

Activisms, Atmospheres and the Affective Life of Broome, Western Australia

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of *place* in aligning and connecting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's political projects and agendas committed to a 'good life'. In particular, it demonstrates how both Aboriginal conceptions of Country, and Country as an independent force: empowers and enables different ways of comprehending and harnessing the agency of place; and sustains connections across difference in Broome, a small West Australian town and its surrounding region. Since late-2014, controversy has emerged in response to the proposed closure and reformation of up to 150 remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. This thesis draws on protests, ethnographic insights and in-depth interviews to map the cartography of these controversies in a small town that assemble differences, preconditions actions and contributes to solidarity. Non-Aboriginal activists, in particular, learn to be affected by Country and participate along with Aboriginal people in disrupting popular imaginaries of the 'good life' imbued with developmental renderings of place. In doing so, collective action creates moments of openness to alternative ways of being, knowing and inhabiting place. Drawing on theoretical insights from non-representational theories in Human Geography and ethnographic research, the thesis demonstrates how connections across difference are sustained when Indigenous conceptions of Country are centred in imaginings of the good life. Being-together with Country emerges through atmospheres of place produced through human as well as more-than-human encounters. These encounters reconfigure relations to time and space so that activists can think-with, imagine-with and co-become-together in place. Through everyday connections with Country, the narratives within describe how activists stage encounters that disappoint and reframe the popular 'good life', whilst simultaneously swelling their potential to enact alternatives.

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² All maps created by David Kelly

List of acronyms

JPP – James Price Point

WA – Western Australia

NT – Northern Territory

NRT – Non-representational theories

4WD – Four-wheel drive vehicle

KLC – Kimberley Land Council

NBY – Nyamba Buru Yawuru Aboriginal corporation

KRED – Kimberley Regional Economic Development Enterprises

Introduction



Image 1 – Protesters march in Broome against the forced closure of remote Aboriginal communities

An older white couple, appearing to be in retirement, trip over a kerbed footpath as they cross Short Street in Chinatown, Broome. They walk hand in hand, wearing matching khaki shorts, tucked-in button-up shirts, sunglasses on lanyards, brimmed hats and pasty sun-screened faces – the uniform of the ‘grey nomad’. Strolling slack-jawed, gazing across the street at a gathering crowd, the man stubs his toe, causing them both to skip a step, tripping onto the footpath. They stop for a moment, refocussing their gaze across the street, before carrying on toward the shopping centre. On the other side of the street, a crowd is assembling in preparation for a protest march through the streets of this otherwise sleepy tourist town. Holding

colourful signs painted in red, yellow and black – the colours of the Aboriginal flag – activists pose for photos and interviews with local journalists.



Image 2 – Protesters leaving Short St, Broome

The crowd of 400 people³ begin their procession through Chinatown, the tourist precinct and commercial centre of Broome. It's early afternoon and the sun is high, the heat is approaching 35°c, almost unbearable, this being the beginning of the dry season. Marching south on Carnarvon Street, the snaking mass of bodies pass Male Oval, the main open public space in the town where ever-present itinerant Kimberley Aboriginal groups spend most of their days and nights. An Aboriginal man yells from the oval: ‘what’s this for?’. ‘The closure of communities’ a woman from the crowd replies. ‘What! You wanna close them?’ ‘No!’ she says, ‘the government want to

³ Noted by protest organiser

close them'. The man dips his head, slides his thongs on his feet, says 'alright then', and joins the crowd, dissolving into the milieu of colourful bodies.



Image 3 – Large Aboriginal flag at the rally point

We march through the streets, chaperoned by a police car in front which halts the traffic. Black and white bodies walk steadfast, pushing prams, carrying placards, chanting, swatting flies from their faces, and posing for numerous photographers. Unfurled banners read 'stop dispossession, respect land rights' and 'stop the forced closure of Aboriginal communities'. Local journalists scurry through the crowd getting soundbites for the evening news and the National Indigenous Television Network (NITV) have flown in from Sydney for the occasion. A group of Aboriginal women distribute protest paraphernalia from large black bin liners – cardboard cut-outs of stencilled hands, painted in different colours, reading 'no gas' and 'hands off Country'. Within 20 minutes, the marching procession has reached the Civic Centre

Reserve at the Shire offices, and organisers, helpers and activists set the stage for the second part of the demonstration.



Image 4 - Tents used to symbolise the growing Aboriginal homelessness rate in the Kimberley

At the reserve, busy bodies herd people to large coolers filled with iced water bottles. Elders are directed to plastic chairs set neatly in front of the stage under a large tree. Those carrying banners erect them around the perimeter of the reserve. Volunteers set up small two-person tents on the manicured lawn, drawing attention to the hyper-visible homelessness population in Broome. A swirl of stage workers set up announcement and recording equipment as the media jostle for spots left and right of the stage. Mitch, a Djugun woman and event organiser, introduces the first speaker Ron, a Goolarabooloo man who figured strongly as a leader in recent environmental activism to stop gas processing at James Price Point.

Aboriginal activists take turns addressing the crowd, making comparisons with previous controversies, narrating an enduring story of oppressions and resistance in

the Kimberley. Bart, a Yawuru man, leaves the stage in rapturous applause after stating, ‘fuck Tony Abbott, fuck Colin Barnett, and fuck lifestyle choices’. Shire President Graeme Campbell takes the stage as hisses and boos emanate from the crowd. He tells the gathering what they already seem to know, saying ‘we are not sure what communities are going to close and how they are going to decide ... the government hasn’t told us anything, we haven’t had any consultation yet’. Passing cars honk. The crowd shouts ‘shame!’. An open microphone is approached by one frustrated and angry Aboriginal activist after another. ‘Stop the cultural genocide!’ they shout.

An atmospheric rupturing

atmospheres are always something spatial, and atmospheres are always
something emotional
– Böhme (2017: 26–27)

atmospheres are a means of revealing political issues in contemporary
life and taking on board the consequences of its aestheticization
– Thibaud (2017: 16)

I begin this thesis by describing my experience of a public protest in the small remote urban town of Broome (pop. 13,984⁴), located in the tropical far north-west of Australia. It was an event of rupture, where the usually tranquil ambiences of a small beachside tourism-dependent community were suspended. As diverse bodies – particularly hyper-visible black bodies in a white-majority place – move through the otherwise-sleepy main street, it does something to the place. Its performance not only interrupts the normal flow of traffic – vehicles being diverted through back streets by police – but it punctures the backgrounded atmosphere, defined by Böhme (2017: 26) as a ‘space with a certain mood’. Tourists literally trip-over the event and static bodies get swept up by the crowd. Bodies stutter and trajectories deviate. The relation between people and place becomes something else/more than it was just moments before. A new atmosphere takes hold that suddenly reframes the aesthetic qualities of the environment. A newly configured feel for place reveals the ‘habitual dispositions’ that usually ‘fall outside of common awareness’ as ‘atmospheres we take for granted’ (Vannini 2015d: 9). Often backgrounded, the atmospheric state of

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016)

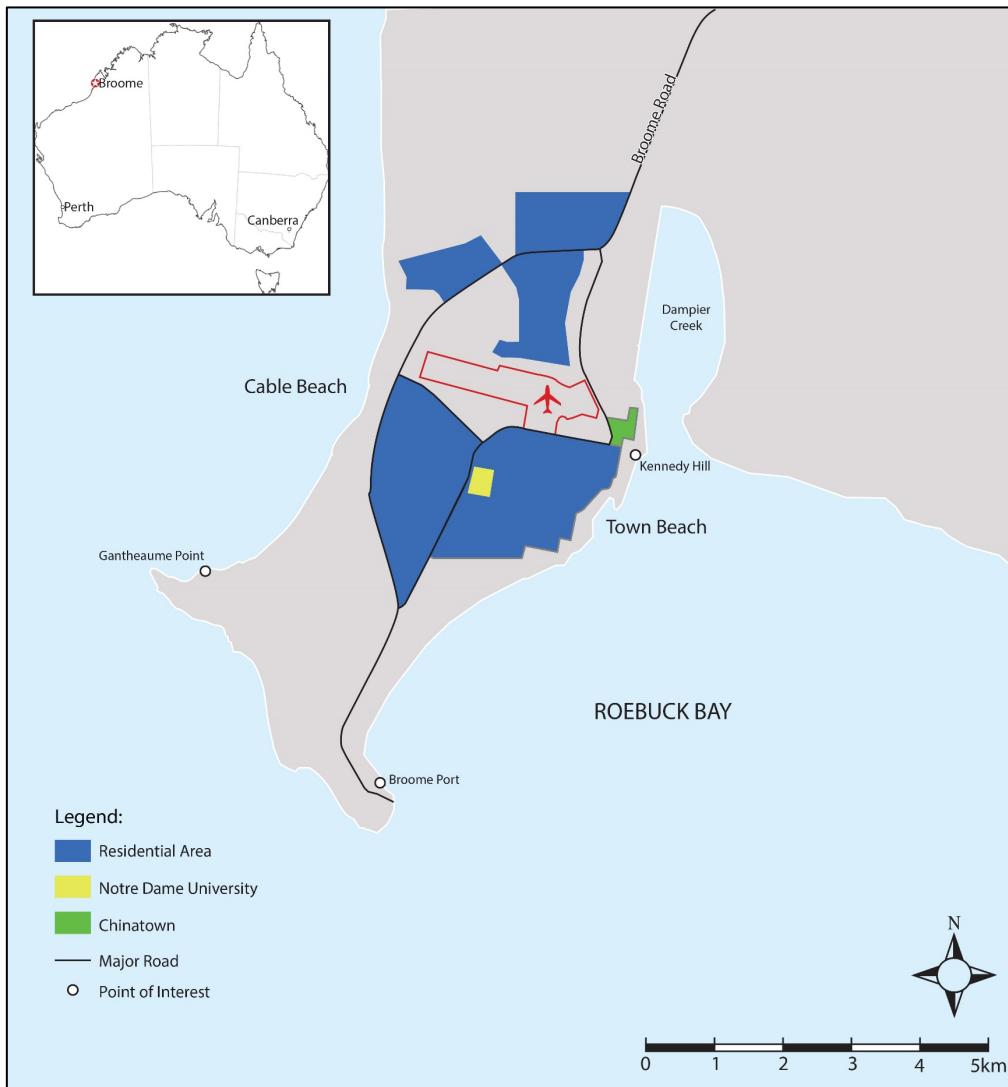
the town becomes an important political tool in the arsenal of dissenting bodies. It was in my experience of this moment that I began to ask: what is political about disrupting the atmospheres and rhythms of place, and replacing them with alternatives?

This question reframed my thinking about the ‘feel’ of Broome: what is the normative atmosphere of this place; how is it maintained; what does it obscure; how are other atmospheres brought to bodily consciousness; and, what is the capacity of an atmosphere to affect political change? Indeed, what I came to understand during my eight-month period of ethnographic fieldwork, is that Broome has a signature rhythmic quality that is celebrated in local references to *Broome Time*. One activist⁵ describes this to me as ‘this weird little time warp where everything slows down and you can think and feel again’ (Ebony, Interview, 20/06/15)⁶. The spatiality of the town also affects the expressions of everyday interactions, trajectories and inhabitations of space. The urban grid of town is bound by a large tidal bay to the east and the south, and a seemingly endless white sandy coastline to the west (see Map 1). Downtime for residents seems to orbit around leisure-based activities such as picnics at the beach, swimming, surfing, bush-walking, camping, fishing etc. This laid-back way of life helps maintain a ‘cottage industry’ economy, another activist

⁵ I use the term ‘activist’ to refer to participants that have taken part in public protest associated with unconventional gas processing, shale-gas fracking and the closure of remote Aboriginal communities. Not all participants explicitly use the term, some even rebuke the language, instead opting for terms such as ‘actionist’ or ‘protectionist’. The intensity and level of participation in protest varies between ‘activists’, some might be better thought of as supporters or advocates. However, this thesis is less concerned with the actual subjectivity of ‘an activist’, and more focussed on mapping the practices and movements that might expand our abilities to discern what activism is and how it comes to shape the emergence of other worlds.

⁶ Throughout this thesis I use the actual names of consenting interviewees when presenting transcribed interview material. One participant chose to remain anonymous, I have used the pseudonym Mary to represent this person. Additionally, I do not wish for the voices of participants to be lost in history by imposing researcher-generated pseudonyms without their consent. For a full list of interviewees, refer to Appendix.

tells me (Will, Interview, 13/06/15). At the height of the tourist season the towns' population more-than triples in size, with southern tourists parachuting into town and immersing themselves in resort-style dwellings (Wergin 2016b). Aesthetically, Broome is an idyllic tropical place with a specific 'place-temporality' (Wunderlich 2010: 46), which helps sell its tropical holiday atmosphere.



Muecke (2016b: 17), in his ethnographic work on Broome, states that it is a 'pretty town' full of 'charms' that enchant visitors who 'often fall under its spell'. What it is that is enchanting about Broome, is also the target of popular representations that aim

to sell the place as a tourist object. Yet, it is not merely happenstance that the enchanting qualities are there for one to encounter, they are also staged and governed. This was made clear to me when I first arrived in this place and I was fortunate enough to get an interview with Graeme Campbell, the Shire President. He is the top politician for the local government area with a reputation for being hard to meet with. I recall him asking me rhetorically, ‘how many traffic lights in town?’, to which he proudly replied:

Zero! I mean, I made the statement 8–9 years ago – I've been the Shire President for over 10 years now, and I made the statement about 8 years ago – “if we put traffic lights in this town they can tar and feather me and take me out of town”. Well, been close a couple of times, but you'll notice as you drive around Broome, there's lots of roundabouts. We've got roundabouts everywhere. They're better for traffic flow – they cost double of what traffic lights cost, but there's no traffic lights (Graeme, Interview, 23/03/15).

Graeme describes how the flow of bodies through the town is intentionally maintained by urban design techniques that contribute to the structuring of how the place feels. He also demonstrates how the spatial managers of the town are aware of how power is exercised in shaping everyday life and associated mobilities. However, this does not eradicate the presence of alternative ways of rhythmically and atmospherically shaping town life. Raymond Williams (1961, 1977) argues that there are many ‘structures of feeling’ that are immanent to a common-sense way of thinking and feeling your way through place. Although multiple structures of feeling occupy the gap between normative and alternative ways of knowing – that is, there are multiple ways of perceiving and registering the feel of place – some are

expressed and articulated more forcefully than others. The intentional structuring of rhythmic flows – channelling how bodies move through space – has a dominating intensity that foregrounds particular hegemonic ways of knowing this place. A backgrounded rhythmic structuring becomes habitual and taken for granted when it is imbued in the common-sense infrastructures of the town – such as roads and roundabouts. Yet, with a sustained attention to rhythms and atmospheres, Edensor (2010: 2) argues:

we may identify how power is instantiated in unreflexive, normative practices but also side-stepped, resisted and supplemented by other dimensions of everyday experience.

Backgrounded atmospheres can surge into bodily consciousness. This involves the rupturing of the normative atmosphere that occupies the in-between space of bodies and environment. As Böhme (1993: 114) theorises, ‘this in-between, by means of which environmental qualities and states are related, is atmosphere’. An atmosphere inhabits a gap that interfaces bodies with places. Böhme (2017: 22) specifically theorises an atmosphere as a mediating force ‘of the environment with aesthetic feelings of a human being’:

The atmosphere of a certain environment is responsible for the way we feel about ourselves in that environment... Atmosphere is what relates objective factors and constellations of the environment with my bodily feeling in that environment. This means: atmosphere is what is *in between*, what mediates the two sides... they are out there; you can enter an atmosphere and you can be surprisingly caught by an atmosphere.

The opening vignette describes how a counter-hegemonic atmosphere of place is brought to the surface of experience. Within this moment, normative and alternative atmospheres vie to occupy the interface between bodies and place. It can cause certain bodies to stumble, such as the grey nomads⁷ tripping up onto the footpath. Yet, an atmosphere also has the capacity to envelop other bodies, socialising them in a collective feeling, aura, mood or momentum. This was demonstrated in my description of the Aboriginal man on the oval, slipping on his thongs and joining in the protest. As the procession moves through town, it encapsulates and moves bodies, shifting them from apathy to a state of activity and activism. Importantly, atmospheres have the capacity to ‘animate or dampen the background sense of ongoing life’ (Anderson 2014: 140). They are differential in their effect on bodies, in that, atmospheres can agitate or sedate, envelop or expel individuals and collectives.

For Bissell (2010: 727), atmospheres ‘form part of the ubiquitous backdrop of everyday life’. The problem that atmospheres pose however, for both activism and ethnographic research, is the ‘vague and diffuse, ephemeral and indeterminate’ nature of them (Anderson and Ash 2015: 36). Atmospheres often have fleeting lifespans that are specific to the time and space context in which they occur – such as the event of protest. Some may endure longer than others, with varying intensities, and importantly, varying forces. Whilst we often locate atmospheres in the sensory stratigraphy of everyday life, or the temporality of an event, they are nevertheless ‘forceful’ phenomena that shape, inhibit and enlarge bodily capacities to express particular actions (Bissell 2010: 727). When the atmospherics of place have such a

⁷ I use the term ‘grey nomad’ to colloquially describe a specific demographic of the Australian-settler identity, which Davies (2011: 194) defines as ‘people aged 55 years and over, who travel for extended periods of time, generally domestically, and generally in self-equipped camping vehicles’.

force, ensured to endure by rhythmically engineering ordinary life, their interruption becomes a radically political act.

The affective life of action

In this thesis, I seek to explore the political possibilities of animating and dampening – in a word, mediating – particular atmospheres of place. I do this through enlivening the ethical-moral trope of the ‘good life’, a relational philosophy of life that asks questions regarding the conditions of a life worth living and the spatial relations that a self-determined future constructs. More than this however, the good life is an imaginary that is scaffolded, an enduring fantasy that is reproduced, by the manipulation and movement of embodied states. In reanimating the role of the good life in activist projects, I move beyond a theorisation of protest and activism as an expression of resistance and turn my research focus to spaces where alternative configurations of *affective life* – atmospheres and rhythms – condition and calibrate bodies to act. Stated simply, I theorise affective life as the flows, transmissions and mediations of *affect*, defined by Lorimer (2008: 552) as the:

properties, competencies, modalities, energies, attunements, arrangements and intensities of differing texture, temporality, velocity and spatiality, that act on bodies, are produced through bodies and transmitted by bodies.

As defined by Thrift (2007: 7), affect is a *pre-cognitive* change in the state of a body, a ‘rolling mass of nerve volleys [that] prepare the body for action in such a way that intentions or decisions are made before the conscious self is even aware of them’. I complicate this pre-cognitive understanding, arguing that affect blends with the cognitive in its continuous emergence, its vagueness can be articulated. As

demonstrated in the chapters to follow, the affective life of place still exists upon cognition, its force does not dissolve upon attunement, awareness and expression. An attention to how affects move between bodies and facilitates the forming of collectives is an important research focus, as Anderson (2017: 503) argues, affective life is ‘primary to government’. It is the affective meditations of quotidian life that are a central ‘object-target for specific and multiple forms of power’ (Anderson 2014: 4). The social control of popular sentiments, moods and passions are key to the acceptance of existing power structures. Manipulations of affect and affective atmospheres are therefore primary objects in the assembly of political collective feelings in social spaces (Closs Stephens 2016).

The strategic assembly and maintenance of affective atmospheres ‘draws attention to how affects can be “collective” and be transmitted between people’ (Adey *et al.* 2013: 301). This thesis therefore interrogates the target-objects of affective life in Broome, and how these target-objects lend capacity to shape popular imaginations of place, to the impoverishment of alternative imaginations. I argue, that in the act of disturbing the normative background of affective life, activists here demonstrate how their political projects have become sensitised to the affective life of power; particularly the geographical sites and representational forms where power intensifies (Anderson 2017). In doing so, they exploit the potential of an affective politics to recompose collective futures, through locally specific ontological frameworks. I therefore explore spaces that affect and are affected by protest; that enlarge bodily capacities to act through sensitising them to the manipulation of affect; and, how ‘managed spaces’ partially maintain particular atmospheres and become identifiable sites of power where challenges can be mounted and alternative

worlds recomposed. Throughout this thesis, I refer to these sites of political power and potential as *Country*.

Central to the performance of action led by Aboriginal activists is Country – ‘a place that gives and receives life... a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life’ (Rose 1996: 7). Country is a living body that affects and is affected by human and more-than-human relations. Goolarabooloo storytellers, Paddy Roe and Frans Hoogland (1999: 18), demonstrate Country’s potential, vitality and relatedness, stating:

This is living country. We’ve got to hold that one, maintain it. In order to keep it alive, you have to experience it, you have to get the feeling for it, and when you get the feeling for it and are reading the country, you can help to keep it alive.

In this thesis, I conceptualise Country as: an Aboriginal *concept* that maps geographies of belonging, co-existence and reciprocity (Hsu *et al.* 2014); a *living body* that has the ‘capacity to affect and be affected’ (Deleuze 1988); a *place* that is at once everywhere and everywhen (Stanner 1969); and, an ethereal-yet-material *force* that is felt as a diffuse-yet-palpable ‘specific atmosphere’ (Anderson 2014: 9). Through the narratives of Aboriginal activists and their non-Aboriginal supporters, this thesis describes spacetimes of being-with-Country that facilitate encounters with atmospheres that ‘prime’ diverse bodies to act together (Bissell 2010). Country, in the narratives of participants acts as a ‘mediating link’ (Böhme 2017: 16) of *co-becoming*, where ‘everything exists in a state of emergence and relationality’ (Bawaka Country *et al.* 2015a: 456). Country follows an atmospheric understanding of place, insofar as Böhme (2017: 26) defines it ‘as tuned space’. As a concept/living

body/place/affective force, Country entangles diverse humans and non-humans in a process co-becoming-together, in turn producing renewed spatialities of co-existence and attachments to place.

Attention to this entanglement bears witness to the emergence of new worlds that are the product of encounters between people and place. Participant's good life narratives stress well-being in the present, marking a radical departure from utopian conflations of futures in emancipatory projects. In doing so, activists bring imaginations of the future into the present by 'learning to be affected' by alternative ways of knowing and being (Latour 2004; Graham and Roelvink 2010). Latour (2004: 206) defines this process of 'learning to be affected' as a process of becoming, when a body acquires new body parts that 'produces at once a sensory medium *and* a sensitive world' (2004: 207). Drawing upon Whatmore (2013: 34), I argue that place/Country here resonates as an 'earthly force' that creates disturbances, or affective events, that enables the emergence of new body parts. The sensitised body then responds to the atmospheres of place that 'force thought' and 'occasion new political associations and opportunities' (2013: 34).

This thesis explores the geographies of politicised narratives of alternative lifestyles/lifeworlds – characterised by intensified interventions in Aboriginal livelihoods – that enclose and diminish options to live differently in the world. It concerns itself with a recent controversy that crystallised late in 2013 in response to a government proposal to close up-to 150 remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia (WA); and the range of activisms that emerge and endure in the flux of ongoing Aboriginal and environmental controversies. In November 2013, the WA Government announced the potential closure of remote Aboriginal communities

across the state. Four-months later, amid the ambiguity and precarity of the proposal, then-Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, when prompted about the closures stated:

What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices if those lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have (Abbott 2015: np).

Within days a social movement, which corralled around the digital hashtag #SOSBLAKAUSTRALIA, emerged and scaled-up rapidly across the country with the aid of social media. The opening vignette describes the taking-place of the first protest event in a series of five calls to action. From out-of-sight places in the remote Kimberley region, to large urban centres of the southern colonial administration, the swarming of charged bodies grew from quiet embodied acts of connection to large public demonstrations in Australian cities. Led by seasoned Aboriginal activists in the Kimberley, and supported by a de-centralised group of non-Aboriginal supporters, the movement emerged not only in response to the proposal to close up to 150 communities, but as a part of a network of diverse activisms that imagine alternatives to colonised futures.

Fundamental to these local expressions of dissensus is the channelling of alternative configurations of life that are drawn from the affective wellspring of Country. Rancière (2010) argues that 'dissensus' is the real location of politics, an event where disagreements are staged that disrupt the normal order of things. He contends that there is 'a symbolic constitution of the social' called 'the police' (2010: 36), an order of social life that distributes what is visible, perceptible and sensible. Amin and Thrift (2013, p. xii-xiii) assert that crucial to the act of 'world making' is 'the ability to alter the means and terms of political conduct so that the latent can emerge with

effective and affective energy'. Acts of dissensus challenge the normative sensory refrain of everyday life by enlarging the capacity of alternative sensory moments to affect bodies. Activists here draw upon the affective life – rhythms, atmospheres, vibes and moods – of Country to affect diverse bodies, charging them to act upon alternative ways of knowing about place. Informed by Rancière's conceptualisation of politics, I argue that activisms which target the atmospheres and rhythms of place enact a radical form of politics precisely because it 'revolves around [...] the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time' (2013: 8).

A vital argument in this thesis, is that alternative ways of making sense in the world, and therefore alternative ways of shaping a world, are foreclosed by the proliferation and expansion of normative sense-making regimes in colonial governance structures. I challenge contemporary modes of affective governance as a way of distributing what is sensible (Rancière 2013), but also as a logic that encloses spaces where other sense-making potentials are active. I also develop upon contemporary understandings of affect – particularly in non-representational theories found in Cultural Geography – that have so far neglected other ways of knowing (non-Western) about the role of affective life in geographies of active world-building (Colls 2012; Vannini 2015d). In demonstrating how Aboriginal sensory frameworks for imagining a world-otherwise embolden political projects, I explore the role of place in facilitating connections that enlarge capacities for bodies to act together.

Beyond representation

This research takes place in a small settler-colonial town in what is regarded by the state as 'the next frontier' (Commonwealth of Australia 2015). Central to the assertion and reproduction of settler authority in Australia, is the exploitation of land

and resources of dispossessed Aboriginal people. Issues around housing and Aboriginality are central conflicts that this research is embedded within. However, I argue that dominant representations of Aboriginality, especially that of traditional homelands and non-mainstream lifestyles, are the mechanisms through which settler power enlarges its capacity to exploit lands and resources, effectively clearing large swathes of space for the future expansion of colonialism. I further argue, following Marcuse and Madden (2016), that there is perhaps no other commodifiable aspect of human life that represents a more important nexus of political disagreement between society and the state, than housing and related modes of existence. How social actors make a home and constitute their being-in-the-world in relation to others, continues to be a contentious domain in which emancipatory struggles take-place.

Whilst speaking to recent controversies in Aboriginal housing and lifestyles, this thesis is particularly concerned with representations: specifically, the performativity of representations; how they are disappointed by activists; and how the ‘object-targets’ (Anderson 2014) of these representations – that is, the experiential charge of things and objects, to consume and make sense of them in preconditioned ways – are reframed. Dominant representations of Aboriginal and alternative modes of existing in a settler-colonial context lubricate the ease to which their *out-of-placeness* colonises the spatial imagination of the Australian nation-state. Indeed, De Landa (2010: 34) argues that it is ‘this capacity to represent or translate’ the stratum of meanings, readings and sensations in space, and about subjects, that gives representational regimes its ‘imperialist’ tendency. Diverse enactments of alternative imaginaries to pervasive popular and official representations are crucial to challenging the ongoingness of colonisation. Such enactments are constituted by difference – cultural, racial and ontological. In resistance to the interventions of the

settler-state, Aboriginal activists are supported by non-Aboriginal allies who live in Broome and the surrounding region. These solidarities form an integral part of political praxis, and they crystallise in events of overt public protest. How these connections across difference are formed relies on pre-figuring co-existence, belonging and reciprocity (Nash 2003; Barker and Pickerill 2012; Coombes *et al.* 2012, 2013) – in other words, rather than deferring reconciliatory efforts to the state, *they enact them*.

Sensuous solidarities

Throughout this thesis I develop a way of thinking about activist actions and inhabitations of space beyond a symbolic gesticulation of resistance and reconciliation. Rather, I think of public protest as events that signal, what Thrift (2007: 5) would call, the ‘onflow’ of life, an escaping force of other active world building projects. In my experience of activism in Broome, atmospheres of protest conjure what Stewart (2007: 44) terms ‘rogue intensities’ which are ‘lived, yet unassimilated’ affects that ‘roam the streets of the ordinary’. I argue that the political passions – which are often characterised by anger, frustration or despair, but extend to joy and celebration (Simpson 2011) – that propel public protest are *more-than-resistance*. Implicit imaginaries of alternative worlds dwell somewhere in the event of protest, not as static visions and images, but as relations between things. In excess of the event of protest therefore lives and flows a multiplicity of alternative affects which maintain the existence of other worlds.

Indeed, there has been a focus upon the emotive and affective experience of collective action in recent Human Geography literature (Juris 2008; Askins 2009; Brown and Pickerill 2009a, 2009b; Horton and Kraftl 2009; de Jong 2017).

Heralding the ‘cultural turn’ in the Social Sciences and Human Geography more specifically, the study of resistance has begun to pay special attention to the performative and embodied aspects of events. Such explorations tend to think beyond the act of protest as a ritual of ‘resistance’, but rather, performances that have real potentials that are under-explored. In studies of social movements there is growing attention to the emotional and affective aspects of protest events (Goodwin *et al.* 2009), within Human Geography particularly (Arenas 2015; Routledge 2017). Emotion has become such a dominant focus that the first issue in 2009 of the academic journal *Emotion, Space and Society* was themed *Activism and Emotional Sustainability*, focussing specifically on what emotional conditions sustain activism (Brown and Pickerill 2009a).

Much of this research pays specific attention to the affective life of protest events and how collective emotions form enduring bonds between social justice actors. Routledge (2012: 428) argues that such events produce or harden ‘sensuous solidarities’ through the ‘performative character of activist subjectivities’ and the shape or form of collective action. Spaces where activists have face-to-face encounters aid in the forging of bonds or the sharing in an affective resonance. For Routledge, integral to the formation of these bonds is a ‘particular *placed* politics’ (2012: 432) that resonate shared feelings among activists, allowing them to embody affective/emotional ‘affinities’ (2012: 438). Roelvink (2010) similarly explores an affective politics that goes beyond resistance and disrupts normative ways of thinking about struggle. There is a focus here on the preparation spaces for the collective, such as forums and workshops for the production of activist paraphernalia, sharing of experiences and tactical planning. It is argued that these

particular places germinate affective bonds that are then crystallised in the event of direct action – such as a street protest – as a sensuous solidarity.

Whilst an attention to the affective life of activism might reveal the presence of other worlds, it is imperative for any political project to have adequate frameworks for the inclusion of difference. Roelvink (2016) highlights how anti-globalisation movements at times inadvertently sow divisions between different groups, to the detriment of the movement. Recently, the Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock revealed just how problematic support can be in Indigenous right's agendas. White allies were characterised as 'unbearable', performing drum circles, yoga classes and other neo-pagan rituals that distracted from Indigenous agendas (Dowd 2016; Planet Juniper 2016). Land (2015: 176), in her seminal book *Decolonizing Solidarity*, highlights the ongoing problems and tensions of white support in Aboriginal political projects in Australia by 'perpetuating dominant-culture colonialism and racism'. Indeed, geographers have stressed the importance of place and understanding Aboriginal connections to land in forming spaces for dialogue and the formation of effective solidarities (Pickerill 2009; Barker and Pickerill 2012); how Indigenous ontologies can inform a placed-based politics (Hunt 2014); and the need to create a 'thirdspace' for the building of effective solidarities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Johnson 2008).

Yet despite the academic call for solidarity frameworks that embrace local and embodied understandings of Aboriginal land and ontology, settler-Indigenous relations remain pre-occupied by representational thinking in Australia. At the time of writing this thesis, a state-led campaign in which Aboriginal people would be recognised in the Australian Constitution as original inhabitants of present-day

Australia, has become the major focal point of reconciliation efforts. The gesture is largely symbolic (although not without impact), and it remains to be seen how adequate Indigenous representation in the founding national document would ensure continued rights of Aboriginal people to self-determine how their livelihoods (and futures) are expressed (Little 2016). Although a broad consultation process has taken place regarding the reconciliation campaign, overarching representational forms of recognition such as constitutional acknowledgment continues to be preferred by the state over differently scaled articulations. Given the enigmatic ideal of reconciliation in settler-Aboriginal relations, how meaningful connections are made across difference remains of critical importance to socio-political research in Australia.

Globally, the status of Indigenous rights remains a rhetorical ambition that frames issues of settler-Indigenous relations around ideas of equality in recognition by the state rather than self-determined rights to independently shape and govern a liveable life. In the Global North, Glen Coulthard (2014), Audra Simpson (2014) and Leanne Simpson (2011) highlight how a representational politics of recognition fails to reconcile the magnitude of ongoing Indigenous injustices. Similarly, a politics of recognition causes tensions between Indigenous and settler people in other settler-colonial contexts such as Latin America (Cadena 2010), Europe (Henriksen 2008), Africa (Sylvain 2014), Asia (Shneiderman 2014) and New Zealand (Mulholland and Tawhai 2010). Representational recognition by the state remains a fraught space where acknowledgement of difference is required to fit within already-established colonial frameworks of inclusion. Alongside this, collective action is continually impeded by a tendency to reproduce unequal power relations that marginalise the perspectives of Indigenous people.

This highlights a dilemma or problem that this thesis wishes to address. I contend that there is an urgency about the state of collective action that requires an exploration of solidarities that go beyond resistance. Given the impending pressures associated with climate change, the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal land and the growing global division of ethnic and racial difference, there is a critical need to identify a politics of difference that works in the service of environmental and cultural continuation (Kelly and Lobo 2017). I argue that an attention to the affective life of political action provides one such insight that works to understand the geographies that assemble diverse solidarities that endure beyond resistance. Such solidarities are often modest expressions of interaction that elude the researcher's gaze. They do not stress, or even necessitate, proximate encounters with human others, but are mediated by processes of 'becoming-with' emplaced⁸ relations and 'rendering-capable' those that are affected (Haraway 2016: 16). Non-Aboriginal supporters don't reinvent relations here, but relate within already-existing modes of togetherness that stresses learning to be similarly affected by affinities mediated by place. These modes of togetherness are conditioned in spaces around and in excess of the performance of protest, in spaces that facilitate a capacity to act together.

Preconditioning spaces

Sara Ahmed argues that '[t]o experience an object as being affective or sensational is to be directed not only toward an object but to what is around that object, which includes what is behind the object, the conditions of its arrival' (2010: 25). I think of these conditions of arrival as the conditions of action, spaces where 'good encounter[s] increases the capacity for action' (2010: 211). I posit that Country is a

⁸ The ontology of being-in-place. The etymology of emplacement derives from the French *em* (in) and *place* (a place). I take it to mean the condition of 'being in a place'.

conditioning spacetime that primes bodies to act in the event of protest, an active force that brings diverse bodies together and enables the collective capacity to self-determine an imagination of a world-otherwise. The atmospheres of Country enable bodies to construct alternative structures of feeling and therefore counter-hegemonic structures for knowing about and inhabiting the world. An atmosphere is always felt, but when it becomes noticeable, noteworthy and sensible it signals the interplay between affect and cognition, or, feeling and thinking. It endows the potential to force thought, and so the construction and maintenance of counter-hegemonic atmospheres might be thought of as the exercising of a capacity to think and feel differently in the world.

I therefore engage spaces of encountering difference in this research, particularly affective encounters that align and entangle diverse bodies in processes of co-becoming together (Bawaka Country *et al.* 2015a). I locate these encounters in the narratives of connection – through in-depth interviews – made between diverse groups of human and non-human actors. Through these narratives, I co-shape a research design that maps these stories, staging research encounters with these geographies through non-representational ethnographic methods (Vannini 2015b). This involves a methodology that shares similarities with ‘deep mapping’, described by Somerville (2015: 117) as a practice where ‘Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together to create processes by which to re-imagine relationships to place’. Narratives of connections with Country, by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, are used in this research to seek out experiential spaces where good encounters are had and made. Sharing in the affective life of place is central to these encounters.

Yet, being-together does not stress proximate encounters with people, but of mediating spaces where differences are accommodated and folded upon each other. This type of encounter in which other ways of knowing and being are brought to interactions with Country ‘can be shared by all who inhabit that place’ (Somerville 2015: 117), regardless of proximity between human bodies. Encounters with Country, I argue, facilitate reconciliatory efforts in activism. This research understands encounter as ‘a specific genre of contact’ that manifests as ‘a distinctive event of relation [...] firmly within the remit of difference, rupture and surprise’ (Wilson 2016: 2). In non-representational approaches, lived experiences that create distinct spaces and temporalities are viewed as the ‘emergent properties of the encounters we undertake’ (Greenhough 2010: 43). Encounter as an event of relating to difference is generative of ways of being-otherwise. I argue that supporters of Aboriginal and environmental rights agendas, embark on an understanding of ongoing interventions in non-mainstream Aboriginal lives through seeking out spaces where alternative knowledges are encountered and sites of connecting with difference are established and maintained. Encounters with spaces of injustice inform their understanding of ongoing inequalities. I approach these events as moments of disappointment, where seemingly ubiquitous narratives of settler supremacy and white utopianism are brought into crisis or pass unrealised (Anderson 2006: 746).

It is in the unease of these moments where renewed ideas about the future begin to take hold. These are nurtured through a deeper embodied understanding of these futures through the making of connections with Aboriginal people, environments and concepts. Importantly, these encounters facilitate a process of becoming-otherwise that forms the basis of solidarity efforts and lends potential to localised modes of togetherness. Becoming-otherwise for Trezise (2014: 72), involves moments when

'sensorial certainties' about one's own subjectivity 'collapse', provoking a 'perceptual reckoning with one's own subjectivity'. Becoming-otherwise is quite literally the undoing of a sensorial regime that builds ideas of self and other, when it falls away, 'one feels neither white nor brown, and so may come to an awakening of their own subjective uncertainty' (Trezise 2014: 72).

In this thesis, I argue that affective places – discussed interchangeably with Country – facilitate and are facilitated by such sensorial collapses, allowing room for the emergence of new affective registers. Aboriginal activists enlarge white-settler capacities to become-otherwise through understanding the lived effect of ongoing injustices and staging affective encounters with alternatives ways of inhabiting space. In so doing, they envision and enact co-constituted futures through staging disappointments and tasking their bodies with obligations to look after Country. Sometimes the staging of disappointments is tactful – deployed specifically to unsettle –, other times they are the product of happenstance encounters with everyday lived expressions of Aboriginality – often characterised by abject poverty and rough sleepers in Broome. Nevertheless, when such moments are productive of difference, rupture and surprise, they leave bodies open to being affected, charged and primed by other spatiotemporal relations such as Country. Muecke (2016b: 17) argues '[j]ust what the 'good life' might be in a place like Broome is what is at issue as people try to organise themselves for a better future in that place'. I argue, that the preconditioning space of Country enables the reimagining of what the good life can be.

Theorising the good life

Central to this project is a conceptualisation of the ‘good life’ as a spatial concept. As a ubiquitous moral philosophy of living well, the good life projects imaginations of the future informed by the past and present. It is a concept sensitive to the scales in which bodies inhabit spaces together and the mediatory forces that entangle and envelope bodies of difference. It is an enduring imaginary that conjures up specific spatio-temporal formations of social life and its relations. I deal with the good life in two ways, firstly, it is a fantasy which structures normative narratives of well-being and life-course pathways to attain desirable objects. This is an exclusive category in Aristotle’s philosophical tradition in which ‘only some had the life that enabled one to achieve a good life, a life that involved self-ownership, material security, and leisure time’ (Ahmed 2010: 13). In this conception, an exclusive privileged group is endowed with increased capacities to attain objects of, and proximities to, the good life through the labour of other marginalised groups.

Butler (2012: 9) argues that the object of well-being and security that is conflated with the good life in this scenario, is achieved ‘by profiting off the labour of others, or relying on an economic system that entrenches inequality’. Groups with lesser capacities to attain proximity to these objects experience a structural foreclosure of the good life, yet the pervasiveness of the imaginary, and the affective attachments to it, ensures that the fantasy is never totally extinguished. Objects of desire circulate in an economy of ‘happy objects’, argues Ahmed (2010: 38), as images imbued with promises that accumulate affective intensities the more they circulate and the more we seek out proximity to those objects. For Berlant (2011: 1), this fantasy of the good life represents a cruel optimism in which ‘something you desire is actually an

obstacle to your flourishing'. Like Ahmed, Berlant (2011: 2) contends that attachments to the images and objects of these good life fantasies sustain themselves through the 'affective structure' of the attachment, when bodies are charged with an:

inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way.

Of course, these fantasies are unattainable when structured in this way: always at the horizon of immediate experience, a utopian imaginary of progress driven by unquenchable desires. Such a fantasy is enigmatic in that its objects can never be apprehended in the same tense or authenticity to which they have been represented. It is therefore the affective properties, which Ahmed and Berlant both point to, that become the 'object-target' (Anderson 2014) of good life fantasies, not the scene, image or three-dimensional object itself. Indeed, geographers argue that the affective properties of such representational and imaginary spaces are often 'engineered' for consumptive effect (McCormack 2008; Anderson 2014; Lin 2015; Jones and Jam 2016). The good life herein, is not just a trope or cliché of moral philosophy, but also extends to envelope economic life and the affective attachments we form in relation to desirable objects. For this reason, I simply define the normative good life by drawing upon Berlant's (2011: 2) formulation that it is a 'moral-intimate-economic thing' which structures our fantasies of an 'enduring reciprocity' in the modes of governance in late liberal society – such as the idea that the free market and civil institutions are able to provide structural equality and opportunity. Big objectives such as Indigenous-settler reconciliation and solidarity, I argue, fit this description

and are often unattainable when the normative fantasy of the good life is structured to exclude and abandon particular Aboriginal livelihoods (Povinelli 2011).

The exclusion of marginal lives and lifestyles are integral to the structure of this fantasy. As Butler (2012: 9) questions, ‘[how does one live] a good life within a world in which the good life is structurally or systematically foreclosed for so many’. The exclusion of others from the fantasy, sustains further investment by privileged groups to which a proximity can be attained – or to which a capacity to be-proximate is enlarged, despite its enigma. This is perhaps the more cynical version of the good life, one that imagines the elimination of colonised/racialised others. For Ahmed, it is precisely the presence of the racialised other in spaces of whiteness that sustains the fantasy: ‘the racial others become the obstacle that allows the white subject to sustain a fantasy that without them, the good life would be attainable’ (2014: 131). Put simply, the failure to attain the good life for white subjects in a racialised settler-colonial place, furthers the project of eliminating/assimilating Aboriginal livelihoods and presences. The presence of otherness is indicative of the failure for the good life to return its promises, and so more investment must be made in order to achieve hegemony. To imagine the normative good life in settler-colonial Australia, is to imagine the absence of bad lives: a future without bad lives, not through the provision of equality, but through subverting the self-determined articulation of difference.

This brings me to the second way in which the good life is used in this thesis: as a point of contestation through which activism and modes of solidarity are built. Central to this conceptualisation is that it is an already-existing way of life that imagines ‘one’s futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course’

(Ahmed 2010: 71). In other words, it is the realisation of possibility and indeterminacy in the future. Essentially this contestation occurs in the disruption of the normativity of the good life, as in events of protest, or even contestations that articulate non-normative modes of being and ways of being-together with difference. This echoes Berlant's (2011: 2) questioning of our attachments to good life fantasies:

What happens when those fantasies start to fray—depression, dissociation, pragmatism, cynicism, optimism, activism, or an incoherent mash?

I argue that it is in the schism and fragmentation of good life fantasies – specifically interrupting the transmission of its affective force (Brennan 2004) – that possibility emerges. The transformative potential of this moment of disruption is generative of further questions. It provides a space in which one might ask what is a good life – as I did in all interviews – and attentions are necessarily drawn to further explorations as to ‘what is good’, or ‘what is a life’ (Butler 2012: 10). How is ‘good’ determined and what beings are constituted as ‘a life’, pushes ethnographic inquiry into the diverse expressions of alternative lives, modes of being alive (Ingold 2011) and the vital signs of liveliness (Bennett 2010). For Butler (2009, 2012), asking what is a life and what is living, begs the question as to what makes certain lives grievable and others ungrievable. The grievable life is one that matters, one that has been granted an exclusive status of living through ‘political belonging’ (Butler 2012: 10). A life existing on the edge of such modes of belonging, or those more explicitly outside the realm of grievability, must secure the protection of their life through political acts.

Thesis structure and aims

In the making of moments where the objects of the good life – and their affective attachments – are disappointed and destabilised, the status of the future becomes indeterminate. This instability of the good life opens-up a space of encounter that is ‘hospitable [...] to whatever happens; to whosoever or whatever arrives’ (Dewsbury *et al.* 2002: 438). Simply, the indeterminacy of the future facilitates encounters that are open to difference. These spaces are left ‘empty for encounters which may contain the potential to unfold things otherwise [...] enacting a world, again and again’ (Dewsbury *et al.* 2002: 438). This research observes how participants conjure atmospheres that escape representation, they are the excesses of life that refuse neat explanations (Anderson 2009b). Atmospheres structure how place is experienced, they ‘capture an emergent “something more” that is produced in the interaction of material, social, and affective, forms’ (Duff 2010: 891). Encounters with difference in Broome add this ‘something more’ to the experience of place – obscured narratives and the moods of place – which fragment the dominant refrain and rhythm of touristic spaces. These rapturous encounters allow alternative readings of place which privileges an awareness of ‘moods than of images, of the atmosphere than of particular spectacles’ (Lefebvre 1996: 229). Through unsettling the expected feel and atmosphere of place, activists offer moments in which alternative ways of feeling and knowing might take hold. This leads me to the central question of this research thesis is: **what role does *place* play in making connections across difference that facilitate activist solidarities which radically reframe normative understandings of the ‘good life’?** In addressing this question, the chapters to follow aim to:

- explore and critically examine how the affective life of places is experienced and contested through the performative aspects of representation;
- explore and describe shared geographies that foreground embodied ways of knowing Country and bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people into productive relation;
- explore and describe how non-Aboriginal people enlarge their capacities to support Aboriginal rights and political agendas.

The organisation of this thesis develops a narrative in which I address these research aims and develop a geographical site of analysis for the reframing of the good life.

The chapters evolve in stages that mark moments where the researcher's body, accumulates new parts that are more sensitive to affects, atmospheres and feelings that articulate alternative 'registers of thought' (Thrift 2007: 12). This is not a personal journey, but 'prepersonal' in the sense that I explore 'the passage from one experiential state of the body to another' through moments that alter a body's 'capacity to act' (Massumi 1987: xvi). The narratives of those interviewed during this research are performative staging events that direct bodies to spaces in which they learn to be affected. They describe the enabling potentials of ordinary spaces that activists and supporters inhabit and narrate as their geographies of the good life.

Part One of this thesis resembles a traditional background-theoretical framework-methodology format in which I demonstrate my understanding of: the socio-political contexts of Broome and Aboriginal issues in Australia; the current research paradigm in Human Geography that builds upon encounter, non-representational theories and affect; and the methodological posture that I develop through key moments in the field. Chapter One outlines the historical and contemporary moments of controversy

and ongoing interventions that impact upon expressions of commonality and difference. I introduce Broome as my fieldwork site and describe how popular representations of that place belie the substrata of local meanings, histories and ways of being. A history of difference in Broome continues to be an integral condition of dissensus and disagreement, and therefore the production of political projects. Representations of Aboriginal livelihoods in remote Australia produce discourses of Aboriginal decline which enlarge the settler-state's capacity to intervene in the futures of those spaces. Whilst affected by the harsh realities of abuse, poverty and addiction, Aboriginal-led action in Broome refuses binary futures of dysfunction or prosperity. Against the dichotomy of industrial development or community reformation, activists here choose a third way, a present-future that is not colonised by dispossession or decline, but by a reimagined 'good life'.

Chapter Two outlines how I understand and deploy the theoretical terms of this thesis. I discuss how encounter has emerged as a productive lens through which to understand the productive potentials of interactions across difference. I situate this research at the forefront of encounter scholarship, a field of research that has been enhanced by recent explorations on enchantment and the non-representational elements of interaction and exchange. The enchanting encounter is here used to position the research within a growing body of literature that explores the non-representational properties of those encounters. I then briefly contextualise the development of affective and non-representational methodologies in scholarship that has been used to develop a set of research sensibilities committed to embodied observation. Central to the goal of this chapter is to describe the ways concepts shape an openness to emplaced knowledges.

Chapter Three presents key moments in the field that radically reoriented the research aims and objectives. I use empirical moments to demonstrate how whiteness acted upon the development of the research design, including an evaluation of my white positionality. Messy moments of ethnographic fieldwork are used in this chapter to describe how dissent needs to be thought of as a productive way of forging bonds with diverse research participants. This dissenting position facilitates the production of alternative knowledges through privileging embodied insights. I use the body as a way to develop affect as a method for attending to spaces where realigned relations emerge.

Part Two of this thesis presents empirical findings that disrupt the normativity of good life narratives and imaginaries in Broome. Chapter Four presents moments where the anticipated feeling of place that are structured through pervasive romanticised representations are disappointed by the actual experience of place. I argue that activists here stage moments of disappointment that are generative of other moments of indeterminacy. Here, one is suspended in a state of openness where they might pursue other regimes of sense-making that facilitate a relational way of thinking about time and space. Representations are reframed through participant-driven photographs that aim to capture the ‘local’ in ways that don’t obscure the realities of injustice or the ordinariness of forming enduring attachments to place. Chapter Five grounds Aboriginal activists’ motivations for protest in protecting their capacities to make their own independent readings of place. I develop a more in-depth conceptualisation of Country through interviews with Aboriginal activists and supporters, and describe why these conceptualisations are integral to understanding how Country enlarges their capacity to act and form new relations.

After establishing Aboriginal frameworks for reading place in the narratives of activists and supporters, I introduce a key chapter – Chapter Six – that defines and unpacks the crucial embodied frameworks from knowing and feeling Country. I pivot between narrative and creative styles of writing to capture how narratives of connection and connecting make up the ‘identity narratives’ of participants that ‘function as performances of spatial belonging’ (Ridanpää 2017: 61). Through narrativising moments of connection, I demonstrate how particular geographies of the good life, as mapped by Aboriginal interviewees, facilitate the rejuvenation of bodies through atmospheric attunements to the here-and-now.

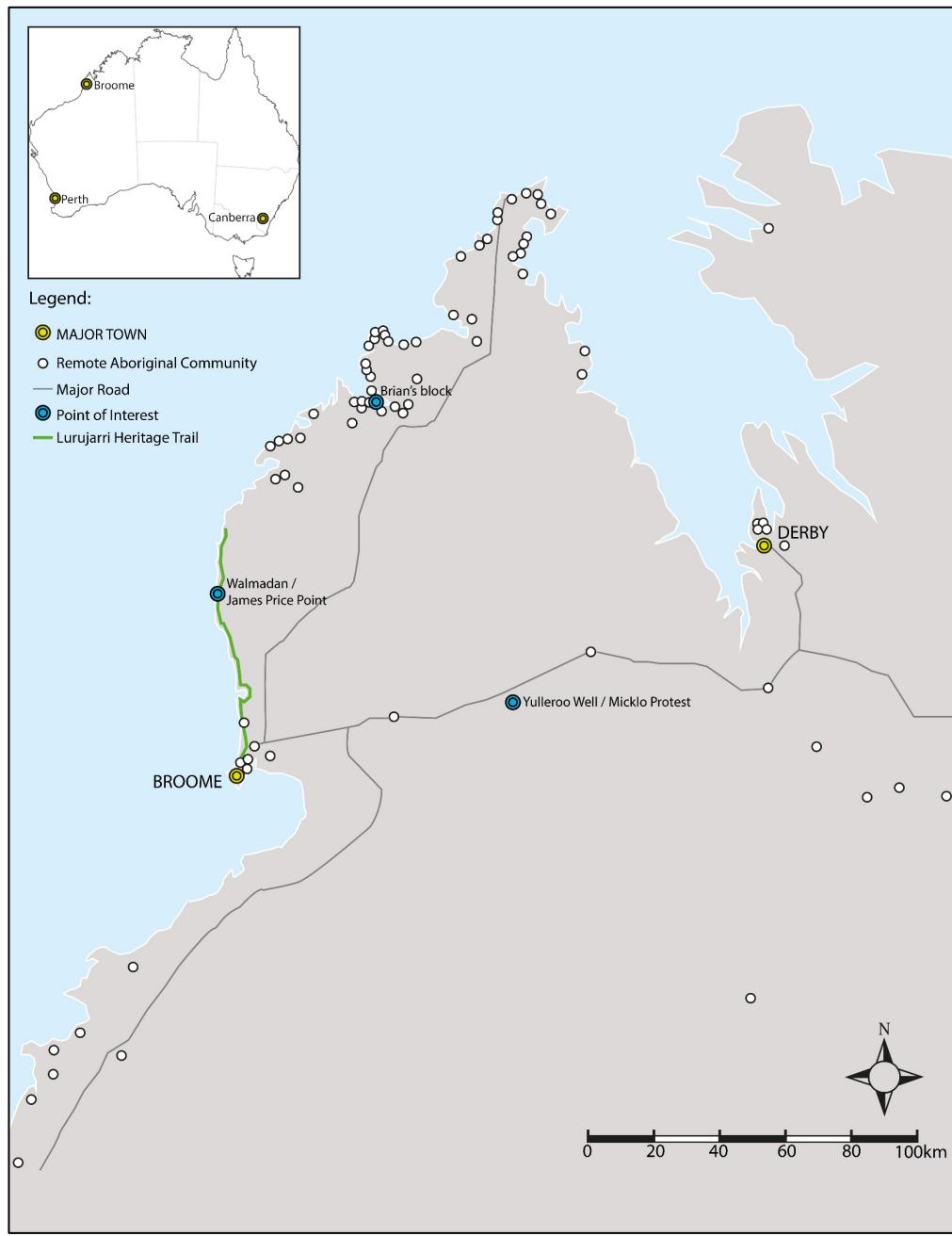
Part Three of this thesis demonstrates how reconciliatory efforts in settler-colonial places are enhanced by and often requires the effective support of non-Aboriginal allies. Chapter Seven foregrounds non-Aboriginal understandings of place from the perspective of supporters of Aboriginal rights agendas. I develop upon non-Aboriginal narratives of arrival and connection precisely because they inhere subjectivities that are not-of-place. These insights are crucial to understanding how supporters learn to be affected by place through revealing layers of obscured histories and alternative readings of place. I draw upon my participation in an activist event at the fracking wells on Yawuru Country, in which a number of white environmentalists engaged in a process of learning from Aboriginal conceptions of Country and wellbeing. As outsiders, white people in Aboriginal spaces share stories with me about definitive moments in which they encountered Aboriginality in Broome. These are moments they recall as formative in their relationship with place, moments that enabled them to enter into a process of becoming-local.

Chapter Eight breaks with the narrative flow of part three to introduce a short account of non-Aboriginal dwellings and inhabitations of spatialities of becoming. I describe the becoming of body parts in white activist subjects that open them up to the alternative sensorium of Country. I describe the ways in which non-Aboriginal people learn to be affected, foregrounding an affective pedagogy that I then develop upon and instrumentalise in the final chapter of this thesis. Chapter Nine brings together my most significant contribution to scholarship which seeks to add to our understanding of how place plays a role in making connections across difference and conditioning the expressions and effectiveness of political projects; and how encounters with difference do not need to be proximate face-to-face interactions in order to generative meaningful connections, but rather these connections can be enabled by mediating forces. I demonstrate how primed non-Aboriginal bodies, that are oriented toward difference and approach space with a willingness to be affected, can engage in a process of meaningful encounter. Walking along an Aboriginal songline – the Lurujarri Trail – I use my body to show how the affectivity of place does its work that has the potential to extend beyond the event of place, and continually enact meaningful connections across difference.

I emphasise my aim in describing the political possibilities in mediating the affective life of place through the most appropriate means available in the contemporary repertoire of Human Geography research methods. Affect does not present itself as a neatly packaged research tool. To apprehend affect in the political projects of Aboriginal and environmental rights agendas, it requires some risk to be taken. I have taken such a risk by breaking with some of the conservative conventions in representing research data. In absence of a sequestered discussion and analysis chapters, I have embedded my understandings and findings throughout. I am

influenced in this regard by the work of my research participants who share a concern for the state of our earth, environment and diversity of people and species.

Part one: Framing place, theory and method



Map 2 – West Kimberley fieldwork region

Chapter one: Contextualising past–present–futures

In imagining alternative present-futures, activists conjure marginal histories of place and bring them to the terrain of immediate experience. This chapter highlights some of the uncomfortable histories of Broome that enable contestation and lend potential to spaces that reconfigure power relations. I demonstrate how histories of being-together in Broome are fraught with tensions and disagreements that unsettle the commonly-held narrative of Broome as a ‘cosmopolitan’ space constructed in the fantasies of white settlers (Choo 2011). This is followed by unpacking the popular ‘discourse of decline’ (Shaw 2007: 65) in representations of Aboriginality in remote locations. These discourses often call the morality of remote Aboriginality into question and its construal as an economic burden is aided in part by ‘failures’ around ‘closing the gap’ between Aboriginal and settler people. These failures permit and sanction further paternalistic-protectionist interventions in Aboriginal livelihoods that are regularly met with protest. As such, those who regularly protest are painted as selfish ‘rabble rousers’. It is this ongoing cycle of controversy and protest that Kimberley rabble rousers aim to disrupt.

Reframing the past-present: poly-ethnic Broome

Known to Aboriginal people as *Rubbibi*, Broome is the Country of the Djugun and Yawuru people. Geographically closer to Jakarta than Canberra, it is one of the most remote urban locations in Australia. Its shares a northern coastline with histories implicated by ‘the identity politics of Asian, White and Indigenous Australians’ (Ganter *et al.* 2006: 3). In pre-colonial northern Australia – or *Marege* as it was called then by Asian traders – annual trade occurred for decades prior to colonial settlement. Off the Kimberley coastline, the fishing grounds known to the Macassans

as *Kayu Jawa* was a site of trade between Aboriginals and Asian groups operating out of the port of Makassar (Ganter *et al.* 2006). The trade of sea cucumbers for tobacco and other commodities, as well as Asian-Aboriginal contact has been the topic of much research; it has been depicted in the form of rock and bark paintings by Aboriginal groups in the region (Choo 1994). Indeed, pre-European contact left profound imprints on the cultures and languages of the far north.

For centuries, Europeans believed in the existence of a great unknown southern land: *Terra Australis Incognita*. Successive generations of Dutch, French, and British maritime explorers mapped the coastline of the continent. Although inspired by competition for trading and territorial dominance, observations and collections made by such voyagers were also aimed at developing a comprehensive scientific knowledge of the world. In the year 1644, the first European charting of the Kimberley coast around Broome was documented by Captain Abel Janszoon Tasman of the Dutch East India Trading Company. In 1688, prior to colonisation of the southern colonies, William Dampier, an Englishman, charted the coastal region north of Broome, what is now known as the Dampier Peninsula (Battye 1924).

In 1788, the British invaded the south-east of the continent and established the penal colony of New South Wales. After the settlement of southern Australia, the British turned their interest to expeditions identifying locations for future settlements, aiming to build stronger trading links with markets in Asia (Bolton 1972). However, it was not until 1861 that Broome became of strategic importance to the British colonisers. The discovery of the *Pinctada Maxima* in 1861 at Nickol Bay was the largest pearl to be discovered in the world at that time. The industry was firmly established in October 1866, near Roebourne, Western Australia, and quickly gave

reason to establish a global industry at Roebuck Bay (Edmonds 1996). By the late 19th century Australia had become the largest pearl industry in the world, more specifically Broome had become the pearl capital of the industry (Martínez and Vickers 2015). From 1861, up until the first waves of Asian immigration, the collection of pearl shell was done without apparatus, with the local Aboriginal people ‘engaged’, with little choice, for breath-hold diving (Wong, 1996). The first wave of migration consisted of Japanese indentured labour, working alongside Kupangers, Malays, Timorese, Aboriginal and white labourers (Oliver 2011).

The town of Broome was proclaimed in 1883, and in 1888, the Eastern Extension Australasia and the China Telegraph Company laid an international underwater telegraph cable between Broome and Java. This telegraph cable provided direct contact to the imperial capital London and solidified its linkage with Asia and London rather than the Australian colonies (Rabbitt 2013). The labour force of Broome around the turn of the century was racially diverse. Labour supply was of primary concern until 1915 when the industry was exempt by the Commonwealth government from the *White Australia Policies* (Moore 1994). Broome was the only Australian settlement to be granted such an exemption. This long standing multicultural history of Broome during the late 19th and early 20th centuries has been well documented by researchers (Yu and Tang Wei 1990; Rabbitt 1994; Martínez and Vickers 2015; S. Yu *et al.* 2015). For a period of decades leading up to significant events such as WWI, the great depression and WWII, the multicultural make-up of Broome was quite different from south Australian cities.

Due to the climatic conditions of the region, the pearl industry experienced seasons of inactivity with monsoonal rains and cyclones during the wet season.

Pearling crews lived on board the luggers (pearling vessels) for most of the year. Historian Christine Choo's (2011) work on this period of increased Asian influence documents the inhumane environments that endured throughout this period. During the cyclone season from December to March, the vessels were laid up along the coast for maintenance, where the men lived ashore in overcrowded conditions. In the early 20th century, growing tensions between cultural groups culminated in what is now known as the *Broome Race Riots*. Living within a highly stratified social system, the bullying and cruelty experienced by Koepang and Ambonese indentured labourers at the hands of the Japanese, served as a flashpoint that precipitated violent street fighting. Choo notes, that whilst the history of displacement and racial discrimination against Aboriginal people in Australia is well known to have been commonplace, ethnic conflicts between multiple cultures at this time were relatively rare. The unruly street-fighting with hundreds of men rushing about armed and angry, occurred at roughly seven-year intervals between 1907 and 1921, borne out of the danger, frustration, and injustice endemic to the pearling industry.

The status of employees in the pearling industry was determined by race and ethnicity, with indentured labour and slavery being common. Aside from the racial tensions created through the pearling industry and remoteness of the town of Broome, businesses established by the ethnic majorities thrived in the international marketplace. Australians and Japanese cooperated in the pearling business to mutual advantage even under the restrictions of the White Australia Policies (Oliver 2011). Many Chinese came from Darwin and Melbourne to establish general stores, tailoring businesses and pearl dealerships, others came as indentured workers in the pearling industry (Yu and Tang Wei 1990). In 1938 the pearling industry began to experience significant decline and came to a complete standstill during the WWII.

The onset of WWII saw the evacuation of northern townships in Australia, the confiscation of luggers, and the intermittent and eventual repatriation of Japanese workers (Ganter *et al.* 2006).

At the height of the WWII on the Pacific front, Broome was the site of Japanese air raid attacks. By mid-February 1942, refugees and soldiers fleeing from the Japanese invasion were arriving in large numbers on the Australian coast. In the last two weeks of February 8,000 mostly Dutch refugees took refuge in Broome on their way south. By the start of March, Japanese forces had occupied Koepang, on the island of Timor, placing them within striking range of the Australian coast. Nine fighters under the control of an observation aircraft, arrived over Roebuck Bay at 9.30am. Not a single operational aircraft was left in Broome when the Japanese departed at 10.30am (Australian War Memorial 2014).

With the collapse of the pearl industry in the 1960's, Broome became a remote town merely surviving. The 1980s heralded the transition of Broome from a small and isolated coastal port to a thriving international tourist destination by the end of the 20th Century (Rabbitt 2013). During a visit to the north-west coast in the 1970s, English business man Alistair McAlpine began a campaign to reinvigorate Broome as a tourist destination. McAlpine is credited with the establishment of the famous Cable Beach Resort and a \$500m restoration of the town infrastructure, which was responsible for rapid population growth during this period (Davidson and Spearritt 2000). The population of Broome grew from 4,079 in 1976 to 13,717 in 1996 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

(Re)producing ideal places

I had first arrived in Broome as a recent graduate on a work trip. I spent most of my time on the road and in remote Aboriginal communities, using the town as a base. According to the Commonwealth government, remote Aboriginal communities are severely socio-economically disadvantaged with radically reduced access to meaningful work, education and health care (Government of Western Australia 2017). My first encounter with a remote Aboriginal community was as a public servant communicating to remote residents that rents would be increased to recover maintenance costs. What followed was angry, tense and emotionally charged interactions with community members who bear the brunt of continual intervention into almost every aspect of their lives.

These encounters were capped by silent three-hour drives back to Broome through the Kimberley in the late afternoon. Boab trees set against the robust red pindan dirt. Clear blue skies and hour-long walks on the iconic Cable Beach during twilight were the closing scenes of emotionally draining days. Indeed, these stark juxtapositions characterise the visitor's experience of Broome and its surrounds. Picturesque land and beachscapes grind up against racialised disparities and differences. Beer cans scatter the sand-dunes. Derelict town communities and vagrant bodies-in-waiting frame the vistas of the resort dwellers. Representational glitches are ubiquitous. The postcard imaginary of this place is always-becoming disrupted, fragmented and brought into crisis by the ordinariness of injustice. How one deals with this disappointment is crucial to social justice projects in this place. For those that acknowledge the disappointment of this so-called 'good life', it offers up

opportunities to realise precipitation points that rain on the fantasy of the good life, cleansing it of its incoherency.

For myself, I quit my ‘promising career’ in the public service two months later – the first person to ever leave a graduate program at the Department of Housing I am told. Those tense and even dire encounters with places and people left an affective imprint. I was charged by Broome despite my ideas of a tropical paradise being disappointed. A need to ‘help’ doesn’t drive this project. The Kimberley has a long, sometimes brutal, but often nostalgic history of Catholic Missions in the region. Many of those non-Aboriginal people encountered during this research fit the profile of either a missionary, mercenary or misfit. Indeed, the will to ‘do good’ is a common sentiment among progressive settler-Australians working on Indigenous issues (Kowal 2015). Often these are continually disappointing moral projects where non-Aboriginal workers of the ‘Aboriginal industry’ frequently burnout. In Mahood’s (2012: 43) affectionate essay on ‘whitefullas’ who work in Indigenous communities, an Aboriginal woman quips that ‘Kartiya [white people] are like Toyotas. When they break down we get another one’. This thesis is not concerned with the continuing cycles of disappointment, but rather, how moments of disappointment might be generative of new relations and registers that make the unknown known.

Broome satisfies and disappoints many diverse compositions of the good life.

Ethnographer Stephen Muecke (2016b: 17) sums up contemporary Broome as:

a pretty town, with a rich Aboriginal and Asian History. In the hinterland and up the coast people find plenty of those things they like to call ‘nature’. So, visitors often fall under its spell, come back in the tourist season, and the

caravan parks fill to capacity. For some retirees, a new lifestyle in Broome is the reward of a lifetime of labour. Others come to Broome simply because the work is there, but they will usually add that they like the beach or the fishing. For the Indigenous locals, Broome has been their home ‘from day one’, but they too want their fair share of ‘the good life’, whatever opportunities are on offer.

Tourists, travellers and wayward rovers have been charmed by the atmosphere of Broome over the years. Its sense of place is a hugely marketable aspect, and as ‘the tourism gateway to the Kimberley’ it is focal point for a broad range of tourism values (Strickland-Munro *et al.* 2016: 362). During the dry season southern tourists and nomads parachute into town, swelling the normal population of around 15,000 to over 50,000 during peak (Wergin 2016a). There are many options available that cater to the tourist. Yoga retreats and spa resorts, adventure excursions, photographic and historical tours, as well as an abundance of Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences (Hughes 2014).

Yet despite the range of opportunities on offer, it is difficult for those that live here to say what it is exactly that enchants them about the place.

Enchantment here is a generative force that cultivates ethical obligations and ‘generosity’ to those that are affected by it (Bennett 2001: 3). For residents and tourists alike, the affective life of place is foregrounded in testimonies on how they make sense of Broome. Nick, the Manager of Broome Visitor Centre, tells me that:

You either get it or you don’t. Some people come here and love the place, don’t want to leave. Other people hate it, it’s not what they expected, it’s just not for them. Either way it’s hard to say – more of a feel for the place
(Interview, 25/03/15).

As Bennett (2001: 4) contends, enchantment ‘is something that we encounter, that hits us, but it is also a comportment that can be fostered through deliberate strategies’. Enchantment is something that happens to bodies, but also a mode of relating other worlds that can be fostered and invested in. Touristic imaginaries attempt to enchant, but are vacant, they fix ideas of place rather than propagate an openness to experience. The type of enchanting encounters that structure ethical generosities, are ones that embrace the unknown and enhance the generative capacities for valuing difference. Central to being-enchanted is an openness to encounter ‘as a state that embraces the potential to become otherwise’ (Wilson 2016: 2).

Grosz (2011: 51) conceptualises this as an unbecoming, or a becoming undone that enlarges a ‘capacity to be otherwise’. Yet, it is important to grasp the types of encounters that inhibit the capacity to become-otherwise and to ascertain the moments in which they reproduce. Being a tourist town, romanticised representations of place are pervasive in the popular imagination of Broome. Images of pristine coastlines and Martian-like landscapes bursting with colour stock the postcard racks in almost every retail space in town. The imagery of sunsets and camel trains on Cable Beach has become the ubiquitous symbol of contemporary Broome, championed by many as being iconic. Yearly multicultural festivals are held that celebrate the poly-ethnic history of this place, and weekly markets during dry season showcase its creative and artistic culture. The consumption of touristic, creative and nature spaces are central to the production of idyllic scenes. These images and experiences which help to sell Broome, inevitably structure expectations, rhythms and patterns of consumption. Staiff, Bushell and Watson (2013: 9) acknowledge that

‘touristic encounters are heavily mediated by the modalities of organised “industrial” tourism’:

While encounters are prepared by representations, nothing can fully prepare us for the ‘encounter in place’ – the moment when a place or an object is encountered for the first time and where, throughout subsequent occasions, subjectivities are shared and memories add to anticipations.

Broome is a dynamic place that offers a myriad of diverse experiences, yet the pervasiveness of caricatured landscapes and postcard scenescapes inhibit ‘an open, ready-to-be surprised “disposition” … with the world’ (Woodyer and Geoghegan 2013: 196). An openness to the unexpected, unanticipated atmospheres of place allow for emergence of difference. Postcards with borders and photos with frames are antithetical to the project of representing a feeling for a place, for the reader might never arrive at such an experience. Bodily encounters with atmospheres of place – those palpable yet intangible feelings/vibes/auras of place that often escape text – define the transformative moments of enchantment that cuts through momentary disappointments. Tourism professionals and service providers note this as well, as caravan park owner and Shire President, Graeme Campbell, tells me:

There’s all this mystique about the place and I think that adds to the liveability of it [...] I’ve got to be careful in saying this but Broome is just, is not just about bloody camels on the beach. And yet the image that a lot of people have is that Broome’s got a beach and they’ve got these damn camels on the beach. Now they’re a good thing, but it’s not all what Broome’s about (Graeme, Interview, 23/03/15).

Postcard imaginaries construct a space of desire in which the tourist might fashion anticipatory feelings around an expectation of place which may or may not add up to the reality of the lived locale (Yüksel and Akgül 2007). As argued by Edensor (2012: 1115), ‘anticipation engenders the coproduction of an atmosphere by preparing visitors for an emotional and affective encounter’. These feelings are ‘based on pre-encounter images’ that confine the availability of emotional and affective registers that might be experienced in place (Desmond 2011: 175). Localised imaginaries of landscape, environment and culture are often overwhelmed by dominant and popular representations, failing in capturing the ‘mystique’ of place. Capitalist-driven reproductions of expectation ‘run from colonialism through to tourism, operating upon desire, a play of the imagination and, ultimately, conquest – visual and/or embodied’ (Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011: 1). Optimism imbued in objectified spaces of the good life inhabits a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1977) which anticipates how certain spaces should be received and experienced regardless of values such as social justice. These structures of feeling produce ‘a collective mood’ which is related to the image of an ideal place (Anderson 2014: 116). Being in ‘proximity to the object means proximity to the cluster of things that the object promises’ (Berlant 2011: 23). The dominant good life imaginary then coalesces around objects of desire and the anticipated feelings, mediated by an optimistic attachment to those objects. The imagined feeling of local atmospheres is fixed and rendered still through an attachment to its objects. It is expected that upon arrival, the atmosphere matches the anticipation, in this sense touristic objects of desire are problematically thought of as inanimate.

Such renderings of place as seen through the normative gaze of popular representation, disavows the evolving nature of experience – which is always in flux.

'Atmospheres are perpetually forming and deforming' says Anderson (2009a: 79) – they are ephemeral in nature, beyond capture they fold and re-compose in the twist of an interlocking field of relations that endures through affective shocks and arrhythmic murmurs – 'never finished, static or at rest'. The normative good life, as an object formed through inanimate still-life representations, becomes unsettled when the anticipation of the locale glitches with the unfamiliarity of lived experience. Animating experiences then require an unsettling of the static and fixed ideas of place. Animacy acknowledges that atmospheres of place are contingent upon diverse experiences coming into relation with each other, or simply stated, difference in relation. Ingold (2006: 10) notes that this is a 'condition of being alive to the world':

characterised by a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness, in perception and action, to an environment that is always in flux, never the same from one moment to the next.

Being-moved by the affects of place, in effect being-enchanted through encounter, cannot be adequately projected onto and inhabited by the objects of desire. Rather, the capacity for movement or change dwells in the 'transformative potential of the entire field of relations' that 'continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence' (Ingold 2006: 10). The rupture of one atmosphere, is the emergence of a new configuration of relations, not composed in the same way before, but re-assembled anew, in alignments that generate new ways of co-becoming together. For tourists in Broome expecting to encounter an atmosphere in keeping with the postcard imaginary, real life experiences of place always disappoint. There is always

the potential for optimism to be disappointed, when the imaginary of place and the good life is an object of desire. As Berlant (2011: 23) notes:

All attachments are optimistic. When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us.

What promises are broken then when the tourist comes to Broome, expecting a harmonious town with a cosmopolitan vibe and is confronted by disharmony? How does this promise of the good life as an optimistically anticipated space, disappoint in the encounter with a protest march through the streets of this town? Framing the good life as an object that contains within it a cluster of promises, draws attention to what is ‘incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments’ (Berlant 2011: 23). Rather than regress into critiquing the inadequacies of representation to give us what we desire, the task is to highlight how this cluster of promises is challenged, recalled, reframed and relived. This makes a significant contribution to the emerging literature in the social sciences more broadly that theorises and demonstrates what comes after critique (Thomas 2016; Fassin 2017; Rebughini 2018). It demonstrates how participants enact the futures they want to live through already-existing spacetimes of the good life. The section which follows begins to describe how encounters with difference facilitate the enactment of alternatives.

Producing discourses of decline

To Aboriginal people in the West Kimberley, particularly groups who live on the Dampier Peninsula, Broome has traditionally (yet also contemporaneously) been a meeting place for diverse groups. Its official function today serves as the

administrative centre and tourism gateway to the Kimberley. It attracts not only international and interstate tourists, but a wide range of Aboriginal people from other communities of the region. With steep rents, overcrowding and a 17-year waitlist for public housing⁹, the public parks, beaches and coastal dune systems host a hypervisible itinerant Aboriginal population. Racialised poverty is a jarring public presence that disrupts the salience of utopian narratives. During fieldwork, the disparities between black and white Australia became pronounced by two saddening events in a remote Aboriginal community near Broome. A 10-year-old girl committed suicide a few years apart from her 12-year-old sister (Taylor and Laurie 2016). It is devastating events such as these – as well as reference to alcohol and substance abuse, and significant gaps in health and education indicators – that propels affectively imbued rhetoric in legitimising the ongoing colonial administration of Indigeneity in Australia. At the time of writing this thesis, an inquest by the State Coroner was underway into the high rate of youth suicide (said to be the highest in the world) in the Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley (Bamford 2017). Ongoing tragedies compound the narratives of failure in town and emphasises the multiple evaluations of failure in remote communities over cases of thriving communities. Aboriginal discourses of decline are so normalised that racialised apartheid-style laws are passed almost unabated. During fieldwork, the local government introduced a law prohibiting the sale of alcohol to those not in a vehicle¹⁰, a law that was regularly relaxed for non-Aboriginal tourists.

⁹ During my time working for the Department of Housing in the WA public sector, it was revealed in a personal interaction with the Regional Manager of Housing in the Kimberley, that the waitlist for public housing in Broome was 17-years-long. The wait was up to 25-years in some remote Aboriginal communities.

¹⁰ Specifically, the law was introduced to arrest the consumption of alcohol by Aboriginal people due to a popularly described ‘riot’ that occurred after a recent football grand final match between Cable Beach and Looma Community (Cordingley 2015).

Paternalistic interventions in regional and remote Aboriginal livelihoods have intensified in the past ten years in the wake of the self-determination era of the 1970s, with policy postures and attitudes toward Aboriginal livelihoods taking on increasing neoliberal and utilitarian logics (Strakosch 2015). In the Northern Territory (NT) during 2007, the Commonwealth government declared a State of Emergency that facilitated the *Northern Territory Emergency Response* – a militarised intervention that suspended the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and certain rights for Indigenous people. In what was an insidious manipulation of the legislature and public policy in violation to the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the intervention was enabled through hyper-negative representations of remote Aboriginal communities as failed societies (Proudfoot and Habibis 2015). Anthropologist Jon Altman (2007: 9) argues that central to the legitimisation of the intervention was the negative portrayal of remote Aboriginal lifestyles:

When proclaimed on 21 June the ‘national emergency’ was about child sex abuse, but very quickly—in July and into August—it came to focus on the issue of dysfunction. Then on 29 August, in his first visit to the ‘national emergency jurisdiction’, the Prime Minister indicated that the intervention was actually about mainstreaming or normalizing remote living Indigenous Australians.

Since the NT Intervention, there have been ongoing experiments in the quarantining of welfare payments based upon behavioural outcomes such as school attendance rates of children. The rollout of cashless welfare cards – the brainchild of a non-elected philanthropic mining-magnate billionaire Andrew ‘Twiggy’ Forrest – has

placed further government controls on the economic and social lives of remote-living Aboriginal people. Altman (2017) argues that the Intervention marked a shift away from the self-determination era which began in the 1970s, to a more violent form of elimination driven by a fixation on sameness. The creation of a discourse which represented remote communities as failed and in decline, facilitated the emergence of paternalistic Indigenous policy (McCallum and Waller 2013). Since the Intervention, argues Altman (2017: 31), successive governments have embarked on a ‘project to eliminate the lifeways of the people who live on Aboriginal homelands’ and draws comparisons to Lemkin’s original theorisation of genocide. Referring particularly to the moral techniques of elimination, Lemkin (1944: 89-90) states:

In order to weaken the spiritual resistance of the national group, the occupant attempts to create an atmosphere of moral debasement within this group.

According to this plan, the mental energy of the group should be concentrated upon base instincts and should be diverted from moral and national thinking.

Through discourses of decline, which I emphasise are responses to real ‘issues of abusive behaviors and sexual transgression(s)’ (Tedmanson and Wadiwel 2010: 7), interventionist homeland policies can be viewed as a creative mode of moral debasement. At a regional level in Western Australia, interventionism peaked during February 2011, when the WA government declared the closure of a remote Aboriginal community in the East Kimberley called Oombulgarri. Utilising a mix of economic-rational and emotionally-laden language, then-Premier Colin Barnett claimed that the Oombulgarri community was no longer ‘viable’, citing sexual abuse. The community did indeed close, and in 2014 it was announced by the Premier that up to 150 more remote communities may close. The closures were officially

announced in response to the cessation of Commonwealth funding for essential service delivery in remote Aboriginal communities. It is also useful to consider the announcement as a provocation during a political standoff between the WA and Commonwealth governments over the national distribution of goods and services tax (GST) revenue. The WA Government proposed to cut essential services – primarily gas and electricity – to remote Aboriginal communities, the locations of which were withheld amid an atmosphere of ambiguous precariousness.

In what appeared to be a fiscal issue between State and Commonwealth governments, a sense of paternalistic morality soon entered the debate. Barnett noted his role as an enforcer of morality, using an official parliamentary speech to state:

We are seeing sexually transmitted diseases in children aged from 10 to 14. How many cases of gonorrhoea are there in the wider community? There are none—not a single case. If members opposite think that I as Premier [...] will sit by and let those children be abused, they are so wrong. We will not do that (Western Australia 2015: 1889).

Echoing the rhetoric that preceded the 2007 NT Intervention, substance and sexual abuse became the core narrative in constructing remote Aboriginal livelihoods as morally wanting and in need of reform. The redistributive responsibility to provide basic public infrastructure and amenity became contingent upon conformity to an economic ideal of an assimilated and homogenous Australian citizenry. In what was a crystallising moment during the controversy, former-Prime Minister Tony Abbott reinforced the conflation of citizenship with economic sameness, stating in relation to the closure of remote Aboriginal communities:

What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices if those lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have (Abbott 2015).

In reproducing blurred distinctions and narratives between economic and Indigenous policy, large industrial development projects have become synonymous with Indigenous advancement within official discourse. The WA state government assume that the failure of large economic developments, reliant on the extraction of natural/mineral resources, reflects a failure in Indigenous policy. In 2009, a key state development project was proposed to establish an industrial facility to process liquefied natural gas piped from offshore reserves near Broome. Said to be the world's largest onshore gas processing hub, it failed after four years of intense Aboriginal-led activism. Barnett, in relation to the failure of the James Price Point (hereafter JPP) gas processing hub near Broome, stated that:

I've failed to get the project [...] onto James Price Point, I've failed to create the thousands of jobs for West Australians, I've failed to create the opportunity for West Australian industry. And, most important, I have failed the Aboriginal people; they placed their trust in me and I've let them down (Macmillan and Ceranic 2013: np).

Western Australia for the past 20 years has been one the highest performing mining resource economies in world, fuelled primarily by the extraction of iron ore in the Pilbara region. Since a global downturn in the price of iron ore, as well as the industry moving from construction to production phases, the 'discovery' of offshore and shale rock gas reserves in the Kimberley region have intensified the government's economic ambitions through resource extraction. Parallel renderings of

Aboriginal spaces as economically unsustainable and unable to function without the aid of government intervention, contributes to white fantasies of Indigenous decline (Shaw 2007). Shaw (2007: 74), in researching the gentrification of the urban Aboriginal enclave of Redfern, notes that discourses representing Aboriginal spaces in decline, form part of a ‘whitewish’ fantasy that naturalises ‘a general belief in the inevitability of its demise’. The construction of remote Aboriginal lifestyles as morally deficient cesspits of sexual and alcohol abuse, has aided in a discourse of decline that contributes to the imagination of a post-Aboriginal remote Australia. The need for economic investment coupled with the fiction of Aboriginal decline in the remote Kimberley, has enlarged the capacity of the corporate-state to exploit resource development opportunities.

Exploiting the gap

Released in 2016, the *Prime Minister’s Report* on ‘closing the gap’ marked ten years since the policy era started. The report highlighted a general absence of ‘progress’ across key indicators and targets (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016). Policy reform since the Commonwealth’s *Indigenous Advancement Strategy* launched in 2013 has been a source of growing concern and scepticism among Aboriginal people, and indeed, there have been numerous failings and misspending in Indigenous reported in recent years (Muir *et al.* 2013). For Altman (2015), the compounding failures in this area has prompted the emergence of a distorted colonial project in the neoliberal age. Altman states:

Having failed to deliver anything concrete, the government is now looking to reignite the settler-colonial project to eliminate native societies so vividly described by Patrick Wolfe. With physical elimination through civil war not

possible in the present, a more insidious strategy has become evident in the wider arena of Indigenous affairs (2015: 12).

Referencing Patrick Wolfe's (2006) 'logic of elimination' inherent in the settler-colonial project, Altman suggests that neoliberal approaches to Indigenous people are becoming the new strategy that seeks to eliminate Aboriginal people. Increased public resources are being directed into the 'development' of Northern Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 2015) where the Indigenous population is projected to increase to half the overall population by 2040, compared to southern cities where they will remain at two or three per cent (Langton 2013). In the *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, the tropics – region north of the Tropic of Capricorn – is characterised as 'the next frontier' for economic development that 'feeds back into jobs and opportunities in Sydney, Melbourne and all major Australian cities' (Commonwealth of Australia 2015: 12). Aboriginal populations in this report are characterised by 'poverty, have poor educational and health outcomes and few employment opportunities' (2015: 25). This policy forming document begins to mesh together national economic measures with Indigenous policy, stating: 'it is apparent that if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are to participate equally in the development of the North these fundamental measures of poverty and disadvantage need to be addressed' (2015: 25). It goes on to characterise Aboriginal populations as 'an untapped source of labour' (2015: 25).

It is evident through the imbrication of Indigenous policy with economic development, that neoliberal logics to Aboriginal Australia are consuming the ability to enact alternative ways of being-in-the-world. The closure of communities in remote Australia creates imagined zones of abandonment that force Aboriginal lives

to be evaluated within the refrain of neoliberal economic practice (Povinelli 2011).

In conversation with Harvey's (2003) Marxist-inspired accumulation by dispossession, the assessment of Aboriginal communities in terms of economic participation might be thought of as *accumulation by abandonment*. Altman (2015) contends that it is precisely these polices of abandonment characterised by a refusal to provide services to remote Aboriginal communities, that constitutes an insidious advancement of the settler-colonial project.

Yet, some Aboriginal groups and organisations in the Kimberley choose to engage in and embrace industrial projects with the promise of economic return and profit for the region's disadvantaged Aboriginal populations (Wall 2010). Others choose to fight what they see as a 'real big push for assimilation [through] development and industrialisation' Aboriginal activist Ebony tells me (Interview, 20/06/15). She relays a common assertion throughout activist narratives, that its 'not about developing our community, it's about access to resources'. In the activist narratives explored in this thesis, the closure of communities is seen as an implicit part of the push to develop the North. Whilst activists in this region have been successful in recent years in collapsing the development at JPP, the effective criminalisation of protest by the state is compounding hardships in struggles against state driven neoliberalism.

After years of intense activism against the highly lucrative JPP project, participants in this research describe recent interventions in Indigenous policy as retribution for causing the failure of the project. Since 2013, the WA Government has deregistered over 3200 Aboriginal cultural heritage sites (Dortch and Sapienza 2015) and introduced legislation that effectively criminalises protest (O'Connor 2016). In addition to this, the fracking of unconventional gas reserves found in shale rock on

the Roebuck Plains has been pursued by the state at a time when other governments (local and state area) of WA and Australia are banning the practice. The interventionist policies of the state that are described in this research, reflect a renewed trajectory of intervention in Aboriginal lifeworlds based on a narrative of moral deficiencies and economic sameness.

Kimberley rabble rousers

To them, we're just a bunch of fuckin' Kimberley rabble rousers – Donna

(Interview, 21/06/15)

In April 2013, Broome received global attention after local activists fought and defeated a large multinational backed by both State and Commonwealth governments. Thousands of residents came together to contest the development of the world's largest onshore liquefied natural gas (LNG) processing plant at JPP/Walmadan, 52km to the north. Steadfast in his commitment to this development, the Premier of WA Colin Barnett, declared that WA was set to become the 'Saudi Arabia of natural gas' Today (WA Today 2009). Intense activism that referenced the cultural and ecological significance of this region persisted for over three years, maintaining its life throughout the precarity of immanent industrialisation. In a David and Goliath-style reverence, JPP has become the exemplar case study of activism done right for grassroots campaigners around Australia (Paris *et al.* 2013).

For the State and Commonwealth governments, many lessons were also learnt. The limitations of its current development policy approach to the north of Australia were made clear through the unlikely victory of Indigenous and environmental activism. As such, since 2013 the Commonwealth commissioned and released a *Green* and

White Paper on Developing Northern Australia. In general, the three limitations to developing northern Australia were highlighted as governance, population growth and land access – specifically, access to Aboriginal held tenures and environmentally protected areas. The Commonwealth has set about establishing a clear narrative for developing the north of Australia, energised in part by proclaiming the ‘untapped opportunities and unrealised potential’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2014, 2015). The renewed push to develop the north by the Commonwealth, coupled with an intent to refuse service to remote Aboriginal communities, has produced a unique contingency for action among social justice campaigners and Aboriginal rights activists in Australia.

In response, a national campaign conceived by Aboriginal activists in the Kimberley region and spearheaded by SOSBlakAustralia, has coordinated multiple public protest events. On several occasions, these large protest events have succeeded in ‘shutting down’ large cities such as Melbourne by occupying busy city streets during peak hour (Hurley and Whinnett 2015a). This campaign – guided under the moniker ‘stop the forced closure of remote Aboriginal communities’ – is Indigenous driven, ‘to support all Aboriginal communities in Australia to remain in their homelands and on Country & enable them to determine their own futures’ (SOSBlakAustralia 2016: np). The campaign encountered much criticism in the mainstream media dominant political commentary. Much of the public discourse about Aboriginality, including their land rights and ‘lifestyle choices’, has so far come to focus on negative accounts of social problems and dysfunction, evidence of a need to ‘close the gap’ (Gillespie 2012). At a time when the gaze of the public was again turned upon remote Aboriginal lives, the national broadcaster ABC framed the issue through a *Four Corners* program called *Remote Hope*. The exposé visited communities in the

Kimberley region that are under threat, concluding that they found ‘grinding poverty, no jobs and little hope’ and ‘appalling stories of sexual abuse and neglect’; but in what is a glimmer of hope they also found ‘community leaders determined to tackle the *dysfunction*’ (Whitmont 2015: np).

Initially the proposal to cease providing essential services –extending in *de facto* to include schools and policing – was a response to the discontinuation of the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (NPARIH). This ten-year agreement shared the responsibility of financially facilitating significant reform in the provision of housing for Aboriginal people in remote communities, through addressing ‘overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage’ (Council of Australian Governments 2008). The initial rhetoric of the debate was largely concerned with how to fund the fiscal black hole that this partnership agreement had previously filled. The justification given for refusing essential services, changed over a period of weeks from late 2014 to early 2015, from one of economic necessity, to a moral imperative.

For towns such as Broome, super-investment in the region was seen by some to substitute a fluctuating and under-performing tourism industry, resolve high unemployment rates, and address extreme poverty. There is a large contingent of residents and high-profile community members that were, and still are, pining over the loss of the JPP project (Bergmann 2011; Collins 2011). Effectively equal in size, pro and anti-gas sentiments split the town down the middle, dissecting professional and social life, friendships, family ties and relationships with kin (Muir 2012). Conditions for effective political action – such as a majority, solidarity and support – were not quite perfect, as consensus among Aboriginal groups and the broader

resident population was effectively unattainable. What was special about the activist group that emerged from the intimate division, was that they were often unacquainted with each other and mixed in different social worlds. Difference and diversity within the movement was pronounced, and interests centred on the protection of Country, culture and the good life. As the debate progressed, it enveloped reputable national personalities in former high court judges, celebrities, political party leaders and international NGOs. There were many popularised explanations as to how this diverse group of Aboriginal activists overcame the weight of the state and a transnational consortium of big oil and gas. But Premier Barnett theorised, that the collapse of the JPP development was due to the actions of radical protesters: ‘the company basically got scared away because of the insults and threats to their employees’ (Australian Associated Press 2016).

The activism around JPP was particularly gruelling, exhausting many core members of the community. Today there are little aspects of Broome’s economic and social spheres that are not influenced or indeed tainted by the fallout of the debate – it is for this reason that the event is referred to throughout this thesis. JPP for many, if not all residents of Broome, was a crystallising moment in reforming the social body of the region. At the origins of the debate, there was broad consensus that the controversy placed the ‘Kimberley at the crossroads’ (Murray 2009), with many residents bracing for a divisive and corrupting atmosphere of animosity. Many of those interviewed in this research expressed their waning energy and devotion during the campaign due to distress, threats and abuse directed at them. Community closure protest organiser Mitch tells me:

...it was a lot of hard work and that's why I said it took its toll on me. I was under a lot of lateral violence attacks from my own mob, my own family, my own clan, tribe who were negotiating, who wanted the money and I knew that that would stick with me for longer than it has. It has right up until now. So, in this process of standing up for something that I absolutely love, which was my culture and this idea of this place that needs to be protected, these spaces that have to be protected because there's not many of them on this globe. And it came down to this point that, as a Blackfella, as a sovereign person of this Country that was born from here, I have a role to be a steward for that little red patch of earth (Interview, 17/06/15).

Anti-gas activists in this extremely divided small remote town, led by a seasoned Aboriginal core, maintained the energy to protest over a three-year period despite trauma and violence. At the core of activism against the forced closures are the same actors involved in the JPP protests. Again, this group of 'protectors' as another activist-participant Anne tells me (Interview, 24/06/15), continue to fight against large state sanctioned policy that affects their 'whole being'.

This research has followed the life of the *forced closure campaign* from its inception on social media through discussions between a core group of Kimberley activists. Since March 2015, the campaign has issued multiple calls to action that have organised large public demonstrations throughout Australian communities, towns and cities. I have participated in each call to action, all events in Broome and three events in Melbourne. The first series of protests witnessed thousands of people rally around the nation, marching through the streets of towns and cities. Following antagonisms from both the Premier of WA and the Prime Minister of Australia, a

large social media campaign was developed by organisers, a group that I was considered a part of. This research has been entangled and embedded with activists since the start of this campaign, in its moment of energy and mobilisation. This moment was virtual – dwelling within the liminal space between a potential and the emergence of a material moment.

I explore spacetimes where potential swells and the capacity to imagine alternative social worlds pool with intensity. I engage with a key group of Aboriginal activists and their allies through an exploration of the forced closure campaign, its multiple rallies, and the multiple imaginations of alternative futures that have been under-articulated in the dominating discourse of development. Broome and the Kimberley region has a recent history of strong activist credentials. This research was embedded within the most recent expressions of diverse activism in the region. The emergence of the community closures campaign was an event that catalysed, as described by Aboriginal activist, Celeste Liddle (2015: 23), ‘Aboriginal Australians’ year of action’. It is the task of this research to attend to and amplify the spaces that facilitated this emergence, and amplify the enactments of a world-otherwise in activist narratives and practices. The geographies of events, moments, connections and actions that are described in this thesis, reflect the taking place of something more-than-resistance – it extends to the practice of (re)framing and enacting alternatives.

Reframing present-futures

In the fold of ongoing and exhausting controversies, Aboriginal activists in Broome continually mobilise bodies around political acts such as protests, but also quiet acts of becoming that occur out-of-sight and off-the-grid. These political projects at once

resist the distribution of colonising imaginaries, but also enact alternative ways-of-being in place of, and resistance to, regressive futures. They lead a decentralised diverse group of non-Aboriginal supporters who don't necessarily identify as activists, nor do they use the typical language of progressive protesters in 'solidarity' and 'struggle'. This is a political project that exceeds the often ritualised and reactive acts of activism in large metropolitan cities. Activisms in Broome bely neat rational explanations that would foreground 'tactics' and 'messages' ahead of maintaining and scaling up already-existing alternative worlds.

It is in a context of enduring harm and injury that this research thesis attends to the forces that envelop diverse bodies in the service of alternative ways-of-being. It is these forces, the affective mobilising forces of becoming that share in a relational idea of the 'good life', which lends potential to successful activism in Broome. The organisation around the idea of the good life, is not lost on the present as a deferred reality or modality of life, but rather the good life is enacted in the here-and-now. Such enactments propel movements and counter-interventions that have been described by Muecke (2016a: 252) as the 'most significant, and successful, Indigenous-green alliance in Australia's history'. Borne out of a personal fascination with this success, this research strives to valorise the backgrounded conditions and performances that lend potential to the affirmative political projects of Broome.

In so doing, this thesis sets out to swell other modes of existence through reframing and apprehending the affective attachments to normative narratives of the 'good life', in a representational objective sense. This is a radical withdrawal from current discourses that equate mainstream economic participation with citizenship through an uncritical fidelity to attaining affective object-targets of the good life (Anderson

2014). It maps the enclosures of thinking and feeling differently that inhibit the capacity of alternative ideas of the good life to emerge, move and affect bodies. Spaces of alterity are necessarily spaces which are in excess of normative representations of place. I attempt to apprehend these excesses which spill out of representations and the distribution of them. I seek to reformulate the language through which we might be able to discern which activisms matter in prefiguring alternative futures of co-existence.

Chapter two: Geographies of non-representational encounters

In this chapter I identify what might be regarded as ‘gaps’ in the existing literature, or perhaps more specifically, the emerging theoretical trajectories in the established Human Geography scholarship. However, I wish to consider the role that critical ethnographic study has in social justice research as not being fixated on ‘plugging’ the speculative holes and blind-spots with the current scholarship, but rather that the fundamental task of such research with a focus upon sustaining alternative futures is *to force new openings into existence*. It reorientates the normative gaze of emancipatory politics from cities to ordinary off-the-map places which often elude geographical research (Robinson 2006; Bonnett 2014). This chapter then moves on to describe the theoretical underpinnings that facilitates the development of a geographic methodology that is sensitive to the excessive forces of ordinary life that resource political potentials.

I focus on dissensus as it creates moments emptied of the over-determining tendencies of economically-driven actors to rationalise space, leaving voids that are open to rupture, surprise and new relations. In embracing dissensus, Crane and Kusek (2014: 124-125) argue that ‘cultural geography is today incontrovertibly done as a staging of encounters between often irreconcilable senses of the world’. But it is not the overt act of protest that apprehends and suspends the dominant representational discourses of place. Of course, the sense of place here – its materiality, climate, seasonality, mood – influences the expressions of protest that are possible. Protest changes the atmosphere of local places, but place also influences the types of expressions that manifest. Whilst this may be a useful point of analysis – that is, the impact of emplaced contexts on overt forms of action – such readings tend

to skirt along the surface of representational politics, cloaking other relational accounts of political projects. Furthermore, descriptive accounts of the extraordinary, inadequately value the aspects of place – often mundane, banal and obscure – that enlarge the capacities for action to occur.

Materialities of place are important. Anti-protest laws in Australia specifically target the materiality of activism through criminalising physical acts of ‘locking on’ to machinery and obstructing ‘lawful’ activity (Ricketts 2017). Expressions of protest are so often the objects of negative representation in the media and political discourse in Australia and other political spaces. Anti-protest legislation introduced in Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and more recently in New South Wales was aided by such representations, for example the mainstream media smears calling protesters ‘selfish rabble’ (Hurley and Whinnett 2015b) and government branding of non-violent ‘knitting nannas’ as ‘ecofascists’ (Ricketts 2017: 108). Representations of activists and events impact upon the range of actions that become possible in renewal and reproduction of controversies. The repetition of similar reactive tactics, over time, becomes ritualistic endeavours that are easily absorbed into the fabric of post-political places (Davidson and Iveson 2015). In contrast to a focus upon inhibitory representational forces, this thesis urges an exploration of moments and encounters that register alternative ‘affects, ambitions, and risks’ in spaces that enable a ‘reparative reading’ amidst a critique of regressive governance practices (Sedgwick 2003: 150).

Behind the representations of radical politics are enabling spaces that contain and radiate the conditions that facilitate alignment. In discussing ‘happy objects’ Ahmed (2010: 25) argues that the ‘affective or sensational’ object or event, illuminates the

object itself but also what is ‘around’ and ‘behind’, what she calls ‘the conditions of its arrival’. The event of overt street protests is not so much the effect of singular or contingent causes, but can be more adequately theorised as an ‘arrival’ of body parts that have come into relation with each other. Relations between bodies produce conditions for the alignment of more bodies in a constant state of what Deleuze (1988: 19) calls ‘composition’ and ‘decomposition’:

The order of causes is defined by this: each body in extension, each idea or each mind in thought are constituted by the characteristic relations that subsume the parts of that body, the parts of that idea. When a body "encounters" another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts. And this is what is prodigious in the body and the mind alike, these sets of living parts that enter into composition with and decompose one another according to complex laws. The order of causes is therefore an order of composition and decomposition of relations, which infinitely affects all of nature.

Specific acts of dissensus provide an entry point into deeper readings of a body’s arrival. These moments of arrival, such as noisy street protests, signal a range of trajectories, capacities and potentials coming into relation. Political projects are always in formation despite the provocations of government. The ‘swarming’ of bodies is given its radical potential through the backgrounded acts of connection and solidarity (Connolly 2017). For this reason, I have foregone a deep analysis of social movement literatures in favour of experimenting with creative theories and methodologies that reflect the forms of socio-political organisation observed. This

chapter outlines how inherited theoretical perspectives are defined and deployed throughout this research thesis. Whilst I engage with the literature around key concepts, I also gradually incorporate and elaborate on subject areas of Cultural Geography, particularly encounter, affect and non-representational theories. Within each chapter theoretical developments are undertaken which develop the methodological and theoretical terrain in which this thesis sits and makes its contribution. Stated plainly, the methodological aspect of this research expands and contributes to the empirical usefulness of non-representational theories in ethnographic research. I begin here by foregrounding encounter as an elemental geographic concept that provides opportunities to analyse how connections across difference are made and sustained.

Encounter

Valentine (2008) notes that encountering difference as a point of interest for urban researchers has been in development since the early 1990s (Burgess and Jackson 1992; Pile 1993; Creswell 1996). Other significant insights are drawn from earlier work of urban practitioners such as Jane Jacobs (1961), who, for example, positions the ‘sidewalk’ as an integral space for contact, safety and the maintenance of community. As a geographical concept, encounter has preoccupied geographical thought around difference and social justice in the city. Public space often prefigures here as the domain of encounter, where interactions between unlike groups take-place (Wise 2009). These spaces have been conceptualised in different ways such as: thirdspaces, where the melding of real and imagined spaces form the basis of a collective lived experience (Soja 1996; Peattie 1998); or micro-publics, places of

purposeful and organized group activity were people can come to terms with difference (Amin 2002).

Public spaces of intercultural encounter are often planned to promote understanding and connection across difference, yet at times seem to stage indifference and even conflict among diverse groups (Fincher *et al.* 2014). When urban public spaces become arenas of dissent and protest, the acts are condemned as an aberration, a violation of social stability (Amin 2006, 2013). Seminal contributions to the encounter literature in Human Geography include conceptualisations of spaces where encounters are facilitated, inhibited and performed. Amin's (2002) writing in the wake of the 2001 England riots that highlighted racial and ethnic tensions, draws attention to the need for spaces of meaningful encounter. Amin argues that affirmative relations across difference can be hindered by proximity rather than enabled. Rather, spaces should be engineered where proximity is rethought and enhanced by modes of relating that shift power dynamics. 'Micro-publics' states Amin (2002: 959), are such spaces 'of everyday social contact and encounter' that break with entrenched habits of interaction and potentially lead to more meaningful relations. They include community organisations such sports clubs, performance groups, community gardens and urban farms etc.

Fincher and Iveson's (2008) continue in this way, conceptualising three social logics of urban planning that contribute to social justice outcomes in cities. In conjunction with a recognition of difference and the redistribution of resources to meet different needs among diverse populations. They argue that spaces of encounter – such as street festivals, public libraries and drop-in centres – are crucial to the production of a just city through modes of unexpected encounter. How particular spaces –

organised and accidental – produce the possibility for meaningful or good encounters/contact is the subject of contemporary geographical literature (Hemming 2011; Wilson 2013; Mayblin; Valentine, and Andersson 2016; Mayblin, Valentine, Kossak, *et al.* 2015; Bawaka Country, Wright, Lloyd, *et al.* 2016; Wilson 2017)

Yet there remain few theoretical accounts in Human Geography that go beyond thinking of encounter as an interaction that takes-place in the presence of others, and the interplay between people and place. As Wilson and Darling (2016: 1) argue, ‘there is a lack of critical attention given to questioning just exactly what it means to “encounter”’. Wilson’s (2016: 1) ‘first conceptualization’ of encounter therefore structures my use and understanding of the term as a geographical tool of enquiry into ordinary spaces of connection. I draw upon Wilson’s (2016: 2) specific definition of encounter ‘as a distinctive event of relation [...] firmly within the remit of difference, rupture and surprise’. This theorisation serves as my primary definition of encounter that incorporates four key elements. According to Wilson and Darling (2016: 2), encounters:

[are] centrally about the maintenance, production and reworking of difference; fundamentally frame [emplaced] experiences and subjectivities; produce and encompass multiple temporal registers; and, offer points of possible transformation and an opening to change.

Encounters draw attention to differences that intersect, remake and transform themselves in the coming together of otherness. These moments are often surprising and fleeting that come as unexpected meetings producing ruptures and surprises.

Encounters shape the affective life of places and frame the formation of newly orientated and organised experiences and subjectivities. Here, alterity is brought to

and formed in the encounter precisely because different bodily capacities interact and continually reform norms, expectations and desires in place. Of fundamental interest to this thesis, is how these encounters are generative of creating alternative space-times where change and transformation become pragmatic possibilities. In other words, I am interested in the political potential of encounter, especially forms of ordinary-yet-enchanting encounters that do not rely upon anthropocentric ‘contact’, but with space-times that reconfigure relations with not-present others.

Through encounter, Wylie (2009: 278) argues, we might get a sense of the binding of absences and presences that configure relational places. Place contains absent and present associations that resist the assimilation of difference and generate new alignments between people, places, concepts and imaginations, composing new modes of action and interaction. What happens in the encounter between people and places is indeterminate, as a plethora of possibilities are always in a state of possible emergence. Thinking through encounter is understanding how interaction inherits a potential for alternative knowledges and collaborations to be made across difference without jeopardising essential differences. As demonstrated in this research, place/Country grounds the formation of new collectives without erasing the original substances of encounter and exchange. I argue that encounters with place, in which human and non-human others might not be present but are felt, facilitates the making of connections across difference. I contribute to recent theorisations on encounter by demonstrating how connections might be made in the physical absence of others.

Grammars and boundaries of difference

Encounter is ‘historically coded’ as a weighted concept that composes ‘oppositional imaginaries’ which have traditionally been integral to the formation of exclusive

spatial boundaries (Wilson 2016: 3). Geographical imaginations of borderlands, frontiers, edges and fringes create dualistic ‘distinctions of friend and foe, superior and inferior, inside and outside’ (Rovisco 2010: 1015). These adversarial traditions of theorising encounter suggest an incommensurability of difference and fundamentally unequal power relations. It also speaks to the role that geography and its imaginaries played in the inception and spread of colonial-imperialist projects (Nash 2002; Shaw *et al.* 2006; Kearns 2009). I aim to unsettle frontier imaginaries that historically foreground the conceptualisation of encounter. Such figurations of ‘the frontier’, argues Prout and Howitt (2009: 397), are present and ongoing in settler-colonial places as ‘constructed geographies’:

rendering Indigenous people always out of place, these frontier imaginings foster continuing erasure of Indigenous rights, lived experiences, and opportunities.

In disturbing the boundedness of geographic imaginaries, the idea of encounter does not totally do away with the imaginary of an ‘edgy’ space where differences come together. Broome and other ‘northern frontier’ spaces creatively assemble new hybrid formations in the coming together of difference (Gibson *et al.* 2010). The spatialisation of difference – that is, the constructed geographies of distinction between different modes of being – relies upon the potential for borders to align affiliations. Frontiers harbour hopeful geographies of co-existence where the interaction of difference, even with inevitable frictions, are productive of new mixtures. In post-colonial contexts, Rovisco (2010: 1016) argues, what is missing in the ‘grammar of difference’ that underpins cross-cultural encounters, are non-dualistic theorisations. Adversarial categories that produce discourses of

incommensurability ignore the reality of already-existing ‘hybrid cultural forms, new identities and ways of coexistence’ (Rovisco 2010: 1016). Regardless of the bounded representations inherent in the geographies of empire, hybrid subjects wilfully navigate the liminality of contact zones.

In similar ways as borderlands and frontier spaces attempt to fix dualisms, touristic imaginaries have the effect of delineating categories of in-here and out-there (Urry and Larsen 2011). Idyllic representations do indeed reproduce simplified romantic categories of difference that impoverish more complex and messy realities of touristic and settler-colonial spaces. Existing in the spaces of colonial and touristic encounter are what Gruzinski (2002: 23) terms ‘go-betweens’ and ‘intermediaries’ – people who navigate the spaces between border imaginaries. For Gruzinski (2002), hard distinctions such as evil-coloniser/good-native belie the messy cross-cultural work that occurs between the representational margins. Indeed, many participants in this research ‘hailed themselves into place’ as entrepreneurial go-betweens that ‘invest in the position’ of being-hybrid (Hall 1996: 5-6). In Broome, Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences purposefully navigate the middle space between representational categories of settler and Indigenous people, where southern tourists are challenged ‘to encounter [alternative] modes of existence’ (Wergin 2016b: 497).

Martínez and Vickers (2015) in their labour history of the ‘pearl frontier’ in northern Australia, note that for over a century, pearl shell had been the driving catalytic force of encounter across the frontier, forging not only economic and political interactions but lasting cultural pluralities. Broome’s hybrid identity has been shaped by intercultural encounter pre-dating colonisation. As a place of multiplicity, many participants remark on their hybridity and celebrate the ‘Creolisation processes [that]

have been ever-present' (Wergin 2016b: 489). This reflects the use of encounter in postcolonial scholarship which features as a theoretical and analytical lens through which difference and diversity might be better understood (Pratt 1991; Moreton-Robinson 1998; Shellam 2009). A concern with postcolonial geographies then necessarily draws upon encounter as a useful spatial tool for understanding grammars of difference. This draws attention to how difference is imagined through narratives of adversarial encounter, but most importantly how margins, edges and spaces on the fringe are productive of difference and multiplicity *through* encounter.

Disrupting contact narratives

The bulk of geographic literature on encounter draws upon the concept of 'contact zones' as a space where difference meets, but also as a space where difference is produced (Askins and Pain 2011; Price 2013; Valentine 2013; Mayblin, Valentine, and Andersson 2016; Wilson 2016). This literature is heavily influenced by a conceptualisation of the term by Pratt (1991: 34), identifying contact zones as:

social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.

Aside from those literatures that focus upon tourism and postcolonial studies, much of the geographic scholarship that draws upon a conceptualisation of 'contact' is heavily urban-centric. Difference in the city is always emerging as multiplicity is always in a state of (de)composition. As such, for Sennett (1992: 123) the city is a place in which inhabitants are always 'people in the presence of otherness'. Indeed, Massey (2005) theorises the city as a site of 'throwntogetherness' where difference

foregrounds everyday inhabitations and negotiations of urban public space. Valentine (2008) explicitly draws upon Allport's (1954) influential 'contact hypothesis' to develop on early theories of encounter beyond the idea that proximity alone develops terrains where prejudices might be overcome. Valentine (2008: 334) argues that 'proximity' might suggest a broad tolerance of difference, but 'does not equate with meaningful contact'. Instead, Valentine (2008: 325; 2013) begins to elaborate on an ethic of 'meaningful' encounter as an event:

that actually changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others.

This progresses Amin's (2002) contention that co-presence in urban public space alone is not conducive to the kind of meaningful interaction needed to overcome racial and ethnic prejudices. Geographical scholarship has developed upon contemporary debates about the types of encounter that bring about meaningful exchanges that affirm difference (Lobo 2010; Askins and Pain 2011; Hemming 2011; Gawlewicz 2015; Mayblin, Valentine and Andersson 2015; Hewitt 2016). A transformative politics of exchange across difference, argues Askins (2015: 473), does not 'flatten out diversity' through the assimilation of difference into a hegemonic whole, but rather holds onto 'same' and 'not-same' as encounters generate new subjectivities.

Although this growing body of literature is developing more diverse accounts of meaningful relations between differences and the emerging hybrid identities that they affirm, there is little geographical literature that focusses upon non-urban spaces with polyethnic identities, particularly those in settler-colonial contexts. Remote tropical

places in the north of Australia are so often excluded from urban narratives of political difference and diversity (Kelly and Lobo 2017). Spaces such as Broome are complicated by the primacy of tourism industries that marketise Indigeneity, cosmopolitan Creole culture, colonial histories and even inter-ethnic conflict. Encounter narratives here struggle to escape from ‘contact’ stories of European colonialism and touristic practices.

I critique these contact narratives as privileging the face-to-face human encounter over other forms and modes of connection, giving less attention to the generative potentials of encounters with ‘enchantment, the sensuous, and the more-than-human’ (Wilson 2016: 8). Overcoming the boundaries of difference has a tendency to focus on moments of contact between human bodies (Young 1986; Amin 2006; Swanton 2010; Askins and Pain 2011; Fincher and Iveson 2012; Mayblin, Valentine, and Andersson 2016), in particular racialised and ethnic minority bodies (Saldanha 2007; Nayak 2011; Lobo 2013; Hopkins *et al.* 2017). Yet these geographies of difference are contingent upon relations that are ‘evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual’ (Lorimer 2005: 83). In the more-than-human scholarship, encounters feature as hybridising events that entangles human, non-human, and material beings (Whatmore 2006; Lloyd *et al.* 2010; Lorimer 2010; Wright *et al.* 2012; Latimer and Miele 2013). These encounters refocus readings of interaction and exchange beyond contact between humans and incorporates the agencies of nature, animals and place into ethico-political projects (Whatmore 2002; Braun 2005; Gibbs 2009; Greenhough 2010; Head and Gibson 2012).

An important intervention in this literature is an emerging geographical scholarship that has begun to explore the role of more-than-human Indigenous concepts, places

and ontologies as forces that forge meaningful relationships across difference (Panelli 2010; Suchet-Pearson *et al.* 2013; Bawaka Country *et al.* 2015a; Bawaka Country *et al.* 2015b; Thomas 2015; Bawaka Country, Wright, Lloyd; *et al.* 2016). I build upon this literature by describing how connections with Indigenous concepts, places and ontologies are made by diverse human bodies. Importantly, these bodily encounters are dependent upon the presence of other human bodies (thought it does help), but rather, through moments of emplaced ‘enchantment’ with Country, human bodies become ‘open’ and ‘ready-to-be surprised’ (Woodyer and Geoghegan 2013: 196). Enchanting encounters, felt through the sensorium of the body, opens subjectivities up to difference, lending capacities to ‘the potential to become otherwise’ (Wilson 2016: 2) – they become amenable to difference.

Making way for enchanting encounters

Whilst the empirical chapters of this thesis describe spaces of being-together in the material presence and absence of human others, I also stress the potential of encounters with disappointment. Moments of disappointment that I observe, entail confronting events that fragment the anticipated ideals that visitors are invested in. Upon arrival, outsiders to Broome go through moments of disappointment in ways that upset and disrupt the image of a cosmopolitan tropical utopia. In the moment of disappointment, bodies are held in a state of openness where what they do next matters. Some let disappointment linger so that it might transform them; others fix disappointment in space, unable to reconcile the gap between what they anticipated and then experienced. When disappointment carries beyond the present – that is, not fixed in time and space – it moves and morphs. Always becoming, disappointment is a reorientating force that can turn bodies toward new subjectivities. In exploring

what makes these encounters meaningful and productive in comprising ethical subjectivities, these moments must move beyond the present into the ‘torques of temporality and indeterminacy’ (Yusoff 2013: 211). Moments of disappointment open-up spaces where new temporal and spatial formations might be assembled.

Drawing upon Derrida’s (1994: xix) contention that justice ‘must carry beyond present life’, Yusoff (2013: 212) argues that:

A call to be responsible beyond the present and presence (it must be noncontemporaneous with itself), is nonetheless marked by the interruption of *différance* in ways that become difficult to negotiate in the fields of practice.

The difficulty in negotiation that Yusoff talks about is precisely the moment of disappointment that I illustrate in this thesis. When regimes of knowledge and sensibility, that are constructed from afar ‘become undone’ (Grosz 2011), the status of past-present-future relations become indeterminate. As Barad (2012: 214) states, this ‘[i]ndeterminacy is an un/doing of identity that unsettles the very foundations of non/being’. When encounters with difference rupture pre-conceived boundaries and grammars of difference, things could go either way. That is, when non-Aboriginal people come to Broome, they encounter crucial moments where pre-conceived imaginations of categorical differences – which are racial, cultural, and incorporate ideas of ‘natural’ spaces – are either reproduced or challenged. Dwelling in these moments of indetermination attends to ‘a site of negotiation’ that has a ‘generative potential – in ethical-political terms – of indeterminate bodies’ (Waterton and Yusoff 2017: 10). These are moments and encounters, states Lawson and Elwood (2014:

210), that ‘might constitute a first step’ in confronting injustices and facilitate the moulding of equitable futures.

The indeterminate zone of possibility is chaotic in the sense that it postpones objective claims to truth about the moment – indeterminacy privileges the formation of knowledge through the body as sensations and feelings. Grosz (2008: 8) argues that it is this chaotic indeterminacy of the present moment that drives an impulse of ‘ceaseless variation’ that:

gives rise to the creation of networks, planes, zones of cohesion, which do not map this chaos so much as draw strength, force, material from it for a provisional and open-ended cohesion, temporary modes of ordering, slowing, filtering.

The radical indeterminacy of disappointing moments resists over-determining differences that figure hard non-permeable borders and harnesses a potential to hold subjects in a state of openness to alternative worlds. The actors that inhabit this field of relation become mutually constitutive of each other and can move beyond the present into futures of togetherness and belonging. This is a vitalising indeterminacy (Bennett 2010) that preconditions the present as a moment ‘for the possibility of all structures in their dynamically reconfiguring in/stabilities’ (Barad 2012: 215). As discussed in the previous chapter, even the most apathetic of my participants to environmental projects and Aboriginal rights stated that there is a ‘mystique about the place’ in which ‘you either get it or you don’t’. I argue that this mystique is a bodily affect felt as an enchanting force that one can’t quite make sense of in the moment. Encounters, particularly disappointing and enchanting encounters, rely upon sensations that occupy ‘the zone of indeterminacy’ as an affective barometer of

moments in-between the lines of differences (Grosz 2008: 73). For Grosz (2008: 73) the sensory ‘erupts from the encounter of the one with the other’:

Sensation impacts the body, not through the brain, not through representations, signs, images, or fantasies, but directly, on the body's own internal forces, on cells, organs, the nervous system. Sensation requires no mediation or translation. It is not representation, sign, symbol, but force, energy, rhythm, resonance.

Initially, proximate presence with human others facilitates moments of disappointment which then open up the possibility for non-proximate differences – that is, different sensory regimes that are affected by alternative concepts, temporalities and cultural institutions – to be encountered. Dominant representational discourses are suspended in this indeterminacy and the allure of enchanting spaces emerges a force that draws bodies to different ways of knowing and feeling. This creates a state of openness that resonates with my identification of moments and spaces that charge or orientate bodies in ways that they become affected by wider sets of relations. Scholarly work on geographies of openness and encounter advances Bennett’s (2001) seminal contribution to theorisations of enchantment. For Bennett (2001), enchantment goes beyond the mysticism of place that might be through of as charming, quaint or magical. As I will describe, Broome has little gems and charms that capture the imagination of people. Yet, I argue that this is not an enchantment in the mystical sense of the extraordinary, but rather, it signals the restructuring of pre-arrival ideas about place. I agree with Bennett (2001: 5) when she describes enchantment as ‘being disrupted or torn out of one’s default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition’.

There is an emerging attention in Cultural Geography to geographies of enchantment, however, as Woodyer and Geoghegan (2013: 196) ‘the concept has yet to be subject to sustained critique, specifically how it can be used to progress geographic thought and praxis’. In the Human Geography literature, the enchanting encounter has had diverse research applications in recent years. For example, Burrell (2011) notes the allure of enchanting places that are constructed through representations of non-proximate ‘western’ objects in socialist Poland; Pyyry (2016) discusses the role that multi-sensory geographical methods, particularly photography, plays in provoking the ‘particular’ in the ‘general’ of city spaces, defamiliarising urban space and opening up moments for enchantment; Rolfe (2016) uses the performance of theatrical magic to illuminate how the obscuring of knowledge produces a capacity to be enchanted by those knowledges when revealed; Herman (2015) foregrounds the agency of place in the building of resilience networks through people-place relations that are made possible through enchanting encounters that are not always positive; Teo and Neo (2017) explore the formation of new publics through diverse negotiations of playing football in non-western urban spaces; and McNally (2017) notes how enchanting encounters with materialities such as art works are sometimes conducive to meaningful encounters but can be limited by the reproduction of categories of difference. These recent scholarly works make up strong contributions to cultural geographies of enchantment and attend to its political potentials in forming ethical relations to the future. Edensor (2015a: 436), in his work on light and illumination, note that enchantment is:

a condition that fuels the potential to enhance playfulness, exhilarates through encounter with the unexpected in the realm of the mundane, and facilitates

affective attachments and communication and thereby opens up possibilities for ethical generosity.

Largely speaking, this work has emerged from Bennett's (2001) hesitation that the theory-driven humanities should not be so quick to talk of the contemporary as a moment of disenchantment, but rather that enchantment dwells within the ordinariness of life. This reaffirms my approach as one that focusses on enchanting encounters that are unremarkably ordinary – they are moments of connection that are often unspectacular and mundane. This does not take away from the notion that they are important events that have the potential to bring alternatively configured worlds into being – and simultaneously to rupture the salience of other worlds. Rather, it is the ordinariness and the ephemerality of these encounters that make them difficult to pin down and represent. In this way, I follow Pyyry's (2017: 2) description of enchantment as a general 'uplifting delight about being alive', but noting that this moment of wonder 'does not have to be a pleasant feeling'. Nevertheless, the feeling of being enchanted, stresses Pyyry (2017: 2), whether felt as good or bad has 'a strong affective force':

In effect, enchantment is often a moment of simultaneous immersion and disconnect with the world [...] both presence and absence at the same time. This unspecific moment of mystery often goes by unnoticed, it is a short-lived juncture that is always already escaping. Enchantment is often out of the reach of verbal representation, but it is a powerful force that is felt, you are sort of struck by it when caught up in a moment [...] it is non-representational.

Enchantment attunes you to the world differently, it shakes your subjectivity. The ontology of an enchanting encounter, I argue, dwells in the affective realm of non-representational life. As Woodyer (2013: 196) argues, we should think of ‘enchantment as a sensory experience of unintelligibility and a mood of fullness or plenitude’. It has a radically future-orientated outlook that Anderson (2014: 15) describes as an ‘ethics of attachment’ that attends to ‘strategies for creating and caring for futures in the making’. In positioning enchantment at the forefront of encounter theorisations, I now turn to affect and non-representational theory in order to enhance understandings about how enchantment can be apprehended as a political force.

Affect

In defining my working conceptualisation of affect I draw upon Thrift’s (2007: 178) Spinozian theorisation of affect, defining it as: ‘the property of the active outcome of an encounter’ that enables an ‘increase or decrease in the ability of the body and mind alike to act’ with a ‘greater or lesser forces of existing’. This highlights the co-constitutive relationship between extra-cognitive forces and encounter. In Human Geography, the turn to affect has become a popular site of research analyses that map the geographies in which representational categories and social relations are challenged and recomposed (Pile 2010). As Dixon and Straughan (2013: 37–38) state:

space as a geographic analytic has itself been recast in light of the play of affect. Whilst diverse critical frameworks have eschewed a simple Euclidean (or topographic) rendering of space as the mere backdrop to events, an

emphasis upon affect draws attention to the as yet undisclosed heterogeneity and multiplicity of space.

Evolving from a Spinozist conception of *affectus*, affect is in its most abstract can be defined as the ‘capacity for affecting and being affected’ (Deleuze 1992: 124). In attending to affect, I theorise it as the change that occurs within a body before the mind has affirmed its existence through its cognate response, such as emotions and feelings. I distinguish affect from emotions, in that affect is a change and emotions are the affirmation of that change. Massumi (2002: 38) articulates this differentiation by defining emotion as:

a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward described as personal.

Emotion is the personal narrative of change, affect therefore, is the pre-personal measure of change that results from an interaction between bodies. Affections, such as joy or fear, signal that such a change has taken place in the body, they are the ‘feeling(s) experienced by the embodied human subject’ (Hickey-Moody 2013: 79). Importantly, affect occurs in the body pre-cognition but does not originate in the human body, rather it circulates and flows through objects, bodies and collectives.

There is an affective quality to landscapes (Ingold 2006; Edensor 2017), seascapes (O’Malley 2016), commodities (Connolly 2002; Anderson 2014), futures (Muñoz 2009; Berlant 2011), imagined communities (Closs Stephens 2016), racialised bodies of difference (Nayak 2010; Saldanha 2010; Swanton 2010; Lobo 2014a) and all representations of life. Indeed, life is lived with a knowledge of moments that imprinted onto our affective memories, with signatures of feelings that have varying intensities: ‘we carry the affective impress of our earliest patterns of relating into all

of our subsequent relationships' (Bondi 2005: 440). Affects accumulate in and flow through bodies, charging bodily capacities that can be harnessed to act in ways that break and interrupt the conformity of civil space. I draw upon contributions in the affect literature that focusses on politics in collective action and activist philosophy (Hynes and Sharpe 2009; Massumi 2011; Hynes 2013). Roelvink (2010: 112) argues that 'affect expands the political field because it introduces awareness of endless possibilities in every moment and brings attention to practices that might capture some of these possibilities to create change'. Affective atmospheres of collective bodies bring differences into relation to each other, blurring the boundaries of socially constructed categories.

In feminist perspectives, the false distinction between the personal and the political realms of life has been critiqued and challenged through an attention to affect and emotion (Thien 2005). With diversifying bio-political modes of governance in this current neoliberal era, 'the emphasis on the political manipulation of emotion/affect is key, and indeed offers a necessary line of examination for geography' (Sharp 2009: 78). Affect is often theorised as the pre-personal realm of politics, in that it is both a tool of manipulation used to govern and also a more affirmative mobilising force that acts upon bodies pre-cognition. Amin and Thrift (2013: 14) state that '[i]f there is one thing that we know about political mobilization, even more in our age than formerly, it is that affect counts'. On the pre-personal nature of politics, they go further, arguing that 'affect precedes decision, rather than the other way round, and that in modern democracies, mastery of the means of affective capture is essential for making political gain' (2013: 158).

Cultural studies have become increasingly more sensitive to the distribution of affect through governing apparatuses. In the *war on terror*, affectively imbued rhetoric has been deployed with the effect of whipping up atmospheres of fear and resentment, enlarging nation-state capacities to engage in more direct forms of militarised social intervention (Pain 2009; Anderson and Harrison 2010; Ahmed 2014). Pile (2010: 15) states that a ‘strong argument for thinking about affect in non-representational theory is that it is being “engineered” by the powerful’. Affect is then a justified mode of exploring the political realms of everyday collective life. Not only can it be deployed by the ‘powerful’, but it can also be harnessed by marginal bodies, in effect, enlarging their capacity to act.

In this thesis, I use affect as a method for exploring the connective tissues of collective political endeavours. I argue that through an attention to affect and the non-representational aspects of movement and action, we can begin to understand how activists recall and reframe the imaginary of good life, and enact alternative spatio-temporal configurations and relations to the future. An attention to affect provides an opening to integrate the taking-place of ethics. Drawing upon Deleuze, Hickey-Moody and Malins (2007: 4) argue that ethics:

is about maximizing the capacities of all bodies to affect and to be affected. It is also about affirming difference and the production of the new. Rather than limiting the future to what has already been or to what is already known, ethics involves opening up the potential for the unknown.

This is a more hopeful articulation of new ethical struggles, as Ahmed (2014: 184) argues, ‘politics without hope is impossible... hope [...] makes involvement in direct forms of political activism enjoyable: the sense that “gathering together” is about

opening up the world, claiming space through “affective bonds”’. Through an attention to the flow of the affective life of an imagination of a world-otherwise, it will be demonstrated that oppositional protest movements harbour within them a hopeful rendition of the future. These imaginations are not merely utopian, but already exist and are enacted in the affective life of protest. In this sense, the imagination is thought of as embodied, embossed in a network of pre- and extra-cognitive senses of the body through interactions with external bodies (Hickey-Moody *et al.* 2016). As Deleuze (1994: 136, 139) states:

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is not an object of recognition but of fundamental encounter. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones... In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed.

This research then privileges the senses of the body in attending to the restructuring of affective relations in the emplaced present. It is through the sense that the body imagines alternative futures informed by rhythms and atmospheres of ordinary life that support difference and coexistence. In this sense, it is influenced by Lefebvre’s (2004) *Rhythmanalysis*, his last scholarly contribution posthumously published. The volume demonstrates his thinking of temporality as non-linear and spatiality as relational in the production of social space. For Lefebvre, forces that push and pull bring the abstract-general (conceptual) into the particular-local (emplaced) and in so doing demonstrates how concepts flow and move, taking-place and affecting bodies in moments of everyday life. In this regard *Rhythmanalysis*, although produced after his most prolific works, serves as a prequel to his most cited *La production de l'espace* (Lefebvre 1974).

Combined with the affective turn in the humanities and geography, analyses of rhythms of everyday life have been the focus of notable works in non-representational research (McCormack 2002; Bissell 2007; Cresswell 2010; Edensor 2010; Vannini 2012; Andrews 2016). Rhythms of biological, psychological and social systems structure the feeling of place, for Lefebvre (2004), rhythms organise and affect the movement and mobility of organic and social bodies. Indeed Rose, Degen, and Basdas (2010: 338–339) conceptualise space as ‘a pulsating, rhythmic force-field of encounters and practices’ that ‘precedes any individual body or subjectivity’. The sensing of rhythms allows the body to feel emergence and endurance of spatio-temporal relations between bodies. Lefebvre (2004: 25) states, that ‘[e]verywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is **rhythm**’. Rhythms give a palpable qualitative sense of time, they are ubiquitous, affective and relational. Their presence marks ‘birth, growth, peak, then decline and end’ (2004: 25) of sense-making regimes, they both produce and interfere in the distributions of what is sensible in time and space. Importantly, this interference can be engineered for change, ‘for there to be *change*, a social group, a class or a caste must intervene by imprinting a **rhythm** on an era, be it through force or in an insinuating manner’ (2004: 24). The sensing and imprinting of rhythms is an intrinsically radical pursuit of political and social change.

Rhythmic spaces – all spaces – produce affective atmospheres, theorised here as ‘temporary configurations of energy and feeling’ that take-place (Conradson and Latham 2007: 238). This thesis pays specific attention to the atmospheres of place that reconfigure relations and intervene in the political distribution of ‘affective economies’ in late liberalism (Ahmed 2014). Momentary reconfigurations of the atmospheres afford the creation of indeterminate moments that create multiple future

trajectories. Crucially, some choose trajectories that radically reshape their relations between human and non-human bodies – in effect, opening moments where ethical entanglements with the world can be renegotiated.

Non-representational theories

Non-representational ethnographic writing aims to return to the immanence of enchantment. – Vannini (2015a: 122)

Within Human and Cultural Geography, this research seeks to make a valued and timely contribution to the thought and practice of non-representational methodologies, particularly in ethnographic research that hold encounter as a central focus. To capture this by method requires an attention to the mundane experiences of place, something that non-representational theories (NRT) holds promise in providing. Thrift (2007: 2) contends that NRT is an interest in ‘the geography of what happens … in large part, it is therefore a work of description of the bare bones of actual occasions’. Preferring to call such bodies of work ‘more-than-representational’, Lorimer (2005: 84) suggests that its:

focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions…which escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation.

The name ‘non-representational theories’ emanates from the work of Thrift (1996, 1997) in the mid-1990s as response to the apparent limitations encountered by a focus upon representing social worlds in constructivism. To borrow from Taussig (1993: xvi), since constructivism, the Academy has been aware of the invented nature of representational categories such as ‘race or gender or nation’. ‘The brilliance of the pronouncement was blinding’, yet for Taussig (1993: xvi) the question remains: ‘If life is constructed, how come it appears so immutable’. It is perhaps this key notion that has spurred the emergence of NRT more than any other account of its genesis: the seeming immutability of socially constructed categories of difference. Constructivist approaches in the social sciences, with its intent on excavating meaning from worlds constituted by power and order, often miss the subtle substances of interaction that reproduce life, or what Thrift (1996: 6) calls ‘the manifold of actions and interactions’. NRT argues that representations of people, culture, place, social spheres etc. are habitually redressed as ‘some *a priori* order waiting to be unveiled, decoded, or revealed’ (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 19). Rather, NRT commits to an exploration and emphasis on the pre-individual and pre-personal aspects of embodied life.

NRT is pre-individual in that ‘[i]t trades in modes of perception which are not subject-based’ (2007: 7). In doing so NRT posits that the ‘subject’ and the ‘social’ are not pre-formed identities that bring meaning to eventful encounters. Rather, NRT prefers an analysis of the body over subject, arguing that ‘bodies are actualised and individuated through sets of diverse practical relations’ (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 8). This theorisation follows on from a Spinozist-Deleuzian conception of the body ‘as a changeable assemblage that is highly responsive to context’ (Hickey-Moody 2013: 81). Subjectivities then, and what the humanities terms *the social*, are

malleable fluid constitutions that momentarily crystallise in a ‘bodily event’ (Dewsbury 2010: 147).

Indeed, it is such propositions and tenets that have prompted criticism and hesitation by many researchers and theorists who voice concern over a lack of acknowledgement of power relations within gender, race, class etc. (Nash 2000; Saldanha 2005; Thien 2005; Tolia-Kelly 2006). Early critiques were made by feminist geographers who argue that NRT theorises bodies of difference as an entity ‘not figured through multiple social categories of age, sex, ethnicity, race and dis/ability’ (Jacobs and Nash 2003: 275). Tolia-Kelly (2006) argues that NRT habitually universalises conceptions of the social, subjectivity and bodies. Bondi (2005: 438) states that:

feminist geographers find research informed by non-representational theory too abstract, too little touched by how people make sense of their lives, and therefore too ‘inhuman’, ungrounded, distancing, detached and, ironically disembodied.

NRT’s emphasis on avoiding reducing difference to ‘meaning, value and signification’ has attracted due criticism from feminist and post-structural accounts of ‘the subject’ (Colls 2012: 431). The onus is on non-representational practitioners to argue for a socially differentiated embodied subject that is thought of as radically contingent upon the space-time context in which they manifest. As Colls (2012: 431) states, NRT offers the ‘differentiated subject as the provisional coming together of a range of forces that are material, affectual, temporal, social, political, economic, technological and so on’. Efforts should be made to resist the analytical temptation to fix bodies according to socially constructed categories, all the while being cognisant

and sensitive to the affective and performative force that such representations bring to encounters and events. This thesis stridently seeks to address a perceived lack of acknowledging socially constructed modes of differentiation, and in so doing, contribute to an understanding of how representational categories, such as race and Indigeneity, can be renegotiated through a heightened sensitivity to non-representational forces. Importantly, NRT is not a substitute set of theories for social constructivism, but rather an experimental elaboration that emanates from constructivist approaches to the world. Constructivism plays an often understated ‘role of context and matrix for the emergence of non-representational theories’ (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 4). This thesis does not dismiss nor ignore the affective qualities and enduring effect of representations.

Representations are integral to geographic analyses of the social worlds that we investigate as they are performances in and of themselves that affect the capacity to make and break connections within the ever-evolving intricate web of power relations. NRT seeks to occupy the in-between space of ‘immutable’ life and the relations that emerge in surprise and excess of representations and power. NRT must be thought of, not as a totalising universal meta-theory of life, but as an ‘umbrella term for diverse work that seeks to better cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds’ (Lorimer 2005: 83). A key sensibility of NRT specifically aims to go ‘beyond constructivism’ and stage realistic attempts to ‘capture the “onflow” [...] of everyday life’ (Thrift 2007: 5); paying particular attention to practice, performance and embodiment that takes-place in the backgrounded hum of everyday life. As a set of theories informed by a range of research traditions, they are a ‘style of engagement with the world that aims to attend

to and intervene in the taking-place of practices' (Anderson 2009b: 503). Therein, NRT is an exploration of the *present* and the contingencies that relate to it.

Non-representational thought seeks to do away with 'divisions, dualisms, and causal principles (associated with transcendence) by remaining committed to the virtual flow of life itself' (Cadman 2009: 456). It fundamentally rejects the binary notion of *cause* and *effect* that reproduces the classical Cartesian dualism in positivist social science research. NRT embraces the muddled contingency of being that is made up of mosaic formations of diverse space-times that imbue capacities, affordances and tendencies. It is in the messy contingencies of everyday experiences where potentials resource the creation of alternatively configured and imagined worlds. Engaging research methodologies in the process of 'worlding' marks the inheritance of the phenomenological traditions – notably Heidegger (1962) – within NRT. Observing worlds in emergence requires a re-theorisation of relatedness as immanent, in that, what gives the present its form and feel is related to a world that has not yet come into view, or a world that is manifestly absent: but it can be sensed. This is a way of relating to world that embraces experimentation within moments where potential pools and the future is not certain (Massumi 2015). These are moments of indeterminacy where worlds are weaved of alternatively imagined futurities imbued with experiences of the past and present. The term 'world' is recognised as plural and dynamic. A world can exist within a world as a moving yet observable set of bodily capacities, relations and practices that incorporate and produce difference (Simonsen 2010). Worlds are not fixed, meaning they can be rejumbled and reorganised so that spatio-temporal relations take on new forms that open-up possibilities for ethical interventions. It is in the emergence of new worlds that ethical precepts can be challenged and redefined.

Moving beyond representational meaning and symbolic order is not anti-representational, but rather it acknowledges that representations have performative qualities. Images that anticipate the experience of an idyllic scene – such as postcard depictions of a tropical beach – carry with them a set of affective qualities that afford particular sets of feelings that can be sensed. They perform as a cluster of affective promises that change the feel of place and are changed *by* the feel of place. Often the experience of these image-objects don't match our expectations. For Yusoff (2007: 219) the disjunction between the image and feel of place forces us to think of 'representation as the imaginative resolution of real contradictions about being in place'. Affective qualities in the lived experience of place are not captured in reproductions – the connective tissue in the experience of the present is manifestly absent from the anticipated object of desire. Therefore, what we can know about certain places, experiences, peoples and cultures is limited, constrained and contorted by cropped and contoured representations. Non-representational theories 'emphasise knowing through connection and participation; the spotlight is on the process, rather than the outcome' (Mayhew 2015: 176). Fundamentally, these theories challenge 'the epistemological priority of representations as the grounds of sense-making or as the means by which to recover information from the world' (McCormack 2003: 488). It acknowledges that how we come to make sense of the world – including through our processes of imagining – is an embodied process that reflects the more-than-human force of the world (Whatmore 2006). Yet, crucially for this research, it is widely recognised by non-representational theorists, that empirical 'geographies based on this concept are painfully few' (Mayhew 2015: 176).

In reflecting upon the usefulness of NRT in practice based research, Boyd (2016: 28) states that 'nonrepresentational theory is a philosophical project that is impossible to

put fully into practice'. In this thesis, I prefer to view NRT as a set of postures that incentivise an attentiveness to the absences of bodies, places and politics that often elude ethnographic research practice. There are no guidelines to this set of postures, although Thrift (2007) does, perhaps erroneously, map out seven tenets of non-representational theories. Vannini (2015d: 11) also argues against these fixed tenets, positing that there are no unique non-representational methods and any attempt to do so 'is simply wrong':

The non-representational researcher is not characterized by the choice or by the rejection of a particular method ... the non-representational researcher ... might very well be uninterested in systematic procedures of data collection.

NRT acknowledges and embraces the muddled and chaotic realities of collecting research material, especially in contexts of uncertainty: it 'embraces uncertainty by affirming life's "messiness"' (Boyd 2016: 29). New epistemologies are not created in the embrace of an NRT-inspired exploration of ordinary life and the emergence of new relations, but rather it redirects research attentions to the processes that underlie the emergence and endurance of worlds. Whilst such an 'embrace' is foregrounded by non-representational theorists, actual situated and emplaced ethnographic work is outweighed by the number of theoretical contributions which omit the importance of fieldwork. There seems to be a chasm between the theorisation and implementation of NRT as a method that can intervene in socio-political life, as Vannini (2015c: 12) argues:

non-representational theory, if it is to continue to be useful, must not retreat into developing theory for theory's sake... too few are non-representational

research studies in relative comparison to the sheer number of conceptual elaborations and theoretical interventions.

To date, there is a growing body of literature that experiments empirically with non-representational modes of research, analysis and presentation. Vannini's (2015c) edited collection *Non-representational methodologies: re-envisioning research* collects the contemporary work of thirteen non-representational practitioners engaged 'to find a different way of writing' (Ingold 2015: viii). The collection is an experimental collection that maps an 'ethos of non-representational research' methods, namely how to write and represent the non-representational (Vannini 2015d: 1). Vannini (2015d: 1) makes clear that there are no 'solutions, formulas, procedures, or codes' that might adequately represent the worlds we research. Rather the collection is an attempt to do away with obsessions with authenticity, accuracy and mimicry in representing lifeworlds. Contributions from prolific non-geographers such as Sheller (2015), Stewart (2015), Manning (2015) and Lingis (2015) demonstrates NRT's evolving relevance in fields beyond Human Geography. It builds and expands upon the highly cited *Taking-place: non-representational theories and geography*, and publication edited by Anderson and Harrison (2010). *Taking-place* is a seminal contribution to the field of NRT in geography, but is limited by its contributors' being 'very British and very male' (Cresswell 2012: 96). *Non-representational methodologies*, however, goes some way in addressing this with half of the main contributors being female, majority non-geographers, and only one chapter being written by British authors. However, again lacking in such a seminal works is a focus on how NRT might be operationalised in a more classical ethnographic sense. There still remains few geographical accounts of empirical ethnographic research that utilises an 'ethos of non-representational research'.

Central to the style of NRT research is a focus upon the ‘body’ as a register of affective flows and how ethnography might attend to ‘witnessing’ the production of ‘knowledge without contemplation’ (Dewsbury 2003). Non-representational research in the past few years has placed heavy focus to the body as a tool of research and as a site of analysis for the transmission and registering of affective forces. The body is the fundamental unit for analyses of everyday life and being, as Cadman (2009: 2) suggests, ‘being-in-the-world is available only through the body and our bodily competences’. There is an extensive literature in Human Geography that focuses on the intersection between place and the body (Nast and Pile 1998; Allen 2004; Tolia-Kelly 2010; Abrahamsson and Simpson 2011; Daya and Wilkins 2013; Hawkins 2013; Colls and Evans 2014; Wilson 2016), in particular racialised bodies (Longhurst 2001; Nayak 2010; Saldanha 2010; Nayak 2011; Price 2013) or Indigenous bodies (Lobo 2013, 2014a; Radcliffe 2015, 2017). Place, for cultural geographers, is foundationally understood through the capacities of the body to become attuned to the affective life of a locale. Indeed, the sensorium of the body is the text through which we make sense of our landscapes (Mitchell 2003; Rose and Wylie 2006; Carter 2010; Lund 2012). Ethnographic methods in Human Geography have therefore become sensitised to viewing the body of the researcher as ‘an instrument of research’ (Longhurst *et al.* 2008). Non-representational ethnographies add to literatures on the body by foregrounding the embodied experiences of the researcher as informative and fundamental to the analysis of social worlds, as Vannini (2015b: 321) states:

Non-representational ethnographic research begins from the researcher’s body as the key instrument for knowing, sensing, feeling, and relating to others and self... From fatigue to enthusiasm, melancholia to keenness, pain

to enchantment, non-representational ethnographic research is affected by bodies' capacity to affect the world and their capacity to be affected by it.

In the chapter to follow, I outline key fieldwork moments that pushed this research into alignment with the bodily dispositions of dissenters in Broome. I describe how two moments in particular played a significant role in shaping a research methodology that embraced non-representational ways of thinking.

Chapter three: Ethnographic Messiness

Parts of the world are caught in our ethnographies, our histories and our statistics. But other parts are not, or if they are then this is because they have been distorted into clarity – Law (2004: 2).

Ethnography often seems to disavow the excesses and messy entanglements that background and pervade the research encounter. Indeed, ethnographers themselves regularly ignore the performative aspects of their own being in shaping and forming moments that expose and open up the presence of alternative knowledges and ways of being. Dominant methodological perspectives reduce knowledge to the realm of the knowable, exiling ephemerality, surpluses and residues of fieldwork to a hidden plane of *otherness* (Law 2004). Academic research constructed by familiar qualitative methods – such as ethnography and interviews – at times flout the muddled nature of fieldwork inquiry that would adequately re-present or attend to ‘a trustworthy tale of ‘mess’ (Beard *et al.* 2016: 108). As Law points out, ‘dominant approaches to method work with some success to repress the very possibility of mess’ (2007: 595). Traditionally, ethnography as a practice of writing people, relies on descriptive accounts of seemingly authentic but unfamiliar social worlds, recounting culture from ‘the native’s point of view’ (Malinowski 2005 [1922]: 25). Such a perspective veils the influence of the researcher in the learning of alternative lifeworlds, tending to contort the mess of ethnography by emphasising coherency through obsessive representations.

This chapter aims to unsettle the tendency to refine and laminate the research experience at the expense of acknowledging messy moments that profoundly shape method and knowledge. It draws on the concept of a ‘messy method’ elaborated

upon in the work of Law (2007: 595), addressing his contention that, ‘if the world is non-coherent, then methods that seek and describe it as coherent are making a mess of doing so’, and embracing the constantly changing condition of knowledge. Paying attention to messy moments in research has become of importance to cultural geographers that acknowledge and seek to reflect ‘how the world is inevitably messier than our theories of it’ (Shaw *et al.* 2015: 212). In doing so, a description of moments is used here to demonstrate how messy contingencies give way to *othered* knowledges, leaping from one moment to other moments that evolve in the service of a collective imagining of a world-otherwise. Such approaches to method that attend to the messiness of research encounters advance non-representational styles of inquiry. Vannini (2015b: 320) writes, that:

a quintessential non-representational style [...] is that of becoming entangled in relations and objects, rather than studying their structures and symbolic meanings, thus animating the potential of these meshworks for our geographical imagination.

The sections which follow describe the method of becoming entangled in the mess of knowledge production that animate and lend potential to further understanding activism and geographies of the good life. It involves throwing the body into the messy moments of recruiting research participants and being reflexive to the dynamism of ethnographic research design. It also involves using the body of the researcher as an instrument or tool (Longhurst *et al.* 2008), a barometer that measures and perceives the presence of affective fields.

In practice, this research staged encounters with diverse geographies of the good life through observant participation and in-depth semi-structured interviews in: public

spaces such as neighbourhood streets, beaches, markets and camping grounds; semi-publics such as cafes and the local university; and the private homes and offices of research participants. Paying attention to the ‘multisensoriality of experience, perception, knowing and practice’ (Pink 2009: 1) this research also draws upon photographs taken by: participants on a ten-day hike along a segment of the *Lurujarri Trail*; participants at a family event at the beach after a protest; and by myself as part of a field diary. I also draw upon recorded story telling sessions and notes of conversations had with activists and tourists whilst walking. Reflexively sensitive, the ethnographic experience embraced what Swanton (2010: 2337) calls ‘purposeful drifts’ into the affective life of activism, including a three-day stay with participants off-grid in a secluded beach hut, two day-trips to a ‘lock the gate’ protest site near fracking wells, numerous public events and a ten-day hike along an Aboriginal song line. Informed by the narrative content in interviews, conversations, diary entries and other media, this research is also the product of places, moments and practices – some of them awkward, uncomfortable and anxious, but some also affirming, vitalising and enjoyable. In negotiating these places, moments and practices, I demonstrate how encounters with power and affect mediate the research process.

Moments during fieldwork

In total, I participated in two protest rallies in Broome that specifically called to ‘stop the forced closure’ of remote Aboriginal communities¹¹. Another in Derby, a small urban town 220km east of Broome, failed to draw a crowd, partly due to several

¹¹ I attended three community closure street protests in the Kimberley and helped organise one in Melbourne, although these events are not the empirical focus of this research

large funerals in town, and partly due to the attendance of prominent activists at the *Kimberley Futures Forum* being held in Derby on that day. Along with several other activists, I attended a protest camp in opposition to shale gas fracking on two occasions at Yulleroo Wells, about 70km east of Broome; immersed myself in a myriad of other activities including film screenings, live television crosses and information forums related to activist agendas; attended discussion groups in the back yards of people homes; and dropped by for a yarn with long-term term residents at cafes, bars, workplaces, parks, beaches and homes. These ordinary events were grounded by moments of going off grid with participants, spending three days at a secluded bush block on the Dampier Peninsula; and a 10-day hike along the *Lurujarri Dreaming Trail* – an Aboriginal song-line – with paying non-Aboriginal tourists and the Goolarabooloo families.

These encounters were completed over a six-month period, from my first of four visits in March 2015 to the last visit in August 2015. The first phase of fieldwork was compounded by disappointment, with my institutional partner withdrawing from the research. This pushed me into other, riskier, spaces that revealed a group of radical/dissenting/alternative people willing to talk about a political idea: the good life. A total of 29 participants were interviewed during this time in the field. Within that cohort, I have identified a group of 24 participants¹² who support the nexus of Aboriginal and environmental rights agendas related to remote Aboriginal communities, mining and gas extraction/processing, and anti-racism. The remaining five (5) participants represent the managerial elite of the town (merchants of the good life), including the Shire President, President of the Chamber of Commerce,

¹² This group consisted of: 12 Aboriginal people from different tribal groupings including Djugun, Yawuru, Jabbir-Jabbir, Niginya and Bardi – all from the West Kimberley region; and 12 non-Aboriginal people with European heritage – English, Irish, Scottish, Italian and Dutch.

Manager of the Tourism Centre, the most successful real estate sales representative in town and a tour guide at the Pearl Luggers heritage tourism company. I draw upon the narratives of these groups throughout this thesis, but use this section to describe key moments that reshaped this research.

Negotiating participation with Kartiya (white) gatekeepers

As a white settler, I found that my whiteness was both a negotiating position and a continually negotiated subjectivity throughout this research, a presence that affects bodies of colour (Lobo 2014a), or a positionality that shapes the research topography through unequal power relations (Tuhiwai Smith *et al.* 2016). Whiteness as an identity comes as a force formed through encounter, it is as Saldanha (2010: 2418) contends, ‘the systematization of affects, over many millions of phenotypically similar and dissimilar bodies, which together inhabit, carry, and gradually change race’. Skin carries with it socially meaningful accumulations of affects that influence interactions with difference: ‘our subjectivity is the embodied accumulation of our actions’ (Hickey-Moody *et al.* 2016: 137). My appearance as white, visibly tattooed and quite hairy, often became a point of resistance but also as a point of constructive difference. I recall moments where I was passed off as another hipster from Melbourne who fashions himself on a Ned Kelly aesthetic; but then I was also interpreted as someone who doesn’t quite fit the mould of your aging well-presented-yet-often-dishevelled academic. My non-Australian accent helped in some way, as Ebony a young Aboriginal activist tells me, ‘we probably wouldn’t have talked to you if you weren’t Irish’. But for the most part, my appearance as a white man was always a force that symbolised the settler, my skin became a marker of my intent before any personal interaction had taken place.

In thinking with and through skin as an intimate contact zone where our historicised social positions are marked as identifiers, it becomes a point of transcendence where differences might be remade. The skin, Ahmed and Stacey (2001: 2) argues, is a ‘boundary-object’, it is a ‘site of exposure or connectedness’ where:

the borders between bodies are unstable [where] borders are already crossed by differences that refuse to be contained on the ‘inside’ or the ‘outside’ of bodies.

White skin has an affective life, it fluctuates from moment to moment, at times held to be an inhibitory force that forecloses the possibility of collaborating across difference, but also as a position through which being-in-common could be explored beyond essentialised categories. Being white, known in this region as being *Kartiya*, was reinforced with a sense of authority by other white academics/professionals in Broome. The ubiquity of Western epistemology in academia, often facilitates white academics taking the gatekeeper role, holding authority over the determination of research standards. Such standards then inform how knowledge is produced, with white gatekeepers assessing the ‘competency, success, and the credibility of knowledge’ (Green *et al.* 2007: 400).

My whiteness, whilst a signifier of difference and a felt tension, provided the opportunity to work through a renewed positionality within the research. This is not to say that unequal power relations were undone, reversed or reconciled. Whiteness was a contingency to be worked through, a negotiated (dis)enabling category. In my encounters with *Kartiya* in Broome, this status of whiteness was used to extend and prolong moments of outsiderness, moments that became immobile and sticky. In his discussion on the researcher’s body, Saldanha (2007) describes how whiteness has an

enlarged capacity to transform itself, to become different in space. As Price (2012: 5) states, ‘skin provides traction amidst mobility, which allows for race to grab hold’. As a researcher new to the field, without bearings and no place as an anchor, unless embraced by otherness the category of whiteness became an outside category that slowed one down when engaging with Aboriginal participants. Perhaps in this way, by upholding my status as an outsider, Kartiya gatekeepers in Broome were resisting the stickiness of whiteness themselves. There then seemed to be nuance to the term Kartiya, a difference between being-white and being-Kartiya. Being characterised as a white researcher would position them as outside, and so it was enabling of their own interests to differentiate themselves from me, as Kartiya rather than white.

White academics, consultants and administrators form a white wall of veto in which new researchers to Broome and the Kimberley must pass through. Prior to arriving in Broome during March 2015, I spent 8 months forming a relationship with Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY). We discussed some of the broad interests of the research project, key concepts that were being considered and desired methods of data collection. A number of interactions via email and telephone were aimed at shaping the research to suit the priorities of this Indigenous Corporation, seeking out a mutually beneficial design that would progress both interests. Speaking with two senior Kartiya members of the organisation, I was warned of previous PhD researchers, one in particular, who is still referred to in Broome as ‘Pol Pot’ or ‘Little Hitler’. This researcher attained a PhD in the 1960s, working with Yawuru, but inevitably betrayed their interests. I was told to ‘be careful’, making note of the long-standing reputation that sticks when the interests of Aboriginal people – particularly Yawuru – are dismissed.

The *Human Research Ethics Committee* at Deakin University requested a letter of support from an Aboriginal Corporation in the field. I had been in consultation with NBY for approximately four months, the relationship had been constructed in good faith and we had been coming to terms with a mutually beneficial research design. Researchers at NBY did provide a letter of support for the project, outlining that the research project has substantial merit, the ethical approach was ‘sound’ and that formal institutional ethical consideration is not essential in regard to the Yawuru community’s participation. The letter of support indicated that they would continue to aid the research by providing introductions and facilitating research participation with members of the Yawuru community and NBY staff under standard scholarship ethical arrangements. Indeed, there was a list of selected members of the community that was generated, much to the benefit of the research in the early stages. This list consisted of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of Broome. Many of the Yawuru participants declined an invitation to discuss the research project and potentially participate, meaning that a majority of Aboriginal respondents were negotiated individually, without help from NBY. In contrast, many non-Aboriginal residents who identified themselves as allies of Aboriginal activists were eager to participate. As per the consultations that were held prior to March 2015, it was indicated that when the time came to recruit, these members of NBY would be on hand to facilitate introductions and source participants.

I conducted three phases of fieldwork between March and August 2015. The first phase of fieldwork consisted of a two week stay in Broome, the priority of which was to make face-to-face contact with NBY and follow up on the initial list generated by its Kartiya gatekeepers. I met with senior non-Aboriginal staff at NBY and non-Aboriginal long-standing residents of Broome, many of whom were

involved in Aboriginal industries and the *No Gas* campaign at JPP. Meetings with a number of activists and environmentalists were also held to introduce myself and the project interests. These meetings were key in the evolution of the project as these connections became crucial points of reference in the second phase of fieldwork to be held in June 2015. Participants were able to connect this research to other events, spaces and people, which helped to form relations with broader activisms in region.

Upon my return to Broome at the start of June 2015, I had been in constant contact with non-Aboriginal staff at NBY and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal researchers at Notre Dame University, maintaining a relationship that would facilitate the recruitment of Yawuru participants. I had already confirmed interviews with a number of people both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal that would account for 15 interviews including five conducted in March. In the first week of arriving back, it became difficult to reach these gatekeepers at NBY. My calls were not returned for the first week and emails went unanswered. I had written an official request addressed to the chair of the board at NBY, outlining my project and request to interview members. Within a couple of hours of sending this email, I received a phone call from one of the Kartiya gatekeepers. I was offered the opportunity to draft a ‘short survey’ which could be distributed to office staff. I was told over phone conversation that the Director had only just become aware of my project and could see no benefit to NBY. The request had been declined. It was in this moment that it became clear the project had been kept from Aboriginal members of NBY, residing only in the minds and inboxes of Kartiya gatekeepers.

The knowledge of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region and Australia more generally, has been mined and extracted to the advantage of white academics and

colonial administrators for decades (Tuhiwai Smith 2015). The unequal power relations of white academics in Aboriginal spaces has meant that more is gained and retained by the white academic in the research encounter. Indigenous communities are often referred to as the most over researched people in the world, little tolerance is therefore afforded to new white researchers to the field (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003). The distance between new white researchers and the recognised Aboriginal community in Broome, is mediated by a number of Kartiya gatekeepers, embedded within almost all Aboriginal and research institutions. In describing this moment, I do not aim to criticise the processes of organisations that are regularly over-burdened by student requests and special interests that often fail to meet their own mission. Rather, my experience exemplifies the tensions that are inherent in negotiating Aboriginal participation. It is a long, difficult, uncertain and risky process.

Engagement by NBY was key to the early progression of this project and I owe a debt of gratitude to the members that helped facilitate the project during this time. However, I suggest that my marginalisation had a performative aspect that reproduced my status as a potentially-problematic-white on the outside wanting in, and maintained other ‘inside’ Kartiya subjectivities as allied to the interests of Indigenous rights and agendas. It is in this moment where I felt the status of the problematic-white sticking, a moment that I sought to unsettle and renegotiate. However, what I came to understand, was that this identity became something productive, a sticking point that enabled a connection with other problematic identities in Broome, such as rabble rousers and activists. Being a problematic-white was a generative position that allowed me to explore other dissenting peoples and places.

Embracing dissent

After being in Broome for almost a week in March 2015, I attended the first protest event against the closure of remote Aboriginal communities. Prior to the event I contacted the event organiser to offer any support I could, but only managed to reach voicemail. After meeting up with other activists that I had become acquainted with in the previous stage of the research, I was introduced to the protest organiser, Mitch, at the end of the event. After a live cross on national television, we organised to have a meeting two days later. Mitch, a Djugun filmmaker, TV personality, activist and rally organiser, as well as Lorna and Donna, fellow activists and friends of Mitch, were also invited. I had briefly met with Lorna and Mitch at the rally, where they kindly agreed to hear about my research after my persistent lingering at the first rally. I had not yet met Donna and suspected that her role at the meeting had been a considered presence. Mitch had assembled a council of friends and the anticipation of the meeting had me reflecting on my position as a white-male-researcher. Quite nervous in the lead up to the meeting, I was throwing myself into an unknown situation, a stranger in the presence of staunch activists. These were staunch Aboriginal women who have served on the front lines of blockades, fighting against multinational corporations, the police and the state. Up until this point, my personal contribution to activism had been quiet, although I regularly attend rallies and marches. I have always wished to remain low-key at such events, an acknowledgment that my place is at the back, helping to maintain an atmosphere, but not direct it. Perhaps perceiving that the meeting might be latent with my own anxiety, Mitch ended our phone call the day before with a request that would allow me to literally bring something to the table. We had just organised to meet at 4pm at

her house, which Mitch referred to as ‘the block’. The end of our phone conversation went like this:

Mitch: yep great, 4pm tomorrow.

David: oka...

Mitch: ...oh and bring a mud cake from Coles

David: oka...

Mitch: ...and some cream!

David: okay, see you then.



Image 5 – Coles mud cake and cream

The four-dollar Coles mud cake is a contemporary Australian delicacy. The mud cake is dark, sticky and moist, and has a rich, glossy, chocolate icing. Brittle and dry ingredients combine with wet into a thick batter when mixed and beaten. Baked in the heat of an oven, it forms under the stress of a violent external force, catalysing an interaction between its parts. It does not crumble when cut or melt when the temperature of the under-seat compartment of a 50cc moped reaches 50 degrees Celsius.

When I arrived at the block with the cake, Mitch and Lorna were sitting around a table under a verandah outside. Mitch says, ‘so you’re interested in James Price Point?’ Over a cup of tea, we begin to talk about the JPP activism campaign and the events of *Black Tuesday*, in particular. Lorna recalls the heavy-handed tactics of the police, breaking activist lines and making arrests, including an underage minor. Lorna said, ‘the police kept charging, it was full on man, you could feel the vibrations’ (Diary Entry 24/03/2015). Mitch and Lorna describe the profound effect that their opposition to JPP had on their lives and those of their family members, including episodes of violence, vandalism and ridicule that ostracised them in their hometown where they had lived for many years. They describe the events as ‘a bushfire that came through’, affecting everyone indiscriminately, but a fire that made them ‘harder and stronger … more able to fight’. Like cocoa powder, an egg, flour, or water, the activist as an individual ingredient assembles with others when exposed to an intensive external force. I use the mud cake here as a metaphor for activism: the forging of bonds and solidarities across difference, mediated by an affective force.

Donna arrives shortly after me and joins into the conversation. Donna is a Bardi woman of Jewish heritage who is well-read, critical and sceptical of other

researchers. I introduce myself as a PhD student and begin to describe my aim in exploring alternative narratives of the good life here in Broome. Less than a minute in, Donna says ‘let me stop you right there’. Depending upon how you feel about mud cake, you can either take or leave the cream. Cream is an optional extra with cake. It is in this moment I feel that I was the optional extra, an elective component to the collective that had already taken shape. For the next hour, I said very little. Donna talks through a number of issues including that absence of a social contract between colonisers and the colonised; the state’s refusals to acknowledge the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; the recent watering down of heritage protections; the rolling back of native title laws in the closure of communities; the neoliberalisation of the state; and growing wealth accumulation power of the ‘one-percent’.

In the lull of conversation, I get to ask a question or two linking the current community closure movement to a broader anti-colonial Aboriginal rights movement. Donna, Mitch and Lorna note that Outstations¹³ are the heart in the sovereign Aboriginal body. They say the dreams and visions of their old people were to open up the Country so that ‘you would never be homeless’. They tell me that many Aboriginal people in the Kimberly have a desire to live off-the-grid in communities detached from the colonial state. Every time an Aboriginal movement begins to gain momentum they say, ‘the state intervenes’. Outstations are seen as a material form of sovereignty that challenges what Donna calls the ‘privilegium of white standards’. When the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission* (ATSIC) was shut down in 2005, it affected efforts in language regeneration,

¹³ Outstations, also referred to as homelands, are ‘small decentralised communities of close kin established by the movement of Aboriginal people to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them’ (Blanchard 1987: xiii).

sustainable food and water provision, renewable energy cultivation and the maintenance of culture. The activist wake of the Outstation movement¹⁴ and the cuts to ATSIC effectively shut down these Aboriginal sovereignty movements, crystallising the ‘Kimberley rabble rouser stigma’ says Donna.

Donna tells me, ‘When you came here it was not known to you, it was strange, it was unknown, and so you were trespassing’. Indeed the trespass is ongoing, post-colonialism doesn’t exist, the colonial project continues. Collectively they tell me, ‘everybody wants to study us’ in an attempt to pin-point the Aboriginal identity. There are still body parts coming back from other countries, DNA samples in colonial buildings and an ever-growing literature written by the White Man. Donna leads the discussion. ‘*You*’, she says, ‘didn’t enter into a social contract with us, you taught us cruelty, and you ensure that it is not a level playing field’. Of course, it was not ‘me’ Donna was referring to, but perhaps the encultured tradition of supremacy that I am embraced by and protected by. I describe to Donna, Mitch and Lorna my heritage as a migrant to Australia from Ireland, and therein my cultural, ethnic and colonial identity as a Celtic person. Growing up in Ireland there is a sense of negative distinction with ‘the English’, not fully articulated, perhaps not fully remembered, but embodied as a hereditary affectation. Donna begins to refer to European settlers as ‘the Western World’ using ‘they’ and ‘their’ instead of ‘you’. She adds ‘not you personally’, suggesting something in common.

Our discussion progresses into the contemporary era in which the dispossession of Aboriginal people is again being historicised, this time through capital accumulation.

¹⁴ Beginning in the 1970s, the Outstation or Homelands Movement saw the voluntary relocation of Aboriginal people from towns in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia, to smaller communities in order to escape a number of social problems associated with more urban lifestyles.

Mitch tells me that when miners and companies come to Country, ‘they don’t see the Dreaming’. Constant interventions by big business facilitated by the state is gradually extinguishing the value of place specific entangled knowledges. Donna says that it is their ‘lifestyle choices’ that are impinging upon Aboriginal ones, not the other way around. The search for mineral resources, pastoral land and tourism commodities is having a subordinating effect on knowledges that have little exchange value in capitalist terms – such as language, culture and embodied knowledges. Trapped by a logic of accumulation, Donna argues, it’s not just Aboriginal people who are in chains and shackles. When things become messy, a discourse usually emerges that turns Aboriginal grievances and complaints into dissonance. In our conversation, we ask how these things might be addressed for recourse, where might the space be in which a grievance might be aired, in which a wrong might be articulated. I ask specifically, ‘what language then will the revolution be in?’ Donna replies, ‘it will be of the mind, in the imagination, a revolution of the imagination’. Mitch and Lorna nod their heads and there is a silence for a few moments. It is at this point that Mitch asks me how they can help the project¹⁵.

Reflexive activist-scholarship

In preparation for the field in distant Melbourne, the research design process was typically formulaic. Labouring over reviewing the literature, making connections in Broome, crafting research and ethics proposals, and scrounging for fieldwork funding marked what seemed to be a clear distinction between *preparing for* and

¹⁵ Mitch was a critical participant in this research who helped co-shape the design, identify sites of data gathering and participant recruitment. For this reason, her narratives feature heavily in this thesis.

doing fieldwork. Upon arriving in the field however, it became clear that such a distinction was far less pronounced except for a drastic shift in climate, geography and rhythm of everyday life. The research design was constantly updated and reshaped through situations and moments in the field that demanded flexibility and reflexivity. Time had to be set aside to secure additional fieldwork funds by marking undergraduate assignments as well as maintaining intimate personal relationships with those physically distant. Personal and academic life continued as I became entangled within the field, implying that ‘the field’ was not a hermetically sealed time and space, but more a bleeding continuum of fieldwork events (Katz 1994). Katz (2013: 762) argues that *preparation* and *doing* is ‘all fieldwork’, it takes a while for the researcher to realise it, but unfortunately academic institutions rarely do. Despite attentive planning and close mentoring, changes in research relationships, place contexts and political interests meant that the design and focus of the project had to be recomposed with sensitivity to new knowledges.

The sections above signify two moments in which this project became reorientated to the service of othered knowledges that are embedded within this activism movement. Kartiya gatekeepers in Aboriginal communities on the one hand facilitated a connection from the preparation phase of the research to the field stage, lubricating ethics protocols and connections to feet on the ground. Yet, my status as an outsider foreclosed the ability to pursue the research design initially structured in the preparation phase. The failure of a research partnership with NBY opened up a messy moment of indeterminacy in which the registered Traditional Owners of Broome effectively removed consent. What was left resembled a mud cake without binding ingredients. All of the singular elements remained, yet the capacity to bring them together, to mix and to fold in, required the substitution of ingredients and the

embrace of other tools. Using my own body as ‘an instrument of research’ (Longhurst *et al.* 2008), it became necessary to embrace the mess of the moment and throw it into uncomfortable situations. From participating in an activist event, to meeting Mitch, Lorna and Donna in anxious terms on their ground, the project actively and enthusiastically committed to a trajectory that ‘embraces dissensus’ (Crane and Kusek 2014: 112). In the wake of disengaging incorporated institutions, this project sought to privilege the voices and imaginations of dissenting peoples, including Djugun, Yawuru, Nyginya, Jabbir-Jabbir, Bardi and other Aboriginal activists, as well as their non-Aboriginal allies. In doing so it embraced a politics that sets ‘the stage for a disagreement’, cultivating what Rancière (2003) calls ‘dissensus’.

Such a method that privileges the voices and knowledge of marginal voices, ‘deviate[s] from mainstream ways of conducting ethical research’ but is ‘instrumental in negotiating Aboriginal participation’ (Lobo 2014b: 21). Without the participation of the Yawuru people representing NBY, the research was at significant risk of whitewashing alternative representations and imaginations of place (Shaw 2007). The preliminary connections confirmed in preparation for the field were all activists with significant Aboriginal affinities – through marriage, employment, friendship etc. – but nevertheless, all were white. In order to negotiate Aboriginal participation in this research, a leap of faith was required in which I positioned myself as an outsider in uncomfortable non-white spaces. I went to the homes of participants, shared meals and drinks, went to social gatherings and protested alongside at rallies. I helped in everyday task such as collecting monthly provisions around Broome with a participant, which we brought back to his off-the-grid block nearly 200km out of town. I drove protest organisers from Broome to Derby in order to

attend an important *Kimberley Futures* meeting and set up a street protest. All of these actions are grey areas for ethics committees, regarded as possibly too risky or intrusive. But it was in these reciprocal moments that I was able to negotiate, through mutual agreement, the participation of participants.

Negotiating participation required an embodied commitment that went beyond plain language statements, spoken promises and consent forms. At particular moments, I made clear to research participants that I was aware that the benefit of this research was unequal. What I could produce as a material outcome of the research encounter would be a narrowly written and read account in the form of a research thesis. The ability for this research to bring about real change, in line with the real change sought in their activism, could not be promised or predicted. It was the good will, generosity and establishment of friendships with activists and their allies that enabled this research. As fellow activists, rather than researcher and participant, the knowledge produced as an outcome of interviews and other ethnographic data, were collaborative in effort. In this sense, I regard my position as an activist-scholar that aims to reconcile the deficit of traditional qualitative research outcomes for researched groups through ‘being useful’ (Taylor 2014). Much like action research, this project sought to ‘give back’ to its participants (Kesby *et al.* 2007).

In the creation of friendships, alliances and shared ideas, I was able to continue being useful through everyday activisms in an academic institution. As Chatterton states, the activist-scholar is ‘someone who sees the value in radical education and the public debate of ideas which challenge the norm’ (2008: 421), the academic campus is one such space that enables this. Having allies that are embedded within the structures that have too-often perpetuated and reproduced inequalities, might be

regarded as an activist project. In order to enable the opportunity to give back, it was imperative that I break with the position of the researcher, embrace dissensus and embark on the embodied process of becoming-activist.

The body as a tool of research

The opening section of this chapter describes a number of moments that acted upon, recomposed and reorientated this research toward a non-representational ethnographic approach. This thesis is just one possible expression of encounters in and between a mixture of bodies, historied with diverse experiences of people and places. These encounters are embodied and so call upon a method of inquiry that is sensitive to the deficits or excesses in re-presenting thought, feeling, emotion and affect that are faithful to the embodied experience of them. Such a description of these encounters requires an attentiveness ‘to the situated, embodied sense-making work being (unavoidably) undertaken by the peoples involved that makes those encounters what they are’ (Laurier and Philo 2006: 353). The method I adopt responds to a need within the humanities to add to the more traditional modes of ‘generating talk and text’ through experimenting with the ‘sensory, bodily and affective registers’ of the research subject (Whatmore 2006: 606). In adopting this repertoire, I turn to the body as a tool in research which is derived from feminist perspectives that seek to makes sense of immaterial labours and efforts (Longhurst *et al.* 2008). The body is the starting point from which we might measure the presence of affective fields of experience, something that guides the research into explorations that would otherwise remain backgrounded.

The body, as this research theorises it, is made up of contingent elements that shape and form material and sensate *things* that has the capacity to affect and to be

affected. It can take shape as a simple fleshy thing that thinks and feels such as the species-specific animal body, which according to Grosz (2011: 178) ‘functions as an instrument in a larger orchestra’. Quoting von Uexküll (2001: 117), Grosz (2011: 178) states that ‘it is not the body that produces harmony, it is the “harmony of the performance that determines that of the body”’. Thus, every *body* is an expression of difference, characteristic of contingent affects coming together, distinguishing it from other bodies, Grosz (2011: 178) continues:

Each species, as it were, sings its own song, according to its own rhythms and harmonies, using its body as its instrument and its particular bodily activities.

Bodies are recognised here as accumulations of historical encounters which vary from body to body. Just as the body is an accumulation or assemblage, so too are feelings, with distinctive qualities and registers that give particular places particular atmospheres and rhythms: ‘processes of making feelings are mixtures, or “assemblages” of bodies, places, times, events’ (Hickey-Moody 2013: 83). Bodies and feelings alike are made through relations with others – a body might also be thought of as a collection of things such as the social body, national body, or even as a collection of processes and operations that give shape to institutional bodies. Each one composing its own harmony and rhythm. Ruddick (2016: 91) explains, that ‘we think the body – whether simple, composite or the whole of nature – not as a bounded object but as an infinite composition of forces’. Forces flow with varying intensities, significations and temporal presences.

The body of the researcher carries with it a signature of affects that have been accumulated before and during fieldwork encounters. Diverse experiences gathered through a unique sequence of contexts and the orientations or positions to those

contexts, inform the availability of tools one's body has to make meanings.

Epistemological baggage is accumulated and brought to the field, altering the power dynamics of everyday encounters, reproducing imbalances and conflicts over different ways of knowing. The body of the researcher then, must engage in a process of becoming-with the situated nature of knowledge, resisting the comfort of disembodied research practices (Kindon 2003) and the 'academic gaze – looking in fascination at the Other' (Crang 1997: 368; Shaw 2011). Becoming-activist as a research practice then entails throwing the body into the spaces of activism in an attempt to disrupt the orthodoxy of research tendencies and attend to, what Routledge (2012: 446) terms, the 'sensuous solidarities' that place facilitates. In so doing, becoming-activist favours an attunement to the affective life of place through 'self-detaching' (Massumi 2011: 155) from mainstream ways of thinking and performing ethnographic research. The body must foreground ethnographic explorations into the affective life of protest and dissensus, as it is the body that is the primary sense making tool of the researcher.

In thinking about the body as a contingency of forces, it is important to briefly acknowledge the importance of 'assemblage thinking', which in Human Geography has been embraced in response to the 'relational turn' (Anderson *et al.* 2012). Relationality recognises that other times and spaces come to give the present its aesthetic feel. The present is the site where we make sense of relational fields of experience, or other times and spaces. The body here is a crucial tool in sensing relational fields, feeling the presence and absence of contingent affects. Whilst presence is measured by the body's capacity to feel, absence is much more difficult to sense. This is in part due to the dominance of Western epistemologies in the ethnographic encounter, a posture that characterises that which is absent as that

which cannot be known, or that which is not crucial to be known. To seek out that which is absent involves a ‘messy method’ of ethnographic exploration, yet it is not devoid of the rigour that traditional methods claim to follow. Law (2004: 161) calls this process of sensing absence and presence ‘method assemblage’, which he defines as:

...the process of crafting and enacting the necessary boundaries between presence, manifest absence and Otherness. Method assemblage is generative or performative, producing absence and presence. More specifically, it is the crafting or bundling of relations in three parts: (a) whatever is in-here or present (for instance a representation or an object); (b) whatever is absent but also manifest (that is, it can be seen, is described, is manifestly relevant to presence); and (c) whatever is absent but is Other because, while necessary to presence, it is also hidden, repressed or uninteresting.

In this research, presence is taken to be those particular images that form through an experience of the here and now, a proximate feel of *in-here*. The body is a geographical scale in which presence marks its affect. Absence, as far as method assemblage theorises, can be manifestly absent or out-there and hidden. The representation of the tropical beach that might be mediated through a postcard image, is manifestly absent. It is real in the sense that it exists as a geographical place, but it is a reality that exists out-there, less proximate than a sense of the here and now. These representations are ubiquitous in late liberal society as sites of consumption and desire, they have also been the focus of much research in the social sciences (Urry and Larsen 2011). However, such a representational focus in the social

sciences, fail to capture or even acknowledge knowledge forming transactions that occur at the site of the body (Thrift 2007).

Absence in method assemblage, seeks to experience the ‘hidden’ as being manifest. Hidden in the sense that it is ‘Othered’, ‘repressed or uninteresting’, but able to be experienced through tracing its flow from out-there to in-here, or from being unknown to known: this is, in a word, emergence. In this sense, method assemblage attempts to demonstrate how phenomena that we perceive to be immaterial, are material and agentic. It reflects thought becoming action and feeling becoming knowledge. If we take the Aboriginal notion of Country as example, it exists at all times and spaces as both in-here and out-there. In western conceptions, Country is ‘the bush’, a geographical notion that fortifies the classic Cartesian dualism of being ‘outback’, a site manifestly absent. In Aboriginal ontologies, Country is always here, but is often obscured, hidden and drowned out by the intensity of other structures of feeling. Always able to be sensed but often repressed and backgrounded.

Other structures of feeling flow from the urban centres, propelled by policies, projects and blueprints that impose spatial imaginations far from their inception. Flowing from Country are diverse embodied knowledges that foreground action in the present. Each exercise an imagination of how space is currently ordered and how the good life should take form in the future. Economic policies and development projects impose visions that tether the present to the future, parasites ‘of the Future’ argues Bennett (2016: 527), ‘intent on robbing the present of its potentiality’ Conversely, protest movements are more than just acts of refusing these futures, but imbue feelings of the present that drive an imagination of the future. Utopian thoughts inherent in emancipatory events are herein ‘not at all about fairytales, but

about genuine futures around which political coalitions can be built' (Friedmann 2011: 147). These futures are based upon feelings of the present, feelings that are crucial to imagining a good life, bodily feelings that constitute knowledges and roadmaps for living ethical futures. This parallels Muñoz's (2009: 1) argument that:

The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*.

Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds.

This contention stresses the need to explore these feelings that contribute to the building of political coalitions across difference. The body is crucial as a methodological tool for tracing the flow of affective fields that come to give the present – and therein the future – its form, aesthetic and materialism. Law (2004: 161) makes the point that 'method assemblage is distinguished from assemblage in the priority attached to the generation of presence'. By taking leave of the manifestly absent – dominant representations – and throwing the body into the hidden *out-there*, this thesis seeks out what McCormack (2008: 419) calls an 'affective cartography' of a world-otherwise that apprehends 'the relation between atmosphere and bodies'. It demonstrates how *othered* knowledges might map out a utopia divergent from the prison house of the here and now.

Affect as Method

The first moment describes a space of indeterminacy in which the initial research design became foreclosed. The withdrawal of participation by NBY pushed the

research away from normative institutional structures, into discursive spaces where activisms are performed and dissensus embraced. The second moment describes how discomfort and anxiety gives way to alternative knowledges that privilege other ways of being-in-the-world. Activists in the region began to embrace a research focus that institutions in Broome deemed to be of no value, something that resonated with their own experiences. The opportunity to share knowledges and experiences that escape words and text, was seen as a worthwhile allocation of time by those that participated in this research.

In seeking out alternative narratives of the good life, it was necessary to actively embrace dissensus, becoming ‘emplaced’ (Pink 2009) in the immanence of an already-existing spatiality of the good life. Thrift (2004b) theorises that representations are performances that have affective intensities, arguing that ‘the use and abuse of various affective practices is gradually changing what we regard as the sphere of “the political”’ (Thrift 2004b). Affects are manipulated and deployed as tools of governance in the neoliberal era, coercing bodies towards particular futures. Spatialities of the good life and therefore diverse utopian imaginations, have affective resonances (Muñoz 2009). These resonances have spatialities on a temporal continuum of past-present-future that range from the intimacy of the personal body, to locales, regions, cities, nations, continents and worlds. The personal body is the receptacle of sensate data, interpreting and making sense of phenomena through feeling. It is at this geographic scale – the body – that knowledge is made. Affective intensities, directed and deployed through governance structures, come to act upon the body. It is then at this site where political analysis of affect, imagination and the good life intersect. In theorising affect as method, Hickey-Moody (2013: 79) states that:

affect is a starting place from which we can develop methods that have an awareness of the politics of aesthetics: methods that respond with sensitivity to aesthetic influences on human emotions and understand how they change bodily capacities.

Exploring affect as method, is then an embodied experience that relies upon making knowledge through the body, in moments which open up alternative ways of being and acting in the world. To state concisely, the method used in this research performs a non-representational style of ethnography drawing upon observant participation that stages encounters with geographies of the good life. It requires a bodily attunement to the embodied imagination of particular places – as identified in the narratives of dissenting activists – that radically challenges dominance of regressive representational futures. These imagined futures are geographical locations that ‘derive [their] materiality by stealing potentiality from the present’ (Bennett and Linsley 2016: 525). Affective intensities have flows that reach into other times and spaces, affects are both incoming and outgoing. Attending to the forces of affect is integral to the exploration of any mode of becoming that hints at the presence of something that has not-quite-yet materialised (Anderson 2006).

Exploring affect is then necessarily an attention to the ‘pre-discursive dimensions of experience that are not necessarily bound up with discourse and meaning’ (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 81-82). Through mapping the contours of these affective flows, this research uses affect-as-method to navigate the messy assemblage that comes to give protest events their shape, energy and trajectories. It responds to the event of dissensus by exploring and thinking about how particular imaginaries, be they dominant or othered, teach bodies how to feel and respond through reducing or

enlarging capacities to act. The chapters that follow unpack the imaginations of the good life in activist narratives. They map the affective contours of such spaces and argue for the need to explore the embodied nature of imagining alternative ways of inhabiting the world.

Part two: Disrupting the normativity of the good life

Chapter four: Encountering the ‘good life’

We travel to encounter...

– Gibson (2010: 521)



Image 6 – Staircase to the Moon markets at Town Beach

Hordes of tourists gather once a month at Town Beach to view the staircase to the moon, a natural phenomenon that occurs from March to October. As the moon rises in the east, it reflects sunlight off shallow water pooled in the depressions of the tidal flats in Roebuck Bay that resembles a staircase. Market stalls sell local ethnically-inspired street foods, jewellery, art and craft for the first two days of the normally three-day event, as acoustic musicians play soft folk music on the grass above the beach (Image 6). Passing through the bodies at the night market, one encounters local flavours and styles of a unique creole influence. Shortly before 8pm, the

crowds leave the lawns, traverse the carpark, and head to the embankment along the beach.

Tourists swarm and stretch out along an artificial sea wall, jostling for viewing spots, awaiting precisely 8.02pm, when the moon rises. The moony vista lies beyond a line of LCD screens; smartphones, tablets, and point-and-shoot cameras (Image 7). A full moon casts a shard of light across the bay, at its photographic best for just a few moments. A mature-aged man within earshot turns to his partner and says ‘well you wanted to see it, and we seen it’. She replies to him ‘yeah, it was nice’, ‘good’ the man says. Another middle-aged man says aloud, as if affirming a general consensus, ‘it was alright’ (Diary Entry 04/06/15). Along with a steady stream of others, they turn on their heels and head back to the markets. This rhythmic tourist migration repeats once a month for a 5 to 6-month period: from land to beach – to encounter, exchange and return.

Gibson (2010: 521) remarks that we travel to encounter things that do something, that affect us: ‘while the tourism industry relies on all manner of material commodities to turn a profit (hotel beds, postcards, luggage, etc), and has been incorporated into a symbolic economy of marketing representations, its most cherished, commodified, essential element is encounter’. Tourists travel to encounter a certain proximity to a force of existence, to experience the pre-conceived postcard imaginary of a place. A popular glossy postcard image (Image 8) of the staircase to the moon anticipates place, structuring a promise of being affected. An atmospheric condition, of being affected by phenomena such as the staircase to the moon, becomes here the *object-target* of such representations (Anderson 2014).



Image 7 – Tourists photographing the Staircase

The postcard is not the object-target itself, nor is its visual text. Whilst the imagery of the moon's rise and its reflective display is the text through which this representation is read, it is the encounter with its affect that is the target-object of such productions. Rather than the content, it is the experience of witnessing and being affected by the dance of the moon, tide and sun that serves as the discursive target of this imaginary. For Deleuze (1973: 186-187, emphasis in original):

a text is merely a small cog in an extra-textual practice. It is not a question of commenting on the text by a method of deconstruction, or by a method of textual practice, or by other methods; it is a question of seeing what *use* it has in the extra-textual practice that prolongs the text.

In other words, the text anticipates the affect; it is performative. The image constructs an anticipated feel of this emplaced phenomena, leading the tourist to expect a particularly narrow zone of experience, one that mimics the borders of the

postcard. Indeed, representations are performances in and of themselves which have the capacity to affect and to be affected. This does not dismiss constructivist accounts of meaning and value associated with popular images, but rather, it attends to the excess of the representation, how it moves beyond its content and social context.

As Dewsbury (2002: 438) contends, representations are not ‘a code to be broken or as an illusion to be dispelled rather representations are apprehended as performative in themselves; as doings’. The *doing* of touristic imaginaries such as the postcard below (Image 8) is an attempt to capture affect in the context of this particular place. It sells place not as real estate, but as experience. It sells the expectation and anticipation of a particular affective atmosphere, a hope in attaining proximity to its promise. Although these affects are yet to be felt, hope tethers an attachment to this zone of experience, a future spacetime of the not yet. In doing so, what might be felt in this zone is limited through the image. The image bounds the experience as anticipations map the affective contours of the experience. Berlant (2011: 23–24) explains:

When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us... To phrase “the object of desire” as a cluster of promises is to allow us to encounter what’s incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments, not as confirmation of our irrationality but as an explanation of our sense of our endurance in the object, insofar as proximity to the object means proximity to the cluster of things that the object promises, some of which may be clear to us and good for us while others, not so much.

In this chapter, I draw attention to the cluster of promises that objects, sites and scenes of desire contain. I specifically address the research aim to explore and critically examine how the affective life of places is experienced and contested through the performative aspects of representation. Through the use of postcards which depict two of Broome's most iconic images – one of the Staircase to the Moon, the other of Cable Beach at dusk – I seek to evoke a local response (of non-tourists) to highly rendered images of Broome. As Yüksel and Akgül (2007: 716) demonstrate, postcards imbue an ‘affective image’ that influences how travellers feel and know about places they have not yet visited. I argue that these meanings extend to affect the popular narratives of those places and become contestable modes of knowing about the local. In understanding how images perform in place, Pongajarn, van der Duim, and Peters (2014: 72) further argue that ‘non-representational readings of postcards’ help to understand how places are constructed popularly and what alternative readings they obscure. This chapter understands that distant feelings of place influence the readings that take place upon encounter. I argue that there is always the possibility of disappointment in the affective cluster of promises that such images produce. The tourist or the traveller to Broome ‘leans toward promises’ (Berlant 2011: 24) in the encounter with the scene of desire. This opens up a space of openness or indeterminacy where alternative readings of the scene might take-place. It is particularly useful to consider moments where the incoherency between the image and scene of experience, as moments where learning might take place and forms of belonging are renegotiated.

I also explicitly attend to my central research objective: what role does *place* play in making connections across difference that facilitate activist solidarities which radically reframe normative understandings of the ‘good life’? Interviews with

activists are drawn upon to reveal the excesses that escape postcard renderings and how moments of openness offer pathways to enchantment through disappointment.

In doing so, I generate insights of how these spaces are the product of ‘fluid interplays that light up the process of becoming by instilling life and mobilising deeper affiliations between self and other’ (Scarles 2009: 466). These interviews serve to reframe the performative aspects of representations, which I then demonstrate through participant-driven photography in later sections.

Staircase to the moon

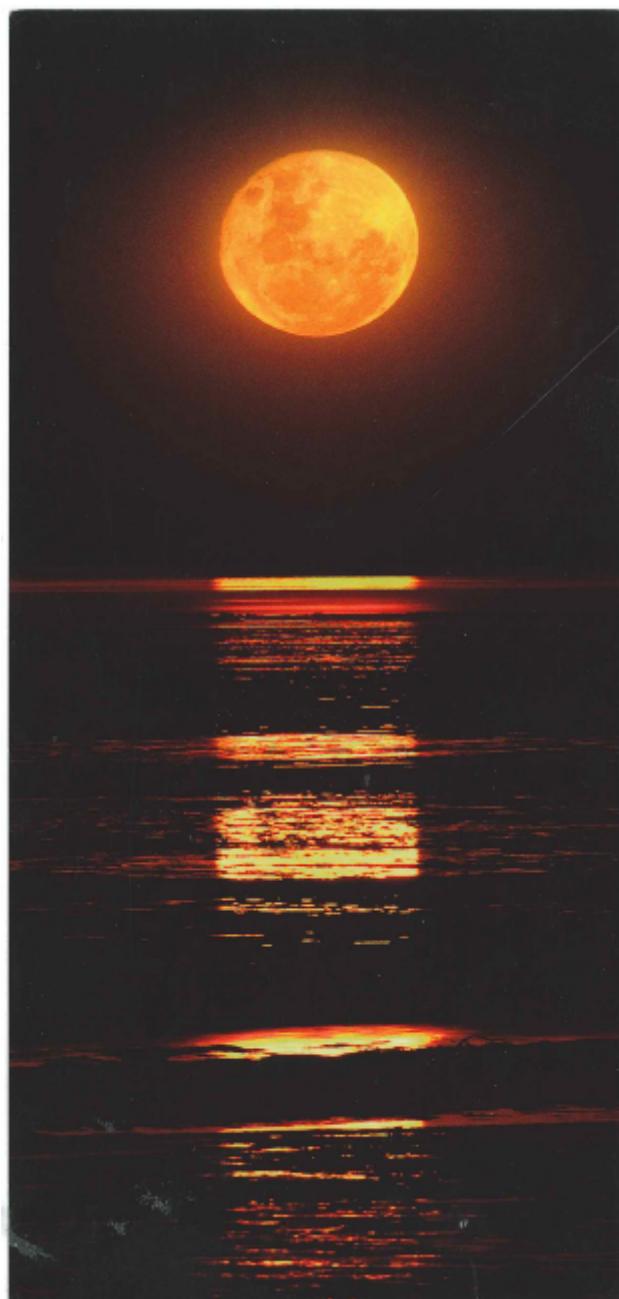


Image 8 – Postcard: "Stairway to the Moon" (Sotiroski Photography)

"It cuts your focus"

I ask each interviewee ‘how authentically does this image (Image 8) represent Broome to you?’ Key themes emerged in response to this question that spoke to their attachments, relational readings and obscured readings of place. Nostalgia,

seasonality and a critique of tourism experiences are also present in these narratives that complicate the text of popular images. Whilst texts are often read differently (Hall 1980; Crang 2005), the feel and atmosphere of the scene affects the capacity to read it differently (Edensor 2017). Being entangled in a broader web of understanding facilitates a capacity to be affected by ‘magical’ atmospheres, as some interviewees note. It is this learning to be affected by place in a way that enlarges broad relational understandings that captures people in Broome. Perhaps it is these attunements to place, that stress broader assemblage thinking, which separates out those who ‘love it or hate it’ as Nick, Broome Tourists Centre manager, suggested to me. For Brian, it is not so much the image that hinders the potential to think relationally, but rather it is the enactments of touristic expectations that constrict being able to read the Country. He states:

...you look at it with flashes going off I feel it's like, it cuts your focus out on your own eyes. They should have an area if they're going to do it. Okay this part here's for the cameras, people that want to take photos go there. People that don't want to take photos go this side. Make it easier for people and that but I know it is one of the most famous things. The staircase to the moon, like I've said, we've known it for years and years before it ever came out and that, before it ever became a popular tourist thing (Interview, 19/06/15).

Much like the physicality of the postcard, the scene has limits. Edges and borders mark the start and end of the representation. Without being able to know what lays beyond the scene, a particular geographical imagination of place becomes fixed within the border of the image. This is a useful metaphor for the experience of the event, in that the congregation of bodies around particular sites and experiences is

bordered by an intensification of communal feeling (Yell 2012), that spatially confines the exploration of alternative experiences. For some interviewees, it is an intended broadening of this site and experience, articulated as such by Brian in the passage above. This is integral to the challenging of dominant representations, values, meanings and knowledges that the ‘something more’ of the event is given potential. Brian thinks that there should be specific spaces where one can experience more-than the postcard, instead of simple scenic reproductions of expectation that obscures readings of Country. There should be an ease to which the alternate readings of the event might be read. Wocky, a Jabbir-Jabbir man, adds to this:

...a lot of people have mixed emotions about that, they love the Staircase to the Moon because it's something that's been around for forever, it's something that you could experience, when no-one was here, you know, it means the tides around ... go out and catch crabs or whatever. All the city persons come and they all line up across here and they all get their phones out and all you can see, you can't even see the moonlight, all you can see is LCD screens, and people taking pictures, and then they're gone (Interview, 22/06/15).

Interviewees note how tourists fail to extend readings of the event in ways that afford a thinking and feeling that acknowledges local histories and meanings. Readings become confined to the narrow space and time of the markets at Town Beach once a month during this season. Through their attempt to replicate the postcard experience through the taking of photographs, normative touristic practices limit the frame through which to interpret the event. Such acts deny the local but they also disappoint their own anticipation of the event. This is demonstrated in Image 7,

where a photo of others taking photos of the phenomena shows just how obscured the field of view becomes at this site. The event is so difficult to capture in a photographic sense, that unless those taking photos have experience with night time long-exposure landscape photography, pictures are often blurred and distorted. Yet, although other readings are obscured here, there is the opportunity to seek out backstage spaces, spaces which the locals know. As Greg, a local astronomer and non-Aboriginal supporter of Aboriginal and environmental agendas, states:

...that's okay. It's good for people to come here and experience that. Sure, they flash their camera at the moon and all that sort of stuff, but if you really want to find a spot and watch the moon on your own you can (Interview, 09/06/15).

Greg concedes that this event is not completely dominated by intensive touristic practices at Town Beach, you can still tap into other experiences if you know where to go. The image does not come to fully overwhelm the presence of other readings, it does not eradicate the capacity to think and feel differently. This is a crucial understanding in exploring the potential for alternative ways of experiencing place to take hold: they always exist despite the intensity of other experiences. Whilst a deeper reading of Country is obscured by cameras and flashes, the capacity to make different readings still exists in other spaces and times. These are described by Will, a local blacksmith, artist and non-Aboriginal supporter of Aboriginal and environmental agendas, as 'little gems' that exist all around Broome:

...before this became cliché, which, you know, it had very quickly, there were little gems like this yet nobody had really paid that much attention to it. There were inadvertent goings on in this little town. And there's so many

others, like cliff jumping. And so then, you go to the right tide and then you go and jump off the cliff. There's all these little things once the tourist industry gets a hold of them and they sell them and then you come and you can't see those for the camera flashes (Interview, 13/06/15).

These little gems are sites of alternative atmospheres, where connections are made and where local people attune to place. Sites such as these are where respite is sought from the obscuring forces of touristic hordes. Little gems don't disappoint, they are not orchestrated events hyped up through markets and festivals but rather are inadvertent sites of connection where enduring attachments are formed. The making of connections is performed through reading Country, a reading that takes place through attuning to the broader ecological assemblage of place. These readings are relational, as the next section explores.

“I read salmon season”

The elaborate cosmological dance of the tide that facilitate the phenomena of the staircase brings forth a milieu of happenings, all imbricated in the reverberating rhythms of time and space. Witnessed in isolation, the staircase to the moon is read as a momentary event that might be missed if not for one's presence in this moment. But what is missed when narrow readings take place, extends beyond the space-time of this short-lived event, as Mitch elaborates:

...if you waited another half an hour the tide comes in and on it, if it's this time of the year, you'll hear the salmon hitting the water and you know you're going to catch salmon. So that's the other story ...if you go this way over here when the tide comes in, that's when the mullets run... That there,

when I see that, I read Country and I read salmon season ...I read it differently (Interview, 17/06/15).

Alternative notions of place crystallise in reading the Country in this relational way. Some people come to Broome for these experiences, but for those that seek to manufacture other readings through place-changing developments, Mitch argues:

We should tell them ‘go back’, if it’s a burden for you to come here we don’t need people like you, yeah? Go back, go back to your sky scrapers, but don’t make policies that affect me looking at that thing and saying salmon season.

Activists such as Mitch fight for the ability to read Country and valorise other ways of knowing. By reading place as a relational assemblage of events and experiences that have always existed regardless of commodified representations sold as affective object-targets, activists like Mitch challenge the normative idea of the good life:

And like, the whole Country is like that, so you know that thing of the good life is: I can go out and I see the trees blooming and they’re yellow I go okay, it’s married turtle season...when the turtles mate, they get married. When the yellow flowers are blooming stingrays and crocodiles are laying their eggs. When that tree there, that white gum tree in about July, July-August, all that gum will start crackling, that’s also another thing for you know it’s married turtle time and it’s the beginning of the [season]. Yeah, so you look at that tree okay and the married turtles will be coming soon. So good eh? Don’t have to look at the calendar and we can sit here at the block and know, see this light breeze coming, tide is turning. Can you feel it?

During the interview, Mitch asks me if I can feel the breeze. It's a gentle salt rich breeze coming in from off-shore. Mitch elaborates:

That's why we're scratching because the sand flies start... what happens is the bay is filling up. So as the mangrove trees get covered with water and the midges and the mosquitos come up in the air and they come here, they fly to all the dry places.

The postcard elicitation technique conjured up a relational understanding of place within the narratives of activists, as demonstrated through an extended engagement with Mitch's interview. Our conversations strayed into other attributes of the environment, from historical readings of what Broome used to be like, to seasonal knowledges that can be felt in the here and now. When the staircase to moon is visible, the salmon are running. This relational understanding of seasonality and liminality is shared among both Aboriginal and white activists. When I ask Will how this image represents Broome to him, he says:

That is a gem that represented our lives [here]. The fishermen stand there and they catch the salmon because the wind's coming from the east and they should be running there. Nobody else is gonna really know that. So, there were all these little gems that make up the whole of why we're drawn to magic little places like this (Interview, 13/06/15).

Although Will is non-Aboriginal, he has been contributing to alternative relational readings of Country since arriving in Broome nearly two decades ago. This hints at a process where local Aboriginal ways of reading the Country transfer to non-Aboriginal people. Bart, a Yawuru man, references the enduring quality and the magical element of place through its ability to fold distant temporalities into the

present. He says, ‘that there, that’ll always be there, it’s always been’. No matter how pervasive the imagery, the ability to read the event more broadly always exists, this broadness is expressed here as a seasonality that outlives the flock of tourists once a month:

It’s a seasonal thing and that’s nature, you can’t fuck around with that. That’s a good thing because it’s shining the light on the Country as well because if you read into that a lot more that’s mud flats, so that’s where we hunt, that’s where you can understand the vast changes in the tide because the water’s right back there and this is the mud flats... that’s a haven for turtles [nesting] (Interview, 02/06/15).

For Bart, the image does not distort the meaning. Rather, it provides an entrance to alternative meanings, readings that exceed the text in representations. Meaning is not fixed by representation, it is made sense of by the performative aspects that flow on from the image. Sensitisation to the seasonality of Country, its ephemeral and liminal relations manifest in Bart’s reading of the event. When ‘the sea goes to the mountain’ – as Bart calls it instead of the orthodox ‘staircase to the moon’ – it sheds light on Country, allowing for a reading beyond the confines of the here and now; the event carries imagination, it moves thought (Manning and Massumi 2014).

Events in which narrow readings of Country take place are the primary stages for which deeper relational readings emerge for newcomers. Relational ways of knowing about unfamiliar places requires a shift in perspective, outside of the boundary. This relational way of thinking about place illuminates ‘lines of flight to elsewhere and “elsewhen”’ (Anderson 2012: 574). Place is never static, but constantly moving in with these lines of flight. How those interviewed come to experience County, reflects

an understanding of place the ‘coming togethers’ (Anderson 2012: 574) of human and non-human agencies, histories, materialities and affects. For those that wish to act upon their disappointment and reframe their readings of place, this event and others like it set the primordial stage for a disagreement. The cyclical essence of this place allows for the co-existence of multiple readings, expressed in the plurality of feelings articulated by interviewees. Greg notes that this is not a source of antagonism or disdain, but rather, is part of the make-up of Broome. He says that ‘Broome will spit you back out’ if you come with the wrong ideas; the churn of people through place is a natural part of the sorting process:

Oh, you know it's a ... character of Broome that people want to be here when the weather's perfect and they all come here during the Dry and they all go away during the Wet, and that's a cyclic thing that Broome is. I mean the tide comes in and goes out four times a day and the people come and the people go and that's part of the nature of Broome too (Interview, 09/06/15.)

For those that seek out spaces to connect and learn to read place, enduring attachments form which pre-condition the movement of thought and feeling. These attachments to place that enable alternative readings flow through events of disappointment, opening up spaces of indeterminacy that resource hopeful moments in activist projects.

“That’s always been there”

There are multilayered understandings that interviewees describe when asked to talk about the postcard. For them, it is about being affected by different spatio-temporal scales that entangle people within a story that exceeds the event. The use of this image demonstrates how such a method provokes the imagination of diverse

relations that span wide time scales and different spaces. They have affective lives.

Indeed, Latham and McCormack (2009: 254) argue that we should ‘[think] of images as nonrepresentational participants’ in fieldwork that asks us to think in and with images. For Mary, a Yawuru woman, Broome has ‘always been the staircase’:

there is always a longing to want to be there when I see that image, it’s where we connect land to sea, gives me a sense of being a coastal Aboriginal person
(Interview, 09/06/15).

For Mary, being able to witness this event is an acknowledgment that one is a coastal person, more specifically, a person from Roebuck Bay or from the eastern side of the Dampier Peninsula¹⁶. As Mitch tells me ‘You can see the stairway to the moon in about 700 different locations’, yet these locations need an eastern orientation and the presence of tidal flats. To witness the staircase is to be of the eastern coast. The idea that it has ‘always’ been here, embeds Mary’s belonging to a temporality that exceeds the moment, it is an enduring attachment to Aboriginal people past, present and future. It connects Mary to other coastal people who have the capacity to witness and be affected by this event. Yet, this connection is not exclusively Aboriginal, as white allies describe when talking about such spaces of connection. It is a connection that is facilitated by bearing witness to the event and attending to the relations that it affords. Maria, a local non-Aboriginal environmentalist, describes events like the staircase to the moon as the reason they are here in Broome, as sites where they were affected by the place. She says that it was this beauty that has kept her in Broome for decades:

¹⁶ The Dampier Peninsula provides a spectacular moon rise but the staircase is only visible where there are tidal flats i.e. bays.

I mean it's what drew me to Broome in particular – the colours. You know it took my breath away the first time I saw the colours, the blue and the red and the green and the blue of the ocean and the blue of the sky. Yeah it really – it spoke to my inner self and I loved it and I enjoyed the beach and doing all of that stuff. I think I've become a bit blasé. I think we've got – if you can have too much beauty, natural beauty, then I think we've got it. And I think it makes us lazy and we can take it for granted very easily and we can stop looking after it and stop nurturing it and stop responding to it. Yeah, I do think that too (Interview, 03/06/15).

For Maria, the potential for ‘beautiful’ or ‘magical’ places to nourish one’s capacity to care requires continual maintenance through repeated moments of being affected. As Broome has grown and transitioned from a primary industry hub to a tourism and hospitality town, the demographic make-up has changed. What was once a haven for hippies escaping the city (Muecke 2016b), has emerged as a future economic powerhouse of the region. *New Broomers* have settled in to recently developed suburbs in *New Broome*, with hopes and dreams of economic prosperity. Many came to Broome as speculators in the property market, hoping to cash in on the development of JPP. As explained earlier, the development never went ahead and many New Broomers went broke. Shire President Graeme Campbell tells me, ‘those people didn’t have jobs; had to sell up and leave town’. Perhaps it is the circulation of optimism in recent years that has compounded the complacency that many *Old Broomers* have expressed in their attitude toward these sites. Immersive ‘beauty’ has seemed to dampen the capacity to be moved by it anymore. Connections between people and place have become taken for granted, unmaintained to some extent that rupturous events such as JPP have managed to separate out those who previously

held affinities with each other. Wade, another local non-Aboriginal environmentalist, tells me that, regardless, ‘people still enjoy’ the staircase to the moon, that it is still a ‘big part’ of Broome:

a big part of it was the events and so forth, but it doesn’t quite carry that same community ownership. And what’s stupid are the traditional days of the Shinju Festival¹⁷ gets moved, you know, to try and extend the length of the tourist season rather than doing it on the appropriate day in relation to the moons and the tides and so forth of which it is a part of, so yeah by doing that it loses its authentic more traditional Japanese and Malay communities and so forth...an analogy of how rather than adapting to the environment in which it fits the moon, fits the tide, by the days, it’s now being kind of um, mitigated or changed in a way where they can, you know, maximize the exposure for a different reason. That’s maybe my take on what’s happening in Broome or the North End in general, is that rather than adapting everyone to the environment, we are out of sync (Interview, 12/06/15).

As local connections to these events have changed in nature over time, perhaps in part due to a renewed focus on market exposure and commodification of culture and environment, so too has a sense of community ownership. Always-existing ‘little gems’ in which connections to people and place are made, are held in tension between relational readings of place and experiences centred around consumption.

As Peter, a public health worker and non-Aboriginal supporter, tells me ‘you tended not to go there unless there were visitors in town’. Yet, these experiential sites still

¹⁷ Beginning in 1970, the Shinju Matsuri Festival is an annual event that celebrated the multicultural make-up of the pearl industry and related community of Broome. It was largely community-orientated until the 1990s when it began to commercialise, seeking to attract domestic and international tourists (Kaino 2005).

resonate despite intermittent connections, they elicit a sense of belonging, as Peter articulates:

and then you go there ‘oh wow, no wonder tourists come here, it’s fantastic’.

I sat there and I thought this is actually quite spectacular... It was a bit like when I went to Uluru...you had seen a million postcards of the same damn thing. If you imagine Uluru, of that iconic image, all the rest of it, but going to Uluru and actually seeing it in reality for the first time. This is so much more amazing than the photos. Photos can’t capture it (Interview, 12/06/15).

Nostalgic attachments

Despite a sense of desynchronization between people and place, enduring attachments have taken hold to the extent that they capacitate imaginations of the future in which these connections are re-established. A critique of peoples' connections with place draws attention to the complacency in which locals fail to renew their attachments that have kept them in place for decades. When I ask Elster, a Yawuru woman, to describe the staircase postcard to me, it provokes nostalgia and in doing so articulates an enduring attachment to place and the good life. She says ‘oh that’s, that’s Broome’:

that's always been there, the staircase to the moon, as kids we used to go down and have a look at it. Mum and Dad used to take us down to the front beach we call it now, it used to be the old jetty and mum used to have the accordion and we'd light a fire, take dinner down there and have dinner and have a singsong and wait for that, the sun to set and the moon to rise (Interview, 15/06/15).

Elster remembers the staircase to the moon as a family event in which song, dance and celebration become part of the experience. Imagining the scene moves Elster's thought away from the present. Nostalgia here is a 'productive' and 'living' imagination that enables Elster's 'active attachment and engagement' with place (Bonnett and Alexander 2013: 391). The time to which Elster refers is a time of apartheid-style segregation in Broome, when a common gate separated Aboriginal and White residents (Lingiari Foundation 2007). It was also a time, nationally, when Aboriginal people were not counted in the general population, often represented in many states by departments that also dealt with flora and fauna. Property ownership was forbidden for Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people 'couldn't keep the deeds, the deed was kept with the Priest [...] being Aboriginal, you weren't allowed to own your own land or house' (Elster, Interview, 15/06/15). Yet despite segregation¹⁸, subjugation and Commonwealth sanctioned Social Darwinism¹⁹, a longing for this time of connection among the Aboriginal community still drives Elster's imagination of Broome and the good life. Racial inequality and community cohesion co-exist here in this nostalgic space-time of the past, disrupting a national tense of belonging that enforced white-only membership. It is within this juxtaposition, where multiple worlds co-exist, that an enduring attachment to place emerges as a counter-

¹⁸ The boundary fence known as the *common gate* segregated the town, prohibiting Aboriginal people from entering the town up until 1954; the Citizenship Act maintained a similar style of segregation until the 1970's (S. Yu 1999; Lingiari Foundation 2007).

¹⁹ Here I refer to the Stolen Generations, a term used to describe multiple generations of Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their families from approximately 1905 to the early 1970s (although considering the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children removed from families by child protection agencies in contemporary Australia, the practice is, arguably, still in operation). Children who were considered 'half caste' were placed into the care of white families, foster systems and Catholic missions, and taught white man's law, culture, religion and customs. This process is considered by some as an act of genocide. Manne (2001: 39) characterises the practices by: 'public officials advocated the sterilisation of all the half-castes'; 'advocated a complex program of eugenics involving, among other things, the effective prohibition of mating between "full bloods" and "half-castes"'; the systematic removal of the "half-caste" children from their families and the "degraded" life of the blacks' camp; the encouragement of marriage between "half-caste" females and white males' and the "breeding out the colour".

hegemonic narrative. Bonnett (2010: 6, emphasis in original) argues that ‘nostalgia nearly always involves a claim to *attachment*’, and in doing so serves as a source of connection. This attachment is not solely directed in the memory of a long-lost past, but is productive in the service of action in the present for the purpose of building optimal futures. Blunt (2003: 719) defines nostalgia as a:

term to represent a longing for home that was embodied and enacted in practice rather than solely in the imagination, and a longing that was oriented towards the future as well as towards the past and to a sense of place that was both proximate and distant.

It is the prevalence of enduring attachments in these narratives, which have persisted in spite of assimilating logics and practices that lend hope and potential in the emergence of alternative futures. Whilst certain sites of connection have been appropriated as representations of the good life, they have not been fully subsumed by powerful forces of consumption. Spaces still exist in which connections can be made, it does however take other ways of knowing to establish these connections.

Will says:

this isn’t abhorrent to me at all, it makes me go ‘oh that’s one of the gems’, that’s right. And there’s a really great way of seeing that where I don’t have to be exposed to twenty thousand tourists, I can walk out [on the bay] because I know the way. And I’ll be the only one who is seeing that. You know, um so...it’s...it’s a gem I think that is necessary. Um, so it doesn’t, horrify me. But we couldn’t sell that beach next to um, the irony is that the best place to experience it is, close to Kennedy Hill. You know? *laughs*
(Interview, 13/06/15).

Kennedy Hill is a town-based Aboriginal community in the heart of town sandwiched between the Mangrove Hotel, the place to be seen for Broome's social elite, and Chinatown, the busiest shopping strip in the region. The irony that Will speaks of is that the community is seen by many as a visual and social blight that occupies a space where the best views of Roebuck Bay can be observed. Selling the image of the staircase requires a detachment from the real social realities of living in town and being an Aboriginal person associated with Kennedy Hill, One Mile Reserve or Male Oval, where rough sleepers are prevalent. In the section to follow, I will discuss a process whereby activists purposefully draw attention to these dissociations, dilemmas and injustices to reframe idyllic images of the good life.

Camels at dusk

Cable beach is an everyday space that has become a significant symbol of tropical Broome. In this way, it differs from the staircase as a phenomenon that occurs only at specific times of the year and is only observable from specific locations. Beach lifestyles on the peninsula pattern the way residents move about town. During fieldwork, I became aware of the distinction made by locals between 'our' beaches and 'their' beaches. Town Beach (located in town) and Riddel Beach (located 8km out of town) were 'local' places for residents. Cable Beach is a tourist beach, although not off limits to locals. The distinction was starker when observing the people and practices that took place at each beach. Town Beach seemed to have an ever-present Aboriginal population, made up of locals and visitors from remote communities; Cable Beach had a significant presence of European backpackers, resort guests and expensive adventure vehicles.

Anecdotally in conversation with other residents of Broome, Town Beach was referred to as the beach where Aboriginal people go, and Cable Beach where white people go. The racialisation process of Australian beach geographies is deeply ingrained in the nation-state psyche (Wise 2009; Moreton-Robinson 2011a; Lobo 2014a). Whilst such insights reveal the exercise of power through such imaginaries, I seek to explore how Cable Beach becomes a territorial site and material form of power's intensity. I conceptualise such sites and forms as key geographies for the 'operation of power', but also as places that facilitate the emergence of 'ways of life that are more than an effect of power' (Anderson 2017: 502).

For those locals that dissent in Broome, Cable Beach is one such site of power, and the form that represents it, such as postcard depictions, are often challenged. During the height of publicity around the community closures protests, the CEO of one of the most powerful Aboriginal corporations in the nation, the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), Anthony Watson, threatened to 'kill tourism'. In an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) program *Four Corners* (Whitmont 2015), Watson demonstrated his awareness of the significance of challenging the imaginary of Cable Beach:

Interviewer: It's images like these, of Cable Beach, that help bring Broome about \$140 million every year in tourism. But now the head of the Kimberley Land Council is threatening to occupy Cable Beach to stop community closures.

Watson: I'd be happy that, er, we move our community on Cable Beach and just camp on Cable Beach, um, because we've always been "out of mind, out of sight" and be pushed away. It'd kill the tourism industry.

Interviewer: Are you serious? Would you be prepared to go that far: to kill...?

Watson: I am serious that, um...

Interviewer: To kill the tourist industry if you had to?

Watson: To bring the attention [...] I'd be happy to, to camp for weeks and months on Cable Beach.

It was a bold statement that presented a risk to potential investors and developers that are active or wish to become active in the region. An awareness of power manifested in the words of Watson. Not a power derived from being the CEO of a large and government-friendly organisation. But a power in the potential to expose the romantic myth of ‘the beach’ as a space of play, escape and colonisation for white southern tourists (Taussig 2000; Moreton-Robinson 2011a; Lobo 2014a). When dissenters protest, they draw attention to the incoherency of promises and attachments of the normative ideal of the good life. This normative ideal of the good life is propagated by the same representations of place inherent in the colonial imaginary – a place for the extraction of value and reproduction of power. Aboriginal people who participate in this research attend to the fragileness of white consumptive spaces, and regularly exercise capacities to challenge and reframe official and popular narratives of place.

Juxtaposed readings

When I show the postcard of Cable Beach (Image 9) to Mary, she tells me that she must ‘choose her words carefully’: ‘tourists are great for Broome’ and ‘this image is therefore great for Broome’. ‘However,’ Mary adds, ‘this image is for them, not us’. Whilst tourism remains the economic base for many of the town’s residents –

providing a much-needed seasonal boost to the local economy – manufactured images deny the uncomfortable histories of town life. Mary says that:

there is a big difference between the tourist image of Cable Beach and the history of Chinatown and the pearling industry.

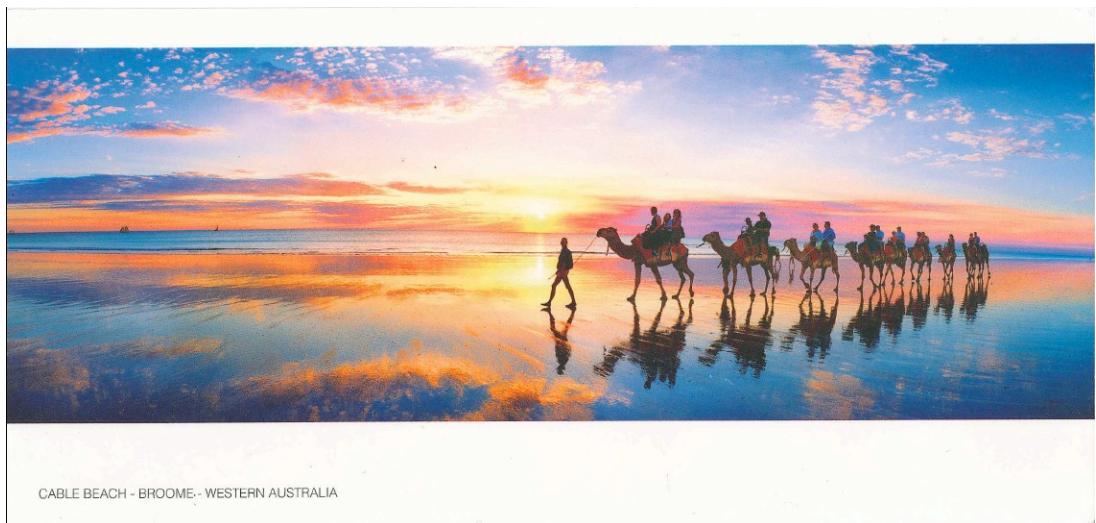


Image 9 – Postcard: Cable Beach (Sotiroski Photography)

Mary alludes to the uncomfortable narratives of town that many of these dominant and popular representations of place fail to disclose. Cable beach is often characterised by high-end beach resorts and photogenic scenery. With a number of high-end holiday resorts, it is also distinctly separate from the town of Broome, even though it is a short 5-minute drive away (Holmes and Rowley 2015). The geographical separation of the beach from the town is perhaps a metaphor for the ontological separation between anticipated and lived Broome experiences. Dualisms and irreconcilable distinctions persist between the struggle and inequality of many Aboriginal people on the one hand, and the affluence and utopianism of white tourism on the other.

I recall when Will refers to Kennedy Hill in his description of the staircase to the moon. Kennedy Hill is one of the most underprivileged geographical sites in urban Australia, ironically perched overlooking one of the most sellable and photogenic vistas in the entire country. It is a dichotomy that goes unspoken in the popular and official narratives of Broome, yet Mitch does not shy away and directly juxtaposes them against each other in her reshaping of these images. I ask Mitch about the image of camels on the beach and what its construction represents:

Yeah but that's a construction that's not made by us. If the tourism bureau of Broome was Aboriginal, on the postcards there'd be nice beach and a tree, and then you'd see a drunken man laying down underneath, or a homeless family. I'd put that in there. Why not? It's true. So that when people come here they don't have this idea that it's all beach and sunsets and camels. There should be some artist now doing things like that. Over the sand dune there's a little camp. Someone's camping there because they're homeless, that's real (Interview, 09/06/15)

Mitch is referring to the recently condemned town-based Aboriginal community of Kennedy Hill. The community is a site of extreme poverty and homelessness, and has seen a steady decline in past decades. Houses have been recently bulldozed. Coupled with a steady increase of itinerant Aboriginal populations in Broome, Kennedy Hill has become an unspeakable stress point in the façade of Broome's brand. Dirty mattresses, shopping trolleys, and beer cans and cartons lay scattered around the site. Residents sleep rough around the solitary house and sand dunes, often with numerous camps fires marking the presence of different groups. Ingetje, a Dutch woman and photo-journalist, has documented the community for a number of

years, photographing the everyday lives of residents and the decline of the infrastructure on the site. A typical photograph (Image 10) in Ingetje's work captures the juxtaposition of life in the tropical tourist town. I follow up by asking Mitch:

David: Is that why Inge's work is so profound?

Mitch: Yeah, yeah, yeah absolutely. She shows the rawness of it and the truth. Australia has to shy away from this issue that they don't have a black history. You do. You have got a black history. It's part of your history (Interview, 17/06/15).



Image 10 – Jackie and Geraldine sleeping on a mattress in front of their house in Kennedy Hill.
Source and permission: Ingetje Tadros

Mitch is unapologetic about disappointment in Broome, although regrettable, the encounter between poverty and utopia is disappointable only to those who anticipate the narrow ideal. She says 'don't be disappointed when you come here and you don't get that experience 100 per cent'. In an interview with Ingetje, I ask her about her work. Among many in Broome, this is controversial work that exposes a number of

injustices on the one hand, but risks fetishizing poverty and stirring up trouble in a traditionally conservative town. Ingetje says:

It is to raise awareness, especially if communities are getting closed, I want to be there when that happens, to show the emotions of people. It's a tragedy, for me it is like a slow genocide. With the community closure, for example, if Looma²⁰ gets closed I will go to Looma, to raise awareness, to show that happening. I strongly believe that images can make an impact, they have done before, you know? Just have to keep pushing it. But also showing inside houses – it is not saying ‘oh look how dirty it is’, it is about saying ‘look at the conditions they are living in’. But I get a lot of shit in my head, people saying to me ‘oh it is their choice’, so it is difficult to present that you know? (Interview, 04/06/15).

Ingetje believes that images are powerful mediating forces that capture emotion, imbuing a resonance that moves the viewer:

If something happens like that I feel that the photos can make a real impact, you know? When you see a written piece, everybody can have their own imagination, but when you see that person cry, or somebody getting dragged away, then you think ‘that is terrible, oh’.

Abject poverty juxtaposed against an idyllic backdrop confronts not only those who come to visit, but those that live here today (Image 11). Prince, a young Djugun/Jabbir-Jabbir man, describes to me how this confrontation is daily and spatially distributed in the main streets of town:

²⁰ Looma is an Aboriginal community about 120 km south-east of Derby adjacent the Fitzroy River. At the 2016 census, Looma had a population of 519

David: How does someone live with that in Broome every day?

Prince: Most people just shut that side out... I do understand how the tourists, they see on the postcards camels and the sunset, and it's a nice tropical place, it's clean and it's just nice and vibrant and there's multiculturalism, and it's so positive - you walk around and people are smiling everywhere, and you do. They get here and they see the camels and the sunset, they might see the multiculturalism, but they won't see the happy faces or they won't see the cleanliness. (Interview, 22/06/15).



Image 11 – Sussanne and Jacquelin waking up in their new camp, at the other side of the fence, as the condemned house they used before in Kennedy Hill, has now been demolished. To this day, this camp is still being used by many homeless people. Source: Ingetje T

Jodie agrees that the beach is a part of Broome, part of the salt water ontologies of Aboriginal people that continue to dream in this part of the Kimberley. Authentically however, this image is not Broome, 'definitely not, definitely not the camels, maybe the beach part of it, not the camels and not really this, no, no'. I ask if there is

disconnect between how Broome is experienced and how you're expected to experience Broome, Jodie replies:

...well someone coming in, I suppose they probably get the experience that they're looking for, but they don't really touch the surface of what Broome's about. But it's easy to fly in here for 4 days, 5 days, live at the Cable Beach Club, have a cocktail watching the sunset, ride your camel, that thing... And that's right, exactly, never have to traverse your way down Anne Street²¹ in the middle of the night and with a big brawl happening or something like that. So, I mean, the tourist operators probably go to great extremes to make sure people don't have to experience that (Interview, 14/06/15).

Will explains in our interview how he believes the difference between the actual experience of Broome and how tourists anticipate that experience, is based upon a narrow ensemble of knowledges. Being disappointed by the prevalence of poverty is for him:

because of a complete lack of understanding and education. So when those people will pour into this town it will...you're really gonna get the picture or you're not. Most people don't want to get the picture.

In production of these imaginaries, there is a perceived disavowal of how a large proportion of the population live. Wade, a non-Aboriginal supporter, thinks that there is a wilful ignorance when it comes to Aboriginal poverty, disenfranchisement and dispossessions:

²¹ Anne Street is a neighbourhood street in Broome with a significant Aboriginal population known colloquially as 'The Bronx'. It has a reputation as a violent place characterised by an intensification of poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime.

the people that run this will fight against the reality that Broome is now filling up with zombies... you're not gonna see the rainforest and poverty in any Getaway²² program (Interview, 12/06/15).

Of course, poverty will unlikely feature in any reproductions of the ideal good life, but in the experience of the present, these reproductions structure expectations in ways that limit the emergence of other knowledges, often to the detriment of marginalised groups. Susanna, an Italian woman who married-into a remote Aboriginal community, uses a metaphor to highlight the effect of these deceptive ideals:

It's like you've got a kitchen that you haven't washed your dishes, and you haven't cleaned up or whatever, and then you pull a curtain in front of this beautiful picture, you know? So, then you say 'oh wow', but you don't see what's behind it. You go and see the camels or the stairway to the moon, you can go in town, you see all those Indigenous people under those trees, run-ins with the police, you know? (Interview, 22/06/15).

The tourist reduces their own capacity to think and feel times and spaces beyond the image through their heightened expectations of an anticipated experience. Susanna says these are 'false expectations', they are bound to be disappointed when they encounter counter narratives of place. She says that 'the city person wouldn't know about it', meaning that those who come from afar, who's bodies are pregnant with expectations and promises, struggle to read differently if they are committed to read a particular way. Uncomfortable narratives that embrace histories of slavery, kidnapping, dispossession, segregation, race riots etc. are read with a degree of

²² Getaway is Australia's longest-running travel and lifestyle television program.

temporal detachment, as if they have occurred in a hermetically sealed space-time. As Peter tells me, ‘well we’ve turned them into tourist commodities as well’. Popular pearl lugger tours have been applauded for their embrace of these narratives describing how tour guides did not ‘mince words’, calling the initial years of Aboriginal labour ‘slavery’ (Frost 2004: 5). Yet, when I interviewed pearl lugger tour guide Megan, I questioned why there was little reference to these uncomfortable narratives of Broome, she replied:

I’ve had two really bad instances with people feeling very, very uncomfortable. At the end of the day they’re here to kind of have a good time, so unless they’re interested in it, I try not to, I skim over it pretty quickly. But that’s the other thing, it’s very hush-hush. Even now a lot of people don’t realise what went on. Like, it was horrible slavery (Interview, 20/03/15).

In the narratives of those interviewed, there is a clear perception that alternative meanings are concealed or left out of the production process of good life imaginaries. Whilst alternative readings of such spaces exist, I seek in the next section to demonstrate how challenges to these imaginaries might be enacted.

Reframing sites and forms of power

When presented with the postcard of Cable Beach, many Aboriginal participants drew parallels between the idyllic scenery it constructs and the erasure of Aboriginal people in the colonial frontier imaginary. In asking Brian if this image represents how he envisions Broome, he replies:

No, no it doesn't. The camels. No, it doesn't represent Broome at all...

There's, there's nothing there that actually represents Broome like there was before because it's been pulled down and never been put back up again... most of the history that have been written about Broome are only about Europeans... it's not Broome because there's no, there's no, there's nothing there that I identify as the sovereign of Broome (Interview, 19/06/15.)

For Aboriginal activists, these images are Eurocentric colonial depictions that imagine Broome as a distant out-there space on the edge of the nation. When Ebony reveals to non-Aboriginal people – in Sydney where she currently lives – that she is from Broome, they generally reply:

'Wow the camels on the beach, I've seen the colour of your dirt, I've always wanted to go there, is that in the NT?' Their perception is it's the Wild Wild West; it's the last frontier, it's the bush, the outback, somewhere out there in their imaginations. Not sure really where but it's out there somewhere up north. Indigenous Australians from that region, we're perceived quite derogatively; bush blacks, we're the bush blacks, tribal mob I get called – bush blacks (Interview, 20/06/15).

Anne affirms this sense of imagination that is imbued within the image. But she articulates how one might inject their own reading into its performance. These readings require an empathetic attunement to the images situated context, its local attachments. Anne says that:

It's an imaginative space, but for me when I look at it, I take my reality into it. For me representation's very important, allowing us to see why somebody else's worldview is that way so that we can have empathy and have a bit of

an understanding of what motivates, what drives them to do the things they do in their life (Interview, 24/06/15).

Whilst representations reveal dominant meanings, obscured meanings that reflect how local people read space are always present, and are often non-representational. When I ask Petrine how her image of this space differs from the postcard, she says:

Mine's very different. Mine's the sea and swimming and enjoying my dog and enjoying friends when I'm there in a group and that's it, *just the ambiance*. (Interview, 08/06/15).

It is these non-representational registers that escape the image in its performance. Ambiance and atmosphere inform how activists come to reimagine what the good life might be in a place like Broome. McCormack (2008: 413) describes these atmospheres as being:

something distributed yet palpable, a quality of environmental immersion that registers in and through sensing bodies whilst also remaining diffuse, in the air, ethereal.

These atmospheres are ordinary affective scenes of the everyday where 'an attunement of the senses, of labors, and imaginaries to potential ways of living in or living through things' takes place (Stewart 2011: 452). There is contest between narrowly defined readings of place and obscured readings that are often not represented in the dominant production of good life imaginaries. How one reads and makes sense of place directs lines of flight where bodies are charged to be affected in particular ways that inhibit and enlarge capacities. One way to explore alternatives is through non-representational readings of place, but also through reframing the image

itself to reveal alternative and radical ways of making sense of place. I demonstrate how ordinary spaces and atmospheres become the stages for the transformative potential of disappointing hyper-idyllic scenes of the good life.

Enacting reframes

To build upon and extend the meaning of the images collected and produced throughout this research, a method of self-directed photography (Aitken 2016) was designed to explore the connections activists make in their reframing of the good life. Given the pervasiveness of representational images in conceptualisations of place during this research, and the research aim in exploring how activists reframe the object-targets of these representations, there was a need to privilege the perspectives of research participants in these refractions. Forty disposable cameras with 34 exposures each were planned to be dispersed to activists during a protest event in Derby (220km east of Broome), with the aim to capture moments immersed in the act of sovereign thought and movement. Along with protest organiser Ebony, I drove to Derby early in the morning to meet up with fellow activists and promoters at Radio 6DBY – operated by the Derby Media Aboriginal Corporation. About eight organisers waited in the carpark of the radio station, waiting for the arrival of other participants for about an hour. They never arrived, in part due to a number of large Aboriginal funeral processions occurring that day, as well the occurrence of the Kimberley Futures meeting: which saw community leaders and government officials meet in Derby to nominate members to an Indigenous Advisory Council in the reform of remote Aboriginal communities.

I characterise this protest as a ‘non-event’ (Anderson and Gordon 2016), in which ordinary acts of waiting gave way to an indeterminacy that held no promises, it

might ‘endure or … sag defeated’ (Stewart 2007: 4). Other happenings in Derby that day siphoned potential from the event; the cultural obligations to grieve the loss of loved ones and critical encounters with the state that hold other promises in articulating alternative futures. A unique contingency of events that were occurring that day in Derby, redirected peoples energies in ways that inhibited the materialisation of a protest event. In this way, other events occur in town ‘by stealing potentiality’ from other events (Bennett and Linsley 2016: 525).

Yet, even as the event did not materialise another event was planned *in lieu* of the Derby protest. A small group of protest organisers felt the need to act upon the pent-up energies and the emotional labour of protest planning. An open family day at Cable Beach was organised for the month of August. Organisers, their families and friends were invited to attend a quiet and convivial expression of care and rejuvenation. Such events might seem like innocuous non-definitive moments of ordinary life that do little to shift the refrain from which normative notions of the good life are produced. However, following Bayat (2013: 14), this event might be thought of as a ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ in which individuals, families and communities come together to enact and catalyse creative movements that embrace and privilege marginalised actors. Having a quiet day at Cable Beach, I argue, is a radical act that involves challenging the sites and forms of power in Broome.

These enactments follow feminist reconceptualisations of ‘the political’ that perform a ‘small “p” politics that often escape’ geographic explorations of social movements (Koopman 2015). The primary focus on large scale or noisy political demonstrations risk missing out on witnessing the pre-conditions that background and facilitate

action (Routledge 2017). Ordinary life includes the baseline conditions for existential continuity such as access to services deemed essential yet being denied – water, electricity, gas – under the precarity of community closures. Protests against the closure of remote Aboriginal communities take aim at the refusal to provide these forms of support for ordinary life to remote Aboriginal people. I present the following enactments of ordinary occupations of space as political actions that are fundamentally backgrounded by ordinary life yet have specific aims to address the denial of conditions that support the maintenance of a life-ongoing, as Butler (2012: 14) states:

when public demonstrations or political actions have as their aim the opposition to failing forms of support – lack of food or shelter, unreliable or uncompensated labour – then what was previously understood as the ‘background’ of politics becomes its explicit object.

In other words, when the scaffolding of ordinary life is withdrawn, and when this withdrawal is contested, what then becomes political is the realm of ordinary life itself. Ordinary acts such as going to the beach and spending time with family and friends become acts of imperceptible transformations through reimaginings and occupations of normative objects of the good life. Postcards of camels on the beach at dusk and the numerous touristic enactments of the good life, become unsettled by political reclamations of space that create openings to write alternative readings of place.

Thirteen (13) participants who identify as Aboriginal agreed to take part in photographing this event, using to the disposable cameras that were not utilised during the non-event of protest in Derby. These photographs were participant-driven,

with no direction given from the researcher, and took place after all interviews were conducted. Of these participants, three (3) participated in interviews prior to the event. Informed consent permission to use these photos were granted by participants, as well as names and phone numbers, which aided in the return of images to the photographers. One photo from each camera was chosen by the researcher to capture moments in which the normative notion of the good life became unsettled through participant reimaginings²³. Craig's photo (Image 12) below, captures protest organisers Mitch and Ebony fixing the Aboriginal flag to the windscreens of a car, as a colourful banner reading 'leave our communities alone' is sprawled across the bonnet.



Image 12 – Protest car. Taken by Craig

²³ The total portfolio of photographs has been returned to the participants.

The Aboriginal flag gets deployed here in different ways by the participants, above (Image 12) effect of marking the car ‘Aboriginal’, below (Image 13) in a photo taken by Mitch, brotherhood and solidarity becomes-Aboriginal. The flag as a symbolic representation of Aboriginality gets folded into the being of others, both human and non-human. A car, a band of brothers, or granules of sand (Image 14) are transformed by the representation of Aboriginality. Objects take on alternative subjectivities through ordinary practices of being-together on the beach.



Image 13 – Band of brothers. Taken by Mitch



Image 14 – Aboriginal flag on the sand. Taken by Sue

Nadine, below (Image 15), eternalises the interplay between Aboriginality, land, sea and time, an expression of the popular protest chant ‘always was, always will be, Aboriginal land’:



Image 15 –Aboriginal flag with eternity symbol. Taken by Nadine

These are renditions/modalities of becoming, in which activists reclaim the Australian beach that registers as the archetypal white space in the national imaginary (Wise 2009). What ‘always will be Aboriginal land’ endures through these etchings of Aboriginality. Such renditions become political acts that defy or disavow the refrain that is white space; performed through European backpackers sunbathing, lifeguards scouting, baby-boomers fishing and southern tourists snapping photographs. They are political precisely because they open up what Stewart (2012: 365) calls ‘pockets’ which give way to ‘the compelling but not necessarily explicit emergence of forms in the course of everyday scenes of living through things’. This moment suspends regimes that distribute value to lives, specifically which lives are ‘good’ or ‘liveable’ (Butler 2012). It is difficult to say whether these actions break the refrain of the good life deeply enough for other worlds to emerge. But what becomes apparent through these events of ordinary political life, is that *ordinariness* has the potential to ‘hold a nonspace without being meaningful’ (Berlant 2011: 34). That is, the world that subjugates alternative knowledges, is interrupted in this moment. These enactments render normative notions of the good life insensible and unthinkable; they’re backgrounded and imperceptible as Image 16 reveals through spatial separation.



Image 16 – Distance from others at the beach. Taken by Trisha

Nor are they necessarily accessible, as Image 17, Image 18 and Image 19 articulate.

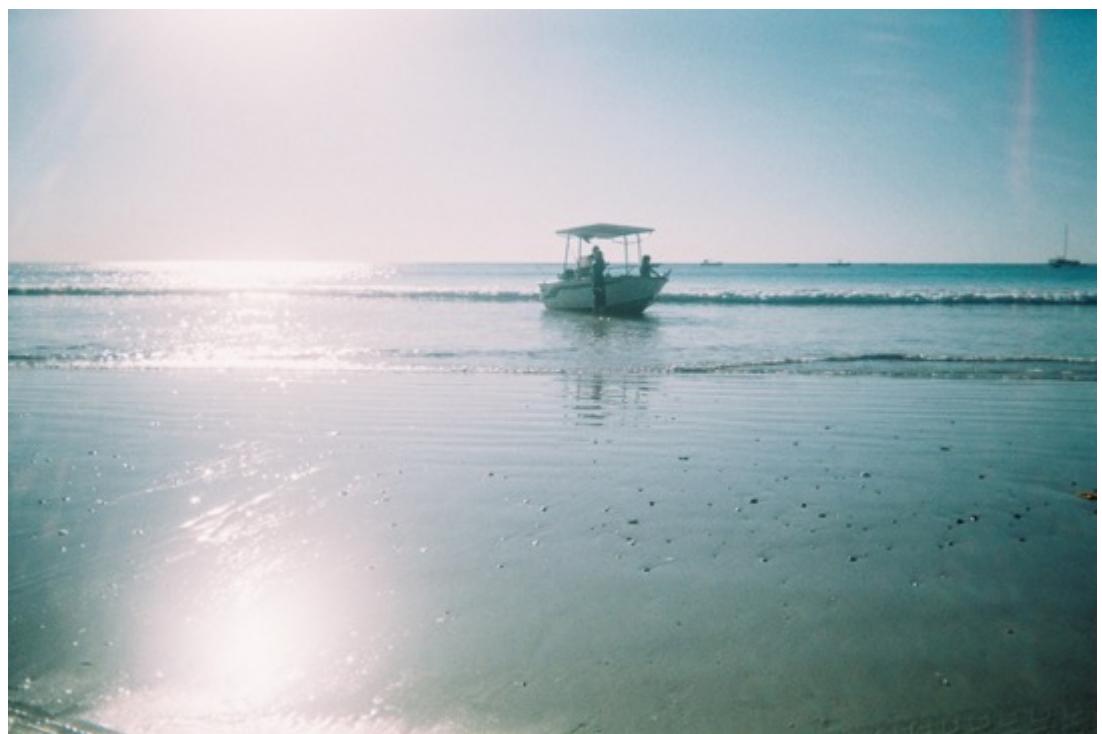


Image 17 – Boat arrival on Cable Beach. Taken by Lily-Hannah



Image 18 – Isolated patch of beach. Taken by Savannah



Image 19 – Driving to/on the beach. Taken by Prince



Image 20 – Leave our communities alone. Taken by Cody

These enactments are integral ordinary acts that pre-condition the capacity to act in the event of noisy oppositional politics. Etchings of Aboriginality enact alternative readings of diverse sensescapes and is performed not just through words, but also hands (Image 20), not just drawings but also feet (Image 21), they are representational and transferrable, but also embodied and emplaced. Image 21 depicts a meeting point between a crab that has left its diggings on the surface on the sand, the tracks of a dog that has passed through, the feet of photographer Nicola and the outlined impression of the Aboriginal flag. Reading the sensescape does not need text or representation to fix meaning for a moment; it requires the body and a set of relational stimuli. One can feel the sensation of sand shifting beneath the feet, by observing this photo; one knows what it is to have wet sand on the tip of a finger, and to wipe it off on the side of one's leg; to play with a dog at the waters edge.

'Every practice is a mode of thought, already in the act' (Manning and Massumi 2014: vii), these photos capture thought-in-the-act.



Image 21 – Feet and flags. Taken by Nicola



Image 22 – SOS Black Australia. Taken by Reshinta

Other etchings incorporate more explicit messages, such as the rallying call ‘SOS’ (Image 22), shorthand for the movement’s social media hashtag ‘SOSBlackAustralia’. Regina photographs (Image 23) ‘help us save our communities’ written into the sand:

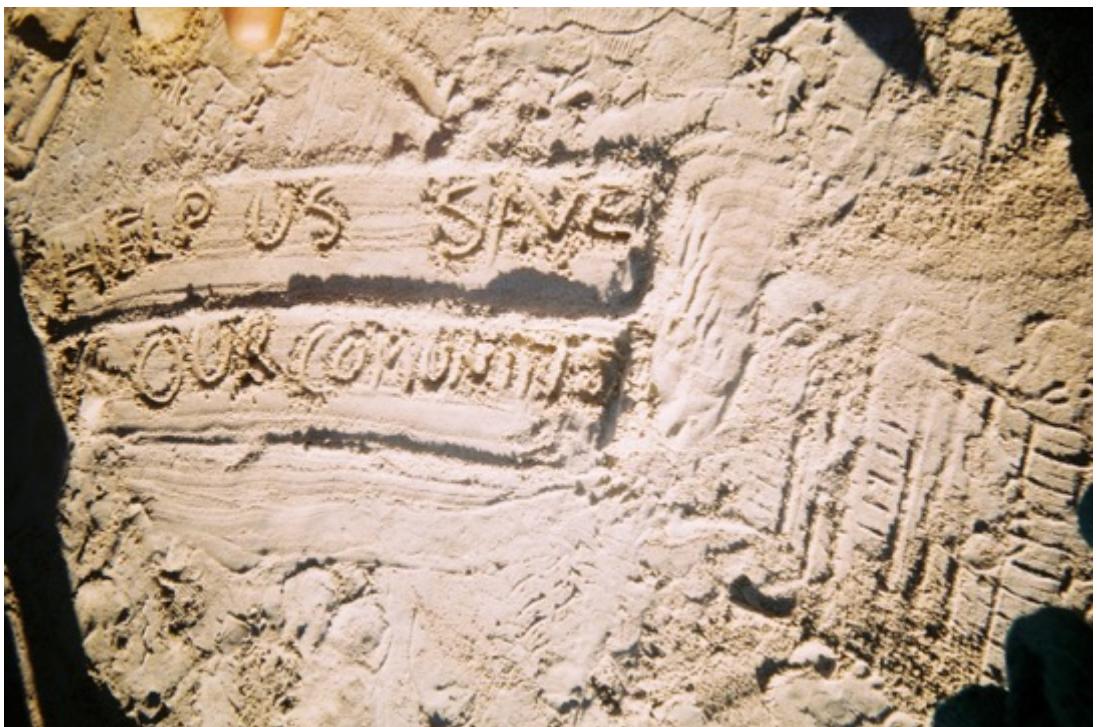


Image 23 – Help us save our communities. Taken by Regina

What is at stake in these ordinary enactments of life? Ebony invokes images of home (Image 24) among her photographs of the beach, an ordinary place of the everyday. I suggest that these ordinary enactments of life background and precondition the capacity to act in the moment of confrontation and disagreement with normative notions of the good life. What the good life is, dwells in the separation between a life that merely survives, and a life that is liveable / able to be lived well. Liveable lives take home as a returning and enduring place which enlarges a capacity to form attachments. It is sovereign articulations of attachments to home and community that activists struggle for in their continuing encounters with the settler-colonial state and

the neoliberal apparatus that distributes normative ideas and ideals of the good life.

Butler (2012: 14) argues that ‘we cannot struggle for a good life, a liveable life, without meeting the requirements that allow a body to persist’. What makes bodies persist in the context of everyday life, are the scenes and enactments that activists perform in the photographs above. These sites of connection become integral to the reframings that activists perform. The next chapter explores in greater depth these countering alternative imaginaries of the good life through the narratives of twelve (12) Aboriginal activists who have featured prominently in activism campaigns in recent years.



Image 24 – Home. Taken by Ebony

Chapter five: Aboriginal-led protections of Country

In this chapter I specifically address the research aim to explore and describe shared geographies that foreground embodied ways of knowing Country and bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people into productive relation. Through the narratives of Aboriginal activists, I attempt to ‘capture an emergent ‘something more’ that is produced in the interaction of material, social, and affective, forms’ (Duff 2010: 891). In doing so I map the excesses of experiences which fragment the dominant refrain and rhythm of touristic, consumptive and extractive spaces. Drawing upon semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with twelve (12) Aboriginal activists, I assemble alternative narratives of the good life that these activists imagine and enact in their political projects. It takes seriously Muecke’s (2016b: 17) observation that ‘[j]ust what the ‘good life’ might be in a place like Broome is what is at issue as people try to organise themselves for a better future in that place’.

Reimagining alternatives to the scripted good life, can be considered an integral act of activism, as Manning (2014) notes, thoughts and imaginations move with bodies. It builds upon new materialist philosophies that seek ‘novel ways of understanding matter, handling objects and interacting with nature’ (Coole 2013: 452). Aboriginal narratives of place problematise anthropocentric dualisms, in effect mapping out what it is about place – it’s capacity to wrangle forms of life and non-life into a co-constituted state of becoming – that gives vitality to movement and protest (Connolly 2013).

This chapter then elaborates on alternative narratives of the good life to foreground the backgrounded pre-conditioning spaces that provoke Aboriginal-led action.

Horton and Kraftl (2009: 14) argue that it is actions that occur in these backgrounded spaces that constitute *implicit activisms* that evoke ‘specific kinds of everyday, personal, affective bonds which lead people to *care*’. I agree with Povinelli (2011: 160) in conceptualising the implication of caring, she states that to ‘care is to embody an argument about what a good life is and how such a good life comes into being’. In caring, activists don’t so much demand change *per se*, but rather they enact it through entangling themselves in the experience of place, entering into a world of becoming (Connolly 2011). They open up relational spaces that accommodate and lend potential to the embrace of difference and alterity.

I build upon a framework that demonstrates how attunements to Country might be thought of as activisms that exist as pre-conditions of protest. These narratives do not promise to map out the cartographies of the good life in strictly utopian terms, nor does it propose to be a visionary ideal of what the good life is. Rather, this chapter describes the generative potentials of good life pluralities through exploring the coming together of diverse constitutions that affect bodies and prime them for action.

Where is Country?

Susanna and Wocky are a married couple who live on the Dampier Peninsula with their sons. They come to Broome regularly for work, school, shopping and family / social gatherings. There isn’t much signal (mobile telephone) reception where they live, so they can be uncontactable for days unless you physically contact with them. Over a period of about 10 days we exchange two text messages. We had organised to meet on a particular weekday in which they would be back in Broome. A majority of my fieldwork encounters with participants were like this. They required patience. Details of our meeting were often broad and open. Meeting times weren’t precise:

sometimes a week would be suggested, or a day if you were lucky. Most meet-ups were confirmed on the day, without much notice. Susanna called me at around 10am, saying that she would be in town with Wocky around lunch time and we should meet at Town Beach. I loaded my bag with my tape recorder and note pad, jumped on my 50cc moped and headed to the beach on a hot sunny day. Both Susanne and Wocky are well-known activists in the region, as well as in Melbourne where they have spent some time in recent years. Wocky is a Jabbir-Jabbir man with a very relaxed disposition and wide smile – his wife Susanna married into his mob, originally from rural Italy. With his long thick dreadlocks and cool disposition, Wocky reminds me a bit of Bob Marley. We sit opposite each other under a gazebo chatting about their active roles in the JPP campaign both in Broome and Melbourne. The conversation is as much a probing exercise for them as for me, I feel that they were evaluating my political posture to a topic that seemed to envelope most residents of this region. There aren't many people around. To my right is a milky blue ocean bay vista glistening in the high noon sunlight. The air is hot but cooling with the sea breeze. Occasionally the smell of roasted coffee from a nearby café wafts passed us. We chat together for about 20 minutes before I ask if I can turn on the audio recorder. They agree and we conduct a joint interview for just over an hour.

Early in the interview we discuss the community closures proposal by the State Government. Wocky feels that the closures are an attempt to urbanise Aboriginal peoples' lifestyles and to eradicate their connection to Country. In a conversational format, I attempt to clarify what Wocky means:

David: So, certain lifestyles have been demonised and been told that this is not what we've set out for you, you need to fully participate in the economy, you need to be here, you need to be in cities, you need to be in towns?

Wocky: Yeah, they're reinforcing that, and they're saying there's no other way. Yeah, well they're saying like that's the only way to live today, but our people have been doing it for centuries, you know? And now they're trying to put us into boxes and make us live like slaves and robots, and they put all these carrots in front of them like good money and good work, royalties and all this other shit. But really, you don't really need that, you know? They're just going to put more problems upon other problems upon other problems to make you live with that problem for the rest of your life. But if you're out in the bush living like our ancestors, you don't have to worry about all that stuff (Interview, 22/06/15).

To Wocky, the state is reinforcing the notion that there is only one way to be-in-the-world, a life equated with a set of problems that accompany rhythms of work and wealth. Although Wocky describes the urbanisation of remote Aboriginal Australia as a point of resistance, I posit that it is not 'the urban' which is the problem. Rather it is the intensification of power at sites and nodes that are often conflated with the urban. Indeed, urban society is often theorised as a site of intensity (Thrift 2004b; Merrifield 2014), a place where rhythms have textured qualities that can be sensed and witnessed (Edensor 2010). Rhythms have signatures that affect how bodies move about (Bissell 2007; Vannini 2012), structure the nature of social interaction (Crang 2001; Duffy *et al.* 2011) and draw our attention to what McCormack (2002: 470) calls the 'mutual implication of ethics and aesthetics'. For Lefebvre (2004: 27), these

rhythms can be ‘dominating’, ‘made up’ temporal refrains that can occupy ‘everyday or long-lasting’ moments, ‘aiming for an effect that is beyond themselves’.

For activists interviewed during this research, the ‘city’ distributes these ‘dominating’ rhythms and the affiliated embodied experiences of being-consumed by ordered patterns of movement. The city, therefore, often has negative connotations, but I stress here that the city is most-often used as a metaphor for a *process* that distributes foreign rhythms and atmospheres ‘aiming for an effect beyond themselves’ (Lefebvre 2004: 27). It is foreign rhythms and atmospheres that activists feel inhibit their capacity to inhabit what Lefebvre (2004: 31) terms ‘the sensible’, which is ‘neither the apparent, nor the phenomenal, but the **present**’. Wocky highlights the power of Country to re-establish an inhabitation of the local/present, in which ineffable bodily shifts occur. He tells me the feeling he gets when he gets back from the city and starts to head out of town, ‘up the peninsula’ to his home:

Disconnection, yeah, you feel it, even once you, you know, you come from the city, like straight from the city out in the bush, you feel it straight away, you feel different, you feel like a different person completely... because you’re already programmed with all these other thoughts and ideas and all these other worries, that’s nothing, you know? You don’t have to worry about that.

In this statement, a temporality of urban life that affects his body begins to articulate itself, programming feelings of anxiety, constricting thought and individual sovereignty. He discusses how his body begins to slow down the farther he gets from the city. Making a point about reconnecting with a way of knowing he is disconnected from in the city, Wocky nods and smiles, staring intently at me. In this

moment, I am not sure that he is going to add more. I ask directly about how his body feels when he is in the city, he says:

Wocky: It gets heavier and heavier.

David: Is it much easier to live the good life where you guys are, in comparison to the city?

Wocky: Yeah, and then coming back to where we live now, I wouldn't change it for the world you know? Just knowing what the city is like, I wouldn't...

David: ...what is the good life for you then?

Wocky: The good life is living out in the bush or Country, wherever you live, without racing time, where you're not racing time, you're moving for yourself, you're not moving for anyone else, you're doing it, so you can go forward for yourself, not for anyone else.

Throughout interviews with Aboriginal activists, Country appears to be a geographical location at first: somewhere 'out' there. It is when we begin to discuss the feeling of Country that a more relational understanding of time and space begins to be articulated. Wocky demonstrates that whilst his good life is 'out' in the bush, it is not the bush that constitutes the good life. Rather, it is the suspension, dulling or de-intensification of temporal rhythms and atmospheres that impinge upon Wocky's individual sovereignty of thought and movement. 'Out' should then be understood as in excess of orderings and regimented patterns of movement, thought and feeling. It is, as Wocky says, about 'moving for yourself' and allowing one self to 'feel different'.

In the narratives that follow, a sovereignty of thought and movement emerges when participants' bodies are affected by alternative spatio-temporal rhythms, atmospheres and scales. This sovereignty is often storied as being a geographical site such as 'the bush' or Country, but as Yawuru man and activist Micklo tells me, rhythms of town and city life are like vibrations that 'thump'. They don't allow one to tether a connection to the affective and healing qualities of other vibrations. He says that 'people these days are distracted by unnatural vibrations'. Urban life is thought of here as a force that distribute non-representational vibrations which inhibit abilities to sense other, perhaps softer, vibrations. Micklo has been living off the grid at Yulleroo Wells, 70km east of Broome since September 2014, 'keeping an eye on things'. He is here because oil and gas company Buru Energy are exploring this area for shale gas with an intention to hydraulically frack reserves beneath the town's drinking water supply. Micklo tells me that he is here 'not just for those who have a connection to this Country, but to those who have lost their connections', he is trying to 'call them back' (Interview, 22/03/15).

Aboriginal activists take it as their task to call people back to Country. Given that I theorise place – including conceptualisations of the urban and Country – as the coming together of a myriad of beings both distant and proximate, being called back is less about *where* one inhabits space, but *how*. When Micklo calls others back to Country, he is calling for them to get a feel for place as a vibrating force. In effect, he is calling for people to attune to Country. Manning describes such affective attunements as a 'mode of immanent relation where the relation radically precedes the purported unity of the self' (2009: 39). In this sense, an affective attunement to Country means feeling in the relations of place on an embodied level. The vibrations,

atmospheres and rhythms of Country come to affect the body, opening it up and facilitating new frameworks for knowing about place.

Attunement is not just the tapping into the relations of place, it is also a process whereby bodies disconnect from ‘thumping’ non-representational forces. Attuning to Country – wherever one might be – facilitates the untethering of attachments to the rhythms of busy, noisy and exhausting patterns of life. In being-with Country, dominating affects are subsumed by a ‘merged becoming’ (Manning 2009: 39) between person and place, a merger that can occur as much in the city as any other space. Thinking of Country as a space that is geographically outside the city erases the presence of Aboriginality in urban places and contributes to colonial fantasies of *terra nullius*.

Unsettling geographies of Country

Country as a non-urban geographical site is a popular way of localising and giving territory to the notion of contemporary Aboriginality. Being ‘out’-on-Country invokes a particular spatial image, one of distance from modernity, sparse landscapes with little signification of ‘settlement’ and the romantic idyll of natural or wild (Carter and Hollinsworth 2009). Its *outness* suggests a space beyond the reaches of a world society colonised by capital, governance, civility and order. Prout (2011: 276), in her exploration of urban Aboriginality in Broome, argues that this popular discourse is ‘an enduring discursive generalisation’. In this generalisation, Aboriginality is thought of as a place-based identity located ‘out there’, ‘remote from urban environments and practised only amongst those who have retained their customary nomadic ways’ (Prout 2011: 276). This discourse is evident in the legal frameworks around native title which work to politicise Aboriginal connections to

Country as a recognition of land rights. Country in this legal category is based upon a proven uninterrupted connection to place, one that is paradoxically undermined through colonial processes of elimination in the southern cities of Australia. Proving an uninterrupted connection to place is fraught with numerous contradictions inherent in the legal doctrine, which implies that all connections have been broken in urban areas. As Maddison (2009: 119) states:

Native title claims processes have [...] imposed a new ‘traditionalist framework’ on to Aboriginal communities, requiring that claimants must demonstrate their ‘traditional’ connections to Country in ways that are increasingly at odds with the complex intercultural realities and layers of identity that constitute their contemporary lives.

This dominant legal refrain imagines Country as a frontier geography. In this framework, colonial infrastructure – implicitly, any signs of the urban or capitalist accumulation – extinguishes native title, therein positing that Country is ‘out there’, beyond the intensive capital accumulation that takes place in urban centres. This discourse pervades not only the legal and state understanding of Country, but also the popular and non-Aboriginal understanding of where Country finds its place. Pat Lowe (2005: 93), West Kimberley resident and long-time activist-author, states that the notion of ‘*frontier*’ is culturally determined’ and is ‘inextricable from colonial expansionism and conquest’:

One never has a frontier in one’s own Country. It is always in someone else’s Country. And the other person is part of the Country still to be conquered. This may seem odd to people who consider the whole of Australia their

Country, and even that of several generations of ancestors. But Australia, to its indigenous inhabitants, is not one Country but many (2005: 93).

The frontier imaginary of Country as being a geographical site removed from urban society needs unsettling in the popular geographical imagination of Australia. Doing so embraces a relational understanding of Country, place and the good life as an affective bond to diverse spatio-temporal assemblages. Robinson, Smyth and Whitehead (2005: 1386) argue that Country is ‘more than a geographical area: it is shorthand for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with Indigenous people’s rights and identity’. This does not disavow the multifaceted and complex understandings of Aboriginal identity politics in contemporary Australia (Paradies 2016b). This research understands Aboriginality as a complex and diverse category deployed inconsistently by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and institutions. It acknowledges that relational ontologies of place are territorially unmoored, meaning that Country exists in all geographical sites where non-static affective bonds take place. Aboriginal activists in this research employ relational understandings of Country/place in their activisms. Being attuned to place is then an act of sovereign movement that challenges colonial desires of stability, fixedness and rationality. Coulthard (2014: 60) in his analysis of Aboriginal struggles against neoliberal antagonisms argues that they:

are best understood as struggles oriented around the question of land —
struggles not only for land, but also deeply informed by what the land as a
mode of reciprocal relationship (which is itself informed by place-based
practices and associated form of knowledge) ought to teach us about living

our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, nondominating and nonexploitative way.

Coulthard (2014) understands Aboriginal notions of place as ontological frameworks through which relationality articulates itself. It is a common misunderstanding in the Western conceptualisation of place, that Country is a material object with a utilitarian quality. Although being-Aboriginal does not exclusively equate to viewing place, land and Country as a relational assemblage. Whilst Aboriginal groups in Australia do deploy utilitarian values on land, sea and their resources, this research represents the relational ways of thinking with space that were described in interviews. The understandings of place that were narrated by Aboriginal participants, reflect Coulthard's (2014: 61) conception, that place is:

as a field of relationships of things to each other [...] Place is a way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others; and sometimes these relational practices and forms of knowledge guide forms of resistance against other rationalizations of the world that threaten to erase or destroy our senses of place.

For Aboriginal activists who commensurate the good life with being-with-Country, a relational understanding of both becomes key to any exploration of their political projects. How they resource a radical imagination in their political projects is affected by an embodied relationship that resists universalist and static understandings of place. I questioned this relational understanding of place with prominent Niginya activist and Broome Shire Councillor, Anne:

David: So for you, the good life can be in Broome and it can be out there, it can be everywhere?

Anne: Oh yeah it can be everywhere because it's a sense of feeling, a sense of connection, a sense of belonging, a sense of understanding that space. Even when I travel through Australia, I might go somewhere where I don't see Aboriginal people and I will go to that land because for me the law is in the land. I'll go to that place and I will say hello I'm, who I am, I come from a long way and I'm here today. Even when I went to Scotland and I'm here on the land and I'm talking to the land because I want to respect you and I hope you will look after me while I'm here and send me back safely. And so before I go there I already talk to that Country and I say I'm coming, you know what I mean? (Interview, 24/06/15).

For Anne, the idea of Country as a relational place is highlighted in her foregrounding of a sense of feeling, connection and belonging in her knowledge and understanding of space. Thinking of space relationally deterritorialises spatial imaginaries that construct boundaries and frontiers so crucial to the legitimisation of authority and jurisdiction. Whilst the nation-state conception of country stresses the exclusive territorialisation of people and place, Indigenous geographies of Country are more 'a statement of connection, belonging, and affinity' (Hsu *et al.* 2014: 370). Country then is not just thought of as a territorial space that demarcates exclusive categories of belonging, but is also a fluid idea that resonates across time and space. It folds the past, present and future into moments that disrupt the linear sequential temporality central to the European enlightenment (Coulthard 2014). Such linear temporalities deny an 'atemporality' of local Aboriginal ontologies and act as 'a specific assemblage of "whitening" tourist time' (Trezise 2014: 78). Like Aboriginal stories of creation and liveliness, Country is both 'everywhere' and 'everywhen' (Stanner 1969).

Where when is Country?

Seeking to understand ‘where’ Country is, is also to ask ‘when’ Country is.

Bugarrigarra in the West Kimberley is the Aboriginal English terminology for the Dreaming, an atemporal moment of creation. Anne describes this concept to me in more detail:

Bugarrigarra means the past, the present and the future fused into this moment in time in which we must act. And so, it’s always about learning from the past, living in the moment but being aware that our decision-making needs to be futuristic and people who haven’t grown up with those values or haven’t been grounded in to some extent a cultural identity around the fact that we as Aboriginal people are custodians for this land and we are the voices of the muted which is non-humans. The birds, the fish, the river you know what I mean? So, there’s this real, there’s this real sort of, to some extent, unknown quality in all of this in terms of meaning... (Interview, 24/06/15).

Country constitutes a space where the assumptions of linear time and objective non-agentic nature or wilderness give way to other scales and relations that affect how the present is felt. Throughout the narratives of Aboriginal activists, Country becomes the geographical topos of the good life, not solely as a territorial site, but rather as an assemblage of relations. Country is non-universalistic, in that it co-becomes together in a ‘cosmos populated by diverse beings and diverse ways of being’ (Suchet-Pearson *et al.* 2013: 185). The assembled feel or atmosphere of place is sensed as the singularity of a moment that comes into being and takes place through the agencies of more-than-human forces. As Hsu *et al.* (2014: 372) contend:

the landscape itself is sentient and alive. Its human and non-human presences are all manifestations of this multidimensional entity. Connected in these ways, co-inhabitants are conceptualised as kin, as sharing a significant connection – as Country.

The reformation of remote Aboriginal communities is seen by Aboriginal activists as the elimination of Country-as-pedagogy. This references Simpson's thesis, that in acts of Indigenous resistance, land must be a tool for activism but also as a way of 'how to live life' (2014: 18). Community reformation, whilst often represented as a physical reshaping of communities and towns, is viewed as an assault on Aboriginal ways of being and knowing that are so integral to sustaining cultural difference (Altman 2017). Simpson (2014: 14) further argues that thinking with Indigenous concepts such as Country aren't simply 'land-based', that in thinking about Indigenous places, particularly in acts of resurgence and resistance, land 'must once again *become* the pedagogy' as a place to think with.

This idea repositions Country away from strictly geographical sites, to a livelier rendition of place that scaffolds the creation of knowledge and facilitates human others to act on its behalf. A disconnection from these spaces for those that make connections and think with place as a vital infrastructure of life, signals the erasure of culturally differentiated knowledges. It is in the spaces that assemble alternative knowledges, facilitated through a thinking-with Country, that an oppositional politics is endowed with a capacity to exercise emplaced pedagogies that unsettle the domination of the normative good life. These knowledges of Country, based upon feeling as knowing and re-scaling belonging within heterogeneous spatio-temporal

assemblages, are subjugated by western enlightenment epistemologies. Foucault (1980: 85) argues that:

it is through the reemergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges [...] that criticism performs its work... To emancipate [them] from that subjection [is] to render them [...] capable of opposition and of struggle.

Activisms

I don't describe myself as a protestor, I describe myself as a protector, because I'm standing up to protect the land as a traditional, and I say I'm a traditional custodian not a traditional owner, because we don't own the land, the land owns us – Anne (Interview, 24/06/15).

Activism in the Broome region has a history of challenging the direction of policy and reframing the future in ways that disrupt the trajectory of settler-colonialism; from the homelands movement in the 1970s; the Noonkenbah walk-offs; native title and land rights more generally; the JPP protests; growing opposition to fracking; and now the closure of remote Aboriginal communities. Why people protest and particularly why Aboriginal people protest, is often explained in terms of oppositional projects that resist ongoing colonial practices (Barker and Pickerill 2012). This tends to essentialise the political projects of Aboriginal people, as reactionary activisms that are catalysed by a resentment toward white settler society. Indeed, activism in general does tend to initially mobilise around atmospheres of anger and perceived injustices (Gruszczynska 2009). However, negative affects such as anger and frustration quickly dissipate, and more importantly, do not characterise

a homogenous experience of being Aboriginal. As activists I interviewed have noted, the colonial project that enacts epistemic violence, marginalising and subjugating other ways of knowing and being, does not neatly divide subjects along Aboriginal/settler lines. Aboriginal sovereignty remains a dividing line among Aboriginal people in Australia, with some in favour of native title and constitutional recognition, and others opting for total sovereignty.

What this sovereignty might mean, perhaps dwells in the freedom of thought and movement, to feel and make sense of the world in non-prescribed ways. This is not a strictly Aboriginal demand, with Aboriginal activists sharing the freedom of Country with non-Aboriginal people, building solidarity around this sovereignty of thought and movement; learning to be affected in alternative ways and imagining a world-otherwise. These methods for building solidarity reject binary thinking that represents cultures and races as being oppositional and unable to co-exist. Activists demonstrate that race, gender and culture, whilst backgrounding the experiences of people, are secondary considerations that follow the imperative to collectively feel, imagine and enact an alternative version of the good life.

The messy business of resistance

Although Country has a salient meaning in Aboriginal lore²⁴ and language around Australia, the idea that this notion is universally privileged by Aboriginal groups is naïvely erroneous. Contemporary Aboriginality in Australia is characterised by intergenerational trauma, high rates of incarceration, and a large gap in life expectancy, health, education and employment (Paradies 2016b). The forms of

²⁴ Lore refers to the socio-ethical frameworks of Aboriginal cosmologies that are passed inter-generationally through creation stories. This is commonly referred to as ‘traditional law’.

place-making that occupy the daily struggles of Aboriginal people are not uniformly practiced, nor are attachments to place an inherent part of the Aboriginal experience (Hinkson 2017). In the Kimberley, as articulated earlier in this thesis, high rates of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse permeates most discussions around Aboriginal inequality. The immediate address of social inequalities in this region, often backgrounds and subverts a connection to Country, lore and language. For Aboriginal pro-gas proponents, the address of social inequalities, and preservation of culture through self-determined engagements with modernity and the political economy, supersedes activist ideas of protecting Country. Highlighting this, Wayne Bergmann, the most pronounced and politically provocative proponent of the JPP gas hub, stated:

The James Price Point project, and the deal that traditional owners have signed, represents a once-in-a-lifetime chance to move beyond welfare and create real jobs and facilities for indigenous people. Indigenous communities are struggling in the Kimberley, and without integrating our people into the modern economy and the world of work we risk losing a priceless cultural heritage. We should not be abused for trying to create opportunities and provide a future for our children. We can do better than a life as victims, living in poverty on the fringes of great wealth. The dilemma of how to adapt to the modern world without sacrificing our identity as indigenous people is one we grapple with every day (Bergmann 2011: np).

The need to protect Country is often complicated by real action in alleviating socio-economic inequality. Choosing to protest is not a default position for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, and not all proposals by the state are viewed as being

inherently destructive. For those that choose to dissent, their energies are directed in purposeful ways that range from direct action, to supporting scientific research, artistic creation and performance, caring for Country and the maintenance of connections – both to place and people. Those involved with the anti-gas campaign at JPP lend their energies to a range of current issues in town, including a growing campaign against fracking shale-gas and the community closures campaign. Many of the narratives of protest invoke JPP as the referential point through which their current activisms work from. Oppositional action among activists interviewed can be broadly affiliated with anti-colonial struggles. But it is important to note that opposition is not just directed at the settler-colonial state, but also at interests and organisations that activists see as lubricating or coercing marginalised groups in colonial regimes. This involves an antagonism not just against the state, but also against other Aboriginal corporations such as the Kimberley Land Council (KLC).

Aboriginal activists interviewed conveyed a sense that they are not only protesting state-driven neoliberal incursion and official policies that support regressive practices such as the eradication of Country, but also what they perceive as colonialism within Aboriginal organisations. Mary, a Yawuru woman, describes a familiar complaint in the politics of place. ‘Nepotism is rife in Broome’ and alongside the ‘oppression of Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people’, is the biggest problem in the region. Mary tells me how Aboriginal organisations in the Kimberley keep power through inheritance, transferring prominent roles to ‘mates, who are usually men’.

The KLC, a representative body for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, is a common target for disaffected Aboriginal voices. Mary tells me how such

organisations ‘have powerful voices that are used to marginalise and manipulate people through promises of money and/or legal action’. In 2010, in a heightened atmosphere during the JPP debate, the KLC established KRED Enterprises ‘as the overriding social and economic development foundation in the Kimberley region of Western Australia’ (KRED Enterprises 2016: np). Wayne Bergmann left his ten-year role as CEO at the KLC to coordinate the establishment of KLC owned development company KRED, a move that raised questions over conflict of interest (Collins 2011). At that time, the site at James Price was subject to a joint Goolarabooloo/Jabbir-Jabbir native title claim for the 15 years prior to this event. Joseph Roe, a Goolarabooloo activist, was the first named claimant and therefore had a prime position in the outcome of the JPP debate – a position that allowed him to block the project. Within two years, Joseph Roe was replaced on this claim by Anthony Watson, pro-gas director (currently Chairman) at the KLC. When Bergmann resigned as the CEO of the KLC in March 2011, he was appointed by the board at KLC as CEO of KRED. Anthony Watson is also the inaugural Chairman of KRED and the move to appoint Bergmann was said by many in the Kimberley as the KLC and Bergmann ‘feathering their own nest’ (Prior 2011). During the negotiations between the native title claimants and the State Government, and despite resigning from the KLC, Wayne Bergmann remained as the Chief Negotiator for the Goolarabooloo/Jabirr-Jabirr Traditional Owners. *ABC Kimberley* reported that, in regard to the transition of power between powerful, well-resourced Aboriginal organisations in the Kimberley, ‘[t]here appears to be a close-knit circle of influence’ (Collins 2011: np).

There are complicated politics of unrest and activism in Broome and the Kimberley that eclipse the boundaries of Aboriginality and imperatives that some Aboriginal

people hold in protecting Country. Country is not always a primary source of vitality for every Aboriginal person, nor are the connections that one has with Country an implicit part of being-Aboriginal in contemporary Australia (see Paradies 2016a). Alongside activist calls to protect Country and to nourish their ability in making self-determined knowledges about the world they inhabit, are a set of often competing interests that complement development discourses. The activisms that this thesis pays attention to includes those Aboriginal people who have lost faith in the state's capacity to bring about meaningful change in areas of Aboriginal inequality, at the same time protecting places that allow for the maintenance of their own wellbeing and cultural continuity.

The position that I take here does not suggest that nepotism is an 'Aboriginal' issue in Broome – self-interested tendencies are within the domain of power not culture. I contend that Aboriginal activists interviewed, like non-Aboriginal activists, have their own political proclivities that blur and disappoint representational categories of difference. The bonds that bind activists together in Broome, deny mono-culturalism and embrace intercultural belongings when facilitated by shared dwellings in place and common pedagogies of feeling. It is in this tense of sharing space that activists collectively imagine alternative modes of inhabiting the future.

For alternative futures

Opening up a space around the imagination of alternative futures is a fundamental practice of activists interviewed. In offering up a plethora of alternative visions, activists create innumerable trajectories that enter into a state of competition with the homogeneity of the present discourse around development and reform. This in an active imagining that unsettles the foothold that the neoliberal present has upon a

future that is yet to be realised. For Povinelli (2011: 6), imagining these ‘spaces of Otherwise’ involves a sustained attention to ‘alternative projects of embodied sociality’. The otherwise is a heterogeneous assemblage of multiple constitutions that expresses and promotes plural occupations of good life geographies. Activisms here go beyond mere resistance to colonial injustices and critique of state policies.

Instead, they seek to promote alternative futures and enact a world of becoming-otherwise. Trezise (2014: 78) in her work on Aboriginal artistic performances that stage a ‘place of potentiality’, highlights the generative capacity of such events to harness:

affects that percolate at the edges of [a] tired, and tightly bursting, scripted repertoire. It would stage a continuing affective state of becoming other-wise, which could enable a socio-cultural dynamics of memory more hopefully operative in a future Australia.

This marks a distinction with much Indigenous ethnographic research that seeks to ‘discover a hidden substrate of continuity and counter-hegemonic resistance’ (Bessire 2014: 112). In its departure from an attention to the noisy and oppositional forms of activism, I present other moments that break from the repertoire and ritual of resistance in settler society. Central to this project is an attention to the geographies that enable narratives of connection that enhance the necessary but debilitating work of oppositional political movements. Mitch notes that the JPP and community closure campaigns has embraced activists that seek to offer alternative visions in their political imaginaries:

We’re offering this other vision. We’re saying let’s start this dialogue about what is our vision for the Kimberley, what are these, you can’t just say that

no developments going to happen. Okay, so what can those developments look like, what kind of industries can we talk about, what can we talk about in terms of new resources, new energy systems. Solar, wind, whatever it is. Those things, we can do it here in the Kimberley, right? (Interview, 17/06/15).

Mitch echoes a sentiment that many activists in this thesis do, as Ebony says:

Yeah, we've got our own visions for our own... each community or family group or nations they've got their own visions for what they want to do and where they want to go (Interview, 20/06/15).

Their position is not strictly anti-development, but rather opposes the narrow development postures of the state and big corporations that devalue Country. In that it is not a strictly counter-hegemonic resistance, but a politics that embraces modernity – technology and science – as well as Aboriginality and other ways of knowing. This resonates with a range of Geography and Anthropology literature on the need for an alternative post-development economic paradigm (Gibson-Graham 2008; Escobar 2011); post-neoliberal imaginaries (Peck *et al.* 2010; Radcliffe 2012); alternative ways of thinking in an era of environmental precarity (Head and Gibson 2012; Gibson-Graham 2015); people on Country as alternatives to economic hegemony (Altman and Kerins 2012; Wergin 2016b); and, the construction of an alter-politics that goes beyond critique and offers alternative imaginations (Gibson *et al.* 2015; Hage 2015; Shaw *et al.* 2015). Alterity is not specifically ‘Aboriginal’, but rather a messy mosaic of diverse worlds coalescing and collapsing in one immanent twist.

The imaginary of these worlds dwell in the narratives of activists and also in their embrace of alternative technologies and economies. Anne describes how she embraces new technologies for the benefit of her community and her Country ‘building our capacity to be able to do a lot of things in terms of alternative economy’. She continues:

So, part of this is, the work that I’m looking at, is around global geo-parks and adventure tourism and eco-tourism and science tourism and cultural tourism, but also this idea of this eco therapy, because there is, quite a lot of people around the world who are looking to recreate in big landscapes and connect with that sort of opportunity (Interview, 24/06/15).

Entangled with the embrace of science and technology is the need to ‘connect’. Anne does not see modernity as a force that embargoes traditional knowledges, but a way of knowing that can be balanced without impoverishing the opportunity to connect with Country. In imagining their vision of the future, activists draw upon and promote affective attunements to Country, which is a pre-condition for knowing about the worlds they hope to invoke. These connections have become a source of entangling those differences that divide. Jodie tells me that activism binds people, ‘the contacts people have made from the James Price Point and stuff people are using that now for this one [community closure campaign]’ (Interview, 14/06/15).

Activism enables a connection with strangers and newcomers who demonstrate a willingness to understand and learn. In the broad activism literature, protest events are argued to have a potential to create networks that mould a commons around certain issues (Iveson 2010; Foster 2011; Chatterton *et al.* 2013; Iveson 2014; Bunce 2016). However, within the mainstream neoliberal discourse, antagonistic protests

events are often seen as divisive, creating contrasting binaries between us and them. This representational discourse became a common occurrence in the JPP debate, with *Black Vs Green*, *Black V White* becoming popular way of describing opposing sides (Burnside 2013). There was little consideration in the coverage of the issue that both sides expressed a diversity of views; Aboriginal, white and ethnic minority. Yet the image of the white environmentalist became the antagonistic face of the anti-gas movement, disavowing the Aboriginal voices in leading the campaign. During the debate, Carol Martin, the first Indigenous woman elected to an Australian parliament stated:

Aboriginal people have been colonised so many bloody times: first, by the British; second, by the do-gooders; third, by the missionaries; fourth, by industry; and now, by the bloody greenies! (Burnside 2013: np).

The connections between diverse people during this campaign have been noted by ethnographic researchers in Broome (Muir 2012; Muecke 2016b; Wergin 2016a). It wasn't just white environmentalists, as Mitch relays:

people think protestors are just all tree huggers. We're Blackfullas and Whitefullas ... weren't just all tree huggers, no way.

Facilitating plurality seems to be the binding force in solidarity networks in activism campaigns around JPP, community closures and anti-fracking. Mitch tells me that the movement consists of people who are open to difference:

I think this is an alternative movement that comes from people who have thought about things and are really, really informed world-wide about what's

going on the in the world and have a really global view of what information is out there and how it can change people's lives.

Racial discourse in popular media has in part constructed false dichotomies in which Indigenous people continually struggle and resist the incursions of the settler political economy. Activists interviewed noted that these events demonstrated the capacity to bring diverse people together. What divided friends, family and co-inhabitants of this place, was not essentialising categories of race or status as being a 'Blackfulla' – although this does divide in other social theatres. Differences rooted in imagining the future plays a major role in the politics of place, at times being integral to divisions and associations.

Native title has become one such dividing line within Aboriginal groupings, as some believe it is to be the partitioning of land within colonial frameworks. 'Native title' says Povinelli (2011: 61), 'demanded of Indigenous people a genealogical reckoning, not within their own language of obligation and belonging, caring and being cared for, but with a liberal imaginary of individual determination'. Moreton-Robinson (2015) argues that the push for governments to want native title these days, is part of the 'white patriarchal possessive' that inflicts violence on racialised bodies through 'property rights'. Wocky likens native title to the brainwashing of Aboriginal people into a sort of bondage with the colonial system, a process that erases sovereignty. He discusses this with others in the Jabbir-Jabbir community, many of whom feel that there is no point in 'going for sovereignty', that it is a losing battle:

A lot of them are believing, they're starting to believe that there's no point fighting them, so we'll sign native title anyway... native title is going to push them in that sort of lifestyle [capitalist], you know? And I'm telling them

don't sign native title, you know? I'm not forcing it down their throat with sovereignty, I'm just saying, this is what native title will give you, this is sovereignty will give you, you make the choice (Interview, 22/06/15).

Native title is a source of critique in Australia, as Aboriginal groups are forced to prove a connection to 'their traditional lands even if previous governments forcibly removed them' (Povinelli 2011: 40); a claim complicated through ongoing acts of dispossession. To maintain a connection to Country is seen by Aboriginal activists as a duty rather than a choice made in seeking native title. The choice lies within the balance you strike between modernity and tradition, and more importantly whether or not your direct that choice in the service of a future in which diverse others might have the capacity to inhabit. Not surprisingly then, interviewees expressed contempt over 'lifestyle choice' comments made by the then-Prime Minister. Bart says:

This lifestyle choice fucking comment it's just bullshit. It's not a choice, I mean it's not my choice to say I'm a Yawuru man and I need to look after Country, it's responsibility and that's the thing that white people don't get ... we don't see it as a choice, I don't see it as a choice. I live in Broome because I'm from here, I was born here, I was part of our religion and our culture is the responsibility of caring for the Country, because we eat off it (Interview, 02/06/15).

In saying 'we eat off it', Bart is being literal – hunting remains a big part of lifestyle on Country. The practice of sourcing free food is a practice of humility for many, as Donna explains:

we needed to really be a bit more humble because when you get too disassociated from nature and you're brought up in an artificial world like the

city to me it is like a room. It's just an artificial room. I know people who lived in cities. They don't know where milk comes from. They don't know where meat comes from. You get it in a pack in a supermarket or in a carton. You have no idea about the reality that you live in. You're so disenfranchised from your reality. That you just...you're bizarre in your thinking. Your thinking is bizarre (Interview, 21/06/15).

Feeding off Country is not just a literal practice here, it is a metaphysical exchange in which those who connect are endowed with an ability to think. Donna says that 'you're bizarre in your thinking' when you become detached from the world that feeds you. I take this meaning to be both literal and metaphorical, in that activists here feed off Country in order to enlarge their capacity to act.

Enlarging capacities

'They're trying to immobilise my people' Ebony tells me as I interview her driving along an unsealed road in a remote part of the Kimberley. Driving and talking, the dictaphone picks up the tremble of voices as we cruise over the corrugated surface. It almost adds emphasis to fear and trepidation when Ebony continues by saying 'this is the last frontier and they're coming for us':

they're trying to immobilise the sovereignty movement just as we're starting to kind of roll with it; the connection criteria on a native title is one of the biggest either winners or letdowns with Aboriginal people – you need to have been connected and practising on your Country like it was since pre-colonisation today. If you're removing Aboriginal tribal people from their

homelands in such larger townships they are disconnected (Interview, 20/06/15).

The capacity to protest or to act ethically is enlarged by activists through the maintenance of solidarity networks and a connection to Country. Relations between people and Country are integral to providing a precondition to act, whether that be in a direct way or more discreet moments of being-with-Country. Aboriginal activists see the JPP, fracking and community closure issues as intimately connected and find their place in a number of political projects post- JPP, perhaps lying dormant, or performing a quiet politics based upon an ethics of care (Horton and Kraftl 2009; Askins 2015; Kelly and Lobo 2017). Many activists also engage in the noisy business of protest, choosing to enact a sovereignty of thought and movement through occupations of space and the disruption of normalised rhythms. The community closures are in part seen as a way to reduce the capacity of Aboriginal people to resist, refuse and act:

So, the story is that mining, protesting, community closures, and the SOS stuff is weaved through it, why people do protests obviously. All of that protest stuff comes from the threat of your community, your connection being broken. Connection to your Country, connection to your home and being (Mitch, Interview, 17/06/15).

The connectedness of protest movements in Broome – most commonly JPP, community closures and anti-fracking – is demonstrated through familiar actors participating across these projects. As explained earlier, the criminalisation of protest, watering-down of the heritage act, deregistration of Aboriginal heritage sites and the community closures are viewed as one and the same issue by many. Action is

mobilised around diverse events – such as rallies, well-being tours, hiking trails and social gatherings – that focus on separate issues but are seen by many to have an intrinsic relatedness. This is most commonly articulated in the relationship between the reformation of communities and mining interests:

So, with the closure of the communities, to me it's like 'okay we'll just move those people off there and we'll go in there and we'll start mining'. This is what they want (Brian, Interview, 19/06/15).

Reforming remote Aboriginal communities through consolidating townships and communities is perceived by Brian and other actors as a push to industrialise the Kimberley. As Ebony tells me, the reformation of communities is part of a 'real big push for assimilation, development and industrialisation'. The development of industry is synonymous with the assimilation of Aboriginal people into White culture, as Ebony continues:

The development is only based on industrialisation and ripping up and pillaging the Country; it's not development for the people or community (Interview, 20/06/15).

If reforming remote communities is viewed as the meta-vision of industrialisation in the Kimberley, then the operational mechanism through which such logics manifest, are the legal system and layers of institutional bureaucracy. Through legal and parliamentary proceedings and amendments, the state navigates the possibility of opposition and refusal through effectively reducing the capacity of Aboriginal people to act. As Anne states:

part of the conversation about closure of Aboriginal communities and the diminishing of the Aboriginal Heritage Protection Act is to clear people, from my perception, is to clear Aboriginal people off the land so we can't protect our land (Interview, 24/06/15).

Protection in this case is based upon the ability to harness a potential to act that dwells in the connection to Country. Maintaining this connection to Country is a fundamental pre-condition for action, it is an affirmative resonance that enlarges the capacity to protect. However, activists are not naïve in thinking that this connection is impervious to the interventions of the state and the instrumentalisation of the legal system against them. An undying faith in the potentialising force of Country is not so flippantly deployed; there is a real knowledge among Aboriginal activists that maintaining a connection to Country is aided through scaffolding solidarity with other non-Aboriginal allies. Solidarity networks in these projects have the capacity to bridge – but crucially do not erase – racial politics, with networks being forged in and across difference. Life-long Kimberley resident and Yawuru activist Elster describes how through protest, relationships were formed across a diversity of people who had similar beliefs:

those people that protested and the relationships have lasted. I met young Damien there and I didn't know Damien before. And he's wonderful and most of those boys are wonderful. And they're like my own sons how they all rallied around and did what they had to do. And just to make sure that everything was protected. It wasn't just a willy-nilly thing that we were campaigning against, it was something that we believed in and they believed in (Interview, 15/06/15).

Elster refers to white allies who aided in providing support for Aboriginal connections to Country, often travelling from other parts of Australia for the JPP campaign and remaining in Broome, working in the service of Country. Mitch describes how the complex politics of JPP, mobilised many into action, finding themselves as accidental activists in a campaign to protect the sovereignty of making knowledge. She explains that the region around JPP was incorrectly claimed by the Jabbir-Jabbir people, therefore those in negotiations had no right to speak for that Country. According to Mitch, the KLC and the State appropriated the consent of a group that did not have a right to speak for that Country. It was at this moment that Mitch began to protest the development:

it was about protection... going down the road of negotiation and engagement with the mining industry in the State and KLC, we had a gun held to our heads and I didn't buy that argument. Even if we had a gun held to our heads, I believe that we could still say no... I started protesting [that] the process is not right that the KLC was taking with the State and with Woodside and with those in the Jabirr-Jabirr group that were going down that road (Interview, 17/06/15).

Mitch's Dad is from Jabbir-Jabbir Country, and introduced her to her lore, culture and Country at a young age. It was this learning with Country, learning how to read the land and sea that affected Mitch, imprinting her with an ethic of responsibility to retain and share that connection. After learning about Country from her father, she describes the affect that this place had in directing her politics later in life:

I know that there's no other place on the planet that I want to be. This is right where I'm supposed to be and it's because of that when I'm away I, I just

don't operate, I don't operate how I should because I'm not in my space and my foundation that gives me all the strength and ability to operate as a fully functional human being and this is where it is. On my Country, where my connection is, where I come from.

As an award-winning filmmaker, Mitch utilises her creative medium to affect others the way in which she was affected. At the time I am interviewing Mitch, she is also busy with the production of a feature film called *Big Spirit Kantri*, a project which she hopes will reshape and reset the dominant constitutions of the good life. The film explores non-extractive values of Country that problematises the utilitarian posture adopted by neoliberal governments and big business in Australia. In doing so, it not only recalls development policies and capitalist regimes of production, but rebuilds connections to land and sea (see <https://vimeo.com/141821055>). Mitch explains:

what I'm hoping is that non-Indigenous people, or people who haven't had this connection to how indigenous people think about ownership of land and Country and connection, will understand then why people protest against resource industries

In this film, Mitch highlights the need to shift the cultural thinking of remote Aboriginal land as 'empty'. It is an activist plea to all people to reinstate our connection to the land through abandoning a cultural arrogance that denies 'full' readings of Country. Crucially to political projects explored here, the creation of accidental activists is done through teaching non-Aboriginal – or people not-of-place – how to be affected by Country. In addressing common arguments in favour of development, activists also work hard to reframe the values associated with land and

offering alternative visions of the good life; providing alternative through learning to be affected by Country, and also critique:

they're arguing... 'oh but you drive a car so you need gas, you need oil'.

We're saying 'yes, we know that', we do know that, but we also know that we need to save this place... And doesn't our culture matter? Doesn't my culture matter as much as your culture matters to you, as much as your religion matters to you? Don't I have the right to also say that about my place my, who I am and my mob?... Doesn't my Country, our Country matter? So that's what it is. So, I want people [...] to understand what that connection really, really means (Mitch, Interview, 17/06/15).

Here the unequal distribution of rights finds its place in the discourse of protest, and a conflict in the idea of self-determination and freedom to self-identify. 'Don't I have the right to also say that about my place my, who I am and my mob?', asserts a claim to alternative thought, the right to make meaning on one's own terms, from one's own perspective. The fight for custodianship of Country is therefore not just a conversation about conservation and environmentalism – although Mitch's work is self-described as environmentalist – it is also about protecting and enhancing the right to *make* sense and to *take* place independently. For Anne, the act of protest is the enactment of this right to make alternative knowledges. Anne's self-identification 'as a protector' that opened this section of this chapter is a reframing of action that implies the need for an ongoing maintenance of connections. During my interview with Anne, she picks up on my watered-down Irish accent, asking me if I'm from the North or South. I say south, to which she replies,

so you know what I'm talking about in terms of, in the old days it was guns, and poisoning, and whatever, now it's structural violence in systemic racism and the laws that are there to enshrine their rights of the corporation over the people (Interview, 24/06/15).

Herein an argument around the insidious nature of delegitimising the formation of knowledge articulates itself, positing that an erasure of local epistemes is being enacted through a push for industrial developments and community reformation. For many, not having a connection to Country is akin to being an ethnographer without the 'fieldwork', not having a source to affect the creation of knowledge. Ebony explains:

community closures is about stopping that way of life; the community closure is about sanitising Aboriginality and totally immobilising a very, very strong population who live in dual worlds and economies; they're all multi-lingual, they're an example of Aboriginal people surviving and thriving as Aboriginal people within this... world. Community closures is about a really obvious push to remove people who are custodians and owners of that Country, off of that Country because they're seen as an obstacle to access and that access they need is to resources (Interview, 20/06/15).

Bart continues in this line of thought, expressing his own personal story of disconnection through historical removals, posing a glum picture of the future for his own children:

the reason why I protest and even say anything or help out for the protests is because of my views and that is we need these people on their Country, it's been too long and it's been happening, it's always been happening since

fucking the boats first rocked up to Australia, but the removal of people from Country is the biggest, the worst thing you could do to a person. Another personal example is my grandmother was taken away when she was six from the Nyginya area, I have no, absolutely no connection to that Country even though I know my descendants from there, I know the names, I know which stations they worked on and lived on but because of the stolen generation or whatever removed her from there, she lost her connection to it at a young age, my mother lost it because you know, and now it's just a ripple effect to me and I don't even know half my family because of that... I've got heritage here but just don't have the connection... if that all happens today to these mob, fifty years down the track the grandkids won't have that strong identification to where they came from because they won't be there as frequent. It will happen and in fifty years' time we'll probably need more gas or resources and if the people aren't so connected to there, they'll just sell it (Interview, 02/06/15).

I conclude this chapter by emphasising the reasons why activists protest. Much of these narratives highlight the need to change the narrative around Country, protection and culture. But it also highlights the need for others to understand why they protest, not as a reactionary practice, but as a praxis that is pre-conditioned by learning about and with Country. In this way, I articulate a politics that goes beyond critique, a politics of critique that aims 'to transcend, to speak beyond a parochial moment in order to create something new' (Thomas 2016: 109-110). When critique only speaks to a specific objection, staying within the confines of a bordered regimes of meaning, it prevents other interpretations and world-forming imaginations from emerging. In this chapter, participants go beyond negative critique as mode of protest to conjure

up other futures, which reflects Rebughini's (2018: 11) argument that critique can be 'imaginative, related to the possibility of imagining ourselves beyond the context'. Protest among Aboriginal activists sets a stage where 'alternate views [and] concrete concerns' are aired as critique that helps to form the emergence of 'potential publics' (Fassin 2017: 25). The operation of critique here is not an unearthing technique, but a mode of thinking that actively imagines the otherwise, it creates other futurities that receive affective attachments. The chapter to follow builds upon this praxis through demonstrating the affective potential of Country to move, rejuvenate and attune bodies to place in ways that enlarge abilities to make localised connections with others.

Chapter six: Geographies of knowing and feeling Country

I get to Mitch's at about 11am and head to the back of the house where there is a common outdoor space the family usually hang out in. Mitch and her sister are sitting around the table working on laptops, other family members are hanging-out under the verandah. Mitch greets me with a hug and introduces me to her family members who I have not met yet. I recognise most people as cousins, brothers, sisters and children of *the block*, a large bushy residential property with multiple dwellings housing multiple generations. I had already met Brian the week before. I was sitting around the outdoor table with Mitch discussing who I might be able to interview in her network. Brian walks through the outdoor space on his way to the kitchen when Mitch says: 'hey Uncle Brian, this is Dave who I was telling you about, you right to take him up to your place, let him know what it's all about?' Brian simply says 'yep, no worries'.

Already having prepared my bag the night before for a three-day trip, all I have to do is throw my bag in the back of the ute²⁵, fill the tank with diesel and head to Mitch's place to pick up Uncle Brian (as Mitch calls him). One week later I arrive to pick up Brian, not knowing much about each other or what to expect. Brian gets in the car and asks if we can just do a few things before we get going. Initially I had thought that we would simply get in the ute and head for his place, but instead we make our way to his brother's place, a residential house in Broome. I back the ute up his driveway as Brian checks to see if he is home. With the house vacant, we haul an empty 40-gallon fuel drum out of the carport and strap it to the tray of the ute. Winding our way through the suburbs of Broome town, driving a very new Toyota

²⁵ A 'ute' is an abbreviated term for a 'utility vehicle' with a trackback cargo area used in Australia.

Hilux branded with the University logos along the side and a drum strapped to the back, we pull into the service station. I jump on the back of the tray and fill the drum with diesel while Brian pays inside. As we pull out he says, ‘be careful’, a full drum of fuel significantly impacts on how the vehicle handles, adding to the difficulty level of driving and breaking on remote unsealed roads. ‘Just pull in here real quick’ Brian says just as we leave the service station. I pull into a small car park, Brian gets out and walks into an employment centre. He comes back to the car after about 10 minutes, telling me ‘sorry about that, just had to sort a few things out, they be calling me all week’.

We get to Chinatown shopping centre after running a few errands. As per Brian’s instructions I park the ute near the entrance, in plain view of security cameras. He is worried that the full drum of fuel might get stolen, even though we are in the busiest part of town at lunch time on a Friday. We walk into the shopping centre, Brian nods and says ‘hey’ to four different people on the way to Coles, all without breaking his stride in what is a very brisk pace. In perhaps the fastest trip to the shops I have ever experienced, Brian tells me to go get a loaf of bread and two dozen eggs, he peels-off and runs up the isles, quickly filling the shopping trolley. Within minutes we are at the checkout, panting, Brian pays for his trolley and I pay for a pack of lamb chops and salad for dinner, as per Mitch’s suggestion. Lamb chops in retrospect doesn’t seem to be an adequate enough gesture for the time and space Brian shared with me.

Back at the block, Ebony – Mitch’s daughter – is sitting outside nursing a headache. It doesn’t look like she is going to join us on our trip, I have seen that look numerous times throughout my twenties, very rarely does one muster up the energy for a road trip with a hangover. To my surprise Ebony throws her rug sack in the back of the

ute as Brian and myself load up two heavy 4WD tyres, large fishing nets, reef walking gear and other items. With the tray filled, it looks as though we are moving house rather than heading out on a weekend trip. We leave as soon as we can, driving out of town and stopping at the next service station to raid the bain-marie of their crumbed sausages and pick up a cool drink for the two-hour drive.

Although there are periods where we aren't chatting, nobody decides to turn on the radio. We turn left off Broome Road heading north on Broome-Cape Leveque Road. A couple of hundred meters up the road and the tarmac disappears, turning into a wide sunburnt halfpipe that tapers to the horizon. The rough corrugated road sends vibrations through the ute, known regionally as the *Kimberley Massage*. The road is relatively straight, but Brian frequently directs me to avoid large pot holes and sandy patches that would steer the ute off the road. Accidents along this stretch are common, but Brian assures me not to worry, he knows 'every bump' on this road. The conversation drops away and using only his outstretched hand like a paddle, Brian points out the lines in the road I should follow. We hit a smooth patch of road and the vibrations drop away. Brian takes in a deep audible breath and exhales. 'Ahhh', he says blissfully. I look at him and ask what that was. With a big grin on his face he says, 'my heart just opened'. It's hard not to return the smile, even though it sounds like a cliché. Brian tells me that he feels this way every time he passes through this space. To me this space looks just like another along the road, no more distinct from the previous hour of driving along the monotonous but vibrant pindan²⁶. To Brian, it has a distinctive affect, something that opens his body up.

²⁶ 'Pindan is a local name for the red soil Country of the Kimberley region of Western Australia (WA). The term comes from local indigenous language and applies to the soil and landscape, and to the associated Acacia-dominant vegetation. Pindan is also a colloquial term used to broadly describe red sandy soils of the Gascoyne and Pilbara regions' (Smolinski *et al.* 2016: 1)

Not realising the speed that one accumulates hurtling along remote roads, I overshoot our turnoff. Ease quickly gives way to stress as I struggle to slow down in time for the unmarked and hard to see road. I was told that the turn was coming up, and as we approached the intersection I slowed as I normally would. But the full drum of fuel on the back added significant weight, it forced the ute forward as the breaks locked up, skidding the ute along the road and past the turn. The collective clench could be felt as we shared a few seconds of fear, not knowing if I had the composure to recover from a lock up. If the road had been in a worse condition, we would have surely encountered a far more wicked situation. The ute stopped on the road, about 20 meters past the turn. Brian said truthfully but with tongue-in-cheek: ‘told you the turn was coming up’. I turned the ute around and we headed up the narrow dirt track about 100 meters. Brian told me to stop and activate the four-wheel-drive. We all got out of the car, Ebony and I sit on the bonnet while Brian went to the toilet and had a cigarette – perhaps a moment of relief in order to shake the effect of a stressful event.



Image 25 – Unsealed road to Brian's beach shack

After a half hour of slow driving through scrub and thickets (Image 25) we arrive at Brian's off-the-grid home over-looking a bay (Image 26). He started laughing as we approached his property, saying that he could hear Ben calling for him. Ben is a young goat Brian has as a pet. He has been strolling around the block for nearly a week by himself, grazing on scrub. When we pull up to the house, Ben is waiting for us at the door as we get out of the car. We unpack the car and take in the view from Brian's shack. There is limited phone reception, electricity is provided by solar panels and a fuel generator, water from a bore and spring, gas is bottled and sewage stored in a septic tank. We back the ute up to the generator so we can unload the heavy 40-gallon drum. It takes two of us to shimmy the drum to the edge of the ute

tray, tip it on its side and drop it one meter. I must have a look of disbelief that we were able to do it uninjured, as Brian looks to me and says ‘haha, bush style’.



Image 26 – View on arrival at Brian's

Brian, Ebony and I sit around a table under the shade and have a couple of beers each whilst we wait for the tide to go out. We talk about catching a heap of crabs for dinner, imagining a hard-earned feast of crustaceans, rice and soy sauce. Ebony and I ask where we will catch the crab, do we have to look out for crocs and how long we will have before the tide turns? As Brian explains, we imagine. We imagine the moment of treading through the mud flats, seeking out puddles and bagging a feed.

As the tide retreats, we wait, we talk and we anticipate the hunt. Brian gets up from the table and comes back with a two-litre bottle filled with a milky liquid. He tells us to cover our skin with the contents in order to keep the sand flies away. We follow him down the dune to the high-tide line and he points to the right, signalling that is

where we will find crab. Ebony asks him why there, why to the right and not the left. He replies ‘Liyan … I can feel it … you just know’.



Image 27 – Brian looking for Crabs

We spent about an hour and a half out on the mud-flats looking under rocks and in pools for suitable crabs (Image 27). We weren’t having much luck until mid-stride Brian yelled ‘stop!’. A large crab was laying beneath the surface of the mud where I was about to put my foot. Under Brian’s instruction, I use a steel rod to hook the crab’s pincer at the elbow (Image 28). We put the crab in the bag and head back to the shack. There wasn’t enough meat on the crab for three people, so we cooked the lamb chops I had bought earlier and sat around the open fire eating as the sun set over the bay. Brian went to bed early as Ebony and I stayed up drinking beer around a fire, looking up in awe at how visible the milky way was, talking about politics and trying to keep Ben away – we were both bowled over by Ben as we each went to the

toilet in the dark. We go to bed to the sound of the tide rushing back into the bay and feral donkeys hee-hawing in the dunes.



Image 28 – Brian with a Crabbing Hook

Encountering Liyan

In this chapter, I build upon a moment of being-off-grid with Brian and Ebony, performing an inhabitation of spaces where activists attune to feelings that move and rejuvenate them. It is here that I unpack the embodied framework for knowing Country that is shared with non-Aboriginal people in these spaces. However, whilst ‘shared’, I acknowledge that non-Aboriginal people never fully understand or embody Aboriginal cosmologies and histories. As we reach a certain point along the dusty pindan road, I recall Brian sighing, saying ‘my heart just opened’. Immersed in feel of a changing sensescape, Brian opens himself up to the potential of Country; spaces that facilitate a sovereignty in feeling and knowing. Over the period of the

next couple of days, we all tune in to the affects of Country, slowing our bodies down through witnessing and feeling the movement of place.



Image 29 – Tide retreating

The tide in the bay takes hours to retreat as the sun dips below the horizon, burning the sky red (Image 29). We eat dinner in an open kitchen, at the top of the fore dune, sand beneath our feet and in between our toes. The next morning Brian cooks breakfast on a halved metal drum as we listen to his plans for the future of this remote bush block. Ben, Brian's pet goat that he hopes will be a stud in the coming years, hangs around the kitchen, prompting Brian to pen him away (Image 30). In the afternoon, Brian's cousin arrives on the block with another man. Brian voiced concern over Ben's awkward walk, these men are here to have a look. They take Ben down to the shore, out of sight of Ebony and myself. Two gunshots ring out, about ten seconds apart. Returning up a sandy path in the dune, with a solemn look upon his face, Brain says 'Ben is gone'.



Image 30 – Ben penned away

Later that day I interview Brian (Interview, 19/06/15). I include Ben's death – due to a broken leg – as not to shy away from the complexities of such spaces, a complexity that embraces not just the upsetting moments, but also the flux of futurity. Despite having foreclosed the possibility of Ben being his stud goat, which implies numerous kids, the good life for Brian remains unwavering. It is not dampened by the death of 'his mate' as he tells me:

the good life for me is being on Country. Being on Country because of my knowledge, skills, resource that's been handed down, being part of it, being also with my descendants because they are always around. Stress free, you don't have to worry about anything and that. I've got my own shop right in front of me that I can live off when I run out of other food. Just having that knowledge it's one of the best, how can I put it?

David: ...the best version of yourself?

Yep that's it, of knowing my Country because without me knowing my Country I'm lost and having been taught all that from the greatest teachers before me, yeah, which I'm very grateful of.

Knowing his Country is what Brian associates with the good life. But importantly, knowing does not manifest itself in absence or dislocation from Country. To know is to be in, or more concisely to be *with*. Being with Country seeks to disembody regressive affects and atmospheres, a state of being 'stress free'. It opens up the possibility of positive affects and atmospheres that facilitate what Brian calls 'knowing my Country', despite momentary emotional slumps. How Brian assembles knowledges about this place derives from his ancestors teaching him how to read the Country, endowing him with knowledge, skills, and resources. Reading the Country is derived from feeling the Country. In relation to this West Kimberley Country, Benterrak, Muecke and Roe (2014 [1984]: 16), in their seminal book called *Reading the Country* state:

reading [is] somewhere between *breathing* and *judging*. *Breathing* is an automatic and natural activity most of the time, and *judging*, as in courts or beauty contests, is a highly social activity; it is so charged with social or cultural meaning that there is nothing natural about it.

The expression of a feeling, through a sigh and the verbal recognition of the good feelings that this place affords gives signification that a reading has taken place; 'reading only emerges as they attempt to "express" this feeling' (Benterrak *et al.* 2014 [1984]: 17). This is an affective reading, one that is affirmed through bodily senses. Feelings guide movement through Country, reading it through an affective

force of the body that interfaces the sensate materiality of place. This what Brian refers to as *Liyan*:

Brian: It tells you, you cannot walk there or you can walk in that area. So, it can tell you if you're approaching a women's law ground or a woman's site it will tell you hang on pull up, turn back. So, you have to listen to it. You can't avoid that feeling that you have.

David: What is it about that, it's a bodily feeling in a way? Is it just like a bad omen?

Brian: It's more like, it's not really a bad element of feeling it's more like your, that your spirit has left your body and they're telling you to turn back. Your body feels totally drained and also, it's like you're carrying a 1kg or 2kgs of something in your body that actually goes right through your body to your feet, because your body will feel so heavy when you approach it. That, of all your energy from your body is just totally drained out... yeah and once you turn around and walk away then it all comes back to you.

David: What's the, what's the opposite feeling of that when it's-

Brian: When it comes back?

David: Yeah or even when it's elevated in a way?

Brian: It's good. It's shown that you have respect of it, that your, you haven't broken any law, that you haven't deceived the elders or the, how can I put it? All the people that gave you the law in the first place yeah. So, you're actually respecting all of them and with that your body is just lifting, lifted up

so high that you feel like that you're not actually walking on the ground that you're actually walking on air and to have that sort of feeling it's really, really powerful. Really, there's no explanation to it really.

As his body moves through space, feelings push and pull. It would be simplistic to suggest that these feelings are morally good or bad, somehow signifying a metaphysical obligation. Rather they lend a potential to movement, to animation and activism. The 'spirit' leaving the body, ushering it back, demonstrates that the feeling of place is nomadic. Being responsive to the atmosphere of place allows Brian to take flight, unmooring him from the stagnation and heaviness of an extra one or two kilograms in the feet. Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 30), this is a smooth space where the nomad exists and deviates from conventional paths and trajectories – traversing the tidal flats for crabs, navigating through feeling and embodied intuition: Liyan. But here, Aboriginal ways of knowing in this place complicate and move beyond these western conceptualisations through attending to the interplay between emplaced feelings and feelings that move. How Brian feels is extra-bodily, in that he feels through the body, but it extends beyond the confines of his skin. His ancestors, whilst past, materialise in the present as Brian passes through Country, temporally smoothing the distinction between past-present-future. The body then reaches into this temporal folding. In doing so it emplaces itself in a broad structure of feeling that reshapes his body to become a receptive tool in the atmosphere, part of the atmosphere itself. As Ingold (2011: 134) contends, 'we would be wrong to suppose that sensory experience is embodied, or that through it, people are tied to place ... feeling carries us away'. I extend this conceptualisation to include place in relation to other places and push passed the limitations of western

theories to attend to sensory experience, but providing a cartography of feeling through Brian's narrative. I ask Brian about his Liyan, where he feels it:

I get it around here, because I'm always looked after by my ancestors.

Doesn't matter where I go. If I go down to mangroves and then go crabbing and there's always someone there watching me and if I turn to a certain point and walk that way, they'll try and stop me. They'll say, 'do not walk that way, go back the other way'. So, my body will just automatically change directions, heading the opposite way to the way I was going.

David: Is it like a whole conscious feeling or like something that you haven't had to think about? It's something that just kind of...

Brian: It's something I don't have to think about. It just happens naturally and that, and your body does let you know because with the old people and what they kind of tell you is 'okay, this part here mightn't have any crab. So, go check that side'. So, there might be crabs that side and when you do, yeah, you come across crabs.

Feelings move us as the account above describes. Brian shows how a feeling that is expressed through a spiritual connection to his ancestors guides him through space. He doesn't think about it, it occurs prior to thought, an affective force that moves his body through Country. This force of feeling forms an affective map that graphs itself onto the body, demarking atmospheric spaces that weigh it down, or spaces that facilitate its mobility. In this way of conceptualising place, it becomes apparent that places are connected to others, tethered through affective networks of feeling (Hinkson 2017). Brian is not so much moored in any one spot, rather feelings carry his body away into other interconnected spaces. This follows in Paddy Roe and Frans

Hoogland's (1999: 19) description of how a feeling for place carries you away, they state:

At a certain time for everybody, the land will take over. The land will take that person. You think you're following something, but the land is actually pulling you ...you're off, you're gone.

Feelings that move

Many other activists describe how a feeling emerges as they move through Country. I ask Mitch what happens when she opens her body up to an embodied intuition with place:

It's amazing, this feeling...there's this other space which is out of town and you head up the highway and as soon as you head out passed Cape Road this thing just, *phew*, goes. All of the stresses of being in town and me being an activist, film maker, story teller always chasing a job, it just means nothing once we hit that road and you can have conversations which are right in the present, right in that space of the present. "Look at that tree, oh it's flowering, oh great that means when we get our camping spot it's going to have, they're going to be fat, the moon's coming up, neat tight moon aye, we're going to get crabs, yep, yep, yep". So right in that moment and all of that stuff that I'm worrying about "oh it's the march are the people going to be there, how many people are going to turn up, have we got enough water for the people, who's our speakers". All of that stuff just becomes insignificant when you're out there you just replenish your soul. It's a good life. That. To be able to just live in the present, in the now, that is a good life. That's the epitome for me of a good life (Interview, 17/06/15).

The feel of being present in Country tunes Mitch into an atmospheric understanding of place: to ‘experience place is to be affected by place’ (Duff 2010: 881). These atmospheres are ‘temporary configurations of energy and feeling’ (Conradson and Latham 2007: 238) that exemplify a ‘blurring’ of ‘discrete emotional and affective geographies’ (Edensor 2012: 1105). Worrisome feelings and anxiousness dispositions are affected by the flows of affect that congeal in spaces as diffuse affective atmospheres (Anderson and Ash 2015). As Mitch’s body becomes able to slow down and dwell, she notices that certain flowers are in bloom, letting her know that the conditions are right to hunt for crabs. Such knowledges of place are facilitated only by a bodily presence that is able to be affected by the intimate zones of the here-and-now. This involves the shedding of other atmospheres that constantly structure her feelings around rhythms of work, deadlines and social obligations.

Journeying from town to more secluded spaces off-the-grid, where Mitch locates *her* Country, her body discards of the atmospheres that inhibit free thought and movement. It is in these places ‘I dream, I see, I smell [and] I feel the vibrations in the earth’ says Mitch. Being able to connect into Country, to dwell in the presentness of moments and atmospheres is rejuvenating and nourishing for the imagination (Rose 1996). As the reverse journey takes place, the affects of a busy life begin to reassemble. Red dirt roads change into asphalt, the vibrations felt in the chassis change pitch:

as soon as we head back on the road it’s like oh my gosh, as soon as we hit
the sealed road I’m thinking okay I have to get onto this, I have to get onto
that, I have to get onto this.

Unlike knowing through feeling, reading and listening to Country, the striated spaces of urban places are guided by rules that inhibit rather than endow Mitch's body. Her Country allows her to feel things differently, to make knowledge and imagine-otherwise; other closed spaces foreclose on these potentials. Rules for Mitch channel potentials, narrowing the possibilities for being different. The city as a force Mitch feels, tends to omit the affective imprints of what Trezise (2014: 71) argues are the 'deeply historicised dynamics of power' erased in the subversion of Country, producing 'felt certainties of a determining sociality'. Importantly, Mitch does not locate Country 'out there', rather she speaks of the power to read places according to a here-and-now open disposition. Here, the urban is not a site *per se*, but rather it is a felt force, a structure of feeling – the 'assertion of the social character' produced through 'force' and 'atmosphere' (Williams 1961: 65) – that inhibits Country from affecting one's body:

Mitch: These mob, who live in the city, want to bring all those rules here and we're objecting. That's why we're here. That's why the people who run away from the city come and live here because of that.

David: Do you feel like it's a traumatic feeling when your body speeds up like that when you're going to these places?

Mitch: Do you know David, when I come back from Perth I have to sleep for at least 4-days. I've got to do mental cleansing, I'm exhausted, I'm exhausted just from that space. Not even from what I had to go and do but just being in that space and all of that energy just flying back and forth.

It is the *intensity of feeling* that Thrift (2004b) describes which exhausts Mitch. Not particular situations as she describes, but the general energy of the place, the

atmosphere of rationally bounded spaces. Broome is seen as a happy medium where you can connect to Country, but not have the intensity of urban life. Spaces where you can feel and connect with Country or place offer up ‘a slower pace of life’ say Jodie. This slower pace of life was the subject of a popular, yet controversial, non-fiction publication called *Broometime* (Coombs and Varga 2001). The publication broke with conventions around privacy and confidentiality (Skene 2002), and in my conversations with residents the book was referenced as a cautionary tale around the politics of representation. Yet the notion of Broometime is useful in capturing a diffuse atmospheric quality of place that is productive of, and produced by, a slower pace of life. Broometime, Kathie Muir (2012: np) notes, carries with it ‘an everyday meaning for many who employ these notions when explaining their love of place’. The release of the book may have trivialised just how powerful this rhythmic register of being in Broome was, with some prominent Aboriginal activists arguing that ‘this tripe called ‘Broometime’ has singlehandedly put reconciliation in the town of Broome back years’ (Bird 2010: 227). Yet the concept, which precedes the book, demonstrates the pervasive understanding of Broome as a place where you can slow your body down, as Ebony told me:

Broometime [...] it’s this weird little time warp where everything slows down and you can think and feel again (Interview, 20/06/15).

Slowing down in this way follows Stengers’ (2005: 994) proposal that a temporal change in the way we receive our world, opens up a momentary ‘opportunity to arouse a slightly different awareness’ of the things that affect and mobilise us. Slow spaces ‘provoke thought’ (Stengers 2005: 994), it is in the seeking out spaces where bodies slow down and connect, that the inhibitory intensities that impoverish free

thought and movement are discarded. Importantly, it is not an anti-urban sentiment that activists propose, but rather it is the seeking out of spaces that enable new affective registers to take place in the body. The following section explores these the taking-place of these slower enabling spaces through inhabiting geographies of rejuvenation.

Rejuvenation

For many activists, slowing down was cited as being a major factor in connecting to Country, in order to develop a relationship of responsibility with it. Broome lends potential to making connections. For those that maintain the atmosphere of slower spaces through continual connections, they recharge their capacities to challenge and imagine what the good life can be. Bart explains how he negotiates this balance:

I think when people don't get out to their, wherever they feel their connection to Country, it starts to take a toll, they start to get either stressed out or depressed and then you'll start feeling that and we always say it, we've got to get out of fucking town and we know where to go, we'll go to where we feel where we get rejuvenated (Interview, 02/06/15).

Geographies of rejuvenation become geographies of responsibility: responsibility to one's own wellbeing and the vitality of Country. For those that feel a connection, the relationship is both a source of therapy and politics. Protectionism becomes an integral practice to geographies of the good life, as Bart continues:

adhering to your responsibilities is part of the balance... you will feel bad in yourself if you're not sort of taking up those responsibilities and looking after it. So, I think when I think about the good life it's got to be a balance.

Aboriginal activists are aware of their affective potential in Country, they can affect Country just as Country affects them; in other words, if you do not look after Country, Country will not look after you. This is an Aboriginal cultural conception of place, one rooted in entangled relations between humans and non-human, time and space, as Anne states:

Yeah well from an Indigenous perspective basically we say it's to some extent a symbiotic relationship, human and non-human because it's about energy... it's all about energy... basically if someone's stressed, they go into nature and engage big landscapes and go fishing and lose themselves in this space because of the energy there (Interview, 24/06/15).

Aboriginal understandings of place engage with the land and sea on terms that acknowledge Country as a sentient subject that reciprocates care. Energy is key here as a mediator of connecting to place. It is a force of place that is sensed in the body. Many participant narratives in this chapter reference the energetics of place as a productive, but also inhabiting force that impacts upon bodies. Indeed, Lobo (2014a: 102) also recognises how the energetics of place facilitate inhabitations of space that enable movements toward new relations:

affective energies from human and non-human sources are productive forces sensed in contact zones of encounter that provide an understanding of how bodies with complex histories and geographies of racialisation can inhabit a 'world of becoming'.

Spaces that participants describe reenergise their bodies so that they might continue to operate in other spaces that fatigue and exhaust bodies (Kelly and Lobo 2017). These are not just spaces where individuals recharge, but are also spaces that enable

the formation of collectives through sharing in related inhabitations of space that allows diverse bodies to be affected by productive atmospheres. As Löfgren (2015: 70) recognises, place-energies play a vital role in the creation of atmospheres that corral people into diverse commons, arguing that these ‘energizing atmospheres’ are often expressed simply as ‘good vibes’. Narratives that stress good feelings that rejuvenate bodies are more than just refuelling sites for stressed out activists, they are also sites that resource bodies to effectively share styles of inhabiting Country. This involves a pedagogy of place that begins in the body, argues Somerville *et al.* (2012: 6):

knowledge of Country, and responsibilities to Country, are deeply folded into the bodies, memories and imaginations of the human subjects who belong to Country.

Bodies that share in the energetics of place are charged with immanent obligations through the experience of spaces and moments of energetic potentiality. Kelly and Lobo (2017: 376) argue that being moved and recharged by the energies of place draws attention to a mode of ‘becoming’ which is

underpinned by embodied potentiality or the energies and life forces that propel and resource movements from ‘quiet’ to ‘noisy’ – collecting bodies along the way.

As Anne highlights, energy flows through humans and non-humans, they nourish each other in ways that are mutually beneficial. It follows Rose’s argument that a Country is embodied with a potential to repair life when recognised as an agentic force (1996: 7). Anne echoes this in my interview with her:

People say to me “what keeps you resilient, what keeps you doing what you’re doing because it’s bloody hard”, and I say when I get tired and drained and exhausted, because I’m from river Country even though Broome’s my home... we have a mile long billabong, and when I feel really exhausted and drained I go to that billabong and I lay down and I can feel the energy coming through me to re-energise me and give me a sense of peace and a sense of belonging and to right size my thinking... So this sense of, yeah this feeling for Country, this, you know what I mean? (Interview, 24/06/15).

Country is a relational living concept that is deterritorialised in the narratives of activists. Whilst many cite that leaving town relinquishes heavy affects and opens them up to momentary attunements, some find the ability to tune into the softer vibrations of Country through thought and meditation. Donna tells me how she meditates every morning before she starts her day, not breaking until she begins to hear the song of birds. She calls this meditation ‘birds are singing’, a method her grandfather taught her:

It's like turning the volume down because for a minute you get out of your human-centric internal dialogue. You remember that you are part of a bigger world. That it's not just your world (Interview, 21/06/15).

I follow up Donna’s description of this mediation by asking her how much this way of thinking affects her worldview:

go and sit down in nature for a while... If the birds and the animals behave in a hostile way toward [you], there's something about you that you need to change.

Through meditation, Donna becomes receptive to the world around her, emplacing herself within the broader ecology of place. She does this as a way of measuring her immanent obligation to nature and the non-human world. As she hears the birds sing, the day starts, beginning with the knowledge that she is tuned into Country. The feeling of being-in-place affirms Donna's idea of herself as a part of nature, a human entity in the wider (decentred) web of life. For Elster, a Yawuru woman, tuning into Country is a repetitive process that needs to be practiced regularly in order to be healthy and to quell restlessness. She teaches her grandchildren how to be healthy with Country through immersing yourself in the feeling:

I think it's good for the soul because that's one place you can meditate, you've got no distractions... you do that every weekend you'd be the healthiest person on this earth. That's why we all kept healthy I think is that, and I feel if I don't go bush I get very, oh cross, I get really niggly and I need to go to absorb all the bush and my surroundings and it's like a cleansing thing
(Interview, 15/06/15).

I ask what it feels like to 'go bush':

Oh, it's a beautiful feeling is the, you, when you leave here your heart is - it's the same, but as you're driving out of town you get light in the heart, you're light-hearted and you're start laughing and talking and joking and singing... it's a nice feeling you put the kettle on, the bushfires going and have a cup of tea and take in the birds and everything your surroundings. You go to bed early and you have dinner early about 5:30pm, 6:00pm, 6:30pm you're asleep, you get up at 5:30am with the birds.

This process of attuning to the circadian rhythm of the day, recalibrates Elster's body, and although coming back to town brings back some of the more inhibiting atmospheres, some of the bush comes too. The 'bush' as Elster says, recalibrates her, allowing her the energy to better cope with the stresses of everyday life.

Importantly, the good life for Aboriginal activists in Broome is not a strictly bounded place so much as it is a relational space that exists as 'a time that simultaneously encompasses not only the past but also the present and future' (Tonkinson 2011: 331). At times the rhythms and atmospheres of what they identify as urban life become too intense and affect health, well-being and ethical obligations to Country. This is not to say that Country does not exist in the city or in regional town such as Broome, but rather that the dominant affects of urban life have ways of drowning out more subtle rhythms of life that endow and enlarge capacities. There are specific geographies characterised by atmospheric intensities and feelings that facilitate the sovereignty of imagination. This is a process whereby 'body parts are progressively acquired' that exercise capacities to register place in new ways (Latour 2004: 207). Learning to feel your Liyan is one way of measuring your capacity to perform obligations to Country. It is an embodied framework that is actively shared with non-Aboriginal people as a practice of commoning.

Conceptualising Liyan

The pedagogical tool through which place is made sense of in this part of the Kimberley for Aboriginal groups is the affective resonance of Liyan. In the narratives above the concept of Liyan begins to be foregrounded as a sense making pedagogy, a feeling that the body instrumentalises as a knowledge forming affective force that is attuned to. This section concisely defines Liyan, a crucial concept that

Aboriginal activists draw upon and share in their political projects. Bart initially introduces me to the concept:

Bart: Liyan is the feeling out, whether it's bad or good, it's like our state of well-being sort of thing.

David: How do you spell that?

Bart: L-I-Y-A-N. We always use it.

David: Is that what it literally translates to, well-being?

Bart: Yeah, well...

David: But there's no literal...?

Bart: No, because it's just like your inner being, your inner spirit it could be your spirit, it could be your gut feeling, your heart, your yes.

As articulated by Brian's narrative in this chapter, Liyan is an embodied intuition, yet it has the potential to disembody your relation to place, carrying you away, lending movement to thought. Anne explains:

what we say is feeling for us is like your intuition, your inner being, your spirit, something feels right or something feels wrong, [it is] a way of moving your journey forward.

This is a crucial understanding that Aboriginal people in this part of the Kimberley teach to other non-Aboriginal people. It is argued by many activists that the feeling of place – articulated through Liyan – connects people to place in ways that form

ethical obligations to people and Country. Anne recalls a story through which non-Aboriginal people have learnt to be affected by Liyan:

David Maybury-Lewis made a 3-hour documentary and he travelled all over the world and he interviewed amazing people and got their stories and whatever and he came her to the Kimberley and spoke to Paddy Roe... he looks at Paddy Roe and he goes, "Paddy I knew it but then I felt it". And that sort of a feel, just sort of, that sort of like a seminal moment you know what I mean. Here's this quantum physicist and he's total quantum physics and anthropology coming together and going I knew it but then I felt it. So, I have this belief that if we can take people to Country I guess to some extent the fact that they are on Country, means that they're at least willing to be exposed to the environment, to the Aboriginal culture, to stories, to song, to meaning of Country. So, the fact that you first got them there means that you're half way there and then when you show them what you know of the land, how you can read the Country, people do get it... people who don't share those values would not be in that space (Interview, 24/06/15).

When Anne talks of Paddy Roe, she is speaking of the Lurujarri Heritage Trail – an Aboriginal song-line explored in Chapter Nine – and the potential to let non-Aboriginal people share in the affects of Country, forming bonds through bodily understanding. This bond operates at a ‘microscopic level’ according to Mitch, ‘right down to us being kin with the plants, the animals, the rocks, the trees, the sky’. It is a part of Aboriginal cosmologies across Australia, an entanglement with nature that decentres the human and privileges the body, or as Elster notes, privileges the heart over mind: ‘your Liyan is your heart, your feeling, your heart, it's where your feeling

is in your heart'. This is not just a centring of intuition or feeling, but is also acknowledges that the emplacement of the human back within the ecology of place might be facilitated through affective bonds and attachments to place.

Although Liyan is a relational concept that connects diverse spaces together, its geography relies upon momentary experiences in the present, having to be there to experience for oneself. Perhaps this is why many activists were gracious enough to afford this research the opportunity to experience these spaces *in situ*. Bart had taken a day out of his weekend to take me to see Micklo at Yulleroo Wells, something I heard him telling Micklo as being his 'obligation'. After my interview with Elster at her bush block in Broome, she had invited me to go fishing at Crab Creek to 'understand' what she is talking about. Brian and Ebony spent three days off-the-grid in a remote part of the Kimberley, actually demonstrating how Liyan is used to read the Country during crab hunts. Liyan is not something that is easily or authentically represented in text, in that sense it is a non-representational concept that explores 'more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds' (Lorimer 2005: 83). In this way, it is a concept that builds upon the affective understandings of place in Western epistemologies.

In reading the Country, 'everything is based on that feeling le-an [Liyan]' (Roe and Hoogland 1999: 21), it is not something that can necessarily be theorised without being affected by it through experience. You have to 'connect first, tune in and feel to be able to really see' explains Emmanouil (2014: 43) in conversation with Goolarabooloo story-teller Frans Hooland. Frans replies, 'Yeah, you have to kind of get lost in it, drown in it'. This involves being with Country, investing in the moments that it offers and expressing what Anne states as 'a willingness to learn and

see the world a different way'. In foregrounding Liyan as an embodied way of knowing Country that is shared with non-Aboriginal people, I now move on to describe how non-Aboriginal people enlarge their capacities to support Aboriginal rights and political agendas through such frameworks.

Part three: Becoming-otherwise

Chapter seven: White allies, attunement and emergent solidarities

In this chapter I specifically address the research aim to explore and describe shared geographies that foreground embodied ways of knowing Country and bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people into productive relation. Disputes over remote community reform and resistance to large scale industrialisation have polarised local, regional and national Aboriginal people who differ in their political posture and imagination of what the future of particular spaces should look like. A diversity exists in the motivations of Aboriginal engagements with the state and the market, a diversity reflected across different spatiotemporal scales. Conceptions of Aboriginality, and belonging more generally, should then reflect a recent ‘movement away’ in Human Geography ‘from conflating Indigenous with local’ (Coombes *et al.* 2012: 810). The common experiences of Aboriginal people should not be reduced to an understanding of their political perspectives as homogenous. Understandings of the Aboriginal experience in settler-colonial societies are both specific and general, with common genres of dispossession and subjugation being present throughout North and South America, Australia and New Zealand.

Yet the positive role that non-Aboriginal people can play in this politics of the belonging is often overlooked in favour of cases which highlight tensions and privileges. This chapter builds upon understandings of Aboriginal histories of subjugation in Australia through highlighting how white activists contribute to Aboriginal-led political projects. I argue that white activists in Broome attend to

Aboriginal histories and provide local modes of solidarity which are facilitated by spaces of connection. Affective connections to place are made in both the minutiae sensorial shifts of the body, but also through larger meta-concepts of region and nation. Indeed, concepts – like Country and Liyan – in and of themselves have affective lives (McCormack 2013), it is the task of ethnographic insights to ‘see how the concept establishes its local authority’ (Muecke 2016b: 4).

There are scales of belonging which can take place in local notions of Country and community, to broader conceptual categories of race, ethnicity and nationality. As Muecke (2016b: 33) states, ‘Aboriginal regionality can now link to a putative Australian nation’. Local and regional articulations of citizenship exist within and often rival the legitimacy of other imposed categories of belonging, such as ideas of Australianness. White allies of Aboriginal activists articulate this sense of scaled belonging when discussing not only the importance of place in understanding the politics of the Aboriginal people they support, but also the broader articulations of Aboriginal struggle and oppression. This chapter works through these scales of understanding. In their expressions of belonging to place, White activists entangle their being in Aboriginal understandings of injustice and dispossession as well as affirmative modes of belonging and co-existence.

I focus upon non-Aboriginal encounter narratives precisely because they are bodies that are not-of-place. In this sense, non-Aboriginal people in Broome – and settler-colonial places in general – represent a group of people whose approaches and attachments to place are important for co-constructing and co-inhabiting ethical futures. I demonstrate how their general scales of understanding Australia’s colonial history and contemporary legacy are honed by specific local renditions of Aboriginal

flourishing and survival. Allies become sensitised to the local politics of place, but push further in their understandings of place by ‘learning to be affected’ (Latour 2004: 205; Graham and Roelvink 2010: 324-327; Gibson-Graham 2015: 52) by Country in ways which demonstrate complex attachments/connections to spaces and hold potential in collective imaginings of a world-otherwise. These spaces become more than just Aboriginal, but are not wholly Settler either. Instead, they inhere a capacity for ‘co-becoming’ (Suchet-Pearson *et al.* 2013) in which Aboriginal and white activists negotiate ways of inhabiting space together. These capacities are lent potential through the sharing-in of collective moods through which people make a life. These collective moods are unspectacular atmospheres that envelope and animate bodies in the service of a future that digresses from the present (Anderson 2009a, 2016).

Quiet politics: ordinary becomings

Events such as loud street protests and direct action are overrepresented in studies of activism (Askins 2015), contributing to what (Srnicek and Williams 2015) call a ‘folk politics’ that fetishizes reactionary and ritualistic protests which fail to meet the scale of neoliberal enclosures. Ordinary acts – walking, camping, fishing, surfing, etc. – are quiet forms of activism that often go unnoticed, are unknown, underestimated and unexplored, represented as innocuous apolitical acts (Kelly and Lobo 2017). The material form of a quiet politics of becoming is often unknown, underestimated and unapprehendable; relegated to the status of an innocuous impotent act. In Georges Perec’s (1997: 179) psychogeography on the infra-ordinary, he argues that ‘[w]hat speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event, the untoward, the extra-ordinary’.

Indeed, what makes headlines, what apprehends our attention and affects our flippant and discriminate attentions are likely to be the big events of apparent rupture: ‘the historic, significant and revelatory’ (Perec 1997: 179). *Occupy Wall Street*, as a big disruptive form of occupational protest, apprehended the attention of global news agencies (DeLuca *et al.* 2012), and the research interests of Human Geography (Pickerill and Krinsky 2012; Pickerill *et al.* 2015; Vasudevan 2015; Cloke *et al.* 2016). A focus on these moments of rupture signals the arrival of overflowing excesses that can no longer be contained by ordinary life. Yet, too often they minimise the critical role that ordinary acts of everyday life play in producing spaces of potential (Halvorsen 2015). The habitual rhythms of everyday life – rhythms that ‘shape human experience in timespace’ (Edensor 2010: 1) – dwell in the substratum of sensory awareness, the problematic of which, contends Perec (1997: 179), is that the everyday and therefore the non-representational remains unquestioned:

We don’t question it, it doesn’t question us, it doesn’t seem to pose a problem, we live it without thinking, as if it carried within it neither question nor answers, as if it weren’t the bearer of any information. This is no longer even conditioning, it’s anaesthesia. We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?

The habitual and ordinary moments of everyday life contain activisms that hold ‘potentials to affect, and be affected, by issues taking place across scales’ (de Jong 2017: 3). In Cultural Geography in particular, Askins (2009) and Horton and Kraftl (2009) re-evaluate the everyday as a site of radical activism where the banal, obvious, and common non-representational qualities of place assemble the ‘background hum’ of social life (Lorimer 2008: 556). Brown and Pickerill (2009b)

describe how the emotional/affective labour of activism takes place quietly on the side-lines of noisy oppositional practices. Geographic literature on social movements, has traditionally fixated on the noisy moments of rupture, yet there is an emerging focus on ‘the role of everyday life in activism’ (Halvorsen 2015: 402). This reflects a renewed but long standing focus on the everyday as the site where politics happens (Thrift 2007), where space is produced (Lefebvre 1974, 2004) and where publics are composed (Amin and Thrift 2013). Leanne Simpson (2011: 11), an Indigenous Canadian scholar, argues that such side-lined everyday practices might be thought of as ‘quiet collective acts of resurgence’ that incubate radical potentials and condition endurance.

The narratives which follow describe how ‘quiet collective’ space-times might be repositioned as radical acts of being-together that unsettle the dominance of discourses around opposition and resistance. Through participant-observation and in-depth interviews with white allies, I argue that activists not only negotiate broad to local scale understandings of Aboriginal dispossession and injustice, but prefigure and produce alterity in their encounters with spaces of connection. These are everyday spaces such as the beach, sand dunes and the bush, expressed as Aboriginal notions of Country. White ally approaches to Country inhere a willingness to be affected by different relations to space and time. It is through these encounters, conceived in this thesis as ‘events of relation’ (Wilson 2016: 14), that those interviewed make connections to alternative imaginations of the good life. Although not dwelling together in a material sense, those who encounter these spaces enact a co-becoming, in that they share in an ecology of experience that radically differs from the engineered affects of neoliberal life (Anderson 2016).

Bodies become ‘primed to act’ in these spaces, preconditioned in different ways that resource and enable collective solidarities to form (Bissell 2010: 284). Fundamental to these rearrangements are affective attunements to place that encompass and entangle diverse beings. Affective attunements are ‘a pre-conscious tuning-with a tendency that sparks a new set of relations that in turn propels the creation of a singular affective event’ (Manning 2009: 41). Contended here is that affective attunements reach beyond the traditional encounter with difference, offering up potentials that resource activisms which strive to imagine-otherwise. They bring bodies into relation with other bodies; including concepts. Bodies need to learn to be affected in order to enter into a process of co-becoming with others in place. One way in which researchers might pay attention to the taking place of these transformative events is by engaging with spaces that harbour palpable atmospheres of change, and seeking out moments of attunement with those atmospheric qualities. These atmospheric attunements, I argue, are crucial to a process of becoming-together, as Stewart (2011: 449) argues:

What affects us – the sentience of a situation – is also a dwelling, a worlding born from an atmospheric attunement.

In the ethnographic account which follows, I describe quiet political events of being-together that break with a traditional focus upon big noisy rapturous protests. It preferences ordinary acts of sharing space, knowledge and engaging in a process of being affected by the myriad relations that come to assemble the feel of being at a fracking well.

Yulleroo WellBeing Tour

Diary field-notes, Sunday 5 June 2015:

A group of white activists meet at the Tourist Centre at 8:30am, preparing for a 9am departure. About 13 of us gather on a footpath at the edge of the carpark, introducing ourselves to each other. There are no faces that I recognise other than Shayne, the coordinator for *Frack Free Kimberley* affiliated with the *Lock the Gate Alliance*. Other than Shayne and myself, all the activists here are women. An older woman stands by her van and we begin talking. She tells me that she retired 10 months ago, bought a van and has been travelling around Australia, she is from Noosa, NSW on the east coast. Her van is plastered in stickers of places she has been, as well as numerous environmental messages such as ‘save the Ningaloo Reef’. I ask others where they are from. They are all Australian, from southern cities such as Perth. Most have been in Broome for 2-3 years they tell me. As we apply generous amounts of sunscreen to our skin, somebody asks if any person in the group has seen the recent film *Frackman*. About half of the group had recently attended the film screening at the Sunset Cinema in Chinatown the previous week. It remains the topic of conversation for the next 15 minutes. ‘It was just awful what they are doing to him’ says one woman, another remarks ‘bastards’! Another says, ‘it’s just like what they are doing here to Micklo and the Aboriginal people’. Shayne gets off the phone and comes over to the group. We divide the group among three cars. I sit in the front of Shayne’s 4WD with three others in the back. Shayne leads the convoy east as we head to Yulleroo Wells, approximately 70km along the Great Northern Highway.

The car hurtles across the smooth straight tarmac at 110km/h, Shayne driving with eyes fixed on the surrounding shrub for animal attempts at crossing. We get a detailed run down of Buru Energy’s activities over the past two years out at Yulleroo

Wells. On two separate occasions we are told, the integrity of the wells have proven to be compromised, lending potential to an ecological catastrophe. Through ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Yulleroo with Micklo and other activists previously, I am familiar with the discussion Shayne leads. At the time of this excursion to Yulleroo, a legal case is being brought before the courts by Buru Energy and the Department of Mines and Petroleum to prove that activists at the site have tampered with the head of the wells – leading to a leak of toxic gases. These activists refute these claims, instead arguing that the well-heads are prone to frequent failure due to the nature of the extractive technique of fracking. It is alleged that activists tampered with fencing around one of the wells in order to gain access to the head. Upon gaining access, they then allegedly struck the well head with a heavy object, causing it to leak harmful chemical gases – it is also alleged that they then threw a dead dingo over the fence into the restricted area of the well compound. Counter to these claims, activists tell me that dead animals have been turning up around the site, assumed poisoned by toxic drinking holes and billabongs. After discovering numerous cases of endemic species dying, activists entered the compound equipped with a camera and a device that measures chemical particles in the atmosphere. They recorded levels of poisonous gas that far exceed legislated levels set by authorities, higher than those that support life²⁷.

Legal proceedings brought by the state and impromptu visits to the site by the Buru mining company, pattern numerous antagonisms that unsettle Micklo's occupation of Yawuru Country. This WellBeing Tour has been organised in a show of solidarity with Micklo, an event that not only expresses a willingness to be educated, but to

²⁷ Since the time of this research, those activists in question have been found guilty of trespass by the Supreme Court of Western Australia, despite a plea of not-guilty (Parke 2016).

energise Micklo's resolve that has persisted for nearly three years. It disrupts usual friction laden encounters on this site, instead allowing a moment of celebration and rejuvenation. Along the road side near the turn off are signs reading 'no fracking' and 'honk to show your support'. When the convoy arrives, the sound of numerous car horns can be heard hailing Micklo from his corrugated iron shack held up by large wooden logs. A locked gate with cardboard cut-outs of Premier Colin Barnett, a 'road closed' sign and Aboriginal flags, one emblazoned with the words 'frack off' (Image 31). Micklo greets us at the entrance with his dog to open the gate.



Image 31 – The locked gate at Yulleroo Wells / Micklo's protest

When I last visited Micklo, spending the day with him behind the gate, he told me that 'water is life'. For Micklo and the other activists who join in the WellBeing Tour, access to clean water is regarded as a fundamental right of humans, non-human animals and Country. Hydraulic fracturing threatens the sustainability of this access as millions of litres of water, toxic chemicals and sand are pumped under high

pressure into the underground rock. Shale gas residing in cracks, creases and crevasses are forced open in the rock, creating fault lines in the crust that leak harmful chemicals into groundwater aquifers. Drills bore vertically through the earth to a depth of about 400 meters, horizontal shafts are then drilled out from the core. This technique has become normalised in recent years as industrialising regions of the world pivot to fracking in the wake of a recent ‘rush’ in North America (Argent 2017). Fugitive emissions regularly leak from the well-heads, a point that activists on the site have attempted to prove, leading to the legal proceedings mentioned earlier. Methane can be measured as it ‘is vented or leaked to the atmosphere from the well head’ (Howarth *et al.* 2011: 272). At the site of the first well, a large patch of red dirt is carved into the scrub around the well-head, creating ‘atmospheres that touch [...] and rub up against one another’ (Anderson and Ash 2015: 39) at the boundary fence.



Image 32 – Activists at the well. Source S. Thompson

It is at this boundary fence where the group of 20+ activists perform a quiet message – ‘don’t frack the Kimberley’ – captured through a camera attached to a drone (Image 32). We gather around 4WD vehicles as Micklo tells us a brief history of Country through creation stories that highlight the biodiverse ecology of the area and the evolution of Roebuck Plains since colonisation. This ritual is repeated four times

as we pile into the back of cars and the loading tray of utes, heading from well to well. At each stop Micklo points into the scrub, telling us of recent sites where he sees dingos (wild dog), goannas (large lizards) or endangered bilbies (rare marsupial). He also shows us hunting spots and billabongs, areas brimming with life that edge the boundary fence of fracking sites. Aside from water, these are the actors at risk from these wells, a risk that has been realised through numerous dead cattle, dingo and goanna sightings by Micklo. We return to Micklo's camp where he meets regularly and faces off with government representatives, Buru workers and police at the gate. Talking with other activists, thanking them for support, this moment creates a meeting place, a space of rest where difference comes together. The atmospheres of methane leaking wells and tense standoffs have become regular antagonisms. Yet here the atmosphere is replaced, reconfigured here as a generative atmosphere that brings people together, where they enter into a process of 'becoming sentient in common' (Stewart 2011: 445).

Just as the earth's atmosphere is fragile and prone to change, the localised atmospheres that bring people together, are ephemeral and respondent to change. Atmospheres move, morph and murmur, constantly in flux, affected by bodies that feel it through imperceptible forces. An atmosphere envelopes bodies and animates them. In the narratives of non-Aboriginal allies, they describe how their bodies became immersed in the affective atmospheres of place. Long term residents - Blackfullas, hippies and artists - maintain the atmosphere in this place through constant negotiation and repeated attunements. They rally around the potential of place in playing a vital role for conjoining bodies and propelling them together in a state of co-becoming.

Affects hinder but enlarge all in one swing of the mood, aura or rhythm. Narratives here describe a space of connection tethered by the touch of an atmosphere, replacing other atmospheres imbued with destructive logics. These spaces of connection are crucial to the imagination of an alternative good life. Activists demonstrate in the following sections their narratives of understanding both broad and local scales of Aboriginal dispossession, injustice and inequality; but they take these representational understandings of history further through learning to be affected.

Foreign arrivals: becoming-local

The first wave of white settlers arrived in Broome as colonisers, missionaries, industrialists and pastoralists: primarily as instruments of the settler-colonial project from the late 19th century to the 1970s (Rabbitt 2013). It wasn't until this time that hippies, artists and nomads began to settle in the town and more widely across the Kimberley. White allies distinguish themselves from *New Broomers* that came within the last decade or so, speculating on the real estate market and flying in/out to work in the extractive resources sector. Their stories of arrival are imbued with notions of connection to nature and culture, Country and Aboriginality. Connections are not instant nor are they without labour, rather they are punctuated by periods of struggle in negotiating their place that require a willingness to unmoor their ideas of belonging.

Whiteness and categories of race become blurred and messy in Broome, with normative divisions and hierarchies fragmented and disrupted in certain spaces. This is not to say that white supremacy/privilege does not exist here, but wilful collaborations occur across difference in spite of systemic injustices and prejudices. Differences are hypervisible yet murky in Broome, as political persuasions and

modalities of connecting to place overlay and sometimes works against binaries of Black and White. Since JPP, different bodies stick together by a glue that seems indiscernible. In spaces – and the historical experiences that assemble them – that white allies seek out in their attunements to place, there is a common affective pedagogy that re-orientates ethical postures toward Country, producing multiplicities and differences that elude taxonomies of race and culture. It is here that difference might be thought of ‘as conceptually prior to the construction of identity categories’ (Cockayne *et al.* 2017: 582). Differences in Broome are complicated by representational categories such as race and Aboriginality, but in my exploration of white activist performances, I argue that they express a ‘productive tension’ with representational difference (Cockayne *et al.* 2017: 580). For white activists, tensions exist in not being Aboriginal, but I demonstrate how these tensions are productive, reflecting the Deleuzian contention that ‘all existence consists of difference: to exist is to be productive of difference’ (Shaw and Meehan 2013: 217).

A Bardi embrace

White allies recall moments to me in which they encounter local historied and affective aspects of place that are productive in their making of connections across difference. Negotiating their arrival, they stress an embrace of difference as a productive force in their narratives. As I interview Louise by a pond full of Koi fish in the backyard of her suburban corrugated-tin cottage home, I ask her:

David: What brought you to Broome or the Kimberly in general?

Louise: Do you really want to know?

David If you really want to tell.

Louise: I was a single mum, I think my daughter was about 4 or 5 and I just finished my Aboriginal studies and fine art degree. I wanted to work with Indigenous people and I'd done some of those rides against Roxby and Narrunga, you know, push bike rides against them, and I had some connection with Indigenous people. I went and sat at Roxby Downs and worked with the people there. Had a bit of exposure with the Royal Commission into Maralinga and stuff, and it was really intense and hard and I just said, oh fuck, this is just such a harsh environment and by the time we got it in to a Royal Commission thing I was pretty burnt out. I was thinking my daughter needed a break too from the desert, so my twin brother was working up at One Arm Point in Bardi Country as a community nurse, and he said come up there for a holiday. I went up there for a holiday and it was just, I was just embraced by the Bardi people. They took me through Law, they showed me so much, I was so privileged and I learnt... the Bardi people just really opened that [learning] up for me. I went back to Adelaide for a short time but Country just called me back, because I'd been through this amazing Law. And so, I finished my Law for five years with that mob and since then I've been really strong about holding that tradition. Which is all connected you know, it was just another door in to that understanding. Sorry about the tears (Interview, 05/06/15).

Louise's critical understandings of diverse Aboriginal experiences began in university through engagement with a broad curriculum on histories of Aboriginal culture, law and dispossession. Yet, whilst spending 12 years in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Louise honed a global perspective in her understandings of inequality and injustice in settler-colonial Australia. An embodied connection across the Indian

Ocean frontier was re-established through her continual work there, reverberating years of encounter and interaction with Afghanistan established during 19th century colonial exploration (Ghosh and Muecke 2006; Rangan and Kull 2010). The foreign labour of Afghan cameleers²⁸ and the supply nodes of Indian ports were integral to early colonial expansion in Australia. Many of these histories endure through marriage and memory, yet such historical connections have been the subject of whitewashing, with racialised caricatures of dysfunction continually shaping the negative stereotypes people from this region (Goodall 2009). Propaganda during the ANZAC campaign in Gallipoli resulted in the racialised image of Turks as ‘blood-thirsty Mussalman fanatics’, a stereotype that carried over to Afghan cameleers in WA (Goodall 2009: 118). Despite the representational discourses that demonised Afghans, Louise threw her body into conflict zones where her difference had to be continually negotiated.

The compulsion to address issues related to social justice were in part influenced by her experiences with nuns at a Catholic school during her childhood. Louise says that to be a nun back then was ‘pretty radical’, they engaged in social justice movements which influenced her politics today. It was the strong female influence of the nuns that Louise makes claim to when she discusses her spirit of activism across a broad range of issues, including domestic violence, environmentalism, women’s and Aboriginal rights. Bike rides through remote parts of Australia as a radical act facilitated her foundational encounters with other Aboriginal activists. Her activism that led to work on the Royal Commission in Maralinga²⁹ highlights the intersection

²⁸ Afghan cameleers were camel caravanners who worked in remote Australia from the 1860s to the 1930s, opening up the continent to exploration.

²⁹ The McClelland Royal Commission in the mid 1980s was established to investigate the ongoing impact of British nuclear weapons testing at Maralinga in South Australia, home to the Maralinga Tjarutja tribe of the Pitjantjatjara people.

between Aboriginal sovereignty, land rights and environmentalism, a contentious space that stresses constant negotiation.

Through these broad understandings of injustice that stretch from British post-colonial legacies in South Asia, settler-colonial relations in Australia and eco-feminism in the age of climate change, an introspection with social injustices became sharpened through local/specific modes of connection. Five years was spent, intermittently, living on Bardi Country in a remote Aboriginal community, learning law and culture. An initial embrace by the Bardi people, which was arguably unanticipated, developed upon through a teacher-pupil style relationship. Louise recalls being shown Country, where she learnt and had doors open up into different modes of understanding. This time spent ‘connecting’ on Country affected Louise to a point where she felt Country had the agency to hail, expressing: ‘Country just called me back’. Even during the interview, the thought of that connection to Country that she learnt from the Bardi people is enough to elicit tears. We stop for a moment as Louise gets a tissue and with her permission we continue:

David: Has that been the appeal of Broome for you, being close to the memory of that place?

Louise: Broome’s my home, it’s my place, you know. A lot of that’s got to do with my age and how long I’ve been here and have a long, long history now and you know I’ve created roots that give me value as a person and that gives me value as a community member, that’s given me respect, love, honour.

Being bitten by place

Spaces and moments of connection with place support white identities establishing meaningful relationships and political support with Aboriginal people. Mostly, this requires periods of struggle in which they negotiate their place and inclusion in solidarity networks. Many interviewees told me how Broome is an inclusive place overall, depending on a willingness to tune in and show respect. As I sit by Town Beach over-looking Roebuck Bay, I am interviewing Greg as he waits for the wind to ‘pick up’ so he can go for a kite surf. According to Greg, Broome has a ‘character’ that is resilient, a character that you must attune to. He says it is ‘impossible not to in Broome because you either do or Broome turfs you out’:

I think it's a very inclusive place yeah... you know you can come to Broome and you can do whatever you want, and that's okay – you can do what you want, you can be who you are (Interview, 09/06/15).

Greg tells me how he felt lost before arriving in Broome. He says that Broome captured him and looked after him, and so he stayed. Greg was difficult to interview. There seemed to be a great deal of implicit knowledges that he expected me to pick up on through his smiles and nods. Constantly smiling, he strokes his long white beard intermittently between folding his long white hair behind his ear. On two occasions, he repeats my questions back to me, not to clarify or ruminate, but as a direct question meant to stir something in me. The surface of the interview seemed weak at first, all answers seemed to suggest Greg experienced an ease in becoming a Broome local. But the privilege of being-local is met with an involvement with issues that manifest in public displays of activism, acts which politicise being a Broome local. For Greg, the support of Aboriginal causes in Broome is a part of the

place. This politicisation of being, is often foregrounded by an attunement to environmental issues and injustices of Aboriginal people. This becomes further developed by a specific awareness of place and the role the Aboriginal ideas of Country and culture play in assembling how that place feels.

Martin, a Welsh middle-aged man who heads an environmental organisation in the Kimberley, describes his first encounter with Broome, remarking that it was the 'landscape' coupled with a progressive thinking that initially captured him:

I wanted to come up here and experience the environment, also the culture, I'd heard of Broome as somewhere that was a bit more enlightened. In effect it's a country town, but it's got a very different dynamic and population and culture to any other country town that I've been to in Australia (Interview, 16/06/15).

Indeed, it is this sentiment – of a beautiful environment, enlightened population and resilient Aboriginal culture – that pervades the narratives of white activists here. Yet, despite the attraction of the physical landscape, environmentalists often struggle to reconcile their pre-existing values of conservation and the heightened presence of racialised poverty. Martin concedes that he experienced this initial difficulty:

I didn't really understand what it was about, you know, the social problems in terms of Aboriginal people, homelessness, but also a beautiful countryside.

Normative understandings of particular places are often disappointed by specific experiences that do not neatly reconcile anticipation and experience. Like that of the tourist, Martin identifies a moment where the beauty of place is hard to immediately reconcile against the poverty among Aboriginal populations in such places. This is a

major point of differentiation to be made between the trajectories that emerge from the experiential moments of disappointment: an affective shortfall between anticipation and experience. Non-Aboriginal activists work through the moment, never able to fully reconcile the disparity, but engage in a process of becoming-otherwise that develops their ability to engage in Aboriginal rights and agendas on *Aboriginal terms*. For those that remain in a state of disappointment, holding on to their previously held convictions and places, their ability to be useful in the service of difference is reduced.

In terms of the archetypal white environmentalist, some previously held ideas are more benevolent in form and arguably more difficult to reform into productive positions of solidarity. Aboriginal people are often dreamt as caricatures of the noble savage in tune with nature, default protectors of the environment. The ‘local trap’ as a common romantic view, assumes that Aboriginal local actors are best placed to deal with ecological degradation through ‘traditional’ forms of knowledge (Brown and Purcell 2005). Without understandings of the indwelling capacity to address such issues, environmentalists risk failing to acknowledge the breadth of colonial dispossession and injustice that inhibits action in the present. Perhaps this explains, to some extent, the moments of misunderstanding where the preconceived caricatures of Aboriginality misfire. These moments of disjuncture are useful in the development of effective white ally identities as they open up spaces in which learning might eventually take place. Importantly, it is not a knowing of othered histories alone that facilitates this, but the act of learning about the embedded colonial injustices of place is performed in a state of openness that is essential to being affected in an affirmative way.

Will, a local blacksmith, artist, musician and tour guide, says that it was a struggle when he first came to town. One premier event that occurs in Broome during tourist season is the Sunday Courthouse Markets, an open-air arts, craft and food market. Will tells me that he was introduced to the markets by a friend when he first arrived, which opened up the opportunity to develop relationships with similar people. He says he connected with ‘a really strong community of cottage-industry-minded people’, people that he says ‘did something outside of the sway’. Upon establishing a friendship network of eccentric people who ‘ran asteroid tours’ and ‘made smoothies on a bicycle’, Will says it became ‘easy to stay alive in this town’:

all of us I believe that we had an affinity with this area. It wasn’t just epitomized in Broome, you started to get, um, definitely bitten by the Country of Kimberly and y-you can’t truly, you can’t truly be absorbed in that without understanding about its culture and its history (Interview, 13/06/15).

Being bitten by Country is something that you hear a lot of in Broome, albeit this is expressed in different ways that don’t explicitly reference ‘Country’. Importantly, this is expressed by people who might support, remain ambivalent or even deny Aboriginal rights and agendas. Additionally, understanding the significance of Broome’s history and culture in producing the place that it is today, is not solely the domain of enlightened progressives. One can be affected by nature, understand history and share an interest in Aboriginal cultures, yet this does not necessarily constitute a ‘progressive white radical’ (Land 2015: 31) identity that is useful in supporting Aboriginal agendas. For Will, it is about recognising the injustice and working through the discomfort of it:

it was paradise... [but] there was another side of that coin which is, nobody rides for free. And no matter how beautiful the weather is or gorgeous the beach is, there's a dark side.

Will's interpretation of this 'darker' side is broadcast on the daily walking history tours of Broome during peak season. I attended one of his tours which traces historical spaces in Broome that were subject to bombing by the Japanese during WWII, but also the often-unspoken aspects of Broome's colonial crimes. At certain points along the walk Will points out places where the common gate was once erected, a curfew border fence that racially segregated the town. We arrive at a statue that commemorates Broome's forgotten women who were pearl divers before the development of breathing apparatus. Cast in bronze, the statue depicts a pregnant Aboriginal teenage girl emerging from the sea with pearl shell cusped in her two outstretched hands. Pregnant women were used by pearling masters to dive for shell as their lung capacity was greater than that of men or non-pregnant women. Sourced by method of blackbirding, Aboriginal men and women were kidnapped from remote areas and forced into '*de facto* government-supported slavery' (Yu *et al.* 2015: 256). According to Will, old white men are regarded as 'legends' here in Broome, he says 'that's what really motivated me to talk about the other side of that coin'. These revered characters of Broome 'raped and butchered to achieve [...] financial gain at the cost of so much', which Will says 'not talked about'. Unspoken histories are a thing that non-Aboriginal come to know over time. Will says that despite wet-season wreaking havoc on his life, he 'dug in':

I really learned from that... you have to be on your down to be able to stay put because it'll throw you out, you know, the good and bad, both will be just

as powerful as each other... a beautiful place but it can be fucking hell as well.

Enduring Aboriginal connections

Stories of digging your feet in and enduring the wild wet seasons of tropical Australia are ubiquitous in local narratives of the Kimberley. Repairs to houses, roads and other everyday infrastructures are commonplace during the wet season. Infrastructures of connection between people are also the subject of repair and maintenance, with activists recounting moments through which they commit to social justice issues that affect marginalised groups in Australia. Maria, Broome resident and environmental activist, came to Australia from Finland as a child with her family. Her time first spent in the Kimberley coincided with the Aboriginal outstations movement, where Aboriginal stockmen and their families relocated from towns to remote outposts on their traditional lands. Working for the Department of Community Welfare at the time, Maria recalls a time when she first became aware of the strength of Aboriginal leaders and advocates in the Kimberley:

We had this fantastic team and there was this real strong feeling that we had to help Aboriginal people to get back to Country. That if people could get back to Country and get their land rights they would no longer be oppressed, they would no longer be drunk and on the street and they would have a good life. They could hunt and fish and they could conduct their traditional law and customs and all the rest of it. And I was so excited to be part of that movement, I loved it, I worked myself to the bone doing it. And it was a very exhilarating time to be up there and that's what I was doing when I was in Fitzroy for years. So that to me was a great triumph to get people out to

Country. Land rights, when it finally happened didn't deliver in the way that I had imagined (Interview, 03/06/15).

The sense of exhilaration the Maria felt whilst working in the service of Aboriginal welfare gave way to a disappointment in the dream of native title and land rights. White bureaucrats working in these service positions in north Australia, often suffer fatigue and disillusionment with the system that they are a part of (Lea 2008; Mahood 2012; Kowal 2015). In their quest to do 'good', many White allies come to the realisation that the facilitation of Aboriginal welfare through the prism of the settler-colonial administration is a contradiction of sorts. Dispossessory logics are an inherent systemic operation of the settler-colonial project (Wolfe 2006; Povinelli 2011). Allies like Maria express their rescaling of activism through the more intimate geographies that exist between the self/body and places/people. That is to say, alongside working in an official capacity aiding Aboriginal people, activists also form everyday connections that extend beyond the broad understandings of self-determination and sovereignty. In doing so they enable the enactment of alternative futures. These connections take hold in the positive relationships they form with place and people, as Maria states:

I just really loved being in the Kimberly, I loved being with Aboriginal people. I loved the challenge of assisting them out of their dire situation. I love the feeling of freedom, the feeling of being in Australia but being in a different country.

Others like Peter share in this connection across difference that facilitated his relocation to Broome and his will to become active in environmental and Aboriginal issues. He settled in Broome during the 80s but first came here in 1977 where he

'lived as a mung bean hippy up behind the sand dunes'. After returning to Perth, like many do, it was some years before he came back to the Kimberley, working as a builder's labourer on Koolan Island, about 150km north-east of Broome. Peter says:

I must have popped into Broome at the time, but what the connection was, was I made friends with an Aboriginal guy who was a chippie – a carpenter on the same building crew that we were on. We weren't big drinkers unlike pretty much else on the crew so we kind of bonded – made friends and he was also quite interesting... a friendship which has actually lasted till now. It's interesting because I don't know if you know that theory that there are a number of crucial people in your life that you meet and there is only a small number of people that actually setting, kind of if you like, the agenda for your life and you meet one person in your life you tend to make decisions or meet people that kind of then sets the scene – but if you hadn't have met that person you possibly wouldn't have done all these other things that have dominated the next ten years of your life or ended up meeting the woman you married or whatever. And Alex, the Aboriginal guy I was talking about, he was one of those guys because if I hadn't have met him... probably wouldn't have come back to Broome (Interview, 12/06/15).

These connections mark a reorientation with people and place through the formation of relationships across difference. It became an apparent theme in these interviews with white allies that they would recall affinities with Aboriginality, whether it be Country or individual people. Encounters with Aboriginal people that turn into enduring relationships are integral moments for non-Aboriginal in which they form affective attachments to place. Mark, a documentary filmmaker who emigrated from

England as a child, responds to my question asking him what made him settle in Broome:

I grew up in Roebourne, which is in the Pilbara, with five tribes mustered off Country, and it was an angry town, but I was lucky I had an Aboriginal mate. And his relatives took me out into the Burrup Peninsula before it was developed, and I loved it. The old men would sing in a ring, I didn't know what they were doing, but I knew that it was special, and that feeling stayed with me for a very long time (Interview, 26/06/15).

Marks reasoning resonates with an ephemeral feeling or a sensory force that exceeds capture and isn't fully comprehended through cognition, but through the inhabitation of an atmosphere. Although he can't recall why he moved to Broome at the time, he is sure that the feeling of the Burrup Peninsula, an intensely spiritual place containing some of the world's oldest petroglyphs and rock carvings, affected him. Despite the angriness of town, there remained spaces of sanctuary where people could attune to productive and atmospheres of well-being that work across difference. These spaces made affective impressions on Mark, as he describes the resurgence of those feelings later in 1991 when he returned to Broome:

then I came up here and I got into film making with Malcolm Douglas [documentary filmmaker and crocodile hunter], and he took me into those places and introduced me to those people that I'd met when I was a kid, and I just felt that I was dealing with something that was far older, far wiser, and meant something to me, but I didn't know what it was... It means everything to me. My whole life is based now, on living up in this part of the world and protecting it, it's how I draw, it's how I identify myself... I'm very thankful

of, as well with my upbringing, my parents. Unbeknownst to them, they introduced me into that Aboriginal culture and Country when I was very young, and it always stayed with me.

Meaningful connections

Ingetje spent three years travelling through New Zealand before settling in Australia, and claims to have visited over 50 countries prior. Expressing a desire to live remote, Ingetje and her Egyptian husband were enchanted by Broome because of ‘its beautiful nature’, she says of this encounter with Broome’s nature, ‘that was the time for me, that moment’. I ask Ingetje if things have changed since she first witnessed this character, she says:

I still love it of course, but the thing has changed now, I look at it different. It’s not always that you think that life is so good, because I mostly hang around with Aboriginal people, especially at the grass root level, it’s a different life (Interview, 04/06/15).

Ingetje says that she is more comfortable around people who are different to her. In countries that she has worked around the world, she tells me that she seeks out the marginal, things that occur out-of-sight. According to Ingetje, a connection to people on a human level precedes her inclination to judge, she says that ‘the connection is amazing, connection for me is life, more so with the Indigenous rather than others’. Ingetje provides an example of this connection through a recent experience:

I was talking the other day to a guy, and he said “I’ve never shook the hand of a white person before, but you are”, “why did you shake mine”, “you

different". I take it as a very big compliment. It's not that I am really cool or anything, but maybe it's a connection.

Broome is often imagined as a multicultural and racially harmonious town where the locals are friendly and the cosmopolitan vibe pervades every aspect of life (Rabbitt 1994; Choo 2011). The connections that interviewees spoke of, often taking place in out-of-sight places such as workplaces, outside of town or in Aboriginal communities like One Mile or Kennedy Hill where locals and tourists rarely venture. Intercultural connections across barriers of difference have been a major component of Broome's identity as a multicultural place. As long-term activists Dave notes, 'of all the places in Australia I thought that Broome would be a place where multiculturalism was a no brainer'. Labour forces in the pearling and pastoral industries were stratified by white employers, so as to avert the potential of any one group organising against White rule. Marriages and relationships naturally bled across these categories of race, leading to a distinct hybrid / creole cultural make-up (Martínez and Vickers 2015). These industries contracted over time and government sanctioned racial segregation was essentially dismantled. Dave married Esther, an Aboriginal Yawuru woman, after spending time in the pearling industry working for his father:

My father had started a pearl farm, and I came here on a pearling lugger from TI [Thursday Island] with a group of blokes, I would have to say because of nepotism, not for any skill that I had, others had to demonstrate their skill, but I joined the vessel to do a voyage... Pearling had attracted a very large population to live on this place which had already been selected by Blackfullas as an already desirable place to live. That isolation in my

perception, gave the population, the second largest population outside of Perth, a great deal of um, expression of independence (Interview, 11/06/15).

Being white, Dave is aware of his ability to move about, take ‘voyages’ on ships where others were forced to work in abhorrent conditions. Central to this was nepotism according to Dave, his father was able to start a pearling farm with ease and he was able to just join a lugger crew that included transnational indentured labour. For Dave, these days were easy in many respects. When it came to meeting people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, races and cultures, pearling provided an ease of passage:

Well it’s logical to say that before it was easier, because people worked on boats together, or worked on cattle stations together, now the cattle stations have fewer people, there are no boats. Those connections aren’t at that everyday level, maybe in the mines, but mines are inclined to be this fly-in-fly-out, seems to be a bit artificial.

When Dave says, ‘those connections aren’t at that everyday level’, he refers to spaces of enforced togetherness (Wise 2009), ‘where intercultural tensions simmer and unfold’ (Lobo 2014a: 101). Often working alongside each other for months at a time, these industries founded the multicultural image of Broome, yet harmoniousness was most likely over-romanticised. Under the conditions of a colonial order, interactions across difference always privileged the presence of whiteness. Spaces where meaningful encounters and connections take place, adequately acknowledge these racialised inequalities through understandings of broad and specific experiences of Aboriginality. Spaces of connection suspend, disappoint and recall normative logics of the settler-colonial state that impinge and

inhibit the capacity to become-otherwise. In contemporary Broome, the absence of large multicultural industries has somewhat hindered the capacity to make everyday connections, yet as will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter, they do exist.

General-to-local scales of understanding

what you've got in Broome here... is a really human way of living where you know your neighbours... you've got this scale that is on a, you know, it's a really human scale – Martin (Interview, 22/06/15)

In interviews, it became evident that non-Aboriginal residents/activists had an awareness of place that went beyond their own personal journeys to Broome. Existing alongside their own personal narratives of mobility prior to ‘finding’ Broome, and the aspects of place that arrested their attention, was a sense that this place exists as a diverse assemblage of histories and experiences. Central to this was an awareness of Aboriginal history, culture and spirituality as being the foundational characteristic of Broome. Martin expresses that ‘scale’ is what makes Broome a unique place to exist. It is a place where you ‘know your neighbours’. In the context of cultural/ethnic/racial co-existence in the tense of national belonging in Australia, this remark was an interesting departure. Multiculturalism, at a national scale in particular, is increasingly called into question by a resurgence in white/right/protectionist populism (Hage 2012; Dean *et al.* 2016). It is peculiar then that sentiments of tolerance and even embracement of difference was articulated by interviewees, especially considering how such frontier towns often become nests of ‘redneck racism’ (Ford 2009). Martin says of Broome:

Here, what I find is you've got much more of a way of thinking where people care about the environment. People care about the society. People respect Aboriginal culture. People have a sense of creativity that is quite different and actually at a, in my view, a much higher level than in many other places. You know and that was born out of through our campaign, that creativity. Um so yeah, it's k-kind of um, yeah it's... there's many different facets here that make Broome different.

It is this difference that interviewees continually reference as the force that captures their interest. There is an awareness that Broome is the product of diversity, embracing people from 'all over the Country... and from all over the world' Martin says. People stay in Broome because they are 'fascinated by Kimberley, fascinated by the history of Broome'. Some people stay longer and 'seek out the people who have the political and cultural knowledge of the area'. These types of people form the white 'activist polis' (Mott 2016: 193) from which support is provided to environmental and Indigenous struggles. However, the transmission of knowledge is not one-way. White activists don't passively absorb learning moments from Aboriginal activists. Broome has always been a place of difference and as such, knowledge from other places and experiences always affects the collective atmosphere of Broome. As Martin says:

[people] bring their own perspectives from other places and add to the conversation and the creativity. This is just this open-mindedness – open-mindedness that is hard to find actually.

Thinking through scales of understanding that interviewees expressed through narratives of Aboriginal knowledges and histories, allows them to glean the 'micro

and embodied scales' of imperialism that reflect a constantly moving and morphing of colonial practices (Radcliffe 2017: 3). White ally narratives evidence an awareness of global geographies of empire that have dispossessed Indigenous people around the world. They situate these global understandings in the context of settler-colonialism at a broad continental scale of Australian nationhood, whilst remaining cognisant of the spatio-temporal variation across the nation. Nuances and discourses punctuate their experience of Aboriginal dispossession through 'seeking out' the political and cultural knowledge embodied by Aboriginal people of the area. This scaled approach to the expressions of imperial-colonial practices emboldens their capacity to learn embodied ways of being that 'exceed colonial-modern ways of living in and knowing the world' (Radcliffe 2017: 6). Critical to this is a process of addressing the specific histories of place that potentially disappoint the claim of Australian sovereignty. Will speaks out publically about these disavowed histories through his historical walking tours. As I interview him at his stall at the Courthouse Markets on a Sunday around noon, with ukulele and crowd babble in the background, he says:

I think there's a huge denial of what actually took place all over the place as far as the treatment of the initial inhabitants of this Country. Obviously, we should be very ashamed of it, but it's something that happened all over the world so you know, we're not alone in that. But I think that by virtue of the fact that we don't discuss it, it's perpetuated. The silence is perpetuated...

Most people here are very open to acknowledging what took place and I'm not just talking about the atrocities that took place in Aboriginal Kimberley but all over Australia as far as the white man's treatment of the first people...

I'm told really that I shouldn't want to talk about it, but I am a bit of an activist at heart. I'm with the underdog (Interview, 13/06/15).

This acknowledgement that Aboriginal inequality occurs as a result of colonisation is shared among all interviewed white allies, further claiming that the distribution of responsibility for disadvantage has been unfairly and unjustly placed upon Aboriginal people themselves. Self-determination discourses that have emerged from past policies of assimilation have demonstrated this individual responsibility mantra by shifting the onus of welfare from state to individual. Despite rhetoric that establishes a language of agency and rights, it has been suggested that since land rights 'paternalism has merely adopted a less obvious form' (Mercer 1997: 192) Peter argues that the long history of colonial interventions that results in inequality, unfairly asks those most marginalised to make the most effort:

the Aboriginal people of course have carried a burden of dispossession and displacement from the early periods of time, so it's never been a level playing field (Interview, 12/06/15).

Self-determination has dualistically been called for as a principle of self-governance and sovereignty by Aboriginal groups, yet appropriated, 'defined and pursued within the state's own ideological framework' (Gibson 1999: 47). Couched within the structure of the settler-state, the majority of self-determination era promises have 'floundered' in contemporary policy (Kowal 2008: 340). Susanna notes the effects that colonial practices have had upon the community that she forms part of through marriage and kinship. Drawing upon her engagement with her Jabirr-Jabirr family members, she says:

You had a system that worked for so many years, a system that it's easy to understand once it's explained to you, it's healthy, it's good for the tribes...

Hell came and broke all that, and disperse them and took the children all away and took their language and their culture and their way of life, and ever since has it worked for them? No, it hasn't (Interview, 22/06/15).

Acknowledgments of ongoing intervention in Aboriginal lives are ubiquitous in the narratives of white allies. However, this does not make them unique supporters of political projects. There is a general yet discursive societal understanding that Aboriginal inequality exists as a result of colonial settlement and violence. Yet, policies that apply these understandings are often conflicted by the immediate interests of economic progress through capital accumulation, rather than a policy framework for the benefit of Aboriginal people. What makes these understandings of white allies interesting, is the way they facilitate further insights. Understanding place-based histories preconditions white activists' entry into local activisms, but their learning does not end there. Through the act of protest, bonds are forged that facilitate the further advancement of intercultural understanding. Will says:

[During JPP] was when I think, most of those people started to understand Aboriginal culture and the reason, because there's a living culture of um, an Aboriginal society in the Kimberly, we all became very aligned that to try to understand it. To fight for this Country, to protect a way of life (Interview, 13/06/15).

Through protest, difficult histories that form part of the contiguous atmosphere of diverse bodies, animate the process of understanding. Maria notes that her

Aboriginal friends who form a base of activist identities in Broome, embody these histories, even if they are laminated by humour and conviviality:

I'm quite aware of all those dark stories and I'm also friends – or at least an acquaintance of a number of the people who experience the dark past. And I know that even though now their telling of it is fairly light-hearted. I know that it must have been a terribly painful period when people were taken from their families (Interview, 03/06/15).

Through an understanding of these histories, resonances are formed to the past where colonial violence was explicit. Although the articulations of colonial violence have become less obvious, hidden in the mundane activities of departmental bureaucrats of the state, links are made between past atrocities and contemporary actions. Louise expresses this by drawing upon her anti-fracking activism:

We've just regressed... almost back into the bloody 18th century. We're just going around poisoning the water holes, it's no different, there's nothing different, just different strategy but the same outcome, displacement!
(Interview, 05/06/15).

There is a rich contemporary geographical literature in settler-colonial contexts that highlight the ongoing efforts of Aboriginal activists in counter-hegemonic resistance movements (Shaw 2007; Pickerill 2009; Barker and Pickerill 2012; Bonds and Inwood 2016; Mott 2016; Radcliffe 2017). On both sides of these movements, there are white allies. There are those who support Aboriginal self-determination through advancing liberal rhetoric of the free market, economic prosperity and closing the gap in health outcomes. Others support the actions of Aboriginal groups against neoliberal forces, directing their energies in service of environmental conservation,

cultural continuity and sustainable futures. Within these paradigms of support there exists a concerted effort to enhance intercultural understandings through engaging in a process of becoming-otherwise. As defined by Grosz (2005: 4):

becoming is the operation of self-differentiation, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality or a system that emerges or actualizes only in duration.

White activists enable their usefulness in Aboriginal political projects through learning how to self-differentiate, a process of unlearning or undoing their own states of being-settler. Geographies of becoming, where activists attune to spaces that facilitate thinking and feeling differently, are fundamental to their knowing of what difference *actually is*. It is in these spaces that difference is encountered, a different way of feeling, knowing and imagining. Grosz (2011: 2) argues that every encounter with moments of understanding, from large meta-conceptual scales to the minutiae shifts in the individual body, is a ‘a mode of becoming that has its own time, its own movements, its own force’. In its own moment, becomings both create and disassemble, ‘they do (up) and they undo’ (Grosz 2011: 2), creating potentials for movements and arresting the momentum of other forces. Becoming does not have an ethical posture, but rather it is a thing that happens as a result of encounter, it is the repeated presence of difference that ‘enable[s] life to erupt’ (Grosz 2011: 2). White allies lean into these processes of becoming-otherwise, aware that it is this process of differentiating their ontological status and renegotiating their whiteness that facilitates their capacity to act in ways that are useful to Aboriginal political projects. Crucially, it is difference that serves as the generative force that creates moments where variations emerge as diversities in materiality, form and expression. Variances

in thinking about what the future might look like, what the good life might be, occur in these spaces.

Chapter eight: Affective pedagogies and learning to be affected

cultural critics, activists, teachers, and scholars who are interested in progressive politics must find a way to address, both convincingly and rigorously, the struggles people wage in and over the affective plane in the educational arena and beyond. Affect matters; it is a pivotal element of individuals' acting and becoming (Albrecht-Crane and Slack 2007: 100)

Non-Aboriginal understandings of Aboriginality are diverse, yet for those interviewed, it can be said that they are emplaced firmly in the remit of reconciliation and social justice. Consciousness of uncomfortable narratives work to establish a sense of wrong which goes some way in forming an anti-racist white progressive subject with a capacity to stage a disagreement. Yet too often this is where the role of the white allied identity ends, in that there is a 'limited repertoire' assumed by contemporary white actors (Land 2015: 2). The white anti-racist ally can be mimicked as a political subjectivity, often exhibited as a trend or fashion of the cosmopolitan urban progressive. Recitations of Aboriginal history – whether it be of place or of concept i.e. of Broome or of Australia – are prone to mimicry because they are performed as representational categories of belonging. White activists frequently occupied spaces on the edge of protest events – taking up places on the periphery of crowds or helping with the non-vocal tasks of setting up stages for Aboriginal speakers. These are quiet acts of political activism that are difficult to analyse in their ability to sustain spaces and moments of meaningful solidarity. What would a genuine white anti-racist identity look like if it were to exceed representational bounds that often settle on tolerance rather than embracement? I argue in this chapter, that encounters with affective spaces of connection that are

beyond representation, offer an affirmative site of analysis that privileges the embodied nature of knowledge production, difference and belonging. In this chapter, I specifically address the research objective to explore and describe how non-Aboriginal people enlarge their capacities to support Aboriginal rights and political agendas. Through learning to be affected by Aboriginal concepts and ideas of Country and Liyan, white allies form enduring attunements that open up spaces that facilitate moments where they might renegotiate their support through Aboriginal framings.

Although embodied affective knowledges of place are privileged in this section, this importantly does not discount the labour of representational knowing in the narratives of Aboriginal struggle. It is a fundamental part of becoming a useful ally to know the historied body of the Aboriginal activist polis, without such understandings power relations between bodies are disavowed and essentialist criteria of being-in-common – such as race – risks being deployed. That is to say, because white connections to place are built upon the dispossession of Aboriginal people, affective relations to ‘nature’ often tend toward sentiments that ‘effectively reinforce the structures of racial hegemony’ (Moreton-Robinson 2003; Muir 2011: 382). Without the wilful labour of understanding Aboriginal histories both broad and specific, the state of ‘open-mindedness’ that activists stress remains elusive. I argue that activists connect with each other in spaces that foreground Aboriginal concepts and ideas of Country through atmospheric affective pedagogies known locally as Liyan. This space is not post-racial in that ignores differences present, it is a decolonising space understood as a process that seeks to facilitate the emergence of other epistemologies (Moreton-Robinson 2011b). It is not an occupation of Aboriginal spaces of connection, but rather an entanglement of diverse enactments of

the good life that perform plurality and enable ontological co-becomings (Bawaka Country *et al.* 2016).

Explorations of these spaces of encountering Country and Liyan push beyond a narrative of survival and protection into a politically charged future-orientated alterity enacted in the present. The good life, and spaces that enact it, prefigures the notion that all lives be ‘affirmed as a life’ in order to move from mere survival to flourishing (Butler 2012: 11). Effective support provided by white activists in Aboriginal struggles over land, environment, culture and human rights is often overshadowed by the privileging of white narratives and discourses within particular movements. Prominent Aboriginal activist Gary Foley states that the ‘situation whereby non-Aboriginal supporters can sometimes become part of the problem is not a new one’ (Foley 2015: x).

Just as white environmentalists have been the source of critique within settler-colonial countries such as New Zealand, North America and Australia, they have also been a source of intense scrutiny in Broome among Aboriginal groups – as already described in earlier chapters. Despite this, white environmentalists in Broome have been a part of an allied group of concerned residents who support Aboriginal activisms. Their recent successes around the JPP protests highlighted an effective campaign of togetherness that enacted connection between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups. Enduring connections are formed through learning to be affected by ‘concepts’ that have affective potentials which move bodies (McCormack 2013). The ‘idea of Country’ is one such concept that facilitates the movement of bodies into moments and spaces that are a ‘statement of connection, belonging, and affinity’ (Hsu *et al.* 2014: 370). White activists express in the

narratives that follow, a feeling out of Country through which they learn how to be affected in ways that help them to become-otherwise in the service of ethical futures that value diversity and difference. As Latour (2004: 213) contends, this process of learning to be affected conditions bodies to become ‘more sensitive to differences’.

Narratives of becoming

Adapting to your environment is totally easy, but enjoying the amazing sunsets that you get during the wet and then the amazing thunderstorms, sitting in the rain and watching the thunderstorms roll in, you know, is pretty awe inspiring. You know it is the cyclone season so you get a lot of angst. And I often find when the cyclone is around we get a lot of good surf which is another thing. But the low-pressure systems when cyclones are around can create a lot of hate in people. You know I often feel it gets the neurons firing a bit quicker and the blood and everything loosened up (Wade, Interview, 12/06/15)

Wade is the regional representative for a peak environmental advocacy council in Australia and is a long-term resident of the Kimberley spending most of his time in Broome. After being invited to his home by a local Marda-Marda academic to share a meal, he agrees to be interviewed. A week after first meeting him, I make my way to his quiet office space on the edge of town where we sit outside on a verandah in the mid-afternoon heat. We spend over an hour and a half talking. Like the majority of interviews conducted with this group of white activists, we trace through the elements of place that enchant Old Broomers. Again, there are clichéd narratives of ‘taking the good with the bad’, something that is often invoked when talking about seasonal shifts that can become violent. What is of interest in Wade’s discussion

around wet season is his language that invokes an atmospheric quality. He asserts that pressures affect the mood of Broome during the wet, with low systems creating ‘hate’ and getting the ‘blood’ flowing. Bodies become anxious and nervy as the ‘neurons’ fire a bit quicker, too quick to be mitigated against. Spaces exist where these moods change, where affect takes place and sends the atmosphere in different directions. The beach with its oceanic vista offers moments where a witnessing of shifting moods takes place: ‘watching the thunderstorms roll in’. Or going for a surf marks a moment of respite and rejuvenation in an otherwise angst-ridden season. I prompt Wade to expand on these spaces and moments, to reflect on the geographies of affect, asking what those types of significant feelings are, and if he is aware of Liyan:

Yes. Sure. I imagine it as something different... I mean it's obviously something different to me than it is to other Traditional Owners. I wouldn't refer to it as Liyan, but I can relate to the concept. And more so I can see it, um, I can relate to it as a third-party person more than in the third person. I can see the significance and feel the significance of something to maybe a Traditional Owner person... I can respect it for that without necessarily owning it for myself... And then be around it and know it's there.

When discussing Liyan, a distinction is made in the white appropriation of the concept, in that activists acknowledge that the concept is not theirs to define or lay claim to. Wade says, ‘I wouldn’t refer to it as Liyan, but I can relate to the concept’, and in doing so maps the contours of the concept through knowing that his being will always sit outside that of Aboriginal ontologies. This does not exclude the capacity

to feel Liyan or the significance of Country as other activists note. Ingetje describes her learning of Liyan to me:

At the beginning, I didn't know what it is. But now, sometimes things happen that gives you goosebumps, and that's good. So, when you talk, a lot to Aboriginal people they say, "that's your Liyan Inge". Your Liyan is talking

(Interview, 04/06/15).

Aboriginal people who Ingetje works with inform her of her Liyan, letting her know how feelings should direct thought and knowledge making. I follow up by asking her why she stays in Broome despite the exhaustion and conflict inherent in her work, to which she references Liyan in her photography:

That is my feeling, that is how I feel it, I can't really explain that, it tells me I have to go there and there and there and I come back to finish that story of what I'm trying to do. Then I can go and think. But I always connect with the mob somehow.

Notions of connecting to 'the mob' through Liyan, despite the constant moving around demonstrates what the affective life of the concept does. It is at once embodied, in that the body feels it and is the barometer of affect, but also disembodied in that it takes her away and moves her thought. I ask where Ingetje feels her Liyan to which she replies, 'if I go bush I experience it – if I really go bush'. But essential to this understanding of bush, is that it is at once everywhere. This is the coloniser's language of Country that constructs frontier boundaries in the geographic imagination: the bush. This becomes clearer when I clarify the idea of the good life with Ingetje:

it's more like being on Country and especially being with Aboriginal people, sitting around the fire, listening to stories about their hardship and their everyday.

For Susanna, the bush forms part of her everyday. Susanna expresses a suspicion of modern modes of organisation and belonging. She says that society engages in corporate work because ‘we all need a sense of belonging, but out bush, you belong there, you belong with the trees’. The bush serves to decolonise how Susanna makes her connections to the good life, she says ‘you have that sense of belonging there’. It is this sense of belonging that she shares through her Aboriginal husband’s connection to Country. Susanna describes his connection in embodied terms:

The way that he talks about his Country, it’s part of him. It’s like an arm or leg, it’s you, it’s your identity (Interview, 22/06/15).

Susanna, who lives remotely with her husband and children, north of Broome, perceives her connection with Country as an ordinary everyday event. It forms part of her process of becoming that needs constant sustained reconnection. It is the energy of the bush that activists seek in resourcing their capacity to act. Everyday practices of connection occur not only remotely, but also as part of the urban fabric of Country. The urban infrastructures that form rhythms and atmospheres of place are part of the feel of diverse renditions of Country. Country is not extinguished by the presence of a skyscraper. It is then not surprising when activists note that Country can be found in Broome too. As I sit with Mark in his outdoor courtyard I can see the dunes beyond the tropical foliage of his garden. Hearing his voice over the ambient sound of waves crashing on the shore, he tells me of a time when he ‘couldn’t wait to get back into the bush’:

I get – I feel connected, I feel connected, and I, if I have a stressful day, which you can have up here with kids, and work can get stressful and everything else, I can just go for a walk over that sand dune onto that beach and sit there for two hours, and be completely different. And the energy in the bush and the ocean and everything it just re-energises you. It's a relationship. It's an exchange is how I always see it or feel it (Interview, 26/06/15).

Mark begins to speak of the energy that Country has, something that Aboriginal participants regularly spoke of. This, I argue, is a significant contribution to understanding how non-Aboriginal people begin to theorise Country as an atmosphere that transmits affective energy. In thinking about Country as an everyday space that can be found in urban Broome, non-Aboriginal activists assemble a contingency of place that upsets binary spatial thinking. These coming-togethers might be thought of as catalysing spaces that trigger ‘moments of “affective energy” for creative thinking’ (Roelvink 2010: 117). Importantly, this energy emanates without the constant proximity of Aboriginal people, even though County and Liyan are Aboriginal concepts. For non-Aboriginal people, they do not need to be chaperoned in order to tap into the energetics of Country atmospheres. Once the concept is taught to non-Aboriginal people, once they have learnt to be affected by it, it takes on its own affective potential. Connolly (2002: 75) theorises this ‘affective energy mixed into thought’ as ‘thought-imbued energies’ that are given their force through the weight of cultural meanings. How non-Aboriginal people experience an atmospheric Country in an everyday space is a vital insight that marks a shift from thinking about Country as a bounded out-there space, to a relational space.

Here I demonstrate how non-Aboriginal people have learnt to appreciate and read Country in everyday settings. It is not the separation between urban and non-urban that marks Country for white allies, it is a way of seeing and knowing that rids relationships between people and place of individualist thinking. Mark, like many other activists interviewed, expressed an opposition to dominant modes of sociality.

When I press Mark to describe his good life, he states:

I don't think that the good life sits with the ten percent of greed-winning-people, I think the good life comes from looking after Country. I think it comes from having a relationship with Country. I think it comes from having a relationship with people of all persuasions – yeah?

By looking after Country white allies position themselves as supporters of a particular mode of being and way of knowing about the world that other interviewed Aboriginal activists espouse. Country offers a gateway to these alternative ways of constructing knowledge and forming imaginations of the future. Some activists synonymise Country with nature or land, perhaps a limitation in their language for being able to describe moments of connection. Louise says that:

It's something to do with nature. There's this inherent feeling within us as human beings that we're connected, this is where people get this solace
(Interview, 05/06/15).

Perhaps it is the ubiquitous operation of the concept of 'nature' in the Western lexicon that provides some insight into Louise's view of Country. Country can be anywhere, therefore certain connections that are formed in any part of the world can speak to these relational ways of thinking. Nature lovers dwell in a potential to be affected by different ways of thinking-feeling through rescaling their being-in-the-

world. Human entanglements with natural ecologies facilitate different readings of culture and difference. In reference to ways of being in remote Aboriginal communities, Louise says:

well imagine if that is your lifestyle because that's the only thing that does gives you solace, that does give you a place, that does give you a role, that gives you understanding and an importance of holding all that. That's the connection people have with Country.

What might be read in Louise's narratives of Country, is that sustaining a life – of bare survival – is not the primary reason for connections to be maintained and preserved. A life might be sustained through critical infrastructures that form the basic meshwork of needs to ensure a life might be lived. Having a role, a place and an understanding that brings you solace is arguably some tenants of the good life that interviewees map out. The good life differs from a life, in that a good life is a future orientated alter-imaginary that stages a resistance to the unliveability of the bad life. Butler (2012: 18) argues that progressive social movements, when they work, enact or perform a 'radical democracy' that 'can articulate what it might mean to lead a good life'. Fundamental to this idea of a radical politics that enacts the good life, is a difference and belonging that facilitates attachments to others whilst retaining a sense of self. Butler (2012: 18) reflects on what the good life might be, positing that it is 'a life lived with others, a life that is no life without those others'. The good life, as activists see it, is an energy field that facilitates a life with others. Maria states that in her work on grassroots campaigns in remote Aboriginal communities, Country gave her a power to enact change:

it gave me power and made me feel very powerful and very sort of energetic... I felt huge amounts of energy... a good life would be I suppose beauty, joy, friends definitely, good support networks – some security but only enough that's it's balanced by excitement and challenge. And to some extent, working with people to make the world a better place, that's very important ...to feel that I'm contributing to positive change in the world (Interview, 03/06/15).

Other people figure as an essential part of connection, yet these connections remain part of the everyday, removed from the physical presence of others. But if Country is to be thought of as an entity beyond objectification, something that is alive and beyond fixed categories and designations as just 'land', it can be read relationally. This relationality is what connects others to Country and the idea of the good life. It is a life that is inclusive of others, of difference. Although some activists use the language of objectification, they have a capacity to sense the potential of relational thinking when encountering Country. Dave tells me:

Well the land itself allows that freedom, you know there's something about land that, when a Whitefulla thinks about land he thinks about real estate, but when a Blackfulla thinks about land he thinks about the spirit of the Country, and you know different places will give you a different spirit, different places give you a different feeling (Interview, 11/06/15).

Thinking as a 'Blackfulla' about land opens up an assemblage of different times and spaces that are as diverse as they are numerous. Injected into these spaces are alternative histories and experiences that change the texture and feel of place, white and Asian histories make reading of Country more complex and varied. In effect,

these spaces embrace intercultural readings that are relational, to some extent they are pre-cultural in that the effect of Country is indiscriminate, Country always affects. So, whilst white allies are sympathetic to understandings of Country, often their affective experiences of it are expressed through their own language. Nature as a category of distinction in the western Cartesian dualism between wild/civilised, plays some intermediary force in facilitating connections to Country. It is a stage that white supporters go through, as Martin explains:

[The natural beauty of Broome] can strike you immediately and then, then you start experiencing it by, for example, walking through Minyirr Park and over the dunes and there's Cable Beach. And then you can walk down and go for a swim in this crystal-clear water. You can experience that nature very easily here. And it's an incredibly beautiful experience... So they start with a kind of a European experience that you can have that gives you a strong sense of connection. And then I guess if you delve a bit deeper and you're interested in Aboriginal culture then, you know, you can gradually find yourself actually talking to traditional owners and getting an understanding of "actually, there's a different kind of connection to that Country that is of a deeply spiritual and religious nature" (Interview, 16/06/15).

This section has presented a number of narratives that aim to capture a process of becoming through the interviews of white supporters. In doing so, it has engaged in a method of mapping contours, limitations and discourses that take place in non-Aboriginal connections to Country. Given the exponential amount of descriptive data that assemblage thinking produces through endless contingencies of action, it is impossible to exhaust an analysis of becoming. However, what I have attempted in

presenting these narratives, is to describe an incomplete process through which white allies enlarge their capacity to renegotiate their place in Aboriginal political projects. This renegotiation occurs within an Aboriginal framework of knowing and being, rather than a framework that attempts to include non-white actors into a dominant way of thinking. Importantly, the process of becoming attuned to Country, and therein Aboriginal ideas of vitality and embodiment, is a state of continual and repeated connection.

White allies interviewed, identify their continual and repeated efforts at connecting in terms of understanding Aboriginality. A caveat to this, which activists describe, is that they cannot fully understand these concepts through the prism of their own ontological status as outsiders. They claim no ownership over Liyan or the idea of Country. In doing so they acknowledge that they are not in fact ‘Aboriginal’ just because they have enlarged their capacity to connect with Country. This capacity is aroused through generating understandings along varying scales that ultimately lead to embodied ways of knowing: what I argue is the profound moment in becoming-otherwise. I use my interview with Petrine to describe here in her own terms, what Liyan means and the productivity that such attunements bring to support practices in Aboriginal political projects. In reference to what her Aboriginal friends, colleagues and acquaintances tell her, she says:

They go “I felt no good about dah, dah, dah”, I know what they’re talking about... And then later they find out why they didn’t feel good. So, they have – they’ve almost got this premonition sort of feeling that goes on if they spend enough time on Country. They wake up. They [...] have a premonition feeling, all these things start to reawaken inside them. Things start to tingle

again and start to feel more alive. That's for Aboriginal people (Interview, 08/06/15).

I ask Petrine what Country does for her, to which she responds:

Well, when you're out on Country it sort of – everything disappears that's in your head I've found. Lots of the worries that you had or the thoughts kind of seems to dissipate. It's really interesting. You sort of immerse yourself in the present a lot more is what I'd say... If we put our thoughts in abeyance and just allowed ourselves to be led by that sense, feeling, intuition, whatever you want to call it, I think most people are very scared of doing that and I don't know many people that do it. But that's definitely a space I would work out of, mostly.

Just as affect is theorised as a precognitive force (Massumi 2015), the feeling out of Country through Liyan is 'not something you can cognitively understand' according to Petrine:

It just has to be done. I know it. I've felt it. I've sensed it. It's just a – just that fact that I got here in the first place, that's a whole other story in itself and the experience that I had on Country that led me into this work was extraordinary. So there's this whole other space that is well beyond my control that I have decided to trust. That's a good way of putting it. There's a whole other reality or dimension if you like, that has got me to this point that I decided that I needed to trust and I still do.

Importantly in this section I have not mapped out a complete process of becoming, such a task is empirically impossible, or at best impressionistic. What I have done, is

etch the contours of a moment in which attunements take place, noting where they take place and through which practices. Non-Aboriginal activists describe the effects that their learning of Liyan and Country has had upon their own personal stories of becoming. This work is essential to the sections that follow where I begin to theorise moments of empirical significance that can be witnessed, felt and known.

Towards learning-with Country

Law (2004) argues that in Euro-American epistemologies, the assemblage that comes to make the totality of knowledges disappears upon enactment. Meaning that, the contingencies of knowing that make up a representation are eradicated, backgrounded or obscured by the representation itself. But, in Aboriginal knowledge assemblages, contingencies never vanish upon representation, the assemblage always exists in the presentation of knowledge. Law (2004: 132) states that to understand ‘takes effort, continuing effort’ and that Aboriginal ways of knowing inhere an ‘endless and necessary preoccupation with process’. Creation narratives of *Bugarrigarra* – an atemporal moment of creation in West Kimberley Aboriginal cosmologies – acknowledges that there is no known reality that is prior to the here-and-now, no singularity and definitive being that exceeds the present. This is because the present is made up of the past and future. No temporal distinction is made in being. The method through which Aboriginal relational knowledges are assembled rejects outright the tendency of Western epistemologies to create dualist separations in categories of difference:

All sorts of characters can be active, are active, are made to be active, in Aboriginal method assemblages. And this, though it is sometimes a source of

trouble, is also [...] a vital source of strength. [It] gathers and generates a rich plethora of actors of all kinds (Law 2004: 133).

This relational way of knowing takes time to comprehend for people-not-of-place. To make sense of this endless multiplicity of relations – humans, non-human animals, plants, land and seascapes, atmospheres, rhythms etc. – the body needs to slow down, it also requires that those bodies are charged / primed to be open, more able to sense. In this bodily state, everything is always in emergence, always immanent to the present situation. Country takes place continually and requires sustained interaction and connection in order to shape and be shaped by ‘the social’ (Law 2004: 12). Being affected by Country is then a form of socialisation for white supporters of Aboriginal activisms, whether or not they dwell – in a material sense – together with others. Such dwellings do not require a *physical* being-together of difference in an objective sense, but through learning how to be affected, white activists begin to share in a co-becoming with Country (Bawaka Country *et al.* 2015a). They stage encounters – ‘events of relation where attunement and nonattunement are experienced simultaneously’ (Wilson 2016: 15) – with difference that requires effort in order to attune to the relationality of Country. Relations then move thought and imagination to other times and spaces through the materiality of the body. White activists engage in the process of becoming-otherwise by understanding conceptual, atmospheric and embodied knowledges of an Aboriginal method assemblage. In doing so, they enlarge their capacity to enact, prefigure and imagine a world-otherwise that is attentive to the myriad interrelations with people, place and the non-human.

These processes of becoming entangle diverse histories and experiences which include the transmigration of ways of knowing and being. Through engaging with this process by learning the scaled variances of oppression and whiteness globally, nationally, regionally and locally, activists enlarge their capacity to share in the affects of place. Embodied narratives of Country through a reading of the sensorium of time and space, resource collective dreamings of what the good life might be: at once detuning from normative notions and attuning to new indeterminate imaginings. Such collective dreamings are diverse, yet they harbour a potential to swell in the event of action – Country primes the body to act. This process of becoming does not negate the embodied histories of diverse bodies and their experiences at the hands of, or as being agents of, oppression. Whiteness is still a political negotiation in the political projects that are led by coloured bodies – both individual and collective. However, Country, felt through affective attunements to relational spaces, allows for these (re)negotiations of belonging to take place. As a geography of the good life, the affective resonances of spaces where activists connect, charge the body in ways that re-orientate and enlarge their capacity to negotiate difference. This enlargement can be witnessed in the event of noisy street protests, yet importantly, it never actually undoes whiteness. The next chapter to follow performs a doing of attunement-to-Country through learning to be affected by Liyan. I use my body, that of a white ally with settler privileges complicated by my embodied history of colonisation as an Irish migrant, to renegotiate my participation through Aboriginal frameworks of knowing and being.

Chapter nine: Attunement to place on the Lurujarri

This chapter brings together auto-ethnographic embodied narratives of attunement to the atmospherics of place. I specifically speak to my overarching research question: what role does place play in making connections across difference that facilitate activist solidarities which radically reframe normative understandings of the ‘good life’? I do so through a process of learning to be affected by Aboriginal embodied pedagogies of knowing. Throughout this thesis I have argued that activists who make connections with place, enable their effective participation in Aboriginal rights agendas. They are firstly pre-conditioned by an event of crisis and disappointment in the normative imagination of the good life – a flowing ‘cluster of promises’ that structure the quest to attain proximity to ‘moral-economic-intimate’ scenes and objects (Berlant 2011: 23). The good life calls the subject into relation with objects and goods structured as places with distinct feels, vibes and aesthetics. The good life hails, but it also misfires. Stan Grant, Wiradjuri man and Aboriginal rights advocate, discusses the becoming of ‘the Australian dream’ from the perspective of Aboriginal Australia, saying:

We heard the howl of the Australian Dream, and it said to us again: you’re not welcome (2016: 2).

Although Grant represents a particular perspective of Aboriginal rights and agendas in Australia which many Aboriginal voices are critical of, his platform and presence as a key political commentator provides a useful perspective on the pervasiveness of a misfired good life among marginalised groups in Australia. Despite this politics, Grant describes how the dream of the normative good life fails to deliver equality for Aboriginal people in Australia. Not only does the good life fail in its promise of

attainment for Aboriginal people, but as Povinelli (2011: 5) highlights it represents a ‘devastating paradox’ in Australia: it is normatively attained through the suffering and injustice inflicted upon Aboriginal people. Gestures toward what a meaningful reconciliation effort might resemble, necessarily invokes a questioning and reframing of what the good life is and how it is embodied. I argue that Aboriginal embodied ways of knowing, and their embrace by non-Aboriginal people, offers crucial insights into how affirmative relations between diverse bodies emerges as a radical source of politics. Non-Aboriginal activist narratives presented in this thesis demonstrate how they come to care about difference through encountering other ways of knowing about their shared worlds. This insight does not posit that non-Aboriginal people inhabit *Aboriginal* worlds, but that there exists a world where both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people can negotiate their belonging. They enact Povinelli’s (2011: 160) contention that ‘[t]o care is to embody an argument about what a good life is and how such a good life comes into being’.

In the sections to follow, I describe a process through which narrow structures of feeling that coalesce around objects of the good life, are replaced by other embodied ways of knowing and being in the world. In previous chapters I described Country as a relational concept that is facilitated by Aboriginal understandings of Liyan. I show that it is Liyan – an embodied way of knowing Country that speaks to Western conceptualisations of affect – that resources, enhances and exercises the capacity of activism in Broome to acts upon moments of disappointing, reframing and enacting the good life. Coulthard (2010: 79) argues, that such connections to Country:

serve as an orientating framework that guides radical Indigenous activism today and offers a way of thinking about relations within and between peoples and the natural world built on principles of reciprocity and freedom.

These relational ways of thinking about space, deterritorialise imaginaries that construct encounter boundaries and frontiers so crucial to the legitimisation of the settler-colonial project. Through thinking and feeling differently, activists enact a sovereignty of knowing that disrupts the distribution of narrow colonial epistemes.

Crucial to these enactments is the taking-place of an affective pedagogy that Aboriginal activists teach non-Aboriginal people. Whilst white allies develop a deeper understanding of Aboriginal injustices and modes of dispossession, it is crucial to an effective politics that these understandings are enhanced by embodying the arguments for a renewed good life. These range from the global economies of empire, to the regional contexts of labour flows across colonial frontiers that helped expand the claim of Australian nationhood (Martínez and Vickers 2015). Locally specific histories that are often hidden and subverted rise to the surface through their recollections of uncomfortable narratives. These understandings foreground their pathways to making connections across difference, engaging in a process of becoming effective white allies. The effectiveness of the collaboration between activists interviewed is highlighted by Muecke (2016a: 252), who characterises this emplaced collaboration ‘to be the most significant, and successful, Indigenous-green alliance in Australia’s history’. Through learning to be affected by Country, white activists shift their temporally ordered thinking to a more spatial atmospheric understanding of being. They move their thought from a pre-occupation with development informed by western discourse, to a more relational way of knowing

that accounts for the contiguous nature of being (Coulthard, 2014). It is this shift, I argue, that accounts, in part, for the effectiveness of allyship across difference in this place.

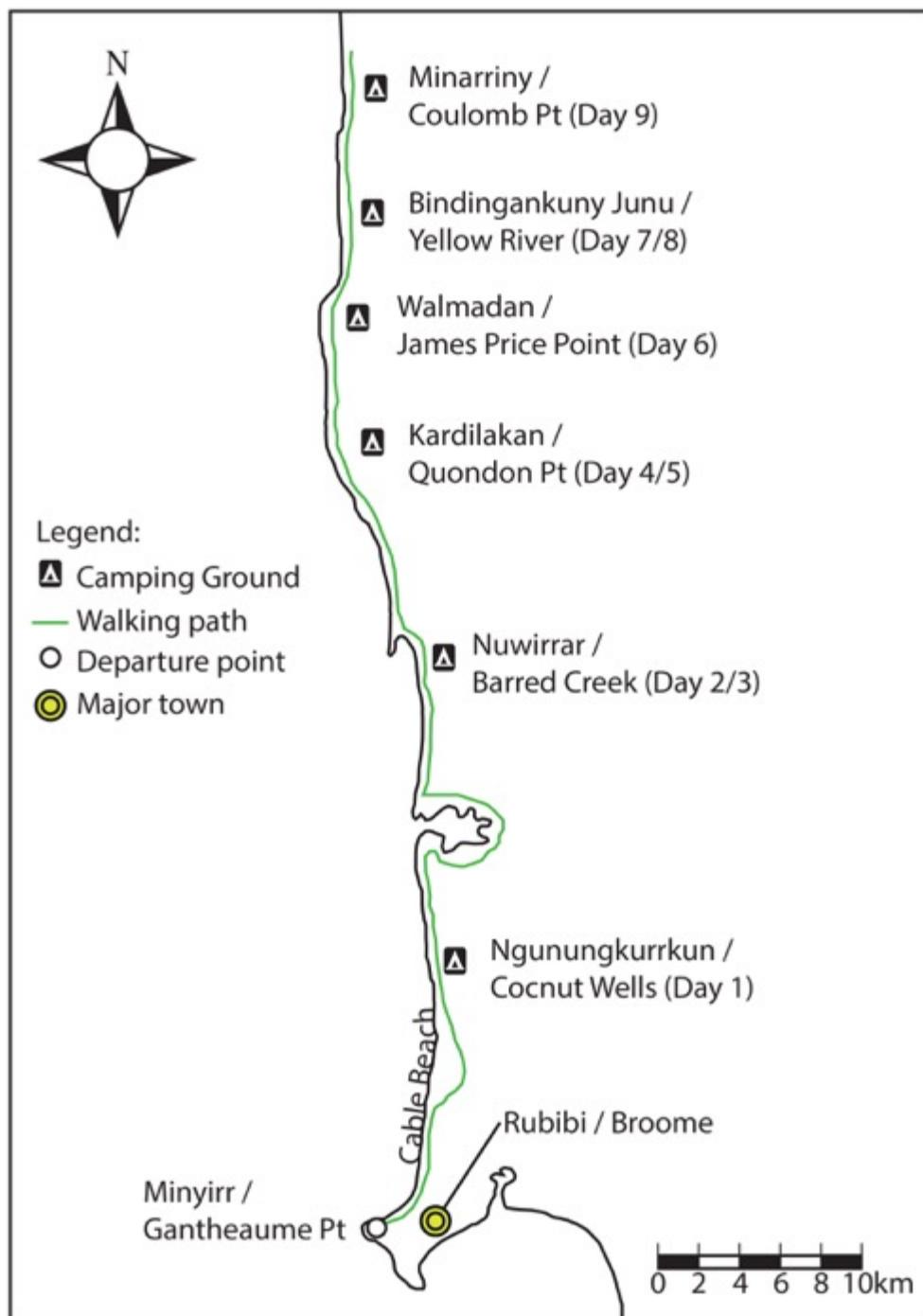
Importantly, white activists enter into a process of becoming by embodying a way of being that occupies alterity, entangling their being-in-place with notions, concepts and ideas of Aboriginality. In this process of becoming, white activists do not assume Aboriginal identities, but instead are affected by concepts inherent to Aboriginal ontologies in ways that facilitate a renegotiation of their inclusion. They do not re-present concepts to fit their pre-conceived ideas of being-Aboriginal, but rather they are enchanted and affected by them. Vincent (2016: 253) argues, that it is these white environmentalist encounters with Aboriginality, that ‘can be seen to capture, becoming, if only partially, possessed by it – or perhaps of it’. Stories of being affected by Country account for the representational aspect of being a good ally and can be analysed through interview narratives. Only partial fragments of a process of becoming can be gleaned through these narratives, with storytelling itself being a performance that informs the research of something that has happened, but limited in its capacity to witness it. It is for this reason that this chapter describes the final phase of this research through non-representational auto-ethnographic insights orientated by the narratives of activists.

I use my body as an instrument of research / barometer of affect in this chapter to explore the embodied pedagogy of learning to be affected by Country. Nine days spent attuning to place through developing a sense of Liyan when walking *with* the Lurujarri provides insights into a partial and incomplete process of becoming that Aboriginal people teach white allies. The trail offers a glimpse of this reciprocal

process that requires multiple (re)engagements and continual maintenance. The sections to follow describe how the trail does its work on bodies. Particularly, it describes the ‘opening up of Country’ to non-Aboriginal bodies (Emmanouil 2014: 42) which enables an embodied understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing and the emergence of new relations. Fundamentally, this ethnography is influenced by my interviewee’s conceptions of the good life, which, stated most eloquently by Anne, is:

To be on Country, to associate with other humans, to share knowledge, to share wisdom, to share song, to share ceremony, to share our knowledge of how we read the Country and live within it. So, my sense of good life is based on that. So that we can reach our full potential as human beings but also open the door and support other people reaching their full potentiality (Interview, 24/06/15).

Lurujarri Country



Map 3 – Lurujarri Heritage Trail

The *Lurujarri Heritage Trail* (Map 3) tracks an Aboriginal song-line that stretches from Rubibi (Broome) to Minarriny (Coulomb Point) 80km to the north. It holds significance to Aboriginal people of the area as a set of dreaming places embedded with creation stories that unsettle the temporality of place and renews ethical orientations to Country. For tourists and other non-Aboriginal residents of this region, it features popular camping grounds due to its relative seclusion and perceived tranquillity. Over the course of the JPP protests, it became a key non-human actor in the facilitation of alliances between Aboriginal groups and white environmentalists. Demonstrating an agentic force, the trail enveloped a diverse set of concerned activists with differing goals and outcomes, forging connections across difference in culture, ethnicity and race, but also imagination. The success of the activism in this place is partly due to those involved drawing on long-term connections with each other through sharing space as residents of Broome, but also through the embrace of Aboriginal and scientific knowledges. This hybrid form of making knowledge crystallised in the successful identification of endangered bilbies, sea turtle nesting sites and dinosaur footprints through melding local embodied Aboriginal knowledges and environmental sciences.

The trail meanders through Goolarabooloo Country, a splice of land meaning ‘the coast where the sun goes down’ (Cooke 2013: 189). This is not one place but many, with a fluid constitution that is made up of numerous tribal groupings – Garadjeri, Nyigina, Yaour, Nyul-Nyul, and Djabirr-Djabirr tribes – as well as other settlements (Cooke 2013). As a tourist event, it begins in the remote-urban town of Broome. Gradually the trail does its work on bodies, leaving the rhythms of urban Broome, opening up the possibility to sense and feel other ways of being. I imagine the trail as a middle space, a liminal expression of relations in-between Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal. It maps a journey where groups are not quite inhabiting each other's way of being-in-the-world, but rather a spatially and temporally distinct alternative. It is an important space considering that settler-Aboriginal relations have so far demanded that Aboriginal people make the journey to the White majority – a journey that often limits a capacity to return (Healy 1999). An intimate space, the trail unsettles and disrupts dominant temporal consumption rhythms of southern postcolonial cities.

Through decades of removal and intervention, assimilationist policies by the state continue to accost affirmative relations between Aboriginal and settler people. The trail is a space that disturbs this seemingly immutable cultural binary. It acts as a travelator – moving walkway – that slows down bodies and allows for cultures to travel together, co-producing and collectively feeling affects. This is a space where difference interpenetrates without being erased, what Massumi (2014: 6) calls a 'zone of indiscernibility', permitting a 'mutual inclusion of difference'. Conceptualising the trail as a space situated in the in-between, keeps the contemporary political motif of 'the gap' between White and Indigenous peoples in dialogue with the politics of the trail.

As suggested throughout this thesis, these entanglements go further than the representation of Aboriginal knowledges, injustices and rights. Being equipped with science and the power of representation help in the forging and maintenance of solidarity across difference. Yet the role that embodied aspects of these connections play in how useful these non-Aboriginal relationships to Aboriginal place, is critically over-looked in academic literature (Askins 2009; Brown and Pickerill 2009a, 2009b). Whilst emotion and affect have emerged as a growing source of

analysis in the labour of activism, the ability for atmospheres beyond the event of protest to endure has been under examined. Atmospheres are theorised in affective literature as the ephemeral taking place of a collective thought, idea or concept that has a feel, texture or signature (McCormack 2008; Anderson 2009a; Bissell 2010; Edensor 2012; Anderson 2014; McCormack 2014; Anderson and Ash 2015; Bille *et al.* 2015). Argued here, is the idea that a spatial thinking imbued within the affective resonances of Country, structures the making of connections between diverse actors. In the section to follow, I develop narratives of activist connections to the Lurujarri Trail to articulate how pre-conditioning spaces enable renewed affective attachments to place that in turn facilitate the making of connections across difference.

Hey, head stockman! Come over here. You've got to walk this Country for us

Well I walked that trail with Paddy Roe back in 1994. He's the old man who's passed on now, and he said to me, he used to call me head stockman because I wear a big hat, "Hey head stockman, come over here", said "You've got to walk this Country for us", he said "It doesn't matter whether your black or white or brindle, if you walk this Country, this Country's going to be strong and the Country will look after you". And so, he charged me with that responsibility and I took it on. I mean he was talking to everyone else around the place to do the same thing, but there's a good lot of people who have taken that on and walked that Country. I've walked that Country over the years with the Roe family a number of times and you know, just hearing the stories of each location and hearing the songs of each location, and just be in that Country, it's a powerful thing that you can't explain by not doing it (Greg, Interview, 09/06/15).

As I have stated previously in this thesis, many non-Aboriginal activists describe their embodied obligations to Country. Greg describes an encounter with Paddy Roe, a local hero-like figure credited with setting up the Lurujarri Trail. In response to this statement by Greg, I ask him if the trial is ‘less measurable like that?’:

Oh yeah you can't measure it, you've just got to do it, you know. I'd recommend it to anyone, in fact I'd say to anyone who's in Broome that hasn't done it, hasn't really got here yet.

As I noted in Chapter Seven, Greg was a hard person to interview. As I was verbally walking him through the plain language statement and gaining informed consent, he laughed and asked, ‘so you’re trying to intellectualise the good life?’ For Greg, the good life is beyond theorisation, something immeasurable and enigmatic to modes of popular representation. A recognition that the song line exists and is important to the Aboriginal people of Goolarabooloo Country brings one to know of the trail, but it does not equate to a process of co-becoming with it. How the trail might be known, is to walk the trail, or more specifically, to walk *with* the trail.

Paddy Roe told Greg, and many other non-Aboriginal people, ‘if you walk this Country this Country’s going to be strong and the Country will look after you’. Readings of Country performed in this way, through walking in reciprocity with Country, is how the infrastructures that enable a feeling of Country stay strong. These infrastructures distribute a different way of feeling and imagining space, and therein, possibilities of what a renewed good life might be. It is a fundamentally political exercise, to walk the trail and to feel alterity. It is political because it stages a disagreement with politics performed through governmentality – at once an opposition to politics (in the hegemonic sense) and the object of politics (in the

emancipatory sense). Rancière (2013) defines politics in two veins: one that distributes what is sensible, and one that disrupts this distribution. He argues – through what he defines as ‘the police’ – that there is an order of governmentality that defines the parameters ‘of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task’ (Rancière 1999: 29). Rancière (2013) calls this process the ‘distribution of the sensible’, in which an imposed way of perceiving space occludes other ways of knowing. It takes place as a striation of atmospheres and rhythms that condition how space might be made sense of, what Williams (1977) calls a ‘structure of feeling’.

Drawing upon Rancière, Iveson (2014) argues that being emplaced within the normative distribution of sensibilities and conventions of sociality, in other words doing what is expected as a citizen, is apolitical in that there is no disagreement staged. The Lurujarri Trail stages a disagreement with the normative distribution of ways of doing and being that structure the cluster of promises associated with the good life. By allowing oneself to be affected by the trail, Country and the feel of Liyan, alternative imaginaries that are radically political emerge through the restructuring of spatial knowledges. As Coulthard (2014) suggests, Indigenous peoples’ ontological frameworks derive from a spatial, and therefore relational, way of thinking, rather than linear time and developmental thinking that has animated mainstream thought since the European Enlightenment. Relationality as a mode of thinking in geography, locates space centrally in political projects: ‘political thinking is informed by spatial thinking... different spatial imaginaries inform different understandings of politics’ (Dikeç 2012: 670). Given this, though thinking spatially – atmospherically, rhythmically, affectively – the trail positions itself as a political project, one that has a potentially transformative quality. This transformation stresses

that walkers go beyond an encyclopaedic knowing of Country, which privileges representation and is prone to mimicry, toward an emplaced entanglement with Country. Greg stresses this transformative potential when he says:

They [walkers on the trail] start off by standing on top of Country and they end up being in Country, there's a big difference.

The transformative potential of place is not a new concept in Indigenous knowledge systems and the song-line has always existed despite the trail being ‘opened up’ in the 1980s. Perhaps the existence of the trail as a touristic event of sharing space together, signals the emergence of a collaborative era corralled around Aboriginal notions of space. Other activists note the importance of this time, with Paddy Roe serving as the personification of affirmative relations between Aboriginal and settler societies. Importantly it was not just a one-way sharing of Aboriginal culture with white Australia, but also the maintenance of a tradition in seeing, knowing and doing among Aboriginal groups of the area. Embracing diversity strengthened the capacity of the trail affect; through sharing the trail, it helped to keep it alive. Dave shares this sentiment with me:

We were fortunate here to have a bloke called Paddy Roe... He seemed to draw tremendous faith and complete fulfilment from his understanding of Aboriginal culture. It allowed him to live his life in that Aboriginal way despite the fact that everybody around him might have been getting vehicles and handouts here and there. He remained, I wouldn't say aloof from that, but he remained satisfied, fulfilled by his own culture. He looked after his kids and his grandkids. But he did realise that for Aboriginal culture to be able to survive, that it needed to be understood and supported by white blokes. So he

perhaps came to the conclusion of the Lurujarri Trail, that he is credited with establishing, where people get the opportunity to understand each other, black and white (Interview, 11/06/15).

Country here provides an opening up of a pedagogy that facilitates the making of connections across difference. In being-with-Country, Aboriginal people occupy positions where they might speak their knowledge and be heard, to hail rather than be hailed to. An affective knowing becomes fundamental here in hailing non-Aboriginal people to Country. The body as a barometer of these affects acts as a conduit for Country, allowing others to apprehend it as a set of different sensibilities that flow across a continuum of Country–people relations and shape the conditions through which new worlds emerge (Coombes *et al.* 2014). Frames of knowing are shifted here to facilitate a teaching that occurs outside of the colonial refrain. Wocky notes how Country turns Aboriginal people into teachers:

You bring them up, no matter if it's here in the ocean or in the middle of the desert, that Aboriginal person, whether he's drunk or sober, he will still be himself, because he'll be showing you what's natural, what's in him, you know? Like, he already has knowledge, he's an expert on what he does you know? And he'll enjoy that, giving that knowledge, passing it on to other people. Even when I was taking the tourists for the walk from here, the Lurujarri Trail, doing that is like awesome, and I like showing them that. I like showing them how we make spears, we used to catch fish, and I want them to catch fish, so I don't have to catch it, you know? But to me, that's real, you know? I feel like I'm teaching, you know? Like I am showing them

something, and then it's real, it's not a lie or anything like that (Interview, 22/06/15).

Such spaces allow for alterity to take hold and apprehend bodies. Frameworks are provided by which a knowing might take-place through doing, but walkers on the trail are responsible for their own connections. Wocky remarks that white tourists are taught how to make their own connections:

at the end of the walk they just don't want to leave, they just want to stay there and make that feeling last forever, you know? They go "I don't want to go".

But this connection is not made by everyone. I recall during interviews with Visitors Centre manager Nick and Shire President Graeme being told about the people who come to Broome and fail to be enchanted. The Lurujarri, like Broome, is a place that has been maintained through basic infrastructures such as roads and electricity grids, but also through the connections made by people with Country. Not all Aboriginal people share in this connection and not all non-Aboriginal people do. The rhythms and atmospheres of Country are maintained by relations in and between diverse human and non-human actors, regardless of categorical affiliations. Not everyone maintains Country and thus, not everybody is empowered by it. For this reason, responsibility is a factor in this complex web of relation. Those who feel responsible for the maintenance of Country and diversity, are those that enlarge their capacity to become empowered by it. In my interview with Bart, we talk about responsibility for Country, to which he addresses the trail:

Yeah, that's a perfect thing to do... you'll see that in the handing down and the transfer of information. And to make it opened up for white people and

visitors is great because you're sharing that appreciation for the Country.

You're sharing it and some people see it and some people don't, some people just don't get it but you see it and you experience it first hand and you go "shit". And then you probably go back thinking environmental friendly, and this and that, and don't do this and don't do that. We need to look after this place. It's not just beautiful for us to look at, it's beautiful because it's rich, it's healthy (Interview, 02/06/15).

For those bodies that are affected by Country as a living entity, the connection lasts despite distance. It seems that once entangled, a set of responsibilities muster around the affective experience. Martin notes that there was a distinct group of people who have walked the trail and returned in the fight against the gas hub at JPP. The trail, he says, was:

something set up by traditional owners to basically show white people Aboriginal culture and share it. And give them appreciation and then, you know, many of the people who have done the Lurujarri Heritage Trail have kept in touch and in fact many of them came back to protect it. Such was the connection they made to that Country and people (Interview, 16/06/15).

Whilst distance might hinder a capacity to repeat and continually negotiate relationships with Country and others, the effects of initial encounters with these spaces of connection endure. As I write my own personal accounts of attunement along the trail, I revisit the site. Photos, diary entries, memories of conversations and experiences reconstruct the feel of moments, allowing me to attend to the process of becoming. Images have performative aspects to them, as non-representational theories acknowledge (Thrift 2007). Indeed, as Latham and McCormack (2009: 253)

argue, ‘images can be understood as resonant blocks of space-time’ that are ‘not just representational’:

Images are also blocks of sensation with an affective intensity: they make sense not just because we take time to figure out what they signify, but also because their pre-signifying affective materiality is felt in bodies.

Images can conjure up feelings, such as the postcard of a beach might do for a tourist. Or as I experienced in the analysis of my own auto-ethnographic photographs, images mobilised my thinking and feeling, allowing me to encounter again the ‘blocks of space-time’ that provoke affective imprints left on my body during the trail. Idyllic imagery of distant scenes have the capacity to transcend distance, but often these scenes structure affect in ways that dislocate them from space, rendering them materially unavailable to the body. There is often a disjuncture between what is expected to be felt and what is felt in the scene of encounter (Edensor 2012). I argue that thinking with and through images can be a generative exercise, but it remains impoverished or idealised when the scene of the image is unavailable to the body.

Thinking in images relies upon imagination, one that is informed by an embodied encounter. Zwicky (2014: 42) states that imagination is:

the capacity to see-as and -into, as sensitivity to ontological resonance, [it] is the most direct route to the good life. It does not *tell* us, it *shows* us.

For Zwicky, to *show* is to think and feel in the same moment. In thinking with spaces of encounter, the body draws upon the feel of the scene, experienced as being with the scene. Massumi (2008: 11) refers to this process as ‘thinking-feeling’, where a

'likeness' of a scene, event or thing might be imagined according to 'the body's relation to the thing'. The thinking-feeling process is 'not cognitive per se, like a recognition', but rather 'a thinking at one with a feeling' that exceeds the embodied encounter (Massumi 2008: 11). This has a resonance for some activists, who recall moments in which imagining a being-in-place resources and nourishes their imagination of what might be the good life. Louise relives the trail when she is physically removed from it, stating:

I used to walk the trail because I was really connected with the trail and I was working with Goolarabooloo. And I used to walk the trail in my mind like a video. Just to remind me that there were amazing places still on the planet that were just pristine and beautiful. So, I used to walk these, just play videos in my head to remind me of nature, or of cleanliness, you know? (Interview, 05/06/15).

The empowering attributes of the trail, whether invoked through imagination or an embodied encounter, have the capacity to sooth divisions and address the debilitating effects of ongoing duress and controversy in Broome. The affective life of Country which the body taps into along the trail, well up discursively from within the established regimes of making sense. Imbued within these discursive spaces are potentials for disrupting the refrain through which performed ways of being and relating become normative. New refrains emerge through enactments and performances of different ways of being and doing that are affected by intensities of place. Affective intensities that grow throughout the walk, inform the shifts that people make in their frameworks of relationality.

These new refrains may emerge from the discursive spaces of the trail, but crucially, they also interrupt the distribution of discursive frameworks, that is, the modes of difference that are legitimated by ideas of what is normal and correct (Cresswell 2006). Intensities of difference and alterity become indiscernibly fragmented through minutiae shifts in the body. Such affective intensities, argues Guattari (1995: 19), are ‘capable of overthrowing’ the order of discourse and distribution of sensibilities; in preference to affirmative ‘transformation’ and ‘new modes of living’ (Bertelsen and Murphie 2009: 139). For Petrine, the trail forms moments that extend beyond the event of encounter, moments that enable better relations with racialised others in Australia. She states:

We live in a very racist country, basically very ignorant, very ignorant country. And that's why people running the Lurujarri Trail, they should be given a bloody medal. They should be put up there, because they're educating the public for those people who are open-minded enough to be educated. There's an opportunity there to change your mind... And they sort of, I suppose, experience it rather than just hear it, they actually feel it to some extent. And it changes something inside of them. That's what I – that's how I would define it... It slows you down to be *with* Country (Interview, 08/06/15).

Through exploring how embodied notions of time affect the process of becoming, this chapter moves now to demonstrate how the trail creates a time-space for bodies to become attuned to place. This notion of place privileges Aboriginal ways of knowing and making sense of the world, at the same time disrupting the normative distribution of the sensible (Rancière 2013). It explores how Indigenous ways of

knowing place gradually fold into perception, and how an attunement to Liyan allows for an affirmative inter-cultural sharing of the present.

Temporal disruptions

In the lead up to the dry, Broome braces for a potential four-fold increase of its population. A blanket of rain, hot sticky air, whirling winds, lightning shows, crocodiles and stinging jellyfish retreats north as tourists, nomads, workers, researchers and residents of the dry parachute into town. Broome as a destination, gateway or transitional space, apprehends the mobility of these bodies, collecting them and reorientating their trajectories. The town is like the axis of a vortex gathering speed, absorbing bit-part bodies into its rhythmic hold. For merchants of commerce, a long Wet has passed and the seasonal reinvigoration of the marketplace is highly anticipated. The churn of bodies through the cash registers and streets, the pitched noise of mopeds thrashing through town and the endless touchdowns of commercial jets and private helicopters recalibrate the rhythm of the dry. Resorts, races, horseback polo, festivals, art shows, theatre, rodeos, wet t-shirt competitions, barbeques, boat parties, house parties and the opera normalises the consumption patterns of space.

As bodies move about from place to place, different mobilities become apparent. Differences pronounced by feelings of being in and out of place determine how bodies move about and at what times. Indeed, these mobilities and patterns of urban space constitute which bodies belong and to what environments (Bissell 2015). Some bodies, notably itinerant Aboriginal people known locally as *long-grassers*, stagnate in public spaces, waiting. Car load after car load of white tourists disembark at the taxi rank in Chinatown: Broome ‘is their Dreamtime wonderland, a picture postcard

of “exotic” Aboriginal life’ notes Grant (2016: 55). A group of Aboriginal men and women sit at the rank, a fixture in a public space that is moving and mobile. A line of cafes raised above street level divide the typologies of stagnation: ‘where one Australia ends and another begins’ (2016: 67).

Walking from the centre of town to my accommodation at the university, bodies of colour move slow along Guy Street, a juxtaposition made stark by a group of white joggers in yoga pants racing past me with a Labrador on the leash. When the heat of the day dies down, nodes of music and chatter emanate from the bars and house parties of Broome, tourists drink in illuminated-intimate-enclosed spaces. As I drive through the streets after dark on my hired moped, they are relatively empty, aside from the usual presence at Male Oval in the centre of town. In conversations with others during ethnographic fieldwork, I recall being told this is not a pleasant place after dark: ‘it’s like a scene from the walking dead’. I drive slow past the park, being careful to avoid bodies crossing the dimly-lit road. The park is animated by gathering groups of people, drinking, laughing and talking excitedly. A group of men raise their cans of beer as I drive by and yell ‘heyyyy!’ as if to celebrate: I give them a toot on the horn. The scene stands in contrast to the idleness of the day when tourist bodies set the tempo of the town. Here space becomes occupied by otherness, aided in a condition of under-illumination, the capacity to maintain normal orders become obscured by the alter-sensorium of night (Edensor 2015a).

As dawn breaks over the town, staggering bodies make it back to town reserves, or to the sober-up clinics, or to a shady tree on the oval. Police complete their round-ups and move-ons as council workers empty bins and gather scattered refuse on the street. I return the moped to the hire shop and make my way on foot along the

suburban streets to a lot of fenced land nestled among houses in Old Broome. I drop my bag and sleeping swag near a flatbed truck that carries the walkers gear for the 10 days and sit on a patch of dirt with other walkers. We don't know each other yet, aside from some who have travelled in pairs. I ask another walker, about 30 years old where she is from, 'Sydney' she replies. Asking me where I am from, I reply 'Melbourne'. She says to me:

Oh yeah, I could have guessed that

What do you mean?

The whole thing. Ned Kelly get-up with the beard, tattoos and hair.

She turns away, as not to continue with the conversation. As a group of 22 walkers, we leave off from the Goolarabooloo compound in Old Broome at about 3pm. Guided by Goolarabooloo CEO Terry Hunter, we west through the compound, down Anne Street and through the Japanese Cemetery. We halt at Port Drive, a busy highway that marks the boundary of Old Broome and New Broome. As complete strangers, members of the group couple-off and get to know one another, asking introductory questions. We cross the busy street and disappear into the cookie-cutter suburban streets of New Broome. Zig-zagging through the bends of the streets, we come to a foot path along a flood gutter that leads to the beach. After walking for about a half-hour, we rest at the top of the dunes, finally within sight of the beach. Another half-hour later and we make our first stop on the beach at Minyarr Park in the foreground of the Cable Beach Resort (Image 33). It is here that we meet up with our supply vehicle that delivers food and water throughout the trail. We are

introduced to our storyteller for the walk, Terry Jnr, who begins with the first story of the song cycle that we are walking.



Image 33 – First stop at Cable Beach

Paraphrasing Terry (Image 34), I recall the story of the *Nadja* spirits from *Bugarrigarra*, the time of creation. This site is known as *Dabberdabbergun* – located in Minyirr Park – is where the first Naji people came from. The Nadja spirits lived in the sea and came back and forth to the land of a silent world. One day about 15 or 16 spirits came out, took human form and laid up on the beach to dry. Standing on the beach, they get a vision of a waterhole to the north – sunrise Country. The world is an empty place. The first man makes a clap with his hands, and with this he opens up the senses to sound and smell. They start the journey to the waterhole, as they are walking through, landforms begin to emerge, being created as they walk. It takes 4 or 5 days to walk to the waterhole. They had a vision of a lake, a big body of water. But when they get there, there isn't any water, it is all dry. The main Naji man

knows now they are in trouble, if there is no water, there is no life. He can smell and hear water in a big black rock. He knows he has to break the rock open. He calls upon another spiritual man in the group. This second man sits, the first man stands in front, both facing the rock. The rest of the Naji form a semicircle around the rock and they start to sing. They have no boomerang or clapping sticks, they just use their hands and ‘make song’. This gives the spiritual men power. The first man throws his stick at the rock, but nothing happens. He switches place with the second man and he then throws his stick, which breaks into pieces. They know they are in trouble so they send a *Darp* – message stick – back to the Nadja spirits at *Bilingurr* on the coast. They get the message, knowing they have to get to them as fast as they can. It takes them 3–4 days to get there and when they arrive they get a scent of death. All the First People are dead around the rock. The tribe know they have to break the rock to survive. Same ceremony with two men. First man throws stick and cracks the rock. Water trickles down. Second man throws and cracks the rock open. Water flows from the rock onto the land, when the water touches the dead bodies, they turn into small trees called *Dingelmarremarre*. The second group that came to help continue on their journey on to sunrise Country, half come back to their birthplace at *Bilingurr*.

The birth story of the Naji Dreaming doesn’t take place along a linear timeline, nor is it situated in any one particular tense, it exists as one in all manner of pasts, presents and futures. Terry tells the group, ‘it’s not from before, but another time’. It was a strange notion to consider that such a reality might exist juxtaposed against a traffic jam of four-wheel-drives on the beach and guests enjoying the cocktail bar of the Cable Beach Resort overlooking where we were stood. In that moment, it was difficult to feel or get a sense of an ephemeral energy and imagination that didn’t

adhere to the conventions of time that I was used to. After all, we were still in Broome, still circulating in the vortex, still avoiding vehicles and other people. There are a number of camel trains, hire vehicles, beach activities and personal cameras all carving out spaces on the beach. Our group is merely a part-piece in this ensemble of tourisms that can be experienced on this beach, not yet any more distinct or unique than the rest.



Image 34 – Terry Jnr. telling the Naji Dreaming

Yet, despite being a part of the beach and its touristic activities, our experience is distinct to that of other beachgoers. Whilst in itself, a single story on a busy beach does not adequately shift the refrain of thinking and being. But through repetition of these creation stories along the trail, our linear sense of time begins to erode. Repetition not only reconfigures the walkers' relations to time, but also to that of their environments. Bissell (2015: 150) notes, that 'as subjects we are produced by environments through our interaction with others, and it is repeated performances

that are a key part of this process'. On the beach, we enter into a process of interactions with others, not just human others, but also more-than-human others who we identify as Nadja spirits. Bugarrigarra gets folded into our experiences of place, in doing so the walkers become conduits that lend Country a potential to disrupt dominant temporal and sensory refrains.

Stories reconfigure relations to new modes of sociality. They do not enact a sovereignty of thought *per se* – as speech is the product of social and cultural assemblages. Rather, stories through speech interrupt other socio-cultural assemblages, they are glitches in the transmission of affect (Brennan 2004) or the normative distributions of the sensible (Rancière 2013). Through the repetition of storytelling in different spaces and at different times, the frameworks of knowing that tourists bring to the trail, begin to erode. Stories along with law and culture flow from Bugarrigarra, where past-present-future is folded into itself (Muecke 2017). Fundamentally, they perform political insurrections into the organisation of life in a settler-colonial society, recalling the terms of transmitting structures of existing. In this space, life becomes undetermined, not injecting a universalising imaginary of the good life, but a restructuring of *how* it might come to be known. An unlearning or undoing of epistemological baggage is undertaken, in-part actioned by stories that force walkers to pause. By the tacit-feeling body navigating through uncertain space, the ambiguity of what is to come is itself a performance of sovereignty-in-knowing. Such a sovereignty is not a freedom from dependence, but a freedom to re-place a life within the interdependent relationality of life.

This tension between alternative conceptions of time and place was perhaps the first process in a complex layering of representational and non-representational elements

along the trail. This birth story of the Naji people began the narrative of the trail. It laid the ground work for an elementary appreciation of Aboriginal conceptualisations of place. As Rose (2003: 179) explains:

birth is a key moment in place because it defines the source, and thus the site of return – to be born from a place is to be located so that one knows to where one shall return.

Place embraces both a departure and return as being connected to *here* and *there*. It is a simultaneity of the present and the immanent; of the aesthetic and the ephemeral. Place here is nomadic and mobile, emerging in the present as a coproduced aesthetic comprised of human, non-human and extraordinary beings. As Benterrak *et al.* (2014 [1984]: 3) state, an Indigenous nomadic notion of place is ‘always there and always on the move’. During this walk, place is continually being inscribed with meaning and felt affects as the nomad moves through it. Aboriginal place is therefore always in emergence, and it is in these early stages of the walk that the nomad begins to attune to its anticipation.

Attuning to darkness

As we walk north on Cable Beach, we pass through a thinning network of four-wheel-drives and camel trains. Moving against the grain of the beach, we interrupt the sunset vista, dodging deck chairs and tourist photographers. The spectacle of the setting sun becomes central to the state of being on this beach. In an almost ritualised

symphony, it's as if you can hear gasps of awe as the sun dips on the horizon. Red light spills off the distant line, bloodying the calm ocean.

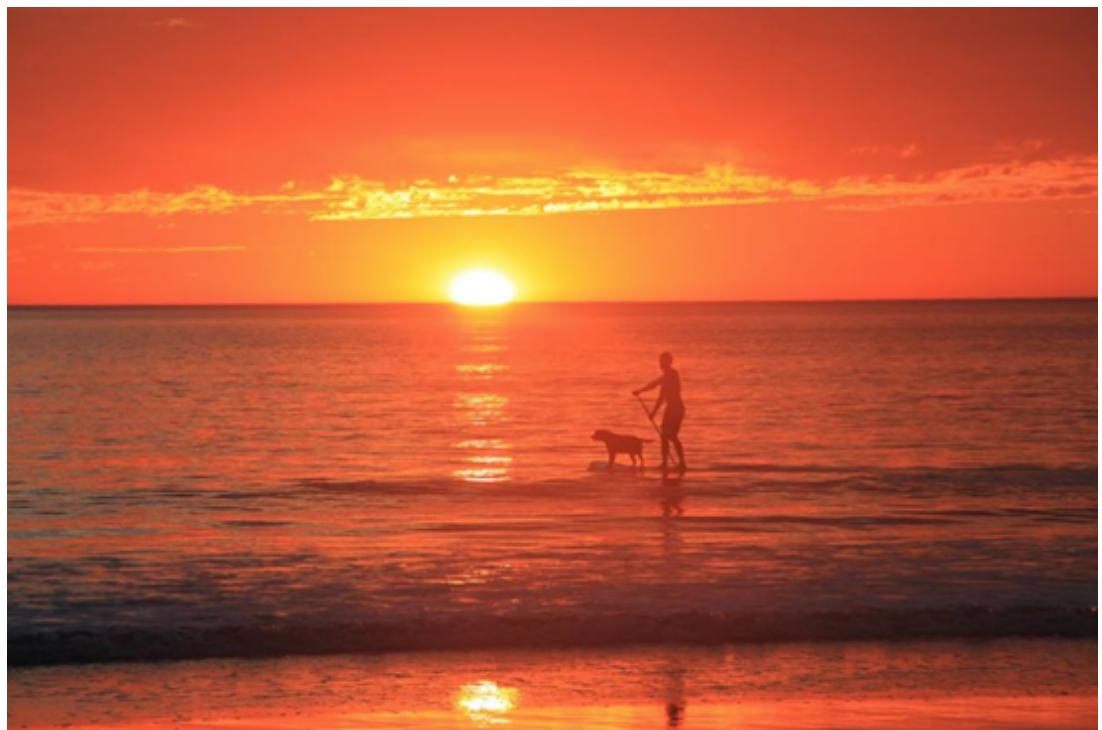


Image 35 – Paddleboarder with dog at Cable Beach

The light seems to burn slow from an over-illuminated daytime brightness, to a tapestry of yellow, orange, red, blue and purple (Image 35). It fades almost in sync with the passage of cars and the walkers spread along the beach into denominations of ones, twos, threes and fours (Image 36). With light becoming bleak, I walk alone near the shoreline. Others are not far away, approximately 20–40 meters. Some are not wearing boots anymore. I take mine off. I walk for about 20 minutes and put them back on – careful not to tread on anything sharp. In the distance, the faint semblance of a white light begins to flicker in and out of focus. It is the only sight of an end to the first day of walking. Twenty-two tourists march toward this flicker of light, foot to ground, repeating, one in front of the other. My headlamp does little to illuminate the gap that spans from shore to dune and on to the horizon. Nevertheless,

I continue walking with it turned on, looking down at the ground trying to map out a short two or three-meter course in front of me. There are only two lights near. But a quiet babble of voices tells me that I am still walking with others. It is just that the majority have turned their torches and headlamps off some time ago. I turn mine off.



Image 36 – Fading light on the beach

At first, the dark puts me off balance. The beach is sentient and shifts its sand from beneath my foot, like walking waste deep on a reef. I begin to hear the crunch of foot-meeting-sand or what could be crustaceans. Walking in the dark on shifting ground requires a robust rhythm, a faith that a regimented '*left...left...left-right-left*' military march will get you to the light without jarring a knee. Both my inner and outer-ear work together to keep my body upright. My eyes are no longer needed to keep my steady march going, nor are they concerned with distance any longer: the fire on the horizon has been on the horizon for the past hour. After having the headlamp on for some time, it takes a few moments to focus to the darkness. Light

begins to slowly emerge as I look up at the cloudless sky. Everywhere there is speckled light, like sequins on a navy blanket, with an enormous streak of dust that must be the Milky Way. After hours of walking, tired travellers no longer speak. The land is noisy with reeds blowing in the dunes, crabs crawling on the beach and waves lapping at the shore. The flicker of light on the horizon slowly becomes yellow. After a while it becomes orange, and then, with the smell of campfire, we know that food and rest is imminent.

When landscapes are imagined or represented, they are usually done so visually, and when we tend to imagine landscapes we usually conceptualise them as a day-time visage (Jakle 2001). There is a moment in the above vignette that I realise that darkness is an abrupt reaction to the sudden removal of light, of over-illumination. I describe a process by which the body is confronted with an abrupt and potentially violent condition of under-illumination. The landscape is a night-time scene that requires a non-visual, sensuously attuned body in order to traverse it. In doing so, the range of sense-making tools that are usually sublime, rise to the surface, helping the body feel its way through the present. In the moment of encountering darkness, there are overpowering affects and sensations that have the potential to ‘overwhelm representational thinking’ (Edensor 2013: 446). What once seemed to be the absence of everything, can become full of meaning. Darkness foregrounds sensations of tactility, sound and smell, provoking an enhanced awareness of the present moment through non-ocular mediums.

Edensor (2013: 453) highlights that ‘becoming attuned to darkness is unfamiliar for many because of the continuing negative associations and dominant visual practices

[...] and the absence of darkness in most everyday spaces'. Historically, in over-illuminated urban towns and cities, darkness has been associated with delinquency and disorder. It is the time of curfew for the enlightened to evade the hedonistic, sinister and carnal practices of the night. In mitigating the dark and its uncivil atmospheres, cities have become lit-up. Street-lamps now map sprawls of human settlement across the earth's surface, a phenomenon seen from outer-space (Thrift 2004a). Such an illumination privileges sight in how we navigate urban life, whilst subverting other ways of making sense to the background hum of the everyday. The primacy of sight and over-illumination, dissolves and erodes the 'qualities of mystery and beauty... limiting opportunities for intimacy and self-reflection' (Edensor 2013: 454). The eyes do not erase, but rather it obscures other readings and reduces the capacity to make sense of the present in different ways.

Attuned to darkness, the body is more able to (re)value a closeness with strangers, the cool relief of night, the silence of groups, the noisiness of nature and the haptics of the foot touching ground. The ethnographic accounts in this section demonstrate how the fading light facilitates encounters with subverted affects. The event of no light, in this case turning the head lamp off, blurred the boundaries of what is 'sensible'. No longer was the body constrained to what the eye could see, a frame of reference that is territorialised by how far light travels. Through disrupting this ocular frame of reference, the vibrancy of what is not sufficiently attended to came into the fold of perception. The noise of other footsteps gave a sense of familiarity, reeds blowing and crabs clicking a sense of fullness, and the smell of fire a sense of actualising what was always immanent.

Whilst these sensory cues are not unique to darkness, the value of their sense making potential becomes apparent when attuned to darkness. As Connolly (2011: 48) states, perception ‘not only has multiple layers of intersensory memory folded into it, it is suffused with anticipation’. It is an anticipation of what cannot be seen but which is in a process of becoming, melded with a knowledge informed by the senses that brings about imagination and perception. Edensor (2013) argues, it is this anticipation that allows for an adaptation to changing conditions; that it is precisely an anticipation of an unfolding environment that brings about affective encounters and attunement (2012). With the arrest of vision in the process of making sense, the body begins to anticipate the emerging landscape by privileging of non-visual ways of making sense. A multi-sensory mosaic gets folded and unfolded again as the immanent-present emerges, fluxing continually as the body moves through it.

Walking: becoming-nomad

Walking is an elementary experience of landscapes. As an embodied experience, it attunes the body to become aware and open to feeling in different ways. de Certeau (1984: 93) characterises walkers as ‘*Wandersmanner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of a [...] "text" they write without being able to read it’. Walking, is a ‘blind and opaque mobility’ that is unable to be made sense of in the tradition of an ocular grammar. Instead, walking prompts an awareness to the affective interface between landscape and body – an atmosphere. Both are constantly reinscribed with shape, form and meaning through an encounter that goes beyond mere sight and vision. There is an ‘ever-moving act of synchronisation inherent where the walker and the landscape combine, at the most fundamental level, where the foot meets the ground’ (Lund 2012: 225). Walking conjures a sense of continual change. The

particular path that one takes through a flexing landscape is ‘the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming’ (Ingold 2008: 1808).



Image 37 – Walking in the dunes, day-two

It was the second day of the trail and already the group was beginning to get a sense that nothing is revealed by accident on the Lurujarri Trail. Information about our walking schedule and distance is always withheld, you are in a constant state of not knowing, or rather, not having a hard objective. In the light of morning, before we were to head off on our second walk, I found a map in a hidden corner of the camp. From this map, and the stiffness in my legs, it became painfully clear that we had walked sixteen kilometres that first day. It would turn out to be the longest walk on the trail and it would be the only time we would walk at night. All of this information was withheld to us the end. This second day (Image 37) of walking was full of questions from walkers: *how long till the next stop? when is lunch? do we get a day off tomorrow? how many kilometres is the walk today?* In what would eventually

become a cynical catchphrase, Terry Snr. answered with a coy smile: *oh, just a stone's throw!*

With no indication of distance from our guides, there was also no visual representation of an endpoint or even a rest-point. The group was gradually being made aware that the practice we were involved in was to be aimless in a traditional orienteering sense. Not aimless in the mind of our guides, but aimless in the concealment of our collective destination. Through a parroted ‘just a stone’s throw’, navigation skills that are usually required to walk such a remote region became redundant. The knowledge of where and when we would be ‘arriving’ was of no consequence to the present reality of just walking. In this sense, we were walking aimlessly, wandering. Bauman (2014) makes the point, that once emancipated from the expectation of an endpoint, the wander accustoms to the present-ness of the moment. The anticipation of the destination is eroded, instead this sense of anticipation is recalibrated through an affective attunement to the present. It manifests in the imagination of the nomad, *always there and always on the move*. Walking as a practice, being a wanderer, a nomad, provides the body with a time-space to revalue Country and its potentials.

In removing the necessity to navigate, to map a course and imagine a destination, walking becomes walking for its own sake. Dwelling in the here and now, walking without apparent end privileges what Adams (2001: 187) terms a ‘peripatetic sense of place’ – deriving from the Greek meaning of *peri*, around, and *patein*, to walk. In particular, walking aimlessly foregrounds the embodied pleasures of walking, allowing for intimate encounters with the sensuous aspects of Country, unmediated by representation. Adams (2001: 189) argues that representations that mediate the

affects and experiences of place ‘are sensorially impoverished in comparison with a peripatetic sense of place’. By walking, the body establishes a physical dialogue with the ground. The repetition of one foot in front of the other and the crunching of sand or sticks establishes a ‘rhythmic harmonization’ (2001: 193) with the ground, heightening the sensitivity to the scene. With prolonged walking, this sensitivity evokes imaginations and affective resonances to planes of feeling that have been dormant in the lives of the urban nomad on the trail. My hurried diary entry from our first day of rest, recants the conversation over morning campfire tea:

Stayed in bed for first half hour of dawn watching the sun come up. A bull (killer) ran through our camp; the dogs chased him off. About five of us sit around fire with bush tea whilst breakfast is made. There is talk about the senses, how thought is much more complex when you absorb more than just what the eyes can see. Smells, sounds, textures and even taste changes with the landscape (Diary Entry, 16/08/2015).

For these nomads walking the trail was beginning to open up a range of registers that were unbound, the limits of which is unknown. Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 20) state that *becoming* is a nomadic notion characterised by ‘heterogeneity, infinitesimal, passage to the limit, continuous variation’. The notion of nomads is used to think through a state of being that resists the hierarchy of centralisation; the nomad is outside normative states of being. This is perhaps best articulated in the distinction between striated and smooth space where the nomad exists. Smooth space is non-hierarchical with a ‘close-range’ perspective that is ‘tactile’ and ‘haptic’ rather than ocular; smooth space can ‘be explored only by legwork’ which is not ‘observable from a point in space external to them’ (1986: 30). In other words, in *being*-nomadic,

one must deviate from conventional paths and trajectories. A nomadic space is essentialised by a foot-to-ground intimate encounter with spaces that privilege an attunement to experiential ‘traits’. Whereas a sedentary space ‘is striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures’, such space seeks to ‘parcel out a closed space to people’ (1986: 44). The smoothing of space emancipates the body from mediating and marginalising forces, being-nomad offers ‘a field without conduits or channels’ (Cresswell 2010: 24).



Image 38 – Making tracks through smooth space

Walking, nomadism and becoming are not especially unique in this exploration, they are concepts that have previously been explored in relation to the Lurujarri Trail. There is a body of scholarship that builds upon Benterrak, Muecke and Roe’s (2014 [1984]), initial introduction to nomadology on the Lurujarri. Cooke (2013) explores the nomad poetics of Paddy Roe, the Goolarabooloo elder-past who is revered in and around Broome for his bush poetry, reconciliation efforts and the establishment of

the Lurujarri as a cross-cultural event. Focussing on a reading of Roe's (2016 [1983]) seminal text *Gularabulu*, Cooke explores how Paddy Roe's stories inhabit the fringes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds. These stories dance the divide, negotiating 'the hazy line proposed by the separation / overlap of settler and Aboriginal West Kimberley culture' (Cooke 2013: 220). Here in this interstitial space, the boundaries between knowledge, culture and race are not eradicated or disturbed. Rather than 'transcending the void, or erecting a wall around culture', the dialectic between otherness and in-hereness is 'suspended [...] giving value to that realm of the passage, or the interval' (Cooke 2013: 220).

Likewise, Healy (1999: 71) describes walking the trail and how 'it created a time-space for the body, haptic spaces built around certain kinds of rhythms and relationships to the Country'. He highlights through Michaels' (1987) how white tourists on the trail perform a process of unbecoming and becoming; 'they are unbecoming their cultural white-ness and becoming minor' (Healy 1999: 70). He proposes that these tourists – or white nomads – are inhabiting the in-between space that Paddy Roe had advocated, 'that lost moment when Aboriginal people might have been European-becoming, and Europeans might have been Aboriginal-becoming while both becoming minor' (Healy 1999: 70). The white nomads are moving away from their own cultural histories, undoing their 'majority' perspective, adopting a 'minority' perspective – whilst still using the language of the majority – which Deleuze and Guattari (1986) describe as 'becoming-minor'. Healy argues that the place created by the Lurujarri Trail is an essential element for white bodies to become-minor. However, I argue that neither group transcends an ambiguous divide. Nor does either subjectivity adopt a complete perspective of the other in its singularity. In the temporality of Country everything exists in the now; this is a place

where everything is contained within, what Deleuze (1997: 4) calls, the ‘plane of immanence’. Subjects are not able to transcend from one fixed position to another, but rather black and white subjects become-together in and with place (Lloyd *et al.* 2015). In this vein, I argue that the middle space that is the Lurujarri, enables a becoming of something that is not quite hybrid or integrated, but something that is more-than-binary.

Sharing space

On the first day of rest, I recall Terry Jnr’s stories from the day before. Whilst we were stopped in a dried-up creek bed, he described to us the interconnectedness of Aboriginal songlines. He tells the group how certain stories emanate from different spots around the Kimberley, as versions of the same story, intersecting, influencing one another, and connecting different people. Pointing to a house perched on stilts at the top of this creek, he tells us of the multiple warnings his grandfather Paddy Roe delivered to a couple who decided to build there in the 1970s. Paddy told them that the location will give them ‘bad Liyan’ if they were to build there. They built on the site regardless, and within three years they had divorced. Another couple bought the house, within three years, they had divorced. This was the introduction of *Liyan* to the stories of the Country, and it began to enter into the thoughts of the group as the walk unfolded. Sitting around the campfire, group members begin to describe some of the complexity to what they are sensing. However, there is one statement that was correct but troubling. One participant on the trail mentioned ‘group dynamics’, explaining to me: ‘why are we separated? I know it, but I will still go and sit with the white group’.

The sense of connectedness between stories, Country and culture was being introduced and repeated at times of rest and recreation. Yet for some on the trail, the separation between the groups had not yet been reconciled. Indeed for a few, this was beginning to disappoint the tourist experience. At many intervals between walking, rehydrating, refuelling with fruit and salad, we would sit together at the campfire and chat. The Goolarabooloo families would arrive at camp before us, set up their tents and go out on Country fishing and hunting amongst other things. There was a logistics crew that was made up of some family members and white ‘adoptees’ or volunteers, and our guides who would walk with us. The organisation of the trail was a large undertaking that was always applauded by the tourists. Yet the bridging of the physical divide and the opportunity for proximate encounters between the groups was elusive.

Some in the walking group made considerable efforts to sit with family members and have casual chats – I am told that these encounters led to friendships. For others, four days of being on the trail, walking to exhaustion, experiencing the erratic fuzziness of thought that accompanies solitary wandering was frustrating. I have conversations with individual people throughout the fifth day of walking. One walker seemed especially frustrated by the lack of intermingling at the campsite, I ask her:

David: Are you disappointed with the fact that there isn’t much contact with the family?

Walker: A little bit, but I think I am being silly. I just wonder if it like this on all of the trails, or is there something different about us? Like, I say, ‘hi how you going?’ and I get little back, no real conversation.

Others reply with ‘it’s a bit strange’ or ‘it can be uncomfortable’ and it isn’t until the second half of the trail that we revisit the issue. At the camp on a day of rest, walkers, adoptees and volunteers sit around chatting, reading, playing guitar and singing. It is a hot day and we are gathered underneath the shade of a large tree. I entered the conversation mid-way to discover that the cultural division was still something of a hot topic. It was interesting to find that, for these walkers, the lack of meaningful intermingling between the family groups and the walkers was becoming reconciled. I hear one walker note, ‘what matters is that we are here in the same space [...] being together is unique I suppose’.



Image 39 – Walking in the lagoon

It is not known if some of these walkers reconciled, on reflection, what they perceived as an absence of intercultural interactions on the trail. But their accounts of disappointment articulated at moments throughout, highlight the imminent crisis of normative frameworks of meaningful encounter between diverse actors. Encounters

between people and place were reimagined during the trail, at times in uncomfortable moments that fragment the distribution of dominant sensibilities. Walkers looking for intimate moments with members of the Goolarabooloo family, were often frustrated. Further anxieties were felt around food preparation and camp work that was conducted by family members and other white adoptees. There were divisions of labour that mirrored the normal paid hospitality experience of resort life in Broome, but these relationships seemed to put some at an unease – white people resting and people of colour working. However, for majority of walkers, the sharing of space was becoming far more important than the filling of silence with words, or idleness with activity.

In sharing space, many walkers' expectations seemed to be configured by a 'contact hypothesis' that stresses a proximity to the others as a way of overcoming prejudice and division (Allport 1954). Yet, as geographers such as Valentine (2008) have argued, proximity alone does not account for the production of meaningful encounters. Duration and repetition of interactions are often overlooked in favour of the ' fleeting' (Lawson and Elwood 2014) and the 'ephemeral' (Halvorsen 2015) encounter. Valentine and Sadgrove (2012: 2050) argue that meaningful encounters are primarily constituted by 'lasting effects' that extend beyond the event. Non-proximate encounters, in the material sense, that are enduring and have the capacity to be repeated, have been the focus of little research. An attention to non-proximal attunements with ecologies that are backgrounded, has the ability to illuminate the affective fields of the unseen or non-cognate (Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006). Recent theorisations on encounter, particularly *meaningful* encounter, has thus concerned itself with going beyond remnant ideas of physical-proximate intimacies.

For instance, Mason and Hope (2014: 108), demonstrate through sensing non-human ecologies, that attunement often occurs ‘without physical or visual contact’.

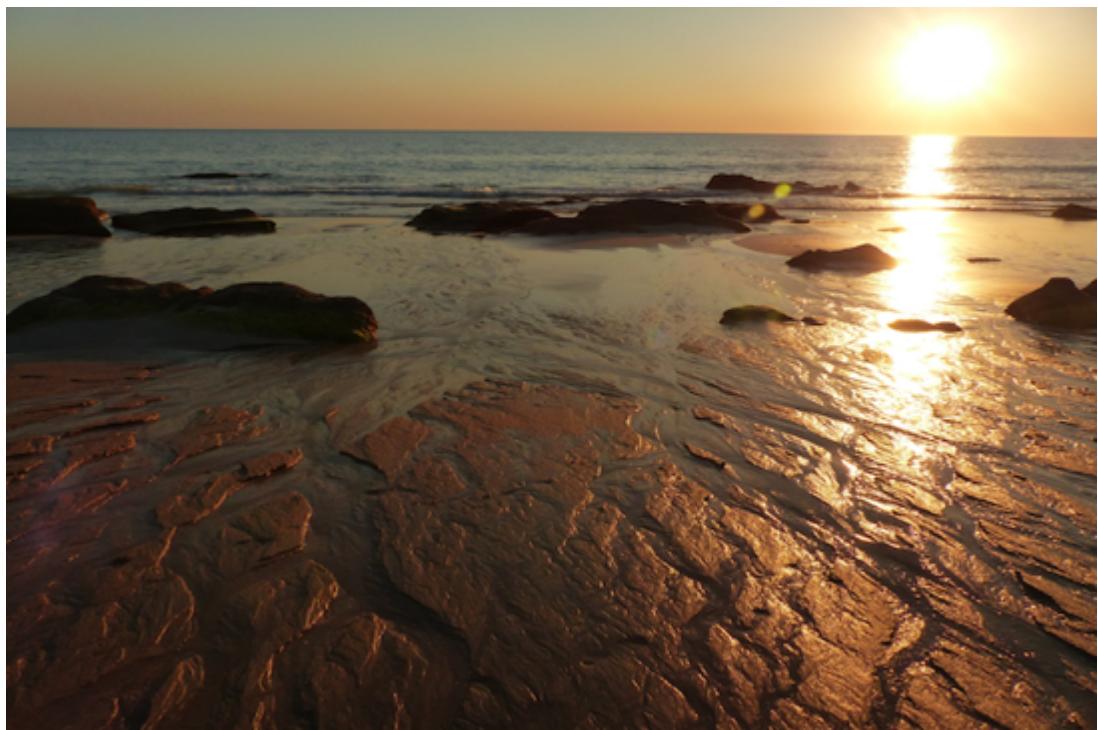


Image 40 – Heavy mineral sand patterns

Atmospheric attunements, I argue, are a form of non-representational encounter, backgrounded in the substrate of ordinary spaces, often indiscernible, and have a potential to affect bodies beyond the event. They are not dependent upon direct interaction between diverse bodies, but can be meaningful, rather, through a sharing in a mediatory force, such as an atmosphere. Such atmospheric attunements, claims Stewart (2011: 451), require a ‘laboured viscerality of being in’ the scene of experience. These scenes are imbued with signatures, textures (Image 40) and moods that are ‘already weighty with the atmosphere’ (2011: 451). Attunements to atmospheres have the potential to produce ‘hard-won attachments that can be hard to get out of once you’re in’ (2011: 451). Stated plainly, attunements to atmospheres are events of encounter that extend and endure beyond the scene of interaction. Along the trail, walkers attune to the atmospheres of place gradually. The first night of

walking disrupts the primacy of sight; repeated stories reconfigure perceptions of time; and aimless walking forces a presentness of the body in the here and now.

After five days being immersed in this process, we arrive at our camp for the next two nights, a place that some walkers described as ‘paradise’ (Image 41).



Image 41 – Resting in paradise

Learning Liyan

Through moving with the landscape, the wanderer attends to the ‘ethereal existence of place’, in which a feel for Country ‘gets hard-wired into senses in a state of sheer attunement’ (Stewart 2011: 519). This begins with attuning to the darkness of the trails remoteness. It then traces other rhythmic, haptic and tacit bodily affects that characterise how these places are made sense of by the nomad. It entwines the process of walking with these attunements, offering a narrative that builds a growing register of affects. Liyan, an affective state of being that is spatially and temporally

specific to place, begins to emerge as a tool through which new affective refrains might be felt. As part of this place, it is an Aboriginal conception of affect that describes the ‘gut-feeling’ of people, places and things. It is a moral philosophy that informs what is good or bad, wise or foolish; it is a compass that guides one through Country, heralding new ethical relations to specific spaces. New readings of place present themselves as the body begins to learn how to move *with* Country.

Frans, a Dutch-born Goolarabooloo storyteller who has been with the family since the 1980’s working with Paddy Roe, leads the group through learning how to be affected by Liyan. The first time Frans engages with the group is on day-four when he describes how cutting tools were made at a site where we rest along the beach. Later that day, under a large tree with vines hanging from it, he begins to describe what the trail means to Aboriginal people. ‘Bugarrigarra’ he says, ‘is the ongoing process of creation: the past, the present and the future. Everybody is part of it, it is a co-created process’. The Nadja spirits contain all the combinations of all living things on this planet. When they became-human, they also became-land, trees and animals. For this reason, Frans tells us, all living things are kin to Aboriginal people, they have been related from the beginning. In this Country, there are two highways Frans says, ‘mainstream and cultural’. The song-cycle we walk with, is one of these cultural highways that connect to other song cycles across the continent. Each story of place affects another. Being affected by particular places along the trail, connects you to other places and people across diverse space-times.

In order to feel this sense emplaced connection in the scheme of an endless assemblage, ‘you have to tune in’ says Frans. This is the key to being able to read the

Country. Emmanouil (2014, p. 43) captures this process ambiguous process of tuning in:

you have to kind of get lost in it, drown in it. Yeah, drown in it, you know?

First you see one world and all of a sudden there is something happening in that landscape and then we see another world emerging, a world we can have some relationship with. But the Trail is an opening, an entrance to get a dream, to get an experience, to see how everything fits in.



Image 42 – Traces of Murella near Quondong Pt

Over the past four days, I listened to stories, walked, shared meals and conversations, and absorbed the ‘cultural experiences’ that were offered. Other walkers were making connections with strangers, with some romantic relationships clearly beginning and friendships forming. On day four, a shift began to happen. We heard stories about Murella (Emu Man) who made footprints on the beach (Image 42) and

can be seen in the stars at night. Just before Quondong Point, we stop in the shade of a cliff, take our shoes off and head to the low tide line which exposes the reef.



Image 43 – Pindan cliffs

This region of the world has recently been described as ‘Australia’s own Jurassic Park’ after 21 different footprints were documented (Devlin 2017: np). In the process of tuning in, this moment became a jolting experience, with the aesthetic of Country becoming entangled in stories and feelings of place. Certain materialisms emerge through the liminality of the tide. As it retreats, reveals 130 million years of walking. This sense of non-human longevity gets entangled with the story of Murella, a sprit being that left footprints all over Country, again disrupting normative conceptions of time and the beings that affect it. Close to our next camping ground, the group pushes on along the beach. To the right a red pindan escarpment (Image 43) lines a course bound by turquoise ocean on the left.



Image 44 – Hermit crabs at Murdudun

As we walk, humpback whales breach a few hundred meters from the shore. For over two hours, we walk with nursing mothers and their young as they migrate north from the Antarctic. We arrive in the late afternoon at Murdudun, a whale survey camp perched at the top of cliffs. Scrub and bush makes it easy to find semi-secluded camping spots near others. Some walkers go for a swim in the ocean and others walk along the high tide mark edging the cliffs. The vibe is relaxed at the camp site. A shower, consisting of a garden hose and a corrugated iron screen, allows us to wash the sweat and salt from our skin. Some walkers settle under a tree to continue woodwork on their clapping sticks that we started at the previous camp – others play guitars nearby. After dinner, many turn in for night. Murella is in full view among the stars as I lay in my swag staring upward. The tide can be heard rushing back in and crashing on the cliff. Yet the noise of leaf litter and clicking overwhelms the

soundscape. Turning on my headlamp, I see hundreds of crazy crabs emerging from the scrub making their way to the beach (Image 44).



Image 45 – Camping on a cliff

At this point, I seemed to be drowning in liveliness. Everything had a language and everything seemed to be able to read it. Murella came out as the tide retreats. He returned in another form as the sun went away. As the tide came back the crabs started moving. The beach, a liminal space between the tides, had an ecology that offered diverse experiences of place that produced emerging worlds. As dawn broke, a thick fog clouded the space. My swag was covered in moisture and white sap from the tree branches above. Ron, one of the Goolarabooloo family members sees me wake. He says to me, “Oh, I should have told you, don’t sleep under this tree. If the sap gets in your eyes it will blind you”. Prompted by potential blindness, I move my swag about 150 meters from the rest of the group. Perched at the top of a cliff (Image

45), it seemed that taking a chance here was negligible in comparison: they are the some of the oldest landforms in the world after all.

For hours, whales move up the coast, breaching and blowing as they go. A faint clapping sound emerges through the call of sea eagles feeding. Near my camp site, Frans is alone carving a boomerang. Sitting cross legged, in solitude, he looks up, smiles, but says nothing. On this rest day, there is nothing to do but immerse oneself in the immanent zone of experience. No stories are told and no activities are organised. Busyness is silenced, but, for the selected tasks people do for themselves. I attempt a reading of *Rhythmanalysis* and in the moment become stuck on this thought offered by Lefebvre (2004: 26–27):

Might there be hidden, **secret**, rhythms, hence inaccessible movements and temporalities? No, because there are **no secrets**. Everything knows itself, but not everything says itself, publicises itself. Do not confuse silence with secrets! That which is forbidden from being said, be it external or intimate, produces an obscure, but not a secret, zone.

Lefebvre's provocation helps me to remember what Terry Snr said to me on the first long day of walking. Like most walkers, I had taken opportunities to ask guides questions about their experiences walking Country: pedestrian questions such as 'how long have you walked the trail' and 'how often do you get out to Country'. After about three questions, Terry simply states 'Too much talking, walking better'. Not much needed to be said, that much was evident in my interaction with Frans. It is not that there was any knowledge being withheld by Terry, nor was Frans being ignorant of me. But rather, what could be known in that moment would have been obscured by chatter and words. There was an atmosphere made by Country and

maintained by the silencing of speech. I managed to read about two pages in as many hours, constantly being interrupted by Country. Any task I attempted, such as making a diary entry, became more and more cumbersome. If I were to put pen to paper, the immediacy of the present would draw my attention back to Country. The atmospheres of place were all-encompassing in their effect they had in drawing my focus. Enchanted, I was becoming aware of a rapidly decreasing capacity to apprehend affect in my research analysis, as the affective atmosphere had annihilated my desire to capture it.

Over the next four days my diary entries became fewer as I documented less in words. Instead, I would turn on my audio recorder and throw it in a bush, returning an hour or so later to save the recorded ambient sounds. Rather than carry my own camera around, I passed around four disposable cameras among the walkers. None of them were returned. Documenting the trip for posterity, through diary entries and photographs, did not seem an adequate medium for representing the affective life of place. The next walking segment from Murdudun to Walmadan was fast. We raced incoming tides to make it around a narrow headland. Stragglers were picked up by a four-wheel-drive as the more-able raced to meet a ferry that would take us across a crocodile-ridden river. We traversed a Monsoon Vine Thicket ecology – a remnant rainforest – eating some bush berries along the way including Mamajen, Marool and Goolyi.

The uniqueness and awe that the monsoonal forest elicited was compounded by a sense of loss when we reached Walmadan (James Price Point), the stage where protests occurred up until 2013. Over the next day, more white Goolarabooloo

adoptees³⁰ joined the group at Walmadan, sharing memories of their time spent there over a period of years. Photo albums of the protest camp were shared with the walkers among structures used to train activists for confrontation. It became clear whilst dwelling at Walmadan, that infected the atmosphere of this place for a number of years. All of the experiences that walkers had registered during the last seven days could have been extinguished by the construction of the gas plant. A conciliatory mood could be felt around the campsite as the family hosted a film viewing of *Lurujarri Dreaming*³¹ under the stars. The accumulation of affects that bodies along the trail registered and began to embody, were reflected upon in this space. It offered moments of pause in which ‘stillness’ crystallised the experiences of days past. This momentary pause served to consolidate the refrain through which we made sense moving through Country. Stillness, for Bissell and Fuller (2013: 12), enables other affective attunements and engagements, allowing for confrontations with the normative ‘temporality of the world’. Pauses and breaks are crucial in the discovery of the affective life of place: ‘to be struck by the force of the world demands stillness’ (2013: 12). We sleep that night knowing that the next stop would be our last.

Exposing liminality

In 1987 Paddy Roe initiated the trail as it has come to be known today, a walking-on-Country event. It was initiated for his people to be on Country, as had always been

³⁰ A term given to non-Aboriginal socialised members of the wider family group – some live with the families on large bush blocks, others in town or on their own. Some adoptees return every year to help out with the running of the Trail.

³¹ An animated film 28 minutes in length that documents the song-cycle of the Goolarabooloo people, along the path of the Lurujarri Heritage Trail (Trench-Thiedeman 2013).

so, to remain connected to the heritage and knowledge of the land. But Paddy also ‘sought to wake up non-Aboriginal people to a relationship with the land’:

to foster trust, friendship and empathy between the indigenous community and the wider Australian and International communities (Goolarabooloo 2011: np).

Morrison (2014: 57) states that in these ‘liminal spaces of Australian postcolonial geographies, Aboriginal songlines relate song and story through walking journeys, which were, and remain, a cultural pillar linking people and Country’. Whilst the trail is influenced by the social histories of both worlds, its inception and indeed it’s lived performance occupies ‘the gap’ between different ways of knowing and being. It aims to traverse cultural and racial anxieties through sharing space, unsettling proximities and senses that order our everyday striated lives.

The trail also physically occupies middle spaces – the beach between land and sea, the dunes between beach and bush, riverbeds between dry and wet, and camping practices between tradition and modernity. I conceptualise it not so much a hybrid space – the melding of two – as it is an assemblage of things composed of difference. The ‘middle’ is an ephemera of relations coming together, occupying the same space at the same time, becoming-otherwise without erasing the differences of that come to identify them singularly (Massumi 2014). As a middle, it serves as a space of passage or interval, where a new or alternate world starts to emerge, where differences are immanent but not dissolved. It begins to question the properties of the dichotomy that this space sits between. In doing so it explores the traditional categorical distinctions that have separated out what Law (2004) calls a sense of ‘inhereness’ and ‘out-thereness’. The making of an affirmative space that is inclusive of

difference is confronted by a constant tension between singularity and plurality.

Singularity implies the absence of distinction between ‘in-hereness’ and ‘out-thereness’ – the worlds have merged. It is the undoing of a dualism with one identity usually absorbing the other. It is an outcome of something new that searches out the resonant constituencies of knowing, but in the process, dismisses the boundaries of difference. Plurality on the other hand acknowledges a distinction between the common and specific, or, here and there knowledge (Wenman 2008).

Ontologically speaking, embracing plurality admits that some knowledges cannot be known to some, as they are not a part of those knowledge systems. Whilst a world that has emerged through co-production can be shared, we cannot enter or expect to know the totality of other people’s worlds. Out-there spaces have not emerged as being included in-here. As Law (2004: 135) explains:

space is not, as it were, isotropic: the same everywhere, essentially neutral. It is being built differently.

The privilege to know the intimate un-known of other knowledges is not simply permitted by an increase in the capacity *to know*. It is based upon a specific spatio-temporal arrangement of belonging to that knowledge. Some of us do not belong, we are ‘not part of these worlds at all... we do not exist to those worlds... they do not exist to us’ (2004: 135). Understanding or representing the intimate knowledges of Aboriginal culture, is therefore not the objective for this chapter. Rather, this chapter demonstrate a capacity to co-produce and imagine other immanent worlds. This is what Connolly (2011) calls ‘a world of becoming’, in which the potential for other worlds to emerge lays within the ordinary haptic, tactic and other affective potentials. Ordinary moments are ‘pregnant’ with potentiality, in which the real world

(ant)agonistic contexts full of interconnected ‘force-fields’ is central to becoming (2011: 9). The latent division between black and white, or settler-Aboriginal worlds, marks out a space in which new ones might arise. Out-there knowledges – hard sciences and economics – and the push for singularity, lacks the capacity to reimagine an ethics that breaks with a utilitarian view of nature and culture. It is crucial to be prompt in our attunement to the already-emerging potentials of these liminal spaces. These are spaces where the dualism between worlds is disrupted through the emergence of new modes of belonging. The emergence of in-between spaces does not erase the existence of difference, but in effect creates spaces of connections across difference.

Purposeful actions facilitate moments and spaces where an opening up of Country enables for alternative readings of place. Imperial structures of knowing and being are disrupted through learning to be affected by different temporalities. Attunements to diverse assemblages, argues Gibson-Graham (2015: 66), allows one ‘to slow down, appreciate the different temporalities of diverse kinds of work and the many available opportunities to improve shared wellbeing within collectives’. These attunements began with an ontological unlearning of culturally specific ways of moving through space in the over-illuminated places. Learning how to move through dark spaces fragments the sensorial refrain of the urban tourist. Whether these affects are structured by design is secondary to the effect that this initial attunement demands of the body. Immediately, the walker becomes sensitive to the body as a tool through which knowledge is produced. As Edensor (2017: 16) notes, ‘light successively solicits particular sensory, perceptual, affective, epistemological and imaginative engagements’. Navigating through a foreign landscape involves a continual affective attunement to the changing illumination of place.

Nomads begin to value the shifts that take-place when actions occur out of sync with our rhythmic calibration to other spaces. Walking at night, or in the blazing tropical sun at noon, is done for no other purpose than to feel something different. We walk, and we become attuned to a landscape in which Country begins to emerge as an atmosphere: ‘as existence of a kind of worldly entity that makes its presence felt as something’ (McCormack 2014: 620). It is diffuse and ephemeral, yet it becomes palpable as our bodies forget how we usually make sense. In doing so my body learns that difference can be felt through becoming affectively attuned to a space that opens up the potential for alternative readings. Sharing space is therefore unburdened by the need for face-to-face contact. The ability to share in something collective, yet radically divergent from the normative frameworks of imagination, is facilitated by being affected by Country together.

In the last two days of the trail, we walk from Walmadan to Yellow River. Our bodies are charged and primed in ways that we appreciate rising anxieties creeping with the knowledge that it is almost over. On a day of rest at Yellow River, small groups of people take off in different directions: east along a dried-up river bed; south into the bush; west to the beach; and north, over large mustard-yellow river banks. Complete immersion in the land, river and seascape of Yellow River reveals hidden gems in the bush and scrub. Guided by Terry Snr., some nomads indulge in bush honey retrieved from the melaleuca bark, in the hollow of the tree. Later that day Terry discretely gestures for myself and Willi (an anthropology PhD student) to follow him into the scrub. There we find a structure of twigs adorned with white and green coloured stones, bones, shells, glass and leaves built by a bowerbird (Image

46). Legend has it, Terry tells us, that the bowers closer to the Argyle diamond mine in the west Kimberley are constructed with the precious stone.



Image 46 – Great Bowerbird bower. Source: Willi Lempert

The group comes together on the last night for the Pelican Corroboree which is led by senior family member Philip Roe. We gather around a large bonfire to watch the men painted in white – including many younger boys in the family – perform a pelican shuffle dance in front of the fire. Non-Aboriginal people are encouraged to join in after the traditional dance and the night ends with a sing song around the fire with guitars, ukuleles, a harmonica and a saxophone. The next morning, we trek back across Country to meet our transport, the feelings resonate with the narratives of urban life that Aboriginal activists told me. In the moment of physically detaching from the Lurujarri, I imagine what a return to the space might be like, would I be able to connect back in, from where I left off? Wocky told me that his return to his Country, where he learnt how to read the landscape, has instant affect:

you feel it, even once you come from the city, like straight from the city out in the bush, you feel it straight away, you feel different, you feel like a different person completely (Interview, 22/06/15).

As we board a bus back to town, I recall Mitch telling me of ‘the speeding up when we come on the highway’. Detached from the ground, sitting in an air-conditioned vehicle, our minds speed up as we brace for a return to other atmospheres and rhythms. For Mitch, the anxiety in her voice is clear when she tells me:

I’ve got to get my head into gear that I’m going to be dealing with masses of people, traffic lights, being directed, signs, walk, don’t walk, stop, don’t go there go here dah, dah, dah... (Interview, 17/06/15).

Sites of power that pool with intensity are striated with rules and conducts distributed through an affective engineering that obscures what is available to feel in the present. In these spaces ‘you are always on your guard’ Mary told me, and the guards start to erect around bus as we move along red corrugated dirt and onto sealed road. As we pull into town, buildings, cars, trucks and machinery wiz past. Planes and helicopters take off and land in the middle of town. It’s overwhelming in comparison to the atmospheres and rhythms of the trail. ‘The buildings dominate me’, I remember Donna say. Even though the skyline of Broome is no more than two stories high, the intensity of the environment hums. Country is still here in Broome, it is maintained through continuous moments of connection. Yet the pace and tempo of town life competes with Country for the attentions of diverse bodies. The Trail teaches our bodies how to slow down and provoke thought through accumulating new body parts sensitive to the relationality of place.

Conclusion

In undertaking and writing this research I have paid particular attention to moments of disagreement and disappointment, which I have theorised through the frame of ‘dissensus’ (Rancière 1999, 2010). Disappointment pervades discussions around the good life, but importantly, this is not a concept that is indicative of defeat or the passage of missed opportunity. I use the good life in two ways throughout this thesis: as a normative exclusive fantasy that is fragile and can be disrupted; and as a mode of political belonging that envelops difference through reconfigured distributions of affect. An empirical finding of this research necessarily argues that disappointment is a generative moment that is crucial in the reframing of incoherent good life narratives. Nick, manager of the *Broome Visitor Centre*, described during our interview the enigma of Broome’s appeal and how the mysticism of place gets lost on some. He states, ‘some tourists come here and hate it... you either love it or you hate it, you either get it or you don’t’. Yet what it is exactly that divides Broome’s visitors is not easily translatable into words, text or depiction. Urry (2007: 79) argues that ‘there is often a massive gap between what people anticipate will be a place’s pleasures and what is actually encountered’. Hope that the scenes, events and objects of the good life might live up to the expectation in the postcard imaginary, is a resource that brings the body to the event, enveloping it within the immediate ecology of place and experience (Manning and Massumi 2014). Hopeful moments, argues Anderson (2014), are affectively imbued relations to the future that move bodies; it is also contingent upon it being ‘disappointable’. Quoting Bloch (1998, p. 341) on the concept of hope, Anderson states:

Hope must be unconditionally disappointable... because it is open in a forward direction, in a future-orientated direction; it does not address itself to that which already exists (Anderson 2014: 1-2).

In this thesis, disappointment signals the emergence of a ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant 2011) in mass tourism and idyllic representations more broadly, in which the consumer has become aware of the unattainability of the affective object-target. It is as though the tourist is sensitised to the anticipated feel of place, charged in a way which leads them to expect a very particular sensescape. The tourist is limited in capacity to feel the history of place, become-with place and blend into the crowd. A tourist subjectivity pregnant with anticipatory desires for place is prone to disappointment by the scene of arrival (Urry 1988). Upon disappointment, the tourist then exists in an indeterminate moment when the incoherency of good life objects are realised, yet the process of establishing new relations to the scene is yet to take place: this is a moment of disappointment. What happens next in the moment of disappointment is crucial to the emergence of new forms of relation. The disappointed subject is always outside, inhibited in attaining proximity to the anticipated ‘cluster of promises’ (Berlant 2011: 23) that revolve around place, but also yet to know alternative ways of reading the scene. I argue, that it is this moment where the enduring fantasies of the good life fray, that moving forward holds open innumerable possibilities to become-otherwise.

Disappointment is a foundational element of reshaping the good life among activists. The tourist can leave the scene, affectively imprinted by disappointment and unable to adequately move their understanding further, but what if they stayed and endured the discomfort of not knowing and being open? Non-Aboriginal people – bodies not-

of-place – arrive in Broome, and the conditions of their arrival position them as outsiders. They endure and work through encounters with disappointment to become something else; perhaps at first the disappointed tourist, then local, then activist. The crisis of anticipated attachments to idealised scenes creates a space that promises nothing, which I argue is a radically productive space that suspends bodies in states of openness. This disappointment dwells, not in the potential of a particular experience, but rather in the measure of attainability in narrowly defined sensorium of experience. In becoming-activist, spaces and events that are objectified in touristic representation are not experienced as disenchanting, indeed ordinary life should not be perceived as disenchanting (Bennett 2001). Rather, in those that seek out alternative readings of place there is an awareness that something more escapes the imagery which the tourist is not calibrated to apprehend. Disappointment opens up a moment of indetermination, in which the knowledge of place is not yet decided, or when hegemonic ideas become undone (Grosz 2011). In encountering an anticipated event, scene or object, the disappointment of a cluster of promises imbued within the expectation of the event, can be a productive undoing of the boundaries of sense making. Ambivalence to the affective quality of this moment is a production of the unexpected. This thesis demonstrates what happens to subjectivities that remain in moments of disappointment and invest in the labour of learning how to be affected by alternative embodied readings of place.

I have demonstrated through the narratives of Aboriginal participants how they stage spaces for the disappointment of the normative good life, and how non-Aboriginal activists work through the moment, enabling its generative potential to co-produce moments of enchantment. Although this thesis is bound by conventions that require questions, insights and contributions to be clearly articulated, I want to reiterate my

own guiding convention that I think reflects that of my participants. Stated plainly, this research thesis has sought *to force new openings into existence* rather than package findings that contribute to enclosed ideas that are often enigmatic to those with whom we share our field-sites and lives. I have endeavoured to present, to the best of my ability, the perspectives of my research participants that are faithful to their material, affective, embodied and imagined experiences. Considering this, one central question directed this ethnographic research carried out in Broome: **what role does place play in making connections across difference that facilitate activist solidarities which radically reframe normative understandings of the ‘good life’?** Addressing this question, I developed three explicit research objectives which aimed:

- to explore and critically examine how the affective life of places is experienced and contested through the performative aspects of representation;
- to explore and describe shared geographies that foreground embodied ways of knowing Country and bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people into productive relation;
- and, to explore and describe how non-Aboriginal people enlarge their capacities to support Aboriginal rights and political agendas.

In framing these objectives, I argued that expressions of protest and activism are more-than-resistance, and are indicative of ‘an emergent “something more” that is produced in the interaction’ of bodies coming together (Duff 2010: 891). The event of protest inheres a challenge to the affective governance of place through disrupting the atmospheres that are taken for granted and background. Central to this acknowledgement was an awareness that such political acts imbue new modes of

belonging that are culturally specific and based upon endearing connections, reciprocal actions and the co-existence of diverse beings. Country in the narratives of those I interviewed manifested as one such space in which dissensus is lent its potential. Country is a concept, a body and living being that interfaces embodied ways of knowing that are shared with non-Aboriginal people. Importantly, Country enlarges and exercises not just a capacity to act, but *a capacity to act together*.

Shaping and challenging the affective life of place

I began the thesis with an event of protest through the streets of tropical Broome. In doing so I highlighted the enigma and incoherence of the event juxtaposed against the backdrop of the tourism season. Such events, purposefully or not, stage moments and spaces that disrupt and reframe the salience of utopian narratives of Broome. Protest in Broome has a history of disappointing the circulation of anticipated ideals and desires in the consumptive practices of southern visitors (Muecke 2016a; Wergin 2016a). An atmosphere – ‘a force field in which people find themselves’ (Stewart 2011: 452) – of struggle fragments and glitches the romanticism of remote tropical places. Dissent envelops the town as protesters make their way through the busy tourist precinct. The disruption re-orientates bodies in space, it redirects and charges the ‘affects, moods, and capacities that might be enactable’ (Duff 2010: 892). Usual rhythms of place stutter and become subsumed by the carnival atmosphere of shouting, chanting and cheering. Indeed, the often-unseen ordinary performances, practices and actions of local dissenters that are more-than the event of noisy protest events, regularly disappoint pre-conceived attachments to place that outsiders bring to town.

In Chapter Four I explored and critically examined how representations have a performativity that frames dominant ways of knowing and obscures alternative readings of place. This understanding of how affect is used to hail subjects into place is crucial to our understandings of how we might renew our attachments to place and others. As Anderson (2014: 75) argues, ‘understanding how affective life becomes an object-target for forms of power is a precondition for developing affirmative relations with affective life’. The ‘misfiring of scenes’ (Martel 2015: 496) that evoke the normative good life opens up an opportunity to remake connections and affinities through encounters with difference. It signals a potential in the moment of disruption in regimes of sense making, where:

all the schemes of the mighty and the powerful could — and also just as easily could not — be unmade or undone by this unexpected arrival (or if expected, still not producing what is was supposed to)... almost anything, it seems, suddenly becomes possible (Martel 2015: 496).

It is the geographical sites and representational forms of good life that become primary targets in the reshaping and framing of ubiquitous affective texts of the good life. Fragmenting the meaning of the image through opening up moments in which something else might be felt, allows for an alternative to emerge. Butler (2015: 11) calls this a ‘volatile field of impressionability’ in which the subject becomes ‘undone’, a moment in which we might map out the contours and relations of a world-otherwise. Disruption through disappointment allows the subject to embrace the unknown: the scene is not for them, rather, they seek to find other scenes in which they might answer the call of place. Here notions of the self are de-contained by strict boundaries, becoming ‘leaky’ says Manning (2009: 38), notions of subject

and the self ‘veer toward new forms of relation’. Through the narratives of Aboriginal activists and their white allies, I demonstrated how alternative readings of postcard imaginaries disappoint, disrupt and undo the boundaries of sense making. Romantic imaginaries of life in Broome represented in postcards were unsettled by activists who go beneath the surface to highlight other tensions which are not visible to the tourist. These alternatives open up potentials to affect and be affected differently, moments in which schemes of the powerful – merchants of romantic good life imaginaries – become weakened and fragile, suspended and remade. The good life, as a cluster of promises that is given shape by reproductions of desirable places, needs respondents to its call in order for it to exist. When the good life is disappointed, optimism in the unattainable becomes undone, allowing for moments where new relations are generated in the service of imagining an attainable utopianism (Berlant 2011).

Foregrounding embodied ways of knowing Country

Some bodies in Broome have a reduced capacity to be affected by alternative rhythms, atmospheres and imaginations of life. There are structured mobilities that obscure readings of Country. Attuning takes effort. Micklo’s protest is a call to the event of relation, that Wilson (2016: 15) says is ‘where attunement and nonattunement are experienced simultaneously’. He tells me that he is occupying Country ‘not just for those who have a connection to this Country, but to those who have lost their connections’. Crucially, this connection is not secret cultural business, but rather a resource through which collective imaginations are lent potential. Mary says that ‘Country will speak to you if you have established a connection with it. Not knowing this is a threat to black and white communities’. Just as diverse bodies here

have a latent potential to connect and learn how to be affected by alternative temporalities and notions of sharing space, a potential exists in all spaces.

As a relational concept, Country entangles the materiality of place, non-human lives and human lives together as inseparable lively infrastructures through which knowledge can be made and a life shaped. This is sensed through the Aboriginal epistemological framework of *Liyan*: a ‘sense of belonging and being, living well in connection with Country, culture, others and oneself’ (Yap and Yu 2016: 241). The emergence of Liyan as a pedagogy of attunement in this thesis, builds upon and advances empirically-grounded Western theorisations of affective attunement. As an embodied tool for well-being, Liyan is often described as gut feeling that can be good or bad (Yu 2013). Whilst not exchangeable as a synonym for the ‘good life’, Liyan is mode of thinking through which ideas of what is a life/lively and what is good/bad: it is an affective tool to rethink life. Like the good life, it has a geography and a political potential to disrupt the normative distribution of affect and insert in its place an alternative affective configuration of political belonging. It is argued, that through the embodied framework of Liyan, which is narrativised in different ways, non-Aboriginal people enlarge their capacity to support Aboriginal rights and agendas.

In Chapter Five I foregrounded the concept of Country through the narratives of Aboriginal activists, describing how they theorise it, read it and become obliged to protect it. I found that relational readings of place were foregrounded by non-representational modes of connection that were described through Aboriginal epistemological frameworks. Through relational readings of place, linear temporalities were disrupted that allowed for imagining of optimal futures that

digress from the seeming inevitability of industrialisation and remote community reform. When complemented by embodied connections to place, the continuum of past-present-future became affectively imbued, allowing participants to feel the future (Hickey-Moody *et al.* 2016).

Atmospheric attunements were demonstrated in Chapter Six where I introduced and define the concept of Liyan, and elaborate on non-Aboriginal understandings of Liyan in Chapter Eight. Learning how to be affected by place, and the immanence of difference, empowers bodies to continue in their ethical engagements with humans and non-humans. It is through being off-grid with Brian where I get a sense of how Liyan as a force of existence enables non-proximate spaces and times to be felt. He tells me that it ‘doesn’t matter in town or in the city if you still have that power, that feeling. Because nothing is lost, nothing is lost’. Alternative concepts that facilitate other affective pedagogies are not extinguished by dominating atmospheres and rhythms. Big urban cities such as Melbourne and Sydney have not eliminated Country or the myriad ways of connecting to people and place. The refrains through which alternatives might be sensed are hidden in the substrate of layered textures imbued with cultural meaning. Yet, Country ‘is there’ Brian says, ‘and it’s all in front of you, you have to go out and find it’.

The non-representational methodology – discussed in Chapter Two – that I employed allowed for these frameworks to be partially illuminated, as my approach was sensitive to the atmospheric qualities of space. I demonstrated how atmospheres become structured and disrupted, and open up new ways for thinking about connections between bodies and spaces. Relational ways of knowing and thinking have long been primary to Indigenous ontologies. Resistance against colonialism and

epistemic violence has also engendered place as a resource that can be attuned to in the service of ethical futures (Coulthard 2010). Indeed, encounters between human and non-humans are generative coming-togethers that manifest in atmospheres that envelope and collectively calibrate beings (Anderson and Ash 2015). The Lurujarri Trail explored in Chapter Nine, as an event that embodies these frameworks of knowing, provides an example of how atmospheres are made, maintained and attuned to through place-specific pedagogical tools such as the epistemology of Liyan. The well-spring that is Country, lies in all space. Ethical encounters between people and concepts that reframe the temporal and spatial boundaries of sense making, can be cultivated through the stimulation of affects that entangle difference-in-place. The trail nurtures this capacity to cultivate, endowing participants with the knowledge that Country is everywhere.

Here, the doing of Aboriginal knowledges demonstrates the subtle limitations of Western theories to apprehend the excesses of non-representational life. Aboriginal pedagogies of feeling complicate and then push beyond the intellectual contours and boundaries of the privileged non-representational researcher. Liyan and being-with-Country perform an ontological unlearning that re-relates bodies to place, producing atmospheres that can be acknowledged and felt. Affect here on the trail and with-Country, is continuously acknowledged as doing its work, therefore exceeding notions of a pre-personal and pre-cognitive force.

Enlarging capacities to become-otherwise

Activists, through everyday practice and the purposeful staging of disappointments, not only highlight the tensions between promises of the good life and the reality of oppression that endures, they also demonstrate a capacity to imagine alternatives.

Activists organise around the unsettling of the good life, creating moments where the dominant narratives of Broome detach from affectively imbued object-targets.

Dissenters perform an alter-imaginary that is not colonised by unattainable normative economic drivers of ‘happy futures’ (Ahmed 2010). This thesis then explored these diverse narratives of the good life that activists organise themselves around in the event of protest. I demonstrate how a focus that rests upon the representational aspects of the good life defers emancipatory change. In the narratives presented in this thesis, the good life maps geographies of relationality and process – all the while disappointing the notion that it is an object that can be attained. As stated previously, activists here don’t so much demand change *per se*, but rather *they enact it*. Echoing Rancière’s (2010: 57) conception of dissensus, activists demonstrate ‘that since they could enact those rights, they actually possessed them’. Rather than asking for rights to be bestowed, participants apprehend the often-enigmatic promises of democratic process through their own frameworks of knowing and being.

Interrelated struggles have moments punctuated by the mobilisation of affected bodies and their allies which manifest in public demonstrations of collective imagining. They are the *doing of* movement and momentum, to feel a degree of belonging-together that might be harnessed as a sustained moment to bring about change. With the coming together of diverse struggles, moments such as these seek to harness the ‘excess’ and onflow of everyday experiences of disaffection. If the events of protest described in this research are reactive in a major way, they react to the forces of representation that colonise the future and enclose ‘enabling places’ (Duff 2012). As Duff (2012: 1390) notes, such spaces imbue ‘discrete enabling resources’ that can be ‘social, material and affective’. Rather than products of anger and frustration, activism here has the effect of challenging the enclosure of spaces

that enable alternative modes of existence through social, material and affective relations.

Noisy overt street protests rarely have the effect of attaining and apprehending more ethical organisations of social life. But protest and dissensus is a movement that signals the enlargement, exercising and enablement of a capacity to act. They are movements and activisms particularly because they are moments of un-rest, moments of activity and mobility. As Massumi articulates drawing upon Whitehead's conception of process philosophy:

The ‘principle of unrest’ from which an activist philosophy departs requires a concept of potential qualifying process as the production of the new: in a word, ‘becoming’ (Massumi 2011: 2 citing Whitehead, 1978: 28)

Becoming, explored in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine, is the process by which the ‘not-yet’ can be felt as emergent, a notion that the future manifests itself as an immanent force that has an affective resonance. In activism, moments of movement signal processes of becoming. Using Biehl and Locke’s (2010: 317) reading of Deleuze’s (1995: 170) interpretation of becoming, it typifies:

those individual and collective struggles to come to terms with events and intolerable conditions and to shake loose, to whatever degree possible, from determinants and definitions — “to grow both young and old [in them] at once”.

Understanding this process acknowledges that singularity does exist in isolation to the contingent form of events: it is difference between things that constitutes a semblance of a coherent subject or object. Therefore, one moment in time such as

this event, exists in relation to other moments, the notion that events have a singular causality is ‘an altogether alien and falsifying category’ (Bennett 2010: 33 citing Arendt, 1953). Each is both past and present made up of many different moments that come to give a material feel, or a zone of experience, to the present. Becoming awakens a new existential consciousness in which life ‘is simply immanent and open to new relations—camaraderie—and trajectories’ (Biehl and Locke 2010: 317). In experiencing the present, this research apprehends the absence of other worlds that come to make up the event. It is about being sensitive to the general in the local – locating and expressing universal egalitarian ideas in the specifics of the immediate present (Rancière 2010) – amplifying the other individual moments that are contingent upon constructing an atmosphere (Connolly 2011).

For Connolly (2011: 80), an affirmative politics that imagines the future enacts a ‘care for the world’ where we ‘cultivate sensitivity to new circumstances and social movements that suggest the possible need to change entrenched habits’. My participation in Broome protests began a process of thinking the act of protest not as a spontaneous, yet concerted, performance of resistance brought about by frustrations, injustices and duress. Instead, the event of protest is one that punctures the seemingly inevitable promises of the future. I now think of the protests that I participated in as contingent experiences reliant upon a process of ‘learning to be affected’ by different spacetimes of thinking and feeling (Latour 2004: 205; Graham and Roelvink 2010: 324). For Thrift (2007: 2), thinking this way considers other political acts, that these events relate to, as not having a social life of its own that can be followed, but rather a ‘speculative topography’ of the ever-changing ‘contours and content of what happens’:

the world is made up of all kinds of things brought in to relation with one another by many and various spaces through a continuous and largely involuntary process of encounter (2007: 8).

This speculative topography of events, moments and encounters that enable action, maps the ever-changing geographies in which ‘the body continually adds parts in to itself’ (Thrift 2007: 2). In attending to these enabling geographies in Chapter Six, eight and nine, I focused upon Latour’s (2004: 206) notion of ‘learning to be affected’, a process of becoming when a body acquires new body parts that ‘produces at once a sensory medium *and* a sensitive world’ (2004: 207). Country is a crucial space that enlarges capacities for difference to be accommodated and is generative of collective feelings, imaginations and actions. Aboriginal ways of knowing are mediated by Country and other pedagogical tools such as *Liyan*, an embodied concept that was explored in this thesis. Learning to connect with Country is a crucial component of Aboriginal political praxis in this research. Therefore, these struggles are not struggles over making and interpreting representations, but for the sovereignty of thought and movement in the lives of collectives and individuals. In acknowledging this, this thesis explored the ‘otherwise’ as a geographical space that digresses radically from the perceived inevitability of colonised futures. It serves as a potential already-existing alternative to regressive futures that impinge upon and saturate the capacity to think and feel differently within the world. Rather than reinventing the world, a focus on how already-existing alternatives scale-up and affect more and more bodies reveals ways for political projects to harness the potential of the here-and-now.

Acts of dissensus and disagreement are a crucial component in the enacting of a world-otherwise and the reimagining of the good life. These are both noisy and quiet forms of politics (Kelly and Lobo 2017), which include diverse forms of radical defiance that often slip under the radar, passed off as local anomalies (Pearce 2013). For Pottinger (2017: 216), these are quiet forms of activism that constitute ‘modest, embodied acts [...] which can be either implicitly or explicitly political in nature’. It is these below-the-radar practices and connections that form part of an everyday ordinary pre-figuration of alternative worlds that are generated in encounters that develop activist capacities to become-otherwise.

Contributions

Drawing upon the related struggles of environmental justice and Aboriginal rights in Broome, this thesis makes a contribution to studies of difference and encounter by demonstrating how sharing in the affective atmospheres of place enlists diverse bodies into progressive political projects. I have built upon knowledge through adding to understandings of how place plays a role in making connections across difference and conditioning the expressions and effectiveness of political projects. This is an understanding of emancipatory political projects that seeks to navigate the problematic scale of the ‘local’ as a regressive fetishized space fixated upon by contemporary progressive politics (Srnicek and Williams 2015), but also as an over-romanticised geographical site that conflates Indigeneity and localism (Coombes *et al.* 2013). In navigating this terrain, I approach place with an ‘understanding that politics, ontologies and beings/becomings/affects/virtues are not just *in* place, but *of* place’ (Bawaka Country *et al.* 2016: 24). Activism in Broome has been successful in recent years with the collapse of the JPP project. I demonstrated in Chapter Five and

Six how place enabled the staging of disagreements, but also resources activist energies through geographies of rejuvenation and movement. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people expressed ways of inhabiting space that are brought into relation by *place* – this, I argue, facilitated modes of connection that do not stress a proximity to other human bodies, but rather, these connections across difference are mediated by place.

This insight generated further insights that build upon the literature around encounter which, to date, has yet to explore the capacity of mediatory forces to corral bodies into networks of belonging that might unburden marginalised people from obligations to chaperone the privileged (Hemming 2011; Valentine 2013; Lawson and Elwood 2014; Mayblin, Valentine, and Andersson 2016; Mayblin *et al.* 2015; Wilson 2016; Hopkins *et al.* 2017). Enchanting encounters provides one such opportunity, where the role of the face-to-face encounter is supplemented by mediatory moments and places of wonder (Bennett 2001; Amin 2006; Woodyer and Geoghegan 2013; Geoghegan and Woodyer 2014; Edensor 2015b; Herman 2015; Pyyry 2016; Bonnett 2017; Laws 2017; McNally 2017; Pyyry 2017; Teo and Neo 2017). In Chapter Seven, Eight and Nine – after having foregrounded the frameworks for encounter Country – I demonstrated how encounters with difference do not need to be proximate face-to-face interactions in order to generate meaningful connections, but rather these connections can be enabled by Country. In this way, the animation of place/Country in the thoughts and feelings of non-Aboriginal people – people not-of-place – provides opportunities that catalyse transformations (Lloyd *et al.* 2015). This thesis then speaks to, and attempts to speak between, theorisations of encounter and Aboriginal connections to place in Human Geography. The seminal work of Bawaka Country, a place with its own agency and capacity to speak for itself

(Bawaka Country *et al.* 2015b), has been important in grounding my understandings of emplaced connections that facilitate subjective transformations between people (Bawaka Country 2016). I use this work throughout this thesis to ground the connections and transformations that I discuss in Chapter Nine. Bawaka Country *et al.* (2015a: 469) argues that an ‘ethics of co-becoming [...] demands that we attend to the connections that bind and co-constitute us’, but this also implies an obligation to address injustice in settler-colonial settings.

Non-Aboriginal acknowledgments of Aboriginal injustices are present across all of the non-Aboriginal participant interviews in this research. I found that it is an essential component in forming effective affinities and collaborations across difference, that privileged bodies approach difference in a state of openness, a willingness to work through dark and uncomfortable histories. I describe histories of Broome in Chapter One that highlight the prolonged nature of intercultural belonging but also living conditions characterised by slavery, white supremacy, racial segregation and Aboriginal dispossession. In Chapter Five and Seven I elaborate on these histories and hidden readings of place through interviews with non-Aboriginal people. I argue that acknowledgement of injustice and privileges are necessary in cultivating ‘an open, ready-to-be surprised “disposition” … with the world’ (Woodyer and Geoghegan 2013: 196). This disposition orientated bodies along lines of flight where they can become-otherwise.

Chapter Eight detailed these narratives of becoming among non-Aboriginal people where, once having embraced the discomfort of radical difference, began to map out geographies of connection that strengthen their affective bonds with place and people. Here I positioned Liyan as a pedagogy of place sensitive to affective life that

inhabitants learn to feel. Through learning to be affected (Latour 2004; Graham and Roelvink 2010), bodies that dwell in place become primed (Bissell 2010) by the liveliness and vitality of a more-than-human force (Whatmore 2006; Greenhough 2010; Whatmore 2013; Dowling *et al.* 2016). Through positioning Liyan as a force for sensing and witnessing the affective life of place, Chapter Nine explicitly employs an ethnographic style which adds to the emerging non-representational research scholarship in Cultural Geography. Through this I have added to the burgeoning literature on affect through introducing non-Western/Aboriginal frameworks of embodied knowing. In doing so, the totality of the empirical findings demonstrate how non-representational theories can enhance our understandings of political subjectivities through ethnographic methods that explicitly explore political charged social justice agendas.

Affective attunements, described by Manning as a ‘mode of immanent relation’ (2009: 39), are made by participants where they bring backgrounded atmospheres to the surface of experience. Importantly, the affective attunements to place need maintenance, care and rejuvenation through continual emplaced connections. But actors need to find ways to extend the impact of meaningful encounters beyond the event. Enchantment and attunement provides a framework for emplaced relations to thrive as they return to scene of encounter. The political possibility is clear when the interface of people and place – the atmosphere – is strong and endowed with capacities to act. How this can be scaled up across time and space remains elusive. What is apparent, is that connections across difference need to be made, maintained and exercised in order to mount challenges to the dominant regimes of sense-making.

Signalling other contributions

Whilst there are explicit contributions that this thesis makes in its expansion of non-representational theories and encounter through foregrounding Indigenous conceptions of place and demonstrating how they are used to envelope non-Indigenous actors, there are a number of relational struggles that address wider global discourses. Of particular note is the *Buen Vivir* movement in Latin America, a decolonial struggle that centres Indigenous notions of good living in opposition to neoliberal extractive practices (Gudynas 2011). As a concept, *Buen Vivir* has particular resonance in comparing how alternative perceptions of the good life intersect with and complicate hegemonic economic structures. The words themselves translate to ‘good life’ or ‘living well’ and are used to describe alternatives to development and prosperity; have actively been deployed by social movements; and, has even reached its way into two new Constitutions in Ecuador and Bolivia.

For the movement, the good life ‘is part of a long quest for alternative lifestyles, forged in the heat of the struggle by humanity for emancipation and life’ (Acosta, 2009, p. 195). The movement emerged in the early 2000s as a response to the numerous negative social, economic and environmental effects of traditional strategies for development that have impacted on Latin Americans in the past 40 years. It is an alternative development paradigm premised on a sense of community and virtuous interactions with other humans and nature. It is made up of numerous cosmovisions that map out a pluri-nationalist fabric within the confines of the modern nation-state as part of a renewed self-determination era for Indigenous groups. As a framework for the inclusion of diverse views on living, being and making sense of the world, *Buen Vivir* marks a radical departure from global

discourses of enclosure and extraction. Being an Indigenous-led movement, predicated upon living with place and its relations – both human and non-human – it provides apparent resonances with the examples I have presented in this thesis. But as a conceptual ideal, its ability to reorientate relations to the good life is radical, as it positions such eventualities as already-existing and able to be apprehended in the here-and-now. As Alberto Acosta (2018: 31–32) states:

It is not a utopia to be built in the future. Its values, experiences, and civilisational practices, as alternatives to capitalism, make the Good Life a realised and realisable utopia.

It is important to note here, that these claims to utopia are not devoid of problems and complications. Walsh (2010: 20) highlights some of the ‘problems, inconsistencies, and contradictions’ that are pervasive throughout the movement and Ecuador in particular. Chaves *et al.* (2018) demonstrate through extensive fieldwork with ten rural communities, that an awareness of impending climatic crisis of hastening the move to sustainable practices, in particular Buen Vivir. However, other work notes, that these moves and claims to success must be framed ‘as emerging – a work in progress’ (Scott, Hinrichs and Jensen 2018: 129).

A broader discourse of Indigenous-led resurgence and world-building includes large scale mobilization events such as the protest at Standing Rock over the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Kyle Whyte (2017), a Potawatomi scholar, highlights the settler-colonial logics and violence inherent in state sanctioned dispossession and police brutality against First Nation people at Standing Rock. Whyte (2018) is also critical of settler support, which he terms as an ‘allyship of innocence’ in which supporters are too quick to divorce themselves from the logics that permit anti-

Indigenous abuse in the first place. This thesis might do more to speak to these complicated relations between allies and Indigenous people, as they may demonstrate how settler-colonialism co-opts good intentions and ensures that harm continues.

Often support for Indigenous rights and agendas corral around environmental concerns as non-Indigenous allies find affinities with the conservation and protection of ‘nature’ spaces. However other movements that support Indigenous sovereignty in the absence of apparent material settler gain exist in Australia, such as the ‘change the date’ rallies on Invasion Day (26 January). Further abroad, the Idle No More is a protest movement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that began in 2012 in Canada as response to state abuses of treaty rights. Leanne Simpson (2013: np), a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, draws attention to the ongoingness of settler-colonial violence through her involvement with the Idle No More movement, stating:

Idle No More has consistently rejected the framing of protestors as fed up and angry, or of the mobilization as ‘new’. The movement is in fact a continuation of 400 years of resistance.

In contexts that don’t demand the centering of Indigenous politics, the contraction and erasure of the welfare state is reflected in global discourses around housing, where the restructuring of home has positioned the provision of housing as an economic commodity rather than a sanctuary and right (Marcuse and Madden 2016). In Australian cities, homelessness is continually criminalised, positioned as an out-of-place blight on attempts to sell the city to tourists (Kelly 2016), and whilst homelessness rates sore, public housing stock is actively being reduced and land transferred to private developers (Kelly 2018). These reflect global trends, especially

in the Global North under late-capitalism's neoliberalisation. Free market principles that position land as an abstract resource continue to drive reckless practices which affect urban places, but also non-urban backroads where unconventional mining practices are passionately opposed. In Australia, the 'knitting nannas' stage frequent craft oriented protests at the gates of shale-gas fracking wells (Gough *et al.* 2017) and other diverse forms of opposition to the practice have taken shape across Europe (Vesalon and Crețan 2015), North America (Vasi *et al.* 2015) in recent years, and assemble with other cases to form a global network of opposition (Kinniburgh 2015).

These examples highlight just a few vantages of comparison that could be contextualised and informed by the narratives and evidence presented in this thesis. Of immediate concern however, is how the livelihoods of remote Aboriginal people in Australia are condemned and assimilated into modes of settler sameness. Given the central empirical focus on place, I have resisted the often simplistic urge throughout this thesis to signal commensurabilities with other contexts and struggles. The diversity and adaptability of oppressive and coercive methods of dispossession and accumulation demands a contextualised approach to dissent and resistance.

The future

In focussing upon contemporary political controversies, this thesis makes an important critical intervention into national discourses around recognition and reconciliation between settler and Aboriginal people by presenting a viable case that illustrates the need for greater attention to emplaced modes of belonging. Since this fieldwork has taken place there have been numerous developments in relation to the community closures proposal. In late 2015 the WA Government established a 'reform unit' tasked with the overseeing of the remote Aboriginal community

reform, beginning with an extensive community consultation process. Made up of the Dept. of Housing, Dept. of Child Protection and Dept. of Regional Development, the *Regional Services Reform Unit* operated under the moniker ‘resilient families, strong communities’. The reform unit released a consultation report in 2017 (Government of Western Australia 2017) which reported upon key insights from the process – the community response is due for release some time in 2018.

During this period, activism against the closures ceased. From my discussions with activists intimate with the politics of the movement, this was in part due to a change in posture of the WA Government – from closure to the establishment of Aboriginal super-centres – but also because of internal struggles. As an activist issue, the case of the community closures seems on standby at the present time – perhaps charged, pregnant with potential and ready to swarm with the next controversy (Connolly 2017). It is not the task of this thesis to unpack the situation that has evolved since my participation in activism against the closures, but important to note is the condition in which activist bodies become debilitated from continual struggle and violence. This research maps out spaces that help to maintain the affective energy for emancipatory projects, which goes some way in combatting the cycles of fatigue.

Despite the lack of political attention to the issue of community closures, there have been some gains. In 2017 the WA Government led by a Liberal-National coalition – right-wing conservative political parties – were voted out of power in a general state election. Their defeat was crushing, with the Labor party elected in one of the biggest swings in Australian electoral history, assuming the largest majority ever to hold government in WA. As a result, a (slightly) more progressive policy making regime has established a 12-month moratorium on shale-gas hydraulic fracking (Dawson and

Johnston 2017), yet there have been no commitments made in relation to the future of remote Aboriginal communities.

Controversies that impact upon Aboriginal lives in Australia appear to be ongoing. The assault on remote livelihoods and the industrialisation of Aboriginal land are just a few examples that can be drawn upon to highlight the antithetical postures of the Australian settler-state in regard to Aboriginal-settler reconciliation. In order to force new openings into existence that break from the circuits of exhaustion and despair, I have attempted to present a mode of existence across difference that creates, maintains and affirms ethical obligations to people and place. The ontology of emplaced relations between diverse humans and non-humans in Broome provokes thought in me. As a result, I argue that a greater attention be paid to the mediatory forces of space/place that assemble diverse bodies into productive alignments that endow capacities to exercise an ability to co-imagine what the good life might be. This research suggests, that lively more-than-human forces which configure modes of affirmative belonging exist everywhere and are awaiting connection. An embrace of relational ways of thinking is one such way that might conjure up the obscured readings of place and difference. Here in Broome, I suggest it is Country and an attunement to Liyan. In other spatio-temporal contexts, the expression of this force is bound to be different.

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Appendix: Interview schedule

Aboriginal activists and supporters:

Micklo, Interview, 22/03/15 – at Yulleroo fracking wells

Anne, Interview, 24/06/15 – at her home in town

Prince, Interview, 22/06/15 – at his home in town

Wocky, Interview, 22/06/15 – at Town Beach

Donna, Interview, 21/06/15 – at a friend's home

Ebony, Interview, 20/06/15 – in a car driving back from camping

Brian, Interview, 19/06/15 – at his off-the-grid campsite

Mitch, Interview, 17/06/15 – at her home in town

Elster, Interview, 15/06/15 – at her home in town

Jodie, Interview, 14/06/15 – at her workplace in town

Mary (pseudonym), Interview, 09/06/15 – at her workplace in town

Bart, Interview, 02/06/15 – at his workplace in town

Non-Aboriginal activists and supporters:

Susanna, Interview, 22/06/15 – at Town Beach

Martin, Interview, 16/06/15 – at his workplace in town

Wade, Interview, 12/06/15 – at his workplace in town

Will, Interview, 13/06/15 – at the Sunday Courthouse Markets in town

Peter, Interview, 12/06/15 – at his home in town

Dave, Interview, 11/06/15 – at his home in town

Greg, Interview, 09/06/15 – at Town Beach

Louise, Interview, 05/06/15 – at her home in town

Ingete, Interview, 04/06/15 – at her workplace in town

Maria, Interview, 03/06/15 – at a café in town

Mark, Interview, 26/06/15 – at his home in town

Petrine, Interview, 08/06/15 – at a café in town

Non-activist non-Aboriginal interviewees:

Clare, Interview, 10/06/15 – at her workplace in town

Nick, Interview, 25/03/15 – at his workplace in town

Rhondda, Interview, 18/06/15 – at the University of Notre Dame

Graeme, Interview, 23/03/15 – at his workplace in town

Megan, Interview, 20/03/15 – at her workplace in town