Theses

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# Community Development supporting Ecological Conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home

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# Community Development supporting Ecological Conversion, as identified in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home.*

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the**

**Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



**School of Arts & Sciences**
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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree diploma in any institution.

Human Ethics: The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, updated 2018). The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the University Of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00418), Approval Numbers #017010B, #018124F and #019120B.

Anne Catherine JENNINGS

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# ABSTRACT

In this extraordinary time of multiple, intersecting crises with compounded costs in social, economic, and environmental degradation, calls for transformative change are emerging from all levels of humanity – global to local. Within that setting, my study concentrated on investigating change at a local level to address the research question *'How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'*

I commenced by reviewing two international communiques, the United Nations *2030 Agenda* and Pope Francis's *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home.* While these proposals called for global through to local sustainability transition, I chose to undertake research in my local region, recognising people at the grassroots level do currently contribute towards change. I envisaged local level actions could lead to opportunities to progress the *Laudato Si'* agenda within community development frameworks.

While community development endeavours pursue social-ecological change within an ideology that questions how our world could be organised and cared for differently, it is recognised that other approaches sit within narrowly framed neo-liberal dogma. The ecological approach of community development involves collaboration, mutuality and reciprocity, and connects social justice and ecological viability for all on this planet.

Since its release, *Laudato Si'* has provoked considerable academic/theological and scientific/environmental debate that does not necessarily contain local people's views and everyday lived experiences, given their often-limited access to those broader debates. The main argument in this thesis is that local people and communities have substantial roles to play in contributing to the transformational change called for within *Laudato Si'*. Exploring this premise, my study focused on ways in which local communities initiated the change they were seeking. I investigated selected historical and current case studies that demonstrated creative and innovative actions undertaken within genuine community development frameworks. These actions generated outcomes that are consistent

with those described in *Laudato Si'*, releasing opportunities for ecological conversion.

The community and ecological practice research methodology developed for this study values integral ecology, which upholds that everything is interrelated, for example the relationship between people, plants, and animals, and between species and planet within systemic networks. The application of interdisciplinary, multi-focused qualitative research methods through the lens of community development practice addresses the research question. One community research method, 'world café', identified the themes incorporated into this study, with local case studies and storytelling playing a strong role in relating the significance of these grassroots activities.

Results from this PhD research, positioned within community development frameworks and inspired by the teachings of Laudato Si', demonstrate theory practices for ways individuals and communities can change relationships with their ecosystem. This includes socio-ecological justice, solidarity, and planetary stewardship which are participatory actions that can lead to ecological conversion.

Recommendations resulting from this research include initiating community-based inquiry that expands engagement and planning into developing bottom-up, grassroots driven community action plans that support social, economic, and environmental change at local levels. These are important steps towards global change. Other recommendations call for embracing and expanding the value of Indigenous living cultures in this Laudato Si' community development agenda, along with increased inclusion of human and other-than-human living systems. These are additional pathways towards ecological conversion that leads to transformational change.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

I acknowledge the Yawuru People who are the Traditional Custodians and Native Title Holders of the land on which I live and undertook this research, in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia. I pay respect to Yawuru Elders past, present and emerging.

I further acknowledge other Country[1] specifically included in this research – that of the collective of Traditional Owner groups of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, which provides a united voice for the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Catchment (in the Central West Kimberley region of Western Australia), and the Noongar people from Kulin (in the eastern Wheatbelt region of Western Australia).

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[1] When capitalised in-text, Country reflects a broad, Aboriginal, inter-relational, holistic understanding of the same word – country – which has a narrower English meaning (Poelina et al., 2020).

# THESIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Huge thanks for your love, patience, and support to my daughters – Bec Jennings and Deb Pearce and their families for being there for me, urging me on, throughout my journey. My heart also goes out to those who passed away during my long years of learning, my son Brendan Jennings who left this world while I was doing my masters; my mum Heather Warnock who joined me in my initial discussions about this PhD before she travelled on; my wonderful husband of 45 years Les Jennings, who was encouraging and supporting me when I commenced this PhD research but illness took him before I finished – I miss you every day; as well as my brother Fr. Chris Warnock - we had some great discussions about *Laudato Si'* when I first started, before your disease finally took you as well. No wonder I 'made' it with all of you with me on this voyage into the unknown!

I also sincerely thank my Principal Supervisor, Associate Professor Sandra Wooltorton, for her wisdom, knowledge, and continuing support while I went through my ups and downs. I don't think I would have arrived at this point without you Sandra. Thanks also to Dr. Patricia Sherwood who not only supported me with my PhD but initially instilled in me the love of working with grassroots communities, during my earlier undergraduate years. Special thanks also go to everyone at the Nulungu Research Institute of The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus. Your ongoing support is greatly appreciated.

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Jennings, A. (2020, October). *'Laudato Si' applied within Community'* [Paper presentation]. Knights of the Southern Cross Western Australia Triennial Conference, Perth, Western Australia.

Jennings, A. (2020). *Innovative, Creative Community and Ecological Economics Projects in Broome* [Presentation]. University of Notre Dame Australia's 'Talking Heads' Program, Broome, Western Australia.

***Other Relevant Pursuits***

Undertook and completed the Catholic Earthcare Australia's *Laudato Si'* Animator's Course in 2018, New Norcia, Western Australia.

Undertook and completed the International Global Catholic Climate Movement's Laudato Si' Animator course electronically in 2019.

Appointed to the national Catholic Earthcare Australia Advisory Board in 2019.

Workshop facilitation on *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* at the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council Conference, Perth, Western Australia in 2019.

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## ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABCD | Asset Based Community Development |
| ACBC | Australian Catholic Bishops Conference |
| ACDA | Aotearoa Community Development Association |
| CD | Community Development |
| CLI | Community Led Initiatives |
| COP21 | Paris Climate Summit |
| COP26 | Glasgow Climate Summit |
| DESA | (United Nations) Department of Economic and Social Affairs |
| ECOLISE | European Network for Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability |
| FTLC | Feed the Little Children |
| IACD | International Association for Community Development |
| IASSW | International Association of Schools of Social Welfare |
| IFSW | International Federation of Social Workers |
| IEB | Incredible Edible Broome |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LETS | Local Exchange Trading System |
| LSGs | Laudato Si' Goals |
| MFR | Martuwarra Fitzroy River |
| MFRC | Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council |
| NFP | Not For Profit |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PBC | Prescribed Body Corporate (for Native Title Holders) |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |

# 1.0 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

## 1.1 Preamble global ecological crisis

Our planet, our common home, is facing a global ecological crisis that is continually intensifying, resulting in pandemics (Tollefson, 2020) and social, economic, and environmental degradation. In one response to this disaster, Pope Francis (2015) released the encyclical (teaching letter) *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home.*[2] It is a pronouncement that considers issues within spiritual, cultural, and physical spaces, aimed at all people on the planet. My research question is *'How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'* To address this question my thesis is designed to search ways to contribute to positive change, probing local projects that have been undertaken in the past as well as those happening now. What is new about this investigation is the recognition that current research largely involves global, top-down investigations. My study explores the lesser researched area of local, bottom-up community approaches to transformational change.

### 1.1.1 Kimberley Transitions

This PhD research is one of a group of five that comprise the *Kimberley Transitions: On Care for Our Common Home* project, established by the Nulungu Research Institute at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus. The first one has recently been recognised (Poelina, 2021). The overall project, and the varied themes within it, focus on Western Australia's Kimberley region in the north-west of the continent, a location of substantial natural and cultural significance. Given current socio-ecological challenges, *Kimberley Transitions'* aim is to collaborate in creating Kimberley-based responses that incorporate local knowledge through to emerging international theories[3] (Wooltorton, et al., 2019). One of the major influences embraced throughout this program is the international transitions movement. The transitions pathway aims to generate collaborative change across the Kimberley. Collectively the *Kimberley Transitions* project aims

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[2] This document referred to as *Laudato Si'* throughout this thesis.
[3] A paper relating to the establishment of the project is available in Appendix II.

to nurture social, cultural, and economic change inspired by the transitions movement and informed by transitions discourses (Wooltorton, et al., 2019).

Situated in Broome, my component of *Kimberley Transitions* study concentrates on change at the local level, embedded within global context. The study includes expanding people's understanding of "both the cry of the earth and cry of the poor" (Pope Francis, 2015, #49)[4], and to encourage participants' efforts to live simpler lives, incorporating community development facilitated ecological conversion processes.

As a community development practitioner, researcher, and lecturer for thirty years it is important to me, professionally and personally, to ensure this research is available to others working in this field. Subsequently I have chosen the Thesis by Publication pathway, which has assisted making my research journey and content more readily accessible to people working in the field via peer-reviewed journals, conference papers and book chapters. This also provided opportunities to personally present papers and gain valuable feedback at conferences (national and international) and at professional gatherings, during this research.

This process does, however, have a minor drawback in relation to some repetition. Although each of the publication chapters covers different topics or themes their commencement necessitated similar introductions that explains the background of the research, laying the foundation before moving on to cover each chapter's content. This is designed to provide readers of the various journals and books the context, before moving on to the different 'themes and stories' covered in particular articles.

The next section commences with a literature review before defining the theory, practice, and methodological frameworks that constitute this thesis. The chapters published during candidature follow. Having sections of the thesis peer reviewed prior to completion also assisted by providing me with a degree of validation for this chosen thesis pathway and the subject content chosen.

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[4] The numbering system in *Laudato Si'* indicates subsections not paragraphs (which aren't numbered), thus the symbol # designates the subsection quoted from.

## 1.2 Literature Review

The literature review sets out to explain background necessary for responding to the question *'How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'*. It commences by describing over fifty years of publications that point to Our Common Home's (earth's) ongoing ecological crisis, along with social, economic and cultural desolation. These issues are mirrored today in a wide range of quantifiable reports, including the United Nation's (2015) *2030 Agenda* and Pope Francis' (2015) encyclical *Laudato Si',* in which he recognises that the "ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion" (2015a, #219).

This research draws on community development theory and practice to examine how local people and activities can contribute to ecological conversion, a process of awakening and/or engagement that substantially changes people's relationship with our ecosystem (Ormerod and Vanin, 2016). A range of multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective approaches are covered to demonstrate opportunities for broad public involvement through, for example, community development, ecological economic, environmental and social justice processes to contribute to moving forward, involving ecological conversion, on the pathway to transformational change.

The literature review has three sections: background and overview that explores the UN *2030 Agenda* and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*; broad community development and associated sub-groupings, then the section conclusion.

The tertiary research sector supports sharing studies widely beyond academia. Merga and Mason (2021) identify a range of benefits of sharing with diverse audiences, including recognising engagement as an opportunity to learn from end users, as well as pointing to different ways research can be communicated. Gunn and Mintrom (2017) examined the importance of research that delivers benefits to the community being engaged and impacted upon. Overall, these authors promote raising both research performance within the tertiary sector and broader societal relevance and applicability of the academic research. Evidence also shows doctoral candidate's reasons to undertake a thesis by publication reflects their desire to share findings (Merga & Mason, 2021). This is what I set out to accomplish when I commenced my candidature: assessing my local community within a global and academic context.

This literature review:

- describes the relationship between separate components of the study,
- identifies prior scholarship,
- locates this research within the context of existing literature,
- supports examining areas being studied,
- while identifying new ways to interpret prior research (Labaree, n.d.).

An 'integrative review' approach has been used here to allow for a wide variety of inquiry, incorporating currency and verification of themes and evidence (Toronto, 2020), while applying past and present literature to support the creation of new knowledge (Torraco, 2016). Those steps have been adopted as processes that characterise this common form of review within social sciences (Labaree, n.d.).

Each published article within this thesis includes, to differing degrees, literature reviews relevant to the focus and subject matter of those chapters. Consequently, I have incorporated additional and/or more up-to-date material in this review to both reduce repetition and to incorporate additional information developed, some after chapter publication.

### 1.2.1 Global Agendas and Community Based Responses

Over the last 50 plus years, ecological devastation along with social breakdown has been documented through mainstream and academic media. In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* warned people about the impact of poison on human and environmental health. Shortly afterwards a plethora of environmental alarms were issued connecting ecological deterioration to human activities. The Club of Rome's 1972 *Limits to Growth* (Meadows) linked these forecasts to economic growth. The modern environmental ethics movement and a wide variety of organisations for social change began during this period. The spiritual link between social and environmental issues was also recognised by Thomas Berry in 1978 (republished in 2003), and others. Berry reviewed the history of traditional Christianity and concluded it is no longer the story of planet and human community. What is required, he portrayed, is purposeful approaches to Cosmic/Earth processes. Berry concluded:

> If the way of Western culture and Western religion was once the way of election and differentiation from others and from the Earth, the way now is

the way of intimate communion with the larger human community and with the Cosmic-Earth process (2003, p. 87).

Since that time, environmental and social scientists have documented extraordinary challenges such as the melting of the polar ice caps, worldwide deforestation and species loss, increased use of poisons going into food chains impacting all species, along with ever-reducing volumes of groundwater threatening ecological and human life. Added to this is the growth of the ecological footprints in the Global North, generating substantial increases in the rich-poor divide, increasing plastic pollution of oceans and waterways and creating ever-increasing volumes of toxins and wastes that cannot be adequately disposed of. Climate change is speeding up, caused by escalating volumes of atmospheric carbon, and seemingly limitless other associated perils including earthquakes, fires and flooding (IPBES, 2019; IPCC, 2018; United Nations, 2015, 2020a).

While localised groups have tried to address some of these threats (Lachapelle & Albrecht, 2019), at the global level many continue to dangerously escalate (Albrecht & Lachapelle, 2019). It appears warnings have not been acted upon sufficiently by many countries, with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reporting Australia needs to intensify efforts to meet its 2030 emissions goal (2019). In addition, a focus on unlimited economic growth continues in this country, along with the inherent belief that these issues can be 'fixed' through science and technology alone (Norman, Newman, & Steffen, 2021; Walker, 2020).

**United Nations *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si'***

In *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development,*[5] released in 2015, the United Nation pointed to the need for socio-ecological change by engaging more coherent and integrated, transformational approaches. Importantly they call for "inter-linkages … between the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development" (2015b, para. 2). I address the *2030 Agenda*, comprising the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that encourage interconnectedness at international as well as local grassroots levels. The document introduces readers to the field of community

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[5] This document will be referred to as *"2030 Agenda"* throughout this thesis.

development, which I adopt as a practice framework consistently throughout this thesis. I explore community development further within this literature review.

A key area of divergence between the UN global and local (grassroots) approaches to transformational change is the 'top-down' (government) and 'bottom-up' (community) debate. Both approaches are needed simultaneously to bring about important changes. In Australia the Commonwealth Government exhibits a real lack of interest and concern, with a flow-on effect of not supporting communities to become more engaged and pro-active. For instance, the national Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) explains the country's role as a signatory of the UN sustainability agenda as follows:

> The 2030 Agenda … is well-aligned with Australia's foreign, security, development and trade interests – especially in promoting regional stability, security and economic prosperity. It also helps Australia in advocating for a strong focus on economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific region and in promoting gender equality, governance and strengthening tax systems (DFAT, n.d., Para 6).[6]

The DFAT approach excludes reference to key areas supported by the UN including socio-ecological change that connects social, economic, and environmental components of sustainable development. This approach certainly leaves a lot of questions for Australia's leaders. Government would argue it is supporting grassroots community change, for example through the National Landcare Program and Indigenous Rangers.[7] This is not denied however the Landcare Program, for example, was initiated by the national government in 2014 to provide funding for direct on-ground environmental support. This has now been changed to target efficiencies in the sector, reducing access to vital on-ground works.

This is not necessarily the case with other countries. The UN recognises India is adopting a paradigm shift to a 'whole-of-society' approach across all tiers of government, as well as involving non-government organisations, and local

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[6] This author gained the impression that 'gender equality' was included only to fulfill one of the UN's 17 SDGs.

[7] National and state government-supported Indigenous ranger projects designed to assist Indigenous people combine traditional knowledge with conservation training to protect and manage their land, sea, and culture.

communities – and notably engaging with people living in vulnerable social, economic and environmental situations (United Nations, 2020c).

The *Sustainable Development Goals Report* (United Nations, 2020b) paints a disturbing picture, not only concerning the slow uptake of the SDG goals but also attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the outbreak uneven progress was identified. Consequently, more focused attention is drastically required to fulfill the seventeen SDG's.

Another international socio-ecological treatise was released in 2015, two months prior to the UN *2030 Agenda,* the encyclical (teaching letter) by Pope Francis: *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. At the launch of the UN *2030 Agenda* Pope Francis, as guest speaker, discussed ways both global organisations could work together, emphasising:

> The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged [people]. (Pope Francis, 2015b).

*Laudato Si'* calls on all people on the planet - Christians, those of other faiths/belief systems and those of no faith - to work collectively to activate ecological conversion that leads to the essential transformation required within and across 'our common home', the earth. Ecosystem issues including climate change and loss of biodiversity along with social and economic concerns are emphasised, including the deep connection between environmental degradation in the Global North and poverty, notably in the Global South. As Lachapelle and Albrecht (2019) emphasise, issues relating to climate change "will no doubt be profound and overwhelmingly negative for those most vulnerable and unable to adapt to sudden and extensive shocks to economic, environmental and social systems" (2019, p.3). The encyclical further highlights creatures' and nature's intrinsic value (Edwards, 2016).

Pope Francis supports Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. In *Laudato Si'* he calls for Indigenous peoples to be "principal dialogue partners", as for them "land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their

ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values" (2015a, #146).

This view is supported by Yu (2016), an advocate for the rights of Indigenous people of the Kimberley region of Australia (where this research is located) for over 30 years. He stated "Laudato si' speaks to the overriding concerns of Indigenous people - degeneration of our lands and seas that nurture us spiritually, culturally, socially and economically; social and political alienation; and rampant industrial development and greed" (2016, pp. 2-3).

Principally the question being addressed by *Laudato Si'* is "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (Pope Francis, 2015, #160). It is a passionate plea to everyone to undertake unified global to local action to address the destruction of both nature and all creatures including humans who cohabit our planet. Chapter 2.2 introduces the content of *Laudato Si',* intended for communities and grassroots workers and volunteers with little or no knowledge of the encyclical; those who are engaged in community action aimed at supporting socio-ecological change.

While activism advocated for in the *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si'* is vitally important to the world's future, with both advocating for their respective organisations to work together, there are notable differences. Capra describes the encyclical as "a 'truly systemic' understanding of the ecological basis for a just, sustainable, and peaceful world", highlighting the "radical ethics championed by Pope Francis … [are] essentially the ethics of deep ecology" (2015a, p. 2). He highlighted the need to shift from the current economic system based on unlimited growth to one that incorporates social justice and ecological sustainability. In a similar vein Sachs (2017), who compared the *2030 Agenda* to *Laudato Si',* concluded the UN Agenda protects the current model that prioritises growth over the protection of our planetary habitat. He found the Pope chose "the path less trodden by clearly mentioning both ecological and social limits, and by holding the industrial growth model accountable for its various shortcomings" (Sachs, 2017, p. 2584). Further, Lachapelle and Albrecht (2019) point out the moral and ethical ramifications associated with impacts on vulnerable populations are becoming more pronounced, as identified in *Laudato Si'*.

These approaches have been described as 'reformational' and 'transformational' (Mathews, 2020). The reformational approach seeks to reduce the impact modern industrialisation has on the planet's ecology and biodiversity as portrayed in the UN's *2030 Agenda*, while the transformational approach in *Laudato Si'* sets out to assimilate economic creation with ecological health for all living systems. For these, and similar reasons, I have chosen to embed this research within the values and direction espoused by Pope Francis (2015a) in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.

Similar to the UN *2030 Agenda*, *Laudato Si'* has a varied adoption rate across the globe, though it appears to be steadily expanding (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, 2020). Now, five years after its launch, the Vatican body with responsibility for actioning the encyclical, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has launched the *Laudato si' Anniversary Year Plan 2020-2021,* which includes commencement of a 7 Year Action Platform. It asserts this provides a unique opportunity to transform current inactivity or slow progress into "a new way of living together, bonded together in love, compassion and solidarity, and a more harmonious relationship with the natural world, our common home" (2020, p. 10). Consequently, they call for global holistic responses, highlighting the need for inclusive grassroots involvement and alliances between local community minded people.

The Action Platform sets out the seven-year journey towards integral ecology, the interconnectedness of environment, economic and social sustainability, a result of ecological conversion. As Ormerod and Vanin (2016) explain, ecological conversion denotes a substantially changed relationship with our ecosystem that:

> … involves more than extending our concern for justice to include other-than-human life. It challenges us to develop an integral ecology, a new paradigm of justice, one 'which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings [Laudato Si' #15]' (2016, p. 351).

This, according to Darragh (2015), requires expanding our knowledge to understand the need for a covenant between people and planet. This should include "recognition of the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of

ecology, …[and] the need to deal with the throwaway culture and the proposal for a new lifestyle" (2015, p. 2).

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform Goals, known as the *Laudato Si'* Goals or LSGs, shape the layout of this research under the categories identified in **Figure 1**.

*Figure 1. Measuring Integral Ecology in the Spirit of Laudato Si'*

- Response to the ***Cry of the Earth*** (greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality efforts, efforts to protect and promote biodiversity, guaranteeing access to clean water for all, etc.)
- Response to the ***Cry of the Poor*** (defence of human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants, children at risk through slavery, etc.)
- Ecological ***Economics*** (sustainable production, Fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people, investment in renewable energy, etc.)
- Adoption of ***Simple Lifestyles*** (sobriety in the use of resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation, etc.)
- Ecological ***Education*** (re-thinking and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirituality of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education etc.)
- Ecological ***Spirituality*** (recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation, etc)
- Emphasis on ***Community involvement and participatory action*** to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels (promote advocacy and people's campaigns, encourage rootedness in local territory and neighbourhood ecosystems, etc).

(Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, 2020, p.8)

A key message throughout *Laudato Si'* is the importance of community. When addressing globalised issues which often provide uniform regulations and technical interventions as answers, participants are urged not to "overlook … the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community" (Pope Francis, 2015a, #144). Other sections also confirm this assertion affirming "social problems must be addressed by community

networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds" (2015a, #219), and "new forms of cooperation and community organization can be encouraged in order to defend the interest of small producers and preserve local ecosystems from destruction" (2015a, #180).

Darragh (2020) supports this view, emphasising the importance of the sense of community within faith communities and their broader locality. He advocates for local connections that do not exclude people based on race, gender, language, spirituality and culture or social class, viewing them as vital to creating networks that demonstrate belonging and interconnectedness. Accordingly, I explore the importance of community throughout this thesis.

There are now additional socio-environmental discourses released by the Vatican. I note three here, although not directly incorporated within the broader thesis. What they do well is clearly amplify major components of *Laudato Si'*, underscoring the global theme that everything is interconnected.

The first commenced with a working document, *Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and an Integral Ecology* (Pope Francis, 2018), with topics including Indigenous peoples and their environment, and the degradation of the Amazon rainforest. Over 200 people met for three weeks to discuss those issues, resulting in the release of the final publication, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation,[8] *Querida Amazonia* (Pope Francis, 2020b). In common with *Laudato Si'* themes, this appeal highlights advocating for the rights of the poor; recognises the Earths' human, social and cultural richness; and confirms everything is interconnected – hence the care of people and the care of ecosystems are inseparable.

A further release was the document, *Journeying towards Care for Our Common Home: Five Years After Laudato Si'* (Interdicasterial Working Group of the Holy See on Integral Ecology, 2020). Published in May 2020 when COVID-19 was prevalent, this document built on the original *Laudato Si'* encyclical, expanding the themes of education and ecological conversion; integral ecology and integral human development; renewable energy; socio-economic development; to

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[8] A Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation is an authoritative document written by the Pope, issued following a Synod (Council of a Church).

healthcare and the importance of the climate question. These areas are consequently reflected in the *Laudato Si'* 7 Year Action Platform.

In 2020 the Pope called together young people from across the globe to '*The Economy of Francesco'* event centred on recognising a better world cannot be built without a better economy. In his message at the commencement of the event, Pope Francis pronounced:

> Dear young economists, entrepreneurs, workers and business leaders, the time has come to take up the challenge of promoting and encouraging models of development, progress and sustainability in which people, especially the excluded (including our sister earth), will no longer be – at most – a merely nominal, technical or functional presence. Instead, they will become protagonists in their own lives and in the entire fabric of society (2020a, p. 4).

The outcomes were released in the *Final Statement and Common Commitment: The Economy of Francesco* (Pope Francis, 2020a), involving a wide range of proposals including:

- the stewardship of common goods such as forests, oceans, all ecosystems, biodiversity and seeds
- economic ideologies that do not reject the poor and minorities, and call for respect and esteem for all people, and
- new, reformed financial institutions to assist recovery from the current imbalances including the pandemic, based on sustainable and ethical finance.[9]

In Australia, the national responsibility to deliver *Laudato Si'* doctrines lie with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC). Annually, ACBC releases a themed Social Justice Statement, encouraging the Catholic community to reflect and undertake action on social, economic, and ecological issues (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2021). In the last few years themes have included affordable housing, mental health, and inclusive and sustainable economics - all areas covered in the *Laudato Si'* encyclical. Ecological issues were covered in 2002 in *A New Earth: The environmental challenge* and this year in *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Cornish, 2021*)*, which specifically communicates *Laudato Si'*. This current Statement, launched in August 2021, also draws on the related

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[9] For a local finance example, see the Kulin Community Bank case study in Chapter 4.

documents noted above. The Statement calls on people, parishes and organisations to participate in the seven-year journey called for in the *Laudato Si' Action Platform.* It also promotes Australia's *Laudato Si' Week* annually in May each year and the international inter-denominational Christian celebration of *The Season of Creation* in September each year.

In summary, one area that clearly differentiates *Laudato Si'* from the UN's *2030 Agenda* is that people, with their individual and collective faith/spiritual belief systems, are now integral participants in discussions and resultant advocacy and actions associated with the current global social, economic and environmental crisis. As McDonagh explained "in this short document Pope Francis has moved the Catholic Church from the periphery of global engagement with ecology right to the very heart of the debate" (2016, p. xiii).

### 1.2.2 Community Development and Allied Practices

I established the importance of community in the section above. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis championed "the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion" (2015a, #219). A study of Australian communities, undertaken by Wheeler et al. (2018), concluded that new community development paradigms may be required to address the economic, social and environmental challenges face today. Integral ecology-linked community development, they conclude, could be that paradigm. Community development is the practice framework, allied with integral ecology, adopted for this research. This allows spiritual qualities to be integrated into activities.

Community development approaches to supporting and/or instigating change, mean many things to many people. This definition by Ife is relevant:

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

This involves "change from below, valuing the wisdom, expertise and skills of the community … and the importance of community control" (Ife, 2013, p. 4). Ife also advises against single purpose actions, given they are one-dimensional approaches that are unlikely to create significant change. Muia (2019) enhances this debate by emphasising the importance of placing community development

collectively with people at the community level who adopt participatory frameworks to drive local agendas aimed at delivering transformational outcomes. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) contributed a further understanding when they championed the approach of 'Asset Based Community Development' (ABCD). This has resulted in a greater recognition, understanding and inclusion of resources available to communities by firstly mapping 'assets' that include local people and their knowledge and skills, infrastructure, networks, natural environment and more – before looking for 'deficits' that may be present.

Another closely aligned approach is 'community-led initiatives' (CLIs) – communities that initiate effective solutions to the pressures of climate and ecological breakdowns (Esteves, 2020). Relevant activity identified by the European Network for Community-led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability (ECOLISE), include permaculture, slow food, and transitions movements and the solidarity economy involving cooperatives and social enterprises (ECOLISE, 2019). Ledwith and Springett (2010) expand on this by calling for engagement in transformative practice. This commences by changing the self, and highlights we are part of the process and cannot place ourselves outside change activity. Thus "engaging in participatory practice is engaging in our own transformation" (Ledwith & Springett, 2010 p. 201). This supports the view of "a world built on such values as cooperation, equality, diversity and human dignity" (2010, p. 189).

The way some community development is currently operationalised has been questioned by Ledwith (2020), who compares the radical, transformative community development of the 1970's to that in today's world. Her research reveals recent examples where neoliberalism has led to the misuse of this process in the interests of top-down managerialism. She calls for alternatives that involve cooperating for the common good, connecting for change that includes adopting new economics and being open to other knowledges, including participatory democracy. Westoby, Palmer and Lathouras' 2020 research, *40 Critical Thinkers in Community Development*, points out there are hundreds of descriptions of community development, with "many [being] contestable, representing diverse values, models, and traditions" (2020, p. 4). They proffer 'community' as "something that emerges, as a felt experience, or a social

phenomenon, when people create it together: when they are in relationship with one another drawn together by a shared concern … and make commitments to act together" (2020, p. 5). A further assessment points out the value of community lies in its ability to brake systems down into smaller components that "enable people to participate and direct parts of their public lives that otherwise they would be powerless to exercise" (Kelly & Westoby, 2018, p. 10).

It is recognised that community development has its foundations in Western ideology, with the term 'development' strongly linked to the industrial revolution and more recently neoliberalism (Bessarab & Forrest, 2017). Australia is a colonising nation and continues to be the ancestral home of Aboriginal[10] peoples. In Northern Australia, where this research was undertaken, Aboriginal peoples have continuously occupied the area for at least 65,000 years (Clarkson et al., 2017). In *Anggaba jina nimoonggoon[11]: Whose knowledge is that? Aboriginal perspectives on community development,* Bessarab and Forrest (2017) researched possible common threads between the concept of community in pre-colonial and contemporary Aboriginal society. They concluded commonalities relate to "groups of people linked through their identity of sharing a common language, small societies living in specific geographical locations, and strong spiritual and ceremonial activities linking people to the land feature in current understandings of community" (2017, p. 5). They also noted shared aims with Western views of community, including:

- common people, as distinguished from those of rank or authority
- a relatively small society
- the quality of holding something in common [and]
- a sense of common identity and characteristics.
  (Bessarab & Forrest, 2017, p. 5).

While there are similarities, there are also significant cultural differences with Western views of community, for example laws/governance. Local Aboriginal people's understandings come from millennia of spirituality, culture, knowledge and science relating to Country. Poelina, Taylor and Perdrisat (2019) have

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[10] In Western Australia Indigenous people prefer to be called Aboriginal people – if citing people from eastern states or overseas this thesis will then use the term Indigenous.
[11] *Anggaba jina nimoonggoon* translates to "Whose knowledge is that?" in the Bardi language, spoken in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia.

recorded Traditional Custodian's perspectives based on First Law, the Aboriginal system of governance and law that places the health and well-being of the land, water and biosphere over human interests. There is an understanding of Country as a sacred living ancestral being, with First Law emphasising its important role in maintaining the Earth's balance. First Law calls for holistic approaches to earthly stewardship, framed within values and ethics of co-management and co-existence. These continue to facilitate inter-generational relationships through ancient and contemporary practices (Poelina et al., 2019).

Traditional Owners, for example, regard the Martuwarra Fitzroy River in the Kimberley as having its own life force and spiritual essence, therefore "the 'River of Life' has a right to Life" (Poelina & McDuffie, 2017). Indigenous writers acknowledge:

> … the importance of Elders, families and communities working together to share knowledge, empowering and inspiring the next generation to hold onto notions of culture, kin, country and community. Finding the vision for Aboriginal community development relies upon a grassroots, yet flexible approach that is governed and controlled by the community itself, and not the top-down approach so readily practised by many government departments for over more than two centuries (Kickett-Tucker, et al., 2017).

To assist clarity in relation to various steps towards community development Mutch (2018) developed content up to Phase 4 in **Figure 2** (below), illustrating the level Western communities generally work to attain. I have developed and added Phase 5 to allow Aboriginal knowledge to be included in the appraisal (Jennings, 2021).

**Figure 2. Continuum of Engagement of Communities**

| ➤ Phase 1 ➤ | ➤ Phase 2 ➤ | ➤ Phase 3 ➤ | ➤ Phase 4 ➤ | ➤ Phase 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research/ Projects *for* communities | Research/ Projects *on* or *about* communities | Research/ Projects *with* communities | Research/ Projects *by* communities | Research/ Projects *inclusive* of living cultures and living country |
| Community-*related* research/ projects | Community-*focused* research/ projects | Community-*centred* or -*guided* research/ projects | Community-*driven* research/ projects | Community-*affinity* with non-human living systems |

(Based on Mutch, (2018, p. 243)
Note: 'Projects' and 'Phase 5' added by the author, (Jennings, 2021).

Is there a link between community development and spirituality in faith and/or belief systems? Ife explored this question and concluded:

> The spiritual dimension … is important to community development. A sense of the sacred, and a respect for spiritual values, is an essential part of re-establishing human community and providing meaning and purpose for people's lives. But the corollary is also true: genuine human community is in itself a spiritual experience, so the development of community is an important ingredient of spiritual development. The two go together (Ife, 2013, p. 255).

Chile and Simpson (2004) recognise today's complex, globalised world is different from previous localised social and economic environments where many beliefs were first inspired long ago. Consequently, community development practice "must be non-discriminatory, inclusive, working towards achieving balance and sustainability, empowerment and the expression of power by all communities" (2004, p. 329). Thus, community development and spirituality both focus on connecting and holding people together, combining interdependence with local flexible constructs to create sustainable societal and planetary well-being.

**Ecological Economics**

Another participatory practice covered in this study that incorporates community development processes is what can collectively be referred to as ecological economics (Speth & Courrier, 2021; Washington, 2020). Designations within this approach include the green economy, well-being economy, solidarity economy, the sharing economy, new economics, and participatory economics – all operating within transformative social, economic, and environmental ethically based whole

of systems change platforms. Norberg-Hodge refers to many of these practices as economic localisation (2016) and the economics of happiness (2019).

Speth asserts that jointly these different approaches converge around the partially shared visions of:

- The lifeblood of the dominant enterprise type is not profit and growth, but public benefit, social purpose, and a decent living for all involved, while the ownership and control of productive enterprise has shifted decisively to workers, the public and economic democracy generally.
- The imperative to protect the planet and its climate, and the need to restore the environment back to health, governs economic enterprise and government action. An ethos of nature as a commons for the shared benefit of all life replaces the practice of privatized resource extraction, with benefits hoarded by the few and the costs borne by the many, usually the poorest and most marginalized.
- Investments are made in accordance with democratically determined priorities, with shareholders replaced by stakeholders and with social and environmental returns taking priority over financial ones.
- The aim of economic policy is no longer tied to growth of GDP, but to promote national and international well-being and the common good.
- Equal justice truly exists for all people in all spheres of life, and reparative justice to address the historic and continuing damages caused by systemic racism is core to the work of ensuring that the benefits of economic activity are widely and equitably shared.
- Popular sovereignty – democratic government of, by and for the people – is restored, concomitant with the expansion of democracy into the economy, reversing the takeover of government by the corporate sector.

(Speth, 2021, p. xxiii)

Ecological economics portrayed as above, acknowledges the planet's ecological limits and the connections between economic, social, and ecological systems. This is guided by "intergenerational equity, irreversibility of environmental change, uncertainty of long-term outcomes, and sustainability" (Washington & Lawn, 2020, p. 13). Another approach closely aligned with community development and ecological economics is the 'commons movement', which seeks to integrate the crucial realms of the social and ecological with the economic (Bollier, 2021).

**The Commons and Transitions Movements**

The concept and activity comprising 'the commons' can be traced to early England when peasants and subsistence farmers had access to publicly owned

land holdings (enclosures) to graze stock and grow food. In today's world commoning has grown to be more than land and infrastructure to include what has been described as "life in common, [involving] everything from public ownership of natural assets to the notion of a genuinely sharing economy" (Dunlop, 2018, p. 68). Subsequently the commons have grown to include both 'rival' resources like fishing grounds, ground water basins and grazing areas, and 'non-rival' common goods such as knowledge and social movements – thus "all forms of non-hierarchical human cooperation are different forms of commons" (DeAngelis, 2019, p. 124). In addition, DeAngelis observes a merging of Indigenous communities in the Global South with the expanded commons. There are two reasons for this, firstly survival due to access to enclosures and free market disadvantage, and secondly due to the subtraction of "resources from capital systems and insert[ing] them into the processes of collective production and cultures based on value practices, which are participatory and democratic" (DeAngelis, 2019, p. 126).

Commoning has the potential to encourage and support people to control their own destinies by adopting bottom-up approaches to organising power and collective ownership. Thus they "reclaim their 'common wealth', both material and political" (Bollier, 2021, p. 348). Bollier expanded further when he observed commoning seeks to enhance both the earth's natural systems and human's social needs, establishing pathways towards post-growth and post capitalist norms (Bollier, 2021; Bollier & Helfrich, 2019).

Papadimitropoulos (2020) identified a range of commons formats, which I propose align with ecological economics, while implementing community development processes. One system that closely reflects those commons methods in this thesis is the 'reformist format'. It features, amongst other points:

- The deepening of participatory democracy – bottom-up participation and decentralisation of local units of action such as neighbourhood councils.
- The commons-oriented moves towards more sustainable and socially responsible operational models of sharing and collaboration that prioritise value creation and money circulation to more people and enterprises.
- The creation of a social economy, for example voluntary associations, NGOs, co-ops, and community-based organisations.

- Open cooperativism between productive communities and ethical market entities that bring together rural and urban commons, energy cooperatives, eco-villages, the degrowth movement and the Transition Towns movement.

(Summary from Papadimitropoulos, 2020, pp. 223-224).

Closely aligned with the Commons is the Transition Towns movement, initiated by Hopkins (2011, 2019), drawing inspiration from permaculture, bioregionalism, de-growth and localisation (Swennerfelt, 2016). The Transitions movement is described as a "movement of communities reimagining and rebuilding our world" (Hopkins, 2019, p. 318), undertaking vastly different development approaches to that promoted by Western (or Global North) governments. Core goals within the movement are to:

> … generate hope, unleash the collective creativity of local folds to envisage a more resilient and whole community, and then encourage the creation of many local working groups and projects that can accelerate a community's transition to a low-carbon, energy-lean way of life that is also ecologically sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling.
> (Chase as quoted in Swennerfelt, 2016, p. 44)

The Transitions Movement embraces the following within movement activities:

- *appropriate localisation*, for example food production closer to home;
- *resilience* by reimagining the local economy and meeting local needs more effectively;
- *low carbon* by creating projects and enterprises that are inherently low carbon;
- *community assets* by bringing assets (land, building, businesses, and others) into community ownership/control; and
- *natural limits*, recognising we live in an infinite world (Hopkins, 2019).

Those points directly correlate with the teachings by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* (2015a) and the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (2020).

As identified, this study is one of five PhDs that are engaged in the *Kimberley Transitions, Collaborating to Care for Our Common Home: Beginnings*[12] (Wooltorton et al., 2019) project, embedded within transitions discourses that commence with Indigenous and/or local ways of knowing, doing and being (Escobar, 2016). Participants support each other and their wider constituency

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[12] See Appendix II.

involved in their community/regional research, where "in practice, they are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support" (Transitions Network, 2018). Importantly the transitions approach not only provides the framework for thinking but also the framework for doing (transitioning).

**Sense of Ownership in Community Development**

A key part of community development the notion of community ownership. In the Community Development and Allied Practices (p. 12) section coverage of Ecological Economics (p. 17) revealed the importance of ownership and control of enterprises. The Commoning (p.18), section highlighted people taking control their own destinies by adopting bottom-up approaches to organising power and collective ownership; and the Transitions Movement (p. 19), pointed to the importance of community members moving assets into community ownership and control.

In community development contexts, increased usage of the terms 'ownership' and the phrase 'sense of ownership' have been cited as "critical element[s] in determining the potential for buy-in and, consequently, public involvement in community planning and development efforts" (Lachapelle, 2008, p. 54). Lachapelle applied those terms to community development research and practice, finding factors involved are often across social, political, and ecological dimensions which involve high degrees of trust. This can be a challenge for non-profit community organisations when data is collected or projects activated by external researchers, particularly within vulnerable communities where activity may be dominated by powerful individuals and agencies (Islam, 2014; Lachapelle, 2008). Kenyon (2020) recognises conservative agendas can inhibit local people/community choices and consequently ownership of projects.

Overall three characteristics relevant to 'sense of ownership' have been identified,

> "(1) ownership in process (which asks who has a voice and whose voice is heard?), (2) ownership in outcome (which asks who has influence over decisions and what results from the effort?), and (3) ownership distribution (which asks who is affected by the process and outcome?) (Lachapelle, 2008, p. 57).

This important area of community development was highlighted by participants in the World Café event and is included in the resultant case studies.

### 1.2.3 Global to Local Transformation

Addressing social, economic, and environmental issues requires transformative change at all levels, local to global. This literature review is framed within global agendas, particularly Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, and concentrates on exploring local community level theory and understandings relating to community development, ecological economics, commoning and transitioning. The literature foregrounds the following chapters covered in this research – chapters that demonstrate applied practices progressing transformative change. Collective principles from the literature directly informs the research question *'How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'*

## 1.3 Theory, Practice and Methodological Frameworks

In this section, I introduce theoretical and practice frameworks; qualitative research methodology with data collection and analysis; and then finish with the thesis format and chapter conclusion.

### 1.3.1 Theoretical Framework

Integral ecology, a union of ecological philosophy and social ecology (Mickey, 2016), is the theoretical framework adopted for the broader *Kimberley Transitions* project and the community development component of this research. Integral ecology is the Christian perspective offered by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, and supports a secular framework, as demonstrated by Wheeler et.al. (2018) in rural community research within the Riverina region of Australia's Murray-Darling Basin.

The 'big ideas', which underpin the *Kimberley Transitions* (2019) community-based ecological conversion blueprint, involve:

- Ecological conversion: from a business-as-usual consumerist lifestyle towards one of simplicity and care for Earth and each other.
- This is Aboriginal Country. Aboriginal cultural knowledges, traditions, languages and caring for Country wisdom – and Aboriginal cultural revitalisation.

- Community-of-practice methodology. The plan incorporates learning and transformation for all levels: the individual, small groups, organisations, institutions, businesses, small communities and the whole community, within an overall community development design.
- All people are welcome. This Catholic initiative is for people of all faiths or no faith, all backgrounds and persuasions, all ages and interests.

In the Kimberley we recognise there are wide-ranging views on issues related to ecology and environment/society, and how humanity can arrive at agreement on ways to solve the complex issues facing our common home today (Wooltorton et al., 2019).

Esborn-Hargens and Zimmerman point to the need for a theory that assists sorting through the wide array of options, and offer integral ecology as "a complex, multidimensional, metadisciplinary approach to the natural world and our embeddedness within it" (2017, p. 65).

Clearly there is variance between ecology and integral ecology. Mickey, Robbert and Kelly (2017) explain the difference:

> Ecology is typically defined as the study of relationships between organisms and their environments. Although this definition is correct, it does not tell the whole story. More specifically, it does not account for what can be described as *integral ecologies* – a variety of emerging approaches to ecology that cross disciplinary boundaries in efforts to deeply understand and creatively respond to the complex matters, meanings, and mysteries of relationships that constitute the whole of the Earth community (2017, p. 17).

The term and associated theory of integral ecology appears throughout the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 4) to advancing insight that advances integral ecology as "a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis" (2015a, #137]. O'Neill supports this analysis by stating the process "refers to the fact that everything is interrelated, requiring consideration of the interactions within natural systems and with social systems" (2016, p. 750). Figure 1 of this thesis outlines the elements of integral ecology as adopted by Pope Francis (2015a, 2020).

Hathaway (2017) cautions:

> Ultimately, cultivating ecological wisdom can never be reduced to a recipe or a neat theory. Many possible approaches, processes, and practices may be employed, some which may be more appropriate for certain individual and contexts than others. … Much of the transformative learning involved may happen outside of any structured event or process (2017, p. 160).

Given this viewpoint discussion above, and Hathaway's comments, offer integral ecology is a valid choice for this multidimensional, meta-disciplinary approach for working towards social and ecological conversion.

## Practice Framework

As identified in the literature review, the practice (or delivery) applied in this framework is 'Community Development'. This term includes "community of interest (motive or purpose), community of identity (self or group definition) and community of practice (habits or systems)", as well as the more broadly defined community of place, that is "geography (spatial scale)" (Lachapelle and Albrecht, 2019, p. 1). Processes where people organise to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Kenny, 2016). Those needs can include value adding to community social infrastructure, through to undertaking activities to overcome disadvantage and climate change.

Ife (2013) proposes the intention of community development is to re-establish community as the locale of substantial human experience. He does advise against single purpose projects/programs, as "one-dimensional community development is likely to be of limited value" (2013, p. 212).

Significantly, Ife (2013) identified eight dimensions of community development, emphasising all eight are critically important. They are what he collectively refers to as 'Integrated Community Development', comprising social; economic; political; cultural; environmental; spiritual; personal and survival development - all important components of *Laudato Si'*. Further, Ife recommends community development is practised within an ecological perspective, which he summarises as presented in **Table 1** below:

**Table 1. An Ecological Perspective within Community Development**

| Ecological principle | Consequences |
|---|---|
| Holism | Eco-centric philosophy<br>Respect for life and nature<br>Rejection of linear solutions<br>Organic change<br>Relational reality |
| Sustainability | Conservation<br>Reduced consumption<br>No-growth economics<br>Constrains on technological development<br>Anti-capitalism |
| Diversity | Valuing difference<br>No single answer<br>Decentralisation<br>Networking and lateral communication<br>Lower-level technology |
| Equilibrium | Global/local<br>Yin/yang<br>Gender<br>Rights/responsibilities<br>Peace and cooperation |
| Interdependence | Critique of the ideology of 'independence'<br>Importance of relationships<br>Analyse relationships, not component parts. |

(Ife, 2013, p. 49)

In common with *Laudato Si'* the International Association for Community Development (IACD) recognises the importance of 'values led practice', identifying community development values as:

- **Participative democracy** – working to ensure the active participation of people and communities in planning and decision-making processes on all matters that effect our lives.
- **Sustainable development and social justice** – working to ensure fair, just and equitable social, economic and environmental development based on climate justice, respect for biodiversity, the protection of our natural environment and all life on earth.
- **Equality and human rights** – promoting and respecting the equal worth, dignity and diversity of all people and working to ensure their equitable access to resources, services and opportunities. Ensuring that fundamental and internationally recognised human rights are respected, promoted and protected.
- **Social and economic justice** – promoting a just society through collective action that challenges injustice, poverty, inequality, discrimination and social exclusion through policies and procedures that lead to the fair and

equitable distribution of resources, sustainable production and democratically controlled decision making.

- **Empowerment** – working collectively with people in ways that value lived experience, build on existing strengths and support the development of awareness, understanding, knowledge and skills, contributing to greater participation, collective action and community resilience. (IACD, 2021)

**Role of the Researcher**

As an investigator it is important to understand the researcher's role. Wadsworth (2006) examined two distinctive roles undertaken by qualitative researchers, that of 'researcher' and 'facilitator of research'. The difference is the 'researcher' owns the inquiry, and stakeholders are the researcher's subject, whereas the 'facilitator of research' implements the inquiry as a participant's inquiry, where the stakeholders are co-researchers with the facilitator.

I see my role as 'facilitator of research', working within a community inquiry model where participants "collaborate as simultaneous co-researchers and as co-subjects" (Yorks, 2017, p. 256). Subsequently the 'research facilitator' role was the primary approach undertaken for pragmatic elements of this study.

**1.3.2 Methodology: Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is the predominant method used in this research. It is exploratory research conducted through contact with 'field' or life situations, which acknowledges experience as a source of knowledge, whilst enabling creativity and complexity to emerge.

Qualitative research, while being interdisciplinary and multi-focused, involves a range of common characteristics. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) examined recurrent features of this approach and found that it is conducted through deep contact 'on the ground'. These situations are typically 'banal' or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individual, groups, societies, and organisations. The researcher's role is to gain an overview of the context under study including capturing data on the perceptions of local actors 'from the inside', through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding and sharing. Relatively little standardised instrumentation is employed as the researcher is essentially the main 'instrument' in the study. Overall, most analysis is undertaken to contrast, compare, and analyse.

**Qualitative Research and Ecological Practice**

Community based qualitative ecological practice research (Reason & Canney, 2015) contributes to qualitative research, Indigenous knowledges and community development. The methodologies draw people and communities together to explore ecological practices that recognise humans are not superior beings. In supporting this process Reason and Canney (2017) recognise new ways of operating that requires embracing ecological complexity - movement away from dominant Western paradigms. Overall, they recognise similarities between qualitative research and sound ecological practice that incorporates understandings of interconnection. These practices can take place both locally and within larger external settings. While recognising this is not a new concept, Reason and Canney (2017) maintain change starts with thinking globally while acting locally and is based on the understanding that the whole is not a collection of 'objects' but a "community of beings, human and more-than-humans" (2017, p. 5). This research process is compatible with community development as it recognises that:

- Community knowledge is irreplaceable and provides key insights through the provision of ground-truths,
- Communities should have equal inclusion and collaboration in the identification, research, and resolution of community issues, and
- There is value and legitimacy in the knowledge of individuals, families and others in the community (from Burns, Cooke, & Schweidler, 2011, p. 5.)

This research uses "heterogeneous epistemology" (Reason & Canney, 2017, p. 8). It draws on people's experience and shared narratives while making sense of the data and developing theories through practice. Thus, people's local experiences are validated as ways of showing what happens at a community level can contribute to global socio-ecological change.

Researchers also proffer their knowledge and different skills and perspectives to the project, along with community members who equally input their locally acquired personal skills, complementary history, knowledge, and understandings.

The overarching qualitative methodology allows for a range of multi-disciplinary methods adopted for this study, as illustrated below in **Figure 3**:

**Figure 3. Qualitative Research and Ecological Practice**



Processes incorporated within this research and ecological practice framework includes:

*Community-based research*. This occurs when the researcher and community are collaborators in the research project and jointly own the results. This builds on established research by incorporating change-based projects within the community of practitioners, researchers, and others, while fostering relationships and cross-institutional linkages and collaboration. Notably it is consistent with postmodern ecological agendas (Senge & Scharmer, 2002).

*World Café.* This is a community-led research methodology, an interactive knowledge generation research process involving local people's discussion and sharing, within a 'café' style setting (Fouché & Light, 2011). This 'bottom-up' participatory process is widely used in community development (Aldred, 2009; Lohr, Weinhardt, & Sieber, 2020). It allows for identification of common patterns, supports collective knowledge to grow and action possibilities to emerge. Importantly, participants are not recipients of knowledge and visions generated elsewhere. As local community members engaged in the process, they are beneficiaries of the outcomes they generate.

*Case Studies.* This involves an inquiry technique that investigates contemporary experience within real life situations. Case studies explore rich, textual data that move beyond the descriptive by exploring surrounding contexts and determine

causes and effects (Yin, 2009; Yin & Campbell, 2018). The case study method is a creative and productive way people can apply community and ecological practice research within community situations (Stringer, 2007). Further, community development practices often evolve from strong historical roots (Chile, 2006), with some examples included in this thesis' case studies. Investigations also allow diverse ways to communicate information to different audiences.

*Storytelling*. This is a traditional means of passing on knowledge, wisdom and culture which can also perform a pivotal role in transformative change by supporting the creation and shaping of identity and motivating action (Prasetyo, 2018, p. 1). While closely aligned with case studies, storytelling is a powerful way to convey knowledge and confront barriers to information transfer, so communities can deal with new challenges and envisage alternative futures.

## Data Collection and Methods of Analysis

I used a range of research methods in this research, within the overarching community-based research and ecological perspective. This allowed for the diversity this research necessitates. Nevertheless, this qualitative approach does not test hypotheses or previous theories per se. What these methods do is create the opportunity and scope to investigate, discover, explore, develop, identify or describe phenomena, depending on the specific project being depicted, using the variety of data collecting techniques, as illustrated in **Figure 4**. This presents opportunities to explore creative ideas and actions, including observations that cater for descriptions and interviews that capture personal perspectives and lived experiences (Labaree, n.d.).

**Figure 4. Data Collection Methods**
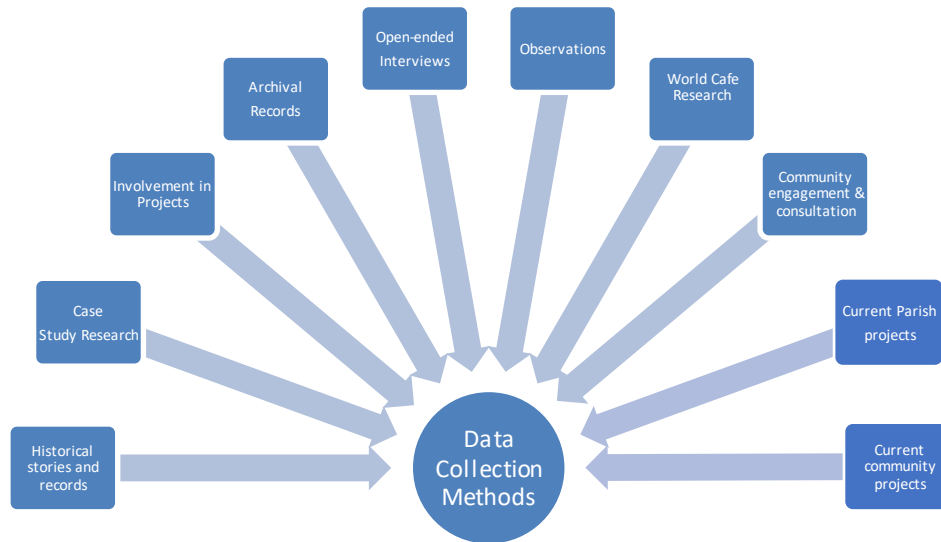


The data analysis design consists of evidence collected during the study. This supports my role as research facilitator given my personal experiences and insights were integral to the inquiry process and resultant considerations.

Analysis took different forms, depending on the activity or experience in investigation. Different narratives, with their unique case studies and details, were analysed and developed into separate thesis chapters. This process recognised complex systems are more than the sum of their parts, so interdependence and community dynamics necessitated (at times) discrete insight. Overall, a credible voice conveyed authenticity and trustworthiness. Complete objectivity is impossible and attempts at objectivity risk undermining credibility. Thus, the researcher's focus aimed at a balance between understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and responsive to community.

Overall, activities involved collecting and analysing data, developing and modifying theory as the project progressed. In each chapter, people involved in the research reviewed draft details and provided input/changes before publication. This process led to the concluding research outcomes and recommendations.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research recognised and embraced The University of Notre Dame Australia's commitment to the highest standard of quality and integrity in research. This thesis conforms to the following credentials:

Notre Dame Code of Conduct for Research.

- Notre Dame's Policy: Research Integrity.
- Notre Dame's Policy: Ethics Approval for research involving Human Participants.
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, and the
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.[13]

Given this study is a PhD by Publication, which incorporates different chapters/journals and conference refereed papers, ethics approval was obtained depending on requirements relevant to each chapter. For some chapters I accessed only publicly available information as data.

A key objective of this study has been to engage local communities' involvement in forging their future ecological direction, within the context of *Laudato Si'.* In two studies, historical documents as data allowed a rear view for community development analysis. Applying this multidisciplinary and multi-perspective approach, stakeholders were co-researchers with the research facilitator, working collaboratively, developing pathways towards ecological conversion and transformative change.

### 1.3.3 Thesis Format

Major outcomes from the qualitative research data collection methods contributed to development of the case studies, which in turn resulted in preparation of the chapters in this study. The resulting papers, built on the theory and practice described in both the Literature Review and the Data Collection Methods in Chapter One, provided the foundation from which this thesis emerged.

Chapter Two began by investigating global agendas relating to the earth's urgent need for social, economic, and environmental/ecological change. This analysis commenced with the UN's *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for*

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[13] See https://www.notredame.edu.au/research/research-at-notre-dame/ethics-and-integrity/research-integrity for further details.

*Sustainable Development* (2015) and is followed by exploration of Pope Francis'
*Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (2015). The contribution of the two
papers in this subsection provided include recognition of, and contribution to, the
global ecological dialogue. Both these reports were significant, and *Laudato Si'*
was chosen to ground this research, given the added inclusion of spirituality,
which was missing in the *2030 Agenda.*

Chapter Three, 'Faith Approaches to Ecological Transition', builds on the
spirituality theme by addressing faith/belief systems' role within the discussion,
exploring people, parishes, and their broader environment. It offers *Laudato Si'*
teachings, and community development processes along with practical theology,
to frame ways communities can renew their spiritual connections to create a
community of practice that contributes to their social and ecological surroundings.
A case study of a local social justice project is included as an opportunity to
expand on environment with social and cultural activities that also support moving
towards ecological conversion.

Chapter Four, "Global to National and Regional Approaches", develops those
themes, moving towards ecological change. Social work and community
development ways of working were adopted to illustrate this point by showing how
the framework can be demonstrated in areas not traditionally considered
ecological. The importance of having community and cultural approaches to
social, economic, and environmental sustainability being initiated within a
paradigm of interconnectedness is emphasised. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
ways of association to beliefs, knowledge and creation were also introduced in
this section.

Chapter Five continues the progression from the broader coverage to focus on the
local. This recognises local people are the developers and holders of valuable
insights and lived experiences in their own locality, which supported choosing the
World Café research methodology as a relevant process to inspire involvement in
this research. Meaningful dialogue from the event resulted in contributing the
research themes that informed the choice of topics for case studies undertaken in
this study.

One area of discussion during the World Café was access to food, which was understandable give in the previous year the Broome region experienced an extremely high rainfall event, roads were flooded and washed away, and even the airport runway was flooded and inaccessible. As a result no transported food was available for purchase in this remote location.

Chapter Six, 'Applied Local Approaches – Food sovereignty', covers both historic and contemporary food sovereignty issues, as well as providing the case study of the community group Incredible Edible Broome. This is a voluntary, self-organising community food group, establish to support locally grown and shared food, which showed initiative prior, during and after this occurrence. A further paper describes Aboriginal people's ecological and nutritional practices and historical, as well as contemporary Aboriginal people's local food sources including bush foods and medicines, fish, reptiles, small animals, fruits, and vegetables which are cultivated, gathered and/or hunted according to local knowledge systems – all linked to caring for our common home.

The part economics plays within the environmental improvement agenda is covered in Chapter Seven, "Applied Approaches – Ecological Economics". This showcases community-based projects that demonstrate ways local people generate and build community social cohesion and ecological capital. Historical and current case studies are provided, which demonstrate how local people contribute to the 'wealth' of their communities economically, ecologically, and socially. An additional paper builds on the previous one by undertaking deeper enquiry into a social enterprise activity that built, on the core values of Indigenous knowledges, climate justice, and social equity – all areas connected with ecological conversion.

Content and outcomes of Chapters Two to Seven undergo further analysis in Chapter Eight, "Application to Laudato Si' Goals", by assessing content and outcomes against the seven *Laudato Si'* Goals. This identifies where practice not only highlights connections between the chapter's content but also demonstrates the importance of community when addressing urgent local through to global social and ecological issues. Transformation that restricts unsustainable behaviours and promotes ecological values, leading to reflective ecological conversion that is called for by Pope Francis, is demonstrated here.

From this basis the last Chapter Nine synthesises key components of the study and draws the thesis together. It reviews the outcomes of the research within the context of the research question '*How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home'*. The findings demonstrate how the *Laudato Si'* aligns with community development practice, fostering ecological conversion. Outcomes for the overall research leads to the final recommendations provided. The closing synopsis points to people's evolved relationship with their ecosystem, showcased through this research, finalising with the statement that locally activated ecological conversion can, and does, support the generation of deep-rooted transformational change required at local through to global level.

The following *Figure 5. Thesis Flow Chart* illustrates the research and activity flow between chapters, themes, content and analysis, as depicted below:

| Figure 5. Thesis Flow Chart | |
|---|---|
| **Chapter** | **Content** |
| **1. Community Development for Ecological Conversion**<br>*Covers literature review and details of theory, practice and methodological frameworks, merging community development with ecological conversion in Laudato Si'.* | 1.1 Introduction<br>1.2 Literature Review<br>1.3 Theory, Practice and Methodological Frameworks. |
| **2. International Ecological Strategies**<br>*Analysis of international socio-ecological agendas as foundations on which to move from global to local ecological conversion.* | 2.1 Community development – The 'Missing Ingredient' in striving for sustainability.<br>2.2 *Laudato si'* – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion. |
| **3. Faith Approaches to Ecological Conversion**.<br>*Explores and applies faith/belief systems' role, shifting from global to local ecological conversion options.* | 3.1 Rural parishes responding practically to the global agenda. |
| **4. Global to National and Regional Approaches.**<br>*Develops and applies sustainability frameworks in non-traditional ecological fields.* | 4.1 Advancing Local Social and Ecological Transitions through Community Development. |
| **5. Identifying Local Approaches**<br>*Application of qualitative research to identifying areas to be covered in this study.* | 5.1 World Café qualitative research informing pathways towards transformative change. |
| **6. Applied Local Approaches – Food Sovereignty**<br>*Food security and community involvement as keys to sharing and ecological conversion.* | 6.1 'Growing' food and community in the remote Kimberley region.<br><br>6.2 'Food as Commons' within an Australian Aboriginal context. |
| **7. Applied Local Approaches – Ecological Economics.**<br>*Explores additional areas identified within an 'ecological economics' context.* | 7.1 Transitions stories in ecological economics from the Australian 'bush'.<br><br>7.2 The Agunya Project. |
| **8. Application to *Laudato Si'* Goals**<br>*Analysis and application of the research outcomes within ecological conversion* | Chapter 8.<br>Laudato Si' Goals.<br>Stewardship in Caring for Our Common Home. |
| **9. Conclusion and Future Directions.** | Chapter 9.<br>Finalisation of the research Thesis. |

## 1.4 Transitioning Global Agendas

In this chapter I introduce my research and its position within the broader Kimberley Transitions project. The literature review identifies recent prior scholarship and depicts the relationship between separate components of the study. The theory, practice, and methodological frameworks provided lay the foundation to progress this research. My main point in this chapter is to show that global agendas can be actioned by local communities. This generates the overall thesis structure, using literature to illustrate community development as a concept that can include genuine ecological and social sustainability, along with the spiritual dimension, setting the foundation to explore pathways to ecological conversion. Components of chapter one support the thesis by introducing the value of being interconnected, involving both humans and other-than-humans, within our global living system.

The main body of this thesis follows, commences with Chapter 2 covering two global strategies aimed at overcoming substantial social and ecological issues facing humanity today. It starts with the United Nations *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), then moves on to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home* (2015a). These agendas set the global scene which lays the groundwork to move to the local stories that appear throughout the remaining chapters in my study.

## 2.0 INTERNATIONAL ECOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

In this chapter, I provide a more detailed description of the two major global sustainability strategies, the UNs *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015a). I review both socio-ecological agendas against community development understandings and frameworks. This supports the research question by highlighting the importance of community development, initially at the international level, and by exploring two similar documents which informed my decision on which to base my thesis. This led to the finalisation of the research question '*How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?*' This is because at the working level and ecological conversion is a key component of *Laudato Si'*.

## 2.1 Role for Community Development – *2030 Agenda*[14]

In this subsection, I establish that community development is the missing ingredient in striving for sustainability. I do this by considering the *2030 Agenda* and the seventeen sustainable development goals contained within that strategy. I examine the global picture, then apply a grassroots perspective that holds community development approaches are important and can assist working towards reducing and alleviating the social and ecological crisis facing the world today.

### 2.1.1 Community Development – The 'Missing Ingredient' in Striving for Sustainability

(The published paper commences on the next page)

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## ABSTRACT

This paper will commence with a global view of the content and requirements of the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The need for unprecedented approaches worldwide to stimulate social, environmental and economic change is covered, based on the areas including the exceptional number of people living in extreme poverty and those living without electricity and with water scarcity, plus the unparalleled damage to our ecosystem. It will then proceed with a short examination of differing views on the SDGs and move on to examine where non-government organisations (NGOs) could be involved, through education and practice, using 'bottom-up' community development approaches. This is advocated for, given many United Nations (UN) processes target national governments and businesses, using 'top-down' methodologies. The importance of education to the UN is addressed and then the paper will move on the involvement with the UN, in particular in relation to the SDGs, by the International Association for Community Development (IACD). It will culminate by supporting the IACD's submission to the UN, which pointed out that "without community development there is no sustainable development". Finally, the need for professional development for community development practitioners in many areas, including SDGs, is covered and seen as one way forward for community workers, both paid and unpaid, across the globe.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper will commence with a global view of the content and requirements of the United Nations 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The need for unprecedented approaches worldwide to stimulate social, environmental and economic change is covered, based on many areas including the exceptional number of people living in extreme poverty and those living without electricity and experiencing water scarcity, plus the unparalleled damage to our ecosystem.

It will then proceed with a short examination of differing views on the SDGs and move on to examine where non-government organisations (NGOs) could be involved, through education and practice, using 'bottom-up' community development approaches. This is advocated for, given United Nations (UN) processes highlighted in this paper target national governments and businesses, using 'top-down' methodologies. The importance of education to the UN is addressed and then the paper will move on to involvement with the UN, in particular in relation to the SDGs, by the International Association for Community Development (IACD).

The paper will culminate by supporting the IACD's submission to the UN, which pointed out that "without community development there is no sustainable development". Finally, the need for professional development for community development practitioners in many areas, including SDGs, is covered and seen as one way forward for community workers, both paid and unpaid, across the globe.

## UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The publication *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN General Assembly, 2015d) (hereafter referred to as the 2030 Agenda) is, according to the United Nations (UN), "a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity", that "seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom", whilst "recogniz[ing] that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" (UN, 2015d, p. 3).

The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see Figure 1), incorporating 169 targets. It has been described as "a bold new global

agenda to end poverty by 2030 and pursue a sustainable future" (UN, 2015, p. 3). It was unanimously adopted by the 193 Member States of the United Nations on the 25th of September 2015, for commencement on the 1st of January 2016. The SDGs are designed to build on the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and "to complete what they did not achieve" (UN, 2015, p. 3). Of note are the extensive consultations that led to the establishment of the SDGs being far more wide-ranging than those for the MDGs, particularly when considering it is no longer a question of halving poverty but eliminating it (Stewart, 2015). The SDGs and targets have, according to the United Nations, been developed to "stimulate action of the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet (2015d, p. 3).

The need for unprecedented approaches worldwide to stimulate social, environmental and economic change is understandable, given that *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* (UN, 2016b) found that approximately one in eight people live in extreme poverty; nearly 800 million people suffer from hunger; 1.1 billion people are living without electricity; and water scarcity affects more than 2 billion people. Further, the report noted that (paraphrased):

- In 2013, 59 million primary school aged children were out of school, and during the same period 757 million adults were unable to read and write.
- An average of 83,000 people died and 211 million were affected each year by natural disasters from 2000 to 2013.
- Over 23,000 ecosystem species face extinction across the globe.
- In 2004 13% of human trafficking worldwide comprised of children, in 2011 this had risen to 34%. (UN, 2016c)

Given the degree and complexity of these and other substantial issues facing the world today, the 2030 Agenda is a significant attempt to galvanise actions "for people, planet and prosperity" (UN, 2015, p. 3.). The 2030 Agenda's Sustainability Goals are as follows:

| GOAL 1 | End poverty in all its forms everywhere |
|---|---|
| GOAL 2 | End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture |
| GOAL 3 | Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages |
| GOAL 4 | Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all |
| GOAL 5 | Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls |
| GOAL 6 | Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all |
| GOAL 7 | Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all |
| GOAL 8 | Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all |
| GOAL 9 | Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation |
| GOAL 10 | Reduce inequality within and among countries |
| GOAL 11 | Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable |
| GOAL 12 | Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns |
| GOAL 13 | Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts |
| GOAL 14 | Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development |
| GOAL 15 | Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss |
| GOAL 16 | Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels |
| GOAL 17 | Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development                (UN, 2015d) |

Figure 1. 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations, 2015.

In common with the MDGs, the SDGs are a declaration of aspirations, framed within a voluntary agreement, rather than a binding accord (Pogge & Sengupta, 2016). The United Nations position on the voluntary nature of the agreement is that, although not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of outcomes pertaining to the 17 Goals (UN, n.d.). Consequently, member countries have the primary responsibility to follow up and review their progress implementing the goals. It should be noted that documentation on SDGs mainly addresses engagement at senior governmental and corporate levels, supporting a 'top-down' approach to policy, planning and proposed action for social, economic and environmental planetary change.

## A RANGE OF VIEWS RELATING TO THE 2030 AGENDA SDGS

Voluntary intergovernmental agreements like the 2030 Agenda have, according to Pogge & Sengupta (2016), the potential to increase political leaders' outlooks beyond their usual national concerns to "think imaginatively about that future cosmopolis whose foundations are now being shaped in this early stage of globalization" (2016, p. 83). According to Gabriele Koehler (2016), a Senior Research Associate at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the new UN 2030 Agenda at first glance impresses with many robust themes. By emphasising and progressing human rights, gender equity and women's empowerment it moves

> … beyond its political predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), [as] the 2030 Agenda is conceptualised as universal, in the sense of being applicable to all countries. This implies that the decades-old dichotomy of "developed" versus "under-developed" or "developing" countries is cast aside. (Koehler, 2016, p. 149)

Further, it was noted, "the most visible innovation…is that the Agenda has succeeded in marrying the goals around economic and/or social development with that of the environment. One tends to forget," she notes, "that the joining up of 'development' and 'sustainability' is a stunning achievement" (2016, p. 149).

When examining the notion of global justice within the changing context of international law and the SDGs, Cimadamore (2016) found that structural differences between states and international systems not only present ways to "explain limitations" but also provide opportunities in the "quest of poverty eradication and global justice" (2016, p. 131). His research concluded that "the political and legal responsibilities emerging from the universal policy agenda of the SDGs (to be implemented according to rights and obligations of states under international law) could pave the way towards global (social) justice" (2010, p. 131).

There is a view, however, that "We won't 'end poverty in all its forms everywhere' without an agreement on who is to do what" (Pogge & Sengupta, 2016, p. 83). Overall, as Leckman & Khoshnood postulate:

> In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations (UN, 2015) did something unprecedented: it brought the world community together, in broad strokes, to focus on wide-ranging, long-term goals.… Just as the 2030 Agenda aims to ensure that "no one will be left behind" (UN, 2015, p. 3), it also leaves no one free from responsibility. Far from a conversation about what the Global North can do for the Global South, it highlights our interdependence and what we can do for each other on issues that affect us all. Everything that one sector does will affect every other sphere and ultimately the quality and character of human life on this planet. (2015, p. 236)

However, whether, and to what extent, uniting the goals of economic, social and ecological objectives can be transformative has been called to question by some analysts who have identified omissions and contradictions that question whether social and climate justice goals could override economic rationale. This, and other similar inquiries and challenges, have emerged from a range of people and organisations, including social commentators, practitioners, academics, not-for-profit and for-profit organisations. Examples of this questioning, at both global and national levels, follow to illustrate this perspective.

When exploring the 17 goals and 169 targets agreed by 193 countries and endorsed at the UN General Assembly, Steward (2015) noted that "[i]n many respects this is a remarkable achievement" (p. 288).

Nevertheless he identified three areas of potential problems as being "ownership and commitment", the "palpable silence on the economy", and "a lack of true integration of sustainability with the development agenda which may well mean continued poor performance on sustainability" (p. 288). When examining the SDGs through a human rights lens, Frey and MacNaughton (2016) found that the Goals have not addressed full employment and decent work, consistent with the International Labour Organization and international human rights legal obligations of the UN member countries. Hence, they concluded, "the new 2030 development agenda sadly aligns with market-based economic growth strategies rather than the realization of the human rights to full employment and decent work for all." (2016, p. 1)

Whilst some critique of the 2030 Agenda focuses on country/government's actions to support the SDGs, others, for instance Deacon, probe:

> In terms of global social governance I ask what do the goals and targets say about how trans-national processes and policies of redistribution, social regulation and social rights are to be enhanced and more concretely what recommendations are there on how the institutions of global social governance are to be strengthened. (2016, p. 80)

Deacon concluded that the Agenda "has nothing to say on global taxation, nothing to challenge worrying international trade developments, and nothing on social rights" (p. 80).

In relation to the 'who is to do what' question posited by Pogge & Sengupta (2016, p. 83), it has been previously noted that governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of outcomes pertaining to the 17 Goals.

This expectation at the higher level is understandable, however it begs the question where do the local/regional organisations and community-based networks fit within the predominately 'top-down' (Ife, 2010; Ife, 2013) methodologies? Does the current global approach to SDGs recognise that, "Bottom-Up [community development] work can make an immense contribution to the alleviation of poverty" (Kelly & Sewell, 1988, p. 114)? As Ife clearly articulates, when addressing the "ecological crisis", "[c]ommunity [development] work is potentially one of the most effective ways to develop a more sustainable society" (2002, p. 23). The next section will commence exploring this further.

## WHERE DO NGOS FIT WITHIN SGD AGENDA?

The United Nations, in its efforts to be more comprehensive when addressing the new global goals, is working with governments and involving business, civil society and citizens when working to attain the desired outcomes of the 17 SDGs. They recognise that "[s]uccessful implementation will require all players to champion this agenda" (The Global Impact, n.d.(a), para 1). To this end Global Compact Local Networks have been formed at the national level with the corporate/business sector. These networks are designed to "advance corporate sustainability at the grassroots level" and to "help companies understand what responsible business means within different national, cultural and language contexts and facilitate outreach, learning, policy, dialogue, collective action and partnerships" (The Global Impact, n.d.(b), para 3). A local example is the Global Compact Network Australia, which is touted as a "business-led, but multi-stakeholder initiative" that involves "some of Australia's largest and most well-known companies, as well as a number of small and medium-sized businesses, business and professional associations, non-profits and universities" (Global Compact Network Australia, n.d., para 1). Investigation has found membership comprises 58 corporate/businesses, three business associations, six universities and nine non-profit organisations. While those nine organisations are respected entities, they are generally national or global organisations, whose major role involves service provision, and do not necessarily include small, bottom-up, local people-activated, grassroots community development.

Further, as noted, the UN places the responsibility on governments when it comes to undertaking the role of involvement and initiating policy and programmes that implement the 17 SDGs. Once again I will use an example from my country, Australia. One has to question commitment when the Commonwealth Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's take on the SDGs is:

> The 2030 Agenda helps Australia in advocating for a strong focus on economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific region, and in promoting investment priorities including gender equality, governance

and strengthening tax systems. It is also well aligned with Australia's foreign, security and trade interests especially in promoting regional stability, security and economic prosperity. The 2030 Agenda is non-binding but has unprecedented buy-in as a result of consultation and negotiations involving all 193 UN member states, the private sector and civil society. Australia actively participated in international discussions to design the SDGs and supported the involvement of all development actors, including civil society organisations, the private sector, philanthropic organisations and academia. (DFAT, n.d., para 6)

Whilst concerned about what appears to be an emphasis on corporate/business being the leader in sustainable development, this exploration does recognise the UN's involvement with non-government organisations (NGOs). Wadlow's research found "[t]here is growing interest in the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within the United Nations system in the making and the implementation of policies at the international level" (2012, p. 1). He takes a historical view that recognises the importance of NGOs when in 1945 lobbying by NGOs resulted in the Commission of Human Rights. This event culminated in the drafting of the UN Charter, where "representatives from 42 NGOs pressed for the inclusion of human rights provisions in the Charter and the establishment of a commission on human rights. From the beginning, the NGOs have been the life-blood of the Commission" (Wadlow, 2012, p. 1).

Interestingly John Kim, NGO Representative to the UN for the U.S. Fellowship of Reconciliation and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, in reviewing Wadlow's article, questions his "rather optimistic, broad conclusion that 'NGOs and government diplomats at the U.N. are working ever more closely together to deal with the world challenges which face us all'" (2012, p. 2). While recognising that the number of NGOs associated with the UN has grown significantly over the last sixty years, Kim points out that:

NGOs have been more active at the U.N. on issues dealing with women/girls, poverty, environment, health, human rights, etc. However on important issues of war and peace, both the Security Council and General Assembly usually hold their meeting behind closed doors – never asking the NGO community's inputs in their formal meetings. (2012, p. 2)

Not to take anything away from Kim's germane point, however, a subtle theme that emerges from his quote is the diverse range of education and skill development required by those engaged in a wide variety of work (paid or unpaid) with NGOs, in areas relating to the SDGs. The next section will briefly cover the UN's involvement in education, and examine ways this approach can be relevant to NGOs.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL NO. 4: EDUCATION

The UN, through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), strongly promotes:

…education [as it] transforms lives and is at the heart of UNESCO's mission to build peace, eradicate poverty and drive sustainable development.

UNESCO believes that education is a human right for all throughout life and that access must be matched by quality. The Organization is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all aspects of education. It has been entrusted to lead the Global Education 2030 Agenda through Sustainable Development Goal 4. (UNESCO, n.d., para 1&2)

Supporting this view, the report *Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for all 2016*, the *Global Education Monitoring Report*, explores complex correlations between education and other aspects of sustainable development. It found that "[e]ducation will not deliver its full potential to catapult the world forward unless participation rates dramatically improve, learning becomes a lifelong pursuit and education systems fully embrace sustainable development" (2016a, p. 8). Further, the Report calls for strengthened multisector partnerships as "sector-specific approaches are insufficient to meet the interdependent challenges of sustainable development" (2016a, p. 31). The partnerships referred to include:

Local and national government authorities, civil society, academics, the scientific community, the private sector and global multi-stakeholder organizations [who] have substantial roles in financing, implementing and ensuring mutual accountability of the new agenda, which is expected to be driven by national governments. (2016a, p. 32)

The Monitoring Report clearly states "[f]or education to be transformative in support of the new sustainable development agenda, 'education as usual' will not suffice" (2016a, p. 34). This is supported by Hunting & Tilbury (2006) who articulate that "[t]raditional problem solving techniques analyse and 'deconstruct' situations to make them appear simpler than they really are. This means that the 'solution' is also too simple and when implemented, falls apart" (p. 31). They call for systems thinking to better understand complex situations, within and external to participants/organisations, that can lead to long-term, successful change for sustainability. Overall Hunting and Tilbury (2006) identified Six Insights to inspire people to look at sustainability through lenses that embrace new ways of thinking. They are:

**Insight 1:** Adopt a clear, shared vision for the future
**Insight 2:** Build teams, not just champions
**Insight 3:** Use critical thinking and reflection
**Insight 4:** Go beyond stakeholder engagement
**Insight 5:** Adopt a systematic approach, and
**Insight 6:** Move beyond expecting a linear path to change

These approaches reflect ways NGOs and others could collectively work towards the common goal of sustainability.

The *Education for People and Planet* report affords authority to technical, vocational, tertiary and adult education as one component of SDG 4, Education (2016a, pp. 42-43); although mainly national 'top-down' systems are again assigned the role. Consequently there appears to be a deficit of 'bottom-up' approaches from the local and regional level that have the ability to add strength and value to the equation, using methodologies like the 'Insights' mentioned above.

When examining the global ecological predicament, Ife proposes the 'bottom-up' approach – initiate change – with community development being identified as the "missing ingredient" (2013, pp. 20-22). He recommends this approach as a feasible alternative to the current neo-liberal social, economic and environmental policies and practices that are major contributors to the current dilemma. A key to Ife's appreciative understanding of community development is that it encompasses the three viewpoints of ecological, social justice and post-Enlightenment perspectives (fully examined in his book *Community Development in an Uncertain World: Vision, Analysis and Practice*). "At the heart of community development," he explains, "is the idea of change from below" (2016, p. 138). Given this assessment, the next section will commence to address ways to move forward, linking the UN SDGs, education, and community development.

## SDGS, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The UN, particularly through UNESCO, has been involved in a wide variety of fields, including education, since its inception in 1945. This includes establishing and resourcing the Educational Clearing House, which regularly published documents and reports relating to educational topics. In 1954 UNESCO produced a special subject bibliography, *Education for Community Development: A Selected Bibliography*. The importance placed on community development is evidenced in the publication being the fourth in the series of special subjects relating to work and education, prepared annually since 1950 (UNESCO & UN, 1954).

In the preface to the bibliography, UNESCO defined its understanding of community development as being:

a generic term covering the various processes by which local communities can raise their standards of living. This process may include, separately or together, the organization or establishment of services for social welfare, health protection, education, improvement of agriculture, development of small-scale industries, housing, local government, co-operatives etc. (1954, p. 1)

The accepted definition also covered the organisation of all-inclusive programmes for social change based on local self-help, possibly assisted from outside, but resolutely based on the existing and emerging needs expressed by local constituencies. Thus, according to UNESCO, the place of fundamental education in community development can be clearly seen. The term 'fundamental education' was seen as ways to assist people "to understand the problems of their immediate environment and their rights and duties as citizens and individuals, and to participate more effectively in the economic and social progress of their community" (1954, p.1). Overall, it was concluded,

> … an appropriate first stage [is] community development through which a conscious effort is made to awaken the minds of people to the realization of their individual and communal potentialities and to assist them to gain the elementary knowledge and skills requisite for the progress implicit in community development. (1954, p. 1)

It was recognised, however, that "after this 'fundamental' educational purpose of awakening minds, fostering habits and imparting basic knowledge has been attained, there will still be much educational work to be done" (1954, p. 2).

Interestingly the 1950s definitions of community development basically remain the same today, with the added emphasis on later identified and/or emerging issues, including ecology and sustainability; diversity and inclusiveness and organic change (Ife, 2010). This has culminated with the understanding that the community development process is postmodern. Ife recognises that community development is placed uneasily with modernity, whose characteristics include certainty, uniformity, predictability and hierarchical organisation. He explains that community development "is more compatible with postmodern understandings, which not only accept difference, chaos and unpredictability but also welcome and encourage them", and "is also very compatible with the emphasis…on wisdom and change from below" (Ife, 2010, p. 47). With this appreciation of community development, from UN to local understandings, the next section will move forward with the International Association for Community Development's suggestions for involvement in SDGs.

## NGOS – IACD'S SUPPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SDGS IMPLEMENTATION

Within the current UN system, NGOs (many using community development practices) are positioned within the operating framework of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), NGO Branch, which hosts the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This Council serves as the central forum for discussing and formulating UN policy recommendations on international economic and social issues.

It is through Article 71 of the UN Charter that consultations with NGOs can be undertaken, specifically by the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs. This Committee is responsible to the UN Secretariat for supporting consultative relationships and providing UN consultative status to approved NGOs (UN DESA NGO Branch, n.d.). Further, those affiliations can be formed with international, regional, sub-regional and national NGOs, non-profit organisations and/or voluntary organisations, under the following three categories:

> General consultative status is reserved for large international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the agenda of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. These tend to be fairly large, established international NGOs with a broad geographical reach. Special consultative status is granted to NGOs which have a special competence in, and are concerned specifically with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by ECOSOC. These NGOs tend to be smaller and more recently established. Organizations that apply for consultative status but do not fit any of the other categories are usually included in a Roster. These NGOs tend to have a rather narrow and/or technical focus. (UN DESA NGO Branch, n.d., p. 1)

The International Association for Community Development (IACD), the host of the 2017 International Community Development Conference in New Zealand, holds 'General Consultative Status' with the UN, as well as with the International Labour Organisation. Notably the IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. Importantly, in the words of recently-elected president, Paul Lachapelle:

Like many of you, I believe the IACD should serve as a driving force to raise awareness across the community development profession in the period ahead about the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals in our work – to truly advance the notion that without community development there is no sustainable development. (IACD, 2016, para 2)

Both sustainable development and community development have been examined throughout this paper, however a further minor review of definitions of community development is provided to confirm or assist peoples' understanding. The definition adopted by the IACD is:

Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality, and social justice, through the organisation, education, and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity, or interest, in urban and rural settings. (IACD, n.d., para 2)

Others provide additional insights into community development, emphasising different aspects of theory and on-ground practice. Kenny's description includes identifying "community development as a method for empowering communities to take collective control and responsibility for their own development" (2011, p. 8). Ife notes the "increasing interest in development at the community level [is] potentially providing a more viable and sustainable basis for the meeting of human need and for interaction with the environment" (2013, p. 2). Ingamells adds to the equation by pointing out that "[c]ommunity development is embedded in many disciplines of practice from agriculture and environment through nursing, rehabilitation, engineering and planning, education, sports, recreation and the arts" (2010, p. 1). Finally, Weeks, Hoatson & Dixon expand on those points by explaining that:

Community practitioners have to be, in current management jargon, multi-taskers!…they will be most effective if they build sustainable relationships, establish empowering processes, build capacity for negotiation and the exercise of influence, and broker new relationships across taken-for-granted boundaries. (2003, p. 28)

As noted previously, the IACD is an agency with 'General Consultative Status' with the UN. The organisation draws its membership from across the world; made up of people and/or organisations working in, or supporting, community development. The organisation itself is a volunteer-led, not-for-profit, non-government organisation, that promotes community development across international policies and programmes, with aims to network and support practitioners and to encourage information and practice exchange. The IACD, along with regional and national community development associations, provides a much-needed infrastructure resource for global networking and collaboration (IACD, n.d.).

As can be seen from Figure 2, IACD involves people and agencies covering an impressive range of expertise and fields of activity across the globe.

**ECONOMIC & SOCIAL:**

- Crime prevention
- Culture
- Education
- Energy
- Environment
- Extreme poverty
- Food
- Human rights
- Minority rights
- Peace and security
- Social development

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:**

- Cooperative
- Poverty
- Social policy
- Youth

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

- Capacity-building
- Climate change
- Education
- Energy
- Gender equality
- Health
- Poverty
- Sustainable development in a globalizing world

**PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA:**

- Development in Africa
- Peace in Africa

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA:**

- Conflicts resolution

Figure 2. IACD activity listing with the United Nations. Source: United Nations, no date.

In its role of Consultative Status at the UN, the IACD prepared and adopted the Position Statement Community Development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) (IACD, 2016). The purpose of the statement is to assist governments, non-government organisations, plus the business and scientific sectors, to "understand that without prior and ongoing community development work, that assists citizens at a local level, together with communities of identity, to participate as active and informed partners in their implementation, the goals will be far harder to reach" (IACD, 2016). Further, the proponents of the paper believe that the community development world, including the IACD, can make an important contribution to the SDGs.

When addressing the SDGs in the position statement, the IACD noted the 17 Goals address issues across the dimensions of social, environmental, and economic development, as well as a call for people to work in partnership. It was noted that:

> For those working in community development, it will be the social development goals around which most will be more familiar and have years of experience. Fewer community development practitioners and agencies will have experience in dealing with the environmental development goals or the economic development goals. And fewer will have had in depth experience of dealing with all three dimensions of sustainable development. This will need to become a higher priority. (IACD, 2016, p. 5)

Community development practitioners and academics are encouraged to read the position paper, as it covers many relevant areas within the community development sphere, including addressing challenges of poverty; hunger and nutritional problems; inaccessible education; gender inequality; and less access to affordable and sustainable energy and clean water and sanitation. Understanding the relationship between those issues, it explains, requires a common, and critical, community development approach. It also includes covering structural and social class inequalities. Enlighteningly, it also recognises that, whilst the poor are victims, in many situations they can become active players in designing and developing solutions. This, I submit, is where community development, bottom-up approaches, can contribute significantly to the SDGs.

There are eight major contributions captured within the IACD Community Development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) position paper, culminating with Number 8 – which clearly identifies "without community development there is not sustainable development" (2016, p. 10). The statement recognises that, at first, some of the SDGs appear to lie outside of the remit of community development; however on closer examination the community development approach can contribute as much via community education and organisation, as it can within the more obvious social goals. Thus:

> Across all of the SDGs there is a need to support and mobilise the most vulnerable communities, who are at the brunt end of climate change and socio-economic inequality. If communities are not educated and organised to play their part then the challenges will not be met. Governments, non-governmental organisations, scientists and the private sector cannot do this alone. It needs citizen action. (2016, p. 11)

Finally the IACD statement concludes that the scale of global challenge clearly establishes the need for community development practitioners and managers will require continuing professional development to enable them to contribute to this important agenda. In addition, community development teachers, and students in training to become practitioners, will require more knowledge and understanding of the importance of the SDGs. The IACD, to assist with this purpose, has recently launched the Global Community Development Exchange (GCDEX) of teaching and learning resources, to assist community development practitioners, teachers and students to fully contribute to the SDGs. This should prove to be a valuable contribution to advancing professional development within the community development sector. The project has been undertaken in partnership with the New Zealand Community Development Association (ACDA), and involves the electronic lodging of community development learning resources, to be shared across membership of both organisations. These organisations are to be congratulated in collaborating to instigate this project, which is hopefully the start of many new ways to assist community development practitioners with their professional development in many areas, including the SDGs.

## CONCLUSION

The United Nations, since its inception in 1945, has included non-government organisations and community development approaches to social change in their operations. The current world ecological predicament, involving momentous social, economic and environmental issues, now sees the initial UN Millennium Development Goals expanded into the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. From a 'bottom-up' community development perspective the international and national approaches to the SDGs lead non-government organisations and community development practitioners to question if there is a role for them in assisting to fulfil the SDGs. This paper clearly articulates the importance of the community development approaches, advocated for by the International Association for Community Development. This includes recognising that, when addressing structural and social class inequalities, the poor who are victims can become active contributors in designing and developing solutions. This is tangible 'bottom-up' community development. In addition, the IACD's view that what's required is professional development opportunities for community development practitioners, is supported. Especially given the complexity of social, economic and environmental issues that need to be addressed within the multifaceted agenda of the SDGs. Consequently these methods are seen as first steps to anticipated broader community development approaches that aim to reduce and alleviate the social and ecological crisis facing the world today.

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### 2.1.2 United Nations 2030 Agenda approach to Ecological Change

In this subsection I recognise the UN *2030 Agenda* is accepted to varying degrees globally and note some approaches are being questioned or not consistently applied. Australia presents one example where the urgency for ecological change is not generally taken seriously, as reflected by current national government policy and practice.

The next section explores an additional international agenda, Pope Francis' encyclical (teaching letter) *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home*. This chapter is designed to increase awareness about the content and to set the scene to further questioning bottom-up community driven practices as they relate to social, spiritual, cultural, economic, and environmental justice.

## 2.2 Role for Community Development – *Laudato Si'*

In this subsection I show while the *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si'* have linkages and commonalities there are differences. I concentrate on *Laudato Si'*, which firmly incorporates the spiritual dimension as well as highlighting the value of Indigenous beliefs and knowledges in global ecological discussions. This holistic view led me to include those key components, along with potential benefits of community development practice, into my research. My exploration into where community fits within *Laudato Si'* lays the groundwork for forthcoming chapters in my thesis, highlighting cooperation, shared vision and collective action as processes for transformative change.

### 2.2.1 Laudato si' – establishing local approaches to global ecological conversion[15]

(The published paper commences on the next page)

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# *Laudato si'* – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion

ANNE JENNINGS

## Abstract

In 2017 the Aotearoa Community Development Association (ACDA) and the International Association for Community Development (IACD) held a conference, *Sustainably yours: Community development and a sustainably just future*, in Auckland where I presented a paper titled "Community development – The 'missing ingredient' in striving for sustainability". That paper examined the United Nations Agenda 2030 (2015) and, in particular, the associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This paper will explore a further significant document, also released in 2015, the encyclical (letter) by Pope Francis, *Laudato si': On care for our common home*. The paper starts with some history of the Pope's work, moves on to provide an overview of the areas *Laudato si'* encompasses, analyses some of the responses it has attained, and then concludes with a review of how and where community development theory and processes fit with the document.

## Preamble

This section provides a brief overview of the previous paper, "Community development – The 'missing ingredient' in striving for sustainability" (Jennings, 2017). As noted in the abstract, this paper was presented at the *Sustainably Yours: Community development and a sustainably just future* conference in Auckland in 2017. The paper included a summary of differing views of the SDGs, some of which pointed to 'top-down' government and corporate approaches to change that are urgently required, due to our planet's ecological predicament. The paper did, however, subsequently question if/where non-government organisations (NGOs) could be involved using 'bottom-up' community development approaches.

UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The publication *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* (United Nations, 2015) is, according to the United Nations (UN), "a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity", that "seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom", whilst "recogniz[ing] that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" (United Nations, 2015, p. 3).

The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), incorporating 169 targets that cover economic, social and ecological developmental objectives. The need for action is certainly understandable, given that *The Sustainable Development Goals report* (United Nations, 2016) found that approximately one in eight people live in extreme poverty, nearly 800 million people suffer from hunger, 1.1 billion people are living without electricity, and water scarcity affects more than 2 billion people. Significantly, many of the issues related to climate change. Further, the report noted that:

– In 2013, 59 million primary-school-aged children were out of school, and during the same period 757 million adults were unable to read and write.

– An average of 83,000 people died and 211 million were affected each year by natural disasters from 2000 to 2013.

– Over 23,000 ecosystem species face extinction across the globe.

– In 2004 13% of human trafficking worldwide comprised of children, in 2011 this had risen to 34% (United Nations, 2016).

All this is in addition to the extreme climate change events currently being felt across the globe, many a result of human-instigated destruction, pollution and overconsumption. We are now in the position where our current epoch (period), the Holocene, which provided us with 12,000 years of stable climate since the last ice age, has clearly ended. "Humanity's impact on the Earth is now so profound that a new geological epoch – the Anthropocene – needs to be declared," according to experts at an International Geological Congress (Carrington, 2016, para. 3).

Given the degree and complexity of the mainly human-activated issues facing the world today, the 2030 Agenda is an important attempt to galvanise actions "for people, planet and prosperity" (United Nations, 2015, p. 3). The resultant SDGs are a declaration of aspirations, framed within a voluntary agreement, but not an obligatory accord (Pogge & Sengupta, 2016). The United Nations (2015) position on the voluntary nature of the agreement is that, although it is not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of outcomes of the goals.

To support this process the UN Global Compact was created, with groups established in member nations to "help companies understand what responsible business means within different national, cultural and language contexts and facilitate outreach, learning, policy dialogue, collective action and partnerships" (UN Global Compact, 2016, para. 2). It was proposed that, through "networks, companies can make local connections – with other

businesses and stakeholders from NGOs, government and academia – and receive guidance to put their sustainability commitments into action" (UN Global Compact, 2016, para. 2). This has resulted, however, in many 'top-down' approaches to policy, planning and proposed action for social, economic and environmental change.

AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT

In Australia the responsibility for the Global Compact Local Network lies with the Commonwealth Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This department's position is as follows:

> The 2030 Agenda helps Australia in advocating for a strong focus on economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific region, and in promoting investment priorities including gender equality, governance and strengthening tax systems. It is also well aligned with Australia's foreign, security and trade interests especially in promoting regional stability, security and economic prosperity. (DFAT, n.d., para. 6)

This certainly does not encourage small-to-medium communities and non-government organisations (NGOs) to participate in the change process. Further, it appears Australia isn't managing very well in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the 2018 Global SDG Index Australia is now ranked 37th in the world – down from 26th last year (Thwaites & Kestrin, 2018, para. 1, 2). Whilst performing relatively well in health and education, results for the environmental goals and climate change are among the worst in the OECD group of advanced nations. Further:

> The new [2018] index ranks Australia as the worst-performing country in the world on climate action (SDG 13). The measure takes into account green-house gas emissions within Australia; emissions embodied in the goods we consume; climate change vulnerability; and exported emissions from fossil fuel shipments to other countries. (Thwaites & Kestrin, 2018, para. 7)

Whilst recognising the UN has been involved in, and has supported, community development approaches to social change for over 60 years (UNESCO, 1954) current approaches to economics and ecological conversion are questioned. That includes asking to what extent can combining the goals of top-down business-as-usual economic development with social and ecological activities be transformative (Jennings, 2017; Sachs, 2017).

WHERE IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

So where, if at all, do the 'bottom-up' community-based processes come into the SDG programmes? When examining the global ecological predicament, Ife proposes that the 'bottom-up' approach to the changes required involves community development processes – which he identified as the "missing ingredient" (Ife, 2013, pp. 20-22). He recommends this approach as a feasible alternative to the current neoliberal social, economic and environmental policies and practices that are major contributors to the current dilemma. "At the heart of community development," he explained, "is the idea of change from below" (2013, p. 138).

Whilst the UN SDG pro-active activities are often undertaken in (and by) small communities and villages across the globe there appears to be very little evidence of the same happening at this level in Australia. In the previous (first) paper in this sequence the following was concluded:

> From a 'bottom-up' community development perspective the international and national approaches to SDGs lead non-government organisations and community development practitioners to question if there is a role for them in assisting to fulfil the SDGs. This paper clearly articulates the importance of the community development approaches, advocated for by the International Association for Community Development. This includes recognising that, when addressing structural and social class inequalities, the poor who are victims can become active contributors in designing and developing solutions. This is tangible 'bottom-up' community development. (Jennings, 2017, p. 16)

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

There have been many valuable international climatic, social and economic changes as a result of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda by member nations. Local people and local communities, however, are often going it alone when they clearly identify social, cultural, health, economic and environmental risks in their own backyards. Consequently, they intuitively adopt 'bottom-up' community development processes to work collectively to overcome them.

Given this discussion so far, research into other similar approaches and campaigns to address the challenges of our global issues was undertaken, resulting in the following study into the encyclical (letter) *Laudato si': On care for our common home*[1] by Pope Francis (2015). The following sections of this

[1] Referred to in this paper as *Laudato si'*.

paper will explore this letter and, as with the previous paper, "Community development – The 'missing ingredient' in striving for sustainability" (Jennings, 2017), will conclude by examining relevant links with local community development processes that could lead to ecological transformation.

## *Laudato si'* – the encyclical

BACKGROUND

To begin, what is an encyclical? The name is derived from the Greek word for circle, or circular. Accordingly, an encyclical is an important letter from the Pope of the day, sent to all bishops around the world, containing vital information relating to Catholic social teaching. They are not issued often, but contain important guiding principles to be taken seriously, and should challenge people to grow their personal knowledge and faith (Global Catholic Climate Movement, 2015). Lately encyclicals are addressed to Catholics, other Christians, people of other faiths/belief systems. Or, as Pope Francis clarifies in *Laudato si'*, "faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet" (2015a, para. 3).

The current Pope, on his investiture in 2013, adopted the name Francis because of a strong conviction in the principles held by St. Francis of Assisi, who devoted his life's work to caring for poor and sick people. Importantly he also loved and cared for all animals and creatures, whom he considered brothers and sisters under God. St. Francis died in Assisi, Italy, in 1226 (Biography.com, n.d.).

Because of this, Pope Francis' very first words in his encyclical are:

> "*Laudato si', mi' Signore*" – "*Praise be to you, my Lord*". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. (2015a, para. 1)

Some journalists and others note Pope Francis is the first Pope to address ecological issues. For example, Tilche and Nociti, in their otherwise supportive paper, state "The Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, addresses for the first time in the Church's history the subject of the protection of the environment" (2015, pp. 1-5). However, in all fairness, the following is acknowledged:

– "In 1963 Pope John XXIII emphasized the world's growing interdependence … he extended the [then] traditional principle of the common good from the nation-state to the world community. Ecological concern [he said] has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and everyone is responsible, although those most responsible are often the least affected. The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic" (United States Catholic Conference, n.d., para. 9).

– In 1971 Blessed Pope Paul VI referred to the ecological concern as "a tragic consequence" of unchecked human activity: "Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation" (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 4).

– Saint John Paul II, in his first encyclical in 2001, warned that human beings frequently seem "to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves their immediate use and consumption". Subsequently, he called for a global ecological conversion (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 5).

– In 2007 Pope Francis' predecessor Benedict XVI, proposed "eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment" … Benedict urged us to realise that creation is harmed "where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone" (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 6).

Thus, the stage is set – not for a conflicting approach to the UN's 2030 Agenda, but for a similar one with many commonalities, plus added dimensions. There are also some differences, which will be discussed later in this paper.

COMMENCEMENT OF *LAUDATO SI'*

In 2015 Pope Francis released the encyclical '*Laudato si'*: On care for our common home', two months before the United Nations released the 2030 Agenda. In fact, on the day of the UN document's release Pope Francis was guest speaker at the United Nations. In his speech to the UN General Assembly the Pope discussed many areas covered by both representations. This included the following:

> First, it must be stated that a true "right of the environment" does exist, for two reasons. First, because we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. … Any harm done to the environment … is harm done to humanity. Second, because every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures. (Pope Francis, 2015b, p. 2)

He continued by emphasising:

> The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged. Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights and the environment. (Pope Francis, 2015b, pp. 2-3)

In the preparation of *Laudato si'* Pope Francis was assisted by an esteemed team of eco-theologists, and scientists from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The Academy, established in 1603, has international, multi-racial and non-sectarian membership, which has included many Nobel Laureates and other famous scientists, including the recently deceased Stephen Hawking (Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 2017).

Therefore, at this stage of the investigation into *Laudato si'* one clear message that distinguishes it from the UN's 2030 Agenda is that, globally, people, with their individual and/or collective faith/spiritual belief systems, or lack of them, are now an integral part of discussions relating to the planetary environmental crisis; and that it is a crisis, as clearly articulated in *Laudato si'*, that not only involves the environment, but also demonstrates a deep connection between environment and poverty.

So how does this differ from fundamental scientific approaches? As one scientist, Gus Speth, a US advisor on climate change, co-founder of the Natural Resources Defence Council, and former Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, stated:

> I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change.
> I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems.
> But I was wrong.
> The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation – and we scientists don't know how to do that. (quoted in Curwood, 2016)

Based on discussion to date, the next section of this paper will move into an overview of what *Laudato si'* contains, chapter by chapter. Whilst the amount of detail is restricted by the length of the paper, the whole document is available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/ papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html if people wish to explore it further.

WHAT DOES *LAUDATO SI'* CONTAIN?

This section provides a synopsis of content covered in *Laudato si'*, to lay the foundation for further discourse in this article. Principally the question being asked in the encyclical is "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 160). This question is at the heart of discussion on caring for our common home. It is a passionate call to all people of the world to undertake unified global action to address the destruction of nature and people who cohabit our planet.

In Chapter 1, entitled 'What is happening to our common home', Pope Francis discusses many of the environmental issues facing us today, including poverty and human inequality, loss of biodiversity, the throwaway culture, overconsumption, global degradation and climate change. Throughout this chapter the interconnectedness of all creation is emphasised, and it clearly illustrates that we cannot continue to exploit and pollute our common home.

Chapter 2, 'The Gospel of Creation', sets out to address the areas

identified in the previous chapter, through understanding and insight that the Bible offers. Pope Francis clearly pronounces:

> …the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man "dominion" over the earth has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. … we must forcefully reject the notion that [we have been] given dominion over the earth [or] … absolute domination over other creatures. (2015a, para. 67)

Thus the wellbeing of all creation is emphasised, including appreciating that every creature has its own value and significance.

Chapter 3, 'The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis', examines the human origins of our current situation, and also explores the use, and dangers of overuse of technology. Misguided anthropocentrism "which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests" (2015a, para. 122) is addressed, as is the importance of work for everyone. Issues relating to biotechnology and genetic engineering are also examined.

In this section, Chapter 4, 'Integral Ecology', is proposed as the heart of the encyclical, as the paradigm for justice. It upholds the relationship between environmental issues as inseparable from social and human issues. Further, it calls for preferential opportunities for people who live in poverty, those most harmed by ecological degradation. Pope Francis devotes this chapter to advancing a new world vision and offers integral ecology as "a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis" (2015a, para. 137). Further, Pope Francis emphasises it is essential to show consideration towards Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions (2015a, para. 146).

Chapter 5, 'Lines of Approach and Action', assesses the achievement of efforts at international and local levels to protect the environment. "World Summits on the environment'," the encyclical reports, "have not lived up to expectations because, due to a lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment". In addition, Pope Francis clarifies, "The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But is concerned to encourage an honest and open debate, so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good" (2015a, para. 188).

'Ecological Education and Spirituality', Chapter 6, emphasises that it is human beings, above all, who need to change. What we need, it advises, is to educate ourselves to forge an agreement between humanity and the environment. Ecological citizenship, which curbs unsustainable behaviours and promotes ecological virtues, is addressed as a requirement to lead to a reflective "ecological conversion".

Overall, '*Laudato si'*: On Care for Our Common Home' addresses many social issues, embedded within their economic and environmental contexts. This includes unemployment, lack of housing, barriers to people leading dignified lives, injustices, and the growing numbers of people deprived of basic human rights. Thus the encyclical promotes social peace, stability and security – calling on society, as a whole, to defend and promote the common good.

*Laudato si'* concludes with two prayers. The first is for the Earth, which

includes a call to assist us to "protect life and beauty" and "help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth". The other, a prayer in union with Creation, includes a plea to "[e]nlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. The poor and the earth are crying out", wrote Pope Francis (2015a, para. 246).

The next section will further discuss and analyse *Laudato si'* – what are people and institutions, both within and outside of the Judeo-Christian and other belief systems, saying about the encyclical? Climate change and appropriate economics lead this discussion.

### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF *LAUDATO SI'*

Like other global approaches aimed at supporting and/or instigating international social, economic and environmental change, for example the UN 2030 Agenda, *Laudato si'*, by incorporating the spiritual, has received both positive and negative responses. Dialogue at this level, however, is considered essential as it involves examining and discussing issues relating to the survival of people, creatures and natural habitats on this planet.

One analyst, Fritjof Capra, describes the encyclical as "The Pope's ecoliterate challenge to climate change, ... a 'truly systemic' understanding of the ecological basis for a just, sustainable, and peaceful world" (2015, p. 1). Capra also upholds that the "radical ethics championed by Pope Francis ... is essentially the ethics of deep ecology" (2015, p. 2). Throughout his paper Capra continually quotes direct from *Laudato si'* to support this theme, including comparing it to ethical principles within the Earth Charter.

However, "the only unconvincing section", Capra found, "is paragraph 50 where Pope Francis tries to downplay the importance of stabilizing population (2015, p. 12). This is not surprising, he qualified, given the Church's staunch opposition to birth control. That section within the encyclical does, however, bring other questions into account on that subject, including pointing out the view of many who maintain the problems of the poor can only be changed by reduction in the birth rate, without considering "extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some" (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 50).

Overall, in supporting *Laudato si'*, Capra concluded that, "our key challenge is how to shift from an economic system based on the notion of unlimited growth to one that is both ecologically sustainable and socially just" (2015, pp. 8-9).

The need for economic change arises regularly in literature pertaining to global climate change and international social justice, both in discussions concerning the UN 2030 Agenda's SDGs and to *Laudato si'*. Wolfgang Sachs, Director Emeritus of the Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy in Germany, is one researcher who has compared the Sustainable Development Goals and *Laudato si'* on this issue (Sachs, 2017). Based on what is happening globally, he states, "the Agenda 2030 is protecting the growth model, a model which has always been prioritised over protection of nature" (2017, p. 2581). The Pope, he says:

> ...chooses the path less trodden by clearly mentioning both ecological and social limits, and by holding the industrial growth model accountable

for its various shortcomings. At one point, he even goes as far as recommending de-growth for the more affluent parts of the world. In other words, he advocates a reductive rather than an expansive modernity. (Sachs, 2017, p. 2581)

Thus, Sachs points out, "*Laudato si'* suggests a strategy of sufficiency embedded in cultural change: it is indeed the rich who have to change, not the poor; it is wealth that needs to be alleviated, not poverty" (2017, p. 2581). In summary Sachs pronounces:

> While the Agenda 2030 seeks to repair the existing global economic model significantly, the encyclical calls for a pushing back of economic hegemony and for more ethical responsibility on all levels. While the Agenda 2030 envisions a green economy with social democratic hues, the encyclical foresees a post-capitalist era, based on a cultural shift toward eco-solidarity. (2017, p. 2584)

Overall, the cultural change Sachs advocates for is intended to be approached from both local and global levels, comprising both cooperative economics and politics aimed at the common good.

Of course, not everyone agrees with this view. *The Australian* newspaper, for example, published a number of articles criticising *Laudato si'*, saying it was "wrong about climate change and ignorant about economics" (Duncan, 2015, p. 55). Further, editor Paul Kelly declared the Pope's language was "almost hysterical. Profound intellectual ignorance is dressed up as 'honouring God'. Page after page reveals Francis and his advisers as environmental populists and economic ideologues of a quasi-Marxist bent." In addition, he claimed, "the Pope has 'delegitimised as immoral' pro-market economic forces" (Kelly quoted in Duncan, 2015, p. 55).

In his investigation into these incidences, Duncan concluded:

> Kelly seriously misrepresented *Laudato si'*, surprisingly so for such a senior journalist and economic commentator. Contrary to Kelly's allegation that the Pope is "blind to the liberating power of markets and technology", Pope Francis explicitly acknowledges and rejoices in the benefits of modern science, technology and creativity which have resulted in advances for humankind. (Duncan, 2015, p. 56)

Another perspective is offered by Carmen Gonzalez, a Professor of Law at Seattle University. In her article 'UN goals fall short of Francis' vision', Gonzalez reviewed the content of both the UN 2030 Agenda SDGs and *Laudato si'*, and surmised:

> While the sustainable development goals represent a welcome incorporation of environmental concerns into the development agenda, they fall short of Francis' vision by seeking to moderate rather than transform the consumption-driven, growth-orientated model of economic development that degrades human dignity and has caused potentially catastrophic environmental harm. (Gonzalez, 2015, p. 30)

Scharmer and Kaufer, in their book *Leading from the Emerging Future*, discuss disconnection: in particular, ecological disconnection, social disconnection and

spiritual-cultural disconnection. They call for the end of the "silo-type approach – dealing with one symptom cluster at a time – [which] isn't working. On the contrary," they say "it seems to be part of the problem" (2013, p. 5). *Laudato si'*, it is maintained, provides the synthesis that enables the spiritual to cross those boundaries to be the connector.

In summary, there are many areas that the 2030 Agenda and *Laudato si'* have in common. In fact the United Nations and the Vatican work closely together in many ways, aiming to instigate social, economic and environmental change. But, as shown, there are also some differences, in both philosophy and resultant activity. This paper will now move from the global to the local, to see where and how communities and NGOs can participate in activities relating to *Laudato si'*.

### *LAUDATO SI'* – WHERE DOES COMMUNITY FIT?

As highlighted in the preamble to this paper, the question "Where does community fit?" was previously asked in relation to the SDGs. Some answers pointed to 'top-down' corporate approaches to change, often totally disassociated from local communities. This question is now being asked of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*.

I will commence by relating it to local Indigenous people/communities. I live on Yawuru country, in Broome, in the northwest of Australia. The Yawuru people are the Traditional Owners, Custodians of the Land, and Native Title Holders of this country. I pay my respects to their people, past, present and future, as I prepare this paper from their land.

In *Laudato si'* Pope Francis addresses his words to "every person living on this planet" (2015a, para. 3). He expands on this by clearly noting it is essential that Indigenous communities and their spiritual and cultural traditions are respected and protected. As Pope Francis explains:

> They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred place with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. (2015a, para. 146)

At a conference held in Broome in 2016, Peter Yu, from the organisation Nyamba Buru Yawuru (This is the land of the Yawuru), was keynote speaker, addressing ways *Laudato si'* was relevant to Yawuru people. He clearly articulated:

> I can say with absolute confidence that *Laudato si'* speaks to the overriding concerns of Indigenous people – degeneration of our lands and seas that nurture us spiritually, culturally, socially and economically; social and political alienation; and rampant industrial development and greed. (Yu, 2016, pp. 2-3)

These thoughts can also be extended to villages and communities around the world. Whilst addressing major international organisations, as the

2030 Agenda does, Pope Francis also pays particular attention to small communities, encouraging them to contribute to locally instigated activities for change. This, it is contended, clearly involves community development understandings, processes and activities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development (which includes communities of intent and/or geographical communities) is the process whereby people organise to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Kenny, 2011). Those needs can include positive value-adding to community social infrastructure, through to undertaking activities to overcome disadvantage and climate change.

As Ife explained:

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

This involves "change from below, valuing the wisdom, expertise and skills of the community … and the importance of community control" (Ife, 2013, p. 4). In addition, Ife highlights "[t]he purpose of community development is to re-establish the community as the location of significant human experience" (2013, p. 212). He does, however, advise against single-purpose projects/ programmes, as "one-dimensional community development is likely to be of limited value" (2013, p. 212).

In addition, links between spiritual and community development ways of undertaking social and sustainability transformation have been made by Ife (2013), and Chile and Simpson (2004). Ife states:

> The spiritual dimension … is important to community development. A sense of the sacred, and a respect for spiritual values, is an essential part of re-establishing human community and providing meaning and purpose for people's lives. But the corollary is also true: genuine human community is in itself a spiritual experience, so the development of community is an important ingredient of spiritual development. The two belong together. (2013, p. 255)

When exploring the work of faith-based organisations, Chile and Simpson noted that:

> The underpinning philosophy of community development and *spirituality* is the connection of the individual to the collective, acknowledging that the well-being of the individual influences and is influenced by the well-being of community. The central tenets of this philosophy are the promotion of fairness, *social justice* and access to community resources to create responsible well-being. (Chile & Simpson, 2004, p. 318)

In addition, they maintain that the dimensions of community development identified by Ife "are strongly informed by spiritual values of holism, sustainability, diversity, equilibrium and social justice" (2004, p. 318). They conclude the role of spirituality within this "discourse provides a framework

for critical analysis and understanding of the causes of oppression as a means for creating positive and sustainable transforming community development" (2004, p. 323).

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY AS HIGHLIGHTED IN *LAUDATO SI'*

It appears Pope Francis understands and supports community development approaches as described above. He clearly points out:

> Attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions can lead to overlooking the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community. New processes taking shape cannot always fit into frameworks imported from outside; they need to be based in the local culture itself. (2015a, para. 144)

Thus, he clarifies:

> There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people *from within their proper culture*.[2] Nor can the notion of the quality of life be imposed from without, for quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each human group. (2015a, para. 144)

Other community-based issues, which appear personalised within *Laudato si'*, include:

> A wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment. At times a commendable human ecology is practised by the poor despite numerous hardships. The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created, if the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging. (2015a, para. 148)

A further cross-section of community, grassroots-relevant quotes, provided by the Pope include:

> [Do not] underestimate the importance of interpersonal skills. If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships. (2015a, para. 119)

> We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (2015a, para. 139)

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Italics as per *Laudato si'*.

> There is also a need to protect common areas, visual landmarks and urban landscapes which increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of "feeling at home" within a city which includes us and brings us together. (2015a, para. 151)

> [We must not] overlook the abandonment and neglect also experienced by some rural populations which lack access to essential services and where some workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights or even the hope of a more dignified life. (2015a, para. 154)

The list could go on; however, this discourse will be concluded by noting a discussion in *Laudato Si'* that describes a case where cooperatives are being developed to provide renewable energy resources, ensuring local self-sufficiency and the possibility of sale of surpluses. Pope Francis tells us that:

> This simple example shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instil a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land. They are also concerned about what they will eventually leave to their children and grandchildren. (2015a, para. 179)

## Conclusion

I'm a community development practitioner and researcher, commencing PhD studies in community development for an ecologically sustainable future. Scrutinising both the United Nations 2030 Agenda (Jennings, 2017) and Pope Francis' *Laudato si'* (this paper) has been essential to my decision relating to which document I will primarily ground my local community action research, activities, projects and consequently thesis, within. I have now decided to primarily use *Laudato si'*, and then 2030 Agenda to a lesser degree.

   Why? *Laudato si'*, I found, encapsulates many of my personal beliefs, philosophy and approaches to ways of working. So, after some time away from the Catholic Church, *Laudato si' has* led me to strengthen my Catholic beliefs and practices. I will now venture to shape those areas into a framework for my study. In doing this I aim to provide participants (local people in my local community) the space to think, and act, big – using community action research. This will be combined with community development processes of cooperation, shared vision and collective action in the challenges that will emerge as we (my community) move forward, towards defining and activating a more positive future.

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### 2.2.2 Laudato Si' Teachings applicable to Social and Ecological Change

In this subsection I expanded on *Laudato Si's* teachings. I aligned the encyclical with community development theory and practice by providing an example offered in *Laudato Si'* that describes the establishment of a cooperative to provide a small locality with renewable energy, ensuring local self-sufficiency and potential income. I propose this is a grassroots community development approach that demonstrates local people making a difference when they assume ownership and responsibility of issues and work collectively to create the change they envisage.

This chapter contextualises the Encyclical Laudato Si' as a continuation of the spiritual leadership of Pontiffs over the past 60 years" starting with Pope John XXIII, then Pope Paul Vi, Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis – all contributors, and directly quoted, in the current encyclical by Pope Francis.

## 2.3 *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si'* Ecological Contributions

The contribution of this chapter to the thesis involves recognition that both *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si'* contribute to global ecological dialogue. In this chapter I delve into the similarities and differences between the two strategies, noting *Laudato Si'* specifically points to global ecological and social limits and holds the industrial growth model accountable. The UN offered the *2030 Agenda* as a voluntary intergovernmental agreement, and I maintain Australia is not fulfilling key responsibilities as a signatory to that agenda. I offer *Laudato Si'* supported grassroots community development practices as one option communities can adopt to initiate local socio-ecological change. A significant contribution this chapter makes is recognition of the theoretical differences between the two documents, noting the UN's movement to improve economic systems while *Laudato Si's* approach, grounded within deep ecology, is to change the system. This supports the choice of Laudato Si' given Pope Francis recognition that ecological conversion was needed to bring about lasting change.

This exploration resulted in my decision to adopt *Laudato Si'* principles throughout my research and subsequent thesis.

In the next chapter I develop the spirituality/faith component of local socio-ecological understanding, exploring theological frameworks applicable to community development methods of change. I apply the research to local parish and broader community activity within an ecological transition framework.

## 3.0 FAITH APPROACHES TO ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

In this chapter, I expand on the previous section, drawing on the points relating to spirituality and beliefs that I propose can become a foundation for understanding and activity supporting transitioning to ecological conversion.

I include faith/spirituality into social, economic, and environmental moves towards change by investigating ways people can embrace ecological conversion within their local parishes and communities. This follows on from the previous chapters, linking both Chapter One, the literature research, and Chapter Two investigating the international ecological strategies and the way they link with community development and ecological conversion, laying the groundwork for the following chapters.

In this chapter I explore theology for people who have had little or no doctrinal training, finding practical theology offers an appropriate perspective for this purpose. It supports faith-centred inquiry within the context of the urgency for global social and ecological change. I demonstrate the significance of renewing spiritual connections to the earth, highlighting the importance of interconnections when researching local parish and community involvement. A recent historical case study is provided to emphasise ways community development processes of networking and connection had previously been undertaken in the town, then moves on to a current local social project that reflects *Laudato Si'* teachings, based on 'cry of the poor'.

## 3.1 Rural Parishes responding practically to *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*[16]

(Paper commences on the next page).

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[16] Publication details:

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores ways people living in rural areas can apply a global Christian agenda that seeks spiritual, social, and environmental changes in their own lives, and within their local parish and community. Ordinary theology lays the groundwork for this approach, the theology relevant to those who have received little or no academic or scholarly theological education. This article studies ways Catholic Social Teaching can be actioned, applying Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. Community development theory and practice is included in this deliberation, highlighting community as the 'home' of rural people, parishes, and their broader environment. Subsequently, I offer practical theology is to frame practice as people embark on an ecological conversion journey.

Keywords: Laudato Si', practical theology, rural parish, community development, ecological conversion, social and ecological change.

**Acknowledgement**

**Introduction**

Australia's colonised countryside outside of cities and larger urban centres is often referred to as 'the bush' and 'the outback', and termed rural, regional, and remote areas (Short, Seiffert, Haynes, & Haynes, 2018). The town where I live, Broome, is located within the Kimberley region in the north-west of Australia and is classified 'remote' for geographic and political reasons (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018; Guenther, Halsey, & Osborne, 2015). For the purposes of this

article the term *rural* will be used to incorporate collectively those rural, regional, and remote zones within this country.

My research covers ways people living in rural areas can apply a global agenda that seeks social and environmental transformation, within their everyday lives. It highlights Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015a) and explores ways local parishes can undertake activities to achieve concepts laid out in the encyclical. To do this I utilize practical theology linked to community development. Collectively those processes support people on their journey towards ecological conversion. The key question in this paper is, 'How can community development theory and practice contribute to the ecological conversion called for in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?*

**Overview**

Internationally, environmental and social scientists have repeatedly documented significant challenges and call for social and ecological transformative change (United Nations, 2020a, 2020b). Issues include worldwide deforestation and species loss, increasing use of chemicals across the food chains, ever-reducing water supplies, massive consumerism by first world countries, and significant increases in the rich-poor divide resulting in high levels of poor health, food insecurity and poverty, especially in the global South (Interdicasterial Working Group of the Holy See on Integral Ecology, 2020). People of faith from a wide range of belief systems have added to the call for social and ecological change.

This is evidenced in *Faith for Earth: A Call for Action (2020)* prepared jointly by the Parliament of the World's Religions and the United Nations Environment Program. It stresses the unprecedented impacts currently being experienced across our planet, impacting where people live and grow food, practise their faith, and raise their children. It recognises climate change continues to threaten human and other-than-human life and ecology. Significantly, this article highlights the important role faith communities assume as they develop ways to initiate change. As explained in *Faith for Earth*:

> Our faiths call us to be warriors for the sustainability and wellbeing of our world. The challenge is enormous, but it does not have to be daunting. No one can do all that must be done, but everyone can do something. One is not responsible for what one truly cannot do alone, but all of us are responsible

for what we do together. Accomplishing what is needed starts with each of us doing what we can (United Nations Environment Programme & Parliament of the Worlds Religions, 2020).

Optimism has been proposed by some analysts, including Bone (2016), when identifying spirituality and ecological practices create foundations for hope. While noting sustainable practice is usually allied to rational scientific know-how and less connected to spirituality, this approach links with deep ecology, ecofeminism, and Indigenous knowledges to embed spirituality within practices. Hope, she explains, will come from 'inventiveness … and through renewing our spiritual connections to the earth" (Bone, 2016, p. 256). This is closely aligned with the teachings of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* and other Christian and non-Christian faith leaders (Braden, 2021).

### *Laudato Si'*

This article is grounded within the encyclical (teaching letter) by Pope Francis (2015a): *Laudato Si'- On Care for Our Common Home*. Released in Rome in 2015, this socioecological treatise highlights "the current damage people are causing to the fabric of the planet", and "the extreme poverty within the world, where people are 'excluded from reaching their true potential" (McDonagh, 2016, p. xiii). As McDonagh explains "in this short document Pope Francis has moved the Catholic Church from the periphery of global engagement with ecology right to the very heart of the debate" (2016, p. xiii*). Others support this view. Kelly (2016), for example, declares the encyclical is a 'game-changer' in terms of Catholic social teaching and dialogue with science.

Far-reaching environmental, economic and social change that involves people of all faiths/belief systems and no faith, living on this planet is called for in *Laudato Si'.* It urgently seeks ecological conversion that moves from global to local socio-ecological transformation (Pope Francis, 2015). For clarity, the term 'ecological conversion' involves more than extending our concern for justice to include other-than-human life. It challenges us to develop an integral ecology, a new paradigm of justice, one which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings (Pope Francis, 2015; Ormerod & Valin, 2016).

Ormerod and Vanin clarify that ecological conversion "can aid us in the arduous transition to a more self-transcendent and authentic way of living in relationship with one another, with all creation, and with God" (2016, p. 352).

*Laudato Si'* opens by exploring what is happening to our common home, leading to an analysis of environmental and social issues facing us today, including consequences of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and human inequality. The interconnectedness of all creation is emphasised, with the encyclical offering insight from Judeo-Christian traditions. It articulates the message that "'dominion' given to humans in Genesis 1:28 does not permit people to control and destroy the earth. The well-being of all creation is emphasised, including appreciating 'every creature has its own value and significance'" (Pope Francis, 2015, #76).

Integral ecology is offered as a valid methodology to amalgamate environmental, economic, and social ecologies. This "refers to the fact that everything is interrelated, requiring consideration of the interactions within natural systems and with social systems" (O'Neill, 2016, p. 750). *Laudato Si* also cautions against theories of economic growth that do not respect ecology. It highlights the danger of excessive consumerism, and the importance of considering our future generations. Notably Pope Francis calls for preferential opportunities for people who live in poverty, as they are the most harmed by ecological degradation.

Environmental education and spirituality underscore the necessity to educate ourselves to create accord between humanity and the environment. The document explains how ecological citizenship, which curbs unsustainable behaviours and promotes ecological virtues, is prerequisite to reflective ecological conversion. The Pope supports Indigenous peoples and their cultural traditions in *Laudato Si'*. He calls for Indigenous peoples to be "principal dialogue partners" (2015a, #146) in discussions relating to their traditions, culture, and lands.

Overall Pope Francis demonstrates the encyclical is not intended to resolve scientific questions or take charge of politics, but is a call for people to take responsibility, for community groups to advocate for change, and for interdisciplinary conversations to progress more ethical and equitable ways to move forward (O'Neill, 2016). *Laudato Si'* concludes with reflections on participation in the sacraments and the Sabbath to assist Christians develop a

meaningful relationship with all creation, and finally with a prayer for the earth and for Christian union with creation.

**Theology**

Astley (2012) affirms that theology has an essential position within Christianity, addressing theology as ordinary theology, which owes much of its origin to less conceptual forms of theology. These emerge from non-academic/non-scholarly accounts, and believers' everyday life experiences. The significance of ordinary theology is that it articulates a faith and spirituality that "in some sense 'works' for those who own it. It fits their experience and gives meaning to, and expresses the meaning they find with, their own lives" (Astley, 2013, p. 2).

Consequently, ordinary theology relates to people's experiences and meaning in their lives. Next, there is a need for ways in which parishioners can undertake concerted activities and actions framed by their spirituality. Practical theology is offered to continue this exploration, which was also my personal 'trail of discovery', one which has led me to a new range of writers. This includes Miller-McLemore (2013), who observed that practical theology is aligned with what some consider to be contextual or local theology. It has also been referred to as theology in practice (Miller-McLemore, 2012) and pastoral-practical theology - the mystical being discovered and demonstrated within people's ordinary lives (Maher, 2015).

Pattison (2007) endorses practical theology as "a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical, and practically transforming" (2007, p. 12) Australian practical theologian Veling explains that theology is "always shaped by and embodied in the practices of historical, cultural, and linguistic communities" (2005, p. 6). Miller-McLemore contribute further when she asserted "practical theology either has relevance for everyday faith and life or it has little meaning at all" (2012, p. 4).

When researching how communities of memory and tradition can develop into communities of practical reason and wisdom, Browning (1991) observed the re-emergence of practical philosophies in many disciplines, including theology. He asserted that theory belongs in practice and if it seems to stand alone it is only

because it has been removed from its practical context. Veling (2005) adds practical theology implies "we cannot separate knowing from being, thinking from acting, theological reflections from pastoral and practical involvement" (2005, p. 6). By adopting a practical theology that integrates both theory and actions, Browning (1991) advises commencing with institutions of faith that leads to reflecting the reasons and justifications for the practical measures proposed, and then undertaking transformative actions relating to the identified change desired.

Overall, Veling states that "practical theology necessarily attends to the *conditions* of human life. It is concerned with the unique, the particular, the concrete – this people, this community, this place, this moment, this neighbour, this question, this need, this concern" (2005, p. 16). This process was effectively applied by Tinney (2019) at Earth Link, a nature-based sustainable living project Sisters of Mercy instigated in a community in Queensland, Australia. In her book, *When Heaven and Earth Embrace: How do we Engage Spiritually in an Emerging Universe,* Tinney described the process of ecological conversion as "bringing the craft of practical theology to bear on ecospirituality in an emerging universe, on the interconnectedness of God, humans and nature, [embracing] Heaven and Earth" (2019 p. 35).

**Parish as Community of Practice**

The context of 'community' is the setting for parishes in this paper. Practical approaches to working in community involve community development, positioned within social science theory with a practice (ways of doing) framework. It encapsulates people's sense of community, which can include community-of-interest, community-of-identity, community-of-practice and community-of-place (Lachapelle & Albrecht, 2019). Community-of-practice involves people who are 'doers', practitioners with similar passions and concerns, who interact regularly and share resources. This can include stories and advice based on lived experience, as well as physical assistance augmenting activities that support ways to address local through to global issues (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Miller (2016) describes parishes as community, recognising that "church as family expresses and nurtures our need for community". As a result, "we experience a deep longing for the things the extended family used to provide: a network of close relationships" (Miller, 2016, p. 25).

A recent study, *Faith and Belief in Australia: A national study on religion, spirituality and worldview trends* (McCrindle, 2017), found what people valued most about their local church was the supportive community (38%), then social connections (24%). Remarkably, 42% of Australians who identify with Christianity yet never go to church indicated they value the supportive community of the local church.

This is corroborated by the *Building Stronger Parishes* project undertaken on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (Dantis, 2015). Dantis' study found a parish community involves interconnected relationships both within and external to the group – creating conditions for community that supports spiritual development. She expands on the theme by noting "the communitarian aspects of a parish are fundamental to its identity" as "the Church inserted into the neighbourhoods of humanity" (Dantis, 2015, p. 3).

Hughes (2019) investigated Australian Churches' role in volunteering and found that rural churches encourage people to be involved in both their parishes and their local communities, while urban churches concentrated on internal parish activity. He found that the difference between church members' and general community members' volunteering commitments is the motivation provided by their religious values (Hughes, 2019), decisions that demonstrate spirituality and community development are closely aligned.

**Spirituality and Community Development**

One definition of spirituality is connecting "people to each other, to all living things, to nature and the universe. Spirituality is a way of appreciating the wonder and mystery of everyday life" (Bone, 2016, p. 247). This section links spirituality to community development to create a foundation from which to progress ecological conversion. The aim is to establish lasting relationships of all humanity to creation, nature, and all species: relationships that hold promise for a new, sustainable future.

Community development theory includes social science, ecological economics, environmental sustainability, and cultural and spiritual principles. Broadly speaking it involves working with communities on ideas/issues they identify as needing to be addressed, sometimes with community development practitioners assisting,

but clearly directed by the community (Jennings, 2021). Resultant action is often undertaken by both paid and volunteer practitioners (doers), creating conditions where local history, knowledge and understandings are highly valued. In this process "community development is an integrated praxis: its theory informs its action and its action develops its theory" (Ledwith, 2020, p. 81). In common with *Laudato Si,* community development involves going deeper to discover the root causes of oppression. It does this by challenging neoliberal approaches that supports domination of nature and promotes consumerism, while blaming marginalized groups for their situations of poverty (Ledwith, 2020).

Is there a connection between spirituality and community development? Ife (2013) explains that the spiritual element is important to community development as it provides a "sense of the sacred, and a respect for spiritual values ... the development of community is an important ingredient for spiritual development ... the two go together" (Ife, 2013, p. 255). Others, notably Chile and Simpson (2004), provide further insight. They explain "the underpinning philosophy of community development and *spirituality* is the connection of the individual to the collective" (2004, p. 318). Community development also champions outcomes that are "in harmony, socially just and sustainable, and achieved with respect for diversity, shared knowledge, and a re-imagining of the future" (Chile & Simpson, 2004, p. 326). This includes the recognition that, while community development and spirituality operate from different paradigms, both concentrate on beliefs that connect and hold society together. Rural people, with their local knowledge and lived experiences, are important given they are initiators and instigators of local activities that can produce their locally identified outcomes (community development practices).

**Applying Theory and Practice in Rural Areas**

McCarroll's (2020) analysis of practical theology has identified a gap in research concerning the application of practical theology to the current global ecological crisis. She argues because of its silence practical theology is complicit, albeit unintentionally, in perpetuating the environmental crisis. To overcome that gap, McCarroll (2020) proposes collaborating with interdisciplinary dialogue partners to support development of creation-centered pathways to change. Given this article

focuses on grassroots, community activity and interventions to instigate local change that is welcomed and supported. Consequently, rural parishes undertaking actions involving practical theology can contribute to filling that gap, within their relatively small population and geographical bases.

How can rural parishes and communities comprehend the challenges proposed in *Laudato Si' to* develop germane practices that can lead to transformative change? This paper explores that question and the challenges posed by initially researching if successful endeavours in the past can establish exemplars for future endeavours. As identified earlier, practical theologian Veling (2005) observed theology is embodied within historical and contemporary cultural practices in communities.

The parish I belong to, 'Our Lady Queen of Peace', is in Broome in the Kimberley region in the north of Western Australia. The Kimberley region has a unique population ratio, where Indigenous people make up 41.6% of the region's population, compared to the state average of 3.1% and Australia-wide only 2.8% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

An activity within Broome's modern history relates to the town's bookshop. It commenced in the early 1970s when the population was about 3,000 people[17]., now over 16,000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The local Methodist (now Uniting Church) Minister took books and magazines and other small items out to remote pastoral properties when he was travelling thousands of kilometres to carry out his ministry (Foote, 2007). At the time the only form of communication with those distant stations was two-way radio. As a result people greatly appreciated his service. The Minister also ran an outdoor 'shop' from the Manse's outside verandah in the town, selling many items not locally available including reading materials, religious items, and children's toys. Local nuns, the Sisters of St. John of God, were regular supporters of the verandah shop, and when he left the district in 1981 they assumed responsibility of the bookshop as an important project in Broome (Sisters of St John of God, 2019). The Sisters ran it for many years, attracting volunteers from both the Parish and the general community.

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[17] Post settlement Broome was established as a base for the pearl diving and subsequent industry and was proclaimed a town in 1883.

Eventually one of their staff took on the initiative as a private enterprise and it is still operating successfully today.

The bookshop project, through practical theological and community development processes, assisted in developing a robust community ethos embedded within ecumenical Christianity, in the town and the pastoral stations.[18] People from diverse backgrounds worked collaboratively to create positive outcomes for those requiring products. They also provided contact with people living in isolation, encouraging support and friendships not easily attained when socially remote. As expressed in *Laudato Si'* through "these community actions, relationships develop or are recovered and a new social fabric emerges' identifying 'the importance of little everyday gestures" (2015a, #232). This first step towards ecological conversion involves developing an understanding of local social legacy, with past collaborative processes and effective outcomes, laying the foundation for other community development activities and projects to emerge, opening the doors to possible expansion to environmental considerations in the future.

**The Parish Today**

The next step, it is proposed, is to think and act practically, linking together the themes of this article - that is *Laudato Si'*, spirituality and practical theology, community development, and parish involvement - to realize collective goals. When a new treatise like *Laudato Si'* emerges people fear increased workloads, and the question 'how can we take on any more work?' is often asked. For this reason, mapping was undertaken to clarify each project's program and gauge where the results align with *Laudato Si'* and other spheres of practical theology and community development. It is also an opportunity to recognise and celebrate valuable projects, where people and their activities build community assets.

One particular case study illustrates this method and resultant project outcomes. Centacare Kimberley is a not-for-profit parish organisation, based in Broome. It provides social support services throughout the Kimberley. The project grew out of over 100 years of pastoral work by the Catholic Church in the region. Their vision is "to provide services that positively contribute to a society where people can

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[18] Exceptionally large cattle grazing properties, each covering many thousands of hectares of land.

enjoy social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing free from poverty and discrimination", while their mission is to "be a responsive and culturally sensitive community organisation that empowers the people [they] support to exercise life choices and self-determination" (Centacare Kimberley, n.d.). The following summary provides an overview of the programs Centacare provided over a twelve-month period.

*Table 2. Centacare Kimberley Case Study*

| Program | Service | People Supported |
|---|---|---|
| Emergency Relief | Food vouchers; clothing vouchers; support | 2342 - Assistance |
| Breakfast Program | Free nutritional meals 3 time a week | 8911 - Meals |
| Homeless Outreach | Rough sleeper program; advocacy, support | 117 – Households |
| West Kimberley Housing Support | Mentoring, role modelling, living skills | 49 - Households |
| Reintegration Support | People leaving prison, back home/community | 217 - Individuals |
| Transitional Housing in Broome | Assist low-income people purchasing homes | 45 - Households |
| Transitional Housing in neighbouring Derby | Assist low-income people purchasing homes | 16- Households |
| Intensive Tenancy Service | Tenancy information, advice, support | 18 - Households |
| Derby Aboriginal Short Stay | Safe, supportive facility, short stays for health and emergency | 1278 Accommodated |

(Adapted from Centacare Kimberley Annual Report, 2018)

Centacare fulfills its stated social mission and vision, but how does it fit within *Laudato Si'*? The encyclical is best known for its environmental message and is true to Pope Francis' assertion that "everything is interconnected and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others" (2015a, #70). This approach to social, spiritual, and cultural justice addresses issues relevant to people living in extreme poverty, applicable to the lives of some people accessing Centacare's programs. *Laudato Si'* identifies issues including overcrowding, physical and human barriers to healthy and fulfilling lifestyles, and the resultant uncertainty that creates changed behaviours. These are some of the areas Centacare covers, highlighting the relevance of *Laudato Si'* to this region's people.

The call for the establishment of "a greater sense of community, a readiness to protect others" (Pope Francis, 2015a, #179) further reflects Centacare's project commitment and engagement with local people/volunteers, including working collaboratively with other social service agencies. These actions not only fulfil principles of both Centacare's mission and Laudato Si', but also apply practical theology theories and engage community development hands-on processes and resultant practical activity.

The governance operations of Centacare also demonstrate a strong recycling and energy saving ethic within the workplace. The organisation works collaboratively with local Indigenous Custodians, supporting them in their efforts to keep local landscapes safe and environmentally balanced for both people and creation. Centacare's homeless and housing programs serve local and itinerant people with support and linkages to housing, and in collaboration with the Church's second-hand clothing shop, providing vouchers for clothing and furniture. In this way Centacare addresses peoples' immediate practical needs and the recycled clothing shop fulfils its responsibility to assist those in poverty, while recycling products that would otherwise have ended up in landfill rubbish dumps. These examples, and others, support *Laudato Si's* assertion that "social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds … the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion" (Pope Francis, 2015a, #219). Thus, the Centacare project achieves elements of the encyclical incorporating spiritual beliefs/insights within commendable practical theology and community development practice.

Other groups within the Parish have similar outcomes. While not necessarily targeting nature and the environment, they are fulfilling social and spiritual/pastoral commitments. Awakening people to the recognition they do fulfil elements of *Laudato Si'* has proven educative. It 'opens the doors' to appreciating their activities also have an environmental impact and encourages organisations to explore this further. Naturally not all groups specifically undertake environmental functions, nevertheless they do operate within planet Earth's environment, so the linkages are there, providing opportunity for education, engagement and change (Interdicasterial Working Group of the Holy See on Integral Ecology, 2020).

Interrelated activities lay the groundwork to understanding how programs align with both the organisation's aims and wider global agendas like Laudato Si'. Parish based groups, upon identifying common issues, can explore opportunities to expand into more environmental activities, if they choose to. That decision lies with parishioners who draw on their local knowledge and experience. Broome has recently formed of a parish based *Laudato Si'* group similar to the Melbourne *Laudato Si'* Animators group (Catholic Social Services Victoria, n.d.), as well as accessing support and resources from Catholic Earthcare Australia through the Earthcare Parishes program (Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2020). Internationally the Laudato Si' Movement (previously called the Global Catholic Climate Movement) provides resources, knowledge and expertise and offers a no-cost online Laudato Si' Animators course that anyone can access. This parish group also supports the global ecumenical 'Season of Creation' held each September (Global Catholic Climate Movement, n.d.).

Other invaluable resources are available to parishes and communities seeking to develop skills in networking, building community and other related community development practices. Notably in Australia, study circle kits like the *Building Rural Futures through Cooperation* (Sheil, 2003a), have been used by communities to "assist rural people explore opportunities created by working together on issues of common interest" (Sheil, 2003a p. 6; 2003b). Added to this *The Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes* (Dantis, 2021), has been released in response to Pope Francis' call for renewal within parishes. The Handbook provides learning materials to support developing pathways towards adapting to change and planning for an improved future. Whilst not specifically prepared for the ecological change championed in *Laudato Si',* the materials provided should prove useful for parishes moving towards ecological conversion.

**Moving Forward**

In 2020, five years after the launch of *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis, the Dicastery[19] for Promoting Integral Human Development (2020) in Rome developed the *Laudato Si' Action Platform* (2020) and associated Goals. It is a roll-out plan to initiate a seven-year journey to social, economic and environmental sustainability

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[19] Dicastery – Official Congregation of Religious and Secular Church administration for the Pope.

in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*. The Plan targets different groups – families, diocese/parishes, schools, universities/colleges, hospitals/health care centres, businesses/agriculture, and religious orders/provinces - inviting each category to achieve their own compelling outcomes. This planning process is framed to assist participants to link their current and proposed activities into the broader *Laudato Si'* ethos and the action platform. It also involves embracing integral ecology, the paradigm asserting everything is interrelated, with an emphasis on respecting human social systems in relationship with planetary natural systems.

To assist this mission further, the Laudato Si' Action Platform goals (2020) provide measurable goals against which to report activity/actions. They are the Cry of the Earth; the Cry of the Poor; Ecological Economics; Simple Lifestyles; Ecological Education; Ecological Spirituality, and Community Involvement and Participatory Action. That Action Platform provides parishes with a valuable guide to assist them prepare and realise their *Laudato Si'* journey – on a pathway that embraces practical theology praxis that cooperatively develops into ecological conversion.

## Article Conclusion

When engaging with the question 'How can people respond to global challenges and embrace ecological conversion within their local parishes and community?' Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* offers practical approaches that rural people, parishes, and communities can adopt when seeking to advance ecologically. This article encourages people to commence by exploring and reflecting on successful actions previously undertaken within their locale. It offers practical theology, linked with community development practice, as an interdisciplinary approach to move towards ecological conversion. To me this is vital, given that understanding, discerning, and responding to social and environmental crisis is the obligation of everyone living on this planet (Pope Francis, 2015a). Our hope rests on the faith we have - upon which we can rebuild our common home. *Laudato Si'* calls on all humanity to step up to this challenge and rural parishes are in an ideal position to draw on their local experiences to activate grassroots approaches to social and ecological change.

Pope Francis advises:

> [W]e have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (2015a, #49).

## 3.2 Applied Practical Theology in Community

In this chapter, I explored Christian belief systems that encourage people and communities to link sustainability and wellbeing into their everyday lives. This includes renewing spiritual connections to the earth that enable the development of foundations for hope supporting ecological conversion. This adaptation and/or expansion to ways of thinking and doing can prompt the creation of social and ecological change.

The contribution of this chapter to the thesis involves moving from the overarching international ecological agendas, and more specifically *Laudato Si'*, to explore and understand theology theory where this faith approach can be positioned. I apply Practical Theology and *Laudato Si'* to a local case study, pointing out the value of viewing parishes as communities-of-practice. Linkages between spirituality, which connects people to each other and all living things in nature and community development have been highlighted. This involves respect for diversity, shared knowledge and looking forward to re-imagining the future.

The next chapter applies this approach specifically to social work and community development approaches to transitioning towards change. I highlight the importance of community and cultural approaches of social, economic, and environmental sustainability, within the paradigm of interconnectedness.

# 4.0 GLOBAL TO NATIONAL AND REGIONAL APPROACHES

In this chapter I move from examination of the faith/spiritual foundations of ecological conversion to illustrate two social action methods, the practices of social work and community development. I commence with the global and progress to national and regional transitional activities based on material developed to this point. Through those steps I examine operational activities of two closely aligned yet varied approaches to activating ecological change for people and planet. Within settler Australia, social work and community development are studied through western traditional work practices. I explore these generic processes to discover if there are opportunities to expand their purview to embrace human and other-than-human entities (for example animals, plants, country, waterways). This is a big change, especially within social work which was established to provide individual and family-led solutions to difficulties people face in their everyday lives. A community development case study illustrates how one non-Indigenous community has successfully undertaken this task over the last twenty years. I also describe Indigenous Australians' ways of living as part of their Country, how their ancient and contemporary cultural practices are vital to maintaining Earth's balance. That is based on Indigenous 'First Law', which extends connection across both the human and other-than-human world.

These approaches progress through stages, starting with community development, then practical theology and *Laudato Si'* - leading to ecological conversion.

## 4.1 Advancing local social and ecological transition through community development[20]

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# Chapter 11
# Advancing Local, Social, and Ecological Transitions Through Community Development

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores social work and community development practices in light of the urgent social, economic, and environmental issues facing the world today. Can those professions, established to support individuals and communities, overcome social disadvantage, evolve into new, alternative roles that seek combined human and non-human (animals, plants, living organisms) understandings leading towards transformative practices? Those professions are viewed within their own constructs and environmental agendas. Ancient and contemporary Indigenous knowledges are then considered, as they relate to the First Law of caring for their living country and living lifestyles. Two community development case studies are examined, involving non-Indigenous people in their community, and Indigenous traditional owners across a whole river catchment to address key questions: How can those disciplines contribute to ecological transformation? Can they appreciate and include non-humans in their practice? and How can Indigenous ancient and current knowledges contribute to social justice practice?*

## INTRODUCTION

I commence by acknowledging the Yawuru traditional custodians and native titleholders of the land on which I live and work, and pay respect to their Elders and leaders past, present and future. Acknowledgement of Indigenous custodians from all lands is likewise offered, respecting their ancient and current traditions and knowledges.

This chapter explores ways social work and community development, can contribute to ecological transformation. It commences with an outline of two global agendas, the United Nations' *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015a). Indigenous knowledges and spirituality are then highlighted; rec-

ognizing the term community development has its foundations in Western civilization and ideology—the very same ideology that sanctioned colonization (Bessarab & Forrest, 2017).

The next section delves into social work and community development processes and practice, "looking back towards the present", with both professions envisioning alternative ways to engage holistic pathways to locally initiated change. Activity from two Western Australian case studies, Cultivating Kulin and the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, are then offered as examples of different community development approaches.

Key questions are:

- How can social work and community development methods contribute to climate change related social, economic and ecological transformation?
- How can social science approaches based on individual and community justice include the non-human in its purview and practice?
- How can Indigenous ancient and current knowledges contribute to community development practice?

## INTERNATIONAL ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE AGENDAS

The first international document is the United Nations (UN) *2030 Agenda*. In 2015 the United Nations (UN) released *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, involving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN's 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people and the planet, while recognizing eliminating extreme poverty is the greatest global challenge when pursuing sustainable development.

Given the degree and complexity of issues facing the world today, the UN's 2030 Agenda is an attempt to galvanize actions "for people, planet and prosperity". The 17 SDGs are a declaration of aspirations, framed within a voluntary agreement rather than a binding accord. Governments however are expected to take ownership and establish frameworks for the achievements of outcomes of those goals. (UN, 2015)

The SDGs include ending poverty and hunger; ensuring healthy lives; equitable education, gender equality; sustainable energy, economy, human settlements and industrialization; conserving and sustainably using oceans, seas and marine resources; promoting peaceful and inclusive societies; and protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable ecosystems (UN, 2015)

To what extent uniting economic, social and ecological objectives can be transformative has been called to question by some commentators, who question whether social and climate justice goals could exist equitably with economic rationale (Capra, 2015; Sachs, 2017). However, it cannot be denied that most 2030 Agenda SDGs are goals to aim for, given the urgent social, economic and environmental issues facing everyone including people and nature, on our planet today (Jennings, 2017). The SDGs have been adopted by the combined international social work organizations (Jones, 2018), as well as the International Association for Community Development (IACD) in their future organizational directions, addressed later in this chapter (2020). The next section of this exploration attends to the environmental encyclical, which frames a radical approach to development.

In 2015 *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* by Pope Francis was released. Although coming from a Catholic Christian position, this extensive 'encyclical' (teaching letter) was introduced by the statement, "faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person

living on this planet" (Pope Francis, 2015, paragraph 3). To that end many other Christian and non-Christian faiths, belief systems and mainstream academics have supported this document, they include, the Faith Ecology Network (FEN) and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC). Internationally Powell (2018) links Muslim-Catholic understanding and solidarity through *Laudato Si'*; as do Buddhists, according to Venerable Bodhi (2020).

Pope Francis was also guest speaker at the United Nations for the launch of the *2030 Agenda*, two months after releasing *Laudato Si'*, discussing ways both representations could work together, emphasizing:

*The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged [people] (The Guardian, 2015).*

While both agendas aim to create substantial change, there are important differences between the two documents—between the "business as usual" approach from the UN, "protecting the growth model, a model which has always been prioritized over protection of nature" (Sachs, 2017, p. 2581), as opposed to "the radical ethics championed by Pope Francis … the ethics of deep ecology" (Capra, 2015, p. 2). Lachapelle and Albrecht (2019) also acknowledge the social justice pressures associated with climate change, including the ethical and moral consequences as expressed by Pope Francis, which are unmistakable.

This year, on the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, the treatise has been consolidated into seven major goals, within an 'Integral Ecology' framework. Integral ecology is a union of ecological philosophy and social ecology that can fit with both social work and community development, and is the major perspective presented by Pope Francis. The Laudato Si' goals call for responses to the Cry of the Earth; Cry of the Poor, Ecological Economics; Adoption of Simple Lifestyles; Ecological Education; Ecological Spirituality and an emphasis on Community involvement and participatory action (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, 2020, p. 8).

In differing ways those two schemas provide goals for social work and community development agendas, and this chapter contends that Indigenous perspectives can strengthen both.

## INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND SPIRITUALITY

People are calling for change "embedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance, and cooperation rather than hierarchy" (Klein 2019, p. 98). One place to do this, it is proposed, is by and with local community (Albrecht & Lachapelle, 2019)—both human and non-human community (Poelina, Taylor & Perdrisat 2019; Wellington & Maloney, 2020). When exploring activity covered in this chapter, which refers to people and community, the non-human community is implied, recognizing their intrinsic importance as encapsulated in Indigenous "First Law". Poelina explains First Law comprises people's relationships, "with each other, our neighbours, and most importantly our family of non-human beings – animals and plants" (2019, p. 144). It recognizes local solutions are fundamental to empower Indigenous people to deliver real change. As Kickett-Tucker et al. identified, "[h]earing the voices of Aboriginal people is a necessity before any vision of community development can journey from a dream to reality" (2017, p. 226). One place to start this process is by

internalizing and adopting new ways of living based on Indigenous ways—ancient and still current ways (Jennings, 2019). This acknowledges:

*…the importance of Elders, families and communities working together to share knowledge, empowering and inspiring the next generation to hold onto notions of culture, kin, country and community. Finding the vision for Aboriginal community development lies in the silent voices closest to the ground. A vision for community development relies upon a grassroots, yet flexible approach that is governed and controlled by the community itself, and not the top-down approach so readily practised by many government departments for over more than two centuries (Kickett-Tucket et al, 2017, p. 226).*

Ife notes that "[f]or Indigenous People, the sacred and spiritual transcend all of life and all human experiences: unless understood within a spiritual context, life has no meaning and no purpose" (2013, p. 254). Ife concluded that the spiritual dimension, then, is important to community development.

Thus a sense of the sacred in place, interconnectedness, and a respect for spiritual values, is an essential part of re-establishing human community and providing meaning and purpose for people's lives—in the spirit of Indigenous First Law. So how does social work reflect these perspectives? The following probes this question.

## EXPLORING CURRENT AND FUTURE SOCIAL WORK METHODS

In 2018, the global organizations overseeing professional social and welfare workers, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), jointly released their report, *Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability* [the SW Agenda] (Jones, 2018). As well as undertaking internal reviews, the international collectives' work addressed social work policy and practice aligned to external international agendas, in particular the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The social work agenda concluded that the SDGs, which link economic and social development with sustaining the natural environment, have much in common with "The SW Agenda".

Remarkably, "the explicit focus on the **physical** environment (both natural and built) alongside the **social** environment was, for some, the most surprising element of *The* [social work] *Agenda*" (Jones, 2018, p. 2-3). Overall, Jones reports that the professional attention to people being integrated within both physical and social environments now appears applicable to social work. In conclusion, the consideration that social work practices should move from individual approaches to embracing other forms of social, economic and environmental transformation clearly sets their future agenda. The bottom line, the social work Agenda noted, is that everything is interconnected.

The need for social work approaches to advance beyond responses seeking individual and family-led solutions to difficulties has, according to Narhi and Matthies (2018) become more apparent in times of societal crises. They propose adopting a structural social work method, with individual's recovery associated with societal change that requires deepening of holistic eco-social transitional approaches through environmental and ecological justice.

As publications exploring social work crossing boundaries into ecological justice continue to be released, concern has also been expressed. Bell, for example, writes that, "despite [an] 'explosion' in eco-social publications, there has not been a corresponding growth in course content in the Australian

higher education sector" (2019, p. 242). He consequently concluded that a diverse range of strategies are needed to adequately transform social work.

An extensive literature review of publications classified as "environmental social work" practice was undertaken by Ramsay and Boddy (2017). While most literature suggested ways social work should operate in the future, nearly all (99%) recognized the importance of having the theoretical focus of social work change to include an emphasis on the natural environment. Being interconnected, with alliances with cultural leaders, activists, community leaders, other professionals and spiritual advisors was likewise recommended in 85% of publications. Overall collaboration can lead to the new insights, knowledge and skills needed to install social with environmental change. Examples of changes that could be provided include, "community initiatives such as food cooperatives, combined purchase power for fuel or new technologies, co-housing, permaculture and local production" (Ramsay & Boddy, 2017, p. 76), considered community development goals (Jennings 2017).

Within the same purview, Ross (2020) seeks to re-orientate person-centered approaches to community work practice to include recognition of animals, eco-systems and planet Earth as beings of equal intrinsic worth and in equal relationship with people. Further suggestions for this theoretical reorientation are presented in *Eco-activism and Social Work: New Directions in Leadership and Group Work* (Ross, et al., 2020). It opens with the paper *First Law is the Natural Law of the Land* (Poelina, 2020, p. viii-xii). Poelina explains:

*Indigenous people are generous in sharing our rich lived experiences which comes from our deep inter-generational relationships with nature. When we are born, we are given a jarriny (totem) to give us a place in the universe from where we learn the ethics of care, we learn to have empathy for all other living things: people, animals, plants, river and landscape. Importantly, we learn to co-exist with nature and not to own, dominate or exploit it (2020, viii).*

Poelina also calls for social workers to adopt Indigenous people's ideas and knowledges and incorporate them into their professional practices and personal lives as citizens on this planet.

In the same publication Brueckner and Ross (2020) propose eco-social work includes:

- Anti-oppressive and community development skills and processes
- Sustainability and de-growth
- Embracing the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world
- Learning from First Nations Peoples' knowledge and ways
- Relational and collective approaches to wellbeing.

Calls to relocate social work with eco-justice have been made, seeking adoption of collaborative partnerships and creative pathways with people, animals and the environment, to encourage working towards ecological harmony (Ross, et al., 2020).

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## EXPLORING SOCIAL WORK AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT METHODS

Broadly speaking community development involves working with communities on ideas/issues they identify as needing to be addressed, sometimes with community development practitioners assisting, as directed by that community.

In 1954 the United Nations (UN), through UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), supported community development as a process for social change based on local self-help, possibly assisted from outside, but resolutely based on the existing and emerging needs expressed by local constituencies. At that time UNESCO already had a broad interpretation of community development, describing it as being:

*…a generic term covering the various processes by which local communities can raise their standards of living. This process may include, separately or together, the organization or establishment of services for social welfare, health protection, education, improvement of agriculture, development of small-scale industries, housing, local government, co-operatives etc. (1954 p. 1).*

With this overview it's not hard to imagine if that definition was being framed in today's "climate": environment and ecological sustainability could easily be included along with their stated agriculture, small-scale industries and other areas. In contrast, a large social work conference in the USA in 1950 inadequately, according to a reviewer at the time, covered the "old debate between functional and diagnostic case work" (Bruno, 1951, p. 256). Furthermore, the discussion about connections between social work and community development practices has also been ongoing since the 1950s. At that time Younghusband identified the need for closer working partnerships between social work and community development practitioners. She "maintained that the use of community development could help in 'enlarging the horizon of social work'" (quoted in Heenan, 2004, p. 795).

It is recognized, however that community development was, and at times is, practiced within conservative growth agendas that inhibit local people/community's choice and ownership of projects (Kenyon, 2020). To varying degrees both fields have positively moved forward since the post-war period. This short history is provided to background discussion on current and projected pathways to social and ecological justice.

The *social work Agenda* recognizes community development is an element within social work, yet concern for the inter-relationship with the physical environment has not been a mainstream concern for most social workers nor their agencies (Jones, 2018). Awareness of community development does not necessarily involve adoption of community development philosophy and practice—the doing of community development.

The social work Agenda segment covering Australian consultation outcomes reported the Australian Association for Social Work (AASW) would be establishing a "Green Social Work Network", to advocate embedding sustainability and spirituality in the social work curriculum (Henderson, 2018). Interestingly, this mention of 'spirituality' is the only reference in over 250 pages of the international report. The Australian section also lacked Indigenous 'voices'. While it did acknowledge the Social Work Reconciliation Action Plan it omitted the people, their spirituality and culture, and what they can bring to the table.

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## EXPLORING CURRENT AND FUTURE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT METHODS

The practice (ways of doing) framework adopted for the rest of this chapter is community development. This term includes "community of interest (motive or purpose), community of identity (self or group definition) and community of practice (habits or systems)", as well as the more broadly defined community of place, that is, "geography (spatial scale)" (Lachapelle & Albrecht, 2019. p. 1). Within that framework community development is the process whereby people organize to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Ife, 2013; Kenny, 2016). Those identified needs can involve a range of activity to overcome problems ranging from social disadvantage through to climate change mitigation and global Indigenous people's community development activity (International Association for Community Development, 2020b).

An overview of community development characteristics (also applicable to social work) offered by Kenny (2018) identified the need to link practice to redressing power differences and social justice, with halting global warming and ensuring sustainable futures. Boulet (2013) also highlights the need for more sustainable lifestyles that embody spiritual and ethical dimensions connected to the living planet. Kenny (2018) does, however, offer a cautionary note—entreating community development activity to be sensitive to its colonial legacy.

Interestingly, there are also calls to recognize the speed of the changing global environment necessitates "renewed calls to position community development more centrally in social work" (Lynch, Forde & Lathouras, 2020, p.245), with Westoby, Lathouras and Shevellar calling for the "radicalising [of] community (CD) within social work" (2019, p. 2207). Heenan's research, on the other hand, found "that there was a strong belief that developing and sustaining partnerships [was needed for] the successful integration of social work and community development" (2004, p. 804), while Newman and Goetz (2016) and Jennings (2020), call for reclaiming community from the 'inside-out'. Kelly, Kickett-Tucker, & Bessarab, (2017) add to this understanding, recognizing postmodernism can inform and redefine community development praxis, incorporating Indigenous values, beliefs and expectations into community development.

Aligned with that vision, this chapter advocates for grassroots community development approaches to social and ecological change that promotes community development processes undertaken by local community members/volunteers, at times with community development practitioners, as the continuum (below) illustrates:

*Table 1. Continuum of engagement of communities in research and/or projects based on Mutch 2018, p. 243, 'Projects', added by the author 2020*

| † Phase 1. † | † Phase 2. † | † Phase 3. † | † Phase 4. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research/Projects *for* communities | Research/Projects *on* or *about* communities | Research/Projects *with* communities | Research/projects *by* communities |
| Community-*related* research/ projects | Community-*focused* research/ projects | Community *-centered* or *-guided* research/projects | Community-*driven* research/ projects |

Those points, particularly Phase 4, are not "new" views of community development. Chodorkoff (1990), for example, appraised the community development views of social ecology philosopher Murray

Bookchin [1921-2006], finding that community development should not be grounded in external professionals delivering services. Further use of outside expertise and resources can cultivate dependence, hindering local leadership, participation and self-reliance. It should be an integrative process that involves social, artistic, ethical and spiritual dimensions with other aspects of community living.

Research into what community development Officers felt about their roles and involvement in short-term community development disaster recovery programs offer an example. As one respondent explained:

*CD is years, it's lifetimes, it's not, "Here's a bucket of money for two years", it doesn't make an ongoing, sustainable community; it makes a short-term fix. It's been great, it's been a benefit and we've been able to do a lot but in some ways it's gone against those communities too because they haven't had to sit back and think about it … two years isn't long enough, two years isn't anywhere near the time (Westoby & Shevellar, 2018, p. 259).*

To explore these phases further, the next section will examine case studies that demonstrate meaningful activity and outcomes—the first reflecting the Phase 4 continuum of community-***driven***, by communities, with the second case study introducing an additional Phase 5 way of listening to, and living with, the voice and lives of humans and non-humans. This researcher's involvement in these examples has been as an investigator and observer external to the projects. All activity was and is undertaken by local people in their own town and on Country.

## CASE STUDY: CULTIVATING KULIN

The Shire of Kulin, with a total population of 826 people, is a sheep and wheat-farming district 283 kilometers south east of Perth, Western Australia. Nearly half, 369 people from 94 families, live within the town of Kulin, with others living in small town sites and on farming properties (Shire of Kulin, 2020).

Twenty years ago this community was researched as it was reportedly overcoming the population exodus and economic downturn common across the region, when people were moving to metropolitan centres (Jennings, 2002; 2004). The change began in 1994 when the Shire of Kulin and community members, concerned by the recurrent pattern of decline of businesses and population (Kenyon & Black, 2001), engaged consultant Peter Kenyon to facilitate a Futures Workshop, themed, *Don't put your future in the hands of others – take control of your own destiny!* From that time local people set about redesigning their own future. A major stumbling block arose, when their last bank was closed in 1998, even though investigations by the local community showed that the branch was making a profit (Jennings, 2002; 2004).

Bank closures in rural areas significantly affect peoples' lives and livelihoods, as they not only lose their bank staff with their families, other organizations including schools, post offices, health services, community groups and sporting clubs, also lose members and clients, and often their viability.

What Kulin already had was a dedicated community that worked together, having formed the "Culivating Kulin" revitalization association as a result of the earlier Future's Workshop. That group had heard about the formation of community banks in Victoria and, while there weren't any in Western Australia at the time, they set about investigating whether that model would suit Kulin.

Community Banks are a product of Bendigo Bank located in Victoria, Australia, which had its origins on the Bendigo goldfields in 1858. The successful building society reconstituted into a bank in 1995,

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developing its Community Bank enterprise in response to bank branch closures across Australia It recognized the effects of closure, which resulted in many disenfranchised communities (Bendigo Bank, 2000).

The Community Bank process involves participating communities managing a community-owned branch of Bendigo Bank, who holds the banking license. The community has ownership of management, which provides local residents and businesses incentives to conduct their financial affairs through their own bank branch, while Bendigo Bank provides financial registration. Sharing in branch revenues provides communities the opportunity to generate profits, which can be returned to support and develop the community (Jennings, 2002; 2004).

Kulin opened the first Community Bank in Western Australia in October 1999—improving the community's long-term economic and social prospects by retaining greater control over the district's capital resources (Robertson, 2000). This move was strongly supported by the Shire of Kulin, and in particular the Shire President at the time Mr. Graeme Robertson, who became the Chair of the Community Bank.

Since the facilitated Futures Workshop planning day in 1994 the following was instigated within the first five years:

- Relocation of a very large, disassembled waterslide from Queensland to Kulin and erected on the swimming pool grounds
- Kulin Bush Races—a revival of the old Kulin Country race meetings
- The Tin Horse Highway—local people create comical horse 'statues' (usually from old drums and scrap metal) that adorn their paddocks on the two roads leading to the Bush Races
- Creation of "Kaptain Kulin", promotional material, including an adult sized costume based on a grain of wheat
- Establishment of the Multi-Purpose Health Service with the first tele-health unit in the State
- Setting up a multipurpose Emergency Services building housing the ambulance, fire brigade and sate emergency service
- Creation of a joint Landcare office and herbarium
- Establishment of the Kulin Community Bank
- Creating the large water slide playground, plus
- Other projects including: playground redevelopment, establishing a tele-centre, upgrading the Kulin Memorial Hall and the cemetery, setting up a newsletter and toy library, plus driver education programs and new medical facilities (Jennings 2002).

The accomplishments of this small community are huge. The town received a bequeath from a local farmer, to be expended on recreational activities, with local children asking for a water slide. "Cultivating Kulin" members explored costs and found a small pool slide was too expensive, then they found a large disassembled water slide was for sale in Queensland. They snapped it up for the bargain price of $25,000 and locals volunteered to take the four trucks and five trailers across the Nullabor to collect the massive structure. After the 10,000 km return journey was complete, the structure was reassembled and refurbished. Kulin now has a 182 meter long water slide—the largest in the state outside of Perth (Mochan & Bennett, 2018). It not only fulfills local children's dreams, people travel long distances, including from Perth, specifically to enjoy the slide, as well as the country hospitality.

When working in community development, practitioners and/or community members, often wonder about the longevity of their projects. Now, over 20 years later, the proof of the success of "Cultivating Kulin" is abundantly clear. The Kulin Community Bank has thrived, and has contributed $500,000 in

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sponsorship, community grants and dividends to the local community, including $100,000 towards building the Kulin Retirement Homes and $30,000 to the Kulin Aquatic Centre. The Bank also partnered with the WA Department of Transport to provide much needed licensing services to the district (Shire of Kulin, 2018).

Last year, in its 25th year, the Kulin Bush Races was attended by 4,000 people (remember the town only has 369 residents, adults and children) and the Tin Horse Highway now has a competition every year, so its "game on" between "opposing" properties leading to the race course, with both roads being upgraded due to increased vehicle usage by tourists (Shire of Kulin, 2020.

The water slide continues to attract people from around the state. Importantly for the local economy, this encourages visitors to enjoy other attractions the town and its people offer, while cooling off in the hot, dry climate of the region. The town has now commenced a new venture, local people have collectively purchased the vacant local hotel, and are now establishing another community owned venture.

## CASE STUDY: MARTUWARRA FITZROY RIVER COUNCIL

The Martuwarra (or Mardoowarra) Fitzroy River (MFR) is the longest river in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Its catchment area is almost 100,000 square kilometers and the floodplains can be up to 15 km across (Department of Water, 2008). In addition it is located within one of Australia's 15 biodiversity hotspots (Poelina et al., 2019) and averages the greatest volume of annual flow and the largest floods within the state (Department of Water, 2008). The cultural and ecological significance of this river has been well documented, however this intelligence has not been transferred positively into state and national water policy and planning according to Jackson (2019) and Poelina et al. (2019).

Local Indigenous people understand the millennia of Indigenous history, knowledge and science relating to the MFR. Poelina et al. (2019) have recorded Traditional Custodian's perspectives, based in First Law, the Indigenous system of governance and law that places the health and well-being of the land, water and biosphere over human interests. The MFR is understood as a sacred living ancestral being, with traditional Indigenous Law emphasizing its important role in maintaining the Earth's balance. First Law calls for holistic approaches to river and water stewardship, framed around values and ethics of co-management and co-existence. These continue to facilitate inter-generational relationships between the shared boundaries through ancient and contemporary practices (Poelina et al., 2019). Traditional Owners regard the river as having it's own life force and spiritual essence. As Poelina and McDuffie visually demonstrate, it "is the 'River of Life' and has a right to Life" (2017). Notably this is a different perception to the conservation work of settler Australians, usually based on the dominance of nature, involving "fixing the problem", not co-existing with Earth.

For local communities, the waterway is the foundation that intrinsically links well-being and livelihoods (Poelina, 2019). Those livelihoods go back tens of thousands of years, a time when people lived and thrived, tapping into, and passing on, their deep and profound Indigenous knowledge and science—at one with nature and their spiritual ancestors (Griffiths & Kinnane, 2010).

Today the responsibilities Indigenous Custodians face are extensive, given the physical, social, ecological and political colonization people and Country have been, and continue to be, exposed to. Native Title groups along the MFR are facing pressures never before experienced. The river's stories that, in the past described the river and its ecological and cultural roles, now contain threats to both people and Country. These include:

- Lack of recognition of the significance of the environmental, spiritual/cultural and economic values that the river provides/shares with its people
- Proposals to dam sections of the river and large scale irrigation projects
- Extractive industries—mining, fracking
- Pastoral systems that are undertaken unsustainably, including beef production
- Land uses that result in producing increased carbon emissions.
  (Jackson, 2015; Poelina et al., 2019; Poelina, 2020)

These, with other issues, negatively impact biodiversity and Indigenous socio-cultural lives simultaneously.

Attentive dialogue has been called for by Traditional Owners along the MFR. Citing Smith's 1999 work *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*, Poelina (2020) champions creating dialogue based on mutual respect, for building hope while enabling Indigenous people to reach their full potential. This approach recognizes the "Indigenous Australian story presents a new way of approaching knowledge-building and adaptive water management to promote Aboriginal people's well being through a co-operative regional earth-centred governance model" (p. 157).

The Traditional Owners and Custodians of the MFR have united, using their intrinsic First Law knowledge, processes and resultant actions to care for both their living Country and living lifestyle. So how does this fit within community development frameworks? As previously noted, it is acknowledged that community development has its foundations in Western civilization and ideology, the very same ideology that backed colonization. Bessarab and Forrest (2017) explored this by unpacking early Indigenous society through the lens of community development, concluding one can only speculate whether the notion of "community" was the same in pre-colonial Indigenous societies. However they did find commonalities, including:

- Groups of people linked through their identity of sharing a common language
- Small societies living in specific geographical locations
- Strong spiritual and ceremonial activities linking people to the land
- Quality of holding something in common
- A sense of common identity and characteristics (2017, p. 5).

An alternative community development theoretical approach has been offered, that of the "third space", based on the work of Bhabha in 1994 (Bessarab & Forrest, 2017). The third space is a place where:

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

The MFR Custodians activities offer compatibility with third space processes, building systems that combine Western sciences, traditional knowledge and industry practice (Poelina, 2019). Like most community activation this has taken considerable time and energy. After years of work, the West Kimberley

Place Report documenting Indigenous people's stories relating to the Fitzroy River Dreaming, cultural beliefs, landscape and artifacts, was adopted by the Australian Heritage Commission (2011).

A significant event occurred in 2016 when representatives from the Prescribed Body Corporates (PBC - Native Title Holders) who live along and with the river, met for two days. They collectively developed and signed off on the 'Fitzroy River Declaration'[1]. This Declaration documented their concern relating to emerging development proposals that had potential for cumulative impacts on the river's unique cultural and environmental values. The first point listed was to establish a joint decision-making process to establish ways to protect their river and its values.

Eighteen months later, after leaders consulted with their own PBCs, another combined meeting was held. This gathering initiated a catchment scale approach to manage the challenges, risks and opportunities by establishing the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council (MFRC)[2,] involving all

Traditional Owner groups. They hold native title rights across the entire catchment area, the first in Australia. Notably they formed their Council to operate under First Law—not to stop development, but to strengthen moves to endorse development in the right and sustainable way. At the same time they have set a unique precedent for others to follow, for how government and industry engages with Traditional Owners,.

The MFRC is working closely with scientists around Australia, adding Indigenous knowledge and science to Western science. To this end 100 scientists have signed the Fitzroy River Science Statement[3] to protect the Fitzroy River. The hundreds of hours it took to arrive at this point is only the start. The MFRC has a huge role to play, including responding to the increasing pressure by the Commonwealth to 'develop' the catchment, under the government's agenda for northern development. The commodification of water, based on pricing water as a "resource", excludes Indigenous spirituality, culture, economy, law and intergenerational responsibilities.

## DISCUSSION

There is a call from various quarters, including Jones (2018) and Ross et al. (2020), for people in social work and community development to become more involved with learning, knowing, adapting and working with and for human and non-human inhabitants of this planet. Given this need, any old debates between social work and community development should be set aside. The urgent call is for transformational change to save our biodiverse planet.

The United Nations *2030 Agenda* (2015) and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015) provide guiding "blue (and green) prints" to support this process. The combined International Social Work agencies have included connection with the UN SDGs into their research and future direction (IFSW, 2017; Jones, 2018), as has membership of the International Association for Community Development reflecting how CD work can mirror the *2030 Agenda* and the teachings within *Laudato Si'* (Jennings, 2018). The key is everything is interconnected, an informed position on which to build the change required.

The call to move from individualism to interdependence has led to exploration of Indigenous knowledges, those "understandings, skills and philosophies developed with long histories of interaction with their natural surrounds" (UNESCO, 2020), including their cultural and spiritual beliefs. Relationships unite people; animals and plants; land, rivers and oceans; and all things—into a whole. Indigenous people's sense of the sacred and respect for spiritual values provides them meaning and purpose within First Law.

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The challenge is for social workers, community development and other community work practitioners to become engaged with future directions commencing with the UN *2030 Agenda* (2015) and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* (2015), and by Indigenous people through their ancient and contemporary knowledges. The challenge is here—what changes can these professions undertake to expand their current work ethic with humanity to include non-human living organisms and planet? For workers not familiar with this line of thinking it can be a daunting task. To assist understanding this challenge two case studies were provided and considered within a transformative context.

The first one, Cultivating Kulin, provides a credible example of community development within today's settler Australian world. In Table 1, the *Continuum of engagement of communities in research and/or projects,* Kulin's activities are identified as fulfilling Phase 4—by community and community- **driven**—seeking skilled assistance from outside, while retaining ownership and undertaking community-initiated, regenerative actions. Kulin has undertaken this approach, adopting whole-of-community approaches to social, economic and environmental change.

The Martuwarra Fitzroy River is provided as the second case study. As noted it is recognized that ancient and contemporary knowledges held by Traditional Custodians may be challenging to some non-Indigenous people. However this is the challenge Jones (2018), Poelina et al. (2019), Ross et al. (2020), Brueckner and Ross (2020) and Poelina (2017; 2020) are calling for professions, which are based on human rights and social justice to include the non-human in their purview and practice. To that end an additional section has been added to the *Continuum of engagement of communities in research and/or projects* (Table 2 below). The new Phase 5 involves research and project **inclusive** of living cultures and living country, with community affording **affinity** with non-human living systems.

*Table 2. Continuum of engagement of communities in research and/or projects based on Mutch 2018, p. 243 —'Projects' and 'Phase 5' added by the author, 2020*

| † Phase 1 † | † Phase 2 † | † Phase 3 † | † Phase 4 † | † Phase 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research/ Projects *for* communities | Research/ Projects *on* or *about* communities | Research/ Projects *with* communities | Research/ Projects *by* communities | Research/ Projects *inclusive* of living cultures and living country |
| Community- *related* research/ projects | Community-*focused* research/ projects | Community-*centred* or -*guided* research/ projects | Community-*driven* research/ projects | Community-*affinity* with non-human living systems |

Dr. Anne Poelina, a NykinaTraditional Custodian whose Country includes the MFR, is Chairperson of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council. In her words:

*Our culture has a word, Bookarrara, which is the essence of our being, locating the past, present and future into this moment now, in which we must act. This land, and the life it supports, was created at the beginning of time by those of the spiritual forces. This is the Law, Bookarrara. We must learn to have empathy in order to connect with all human and non-human life and we do this by listening to our liyan, our inner spirit (2017, p. 271).*

A diverse range of information and ways of working has been covered, starting with social work, aimed at advancing local social and ecological transitions through community development practice. Three key questions asked in the Introduction will now be considered against the material provided.

Firstly, *how can alternative social work and community development methods contribute to climate change related social, economic and ecological transformation?* The evidence points to the resolve of the international organizations to re-contextualize their professions towards engaging in change that involves social with economic and ecological transformation. This step is notable for social work, given its principal role has been to work with, and support, individuals within their community context. Community development, however, has a longer history of embracing broader social and economic change in social justice, housing, promotion of agriculture, development of small-scale industries, education, health and co-operatives, so the transformative extension into ecological areas may not be as challenging a prospect. The intent is certainly there for both social work and community development.

The next question probed is *how can social science approaches based on individual and community justice include non-human in its purview and practice?* As evidenced, social work is moving into environmental areas—however embracing awareness of, and working with, the non-human entities on the planet has only recently been recognized by Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics (see Ross et al., 2020). Bell (2019) acknowledged that, despite increases in eco-social publications, there have not been corresponding advances in social work course content in Australian universities. Community development practice, as evidenced in IACD's Practice Insights magazine, does embrace Indigenous people's global activities, however there is scope to progress the non-human approaches and/or "naming" the ones that happen in terms broader than just nature.

Lastly, *how can Indigenous ancient and current knowledges contribute to community development practice?* Indigenous people's Earth-centered belief places non-human organisms and the Earth in functional systems with humans. Contributors to the publication *Eco-activism and Social Work: New Directions in Leadership and Group Work* (Ross et al., 2020) are breaking new ground by accepting this concept, however this is not an extensive understanding. There is so much settler- Australians can learn from Indigenous people, this is only the beginning!

## CONCLUSION

In *Mia Mia Aboriginal Community Development: Fostering cultural security,* Kickett-Tucker advises local solutions are essential to hear the voices of Indigenous people before any vision of community development can journey from a dream to reality. Part of that process is to understand that "colonization" is invasion, where a group of powerful people takes the land, imposing their own culture on Indigenous people. Decolonization processes that tackle restorative justice, while challenging both conscious and subconscious racism, needs to be fully embraced. As does learning from, and embracing, the complexity and wisdom of Indigenous ancient knowledges.

Community development, it is concluded, is one framework that can bring together the threads in this chapter to create a pathway for that 'journey from that dream to reality'. Community development has strong linkages with other social sciences, particularly social work, and is strengthened by international ecological plans from the United Nations, Pope Francis and others. Importantly community development processes and practice can support links between Indigenous knowledges and spirituality with non-Indigenous understandings and beliefs. Thus postmodernism can inform and redefine community

development praxis, incorporating those Indigenous values, beliefs and expectations into community development, supporting this transformational journey.

Alternative approaches like the "third space" where different cultures intersect or meet, can also be incorporated within community development. Consequently, community development is considered an appropriate pathway "from dream to reality" due to reliance on grassroots, community controlled, flexible methods, governed by the community itself, not external top-down organizations.

For our planet and its inhabitants' sake we should take heed of the Aboriginal proverb:

*We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love … and then we return home. (Kickett-Tucker et al., 2017, p. 226)*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## ENDNOTES

[1]    Fitzroy River Declaration: https://www.fitzroystatement.org/statement
[2]    Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council: (https://www.klc.org.au/kimberley-traditional-owners-establish-martuwarra-fitzroy-river-council)
[3]    Fitzroy River Statement: http://www.fitzroystatement.org

## 4.2 Post Colonial approaches to Social and Ecological Practices

In this chapter I have featured Indigenous and non-Indigenous case studies that relate to connected human and other-than-human activities on this planet. I further show linkages between Indigenous knowledges and spirituality along with non-Indigenous understandings, beliefs, and practices. The contribution of this chapter to the thesis includes continuing progression from international ecological agendas to this point of national and regional approaches to activating change. I describe social work and community development practices to show they are transitioning, at different stages, towards a stronger, ecologically balanced future. To support this activity, I proffered post-modernism to inform and redefine ways settler Australians operate, suggesting Indigenous 'First Law' could be one path to activate restorative justice. The contribution of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives is provided as they constitute the community and locality within which I undertook this research. The combination of the two case studies contribute to informed community development practices which have the potential to embrace eco-social change to protect and revitalise our common home, important components of ecological conversion.

The next chapter explores examples of social, economic, and environmental projects local community members and groups are currently undertaking and investigates how their suggestions and outcomes can inform additional efforts moving towards ecological conversion. I implemented the qualitative research method 'World café', which is compatible with community development, to identify and stimulate this learning.

## 5.0 IDENTIFYING LOCAL APPROACHES

In this chapter I continue the progression from broader global, national, and regional coverage to concentrate on the local. I have adopted the qualitative 'World café' process as the main research method, recognising local people are the developers and holders of valuable insights and lived experiences who can contribute to visioning positive futures for their locality. My decision acknowledges participants should not be recipients of knowledge and visions generated elsewhere but engaged in the research process as both contributors to knowledge generation as well as beneficiaries of the outcomes they generate. By using this approach, I was able to benefit from their collective knowledge, analyse patterns of data recorded and assign insights gained into emerging themes. That process contributed significantly to my research by providing the five key themes of ecological economics; spirituality; sharing Aboriginal aspirations; food sovereignty; and place-based culturally oriented community development practices – topics that I then explored and developed into the remaining chapters of this thesis.

This process has assisted, not only in framing the research, but also in linking the themes within community development practice. Importantly it links community owned and initiated themes into the overarching research enquiry. This broad approach is an important step when formulating research to answer the question *"How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si".*

## 5.1 World Café Qualitative Research informing Pathways towards Transformative Change[21]

(The published paper commences on the next page)

# World Café qualitative research informing local pathways towards transformative change

*Anne Jennings*

## Introduction

This article describes a component of ongoing Kimberley Transitions research that is currently undertaken and based in Broome, population 16,222 (ABS, 2016), in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The Kimberley region's population includes 41.6% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as compared to the state average of 3.1% and the national average of 2.8% (ABS, 2016).

The World Café research presented here is one small part of a broader project, *Kimberley Transitions: On Care for Our Common Home. Kimberley Transitions.* The vision for the overall project is for people to learn to live and work as if people, environments, and futures matter, acknowledging the cultural values, intellectual life, insight and practices of generations of Aboriginal[1] people and nations. It also recognises ongoing post-settlement efforts to retain and improve cultural and ecological knowledges and narratives (Wooltorton et al., 2019).

My PhD study investigates *'Community Development for Ecological Conversion;[2]'* it draws on the *Kimberley Transitions* framework, *Laudato Si'* dialogue, community development theory and practice and ecological economics, applying the concepts and ideas to current and future transformational change. A key feature of this World Café research is communities stepping up to address challenges by collaborating and working locally – within global frameworks – in self-organising ways.

## Laudato Si'

For this article, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, has been selected as the primary source to comprehend global socio-political, economic and environmental concerns, while offering positive visions and pathways towards change. Because of its ecological and

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*World Café qualitative research informing local pathways towards transformative change*

human sciences approach this, is preferred to the United Nations' (UN) *2030 Agenda* (2015). As Sachs (2017) observed, the UN strategy targets the repatriation of the current global economic system, while *Laudato Si'* seeks to change the dominant schema to create cultural shifts towards ecological economics, Capra (2015) supporting the encyclical's systemic approach to form an ecological basis for a just and sustainable future.

> *Laudato Si'* is addressed to everyone on the planet, people of all faiths and no faith, urging significant lifestyle changes, given the intersecting global crises. As Pope Francis (2015) explained, it encourages dialogue on a range of issues that are facing us today, including poverty, human inequality, loss of habitat and biodiversity, overconsumption, and climate change.

It renounces the Judeo-Christian biblical interpretation where humans assume the right to unrestrained 'domination' and exploitation of nature; a misguided anthropocentrism that considers one's own immediate interests first and nature second or irrelevant. In response, the Pope calls for human and nature (more-than-human) integration that involves integral ecological approaches leading to living simple, spiritually connected lifestyles. Integral ecology is understood to unite five essential principles:

- Evolutionary [a deep sense of time]
- Planetary [everything is related]
- Transdisciplinary [new ways of knowing across disciplinary borders]
- Re-enchanted [a new approach that acknowledges the sensual, spiritual, and sacred], and
- Engaged [being actively engaged individually and collectively in transitioning to a peaceful and environmentally safe world] (Kelly, 2017).

The practice (ways of doing) framework adopted here is *community development* (Ife, 2013; Kenny, 2016; Lachapelle & Albrecht, 2019). After a literature review, I describe a research method known as a *World Café* and demonstrate how that method can function as a community development process to prompt transformative change. This is the significance of the research and the innovation being offered.

**Community Development**

Grassroots-level community development encourages change based on interdependence and interconnectedness, to embrace reciprocity and cooperation (Klein, 2019). One place to do this, it is proposed, is by and within communities of interest, identity and practice, as well as those involving geographical place (Lachapelle & Albrecht, 2019). Within that framework community development is the process whereby people organise to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Ife, 2013; Kenny, 2016). Those needs can involve a range of activities to overcome challenges ranging from social disadvantage through to climate change mitigation (International Association of Community Development, n.d.) The framework respects and empowers Indigenous peoples and cultural knowledges (Poelina, Taylor & Perdrisat, 2019). Ecological and socio-political justice, often considered unattainable at global levels, can be realised through collaborative community approaches (Ife, 2013).

An overview of community development characteristics offered by Kenny (2018) identifies the necessity to link practices to redress power differences and social justice with halting global warming and ensuring sustainable futures. Boulet (2013) adds to this by highlighting the need for sustainable lifestyles that embody spiritual and ethical dimensions connected to the living planet. Increasingly in the literature, these are referred to as regenerative lifestyles (Wahl, 2016). Kenny (2018) does, however, provide a cautionary note – entreating community development activity to be critically aware of its colonial legacy. Kelly, Kickett & Bessarab (2017) suggest postmodernism could inform and redefine community development to incorporate Aboriginal values, beliefs and expectations into theory and practice.

Trainer and Alexander (2019) argue for a post-growth and post-capitalist society and economy by transitioning to a '*Simpler Way*', strongly linked to the degrowth movement (Trainer, 2015). An integrated *Simpler Way*, they contend, involves bottom-up/inside-out community-driven activities (community development) with the potential to generate sustainable quality of life with social, environmental and economic justice. Processes to adopt can include devising common assets and vision; sharing of surpluses; mutual assistance; small social enterprises and development of local economies based around arts, crafts and home food production. Society, they envisage, can then transcend the current growth paradigm, and encourage positive pathways to expanded mutuality and reciprocity[3]. Upon analysis, much of the discussion and resultant suggestions from the *World Café* are compatible with the *Simpler Way* approach. This is an opportunity for the community to connect, to support their current and future projects and jointly advocate for the crucial change that is needed.

Research incorporating community development processes and practices commonly adopt a participatory worldview as the overarching context. Heron & Reason point out that this approach allows participants to know they are part of a whole that can bring with it "*the sense of resolution and meaning, of joy and beauty, the image of participation brings to us personally*" (1997:275). Within this worldview, a qualitative research methodology has been chosen. The method utilised to support transitioning towards socio-ecological change is *World Café*. Process outcomes from this method have the potential to be incorporated into future exploration and participatory action. Experience in the current research indicates that world café can become an element of action research. Reason and Canney (2015) support the challenge and opportunity offered by action research as it allows for effective creation of responses to the ecological crisis for members of the wider community of beings on Earth.

**World Café**

'*World Café*' is a research method that involves interactive knowledge generation through valuable

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conversations (Fouché & Light, 2011) and it is widely used within community development practice (Aldred, 2009; Löhr, Weinhardt, & Sieber, 2020).

Features of this research method include the ambience of the setting, which is modeled on a café – small tables with food and refreshments – to facilitate informal conversation, located in a neutral public space. Exchanges commence at each table with a series of conversations around prompting questions particular to each table, with data being recorded (on butcher's paper or similar) throughout the event. At the end of each round, people are invited to share their insights and results from discussions, then move to a new table, covering different discussion themes. The intent is to gain valuable input and resultant research outcomes through facilitated group dialogue.

A world café allows common patterns to be identified, supports collective knowledge to grow and allows possibilities for action to emerge. This illustrates a shift from top-down approaches and knowledge production, to a bottom-up participatory approach (Löhr et al., 2020). Importantly, participants are not recipients of knowledge and visions generated elsewhere...

**"– as local community members they are engaged in the process as well as beneficiaries of the outcomes they generate. This interactive method involves the cross-pollination of ideas built on participants' knowledge and lived experiences."**

For this research, Human Research Ethics Committee approval was provided (No. 019120B), and the questions used are attached at Appendix A. Participants recorded responses (which form the data) at each table. Thanks to Dr Anne Poelina and Mr John Croft for their meeting facilitation and to Catholic Church Insurance for their small grant which paid for all meeting costs. Thematic analysis of the outcomes of data recorded at the tables was conducted. This method generated codes that were analysed and assigned to emerging key themes, which are presented in this article.

**Outcomes from the World Café**

Patterns of data from the World Café event provide insights and themes as developed below.

***Theme I Ecological Economics***

A strong theme that emerged from the World Café activity centred on local ecological economics, a transdisciplinary approach integrating a wide range of areas, including the earth's ecological systems and natural life forms (more-than-human), along with people, their values, health and well-being. Thus, the ecological approach views the economy "*as operating within, rather than dominating, the spheres of nature, society, and culture*" (Capra & Jakobsen, 2017).

Participants pointed to the value of local social and economic activities to their community, highlighting the importance of having influence on place-based endeavours. The current value and potential of cultural tourism was noted, as was bush medicines and foods, volunteer activity and the local food cooperatives. Social enterprises and local markets were emphasised, along with the suggested establishment of LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) as a community currency project in the town.

In relation to the LETS proposal, World Café participants identified local currency as one way the community could exchange goods and services without the need for direct barter or cash. When a local system is established the '*new*' money units stay local, enhancing the local economy, thus mobilising the '*real*' wealth of the community. Informal discussions commenced after the research event and when COVID-19 hit, a Mutual Aid Network[4] was formed in Broome to aid individuals and families with health issues. After the initial small number of people overcame the virus, no more infections occurred, so Mutual Aid Network members looked to the next issue facing the community, that of economic endurance. They too came up with the concept of forming a LETS group. After a public meeting floated the proposal, participants from the World Café joined forces with members of the Mutual Aid Network, resulting in *LETS Broome* being formed. The process and outcomes from this activity join the growing list of 'bottom-up' (Ife, 2013) or 'inside-out' (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) community development and ecological economics ventures in the town.

***Theme II. Spirituality***

The sense of the sacred, along with respect for spiritual values, was considered during World Cafe, particularly Aboriginal ancient and current spirituality and religious beliefs including faith-based formats. Ife (2013) identified the spiritual dimension as important to community development, pointing out "[*g]enuine human community is in itself a spiritual experience, so the development of community is an important ingredient of spiritual development. The two belong together*" (2013:255). This is supported by others, including Hustebbe (1998) and Chile and Simpson (2004).

Local Aboriginal people understand their Country[5] as a sacred living ancestral being, with *First Law* being their system of law and governance (Poelina, 2019). *First Law* places the health and well-being of the land, water and biosphere together with human interests. Participants at the World Café supported this, inclusive an approach to sacred living, offering the following insights:

- We welcome people to our common home, helping educate them on how/what to care for,
- We have a feeling of a deeper connection to place, the natural landscape, and its beauty,
- Aboriginal ways include a dreaming system for sustainability, for instance no water equals no song-lines and no health, and
- Sharing stories and portrayal in art encourages shared vision.
  (Various participants at the World Café)

These areas are compatible, for example, with Christian and other faith-based approaches. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, points out that "[*i]nterdependence obliges us to think*

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*of one world with a common plan*" (2015, para. 164), where *"[e]verything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others*" (2015, para. 70). Powell (2018) links Muslim-Catholic interconnectedness and solidarity through *Laudato Si'*, as do Buddhists, according to Venerable Bodhi (n.d.).

Traditional Custodians and Native Title holders in Broome, the Yawuru people, also acknowledge cross-cultural spiritual and ecological significance. As Dodson (2017), a Yawuru Elder and Senator in the Australian Government explained, Indigenous law combines religious beliefs with social and legal codes. He applies this to art, explaining it *"is the spiritual link of person and community that brings alive the intrinsic beauty that finds its way onto the canvas*" (Dodson, 2017:171).

Pope Francis calls for ecological education, along with spirituality, to educate ourselves to build agreements between humanity and the more-than-human living planet, noting ecological dialogue and reflection can lead to ecological conversion. Overall, *Laudato Si'* promotes social peace, balanced ecology and planetary stability and calls on society to defend and promote the common good.

### Theme III Sharing Aboriginal Aspirations

It is noted that, at a Broome conference, Yawuru's (then) Chief Executive Officer stated: "*I can say with absolute confidence that Laudato si' speaks to the overriding concerns of Aboriginal people – degeneration of our lands and seas that nurture us spiritually, culturally, socially and economically*" (2016:2). This understanding is compatible with the views of those participating in the World Café.

> When discussing Aboriginal Country, knowledges and traditions, local people emphasised the importance of sustainability that involves consideration of health, wellbeing and landscape; the role and benefit of Indigenous Ranger groups1; cultural issues around losing language; duty of care to the planet; shared-lived experiences of colonisation and the need to heal; and redefining roles in today's world.

Others contributed their feeling of deep connection with cultural aspects of place, not just being a '*tourist*'.

Acknowledging the next generation as our future and the importance of support and engagement of young people was emphasised, as were relationships that involve learning from each other, while allowing for different perspectives and generating common purposes. Participants also called for deeper conversations between all involved, including local government, highlighting the importance of good, ethical governance.

One project widely discussed and supported was promoting the social, cultural, economic, and environmental value of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River, located more than 150km north east of Broome. Responsibilities of the Traditional Custodians, represented by the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, was discussed

as participants were keen to learn more about traditional values and uses associated with the river catchment, as well as issues pertaining to its sustainable future.

### Theme IV Food Sovereignty

Food security, and growing and sharing food locally, both on Country and within townsites, was a consistent topic throughout the World Café. In relation to Country, participants highlighted the importance of Indigenous people's knowledge, innovation and skill as well as the high nutritional value of traditional foods, as identified by Crabtree, Bird and Bird (2019). For thousands of years, people living on Country have undertaken many forms of food production, involving preparing, processing and sharing food – dispelling the myth that the only Indigenous food supplies were/are sourced via hunter and gatherer practices (Pascoe, 2014). As Lane expounds, the world is now starting to discover "*the ancient, sacred foods of Aboriginal Australia*" (2019:75), supported by scientific and commercial evidence relating to the nutritional value and medicinal and industrial potential of these foods growing. Many bush foods previously considered valueless are now being hailed as 'super foods' (Lane, 2019), with emerging change demonstrating the potential to develop into an ecologically balanced food paradigm for the future (Szabo, 2019).

One example discussed during the World Café was *Mayi Harvests*[6], *a local Aboriginal family-owned business that harvests and sells wild food products from their traditional lands (Torres, n.d.). Ancient protocols are applied, including cultural beliefs and land management practices of harvesting products seasonally to ensure a sustainable future. Mayi Harvests* not only sell their products, they openly share their knowledge of plant foods and remedies to assist customers enjoy good health and well-being.

World Café participants also strongly advocated for local urban food growing in the town, including highlighting the local *Incredible Edible Broome* project. This is a grassroots initiative that supports food growing, shares food and provides community education relating to locally growing fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs. Similar approaches are being undertaken internationally, with emerging organisations instigating a new wave of self-organising, non-hierarchical community food groups (Cardoso, 2011). Projects like these illustrate a process of new '*commoning*', that is, the understanding of commons no longer as property only, but *more-than-property*. As Rose explains "*Commoning describes a diverse and expanding array of practices and interactions that are expressive in new forms of social relations, between and amongst groups of people and between other lifeforms*" (2018:202).

The importance contributors to the World Café paid to both Aboriginal traditional foods and locally grown fresh tropical produce will continue in this ongoing research. A key within this process will be reviewing what has happened in the past (Gaynor, 2018), what is happening now and exploring opportunities for transformative approaches in the future. *Place-based community development* approaches provide important means to attain these outcomes.

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***Theme V: Place-based culturally oriented community development practices.***

A mix of place-based philosophies, calling for new and expanded community development creative ideas, emerged from the World Cafe. Responses outline a method of practice which includes, but is not limited, to those listed below:

- the importance of Aboriginal culture and beliefs
- holding ocean clean-ups in Roebuck Bay
- learning from the Elders' wisdom
- encouraging community connection to land and environments
- undertaking efforts to find alternative energy sources
- cross-cultural engagements
- advocating for change at political levels
- supporting and engaging young people
- including health and wellbeing within sustainability programs
- critically acknowledging colonial history
- finding common ground and common purposes to instigate change
- relationship building, within and between communities of intent and geographical communities, and
- importance and value of rivers and water to more-than-human biodiversity and cultural interaction with people.

The World Café generated these and other proposals for activities that are currently being discussed among local community organisations, with a view to future actions[7]. The community development relevance of this method is that the data and consequent themes have been generated by members of the local community. Consequently, the outcomes are being utilised by representatives of the organisations involved, for their future strategic planning and community action use.

### Discussion

In *Laudato Si'*, the Pope asks, "*What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, the children who are now growing up?*" (2015, para. 160) This is an underlying question people participating in the World Café were and are asking. Added to that is the challenge to adopt transformative behaviours that create change from being passive observers to active creators of a new future (Rose, 2018).

A further question posed by this World Café research is how we, as community development volunteers, practitioners, activists and academics, activate renewal at the local community level? The ecological economics and community development processes offered can involve examining previous practical examples of what worked in the past, what is working now and exploring how they can be adopted and/or expanded into the future (Gaynor, 2018; Jennings, 2020). Importantly, the resultant outcomes from the World Café are now being used to initiate further community development action research and community activity, involving collaborative efforts.

Co-created World Café knowledge demonstrates autonomy and self-reliance; intergenerational equity;

knowledge of ecological limits; support for decreased consumerism; understanding of the intrinsic value of the natural world; human creativity and reciprocity with mutuality. Further, as noted at the World Café, a relational link exists between community development and ecological economics. Hamstead & Quinn's (2007) research, for example, indicates that achievable sustainable community development could be contingent on the convergence of collective community development and ecological economics activity.

> Previous studies of small remote communities within Aboriginal contexts, found common ground emerging in the form of the '*third space*'. This is the place where different cultures intersect. Bessarab & Forrest (2017), referring to the initial work by Homi Bhabha in 1994, maintain that the third space can be a place of contestation and misunderstanding; however, they assert it has "*enormous potential for people to engage in conversation that can move them forward into a space of understanding and transformation, by not only identifying and acknowledging these different world views but focusing on commonalities as a driver to move forward*" (2017:10).

Given that this process was essentially happening during the World Café activity, based on observed collective openness during the day, there appear to be opportunities for third space type approaches to be progressed further in Broome and moving them into future collective endeavours.

In relation to spirituality, where belief systems fit within community development practices and processes, represents a space rarely examined. As previously mentioned, Chile and Simpson (2004) highlight that the spiritual dimension is important to community development. The sense of the sacred, as discussed at the World Café, along with respect for spiritual values, is vital to re-creating community providing meaning in people's lives.

*First Law* places the health and well-being of the land, water and biosphere together with human interests. Exploring others' spirituality could also be a third space exercise, exploring and embracing similarities and differences. Traditional Custodians of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River, for example, are currently finalising a film portraying their *First Law and Country* story, which is being dedicated to Pope Francis for his work supporting Indigenous peoples within the Amazon region of South America.

As stated, *Laudato Si'* discusses issues that are facing the world today, including poverty, human inequality, loss of habitat and biodiversity, overconsumption and climate change. Pope Francis emphasises "*mutual responsibilities between human beings and nature*" and our "*duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations*" (2015, para 67). In calling for ecological

education along with spirituality, to educate ourselves to build agreements between humanity and the environment, he notes ecological citizenship can lead to reflective ecological conversion, a genuine call for social, spiritual and ecological transformation.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of this World Café and potentially other World Café events, is the process itself as a community development tool with considerable transformative possibilities. It provides a meaningful dialogue opportunity, which is central to transformation. Learning and change opportunities also arise when participants hear other perspectives and collaborate to follow up assigning ideas to practice. The process can provide an experience of genuine human community, potentially being in encounter with spirituality (Chile and Simpson, 2004; Ife, 2013), as well as introduce people to new concepts like the *Simpler Way* (Trainer & Alexander, 2019). Both offer local, achievable pathways to transformative change.

### Conclusion

As a result of the World Café research event, the themes of ecological economics, food sovereignty, spirituality, Aboriginal aspirations and place-based culturally oriented community development practices were identified for future activity within the Broome community. There is now a clear call for approaches that support and sustain collective movement towards transformative initiatives and alternatives, in areas identified here. The World Café event also illustrated considerable current progress towards these goals in Broome, together with further action following on from the event itself.

In summary, this research methodology has demonstrated the value of creating collaborative spaces at the grassroots level. It illustrates how a World Café event can function as a community development process that promotes transformative change. The event can provide the opportunity for genuine and meaningful dialogue, itself a spiritual practice of listening and community development. Overall, it is asserted that strengthening grassroots collaboration and exchange can support learning towards living more simply, in a journey towards sustainable, renewing lifestyles. This is an application of *Laudato Si'*, the Pope's Encyclical on the Environment, to community development. ●

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**Appendix A**

**World Café – Suggested Areas for Dialogue**

**TABLE 1.0: COLLABORATING TO CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME.**

*(For people to further discuss what the topic means to them, now and visioning the future, within the Kimberley context)*

1.1 What we love about our common home in the Kimberley.

1.2 How do we do care for our common home at present?

1.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?

**TABLE 2.0: ACKNOWLEDGING YAWURU COUNTRY, ABORIGINAL KIMBERLEY COUNTRY: CULTURAL KNOWLEDGES, TRADITIONS, LANGUAGES, CARING FOR COUNTRY KNOWLEDGES, CULTURAL REVITALISATION AND RESURGENCE.**

*(Understanding that Aboriginal knowledge and traditions, through long-term experience in place, belong to the Kimberley - and are essential to informing change that can lead to a restored future)*

2.1 What we love about being in Aboriginal Country.

2.2 How do we care for Aboriginal knowledges and traditions at present?

2.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?

**TABLE 3.0: COMMUNITY-OF-PRACTICE METHODOLOGY - COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

(Opportunities to share and explore peoples collaborative understanding, approaches and practice from a community based, bottom-up perspective)

3.1 What we love about the ways we work together to achieve common purposes?

3.2 How do we do this at present?

3.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?

**TABLE 4.0: LOCAL-SCALE ECONOMICS, HUMAN-SCALE DEVELOPMENT, CULTURAL ECONOMIES, CIRCULAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

*(New economics/ecological economics understandings are shared to support approaches that lead to intergenerational change)*

4.1 What we love about our local economies already?

4.2 How do we do this at present?

4.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?

**TABLE 5.0: ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. EVERY PLACE IS A LEARNING PLACE**

*(Delving into the heart of environmental communication and education, to enhance understandings to allow people to collectively move forward)*

5.1 What we love about our places, and the ways we see others caring for our places.

5.2 How do we do this at present?

5.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?

**TABLE 6.0: VALUING WISDOM OF THE ELDERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE 'EVERYDAYNESS' OF LIFE**

*(Exploring the rich tapestry of Elder wisdom to assist understanding today's issues, then exploring ways to use this knowledge to move forward)*

6.1 What we love about elder wisdom in our places?

6.2 How do we do this at present?

6.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?

**TABLE 7.0: CLIMATE CHANGE, SPECIES LOSS, AND RELATED ISSUES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE AND LIVING NATURE**

*(What issues in the Kimberley's immediate and long-term past have current effects, and how can we move towards transformative change)*

7.1 How do we feel about previous and present socio-environment issues in the Kimberley?

7.2 What should we do? (The people and the organisations – in this room?)

7.3 How can we be more effective in making change?

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**Endnotes**

1.   The term 'Aboriginal' is used in Western Australia by request from First Nations People. Indigenous is used for the whole of Australia or overseas.

2.   'Ecological Conversion' refers to the change experienced by people, resulting in seeking to live in harmony with nature, rather than dominating it, ensuring equality of the planet's resources, both human and more-than-human.

3.   'Mutuality' involves relationships and actions within a cooperative framework, and 'reciprocity' is a practice of exchanging goods with other people, resulting in mutual benefit

4.   See https://www.mutualaidnetwork.org/

5.   'Aboriginal Rangers' undertake cultural and natural resource projects to improve and enhance the unique biodiversity and cultural values of their region – see https://www.klc.org.au/kimberley-ranger-network

6.   See www.mayiharvests.com

## 5.2 Meaningful Dialogue from the World Café event

In this chapter I found the world café research method provides opportunities for meaningful dialogue involving local people, including participants who had not previously engaged in community consultations. World café research provides a valuable tool that supported community development enquiry. The contribution of this chapter to the thesis includes the provision of locally generated insights into activities currently happening in the town studied, as well as place-based visions relating to potential future activity. Importantly for me the world café event generated outcomes that formed the key themes to explore throughout this study. It also provided a comfortable environment where local Aboriginal and settler/migrant Australians shared their lives and dreams and allowed discussions relating to both human and other-than-human conditions in this region to emerge. A further contribution to this pathway to ecological conversion is this chapter illustrates communities stepping up to address challenges by collaborating and working locally – in self-organising ways.

The next chapter focuses on the first of the key themes, food sovereignty. It commences with a brief description of Aboriginal nutritious foods prior to colonisation and continues with stories relating to settler/migrants after arrival on the shores of this country. Contemporary food sovereignty issues in a local sustainability context are then explored.

# 6.0 APPLIED LOCAL APPROACHES – FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

In this chapter, comprising two subsections, I introduce food sovereignty and security discussion as identified at the world café research event. Details provided relate to both Aboriginal Australians' ancient and contemporary lives, as well as those of settler Australians from early colonisation days to current times. I explore the importance of nutritional food supplies within broader national and then local situations, including Aboriginal food systems accessing native plants for food and medicine, as well as settler Australians with their European based diets. I further critique those activities against community development, commoning and community economic practices and point to projects demonstrating interconnection, an essential ingredient to initiating social and ecological change as determined by Pope Francis (2015a) in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. These case studies link people and food production with community development processes and Laudato Si' teachings to efforts encouraging ecological conversion.

## 6.1 Remote Food Production and Community Actions

In this subsection, I discuss access to food in historic and contemporary remote Australia. I note this proved a popular discussion topic during the world cafe, given that in the previous year the Broome region experienced an extremely high rainfall event, roads were flooded, and no transported food was available. I describe how one community, as a self-organising community food group, was established to support locally grown and shared food, showing initiative prior, during and after this occurrence.

### 6.1.1 'Growing' Food and Community in the Remote Kimberley[22]

(The published paper commences on the next page).

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# 'Growing' Food and Community in the Remote Kimberley Region.

*Anne Jennings*

### Brief history of localised food production in Australia

I will commence by contributing historical evidence of localised food production in Australia, starting with Aboriginal people, on country, prior to colonisation. I will then move on to food grown by colonists, then addressing the depression and world war years, concluding with activities at the end of the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries.

### First Nation Peoples

For thousands of years people living in Australia have undertaken many forms of food production, involving preparing, processing and sharing food, starting with the Aboriginal people prior to colonisation. Bruce Pascoe's (a Bunurong man from Victoria, author and historian) research of journals and diaries written by explorers and colonists has "*revealed a much more complicated Aboriginal economy than the primitive hunter-gatherer lifestyle we have been told was the simple lot of Australia's First People*" (2005:11). Evidence points to "*people building dams and wells, planning, irrigating and harvesting seed, preserving the surplus and storing it*" (2005:12). One example provided by Pascoe is the '*desert raisin*' or '*bush tomato*', which has been used by Central Desert people for thousands of years. This plant has become dependent on people for its propagation and spread. Custodians, in turn, celebrate the plant in ceremonies, dance and song, with body painting often featuring its image. Further, surplus harvests were conserved for future use by being ground into a paste and rolled into balls. This allowed for transportation and/or storage of food that could be kept for future consumption. It also enabled fruit balls to be shared among family and community and provided the opportunity for them to be used in economic transfers. Overall, as Pascoe pointed out, "*Australia is a colonised country with a colonised mind. The first Europeans were steadfast in their refusal to use the food offered by this country, the domesticated food products of Aboriginal Australians*" (2018:xiii).

### From Colonisation to the twentieth century

Colonisation saw Europeans arriving on Australia's shores, initially English and Irish people. The first garden of introduced food plants was started within the first week of the commencement of the colony at Sydney Cove, in January 1788 (Coltheart, 2016). The following year saw yields of cauliflowers, French beans and strawberries. Due to the perceived lack of alternative food sources and the inability of the new settlers to learn from the Aboriginal people living there, growing known food became imperative.

The next few years saw people in settlements and on newly established farming properties producing vegetables and fruit for their family and staff, as well as exchange for other products. This trend has continued since then, with different periods highlighting the relevant history in time, as it relates to the food being grown; for example, during and after the gold rush days, Chinese gardeners provided fresh produce for their own use and local sale or exchange.

Another case records activity by one Mary Cunningham, who successfully planted and harvested vegetables and fruit on her family farming properties, starting in the late-1800s. After returning from a stay at the Australian army base in Egypt in 1916, Mary returned home and harvested her almond trees and dispatched them to the troops based overseas. Interestingly, as well as noting the exchange of plants between friends and family during different periods, Australian historian Lenore Coltheart, wrote that *"[h]istoric food garden research not only provides a basis for assessment and conservation of vulnerable elements like Mary Cunningham's almond grove ..., but offer new insights into everyday life by looking into the backyard of Australian historiography"* (2016:7).

In his exploration of *Australia's Quarter Acre: The story of the ordinary suburban garden*, Timms acknowledged:

> *"For centuries, the vegetable garden and home orchard were simply a matter of necessity: 'if we don't grow them we do without', Brunning's Australian Gardener declared as recently as 1924. That was the case for most Australians during the nineteenth century and remained so for many until well after World War II. We tend to forget that, throughout human history, gardening has very often been a matter of life and death"* (2006:129).

To further support the widespread movement of home food gardening, it was noted that, in "*1845 ... one Hobart Town nursery catalogue offered the seeds of fifty-two different vegetables and herbs*" (Timms, 2006:131). For many people it was essential to have vegetable gardens during both the Depression Years of 1890s and 1930s, to allow them access to food and nutrition.

## After the Depression, some people reported being embarrassed about growing home vegetables, because they looked like they were poor.

The Second World War did, however, stimulate a higher degree of food independence as a result of threats to the Australian food security (Gaynor, 2018). The post-World

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War II migrants to Australia also added variety to backyard food production, with people from countries including Italy and Greece bringing their vegetable growing expertise to this country.

Over time, Australia experienced the arrival cheap inner-urban housing – the urban sprawl - and more advanced food preservation - including ice-chests and Fowler's 'Vacola' bottling outfits, through to refrigeration, the corner store and then supermarkets, to name just a few changes (Gaynor, 2006; Kunek & Stone, 2018). Another major alteration was from small commercial vegetable gardens to expanded large-scale farming ventures, where horticultural products were produced from monoculture systems. Added to this was the proliferation of modern transport systems, which resulted in the availability of foods being produced in vastly different climates from the ones where the products were presented for sale. Consequently,

*Few shoppers today would even know, as they fill their trolleys with fruits and vegetables, which of them are in season and which are not. Another payoff for having everything at hand all the time is that taste and smell have been almost eliminated from what we eat.* (Timms, 2006:138)

In summing up his research, Timms concluded *"A great deal has changed since the 1930s. Home gardeners today are beginning to show the way, not because they have been forced to, but because they are better informed about, and more attuned, to the processes of nature"* (2006:207).

} As time moved on, backyard vegetable
} production scene also changed. By 1992,
} home food harvest was dominated by
} Australian-born people of over 55 years of
} age, as different to all age groups in earlier
} generations (Gaynor, 2006).

The second half of the twentieth century also saw other changes, including the emergence and support for publications like *Earth Garden* and *Grassroots*, and the commencement of community gardens. The Permaculture movement, started by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, was also at its peak during that era. As Holmgren points out *"[g]rowing food right where people live, in back and front yards, has environmental, social and psychological benefits"* (2018:91).

From the late twentieth century and now into the twenty-first century, people's interest in growing their own food has evolved further, with many seeking 'pure' food. Reasons given are based on health, including the danger of pesticide residue and herbicides in foods and concerns for the broader environment relating to their usage (Gaynor, 2006), as well as issues related to climate change. Another factor is '*food miles*', the transport measure of the distance travelled by food products between production and consumption (Gaballa and Abraham, 2007). Rose emphasises these points by observing: "*… contemporary food systems in Australia (and globally) are accurately*

*categorised as being oligopolistic: they are dominated by a handful of powerful agri-chemical, grain- and meat-packaging and trading, food-and-beverage-processing and supermarket corporations.*" (2018:197).

The quality and taste of food, and the continuation and growth of heritage, non-hybrid varieties of fruit and vegetables available from seed-saving clubs and small seed companies has also added to change of consciousness. This involves a resurgence in adopting permaculture principles, involving the recognition that urban areas produce large amounts of organic matter, which can become a critical resource for improving and maintaining soil fertility, and use of composting systems and greywater recycling. In addition, as well as building household resilience, urban farming is a practical and satisfying way to connect with nature (Holmgren, 2018).

This historical context has provided the background to examining urban food production in the twenty-first century. This "*[k]nowing our history empowers us to redirect these historical forces for the establishment of an economy based on [local] food production*" (Kunek & Stone, 2018:187). The next section will provide a brief view of some Kimberley First Nations Peoples' wild food production and then to a larger case study of the community project, *Incredible Edible Broome* - all located in the remote North-West of Western Australia.

**Background to the location - Broome**
Broome is located in the Kimberley region on the North-West coast of Western Australia, 2,240 kms north of Perth. The climate is usually classified sub-tropical and our nearest towns are Derby, 203 kms north; Fitzroy Crossing 396 kms east, and Port Hedland 599 kms south. There is archaeological evidence that Aboriginal people have lived in the Kimberley for at least 60,000 years.

Rainfall, which comes over summer (wet season) and often via thunderstorms and cyclones along with humid weather, averages 464 mm annually (just over 18 inches). Little or no rainfall is received in the dry season (winter). The countryside around Broome is predominantly rangeland used for cattle production.

While remote isolation can be a limiting factor when it comes to many fulfilling everyday needs, including accessing fresh food and high transport costs, the wonderful dry season (winter) weather - usually around 30 degrees every day - and world-famous beaches attract many tourists during that time. The permanent population is around 16,000 people, which expands to about 45,000 during the peak of our tourist (dry) season. Some of the population is, however, reasonably transient, given many people 'go north' for a few years, for work and leisure, then move on.

I will now provide a brief overview of contemporary First Nations People's continued use of local food products, before moving on to a detailed case study of the local, grassroots, community project, *Incredible Edible Broome*.

**Contemporary First Nations Peoples**
Aboriginal society continues to access native foods in culturally contemplated ways. One West Kimberley example is Mayi Harvests, established by Pat Torres in

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Broome (see www.mayiharvests.com). This Indigenous family-owned business harvests wild food products from their traditional lands. Ancient protocols are applied, including cultural beliefs and the land management practices of harvesting products seasonally, to ensure a sustainable future. Mayi Harvests not only sell their products, they also openly share their knowledge of plant foods and remedies to assist customers enjoy good health and well-being (Torres, 2019).

An East Kimberley example is provided by Samantha Martin, a descendant of the Kija/Jaru peoples, who was taught ways of identifying, preparing and eating produce off local land and waters by her mother and other Aboriginal Elders. She understands their nutritional properties and the diversity of Australian bush foods and regularly shares her passion and insights through a documentary series (and book) *My Bush Tukka Adventures* via television programs on SBS/NITV (Martin, 2014).

Similarly, another television program, *Kriol Kitchen* (also on SBS/NITV), hosted by Ali and Mitch Torres and featuring Broome and other Kimberley Aboriginal people, clearly points to strong connections between local native foods, cultural history and nutritious and tasty cuisine. As well as sharing family stories and recipes this program has moved forward by supporting young people sharing their own cooking styles, influenced by the generation that came before them.

Aside from acknowledgment of the value of bush foods from Kimberley Aboriginal Corporations and change agents like Incredible Edible Broome, Aboriginal

food knowledges remain largely marginalised, typically through small enterprises (Wooltorton et al. 2019), but rarely through mainstream food acquisition or consumption. In reality, the Kimberley environment provides significant food sources, including native fish, reptiles and small animals, as well as fruits, seeds and vegetables. It is recognised that for many small, remote communities, the Kimberley's environmental richness and biodiversity is a precondition to food security. Like climate change, food insecurity is interwoven within a web of cultural, ecological, economic and political complexity which, according to Pascoe (2018), points to the need to work locally and ensure information about local food knowledges is actioned and passed on to next generations.

**Case Study: Incredible Edible Broome (IEB)**

Incredible Edible Broome (IEB) is a grassroots community-initiated, -owned and -run project, based on provision of locally grown fresh fruit, vegetables, seeds and herbs. The motivation to commence this project started when the (then) manager of the local Broome Circle Community House was shown a TEDtalk video at a conference, featuring the dynamic Incredible Edible co-founder in the UK, Pam Warhurst. She returned home to Broome and spread the word. This resulted in a planning workshop held at Notre Dame University, where over 80 enthusiastic local people participated - and IEB was born.

This organisation is now a part of the new wave of self-organising, non-hierarchical, community food groups

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| *Monthly Food Shares* | ⬯ | Meeting monthly at Broome Circle Community House. People bring in excess produce from their home gardens including vegetables, fruit, herbs, plants, seeds, cuttings, recipes, seedlings. This can include paw paws, bush foods, bananas, coconut and herbs and plants to make drinks and tea. People moving to Broome are often more familiar with growing in the Mediterranean climates of Australia, so regularly request hints on growing food in a sub-tropical climate. |
|---|---|---|
| | ⬯ | Also shared are more standard vegetables like tomatoes, sweetcorn, cucumbers and zucchinis, to name a few. |
| *Equipment Shares* | ⬯ | IEB has two trailers for community use – one large one, with hydraulic tipping which can, for example, be used to cart mulch. The other one is equipped with multiple use garden tools. This equipment is available to the community at a minimal cost to cover ongoing expenses. |
| *Skill Sharing* | ⬯ | At monthly Food Shares members regularly demonstrate a wide range of skills, including cooking Asian foods, how to de-husk coconuts (with a large machete!), making mango roll-ups; cooking with lemon grass; making Kombucha; cooking with Boab leaves; making coconut yoghurt; Blachan (sambal) cooking demonstration; composting, permaculture, and more. |
| *Seed Exchange* | ⬯ | Members save seeds and share at the monthly food shares. IEB has also set up an open, collection box of seeds at the local Library. These are available free to everyone, with many returning seeds from their resultant successful gardens. |
| | ⬯ | Also locally sourced native bush seeds are available to giveaway at both venues. |
| *Local Garden Tours* | ⬯ | Regular tours are held, travelling to members and others' productive gardens, many as cycling tours. |
| | ⬯ | Learning from each other while having fun. |

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|---|---|---|
| *Community Education* | ● In partnership with Notre Dame University, Broome, hosted the film '*A New Economy*' with a Q&A session with a local expertise panel.<br>● Host training workshops, including: establishing worm farms; how to develop wicking (large container growing) beds; building raised beds; bugs in edible garden; locavore (locally grown food) share lunch; what works – mulch and manure; making sourdough bread and dry season planting.<br>● Film Nights – including films on Tiny Houses; Fight Food Waste Film and Art Night; The Kids Menu, No Impact Man and 2040.<br>● Fight Food Waste short film competition, with a Winning Films Night involving an interactive art exhibition and locavore food/drink. | |
| *Broome North (new subdivision) community garden* | ● IEB established and maintains with volunteers a community garden. This is in conjunction with the developers, residents and teachers and school children. It includes garden blitz's; picnic feast and film nights in the park; and a garden shed with tools for public use.<br>● IEB also regularly assists with children's day care centre's garden in town. | |
| Broome Harvest | ● Annual event held on the grounds of a local restaurant and craft brewery.<br>● Provides a wide range of local fare to taste and enjoy at the Harvest, including: 'Boab pesto'; Banana flower salad; Boab seed beer; Kombucha; freshly squeezed sugar cane juice; Boab seed Fro-Yo, local seafood, native fruits and lots more. | |
| *External projects* | ● Involved in and/or supports other projects including Boomerang Bags, where volunteers make cloth shopping bags and donate to shopping customers to reduce plastic bag usage; Food Coop – IEB partnering by having Co-op food collections at their monthly food shares; Chinatown Shop Owners, setting up edible food boxes on footpaths and walkways in the centre of town, as well as the edible garden verge in conjunction with Broome Circle House. | |
| *Collaborations /Partnerships* | ● With other groups including Broome Circle House; Broome Food Coop; Notre Dame University, Broome; Environs Kimberley; Broome Community Recovery Centre (mental health); and Police and Citizen's Youth Club (PCYC), Plastic Free Broome, and others. | 10 |

'sprouting up' all over the world. From humble beginnings only five years ago, IEB has progressively moved forward from initially targeting home gardening/backyard food-growing and sharing/swapping excess food to become a more comprehensive, grassroots community organisation. Further, IEB is 'growing' its membership and activities by expanding into a wide range of locally-initiated programs as a result of listening to local people talk about their needs.

IEB's community activities and projects include:

**Exploration of IEB**
This research involved one-to-one interviews with IEB members (me being a co-researcher with members); my personal involvement with the group (as a local community member/insider and a professional community development practitioner); discussions with the organising committee members and accessing publically available documents and social media.

Primarily, it was found that IEB's projects and activities clearly involve interconnected processes. Being interconnected is considered an essential ingredient in initiating social and ecological change, a process recognised in international documentation, including in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (Pope Frances, 2015):

All of us are linked to unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect (LS 89).

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage … which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth (LS 92).

IEB's interconnected activities are positioned both internally and externally. Internally they reflect strong relationships between members and their connection with the earth and nature, plus their activities often cross boundaries, for example community education combined with horticulture, reduced food miles and community building – all in one activity. Further, externally, IEB is connected with community organisations operating from similar value bases, evidenced by the robust alliances that have resulted in undertaking joint community action projects.

**Urban Commons**
Areas emerging from this study are classified under the banner of urban 'commoning'. In the past, urban commons were characterised as collectively shared property, however this definition has moved on to understand commons as "*more-than-property*" (Williams, 2018, p. 16). "***Commoning*** *describes a diverse and expanding array of practices and interactions that are expressive in new forms*

*of social relations, between and amongst groups of people, and between people and other lifeforms*" (Rose 2018, p. 202).

Key features of urban food system commoning in Australia include:

*sharing and collaboration* (of resources, knowledge, skills, land, traditions and culture, food);

*connection and interdependence* (to country, place, home, history and memories, friends and community);

*nurturing, care, respect and trust* (of women, children, cultural difference, multiple species, of life itself);

*celebration, joy, welcoming and hospitality*;

*healing and overcoming* (of divisions, fear, ignorance and bigotry, past and present suffering and injustice);

*creativity* (to imagine, transform, work with plants and animals, co-design);

*and diversity (*of plants, species, cultures, people). (Rose, 2018, p. 203)

This study has identified the values held by IEB's membership and the activities/actions they undertake embrace all 7 points listed above, at different times and to different degrees. The importance of sharing and collaboration and of connection and interdependence is a major difference to the 1880s to post-World War years, where backyard growing was an individual activity. Collective and collaborative approaches are successfully being undertaken by IEB and other similar groups.

Gaynor (2018) clearly differentiates between the two examples by identifying:

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"*One of the distinctive features of the 'revival' of urban food production in recent decades is a growing attention to the more communal dimensions of food production, moving beyond a self-provisioning focus to encompass food production as a means of strengthening community and providing fresh and nutritious food …*" (p. 173-174).

The importance of building community relationships and strengthening people's knowledge and skills base is embraced by members. Markedly, couples and their young children make up a noteworthy proportion of the organisation's membership - a shift from previous decades where many urban/backyard gardeners were over 55 years of age.

**Community Economy**

Mobilising the 'wealth' of the community through food provisioning and practices of commoning is a key component of the IEB project. With many people now living in urban settings, there is interest in 'taking back' the food economy. As Gibson so clearly articulates:

*It is important [to] see food production as a contested site of both commoning and uncommoning, community making and unmaking, so that we can take steps to build ethically oriented community economies that make the benefits of an urban food commons more real* (2018:8).

Examples of this involving IEB and their partners include food shares, community gardens, road verge gardens and the edible food planters located on the town centre's footpaths and walkways. They offer nutritional food sources for everyone to access, replacing the

thousands of kilometres of 'food miles' and economic benefits that flow out to multinational, profit-oriented companies. An extra bonus is that local people can enjoy the "*pleasurable visuals, aromas, touch sensations of edible produce*" (Gibson, 2018:11). Another IEB activity that supports community wealth is the Broome Harvest lunch feast, an annual celebration of local food. Local seafood, native foods, leafy green salads and desserts – to name just a few – are available to eat and enjoy, while allowing participants to meet the people who grew and/or made the cuisine.

An added community bonus from the IEB food shares is that surplus garden produce is regularly donated to the local project *Feed the Little Children* (FTLC). This Broome-based group has volunteers cooking and delivering over 600 healthy hot meals two nights a week to local children and pregnant and nursing mums. Broome police statistics show that nutritional food availability has measurably reduced the number of local children charged with stealing offences (yes, some offences involve children stealing food because they are hungry!), with further research being undertaken to quantify changes in nutrition-based illnesses and hospitalisation (FTLD, n.d.).

Another example is IEBs collaboration with the Broome Food Coop, which involves their physical co-location for the monthly IEB's food share and the Food Coop's products distribution. IEB's equipment, a large tip trailer and another trailer equipped with multiple use garden tools, is a further example. Importantly, this makes gardening equipment accessible to everyone, so those who are not in a position to purchase them can start/continue their vegetable, herb and fruit gardens which, of course, also contribute to community wealth.

**Conclusion**

This paper has 'painted' a picture of edible food creation in Australia, from production by Aboriginal people thousands of years ago to the colonists who only arrived around 230 years ago, through to current times. It has looked at ways people have been, and are still, involved in establishing and maintaining healthy, resilient local food systems. The case study of Incredible Edible Broome highlights their stories and is examined within the 'urban food system commons' framework - from which Rose challenges us by asking:

"*Are we going to be active shapers of our own history and creative narrators of our own stories? Or are we going to be passive observers, spectators of the historical process as it is written and shaped by the currently dominant actors?*" (2018:201).

This research exemplifies those involved to be active shapers of their own history and creative narrators of their own stories. This intergenerational approach is inspirational, telling us that the solutions are already around us – that, as William Gibson is regularly quoted as saying: '*The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed*'. Our history speaks to us today and into the future (Kunek & Stone, 2018:196); the future is here now – our hope is that we can fulfil the second half of that quote, for our and future generations' sake – as well as that of our planet. ●

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### 6.1.2 Pre-colonisation to Post-settlement Food Sharing

In this subsection I provided an overview of food sovereignty by Aboriginal people, from pre-colonisation to post-settlement. I further discussed contemporary urban food cultivation and production, mostly in people's backyards. An important outcome from the process is highlighted, identifying the non-monetary 'wealth' contributed by people to their local community through food sharing and aligned activity. This was highlighted at the world café event and involves elements of successful community development, demonstrating the importance of being interconnected when initiating social and ecological change activity, as portrayed in *Laudato Si'*.

In the next subsection I further explore food security and sovereignty, recognising Aboriginal peoples' ecological insight is informed and shaped by their knowledge and coexistence with land, rivers, plants, and animals. This acknowledgment is captured in language, culture and practices associated with protecting food supplies.

## 6.2 Australian Aboriginal Food Systems

In this subsection, I describe Aboriginal people's ecological and nutritional practices that incorporate land, plants and animals in the environment. I provide descriptions of regional archaeological evidenced rock art that illustrates ancient use of plants, grasses, trees and tubers, as well as usage of digging sticks, dilly bags and stone axes in food production. Contemporary Aboriginal people and groups similarly recognise historical and current traditional food sources in the Kimberley, where my research is located. Food sources locally include bush foods and medicines, fish, reptiles, small animals, fruits and vegetables, and they are cultivated, gathered and/or hunted according to local knowledge systems, wisdom and seasonal availability.

### 6.2.1 'Food as Commons' within an Australian Aboriginal context[23]

(The published paper commences on the next page).

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# 'Food as Commons' within an Australian Aboriginal context

*Anne Jennings*

## Personal and General Introduction

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

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

The previous issue of *New Community* (themed 'Food Security & Sovereignty') included the paper *'Growing' Food and Community in the Remote Kimberley Region.* That article provided a case study of a grassroots community development project formed to support growing and sharing local nutritious vegetables, fruit and herbs. That study provided an overview of Australian Aboriginal peoples' past and very much still current, approaches to traditional food gathering, growing and harvesting. It then moved on to adopting an historical approach to food

growing by early colonists, starting with settlers first food gardens planted a week after arrival in 1788, through to a current case study of Incredible Edible Broome (IEB). IEB involves a Western communitarian approach to sustenance gardening, skill development and produce sharing. The second component of that article relating to Aboriginal food provision is being expanded upon here, with particular relevance to the theme 'Regional, rural and remote community development'.

## Setting the Scene

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

Overall, the Project's vision is for people:

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

## Practice Framework – Community Development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Theoretical Framework – Transitions Discourse

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

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

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

### Combined Practice and Theoretical Frameworks - Commons

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

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

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

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

### The Kimberley

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

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

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

### Aboriginal Food Systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reports about Aboriginal people during the pre-colonisation era indicate they were healthy and physically lean, "*attributable to an active lifestyle and a nutrient-dense diet characterised by high protein, polyunsaturated fat, fibre and slowly digested carbohydrates*" (Ferguson et al., 2017:294). Australia appears to be 'waking up' to this recognition; as Lane from the Kimberley Institute in Broome explains, the world is starting to discover the "*ancient, sacred foods of Aboriginal Australia*" (2019:75). Further, he quotes growing scientific and commercial evidence relating to the nutritional value and medicinal and industrial potential of these foods. Consequently, many bush foods, previously considered valueless, are now being hailed as '*super foods*' (Lane, 2019), although generally post-colonial Australians remain remarkably unaware of Indigenous Australian food (Szabo, 2019). Wondering why this is so, given that Aboriginal Australians have been and continue to access and cultivate foods better adapted to the continent's temperature and environmental pressures, Szabo {2019} agrees with Lane, asserting that change is slowly emerging and is likely to "*rewrite a more authentic local and sustainable food paradigm*." 30

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

to explore the diversity and possibilities provided by our planet

### Food Sovereignty

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

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

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

### Food as Commons

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

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

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

### Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 6.2.2 Food Democracy, Justice, and Sovereignty

In this subsection I linked the themes of transitions discourses and food as commons with Aboriginal people's food democracy, justice, and sovereignty. I placed this examination within the broader research context of community development practice. I also recognised that governments that seek to have a role in this field need to move from dominant, neoliberal policy and consumerist approaches to those more consistent with Aboriginal knowledges.

## 6.3 Commoning, Food Security and Transitions Discourse

The world café research revealed considerable interest in and knowledge of Aboriginal traditional and contemporary food systems, by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. Insights I provide in this chapter include noting Australia has over 6,000 edible native food and medicine plants that have been in use by Aboriginal peoples for tens of thousands of years. This information has been regularly rejected under colonisation, to the detriment of all Australians.

The contribution of this chapter to the thesis is recognising how access to nutritious food, within ecological and justice frameworks, is essential not only for humanity but also for broader planetary inhabitants and environment. I further recognise and elaborate on the importance of food accessibility within broader local to global change activity. I frame discussion within a range of constructs including urban to remote commoning, community economics, food sovereignty, and transitions discourse – all couched within community development contexts that support ecological conversion as a transition discourse towards social and ecological change.

The final chapter, which examines the world café outcomes under the 'ecological economics' banner, follows. Case studies illustrate different facets of this approach, commencing with one relatively recent project, before I move on to describe a range of active enterprises in my community.

# 7.0 APPLIED APPROACHES – ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

In this chapter, I expand community development ways of working to incorporate ecological economics. Today's neoliberal approaches to economics involve consumption that ignores planetary boundaries and is having a devastating effect on humans and other-than-humans across the globe. There are calls from many quarters, including at the world café event, to change the way humans operate. I provide case studies of creative projects that provide strong connections between economic activity and the ecosphere, relating to intergenerational equity, acknowledging ecological limits, respect for the intrinsic value of the natural world, and reduction in consumerism. These are examples of actions that sit within the overarching term ecological economics. I include these case studies as they clearly illustrate the alternative economic paradigm Pope Francis calls for in the encyclical. Consequently this area of research is valuable, not only for local people and their projects, but also linking global to local community-initiated approaches as proposed in *Laudato Si'*, highlighting ecological economic activities that contribute to ecological conversion.

## 7.1 Engaging Ecological Economics

In this subsection I offer case studies that showcase community-based projects demonstrating ways people generate and build community social and ecological capital. I recognise these stories are regularly excluded from current state or national economic debates. I showcase local people's wonderful creativity, innovation and resilience when engaging in generating community wealth across social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and environmental structures.

### 7.1.1 Transitions stories in ecological economics from the Australian 'bush'[24]

(The published paper commences on the next page).

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## Chapter 13: Transitions stories in ecological economics from the Australian 'bush'

**Anne Jennings**

### Introduction

This chapter discusses a study that is one component of a broader project, *Kimberley Transitions*[33]. The project includes five PhD studies that cover a diverse range of themes, exploring whether: 'solutions to Kimberley problems are in Kimberley-based knowledges and ways of knowing, doing and being' (Wooltorton et al 2019 p. 4). The unifying thread through the studies is transformation to a more socially and ecologically just society for current and future generations.

Essentially, *Kimberley Transition's* vision is for people:

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

Aligned with that vision, this paper advocates for grassroots ecological economics approaches to social and ecological change. Progressives[34] are calling for change 'embedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance, and cooperation rather than hierarchy' (Klein 2019, p. 98). One place to do this, it is proposed, is by and with community - both human and non-human community (Maloney 2017; Poelina 2019; Washington & Maloney 2020). Whilst I'm concentrating on exploring activity within the human community, the non-human community is implied, recognising their intrinsic importance as encapsulated in Aboriginal 'First Law'. Poelina (2019, p. 144), a Nyikina Traditional Owner in the West Kimberley, explains First Law comprises people's relationships: 'with each other, our neighbours, and most importantly our family of non-human beings –

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[33] The Kimberley region covers the north west of Western Australia – see the 'Broome town and Kimberley region' section in this chapter.
[34] Klein's term.

animals and plants'. Washington and Maloney (2020) concur, calling for consideration of a new approach to ecological economics, one that moves from 'Nature's Contributions to People' to 'People's Contributions to Nature'. Further, the *Kimberley Transitions* process recognises the cultural beliefs and practices, intellectual life, wisdom and experiences of generations of Aboriginal people, whilst acknowledging continuing post-settlement efforts to maintain and strengthen cultural knowledges and ecological narratives (Wooltorton et al 2019).

The practice (ways of doing) framework for this paper is Community Development (CD). CD, which includes communities of intent, interest and/or geographic location, is the process whereby people organise to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Kenny 2013; Ife 2013; Muirhead 2020). Those needs can necessitate a wide range of actions to overcome social disadvantage through to climate change mitigation. As Ife (2013 p. 2) defined:

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

Overall, CD involves strengths-based approaches that:

- Begin with a focus on the strengths of community.
- Recognise that development can be community-or outsider-initiated as long as it is by the community, *for* the community.
- Build the capacity of members to drive their own development by starting with what already exists.
- Apply a social justice approach by building inclusive and resilient communities.

(Kelly et al 2017, p. 101).

**Broome town and Kimberley region**

Broome is located in the Kimberley region in the north west of Western Australia (WA), 2,240 km north of the capital city Perth. The landscape includes large areas of wilderness characterised by unspoiled deserts, semi-

arid savanna, rugged ranges, spectacular gorges and a largely isolated coastline, which is home to significant, and unique topography and biodiversity. The 2016 Census figures indicate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people make up 41.6% of the Kimberley population, compared to WA state average of 3.1%, with the total for Australia being 2.8%. The Broome town site has a permanent population of 16,000 people, which expands to around 40,000 during the peak of the tourist period, the 'dry season' - when it is winter in southern areas of the continent.

**Case Studies**

There is a call in many towns across Australia and beyond for community-based economies that can respond to concerns relating to declining local and regional economy, environment and lifestyles (Dodson et al 1999; Kenyon 2005). This can include efforts to move away from the dominant neoliberal economy to multitudes of sustainable local economies by embracing new activities such as mutual financial societies, employee-owned firms, community development and social enterprise agencies. Various scholars argue that alternative approaches should be backed by governments at all levels, to support financial shifts from transnational corporations into local efforts (e.g. Klein 2019). I recognise however that in today's political environment this is certainly challenging.

The following case studies provide examples of small-town revitalisation projects (Kenyon & Black 2001). These initiatives exhibit valuable social, economic and environmental efforts resulting in local change. The case studies provide contextual data relating to what is happening, then moving beyond the descriptive by exploring surrounding contexts and determining relevant causes and effects. This section commences with provision of a previous Broome example that commenced 50 years ago, before moving on to a diverse selection of current activities.

**Historical Case Study - Bishop Raible Cooperative**

The Bishop Raible Co-op was established in Broome during the early 1970's, at a time when criticism of both Church and government for past actions was increasing. Such criticism included lack of respect for Aboriginal language, law and social structures, and forced separation of many Aboriginal children and their natural parents (McMahon 1992). Government was then engaged in

the top-down dominant welfare system, with the Catholic Church seeking to return to the more spiritual approach, reducing hands-on practical assistance (Ibid).

The Co-op started when two local Aboriginal women successfully sold second-hand clothing to fund Kimberley people travelling to a Church Congress in Melbourne (McMahon 1992; Wood 2004). About the same time an Aboriginal man approached Fr. McMahon with an issue relating to a hire purchase agreement. The Church assisted with a loan to tide him over. This led the priest to explore raising money to lend to buyers so they could make purchases and repay the program, with no danger of having them repossessed. These two occurrences triggered the establishment of Bishop Raible Cooperative, starting with microfinance and the second-hand shop. Previously, there was no retail furniture outlet in the town so one was soon added, proving an instant success.

Formality was kept to a minimum; members paid a $10 fee and they received interest free loans. In 1974 a funeral operation was launched. At the time it was not uncommon for backhoes to be used to fill in the graves, which for Aboriginal people was culturally inappropriate, especially when mourners were still in attendance. This new service enabled the community to take control of this essential spiritual and cultural event (McMahon 1992). It was later expanded to the whole community when the other service closed down. The Co-op grew, developing Aboriginal management and became a significant employer of Aboriginal labour. Legal incorporation followed, independent from, but working closely with, the Church. A food store, named 'Mungarri' - a local Aboriginal word for food (Ibid) - was also established. As well as the town, remote Kimberley-wide communities were able to purchase goods at reasonable cost.

Fr. McMahon reviewed the project in 1992, as he was leaving Broome. He lamented Aboriginal people had not adequately benefited from employment in the broader community, as their population distribution should suggest. McMahon (1992, p. 21) felt that: 'probably the solution lies in more Aboriginal-run and -controlled enterprises which will bring direct economic benefits and employment opportunities to these people who are such a significant group in Kimberley society'. Further, he concluded (p. 18):

> My experience in Broome has led me to the deep conviction that liberation theology has much to offer the Aboriginal people. I have come to this conclusion on both practical and theoretical bases. Poor people, because they lack lines of credit, are wide open to exploitation. Poverty forces people to go without things that others take for granted.

Time moved on. By 2004 many of the Cooperative's original functions ceased, due to the growth of the town and its services - all except for the funeral service. This function was finally replaced by a new commercial one, with the Cooperative's legal status being cancelled in 2008. Local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people continue to pay tribute to the changes the Co-op made to their lives - culturally, socially, economically and practically. Overall, the Cooperative assisted in developing a community ethos based on people from mixed backgrounds working collaboratively to generate social and economic change for themselves and their wider community.

**Current Case Studies**

**Agunya Ltd.**

Agunya is a locally initiated not-for-profit (NFP) social enterprise that offers young Aboriginal people opportunities to develop practical skills and training in carpentry, building and construction, creative woodwork and related craft proficiency, plus personal development and communication skills. The enterprise has been described as a community creation franchise focused on supporting social enterprise, health, ecological sustainability, self-empowerment and equality (Agunya n.d).

Mr Andy Greig Agunya's founder, a non-Aboriginal person, works both independently and collaboratively with other organisations and businesses to upskill the young people on their journey to becoming contributing members of their communities. The organisation receives little direct government funding, usually irregular one-off grants, however many trainees are referred to Agunya from, for example, the Transition to Work program operated by *Nyamba Buru Yawuru*, the Traditional Custodians and Native Title Holders of Broome. Agunya also works closely with *Many Rivers*, a microenterprise NFP that provides support to Indigenous and other Australians who are excluded from economic involvement due to a lack of financial or practical business

support. With its partner organisations Agunya walks alongside participants to assist them achieve positive outcomes.

One example occurred in early 2018 when Broome experienced its 'wettest wet season'[35] recorded, where nearly two metres of rain from cyclones and tropical storms fell in less than two months. This resulted in majestic old trees being damaged and/or uprooted. Agunya worked closely with the local Shire Council to identify trees that were retrievable, providing valuable sources of timber. Young trainee artisans learnt to use a mobile timber mill and their skills development followed through to the point where they turned the raw product into one-off creative works of furniture and art. This is an example of the resourcefulness of this social enterprise, which also collects old cast iron agricultural and industrial machinery parts to use for inspired pieces of art, as well as in conjunction with timber to create stunning furniture (if you're in Broome check out their remarkable outside furniture at Matso's Brewery).

Agunya is now working to establish a sustainable food garden they are developing in central-Broome, to facilitate community programs aimed at alleviating anti-social behaviour and providing participants with an opportunity to engage in meaningful work. Young people who have worked with Agunya over the last couple of years will not only assist, using their increased skills base, in its establishment but will also mentor new participants in the project.

**Saltwater Country Inc.**

Saltwater Country is a NFP community organisation founded by Ms Cara Peek, a Yawuru/Bunuba (Broome/Fitzroy Crossing) Traditional Owner. The project vision is to empower young Aboriginal people to improve their social, emotional and economic wellbeing. The group, involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in its organisation, uses the sport of rodeo as a change making tool to create opportunities for trainees. Strength-based approaches are treated as rites of passage for young Aboriginal people, using rodeo as the medium to train, work and compete together - showing the world what they can do. Saltwater Country is especially committed to assisting participants to be their best selves, in a culturally appropriate and relevant way (Saltwater

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[35] How local people describe it.

Country n.d).

This approach builds on the symbolic power of the Aboriginal cowboy in remote Australia, a position of strength, where the freedom of the cowboy can reflect freedom for Aboriginal people and their communities, assisting them find their own way (Saltwater Country n.d.). The group's major rodeo is held annually in Broome, attracting more than 100 Aboriginal competitors from across the Kimberley. The organisation is also establishing the *Saltwater Academy* to operate clinics for Bull Riders, involving young and older participants and facilitated by a three-time world champion who travels from Brazil to share his knowledge and experience from the elite, world class level. *Saltwater Eats* has likewise been created to train young Aboriginal people in the events hospitality industry. In addition, Saltwater Country has connected with a local Aboriginal radio and television NFP company, Goolarri Media, to produce *Saltwater Stories*. Those stories capture the excitement and passion of young people involved in rodeo, building on the legacy left by previous Aboriginal stock men and women.

To enhance her role in Saltwater Country Ms Cara Peek was awarded a 2019 Churchill Fellowship. This involved travelling overseas to learn from First Nation and African American owners of rodeo circuits in both North and South America, investigating the social outcomes that result from involvement in those events (Waddell 2019, p. 9). Further, Cara was awarded the Western Australian Rural Women's Award in April 2020, receiving a business development financial award to further the establishment of the Saltwater Academy project. She will represent WA in the Australian award finals later this year.

**Broome Courthouse Markets**

Broome Courthouse Markets (n.d) is a project of a NFP association that comprises market stallholders. They manage and promote local endeavours and events that are staged at weekend and evening markets. Notably 'profits' generated from this source are annually distributed to community groups, encouraging community responses to locally identified needs around the town.

As well as providing opportunities for local artists, craftspeople and others, Broome Markets also organises regular 'Youth Markets'. Young people (under 18 with the support of adults) are encouraged to unleash their

creativity, use their talents and test their ideas through the provision of promotion and availability of market stalls. This also allows outcomes from initiatives at schools, and with youth groups, to follow through to create greater public exposure and point of sale opportunities. Others who utilise the Markets to promote and/or sell their products include various Aboriginal artists; NGOs including Agunya, Environs Kimberley and Broome Bird Observatory; Kimberley Wild Gubinge (local Aboriginal name for Kakadu Plum), and of course pearls, to name just a few.

Broome also has a significant multicultural population, with many people being dependents of earlier pearling families who came to Broome from neighbouring countries to the north of Australia. Meals offered at their food stalls at the Markets provide evidence of this by way of delicious cultural cuisine, which not only attracts tourist patronage but also strong, continued support from local residents year round. Who needs multinational takeaways when we have this in our own 'backyard'!

**Theatre Kimberley**

The arts have long been associated with community development, economic viability and sustainability. NFP Theatre Kimberley (n.d) has an exemplary history in this area. One of their major annual activities is '*Worn Art'*, an extravaganza of costumes, storytelling and dance. The wearable art event is an exceptional drawcard with exotic costumes, made from recycled materials, reflecting Broome's diverse artistic and cultural population, telling tales from the early pearling industry years in Broome. Theatre Kimberley also established and facilitates the Sandfly Circus, where young people are trained in circus arts. Their major show for 2019 was the '*Circus Rabbie – To Save the Planet'!* The main prop was a shopping trolley and the rubbish collected in it, with young acrobats displaying amazing circus while visually telling the story.

The group also presented the *Shorebird Quest* last year– which involved an evening outdoor show with giant illuminated puppets, made by volunteer attendees at local workshops. This provided stunning recognition of overseas and local birds and other wildlife, particularly from the waters of the Roebuck Bay. Created in conjunction with the Parks and Wildlife Department and the Yawuru Rangers, the show was held along the foreshore of Broome's

Roebuck Bay. The Bay, which has 330 bird species verified and recorded, is also an international RAMSAR[36] migratory bird site (Broome Bird Observatory n.d). The artistic Shorebird Quest highlighted the life of the small wader birds who travel 5,000 kms to Broome each year to produce young, and fly home to Siberia and China – flying without touching the ground. This year (2020) 20,780 of these birds were counted leaving to fly that amazing distance, providing spectators an incredible visual display of nature at its finest.

**Kimberley Community Scheme**

A unique local project involves a collaboration between the Western Australian government entity, Water Corporation and service organisation, the Lions Club of Broome. It involves the Water Corporation diverting treated wastewater to a property not far from town, where it is utilised to irrigate tropical Rhodes Grass for hay production. The hay is then sold on locally. Profits generated go into the Kimberley Community Grants scheme, jointly managed by the Corporation and Lions Club.

Funds are dispersed annually, to:

> ➢ Support the long-term vitality of the Kimberley.

> ➢ Build appreciation of nature and awareness of the preciousness of water.

> ➢ Provide the opportunity for community to identify and respond to local issues.

> ➢ Empower the community to take an active role in improving their quality of life.

> ➢ Foster community involvement and wellbeing.

Since its inception in 2016 the program has funded a total of $185,807 to the Kimberley region (Water Corporation n.d). Projects that received funding include:

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[36] RAMSAR = The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

- Mowanjum Aboriginal Art and Cultural Centre (Derby) – for the Song Weavers Water Project, to bring the community together to share stories about the preciousness of water and its cultural value.

- Broome Bird Observatory – to install a solar power system for their new RAMSAR interpretive public education centre.

- Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation (on Dampier Peninsular near Broome) – to promote healthy eating and community connectedness by providing fruit trees to community families to care for, harvest and enjoy.

- Broome PCYC[37] – to support working with at risk youth to build and maintain an edible and waterwise garden.

- Society for Kimberley Indigenous Plants and Animals – to showcase at community events the diverse range of bush foods and native plants endemic to the area, and

- Broome Primary School – to promote inclusion by installing 'buddy benches' around the school and work with an Aboriginal artist to develop artwork around the concept of *belonging*.

**Discussion and Way Forward**

Can local, bottom-up community efforts make a difference to society and the environment that supports it, given the global challenges we have before us? Klein (2019), recognising the exploitation of people and planet, strongly advocates for international structural change. She does (p. 134) however acknowledge that: '[t]his is not to belittle local ... Local is critical. Local organizing is winning big fights'. Notably, she concludes (p. 135) it is: 'not that one sphere is more important than the other'.

People and their associated communities in these case studies answer that call. Their creativity and tenacity clearly identify them as active shapers of their stories and history. The case studies have demonstrated practical approaches

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[37] Police & Citizens Youth Club.

that enable change. The Bishop Raible Cooperative rejected the conservative approach held by both government and the Church at the time and opted for a solidarity and liberation agenda to cater for local needs. Overall autonomy and self-reliance laid the foundation for later community social and economic activities in Broome.

Agunya and Saltwater Country hold similar aims when catering for young Aboriginal people. Their distinctive approaches are in line with the theory presented by Bessarab and Forrest (2017), which is that of the 'third space'. This is a space where cultures intersect, while focusing on commonalities. These project's outcomes are unique, from Agunya salvaging 'dead' or damaged trees and repurposing them into distinctive furniture while engaged in skill development, to Saltwater Country urging participants to develop resilience as well as quality health and fitness via competitive rodeo activity. The end result in both cases is trainees that are involved in creating their own positive futures. Other outcomes include Agunya reusing and reinventing damaged and/or rejected natural and industrial resources, within a context of justice for both human and non-humans alike. In addition, Saltwater Country's involvement in creating intergenerational equity, whilst encouraging healthy people, healthy animals and a healthy economy, demonstrates knowledge of ecological limits in their region.

Both Broome Courthouse Markets and Theatre Kimberley contribute to the local economy, via interconnected local systems. The Markets provide strong support for local artisans and youth while stimulating their community and economic prospects; while Theatre Kimberley, with its extravaganza productions, promotes interdependence between shore birds (non-humans) and humans, via portraying the migratory story. The Broome Courthouse Markets also stimulate creative social and economic exchange by, for example, being an outlet for household and small enterprise production, through to providing opportunities for local NFP volunteers to share their stories to a broad audience. Overall the Markets demonstrate both monetary and non-monetary actions are economic, not separated from community, and are valuable. Theatre Kimberley's outcomes are similar, as they visibly demonstrate making more with less, and promote the value of both art and culture to the human populace, while supporting decreased consumerism and demonstrating the intrinsic value of the natural world.

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Added to that, the Kimberley Community Scheme illustrates how government and a community organisation can establish inventive, successful partnerships. This is quite unique, especially given the Water Corporation is not only a government entity, but specifically a business-for-profit venture of the state government. Overall, while projects drew on local settings and material resources; human creativity, relationships and collaboration are key to the emergence of locally instigated change projects that support healthy living within health ecosystems.

I believe these cases have much in common with Trainer and Alexander (2019), who argue for a post-growth and post-capitalist economy by transitioning to a 'Simpler Way'. An integrated Simpler Way economy, they maintain, has the potential to generate sustainability, economic justice and quality of life. Processes adopted include commons assets and vision, sharing of surpluses, mutual assistance, small social enterprises and economies based around crafts and home food production. Society, they envisage, can then transcend the current growth paradigm, and encourage positive pathways that involve expanded mutuality and reciprocity (Ibid).

So - where to from here? It is understood other communities are undertaking similar actions; however they are often stand-alone efforts that lack opportunities to share ideas and experiences. Consequently there is little opportunity for peer support and sharing of ideas and practices, nor for collective growth of this promising sector. There is now a call for them to unite. The *Global Tapestry of Alternatives*[38] seeks to establish networks and alliances amongst Simpler Way type enterprises. The process begins with interaction between local projects, moving on to the regional, national and then the global scale. It is:

> … about **creating spaces of collaboration and exchange**, in order to learn about and from each other, critically challenge each other, offer active solidarity to each other whenever needed, interweave the initiatives in common actions, give them visibility to inspire other people to create their own initiatives and to go further along existing paths or forge new ones that strengthen alternatives wherever they are, **until the point in which the critical mass of alternative ways can**

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[38] See www.globaltapestryofalternatives.org

> **create the conditions for the radical systemic challenges we need.**
> (my emphasis)
>
> (Kothari et al 2019, pp. 339-340).

Rose (2018, p. 201) challenges us by asking:

> Are we going to be active shapers of our own history and creative narrators of our own stories? Or are we going to be passive observers, spectators of the historical process as it is written and shaped by the currently dominant actors?

This paper shows that small groups of community activists can undoubtedly contribute towards improved outcomes for both current and future human and nonhumans living in our common home (Pope Francis 2015). The people introduced through these case studies aim to live within, and promote, ecological limits. Indeed, hope for a sustainable future involves grassroots activities just like these.

As anthropologist Margaret Mead (n.d) clearly articulated:

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

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### 7.1.3 Ecological Economics highlighting Ethos of Self-help

In this subsection I referred to a broad range of community projects developed under the ecological economics banner. They demonstrated local peoples' contribution to the 'wealth' of their communities economically, ecologically, and socially. Their actions not only highlight practitioners' high levels of creativity - they also exhibit interdependence within and between projects and community. This activity strengthens the value of cooperation and inter-connectedness, as portrayed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. I recognise the value of locally informed wisdom resulting in innovative activities within local communities. The case studies are essentially aligned with the "the cry of the earth and cry of the poor" (Pope Francis, 2015a, #49). My examination not only underscores invaluable outcomes, but importantly highlights the community ethos of self-help that actions engender.

In the next subsection I further develop one of the ecological economics case studies included in the previous publication - The Agunya Project. This work highlights the wide-ranging benefits one locally initiated project can realise within internationally informed community development practice standards.

## 7.2 Expanding one Case Study - Agunya Social Enterprise

In this subsection I add to the story of Agunya described in the previous section. I link this not-for-profit social enterprise's activities with the IACD's International Standards for Community Development (2018). This enables me to contextualise Agunya's core values of Indigenous knowledges, sustainable development, climate justice, empowerment, participatory democracy, diversity, and social equity which directly aligns with IACD's global community development practice themes – essential components of my thesis' theory and practice.

### 7.2.1 The Agunya Project[25]

(Published paper commences over the page in unpublished format as awaiting receipt of the book)

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[25] Publication details:

Jennings, A., & Grieg, A. (2021). Case Study 4 – Australia: The Agunya Project. In C. McConnell, D. Muia and A. Clarke. (Eds). *International Community Development Practice* (pp. 46-48). Routledge.

Contribution of Author – 80%          Contribution of Co-author – 20%.

Publication released a week before this thesis was submitted.

**The Agunya Project**

In the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, Indigenous people, and more specifically young Indigenous men, have been severely disadvantaged in their efforts to attain positive training and employment opportunities (AIHW, 2021). The Agunya project was established to upskill young Indigenous men in a wide range of areas including building construction, carpentry, creative arts, machinery usage, and communication/self-development, as well as expanding participant's competences into mentor roles. As a social enterprise it generates 60% of its own income, with over 90% of products being fashioned from recycled materials. The benefit to the community is extensive.

The core values within this project include using Indigenous knowledges, beliefs, and expectations from within their communities, while at the same time the project recognized the values of Western 'colonization' are still impacting Indigenous people. Consequently, the project included bringing the Elders together with non-Indigenous people to assess current activities and provide knowledge and direction to direct future pathways. We adopted a commitment to equity and human rights, along with other values including social and economic rights and individual and community empowerment for transformational change.

For years Andy Greig, an experienced building/construction professional living and working in remote Indigenous communities in Australia, grappled with culturally and environmentally inappropriate (design and materials) housing - as well as lack of employment and skills development for young people, given many Indigenous communities may only have one shop, others none and most services are provided fly in-fly out by external agencies. Andy undertook a Diploma in Community Development and became the practitioner supporting the Elders to devise a collective response. This led to Agunya, a not-for-profit social enterprise, being formed to engage in ecological community and economic development projects.

Agunya commenced working with small, remote Indigenous Community Governing Councils on housing projects, training local people through practical skills application. Those trained then undertake ongoing repair works within their

own communities. Agunya also established a central training venue, creating opportunities for more trainees and for collaboration with more organizations.

The project contributors undertake detailed carpentry out of recycled timber as well as old cast iron machinery parts.  Overall recycled products account for 90% of production materials, with some timber coming from trees uprooted during cyclones, to make stunning one-off creative works of furniture and original art.

Agunya is now establishing a sustainable food garden to assist programs aimed at alleviating anti-social behaviour, with support being offered to new participants by a group of current trainees. They are also setting up a new project supporting young men returning home from juvenile detention centres thousands of kms away. Agunya's previous participants are being trained as peer mentors for the new project, to bring about maximum benefit to all involved.

**What works/worked well:**

- Linking values and practices through to outcomes - participants were encouraged to continually discuss their values and reviewing their work on completion, within those values. This has been a totally new approach for most of them, which they have reported back as having high personal value.
- Engaging communities by building and maintaining relationships – for many young people this was the first time they had engaged with the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous community as many come from small Indigenous-only communities (many under 200 people). From an often-frightened start they moved forward building and maintaining relationships that have the potential to both assist Agunya's professional approach and to personally build confidence and skills.
- Organizing for change, while delivering practices that recognize and respect diversity, and then evaluating activity to inform future practice. As participants moved through the program, at their individual pace, they realized their own worth and skills (which many articulated came as a surprise to them) as well as respecting both cultural and skill-based diversity. They then contributed significantly to the project's strategic direction, thus informing Agunya's future practice.

**Challenges included:**

- Establishing a new, innovative project that does not 'fit' existing values systems takes time, as a strategy of community education was required and enacted. Then it takes time to develop value-based relationships with other like-minded community organizations who contribute to, as well as benefit from, this program.

- In addition, developing new funding/income stream arrangements for innovative activities created 'outside-the-box' was quite demanding and took the community development practitioner away from other roles.

- A challenge for the project instigator, Andy, related to working within trauma informed and culturally sensitive spaces, which meant he had to 'carry on regardless' without showing his emotions when participants had disturbances in their lives. This he found exhausting, and it pointed to the importance of setting up personal support/debriefing systems early in a project – which is now being addressed.

- And, of course, COVID-19. After being shut down for seven months, Agunya arrived at a point where it was about to close – however thanks to a philanthropic contribution the rent was covered. Agunya is now back on track, slowly but surely.



Table crafted by trainees from fallen trees and metal retrieved from a rubbish dump.

**Learning and Future Plans**

This whole project has been continual development and learning (often on the run), however after six active, roller coaster years it is now at the point where it can consolidate, reflect on experiences and learnings, and move forward. This chapter was co-written by Anne Jennings, (University of Notre Dame Australia PhD candidate). She reported on how the project's values encompass:

a) Participative democracy – as the young people involved develop active participation in planning and decision-making;

b) Sustainable development and climate justice – with the demonstrated 90% use of recycled materials, within a social and climate justice framework;

c) Equity and human rights – respecting participants dignity and ensuring positive opportunities;

d) Social and economic justice – combining the points above, undertaking collective action that challenges injustice, poverty, inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion; and

e) Empowerment – with Agunya working collectively with participants in ways that values lived experience, builds on existing strengths and supports the development of understanding, knowledge and skills, contributing to greater participation and collective action.

This empowerment process is key to the establishment and continual expansion of activities and diversity of activity within the project – without which Agunya would have become another project that tried, but could not produce, the creative outcomes required to bring about distinctive social change in the lives of participants. To keep this on track, Andy and the community management committee have devised a three-year strategy, continuing to mentor a group of young men to the point where they will take on full responsibility for the project, supported by their Elders and other community organizations and collaborations.

**7.2.2 Interconnected Social and Economic Justice Activity**

In this subsection I described the Agunya project. Through this process I illustrate the extent of social and ecological benefits that can be achieved when undertaking a project within a community development framework that highlights collaboration and interconnectedness. Consequently, I found this project

demonstrates participative democracy, sustainable development, equity, social and economic justice for those involved. These are closely aligned with the ecological guidance (both spiritual and secular) offered in *Laudato Si'*.

## 7.3 Applied Grassroots Ecological Economics Actions

The contribution of this chapter to the thesis is to expand practice activity by embracing ecological economics practices as they are aligned to community development and *Laudato Si'*. The resultant outcomes demonstrate thinking globally and acting locally, where local benefits can then contribute to global change. Applied practical actions are then considered as steps on the pathway to ecological conversion. I illustrate how people and organisations can reflect on past experiences and build on previous learnings and successes to develop new community-initiated and driven projects. The case studies I have incorporated here range from an Aboriginal project using rodeo as a platform for social change through to a project based on recycling/reusing materials normally destined for landfill rubbish dumps. Overall, this chapter contributes to understandings that current economic activities, based on depletion of the planet's resources and overconsumption, can be addressed and reversed locally when participants adopt ecological economic actions linked to an ecological conversion pathway.

Having presented a range of recent h4333istorical and current case studies this research now reviews the endeavours reported here, including assigning details and outcomes to the *Laudato Si' Action Platform*, with its related *Laudato Si'* Goals as presented by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (2020), in collaboration with Pope Francis. I compare data and contents from my research when appraising the research question, with the view to generating debate leading to conclusions.

## 8.0 APPLICATION TO LAUDATO SI' GOALS

In this chapter, I apply my research to the seven *Laudato Si'* Goals by addressing each goal individually, reviewing them against findings I have recorded in the papers presented in this thesis. I identify where practice measured against the goals not only highlights connections as they apply to the research question but also demonstrates the importance of community when addressing the urgent social and ecological issues affecting both humans and other-than-humans on our planet today.

*Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* is the first papal encyclical entirely devoted to the crisis of our planetary home (Global Catholic Climate Movement, n.d.). It is a powerful call for everyone of good will to protect people who are marginalised and disempowered, and to urgently undertake measures against the environmental injustice being exerted on our common home. Importantly, this also includes other-than-human inhabitants of planet Earth. In 2015, when *Laudato Si'* was released, the UN announced its *2030 Agenda*, allotting seventeen SDGs for global change. Later that year the Paris Climate Summit (COP21) prepared a global plan to tackle climate change. Subsequently the climate crisis received global acknowledgement by those agencies calling for global, national, and local change. Transformation that restricts unsustainable behaviours and promotes ecological virtues, leading to reflective ecological conversion, has been called for by Pope Francis (2015a; 2015b).

When speaking at the UN Pope Francis told the General Assembly:

> First, it must be stated that a true 'right of the environment' does exist, for two reasons. First, because we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. … Any harm done to the environment … is harm done to humanity. Second, because every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures (Pope Francis, 2015b, p. 2).

Five years after the launch of *Laudato Si',* the Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development at the Vatican introduced the '*Laudato Si'* Action Platform' (2020), a seven-year plan identifying key change maker institutions and areas for transformation (2020).

Laudato Si' Action Platform

The groups and organisations specifically identified to carry out the *Laudato Si'* goals include families, dioceses, school, hospitals/health care centres, businesses including agricultural farms, and religious orders, as illustrated in **Figure 5**, above. Their task is to journey towards integral ecology[26] within a seven-year timeframe. Importantly the action platform also includes *Laudato Si'* Goals to promote, undertake and record integral ecology advances. In common with the Sustainable Development Goals in the UN *2030 Agenda*, these goals offer both a vision for change as well as scope for strategies that focus on challenges and identifies pathways to accelerate socio-ecological transformation at all levels.

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[26] As described by Ormerod and Vanin (2016) in this thesis's Literature Review, under 'United Nations *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si''*.

## 8.1 Laudato Si' Goals

The following **Figure 6** illustrates the Seven *Laudato Si* Goals:

**Figure 6. Seven Laudato Si' Goals**

The *Laudato Si'* Goals call for:

1. Response to the **Cry of the Earth,** including through greater use of renewable energy, reducing fossil fuels, protection of biodiversity and attention to vulnerable groups like Indigenous communities and adults and children at risk through slavery.
2. Response to the **Cry of the Poor**, defending and supporting human life, protection of other forms of life on Earth, and again special attention to vulnerable groups including migrants.
3. **Ecological Economics**, involving sustainable production, Fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, and divestment of economic activity harmful to the planet.
4. Adoption of **Simple Lifestyles**, with examples including sobriety in the use of resources and energy, avoiding single-use plastic, a more plant-based diet and avoiding polluting modes of transportation.
5. **Ecological Education**, aimed at re-thinking and re-designing educational curricula and institutional support that emphasises the spirit of integral ecology, and creating ecological awareness and action.
6. **Ecological Spirituality** that emphasises recovering a spiritual vision of God's creation, encouraging greater contact with the natural world and promotion of creation-centred liturgical celebrations and ecological retreats.
7. Emphasis on **Community Involvement and Participatory Action**, caring for creation at all levels, including local and regional, promoting advocacy, and encouraging positive actions within local regional ecosystems (based on the Dicastery for Promotion of Integral Human Development, 2020).

Community development theory, practice and case studies have been considered throughout this research. Not all examples presented responded directly to *Laudato* Si,' nevertheless their response to locally identified needs to initiate change within the physical and social environment aligns with both *Laudato Si'* and community development principles.

The case studies presented in the papers comprising my thesis are considered below in the context of the seven goals of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (2020):

**Cry of the Earth**
Both the UN's *2030 Agenda* (Chapter 2.1[27]) and *Laudato Si'* (Chapter 2.2) point to severe social and ecological destruction of Earth, and urgently call for people to change their lifestyles to reduce climate damage. *Laudato Si's* Cry of the Earth recognises the human roots of the ecological crisis, particularly from those residing in the global north, and the subsequent need to change the ways we care for our common home.

This strong message was recognised at the world café qualitative research event (Chapter 5). Participants emphasised the importance of spirituality as a general notion, and for some a Christian concept (Chapters 3 and 4), calling for a deeper connection between people and place as a step towards humanity changing damaging habits. Suggested change included critically acknowledging settler people's colonisation history, seeking alternative energy sources, undertaking ocean clean-ups in the local Bay and relationship building to support other local activity to protect biodiversity. The ecological benefits of people growing and sharing their food is covered in Chapter 6.1, with 6.2 recognising Aboriginal people's food systems highlight traditional and contemporary knowledge and science and their responsibilities as custodians of Country.

Chapter 7's case studies of ecological economics also highlight the Cry of the Earth. Projects that contribute to change include the Kimberley Community Scheme that involves diverting treated town sewage wastewater from flowing into Roebuck Bay, using it to irrigate fodder and create income generated from hay sales, which are subsequently lodged into a community fund. These funds in turn are granted to community organisations to undertake projects including growing

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[27] All the chapters referred to in this section relate to this thesis.

community gardens and fruit trees in remote Aboriginal communities, sharing knowledge and stories about the preciousness of water and its cultural value, and for a solar power energy system for an international bird sanctuary's infrastructure.

The case study of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council in Chapter 4 unites Aboriginal spirituality and culture with ecological stewardship, framed around values and ethics of co-management and co-existence between people and planet – answering the call for Cry of the Earth.

**Cry of the Poor**
The Cry of the Poor supports human life as well as protection of other forms of life on Earth. Of note is the case study in Chapter 3, which depicts the not-for-profit Centacare Kimberley project. It was established to deliver services that positively contribute to society so people can enjoy social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing free from poverty and discrimination, within culturally sensitive constructs. The resultant activities demonstrate "everything is interconnected and that genuine care for our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice, and faithfulness to others" (Pope Francis, 2015a, #70). This case study also links Cry of the Earth with Cry of the Poor.

Chapter 4 describes professional approaches of both social work and community development as they relate to marginalised and disempowered people. The foundation for social work resides in person-centred approaches for *individuals*, their families and at times their broader community; while community development involves *collective* approaches to facilitate locally identified changes, typically involving the people themselves. Those areas clearly work to alleviate issues relating to the Cry of the Poor. Whilst the two fields serve different purposes, this research has found a shift is emerging, particularly in relation to social work. It is aimed at re-orienting care activities to include recognition of animals, ecosystems, and planet earth's intrinsic worth (Boulet & Hawkins, 2021). There is a long way to go, yet importantly the transformative path has begun. Community development has been slowly moving towards this enlightened approach since post-World War 11. In part, credit for this can go to its early formation that not only included social welfare but also other areas of activity including involvement in agriculture, small-scale industries, and formation of local co-operatives.

**Ecological Economics**

Ecological economics involving sustainable production, ethical consumption and investments is another *Laudato Si'* goal. Areas in this theme emerged throughout the world café process. This included discussion relating to the Incredible Edible Broome project incorporating local food sharing (Chapter 6.1) and the proposal for a Local Exchange Trading System (LETS), a community currency project (Chapter 5). Those activities demonstrate how local people mobilise the non-monetary 'wealth' of their community through food provisioning, practices of commoning, and ethical monetary measures.

Ways of creating local wealth are not new to my town of Broome. An example of a recent historical project, initiated in the early 1970s, is detailed in Chapter 7.1. It describes a co-operative that emerged because of needs in the community, resulting in activation of a broad range of projects. They include provision of microfinance, recycled clothes shop, culturally appropriate funeral service, furniture shop, and a food co-op. The Bishop Raible Cooperative project assisted in developing a community ethos involving people from mixed cultural and spiritual backgrounds working collaboratively to generate economic, social, and ecological change for themselves, and their wider community.

Additional current ecological economics projects recorded in Chapter 7.1 include the Agunya project which undertakes personal and skills training and development with young unemployed Aboriginal men, using over 90% recycled materials to produce creative art and furniture pieces. Chapter 7.2 further elaborates on this project. Others described in 7.2 include Saltwater Country, a not-for-profit training and development program aimed at empowering young Aboriginal people to enhance their social, emotional, and economic wellbeing through the provision of the sport of rodeo, a truly unique project. The Broome Courthouse Markets, Theatre Kimberley and the Kimberley Community Scheme are also included here, demonstrating local, bottom-up community and economic development activity. The examples illustrate how monetary and non-monetary actions are ecological, not separated from community or the natural environment, and are inherently valuable.

**Simple Lifestyles**

*Laudato Si'* supports people living simple lifestyles, as presented in Chapter 2.2. This section argues that humans should be reflecting, promoting, and adopting ecological approaches that curb unsustainable practices – a road to ecological conversion. This approach emphasises the value of simple lifestyles, including contemplating Indigenous peoples' spiritual and cultural approaches to caring for Country that does not lead to degeneration of lands nor rampant industrial development and greed.

The necessity of adopting simple lifestyles was articulated by participants in the world café event (Chapter 5). The importance of place-based endeavours is highlighted, including local food co-operatives, social enterprises, local markets, growing and sharing locally grown food, volunteering in the community, and the preparation, processing, and customs connected to Aboriginal bush foods. It also emphasises the importance and value of rivers and water to more-than-human biodiversity.

The case studies in Chapter 6.1 address post-settler examples of local food production and associated sharing projects, with Chapter 6.2 covering Indigenous bush foods production and sharing. These are examples of positive food system commoning. As noted, they involve interactions of sharing and collaboration; connection and interdependence; nurturing and care for people and other inhabitants on this planet; and a diversity of approaches to living simply. One way to support this offered by *Laudato Si'* is to opt for non-consumerist models of life, moving from misguided anthropocentrism towards earth-centred lifestyles, ensuring our environment is safe for future generations.

Chapter 7.1 contributes additional case studies that point to living simply and obtaining goods locally. Broome Courthouse Markets promote locally produced goods, services and food products and as noted, the Kimberley Community Scheme creatively adopts a circular economy process to benefit the whole community by funding and support promoting the adoption of simpler lifestyles.

**Ecological Education**

As documented in Chapter 2.2, ecological education is a key theme covered in *Laudato Si'*. It calls for transformative education relating to our common home. Post-school community based ecological learning is integrated throughout this thesis, particularly within the case studies presented. Stories portrayed showcase transformation as they cultivate ecological awareness (learning) with the action (doing), key components of community development theory and practice and reflected in *Laudato Si.*

Community based ecological education recognises learning approaches need to be adapted in parallel with continuous changes within communities, to wholly appreciate the challenges and needs of those seeking new or expanded knowledge (Saepudin & Mulyono, 2019). Community, then, is important when supporting and applying grassroots approaches to educational advances, not necessarily waiting for external help (Chapter 6.1).

This approach draws together community engagement, education, and social awareness and interactions that are mutually beneficial and are consistent with UNESCO's educational goals. Those goals are fundamentally linked to community development, as described in Chapter 2.1, and involve "learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together" which are "a necessity in the midst of the challenges of today's global crisis" (Saepudin & Mulyono, 2019, p. 64). Additional ways of facilitation of ecological education linked to this research includes having thesis chapters made available in publications that are easily accessed by community members and workers, volunteers and paid alike.

The importance of life-long learning approaches was reinforced at the world café (Chapter 5), reflected in the major themes identified: ecological economics, spirituality, sharing Aboriginal aspirations, food sovereignty, and place-based community development practices (noted in all chapters). Without post-school place-based learning, communities often struggle to establish the ecological and societal transformational change they seek.

**Ecological Spirituality**

Ecological spirituality is a major theme in *Laudato Si'* and is cited in the world café report (Chapter 5) and other sections presented in this research, particularly Chapter 3. Chapter 2.2 provides background details of the encyclical and presents

recent history of the Church's teachings relating the world's ecological interdependence, noting some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly human initiated and global. *Laudato Si's* teachings are summarised, pointing to the need for ecological responsibility that impedes unsustainable pursuits and promotes environmental virtues that can lead to insightful ecological conversion.

That approach involves integral ecology, a discourse that amalgamates environmental, economic, and social ecologies, and is now included in Catholic Social Teaching (see Chapter 3). It encourages peoples' understanding and development of human dignity, care for our common home, justice, solidarity, and planetary sustainability. Chapter 3, *Rural parishes responding practically to the global agenda*, combines spirituality and ecological practices that promote caring and nurturing ourselves and our common home. It emphasises the interconnectedness of all creation and postulates that Judeo-Christian traditions of 'dominion' do not give people the right to control or destroy Earth. Moreover, this chapter connects activities applicable to practical theology, the 'theology of practice'. It involves people in their everyday lives undertaking transformational activity to instigate change. Actioning practical theology, it is proposed, is also practical application of community development.

Chapter 4 notes international research found the social work profession is beginning to incorporate the natural and build environment alongside that of social justice. Further, the case study of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council in Chapter 4 merges Aboriginal spirituality and culture with ecological stewardship, framed around the values and ethics of co-management and co-existence between people and all living creatures and formations on this planet.

**Community Involvement and Participatory Action**
Community involvement and participatory action has been a significant component of my PhD research. As previously noted, Incredible Edible Broome, illustrated in Chapter 6.1, is an exemplary example of community in locally community initiated, owned and facilitated projects. The list of collaborators and partners actively involved with this group is around twenty local community and business organisations. Activities undertaken result in people enjoying tasty, in-season and relatively pesticide free food and reduction in 'food miles' (kilometres).

This is important given most consumables travel 2,300 kilometres by road from city markets to the town, resulting in produce deteriorating on the journey.

Environmental consequences of food miles include excessive carbon emissions and other forms of degradation using the earth's non-renewable resources. In contrast, *Laudato Si'* (2015a) highlights the value of small-scale food production systems that use a modest quantity of land and produce less waste, whilst favouring production diversity.

Other case studies demonstrate similar community involvement, participation and positive outcomes – all mobilising the wealth of the community through their projects and the relationships of mutual responsibility between humans and nature. One clear way to support this promoted in the encyclical is opting for non-consumerist lifestyles.

*Laudato Si'* clearly reinforces the importance of community. Pope Francis urges people not to overlook the complexities of local issues that "must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds" (2015a, #291). That represents the core of community development theory and practice and the cornerstone of the case studies captured here.

This is consistent with the views expressed by the IACD when highlighting significant inequities in the impact of climate change felt by vulnerable and marginalised communities. While acknowledging "one size cannot and will not fit all" IACD calls for community development practices that "ensure fair, just and equitable social, economic and environmental development based on climate justice, respect for biodiversity, the protection of our natural environment and all life on earth" (IACD, 2021, p 2).

## 8.2 Stewardship in Caring for Our Common Home

In this chapter I focus on linking separate thesis chapters' key elements to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and related goals. I do this by combining spirituality with community and ecological practices. I move the narrative away from neoliberal social, economic, and ecological activity detrimental to our planet to approaches supporting caring for our common home, justice, solidarity, and planetary stewardship. The approach undertaken also reveals faith-based

approaches to sustainability are consistent with those of secular community endeavours, global to local.

This chapter contributes a summary of key elements of this thesis against the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, recognising the role of faith/beliefs/spirituality in environmental deliberations. From that basis my conclusions will explore if community involvement can embrace ecological participatory actions that result in movement towards ecological conversion.

I will now finalise this thesis by presenting an overview of the content in relation to the research question. It commences by presenting details of limitations and strengths in relation to my study, then moves to offer recommendations for future directions in this field of research.

# 9.0 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.

## 9.1 Thesis Review

This final chapter synthesises key components of the study and draws the thesis together. It overviews the thesis and concludes it. I commence with a brief overview of the research content, then report on the limitations and strengths of this qualitative research project. Next, I discuss the outcomes of the research within the context of the research question, *'How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'* The findings demonstrate how *Laudato Si'* aligns with community development practice that fosters ecological conversion. Further research directions are then offered for continuing this work.

My research commenced by exploring the UNs *2030 Agenda* and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si',* adopting the preceding strategy for my study based on the encyclical's portrayal of spirituality, cooperation, shared visions, collective activity and outcomes. I point to community development as the missing ingredient in striving for sustainability, applying a grassroots approach that supports reducing the social and ecological crisis facing us today.

Relevant socio-ecological, spiritual and faith activity was explored within a transitioning context. This relates to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, their culture, beliefs, and practices. The qualitative research method, world café, was utilised to identify content for most of this research. This process was adopted, recognising local people are the holders of valuable insights and lived experiences that contribute to visioning a positive future for their locality. Significantly, participants clearly identified the importance of including humans and other-than-humans purview in this research.

Using the themes identified during the world café event I presented case studies that demonstrate local food growing and sharing, both pre-colonisation and post-settlement. This includes covering Aboriginal peoples' knowledge and coexistence with land, rivers, plants and animals, and settler Australian's self-help approaches to local food cultivation and food sharing. These activities are shown to contribute to non-monetary 'wealth', nested within a community development framework. Added to this is ecological economics, providing models that demonstrate local

economic activity - actions that acknowledge ecological limits, respect for the intrinsic value of the natural world, and reductions in consumerism.

My research concludes by linking the information portrayed to the *Laudato Si'* goals, highlighting community development practices that contribute to caring for our common home. These include socio-ecological justice, solidarity, and planetary stewardship – participatory actions, I maintain, that can lead to ecological conversion.

To begin, the next segment covers strengths and limitations associated with this research, before initiating the assessment.

### 9.1.1 Limitations

A major unforeseen limitation when commencing this study was the global pandemic, COVID-19 starting in early 2020. Consequently, my planned mapping exercise of personal contact with social, economic, and environmental projects within and by my local parish in Broome became unattainable. This is noted in Chapter 3 *Faith Approaches to Ecological Transition*. To realise this task, I revised the method and completed it through literature reviews of relevant projects and organisations, including my local knowledge. As a parish community member, I hope to be able to complete the original task in the future, using qualitative research methods.

A further limitation was my initial plan to interview staff and students involved in the Broome campus of The University of Notre Dame Australia on ways they could become involved in projects that reflect teachings in *Laudato Si'*. Given the campus closed down and many did not return in my research timeframe I will be addressing this area in my planned post-graduate research.

I recognise my research exclusively involved participants from within my own locality which some might call a limitation, however this did not seem to be the case.

### 9.1.2 Strengths

While being a local, community-involved person could be seen as a limitation, I now understand it is a strength. Living and working in a small town I had pre-existing relationships where I'd already earned a degree of trust with many of the

study participants/organisations. The opportunity to delve into records to retrieve local stories was valuable and I passed all case study drafts on to the relevant people for their endorsement prior to including their accounts into my study and publications. In each instance, this was feely given, with some adding their thanks for compiling their stories and promoting their projects.

A further strength relates to being a local person working from the 'inside-out' in the process. My thesis methodology incorporated the position that the researcher and community become collaborators and jointly own the results. I also identified my role as a 'facilitator of research', where those concerned work together as both co-researchers and co-subjects. Participants' feedback endorsed this approach.

Findings from the initial stage represented another strength. The world café research proved invaluable as it firstly resulted in recognition of the value of current community activities, and secondly provided needs identification by the people who will be recipients of the outcomes of the research. This formed the 'heart' of the study.

Another strength was the ongoing responses I received from publishing papers throughout my PhD candidature. This provided me with valuable, peer reviewed feedback, which I feel strengthened both my writing and research content.

## 9.2 Community Development at the Heart of Ecological Conversion

My research explored the hypothesis that community development theory and practice can form the heart of ecological conversion. This is one component of the *Kimberley Transitions* project, initiated with the overarching aim to collaboratively generate Kimberley-based responses to locally identified needs. This entails local knowledges, a mixture of disciplines and emerging theories, and working with scholars and relevant groups to form Kimberley-wide practical and shared research (Wooltorton et al, 2019).

My study is grounded within Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015a). It offers both practical 'on-ground' community case studies, as well as theological reflection, to investigate the research question '*How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'*

When reviewing the encyclical and related academic reviews, it became apparent that *Laudato Si'* provoked considerable international academic level theological and scientific environmental debate. Those deliberations did not necessarily contain local people's views nor incorporate their everyday lived experiences, given their often-limited access to broader discussions and/or due to facing issues related to social, economic, and environmental inequality. This highlighted the research gap, identifying the need to join the broader theoretical debates with invaluable practical knowledge and on-ground actions by people living in smaller localities. That consideration prompted the research question.

The theory and practice of community development, as detailed throughout this study, fits within the principles outlined by Shevellar and Westoby (2018):

- Ideological principles: such as working in holistic, sustainable ways that embrace diversity and balance;
- Social justice principles: such as working towards betterment, emancipation and empowerment, equity, social justice, self-determination and the reallocation of resources to the greatest social benefit;
- Principles that value the location: including valuing local knowledge, culture, resources, skills and processes;
- Process principles: linking the immediate goal to long-term vision, raising consciousness, maximising participation, inclusion, working for cooperative structures and moving the private concern to political action;
- Global to local principles: understanding globalisation and its impact, practising locally, and linking to global agendas for change; and
- A relational approach to social change.

(Shevellar and Westoby, 2018, p. 5).

Those principles underscore the commonalities between components of my study.

Researching community involvement involved inclusion of grassroots, locally generated projects such as those contained here. The process also consisted of revisiting historical projects that, along with current examples, illustrate the cultivation of robust community participation. This includes people from mixed backgrounds working together to generate socio-ecological change for themselves and their wider community. This is not to say everything relating to communities is positive and productive (Kelly & Westoby, 2018), but it does involve recognising, celebrating, and building on successful examples. Many of the cases researched were not from faith-based people or groups, consistent with

Pope Francis' calling for "a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all" (2015a, #14).

Pope Francis calls for ecological conversion in *Laudato Si'*, a call that appeals for more than simply 'fixing problems' but seeks changes in terms of 'converting hearts' (Sedmark, 2017). Kureethadam (2015) describes this as "the cultivation of ecological virtues on the part of humanity for the responsible care of our common home" (2015, p. 181). Expanding this concept, Edwards (2006) found the practice of ecological conversion goes further than the church, as it "involves people from all kinds of ethnic, political, and religious backgrounds" (2006, p. 3). Christians, he maintained, are called to respectfully align with other likeminded (secular) people, as many have long been leaders in ecological conviction, advocacy, and activism.

As a result of my research, I argue that community development activity is conducive to ecological conversion through awareness resulting from social and ecological participation, education, activity, and outcomes illustrated throughout this thesis. Several of the community development case studies feature secular approaches to ecological conversion. These techniques cover the same elements as Christian methods, with the latter involving the additional component of spirituality/faith/beliefs (See **Table 3** below for a breakdown of the elements).

*Table 3. Components of the Research Response*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***Community Development*** (<u>**Activity/Actions**</u>*)* | Local to global<br>Collaboration<br>Connectivity<br>Mutuality<br>Reciprocity<br>Participation<br>Social justice<br>Economic justice<br>Ecological Justice | Transitioning<br>Indigenous inclusion<br>Cooperation<br>Spirituality<br>Cultural diversity<br>Responsiveness<br>Interdependence<br>Interconnectedness<br>Simple lifestyles |
| ***Ecological Conversion*** (<u>**Secular**</u>) | Interconnectedness<br>Integral ecology<br>Global to local<br>Collaboration<br>Simple lifestyles<br>Mutuality<br>Reciprocity<br>Participation<br>Social justice | Economic justice<br>Ecological Justice<br>Transitioning<br>Indigenous inclusion<br>Cooperation<br>Cultural diversity<br>Responsiveness<br>Interdependence |
| ***Ecological Conversion*** (<u>**Christian**</u>) | Spirituality/faith – <u>linked to all components listed above</u> under "Ecological conversion (Secular)" | Plus *Laudato Si'* advocating for Indigenous spirituality be adopted within western Christian ecological approaches to change. |

Within Christian beliefs, ecological conversion prompts a 'change of heart', as it:

> … implies a change in how we look at, interact and behave, to care for our common home. It means changes in the choices that we make in our daily life, that have an effect on the environment as a whole; on other living organisms, including people. It is a change for the betterment or improvement of all creation and its creatures. A person who has ecologically converted acts like a human being in the image of God where s/he seeks to live in harmony with nature (including people); a steward rather than someone who dominates (University of Faith, 2020).

Elements of these methods are the same, with Christian beliefs adding the additional dimension of "the image of God" (University of Faith, 2020). Both Christian and secular approaches to ecological conversion fit with *Laudato Si'* as Pope Francis (2015a) calls for all people, those of Christian faith, those of other belief systems and those of no faith to unite in caring for our common home.

The value of a call for people of Christian faith and other beliefs is evidenced in the current lead up to 'Glasgow 2021 – Climate COP26'.[28] As I write this, a month before this event, Pope Francis has met with forty international faith leaders, including those from Catholic and other Christian faiths, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and others, at the Vatican (Braden, 2021). They have jointly signed an appeal that calls on governments to set climate targets and take urgent, critical, and enduring actions for our planet and future generations. This follows closely on the heels of the combined statement on the threat of climate change issued jointly by Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew[29] and Archbishop Justin Welby[30] of Canterbury (Braden, 2021).

Integral to the teachings in *Laudato Si',* Pope Francis calls for Indigenous peoples to be "principal dialogue partners" (2015a, #146) in matters relating to their cultural traditions. For them land is "a gift from God and their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space on which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values" (2015a, #146). Significant findings in *The Territories of Life 2021 Report* (Jones et al., 2021) link Indigenous peoples with local communities, including pointing to their substantial roles in conservation and sustainable ecosystems, highlighting their contribution towards a healthy planet embedded in culture, land and spirituality. This is an argument for Aboriginal-led community development in the Kimberley, rather than the current context of outside-imposed top-down developments that continue colonial agendas (Wooltorton et al., 2019).

Overall, the global to local contrast is acknowledged by international organisations, with the *2030 Agenda* and *Laudato Si'* representing valuable broader plans. Activists, including Klein (2019), call for national and international policy and structural changes, while at same time recognising that "[t]his is not to belittle local activism. Local is critical. Local organizing is winning big fights" (Klein, 2019, p. 134). Further Klein expounds "It's not that one sphere is more important than the other. It's that we must do both: the local and the global. The resistance and the alternatives" (2019, p. 135).

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[28] The UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland - UK, November 2021.
[29] Archbishop of Constantinople and spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Christians worldwide.
[30] Lord Archbishop and Primate of the Church of England.

Accordingly, *Table 4* (below) summarises the local and global alternative understandings and approaches featured in my chapters:

### *Table 4. Alternative Understandings and Approaches*

| | |
|---|---|
| Ch. 2. | • Bottom-up community driven practices linked to social, spiritual, cultural, economic, and environmental justice <br> • Value of Indigenous beliefs and knowledges in global ecological discussion. <br> • Cooperation, shared vision, and collective action are processes for transformative change. <br> • Local people's ownership and responsibility of issues and working collectively leads to creation of the change they envisage. |
| Ch. 3. | • The significance of renewing spiritual connections to the earth and the importance of interconnections. <br> • People adopting sustainability and wellbeing into their everyday lives. <br> • Previous community development processes of networking and connection laying the groundwork and ethic for current and future activity. <br> • Faith approaches valuing establishment of parishes and broader communities as communities-of-practice. |
| Ch. 4. | • Diverse approaches activate ecological change for people and planet. <br> • Indigenous peoples'` ancient and contemporary cultural practices are vital to maintain the Earth's balance. <br> • Building linkages between Indigenous knowledges and spirituality and non-Indigenous understandings, beliefs, and practices. <br> • Both human and other-than-human creatures/nature on this planet are interconnected. |
| Ch. 5. | • Local people should not be recipients of knowledge and visions generated elsewhere but engaged in research as contributors of knowledge generation, as well as beneficiaries of the outcomes they generate. <br> • Safe environments where local Aboriginal and settler/migrant Australians can share their lives and dreams are important. <br> • This also allows for discussion relating to both human and other-than-human conditions in this region to emerge. |
| Ch. 6. | • Both Indigenous and settler Australians' activities involve interconnection with community development, commoning and community economic practices. <br> • Aboriginal peoples' ecological insight is formed and shaped by their knowledge and coexistence with land, rivers, plants, and animals. <br> • Pre-colonisation to post-settlement nutritional food cultivation can involve non-monetary community 'wealth' development through sharing food, knowledge of native foods, and reducing transportation. <br> • Access to nutritional food ecologically produced is vital not only for humanity but also for our broader planetary environment. |
| Ch. 7. | • Current neoliberal economics result in the depletion of the planet's resources and overconsumption. <br> • Ecological economics involves local people's creativity and resilience across social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and environmental structures. <br> • High levels of innovation demonstrate interdependence within and between people, communities, and projects. <br> • Intergenerational equity, cooperation, and interconnectedness support generation of social and ecological capital. |

In this study I have reviewed global strategies for ecological change from both the United Nations and Pope Francis; as well as exploring Christian theology and the need for ecological change given issues surrounding climate change and resulting crises. I investigated national and regional approaches to people becoming change agents, specifically those involved in social work and community development. My research recognises the centrality of Indigenous knowledges and inclusion of other-than-humans on Country. Through qualitative research I identified local approaches that informed themes in movements towards change. My study addressed a range of local case studies undertaking community development activity, some associated with commoning, ecological economics, and the transition movement. Collectively those interdisciplinary and interconnected approaches inspire ecological conversion in the movement towards transformational change.

## 9.3 Conclusions

Community development and ecological conversion, as well as *Laudato Si's* theory and strategic direction, are mutually complimentary, compatible, and interconnected. The case studies clearly demonstrate ways local communities comprehended their true power to promote and instigate change. Significantly, the people involved undertook community development practices that realised and built on their knowledge and understanding of socio-ecological needs within their locality. Those processes subsequently contribute to personal ecological conversion.

This thesis asks *'How can community development theory and practice contribute to ecological conversion, as identified in Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home?'* The answer to this question lies in the identified components of community development and ecological conversion, linked to *Laudato Si'*. These components, noted in Table 3, highlight key values, processes, and desired outcomes where community development can contribute to transformation. Table 4 adds to this testimony by providing a compilation of understandings featured in chapters throughout my thesis, points that clearly reveal how community development can contribute to ecological conversion.

Therefore, to answer the research question I present this investigation, which provides evidence of a wide range of practices and processes that have the scope to lay a solid foundation for movement towards ecological conversion.

## 9.4 Recommendations

My research promotes efforts to care for our common home and identifies the need to grow this body of work. The outcomes from my research can prove valuable to communities within this region, and external to it, when seeking to establish transformative change. I propose ongoing research be undertaken, commencing with the preparation of a Community Action Plan based on the outcomes of this research. Partners in this process to involve Our Lady Queen of Peace parish; University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus; and the Kimberley Transitions project, as well as inviting contributors to the World Café event to participate.

A further proposal for scoping is the establishment of a networking 'circle of *Laudato Si'* researchers' by creating spaces for researchers to share and exchange their work, collaborate, and learn from each other. This approach could be similar to the Global Tapestry of Alternatives referred to in Chapter 7.1. The Global Tapestry of Alternatives supported "creating spaces of collaboration and exchange … until the point in which the critical mass of alternative ways can create the conditions for the radical systemic challenges we need" (Kothari et al, 2019, pp. 339-340). In this spirit, networking and collaborating within a nurturing environment can meaningfully support researchers and practitioners in their roles caring for our common home.

Another possible field for research and action is a question relating to Catholic universities. I ask myself, 'what is my own university doing that reflects *Laudato Si's* teachings?' This field offers opportunities for a range of research to be undertaken, aimed at making significant changes in this university that could flow on to other tertiary campuses and institutions.

The final recommendations generated from this research are as follows:

**RECOMMENDATION 1.**

A Community Action Plan be initiated that moves the outcomes of this research into practical, on ground activities by partners in this research, that heeds the call to take care of our common home. This includes Our Lady Queen of Peace parish; The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus; and community organisations involved in the case studies. Invitations should also be directed to local participants in the initial World Café event.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.**

Research partners be sought to explore the possibility of expanding the processes and outcomes of this research and replicating it in other areas as part of Stage 2, including in larger communities and urban settings, within Australia and possibly overseas.

Valuable resources to support undertaking the Community Action Plan (Recommendation 1.) and this expanded process (Recommendation 2.) are available from a range of sources including internationally through the Laudato Si' Movement https://laudatosimovement.org and https://www.laudatosi.org/about-1/projects-and-networks/, and the Laudato Si Animators project on https://laudatosianimators.org/resources/. In Australia support and resources are available through the Australian Jesuit Province's Laudato si' Action Plan Framework https://jesuit.org.au/laudato-si-action-plan/ and Catholic Earthcare Australia on https://catholicearthcare.org.au/resources/.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.**

Communication be initiated with external research centres/researchers to scope the feasibility of establishing a *Laudato Si'* 'Circle of Networkers'. The proposed network would embrace cultural diversity and provide participants opportunities to interact and mentor each other, while encouraging further research grounded in the principles of *Laudato Si'* and Indigenous cultural practices.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.**

An interdisciplinary working group (with possible membership of the international Laudato Si' Movement) be established to scope interest in, and viability of, a pilot research project that explores an Australian Catholic university's opportunities to

apply *Laudato Si'* teachings in their academic courses and research and linkages with the Vatican's Laudato Si' Universities program.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.**

Additional investigations be initiated that further investigate human and other-than human living systems; the value of inclusion of Indigenous living cultures; the importance of local knowledge and people's power to contribute to change; adopting both Christian and secular ecological conversion processes on the journey towards social, economic and ecological transformational change.

## 9.5 Closing Synopsis

In summary, my PhD research findings illustrate the value of *Laudato Si'* as a framework to underpin locally initiated community development action. It demonstrates ways for local communities to mobilise their power to initiate change. Specifically, case studies demonstrate how this treatise can stimulate the actions of organisations in the Kimberley, involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Both *Laudato Si'* and community development principles are international, and it is proposed that the local examples provided can have relevance across the globe, within faith-based and secular community settings. This research confirms ways communities can fulfil their local ecological aspirations for change within broader transition objectives. My research demonstrates how adopting *Laudato Si'* grounded community development practices can inform ecological conversion - a significantly evolved relationship with our ecosystem that respectfully recognises both human and other-than-human inhabitants of Earth. Locally activating ecological conversion can – and does – support the generation of deep-rooted transformational change.

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## APPENDICES

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[31] This is the Literature Review [Chapter 1.2] excluding reference pertaining to 'this Thesis'.

# Interconnectedness:

# Exploring global to local approaches to the community ecological 'jigsaw'

*Anne Jennings*

## Abstract

In this extraordinary time of climate change, with its compounded cost in social, ecological and environment degradation, calls have been made for transformative change at all levels, from global to local. This paper explores some of the current 'jigsaw' of agendas and practice from the global: United Nations Agenda 2030 and Pope Francis's *Laudato Si' On Care for Our Common Home,* and the local – community development; ecological economics; and the commons and transitions movements, informing both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society.

## Introduction

Over the last 50-plus years, ecological devastation along with social breakdown has been well-documented through mainstream and academic mediums. In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* warned people about the impact of poison on human and environmental health. Shortly afterwards a plethora of environmental alarms were issued connecting ecological deterioration to human activities. The Club of Rome's 1972 *Limits to Growth* (Meadows) linked these forecasts to economic growth. The environmental ethics movement and a wide variety of organisations for social change began during this period. The spiritual link between social and environmental

issues was also recognised, including by Thomas Berry in 1978 (republished in 2003). He reviewed the history of traditional Christianity and concluded it is no longer the story of planet and human community; what is required is purposeful approaches to the cosmic/Earth process:

If the way of Western culture and Western religion was once the way of election and differentiation from others and from the Earth, the way now is the way of intimate communion with the larger human community and with the Cosmic-Earth process (2003:87).

Since that time, environmental and social scientists have documented extraordinary challenges such as the melting of the polar icecaps, worldwide deforestation and species loss, increasing poisons across the food chains impacting all species, along with ever-reducing volumes of groundwater threatening ecological and human life, increasing ecological footprints by First World countries, a massive increase in the rich-poor divide, increasing plastic pollution of oceans and waterways, ever-increasing volumes of toxins and wastes which cannot be adequately disposed of, climate change caused by escalating volumes of atmospheric carbon and seemingly limitless other perils (IPBES, 2019; IPCC, 2018; United Nations, 2015, 2020).

Whilst localised responses have tried to address some of these threats (Lachapelle & Albrecht, 2019), at the global level, many continue to dangerously escalate. It appears warnings have not been acted upon sufficiently by many countries, the OECD reporting that Australia needs to intensify efforts to meet its 2030 emissions goal (2019). In addition, a belligerent focus on unlimited economic growth continues, along with the inherent belief that these issues can be fixed through science and technology alone.

### United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda

In *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* released in 2015, he UN clearly points to the need for socio-ecological change by engaging more holistic, coherent and integrated transformational approaches. Importantly, they call for "*inter-linkages … between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development*" (2015b, para. 2). This document includes the UN 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through to possibilities of interconnectedness of grassroots community development projects. A key area of divergence between the UN global and local (grassroots) approaches to transformational change is the '*top-down*' (government) and '*bottom-up*' (community) debate, recognising that both approaches are needed simultaneously to bring about important change. In Australia, however, the Commonwealth Government exhibits a real lack of interest and concern, with the flow-on effect of not supporting communities to become more engaged and pro-active (Jennings, 2017). This is reflected by the national Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, explaining the country's role as a signatory to the UN sustainability agenda as follows:

The 2030 Agenda … is well-aligned with Australia's foreign, security, development and trade interests – especially in promoting regional stability, security and economic prosperity. It also helps Australia in advocating for a strong focus on economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific region and

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in promoting gender equality, governance and strengthening tax systems. (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade., n.d., p. 6)

This certainly leaves a lot to be desired from Australia's leaders, however it is recognised this is not necessarily the case with other countries. India, for example, is adopting a paradigm shift to a '*whole-of-society*' approach across all tiers of government, plus involving non-government organisations, and local communities – and notably engaging with people living in vulnerable social, economic and environmental situations (United Nations, 2020c).

Now, five years on, the current annual *Sustainable Development Goals Report* (United Nations, 2020b) paints a disturbing picture, not only concerning the slow uptake of the SDG goals but also attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, it noted progress had been uneven and consequently more focused attention to be drastically required in most of the 17 SDG areas.

**Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home**

Another international socio-ecological treatise was released in 2015, two months prior to the UN Agenda 2030, the encyclical (teaching letter) by Pope Francis: *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. At the launch of the UN Agenda 2030, Pope Francis, as guest speaker, discussed ways both representations could work together, emphasising:

> The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged [people] (The Guardian, 2015).

*Laudato Si'* calls on all people on the planet, Christians, those of other faiths/belief systems and those of no faith, to work collectively to bring about ecological conversion that leads to the essential transformation required within and across '*our common home*' (Jennings, 2018). Environment issues including climate change and loss of biodiversity along with social and economic concerns are highlighted, including the deep connection between environmental degradation, especially in the Global North, and poverty, notably in the Global South.

Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions are strongly supported by Pope Francis. In *Laudato Si'* he calls for Indigenous peoples to be "*principal dialogue partners*" as:

> For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best (2015, #146)[1].

This view is supported by Yu (2016), an advocate for the rights of Indigenous people of the Kimberley region of Australia for over 30 years. He clearly stated:

Laudato Si' speaks to the overriding concerns of Indigenous people - degeneration of our lands and seas that nurture us spiritually, culturally, socially and economically; social and political alienation; and rampant industrial development and greed (2016, p. 2-3).

Principally the question being addressed by *Laudato Si'* is "*What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?*" (Pope Francis, 2015, # 160). It is a passionate plea to everyone to undertake unified global action to address the destruction of both nature and all creatures including humans who co-inhabit our planet. It appears much of the content of *Laudato Si'* is aimed at communities and grassroots workers and volunteers (with little or no knowledge of the document) who are engaged in community action aimed at supporting social and ecological change.

While both *Agenda 2030* and *Laudato Si'* are acknowledged as vitally important to the world's future, and their respective organisations work together regularly, there are notable differences. Capra describes the encyclical as "*a 'truly systemic' understanding of the ecological basis for a just, sustainable, and peaceful world*", highlighting the "*radical ethics championed by Pope Francis ... [are] essentially the ethics of deep ecology*" (2015:2). Capra also highlights the need to shift from the current economic system based on unlimited growth to one that incorporates social justice and ecological sustainability. In a similar vein, Sachs (2017) compared the UN Agenda 2030 to *Laudato Si'* and concluded that the UN Agenda protects the current model that prioritises growth over the protection of our planetary habitat. The Pope, he found, chose "*the path less trodden by clearly mentioning both ecological and social limits, and by holding the industrial growth model accountable for its various shortcomings*" (Sachs, 2017:2584).

These approaches have been described as '*reformational*' and '*transformational*' (Mathews, 2020), the reformational approach seeking to reduce the impact modern industrialisation has on the planet's ecology and biodiversity (as in the UN SDGs), while the transformational approach (in *Laudato Si'*) sets out to subject economic creation to ecological health for all living systems. For these and similar reasons, I have chosen to embed this paper within the values and direction espoused in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home.*

Similar to the UN Agenda 2030, *Laudato Si'* has a varied adoption rate across the globe; however, it appears to be steadily expanding (The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, 2020). Now, five years later, the *Laudato si' Anniversary Year Plan 2020-2021,* including commencement of a 7 Year Action Platform, has been launched. It provides an unique opportunity to transform current inactivity or slow progress into "*a new way of living together, bonded together in love, compassion and solidarity, and a more harmonious relationship with the natural world, our common home*" (The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, 2020). To do this, holistic responses are called for at all levels, particularly at the grassroots level, through collaboration and alliance between local community-minded people.

The Action Platform (see Table 1.) sets out the 7-year

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journey towards integral ecology, the interconnectedness of environment, economic and social sustainability that can lead to ecological conversion. As Ormerod and Vanin clarify, ecological conversion denotes a substantially changed relationship with our ecosystem that:

> "… involves more than extending our concern for justice to include other-than-human life. It challenges us to develop an integral ecology, a new paradigm of justice, one 'which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings' [LS. #15]" (2016:351).

This, according to Darragh, requires expanding our knowledge to understand the need for a covenant between people and planet. This should include "*recognition of the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, …[and] the need to deal with the throwaway culture and the proposal for a new lifestyle*" (2015:2).

## MEASURING INTEGRAL ECOLOGY IN THE SPIRIT OF LAUDATO SI"

### (Laudato Si' Goals – LSGs)

1. Response to the **Cry of the Earth** (greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality efforts, efforts to protect and promote biodiversity, guaranteeing access to clean water for all, etc.)
2. Response to the **Cry of the Poor** (defence of human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as Indigenous communities, migrants, children at risk through slavery, etc.)
3. Ecological **Economics** (sustainable production, Fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people, investment in renewable energy, etc.)
4. Adoption of **Simple Lifestyles** (sobriety in the use and resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation, etc.)
5. Ecological **Education** (re-think and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirituality of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, promote the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education, etc.)
6. Ecological **Spirituality** (recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation, etc.)
7. Emphasis on **Community involvement and participatory action** to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels (promote advocacy and people's campaigns,

encourage rootedness in local territory and neighbourhood ecosystems, etc.).
(The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, 2020:8)

Another message appearing throughout *Laudato Si'* is the importance of community. When addressing globalised problems which often provide uniform regulations and technical interventions as answers, we are urged not to "*overlook … the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community*" (Pope Francis, 2015, #144). Other sections confirm this assertion, declaring "*[s]ocial problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds*" (2015, #219), and "*[n]ew forms of cooperation and community organization can be encouraged in order to defend the interest of small producers and preserve local ecosystems from destruction*" (2015, #180).

Darragh (2020) supports this view, emphasising the importance of the sense of community within faith communities and their broader locality. He advocates for local connections that do not exclude people on the basis of race, gender, language, spirituality and culture or social class, viewing them as vital to create networks demonstrating belonging and interconnectedness. Consequently, the importance of community will be investigated further in this paper.

In 2020, the Pope called together young people from across the globe to '*The Economy of Francesco*' event based on the recognition that a better world cannot be built without a better economy, as considered in *Laudato Si'*. In his message at the commencement of the gathering, Pope Francis pronounced:

> Dear young economists, entrepreneurs, workers and business leaders, the time has come to take up the challenge of promoting and encouraging models of development, progress and sustainability in which people, especially the excluded (including our sister earth), will no longer be – at most – a merely nominal, technical or functional presence. Instead, they will become protagonists in their own lives and in the entire fabric of society (2020a:4).

The outcomes were released in the *Final Statement and Common Commitment: The Economy of Francesco* (Pope Francis, 2020), covering a wide range of proposals including:

- the stewardship of common goods such as forests, oceans, all ecosystems, biodiversity and seeds;
- economic ideologies that do not reject the poor and minorities and calls for respect and esteem for all people; and
- new, reformed financial institutions to assist recovery from the current imbalances including the pandemic, based on sustainable and ethical finance.

In summary, one clear message that differentiates *Laudato Si'* from the UN's Agenda 2030 is that people, with their individual and/or collective faith/spiritual belief systems, are now integral participants in discussions and

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resultant actions relating to the current global social, economic and environmental crisis.

## Community Development

The importance of community has been recognised here. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis championed "*[t]he ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion*" (2015, #219). Based on this understanding, community development has been chosen as the practice framework for this article.

Community development approaches to supporting and/or instigating change, however, mean many things to many people. The definition by Ife is relevant as he explained:

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

This involves "*change from below, valuing the wisdom, expertise and skills of the community ... and the importance of community control*" (Ife, 2013:4). Ife also advises against single purpose actions, as they are one-dimensional approaches that are unlikely to create significant change. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) added a further dimension when they introduced the approach of '*Asset Based Community Development*' (ABCD), resulting in a greater recognition, understanding and inclusion of resources available to communities by firstly mapping their assets, for example local people and their knowledge and skills, infrastructure, networks, natural environment and more – before looking for 'problems' that may be present.

The way community development is currently operationalised, however, has been questioned by Ledwith (2020), who compares the radical, transformative community development of the 1970s to today's world. Her research reveals neoliberal examples where this approach is being misused in the interests of top-down managerialism, calling for alternative approaches that involve cooperating for the common good, connecting for change that includes adopting new economics and being open to other knowledges, including participatory democracy.

Westoby, Palmer and Lathouras's 2020 research, *40 Critical Thinkers in Community Development*, shows that there are hundreds of descriptions of community development, with "*many [being] contestable, representing diverse values, models, and traditions*" (2020:4). They proffer '*community*' as "*something that emerges, as a felt experience, or a social phenomenon, when people create it together: when they are in relationship with one another drawn together by a shared concern ... and make commitments to act together*" (2020: 5). Kelly and Westoby add to this assessment by pointing out that the value of community lies in its ability to break systems down into smaller components that "*enable people to participate and direct parts of their public lives that otherwise they would be powerless to exercise*" (2018:10).

It is recognised, however, that community development has its foundations in Western ideology, with the term '*development*' strongly linked to the industrial revolution and more recently neoliberalism (Bessarab & Forrest,

2017). Australia is a colonising nation and, importantly, has been and continues to be, the ancestral home of Aboriginal[2] peoples. In the Kimberley region in Western Australia, evidence indicates they have lived in this area for at least 65,000 years (Wooltorton et al., 2019). In their paper *Anggaba jina nimoonggoon[3]: Whose knowledge is that? Aboriginal perspectives on community development* Bessarab and Forrest (2017) researched possible common threads between the concept of community in pre-colonial and contemporary Aboriginal society. They concluded commonalities relate to "*groups of people linked through their identity of sharing a common language, small societies living in specific geographical locations, and strong spiritual and ceremonial activities linking people to the land feature in current understandings of community*" (2017:5). They also noted shared aims with some Western views of community, including:

- common people, as distinguished from those of rank or authority;
- a relatively small society;
- the quality of holding something in common; [and]
- a sense of common identity and characteristics. (2017:5).

While there are similarities, there are also significant cultural differences with non-Aboriginal society, for example laws/governance;

Local Aboriginal people's understanding come from millennia of spirituality/culture, knowledge and science relating to Country. Poelina, Taylor and Perdrisat (2019) have recorded Traditional Custodians' perspectives based on First Law, the Aboriginal system of governance and law that places the health and well-being of the land, water and biosphere over human interests.

Country is understood as a sacred living ancestral being, with First Law emphasising its important role in maintaining the Earth's balance. First Law calls for holistic approaches to earthly stewardship, framed within values and ethics of co-management and co-existence. These continue to facilitate inter-generational relationships through ancient and contemporary practices (Poelina et al., 2019). Traditional Owners, for example, regard the river as having its own life force and spiritual essence, thus "*the 'River of Life' has a right to Life*" (Poelina & McDuffie, 2017). Overall, it is acknowledged that:

… the importance of Elders, families and communities working together to share knowledge, empowering and inspiring the next generation to hold onto notions of culture, kin, country and community. Finding the vision for Aboriginal community development relies upon a grassroots, yet flexible approach that is governed and controlled by the community itself, and not the top-down approach so readily practised by many government departments for over more than two centuries (Kickett-Tucker, Ugle, Moore, Ugle, & Knapp, 2017).

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Image: Naja Bertolt Jensen

To clarify the various approaches to community development, in Table, I note that Phase 4 is the usual level Western communities work to attain. I have developed and added Phase 5 to include Aboriginal knowledge in the appraisal.

## Continuum of engagement of communities based on Mutch, 2018:243

**Phase 1**
- Research/Projects *for* communities
- Community- *related* research/ projects

**Phase 2**
- Research/Projects *on* or *about* communities
- Community-*focused* research/ projects

**Phase 3**
- Research/Projects *with* communities
- Community-*centred* &-*guided r*esearch/projects

**Phase 4**
- Research/Projects *by* communities
- Community-*driven* research/ projects

**Phase 5**
- Research/Projects *inclusive* of living cultures and living country
- Community-*affinity* with non-human living systems

*Note: 'Projects' and 'Phase 5' added by the author (Jennings, in Press)*

Is there a link between community development and spirituality in faith and/or belief systems? Ife explored this question and concluded:

> The spiritual dimension … is important to community development. A sense of the sacred, and a respect for spiritual values, is an essential part of re-establishing human community and providing meaning and purpose for people's lives. But the corollary is also true: genuine human community is in itself a spiritual experience, so the development of community is an important ingredient of spiritual development. The two go together (2013:255).

Chile and Simpson (2004) recognise that today's complex, globalised world differs from previous localised social and economic environments from which many beliefs have emerged long ago. Consequently, community development practice "*must be non-discriminatory, inclusive, working towards achieving balance and sustainability, empowerment and the expression of power by all communities*" (2004:329). Thus, community development and spirituality both focus on connecting and holding people together, combining interdependence with local flexible constructs to create sustainable societal and planetary well-being.

### Ecological Economics

Another participatory practice that usually incorporates community development processes (Jennings, 2020) has been collectively referred to as ecological economics (Speth & Courrier, 2021; Washington, 2020). Designations within this approach include the green economy, well-being economy, solidarity economy, the sharing economy, new economics and participatory economics – all operating within transformative social, economic and environmental, ethically-based whole-of-systems-change platforms. Collectively, Speth maintains, the different approaches converge around the partially shared visions of:

- The lifeblood of the dominant enterprise type is not profit and growth, but public benefit, social purpose and a decent living for all involved, while to ownership and control of productive enterprise has shifted decisively to workers, the public and economic democracy generally.
- The imperative to protect the planet and its climate and the need to restore the environment back to health, governs economic enterprise and government action. An ethos of nature as a commons for the shared benefit of all life replaces the practice of privatized resource extraction, with benefits hoarded by the few and the costs borne by the many, usually the poorest and most marginalized.
- Investments are made in accordance with democratically determined priorities, with shareholders replaced by stakeholders and with social and environmental returns taking priority over financial ones.
- The aim of economic policy is no longer tied to growth of GDP, but to promote national and international well-being and the common good.
- Equal justice truly exists for all people in all spheres of life, and reparative justice to address the historic and continuing damages caused by systemic racism is core to the work of ensuring that the benefits of economic activity are widely and equitably shared.
- Popular sovereignty – democratic government of, by and for the people – is restored, concomitant with the expansion of democracy into the economy, reversing the takeover of government by the corporate sector. (Speth, 2021:xxiii)

For the purposes of this article, ecological economics is portrayed as above, acknowledging the planet's ecological limits and the connections between economic and ecological systems. This is guided by "*intergenerational equity, irreversibility of environmental change, uncertainty of long-term outcomes, and sustainability*" (Washington & Lawn, 2020:13). Another approach closely aligned with

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community development and ecological economics is the '*commons movement*', which seeks to integrate the crucial realms of social and ecological with the economic (Bollier, 2021).

## Commons Movement

The concept and activities comprising '*the commons*' can be traced to early-England, peasants and subsistence farmers accessing publicly-owned landholdings to graze stock and grow food. In today's world, *commoning* has grown to be more than land and infrastructure, to include what has been described as "*life in common, [involving] everything from public ownership of natural assets to the notion of a genuinely sharing economy*" (Dunlop, 2018:68). Subsequently, the commons has grown to include both 'rival' resources like fishing grounds, groundwater basins and grazing areas and 'non-rival' common resources such as knowledge and social movements – thus "*all forms of non-hierarchical human cooperation are different forms of commons*" (DeAngelis, 2019:124). In addition, DeAngelis observed a merging of Indigenous communities with the expanded commons, firstly for survival due to enclosures and free market disadvantage and secondly, due to the subtraction of "*resources from capital systems and insert[ing] them into the processes of collective production and cultures based on value practices, which are participatory and democratic*" (2019:126).

> *Commoning* has the potential to encourage and support people to control their own destinies by adopting bottom-up approaches to organise power and collective ownership. Thus they "*reclaim their 'common wealth,' both material and political*" (Bollier, 2021:348).

Bollier further clarifies that commoning seeks to enhance both the earth's natural systems and human's social needs, establishing pathways towards post-growth and post-capitalist norms (Bollier, 2021; Bollier & Helfrich, 2019).

Papadimitropoulos (2020) identified a range of commons formats aligned with ecological economics, while adopting community development processes. One system that closely reflects commons methods in this article is the '*reformist format*'. It features, amongst other points:

- The deepening of participatory democracy – bottom-up participation and decentralisation of local units of action such as neighbourhood councils.
- The commons-oriented moves towards more sustainable and socially responsible operational models of sharing and collaboration that prioritise value creation and money circulation to more people and enterprises.
- The creation of a social economy, for example voluntary associations, NGOs, co-ops, and community-based organisations.
- Open cooperativism between productive communities and ethical market entities that bring together rural and urban commons,

energy cooperatives, eco-villages, the Degrowth movement and the Transition Towns movement.
- (Papadimitropoulos, 2020:223-224).

## Transition Towns Movement

Closely aligned with the commons is the Transition Towns movement, initiated by Hopkins (2011, 2019) and drawing inspiration from permaculture, bioregionalism, de-growth and localisation (Norberg-Hodge, 2019; Swennerfelt, 2016). The Transition Towns movement is described as a "*movement of communities reimagining and rebuilding our world*" (Hopkins, 2019:318), undertaking vastly different development approaches to that promoted by Western governments. Core goals within the movement are to:

> … generate hope, unleash the collective creativity of local folds to envisage a more resilient and whole community, and then encourage the creation of many local working groups and project that can accelerate a community's transition to a low-carbon, energy-lean way of life that is also ecologically sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling. (Chase quoted in Swennerfelt, 2016:44)

Hopkins (2019) suggests the focus is to embrace the following within movement activities: *appropriate localisation*, for example food production closer to home; *resilience* by reimagining the local economy and meeting local needs more effectively; *low carbon* by creating projects and enterprises that are inherently low carbon; *community assets* by bringing assets (land, building, businesses and others) into community ownership/control; and *natural limits*, recognising we live in a finite world. In practice. people involved in the Transition movement "*are reclaiming the economy, sparking entrepreneurship, reimagining work, reskilling themselves and weaving webs of connection and support*" (Transitions Network, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Social, economic and environmental issues call for transformative change at all levels, from global to local. This article is framed in global agendas, particularly Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, concentrating on exploring local community-level theory and understandings relating to community development, ecological economics and involvement in commons and transition movements. The key to these approaches is **interconnectedness** - the way communities pull the jigsaw pieces together to enable them to understand and create transformative change locally, feeding into regional, national and global change.●

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**Endnotes**

1.  The numbering system in Laudato Si' indicates subsections, not paragraphs, therefore the symbol # designates the subsection quoted from, as separate paragraphs are not numbered.
2.  In Western Australia Indigenous people prefer to be called Aboriginal people.
3.  *Anggaba jina nimoonggoon* translates to "Whose knowledge is that?" In the Bardi language, spoken in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

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

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**Nulungu Research Institute**
The University of Notre Dame Australia

**Appendix II**

# *WARNING: This document may contain images and/or names of people who have passed away*

## Cover Photo
Majala Wilderness Centre, Balginjirr Community, by Anne Poelina.

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

**Nulungu**
Research Institute
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## Acknowledgements

## Acronyms

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

# Abstract

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

**Appendix II**

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

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

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

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

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

## Foregrounding the Kimberley

The Kimberley's landscapes with unspoiled deserts, rivers, ranges and coastlines, are renowned for their rugged beauty (e.g. Broome Arts and Music Foundation 2005; Laurie 2010; Richards et al. 2002). However, along with other parts of Australia and internationally, human tragedies and associated difficulties exist, such as youth suicide, food insecurity, and conflict over large scale industrial and agricultural development with threats to water, cultural and environmental values. From a transitions discourse perspective (Escobar 2016), the solutions to Kimberley problems are in Kimberley-based knowledges and ways of knowing, doing and being. This innovative approach to development is the Project's significance and as a case-study of transition, it is of high potential value both locally and globally.

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

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The Project's vision is for people both nearby and distant to learn to live and work as if the future matters — every person's future — properly informed by locally inclusive knowledges of caring for Country: living in deep, intertwined relationships with land, rivers and saltwater places, and with each other. An intertwined vision is also to learn from post-settlement Kimberley stories, persons, events and activities. A question that may be asked is 'what value is the *Kimberley Transitions* Project to Kimberley people, lands, waters and knowledge?' At this preliminary stage of the Project, a response to this question is that, like an ongoing dialectic, the outcomes can be predicted only. Efforts aimed at placing an emphasis on working collaboratively across disciplines, institutions and non-government organisations, nonetheless add hope to an enhanced body of expertise from Kimberley people and places that not only stays 'in-place' but also has the potential for increased community-based engagement. This includes, for instance, research domains, cultural healing in schools and wide-spread involvement with human/environment projects aimed at transitioning towards greater recognition and inclusion of Aboriginal voice and place.

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

## Transition Discourses

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

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

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

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

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

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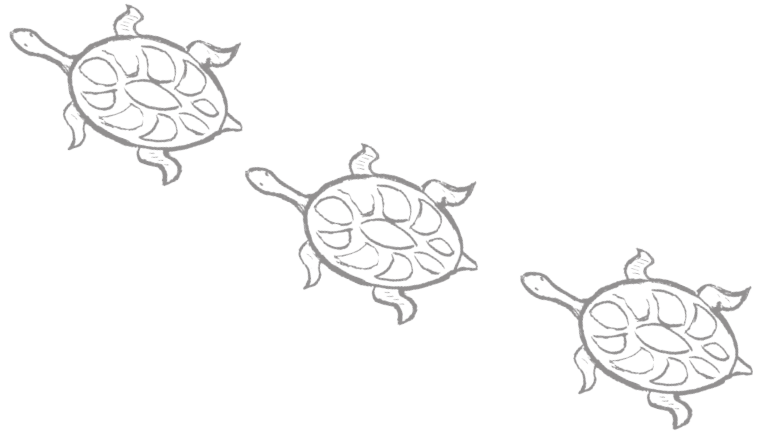
economics, mainly into small enterprises (e.g. Lands 1987). In reality, the richness of the Kimberley environment provides a significant food source for many so-called 'remote' community residents (Toussaint 2015). For example, the iconic Fitzroy River is also known as *Mardoowarra* or *Martuwarra*,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

### Nature-Based Solutions

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

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### Integral Ecology and Ecological Theology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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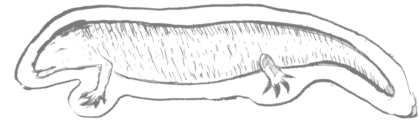
interdependencies rather than dualistic separation. Once these dualisms are removed, the earth can be seen as it really is: animated "by countless forms of agents" (Latour 2017:63). Complex socio-environmental systems including birds, water, wind, animals, spirits and energies have been encoded by Aboriginal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

### Everyday Acts of Renewal and Future Transitional Possibilities

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

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

### Implications for Transitions, Methods and Cultural Ethics

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

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

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

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

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# Current *Kimberley Transitions* Doctoral Research Projects

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

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

Dr Anne Poelina, Doctor of Philosophy (Health Sciences)

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

## Community Development for Ecological Conversion

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

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

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

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

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

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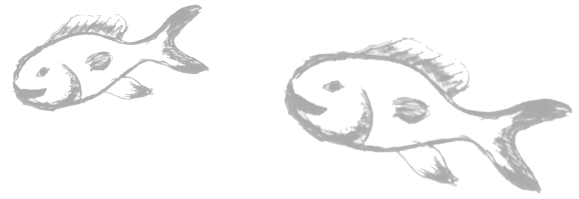
## Transformative Learning for Sustainable Futures

Ms Jacqueline Remond, Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

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

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

## Transformative Discourses for Climate Hope

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

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

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

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

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

Of great significance to Kimberley Aboriginal interests and transition activists everywhere, is the UNESCO (2017) *Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change*. The principles oblige governments and citizens to act in solidarity to meet global and local climate change challenges at all levels of society: "including states, international organisations, sub-national entities, local authorities, Aboriginal
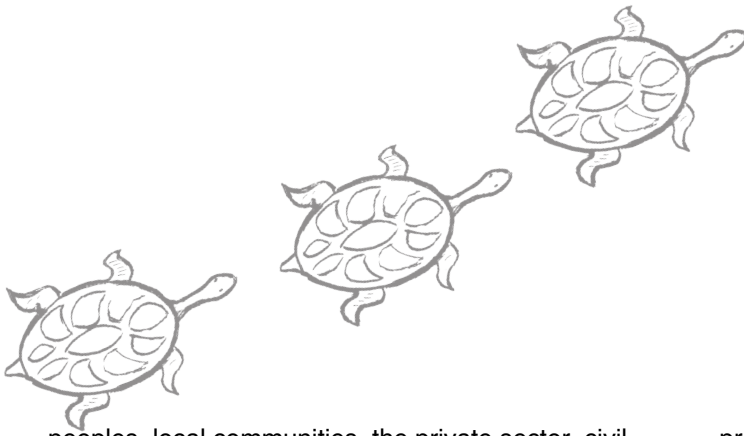
peoples, local communities, the private sector, civil society organisations, and individuals" (2017:129). The point of this section is that UN policy frameworks are intended to transform the world onto a "sustainable and resilient path" (United Nations 2015), and Kimberley organisations are already contributing to that agenda.

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

## Beyond Beginnings …

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

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

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

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

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

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

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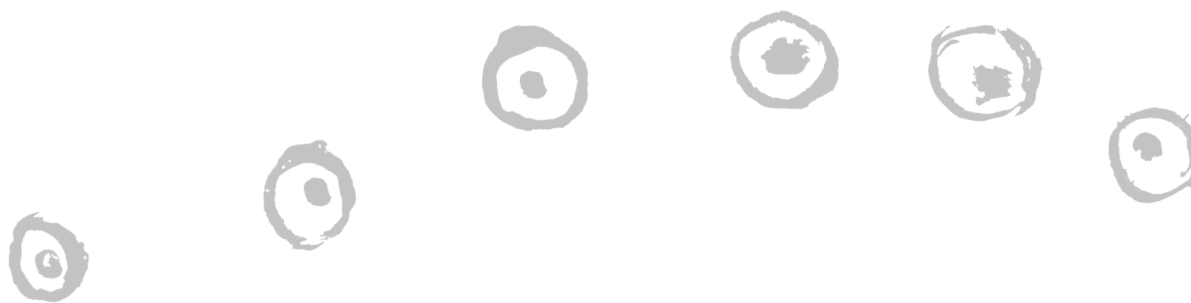
of all research completed in the Kimberley in the last 50 years; a 'world café' conversation with individuals and organisational representatives who wish to support the Project; a series of transitions dialogues conducted through Nulungu; and a cultural resurgence research project in a remote Kimberley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

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

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**Appendix II**

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# Authors

**Sandra Wooltorton** is a Senior Research Fellow and Associate Professor of Education with the Nulungu Research Institute at UNDA, Broome. She convenes the *Kimberley Transitions* project, and is a transdisciplinary researcher with publications in Aboriginal education, teacher education, learning for sustainable futures and social change.

**Sandy Toussaint** is an anthropologist, author and curator. She has worked in the Kimberley with Indigenous groups since the early 1980s. The author and/or editor of five books, she is an Honorary Professor with UNDA's Nulungu Research Institute and the School of Medicine, and in Arts and Science at The University of Western Australia (UWA).

**Anne Poelina** is an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow and Doctoral Health Science Scholar at UNDA, Broome. Her work includes Indigenous people's rights and obligations which includes Indigenous science-traditional ecological knowledge, First Law and the rights of nature to the solutions for planetary health and wellbeing.

**Anne Jennings** has been a community development practitioner in regional and remote WA for 30 years. She is currently undertaking a PhD through UNDA, in her local community of Broome. Grounded in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Pope Francis 2015), Anne's study explores community development for ecological conversion.

**Stephen Muecke** is Professor of Creative Writing at Flinders University, SA. He has a long history of work with the Goolarabooloo people in Broome from the late 1970s writing *Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley* (1983) and *Reading the Country* (1984) with Paddy Roe. A new book called *The Children's Country: The Creation of a Goolarabooloo Future in North-West Australia* will appear in 2020.

**Kevin Kenneally** AM is an Adjunct Professor with the School of Agriculture and Environment at UWA and with the Nulungu Institute at Broome's UNDA Broome. He has conducted research on the vegetation, flora and natural history of the Kimberley for over 40 years.

**Jacqui Remond** is a current PhD student with the Nulungu Research Institute, UNDA Broome. For almost two decades Jacqui has worked with communities across Oceania to bring about ecological transformation and she is a co-founder of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

**Arjati (Ari) Schipf**, a PhD candidate with UNDA, has over 16 years working as a practicing anthropologist in WA. She has conducted extensive field-based research in areas of native title and cultural heritage management and her aim is to support Aboriginal people's future aspirations for economic and social independence that is culturally based and sustainable.

**Louisa Stredwick** is a current PhD candidate based in Broome with the Nulungu Research Institute, UNDA. Louisa completed her undergraduate degree in Public Policy and Human Geography at the University of Tasmania and has worked as both a researcher and a wilderness guide prior to commencing her PhD in 2019.

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   ii) training for the professions; and
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## Appendix III (i) – World Café Ethics Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF
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9 September 2019

A/Prof Sandra Wooltorton & Anne Jennings
Nulungu Research Institute
The University of Notre Dame Australia
P.O Box 2287
Broome WA 6725

Dear Sandra and Anne,

**Reference Number:  019120B**

**Project Title: "Kimberley Transitions World Café Research Project."**

Your response to the conditions imposed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has been reviewed in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for this proposed study.

**All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.**
**Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.**

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc:     Dr Robbie Busch, SRC Chair, School of Arts & Sciences

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME**
**AUSTRALIA**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**
# Kimberley Transitions World Café Research Project

Dear ...............................................................

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

***What is the project about?***

This project is one section of a PhD research program, which aims to connect Broome people and organisations, working towards sustainable lifestyles and planet – our common home. The component of my PhD study involves community organisations including Broome CIRCLE House, Incredible Edible Broome and Environs Kimberley, plus others.

It is grounded within Pope Francis' Encyclical (teaching letter) *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home. Laudato Si'* is about social, ecological (environmental), and economic transformation. It emphasises that:

> A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (Pope Francis, 2015).

This project invites people to become co-designers and active participants in the Kimberley Transitions project, through a 'World Café' research method. This will focus on connecting with local creative, action oriented, people and organisations. Participants will be engaged in establishing their organisation's pathway, within the Kimberley Transitions project's pathways – towards ecological and social change. This research, then, aims to support cooperative community efforts to live simpler lives, through community development initiated, locally owned and instigated 'bottom-up' activity.

***Who is undertaking the project?***

This project is being conducted by Anne Jennings, as part of her PhD studies with The University of Notre Dame Australia. It is conducted with the support of Nulungu Research Institute, Notre Dame Broome and community groups in Broome.

***What will I be asked to do?***

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and the tasks you will be asked to complete. Please make sure that you ask any

questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

The process involves participation in the one day World Café research project.

All information requested will be at project level and will not require personal details of individuals/clients or staff members.

After completion of the research event your organisation's section will be prepared in draft form. You will subsequently be invited to review the details and make changes including taking out details (even if they are available publically), before it is added to the final report.

An overview of the research project – World Café is a qualitative research process where the room is set up to look like a Café and participants move from table to table – providing their input and ideas on each Table Theme.

The Table Themes are:

A. Collaborating to care for our common home.

B. Acknowledging Yawuru Country, Aboriginal Kimberley Country: cultural knowledges, traditions, languages, caring for Country knowledges, cultural revitalisation and resurgence.

C. Community-of-practice methodology, collaborative learning and community development.

D. Local-scale economics, human-scale development, cultural economies, circular economic development.

E. Environmental communication, environmental education: Every place is a living place.

F. Valuing wisdom of the Elders, particularly in the 'everydayness' of life.

G. Climate chaos, species loss, forms of violence against people and living nature.

***Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?***

There is no foreseeable risk in you participating in this research project.

***What are the benefits of the research project?***

It is envisaged this component of the PhD research will see adoption of collaborative planning and action/activities, where local community organisations and individuals can work in with Kimberley Transitions, aimed at building local and regional social and environmental change.

***What if I change my mind?***

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

***Will anyone else know the results of the project?***

Information gathered from your organisation (excluding names of individuals) will require your approval before it can be included in the World Café final report and resultant journal paper and PhD Thesis.

During the timeframe of the PhD research data will be stored in the Researcher's locked computer, protected by Notre Dame's IT security. Once the study is completed, the data collected from you will be stored securely in the Nulungu Research Institute's secure storage, at The University of Notre Dame Australia, for at least a period of five years before it is destroyed.

***Will I be able to find out the results of the project?***

As noted, once the information is analysed, you will be given the draft for possible modification/ exclusion, and your agreement/disagreement on your section to be included in

the final report. Following this, the final report is likely to be publicly available, and it is anticipated that a shorter version will be published as an academic article, prior to inclusion in the PhD thesis.

*Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself anne.jennings@nd.edu.au or Nulungu Senior Researcher, Associate Professor Sandra Wooltorton on sandra.wooltorton@nd.edu.au We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

*What if I have a concern or complaint?*

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 019120B). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

*How do I sign up to participate?*

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and return to other one to me or mail to me in the envelope provided.


Thank you for your time. This sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,




**Anne Jennings**
*PhD Research Candidate*


*Date:*

**Appendix III (iii) - World Café Participant Consent Form**


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## RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

### Kimberley Transitions Project - World Café Research

- I agree to take part in this research project.

- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.

- I understand that I will be asked to participate in a one-day Kimberley Transitions World Café Research Project, undertaken within a simulated World Café setting.

- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.

- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as publicly available, however I understand that any information I divulge about individuals will be excluded.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed. However, I recognise that my organisation's name will be identifiable, along with our activities and services provided.

- I understand that, from the general information I provide, I may be identifiable by local people. I acknowledge I will have the opportunity, when reviewing the draft of the interview, to make changes or totally withdraw all information.

| Name of participant | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Participant's Organisation | | | |
| Signature of participant | | Date | |

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant and explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

| Researcher's Signature | | ANNE JENNINGS | Date | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

# KIMBERLEY TRANSITIONS - WORLD CAFÉ –AREAS FOR DIALOGUE

A World Café is an innovative process for facilitating collaborative dialogue, knowledge-sharing and creating possibilities for transformative action. It is being used by *Kimberley Transitions* to bring together the ideas of Kimberley people, aiming to create networked actions for change.

The method builds on the notion of group intelligence – through the synergy of dialogue. By organizing a number of conversations rounds in one sitting, where people are invited to dialogue on topics of common interest in small groups, the method enables synthesis of individual ideas into inclusive understandings, learning and research findings.

When combining the creativities and insights of the small groups, the plenary can see and connect ideas and principles from a broader perspective. Patterns can be celebrated, and then shared wisdom becomes obvious to all. As a result, possibilities for action can be clarified and proposed.

## TABLE 1.0: COLLABORATING TO CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME.
*(For people to further discuss what the topic means to them, now and visioning the future, within the Kimberley context)*
1.1 What we love about our common home in the Kimberley.
1.2 How do we do care for our common home at present?
1.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?


## TABLE 2.0: ACKNOWLEDGING YAWURU COUNTRY, ABORIGINAL KIMBERLEY COUNTRY: CULTURAL KNOWLEDGES, TRADITIONS, LANGUAGES, CARING FOR COUNTRY KNOWLEDGES, CULTURAL REVITALISATION AND RESURGENCE.
*(Understanding that Aboriginal knowledge and traditions, through long-term experience in place, belong to the Kimberley - and are essential to informing change that can lead to a restored future)*
2.1 What we love about being in Aboriginal Country.
2.2 How do we care for Aboriginal knowledges and traditions at present?
2.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?


## TABLE 3.0: COMMUNITY-OF-PRACTICE METHODOLOGY. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.
*(Opportunities to share and explore peoples collaborative understanding, approaches and practice from a community based, bottom-up perspective)*
3.1 What we love about the ways we work together to achieve common purposes?
3.2 How do we do this at present?
3.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?


## TABLE 4.0: LOCAL-SCALE ECONOMICS, HUMAN-SCALE DEVELOPMENT, CULTURAL ECONOMIES, CIRCULAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.
*(New economics/ecological economics understandings are shared to support approaches that lead to intergenerational change)*
4.1 What we love about our local economies already?

4.2 How do we do this at present?
4.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?


**TABLE 5.0: ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. EVERY PLACE IS A LEARNING PLACE**
*(Delving into the heart of environmental communication and education, to enhance understandings to allow people to collectively move forward)*
5.1 What we love about our places, and the ways we see others caring for our places.
5.2 How do we do this at present?
5.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?


**TABLE 6.0: VALUING WISDOM OF THE ELDERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE 'EVERYDAYNESS' OF LIFE**
*(Exploring the rich tapestry of Elder wisdom to assist understanding today's issues, then exploring ways to use this knowledge to move forward)*
6.1 What we love about elder wisdom in our places?
6.2 How do we do this at present?
6.3 How can we do this with more resilience and vigour?


**TABLE 7.0: CLIMATE CHANGE, SPECIES LOSS, AND RELATED ISSUES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE AND LIVING NATURE**
*(What issues in the Kimberley's immediate and long-term past have current effects, and how can we move towards transformative change)*
7.1 How do we feel about previous and present socio-environment issues in the Kimberley?
7.2 What should we do? (The people and the organisations – in this room?)
7.3 How can we be more effective in making change?

---

*Note: All the table headings and associated questions (above) are designed to contribute to the project's aim to develop knowledge and opportunities to integrate the following areas:*

| Kimberley Transitions – Collaborating to Care for Our Common Home | | |
|---|---|---|
| **The 7Ps** | **Integrating** | **Opportunities** |
| People | The Who | All of us – everyone in the Kimberley. |
| Place | The Where | Living with a sixty millennia story on Yawuru Country and Aboriginal Kimberley Country: learning to respect and care for Country knowledges, traditions, languages and wisdom. |
| Purpose | The Why | Understanding, living and working sustainably. |
| Process | The How | Nurture what needs to change: through learning, doing, and sharing. Increase our social handprint to reduce our ecological footprint. |
| Participate | For Individuals | Making change individually and sharing with family and friends. |
| Partnership | For Groups | Shared activities with our streets, neighbourhoods, clubs, community organisations, institutions, corporations and faith-based groups. |
| Product | For What | Ecological transformation: shared vision, commitment, collective action, living simply – so that others can simply live. |

# Notre Dame
## Nulungu

### A *Kimberley Transitions* event

*A New Partnership,* William Roe, 1994

## Kimberley Transitions - World Café Dialogue
### Wednesday 18th September 2019
*Topic*: Transitioning the Kimberley towards social, spiritual, economic and environmentally sustainable futures.

**Facilitators:**

John Croft is a Western Australian who has national and international experience working in community based social and environmental sustainability fields.

Dr Anne Poelina, Managing Director of Madjulla Inc; Nyikina Traditional Custodian from the Mardoowarra, Lower Fitzroy River and Nulungu researcher and international speaker.

### Wednesday 18th September 2019
### at the University of Notre Dame Hall, Guy Street, Broome
*(Bottomless pots of tea and coffee available all day)*
**10am to 12.15pm – World Café Workshop Part 1.**
**12.30pm to 1.30pm – Talking Heads Speaker Dr Anne Poelina**
**1.45pm to 2.30pm Lunch** *(Provided)*
**2.30pm – 3.45pm World Café Workshop Part 2.**

**What's a World Café?**
The World Café is a method of hosting group discussions that explore local questions and themes. Participants take part in collaborative conversations, within a comfortable setting, modelled on a café.

**What is being discussed?**
Within a framework of transitioning the Kimberley towards social, spiritual, economic and environmentally sustainable futures, areas to be covered include: caring for our common home; community development, local scale enterprise and circular economics; environmental education; wisdom of the Elders; and climate emergency/species loss.

**Who is invited?**
All community organisations and individuals who would like to contribute their local knowledge, aspirations and visions - towards an ecologically and socially sustainable future - are welcome.

### *Please RSVP for catering: to Kimberley Transitions Project Coordinator*
anne.jennings@nd.edu.au

## Nulungu
Research Institute
The University of Notre Dame Australia

| Fremantle | Broome | Sydney | nd.edu.au/nulungu |

## Appendix IV (i) – Parish Project Ethics Approval

25 September 2018

Professor Sandra Wooltorton & Ms Anne Jennings
Nulungu Research Institute
The University of Notre Dame Australia
PO Box 2287
Broome WA 6725

Dear Sandra and Anne,

**Reference Number:  018124F**

**Project Title: "Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish Broome – Community Projects Audit."**

Your response to the conditions imposed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has been reviewed in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for this proposed study.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

| Name | School/Centre | Role |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prof Neil Ormerod | Australian Catholic University | Co-Supervisor |
| Dr Patricia Sherwood | Sophia College | Co-Supervisor |

**All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.**
**Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.**

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc:      Dr Robbie Busch, SRC Chair, School of Arts & Sciences

**Appendix IV (ii) – Parish Project Participant Consent Form**



## RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

## Broome Parish Activities/Projects Audit Research

- I agree to take part in this research project.

- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.

- I understand that I will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview relating to the Broome Parish Activities/Projects Audit Research.

- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.

- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as publicly available, however I understand that any information I divulge about individuals will be completely de-identified.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed. However, I recognise that m

- My organisation's name will be identifiable, along with our activities and services provided.

| Name of participant | | |
|---|---|---|
| Participant's Organisation | | |
| Signature of participant | | Date |

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant and explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

| Researcher's Signature | | ANNE JENNINGS | Date |
|---|---|---|---|

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**
# Broome Parish Activities/Projects Audit Research.

Dear ................................................................

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

### *What is the project about?*

This project is one section of a PhD research program, which aims to connect Broome people and organisations, working towards sustainable lifestyles and planet – our common home. The PhD study involves the Catholic Diocese of Broome (Broome Parish), The University of Notre Dame Australia, Nyamba Buru Yawuru, St Mary's College and other local groups and organisations – involving people of all faiths and people of no faith.

It is grounded within Pope Francis' Encyclical (teaching letter) *Laudato Si':
On Care for Our Common Home. Laudato Si'* is about social, ecological (environmental), and economic transformation. It emphasises that:

A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (Pope Francis, 2015).

This component of the project investigates what activities and projects, instigated by and/or involving the Broome Parish, are currently being undertaken. The information gathered will then be appraised against the teachings of *Laudato Si' and* will be used to prepare details of what we are doing in Broome that already fit within the Encyclical.

### *Who is undertaking the project?*

This project is being conducted by Anne Jennings, as part of her PhD studies with The University of Notre Dame Australia. It is conducted with the support of Nulungu Research Institute, Notre Dame Broome and the Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Parish, in Broome.

### *What will I be asked to do?*

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and the tasks you will be asked to complete. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

The process involves a face-to-face interview, using open ended questions, seeking publicly (only) available information about your project/organisation relating to your purpose and the services you provide within the local community.

All information requested will be at project level and will not require personal details of individuals/clients or staff members. In addition, you may like to provide publically available documents, like annual report, minutes, and newspaper clippings, to further assist this research.

After completion of the interview/research your organisation's section within this research will be prepared in draft form. You will subsequently be invited to review the details and make changes including taking out details even if they are available publically, before it is added to the final report.

An overview of the research project is as follows:

The research question for this element of the study is:

Are there any current projects/activities being undertaken within the Catholic Parish of Broome that align with the ecological transformation being sought by Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudate Si'*?

The aims of this research are:

a) To gauge if the Parish of Broome is currently undertaking activities that fulfil some of the challenges highlighted in *Laudato Si'*?
b) If so, what are they and what sections in *Laudato Si'* can they be aligned to?

It is anticipated the interview will take between 30 and 40 minutes, plus any time you may spend obtaining and passing on relevant documents to the researcher.

***Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?***

There is no foreseeable risk in you participating in this research project.

***What are the benefits of the research project?***

It is envisaged this component of the PhD research will be a good starting point to assist people understand *Laudato Si' and* gain an understanding of what parts of their current activities link to the encyclical. It may then link with forthcoming phases of study over the next 2 years.

***What if I change my mind?***

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

***Will anyone else know the results of the project?***

Information gathered about your organisation will already be of a publicly available nature and is likely to appear in some form in this project's report. During the research activity, data will be stored in the Researcher's locked computer, protected by Notre Dame's IT security.

Once the study is completed, the data collected from you will be stored securely in the Nulungu Research Institute's secure storage, at The University of Notre Dame Australia, for at least a period of five years before it is destroyed.

Following the publicly available report, it is envisaged the results of the study will be published as a journal article and included in the resultant PhD thesis. Your organisation's name and some identifying details may be published through these opportunities and will most likely be identifiable in the PhD thesis.

***Will I be able to find out the results of the project?***

As noted, once the information is analysed, you will be given the draft for possible modification and your agreement on your section to be included in the final report. Following this, the final report is likely to be publicly available, and it is anticipated that a shorter version will be published as an academic article.

***Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?***

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself anne.jennings1@my.nd.edu.au or Nulungu Senior Researcher, Associate Professor Sandra Wooltorton on sandra.wooltorton@nd.edu.au We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

***What if I have a concern or complaint?***

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 018124F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

***How do I sign up to participate?***

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and return to other one to me or mail to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time. This sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

**Anne Jennings**
***PhD Research Candidate***

***Date:***

**Appendix V (iv) Prompting Questions**

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**Broome Parish Activities/Projects Audit Research**

**Prompting/Leading Questions**

(These will be the focus for a conversation in which I will probe and request clarification of responses as necessary).

**One-to-One Interviews**

1. Please tell me what services or projects/activities your organisation provides in/to the local community?
2. What clients and/or projects do you provide services to, as per your constitution, management committee, funding body or other relevant bodies?
3. Are they any other services or projects/activities that you provide that are not specifically funded but you think are important?
4. What do you feel are the services or activities provided that result in most impact in your field?
5. Does your organisation consider its major role is social change? If so, please describe.
6. Does your organisation consider a role is environmental change? If so, please describe.
7. What, if any, is the formal relationship between your organisation and the Parish of Broome?
8. What, if any, is the informal relationship between your organisation and the Parish of Broome?
9. What other local religious and/or community groups does your organisation work closely with? How does this collaboration work?
10. Is there anything else you can add that relates to this research and the broader Transition Broome project (details in the Newsletter you have received)?

## Appendix V (i) Incredible Edible Broome Ethics Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
AUSTRALIA

19 Mouat Street (PO Box 1225) Fremantle WA 6959
+61 8 9433 0555 | enquiries@nd.edu.au

20 March 2017

Mrs Anne Jennings
Academic Program Centre
The University of Notre Dame Australia
P.O Box 2287
Broome WA 6725

Dear Anne,

**Reference Number:  017020B**

**Project Title: "Incredible Edibles Broome – Growing the Local Community."**

Your response to the conditions imposed by a sub-committee of the university's Human Research Ethics Committee, has been reviewed and assessed as meeting all the requirements as outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated May 2015). I am pleased to advise that ethical clearance has been granted for this proposed study.

*All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval. Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.*

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc:     A/Prof Sandra Wooltorton, Director, Nulungu Research Institute

THE UNIVERSITY OF
**NOTRE DAME**
A U S T R A L I A

# Focus Group/Advisory Group - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
## Incredible Edibles Broome – Growing the Local Community

Dear …………………………………………………

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

***What is the project about?***

This research project investigates the Incredible Edible Broome (IEB) project to find out if IEB, whilst endeavouring to increase production of, and access to, locally grown food, provides additional individual (via involvement/membership) and broader local community benefits?

As you may be aware, the IEB project is based on similar programs in the United Kingdom, however it is relatively new to Australia. Research in England points to broader community benefits, additional to supporting people learning growing fresh food and relevant gardening techniques. This research will examine the Broome project to see if those additional community building outcomes are also present as a result of our local project.

***Who is undertaking the project?***

This project is being conducted by Anne Jennings and it will add to her local knowledge and facilitation of the course Diploma of Community Development, within The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus. The project is being conducted with the support of Nulungu Research Institute, Broome.

***What will I be asked to do?***

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and the tasks you will be asked to complete. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

Members of IEB Management Committee are invited to be involved in the following ways:

- Support this research project by being the Research Advisory Group, providing valuable support and advice to the Researcher

- Participate in a Focus Group meeting to investigate the research questions being addressed in this project.

An overview of the research project is as follows:

The research question is: What are the individual and community benefits if IEB?

The aims of the research are:

- To gauge if IEB project is fulfilling the organisation's guiding principles, which are:
  - Increases access and availability of locally produced food
  - Is inclusive – all members of the community welcome
  - Seeks to benefit the community
  - Considers the environment
  - Does not rely on formal funding to be sustainable.

- To investigate other possible project outcomes that benefit individuals and the local community.

The significance of this research is:

*Research in England (Schifferes, 2014) has demonstrated community food projects that involve engagement of local residents/communities has led to "developing community connections and community leadership" (2014, p. 20), as key outcomes of projects involved in the Incredible Edibles Movement. Whilst Australia also has community food projects, mostly community gardens, the extent to which growing vegetables, either in one's back yard or in public spaces, can lead to broader community building outcomes, has yet to be determined. This will be explored through Incredible Edible Broome, a small, local project that has only been operating for a short time, however, has gained local support and credibility.*

It is anticipated that the Research Advisory Group contact will be at one IEB Management Committee meeting, plus telephone and email contact. The total time is expected to be approximately 4 hours over 3 months.

The Focus Group meeting will be held in Broome, at a mutually convenient location, and is expected to take 1 ½ hours.

### Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There is no foreseeable risk in you participating in this research project.

### What are the benefits of the research project?

It is envisaged Incredible Edible Broome, as a community organisation, will benefit from this research project as they will have the research report to demonstrate their work to date and use for forward planning. Also, when IEB undertakes funding applications the report can be provided as evidence of the organisation's outcomes.

In addition, IEB can add the report to their website, as a reporting mechanism back to membership, but also to attract potential new members. It could also be used when other communities seek IEB's assistance in establishing similar projects in their local, as well as IEB's marketing and promotion.

On finalisation, of the project, the researcher plans to submit an article on IEB to the peer reviewed journal, and/or presented at a relevant conference.

### What if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

### Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken if required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by substituting people's names with another, as well as the sex of participant.

During the research activity data will be stored in the Researcher's locked computer, protected by Notre Dame's IT security.

Once the study is completed, the data collected from you will be de-identified and stored securely in the Nulungu Research Institute's secure storage, at The University of Notre Dame Australia, for at least a period of five years. As noted, the results of the study will be published as a journal article.

### *Will I be able to find out the results of the project?*

Once we have analysed the information from this study, we will email a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback 4 month after commencement of the project.

### *Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself anne.jennings1@my.nd.edu.au or Nulungu director, Associate Professor Sandra Wooltorton on sandra.wooltorton@nd.edu.au We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

### *What if I have a concern or complaint?*

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 017010B). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

### *How do I sign up to participate?*

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and return to other one to me or mail to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time. This sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

**Anne Jennings**
**Chief Research Investigator**

*Date:*

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
A U S T R A L I A

# RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

## Incredible Edibles Broome – Growing the Local Community

Dear ………………………………………………………………………

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

### What is the project about?

This research project investigates the Incredible Edibles Broome (IEB) project to find out if IEB, whilst endeavouring to increase production of, and access to, locally grown food, provides additional individual (via involvement/membership) and broader local community benefits?

As you may be aware, the IEB project is based on similar programs in the United Kingdom, however it is relatively new to Australia. Research in England points to broader community benefits, additional to supporting people learning growing fresh food and relevant gardening techniques. This research will examine the Broome project to see if those additional community building outcomes are also present as a result of our local project.

### Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Anne Jennings and it will add to her local knowledge and facilitation of the course Diploma of Community Development, within The University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus. The project is being conducted with the support of Nulungu Research Institute, Broome.

### What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and the tasks you will be asked to complete. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

Members of Incredible Edibles Broome are invited to be involved by participating in a one-to-one interview with the researcher.

An overview of the research project is as follows:

The research question is: What are the individual and community benefits if IEB?

The aims of the research are:

- To gauge if IEB project is fulfilling the organisation's guiding principles, which are:
    - Increases access and availability of locally produced food
    - Is inclusive – all members of the community welcome
    - Seeks to benefit the community
    - Considers the environment
    - Does not rely on formal funding to be sustainable.

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- To investigate other possible project outcomes that benefit individuals and the local community.

It is anticipated the interview will take between 15 and 30 minutes. You will be given copies of the notes taken during the interview, for your verification.

*Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?*

There is no foreseeable risk in you participating in this research project.

*What are the benefits of the research project?*

It is envisaged Incredible Edible Broome, as a community organisation, will benefit from this research project as they will have the research report to demonstrate their work to date and use for forward planning. Also when IEB undertakes funding applications the report can be provided as evidence of the organisation's outcomes.

In addition IEB can add the report to their website, as a reporting mechanism back to membership, but also to attract potential new members. It could also be used when other communities seek IEB's assistance in establishing similar projects in their local, as well as IEB's marketing and promotion.

On finalisation of the project, the researcher plans to submit an article on IEB to the peer reviewed journal, and/or presented at a relevant conference.

*What if I change my mind?*

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without discrimination or prejudice. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

*Will anyone else know the results of the project?*

Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken if required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by substituting people's names with another, as well as the sex of participants.

During the research activity data will be stored in the Researcher's locked computer, protected by Notre Dame's IT security.

Once the study is completed, the data collected from you will be de-identified and stored securely in the Nulungu Research Institute's secure storage, at The University of Notre Dame Australia, for at least a period of five years. As noted, the results of the study will be published as a journal article.

*Will I be able to find out the results of the project?*

Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback 4 month after commencement of the project.

*Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?*

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself anne.jennings1@my.nd.edu.au or Nulungu Director, Associate Professor Sandra Wooltorton on sandra.wooltorton@nd.edu.au We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

*What if I have a concern or complaint?*

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number 017010B). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

***How do I sign up to participate?***

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and return the other to me personally, or in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time. One sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

**Anne Jennings**
**Chief Research Investigator**

***Date:***

## INCREDIBLE EDIBLE BROOME PROJECT
## RESEARCH QUESTIONAIRE

1/ Can you please tell me why you became involved in IEB?

2/ Do you think this is being achieved and if so, can you please give examples, including any activities you have participated in?

3/ If not can you please give your views on why not?

The IEB project also aims to make all interested members of the community welcome.

4/ How do you think they are going with that aim?

5/ If so please give examples that will support your view.

6/ If not can you give your views on why not?

7/ Do you think activities IEB undertakes considers the environment?

8/ If so, can you please give examples, and if not please explain why not?

9/ Can you please give your views on whether this is happening, and also examples that will illustrate your view?

10/ What about other possible projects IEB could undertake that could benefit individuals and the local community – can you think of any?

11/ Is there anything else you can add that helps tell the IEB story, including some of the activities/events you have participated in, if they were beneficial to you and why?

12/ Also can you let me know about any individual and/or community connections you may have developed as a result of your involvement in IEB, and if so, how they were beneficial?

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA**

# RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM
## Incredible Edibles Broome – Growing the Local Community

- I agree to take part in this research project.

- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.

- I understand that I will be asked to participate in a (A) Focus Group meeting, or (B) participate in a one-to-one interview relating to the Incredible Edibles project in Broome.

- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.

- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

| Name of participant | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Signature of participant | | Date | |

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

| Signature of Researcher | | ANNE JENNINGS | Date | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

# APPENDIX VI, i.- Copyright

| Location | Publication |
|---|---|
| 2.1 | Jennings, A. (2017). Community Development – The 'Missing Ingredient' in Striving for Sustainability. In Stansfield, J., & Frankland-Hutchinson, A. (Eds). *Sustainably Yours: Community Development and a Sustainably Just Future – ACDA and IACD Conference Proceedings* (pp. 6-18). Unitec Institute of Technology. https://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ACDA-IACD-2017-proceedings.pdf<br>Copyright: Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License and publically available on the link (above). Copyright details attached on Appendix VI, i. |
| 2.2. | Jennings, A. (2018). Laudato si' – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion. *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, *4*(2), 32-47. https://www.unitec.ac.nz/whanake/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Whanake4.2_Jennings.pdf<br>Copyright: Published by an Open Access journal, operating under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. Details in Appendix VI, ii. |
| 4.1 | Jennings, A. (2021). Advancing Local, Social and Ecological Transition through Community Development. In Boulet, J., & Hawkins, L. (Eds). *Practical and Political approaches to Recontextualising Social Work* (pp. 209-227). IGI Global.<br>Copyright: This publisher has granted authors only rights to reproduce in university repository site. Details in Appendix VI, iii. |
| 5.1 | Jennings, A. (2021). World Cafe qualitative research informing local pathways towards transformative change. *New Community*. 19(1), 22-29.<br>Copyright: The publish of *New Community* has granted this author authority to reproduce in full publshed formation in this PhD Thesis. Details in Appendix VI, iv. |
| 6.1 | Jennings, A. (2019). 'Growing' Food and Community in the Remote Kimberley Region. *New Community.* 17(3), 7-12.<br>Copyright: The publish of *New Community* has granted this author authority to reproduce in full publshed formation in this PhD Thesis. Details in Appendix VI, iv. |
| 6.2 | Jennings, A. (2019). "Food as Commons" within an Australian Aboriginal context. *New Community*. 17(4), 28-33.<br>Copyright: The publish of *New Community* has granted this author authority to reproduce in full publshed formation in this PhD Thesis. Details in Appendix VI, iv. |
| 7.1 | Jennings, A. (2020). Transitions stories in ecological economics from the Australian 'bush'. In H. Washington. (Ed). *Ecological Economics: Solutions for the Future* (pp. 258-272). PANGEA Research Centre. https://anzsee.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EESolutionsFutureRoyalDraftJuly2ndFINALEbook.pdf<br>Copyright: Authority to publish this chapter from the book Editor has been granted and is attached in Appendix VI, vi. |
| Appendix 1. | Jennings, A. (2021). Interconnectedness: Exploring global to local approaches to the community ecological 'jigsaw'. *New Community, 19*(2), 62-69.<br>Copyright: The publish of *New Community* has granted this author authority to reproduce in full publshed formation in this PhD Thesis. Details in Appendix VI, iv. |
| Appendix 2. | Wooltorton, S., Toussaint, S., Poelina, A., Jennings, A., Muecke, S., Kenneally, K., Remond, J., Schripf, A., & Stredwick, L. (2019). *Kimberley Transitions, Collaborating to Care for Our Common Home: Beginnings*, Nulungu Research Institute. https://www.notredame.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/78326/Nulungu-Research-paper-No2.pdf<br>Copyright: This paper was published by the Nulungu Research Institute of The University of Notre Dame Australia, where this author undertook her PhD and is also employed there. It is publically available on https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/nulungu_research/2/ |

**Appendix IV (ii) – Sustainably Yours: Community Development and a Sustainably Just Future**

## APPENDIX VI, iii.

## *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*

*Whanake* is an Open Access journal. Open Access is a term used to describe digital publications that are freely available online, without restriction. Open Access also describes our approach to knowledge, which we believe should be accessible to all. Academics are paid by taxpayers to research and produce knowledge, and we believe it should be available to anyone who has the desire to read and use it. This is why we operate a Creative Commons licensing system.



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## *Sustainably Yours: Community Development and a Sustainably Just Future – ACDA and IACD Conference Proceedings*, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

*Sustainably Yours: Community Development and a Sustainably Just Future – ACDA and IACD Community Development Conference*, Unitec Institute of Technology, 15 - 17 February 2017, Unitec Mt Albert and Waitakere Campuses, Auckland, New Zealand.

All papers published in these proceedings have been blind peer reviewed by a minimum of two referees. The papers in this publication comprise the proceedings of the meeting mentioned on the cover. They reflect the authors' opinions and, their inclusion in this publication does not necessarily constitute endorsement by the editors, ePress or Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

https://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ACDA-IACD-2017-proceedings.pdf

**Appendix IV (iv) – Complimentary Content of Practical and Political Approaches to Recontextualizing Social Work**

Dear Prof. Jennings,

I hope this message finds you well and in good health. I wanted to provide you with an update on your current title, Practical and Political Approaches to Recontextualizing Social Work(https://www.igi-global.com/book/practical-political-approaches-recontextualizing-social/257156), and inform you that it has been officially released.  As an integral part of this publication, you are furthering the advancement of academic research and congratulations on this notable achievement. Due to your role in this publication, I would like to provide you with access to your complimentary electronic copy of the entire publication on a chapter-by-chapter basis using the simple steps below:

· Login to your IGI Global Portal Account
· Haven't accessed your Portal account? Use the log in information below:
o Username: anne.jennings@bigpond.com
o Password: Enter your password. Forgot your password? You may reset it here.
Please keep in mind that you must be logged in first, in order to access the publication.
· Navigate to "Your Personal Library" and click on "Access Your Personal Library"
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We are still actively supporting your research and are continuing to publish critical resources to support the academic community. As the expert in the field of research, I would be happy to collaborate with you to maximize these efforts to ensure that others within your field can access this valuable research, as well as make it more eligible for indexing in prestigious indices, including Web of Science™ and Scopus®.
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Understanding that everyone's schedules are limited, I would be happy to provide support on the following actions above. In conjunction with these actions, IGI Global's Marketing Team is working diligently to ensure that your publication has the greatest impact in your field of research through sharing your publication with our vast network of global distributors and direct global representation; integrating your publication into all major discovery systems and aggregate databases; submitting your publication to major indices; featuring your publication to thousands of librarians, partners, and researchers; and more.

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Please let me know if you would like any additional information on the points above or have any questions.

Best Regards,
Genevieve Robinson, Marketing Assistant
IGI Global

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**APPENDIX VI, v.**

7th April 2021

To Whom It May Concern!

Dear reader of this statement,

I am writing this statement as General Editor and member of the Managing Group of the '***New Community, a Quarterly Journal***,' published by the New Community Quarterly Association Inc. that holds copyright of published articles in the journal.

Ms Jennings has submitted several articles to the journal which have gone through a double-blind referee process, including one that will be published in the June issue of the journal and that is, hence, not yet available in published format.

This email is to authorise Anne Jennings, The University of Notre Dame (Australia) to include her published papers in their full, published format as they have appeared – or will appear - in the *New Community*, in her forthcoming PhD Thesis by Publication.

 If you require any further information please get back to me via the contact details in the letterhead.

 Yours sincerely,

Jacques Boulet, PhD

General Editor New Community

Adjunct Professor, Deakin University

**Appendix VI (vi) – Copyright for chapter of 'Ecological Economics .....'**

From: Haydn Washington <haydnwashington@bigpond.com>
Subject: RE: Copyright for chapter of 'Ecological Economics ....'
Date: 22 September 2021 at 1:30:42 pm AWST
To: "anne.jennings@bigpond.com" <anne.jennings@bigpond.com>

Hello Anne,

I hereby state that I permit Anne Jennings to use her chapter "Transitions stories in ecological economics from the Australian 'bush'" from my book 'Ecological Economics: Solutions (for which I hold the copyright) for the Future' in The University of Notre Dame Australia's institutional repository as part of her thesis, or for whatever other purpose she chooses.

Yours faithfully, Dr Haydn Washington