NEW COMMUNITY

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regional, rural + remote
community development

New Community is the only Community Development journal in Australia: refereed and contemporary, we're aiming towards a socially and ecologically sustainable world. We aim to provide a space to stimulate discussion about theories and practices of community development.

New Community wants to promote education towards sustainable practices of community development. By examining all levels of community activism and practice, we hope to foster a sense of community through the establishment of networks of community activists, practitioners and learners in Australia and our global neighbours.

Whilst we encourage open debate about and critical-pluralist engagement with all pertinent issues, we espouse a social justice and human rights stance, eschewing discriminatory views along the lines of gender, race, class, ability and age as well as sexual preference.

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Community Quarterly was founded in 1983 by People Projects, a publishing project of Employment Working Effectively Inc. It appeared for 17 years, as the only specialist community development journal in Australia, produced by volunteers. It suspended publication in 2000. A collective of people based at or associated with Borderlands Cooperative Ltd. in Hawthorn, Victoria worked collaboratively to relaunch the journal in 2003 as New Community Quarterly. From volume 11, 2013 the journal was renamed New Community. It continues to be collectively managed and produced by New Community Quarterly Assoc., Inc.

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New Community acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Cover Photo: Shelley Banders, Strezlecki, Gippsland

contents

Dear subscribers, readers and friends of the New Community

Jacques Boulet

Here we are with our final issue of 2019, our 17th volume. We're a little later than we had hoped to send you this issue on *rural, regional and remote community development* and the reason for the delay will be readily understandable for all of you… the co-editor of the issue, Dr Helen Sheil, had to evacuate because of the East Gippsland fires in December – early January… She still managed to send me a great variety of articles and poems and other bits of worthwhile information about and from her networks and I'm sure that you will enjoy the collection included here… We're really happy that we can re-start with this issue a 'tradition' we maintained for several years, dedicating the last issue of the year to community development stories dealing with the lives of about one quarter of the Australian population… Readers who have been with us during that time will certainly remember… so here's hoping that we may re-start the tradition for a second time!

Readers of our journal have been really happy with a few of the last issues of the journal… and they have told us so in many various ways… here's a selection…

- Well done – it is still being produced and now on-line! This widens the distribution options when … There is such a need for informed discussion… (Helen Sheil)
- Just to thank you for the latest New Community journal. It was a most valuable set of material and commentary (NDIS). Your guiding role has been much appreciated. (David Purnell)
- … I've been slow in acknowledging this stimulating edition of New Community (NDIS). Though some of the analysis is abstruse for this reader, I appreciate the intent and applaud the in-depth examination of issues that are of such community-wide importance. (David Hall)
- Just writing to say ta for latest journal issue; I've been wanting to get my head around NDIS and you've curated a beauty, rich, diverse, and all the other additions too. (Peter Westoby)
- Thanks so much for the New Community Journal (NDIS). It's terrific. (Paul Dunn)
- I am currently working my way through the latest New Community and finding it absolutely essential reading! (Violence against women). I'm keen to support the fabulous work you do - just let me know (Lynda Shevellar)
- Wanted to let you know I think this latest edition of New Community is really fabulous (not because I'm in it!). Well Done – and what wonderful contributions throughout. (Ndungi wa Mungai)

So again, we must be doing some things right…and thank you to all who have expressed their appreciation by phone, email or face-to-face… it certainly helps us to keep going!

As we soon will start our 18th volume, subscription renewals are coming up; they have been inserted in the journal or attached to the email message bringing you the on-line version…It's a real joy to be able to let all of you know that our subscriber numbers are still growing… we're passed the 170 mark which is a great result, showing that the valiant efforts of Lesley Ervin to keep in touch with subscribers and follow up on all manner of requests are bearing fruit… We are REALLY thankful for the great work she's doing… And we're REALLY thankful to all of you who have been staying with us, who have joined – or returned! - more recently. It all gives us hope that we may reach the magical number of 200 subscribers which would start to assure our survival for the medium term…

The next issue of the journal will review the 'grassroots' version of community development (some of you may say: is there really another version and still call it community development???), examining some historical antecedents and assessing whether it's still happening today and in what form(s); given all the contextual changes in which community development operates (or the various neologisms which now tend to describe our work and approach aimed at positive social (and ecological) change), 'grassroots' feels strangely … sort of … out of fashion…?

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Please, dear readers (and potential writers), help me believe that I'm wrong!

Anyway… the suggested content of the following issues – as per usual – is on the inside back cover… I really hope that the journal continues to inspire you … help us to grow the journal's spread… Given the increasingly absurd spectacle of our political theatre, the worsening flaws in our neo-liberal version of the economy and – especially – the ever more urgent need to mobilise our communities to get active in the climate emergence, community development and a journal that promotes it and is a voice for it become ever more crucial…

So thanks for helping us and for continuing to do so!

Jacques Boulet for the New Community Managing Group.
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Editorial from (a burning) East Gippsland to Metro-Melbourne (a becoming mega-city)

Helen Sheil & Jacques Boulet

*Editorial from (a burning) East Gippsland
to
Metro-Melbourne (a becoming mega-city)*

Dear Readers…

It may appear strange to start this issue on '*Community Development in Rural, Regional and Remote areas*' by talking about cities … and yet… Homo sapiens (as we – still - like to call ourselves… '*sapiens*' meaning 'knowing' or even 'wise'…) has become a '***homo urbanus***', a city dweller in the main… and hence, more sedentary than ever… even if we like to think about ourselves – our selves – as the most mobile ever…

If all predictions about the size of the world population turn out to be accurate, globally, about 7 billion of us (about the present size of the world population) will live in cities in 2050 … And we're not alone being a bit worried about this … The 2016 UN-sponsored Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador wondered about how life in such cities will look like, with people *'packed on top of one another,'* in living '*vertical barracks*',

"needing to be built with recycled materials recouped from previously redundant dwellings, in geographically ever-expanding cities, directly encroaching on ever-more natural spaces and areas, robbing humanity of the '*green lungs*' it needs for its livelihood…"

Habitat III also considered what such expansion of cities and city-living will do to the rest of the earth… especially, as this expansion is irreversible … Joan Clos,

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secretary-general of Habitat III strongly argued for the need of state-based planning, including consideration of housing affordability, transport choices, protection of green areas and heritage and urban consolidation, maintaining social diversity and integration and environmental sustainability; *generally, suggesting a new approach to governance and spatial planning is needed* that will require engagement with the present economic and political powers at work in urban development. Clos also strongly states that '*just*' cities are also the most prosperous cities… a healthy reminder in this era of growing global inequality…

Thus, in addition to maintaining cities as liveable and 'common' public and democratic places, we need to start thinking about ways to 'counter' the drift to the city… Summarising some of the challenges emerging in association with the globalising city-living modality:

Between 1900 and now, the sheer number of humans increased 5 times: from about 1.5 billion to about 7.3 billion and it is expected to grow to about 10 billion by the middle of the century…

"The global urban population has grown 16 times, now encompassing well over half of the world population and expected to grow to 7 billion (70%) between 2050 and 2070."

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With city-dwelling numbers now approaching 5 billion, *three times more people now live in cities* than the world's *entire* population in 1900… Nearly all growth of the world population is occurring in cities and mostly in so-called '*developing countries*.'

As people move to the cities – especially in 'developing' countries – their resource consumption multiplies by a factor of four… moving, people lose their 'subsistence capabilities' because of the loss of their parcels of soil (however small they were) and because of the loss of the 'commons,' including community-owned and controlled food-producing places, still much more present in rural areas.

Cities are located on only 3 - 4% of the total global land surface but they use 80% of the global resources… and they discharge most solid, liquid and gaseous waste produced … creating important pollution problems impacting gravely on the sustainability of what remains of arable lands and of oceans and water sources… thus adding to the overall ecological deterioration of the planet…

Cities are highly unequal places to live in… the privatisation of land and property has left the poor multitudes in overcrowded places and spaces, an unwinnable struggle for improvement and advancement… whilst creating gated enclaves for the well-off and increasingly precarious places for everyone 'in-between'

(think housing affordability…).

So it seems clear that ecologically, economically and socially, city futures will become highly precarious and most likely unsustainable unless we start to seriously think about regenerative alternatives of living and surviving… *and that will have to include thinking about the relationship between cities and rural, regional and remote areas*… which leads us to examining what it may mean to live in such places and more particularly, what it may mean when living under duress, as the South-East of Australia is now so dramatically experiencing, destructive bushfires devastating the land…

And on this land cities also depend… indeed, it is a dependency that stays hidden and thus becomes highly one-sided and exploitative, as city-dwellers don't even seem to care – let alone understand - where their sustenance comes from… City-dwellers relate to the rural and remote when thinking about holidays and retirement… or so it seems… until their daily lives become suffused with toxic smoke and rather sticky red dust-cloud-and-rain mixture… and the prices of vegetables and fruit go up….

So this is the point where the co-editing voice of Helen Sheil needs to be heard to also bring us to what all of this has to do with community development…

Community is geographic. The twin goals of community development are to enable people who live in a region to take care of each other and of the place they live in.

The environment. Despite our best efforts to protect and care for our Gippsland catchment – from ourselves and those whose decisions impact on us – little rain has fallen in the last 3 years and our lake – Lake Tyers - is suffering. Bushfires have burned in our neighbouring communities since November 2019 – old practices continue to inform an unknown situation and we all try to learn…

This edition of the New Community offers a smattering of an approach from one community in East Gippsland to keep learning and present the organisations and interest groups that have supported or hindered us in achieving that goal. We welcome organisations like the New Community and the Borderlands Cooperative who have continued to work with us and share our stories of hope and our practices that welcome all to our table.

Tavern Tuesday – is the **FLOAT** community that meets at the Waterwheel Tavern at Lake Tyers Beach every Tuesday 10.00a.m. – noon for a cuppa and update on how we are faring and what is happening. Visitors are most welcome. It is a practice in our local democracy with everyone being heard and encouraged to listen to others whose life experience may be different. It gives us hope and sanity, a laugh and the Tavern staff look out for us with great food and a hug. We thank those organisations like *Regional Arts Victoria* and *Writers Victoria* who fund some

of our projects… Those who do come our way go back energised to their organisations – we have much to offer as some of the contributions to this issue will illustrate and demonstrate.

In the absence of an Australian Rural Policy, decisions impacting on our communities are fragmented across portfolios concerned with other agendas than investment into regions and our small scattered populations. *We grieve the growing divide between urban and rural communities that foster ignorance of our interdependency*. Once, the Office of Rural Affairs, Rural Youth Network, Rural Women's Network staff, Country Education staff linked to local TAFEs and a thriving University in Gippsland were dedicated to local and regional issues and concerns… For this region and many other regions, *'bigger' has not been 'better'* and we have far less control and appropriate resources coming to us.

"East Gippsland has always been different – we have learnt to co-operate across our small rural communities and departments once inserted into the policies and ensuing practices. We all benefited."

It can work for our mutual benefit; indeed, cities are dependent on rural communities and we fail to thrive if policies that treat us only as a source of extraction for the benefit of and consumption in cities continue to deplete our natural – and our social - resources.

Here, we offer different stories – Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* had the generosity and skill to acknowledge the deceit of the past, while ending with an invitation to love the land, so we try to take those steps. The way forward is not *straight* forward and we stumble. Locally we have begun to hear stories that had been hidden for too long and to work to repair past harm to the land and the people while we wait for rain, take steps to care for the soil, fires and smoke overcome us and we speak of homes and communities burnt. We know smoke from our fires has reached Melbourne and made you breathe this air – we have been breathing it for three months…. Together what can we do?

We start with a mosaic of 12 contributions by various authors living and working in the (mostly East) Gippsland area in Victoria, offering reflections on their lived experiences in the region, expressed in photography, poetry, auto-ethnography and reporting styles. The stories are at once very personal and 'public'; they range from local-to-global networks of initiatives aiming at sustaining and strengthening life in rural and regional areas and illustrate the diverse but necessary possibilities to reset the balance of the interdependence between city and region … lest both will succumb to the devastations our ways of living continue to inflict on mother earth… As mentioned in the

general editorial to this issue, the fires in the region have prevented a more timely collection of these contributions as well as making a wider scope across a greater variety of regions and areas difficult.

Nevertheless, several refereed contributions from other areas provide additional breadth to this issue; Anne Jennings expands her contribution in the previous 'Food Security and Sovereignty' issue of the journal by further elaborating on 'Food as Commons' in an Indigenous context, more specifically, the Kimberley region in Western Australia.

Candice Boyd, who also contributed in an earlier issue, offers a detailed overview of her project which intends to shed light on why young people either stay in their rural./regional town areas, why they don't and why or whether they come back to their regions. Exploring such 'decisions' in three regional areas – the Eyre Peninsula in SA, the Pilbara in WA and the Riverina in NSW – will offer deeper insight in an issue which has affected regional and rural areas profoundly during the last – say – 70 years.

Finally, Amiya Singh and Supriya Pattanayak show how a 'forgotten village' managed to activate younger people to get involved in an innovative and diverse horticulture project that gave hope not only to the young people themselves but to the entire village. An important example of what is possible!

The thematic section concludes with a few articles highlighting aspects of the consequences of climate change and global heating, again returning to the question we posed in a New Community issue through Jim Ife's post-election essay and to which we returned in the last few issues: how should we face the likely demise of our civilisation? This journal presents itself as a highly appropriate place to engage in such discussions and conversations!

The Network and News sections of the issue offer the usual variety of articles we think relevant for thinking and practising Community Development in the present political, economic and ecological context…

We look forward to your reactions to this issue which resurrects a tradition we held for several years in the history of this journal… to publish the fourth issue of each year on community development in rural, regional and remote areas… let us know whether this is a useful attempt!

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Helen Sheil, Jacques Boulet, Issue editors

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The local informing the global from Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) to Edinburgh

Dr Helen Sheil

"I went home and thought I have to unlearn what I know, strip it back and start again"
(Murdoch 2018).

Veronica Brady, writer, Catholic sister and campaigner for Reconciliation challenged Australians to find a new guiding story to bring happiness beyond the god of consuming things (Brady 1996). This is a local story of a rural community searching for their guiding story. A story to transform the way we are treated by urban decision makers and how we relate to each other. It began by finding out about ourselves, by sharing stories that have been hidden away under the bed in letters, diaries and reports and in people's memories and hearts on Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) in Gippsland, Victoria.

Lake Tyers catchment includes the Nowa Nowa Gorge that in Aboriginal knowledge has a dreamtime protection story and in European terms is a Devonian rock formation 400m years old.

"Nowa Nowa (population 200) means mingling waters, a changing halocline of fresh and salt water depending on rainfall, tides and wind."

Just beyond the road bridge, bubbles of gas appear in the water, signs of the fragile crust linking to sulphur springs. You can travel the 25 K of inlets and islands, forests and swamps down the catchment by boat. Sea- eagles and kingfishes are a common sight. At the estuary opening is Lake Tyers Beach, a holiday destination and home to approximately 500 residents. The Lake Tyers Aboriginal Co-operative manages a stunning peninsula of land and is home to around 200 people. This much loved landscape has a rich and contested history close to the surface of everyday life.

For a time, I lived on the banks of the Nowa Nowa

Gorge and was involved in the David and Goliath campaigns this community, black and white, initiated to prevent the gorge being dynamited by companies taking services past us, from Melbourne to Sydney… first, a gas pipeline constructed by Duke Energy, a derivative of Esso (1999-2000); then, optic fibre by Telstra (2010) for communication. Despite a **Ramsar** listing as a significant site for migratory birds, the catchment remains unprotected and, in a planning sense, invisible. A licence to mine a small but high quality deposit of iron-ore, initially by Australian-owned mining company Eastern Iron, in the upper catchment of the lake valid until 2034, has since been sold to a predominantly Chinese-owned company.

I had experienced this discrepancy between what local people valued and imposed policies that destroyed communities and environments before moving to Nowa Nowa. In 1992, Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett had withdrawn services and infrastructure from communities of under 3,000 people, regarding them as problematic to his expansionist agenda of corporate privatisation. In the absence of an Australian rural policy, the dependence of urban communities on products and natural resources originating from rural communities was not considered. It was a traumatic time in our region. To rural people, the policies made no sense.

Back then, I was a community development practitioner, teaching at Yallourn TAFE and, like friends and neighbours now, unemployed. Surely I knew of ways to re-engage with decision-makers. From researching successful Rural Women's programs, I developed a model of *Collaborative Engagement for Transformation* (Sheil, 2000), involving nine theoretical strategies, each with an underpinning practice. I wrote resources for regional workers and community members under the auspice of the Centre for Rural Communities, an independent organisation. The approach was accredited by a major university and, for a time, I introduced regional workers to facilitation skills enabling local knowledge to shape public planning. (Sheil and Smith 2006).

Regional Universities were under pressure to exploit overseas markets, the practice components were removed from the post-graduate course in Regional Community Development. This motivated me to leave the University and move to Nowa Nowa, buying a quirky caravan park. Sitting and talking with locals and travellers, the conversation was often of ways to raise awareness of the beautiful, vulnerable catchment: what did we know that could be useful?

The beginning of *Stories of influence...*
Feminist practice begins with asking and listening, providing space for words to be crafted around experiences, recognising that stories do not emerge fully formed. The work of Mary Field Belenkey and colleagues draws attention to the contribution of language to a personal and moral developmental journey, not only for the speaker, but for the listener (Belenky Field 1986, 1997). Jan 'Yarn' Wositzky, professional singer and storyteller, was a regular

visitor to Nowa Nowa and offered to record local stories and host a performance in the local Hall in 2014. We named the event **Gorge(ous) Yarns**.

> People of different ages, backgrounds and lifestyles came and spoke of their life and its connection to the catchment; stories of hardship, stories of discrimination, stories of spiritual encounters, stories of connection with birds and animals, stories of love and beauty.

Maisie's poem,' written in the 1930s on lined paper held together with a nappy pin, told of a bountiful life on the lake (*Stories of the lake* 2019). Jan Wositzky sang songs of humour and tragedy that we related to. The response was positive. People smiled at each other. We hadn't divided our small community. There was interest in holding another event.

Community development recognises that you cannot learn for someone – but you can learn from them. *Stories on the hill @ Nowa Nowa hall* created a space for people to meet and we began to fill in some gaps in our history and to consider how we, as descendants of an invading country who have caused displacement, could '*be welcome*' in this landscape.

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose's (1997) insightful analysis of Western relationships shows how discrimination and dispossession occurs and is reinforced with language that classifies one group of people as present and its opposite as absent, as 'other.' '*A matrix of hierarchical dualities: man/woman, culture/nature, mind/body, active/ passive, civilization/wilderness {rural/urban} and so on and on...* (Rose 1997); a pervasive framework that becomes internalised when people are silenced.

Unpacking language, lies and legislation that creates 'the other'
When people spoke for themselves, the rich reality of diverse lives became evident. The following four ways narratives contribute to change are evident in *Stories of influence* (Sheil 2000).

- **Personal growth and development from silent, isolated individual to connected beings.**
People spoke of the difficult but liberating experience of painful memories surfacing as public records were unearthed. Eileen Harrison and Carolyn Landon's book *Black Swan: a koorie woman's life* (2011), gives insight into the traumatic impact of policies on our landscape and families at Lake Tyers. Eileen was born deaf, initially crafting her story as pictures, then working with Carolyn as a longer story emerged. Art and story are a powerful combination. She is now Dr Aunty Eileen Harrison and comes each year to our event.

Emerging writer, Megan Webb Hand spoke last year of coming to *Stories on the hill in 2016* to speak of writing

of her recovery from child sexual abuse. By the end of the weekend, the response from published writers hearing her speak led to introductions to publishers who offered to read her manuscript. She now identifies as a writer.

- **Challenging or affirming relationships across species, gender, culture and location?**
People spoke of the impact of hearing untold stories. Bruce Pascoe lives in East Gippsland and *Dark Emu: Black seeds agriculture or accident (2014)* documents unopened reports from early 'explorers' observing the growing and harvesting of grains, farming of fish and eels, ceremonial practices, challenging the official narratives of this land being unoccupied (*Terra Nullius*), inhabited by uncivilised people. The invitation to re-imagine our relationship to the land is a love letter that many have responded to. *Dark Emu* is now an opera, performed by the Bangarra Dance Company, a *Young dark emu* (2019) publication and teaching resources for use in schools are in demand. A television documentary is being produced… resources that are changing understanding... 'the other' speaking back invites connection.

Harry Saddler, author of *The Eastern Curlew: the amazing migratory bird* (2018), came for a week's residency on the floating art studio (www.facebook. float3909.com). **FLOAT**, the regional arts initiative brings an engaged network of artists, scientists, environmental activists, biologists, botanists, fishing people, bird watchers, whose connecting point is care of the lake. They bring an economy welcome in this stripped back, sold-out region.

Harry walked and talked with locals with knowledge of the mudflats, the lake, changes in habitat and the impact of 3 years of drought. He shared insights into communities in Northern and Western Australia, in Korea and China and to the wonders and vulnerability of migratory birds. The **East Asian Australasian Flyway** connects habitat and climate all home to the Eastern Curlew challenging binary understanding of where this bird belongs. It is a story of shared responsibilities. *The Guardian* reported the story and a recording is circulating through Rotary D9510 online Australia. Harry plans to return and tells others. Word of the catchment and community spreads. https://www. youtube.com › watch

- **Creation of new language and a new grand story that offers hope.**
The response to *Dark Emu, Black Swan* and other 'untold stories' affirmed the significance of local stories. The second time Gunnai custodian Wayne Thorpe welcomed us to Krowatungalang country of the Gunnai Nation (Gippsland), he spoke of a story he was working on: *A story of Bung Yarnda (aka Lake Tyers)*. This was published in 2016 and promoted 'on country' http:// www.laketyersbeach.net.au/culture.html. At 'Stories,' we sat underneath shady gums on the billabong at Nowa Nowa listening to Uncle Herb Pattens' gumleaf playing; then Wayne spoke of how the fresh water came down the catchment, spreading across the land, feeding

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the plants, habitat for fish, birds and insects as well as humans. The fresh water knew when to invite the salt water, Narkahungdha, to rest under the shade of the big gums in Bung Yarnda. When the lake estuary opens, food is distributed to the ocean. A local story of estuary management with universal significance.

A Living Bung Yarnda Project to monitor quality and quantity of water in the lake was initiated by Dr Jessica Reeves, a research scientist who formed a strong bond with Aunty Eileen Harrison, her art and the lake after hearing her story and spending time in the catchment. Jessica gained support from responsible land and water management agencies for the project be managed by Lake Tyers Aboriginal Co-operative. The Citizen Science approach complements the growing **art+science+environment** involvement generated by FLOAT, the local **communiversity**.

Lake Tyers is named after Crown Lands Commissioner of Gippsland, T.J. Tyers, of whom local historian Peter Gardner records that '*in 1844 [he] was out on a punitive mission hunting the Kurnai who had been spearing settler's cattle*' (Gardner, 1988:29); the country's earlier name **Bung Yarnda** is becoming more widely used.

- **New relationships and new partnerships emerging**

By 2018 *Stories of influence* moved to the Lake Tyers Beach Hall, adding a Friday fringe to include the screening of *The Warrigal Creek Massacres (2018)* a documentary made by journalists at Swinburne University. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiPWjgx7nQ0 . In the documentary, Dr Aunty Doris Paton comments that, like with stories of children being taken away, it was too painful for Aboriginal people to raise them alone. These are black and white stories. Peter Gardner's publications, including *Our founding murdering father, Angus McMillan and the Kurnai Tribe of Gippsland 1839-1865* (1987), proved valuable resources.

The impact was profound. This year, three stories of European families acknowledging their ancestors' or communities' involvement in past murders were shared.

- Cal Flyn, young Scottish journalist and author of *Thicker than Water: a memoir of family, secrets, guilt and history* (2016), spoke of tracing her great-great-great Uncle Angus McMillan's forays into Gippsland in the 1840s. Cal's writing locates this personal story within a wider context of the good and bad that is within us all and factors that tip humanity into evil, not only in Australia but also in Canada and America. We linked to Cal by zoom in her home in Orkney; a chance for us to connect with her experiences and to speak of the impact of her story in Gippsland.

- Shocked by the extent of the massacres and how little was publicly known, Shane Rees, president of the local hall committee, set up *Reconciliation East Gippsland* (REG). An opportunity to

support recognition came about in response to a newspaper article by Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison, co- author with Peter McConchie, of *My People's Dreaming, An Aboriginal elder speaks on life, land, spirit and forgiveness* (2012). Uncle Max is holding a ceremony on the site of massacres on the Snowy River to heal the land. Descendants of survivors and perpetrators are invited. Some are heartened by the opportunity to change the public history beyond that of the death of one white man being killed. Uncle Max is writing a new book, *Rivers of Kinship*.

- Joan and Alan McColl showed the film *Dhakiyaar Versus the King* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fl2HpYihcU , an inspiring story of two laws, two cultures and two families (one eing the McColls) coming to terms with the past, seeking ways to act responsibly in the present and future. They welcomed the opportunity to share their emotional journey of being forgiven by descendants of Dhakiyaar's family for what their ancestor, a policeman, had done on Woodah Island off Darwin in the 1930s. Now in their 70s, the McColls are distressed that this tribe with a living culture are existing in poverty and extreme hardship.

The Saturday night performance ended with singer-songwriter Todd Cook singing *Butcher's Ride* about

Angus McMillan's destructive trail through Gippsland. Working for the *Edinburgh Fringe* (2012/13), Scottish and Australian musicians spoke of Scots forced to leave their own homelands due to British policies and becoming the inflictors of barbarity in their new homeland. As Paulo Freire perceived, the oppressors are impacted by their own actions (Freire 1987).

Now in its 6th year, *Stories of influence* is recognised as one of *Melbourne City of Literature* regional presenters contributing to the UNESCO *Cities of Literature* and
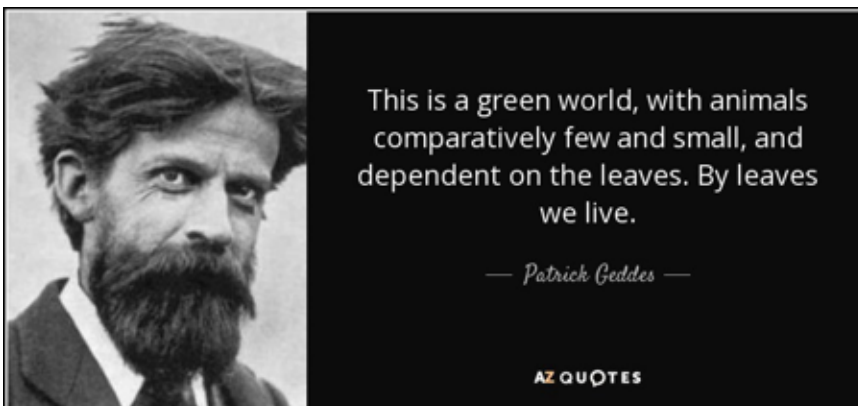
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features on their roadmap.

Being connected to the world of words in Melbourne through the Victorian Writers Centre, the Wheeler Centre and the Small Press Network validates the significance of our local event. All have invested welcome contributions of time, funds and contacts to our rural gathering on the Lake Tyers catchment.

Edinburgh is also a City of Literature and as my daughter has made this city her home, I visit regularly. Edinburgh celebrates stories and has a [Scottish] Storytelling centre. My wee grandsons enjoy storytelling time particularly when there is conversation, music and performance. My daughter and I visit *The Scottish Poetry library*, where I've gifted local publications, and more recently, Summerhall, the home of the Edinburgh Fringe. While enjoyable, there was no opportunity to speak with organisers of my involvement in creating space for stories to be shared and exchange ideas.

Then, David Ryding, manager of *Melbourne City of Literature* (MCOL) wrote, introducing me to the directors of the *Scottish International Storytelling Fe*stival (SISF). A one hour meeting with Donald Smith at the *Storytelling Centre* over a pot of tea was an instant love affair of connections that celebrated stories of place, of people with fragments of culture standing strong, of languages that had been silenced, of song and performance. I left in the pouring rain under a black Edinburgh sky at Festival time, when buses struggle to run on time – with a warm sense that our tiny gathering '*Stories of influence*' on the catchment of Lake Tyers in East Gippsland, had a broader legitimacy and presence….

Donald has since contributed an article for this journal introducing me to the *Habits of Mind* **t**hat shaped the work of the SISF. Patrick Geddes' work on bioregionalism and planning needing to be '*scoped by detailed knowledge of*

This is a green world, with animals comparatively few and small, and dependent on the leaves. By leaves we live.

— *Patrick Geddes* —

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ecological, social, geological, cultural and hydrological conditions of the local region' resonated with conversations that I hear every week at *FLOAT*'s Tavern Tuesday, our weekly gathering based on the democratic approach of study circles where each person is valued for '*coming to the table.*' They are deeply personal and inter-generational,

taking into account knowledge of past events and seasons, the impact of changing conditions and what it means for us all. The dramatic contrast with language used by our current leaders, choosing words such as '*protestor pests*' when referring to people concerned about species extinction and the climate emergency, is an appeal of the group.

To learn that Geddes' *Cities in evolution* (1915) led to the *Local to Global* concept inspiring the 1992 United Nations Local Agenda 21 in Rio de Janeiro affirmed the value of both our weekly gatherings and annual sharing of stories facilitating the diverse richness of life being visible.

Connecting streams

The connecting links between Geddes' work in social planning being underpinned by ecological balance and community development frameworks, seeking to balance 'social, economic, political, cultural, personal, spiritual development, and recognising that for all these we depend on the environment (Ife 1995), are evident.

"Geddes understood that community is geographic; that community thrives or declines according to the impact of policies or actions by organisations and industries on the people and landscape they depend on"

… *that a region is critical*.

Drinking tea with Donald, I spoke of the profound impact of *Stories of influence* for both presenters and listeners; he responded enthusiastically and I sensed this affirmed the foundational principles of the *Scottish International Storytellers Festival* that has an *Earth Charter* and a *Program of Place* that seeks 'earth stories' that help us reconnect. '*Talking cures*' recognise that dialogue within families, communities and across and between nations offers points of connection and pays attention to '*transformative myths*' (origin stories) that assist integration with nature, our relationships and our spirituality and the role of artists. The question of whether Indigenous people can be restored to a place of honour and inspiration, an embedded concept is becoming clearer in our community. https://www.sisf.org.uk/

Embracing the cultural story of landscape restoration – narrative evolution

Geddes would recognise Greening Australia's Martin Potts' story as '*narrative evolution*': the place, Lake Wellington wetland in Gippsland, drained by settlers for

farming; the approach, a call to action acknowledging the degradation of the land and communities, beginning by listening to the stories of the land. It is a land with many stories; massacre and burial sites were found; canoe trees were evidence of ceremony and stone artefacts. At every planting, a smoking ceremony was held with dancing and singing. More recent cultural and settler stories emerged.

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Children are introduced to culture, to habitat planting and to local species of frogs. Reintroducing species able to flourish in this increasingly saline environment slowly brought this landscape to life. Employment is generated and planting undertaken to reclaim wetlands. Everyone learns of the *Yam story* from Aileen Mongta and the *Turt-Willan Story of the Women's digging stick.*

Local schools, farmers, cultural groups, responsible agricultural and land management agencies, environmental and cultural groups, plus organisations working on employment, water and habitat are involved. Scientists from 6 Universities monitor the impact on grasses, blue carbon and biodiversity, along with community organisations concerned with frogs, birdlife, Landcare and Coastcare.

> The call to action holds and transforms the trauma, healing people and place that Patrick Geddes would have appreciated.

Koorie artist Alfie Hudson created this painting, depicting the now live meeting places to thank Martin. The footprints walking through country are his. It is an emotional story of hope while the community and land wait for rain.

Habits of mind

Scottish poetry and storytelling events are performances; the stories of myth, of monsters, of spiritual being in the landscape are familiar. I am reminded of this quality when listening to Lynne Kelly, author of *The Memory Code* (2016), speaking of artifacts and characters being memory triggers for knowledge in oral societies. As a science researcher, Lynne was impressed that oral cultures '*remembered*' vast bodies of complex knowledge on species, navigation, genealogy, plants and history without written records. In response to her constant questioning of how people knew, she was introduced to techniques that demonstrate the extraordinary capacity of our brains at any age. Lynne has since tested these in experiments, not finding a magic forumula but the use of imagery, character, repitition, story, music and dance. The story challenges the accepted wisdom of the '*inferiority*' of oral soceieties and is potentially transformative for practice and understanding within our education system. Her new book *The Memory Craft (2019)* introduces the best memory techniques from ancient times and the Midde Ages to methods used by today's memory athletes.

Geddes may have smiled as the concluding panel of writers chaired by National Rural Reporter Kath Sullivan unexpectedly became a conversation about trees. Jack Whadcoat (oldest/newest writer on the panel) had just published '*It isn't easy being a tree*,' a slim publication of conversations over his lifetime with an ageing *Mountain Grey Gum* (Eucalyptus cypellocrpa) in his backyard. Harry Saddler, Eileen Harrison and Lynne Kelly all became animated, speaking of their current practice and writing in relation to trees.

There are many stories and choice of action is not simple, linear nor universal. But that people meet sharing a common love of the catchment Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) and discuss these issues regularly, engaging in life-long learning gives us insights into a guiding story that Veronica Brady, Patrick Geddes and Hamish Henderson would welcome.

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Notes

1. The **Ramsar** *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance* especially as *Waterfowl Habitat* is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. Named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971.
2. Language: Blackfella's and Whitefella's. This author choses to use black and white as a rough definition of history of settlers and First Nations peoples. Not out of disrespect but in recognition of the interlinked and evolving histories of these groups that fail to fit neatly into settler and First Nation. It is how we refer to ourselves.

Global Local From Scotland to Lake Tyers

Donald Smith

(Donald Smith is a storyteller, author and educationalist. As Director of The Netherbow Arts Centre from 1982 and founding Director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre from 2003-2014, Donald has been in the thick of cultural and social developments in Scotland and beyond over three decades. He believes in the power of culture to enhance confidence and well-being and in the vital importance of individuals and communities being the inheritors and makers of their own stories. He leads workshops and storytelling sessions nationally and internationally, with a special interest in the relationships between culture and social or spiritual values.)

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As '*Stories of Influence*' 2019 gets underway at Lake Tyers in Victoria, the Scottish Storytelling Centre is starting its annual international storytelling festival, which begins in Edinburgh and burgeons into communities across the country. Are there connections between these happenings? Here are dispatches from some Scottish front lines – lines of thought criss-crossing action.

Habits of Mind

Scotland has long prided itself on a generalist way of thinking, resisting specialisation in favour of inter-connection and integration. Even in the 1970s, as an arts student at Edinburgh University, I was required to do at least one course in Moral Philosophy. Academic institutions in Scotland still offer four-year Honours degrees involving study beyond the main subject focus, though as elsewhere University managers also promote technocratic specialisation, which sits more comfortably with the concept of education as a business transaction servicing some specific, perceived socio-economic need. Yet the generalist habit of mind remains strong in Scottish education, culture and politics.

Scottish intellectual history exhibits a dialectic between proponents of universal or general truths and radical dissenters. Even in medieval times, the Scottish Franciscan

> Duns Scotus challenged the Aristotelian scholastics with his philosophy of unique individualised identities and energies. His advocacy of 'this-ness' lived on to influence poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins in Britain and Les Murray in Australia.

In the eighteenth century David Hume dissented from universal or certain truths, arguing the unpredictability of repeated causes and effects. This, in turn, led to Thomas Reid's defence of reasoned empiricism and the emergence of the '*Scotch School*' of common sense philosophy that was to dominate nineteenth century thought in the English-speaking world. Yet, this, in turn, provoked radical dissenters including the essayist and biographer Thomas Carlyle and the artist-critic, John Ruskin, for whom lived experience was more important than rationalist abstractions.

For contemporary purposes, these streams of Scottish thought were harmonised by the pioneering ecologist, Patrick Geddes (1854-1932). Geddes began as a biologist but quickly became interested in the evolution of consciousness as a dynamic force for change. In this crucible, science and culture, the material and the spiritual, the organic and the technological came together. Geddes is often referenced as the founder of modern civic planning, but he was much more. As an evolutionist, he brought together patterns from nature with human development. He took rural paradigms, such as his valley section and showed them crossing into urban settlement. As a thinker, he reconciled progressive generalism in the spirit of the Scottish Enlightenment, with laboratories of practical experiment.

Though he worked in France, India and North America, Geddes's primary laboratory was Edinburgh's Old Town, where the Scottish Storytelling Centre is located. By the late-nineteenth century, after the prosperous classes had moved over to the Georgian New Town, the area had become an overcrowded slum, packed with immigrants from Ireland and other parts of Scotland. Geddes began a movement to conserve historic buildings by finding them new uses, create social housing, open kindergartens with gardens, establish green spaces or 'lungs', and commission public art. Underpinning everything else was a drive for locally grounded lifelong learning, though Geddes also pioneered international summer schools to explore the wider significance of local laboratories of change.

For Geddes,

"story is the central vehicle for understanding and interpretation; everything is in narrative evolution and the key to progressive change lies in human culture."

It is appropriate, therefore, that Geddes' Edinburgh monument stands in one of his green lungs, the Sandeman House Garden, behind the Scottish Storytelling Centre. Around it are inscribed some of his popular maxims: '*By leaves we live*', '*by living we learn*', and '*think global, act local*'. The last also works in reverse, '*think local, act global*'. Geddes has been a core inspiration for Storytelling Centre Summer Schools and would surely feel at home by Lake Tyers.

Carrying Streams

Sadly, Patrick Geddes' energies and endeavours were dealt a severe blow by World War I, in which he and his wife Anna lost a dearly loved son, and by the subsequent Depression. However, on Armistice Day, 11th November 1919, another Scottish catalyst, Hamish Henderson, was born in Perthshire. His childhood was dominated by the long aftermath of the war and his own coming of age was dominated by service in World War II. Beginning as a pacifist, involved in refugee work in Europe, Henderson subsequently enlisted and worked as an intelligence officer in North Africa and then, ahead of the Allied advance, through Italy.

Though exposed from birth to Scottish folk traditions, it was the war which awoke Henderson's interest in the hidden, unofficial culture of rank-and-file soldiers and the Italian partisans. He began to collect folk songs and, returning to Scotland, conceived what became a lifelong mission to record and communicate Scotland's oral traditions as the centre of people's history and culture.

From the start, this was a political and educational as well as a cultural enterprise. Henderson was also in this formative period translating the prison letters of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who had been imprisoned by Mussolini. Gramsci was one of the few communist intellectuals to recognise the importance of popular and folk culture, perhaps because he was a Sardinian, aware of linguistic and cultural difference. In the Prison Letters, written during a long incarceration during which Gramsci was unable to pursue his political journalism, attention focuses on the failure of the Italian middle class to deliver on the promise of the Risorgimento. This was because in his view they had pursued class interest rather than the collective wellbeing of Italian society.

This chimed with Hamish Henderson's conviction that the Scottish middle classes had sold out the cause of national wellbeing in favour of serving the imperial and post-imperial British establishments in return for social status and economic security. He reserved particular criticism for those with an intellectual role - teachers, academics, politicians, journalists, clerics and broadcasters – who, in his view, had averted their gaze from the actual conditions of life in Scotland to peddle a hollowed-out and sometimes repressive Anglo-Scottish version of Scottish culture.

This is a politically harder-edged version of Geddes. He had been in some ways a Victorian philanthropist,

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trusting in voluntary action for communal progress. Hamish Henderson embraced the cultural and artistic dynamism of Geddes but married it to radical socialism and political activism. His was a Freire-like pedagogy of the oppressed and marginalised, from which progressive change would emerge. Understanding of one's own culture and experience was, he believed, the route to personal and social confidence, the way to end internal colonisation and the key to outward looking internationalism. To achieve this, he put the folk songs of working people, nomadic travelling people and cultural minorities centre stage. Henderson is acknowledged as '*Father of the Scottish Folk Revival*', but he was much more. He gave contemporary Scotland new resources for self-understanding, for cultural reinvention and so for political change. These were taken up by grassroots movements such as the Freire-inspired Adult Learning Project in urban areas such as Gorgie/ Dalry in Edinburgh. His own songs and poems such as '*Free Mandela*', '*The John MacLean March*' and '*Freedom Come All Ye*', exemplify how human truths grow through specific struggles. Universals must be earthed in social and cultural specifics. Hamish Henderson's 2019 centenary has been marked by a wave of tribute events including a recent commemoration in the Scottish Parliament. He prepared the cultural ground for Scottish self-government, though if still alive, he would urge more radical change in the face of inequality and environmental injustice.

This year's *Traditional Arts and Culture Summer School* at the *Storytelling Centre* was dedicated to exploring the future significance of Henderson's radical thought and creative praxis.

2014 and All That

The *Scottish Storytelling Centre* is a hub which invites people to express their own sense of narrative focus, social value, identity and belonging. It is also the home of TRACS (*Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland*) the umbrella for national networks of storytellers, musicians and dancers. TRACS continues to advocate and evolve the Henderson vision of place-based and people-centred creativity. Artists, according to Henderson, should not belong to the professional middle classes, alongside arts bureaucrats and media commentators, but be embodied like the bards of traditional cultures in specific locales and communities.

This raises many questions and through local projects and methodologies, such as '*The People's Parish*', TRACS endeavours to provide contexts for action research and living laboratories, rather than pat outcomes. How can

> How can creative equality emerge if there is inadequate provision for arts education across the board?

locally embodied culture function economically? Both Geddes and Henderson founded their programmes on whole community lifelong learning.

Yet both Geddes and Henderson brought creative passion to bear. Their creativity is an expression of life energies, a cultural dynamic that is close to the energy and forms of the natural world. Their methodologies, such as community drama, open ceilidh for song, story and dance, seasonal rituals and the cultural walk or 'pilgrimage' are all ripe for contemporary re-formulation and expression. They have the potential to combine creative inspiration with communal wellbeing and social and personal growth. Re-connecting the human in dynamic interplay with our natural environments is the ambition of Geddesian narratives and Henderson's 'carrying streams' of culture.

Political and historical context also, of course, impact; it is twenty years since the Scottish Parliament was re-established in 1999 and in that period, it has rapidly taken its place as the forum for democratic and social debate in Scotland. It is forty years since, in 1979, Scotland first voted for devolution, but was denied on the basis that 40% of the total potential electorate had not actively voted in favour. Instead, Thatcherism took control in England and Scotland moved steadily in a different direction.

In retrospect, these decades were the seeding ground of the remarkable outburst of campaigning energy that marked the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum. Since support for independence had long hovered around 30% in opinion polls, this referendum seemed to be a long shot for the ruling Scottish National Party. In the event it proved cathartic, releasing an unprecedented intensity of democratic participation.

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Most events in the campaign were not party-political but hosted by civic, business, community, faith and cultural organisations. In addition, while the official media were all aligned against independence, there was an explosion of social media and live 'Yes' happenings. What bubbled to the surface was an unforeseen appetite for looking at things afresh and for locally-driven change. The outcome of 45% for independence did not in the outcome reflect the total experience, as a significant proportion of the 55% vote against was reluctant, with some swung by Westminster's frantic last minute '*Vow to Scotland*' (now forgotten), or even conflicted in actively repressing their own positive emotions.

This might now be only a chapter in political history were it not for the continuing wave of post-2014 activism, still independent of conventional party politics. This wave embraces community development, environmental projects, community land ownership, social enterprise, heritage projects and community arts. The artists, however, are not necessarily in the vanguard, where they often see themselves, but part of a wider social energy. What is cultural in this movement is the social self-confidence, contrasting with longstanding attitudes of '*being seen but not heard*', resentful deference and what was labelled '*the Scottish cultural cringe*'.

The ongoing UK Brexit crisis and the growing Climate Emergency have given renewed momentum to this ferment.

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Whatever the next stages, Scotland is on the cusp of further change. Some of the drivers are clearly political and constitutional. Political opponents of Scottish independence have linked Scottish nationalism with more recent right-wing populism. But as Scottish Judges at the highest level have shown through their legal defence of British parliamentary sovereignty, Scotland's politics are civic, constitutional and democratic.

Yet, could the decisive factor still be culturally led social change? And if so, how will Scottish artists respond? One way is to assume that in underlying terms, independence has already been gained. The aim now is to imagine a new nation in boldness and hope, from the grassroots. Embodied imagination can be radical and transformative, as Geddes and Henderson show.

"There is more to Scottish independence than avoiding a UK crash-out from the EU and transferring existing powers to Edinburgh."

'*Vote for Hope*' was the catch phrase of the 2014 Independence Referendum, not '*Take Back Control*' which was the Leave mantra in the 2016 EU Referendum.

Unfortunately, hope denied can turn to anger and conflict. This is the moment to empower stories that carry wisdom from the past and far-sighted vision for the future - at Lake Tyers and in Edinburgh.

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Further Reading

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☛ Donald Smith *Freedom and Faith: A Question of Scottish Identity* Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2013

☛ Walter Stephen (Ed) *Think Global, Act Local: The Life and Legacy of Patrick Geddes* Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2004

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Ode to the Manna Gums

Leanne

(*Leanne attributes her interest in in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders culture and lore to having parents who were members and advocates for the Aboriginal Advancement League in the late-1960s. She has annually attended Garma the largest Indigenous Festival in Australia since 2014 and works in the pop-up library on site. Leanne attended* **Stories of Influence** *in 2016 where she heard Bruce Pascoe speak about Dark Emu Black Seed and again in 2018 when the documentary film Warrigal Creek Massacre was screened. Each event and the connections made within her communities has encouraged Leanne to help establish* **Reconciliation Wellington and Reconciliation East Gippsland**.)

Unfortunately, power over the life we're born into and the people sharing our time and space is beyond our control. It is what it is, so to speak. What's also apparent is that where, when and what circumstances we're dealt guide the opportunities and subsequent choices we make.

This leads me to reflect on being born into a loving family in regional Victoria and choosing as an adult to live in Gippsland. Where I come from, where I've chosen to live, and the connections made has provided me with opportunities for exploration and personal reflection.

> Connecting with people, exploring places and questioning the permanence of both has become a new and unexpected challenge as I'm drawn to the significance of daily events and the impact of a bygone era.

What I do know is that after being gently fed and nurtured, I may have found my life's purpose and it seems to be leading me down a specific road where the destination is unknown.

Driving along the wide-open roads that aren't wide, or even open anymore since centre barriers were installed to protect drivers from crashing into the trees, my attention drifts from the task at hand. My gaze is drawn towards those trees as if I'm being enchanted and under a spell. The trees from whose dangers we are being protected. I've recently come to realise that what's been happening is less like a medieval spell and more a process of awakening.

I've finally become 'woke 'in East Gippsland!

The trees forming a natural Avenue of Honour down the highway are an entirely different construct to the strategically planted memorials to fallen soldiers. These trees and other ones in places of unharnessed natural habitats have become a part of my thoughts, my observations, my imaginings, my sorrow, my melancholy, my life.

The majesty of the trees with their towering gnarled trunks and lofty branches unexpectedly transport me back to a place and a time where the roads weren't bitumen or gravel and certainly no centre barriers. Fences delineating property and creating false ownership were unnecessary because the natural lay of the land and its geographical features were enough to establish boundaries and create lore.

I'm in awe of the Eucalypts with their colourfully dappled trunks and a promise of a home for a possum or powerful owl. Manna Gums with trunks that are so smooth, cold and hard to the touch, yet have natural soft creases where limbs have begun their life. It's the exquisitely beautiful Manna Gum that reminds me of a naked mature woman with her soft full skin folds. Trees that would have once, in the days before colonization, covered the land more densely but are now in scattered clumps on roadside verges.

If I stand before one of Earth's ancient ancestors, the urge to touch its cold hard strength is overwhelming. So strong is the desire to connect with its life force and share the energy and space it has inhabited for centuries. Each close encounter with the trees and their shared landscape encourages me to contemplate what was once there and can be no longer. It's an opportunity to pay respect and homage to the life it has lived, to the hundreds of hot summers it has survived, to the generous gifts of shelter, tools, weapons, food, lookout vantage points to warn others of impending danger. I poignantly wonder of the horrors it may have witnessed or even inadvertently been complicit.

As I drive the country roads surveying landscapes of remnant Red Gum Grassy Woodlands my eyes catch imagined glimpses of proud confident figures purposely striding through the scrub. The visualisation is so strong that I can almost hear their soft utterances as they go about their life unimpeded and at one with the earth and its offerings.

I can't seem to restrain these musings, hence the earlier reference to sorrow and melancholy, but perhaps they're not meant to be restrained. Maybe their existence is designed to be a reminder, a leveler, a motivation and catalyst for change and that I believe is my life's purpose.

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Banking on economic and community development

Marg Lynn

(Dr Marg Lynn is a retired Monash University academic and a community volunteer in Mirboo North, including Mirboo North and District Community Bank Board director and former Chair.)

How familiar are you with the Bendigo Bank and their community banking model? Are you aware that it has existed as a financial institution since its foundation in the Bendigo goldfields as a building society in 1858, expanding gradually through mergers until it became a bank in 1993, and is now the fifth largest retail bank in Australia? It currently has about 500 branches, over 320 of which are community banks branches.

How does this relate to community development, you ask?

The Community Bank model was born out of the bank closures of the 1990s, when over 2000 branches of all banks closed across Australia as part of economic rationalist/neo-liberal thinking and practice.

> This philosophy rose to ascendancy for the next two decades, and whilst it was attacked by the left, it is only recently being critiqued by business leaders themselves, economics journalists and academics. Politicians on the left are feeling brave enough to challenge it again.

Having said that, it is still pretty well-entrenched and has become the taken-for-granted paradigm.

The shift in the 1990s was marked by significant down-sizing (sackings) and centralisation, rather than de-centralisation and local influence; scaling-up of corporations and increasing emphasis on management and heftily paid CEOs; the separation of policy and implementation ('steering' and 'rowing'); shareholder not customer benefit; loss of social responsibility towards community and the reciprocal nature of business, i.e. business needs customers/customers need business.

Some of its worst impacts were in rural areas, because of the demise of the ethos of cross-subsidisation in goods and services espoused by the 'great Liberal' Menzies, and practised by governments and large corporations as part of their holding a social licence to operate - a concept of the **common good**. This had been seen as necessary to make a vast country like Australia work – it couldn't all be profitable, but it was essential that it was serviced, by roads, telecommunications, power, transport, education and health services.

Even though small community-located banks were profitable, they were closed because of their small scale. They were caught up in the sort of 'rationalist' thinking that closed post offices, railways, schools and government offices in the country.

"Economic rationalism has at its core the idea that everything ultimately is economic or can be reduced to economics."

The Bendigo Bank model took this concept and turned it on its head by saying economics must serve society and a well-served society and community is good for business. It also turned 'pure' community development on its head, as it was not at that time familiar with dealing cooperatively with business, rather considering there to be a natural tension between the world of commerce and the community sector.

Rob Hunt, the CEO of Bendigo Bank, had a vision of a retail bank that could work for the community and share ownership with the community, so that profits would remain local rather than go to distant shareholders. It appealed strongly to localism and to people who identified with their community, demonstrating that the more business they do with the bank, the more their community will benefit. Since the 1990s, almost all new branches created within Bendigo Bank are Community Banks rather than company-owned branches. It was originally envisaged as a rural model but many suburban branches have since opened.

Case study of Mirboo North

Mirboo North lost its last bank in the late-1990s and after a grieving process, a number of the movers and shakers in the town set about finding a creative solution. They had heard of the Community Bank model, rolled out in Minyip-Rapunyip in 1998, but were keen to get something started very quickly. Within the community was a business man willing to put up capital, so a cooperative was formed to establish a Bendigo Bank agency, not a full bank, half-owned by the business man, half owned by the community cooperative raising funds through the sale of shares.

This agency model served the town and district well for

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10 years, but it had always been the plan to move towards full banking services and full community ownership. In 2008, community people formed a steering committee, several of them key co-op members, to start working towards a full Community Bank branch for the district. What this involved was that Bendigo provided support and advice, with a senior banker meeting almost monthly with the steering committee as they determined their geographic area, surveyed the district, conducted a feasibility study and inspired the community to buy shares to create start-up capital.

> The Community Bank model requires the community to form a company, with a board, to meet the costs of running the banking business, employing staff, developing policies for governance, complying with ASIC regulations, purchasing or leasing property and equipment, whilst liaising closely with Bendigo Bank.

In return, the company receives 50% of the profits of business transacted, i.e. interest margins, up-front and trailer commissions on banking products (loans, deposits, insurances), income from ATMs, and fees.

Mirboo North and district, including towns of Yinnar and Boolarra, a population of about 3,000, raised the amazing amount of $830,000, providing us with a cushion and enabling us to get into modest profit well before projections in the prospectus suggested we would. Bendigo Bank had required us to raise $650,000 to be viable, which we exceeded magnificently. Because of our fortunate position in inheriting the agency's built-up capital, we owned the building and have since built on offices and a conference room for the Board.

The Community Bank opened its doors in 2010. We have 6 staff (2 full- and 4 part-time), a volunteer board of 10/12 representing all parts of the district. From the profit the community company makes, it can make grants and sponsorships to the community and pay dividends to its shareholders, roughly in proportion of 80/20 to the community.

We have returned a dividend to shareholders every year except one and have contributed over $1 million to community groups in grants, sponsorships and scholarships. Sponsorships tend to go to schools, sporting clubs and arts and community events to help raise our profile and let the community know we are keen to partner them. The grants go without strings to organisations that are doing important developmental activities in the community. Examples are $100, 000 to the renewal of the swimming pool, our largest grant so far; $15, 000 to the Op Shop, that received almost enough to buy their own building through a *Pick My Project* grant last year. This will allow their community user groups to plough much more of their profits into their own development work

rather than paying high rental costs to the Op Shop.

Community banking not only shares the profits; it also shares the risk. If anything were to go wrong financially in ways that were preventable, the Board carries the responsibility. A large amount of work is done by unpaid directors working for the good of the community, rather than for a corporate entity. Directors are responsible for running the business, but not the banking, which is done by paid professional staff. Bendigo obviously holds more power and is able to shift the economic goalposts more easily than communities can, but its value to community is not only about grant moneys but also local employment, support for local business and retaining business in town; if people can't do their banking locally, they will do other things out of town as well. It provides leadership in the district and support in skills-building, assisting in business development and encouraging educational success.

Across our three communities, we have the capacity and are working towards assisting the community meet more substantial needs. We can do this through person-power and leadership as well as financial leverage. Bendigo Bank gives us legitimacy in the community to do things, though it always remains a balancing act. It is important that the Bank doesn't throw its weight around.

"Financial power has to be exercised for the community according to values that are aligned with community development and social justice; for us, this means creating equity and access for our rural communities."

Mirboo North is known as a community that can get things done and has been fortunate to have activists and community advocates. There are plenty of stories pre-dating or contemporary to this particular phase of community planning and participation of Mirboo North creating socially alternative and progressive projects and punching above its weight; for example a LETS scheme, arts council, community newspaper, swimming pool campaign, energy hub, Community Foundation, opposing coal seam gas and, more recently, *Preserve our Forests* and parkrun. Indeed, it was the home of the founders of the **Centre for Rural Communities Inc**., who themselves were involved in many of these ventures. The two other communities have similar strengths. In the interests of brevity and my closer connection, I am concentrating on Mirboo North.

In 2012, members of the Community Bank Board took the initiative to form a community planning group in Mirboo North, representing broad community sectors: education, recreation, health, local government and the community, through its 'peak body,' **Mirboo Country Development Inc** (MCDI), the **Mirboo North and District**

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Community Foundation, and the **Bank** itself. An extensive and inclusive exercise in community planning over a couple of years developed priorities for action, including projects already mentioned: saving and redeveloping the town's iconic swimming pool, creating an energy hub that has recently installed 80 kW-producing solar panels on a cluster of public building roofs and campaigning for the Baromi Park master plan and redevelopment, now underway.

Working with the Community Foundation and MCDI has been essential to the success of these projects and the wellbeing of the town. MCDI carries a watching brief for a range of community activities; it employs a one day a week Community Project Officer, jointly funded by the three organisations; it manages the local monthly market; and it has recently acquired the lease for the Shire-owned building that had been the Senior Citizens Centre home until the latter relinquished management. The Community Foundation is a well-resourced entity, with capital exceeding $8 million, seeded from the sale of a community-owned aged care facility ten years ago. They also run a grants program. They have been a tenant of the Community Bank Board till the last twelve months and the two organisations work closely together, most significantly for the last year in a joint *Vital Signs Project*.

Vital Signs was brought from the community philanthropy sector in Canada and involves '*taking the pulse*' of the local community/communities across a number of themes. Our Committee, representing our four communities, (the three previously-named plus Thorpdale included by the Foundation) selected the themes of health, education, the economy, the environment and belonging. Our project manager researched the basic data, consulted key experts in each area and, as a committee, we have held community forums in four towns. The challenges of climate change, the development of renewable energy sources and continuing healthy water sources, sustainable agricultural practices pose strategic problems for us. The mental health of young people and adults is an ongoing issue we need to handle more holistically. We are at the point of publishing brief reports for each of the four sub-districts, to be followed by a more major consolidated report. It will provide us with guidance on how we can work on the issues with those affected or involved, and on what can be funded from our combined or separate granting resources.

The Community Bank (along with the Foundation) can do a number of things with our funding. We can provide bank loans as we would to any eligible business proposition. We can give a grant from annual grant rounds or from our capital reserves (which would need the approval of shareholders, but is possible). We can leverage other grant money by matching funds from other sources and we can 'crowd source' – seeking local funds that we can back with a guarantee.

The banking sector is changing, partly as a result of the *Royal Commission into Financial Services*, but even more because of the rapid changes in technology. Banking as we knew it 20 years ago is almost unrecognisable and it is anticipated that in another 5 years the changes will be just as dramatic. Whilst tightening interest rates mean less profit, because of the growth in business, we have still been earning increased profits year on year.

"The Community Bank's future lies in creating even stronger partnerships with community as we transition to ever-decreasing face-to-face transactions with customers whilst still remaining an essential part of the community's infrastructure."

We (and the Foundation) are at the forefront of change and our financial resources give us a unique opportunity to position our small rural communities to respond proactively rather than reactively to the local implications of broader systemic and structural problems. *Vital Signs* is partly showing us the way and we are fortunate in the leadership we have across all the various current community projects, capable of inspiring commitment and wide participation.

If you believe your community would benefit from a Community Bank and has the capacity to develop it, you can always discuss your thoughts with Bendigo Bank.

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SLAPP

We all live downstream

Gabrielle Higgins

An interview with Martin Fuller, CEO

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

*A **strategic lawsuit against public participation (SLAPP)** is a lawsuit that is intended to censor, intimidate, and silence critics by burdening them with the cost of a legal defense until they abandon their criticism or opposition. - Wikipedia*

dry up resolve and resources
of those who speak

not new this reduction
that drives away those
of lowest evaporation points

all oxygen removed in the changing state
not enough being

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right - nothing but
resolution by financial pressure
silence becoming self-imposed

torn between principles
and one's changing state of funds
solid, liquid, gaseous

words matter
declared malice motivated

hindering or preventing
or attempting to hinder or prevent

free speech's reduction
leaving a sticky burnt
coating on the pan

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[**Helen Sheil's Introduction**:

This article is a reprint with permission from *West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority*. The key point is the dependence of Melbourne on Gippsland Water, yet the lack of a rural policy in Australia results in no tax or reciprocal relationship to source of water, as it does in countries such as Japan and Canada and parts of the EU. Rural areas, unfortunately, are treated as a source of extraction rather than a source to reinvest in the national wellbeing under current limited goals of GDP, giving no value to environment or community. Time for this to become a bi-partisan agenda!]

There has been a lot of focus in the national media in 2019 on the Murray Darling Basin and NSW river systems, but what about the health of our local Gippsland rivers? West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority's CEO, Martin Fuller, said a range of projects are underway aimed at improving river health and resilience right across Gippsland:

> "*We believe healthy rivers are at the heart of healthy communities. But when we talk about river health, we actually have to look at the bigger picture – the whole catchment. It's important to remember that the activities that happen within towns, businesses and on farms will impact the waterways in the catchment area. Gippsland rivers are extremely important to our community, but healthy river systems also have statewide importance.*"

The Thomson River gathers its waters from the slopes of the Baw Baws where it is filtered by the alpine peatlands and forms a river. The river descends 970-metres over its 170-kilometre course before joining the Latrobe River near Sale.

> ***In the upper reaches of the Thomson River is the Thomson Dam that provides around 70% of Melbourne's water storage. While the river is a major source of water for Victoria, it also plays a vital role in the Gippsland environment.***

Mr Fuller continued:

> "*Our work on the Thomson River is a great example of how we approach river health. Up high in the headwaters, we have our willow control*

program. Through this program we target willows upstream to stop them from becoming a downstream problem. This is a cost-effective program and will save thousands of dollars down the track. Further down the river, we work with farmers to fence off and revegetate their waterways. This creates a filter for the run-off from the farm as well as providing a corridor for wildlife. This is where we also treat established willows, removing them and then re-stabilising the banks with native vegetation."

These works also help build the resilience of the river so it can withstand the impact of flood and other unpredictable events.

"*Within the Thomson River catchment, we have programs that work on farm efficiency. These might be aimed at improving irrigation efficiency or keeping nutrients and sediments on farm. These programs have a dual benefit. There are real cost and productivity savings for the farmer but also health benefits for the river and the local environment. Our farmers know that while their farms have boundaries, their impact doesn't and many of them work hard to have a positive impact on the environment.*"

Connecting rivers and allowing them to flow through their original course is an important part of river health. Past practices mean that rivers have been straightened or bends chopped out of them. This can mean the river flows too fast in a flood, stirs up sediment or in some cases, prevents migratory fish passage.

Thomson River fishway

"*One of our most important projects completed recently was reconnecting the Thomson River at Horseshoe Bend. The Thomson River was heavily mined in the late-1800s early-1900s. At this time a tunnel was built through Horseshoe Bend to divert the original course of the river, allowing alluvial mining. Before we completed the fishway, water flowed around Horseshoe Bend only 6% of the time. This meant that native fish migration had effectively stopped.*"

As a result of the Thomson River fishway, 60% of water flows through the tunnel and 40% around Horseshoe Bend – allowing fish consistent and long-term access to 84 km of pristine habitat above the tunnel.

"*Horseshoe Bend is a heritage-listed site because of its goldmining past. Ensuring that this heritage is protected has been an important part of the project. Sixty per cent of the water flows through the tunnel, so that visitors can still enjoy this experience. But the fishway means that the river is connected, right through from the Gippsland Lakes up to the alpine reaches of the Thomson and its tributaries. River connectivity is one of the key principles of ecosystem health. Like we plant trees to create wildlife corridors, a fully connected river is like a wildlife corridor for aquatic species. They*

can move up and down the river as part of their lifecycle or, as is sometimes the case, to move away from bushfires and other threats."

For more information about West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority visit ***wgcma.vic.gov.au*** or on Facebook ***@WestGippslandCatchmentManagmentAuthority***

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Ancient Language

Angelique Stefanatos

(Studied biology in Melbourne and moved to Alice Springs to work at the Alice Springs Desert Park. While living in Alice Springs, I embraced the opportunity to learn about indigenous culture and spirituality of the region. Now residing in Lakes Entrance, a keen Landcare volunteer and busy at her **Trust for Nature** conservation covenanted property; when possible, I travel in order to learn how other cultures look after their land, through sacred seasonal festivals and nature ceremonies.)

In 1999 I spent one intense week in Central Australia participating in a Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal language course. It was one of the most interesting experiences I have had, because as the week progressed I felt more and more disoriented from the modern world around me (with its relatively modern language). I experienced both a physical and mental sense of dizziness, as I desperately tried to concentrate all day in class and immerse myself in this ancient language.

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In the evenings, when I went home, I had trouble reading something as simple as a letter addressed to me in English. Then, at night, I dreamed in Pitjantjatjara!

Not that I could consciously understand what was being said, but I got a sense that there was some part of me that understood it all.

Learning an ancient language in an ancient land felt like pushing anticlockwise against a clock-face. When the lessons stopped I was dizzy, like the earth was spinning backwards. I felt disoriented, as if there was no place for me in time. The desert landscape, culture and spirituality are inseparable from the language: The earthy, throaty, swallowed sounds penetrated through me, shaking me like the footsteps and rumblings of a giant *Tjukurpa* ancestor (*Dreaming* ancestor).

As I pronounced the words for the first time, I started to vibrate to an ancient song *(inma)*, like the language had always been an unconscious part of me. This is possible..

if I remember that I too was born in this country, and the cells of my body are made from the soil and water of

"if I remember that I too was born in this country, and the cells of my body are made from the soil and water of this ancient land. So it is not such an improbable thought that after at least 60,000 years of songlines criss-crossing the continent, that every child born here has been sung into existence."

And is sung to sleep at night by an ancient song that we adults can't hear because of the sounds of our hectic lives.

This *piranpa* (whitefella) found the language very complex, despite the fact there are only thirteen letters in the alphabet. But its complexity is not surprising considering the language has been evolving for thousands of years. I loved the descriptive nature of the words; how they paint a picture which can only be seen (or heard) if you become intimately familiar with the desert country:

> Rain - *kapi puyuni* (water smoke). Is this a description of rain evaporating off the hot ground as soon as it hits the earth, or perhaps of wispy rain clouds?

> Stars - *kililpi.* I can almost hear the stars making this sound as they twinkle in the crystal-clear desert night!

The many descriptions for the sun going down:

punu uti   (sun down but tree outlines still visible),
manta uti   (sun down but ground still visible),
tjintu tjarpanyi (sun going into the earth).

Such subtle variations come from people who have observed their lands for-ever. In comparison, English seems so sterile to me; it can be learned from books or in a classroom closed off from the world. To really get a feel for a desert language we have to go outside in the *Anangu* way (Aboriginal people's way) and sit under a tree, while we listen to *kaanka* (the crow), *nyii nyii* (zebra finches) and *kiily kiily kari* (budgerigars), as they sing to us, and remind us what their names are.

***

(This poem was inspired by my work as a zookeeper at the Alice Springs Desert while I was training in venomous snake handling. I was asked to catch and hold my first venomous snake: A Western Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja nuchalis*). It was a black-headed, orange-bodied colour type. Up close, the unworldly beauty of the snake seemed heightened by the inherited fear and suspicion of snakes in our culture. However, once my fear was overcome, I felt an incredible connection with this creature, honoured as divine by other cultures.)

DESERT JEWELS

Primeval creature rippling like a wave across sand.
Ancestral dreamings of carved gorges and watery
elements.
Scales glistening like dew in the morning light.

Innocent child-like wonder or sinful, biblical
temptation?
Wanting to touch, explore, experience; or fear, guilt,
loathing?
A mixture of all aspects fighting within me.

After watching, waiting, assessing the risks, I am ready.
Fear controlled by my will.
The beauty of the creature distracting me,
tempting me to abandon myself and touch it.
I calculate and time it perfectly, then plunge in beyond
the point of no return…

I have it in my hands now.
The cool, smooth body and the sensuous way it moves
reminds me of water,
a living wave,
the guardian of water holes.

My ignorance is replaced by knowledge.
From potential victim, I become powerful.
My fear is replaced by overwhelming love pouring from
my heart.

With fear no longer blinding me,
I see its beautiful, multicoloured scales,
like the sparkling jewels of a mystical kingdom…
that I am now holding in my hands.

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Rights of Nature

Helen Sheil

Lake Tyers – FLOAT art+science+environment project has been liaising with **Dr Michelle Maloney** from the **Australian Earth Laws Alliance** (AELA) to explore ways the catchment could be listed and protected in its own right. A seminar was held earlier in 2019 on a Blue Print for the area – planning from a perspective of a regional catchment rather than from a portfolio perspective with overlapping and confusing planning overlays and requirements (and that was before the current fires).

This is one of the few ways environmental protection is becoming part of the planning in some countries, rather than small community groups having to fight after planning for inappropriate development has been announced. Each community fights time and again for river health in Gippsland: the Snowy River, the Mitchell River, Tambo River… our Lake Tyers Catchment … the list is long.

https://www.earthlaws.org.au/what-is-earth-jurisprudence/rights-of-nature/

Introduction

The Rights of Nature movement is growing worldwide. Recognising the Rights of Nature in law, means that we reject the notion that nature is human property and we legally recognise the rights of the natural world to exist, thrive and evolve.

> Recognising that the natural world is just as entitled to exist and evolve as we are, necessarily changes the way humans act.

Rights of Nature is grounded in the recognition that humanity is just one member of the wider Earth community, and that we have evolved with, and are dependent upon, a healthy, interconnected web of life on Earth. Rights of Nature laws create guidance for actions that respect this relationship. AELA is working with the **International Centre for the Rights of Nature**, managed by the **Community Environmental Legal Defence Fund** (CELDF), to advocate for Rights of Nature laws in Australia. AELA acknowledges that the sovereignty of the First Nations People of the continent now known as Australia was never ceded by treaty nor in any other

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way. AELA acknowledges and respects First Nations Peoples' laws and ecologically sustainable custodianship of Australia over tens of thousands of years through land and sea management practices that continue today.

What are Rights of Nature?

The health of ecological communities around the world is deteriorating. The United Nations has warned that we are heading toward "*major planetary catastrophe*." There is a growing recognition that we must fundamentally change the relationship between humankind and the natural world. Making this fundamental shift means recognising our dependence on nature and respecting our need to live in harmony with the natural world. It also means securing the highest legal protection for ecological health.

Acknowledging that all life on Earth has a right to exist, thrive and evolve

Advocates for the Rights of Nature argue that as all life on earth - and life supporting ecosystems - have evolved together during the long history of the universe and the planet, and as human beings are just one part of this larger, interconnected web of life (and are completely interdependent on the rest of the natural world for our very existence), the non-human world has just as much right to exist as humans do. Or, using the language of Earth advocates: the Earth community should be recognised as having the right to exist, thrive and continue its evolutionary journey into the future.

Valuing and protecting nature for its inherent worth

From this view, nature deserves to be valued for its own inherent worth. Legally recognising the rights of nature is not about 'conferring rights' on nature, but giving legal recognition to what is already there. Recognising that the natural world is just as entitled to exist and evolve as we are, necessarily changes the way humans act. We can refer to Earth-centred cultures around the world for guidance as to how humans treat the natural world when they see themselves as merely part of it – rather than the masters of it.

"Many Indigenous cultures see plants and animals as relatives, members of an inter-connected community of life that is self-sustaining and deserves respect. They draw from the natural world to live, but do not take more than the natural system can sustainably provide."

This contrasts with the culture and legal system that is dominant in western industrialised nations today, which treats plants, animals and entire ecosystems, as objects that are human property. Our current legal system allows humans to destroy ecosystems in the name of material 'development' and only grants rights to humans and human-created constructs such as corporations and nation-states. Legally recognising the rights of nature has a number of significant flow-on effects. In simple terms, it does two things: *first*,

it pro-actively changes the way humans interact with and impact upon the non-human world and *second*, it changes the way citizens can defend and restore nature.

Learning from First Nations People - Earth centred culture and laws that respect the rights of nature

The Rights of Nature movement acknowledges, respects and is inspired by the ancient wisdom of First Nations peoples around the world. AELA acknowledges that the sovereignty of the First Nations people of the continent now known as Australia was never ceded by treaty nor in any other way. AELA and the Australian Rights of Nature Tribunal proceedings acknowledge and respect First Nations peoples' laws and ecologically sustainable custodianship of Australia over tens of thousands of years through land and sea management practices that continue today.

Challenging the idea that nature is 'property'

Under the current system of law in western and industrialised nations, nature is legally treated as human property. Something that is considered property confers upon the property owner the right to damage or destroy it. Thus, those who "own" wetlands, forests and other ecosystems and natural communities, are often permitted to use them however they wish, even if that includes destroying the health and well-being of nature. When we talk about the Rights of Nature, it means recognising that ecosystems and natural communities are not merely property that can be owned. Rather, they are entities that have an independent and inalienable right to exist and flourish. Laws recognising the Rights of Nature change the status of ecosystems and natural communities to being recognised as rights-bearing entities. As such, they have rights that can be enforced by people, governments and communities on behalf of nature.

Rights of Nature laws prohibit human activities that would interfere with the ability and rights of ecosystems and natural communities to exist and flourish. These laws transform the status of nature from being regarded as property to being rights-bearing. In fact, these laws change the status of property law. Rights of Nature laws eliminate the authority of a property owner to interfere with the functioning of ecosystems and natural communities that depend upon that property for their existence. They do not stop development; rather, they stop development and use of property that interferes with the existence and vitality of those ecosystems. Under Rights of Nature laws:

- Nature is empowered to defend and enforce its own rights;
- People are empowered to defend and enforce the Rights of Nature; and
- Governments are required to implement, defend, and enforce the Rights of Nature.

How are Rights of Nature laws different to current environmental laws?

Current environmental regulatory structures are mostly about "permitting" human-centred, material development at the cost of allowing harm to occur to the natural world. For example, our current legal system allows unconventional gas/fracking, mining, logging and factory farming to destroy

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ecosystems and communities of plants and animals. They act more to legalise the harmful activities of corporations and other business entities than to protect our natural and human communities.

Laws recognising the Rights of Nature are different. They establish a basic principle of rights for the non-human world, which requires laws and regulations to work within that framework to uphold those rights. In turn, Rights of Nature laws create duties requiring people to consider, defend and speak on behalf of, the non-human world. For example, communities that have enacted Rights of Nature laws in the USA are empowered - indeed, they have a duty - to reject governmental actions permitting unwanted and damaging development which would violate nature's rights to exist and thrive. Rights of Nature laws enable people, communities and ecosystems themselves to defend and enforce such rights. Without the ability to do so, those ecosystems would be destroyed.

What rights do Rights of Nature laws recognize?

The earliest Rights of Nature laws recognised the right of ecosystems to "*exist and flourish.*" Others, including the Ecuadorian constitutional provisions promulgated in 2008, recognise the right of nature to exist, persist, evolve and regenerate. These laws also recognise the right of any person or organisation to defend, protect and enforce those rights on behalf of nature, and for payment of recovered damages to government to provide for the full restoration of nature.

Rights of Nature laws put the health of the natural world at the centre of human decision making

The simplest way to understand the different framework that Rights of Nature laws offer, is that they aim to change human interaction with the natural world. Rights of Nature laws enable the non-human world to be 'seen' in the eyes of the law and to *'have a voice'*, rather than to be invisible or secondary to human centred objectives. When we talk about the Rights of Nature, it means recognising that ecosystems and natural communities are not merely property that can be owned. Rather, they are entities that have an independent and inalienable right to exist and flourish.

Does recognising the Rights of Nature stop human activity?

No, it doesn't. But we do need to rethink some of our activities - and industrial societies need to rethink our attitude about what we can demand from our finite planet. Recognising **Rights of Nature does not put an end to human activities**, rather it places them in the context of a healthy relationship where our actions do not threaten the balance of the system upon which we depend. Further, *these laws do not stop all development, they halt only those uses of land that interfere with the very existence and vitality of the ecosystems which depend upon them*. Mari Margil, "*Building an International Rights of Nature Movement*" in M. Maloney and P. Burdon (eds) *Wild Law in Practice* (Routledge, 2014)

Which countries have Rights of Nature laws?

Rights of nature laws and policies now exist in several countries. The rights of nature were enshrined in Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, Bolivia's 2010 '*Rights of Mother Earth*' Act and are now present in more than three dozen local laws in the USA. In New Zealand, several ecosystems now have legal rights, including the Whanganui River and the Urewera Forest. The European Citizen's Initiative on the Rights of Nature is working to introduce a proposed Directive to recognise and enforce the Rights of Nature and Rights of Nature policies have been adopted by the Scottish Greens Party and the Green Party of England and Wales. Please see the links below for information about rights of nature laws and policies around the world.

RIGHTS OF NATURE LAWS

Rights of nature laws exist in the countries listed below. For a brief summary of Rights of Nature laws in all these countries, please read the latest **'Rights of Nature - Global Update Report'** from GARN (http://earthlaws.org.au): Bangladesh, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Mexico City, New Zealand, Uganda, USA (, Ponca Tribal Council) USA - local community ordinances.

RIGHTS OF NATURE POLICIES AND ADVOCACY

EU Directive on the Rights of Nature - proposed Citizen's Initiative

Greens Party of Scotland - official adoption of Rights of Nature policy

Green Party of England and Wales - official adoption of Rights of Nature policy

International and Regional Initiatives
- Universal Declaration for the Rights of Mother Earth
- UN Harmony with Nature Initiative
- IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) - Work Program 2017-20
- IUCN Ethics Working Group - Oslo Manifesto 2016
- The Pope's Encyclical - 2015 - *Laudato Si*
- Proposed Regional Convention on the Rights of the Pacific Ocean

Rights of Nature Tribunals
International Rights of Nature Tribunal

The International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature was created by the **Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature** (http://therightsofnature.org/) in January 2014. The Tribunal has been created as a permanent tribunal and it will hear cases from around the world on an ongoing basis. The Tribunal was created by leaders of the Rights of Nature movement in response to concerns that current national and international legal systems do not protect the natural world. The Tribunal aims to create a forum for people from all around the world to give a voice to protest the destruction of the Earth—destruction that is often sanctioned by Governments and Corporations— and to make recommendations about Earth's protection and restoration. The Tribunal also has a strong focus on enabling indigenous people to share their unique concerns and solutions about land, water and culture with the global community.

Australian Peoples' Tribunal for Community and Nature's Rights (APT)

In 2016, AELA created the *Australian Peoples' Tribunal (APT) for Community and Nature's Rights* (https://tribunal.org.au/), a permanent civil society institution for Australia. This Tribunal is a Regional Chapter of the International Rights of Nature Tribunal.

Rights of Nature Tribunal, Bay Area, California (USA)

The Bay Area Rights of Nature Alliance (BARONA), in California, has held two People's Tribunals for the Rights of Nature:

2016 - A Tribunal for the Bay Area Delta and waterways

2014 - Chevron Refinery and the Fossil Fuel Industry

How could Rights of Nature laws be created in Australia?

AELA works with communities in Australia to explore ways that rights of nature laws could be created in an appropriate way for local and Indigenous communities. *The Australian Peoples' Tribunal for Community and Nature's Rights* also examines law reform proposals for creating rights of nature laws. There are a number of ways that we could introduce Rights of Nature laws in Australia:

- **Constitutional reform** at the Federal and State Government level in Australia. View an overview of *how Ecuador created Constitutional recognition of the rights of nature.*
- **Transform federal and state environmental laws** to explicitly recognise the rights of nature. See an example of *how Bolivia created national laws* and institutions to recognise and support the legal rights of nature.
- **Community local law making -** Read about *communities in the USA* who have acknowledged the legal rights of nature in local laws and ordinances. Read an introduction to *how we could advocate to do this in Australia.*
- **Legal mechanisms for First Nations People** to enshrine their ancient first laws in modern legal instruments, which would include the rights of nature. Read an example of how a *First Nations community* in the USA has acknowledged rights of nature in its Constitution. Learn more about how *Maori people in New Zealand* have created new legal mechanisms to enshrine their cultural and legal values relating to the non-human world.
- **Creating rights of nature for iconic ecosystems** - such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Mardoowarra/ Fitzroy River and other major ecosystems and landmarks.

Rights of Nature laws for the Great Barrier Reef

AELA has created model laws that show how the rights of the Great Barrier Reef could be enshrined in law.

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[vurb]

Gabrielle Higgins

any member of a class of words which express the occurrence of an action, existence of a state

there are
new anti-protest laws
designed for those seeking
to disrupt day to day business
these laws include 'intending'
so it isn't clear when 'to be'
becomes 'to do'

[kuh'lekt]
- *to gather together; assemble*
- *to regain control of (oneself)*
- *to gather (money); for example*
    - illegal mining (down from $1.1m to) $5,000
    - protesting on business premises $5,500
    - unauthorised work stoppage $10,800
- *to be paid for by the receiver*

how do I regain control of myself
how do we gather [*uh*-sem-*buh* l]
into one place, company, body or whole

watch the assembling of each little piece
each incremental change a weight
inching toward tipping point

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Gippsland News and Initiatives in Sustainability "Global warming dwarfs all other political issues".

Collected by Peter Gardner

A Gippsland World First in Soil Carbon

An excellent article on climate change and farming in **_the Saturday Paper_** (5.10.19) by Matthew Evans alerted me to the work of Niels Olsen of Hallora. Niels has developed a *carbon farming* technique which boosts both productivity and soil carbon – the latter more than trebling in the amazingly brief period of 5 years. As a result of this activity Niels' _Soilkee farm_ (https://soilkee.com.au/) has been the first anywhere to be issued "*carbon credits*" for "*a soil carbon project under the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) and the Paris Agreement*".

The Soilkee Renovator works with "*minimum till disturbance in spaced apart rows by means of rotating blades create a competition free seed bed for successful germination, leaving around 80% of the pasture undisturbed. A diverse mix of seeds from clover seed to faba bean size can be applied from the seed box during operation with seeds dropping in the kees. The undisturbed portion acts as a cover crop protecting the soil from the elements, reducing erosion and keeping around 80% of soil life habitat intact. Whilst creating the seed bed the Soilkee Renovator provides additional benefits of aeration and a green manure crop within the worked up portion, providing aerobic conditions and a food source that activates the soil fungi, bacteria and earthworm populations and the natural soil processes they perform.*"

Image credit: Shelley Banders, Gippsland

The benefits of this process besides the increase in soil carbon include a substantial increase in dry matter equivalent, better moisture retention and thus some drought protection, a general increase in a wide range of nutrients and their availability and better soil aeration. Sounds almost too good to be true. Aside from minimum tillage using a wide range of seed, especially deep-rooted and nitrogen fixing varieties, ensures that the carbon sequestration and soil building process goes down a metre or more. And an added bonus for the Olsens has been the $15,000 in carbon credits from the ERF – the first payment for a form of carbon, capture and storage besides trees that actually works.

Understandably, as in many pioneering processes, there have been difficulties to overcome – in particular estimating the amount of carbon being stored and the cost of measuring this.
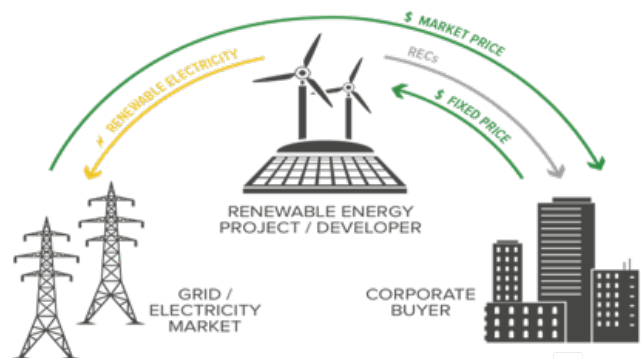
There is also the possibility of governments proclaiming the success of the process and avoiding the dire need for climate action on as many fronts as possible. On the other hand this form of sequestration of soil carbon has massive potential for the rapid removal of CO2 from the atmosphere. But one must ask why the pollies and the news media have not been shouting loudly about this '*from the rooftops*'. Here we have one of the very few tangible developments of their much lauded ERF - a rarity that looks so promising. And we have a world first in Gippsland hardly anyone, even locally, has heard of.

East Gippsland Shire's PPA

Commencing next year the East Gippsland Shire Council "*has agreed to participate in a tender to purchase electricity supplied from 100 per cent renewable energy over the next 10 years*" with a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). This is an exciting move whereby the shire will support the rapid expansion of renewable energy, help make some of our urgently needed greenhouse gas reductions and hopefully save the shire some money. The 10 year period is sufficient to cover the rapid (and hopefully just) transition from the fossil fuel based energy to renewables.

PPAs are contracts between buyers and sellers for electricity. The buyer has a fixed price and is purchasing their power from a solar or wind farm. The seller's forward

contract – in other words a guarantee of sales – enables them to obtain financing. Some of Australia's biggest companies are using PPAs as a means of drastically reducing their carbon emissions including Telstra.

Shire sustainability officer Rebecca Lamble noted that "*The opportunity has been developed by a local government group consortium of 48 Victorian councils. The tender will be managed by the Municipal Association of Victoria and is for the purchase of renewable electricity… By participating, East Gippsland Shire Council will be able to access renewable electricity for their buildings and assets, such as street lighting, public toilets, aquatic centres and libraries.*"

The PPAs are an obvious way for the shire to get in on the ground floor and switch to 100% renewable energy use immediately. The East Gippsland Shire's push for solar energy is also commendable and in reality they should be looking at 200% renewables or more. While the PPAs are encouraging the rapid expansion of solar and wind farms, it is a shame that more of them cannot be located in Gippsland where the flow-on effects of employment in construction and maintenance are added benefits.

Bushfires and the CSIRO Warnings of 1987

On 14 November 2019 the Age published a short letter from Tom Beer, retired CSIRO scientist, on the bushfire emergency of our northern neighbours. Beer looked up an article he had lead-authored in 1987, the conclusion of which was that with climate change "*the fire danger every year on average would be larger than the fire danger during the year (1983) in which Ash Wednesday occurred.*" This was followed up immediately by Graham Readfearn in a great article (in the Guardian on the 17th of November) that expanded on Beer's work in the CSIRO department of atmospheric physics and looked at the effort of others including Graeme Pearman and Barrie Pittock. Readfearn noted that the science had not changed since 1987 – referring to the **Monash Conference** when over 50 papers including Beer's were presented.

He continued: "*What Pearman is seeing play out now, in the bushfire crisis and the drought, is what we were talking about at the Greenhouse 87 meeting. That was about the changes that we anticipated, based on basic physics of the climate syst*em." Despite the fact that Pearman gave more than 500 presentations on climate change between 2000 and 2010, he still asks himself if he could have done more. "*What could I have done? What did I do wrong*?"

Interestingly, one set of data used by Beer et al.* was from East Sale Air Base from 1945-1986. The abstract

} For those too young to remember, on Ash Wednesday 16 February 1983, over 100 fires burned across Victoria and South Australia causing 75 fatalities and the loss of over 2,500 homes.

of the paper noted the importance of humidity and that "*estimating the likely changes in relative humidity for any future climate scenario is vital for examination of future bushfire incidence*" with relative humidity being a function of a number of factors including temperature rainfall and wind.

It was an El Nino year and very dry when many of the rivers in East Gippsland stopped flowing. This century has started to fulfil the forecasts of Tom Beer. Both the 2003 and 2006/7 fires in Gippsland burned huge areas for more than 2 months. The fatalities and damage caused by Black Saturday have eclipsed all previous bushfires. The NSW and Queensland fires look set to burn for some time yet. And summer is yet to come**.

Notes

*T.Beer, A.M. Gill and P.H.R.Moore "Australian bushfire danger under changing climatic regimes" p.421 in G.I.Pearman (ed.) *Greenhouse: planning for climate change*, CSIRO Australia, 1988

**Since this was written a number of 'unprecedented' bushfires have been burning in Gippsland at Gelantipy, Ensay, Bruthen and other locations.

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'Food as Commons' within an Australian Aboriginal context

Anne Jennings

I respectfully acknowledge the Yawuru People, Native Title Holders and Traditional Custodians - past, present and emerging - of the land on which I live and researched/prepared this article.

Personal and General Introduction

I am a regional/remote-based community development practitioner and social justice activist, having pursued these interests passionately for over thirty years. Given the colonial history of Australia and the use of food in excluding Aboriginal people from their Country (for example to grow European agricultural products) and in Aboriginal missions and reserves (rations of food provision), food is one of the most significant issues for community development. Disregarding Aboriginal people's knowledge and the high nutritional value of traditional foods by, for example, replacing diets with food containing excessive levels of carbohydrates and sugars, has led to disproportionate levels of diet-related chronic disease and, at times, loss of traditional knowledge.

Whilst being non-Aboriginal, my life experience, including Aboriginal family, friends and colleagues and living and working in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, has provided me the opportunity to learn from knowledgeable Aboriginal people.

The previous issue of *New Community* (themed 'Food Security & Sovereignty') included the paper *'Growing' Food and Community in the Remote Kimberley Region*. That article provided a case study of a grassroots community development project formed to support growing and sharing local nutritious vegetables, fruit and herbs. That study provided an overview of Australian Aboriginal peoples' past and very much still current, approaches to traditional food gathering, growing and harvesting. It then moved on to adopting an historical approach to food growing by early colonists, starting with settlers first food gardens planted a week after arrival in 1788, through to a current case study of Incredible Edible Broome (IEB). IEB involves a Western communitarian approach to sustenance gardening, skill development and produce sharing. The second component of that article relating to Aboriginal food provision is being expanded upon here, with particular relevance to the theme 'Regional, rural and remote community development'.

Setting the Scene

This exploration is one component of a broader project, *KimberleyTransitions: Collaborating to Care for Our Common Home*). The Project includes five major studies which accept the understanding that "*solutions to Kimberley problems are in Kimberley-based knowledges and ways of knowing, doing and being*" (Wooltorton et al., 2019:4). The unifying thread between the studies is a collective interest in linking histories to current contexts for future generations of persons and landscapes.

Overall, the Project's vision is for people:

"*... to learn to live and work as if the future matters – every person's future – properly informed by locally inclusive knowledges of caring for Country: living in deep, intertwined relationships with land, rivers and saltwater places, and with each other. An intertwined vision is also to learn from post-settlement Kimberley stories, persons, events and activities*" (Wooltorton et al., 2019:5).

Practice Framework – Community Development

The practice (ways of doing) framework for this paper involves 'Community Development,' (including communities of intent and/or geographical communities), the process whereby people organise to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Kenny, 2016). Those needs can include a range of features such as value-adding to community social infrastructure, through to undertaking activities to overcome disadvantage and climate change. As Ife explained,

Community development represents a vision of how things might be organised differently, so that genuine ecological sustainability and social justice, which seem unachievable at global or national levels, can be realised in the experience of human community (2013:2).

> For some Aboriginal writers, however, the Western concept of 'development' is linked to industrial societies..

"*a term [that] is not compatible with pre-colonial Aboriginal understandings, which have their foundations within an ecological framework that has been informed and shaped by Aboriginal ontology, land, plants and animals who share the environment with Aboriginal peoples*" (Bessarab & Forrest, 2017:7). Ife (2013) concurs with this, adding that colonisation is all about top-down development. Bessarab and Forrest stress that it should be recognised that Aboriginal Australian communities are diverse and located in different geographical areas constituting regional, remote

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and/or urban settings. They also point out that a useful theoretical lens for considering the purpose of community development to Aboriginal communities is the concept of the 'third space', as purported by Homi Bhabha in 1994 (in Bessarab & Forrest, 2017:10). This is a space, they maintain, where:

> "... *different cultures intersect or meet; it can be a space of contestation, collision and often misunderstanding due to the different world views, beliefs and understandings that people bring to that space.* [It does have] "enormous potential for people to engage in conversation that can move them forward into a space of understanding and transformation, by not only identifying and acknowledging these different world views but focusing on the commonalities as a driver to move forward*"* (Bessarab & Forrest, 2017:10).

Further, Gooda (2017) offers the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as an approach to inform and empower Aboriginal-led community development whilst Kelly, Kickett & Bessarab (2017) propose strength-based approaches that recognise currently-held knowledge and skills that support Aboriginal community development.

Theoretical Framework – Transitions Discourse

From a transitions discourse perspective (Escobar, 2015), resolutions to Kimberley problems are in locally-established understandings and collaborative activity and actions (Wooltorton et al., 2019). Solutions are underpinned by cooperative, participative models that embrace the Transition Network program, an international community-based, grassroots environmental movement (Aiken, 2017). The Transition Network features communities stepping up to address complex challenges by working together locally and collaboratively to find solutions in self-organising ways (Hopkins, 2011, 2019; Swennerfelt, 2016). Keys to this approach include resilience, self-organisation, local scale, diversity, mutual dependence and the potential for local feedback loops (Aiken, 2017).

> The broader transition dialogue begins with local and Indigenous knowledges (Escobar, 2016), aimed at strengthening this and other movements for a post-development future that emphasises decolonisation of local and Indigenous peoples in the global south and de-growth in the global north[3] (Wooltorton, et al, 2019).

For these reasons, *Kimberley Transitions* recognises the cultural beliefs and practices, intellectual life, wisdom and experiences of countless generations for at least 60,000 years (Clarkson et al., 2017), whilst acknowledging continuing post-settlement efforts to maintain and strengthen Aboriginal cultural knowledges and ecological narratives (Wooltorton, 2019).

Combined Practice and Theoretical Frameworks - Commons

In addition to community development and transition dialogue, another context that combines Kimberley

peoples' realities is that of the 'commons' or 'commoning'. For the global north, the previous commons were characterised as collectively shared property, however this definition has changed into an understanding of commons as '*more-than-property*' (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Goodall, 2019; Rose & Gaynor; 2018), broadening the scope of those who could potentially become involved in commons processes. "***Commoning*** *describes a diverse and expanding array of practices and interactions that are expressive in new forms of social relations, between and amongst groups of people, and between people and other lifeforms*" (Rose, 2018:202). It has also been noted that "*all forms of non-hierarchical human cooperation are different forms of commons*" (De Angelis, 2019:124).

Briefly, a commons can be viewed as an integrated whole and internationally, First Nations peoples offer strong evidence that the 'commoning' tradition, developed over thousands of years, remains current practice today and is expected to continue into the future as Bollier & Helfrich (2019:26) suggest:

> **Every commons is based on natural resources.**
> **Every commons is a knowledge commons.**
> **Every commons depends on a social process.**

The Kimberley

The Kimberley is Western Australia's sparsely settled (in a global north context) northern region of the state. The topography includes large areas characterised by unspoiled deserts, semi-arid savanna, rugged ranges, spectacular gorges and a largely isolated coastline, plus significant animals, birds, insects and vegetation. It covers an area of 423,517 K^2 (Kimberley Development Commission, n.d.). Archaeological evidence reveals that Aboriginal people have been living in this area for 60,000 years (Clarkson, et al., 2017).

The 2016 Census figures indicate 41.6% of the Kimberley region's population are Indigenous, (compared to Western Australia's 3.1% and Australia's 2.8%; Kimberley Development Commission, n.d.). It has been recognised that

> "… *like other parts of Australia and internationally, human tragedies and associated difficulties exist, such as youth suicide, food insecurity and conflict over large scale industrial and agricultural development with threats to water, cultural and environmental values*" (Wooltorton et al., 2019:4).

Aboriginal Food Systems

This section recognises Article 31 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, upholding that:

> *Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, design, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They*

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also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (United Nations, 2007)

Recent archaeological and botanical research in the Kimberley region and other locations in Australia and Asia, confirms Aboriginal peoples' traditional food systems clearly demonstrate manipulation of plant resources has been maintained for millennia (Veth, et al., 2018; Clarkson et al., 2017; Pascoe, 2005). Thus, for thousands of year, people living in Australia have been undertaking many forms of food production, involving preparing, processing and sharing food - dispelling the myth that their only food supplies were/are sourced via hunter and gatherer practices. Aboriginal Australians have continuously maintained these practices and look to continue them into the future (Pascoe, 2005).

Archaeological evidence supports this recognition through the medium of rock art. Research into Kimberley Rock Art illustrates vast amounts of plants, grasses, trees and tubers as well as digging sticks, dilly bags and wood-hafted stone axes. Importantly, and globally significant, the rock art depicts a society that adopts long-term sophisticated physical and symbolic manipulation of plants, a practice that locates plants centrally in their lives (Veth, 2018). This confirms Aboriginal peoples played key ecological roles within their ecosystems, not only by consumption but also by the "*non-consumptive effects of ecosystem engineering*" including "*small-scale vegetation clearing, digging or other bioturbation activities, hydrological engineering (such as the provisioning of water sources or wetlands), or the use of landscape fire (e.g. burning to improve hunting returns)*" (Crabtree, Bird & Bird, 2019:174).

Bruce Pascoe, a Bunurong man from Victoria, author and historian, provides further testimony; his research into journals and diaries written by early settler explorers and colonists has "*revealed a much more complicated Aboriginal economy than the primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle we have been told was the simple lot of Australia's First People*" (2005:11). Evidence points to pre-colonisation "*people building dams and wells, planning, irrigating and harvesting seed, preserving the surplus and storing it*" (2005:12). One botanical example provided by Pascoe is the '*desert raisin*' or '*bush tomato*', which has been used by Central Desert people for thousands of years. This plant has become dependent on people for its propagation and spread.

"Aboriginal custodians, in turn, celebrate the plant in ceremonies, dance and song, with body paint designs often featuring its image."

Further, surplus harvests are conserved for future use grinding them into a paste and rolled into balls, allowing for transportation and/or storage. These fruit balls can be shared among family and community and they could be used in economic transfers.

Similar events occur in the Dampier Peninsula, near Broome in the Kimberley. *Acacia colei* seeds are wrapped in paperbark and stored underground and sweet lerps from bloodwood eucalypts are rolled into balls and eaten months later (Lands, 1987). A variety of seeds from that area, particularly the hard seeds, are winnowed and ground, then baked and eaten as a nutritious paste (Kenneally, Edinger & Willing, 1996).

Reports about Aboriginal people during the pre-colonisation era indicate they were healthy and physically lean, "*attributable to an active lifestyle and a nutrient-dense diet characterised by high protein, polyunsaturated fat, fibre and slowly digested carbohydrates*" (Ferguson et al., 2017:294). Australia appears to be 'waking up' to this recognition; as Lane from the Kimberley Institute in Broome explains, the world is starting to discover the "*ancient, sacred foods of Aboriginal Australia*" (2019:75). Further, he quotes growing scientific and commercial evidence relating to the nutritional value and medicinal and industrial potential of these foods. Consequently, many bush foods, previously considered valueless, are now being hailed as '*super foods*' (Lane, 2019), although generally post-colonial Australians remain remarkably unaware of Indigenous Australian food (Szabo, 2019). Wondering why this is so, given that Aboriginal Australians have been and continue to access and cultivate foods better adapted to the continent's temperature and environmental pressures, Szabo {2019) agrees with Lane, asserting that change is slowly emerging and is likely to "*rewrite a more authentic local and sustainable food paradigm.*"

What could such *paradigm* be based on? At the beginning of the 21st century, the general consumer eats fewer than 200 different plants for nourishment (Cribb, 2019) and noted Australian agronomist, Bruce French, has been investigating and identifying global edible plants for 50 years. Supported by his Tasmanian Rotary Club, French has established and maintains an international and generally accessible database of over 30,000 recorded edible plants, a list continuing to grow (Food Plant Solutions, n.d.). Through the *Food Plant Solutions* project established by French, edible plants from all continents are investigated and validated, including how to grow and prepare them as food, specifically targeting countries struggling with hunger and poverty. In Australia, "*Dr French has identified no fewer than 6,100 edible native plants used by the continent's Aboriginal peoples for food and medicine for tens of thousands of years*" (Cribb, 2019:276). From French's work, Cribb surmised that, given plants on the database are mainly vegetables, they are ideally suited to "*climate-proof urban food production – being grown in a fraction of the time and with a fraction of the resources used to grow grain or large animals*" (2019:277). The overall message is that humanity has yet

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to explore the diversity and possibilities provided by our planet

Food Sovereignty

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA), a collective of small-scale farmers, Indigenous peoples, fishers and NGOs, defines food sovereignty as "*promoting everyone's right to access culturally-appropriate and nutritious food grown and distributed in ethical and ecologically-sound ways, and our right to democratically determine our own food and agriculture systems*" (AFSA, 2018), which concurs with Article 31 of the previously mentioned UN Declaration.

⎫
⎬ The Food Sovereignty paradigm, including
⎭ "*seeds, land, water, knowledge, biodiversity – and anything else that sustains materially and symbolically or spiritually, a people in a territory – are considered a commons*" (A. Escobar, 2019:187).

They are therefore not a 'resource' to be exploited, as a 'commons' perspective recognises collaborative and collective contributions. One instance of Food Sovereignty in the Kimberley region is the water, land, vegetation and people living on and around the Mardoowarra, Fitzroy River. This significant waterway provides multiple values and life forces for Traditional Owners connected to it from the beginning of time through to the present through the sacred ancestral river and First Law (Poelina, 2019). It supplies fish, reptiles, small animals, fruits and vegetables and intergenerational cultural safety through Aboriginal beliefs, histories, knowledge systems and wisdom (Wooltorton, et al., 2019). Similar to other Traditional Owners and Native Title Holders and Claimant groups, access to and safety of their environment is at risk from external pressures, closely linked to threats to cultural integrity, land, vegetation, animals and food sovereignty and the risk of food insecurity.

Food as Commons

As previously noted, "**Commoning** *describes a diverse and expanding array of practices and interactions between and amongst groups of people, and between people and other life*forms" (Rose 2018:202). Bollier and Helfrich point out that "*Indigenous cultures, tradition and habit can make commoning seem utterly normal, rendering it invisible*" (2019:101), comparing it to western industrialised societies, where commoning is also invisible, even if "*for a different reason: it has been culturally marginalized.*" (2019:102)

It is becoming increasingly accepted that food is treated as a commodity, a market-driven opportunity to extract private value, within neoliberal domination prevailing today (Vivero-Pol et al., 2019; Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Kothari et al., 2019; Rose & Gaynor, 2018), to the detriment of all people on the planet and - undeniably – to Indigenous peoples seeking to produce and secure healthy and ecologically sustainable food. Traditional communities' livelihoods, their solidarity and care, exhibit "*strong relationship to Nature, one that recognizes [their]*

interdependence with Nature and does not see it simply as a resource to exploit" (Vivero-Pol et al., 2019:382). This relationship is now being called the 'revival' of the commons, but it is an ancient practice based on the right to food that has safeguarded Indigenous peoples' existence for thousands of years and embraced and promoted by the global south. Overall, these understandings involve Aboriginal strength-based community development processes that "*[b]egin with and focus on the strengths of a community,*" (Kelly, Kickett & Bessarab, 2017:101) incorporating spirituality and connection to land and family.

Discussion

Bessarab and Forrest (2017) wonder whether community development practices were undertaken in traditional Aboriginal societies pre-colonisation; recognising that the term 'development' has its origin in western industrial ideology, they probably did by envisaging different conceptual frameworks, doubtlessly including Dreaming lore. Relating this to today's society, Bessarab and Forrest (2017:12-3) identify a "*third space that is shared by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people,*" offering the potential for transformation where diverse cultures meet, acknowledging differing belief systems and worldviews and collectively working towards "*understanding, acceptance, problem solving and moving forwards [recognising this] is where changes happen, resulting in transformation and capacity building in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal spaces.*"

Transformation is an aim of the Transitions movement; the *Kimberley Transitions* project has identified that, "*[a]lthough Aboriginal histories and wisdom are widely recognised in Australian transition initiatives, few programs explicitly linked to the transition movement relate to Aboriginal knowledges as a central organising idea.*" (Wooltorton et al., 2019:50) In her doctoral research on the Transition movement in Australia, Power (n.d.) identified "*[c]ritical community development with its practice-based focus on social change, power inequalities and social justice as well as research and analysis about inclusion and diversity, is potentially a great resource for Transition.*" In addition, she appreciates the importance of *process* (a key to community development practice) and suggests that the Transition movement could learn from knowledge bases including Indigenous wisdoms and community development.

As described, '*food as commons*' is linked to "*food democracy, justice and sovereignty*" (Vivero-Pol et al., 2019), encompassing a range of social imperatives, including cultural knowledge, spirituality and empowerment, which is expanded by Gammage in *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia*. Gammage maintains that non-Aboriginal people "*can only 'become Australian' through reconnection with the great lost traditions of the commons in Aboriginal culture*" (in Goodall, 2019:8). Thus, the global north is challenged to re-conceptualise food as commons by unlocking imagination and creating innovative approaches

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to policy and legal frameworks for food systems - currently disallowed as they are misaligned with the dominant capitalist system (Vivero-Pol et al., 2019).

The transformative change Gammage calls for has recently been witnessed by De Angelis (2019:126), who sees *"[I]ndigenous communities and new commons systems [are] emerging and becoming more visible and innovative."* Archer et al. (2019. 2019:11) add to this:

> *"Indigenous cultural strengths and knowledge systems for looking after country and its people as part of an inclusive, responsive, innovative, diversified ecosystem services economy. This purpose is not about advocating for mutual assimilation. Rather, it is about recognising that there are now two major coexistent cultural traditions [in Australia] which, from time to time and place to place, may intersect constructively to provide mutual benefit."*

I have endeavoured to identify and recognise past and present Aboriginal knowledges and practices as they relate to Country, culture and activity, particularly as they interact to benefit Aboriginal peoples' food systems. Bessarab and Forrest's (2017) call for a 'third space' and Archer et al. (2019) and Gammage's (2019) statements create optimism for the future. Considerable work is happening 'on the ground', but governments need to play their part and move from dominant, neoliberal policy and practice approaches to those more consistent with Aboriginal knowledges as currently advocated for by the global south.

"The linkages between these practice-theory frameworks are strong and jointly support the commoning processes discussed in this article, particularly as it relates to 'food as commons'."

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Anne Jennings, PhD Candidate
Nulungu Research Institute/School of Arts & Sciences
The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus
anne.jennings@nd.edu.au

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Endnotes
1. In Western Australia Indigenous people prefer Aboriginal Australians. First Nations and/or Indigenous will be used for areas outside of that state.
2. The Kimberley region covers the north west of Western Australia – see 'The Kimberley' section in this paper.
3. Perennial bush or tree, native to northern Australia. Western common name is 'Cole's wattle'.
4. Sweet insect excretions created by Psyllids, tiny sap-sucking insects.
5. Depicted in the film Bookararra Liyan Mardoowarra Booroo see http://www.magalimcduffie.com/films

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Engaging Youth in Regional Australia: The EYRA Study

Candice P. Boyd

Abstract

This article describes the rationale, aims and methods for an Australian Research Council-funded project *Engaging Youth in Regional Australia* (the EYRA Study). The EYRA Study focusses on three key regional areas of Australia meeting our increasing demands for food, energy and resources, experiencing a steady decline in their youth populations – the Eyre Peninsula (Port Lincoln, SA), the Pilbara (Hedland, WA) and the Riverina (Griffith, NSW). This research addresses the need for prospering regional areas of Australia to have more effective policy strategies in place to (1) engage with their existing young people; (2) stay engaged with young people who leave; and (3) re-engage young people who return, taking into account the variety of scenarios that returning might involve. Through a combination of roundtable discussions, qualitative interviews, postqualitative methods and innovative creative approaches, the project aims to provide these areas with a holistic social and cultural analysis of regional youth engagement.

Introduction

Youth outmigration has been a serious dilemma for regional Australian communities for over a decade, with approximately 50% of the young people in the 15-21 age group leaving their home areas (Argent & Walmsley, 2008; Coffey et al., 2018). The reasons for youth outmigration are complex. Contextual factors such as access to higher education and more diverse employment options are relevant, but so are symbolic factors such as the lure of urban lifestyles that are seen to embody youth culture, as well as affective factors related to the lived experiences of young people (Alston, 2004; Farrugia, 2016; Stratford, 2015). Recent research has highlighted the negative consequences of prolonged youth outmigration for regional communities; these include the loss of social capital, the structural ageing of the regional work force and the effects on the sustainability of community services and businesses (e.g. Dufty-Jones et al., 2013; Luck et al., 2011). However, in view of an increasingly mobile world, regional communities realise that simply stemming the flow of outmigration is not the solution. Return migration of educated and experienced young people can be of great benefit to regional areas. Thus, the need to keep existing young people engaged in their communities so as to increase the likelihood of their return,

staying engaged with young people while they are away and re-engaging with young people who do return (for different durations) are all part of a holistic youth engagement strategy (ACYS, 2015).

Regional youth engagement means creating activities and experiences of meaning, variety, and local relevance that strengthen the social and emotional connections that young people have to their hometowns, which, in turn, encourages and empowers them to participate in the lives of their communities (ACYS, 2015). Several examples of diverse and locally-generated approaches aimed at informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering young people exist (reviewed by ACYS, 2015); however, little is known about why they work or how current national efforts might be improved. This is in part due to the fact that regional communities have recognised the need to act, despite very little investment in the issue by governments or academic researchers (MVS, 2015). Research on regional youth engagement that has been undertaken takes the form of surveys or interviews designed to gather young people's views and opinions (e.g., Bryant, 2003; Burns et al., 2008; YNOT, 2013; VRYS, 2014). Conversely, critical work that unpicks the complex and contested ideas upon which youth engagement practices are built is rare (Oliver & Pitt, 2013). What is needed to complement the work already done in this area is a holistic social and cultural analysis of regional youth engagement efforts that will provide the breadth *and* depth of knowledge regional communities need to underpin and inform their local policies and initiatives.

Contemporary cultural geography

Cultural geography is a sub-branch of human geography concerned with the human organisation of space, the relationships between people and places and the interactions between human culture and the material (and non-material) world. Cultural geography has developed over time from traditional cultural geography – concerned with ideology, hegemony and resistance – to the new cultural geography, concerned with performance, performativity, embodiment, affect and emotion (Kong, 2013). One of the most promising perspectives in new cultural geography is non-representational theory (Anderson & Harrison, 2010; Pratchett, 2010).

Understandings of youth engagement in other disciplines have tended to imagine engagement rather narrowly by typically evaluating young people's involvement in discrete events such as the decision-making forums (ACYS, 2015). However, a cultural geographical perspective would contend that engagement can take many other forms and that people's relationship to places is highly complex (Anderson & Ash, 2015). Whilst youth might not be engaging directly in the decision-making practices of their local communities, they are likely engaging with their community in all kinds of other ways that go undetected in more conventional analyses of this topic. As such, mundane and unconscious practices of engagement make places meaningful, creating subtle but powerful affinities between youth and their communities. These affinities constitute a latent capacity that can potentially be drawn upon by diverse stakeholders.

This is where non-representational theory comes in (Thrift, 2008). This theory foregrounds the significance of how people come to be affected by places in ways that often fly under the radar. These are the things that we feel and sense with our bodies, as we encounter the world and only

later make sense of with our minds (if at all). Doing non-representational research, therefore, involves using nuanced methods such as observant participation, videography and walking interviews often through a posthumanist lens (Lapworth, 2019). These are techniques that involve moving through, and attending to, people's engagement with different community spaces as they unfold (Bissell, 2016; Boyd, 2018, 2017a/b; Boyd & Duffy, 2012; Dewsbury, 2003). Important here is not just what participants say, but also the spaces in which they move, the qualities of the environments they inhabit, the effects that certain practices have on bodies and the atmospheres or intensities that are generated by the different ways people respond to, or are shaped by, their environments (Andrews, 2018). The sensory, embodied knowledges gained from these methods foreground a range of important factors in youth engagement that have hitherto been overlooked, including the significance of atmospheres, rhythms, memories and objects (Carolyn, 2008; Farrugia, 2016; Waite, 2017). The development of non-representational theory as the conceptual framework for the EYRA Study is powerful as it creates opportunities for understanding youth engagement in ways that are downplayed by more conventional approaches.

Engaging Youth in Regional Australia: Stakeholders' Views
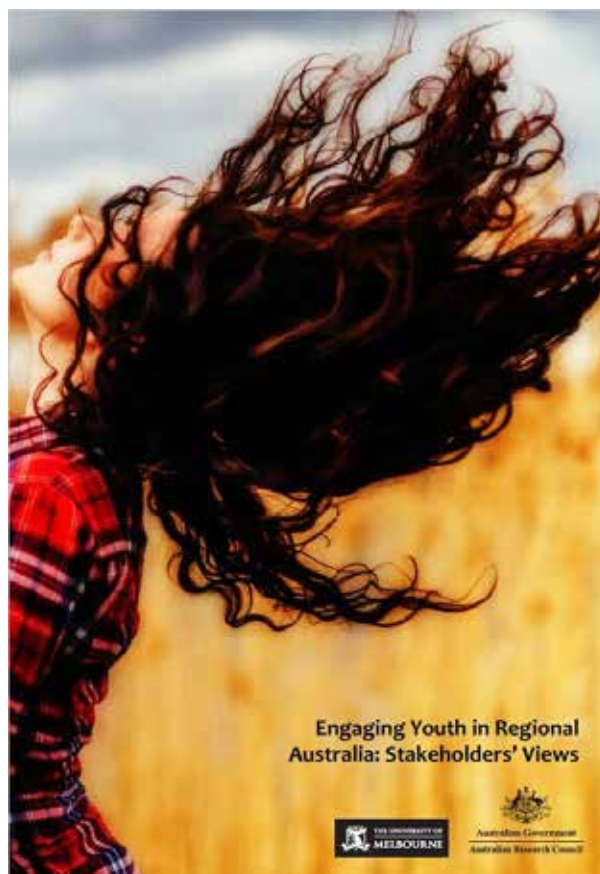
Image credit: Regional Development Austtralia

The EYRA Study

This study plans to draw on a combination of qualitative, postqualitative and creative methods in order to address its five aims. Table 1 matches the five research aims with a specific phase of the research. This staged approach will allow for multiple dimensions of regional youth engagement to emerge during the course of the fieldwork, with each new phase being informed by the one before. Since it cannot be known which aspects will be significant in advance, it is necessary to take an approach that remains flexible and open to what the research reveals over time.

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Table 1. Research Aims and Methods

Identify the extent of youth engagement practices in economically significant regional areas of Australia	**Stakeholder Roundtables**
Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of those practices in engaging regional youth	**Phone/Skype or F2F* Interviews**
Interrogate the diverse dimensions of regional youth engagement	**F2F* Walking/Video Interviews**
Develop new methods for communicating young people's needs in relation to regional engagement	**Video Production/ Co-Produced Creative Exhibition**
Advance the field of regional youth engagement through the development of fresh theoretical perspectives	**Dissemination of Findings**

*F2F = face-to-face

Stage 1: Stakeholder Roundtables

In order to identify the extent of current youth engagement practices in the key regional areas of the Riverina, Pilbara, and Eyre Peninsula, stakeholder roundtable discussions will be conducted in a regional city of each area (Griffith, Hedland and Port Lincoln). In this instance, roundtables are preferable to focus groups or individual interviews of stakeholders as no one is the leader of a roundtable discussion. Roundtables are focus events that closely explore specific issues, actions or strategies in an atmosphere of equality.

In accordance with accepted methodology (Riggas et al. 2011), the roundtables will include 10-12 participants. As a starting point, the community development officer at the local council of each regional area will be approached to take part in and host the roundtable discussion. I will work with that person, or their preferred representative, to identify the remaining participants. Participants will be chosen to represent a cross-section of organisations, interest groups or agencies that are invested in engaging young people in the local region. Where appropriate (e.g. Pilbara region), representatives from local Indigenous communities will be sought so that the research includes an Indigenous perspective. A young person meeting the inclusion criteria for the study will also be invited. Local governments have been chosen as a starting point as they are a central location where issues and challenges that confront a community are debated and addressed.

Optimally, the local council is a portal or a hub that connects various stakeholder groups within a community as well as the place where policy is written and funding is allocated in response to these issues.

A roundtable discussion is based on an agenda and timeline that are circulated a few weeks before the meeting is scheduled. It is typical for roundtable agendas to contain 2-3 focus topics, e.g. *(1) What are the current range of activities that take place in this community to include young people; (2) Is there a coordinated youth engagement strategy? If so, what are its goals and priorities? (3) What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of your current youth engagement strategy?* To ensure the success of the roundtables, a systematic approach such as that detailed by Riggas et al. (2011) will be followed. Participants will be given the opportunity to write down their views before and after the meeting and the event will be evaluated. Participants will also be given the opportunity to email me, as researcher, with any follow-up comments. The roundtable discussion will be recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

Holding stakeholder roundtables at the start of the project will ensure that potential policy beneficiaries of the research will be involved from the outset, thus maximizing the potential for meaningful collaboration over the duration of the project. At the time of writing, this stage has been completed. Results will be fed back to stakeholders in the form of a summary research report, which will be made publicly available via a link from the EYRA Study's page on social media late 2019: http://fb.me/EYRAStudy.

Stage 2: Interviews with Young People

(i) Thirty young people, between the ages of 18 and 34 years, who were 'born and raised' in each case study area, will be recruited via social media. Ten young people who have decided to remain in their home communities (stay), 10 young people who have recently chosen to leave their home communities (leave), and 10 young people who have chosen to return to their communities after leaving for six months or more (return) will be sought. Interviews will take place by Skype or Facebook messenger and take approximately 40 mins (see Longhurst, 2017 re: the use of Skype) with the exception of interviews with Indigenous youth, which will be conducted in person and accompanied by an Indigenous representative if desired by the young person. Total number of interviews conducted and the sample size for this round of interviews is 90. The style of the interviews will be partly informed by post-qualitative thought, although a qualitative method is being used (see Brinkman, 2017). Working in a team, the researcher and a post-doctoral research assistant will explore the extent to which their qualitative approach can adopt and work through post-structuralist and posthuman styles of thinking and analysis (St. Pierre, 2018).

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(ii) A proportion of these young people will be selected to take part in a second round of in-depth mobile/ walking interviews, according to their availability and motivation to do so as well as the need to include a balance of viewpoints. The expected number of young people to take part in these interviews is 18 (i.e. six from each location and 2 from each category of stay, leave, return and preferably with contrasting stories within those categories). These interviews will take up to 2 hours each and involve walking with and video recording participants *in their current place of residence* as they "*experience, tell and show their material, immaterial and social environments in personally, socially and culturally specific ways*" (Pink, 2007:240). Walking interviews have been found to provide more information about the spatial and sensory features of an environment than sedentary interviews (Cruz et al., 2017; Evans & Jones, 2010; Harris, 2016). As such, they also provide an opportunity to explore the non-representational, affective and embodied dimensions of these young people's connections with their home environments, be it their hometown or the region to which they re-located. These interviews will be collaboratively filmed with each young person (see Boyd, 2010; Parr, 2007 for examples). In addition to being analysed, some of the footage may be incorporated at Stage 3 of the research. This footage will be taken in collaboration with the young people being interviewed and will involve the use of a mobile phone mounted on a gimbal assembly. The reason and purpose behind this stage is to add depth to the analysis by exploring more-than-representational and embodied experiences of the environment (Carolyn, 2008).

Stage 3: Video Production

Videography has been rapidly rising in significance in recent years with demonstrable impacts on knowledge transfer and public engagement in social sciences research (Pink et al., 2015; Sandercock & Attili, 2010/2014). Sandercock and Attilli (2014:23) describe the use of video in this regard as "*a mode of inquiry, a form of meaning making, a way of knowing, and a means of provoking public dialogue around planning and policy issues.*" In this stage of the project, video collected as inquiry will be carefully selected and edited to produce a series of 'microdocs' (short documentaries) which will be featured in Stage 5 (Exhibition).

Stage 4: Creating the Exhibition

There are a small number of scholars in the world who identify as artist-geographers of whom I am one. These people bring their pre-existing or concurrent artistic practices into dialogue with their geographical research (e.g. Boyd, 2017a; Cresswell, 2013; Crouch, 2010; Gallagher, 2014; Gorman-Murray, 2018; Zebracki, n.d). Artist-geographers practice in different ways. In my case, I work within a performative research paradigm, using practice-based insights to inform or complement my qualitative research efforts *and* to translate research findings into creative outputs that can be publicly audienced. I will bring this experience to the proposed project to create an exhibition for public display which

combines the videos from Stage 3 with static displays in an appealing format to be housed temporarily in each of the case study areas.

Young people who have participated in walking interviews and collaborative film-making will be invited to attend a creative workshop to plan and install the exhibition that relate to their case study areas. The exhibition will be evaluated via the visitor book (Macdonald, 2005). Stakeholders involved in Stage 1 of the project and participants in Stage 2 will be invited to a pre-screening of the videos before the exhibition launch in each regional centre.

Stage 5: Dissemination of Findings

Stage 5 is where the dissemination of findings will be most concentrated, although it will take place throughout the project at different stages and via the project's social media page. In Stage 5, the most significant means of public dissemination of the research findings are the exhibitions and the local media attention surrounding them. Once launched in each regional location, these exhibitions have the potential to travel to other locations in the future and it is hoped that there will also be a summative exhibition in Canberra at the end of 2021.

Concluding Remarks

... what are the shapes and patterns that make up life; what lines, grids, circles, trajectories and complex geometries intersect as places, people, spaces, histories, memories, energies, forces, and affects; and how do they entangle and disentangle with each other to build networks, meshworks, cities, neighbourhoods, regions, nations, and worlds? (Campbell, 2016:1)

Taking inspiration from the above quote, I do not expect to be able to fully answer this question by the end of the EYRA Study.

"What I do hope for is an expanded view of regional youth engagement which appreciates its affective and material dimensions, alongside its social, civic and political ones."

A range of methods will be employed in the project, chronologically as the project unfolds over three years, moving from more traditional qualitative methods to postqualitative inquiry and creative, practice-based approaches. I hope that the project is able to advance knowledge both inside and outside academia and be socially and culturally relevant to each of the regions involved.

●

Candice P. Boyd, PhD
Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow

School of Geography, University of Melbourne, Australia

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Endnote

1. To put that in context the State of Victoria covers 227,444 square kms, around half of the area of the Kimberleys.

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Community Action Learning: Reviving the Forgotten Village

Dr Amiya Singh,

Dr Supriya Pattanayak

Abstract

This article is about the Centurion University of Technology and Management, Odisha, a state-enacted skills university, incubating its student trainees as entrepreneurs while acknowledging local knowledge and context. 'Grounded intelligence' and 'grounded [1]imagination' of the promoters and senior management of the University plays a critical role in promoting various community action learnings by students. This article specifically discusses 'reviving the forgotten village' through the efforts of unemployed young people in responding to community needs and bringing about transformation in their lives and that of the community.

Introduction

Globalisation has brought new ideas and opportunities. Appadurai (2010) has described globalisation as a world of things in motion, a world of flows. There are flows of ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques. But, he says, these various flows are not coeval or spatially consistent; rather, they are in relations of disjuncture. An example he gives is of media flowing across national boundaries, producing images of well-being that cannot be satisfied by national standards of living and consumer capabilities. So, he concludes, globalisation '*produces problems that manifest themselves in intensely local forms but have context that are anything but local*'.

While this flow-on effect of globalization and its particular economic policies for universities exist in different economies, in India one sees a combination of various types of university ecosystems, the heavily-funded government universities who believe in a free or highly subsidised education that allow access to those students who pass an entrance test and the corporatised, entrepreneurial universities developing closer ties with industries, forming spin-off companies and private business arms, and moving toward user-pays philosophy for most services, Universities increasingly being treated like businesses.

In the process, however the very purpose of education is lost. That the outcome of education should be '*education*'

itself, or '*learning to be*' or '*being connected to land, nature, one's soul and one another*' has taken a backseat. In striving to understand the plurality of cultures in the international context through increased student exchanges and exposure, the very complex social fabric of the Indian context is forgotten. Traditional values are being threatened by opening up Universities to the forces of globalisation; there is heightened competition, increased managerialism, commodification of knowledge and instrumentalism in the curriculum.

Setting the Context: Centurion University as an incubation ecosystem

Centurion University of Technology and Management, enacted by the State Legislature of Odisha, was set up in Gajapati district of Odisha, which has a large tribal population (54.36%, Government of India, 2011). The University has, as part of its charter, a School of Vocational Education and Training which is seeking ways to '*shape lives and empower communities*'[2], that is, seeking ways to provide alternative pathways to young people who have dropped out of formal education for various reasons, including its unaffordability. It further provides an opportunity for these young people to get back into formal education if they so desire. The University has also set up a number of social enterprises which operate as teaching and learning laboratories for students, staff and alumni with the intention of making a last mile connect with the local populations, be it tribal farmers, women entrepreneurs or young unemployed young people with little skills. The University also works as an incubator for staff and students to explore new ideas for enhancing production and productivity through entrepreneurship. Further, the promoters, mentors and senior management of the University have a '*grounded intelligence*' and '*grounded imagination*'[3] that considered '*ground up*' learning to be the best and application of theories in the '*local*', '*context-specific*' manner to be the most meaningful to community. In view of this, technology in agriculture, renewable energy, disaster risk reduction, organic agriculture, waste-to-wealth-recycling have been promoted.

The relationship between the University and various communities has been nurtured through identifying issues specific to the communities and respond to them. The focus of the University has been to build capacities and create competencies of members of the communities to address their livelihood issues. This article specifically discusses '*reviving the forgotten village*' through the efforts of unemployed young people in responding to community needs and bringing about transformation in their lives and that of the community.

The forgotten village

This could be the story of many villages in India. As an initial project, Tarakote village of Jajpur district was adopted for one such outreach initiative by the University. The village has a population of 6000 individuals (1100 families). A school and two colleges are located on the outskirts. A number of young people have completed their graduation and migrated to nearby urban areas and neighbouring states. The opportunities for graduates are limited and therefore many have succumbed to hopeless and wasteful ways.

The primary occupation of the people is rain-fed agriculture. This too is diminishing as the land is getting depleted and fragmented. In the past, public investment in

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irrigation was minimal and therefore, at present, farmers are facing great distress with extremely erratic rainfall. Farmers also do not have the resources to invest in groundwater extraction. The local ponds are drying out as the water table is receding. One of the respondents highlighted that '*every alternate year is a drought year or flood year, and this is interspersed with frequent cyclones*'.

The erratic rainfall meant that there was only a single paddy crop during the year; the land remained fallow for almost 8-9 months. Where groundwater was available, farmers previously raised a summer paddy crop; with the declining water table, this is becoming difficult. Agriculture as a mainstay profession is slowly dying. The hegemony in agricultural knowledge has leant paddy farming a superior status. It is important for the farmers to unlearn and be demystified about paddy cultivation, adopting multiple cropping thus enhancing the productivity of the land. With the land being depleted and young people getting formal education, they no longer find agriculture remunerative or easy and therefore do not want to engage in it. Further, the young people of the region had little market-ready knowledge or skills and were getting involved in unproductive activities. The result was high rates of migration.

Affirming an inclusive community – setting up the 'Chhua's Farm'

Six village young people aged between 18 and 28 brought together various ideas for incubation with the support of a mentor. They struck upon the idea of vegetable farming and marketing. A land measuring 30,000 square feet next to the road was identified so as to be visible to all passers-by; thereby making an impact. The group decided that the farm be called '*Chhua's farm*' which means '*children's farm*'. There was some deliberation among these young people as to who is to be included in this enterprise and the role they will play. There was no exclusion on grounds of social categories. On viewing the work of the young people, a few school children, playing in the nearby playground after school hours but finding farming more interesting than cricket, joined the group and assisted in various activities. Since it was a voluntary act supported by adults in the community, it posed no problems for any of the stakeholders.

The group then decided on the modalities of undertaking such an endeavour. The total investment required was less than Rs. 50,000/- (approx. USD 700), which was primarily raised by the mentor and his friends. Initially the young people learnt a lot about organic farming from YouTube and other internet resources. Subsequently to understand the package of practices and the use of technology in farming, technical support was provided by the School of Agriculture of the Centurion University.

Grounded action - What the young people did

The group of young people at the outset had to negotiate with the owner for the use of the land during the off-season. After gathering some initial information, the group undertook vegetable farming through a trial and error method and with support of the mentor who also had limited knowledge in agriculture. The suggestion to the young people was that it was 'okay' to fail and that failure was not insurmountable. It was almost as if the freedom to fail provided the impetus for undertaking such a daunting task at such a large scale.

The planning and preparation of the land started and the young people also used this as an opportunity for branding. Since the farm was bordering the road, many passers-by stopped to watch what was happening and this further encouraged the young people. The land was ploughed, lines were drawn and trenches created. Quality seeds were procured by the mentor and were planted by the young people. The young people had to explore the availability of organic products in the market and the best were chosen for use on the farm. The real challenge was finding the water to irrigate the land, the seeds and the saplings as they emerged. There was a pond across the road and the young people took turns to carry water in buckets each day to water the crop.

Seeing their efforts, and it being school holidays, a number of school children joined hands to both learn and volunteer. They too learnt various agricultural activities while helping in carrying the water across the road and watering the plants. When the first yield of cucumbers and okra arrived, the young people took great pleasure in selling it on the roadside. Some amount of market intelligence was required to ascertain the cost of products. How and when to harvest the crops? How did the costs vary when sold near the village as compared to the market nearby? How to manage the large quantum of produce? These were some of the issues and challenges faced by the first-time producers of perishable items.

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Community Action Learning - What the young people learnt

There were a number of lessons learnt by the University team and the young people along the way. The idea was to encourage sustainable agricultural practices in the villages and break the myth of paddy farming. The aim was also to revive the village and keep young people from migrating while at the same time honing their skills in agriculture and giving them new and appropriate technologies where required, thus giving them confidence in the local.

Local to Local – The merits of identifying local resources to produce for the local area was clearly envisaged as being central to the ways of operation of the group. The local networks were mobilised, firstly to reflect what the young people wanted to make of their lives, plan for the enterprise after listing out various options, and then operationalising it. The roles of each one of the young people was determined in a participatory manner. Rice is being subsidised heavily by the state and therefore it appears like there is little incentive to grow your own food. However, people have realised that '*when importing food, they were displacing the impact of consumption*'. As is evident in Tarakote village, the depletion of the land and the non-availability of water is an indication of impending disasters. By the time people recognise this, it may be too late to reverse the impacts. Therefore, the University's role is critical in filling the knowledge and practice gaps.

Learning by Practice – 'Learning by Doing' was the focus of the young people. It meant that they gave themselves the freedom to fail. They redefined 'failure' as they had nobody to answer to but themselves. It was important that they saw the outcome of their efforts; 'how much' did not matter. They were willing to try new things beyond their existing knowledge. They were willing to learn from various resources such as the internet, books, specialist magazines, while also seeking assistance from expert farmers in the field. While the mentor (who is also the first author) and his friends invested in the farm, he did not seek a 'profit', the focus was on the young people learning and reviving the village. The idea was to cultivate and reaffirm the ties to one another, to the land and the world at large. Once the yield was marketed, a participatory audit was conducted so that the young people could understand the economics of the enterprise.

The entire task was undertaken at the pace of the young people and based on their acquired competencies so that they were not daunted by the task. What the young people learnt was that if proper inputs were used, proper processes and their timeliness was followed, they were most likely to break even if not making a profit. The notion of profit was being redefined as well; profit was conceived as the non-monetary benefits - the collective efficacy, collective resource management, the psychological sense of community, social cohesion, community competence and community empowerment (Kawachi 2001, Adamson 2010, Bec, McLennan and Moyle, 2016) - to the young people and the community as a whole.

Learning as a Team – The young people realised that when they worked as a team, each one brought something to the task. So while the endeavour was started by the youth group, the school children were enthusiastic participants. Rakesh, 18 years, continuing his Graduation in Arts says, "*Following the completion of their exams, we welcomed the kids' curiosity to volunteer and learn with us. At first, there was communication gap, which diminished with the passage of time*". Responsibility of the kids was mainly concentrated in the activities like sowing, planting, weeding and harvesting. In contrast, focus of the young people was on applying organic fertilizers and pesticides, watering, marketing of the produce and accounting.

Involvement of the community at large – At the outset, the produce was sold near the farm. With the passage of time and the increased productivity, the produce was taken to the nearby market. What was interesting was that often passers-by who wanted to buy the produce were encouraged to pick the vegetables from the farm themselves. This gave them a great sense of pleasure while strengthening a connection with the land. Mr. Damodar, a regular buyer of the farm's produce, said: "*I prefer to buy from Chhua's farm than market, because the vegetables available in the market are not as fresh and many a times exposed to varieties of chemicals*". Since this initiative, several farmers have volunteered to take up vegetable cultivation due to diminishing availability of water. There has been increasing pressure from women in the community to discontinue paddy cultivation as the water table was declining, thus limiting water availability for essential use.

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Farm to Market – the fun way – The group soon realised that undertaking such a task was fun all the way. It was learning by doing with nobody to evaluate their work other than their own satisfaction with the work; there was no question of failure. The results were also very quick, and money in their hands was a great reward; moving beyond the individual and working together towards a common end created moments of '*collective joy*' (Segal, 2018). This enabled young people to move away from destructive practices that they had adopted, to creating conditions that helped them and others in the community thrive. Moments of collectivity in the Tarakote context made them feel alive and happier. While working together, the struggle was to establish equity, which sometimes was hard. The struggle to cultivate and (re)build a sense of the community compelled the young people to move beyond themselves and reaffirming their connection to each other. Segal (2018) notes that '*it is precisely this kind of "acting in concert" to create a more just and better world that facilitates these life-affirming moments of collective joy*'.

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Building Confidence – The single most important lesson that the young people learnt was that 'learning by doing' meant a boost to their confidence. Young people in rural Odisha have limited opportunities and do not have very high aspirations. They learnt that they had to nurture things and monitor its progress, that is, see the crop grow, mature and be harvested. In order for this to happen, they had to follow a process, prepare the land, procure seeds and plant them appropriately, water them, fertilise them and apply pesticides – all this to ensure a healthy crop. They learnt how to do the right thing by themselves and for others. They learnt that there was no place for fear in learning, that there is no fear in failure; the ultimate aim is to connect with the land and with each other. They learnt that they had to stand up for themselves and do what made them, their families and the community truly happy. Their self-esteem also rose when "*…. (we) they received queries from the residents of (our) their village and nearby localities to mentor them for crop production in the next season*" (Bharat, 24 year old, high school dropout and an active member of Chhua's farm).

Investing in Solutions – In order to increase shared prosperity among those who need it the most, it is important to go beyond employment rates and average incomes, to collaborating for attaining 'collective joy'. There is a need to focus on solutions that are local and long term. Young people involved in the farm took some seeds home and planted them in their backyards, which made their families extremely happy, while providing fresh produce and nutrition to the family. The mother of Pupul (a high school student at Chhua's farm) said, "*I am very happy for Pupul growing vegetables in our backyard for our own family. I*

have found him to be more responsible and engaged while being involved with the farming. I have no objection, if he continues to plan a career in the same after his high school".

Social Relationship based initiatives that ensure sustainability – In Odisha, young people who are going through the formal education system, feel alienated from the work they do, from each other and from culture and nature, ultimately from their very souls. These young people have realised that they need to renew themselves while also feeling more engaged, enlivened and responsible for what they set out to do. They feel they should be more connected with the land and their communities. Bharat further adds, "*Being the only son, I have to take care of my mother and sister, when my father is working outside Odisha. I can't think of leaving the village due to the family liabilities. So, I am looking for alternatives to make a good regular income. From my experience of this season at Chhua's farm, I am very sure of making profit in the next season as well*".

Change that is transformational – While the young people were wiling away their time in unproductive activities previously, this opportunity was essentially transformational. They aimed at sustainable production, whereby the community tried to reduce waste and be more thoughtful about what they ate. They learnt that vegetables had a much lower impact on land than other products (paddy or livestock). So the hegemony of paddy cultivation was debunked. They learnt to make optimum use of land. In the process, community capital was enhanced; that is shared resources, expertise and networks leveraged to solve collective problems and/ or improve various aspects of the community (Callaghan and Colton, 2008).

Academic Learning to Concepts of Farming – One additional benefit included the Mentor imparting problem solving approaches related to farming to the school students using the Science and Mathematics they learnt at school. It became useful to see the reflection of their academic learning towards its utility for real life. Subsequently, the children's interest in those specific subjects was also observed. This motivated the mentor to design farming content to be included in their curriculum.

Conclusion
Education as we see it today in Odisha alienates children from their families, environment and tradition. Further, it tends to forget the very fabric of the Indian culture: diversity, plurality and complementarity. As the UN Report on Land Degradation and its impact on human well-being (IPBES, 2018 quoted in The Guardian) notes "*If we do not change*

lifestyles, consumption habits and the way we use land, then sooner or later we are going to destroy this planet. Looking for another one is not an option".

Further it is critical to make agricultural practices sustainable. Soil fertility and water is being lost at a rate beyond comprehension; scientists have warned that fertile soil was being lost at the rate of 24bn tonnes a year. Further, those who benefit from over-exploitation of natural resources are among the least affected by the direct negative impacts of land degradation and therefore have the least incentive to take action (The Guardian, 2018). Therefore, farming/ gardening should be an important life skill within the education eco-system. Centurion University of Technology and Management, Odisha is playing a catalytic role in supporting communities to transform themselves.

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Dr Amiya Singh + Dr Supriya Pattanayak
Centurion University of Technology and Management, Odisha, India

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[1]This is the first of a series of articles by the authors which will culminate in theorising on how Universities can support in creating sustainable communities.
[2]Shaping Lives, Empowering Communities is the tag line of the University.
[3]Imagination, as Laenui describes it, is not only an antidote to hopelessness. It is a source of power, and when it is missing, it weakens the spirit.

Eating Tomorrow:
Agribusiness, Family Farmers and the Battle for the Future of Food

Timothy A. Wise

(Following up on our previous issue on food security and sovereignty and linking it with themes from this issue. Ed.)

"*Eating Tomorrow* is a wake-up call about the future of food. Wise describes how agribusiness has transformed agriculture into an extractive industry, destroying the land and farmers." -- Vandana Shiva, author, *Who Really Feeds the World?* and *Soil Not Oil*

Few challenges are more daunting than feeding a global population projected to reach 9.7 billion in 2050—at a time when climate change is making it increasingly difficult to grow crops successfully. In response,

"corporate and philanthropic leaders have called for major investments in industrial agriculture, including genetically modified seed technologies."

Reporting from Africa, Mexico, India, and the United States, Timothy A. Wise's **Eating Tomorrow** discovers how in country after country agribusiness and its well-heeled philanthropic promoters have hijacked food policies to feed corporate interests.

"*There is no 'we' who feed the world. The world is mainly fed by hundreds of millions of small-scale farmers who grow 70% of developing countries' food*." — from Eating Tomorrow.

With his unique background in academic research, international development and economic journalism, Wise takes readers far and wide in his quest to understand how governments, development agencies, and farmers themselves have responded to the challenge to help developing countries grow more of their own food by empowering their small-scale farmers. Wise talks to victims

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of land-grabbing in Mozambique, Monsanto officials trying to push genetically modified corn into Mexico, and Malawian farmers trying to preserve and promote their nutritious native seeds. Wise reports on the damage done to Mexican rural communities by the North American Free Trade Agreement and exposes the hypocrisy of U.S. officials using arcane World Trade Organization rules to curtail India's ambitious national food security plan. He reports from Iowa, where biofuels and factory farms absorb industrial agriculture's surpluses and the rivers flow with toxic runoff.

Wise reminds readers that we already grow enough food to feed 10 billion. The true path to eating tomorrow is alongside today's resource-starved farmers, who can and will feed the hungry – if we let them. "*Wise's writing is riveting, melding the right mix of historical context, first-person accounts, interactions with key players, and original insight, all related in fast-moving, piquant prose. This is a concentrated dose of perceptive exposition that leaves a reader informed and energized*." **--** Ricardo J. Salvador, Director and Senior Scientist, Food & Environment Program, Union of Concerned Scientists.

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Timothy A. Wise, New Press, 2019

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Strength From Grief: How Aboriginal People Experience the Bushfire Crisis

Vanessa Cavanagh,

Jessica Weir,

Bhiamie Williamson

Vanessa Cavanagh is an Aboriginal woman with Bundjalung (NSW north coast) and Wonnarua (NSW Hunter region) ancestry. Vanessa is an Associate Lecturer, School of Geography and Sustainable Communities, University of Wollongong. She has more than two decades of experience in environmental conservation including both the corporate and government sector.

Jessica Weir is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. Dr. Weir investigates the socialcultural dimensions of environmental management, spanning issues of natural hazards, fresh water, native title, climate change and decolonial ethics.

Bhiamie Williamson is a Euahlayi man from north-west NSW and south-west Qld with family ties to north-west Qld. Bhiamie's fields of professional and academic experience include Indigenous land and water management, Indigenous youth, Indigenous governance and Indigenous data sovereignty. He is a current member of the Mayi Kuwayu Data Governance Committee and the ACT Bushfire Council. Bhiamie is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. at the Australian National University. His Ph.D. investigates Indigenous Men and Masculinities.

[This article was originally published by The Conversation *and by our friends from Yes! Magazine in the US. It has been republished here through the Creative Commons licence.]*

How do you support people forever attached to a landscape after an inferno tears through their homelands: decimating native food sources, burning through ancient scarred trees, and destroying ancestral and totemic plants and animals? The fact is, the experience of Aboriginal peoples in the fire crisis engulfing much of Australia is vastly different from that of non-Indigenous peoples.

Colonial legacies of eradication, dispossession, assimilation, and racism continue to affect the lived realities of Aboriginal peoples. Added to this is the widespread exclusion of our peoples from accessing and managing traditional homelands. These factors compound the trauma of these unprecedented fires. As Australia picks up the pieces from these fires, it's more important than ever to understand the unique grief that Aboriginal peoples experience. Only through this understanding can effective strategies be put in place to support our communities to recover.

Perpetual grief

Aboriginal peoples live with a sense of perpetual grief. It stems from the as-yet-unresolved matter of the invasion and subsequent colonization of our homelands.

While many instances of colonial trauma were inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples—including the removal of children and the suppression of culture, ceremony, and language—dispossession of Country remains paramount. Dispossessing people of their lands is a hallmark of colonization.

Aboriginal rights activists on Australia Day in Melbourne, Australia on January 26, 2018. Australia Day is named by some as Invasion Day due to the dispossession of Indigenous land and the arrival of the First Fleet's at Port Jackson, Sydney, in 1788. Photo by Asanka Brendon Ratnayake/ Anadolu Agency/Getty Images.

Australian laws have changed to partially return Aboriginal peoples' lands and waters, and Aboriginal people have made their best efforts to advocate for more effective management of Country. But despite this, most of our peoples have been consigned to the margins in managing our homelands. Aboriginal people have watched on and been ignored as homelands have been mismanaged and neglected. Oliver Costello is chief executive of Firesticks Alliance, an Indigenous-led network that aims to reinvigorate cultural burning. As he puts it:

Since colonisation, many Indigenous people have been removed from their land, and their cultural fire management practices have been constrained by authorities, informed by Western views of fire and land management.

In this way, settler-colonialism is not historical, but a lived experience. And the growing reality of climate change adds to these anxieties. It's also important to recognize that our people grieve not only for our communities, but for our nonhuman relations. Aboriginal peoples' cultural identity comes from the land. As such, Aboriginal cultural lives and livelihoods continue to be tied to the land, including landscape features such as waterholes, valleys, and mountains, as well as native animals and plants.

The decimation caused by the fires deeply affects the existence of Aboriginal peoples and, in the most severely hit areas, threatens Aboriginal groups as distinct cultural beings attached to the land. As *The Guardian*'s Indigenous affairs editor Lorena Allam recently wrote:

Like you, I've watched in anguish and horror as fire lays waste to precious Yuin land, taking everything with it—lives, homes, animals, trees—but for First Nations people, it is also burning up our memories, our sacred places, all the things which make us who we are.

For Aboriginal people then, who live with the trauma of dispossession and neglect and now, the trauma of catastrophic fire, our grief is immeasurably different from that of non-Indigenous people.

Bushfire recovery must consider culture

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As we come to terms with the fires' devastation, Australia must turn its gaze to recovery. The field of community recovery offers valuable insights into how groups of people can come together and move forward after disasters. But an examination of research and commentary in this area reveals how poorly non-Indigenous Australia (and indeed, the international field of community recovery) understands the needs of Aboriginal people. The definition of "community" is not explicitly addressed, and thus is taken as a single sociocultural group of people.

But research in Australia and overseas has demonstrated that for Aboriginal people, healing from trauma—whether historical or contemporary—is a cultural and spiritual process, and inherently tied to land. The culture-neutral standpoint in community recovery research as yet does not acknowledge these differences. Without considering the historical, political, and cultural contexts that continue to define the lives of Aboriginal peoples, responses to the crisis may be inadequate and inappropriate.

Resilience in the face of ongoing trauma

The long-term effects of colonization have meant Aboriginal communities are (for better or worse) accustomed to living with catastrophic changes to their societies and lands, adjusting and adapting to keep

The Anganu, traditional Aboriginal owners of Uluru-Kata-Tjuta in the Northern Territory, gather in front of the Uluru, also known as Ayers rock, after a permanent ban on climbing on October 26, 2019. The Anganu lobbied for the closure of the walking track because it undermined the landmark's spiritual significance. Photo by Saeed Khan/AFP/Getty Images.

functioning. Experts consider these resilience traits as integral for communities to survive and recover from natural disasters. In this way, the resilience of Aboriginal communities fashioned through centuries of colonization, coupled with adequate support, means Aboriginal communities in fire-affected areas are well placed to not only recover, but to do so quickly.

This is a salient lesson for agencies and other nongovernment organizations entrusted to lead the disaster recovery process. The community characteristics that enable effective and timely community recovery, such as close social links and shared histories, already exist in the Aboriginal communities affected.

Moving forward

The agency leading recovery in bushfire-affected areas must begin respectfully and appropriately. They must be equipped with the basic knowledge of our peoples' different circumstances. It's important to note this isn't "special treatment." Instead, it recognizes that policy and practice must be fit-for-purpose and, at the very least, not do further harm.

If agencies and non-government organizations responsible for leading the recovery from these fires aren't well-prepared, they risk inflicting new trauma on Aboriginal communities. The National Disability Insurance Agency offers an example of how to engage with Aboriginal people in culturally sensitive ways. This includes thinking about Country, culture, and community, and working with each community's values and customs to establish respectful, trusting relationships.

The new bushfire recovery agency must use a similar

strategy. This would acknowledge both the historical experiences of Aboriginal peoples and our inherent strengths as communities that have not only survived, but remain connected to our homelands. In this way, perhaps the bushfire crisis might have some positive longer-term outcomes, opening new doors to collaboration with Aboriginal people, drawing on our strengths and values, and prioritizing our unique interests.

Thousands of people take to the streets to mark the start of National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee Week, which runs in the first full week of July each year. NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Photo by Darrian Traynor/ Getty Images.

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As the Climate Collapses, We Ask:
"How Then Shall We Live?"

Dahr Jamail,

Barbara Cecil

Originally published by **TruthOut** (and reproduced here by Creative Commons agreement)

This is the first instalment of a monthly series by Dahr Jamail and Barbara Cecil, entitled, "*How, Then, Shall We Live? Finding Our Way and Peace of Heart Amidst Global Collapse.*"

> *Although the wind*
> *blows terribly here,*
> *the moonlight also leaks*
> *between the roof planks*
> *of this ruined house.*
>
> — *Izumi Shikibu*

This commentary is about the moonlight leaking between the roof planks of this ruined house. It is not written to convince anyone of anything, or to get things back on track. It is not a survival manual. What we have to say is not written on the wavelength of fear.

Dahr has been on the front lines digging out the truth around climate disruption for 9 years. Before that, he spent more than a year in Iraq reporting, unembedded, on how the US occupation of that country was impacting the Iraqi people. He has, more recently, had to digest staggering climate information ahead of the wave of the general public, fielding in himself a cavalcade of disbelief, grief, anger, hopelessness and desperation. He thus describes this commentary as "*the inevitable conclusion of all my war, political, environmental and climate reportage.*"

For 20 years Barbara's work and writing has guided people through life-changing transitions, with an ear to a deeper sense of purpose and meaning behind chapters of life that are ending. Her understanding of what it takes to change, in fundamental ways, has been a setup for the mega transition necessary for us all as the world we have counted on dissolves.

What we have to share is written on a carrier wave of love for what we cherish. That love, moving outwards into the world through us, is the moonlight. What we write here is for those with the kamikaze courage to take in the facts of intensifying climate chaos, growing economic inequality, crashing biodiversity, growing fascism, a global debt bubble and extinction scenarios that are already coming through the front door. It is for those who are feeling the implications of these in the pit of our stomachs, even before the radical changes needed in our personal and collective lives dawn fully into awareness.

It is for those who, given all that is collapsing, are risking treasured images of the future, and venturing into conversations about adaptation rather than just mitigation. It is for those who are tiptoeing into the unthinkable with a question on their lips: "*How then shall we live*?" Or maybe more pointedly, "*How then shall I live*?" We may (or may not) be a step or two ahead of you, down the path of accepting the likely demise of the biosphere, which exposes the lie of invincibility of Western civilisation. We have learned that finding ways to take action, even in the smallest ways, staves off depression and cynicism.

Dahr, for example, in addition to using his work to spread awareness of the crisis, lives in a solar-powered house and works to reduce his carbon footprint annually. We created a garden together, which provides most of our food. Additionally, we are both committed to supporting younger generations through apprenticeships on the land we share, as well as by holding retreats for young leaders interested in personal sustainability and leadership in uncertain times.

Our intent with this series is not to rehash data, but to share the ways we are digesting the global decline and finding solid ground in ourselves and within our day-to-day lives. We hope that our thinking and choices will inspire readers to ponder what is uniquely theirs to do. The depth of our global crisis requires a new understanding of what hope means. At the end of each piece, we will include annotated reference material that informs our own perception in reliable and expansive ways.

Our pathway to acceptance of current reality crosses serial thresholds that involve shifts in mindsets and emotional black holes. We recognise these now as gateways into open-ended, unprecedented healing and generative inquiry. This interior work sits alongside the crucial exterior work of building bomb-proof relationships that sustain us in these times, supportive and practical close community, local resilience, and worthy action.

Each person hits thresholds particular to their culture of origin, family history, exposure to trauma, age, family makeup, religious frameworks, location and more. It is our hope that the terrain of our own deep questioning supports your unique pathway. In each reflection, we will describe some of the practices we have stumbled on that pave the way for an honourable, fulfilling future and even contentment — another beam of the moonlight seeping

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through the cracks. We have co-authored this series because it is almost impossible to take in the immensity of this moment on one's own.

Endings

⎰
⎱
⎰
⎱ We confront, on a daily basis, things that are over. Sheaths of endings fall away leaving a broken heart, time and time again.

Many people in the world are already facing the finality of guarantees of clean water, consistently breathable air, food that is safe and healthy to eat, permanence of a physical home, financial security, the viability of going to college, giraffes, bees, and on and on. For example, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre has estimated that 1.68 million Americans were _internally displaced by disasters in 2017,_ and a study carried out by the University of Georgia predicts sea-level rise alone _could displace as many as 13 million Americans_ by the year 2100.

Closer in, the winds of change are blowing through our relationships, work and homes that make many of these no longer viable. We all know there are already many locations on the planet that have already been rendered unliveable by climate change impacts, toxic spills or industry. Fundamental assumptions about family and child-rearing are shaking. Maybe it's simply the trees being blown bare in autumn that lands as sadness in you. Most endings dip us into the well of grief. When we drop into that well, the seemingly distinct sources of grief are mixed in the depths.

There is a second kind of grief that engulfs us in the moments when we really understand what we as humans have done. Questions about how we shall live going forward inherently require honest confrontation with "**How** _have_ **we lived**?" How did we get here, completely divorced from the web of life, in utter violation of the balance and reciprocity that is natural to all forms of life, and ending with many of us behaving violently toward one another? What has been _my_ part in this, in my thinking and in the lifestyles I have taken for granted? The plug has been pulled on growth and progress myths. Abuse of the Earth and of those who have lived in harmony with Her is laid bare. All of our greed and complicity land like a death sentence. This grief and remorse are enormous.

Simple practices can prepare us for the more sweeping endings that lie in wait.

"We can develop needed resilience by working incrementally and deliberately with the succession of losses that are presently occurring in our lives."

We suggest systematically noting and naming the things that are ending in your life. One strategy is to keep a private, uncensored journal, and pour our hearts out as waves of realisation and sorrow crash over us. Pay attention to the personal- and micro-endings that are eroding our sense of control and promise. Keep asking, "_What is ending_?" "_What is over_?" whether it be cherished beliefs, comforts we have taken for granted, images of the future for our children and our grandchildren, or something else. Maybe it is our youth slipping away, or our health, or the loss of some person or animal who is close to us. With courageous and astute naming comes the broken heart. Keep breathing.

A beautiful bowl carefully placed in your home can be designated as a guardian of seasons and cycles that are phasing out. Visit the vessel as often as you need to, holding it dear, feeling life's support for your tenderness.

With the help of our young friends, Colin and Maura, we built a forest altar in the dark cedar wood near our garden — an old hollowed-out stump opens to receive bits of feathers, stone, lavender, dreams, ashes from burnt sage, names of friends who are troubled and tears that are quietly placed in the hollowed-out core for life's safe-keeping. We visit the forest altar when the intractability of life's challenges becomes unbearable. We have also called together a safe circle of friends who hold matters of the heart, impossible questions and personal quandaries about just action.

The depth of our grief is the measure of our love; its flip side is praise for all we hold sacred, bathed in the moonlight. Every night before dinner, each one at our table says one thing they are thankful for and one way they have served the Earth that day. We never fail to drop into the world of what is most precious to us. Indeed, in the course of loss, what we cherish most becomes most vivid. These are all ways we invite the moonlight to "_leak between the roof planks_."

On the backside of grief, with the heart sponged out and open, we are able to think more clearly. There are things to do, now, in this window of time that require clear and fresh thought. Forthcoming commentaries will include topics such as: how to find solid ground in a wash of chronic uncertainty, how to maintain a healthy relationship with the news (how to metabolize all that we read and learn), activism in the context of collapsing systems (what is the most leveraged work to be done and why), and how to raise and educate children in preparation for the world they are inheriting, among others.

The Long View
The bones of this piece are the product of a conversation between us that started two years ago that has been ongoing day by day as we edit, read and write the news. We wrote this while on an offline media fast — no screens for five days — in Washington State on the seam of the stormy Pacific Coast and a thick, green rainforest. We had time to read and write in journals, and just stare at

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Are we headed towards a new economy?

Dr Amanda Cahill

the ocean and listen from the inside out. We made space for connection to the roiling seas, moss-laden trees, original thought and the upwelling of the moonlight from within.

We were called to follow signs that directed us to the world's largest Sitka spruce and the world's largest Douglas Fir and the world's largest red cedar. Every encounter was breathtaking and served to put our global conundrum into perspective. We spoke in whispered tones, in the presence of ancestors over 1,000 years old that grew, in turn, out of their ancestral roots.

Strewn on the ground were fallen great ones, slowly composting in the rain. Scientists tell us that the years it takes to decompose equals the standing life of the tree. These trees are hardly dead. In fact they are called "nurse logs," as their rich soils and fungal growth provide nourishment for many species beyond their own seed. Salal and huckleberry, young cedar trees, firs, hemlock, spruce, large leaf maple, and a myriad of other species thrive, their roots reaching into the richness of the fallen mother tree. As she decomposes, the other life forms grow tall. Some of these offshoots may themselves live to be 1,000 years old, and then lay down to birth yet another generation. The nursing phase of these giants was at the end of their life instead of at their young prime. Maybe this has something to say to us about the value of true elders during this time (more on this topic forthcoming).

There is much we simply don't know about the continuity of life. Perhaps the wisdom we need most is already right before our eyes in the awesome wonder of the natural world, and all we need to do is open ourselves to it.

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Annotated references:
- *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn. Zinn's history is a more accurate account of US history than is commonly taught in our schools.
- *The Big Picture* by Richard Heinberg. Heinberg' sweeping analysis of our current situation, its roots and our resistance to take it in are masterful and easily digested in this article. His own life is filled with the moonlight that leaks in, suggesting ways to live more sustainably.
- *The Smell of Rain on Dust* by Martin Prechetel. This Native view of grief helps us welcome the inevitable and necessary plunges into these depths.
- Dahr Jamail's "Climate Disruption Dispatches." Jamail's regular updates on the science of climate change are reliable sources of scientific truth.

Dr Amanda Cahill, the CEO of ***The Next Economy***, talks to Wendy Williams about what we mean when we talk about a new economy and how it could work.

We are in the middle of a transition to a new economy. The capitalist system is in crisis. Inequality is rising. Natural resources are becoming increasingly scarce. People everywhere are asking questions about the economy and power. What happens next, no one knows. For Dr Amanda Cahill, the CEO of The Next Economy and director and founder of the Centre for Social Change, this is the moment we will look back at in 30 years and realise we either got it right… or we missed the opportunity.

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But, what is the opportunity?
In 2014, Tim Buckley, director of Energy Finance Studies, was speaking in North Queensland about how Australia's biggest trading partners were moving away from thermal coal and how the country needed to plan for what happens after that. He showed graph after graph of what was happening, and realising he was right, people began to question what they were going to do. In response, Cahill was invited to speak about what local communities could do around community-led economic development. She went there under the assumption that everyone would think she was a "*greenie*" and it wouldn't matter what she said.

But the opposite happened. People not only understood what she was saying, they asked radical questions about power and community. Cahill has since spent five years working with mainly coal or gas affected communities or other small communities doing it tough, to help them see the looming changes as an economic opportunity.

> The purpose of The Next Economy is to generate greater awareness of the range of economic tools and practices we can use to ensure the long-term wellbeing of both people and planet, as well as support communities across Australia to implement these approaches to strengthen and stimulate their local economies.

"*To me the new economy is bringing the threads together. We've got a choice at the moment around whether we double down on strengthening the power of big multinational companies or we use the opportunity that things are shifting and changing to build more decentralised, resilient local economies*".

What do we mean by the new economy?

The first point is that it is not necessarily new – which is why Cahill chooses to use the term "*next economy*" for her organisation. It includes things like circular economy principles, food co-ops and initiatives that move us closer to a zero emissions economy, including community-owned renewables and regenerative land use practices. "*It's reviving some really old concepts and practices like the co-operative movement and the sharing economy (in a genuine sharing sense not like in an Uber sense).All of these things have actually been around for a really long time, but it's thinking about how they can apply in the current context, when we're dealing with so many different, big challenges.*" Whether it's dealing with climate change, growing inequality or cracks in democracy, it is about getting more participation in the decision-making process, and asking questions about where power resides, who gets access to what resources and who decides. "*It's kind of questions about what sort of democracy do we want? What sort of economy do we want?*"

She uses the example of energy. From a climate

49 { The alternatives are to have a government-owned renewable energy system, as in Queensland, which sees energy as a human right and a public service, or to have community-owned renewable energy projects, which are smaller scale but keep the money and the workers in the local community.

perspective, Australia could get to 100% renewable energy by big private companies choosing to roll it out across the countryside. This is already happening. But there is an increasing backlash against large scale renewable energy projects. Cahill says the social licence of renewable energy is starting to reduce quite rapidly as companies are building multiple projects without consulting communities. "*Those are the kinds of questions I think the new economy movement is dealing with. How do we address the challenges but also address issues around justice and inequality?*"

How would it work at scale?

Cahill says the issue of scale is always a big one. The opportunity is to build economies that are more place-based and where a lot of the solutions are suited and adapted to a particular context, and then link them up. "*Instead of one thing then has to grow and get bigger, the growth is almost like nodes within a network. It's more about how do we connect up things that are working in each place, to then create the systems that are going to enable those things to*

thrive in a broader ecosystem."

This is not without its challenges. There are successful examples that have fallen over because they're not connected to anyone else. "*They're kind of doing it on their own. The systems that support aren't around them, whether that's training, whether that's procurement and supplies.*" But, she points to a model in <u>Preston in the UK</u> as a possible solution. The local city council has set up procurement agreements, supporting worker co-operatives to supply "*anchor institutions*" – such as hospitals, councils and universities – in order to keep profit localised, in a model becoming known as **The Preston model**. "*Those sorts of things are happening all over the world now, we're trying to figure out how to make it resilient, so it's not just a nice little fringe thing, it actually can put down roots in one place but is networked across places and across the world.*"

How likely is it that this is the future?

Cahill is positive, but says we're at the point at which "*it could take off or die*", based on whether or not the systems are there. The good news is that all around the world, people are experimenting with economic practices that not only meet the needs of people, but also protect and regenerate natural systems. "*Even in Australia every community I go to, if you ask the question, it's there, people might not see it though. It's not very visible. So I think these little mushrooms are popping up but they're not necessarily visible or connected yet.*" She says the element that gives her hope is around the sophistication in leadership and community organising. "*There are people with a political consciousness and skills to actually support those things across the board. We have the internet now, people can connect quickly and organise quickly.*"

The third element is that governments – especially local governments – are having to confront some big issues and are turning to new economy ideas as the alternative. "*So a number of local governments for example now have to deal with their waste issues because of China not taking their waste, and they're turning to circular economy principles and saying 'how do we have a closed loop around not just our waste but actually looping back into producing things differently'. These conversations are actually happening everywhere, but at the same time the message skews as the crisis hit, particularly around climate.*"

There is the risk that we'll double down on big high-tech solutions as government and companies stand to make money by capturing the solution. Cahill says only time will tell which way we go. "*We're in the middle of the mess. So it's hard to say.*"

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News from the cooperative, social enterprise + employee-ownership fields

Alan Greig

[Alan Greig has been sending us regularly hot-off-the-press materials in a variety of aspects of the 'alternative economies' as they are evolving and are being experimented with everywhere… This is a good opportunity to say thank you to him and to offer our readers a new set of instalments from his keen observations of the field!]

On the issue of the breadth of legal models operating in the *social enterprise space* in other economies - two recently published reports by SEUK are important:

i. **Capitalism in Crisis - Transforming our economy for people and planet:** https://www. socialenterprise.org.uk/state-of-social-enterprise-reports/capitalism-in-crisis-transforming-our-economy-for-people-and-planet/. Note the graph on *numbers of social enterprises* by existing legal models (including cooperatives and CICs) on p. 13.

ii. **Social Enterprise - The Hidden Revolution:** https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/policy-and-research-reports/the-hidden-revolution/ Note the huge increase in 'performance' in the social enterprise space when cooperatives and mutuals are added into the mix.

Further on the question of the relatively short-term survival rates of social enterprises - and as to why almost 90% of all social entrepreneur startups fail to last the first five years (unlike cooperative where the majority tend to last more than five years) - check out this quote from the *World Economic Forum* article: *"Three reasons why social enterprises fail – and what we can learn from them"*:

"Failure rates: As for how long the **social enterprises** remained operational, 38.3% survived less than one year, 45.2% lasted between one and three years, 8.7% lasted four to six years, 2.6% seven to nine years, and 5.2% lasted more than 10 years."

Cooperative entrepreneurship seems to always do better – especially for society - than the '*heropreneur*'. For more on this research – and its interesting conclusions regarding the need for a supportive '*social ecosystem*' - see: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/3-reasons-why-social-enterprises-fail-and-what-we-can-learn-from-them/ .

On this topic "*Idolised entrepreneurs': Hosing down the startup hype*" from the Sydney Morning Herald https://www.smh.com.au/business/small-business/idolised-entrepreneurs-hosing-down-the-startup-hype-20180731-p4zulo.html

Further, there's a brilliant "***New Economy Program***" sponsored by '***Stir to Action***' in the UK: https://www.stirtoaction.com/workshops?482ccdc5_page=2. To quote:

New Economy Programme
The New Economy Programme – a year of practical one-day workshops and three-day residentials – launched in October 2018 after a crowdfunding campaign to train 1,000 people in Bristol, Oxford, London and Dorset. Our 2019-2020 programme is now open for bookings and is relaunching in Plymouth, Bradford, Newcastle, Bristol, London, and Dorset from October 2019 to July 2020.

We also work with regional and national funding partners to offer sponsored places for those working in different sectors, such as co-operatives, digital technology, heritage, local development, food & farming, and others. Community ownership is the way to go!"

Relevant to your research and development work - as well as to the social enterprise sector generally - is the announcement by the Federal Government on 'cooperative workplaces'. Especially important are the three questions the consultation/research aims to address:

1. To what extent do productivity benefits arise from cooperative workplaces?
2. To what extent do employees benefit from cooperative workplaces?
3. What other benefits are available to businesses, and the wider community by greater encouragement and utilisation of techniques to establish more cooperative workplaces?

The report/consultation paper is at: https://www.ag.gov.au/Consultations/Documents/cooperative-workplaces/cooperative-workplaces-discussion-paper.pdf.

New Community readers might want to make a submission as diversity in business models/legal structures/governance arrangements can add significantly to addressing the above three questions.

On that topic, it is pleasing to see the announcement by the Australian Law Reform Commission that one of their

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'five tasks' for the next year will be to investigate the need for a new, dedicated legal structure for social enterprises. The announcement is at: https://www.alrc.gov.au/news/report-launch-the-future-of-law-reform/ To quote: "*Social enterprises are organisations that seek to make money, but are also committed to social or environmental goals. It has been suggested that existing legal structures fail to reflect the needs of social enterprises. An ALRC inquiry would examine whether new corporate structures should be introduced.*" The "Future for Law Reform Final Report" can now be downloaded from the ALRC web-site – the link is https://www.alrc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Future-of-Law-Reform-Final-Report_v3web.pdf

As well, an article on the ARLC review was published in **Pro Bono News**. It features an interview with Employee Ownership Australia's Angela Perry. You can see the article *Social enterprise structure under review* at: https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2019/12/social-enterprise-structure-under-review/
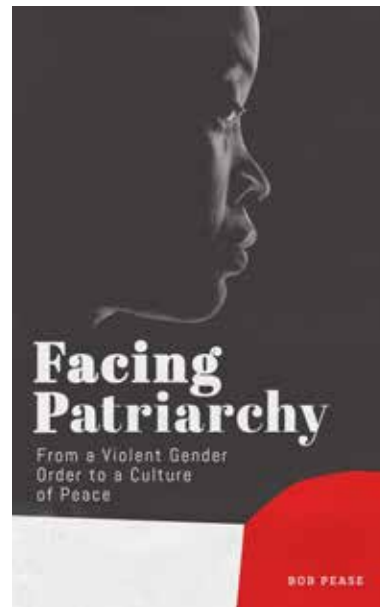
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Alan Greig, Co-ordinator,
Social Enterprise Legal Models Working Group
http://www.employeeownership.com.au/social-enterprise-legal-models/

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Facing Patriarchy From a Violent Gender Order to a Culture of Peace

Bob Pease

'A welcome addition to our toolkit for challenging men to be fully human.' Robert Jensen, University of Texas Facing Patriarchy challenges current thinking about men's violence against women. Drawing upon radical and intersectional feminist theory and critical masculinity studies, the book locates men's violence within the structures and processes of patriarchy. Addressing the limitations of current violence prevention policies, Pease argues that a nuanced conceptualisation of patriarchy – that accounts for a variety of patriarchal structures, intersections with other forms of inequality, patriarchal ideologies, men's peer group relations, men's sexist practices and the construction of patriarchal subjectivities – is required to understand the links between gender and men's violence against women.

Pease shows that men's violence against women needs to be understood in the context of other forms of men's violence, including violence against boys and other men, in the involvement of men in wars and conflicts between nations and men's ecologically destructive practices. With crucial implications for priorities in violence prevention, gender equality promotion and in strategies for engaging men in this work, Facing Patriarchy offers new hope for the elimination of men's violence.
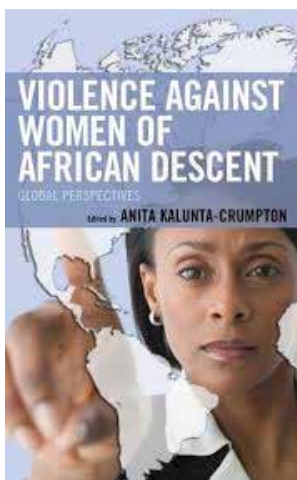
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The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR
zedbooks.net

Violence Against Women of African Descent: Global Perspectives

Anita Kalunta-Crumpton

CONTRIBUTIONS BY Nenadi Adamu; Dina Alves; Joseph Appiahene-Gyamfi; Maame Yaa A. Barnes; Kgomotso Pearl Bosilong; Soumia Boutkhil; Marika Dawkins; Elisa Garcia-España; Camille Gibson; Lydia Wanja Gitau; Anita Kalunta-Crumpton; Winnie Kanana Munene; Meseret Kassahun Desta; Karatu Kiemo; Jesca Kinoti; Jephias Matunhu; Viola Matunhu; Paulin Mbecke; Ndungi wa Mungai; Ngozi Osarenren; Timi Osidipe; Udo Chikezie Osisiogu; Caterina Peroni; Indira Rampersad; Elisa Rapetti; Kanika Samuels-Wortley; Dahlia Stoddart and Pietro Toggia

"In a unique collection that includes contributions from countries and populations that so far have not told their gender victimization stories, Kalunta-Crumpton has produced an original volume that reveals the many facets of violent victimization of women of African ancestry. This book provides insightful discussions and analyses of forms of gender violence in sixteen countries spread over four continents. From Morocco to Zimbabwe, to immigrant African communities in Australia, Europe, and the United States, contributors analyze the experiences of hard-to-reach and often silenced populations regarding their gender-related violence—physical, emotional, communal, and societal. This important edited collection is highly recommended for students in sociology, criminology, and legal, African, and gender studies, as well as the general public."— Edna Erez, University of Illinois at Chicago

"Violence against Women of African Descent testifies to the established track record of Anita Kalunta-Crumpton as an editor who has carved a niche in Pan African Studies by collegially collecting contributions from around the world to cover relatively neglected fields of study.

"In this book, she demonstrates that violence against women is a global epidemic that does not attract the deserved scholarly attention anywhere and especially when the victimized are marginalized women of African descent."

The original contribution of the book is a timely reminder that violence against women is a violation against all of humanity because such violence, when tolerated, tends to escalate violent crimesand intensify the structural violence that accompanies racist-imperialist-patriarchy in societies structured in dominance. Violence against women anywhere is therefore a threat of violence against all of humanity everywhere, to paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr."— Onwubiko Agozino, Virginia Tech

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Anita Kalunta-Crumpton
Professor of administration of justice at Texas Southern University

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Digital dystopia: how algorithms punish the poor

Ed Pilkington

In an exclusive global series, the Guardian lays

bare the tech revolution transforming

the welfare system worldwide

– while penalising the most vulnerable

All around the world, from small-town Illinois in the US to Rochdale in England, from Perth, Australia, to Dumka in northern India, a revolution is under way in how governments treat the poor. You can't see it happening, and may have heard nothing about it. It's being planned by engineers and coders behind closed doors, in secure government locations far from public view. Only mathematicians and computer scientists fully understand the sea change, powered as it is by artificial intelligence (AI), predictive algorithms, risk modelling and biometrics. But if you are one of the millions of vulnerable people at the receiving end of the radical reshaping of welfare benefits, you know it is real and that its consequences can be serious – even deadly.

The Guardian has spent the past three months investigating how billions are being poured into AI innovations that are explosively recasting how low-income people interact with the state. Together, our reporters in the US, Britain, India and Australia have explored what amounts to the birth of the **digital welfare state**. Their dispatches reveal how unemployment benefits, child support, housing and food subsidies and much more are being scrambled online. Vast sums are being spent by governments across the industrialized and developing worlds on automating poverty and in the process, turning the needs of vulnerable citizens into numbers, replacing the judgment of human caseworkers with the cold, bloodless decision-making of machines.

At its most forbidding, Guardian reporters paint a picture of a 21st-century Dickensian dystopia that is taking shape with breakneck speed. The American political scientist Virginia Eubanks has a phrase for it: "**The digital poorhouse**." Listen to governments, and you will hear big promises about how new technologies will transform poverty as a noble and benign enterprise. They will speed up benefits payments, increase efficiency and transparency, reduce waste, save money for taxpayers, eradicate human fallibility and prejudice, and ensure that limited resources reach those most in need. But so often, those pledges have fallen flat.

"At a time when austerity dominates the political landscape, millions have had their benefits slashed or stopped by computer programs that operate in ways that few seem able to control or even comprehend."

Mistakes have become endemic, with no obvious route for the victims of the errors to seek redress. This week, the automation of poverty will be brought on to the world stage. Philip Alston, a human rights lawyer who acts as the UN's watchdog on extreme poverty, will present to the UN general assembly in New York a groundbreaking report that sounds the alarm about the human rights implications of the rush to digitalize social protection.

Alston's analysis is based partly on his official UN studies of poverty in the UK and US, and partly on submissions from governments, human rights organisations and experts from more than 34 countries. It is likely to provide the definitive snapshot of where the world lies now, and where it is going, addressing the harassment, targeting and punishment of those living in the rapidly expanding digital poorhouse. Mistakes have become endemic, with no obvious route for the victims to seek redress

In Illinois, the Guardian has found that state and federal governments have joined forces to demand that welfare recipients repay "overpayments" stretching back in some cases 30 years. This system of "***zombie debt***", weaponized through technology, is invoking fear and hardship among society's most vulnerable; as one recipient described it: "*You owe what you have eaten.*"

In the UK, we investigate the secure government site outside Newcastle where millions are being spent developing a new generation of welfare robots to replace humans. Private companies including a New York outfit led by the world's first bot billionaire, are supercharging a process which has spawned a whole new jargon: "*virtual workforce*", "*augmented decision-making*", "*robot process automation*". The government is rushing forward with its digital mission despite the pain already being inflicted on millions of low-income Britons by the country's "*digital by default*" agenda. Claimants spoke of the hunger, filth, fear and panic that they are enduring.

In Australia, where the Guardian has reported extensively on ***robodebt***, the scheme that has been accused of wrongly clawing back historic debts through a flawed algorithm, we now disclose that the government has opened

a new digital front: using automation to suspend millions of welfare payments. Recipients are finding their money cut off without notice. The most disturbing story comes from Dumka in India. Here, we learn of the horrifying human impact that has befallen families as a result of Aadhaar, a 12-digit unique identification number that the Indian government has issued to all residents in the world's largest biometric experiment. New high-tech approaches sweep through social services, work, disability and health, often with minimal public debate. Motka Manjhi paid the ultimate price when the computer glitched and his thumbprint – his key into Aadhaar – went unrecognised. His subsistence rations were stopped, he was forced to skip meals and he grew thin. On 22 May, he collapsed outside his home and died. His family is convinced it was starvation.

The Guardian investigations illuminate the shared features of these new systems, whether in developing or developed countries, east or west. The most glaring similarity is that all this is happening at lightning speed, with hi-tech approaches sweeping through social services, work and pensions, disability and health, often with minimal public debate or accountability. Within that revolution, the human element of the welfare state is being diluted. Instead of talking to a caseworker who personally assesses your needs, you now are channelled online where predictive analytics will assign you a future risk score and an algorithm decide your fate.

> In the new world, inequality and discrimination can be entrenched. What happens if you are one of the five million adults in the UK without regular access to the internet and with little or no computer literacy? What if the algorithm merely bakes in existing distortions of race and class, making the gulf between rich and poor, white and black, college-educated and manual worker, even more pronounced?

There is also a chilling Kafkaesque quality that spans the globe. As Manjhi so tragically discovered, mistakes are made. Machines glitch. If there is no one within reach who sees you as a person and not as a 12-digit number to be processed, the results can be fatal.

The computer says "*No payments*". Now what do you do?

If you have a story to tell about being on the receiving end of the new digital dystopia, email ed.pilkington@ theguardian.com *And confirming this international trend, here's Pro Bono's article reporting from Australia.*

Australia's welfare system failing to protect vulnerable people

Australia's social security system is increasing, rather than decreasing, the risk of homelessness for welfare recipients, according to a new report.

Luke Michael
Pro Bono News

The research, from the National Society Security Rights Network and Canberra Community Law, explored the experiences of 567 recipients in the Australian Capital Territory and found that "extremely low" Centrelink payments were driving people into poverty. The cases detailed in the report included people sleeping rough, people unable to pay their rent, and those who were forced to sleep on couches, in their cars or in the living rooms of friends and family.

Report author Sophie Trevitt said people with disability, single mothers escaping violence, and Indigenous people were disproportionately affected by low welfare payments and public housing shortages. "*People on the Newstart Allowance are struggling to live on less than $40 a day. They are entirely cut off from the private rental market; and with extremely long wait times for public housing, many were forced to sleep in their cars, in the living rooms of friends and families, in parks, caravans and refuges.*"

The report also found that the government's issuing of robodebts often hurt the most vulnerable welfare recipients who were living in insecure housing. Trevitt said she welcomed the government's recent announcement (Guardian, 19/11/2019) that it was revising the scheme: "*However, robodebt is only one part of a system of often punitive, difficult to navigate and inadequate social security measures that drive vulnerable people further into poverty, put their tenancies at risk, and contribute to the rising rates of homelessness around the country.*"

The report has called on the government to immediately raise the rate of Newstart, Family Tax Benefit and Rental Assistance.

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Ed Pilkington
https://www.theguardian.com/profile/edpilkington

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Collective impact – When theory becomes practice

Dr Andrew Curtis

Back in 2014, I started a short-term piece of work with a small charity in north London. The CEO was the founder. The charity was running at a significant loss and the founder was topping up the finances with family money. There was no doubt that there was commitment and passion. The problem was that what this charity was offering was the same as numerous other charities within a three-kilometre radius. They were all competing for participants in their programmes and all competing for the same ever-dwindling pot of money. My suggestion that this charity should collaborate with other charities doing the same thing was met with disbelief and hostility. And yet collaboration is exactly what's needed.

You only have to look as far as the UK charity register for the proof. The UK has 166,854 registered charities; 82% of these are categorised as either micro or small – 47% with an annual income of less than £10,000 (A$19,000). All of them, large or small, compete for the same charity pound. Meanwhile, poverty in the UK is trending downwards. More than 14 million people, including 4.5 million children, live below the poverty line in the UK. The war on poverty continues, while charities compete with each other to end it. Despite lots of activity by lots of charities, poverty remains stable. It has not gone away and does not even appear to be in retreat.

Meanwhile, others in other parts of the world are winning the war on poverty, not through a disintegrated, fragmented competitive strategy, but with a multisector comprehensive approach called "collective impact". In September, we published two articles in Pro Bono Australia under the broad heading of ***What can collective impact offer***, based on our research in the UK. Collective impact is a framework for "collective practice" that moves beyond traditional collaboration. And it works. As David Brooks writes in the New York Times, according to recently released data, between 2015 and 2017, Canada reduced its official poverty rate by at least 20%. Roughly 825,000 Canadians were lifted out of poverty in those years, giving the country its lowest poverty rate in history.

How did Canada do it?
Brooks notes that while the Canadian economy has

been decent over recent years, it has not been robust enough to explain these outcomes. Instead, one major factor is that Canadians have organised their communities differently. They used the collective impact methodology to fight poverty. The collective impact approach stands in stark contrast to how Brooks describes the usual route to poverty alleviation in America: everything is fragmented, with a bevy of public and private programs doing their own thing. In one town there may be four food pantries, which don't really know one another well. The people working in these programs have their heads down, because it's exhausting enough just to do their own work.

This is compounded by the common model of one-donor-funding-one-program. Different programs compete for funds. They justify their existence using randomised controlled experiments, in which researchers try to pinpoint one input that led to one positive output. The foundation heads, city officials and social entrepreneurs go to a bunch of conferences, but these conferences don't have much to do with one another.
What Brooks describes is detailed in the recent Economist essay Poverty In America. Sound familiar, whether you are in the US, the UK or Australia?

"Every day, they give away the power they could have used if they did mutually reinforcing work together to change the whole system."

Brooks notes that "*in Canada it's not like that*". Why? As Brooks writes:
"About 15 years ago, a disparate group of Canadians realised that a problem as complex as poverty could be addressed only through a multisector comprehensive approach. They realised that poverty was not going to be reduced by some innovation – some cool, new program nobody thought of before. It was going to be addressed through better systems that were mutually supporting and able to enact change on a population level."

So they began building city-wide and community-wide structures. They started 15 years ago with just six cities, but now they have 72 regional networks covering 344 towns. They begin by gathering, say, 100 people from a single community. A quarter have lived with poverty; the rest are from business, not for profits and government. They spend a year learning about poverty in their area, talking with the community. They launch a different kind of conversation. First, they don't want better poor; they want fewer poor. That is to say, their focus is not on how do we give poor people food so they don't starve. It is how do we move people out of poverty. Second, they up their ambitions. How do we eradicate poverty altogether? Third, they broaden their vision. What does a vibrant community look like in which everybody's basic needs are met?

After a year they come up with a town plan. Each town's poverty is different. Each town's assets are different. So each town's plan is different. The town plans feature a lot of collaborative activities. A food pantry might turn itself into a job training centre by allowing the people who are fed to do the actual work. The pantry might connect with local businesses that change their hiring practices so that high school degrees are not required. Businesses might pledge to raise their minimum wage. The plans involve a lot of policy changes on the town and provincial levels – improved day care, redesigned transit systems, better workforce development systems. The process of learning and planning and adapting never ends.

A leader in the approach, **The Tamarack Institute** pioneered a lot of this work. They emphasise that the crucial thing these community-wide collective impact structures need is attitude change:

> *"In the beginning, it's as if everybody is swimming in polluted water. People are sluggish, fearful, isolated, looking out only for themselves. But when people start working together across sectors around a common agenda, it's like cleaning the water. Communities realise they can do more for the poor. The poor realise they can do more for themselves. New power has been created, a new sense of agency."*

Collective impact in Canada is a real-life experience of where theory or thought leadership meets practice and brings transformational change. The challenge is to get people and organisations to work together, not against each other.

There has to be learning from the Canadian experience. We could all do with a dose of collective impact. Not for our own health, but the health of those whose daily existence is entrenched systemic poverty.

Poverty is the real challenge, but so is distrust, polarisation, competition and personal ego amongst those wanting to end poverty.

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Dr Andrew Curtis, co-founder and director of **The Dragonfly Collective**, sums up how collective impact works in practice, in this case in Canada.
(With thanks to @ProBonoNews)

The NDIS needs a new plan

David Gilchrist

UWA White Paper calls for fit-for-purpose disability system in Australia

https://www.uwa.edu.au/projects/six-years-and-counting-the-ndis-and-the-australian-disability-services-system

[Following up on our previous issue on the NDIS…With thanks to ProBono News and Wendy Williams]

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is not working for everyone and change is needed now, a new report has found. A comprehensive white paper from the University of Western Australia analysed 63 reports that have been written on the NDIS since it was first launched in 2013. It paints a damning picture of how the system is currently being managed, and argues a significant part of the problem is the lack of an industry plan focused on reforming the Australian disability services system as a whole, rather than the NDIS as a standalone element.

This, combined with a short-term approach to problem solving, the report argues, has resulted in a system that only works for some service users and providers. "*It is increasingly evident that it leaves major gaps in terms of responsibility allocation and funding capacity between state/territory and the Commonwealth governments in critical service areas such as housing, health, education and employment. It also leaves states and territories to pick up the bill when people with disability are diverted to other health and welfare systems due to supply breakdown.*"

Report co-author Penny Knight, research fellow at UWA and managing director of BaxterLawley, told Pro Bono News the aim of the paper was to shake up people's thinking and encourage them to take a more mature view: "*The aim of the white paper is to try and draw a line under the work that has been done and encourage people to step back and think from a wider perspective on is this heading in the right direction and where could we go that would be better of this.*" She said there were some fundamental assumptions underpinning the way the NDIS had been developed and rolled out that had not been questioned and were causing problems. Some of the assumptions are explicit, such as around the existence of a functional market, some are more implicit assumptions about the

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efficiency of the sector. "*The expectation was that after six years we would start to see competition driving efficiency and reducing prices, that is based on the assumption that the existing system was inefficient and was overcharging, and what we're seeing is the opposite, prices have actually gone up. So that assumption is implicit but it's never challenged.*"

The white paper, designed to describe a way forward, warns there is a significant risk that ignoring the mounting evidence could cause "*destruction*" in terms of the system's capacity to deliver appropriate and fit for purpose services and supports, increasing difficulty for people with disability and cost for governments. It cautioned that people with disability were "*the shock absorbers*" for any volatility caused by poor policy and practice.

Some of the issues highlighted included: a break down in pre-existing inter-governmental and intra-governmental service structures; increased uncertainty preventing investment and expansion by service providers; significant workforce issues; and pricing based on funding availability rather than sound data on needs and costs of services. Knight said while the system worked well for some people, the concern was that it didn't work well for everyone: "*Our concern is that, as much as we want to have support for disability, we actually have to build it so it aligns with those mainstream services, not create a completely separate model of governance. While it sits as it does, it is quite separated and isolated, which is inefficient and also results in poor service outcomes for many people.*" The paper is calling for the development of an industry plan and local decision-making framework as a priority.

What are the issues?
- The NDIS is not working for many it is intended to support
- The 2018/19 $4 billion+ underutilisation and clear signs of unsustainability in the disability services sector confirm this reality
- The roll out of the NDIS was always going to be difficult and mistakes were always going to be made. Good leadership means that we learn from this experience and modify our approach in a timely manner
- A significant part of the problem is the lack of an industry plan focused on reforming the Australian Disability Services System not just the NDIS, combined with a short-term approach to problem solving—changes being made are not positively modifying the system itself they are tinkering with band aid solutions
- We now have a significant body of evidence in 63 separate reports, primarily focused on the NDIS, written since 2013 relating to problems and potential solutions across the system
- People with disability are the shock absorbers for any volatility caused by poor policy and practice—they are the ones that ultimately feel the impact of systemic challenges

- There is a significant risk that being unresponsive to the gathering of evidence will cause destruction in terms of the system's capacity to deliver appropriate and fit for purpose services and supports, increasing difficulty for people with disability and cost for governments.

What do we need?
- Leadership must accept the challenges and have the courage to drive forward in new ways where experience tells us what we are currently doing is not working
- Leadership must accept that the successful implementation of the NDIS requires a fit for purpose approach driven by a culture of clarity, certainty, accountability, collaboration and flexibility
- A comprehensive industry plan and responsible investment funded out of the savings from underutilisation, to guide the development of industry and support government decision making, and which utilises the decades of experience & capacity that exists nationally to ensure the whole system works
- A national governance model and policy framework allowing for policy and investment to be informed collaboratively by all involved in the system including people with disability, governments and provider peak bodies
- A local decision-making model providing fit-for-purpose allocation of resources and capacity to make decisions in the community where those decisions have to be lived with
- Transparency of outcomes to ensure we are all working toward a future where people with disability are receiving fit for purpose services & supports and are maintaining decision making capacity and agency

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David Gilchrist, Professor
University of Western Australia
david.gilchrist@uwa.edu.au

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In traditional language, there is no word for disability

Damian Griffis

Get thee behind me, tech: putting humans before social media

Douglas Rushkoff

**We have always been 'come as you are'.
The disability system in Australia is upside down in many ways.**

(Damian is a descendant of the Worimi people of the Manning Valley in NSW. He is CEO of the First Peoples Disability Network. In 2014, he won the Tony Fitzgerald (Community Individual) Memorial Award at the Australian Human Rights Awards.)

By any measure, Australia's First Peoples with disabilities are among some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia today. This is because they often face discrimination based on their Aboriginality and/or disability. Meeting the needs of First Peoples with disabilities is one of the most urgent and critical social justice issues in Australia today.

Yet despite the many unmet needs, the situation for the vast majority of First Peoples with disability remains largely unknown to the wider community. In the experience of the **First Peoples Disability Network**, we say that the majority of First Peoples with disabilities live in poverty. They also lack access to disability appropriate housing. Many young Aboriginal people with disability cannot attend school or can only participate in a very limited way because their local school can't accommodate their disability. And we have the extraordinary ongoing situation of the indefinite detention of First Peoples with disabilities in Australian prisons, particularly in the Northern Territory. The human rights situation and the violations experienced by many First Peoples with disabilities are often deeply disturbing. The Disability Royal Commission is likely to expose, often for the very first time, the serious abuse and neglect of First Peoples with disability.

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Digital media theorist Douglas Rushkoff argues technology needs to optimize 'human flourishing'

CBC Radio (19/12/2019)

Digital media theorist Douglas Rushkoff remembers when the military offered the internet — the entire internet — to AT&T for a dollar, and AT&T politely declined. He also remembers believing in its original promise: that it could be a place where human beings would encounter one another authentically. He remembers the initial attempt to monetize the web at the dawn of the millennium and how relieved he and fellow early web denizens were that big business had been rebuffed.

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All that is ancient history now, and a rather quaint tale at that. "*When the dot-com crash happened, people like me, we all celebrated! The internet fought off another infection*," Rushkoff said in his keynote address at the *4th Waterloo Symposium on Technology & Society at the Balsillie School of International Affairs*, organised by the *Centre for Security Governance* — the basis for this IDEAS episode. "*First, it was the military. We got them off there so we could all talk and play. Now, business came and they want to sell things ... we got rid of that and it's social again. And then it seemed like social media would be people reclaiming the net. But ... social media ended up pivoting over into a business as well*."

Now Google, Facebook, Twitter, and their many cousins are the online colonizers. Apps and portals belong to a handful of billionaires and they're rife with algorithms that deliberately mess with us. Rushkoff has witnessed the development of these algorithms first-hand. "*There's an entire division at Stanford [University] called '**captology**' ... It's a division that teaches developers how to capture human beings in a piece of technology. They learn to take the algorithms from Las Vegas slot machines and port them into our news feeds. These are the folks that know how to go down into your brain stem and trigger your amygdala, by any means necessary.*" And why is '**captology**' such an integral part of social media? Rushkoff says it's because human beings have now become the commodities that drive the technological economy.

Computer colonization

In the wake of the Second World War, it became clear to the Western powers that continuing to colonize various countries for cheap resources was no longer paying off. At the same time, computers were in their infancy. Rushkoff quotes a bit of writing from that period; a 1945 essay in The Atlantic magazine, by Vannevar Bush, called '***As We May Think***'. Bush's essay is widely known in Silicon Valley. "*He theorized about the first computer. This idea for a 'memex' and how it would work and it would store our memory and all that. But Vannevar Bush was a guy who was in charge of computers during the war, and he wrote this essay for The Atlantic as a way of arguing to Eisenhower that you've got to keep developing computer technology, because even though we don't need it for the war, we need it for the economy, we can't colonize other places anymore. They're pushing back. We can't take more stuff from them … We need a new landscape to colonize. And computers would give that. But the thing that we decided to colonize with them is our own minds.*"

Douglas Rushkoff is a prolific author whose latest book, *Team Human*, is an urgent manifesto. He calls for a reaffirmation of our social nature, a clear understanding of what social media and artificial intelligence are doing to us and a recognition that being human is a team sport. His ***Team Human podcast*** (https://teamhuman.fm/) features conversations with people in a variety of fields who reflect this understanding in their own lives and work. Rushkoff's not only sounding the alarm, though. He's encouraging people to see clearly and to imagine a way forward — one that identifies what divides us, and celebrates what unites us. He imagines that we're at the dawn of a digital renaissance. "*What we retrieve in a digital renaissance is the digits. It's not some computer thing. It means we're getting our hands back into things. That means we're not just consumers, we're producers. It means we are makers. It means we're actually participating, not just spectating. That's the digital difference. So instead of using technology to optimize human beings for the market, which is really what we're doing with digital tech today, we can optimize technology instead for the collective human flourishing.*"

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Low point: The rush to climb Uluru before the ban exposes a hollow centre

Andrew Tate

(in The New Daily - 6/10/2019; with thanks and permission)

"*Heads on 'em like mic*e". It's an old Australian bush saying expressing surprise at the large numbers of any given thing. There sure have been a lot of mice heads at Uluru in recent months. With the climbing of the world's largest monolith set to be banned on October 26, Australians – and let's be clear, mostly us white guys – have been turning up en masse to stake bragging rights for the rest of eternity. The images on social media this week of tourists lining up to get to the top of the rock – not to mention the numerous Facebook posts of ruddy faced kids with mum and dad surveying vast miles of red sand – highlight how far we still have to go in respecting traditional culture.

Sure, we seem able to delight in the achievements of Indigenous sports stars – well, provided they don't call out casual racism – and we love the warm fuzzies that come from international visitors embracing Indigenous art. But let's not do anything too drastic. No, nothing that impinges on our right to do whatever the hell we like when we are on land that has spiritual significance to the first Australians. Imagine being the "*my bucket list is going way out of my way to do something traditional owners have specifically said they don't want me to do*" person.

Last chance to climb natural wonder Uluru

Before the world-famous climb closes, many have travelled there in the hope of making a final dash

October 26 marks the 34th anniversary of the handover of the Uluru title deeds to Anangu traditional owners by then Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen. The land was leased back for 99 years as a National Park. The closure of the climb – which was only made possible in the 1960s by the installation of a handrail – has been many years in the making. It has even been done softly, softly to avoid hurting the feelings of those who want to climb, not to mention with one eye on the millions in tourist dollars that are at stake.

The decision to close the climb was tied to a decrease in people taking the opportunity, with an education campaign in the past decade instead encouraging the stunning cultural walks around the base of the rock. This has had the desired effect.

"In recent years the numbers of those wending their way up the now scarred rock face have dropped from above 75% of visitors to below 30%."

Like many people of my generation, as a young man I also climbed Uluru. There was not much else to do there then. But I've visited several times since and with the cultural programs on offer there is little enough time on a normal duration visit to take it all in. Climbing was what you did unthinkingly in the early 1980s before the land was handed back and when most Australians still thought it impossible for a dingo to snatch a baby from a campground. After many years of trying to promote understanding of the traditional reasons for not climbing, the ban is finally here – and yet it is clearly still not accepted by some. While the climbing path is said to overlay parts of the path of the sacred sand python, in Australia's seemingly endless and pointless culture wars this is reason enough for Pauline Hanson and her ilk to invite public ridicule of the need for a ban.

Meanwhile, the same culture warriors are staunch in their defence of religious freedoms for the rest of Australia. Try abseiling down the spire of St Patrick's cathedral to the now famous sacristy and see how far you get. What is missing in all these debates about culture is that we really have none – Australia's uniqueness has been ebbing away for years as we morph from forelock-tugging wannabe Brits into a pale little America. We are a country without our own flag or head of state. Our politics has been dominated by wedges on immigration, refugees, dole bludgers and terrorism. No great heights there. Our idioms are more American these days than old Australian. The notion of mateship extends, as our smirking prime minister would have it, to a guy like Donald Trump – who once would never have passed a country pub sniff test. Our egalitarian streak is strung out, we trample our wild places for the economy's sake and and put self-interest ahead of all else.

If the race to climb Uluru can be seen as a yearning for a simpler time when Australia was 'relaxed and comfortable' and lacking in political correctness, then there is one thing the pipsqueaks at the summit should consider. The real stories are all down below. Stripped of any reference points, on top of Uluru there's nothing much to see but sand and blowflies for endless miles.

Up there, alone with Australia's emptiness, all those mice look even smaller.

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The best country in the world…
but not for activism

Maggie Coggan

New research reveals Australia's civil society is under increasing threat

Maggie Coggan is a journalist at Pro Bono News

Media raids and the introduction of data surveillance laws have seen Australia's civic rating downgraded, a new report raising serious concerns the government is trying to "*muzzle criticism*". The downgrade means that while Australia still allows individuals and civil society organisations to exercise freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, violations of these rights is also happening.

The findings were published in the latest **CIVICUS Monitor**, an ongoing research project between the global civil society alliance, CIVICUS and 20 global research partners. This year's report found there were 24 countries with closed (the most restrictive rating) civic space, 38 countries with repressed space and 49 with obstructed space. Just 43 countries received an open rating and 42 countries (including Australia) were rated narrowed; 9 countries changed ratings since 2018; 7 country's ratings worsened and 2 improved. "*This indicates that repression of peaceful civic activism continues to be a widespread crisis for civil society in most parts of the world,*" the report said.

Following a year of regular monitoring, the report said incursions on free speech, the increasing use of surveillance and crackdown on protesters in Australia were behind the downgrade. CIVICUS pointed to police **raids on ABC headquarters** over a two-year-old report detailing killings by members of the Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan, and **raids on the homes of Sunday Telegraph and News Corp journalists**, after they reported on plans by the government to expand civilian surveillance powers as areas of serious concern.

Lyndal Rowlands, UN advisor at CIVICUS, said there was a clear climate of intimidation by the state to discourage dissent: "*Australians have always enjoyed a healthy scepticism of unchecked power, yet more recently it seems like the only people getting punished for government wrongdoing in Australia are the people who courageously reveal it.*" Government attempts to silence whistleblowers and crackdowns on environmental climate activism in Australia were also criticised in the report: "*The right to peaceful assembly, association and expression is essential to our democracy – rights that Morrison has a duty to protect, even if he disagrees with the message.*"

Josef Benedict, CIVICUS civic space researcher, told Pro Bono News for Australia to improve its rating there needed to be serious push back by civil society on restrictive laws, such as the anti-encryption laws, and an end to crackdowns on press freedom.

"There needs to be laws that enshrine human rights in legislation, particularly the rights to privacy protection and freedom especially."

He said with much of the Asia Pacific region sitting in the obstructed or repressed zone, it was important for Australia to set a good example for other nations: "*People are seeking out how they can mobilise and organise themselves across the globe and fight back, and I think in Australia we need to be setting an example.*"

A full copy of the report can be found at: https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019

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# How Liberals Left the White Working Class Behind

Erica Etelson

White working-class anger has been simmering for decades, due to globalization, wage stagnation, and the myth of meritocracy.

(From our friends at Yes! Magazine – probably some lessons for the 'left' in Australia. Obviously, 'liberals' in this article are the US version of the 'left'… often left-of-centre Democrats. Below an excerpt of *Erica Etelson*'s important book. Creative Commons)

Erica Etelson is a writer, community activist and certified Powerful Non-Defensive Communication facilitator. A former human rights attorney, she has advocated in support of welfare recipients, prisoners, indigenous peoples, immigrants and environmental activists. She has also organized for clean, community-owned energy as part of a just transition to a local, low-carbon economy. Following the 2016 election, Etelson became active in the resistance movement and in left-right dialogue initiatives.

Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary, Lawrence Summers, admits that he never visited Rust Belt cities devastated by NAFTA. Displaced White workers "*weren't heavily on our radar screen*," he said, noting that the Democratic Party base is a "*coalition of cosmopolitan elite and diversity*." Summers' "cosmopolitan elite" are highly educated, affluent people who travel the world, live in ethnically diverse cities and are in constant global communication. For them, the benefits of globalisation are myriad, and the downsides invisible. But for those whose idea of the good life is more slow-paced and parochial, global economic and communication networks are a threat to their livelihoods, their way of life, and their communities, which have been ravaged by foreclosures, offshoring, and automation.

> Our economy is being rocked by hugely disruptive enterprises that have reduced many workers to precarious, underpaid piecework in the gig economy and Amazon fulfillment centres. Artificial intelligence breakthroughs will only elevate the level of disruption.
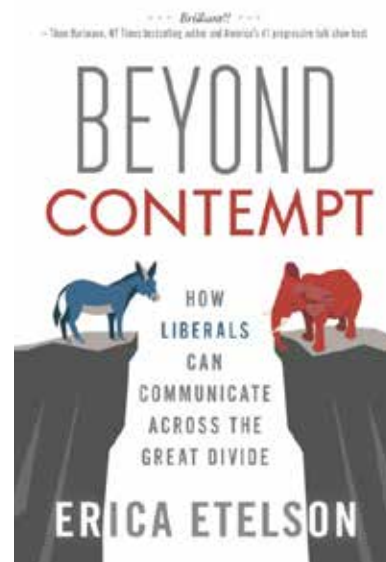
Successful technocrats sometimes sneer at others' failure to get with the program. Though many affluent liberals have compassion for poor folks, others lean into the myth of the meritocracy to rationalise their wealth, glossing over the intrinsic inequality of a meritocracy in which, by definition, there are winners and losers. "*You're all fucking welfare cases*!" a protestor yelled at Trump rally goers in Albuquerque. "*You just don't want anyone else getting any*!" A heartwarming moment of working-class solidarity it was not.

Fewer than half of Americans born in 1980 will earn as much as their parents, compared to 79% of those born in 1950 and 92% of those born in 1940. Low-wage White workers have seen their pay stagnate or decrease for decades. (Black and Latinx workers' wages have risen but still lag far behind Whites'.) Since 1971, the percentage of middle-class households has fallen by 10%—half of those households joined the upper class and half the lower. Little wonder then that the middle class looks with hopeful anticipation upon the rich and with anxious dread upon the poor.

In *The Limousine Liberal*, historian Steve Fraser traces the rise of right-wing populism to the Nixon presidency when blue-collar Whites realized that "*their social contract with New Deal liberalism was expiring*." Structural unemployment and wage stagnation were taking their toll, but the Democrats offered no solutions. Nixon offered no help to the working class either; instead, he celebrated their folkways, initiating a culture war steeped in noble traditions like hard work and humility and pernicious ones like patriarchy and White supremacy. Reagan and George W. Bush carried on in this vein, with Bush going so far with the plutocratic populist ruse as to provide hard hats to the corporate lobbyists who populated his campaign rallies.

Nixon voters' discontent was not only financial. They bemoaned the atomistic quality of modern life writ large. On that score, the situation has only deteriorated. The social fabric is weak, civic participation is anaemic and poor people are regarded as losers, when they're regarded at all.

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The bipartisan myth of the meritocracy has effectively displaced altruistic values of community and care, resulting in social conditions shitty enough to impel nearly 5% of Americans to try to take their own lives.

Coincident with economic precarity and incohesion are several significant demographic and cultural shifts: The proportion of Whites in America has decreased from 88% in 1970 to 72% in 2010. Today, women compete with men in the work-place, gender identities are in flux, multiculturalism is the norm, marriage equality is the law of the land and there's a new lexicon for discussing race and gender—and impatience toward those who aren't yet hip to it. Whites are, on the whole, overrepresented in higher education, politics, corporate management and prestigious professions like law, medicine, and journalism. But not working-class Whites. While people of colour and middle-class White women are slowly gaining representation, poor Whites' stars are not rising. On the contrary, their well-being, as measured by life expectancy, health, educational attainment, and income, is declining.

These deteriorating social conditions set the stage for race hustlers to forge a counterfeit bond between rich and non-rich Whites—a bond that tends to suppress any claims the have-nots might make on the wealth of the haves. As Briahna Joy Gray astutely argues, absent a class analysis, calling out Trump's racism can perversely bolster his position as the great White saviour who has the best interests of White Americans at heart (thereby obscuring his avaricious allegiance to crony capitalism).

> Racist precepts were constructed to justify the slave trade and have served handily ever since to pit poor Whites against Blacks in the capitalist rat race.

As economic inequality hits new extremes, oligarchs are more than happy to have non-rich Whites blame immigrants and people of colour for their inability to get ahead. Those who are down-and-out have one of three explanations for their circumstances—the system is flawed; they're losers who have only themselves to blame; or it's the fault of scapegoats and their liberal coddlers. To the extent that economic elites seal-off door No. 1, our democracy is imperilled by the temptation to enter door No. 3.

Most liberals understand that gender equality and racial and ethnic diversity are not the cause of economic decline, but put yourself in the shoes of a White conservative living in an area undergoing rapid diversification. Ku Klux Klan leader Rachel Pendergraft says that hate groups' numbers are swelling with new members who feel like "*strangers in their own country.*" Even if one isn't

experiencing downward mobility themselves, seeing others in their community struggle—and mistakenly linking those struggles to racial diversity and liberal immigration policy—makes them worry about what the future holds for them as the White minority.

Liberal professionals look upon nationalism with unmitigated horror, because all they see is the racist aspect. What they're missing is how nationalism is a reaction to the detrimental impacts of globalisation. Two-thirds of working-class Whites and three-quarters of Trump primary voters see trade deals as harmful to American workers and there's plenty of evidence that they're right (and that foreign labourers are being exploited in the bargain as well). When Trump tells them he will bring back their jobs by shredding unpopular trade and climate deals, that sounds pretty damn good.

After NAFTA passed, the president of the electrical workers' union vowed revenge: "*Clinton screwed us and we won't forget it.*" Twenty-four years and a few dozen Trump anti-NAFTA jeremiads later, rank-and-file electrical union members welcomed Trump to their Philadelphia job site. Minnesota iron and steel workers, too, say they've never forgiven President Clinton for NAFTA and that Trump won them over with his outspoken commitment to killing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Trade deals, they say, are their *No. 1 issue* and the reason the once-solidly blue North Star state is turning red. Liberal Democrats are right: We're not going back to the closeted, corseted, Jim Crow 1950s. But we're not going back to the Clintonian 1990s, either. That much was made evident in 2016.

City University of New York sociologist Charlie Post summed up the 2016 debacle like this: "*Traditionally Democratic working-class voters were faced with the choice between a neoliberal who disdained working people and a right-wing populist who promised to bring back well-paying manufacturing jobs. Many stayed home, and a tiny minority shifted their allegiances from the first African-American president to an open racist and xenophobe.*" Or, to put it in Michael Moore's less academic terms, Trump's victory was "the biggest fuck you ever recorded in human history."

Post's conclusion aligns with the views of Trump voters in blue-collar Howard County, Iowa, which Obama won by 20 points and Trump won by a staggering 41. Pat Murray, a press-brake operator and Democratic member of the county Board of Supervisors, said, "*Democrats always say we're going to fight for the working people. The last few elections, we haven't shown that at all.*" Murray didn't vote for Trump, but his brethren did. And in interview after interview, the reason they gave was Clinton's elitism. They caucused for Sanders and, when he lost the primary, turned a desperate eye on Trump.

Blue-collar Whites weren't Clinton's only detractors. Civil rights scholar Michelle Alexander argued during the primary that Clinton didn't deserve Black people's vote; evidently, she wasn't alone. Eleven percent of Black 2012

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Obama voters stayed home in 2016, representing a loss of 1.6 million votes, many of them in swing states that Trump won by razor-thin margins. Some Black Milwaukee residents told reporters they were disillusioned with how little their lives had improved after eight years of Obama and couldn't bring themselves to vote for Clinton. As pollster and strategist Stanley Greenberg notes, "*The Democrats don't have a 'White working-class problem.' They have a 'working-class problem*,'" borne of decades of alignment with the economic interests of the elite.

To hear political analyst Thomas Frank tell it in *Listen, Liberal*, too many Democrats have stood by and watched—if not cheer-leaded—as the invisible hand of the market grabbed Black, brown and White middle-Americans' wealth and handed it over to oligarchs. Democrats in the Clinton mould have, as Open Markets Institute Policy Director Matt Stoller puts it, "*replaced a New Deal-era understanding of economic and political democracy with an ideology that justified the pillaging of working-class Americans by a new group of political and economic elites*." The Democratic Party has moved so far to the right on economic issues that Bernie Sanders' 2016 platform looked like Dwight Eisenhower's! Having hewed to a centrism that has skewed so far to the right, and having made little effort to reposition the centre further to the left, Democrats' working-class mantle was, by 2016, threadbare.

In becoming the party of upper-middle-class professionals that, as Frank puts it, "*no longer speaks to the people on the losing end of a free-market system that is becoming more brutal and more arrogant by the day,*" an opening has been created for the right-wing to co-opt class and for Trump to disingenuously inveigh against the establishment. What's more, Frank laments, "*The task of deploring and denouncing the would-be dictator Trump has entirely crowded out the equally important task of assessing where the Democratic Party went wrong…They don't need to persuade anyone. They need only to let their virtue shine bright for all to see.*"

You may not agree that neoliberal economic free trade and de-regulatory policies are to blame for our country's economic woes, and my task here isn't to convince you to reject market capitalism or to see the meritocracy as mythical and arbitrary. I'm suggesting that there are social and political conditions, other than or in addition to bigotry, that make many working- and lower-middle- class people feel "*left behind*." If they hired Trump to blow up a system they see as rigged, campaigns that promise to return to the good ol' days of 2015—before Trump ruined everything—will not inspire, nor will conversations that refuse to acknowledge how the good ol' days were rife with cynicism and despair. Trump's solutions to complex problems are dangerous, simplistic and cruel, but the problems are real.

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New Year's Day, Lake Tyers Beach

Gabrielle Higgins

Where have they come from
these black leaves
which litter our garden and lie in the street
without invitation?
We didn't plant such a tree.
Their dark beauty is just
a disaster.
The answer is
everywhere
everywhere

What is that smell
at the heart of the smoke
that is occupying the air
and every breath I take?
We didn't light a fire,
would never let such a monster
loose in the land.
The answer is
everything
everything

Who must now mourn the country killed
and help heal the injured?
everyone
everyone

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Image credit: Frank Flynn

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There is an antidote to demagoguery – it's called political rewilding

George Monbiot

You can blame Jeremy Corbyn for Boris Johnson, and Hillary Clinton for Donald Trump. You can blame the Indian challengers for Narendra Modi, the Brazilian opposition for Jair Bolsonaro, and left and centre parties in Australia, the Philippines, Hungary, Poland and Turkey for similar electoral disasters. Or you could recognise that what we are witnessing is a global phenomenon. Yes, there were individual failings in all these cases, though the failings were very different: polar opposites in the cases of Corbyn and Clinton. But when the same thing happens in many nations, it's time to recognise the pattern, and see that heaping blame on particular people and parties fixes nothing.

> In these nations, people you wouldn't trust to post a letter for you have been elected to the highest office. There, as widely predicted, they behave like a gang of vandals given the keys to an art gallery, "improving" the great works in their care with spray cans, box cutters and lump hammers.

In the midst of global emergencies, they rip down environmental protections and climate agreements, and trash the regulations that constrain capital and defend the poor. They wage war on the institutions that are supposed to restrain their powers while, in some cases, committing extravagant and deliberate outrages against the rule of law. They use impunity as a political weapon, revelling in their ability to survive daily scandals, any one of which would destroy a normal politician.

In 2014, Finland started a programme to counter fake news. The result is that Finns have been ranked the people most resistant to post-truth. Something has changed: not just in the UK and the US, but in many parts of the world.

A new politics, funded by oligarchs, built on sophisticated cheating and provocative lies, using dark ads and conspiracy theories on social media, has perfected the art of persuading the poor to vote for the interests of the very rich. We must understand what we are facing, and the new strategies required to resist it.

If there is a formula for the new demagoguery, there must also be a formula for confronting and overturning it. I don't yet have a complete answer, but I believe there are some strands we can draw together. In Finland, on the day of our general election, Boris Johnson's antithesis became prime minister: the 34-year-old Sanna Marin, who is strong, humble and collaborative. Finland's politics, emerging from its peculiar history, cannot be replicated here. But there is one crucial lesson. In 2014, the country started a programme to counter fake news, teaching people how to recognise and confront it. The result is that Finns have been ranked, in a recent study of 35 nations, the people most resistant to post-truth politics.

Don't expect Johnson's government, or Trump's, to inoculate people against their own lies. But this need not be a government initiative. This week, the US Democrats published a guide to confronting online disinformation. They will seek to hold Google, Facebook and Twitter to account. I would like to see progressive parties everywhere form a global coalition promoting digital literacy, and pressuring social media platforms to stop promoting falsehoods. But this is the less important task.

The much bigger change is this: to stop seeking to control people from the centre. At the moment, the political model for almost all parties is to drive change from the top down.

They write a manifesto, that they hope to turn into government policy, which may then be subject to a narrow and feeble consultation, which then leads to legislation, which then leads to change. I believe the best antidote to demagoguery is the opposite process: radical trust. To the greatest extent possible, parties and governments should trust communities to identify their own needs and make their own decisions.

Over the past few years, our relationship with nature has begun to be transformed by a new approach: rewilding. Bizarre as this might sound, I believe this thinking could help inform a new model of politics. It is time for political rewilding. When you try to control nature from the top down, you find yourself in a constant battle with it. Conservation groups in this country often seek to treat complex living systems as if they were simple ones. Through intensive management – cutting, grazing and burning – they strive to beat nature into submission until it meets their idea of how it should behave. But ecologies, like all complex systems, are highly dynamic and adaptive,

evolving (when allowed) in emergent and unpredictable ways.

Eventually, and inevitably, these attempts at control fail. Nature reserves managed this way tend to lose abundance and diversity, and require ever more extreme intervention to meet the irrational demands of their stewards. They also become vulnerable. In all systems, complexity tends to be resilient, while simplicity tends to be fragile. Keeping nature in a state of arrested development in which most of its natural processes and its keystone species (the animals that drive these processes) are missing makes it highly susceptible to climate breakdown and invasive species. But rewilding – allowing dynamic, spontaneous organisation to reassert itself – can result in a sudden flourishing, often in completely unexpected ways, with a great improvement in resilience.

The same applies to politics. Mainstream politics, controlled by party machines, has sought to reduce the phenomenal complexity of human society into a simple, linear model that can be controlled from the centre. The political and economic systems it creates are simultaneously highly unstable and lacking in dynamism; susceptible to collapse, as many northern towns can testify, while unable to regenerate themselves. They become vulnerable to the toxic, invasive forces of ethno-nationalism and supremacism.

But in some parts of the world, towns and cities have begun to rewild politics. Councils have catalysed mass participation, then – to the greatest extent possible – stepped back and allowed it to evolve. Classic examples include participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre in Brazil, the Decide Madrid system in Spain, and the Better Reykjavik programme in Iceland. Local people have reoccupied the political space that had been captured by party machines and top-down government. They have worked out together what their communities need and how to make it happen, refusing to let politicians frame the questions or determine the answers. The results have been extraordinary: a massive re-engagement in politics, particularly among marginalised groups, and dramatic improvements in local life. Participatory politics does not require the blessing of central government, just a confident and far-sighted local authority.

Is this a formula for a particular party to regain power? No. It's much bigger than that. It's a formula for taking back control, making our communities more resilient and the machinations of any government in Westminster less relevant. This radical devolution is the best defence against capture by any political force. Let's change the nature of politics in this country. Let's allow the fascinating, unpredictable dynamics of a functioning society to emerge. Let the wild rumpus begin.

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call for articles

Volume 18 #1 Issue 69, (Submissions due: February 15, 2020)
Community Development and grassroots economic and politics: from utopian to survival thinking?
The 'grassroots' have always been one of the staple words evoked in community development writing and praxis… together with other words and concepts like 'bottom-up is good' and 'top-down is bad' and associated ideas and practices and activism, it has – sort of – been replaced by a vocabulary of 'community engagement', 'participation' and 'inclusion' and has relegated the former topical areas to a past utopian vocabulary – if not just simply disappearing it…
But we think we're discerning a kind of revival… in the context of the many spreading initiatives aiming to 'deal with' the climate and global heating emergencies, localism and 'new economic' and alternative political thinking has started to gain serious consideration again… from Local Futures to Peer-to-Peer work, from local cooperatives, suburban agriculture, local and regional distributional systems, the 'development of community' is getting in the limelight again…
We're inviting contributions to document this evolution with the added hope that we may revisit our vocabularies of the past and test them for applicabilities and good thinking for the present and hopefully for a future…

Volume 18 #2 Issue 70, (Submissions due: May 15, 2020)
The School Strikers: what were they thinking…?
It seems clear that 'we' seasoned community action people from the high-noon periods of social action, demonstrations and protest could learn a thing or two from the young activists who, across the world, have been motivating millions of young and old(er) people to take to the streets and let power-holders know what needs to happen around climate heating, pollution and the many other issues which have resulted from a profligate 'modernist' and 'developmental' and 'progressive' set of attitudes and practices… We are trying to share their thoughts with us… so that we may all learn!

Volume 18 #3 Issue 71, (Submissions due: Sep 15, 2020)
Community (development) and neighbourhood houses: still a match made in heaven?
For a long time, community centres and neighbourhood houses have been considered and used as the 'hearts' of the community or neighbourhood… until the not-so-sudden arrival of neo0liberalism and its imperative to impose 'fee-for-service' on about everything and anything funded and offered through 'public' money… and many houses and centres switches to become 'providers' of training or other 'products'… and the mission to be and stay 'meeting places' for local groups including for 'grassroots' initiatives and such became – at best – secondary and – at worst – disappeared …. Anecdotally, we have learned that the tide is turning again… but is it really a 'tide'…? Or does it remain restricted to some few isolated examples…? And if it's the beginning of a tide, what are its elements and the good steps to be taken by the house/centres who would want to reclaim their 'community' mission? We invite stories, evaluations, reflective pieces about what's going on in the 'sector'…

OVERVIEW OF NC MATERIAL

NC publishes articles and other material about or broadly relating to community development theory and practice with particular emphasis on:
- Manuscripts that reflect creative ways of social betterment for all, of eliminating inequality and fostering social justice, and of regenerating the ecology on which we depend for our survival.
- Manuscripts that encourage and further the effective and productive interaction between theories/theorists and practices/practitioners of community development; in the refereed and the thematic sections of the journal, NC will offer examples of creative theory- practice integration.
- Manuscripts that reflect the many forms in which the principles of community development are expressed and embodied in Australia and overseas. Poems, cartoons and other illustrative (and printable) materials are welcome.

Usually, each issue of NC will feature a '*thematic*' section, focussing on one specific and relevant aspect of Community Development (the themes for the next four issues are announced on the back pages of each issue); a '*refereed*' section with articles not related to the 'theme' of the issue but aimed - more specifically but not exclusively – to also serve more formal academic purposes; a '*networking*' section to which existing networks working in the spirt of community development are invited to contribute with shorter informative articles documenting their work and concerns; a '*news*' section with information of (possible) interest to critical engagement in communities.

Articles for the thematic section:
Non-refereed or refereed articles or contributions for the *thematic* section (or for the news and networks sections) can be up to 4,000 words with an introduction (or 'abstract') of 100-150 words for the longer ones, featuring the main points of the article (these introductions may be used for on the NC Website).

Articles for the refereed section:
(or for the thematic section – see above)
Articles will be refereed (in the 'double blind' method) by an appointed panel with experience and knowledge of the proposed topic and will normally be 3,000-4,000 words in length (but negotiable if larger). Articles will deal with community development issues and themes in a substantial, engaging and accessible way. Generally, a clear, concise, straightforward writing style, using direct language with a minimum of specialised jargon, is preferred for refereed articles; they must appeal to and be readily understood by the general NC reader rather than only by academic 'specialists'. An introduction/abstract of 100-150 words, featuring the main points of the article, may be published on the NC website. On a separate cover sheet, authors will supply their full name, highest qualifications, current position and name of organisation if applicable. Succinct sub-headings throughout, guiding the reader, are appreciated; whilst not encouraged, endnotes are accepted as are bibliographies. The Harvard referencing style is recommended but not expected; we encourage *consistency* in referencing, whichever style is preferred by the author(s).

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Also welcome:
Review essays, book reviews, letters and comments; these will generally comment on important current texts or events and contextual news in the community development (and related) area(s), outlining the relevance and value for the NC readership. Reviews are generally not exceeding 1,000 words.

punu uti — sun down but tree outlines still visible

manta uti — sun down but ground still visible

tjintu tjarpanyi — sun going into the earth

Pitjantjatjara language
Traditionally spoken by the Pitjantjatjara people of Central Australia

punu uti — sun down but tree outlines still visible
manta uti — sun down but ground still visible
tjintu tjarpanyi — sun going into the earth