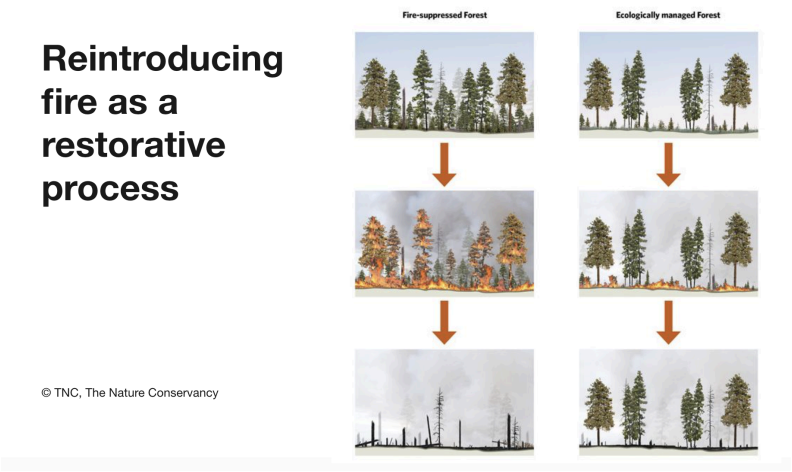
Fire Protocols: Attention as Autopoietic Space

AUTHOR 1	Jiordi Rosales	AUTHOR 2	Nathalia Scherer

CONCEPT	After a century of fire suppression and heating atmospheric conditions, California has changed from a fire-ecology to a fire-climate; our ability to work with fire is reshaping how we come to know the world. Fire protocols seeks to adapt communities to fire as an essential tool and way of life rather than a destructive force to be suppressed at all costs.
TARGET PROTOCOL	What are the protocols that allow for communities to regenerate, maintain, and pass on fire knowledge systems and how can that knowledge be coordinated into large-scale action across diverse social, political, and ecological variables? Our scope is specific to the Sonoma County prescribed fire environment with opportunities to scale as needed.
PHOTO/ SKETCH	
CENTRAL TENSION	Geopolitical top-down structures vs. Cultural knowledge systems
LINKS	Artificial Memory and Orienting Infinity: Just as living memory can move between mediums and agents, dissolving the boundaries between the artificial and the natural, so too can our relationship to weather. Through attention, we cultivate ways of sensing and navigating the complexity of contexts. Shoreline Adaptations to Flooding in Urban Waterways: Interventions that uncover new civic and symbolic perspectives, drawing on history and culture, while transforming fire and flooding from crises of fear into symbols of collective meaning and ecological restoration. Weaving Memory: How to Make a Memory Pouch: The Fire Affects Logbook serves as a physical archive, helping fire practitioners cultivate attention to place while deepening their personal relationship with different forms of memory.

HOW WE HOPED TO IMPROVE THE PROTOCOL	To create an interactive map that describes stakeholder relations and geography, and a guiding document that simplifies the process for land managers to access the resources necessary to carry out prescribed fire on their land.
WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?	- The creation of a prescribed fire coordinator network across Sonoma County to be utilized by land managers within the local Prescribed Burn Association (GFA). Pilot year is 2025. - Integration of Kashia Pomo fire protocols into GFA coordination system. - The implementation of 2 prescribed burns covering 60 acres in partnership with 18 local tribal, private and State-governing organizations (May and June 2024). - Draft of Fire Affects Logbook to further observational capacity of GFA and local partners. - Draft of memetic image to anchor newly forming identity for prescribed fire practitioners. - Draft of Fire Protocols Lab and research/education program for prescribed fire that integrates and furthers our protocol improvement. - Participation in the Cultural Fire Management Council's Training Exchange. - Becoming a State-certified Burn Boss (Jiordi) and Firefighter type II (Nathalia).
WHAT WE LEARNED	1. Prescribed fire is insufficient as a stand-alone event. It must be understood within a 'fire return interval' and ongoing relationship. 2. To ensure the longevity of prescribed fire practices, it is vital to diversify funding beyond state mechanisms. 3. Fire is now a public digital spectacle via technologies and apps like WatchDuty and ALERTcalifornia, reshaping our interactions with transparency, identity, and coordination in crisis. 4. Climate-based realities and catastrophes we're facing today have simply not existed on the planet within human memory. We need practices that keep us nimble and flexible within rapidly-changing conditions, and ultimately grow our ability to improvise while maintaining collective discernment. 5. Prescribed fire practitioners require an identity outside of firefighting in order to generate a sustainable cultural shift. 6. The production and exchange of different types of knowledge instigate new kinds of civic participation. 7. Fire management goals risk becoming harmful when disconnected from local context and community accountability. 8. Instructions and guidelines can become ineffective without the backing of the resources and networks through which they can be carried out. They also require this support to remain adaptable and responsive to changing conditions. 9. There are a million ways to burn a forest. The best ways are often the slowest. 10. The role of fire is to break continuity and differentiate generational growth. Perceiving subcanopy reduction as restoration offers a shift in how we relate to loss, seeing it not as destruction but as a necessary part of ecological renewal.