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## Kimberley Transitions, Collaborating to Care for Our Common Home: Beginnings...

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### **Cover Photo**

Majala Wilderness Centre, Balginjirr Community, by Anne Poelina.

### **Cover Artwork: 'Seeing Country' by Nyapuru Laurel**

Nyapuru Laurel was a Walmajarri artist and educator from the Kadjina Community (part of Millijidee Station) in the Kimberley region of Western Australia on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. Along with her sisters, brothers and mothers, Nyapuru advocated to set up the remote Wulungarra Community School and, through her work, contributed to the passing on of knowledge of the land, water, law and culture to future generations. She passed away in August 2015. Extracts from 'Seeing Country' are located throughout the document.



## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Acronyms**

COP:	Conferences of the Parties
IUCN:	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KALaCC	Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre
NBY:	Nyamba Buru Yawuru
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDA:	University of Notre Dame Australia
WA:	Western Australia



# Abstract

This scoping paper is a preliminary introduction to the aspirations, interrelated literature and research involved in development of the *Kimberley Transitions Project*. Our focus is on Western Australia's Kimberley region, a landscape of immense natural and cultural significance. Along with the rest of Australia, and indeed the world in which we all live, the Kimberley is on the verge of major climate, political, social and economic change. The direction of changes being proposed by governments and industry are regularly criticised, both globally and locally, by individuals and organisations concerned about damage to its rich biodiversity and cultural integrity. With the aim of collaboratively generating Kimberley-based responses grounded in local knowledges, a mix of disciplines and emerging international theories, scholars and relevant groups have come together to form a Kimberley-wide practical and shared research agenda. One of the key influences behind the project is an international transitions movement which aims to generate collaborative change incorporating a process of transition. Locally identified issues using local knowledges and capacity are central to its evolution. A conceptual and theoretical framing known as 'transitions discourse' is also emerging internationally and nationally, one that foregrounds diverse epistemologies and challenges mainstream economics and associated ideologies, such as neoliberalism. Via the *Kimberley Transitions* project, Kimberley-based researchers and collaborators aim to support and further document social, cultural and economic change inspired by the transitions movement and informed by transition discourses. It has the Kimberley landscape and people at its heart; a transformative approach featuring cultural healing, intellectual rigour and an ethos aimed at enduring, practical and interconnected sustainable outcomes.



**Transition is a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world (Transition Network nd).**

The purpose of this scoping paper is to introduce *Kimberley Transitions* ('the Project'), the full name for which is *Kimberley Transitions: Collaborating to Care for Our Common Home*. It is also to invite dialogue and collaboration from across the Kimberley and elsewhere. This paper is primarily a selective review of literature to refine a transitions discourse (after Smith 2001:122) for Kimberley use, along with thumbnail sketches of doctoral research currently beginning or underway through the Project. Internationally and nationally, 'transitions discourse' as a conceptual and theoretical framework is a recent addition to the transitions movement, and we believe it is a useful tool for groups working towards better Kimberley futures. In Australian academic contexts this discourse is taking shape through Aboriginal education research, being articulated as a series of 'south-south' dialogues building upon Southern Theory (Nakata 2018; Santana et al. 2018; Williamset al. 2018). Considerable university-based research is taking place, such as *The Anthropocene Transition Project* (McLeod and Benn 2017).

One spiritual leader, Pope Francis, highlighted the value of both challenge and renewal:

**A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal (2015:LS 202).**

In a world where climate change, poverty, social unrest and environmental destruction are tumultuous, a movement of huge numbers of people is organising locally and globally to circumvent governments and industry, and to take their own action to create the future they want (Hopkins 2011). The recent international strike by high school students and supporters that took place on 15 March 2019, a determined attempt that stressed the need for governments to act against the impact of climate change, provides just one example of people taking action for the future world in which they wish to live (ABC News 2019).

An international transformative agenda gained momentum in 2015 (e.g. Escobar 2015, 2018; Pope Francis 2015; United Nations 2015), the same year an intentional transition project first commenced in Broome. We anticipate that the development of a series of separate yet interconnected Kimberley-inspired case studies of transitions could contribute to an over-arching transitions agenda, and gradually add weight to the need for an enduring Kimberley sustainability.

## **Foregrounding the Kimberley**

The Kimberley's landscapes with unspoiled deserts, rivers, ranges and coastlines, are renowned for their rugged beauty (e.g. Broome Arts and Music Foundation 2005; Laurie 2010; Richards et al. 2002). However, along with 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. From a transitions discourse perspective (Escobar 2016), the solutions to Kimberley problems are in Kimberley-based knowledges and ways of knowing, doing and being. This innovative approach to development is the Project's significance and as a case-study of transition, it is of high potential value both locally and globally.

*Kimberley Transitions* is hosted by the University of Notre Dame Australia's (UNDA) Nulungu Research Institute ('Nulungu') in Broome, the Kimberley's most western landmark and port, and the traditional lands and waters of the Aboriginal Yawuru native title holders. From the vantage point of Kimberley women, men and children throughout time, cultural beliefs and practices, intellectual life, wisdom and experience have influenced countless generations and Country for at least 60,000 years (Clarkson et al. 2017). *Kimberley Transitions* acknowledges post-settlement efforts to maintain and strengthen Aboriginal cultural knowledges and ecological narratives, as well as a variety of non-Aboriginal perspectives, matters that a number of Project researchers are exploring (see below for examples of current Project PhD research underway via Nulungu).



The Project's vision is for people both nearby and distant 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. A question that may be asked is 'what value is the *Kimberley Transitions* Project to Kimberley people, lands, waters and knowledge?' At this preliminary stage of the Project, a response to this question is that, like an ongoing dialectic, the outcomes can be predicted only. Efforts aimed at placing an emphasis on working collaboratively across disciplines, institutions and non-government organisations, nonetheless add hope to an enhanced body of expertise from Kimberley people and places that not only stays 'in-place' but also has the potential for increased community-based engagement. This includes, for instance, research domains, cultural healing in schools and wide-spread involvement with human/environment projects aimed at transitioning towards greater recognition and inclusion of Aboriginal voice and place.

In an age of climate contestation, global warming, human tragedy and political outrage, an aim for those involved in the early stages of *Kimberley Transitions* is to celebrate Kimberley knowledges and produce narratives of sustainability that are instructive for Kimberley people and humanity more broadly (Dodson 2010), while also being mindful that there is still much to equitably change.

## Transition Discourses

Transition discourses begin with local and Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, doing and being (Escobar 2016). They bring together the academic writers and actionist movements for post-development of the global south (Escobar 2015), decolonisation of local and Indigenous nations and peoples (Paradies 2016), and de-growth of the global north (Sachs 2017). Transition discourses are underpinned by a cooperative, participative or planetary paradigm (e.g. Conlon 2017). This paradigm research is itself a transformative practice (Wilson 2008:135), along with

local transition actions. Intergenerational resilience is a common theme in emergent writing and actions.

### The Transition Network

At a community-based practical level, the international transition network of hubs and initiatives has been growing since 2005 (Hopkins 2011). The network features communities stepping up to address big, complex challenges by working locally and collaboratively to find solutions in self-organising ways. They intend to nurture a caring culture, one focused on supporting each other in groups and in wider communities: "In practice, they are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support" (Transition Network nd).

### Transition in Australian and Kimberley Contexts

The transition movement started in the United Kingdom, and was founded on the principles of permaculture originally devised in Australia (Mollison and Holmgren 1982). Perhaps as a consequence, the Australian transition movement remains strongly informed by permaculture which involves sustainable design principles and practices for buildings, gardens, farms and suburban retrofitting (Holmgren 2017). Although 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. This condition is likely to change as the *Kimberley Transitions* Project evolves. It is nonetheless the case that an outstanding practical example that reflects transition in discourse and process is the Australian Aboriginal Ranger network, which is resulting in improvement in community and individual resilience, and regenerated tracts of Country (e.g. Country Needs People nd; Pyke et al. 2018). It also makes a significant contribution to carbon sequestration by restoring Kimberley Aboriginal fire management regimes (Kimberley Land Council 2016).

Aside from acknowledgement of the value of bush foods (Kenneally et al. 1996) from Kimberley Aboriginal organisations and transition groups such as *Incredible Edible Broome*, Aboriginal food knowledges remain largely marginalised from mainstream



economics, mainly into small enterprises (e.g. Lands 1987). In reality, the richness of the Kimberley environment provides a significant food source for many so-called ‘remote’ community residents (Toussaint 2015). For example, the iconic Fitzroy River is also known as *Mardoowarra* or *Martuwarra*, and links the Adcock, Hann, Leopold and Margaret Rivers before running through the town of Fitzroy Crossing to the west coast. It supplies fish, reptiles, small animals as well as fruits and vegetables which are used by many of its communities for much of the year (Close et al. 2014; Hunt 2017). In this sense, the environmental richness and biodiversity of the Kimberley is a precondition to food security for remote communities. Like climate change, food insecurity is entangled within the webs of cultural, ecological, economic and political complexity, resulting in the need to work locally and to ensure information about local food knowledges is actioned (Pascoe 2018).

### Nature-Based Solutions

The complex example of food security for Fitzroy Valley residents illustrates the opportunity for low carbon economic developments in line with nature-based solutions (NbS). These foster natural and cultural resurgence for the future of the Mardoowarra, rather than invasive, high-carbon industries such as fracking (see Laschon and Shine 2018) — both of which are supposed to benefit the region and nation. The precise interpretation of the term: nature-based solutions remains undecided, however the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)’s working understanding of nature-based solutions is: “Actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits” (Cohen-Shacham et al. 2016:5). From the IUCN’s perspective, the strength of nature-based solutions is that they simultaneously address challenges such as climate change adaptation and impact mitigation, food security, disaster risk reduction, water security and attaining good health. Huge shifts will be needed though, in moving away from silo-based thinking towards transdisciplinary scientific knowledge, and “robust guidance on how the services of nature can be harnessed for biodiversity and society” (IUCN 2019).

### Integral Ecology and Ecological Theology

Integral ecology emerged about 30 years ago (Conlon 2017) along with the multi-disciplinary ecological philosophies such as deep ecology, social ecology, spiritual ecology and ecofeminism. Ecological theology is now considered part of integral ecology due to its history of enlivening theology in response to ecological concerns. Prominent ecological theology authors include McDonagh (McDonagh and Pope Francis 2016), Deane-Drummond (2018), Johnson (2014) and Edwards (1999). All major religions have now publicly expressed their support for environmental protection (McDonagh 2016) along with millions of environmental activists, everyday citizens and a growing youth movement.

Since the 2015 launch of *Laudato Si: On the Care of Our Common Home* (Pope Francis 2015), an encyclical letter urging major lifestyle changes in peoples of the global north, a number of related projects and emphases have emerged, as McDonagh (2016) made plain. In Pope Francis’s letter, he maintained that economic growth, anthropocentrism, and the technocratic paradigm are root causes of civilisational crises, necessitating ecological conversion to a simple spiritual lifeway. Clearly indicative of a likely or hoped-for transition, from this perspective ecological education with commitment to a viable future is required, as is dialogue among people to decide the kind of sustainable future desired.

One of the first Aboriginal respondents to *Laudato Si’* was Peter Yu, Chief Executive Officer of Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY). While presenting the keynote address at an international *Laudato Si’* conference at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Broome, Peter explained that *Laudato Si’* addresses concerns about the common good by Yawuru people and Aboriginal people everywhere. He saw congruence among *Laudato Si’* and Yawuru cultural values such as sacredness in nature and tradition. In Yawuru culture this quality arises from the *Bugarrigarri*, with strong *liyan* — a Yawuru way of understanding well-being (Yap and Yu 2016) — as a result (Yu 2016).

There are many varieties of integral ecology, united by five principles which are listed by Kelly (2017)





as: evolutionary (a deep sense of time); planetary (everything is related); transdisciplinary (new ways of knowing across disciplinary borders); re-enchanted (a new materialism which acknowledges the sensual, spiritual and sacred); and engaged (being actively engaged individually and collectively in transitioning to a peaceful and environmentally safe world).

The theoretical strength of integral ecology is its rejection of neoliberal growth-based agendas, its transdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary knowledges, its ecological and social relationality and its proactive stance on environmental justice, human rights and equity for all. Its recognition that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are the same cry (Pope Francis 2015), and its regard for the inclusion of marginalised voices, makes it a fitting framework to both theorise and implement transition actions.

### **People-Place Relational Knowledges**

Aboriginal cultures integrate knowledge systems (epistemologies, or grounds for knowledge claims) with ways of being (ontologies) through systems which connect people and place in immutable relationships of care (Poelina 2017). Kimberley Country is a complex living cultural landscape, being embellished with extensive cultural, intellectual, economic, social and emotional meaning. Aboriginal interrelationship with Country is influenced by knowledge systems, long occupation, and an extensive comprehension of natural cycles, all of which relate to both extended and more local stretches of country (Kenneally 2018). Aboriginal people hold a particularly complex set of people-plant relationships and significantly, Kimberley rock art stands out globally in having an enormous body of direct and indirect depictions of plants. These include grasses, trees and yams as well as plant-based material culture such as digging sticks (Veth et al. 2018). The unusually plant-rich rock art of the Kimberley links with the traditional practice of 'wild harvesting' by Aboriginal people within 'ecoscaples' or ecosystems that contain more than one biological community (Lidicker 2008) and which are subject to sustained human interaction (Ouzman et al. 2017). This relational dimension is one of the most significant foundation principles for Kimberley-based transition research, owing to its recognition of the contribution

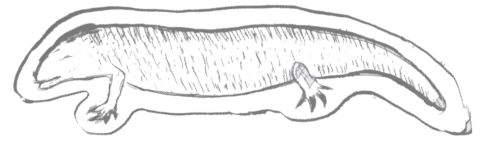
of Aboriginal knowledges to place-based low-carbon futures.

### **Land and Language**

In the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and when a great deal of language work is underway in the Kimberley through Aboriginal-run regional language centres and schools, Abram's (1996) book provides a reminder that language in and of itself, along with its associated systems of meaning, determine and pattern the ways in which its speakers interact with their world. Languages function to maintain socio-ecological systems — which can break down through language change or loss, due to the absence of shared language-encoded concepts, or can change over time. According to Abram (1996), English is one of the problematic languages because it convinces its speakers they exist separately to nature, having many generations ago forgotten their natural reciprocity and therefore who they are.

Latour's Facing Gaia lectures also helps, from a *Kimberley Transitions* perspective, to conceptualise and explain the role of English language in artificially maintaining dualisms and separations. For instance, generally English speakers understand themselves as alienated, or radically separated, from the environment (Latour 2017:14). This makes it plain that most English (and European) definitions of 'human' distinguish human from nature — which is a false nature/culture dualism. In reality, each side exists as one half of the same concept (2017:19), having a common core. Latour (2017:8) cogently argued that dualistic thinking (for instance: nature/people, human/animal, spirit/matter) have caused people of the global north to ignore warnings about climate change over a period of three or more decades, illustrating a madness, a "profound mutation in our relation to the world". This critique of dualisms fits well within a transitions framework, in part because it shows the problem of either/or binary assumptions and generalisations when the solution might be somewhere in between.

Latour (2017) proposed use of more nuanced languages that do not see these differences as oppositional, for instance Aboriginal languages recognise layers of relationship and



interdependencies rather than dualistic separation. Once these dualisms are removed, the earth can be seen as it really is: animated “by countless forms of agents” (Latour 2017:63). Complex socio-environmental systems including birds, water, wind, animals, spirits and energies have been encoded by Aboriginal languages throughout the Kimberley and for First Nations groups elsewhere over millennia (see also Escobar 2015 with regard to South American Indigenous groups). Put another way, the earth is neither inanimate nor inert as it has often been represented in English and the European languages (Abram 1996; Latour 2017). Epistemological insights such as these about the centrality of language to worldviews are intrinsic to the ways in which the methods, ethics and processes of a transition approach resonate. It is therefore of high value to both current and prospective *Kimberley Transitions* projects.

### **Everyday Acts of Renewal and Future Transitional Possibilities**

Transition projects include the meanings and activities associated with everyday life, which are dependent on their reproduction and renewal. Indigenous relationships, for instance, are perpetuated and renewed through everyday actions, language use and reception (Cornthassel and Scow 2017; Cornthassel et al. 2018). These interactions often occur in intimate spaces, such as someone’s home, in ceremony, in the car, on the land or water, and wherever meaningful relationships exist. While large-scale events such as protest or blockades are often viewed as impetus for change and decolonising practices (as with the 2015 Climate Change High School Strike mentioned earlier), the often unseen and unacknowledged everyday actions that we engage in, can be significant acts of community resurgence. These may include speaking an Aboriginal language, sharing stories, walking on home Country, engaging in ceremony, conversing with family and friends, cutting wood for Elders, parenting children or someone else’s children, spending time in community, growing and eating traditional foods and a number of other embodied expressions. In similar vein, scholar and activist Simpson (2011:16), claimed that “when resistance is defined solely as large-scale political mobilisation, we miss much of what has kept our

languages, cultures, and systems of governance alive.” By highlighting the need to better value the everyday as part of a transitions process, especially in the Kimberley, a deeper understanding of how extended kinship networks operate, the politics of intimate settings, and how gendered relationships take place can be gained. Ideas, thoughts and actions speak to how the larger community dynamics of nationhood, resurgence and renewal occur. Additionally, the daily, micro-processes of renewal can lead to larger-scale movements and political actions. Everyday actions are the ways that Aboriginal knowledge, living histories, and relationships between selves and landscape are enduringly perpetuated.

### **Implications for Transitions, Methods and Cultural Ethics**

Research methods underpinned by dialogue for social change, such as action research and other participatory methods, are aligned with transition discourses. The NBY organisation in Broome exemplifies such a method. Having participated in the application of a process known as “working in the recognition space” (Taylor 2008; Yap and Yu 2016), a study entitled *Community Wellbeing from the Ground Up* demonstrated the strengths of transitional process, by using democratic dialogical exchange as an instrument of change. The Kimberley Transitions doctoral research will extend transitions discourse while building upon successful local models of change.

Notably, each of the current *Kimberley Transitions* researchers actively use research methods aligned with that described as ‘the Nulungu Way’:

[The Nulungu Way] is founded in Kimberley Aboriginal traditions of respect and recognition of ownership of Country, Indigenous Knowledge, continuing cultural practice and well defined cultural governance. The Nulungu Way respects traditions of the past that underpin contemporary community actions to create a better future for the people of the Kimberley and beyond. Nulungu’s mission is to work with ‘Right People, Right Country, Right Way’ (Nulungu Research Institute 2016).

With transition theories, local actions and ideals in mind, we now introduce the project’s PhD research plans.

## **Current Kimberley Transitions Doctoral Research Projects**

Current *Kimberley Transitions* doctoral researchers aligned with the Project, and others we are concerned to include, are primarily focused on community-engaged collaborative projects aligned with the discourse, concepts, principles and goals embedded in transition. With a unifying thread being an interest in future generations of persons and landscapes, the following current doctoral projects indicate where the *Kimberley Transitions* Project is currently situated.

### **Cultural Solutions: Sustaining Aboriginal Lives, Livelihoods, Landscapes**

Dr Anne Poelina, Doctor of Philosophy (Health Sciences)

In this doctoral research cultural solutions will be identified and developed using Aboriginal methodologies, techniques and methods, as a process for 'knowledge gathering and sharing' to build capacity for sustainable life and sustainable development for Aboriginal people and their communities along the entire length of the Mardoowarra Fitzroy River Country. The intention is to develop and articulate a cultural health and wellbeing paradigm that enables all peoples to understand and frame actions for change at all levels. This strength-based approach is designed to enable Aboriginal Australians to participate in new economies grounded in natural and cultural assets. This research will address the key research question and connected questions: What is the connection between the cultural, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the individual and the health of the nation of which they are citizens? On the eve of climate chaos caused by the impact of Western knowledges on the planet, the poor and Aboriginal peoples, can Aboriginal knowledges be used to inform, reform and transform individual and community wellbeing, and if so how? The theme for the research is climate chaos to climate chance: and hope for health for all.

### **Community Development for Ecological Conversion**

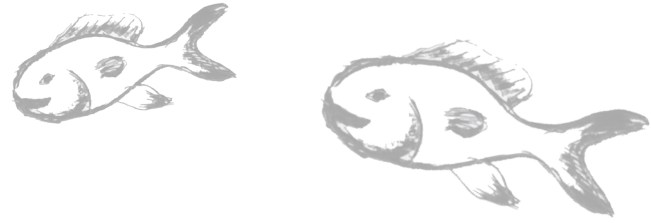
Mrs Anne Jennings, Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Sciences)

Using the wisdom of Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Agenda 2030* (United Nations 2015), this Kimberley-based doctoral research will use community development practices involving collaborative processes to encourage people to understand the need for, and be engaged in, ecological and social change. It is anticipated that, with this understanding, participants will become involved in locally identified, owned and driven community endeavours. Projects that lead to people expanding their understanding of "both the cry of the earth and cry of the poor" (Pope Francis 2015:49), will be designed, initiated or supported, and evaluated. The aim is to build participants' efforts to live simpler lives, through community development facilitated ecological conversion processes.

### **Economic, Social and Cultural Sustainability for West Kimberley's Aboriginal Communities**

Ms Arjati (Ari) Schipf, Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Sciences)

Working closely and collaboratively with Fitzroy Valley Aboriginal groups alongside the local Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALaCC), and navigating historical legacies of government policies, legislation and service delivery, this doctoral research focuses on the future cultural, economic and social sustainability of remote life. Guiding questions include how, and the extent to which future generations will carry on cultural and economic responsibilities, within the imposition of 21st century governance policies and implications. This includes the way in which aspirations of the young might differ from those of their forebears. A key point is the analysis of generational impacts and the challenge of distinctive cultural identity and continuity in remote settings at a time of political and social change.



## Transformative Learning for Sustainable Futures

Ms Jacqueline Remond, Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

This doctoral research will apply a community of practice action research methodology to develop, deliver and evaluate a plan for integral ecology within a global university network, located in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The research aim is to set up action research methods at the outset to monitor learning in a group of staff and community members before, during and after the research concludes, supplemented by other methods as needed.

The school-based aim is to guide the school and community to discover and respond to the intent of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. The guiding framework for this body of work will be *Laudato Si'*, and an acknowledgement that the project is located on Yawuru Country. Hence, there will be a strong focus on engaging with Yawuru cultural knowledges, traditions and languages and caring for Country wisdom. Integrating Yawuru cultural revitalisation and resurgence with the theology, philosophy and ecological action of *Laudato Si'* will be the central backbone of the project. The first task will be to consider the integration of these knowledges with Yawuru cultural advisors.

## Transformative Discourses for Climate Hope

Ms Louisa Stredwick, Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Sciences)

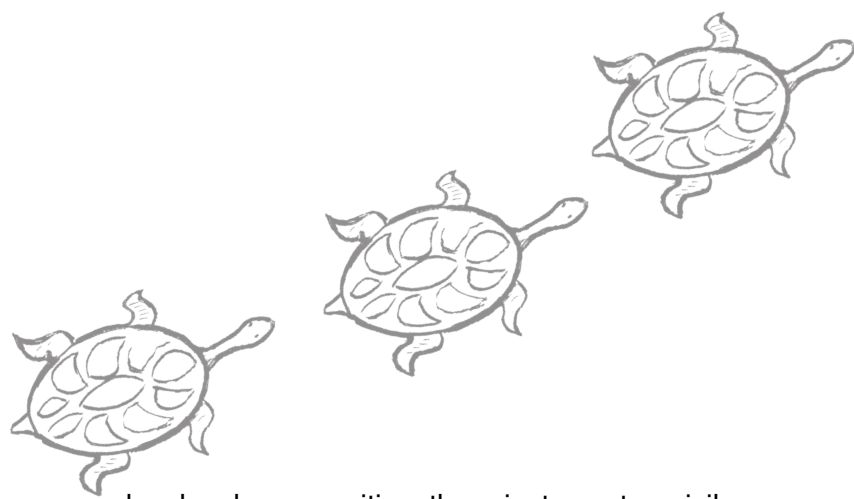
Philosophy of language is an integrative field of study that offers a unique tool for understanding power and performativity in discourse. This doctoral project will draw on and apply international transitions theories and methodologies to identify critical language requirements for articulating and enacting hope on climate. Specifically, the research will interrogate the construction of 'otherness' and its implications for collective decision-making, and will analyse and present findings from case-studies of communities which exemplify climate hope.

Kimberley-based thumbnail sketches of doctoral projects illustrate examples of transitions research currently in progress, emphasising local knowledges, equitable local participation and meaningful practical application. They also foreshadow future implications for collaborative research outcomes, and positive cultural and environmental change.

## Research Challenges, Policy Contexts, and Hopes for Change

Perhaps the most significant international policy impacting upon the Kimberley in recent times is the *2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations 2011). Internationally this has served to strengthen Aboriginal interests at national levels, reinforcing perspectives and rights often unacknowledged in Australia. In the Kimberley this has served to allow direct information, knowledge and cultural exchange between local Aboriginal representatives and the UN (e.g. Kimberley Land Council 2017). The Kimberley Land Council also participates in the Conferences of the Parties (COP), the decision-making body of the Convention on Climate Change, including COP21 in Paris in 2015 at which the climate change agreement was finally signed (Kimberley Land Council 2016). The Paris agreement united the world in a single agreement on tackling climate change for the first time in history. Coming to a consensus among nearly 200 countries on the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions is regarded by many observers as an achievement in itself and has been hailed as "historic" (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2015). Also in 2015, UN Agenda 2030 was launched, which is an international policy of world transformation based upon the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations 2015).

Of great significance to Kimberley Aboriginal interests and transition activists everywhere, is the UNESCO (2017) *Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change*. The principles oblige governments and citizens to act in solidarity to meet global and local climate change challenges at all levels of society: "including states, international organisations, sub-national entities, local authorities, Aboriginal



peoples, local communities, the private sector, civil society organisations, and individuals” (2017:129). The point of this section is that UN policy frameworks are intended to transform the world onto a “sustainable and resilient path” (United Nations 2015), and Kimberley organisations are already contributing to that agenda.

On the other hand, neoliberal agendas are being increasingly tightened (Springer 2016), and in 2016 Donald Trump was elected President of the United States of America, resulting in much airplay given to neoliberal values (Monbiot 2016) which emphasise narrowly defined economic priorities ahead of humanitarian and ecological considerations. However, transition discourses are beginning to influence the world, in large-scale movements of grassroots actions (Sachs 2017).

## Beyond Beginnings ...

There is a need to re-organise institutions in time to adapt to future conditions, based on the best available predictions, and all that transitions movements offer. Latour’s (1998) argument, “we have to choose between modernisation and ecologisation” focuses the spotlight on the conduct of local and national institutions — be they legal, educational, economic, religious or artistic. They all need to change in concert, and many are already doing so as they calculate future risks. Identifying the impact of climate change as a result of human behaviour, Klein (2015) argued, “this changes everything”.


The Kimberley has a multi-millennial Aboriginal history, with a more recent infusion of modernisation that has already determined that the whole population simply cannot return in its entirety to its past. Transition will mean negotiated calculations about what can be retained from the various heritages, including settler-colonial ones, and then projected forward as best practice. Muecke (2016) and Toussaint (2012) explored both Aboriginal and settler Kimberley relationships. Whyte (2013) advocated collaborative relationships between institutions developing traditional ecological knowledges and mainstream scientific, legal and economic ones. The Kimberley, with its strong and continuing Aboriginal history and

presence, has an opportunity to develop regional governance models based on multi-species kinship and skin-groups, or sub-sections. These also recognise and incorporate non-human agencies, and distribute rights and responsibilities on an annual or seasonal basis.

Indicating fertile ground to promote, extend and embed the value of a transitions discourse, an introduction to how a *Kimberley Transitions Project* might progress reveals there is tremendous room for a productive dialogue and associated research activities to collaboratively emerge. Transition emphasises and discourses that celebrate local languages and Aboriginal knowledges have been mentioned throughout this paper, and we are aware that there are so many others (e.g. Pyke et al. 2018). The planetary paradigm is cooperative, socially collectivist, intergenerational, relational and transformative. A transition network of many thousands of place-based groups working towards locally-agreed goals already exists. In a sense, the Kimberley is more than ready to address big complex issues: it is, and always has been, significantly well-placed for a research-based transition endeavour (a series of principles has been designed for release on the Nulungu website to frame the *Kimberley Transitions Project*).

Project limitations include that of specific place-based translation of the research findings, and ethical requirements which, at this stage, will mainly be actioned through the doctoral researchers working with local organisations, and through publishing and public presentation events. As it is produced, we anticipate that research in-progress will be published through or summarised for the *Kimberley Transitions Project* website. Where possible, every effort will be made to support other Kimberley organisations with research support and translation.

With regard to the next steps, beyond the beginnings briefly outlined in this paper, the aim is for transitions knowledges derived by Project researchers to be ‘translated’ directly into practice and in accessible formats in the Kimberley through participating organisations. Nascent ideas – wishes and hopes — include collation of an annotated bibliography



of all research completed in the Kimberley in the last 50 years; a ‘world café’ conversation with individuals and organisational representatives who wish to support the Project; a series of transitions dialogues conducted through Nulungu; and a cultural resurgence research project in a remote Kimberley school. (Some of these proposals are funding-dependent.)

Contributions to the Project’s evolution, and to the ideas, concepts, discourse, research projects and emphases posited in this paper, are invited. Interested parties are encouraged to register their interest and possible participation as part of a series of convened dialogues, workshops and presentations inspired by individuals and representative organisations concerned with the value of sustainability and its consequences. *Kimberley Transitions* is all about living collaboratively, cogently, hopefully, and gently in our world, informed by Kimberley wisdoms and place-based knowledges.

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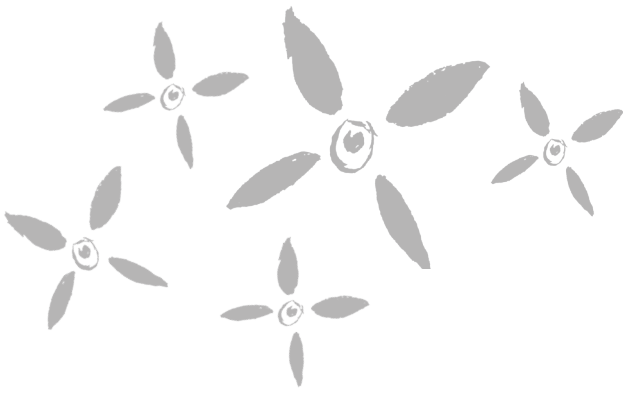
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