Geoforum 106 (2019) 385–392

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Geoforum

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/geoforum

Apprehending felt futures in Broome, Australia

David Kelly

HOME Research Hub, Deakin University, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Country
Indigenous
Atmosphere
More-than-human politics
Activism

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how the atmospheres of place act upon bodies, provoking thought and mediating the emergence of a more-than- human politics for living in the urban Anthropocene. Taking-place in a remote urban town, it explores the conditioning geographies of Indigenous-led activisms that harness the potential of place in recent political projects. Central to this is a thinking-with Indigenous felt approaches to place, specifically the work of Country as: a concept that maps geographies of belonging, co-existence and reciprocity; a living body that has the capacity to affect and be affected; and, an force that is felt as a diffuse-yet-palpable atmosphere. Through the narratives of Indigenous activists, this paper describes spacetimes of being-with- Country that dwell in the atmospheres and apprehend capacities to act upon and imagine other present-futures. To think of an environmental agent animated by the force of liveliness, is to work through the political status of the non-human, all the while experimenting and making a call for attention to the felt reality of human connection.

1. Introduction

> With the Anthropocene, the atmosphere has changed, as we try to debate something we can't fully grasp, yet we fear is changing things forever. – Muecke (2016b: 86)

As a symbolic indicator of human temporal proximity to planetary catastrophe, the 2018 Doomsday Clock produced every year by the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* reads: It is now two minutes to midnight. Akin to this doomsday warning, the dominant Anthropocene imaginary as a way of thinking about the future tends to evoke apocalyptic scenes where loss gives way to grief (Head, 2016), narcissism (Shaw and Bonnett, 2016) and political depression (Osborne, 2018). The capacity to collectively imagine alternative futures is rendered impotent by a seemingly almost-certain "deathscape of disastrous, entangled, recursive devastation" (Rose, 2015: 89). This future of decline dominates in western scientific thought (Yusoff 2018) and popular culture (Smith and Vasudevan, 2017; Gergan et al., 2018), where *the* apocalypse is immanent, however not-yet present. Such frameworks of existence and loss be ly the grief for lost futures already experienced by colonised people, and related modes of Indigenous resurgence (Whyte, 2018). Scenes of devastation that pervade the anthropocenic imaginary are compounded by the erasure and denial of futures that occupy spaces where alternative relations to life sustaining places take precedence. This paper draws attention to already-existing relations to place that complicate western-centric understandings of nature, culture, space and time, to engender new engagements and imaginations. Its aim is to hold open moments of connection to human and more-than-human relations that radically challenge the imagination of a future devoid of difference. It does so, not by ignoring or minimising the risk of global climatic decline, but by demonstrating how survivors of an already-experienced apocalypse experiment with more-than-human relations to place to assemble allies and bring alternative futures into existence.

Such an experiment is ongoing in the Kimberley region of Australia's north-west coast in Broome, a remote town where connections to more-than-human aspects of place form part of an enduring environmental politics that embrace difference. Although Broome is a small urban town (pop. 13,984), it has a recent history of direct action that has effectively disrupted the development of large-scale industrialisation in the region (Muecke, 2016a). Protesters, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have been successful in forming impactful relations with each other, and with place, that redirect the course of capital accumulation and policies that dispossess Indigenous people of their lands. I draw from these relations in the political context of the region that relates to the development of a liquified natural gas processing hub, hydraulic shale gas fracking and the closure of remote Aboriginal communities. Within all of these projects, non-Indigenous supporters rally behind Indigenous organisers. Crucially, they demonstrate a willingness to engage place 'as pedagogy' (Simpson, 2014), where a more-than-human politics scaffolds present and future relations. Broome researchers argue that Indigenous conceptions of place and related ontological groundings that structure time and space, were crucial conditions to the success of solidarity networks in recent activism (Muecke 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Wergin, 2016). As such, these conditions that enable productive relations are the empirical focus of this paper.

The content of narratives that activist-participants articulate necessitates a felt evaluation of place. I use extracts from interviews with Indigenous participants that are representative of the wider pedagogical project that exists for the purpose of renewing Indigenous

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.03.002
Received 5 December 2017; Received in revised form 28 February 2019; Accepted 7 March 2019
Available online 12 March 2019

knowledge and solidarity networks. These excerpts derive from my doctoral research, which comprised of four fieldtrips to Broome over the course of a seven-month period in 2015. Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, 24 of which expressly self-identified activists/actionists and supporters of environmental agendas. Place in the narratives of participants reflected other times and spaces of affirmative Indigenous-settler relations, acting as a mediator of "co-becoming" (Bawaka Country et al. 2016a: 456). Place is both author and collaborator in the labours of imagining alternatives to a destructive urban Anthropocene (Bawaka Country et al., 2015), and resonates as an "earthly force" that creates disturbances, that "might 'force thought' among the people affected by them and, thereby, occasion new political associations and opportunities" (Whatmore, 2013: 34). In this paper, I explore the underpinning conditions of political and pedagogical projects in Broome that account for the reshaping and contesting seemingly foreclosed futures.

1.1. Atmospheric Country

Central to the performance of action led by Indigenous people in this place is the protection of *Country* – an Aboriginal-English term for ancestral homeland. Yet this expression of Country extends beyond physical territory to be a concept that maps geographies of belonging, co-existence and reciprocity (Hsu et al., 2014); it is also a living body with an ontological presence that disrupts western-capitalist temporalities (Muecke, 2017). Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in this research describe spacetimes of being-with-Country through the presence of nonrepresentational forces such as atmospheres, ambiances and vibes. It is a force of being that speaks to the Spinozist conception of affect, as the "capacity for affecting and being affected" (Deleuze, 1992: 124) – although this relation is not neatly balanced. In defining the limits of Country, this paper positions its agency as not wholly or adequately captured by such conceptualisations of affect but shares in a *felt* understanding of experience.

For Law (2004: 14), in western ontological traditions there is a lack of language that can express the "hidden Otherness" of Indigenous ways of knowing and being that are not fully open to non-Indigenous people. Indigenous researchers have indeed warned of the paradoxes and violence of non-Indigenous appropriations of Indigenous knowledges that are not readily shared (Simpson, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2015). Non-Indigenous research similarly encourages researchers to resist neat commensurabilities between Indigenous and western knowledges (Dorries and Ruddick, 2018), and for non-Indigenous activists and scholars to understand Indigenous emplaced and embodied knowledges on their own ontological (Barker and Pickerill, 2012) and affective terms (Young and Gilmore, 2013). This paper does not seek to package affect and extract Indigenous knowledges into a cogent theory of prepersonal embodied life, but rather, engages in an "invitation and response to be in a relationship" *with* Country (Porter, 2018: 239); to express how collective intercultural knowledge takes its form in conversation with place, as a melding of ontological forms and epistemological knowing (Castree, 2003; Watson and Huntington, 2008; Roelvink, 2016; Robertson, 2017). For Ruddick (2017: 120), these "alliances" are "a kind of evolution between two or more heterogeneous terms that together become a block, each element transformed … expressing a different ontological configuration." I therefore resist any claim to an *authentic* cultural tradition, instead demonstrating how relations to place provide an allied framework for thinking and feeling our way through the Anthropocene.

Indigenous scholarship, in particular, affords an entry into the ways of engaging with heterogenous knowledges that incorporate felt and cognitive theory. Indigenous feminist researchers such as Dian Million (2009) provide a reading of affect in the historical narratives of Indigenous women, a reading that must be foregrounded when articulating the full effects of colonialism on the body. Million positions a *felt theory* and analysis in Indigenous stories alongside its intellectual content, choosing not to let one fall away in the re-presentation of knowledge. For Million, the full experience of history-till-now carries with it an "emotional resonance" that Indigenous people live *through*, and that this emotional resonance is as palpable in both "storied bodies *and* lands" (2009: 72 emphasis added). Other Indigenous researchers position land and environment as a reciprocal body that gives way to feeling, but also receives and amplifies. Land can be realised as a "force that energizes decolonization" (Martineau and Ritskes, 2014: 2), a pedagogical tool underlining Indigenous intellectual projects (Coulthard, 2010; Simpson, 2014), and a facilitator of conciliatory relations between settler and Indigenous peoples (Coombes et al., 2013; Larsen and Johnson, 2017). Indeed, the centrality of land and the territorial-cum-conceptual figure of Country in Indigenous epistemes and ontological forms has been a robust, if marginal, understanding in geographical research that seeks out decolonising potentials (Lloyd et al., 2012; Bawaka Country et al., 2016a, 2016b; de Leeuw and Hunt, 2018).

Indigenous connections to land can facilitate conditions for a cooperative politics between settler and Indigenous people, and these expressions of solidarity necessarily pivot around place, particularly in the here-and-now. This is an important understanding for *placing* action, as Whyte (2018) cautions settler allies, that non-Indigenous people should resist imagining the future as dystopian and in need of correction or saviour. The future and the present are not temporally detached, and settler allies should acknowledge "the present time as already dystopian" (Whyte, 2018: 224). Temporal detachment in the popular and scientific grammars of the Anthropocene continue to displace Indigenous people in the present and the future. Yusoff (2018) argues that the dominating "White Geology" of the Anthropocene imaginary is an extractive praxis that removes Indigenous post-apocalyptic narratives from the present and continues extractive logics that spatially and temporally displace. I refocus this anthropocenic imaginary through an embodied experience of place, arguing that thinking through the *atmosphere* of place is a useful conceptual conduit for re-placing relations in the here-and-now. I do this whilst knowing that I, myself, am not *of* place, and that my capacity to speak in the here-and-now is unduly enlarged by my position as a white male academic.[1]

Acknowledging the atmosphere relies upon recognising that the affective intensities of particular places vary and are spatio-temporally distinct. There are differentiated atmospheres that bodies become aware of as they move from place to place (Dyson, 2018). Colloquially, a feel for place is often referred to as a 'sense of place', which is felt as well as reasoned. Böhme (2017: 22) argues, that the materiality of place, what he calls "objective factors of the environment", interface "with aesthetic feelings" in the human body. The space in-between the body and the environment, indeed the mediating link in making connections to place, is the atmosphere. It is also produced through both human and more-than-human agencies. Human feelings, atmospheres and places are imbricated within one another as configurations of life that take-place on varying sites along a continuum of body-to-body interaction. Importantly, atmospheres can overcome singular bodies, sweeping them up and redirecting them to what is possible in given moments and projects. As Stewart (2011: 452) states, an atmosphere as

[1] There are power imbalances, but also points of negotiated dialogue, that are produced from my positionality. Firstly, being a settler person working with Indigenous people, my approach to this research is influenced by my shared political ideas with participants and my historical critique of colonialism as an Irish person. Secondly, being a settler who resides in the southern cities of Australia, there is the dual problematic of never having been welcomed to place in the context of equal power relations, but also my adherence to the tendency for southern settlers to 'head north' for the purpose of what Gary Foley critiques as 'the phenomenon of "running off to the Northern Territory" to work in a remote Aboriginal community' (Land 2015: 179). I acknowledge these tensions and do not suggest that I have overcome them, rather, I hold these points of negotiation open, particularly around the idea of place.

"a force field [is] an attunement of the senses, of labors, and imaginaries to potential ways of living in or living through things."

Atmospheres are also culturally contingent and limit the possibilities of what imaginations might be conceivable and what movements a body might make. As Duff (2010: 892) contends, they are based upon a "subjective orientation to place, signalling the various affects, moods, and capacities that might be enactable in that place." The trouble is, that they are not easily replicated, equal in force or readily identifiable, hence they are often thought of as being beyond representation, often evading apprehension or capture (Ash, 2013; Anderson and Ash, 2015). However, to think of atmospheres as beyond representation ignores the conditions of their arrival, emerging in part by deep "sociohistorical formations" that resonate through place and blur the "distinctions between the representational and nonrepresentational" (Edensor, 2012: 1119). In this sense, atmospheres are culturally produced conduits for making connections to place and can tether to concepts, objects and places such as the idea of Country (Hsu et al., 2014).

The sections to follow describe how Country becomes a wellspring of change through the making of atmospheric connections. Interviewees narrate subtle moments of connecting to Country through the atmospheric qualities of place, which in turn resource political acts. In making and renewing connections to Country, I illustrate how encounters with the affectivity of space creates an openness to the becoming of *liveliness*, which I argue is a radical driver of human action and integral to a more-than-human politics (Bawaka Country et al., 2016a). It is in these everyday acts of connection, argues Stewart (2011: 446), that "[m]odes of existence accrue, circulate, sediment, unfold, and go flat. Every attunement is a tuning up to something, a labor that arrives already weighted with what it's living through" (Stewart, 2011: 448). I engage with participant narratives that centre Country as a living concept and body that requires attention to its liveliness so that its capacity to affect can be exercised. Drawing upon the narratives from interviews with Indigenous activists, the main section of this paper adopts a narrative style of inquiry to explore how Country has come to act in activism against the closure/reformation of remote Aboriginal communities. In this instance, participants endow and draw upon the affective potentials of Country, enlarging human and non-human capacities to act together. I move then the discuss the spacetimes of a living Country before concluding.

2. Being affected by place

2.1. Moving with Liyan

Travelling off-grid with Brian, a Djugun man, and Ebony, a young Djugun woman, with a fully loaded four-wheel-drive utility vehicle, we drive north on the Dampier Peninsula, turning onto the well-known Cape Leveque Road. After a few hundred meters, the tarmac disappears, turning into a wide sunburnt dirt halfpipe that tapers to the horizon. Known regionally as the *Kimberley Massage*, the rough corrugated road sends vibrations through the vehicle. The unsealed road is straight, but Brian frequently directs me to avoid large pot holes and bog patches. Brian knows "every bump" on this road. The conversation drops away and using only his outstretched hand like a paddle, he points out the lines in the road I should follow. We hit a smooth patch of road and the vibrations drop away. It is at this point that Brian takes in a deep audible breath and exhales: "ahhh." With a big grin on his face he says, "my heart just opened." Brian tells me that he feels this way "every time" he passes through this particular spot. This space looks just like any other along the road, no more distinct from the previous hour of driving along the monotonous but vibrant pindan[2]. Yet to Brian it has a palpable affective quality, something acts upon his body opening up and catalysing a sense of ease.

After a half hour of slow driving through scrub and thickets we arrive at Brian's off-the-grid beach shack overlooking a large tidal bay. We rest in shade at the top of the dunes waiting for the tide to retreat. We talk about catching crabs for dinner and Ebony asks where we will catch the crab and if we should look out for crocodiles. As Brian explains, we "slow down and imagine." We imagine the moment of treading through the mud flats, seeking out tidal pools and bagging a feed. As the shoreline retreats, we wait, we talk and we anticipate the hunt. We follow Brian down the dune to the high-tide line and he points to 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." An hour and a half on the mud flat passes, looking under rocks, in pools for crabs. I'm mid-stride when Brian yells "stop." A large crab lays beneath the surface of the mud where I was about to tread. Brian hands a steel rod to hook the large crab's pincer at the elbow. We drop it in a canvas sack and head back to the shack.

When we sit down the next day for an interview, I ask Brian discusses his connection to Country:

> …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 ancestors because they are always around. Stress free, you don't have to worry about anything. 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 … without me knowing my Country I'm lost.

Knowing his Country is how Brian imagines his future, but importantly, knowing does not manifest itself in absence or dislocation from Country. To know is to be *with*. It is at once an attempt at disembodying regressive rhythms, a state of being "stress free", and a sensitisation to feelings that facilitate "knowing Country." Liyan is a felt resource handed down through a labour of learning one's culture, often through life-long intergenerational cultural mentoring. How Brian knows this place is facilitated by his inheritance of ancestral knowledge that teaches him how to read the Country, animating knowledge, skills and resources as he entangles his practices in a co-becoming with Country. Indeed, as Bawaka Country et al. (2016a: 467) note, "there is no clear separation between experiencing Country and knowing it", those affected by Country "co-become with Country as a presence in itself." It is in the middle of this immanent twist, that new relations emerge, that Country and those affected by it get to know one another. A reading of Country is facilitated by knowing through embodied sense of relating to place. Brian expresses a felt reading that provokes thought, one that affirms the bodily senses. Feelings guide movement through Country, reading it through Liyan, an affective force of the body that interfaces the sensate materiality of place. As Brian puts it, feeling Liyan can be like:

> your spirit has left your body and they're telling you to turn back. Your body feels totally drained, it's like you're carrying a 1 kg 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. All of your energy from your body is just totally drained out … once you turn around and walk away then it all comes back to you … 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.

As his body moves through space, feelings push and pull. They lend a potential to movement and to an activism that forces situational obligations. The "spirit" leaving the body, ushering it back, demonstrates that the feeling of place is nomadic. Being responsive to the atmosphere of place Brian takes flight, unmooring from the stagnation and heaviness of an extra one or two kilograms in the feet. To use Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 30), this atmosphere is a "smooth space" where the

[2] Local red sandy soil with a high clay content, low nutrients, susceptible to drought and waterlogging.

nomad exists; it requires a "close-range" perspective that is "tactile" and "haptic" rather than ocular; smooth space is not "observable from a point in space external to them." In other words, in being-nomadic, or being-activist, Country animates deviations from conventional paths and trajectories. This space facilitates a being-activist in that it gives primacy to feelings that guide and emancipate the body from engineered forces, offering what Cresswell (2010: 24) describes as "a field without conduits or channels." How Liyan feels is extra-bodily, in that affects flow through the body and extend beyond, to place. Brian's ancestors, whilst past, affect the present as his body moves through Country, temporally smoothing the distinction between past-present-future and occupying the middle somewhere between breathing and judging. The body becomes entangled in this temporal folding. In doing so it allows his body to become a receptive and responsible tool in the atmosphere, part of the atmosphere itself.

Through moving with Country, Brian's body 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, 2012: 519). A feeling for Country facilitates a sovereignty of thought, forcing into existence a bodily capacity to imagine differently. Feelings move us as the ethnographic account above describes. Brian doesn't think about it, it occurs as a force that moves his body and forces the emergence of alternatively configured knowledge regimes.

2.2. Relating with the more-than-human

Activists describe how a feeling emerges as they move through Country, forcing a momentary thought with an obligation to attend to and witness the present. I ask Mitch, a Djugun woman, what happens when she leaves Broome for a regular weekend camping trip:

> 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 past Cape Road this thing just, *phew,* goes. All of the stresses of being in town and me being an activist, filmmaker, 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, all that stuff that I'm worrying about […] just becomes insignificant when you're out there you just replenish your soul. That. To be able to just live in the present, in the now, that is a good life.

The feel of being with Country tunes Mitch into an immediate embodied understanding of place. As her 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. This involves the shedding of other atmospheres that constantly structure her feelings around rhythms of work, deadlines and social obligations. 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. In seeking out spaces where she can connect, Mitch's body discards the inhibitory intensities that impoverish free thought and movement. Importantly, it is not an anti-urban sentiment that Mitch proposes, but rather it is the seeking out of spaces that enable new affective registers to be take place in her body. These moments might apprehend the urban, just as the urban apprehends off-the-grid places in its capitalist expansion and the distribution of a planetary Anthropocene. 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 essence of moments and atmospheres is rejuvenating and nourishing for the activist body. As the reverse journey takes place, the forces of a normative town life come to affect the body more and more. Red dirt roads change into asphalt, vibrations felt in the chassis change their composition:

> …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.

Mitch describes how the felt intensity of place varies as she moves through and with Country. In large urban centres, different intensities, other rhythms and atmospheres act upon her body in unfamiliar or anxious ways:

> I talk about the speeding up when we come on the highway, when I jump on the plane and have to go somewhere else like to Perth, another speed up again, it's a whole different thing … masses of people, traffic lights, being directed, signs, walk, don't walk, stop, don't go there go here. That's one level, then when you go to Sydney it's another level.

The city for Mitch is structured by intensities and sensibilities that inhibit rather than extend her bodily capacities to imagine and enact alternative ways of being. Her Country allows her to feel differently, to assemble knowledge and construct alternatives to the normative "moral-intimate-economic" ideal of "the good life" (Berlant 2011: 2). As a site of accumulated materials and its engineered affective rhythms and atmospheres, Mitch feels that urban intensities can foreclose on these potentials. However in this account, the urban might be thought of "not as simply bricks and mortar" or the materiality of the city, but rather "as a process that produces" other materialities both present and absent (Merrifield 2014: 5). Given the relationality of the urban and close readings of participants' critiques, I think of the urban not as a site *per se*, but as a felt force, an intensity that, for Mitch, steals a potential to form relations. Mitch explains that the tempo of city life affects her:

> I'm exhausted just from that space … just being in that space and all of that energy just flying back and forth.

It is the *intensity of feeling* (Thrift, 2004) which exhausts and debilitates bodies. It is not strictly the city that is central to this critique, nor is it urban life. Rather it is the particular atmospheres of a *busy* urban life that makes it harder to slow down and seek out spaces where alternative ways of knowing might be felt. For many activists interviewed, Broome is a liminal place between the city and 'bush life' where one can apprehend the potential to imagine-otherwise. Perhaps the example of Liyan provides an opening into the processes through which diverse already-existing experiments with tempo and pace facilitate a "pivot toward the future", demonstrating how "transformation might be imagined, anticipated, or enacted" (Braun, 2015: 240). As Anne explains, it's "a way of moving your journey forward." Liyan has the potential to at once entangle and deterritorialise inhibitory relations to place, in effect, carrying bodies away and lending movement to thoughts not constrained by seemingly already-colonised futures.

Feeling your way through space by using your Liyan connects people to place in ways that form ethical obligations to people and Country. Anne describes how non-Indigenous people have learnt to be affected by Liyan, uttering the common refrain "I knew it, but then I felt it." This approaches the problematic appropriation of Indigeneity, but crucial to note is that these entanglements always-include Indigenous people, Liyan seeks emplaced belonging and is shared with non-Indigenous people. Petrine, a non-Indigenous participant, for example, describes how there are spaces around Broome were Liyan is promoted by Indigenous people as a way to connect to Country/place. Petrine says that theses spaces are "were it slows you down *to be with* country", reflecting on moments of connection, stating that it was these sorts of "experiences that I had on country that led me into this work [in remote communities]." Country and emplaced modes of connecting with it, often form the basis of ongoing projects and collaborations between Indigenous and settler people – whether that be performing in explicit protest or maintaining long-term relationships.

Anne explains that nature/place/Country has to be in a "symbiotic

relationship" with humans, stating that "we are human beings together and that [place] for me is the connector." The challenge that confronts Indigenous "protectors", as Anne terms it, "is trying to create a space where different people can come together." Country, and the capacity to connect with it, opens up a space for productive tension where diverse bodies, human and more-than-human, come together. For Mitch, attuning to Country through your Liyan forms enduring bonds that operate at a "microscopic level […] right down to us being kin with the plants, the animals, the rocks, the trees, the sky." It is a part of an entanglement with nature that decentres the human and privileges the body, or as Elster notes, privileges the heart over mind, Liyan is "where your feeling is in your heart." This acknowledges that the emplacement of the human back within the ecology of place, can be witnessed through affective bonds and attachments.

Although Liyan is a relational concept that connects diverse spaces together, its geography relies upon momentary experiences of the present. It is not something the is easily or authentically represented in text, in that sense it is a more-than-representational concept that explores "more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds" (Lorimer, 2005: 83). In being able to read the Country, to centre its mediating presence, "everything is based on that feeling le-an [Liyan]" (Roe and Hoogland 1999: 21).It is not something that can be easily theorised in absence of being affected by it. You have to "connect first, tune in and feel to be able to really see" explains Frans Hooland, an adopted Goolarabooloo story-teller: "you have to kind of get lost in it, drown in it" (Emmanouil, 2014: 43). This involves co-becoming 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."

2.3. Reading relational others

Slowing down is crucial in connecting with Country, and in so doing, developing alternative readings and relations to its non-human components. In this paper I argue for relations that "provoke thought" and "slow down" (Stengers, 2005: 994) thought so that other sense making regimes might emerge. Broome during dry season is a busy place, yet it lends potential to slowing down and making connections, and those that seek out the middle between town and bush life get rewarded, as Bart explains:

> 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 …we know where to go, we'll go to where we feel we get rejuvenated.

Rejuvenating spaces become geographies of responsibility when the reimagining of human/more-than-human relations to time and space are underpinned by attachments to place. Country is not somewhere else on the horizon, but a here-and-now place. It is not *out-there* awaiting one's arrival, it is a presence that urges an immediate responsibility to sustain it. For those that feel a connection, the relationship is both a source of therapy and politics. Indigenous activists are aware of their affective potential with 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 a conception of place that entangles relations between humans and non-human, time and space, as Anne states:

> 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.

These narratives engage with place on terms that acknowledge Country as a sentient subject that reciprocates care. Learning about place begins in the body argues Somerville et al. (2012: 6), stating that "knowledge of Country, and responsibilities to Country, are deeply folded into the bodies, memories and imaginations of the human subjects who belong to Country." As Anne highlights, energy flows through humans and non-humans, it nourishes each in mutually beneficial ways. These "temporary configurations of energy and feeling" constitute an atmosphere that acts upon those within its field of influence (Conradson and Latham, 2007: 238). Connecting with place unburdens the body and opens it to momentary occasions and abilities to sense the softer vibrations of Country. At home in the middle of town in bed, Donna dwells before her day begins, attuning to 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.

Through meditation, Donna becomes receptive to the world around her, a way of being-present. As she hears the birds sing, the day begins in tune with Country. As a part of Country, birds force a feeling of being-in-place that positions Donna as a human entity in a wider decentred web of life. Elster describes to me how birds influence her being with Country:

> 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 5:30 pm, 6:00 pm, 6:30 pm, you're asleep, you get up at 5:30am with the birds.

Attuning to the circadian rhythm of the day is facilitated by the sound of birds at dawn. Well known for its migratory birds, the flood plains of Broome host animal travellers as they form part of a far reaching relational ecology. Indeed, space is relational and does not exist outside of a more-than-human field of interaction. As Massey (2005: 9) states, space is "always in the process of being made", it is therefore always in emergence, forced into existence by the presence and absence of materials, histories, processes, affects and futures. Being with Country, non-human others become imbricated in human actions and attentions, forcing thought upon attunement. Through learning to be affected by the relational presence of non-human others, Country is generative, able to wake and evoke movement and thought. Care for a more-than-human world returns therapy and rejuvenation. A power to animate the potential of Country, enlarges a capacity to think and feel differently, reconfiguring nature-culture relations and unsettling anthropocentric imaginations of the dystopic future. For Anne, the figure of a healing Country becomes part of a life centred on self-care, care for other, place, nature and the future:

> People say to me "what keeps you resilient, what keeps you doing what you're doing because it's bloody hard." When I get tired and drained and exhausted – I'm from the River even though Broome's my home – where my mother was born, we go out there. We have a mile-long billabong, and when I feel really exhausted and drained I go to that billabong. 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.

3. Spacetimes of a living Country

Activisms in which Indigenous conceptions of place are foregrounded open and hold spaces of collaborative possibility through enacting alternative relations to time, space and non-human others. Recent action in Broome has been described by ethnographer Stephen Muecke (2016a: 252) as the "most significant, and successful, Indigenous-green alliance in Australia's history." In discussing economies of the Anthropocene in Broome, Wergin (2016: 13) argues that local action was, and is, aided by "the help of 'living Country' and Indigenous

knowledge." Place, as living Country, is used by activists in Broome as a conditioning space and resource in their political agendas. Through Indigenous narratives of connection, more-than-human relations and capacity lending effects of place, this paper has explored the conditions of a living Country that underpin action. These conditions include learning to be affected through slowing one's down and being present, appreciating the atmospherics of place. Such practices, I argue, are crucial in this place, among these participants, in enabling connections and responsibilities that extend belonging beyond categories of the urban and the Anthropocene.

In situating the role, voice and affective capacity of non-human actors such as a *living Country*, Bawaka Country et al. (2016a) experiment with the co-production of knowledge through place and how this contributes to a method for living together in a more-than-human world. Country is a relational place that encompasses and co-becomes with humans, non-human animals, flora, landscapes, seascapes, as well as atmospheres, auras and events (Bawaka Country et al., 2015). It comes into being through presences *and* absences, positioning Country in a reciprocal loop of responsible action that envelops human and more-than-human relations across varying temporal scales. The ontological status of Country as temporally ubiquitous, foregrounds the emergence of a politics that is accountable to the future: "a politics within which more-than-humans build the present, the past and the future" (Bawaka Country 2016b: 25). Country, as constituted by and through all relations, is an emergent property in the politics of place, its relations charge it with a capacity to act, just as it charges others to act. Thinking of and with place in this way, decentres human authority and universal claims to knowledge production (Dowling et al., 2017). Such a politics enables the potentials of place to emerge as a force that has a transformative quality in local reconciliation efforts (Lloyd et al., 2015) and a demonstrable effect in reframing the narrative of "development" in northern Australia (Lloyd et al., 2012).

This conceptualisation of Country diverges radically from its popular Eurocentric mal-theorisation as an exclusively non-urban Indigenous space (Lloyd et al., 2010). Frontier imaginaries impoverish Country's potential to be a mediator of living in the urban Anthropocene. Country should be thought of, rather, as a force that underpins existence in all Australian cities, urban towns and remote locales as an always-present mediator of human and non-human relations (Porter, 2018). I go further and conceptualise Country as an active participant in the imagining of alternative futures, as a political actor that envelops difference and folds past-present-futures into the here-and-now. Thinking of place as a living political actor follows Whatmore's (2013: 36) contention that geographers should "gravitate towards the rich conjunction of the bio (life) and the geo (earth)", or the "livingness" of the world. It is at this intersection between life and earth that geographers and the environmental humanities might witness and encourage the emergence and duration of potential futures (Povinelli, 2016). Whatmore (2013: 36) contends that such thinking "conjures an ecological imagination that foregrounds the conditional openness or immanence of life" in which the livingness of the world is fundamentally a "relational condition" that entangles the animate matter of bodies with the "seemingly indifferent" materialities of everyday life.

For one interviewee, Wocky, Country is "like an arm or leg, it's you, it's your identity." As a culturally imbued space, Wocky says that Country is "where you're not racing time, you're moving for yourself, you're not moving for anyone else." It is also an active contributor to political projects, articulating how the dissolving of nature-culture binaries and the emergence of liveliness facilitates the becoming of place as a tool "not here just to think with", but a body that is "here to live with" (Haraway, 2003: 5). Country unsettles the material distinctions between human and more-than-human bodies. It is a ubiquitous being that exists in all homelands of Firsts Nations people as an ever-present affectivity with a capacity to undo exclusive categories of belonging. Like the anthropogenic alteration of the earth's atmosphere that affects all of human settlement, Country mediates ideas about what the urban might look and feel like. Hsu et al. (2014: 370) argue that Indigenous geographies of Country are more "a statement of connection, belonging, and affinity" than solid materialisms. How Country, or any living conception of relational space, might be connected with in large urban centres, relies upon its availability to be attuned to and for humans enter into a reciprocal relationship on its own emplaced terms.

Alternative ways of experiencing time is crucial to this task. The temporal rhythm (and source of law) of Country in this part of the Kimberley, known as *bugarrigarra,* influences action in the present. Muecke (2017: 1) notes that it this temporal refrain based in local ontological groundings, "was mobilised to resist extraction colonialism" in recent social movements around Broome. Self-described "actionist" Anne, describes the importance of this temporality in enabling a particular kind of thinking:

> 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 …[it's] 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.

In making connections with place, bodies must be open to "learning to be affected" by alternative temporalities in a space that opens possibilities to imagine a being-otherwise (Latour 2004: 205; Graham and Roelvink 2010: 324-327; Gibson-Graham 2015: 52). Time and its intensity structures a space where linear progress and static space give way to other scales and relations that affect how the present is felt and future imagined. The 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. Hsu et al. (2014: 372) sum this up by stating that:

> 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.

Through attuning to the rhythms of place, those affected by Country learn to act within an interconnected biosphere. Latour (2015: 154) argues that reconceptualising time as immanent rather than linear, is crucial to action in the present. Time is not sequential, but rather is immanent dimension that is always acting on the present. He argues that humans need to radically rethink time, it "is only once we have radically changed our relation to time […] that we might be spurred into action without delay" (Latour, 2015: 154). Acting with Country facilitates a re-centring of action as occurring in an already-here future. Through interviews with Indigenous participants in this paper, I have worked *with* place as a facilitator of activism. Country figures as a temporally amorphous subject of the Anthropocene, and a facilitator of a reimagining how a felt approach to place alters human subjectivity and drives human action. The potential of Country to be a co-producer of action is enlarged by, and dependent upon, the reorganisation of human relations to time and space. Connections demand bodily encounters mediated by Indigenous pedagogies and ways-of-knowing. They demonstrate how the force of Country is attuned to and sustained by human actors. Through an affective connection and attunement to its liveliness, a living Country is endowed with a capacity to "force thought" (Stengers, 2005: 994; Whatmore, 2013: 34) in those that come to be affected by it.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have demonstrated the expanse of Country as a concept, living body, place and atmosphere that mediates human relations in place and elaborates on a felt theory about what present and future relations might be in the Anthropocene. The examples identify

more-than-human readings and connections with place, and the identified relations that emerge in already-existing experiments with Country. Whatmore (2013: 35) argues that "it is what exceeds rather than what comes after the human, however configured in particular times and places, which is the more promising and pressing project." I argue that this process of forming alternatively configured human/more-than-human relations, is facilitated through endowments made *by* and *to* place that produce affective capacities to imagine-otherwise. To think of an environmental agent animated by the force of liveliness, is to work through the political status of the non-human, all the while experimenting and making a call for attention to the felt reality of human connection. It is in the spacetimes of Country, with its rejumbling of attachments, that common settler notions of time and space undergo an undoing. Seemingly fixed ideas of the future become destabilised in this turbulence and in-so-doing spacetimes emerge imbued with new possibilities, where plurality, difference and co-existence can be renegotiated with the earth.

Grounded in Indigenous narratives of Country and connection, this paper sought after the contention that "[s]omething in the world forces us to think" (Deleuze, 1994: 136). When Indigenous ways of knowing – including a felt theory of experience (Million, 2009) – are excluded from narratives of social agency, connection, cultural analysis and activism, the future is bound to be dystopian (Whyte, 2018). Environmental and Indigenous controversies signal the arrival of uncertainty where dominant modes of thought and being become disordered. Broome, as a site of on-going experimentation with spatio-temporal relations is a rich site for the witnessing of forces that mobilise connections across difference and the collaborative more-than-human imagination of the Anthropocene. How the mediatory effect of Country can be scaled-up, amplified, replicated and re-engaged in larger urban cities needs further attention. However, as this paper demonstrates, the work of Country in affecting bodies is enabled by a felt approach to place, be that the city, or urban Country. The atmospheres of place with rejuvenating and enlivening affects are elemental in this task. Country works in formulating a more-than-human politics for the Anthropocene, slowing down, feeling place and reading the liveliness of non-human others has proven to be a radical driver in reimagining a collaborative future in Broome.

References

Anderson, B., Ash, J., 2015. Atmospheric methods. Non-representational methodologies: re-envisioning research, New York: Routledge, pp. 34–51.

Ash, J., 2013. Rethinking affective atmospheres: technology, perturbation and space times of the non-human. Geoforum 49, 20–28.

Barker, A.J., Pickerill, J., 2012. Radicalizing relationships to and through shared geographies: why anarchists need to understand indigenous connections to land and place. Antipode 44 (5), 1705–1725.

Bawaka Country including Wright, S., Suchet-Pearson, S. et al., 2015. Working with and learning from Country: Fecentring human author-ity. Cultural Geogr., 22(2), 269–283.

Bawaka Country including Wright, S., Suchet-Pearson, S. et al. 2016a. Co-becoming Bawaka: Towards a relational understanding of place/space. Progr. Human Geogr., 40(4), 455–475.

Bawaka Country including Wright, S., Suchet-Pearson, S. et al., 2016b. The politics of ontology and ontological politics. Dialogues Human Geogr., 6(1), 23–27.

Berlant, L., 2011. Cruel optimism. Duke University Press, Durham.

Böhme, G., 2017. The aesthetics of atmospheres. Routledge, New York.

Braun, B., 2015. Futures: imagining socioecological transformation—an introduction. Ann. Assoc. Am. Geogr. 105 (2), 239–243.

Castree, N., 2003. Environmental issues: relational ontologies and hybrid politics. Progr. Hum. Geogr. 27 (2), 203–211.

Conradson, D., Latham, A., 2007. The affective possibilities of London: Antipodean transnationals and the overseas experience. Mobilities 2 (2), 231–254.

Coombes, B., Johnson, J.T., Howitt, R., 2013. Indigenous geographies II: The aspirational spaces in postcolonial politics – reconciliation, belonging and social provision. Progr. Human Geogr. 37 (5), 691–700.

Coulthard, G., 2010. Place against empire: understanding Indigenous anti-colonialism. Affinities: J. Rad. Theory, Culture, Action 4 (2).

Cresswell, T., 2010. Towards a politics of mobility. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 28 (1), 17–31.

de Leeuw, S., Hunt, S., 2018. Unsettling decolonizing geographies. Geogr. Compass 12 (7), e12376.

Deleuze, G., 1992. Ethology: Spinoza and us. Incorporations 625–633.

Deleuze, G., 1994. Difference and repetition (P. Patton, Trans.). Columbia University Press, New York.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. 1986. Nomadology: The war machine (B. Massumi, Trans.): Semiotext (e) New York.

Dorries, H., Ruddick, S., 2018. Between concept and context: reading Gilles Deleuze and Leanne Simpson in their in/commensurabilities. Cultural Geogr. 25 (4), 619–635.

Dowling, R., Lloyd, K., Suchet-Pearson, S., 2017. Qualitative methods II: 'More-than-human' methodologies and/in praxis. Progr. Human Geogr. 41 (6), 823–831. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516664439.

Duff, C., 2010. On the role of affect and practice in the production of place. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 28 (5), 881–895.

Dyson, J., 2018. Fresh contact: Youth, migration, and atmospheres in India. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 0263775818816318.

Edensor, T., 2012. Illuminated atmospheres: anticipating and reproducing the flow of affective experience in Blackpool. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 30 (6), 1103–1122.

Emmanouil, N., 2014. You've got to drown in it. PAN: Philos. Activism Nat. 11, 41–47.

Gergan, M., Smith, S., Vasudevan, P., 2018. Earth beyond repair: Race and apocalypse in collective imagination. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 0263775818756079.

Gibson-Graham, J.K., 2015. Ethical economic and ecological engagements in real(ity) time: experiments with living differently in the anthropocene. Conjunctions 2 (1), 45–71.

Graham, J.K.G., Roelvink, G., 2010. An economic ethics for the anthropocene. Antipode 41, 320–346.

Haraway, D., 2003. The companion species manifesto: Dogs, people, and significant otherness. Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago.

Head, L., 2016. Hope and grief in the Anthropocene: re-conceptualising human-nature relations. Routledge, London.

Hsu, M., Howitt, R., Chi, C., 2014. The idea of 'Country': Reframing post-disaster recovery in Indigenous Taiwan settings. Asia Pacific Viewpoint 55 (3), 370–380.

Land, C., 2015. Decolonizing solidarity: dilemmas and directions for supporters of indigenous struggles. Zed Books, London.

Larsen, S.C., Johnson, J.T., 2017. Being together in place: Indigenous coexistence in a more than human world. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Latour, B., 2004. How to talk about the body? The normative dimension of science studies. Body Soc. 10 (2–3), 205–229.

Latour, B., 2015. Telling friends from foes in the time of the anthropocene. In: Hamilton, C., Gemenne, F., Bonneuil, C. (Eds.), The Anthropocene and the global environmental crisis: rethinking modernity in a new epoch London: Routledge, pp. 145–155.

Law, J., 2004. After method: Mess in social science research: Routledge.

Lloyd, K., Suchet-Pearson, S., Wright, S., et al., 2010. Stories of crossings and connections from Bawaka, north east Arnhem Land, Australia. Soc. Cultural Geogr. 11 (7), 701–717.

Lloyd, K., Suchet-Pearson, S., Wright, S., et al., 2015. Transforming tourists and "culturalising commerce": Indigenous tourism at Bawaka in northern Australia. Int. Indigenous Policy J. 6 (4), 1–21.

Lloyd, K., Wright, S., Suchet-Pearson, S., et al., 2012. Reframing development through collaboration: Towards a relational ontology of connection in Bawaka, north east Arnhem Land. Third World Quart. 33 (6), 1075–1094.

Lorimer, H., 2005. Cultural geography: the busyness of being 'more-than-representational'. Progr. Human Geogr. 29 (1), 83–94.

Martineau, J., Ritskes, E., 2014. Fugitive indigeneity: Reclaiming the terrain of decolonial struggle through Indigenous art. Decolonization: Indigeneity Educ. Soc. 3 (1), 1–12.

Massey, D., 2005. For Space. Sage, London.

Merrifield, A., 2014. Whither urban studies. The New Urban Question. Pluto Press, London, pp. 1–10.

Million, D., 2009. Felt theory: An Indigenous feminist approach to affect and history. Wicazo Sa Rev. 24 (2), 53–76.

Muecke, S., 2016a. Indigenous-green knowledge collaborations and the James Price Point dispute. In: Vincent, E., Neale, T. (Eds.), Unstable Relations: Indigenous people and environmentalism in contemporary. UWA Publishing, Australia Crawley, pp. 252–272.

Muecke, S., 2016b. The Mother's Day protest and other fictocritical essays. Rowman & Littlefield International, London.

Muecke, S., 2017. Earthbound law: the force of an Indigenous Australian institution. Law Critique 1–9.

Osborne, N., 2018. For still possible cities: a politics of failure for the politically depressed. Aust. Geogr. 1–10.

Porter, L., 2018. From an urban country to urban Country: confronting the cult of denial in Australian cities. Aust. Geogr. 49 (2), 239–246.

Povinelli, E., 2016. Geontologies: a requiem to late liberalism. Duke University Press, Durham and London.

Robertson, S., 2017. 'Thinking of the land in that way': Indigenous sovereignty and the spatial politics of attentiveness at Skwelkwek'welt. Soc. Cultural Geogr. 18 (2), 178–200.

Roe, P., Hoogland, F., 1999. Black and white, a trail to understanding. In: In: Sinatra, Murphy (Eds.), Listen to the land, listen to the people, vol. 22 Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Roelvink, G., 2016. Building dignified worlds: geographies of collective action. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Rose, D.B., 2015. Flying Foxes in Sydney. In: Gibson, K., Rose, D.B., Fincher, R. (Eds.), Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene. Punctum Books.

Ruddick, S.M., 2017. Rethinking the subject, reimagining worlds. Dialogues Human Geogr. 7 (2), 119–139.

Shaw, W.S., Bonnett, A., 2016. Environmental crisis, narcissism and the work of grief.

Cultural Geogr. 23 (4), 565–579.
Simpson, L., 2011. Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation. Winnipeg Arbeiter Ring Publishers, Resurgence and a New Emergence.
Simpson, L., 2014. Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Educ. Soc. 3 (3), 1–25.
Smith, S., Vasudevan, P., 2017. Race, biopolitics, and the future: Introduction to the special section. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 35 (2), 210–221.
Somerville, M., Davies, B., Power, K., et al., 2012. Place pedagogy change, vol. 73 Springer Science & Business Media, Rotterdam.
Stengers, I., 2005. Making things public. In: Latour, B., Weibel, P. (Eds.), The cosmopolitical proposal. MIT Press, Cambridge, pp. 994–1003.
Stewart, K., 2011. Atmospheric attunements. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 29 (3), 445–453.
Stewart, K., 2012. Precarity's forms. Cult. Anthropol. 27 (3), 518–525.
Thrift, N., 2004. Intensities of feeling: towards a spatial politics of affect. Geografiska Annaler 57–78.
Tuhiwai Smith, L., 2015. Decolonizing knowledge: Toward a critical Indigenous Research Justice praxis. In: Jolivette, A.J. (Ed.), Research Justice: Methodologies for Social Change Bristol. Policy Press, pp. 205.
Watson, A., Huntington, O.H., 2008. They're here—I can feel them: the epistemic spaces of Indigenous and Western Knowledges. Soc. Cultural Geogr. 9 (3), 257–281.
Wergin, C.H., 2016. Dreamings beyond 'opportunity': The collaborative economics of an aboriginal heritage trail. Journal of Cultural Economy 9 (5), 488–506.
Whatmore, S., 2013. Earthly powers and affective environments: An ontological politics of flood risk. Theory, Culture Soc. 30 (7–8), 33–50.
Whyte, K.P., 2018. Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises. Environ. Plann. E: Nature Space 1 (1–2), 224–242.
Young, J., Gilmore, M., 2013. The spatial politics of affect and emotion in participatory GIS. Ann. Assoc. Am. Geogr. 103 (4), 808–823.
Yusoff, K., 2018. A billion black anthropocenes or none. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.