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## The Creative Arts, Environmental Crises & Well-Being in Globalized Place: Methodological Considerations for an Ecocritical Mode of Practice-Based Research

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## **The Creative Arts, Environmental Crises & Well-Being in Globalized Place: Methodological Considerations for an Ecocritical Mode of Practice-Based Research**

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### **Introduction**

Problems pertaining to environmental and ecological well-being are increasingly having effects on a global scale; climate change is the most obvious example of this, but not the only one (the pollution of the oceans and transnational light pollution are others). Our paper argues that individual and community well-being in general, which is always directly or indirectly related to specifically environmental or ecological well-being at the global scale, can be augmented through the introduction of Creative Arts activities and products into local communities. If a Creative Arts approach is to be effective, however, it needs to take into account the ambiguities around the “located-ness” of these communities. The challenge that the term “globalization” poses, and which we will address in depth on these pages, is how such communities are constituted in relation to vexed concepts of “the local” and “the global”.

This paper reflects upon the use of Practice-Based Research (PBR) as the pre-eminent methodology of the Creative Arts, with special attention to PBR’s deployment in international, cross-cultural space and places. Issues of Reliability and Validity are at stake here, and by this measure there is some methodological common ground between international PBR and more conventional Humanities/Social Science-based research in similar contexts. Relatedly, and perhaps ultimately most importantly, there is a role in both for the concept of Rapport in order

to facilitate research environments that both comprehend and encourage the nuances of meaning that inevitably exist in any given cultural, historical or political context. However, what Rapport means varies depending upon the emphasis given (if any) to the nature of globalized space and, more specifically, upon how the relationship between the local and the global is experienced in any given community environment.

This is a case-study based paper: In 2011, a PBR project named *Flows & Catchments* was established to explore questions of well-being in the Volcanic Plains region of South-Western Victoria, Australia. At present, this project is seeking to expand its enquiries internationally, and it is thus grappling with the methodological considerations that this brings up. This paper explores some of these issues. In doing so, it suggests the folly of trying to connect PBR to specific places of community using rationales of Rapport imported *without modification* from the Humanities/Social Sciences. Instead, we will argue that the nature of PBR always already suits it quite well to the geo-cultural circumstances of communities as they exist in a globalized world. To this extent, different notions of Rapport need to be dis-articulated. Just as well-being must be linked to the dual local/global relationships people have to place, so too must PBR incorporate and reflect the double-ness of all places by deploying a particular species of Rapport. In this, it departs from more familiar notions of methodological Rapport.

By responding to the methodological challenge that globalization throws out, PBR maximizes the value of the Creative Arts to the creation of well-being in localities of international place. It also distributes a number of other benefits. For instance, taking *Flows & Catchments* into the international arena has not only caused us to reflect on the international dimension that should always, as it were, inform work in its “home” territory of South-Western Victoria; it has also pointed up what is missing in cognate Humanities/Social Science-based

approaches. To the extent that there is or should be an homology between the lived experience of local/global place and the involvement by members of any given community with the Creative Arts through PBR, the onus is on Humanities/Social Science-based approaches to show how they effectively take the complexities of globalization into account. While we cannot explore them fully within the boundaries of this paper, PBR as linked to the Creative Arts suggests a series of broad-based adjustments that all methodologies with international ambitions might do well to take note of, especially insofar as Rapport is concerned.

In summary then, we are interested in the capacity of a fully developed mode of PBR to address globalized environmental and ecological crises, as these influence well-being, through its ability to create Rapport with communities that themselves inevitably exist at the intersection of the local and the global, where Rapport is always going to be problematic. Given that PBR is not just about indexing well-being but about actively contributing to it, its methodology places a heavy emphasis on the actual making of things. Indeed, this is the signature of the ecocritical Creative Arts. Rapport, to this extent, is as much about creating entirely new opportunities for Rapport, as it is about relying upon connections that need only be identified in order to be, after a fashion, re-kindled or re-created.

### **Background to *Flows & Catchments***

*Flows & Catchments* is an ongoing collaborative research project seed-funded by Deakin University's Centre for Memory, Imagination and Invention (CMII) in 2011. It has about a dozen active members. Its focus, until recently at least, has been on the Volcanic Plains Region of South-Western Victoria, and it seeks to achieve an understanding of the area that retains its rich and lived complexity, without reduction to dis-associated empiricism or instrumentalization.

Specifically, *Flows & Catchments* explores how the ecological creativity of the region under consideration may be transformed into an ecology of well-being of benefit to the local community. Drawing broadly on the “friendship-based” philosophy of Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze, we maintain that community well-being results from the richness of connections and relationships made within a place (Deleuze 126).

*Flows & Catchments* thus seeks to respond, in a practical way, to some of the questions Deleuze poses as part of his investigation into the potential of Spinoza’s ethological approach: “How do individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, ad infinitum? How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other’s own relations and world? And in this regard, what are the different types of sociabilities...?” (Deleuze 126). Furthermore, in doing this, *Flows & Catchments* strengthens the connection between Spinoza and the creative arts that Deleuze himself fails to make explicit. To wit, Spinoza argues for the value of such pursuits as “dress, music, sports, and theatres, and other things of this kind” in these terms: “For the human body is composed of many parts of different nature which continuously stand in need of new and varied nourishment, so that the body as a whole may be equally apt for performing those things which can follow from its nature...” (Spinoza 170). This notion of “the body as a whole” (Ibid. 170) implies, we suggest, the greater bodies of which, as a whole, it may in turn become a part: in other words, Deleuze’s “higher individuals” and “sociabilities” (Deleuze 126). Again, the metaphor of *Flows & Catchments* operates in many different ways across the various art forms it encompasses, but perhaps its strongest impact relates to how individuals (bodies) might “flow” into the “catchments” of communities (“sociabilities”) (Ibid. 126).

As noted, the *modus operandi* of *Flows & Catchments* is PBR, which is research in the creative arts that uses “subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies” to “extend the frontiers of research”. It depends on “personally situated, interdisciplinary and diverse and emergent approaches” (Barrett and Bolt 1-2). It is also highly reflexive, and draws on “ineffable or tacit knowledge”, as well as on intuition. It acknowledges “a plurality of views” (Ibid. 4-5). PBR spreads out from the local and specific, in art, to engage broader issues of knowledge, culture and society. It is about extrapolating from the little picture to the big picture, and thus, perhaps, subtly or not so subtly altering the big picture as it does so. “An innovative dimension of [its] subjective approach to research lies in its capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalised or not yet recognised in established social practices and discourses” (Ibid. 4). This last aspect of PBR is particularly relevant to our interest in transforming the perhaps-hidden ecological creativity of a mainly rural region into an ecology of well-being, and it nuances our developing interest in this paper in methodological Rapport.

In order to fully demonstrate the breadth of the *Flows & Catchments* sub-projects, their engagements with PBR (in most cases), and the efforts of team members to engage the ecological creativity of the Volcanic Plains region of South-Western Victoria, the following section describes a selection of them in detail:

*Flows & Catchments Sub-Projects (1): The Intellectual Legacy of James Dawson*

James Dawson was the author of *Australian Aborigines* (1881), and it is from him that *Flows & Catchments* derives its overall research inspiration. The research on Dawson outlined below is essentially archival and historical in nature, while the foci of the other studies included

are principally concerned with PBR. This is worth noticing because it highlights the multi-method approach of *Flows & Catchments* overall.

The most pertinent feature of Dawson's *Australian Aborigines* is its "Vocabulary of Words in Three Languages" augmented with a list of place-names and sample sentences illustrating the grammar of the languages. The wordlists are remarkable for representing dialects spoken right across the region with which we are concerned. A detailed study and cross-referencing of these wordlists for consistency/irregularities would necessarily encompass elements of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, thus rendering *Flows & Catchments* both *multi-method* and *mixed-method*. This study of Dawson's wordlists is forthcoming in our project schedule as an investigation of the relationship between landscape and language.

Although some archival study into the whole of Dawson's (largely unpublished and unstudied) works has been done (see, for example, the work of Jan Critchett, or the Indigenous cultural recovery programs that draw on Dawson's Wordlists), there has not yet been adequate recognition of their bi-cultural significance as records of a unique attempt at intercultural reconciliation, nor of Isabella Dawson's (James's daughter's) role in collecting Indigenous languages. With regard to the latter: to what extent are the language lists James Dawson published gendered? And what might the implications of this be for the shift from ecological creativity to an ecology of well-being? Are ecologies of well-being gendered in some ways? There is scope here for further research as *Flows & Catchments* develops. As we move *Flows & Catchments* into the international domain, exploring connections to well-being concerns in places as diverse as Qatar, Ireland and New Caledonia, we are concerned not to lose touch with the fine-grained aspects of the project linked to its original and continuing location in South-Western Victoria. Indeed, attention to such matters as gender, on the local scale within South-

Western Victoria, might well find resonance with the global environmental concerns that we are now turning to. In fine, how are (globalized) environmental and ecological crises gendered? This is one very practical, not to mention political way, in which “the local” and “the global” interact within globalization.

Interestingly, Dawson uniquely anticipated and provided the impetus for *Flows & Catchments*, and particularly its interest in PBR. One example of his initiatives in this regard is his commissioning of artist Eugene von Guerard to paint scenes from the area’s volcanic landscape in oils in 1855, with a view to a study of ecology and the inculcation of environmental values amongst the local populace. This is a prime example of how the ecological creativity of a place may be gathered up in artistic form for the benefit of its human inhabitants. All of Dawson’s enquiries were motivated by friendship (if not with the philosophical rigour of Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze), by a sense of community through connection, and by a research agenda predicated on the importance of lived human relationships and communication within and with natural places. Overall, his importance to *Flows & Catchments* is that he exemplified a place-based approach to learning and well-being.

More specifically though, Dawson’s interest in painting establishes a connecting thread of the visual arts through *Flows & Catchments*. As will become clear in the following sections, from von Guerard’s paintings, the members of *Flows & Catchments* have extended into film, drawings and diagrams. Just as, as explained above, the “friendship-based” philosophy of Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze creates “catchments” of community out of “flows” of individuals, so too PBR generates art-form “catchments” from the “flows” it gathers up. The line of the visual arts stretching from von Guerard to today and into the future suggests teasing possibilities for further academic research and reflective Creative Arts practices.

*Flows & Catchments Sub-Projects (2): Sisters of the Sun*

The fictional-documentary film *Sisters of the Sun* constitutes the primary example of PBR addressed here, and it explores several related questions: How does language work to name place, or not? How does language work to create a sense of connection to place, or not? And how does the creation of memory, or more precisely memorialisation (as typically occurs after one's death), create or not create a sense of continuity linking past, present and future?

To answer these questions, documentary-style interviews with people who live and work in the Volcanic Plains Region (including shearers, eel fishermen, farmers and quarrymen) are bookended by a fictional story about Isabella Dawson's preparation of her father's wordlists. Historically, Isabella's research took the form of conversations with a number of the local aborigines, but for this film her relationship with Wombeetch Puuyun (also known as Camperdown George) is foregrounded. A further ghostly re-fashioning of the historical material, which gives the film an almost magical-realist tone, is implicit in the setting of their conversation. This mainly takes place around Wombeetch's grave, an obelisk or cenotaph erected at Camperdown cemetery through the efforts of James Dawson, which bears the inscription "last of the local tribes". A certain ambiguity of time pervades this fictional part of the film: an ambiguity consistent with the explored idea that place contains its own sense of timing, distinct, for example, from historical time as modeled on (the English) language as a linear progression—as of words following other words in a wordlist. According to Wombeetch Puuyun in the film, place itself connects past, present and future, rather than any words on a gravestone. In a final, climactic scene, he scatters the pages of Isabella's diary to the winds, across place.

In line with the philosophical and ecological ethics of *Flows & Catchments*, the aim of the film-makers was to conduct an experiment in the maximisation—through the de-composition

and re-composition of established notions of time, place and language—of a sense of community amongst those they interviewed and amongst people more broadly. In other words, once framed by the fictional story of Isabella Dawson and Wombeetch Puyuun, what new perceptions might be suggested, for the viewer, concerning the well-being or otherwise of the interviewees as representatives of a diverse landscape of ecological creativity?

*Sisters of the Sun's* “fit” within the PBR model warrants further discussion. Recalling the definitions outlined above, it is *interdisciplinary* insofar as it is a *fictional-documentary*, a weaving together of creative-writing narrative with documentary filmmaking. The process of its generation was necessarily *reflexive* as its creators negotiated how the separate elements of such a cross-genre art form could be wed together, as a way of thinking about their investments in the story they were telling. (Because “real life” kept intervening in the shape of the people interviewed, it was not possible to write the script in a non-reflexive vacuum.) *Sisters of the Sun* was *emergent* in that it was unknown how the interviewees would react to each other and allowances/adjustments were sometimes necessary “on the spot”, and it was *subjective* since it was primarily driven by its creators’ own personalities, interests, enthusiasms and so forth. As for “*its capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalised or not yet recognised*” (italics ours, Barrett and Bolt 4, as per above), *Sisters of the Sun* brings out the indigenous background to current, mainly non-indigenous, farming and industrial practices in the region under investigation. It re-frames contemporary life through the prism of a (partly fictional) story of the past. In this, we think, lies its potential to enact a shift from ecological creativity (a film about a place) to an ecology of well-being (the happiness of that place’s inhabitants).

*Flows & Catchments Sub-Projects (3): Presentations, Artistic Installations and Exhibitions: the  
Lake Bolac Eel Festival and Stone Soup*

Besides historical/archival research and filmmaking, other *Flows & Catchments* activities include spoken-word presentations within the Volcanic Plains region, such as at the Warrnambool Art Gallery, outlining how the creative arts may motivate a re-creation of self in response to the ecological creativity of place and, in practical terms, the benefits of long-term and short-term artists' residencies for building an ecology of well-being in local, rural and often socially and economically under-privileged communities.

With respect to community arts activity, there have also been photography and other artistic exhibitions, which have been presented through involvement with local schools and clubs, as well as our participation in a broad range of other local events. A key example of this sort of collaborative, community arts engagement was a workshop held with local people at the Lake Bolac Eel Festival in March 2012 to bring to life a creative music soundscape around the theme of volcanoes. This soundscape was later performed as part of the twilight evening concert at the festival's culmination.

Now, if the visual arts forms one "catchment" of "flows" within our PBR approach, so too does music (if less directly and more abstractly) through Walter Pater's provocative suggestion that "*all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*" (qtd. in Bennett and Royle 73). That is to say, all *Flows & Catchments* artistic outputs and events might be said to contain a vein or veins of musicality in this sense. Such formal relations amongst *Flows & Catchments'* art forms, mingling with the various other modes of "catchments" and "flows" it contains, re-double the energies of the entire project.

A further sub-project, also included as part of the Eel Festival, was the production and exhibition of a series of drawings/diagrams that described and suggested types of projects to be done with local communities. These communal drawings were conceived of as the making of *Stone Soup*. The notion of *Stone Soup* is taken from folk tales about travellers in search of food who invent the idea of a magical Stone Soup to induce cooperation by asking local residents to garnish the mixture with local produce. Other forms of the folktale from around the world include Nail Soup, Button Soup and Axe Soup. For the Eel Festival, three different types of communal drawings (soups) were made. Participants were able to choose from Stone, Axe or Heirloom Soups, and then invited to take part in their production. The function of the “Soups”, from a PBR perspective, was the exploration and exposition of local community, with a view to further development of community interactions and well-being in response to the underlying ecological creativity of place and people. At the Eel Festival’s conclusion, the drawings were given to the community, and they were exhibited again at the festival in 2013.

In its original form (prior to international expansion), the *Flows & Catchments* suite of inquiries aimed (and still aims) to use the creative arts to facilitate community well-being in the context of the rich ecological creativity of the region serviced predominantly by Deakin University’s regional campuses. Within the Volcanic Plains region there are limited resources for local schools, declining enrolments, declining populations overall, as well as associated problems of social isolation. It is hoped that, through the projects just described, people will be brought closer together and at least some of these problems may be addressed. In particular, work with and within local schools is essential, since educational institutions are ideally suited to serve as conduits of ecologies of well-being. A one-day workshop in creative writing, photography and

movement was held at the Lake Bolac College in early 2013 as a pilot project for more work of this sort involving up to five nearby schools.

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**Practice-Based Research and its Common Ground with “Traditional” Research Methodologies**

One of the central premises underpinning this paper is that PBR and more “traditional” qualitative research in the Humanities/Social Sciences (hereafter “qualitative research”) are built on remarkably common ground. Furthermore, there are also common imperatives informing both practices in cross-cultural, international settings. Thus, qualitative research has much to offer in providing foundations for the relatively nascent PBR. There are important points of divergence (see below), but without directed attention to a range of factors central to both, no research, of any kind, would ensue.

Several of the considerations that follow are issues common to all qualitative research, but they are compounded/exacerbated by conducting such research in a global setting. As Glenn Laverack and Kevin Brown explain

The skills and qualities required of cross-cultural researchers have been identified as tolerance for ambiguity, patience, adaptiveness, capacity for tacit learning, and courtesy (Seefeldt, 1985). A number of authors have suggested that a team comprising both foreign personnel and members of the host community, preferably someone working closely with the community, provides the most suitable approach for cross-cultural research (Chow, Murray, & Angeli 1996; Cuthbert, 1985; Westwood & Brous, 1993). (Laverack and Brown 334)

Some of the factors listed here—patience, courtesy—are self-evidently essential requirements for effective communication of almost any kind. Others—a capacity for tacit learning, adaptiveness—might have been lifted from a guidebook for PBR. With regard to a “tolerance for ambiguity”, however, PBR goes a step further; it doesn’t just tolerate ambiguity, it *embraces* it. We explore this more in the next section.

In qualitative research, the use of members of the local community as facilitators in international settings is (at least) threefold. Firstly, they validate the researchers and their activities in the eyes of the locals, providing a necessary point of entry through which research can then ensue. They also play a cultural “safeguarding” role, helping to ensure that researchers do not inadvertently cause offence by behaving in some manner rude or inappropriate, simply because of a lack of understanding of the local culture. With regard to these aspects, the use of local community members is as integral to PBR as to any other form of research. In the third instance, though, qualitative research would further utilise locals at the stage of data analysis, playing an interpretative role so that findings are understood “correctly” (i.e. in the context of the specific international setting and all the nuances of culture it may contain). As Laverack and Brown observe:

Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out the importance of having members of the stakeholding groups in an evaluation to check the interpretation of data at the times of collection and of analysis. This is especially the case in cross-cultural circumstances, as the researcher might be more prone to misinterpretations. (Laverack and Brown 334)

As discussed in the later stages of this paper, this last function is one of the points at which PBR and qualitative research can be seen to diverge: PBR is not so interested in how

correct interpretation/meaning can be extracted from international settings as it is with the intersection of the global and the local, and the new meanings that might be generated from experimentation in such a hybrid space. Again, we come back to this in the next section.

In a nutshell, both PBR and qualitative research can be seen to thrive on the fostering and maintenance of Rapport. With particular regard to qualitative research group interviewing/discussion settings, four styles of interaction have been identified, listed from most- to least-desirable: empathy, engagement, railroading and disengagement. In the passage that follows, “facilitator” can be read as synonymous with “researcher”:

Empathy involves the facilitator’s being able to achieve insightful understanding by taking the point of view of the other. This is most likely when rapport (an equivalence of meaning construction between parties) is high and facilitator direction is low. Engagement also requires high rapport together with greater levels of facilitator direction, for example, where the facilitator encourages a particular direction for discussion. Low rapport results in role types that should be avoided. When rapport is lost or not gained, higher direction can force discussion to areas of lesser interest to the participants and is a kind of railroading. Low rapport combined with low levels of direction can leave the facilitator as a disengaged ‘outsider’ whose observations might lack validity. (Laverack and Brown 335-36)

While the specificities of the research settings will clearly differ, the importance of Rapport is undeniable and, with regard to it, we could extrapolate that “facilitator” might not only be synonymous with “researcher”, but also with “PBR practitioner”. Be this as it may, however, it

should be noted that the concept of Rapport has thus far been treated unproblematically (loosely, as that set of social conditions which best facilitates trust and amicable communication between individuals and/or amongst groups). In the following pages, exactly what that might mean in practice at the intersection of the local and the global will prove to be a moveable feast.

In globalised, international research, it is not unlikely that problems presented by language barriers might also need to be added to the mix. This is not, in fact, a different issue from those addressed above, so much as a compounding factor layered on and through the pinning down (or generation, in the case of PBR) of meaning in cross-cultural contexts. Four levels of language competence for interpreters have been identified: “grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic” (Danesi, 1996; Larson; 1998; Savignon, 1997, as cited in Squires 266). In the latter two categories, the line separating language and culture becomes indistinguishable. With regard to qualitative research, the issue is articulated thus:

Experienced cross-language qualitative researchers understand that when they conduct studies with participants who speak another language, they have a responsibility to maintain the integrity and credibility of translated qualitative data. Inexperienced cross-language qualitative researchers often wrongly assume that a translator or interpreter will resolve any methodological issues related to language barriers between qualitative study participants and researchers (Temple 2002; Temple & Young 2004; Yach 1992). With words as data, however, language barriers between ... researchers and participants become a potentially formidable methodological challenge. (Squires 266)

While PBR does not necessarily engage with issues of experimental validity in the same way or to the same extent as qualitative research, the negotiation of language barriers is essential for both, in order for research to move forward.

Shifting focus from cross-cultural research to intercultural communication more generally, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions constitute a succinct summary of (additional) factors that might impact upon the migration of *Flows and Catchments* beyond the conditions of its inception in South-Western Victoria. Hofstede identifies six categories, as follows:

- Power Distance (PDI), the willingness of a culture to accept social hierarchies, rather than espousing equality for all.
- Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), a personal versus a group focus/orientation
- Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)
- Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), the extent to which members of a culture are prepared to take risks
- Long-term versus Short-term Orientation (LTO)
- Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)

An extended discussion of these Dimensions is not required here, except to note that cultures can differ markedly with regard to them. For example, Western cultures are held to be characterized by low Power Distance and high Individualism, while Asian cultures are generally the opposite. In any event, the list of variables of which researchers should be mindful in cross-cultural settings grows ever longer . . .

Before closing this section of our paper, there is one additional “patch” of common ground between PBR and qualitative research to consider—one further element that might be added to the use of PBR to generate well-being (whether in cross-cultural, or any other settings). As much as this paper has argued against the scientific presuppositions inherent in many (not all) of the more “traditional” forms of Sociological and Humanities-based research, the application of such methods at the conclusion of a (series of) PBR event(s), at the very least, could help to gauge their effectiveness, to measure the extent to which well-being had or had not been facilitated. That is, after the “makings” of PBR in the Creative Arts had been concluded.

A quick glance at Google turns up a plethora of survey instruments with pre-established validity that measure well-being (with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Council for Educational Research and Deakin University all represented on the first page). Obviously, any survey instrument employed in a cross-cultural setting would need to be “tweaked” in order to be made as appropriate as possible, but the processes for doing so are well established.

All the same, measurement with any degree of scientific precision remains antithetical to PBR. While community members might not object to completing a survey at the conclusion of their participation in a PBR event, to further survey them beforehand so as to establish a baseline (a classic pre- and post-test design) would likely be detrimental to PBR’s effectiveness, as it would impose the rigidity of a scientific experiment on the process as a whole, and would thus be contra-indicated. Therefore, unless population samples could be sufficiently well-matched for a control group to be utilised, a post-PBR survey could only remain a general indicator of well-being in a community following PBR, rather than a direct measure of PBR’s effectiveness in coalition with the Creative Arts.

Nonetheless, we maintain that this potential lack of precision does not detract from the usefulness of such an exercise. And in general, in this section of our paper, we are suggesting that to work in the Creative Arts and in the domain of “globalized well-being”—that is, necessarily within the tension of the local and the global—a combination of PBR and other, more “traditional” methodologies is quite clearly valid.

Ethically, it remains important to use whatever resources lie to hand, to create ecologies of well-being in an increasingly globalized space of environmental crises.

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### Globalization and Practice-Based Research

In this penultimate section of our paper, we will begin the process of thinking through the methodological issues involved in transporting *Flows & Catchments'* PBR (Practice-Based Research) out of its original context of South-Western Victoria and into engagement with overseas places that are also subject to environmental challenges on an international scale. Our point is not that South-Western Victoria is itself immune to these challenges. To the contrary, we are arguing that the deliberate expansion of the *Flows & Catchments* project into the international domain brings into sharp relief how all local places, even those most familiar to us as researchers, are always already intersections of a multitude of local and global flows. Visiting and conducting research in places like Ireland, New Caledonia and Qatar thus carries the heuristic potential to de-familiarize our project's starting point. Ultimately, our engagement with the methodological imperatives brought to attention through internationalizing *Flows & Catchments* will force a reassessment of how we treat South-Western Victoria as a discrete place or, more accurately, as an archipelago of geographically proximate places.

The term “globalization” confronts us everywhere in the media and everyday speech, as much as in academia. In his book *Living with Globalization*, Paul Hopper quotes Susan Strange describing globalization as “a term used by a lot of woolly thinkers who lump together all sorts of superficially converging trends” (2). This is probably going too far. Nevertheless, to explore, as we are doing here, the crossover between “globalization” and a certain trajectory of methodological engagement moving from the qualitative approach of the Humanities and Social Sciences towards and into PBR, relates to the task of making the term “globalization” itself more useful and manageable. What Strange is presumably picking up on is a tendency for “globalization” to be presented as an explanation complete in and of itself: a sort of theory of everything. The “homogenization of cultures across the world” that “globalization” is generally used to signify makes the word itself somewhat homogeneous (Hopper, back cover). “Globalization”, as a concept, is in fact what must be critiqued and interrogated. In this, we are following the Empiricist line of philosophy that takes in an impressive lineage of Western thinkers. As John Rajchman observes, writing of Gilles Deleuze, “Even in A. N. Whitehead, he [Deleuze] admired a ‘pluralist empiricism’ that he found in another way in Michel Foucault—an empiricism of ‘multiplicities’ that says ‘the abstract doesn’t explain, but must itself be explained’” (7).

What we must seek to explain, however, is a hugely influential concept! Citing the work of Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Hopper notes that “it has been claimed that globalization is the human condition. From the first human beings emerging from Africa and spreading out across the globe, human history has been one of migration. Furthermore, long-distance trading activity and trade networks existed prior to the establishment of capitalism” (5). Our initial task then, is to explain “globalization” in a way that simultaneously engages its monumental significance for

the well-being of every earth dweller and also relates to the particularities of our argument as we are developing it around notions of methodology, place, the local and the global.

As a placing shot, we could do worse than cite Hopper's recommendation to attend, within globalization, to "the intersection and interaction of the global and the local" (1). This formulation suggests that the global and the local are discrete entities that "intersect and interact". Intersection *is* what's at stake here, but we want to signal a distance between how Hopper understands "intersection" and how we will. To an extent though, he takes us some way towards our position on globalization himself, when he argues that globalization's "processes and flows.... are having varied and ultimately unpredictable effects" (4). Unpredictability is a part of it.... Wherever and whenever a place is constituted as an intersection of the global and the local it (the place) changes the very nature of the global and the local. Ironically, for a study of the places that collectively make up the globe as the baseline of globalization, Hopper's book largely leaves out, or at the least under theorizes, the notion of place itself. What flows, as it were, out the other side of any given place are not the same formations of "the global and the local" as first flowed into it. The global and the local should not be regarded as Platonic forms, untouched by the sites through which, in any given time-place conjunction, they are re-created, if not created as if for the first time.

Another way to put this is to say that the between of any two things is not just a combination of those two things but something new and different in many if not all of its qualities. In *Being Between: Conditions of Irish Thought*, William Desmond multiplies the possible states of "in-between-ness" through a series of culturally and/or nationally based examples. For the Greeks, "being between" denotes "a primal porosity" (Desmond 18). "The porous milieu, exceeding all determinations, is over-determinate, and yet makes all determinations, of knowing

and of being, possible” (18-9). For the French, “The darkness of the middle, the mysterious equivocality of the between, makes us uncertain about our whence and our whither” (20). Further, “Man [sic.] is a double being, and yet in him the extremities can touch each other—as if the extremities flashed across the interim between and found their point of intensive condensation in us” (21). The Germans are our third and final example. For them, as Desmond puts it, there is a Hegelian, dialectical touch to the notion of in-between-ness: “The middle . . . is the space of mediation between opposites” (22).

We are not suggesting that any one of these ideas of in-between-ness necessarily captures how places might be constituted as *being between* the global and the local. (And certainly we don’t feel very attracted, as writers sympathetic to Creative-Arts practice, to the Hegelian nullification of opposites that, for Desmond, characterizes German thought. Dialectical thought is perhaps no less homogeneous an approach than any uncritical deployment of the term globalization.) However, Desmond’s work very usefully points up the absence of in-between-ness—which is ultimately the absence of place—in Hopper’s study of globalization.

Methodologically speaking, taking *Flows & Catchments* out of South-Western Victoria means having to engage with the in-between-ness of the global and the local as these categories inform the being of any given place (Ireland, New Caledonia, Qatar . . . ). Desmond shows us that this space of in-between-ness can be constituted in multiple ways, although as we have already noted, we do not feel ourselves constrained to choose from amidst his selection. As creative artists and researchers with a PBR focus, we are free to experiment with whatever approaches work best for any given creative-arts project. This freedom is built into the definition of PBR given towards the start of this paper.

Having said this, the emphasis of our PBR project is on place, particularly as expressed in the *Flows & Catchments* ethical presupposition that to augment the creativity of the place where any given community of people lives is also to augment the well-being of that community. *Flows & Catchments* explores how the ecological creativity of the region under consideration, wherever it might be, may be transformed into an ecology of well-being of benefit to the local community. Place is the most productive site for creativity to have a positive influence on the producers and receivers of creative-arts outputs.

It is for this reason that we are drawn to Paul Carter's (2010) work in *Ground Truthing: Explorations in a Creative Region*. Carter's book foregrounds the Mallee district of North-Western Victoria but it is, at a broader level, a thesis in creative processes as linked to place-making. Explicitly, it has a global focus, though its vocabulary and its key terms are very different from Hopper's (2006). This is a crucial point and this is why we like Carter's work so much. His book allows us to join the dots of our interest in place-making as a stimulus of well-being, the matching of methodology to project, and the emergent international (globalized if you will) dimension of *Flows & Catchments*. "From a creative point of view," Carter writes, "regions are nested within regions and the region of all regions where creative principles are grasped may only be found when a particular region has been selected" (149). In a sense, Carter folds the local and the global together into an intricate origami of regions. Equivalently, in the terms of in-between-ness, he populates the space "between" the local and the global with his notion of regions nesting within regions and of a "particular region" that, in every case, gives access to the "region of all regions" (149). Carter's in-between-ness has some of the qualities of a Möbius Strip or a Klein Bottle. In this way, he builds into any given "g/local" place an awareness of the "unpredictability" of local/global intersections akin to the ambiguity or "unpredictability" of one side and/or

another, or of inside and/or outside, in a Möbius Strip or a Klein Bottle. It is this idea of in-between-ness as the ever-present and vacillating third term of the local and the global—ultimately, as the “place” of place—that eludes Hopper even as it proves so useful to PBR in the Creative Arts.

In other words, Carter’s formulation of regions and regionality might be read as notes towards a methodology. Or better, as a clue to what, distinctly in PBR, makes PBR exceptionally appropriate to research that takes seriously both the nature of our globalized world and the vital “place” of places in that world. Of course, the creative-arts practitioners in *Flows & Catchments* were never going to jettison PBR wholesale, even as they moved their activities out of South-Western Victoria and into the international domain. However, there was, at least initially, an uncertainty about how PBR would translate onto the world stage in the service of a desire for community and (by extension) individual well-being. It is the very ambiguity and uncertainty—the un-resolvable doubleness of Carter’s formulation—that indexes the specific usefulness of PBR, as a methodology, in a globalized world facing highly globalized environmental challenges (such as, pre-eminently, climate change). Here, PBR can latch onto a device that ensures globally nuanced Rapport: a Rapport of complex regionality (as if any one place contained the “place-ness” of all the places of the planet). A Rapport that comprehends how Rapport can never be direct, essential, straightforward. Still, a Rapport that sutures PBR and the Creative Arts to the highly globalized nature of contemporary environmental crises as these impact on the particular places where people live and form local communities.

While there may well be significant common ground between the methodology of PBR and that of other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences more generally, we think we have identified here an important point of real difference. In this, our work within *Flows &*

*Catchments* within an international framework finds a secure anchoring point while, just maybe, throwing out a challenge to other methodologies that are subtended by the less sophisticated (and altogether too Platonic) approach to the question of the relationship between the local and the global that Hopper appears to put forward.

## §

### Conclusion

*Flows & Catchments* is a project and, by extension, a methodology *in process*. This is not the time to make a final judgement on its effectiveness. The incorporation of what we define above as “a Rapport of complex regionality” is, however, designed to stimulate certain outcomes. The primary project aim, of course, is to augment individual and community well-being in localized places that are, as Carter’s work shows, inevitably woven into global space. Rapport, as we have argued, is vital to this sort of well-being to the extent that it assists in extracting creative-arts outputs from the inherent creativity of a place (in our example, the Volcanic Plains of South-Western Victoria, Australia).

Alongside this desired outcome, however, another *Flows & Catchment’s* ambition is to engage directly, if necessarily more conceptually, with the very problem of the global-local overlap. Leaving well-being out of it for a moment, one might start to notice how “a Rapport of complex regionality”—as part of our project’s design—gives the Creative Arts the traction it needs to address Ursula Heise’s key theme in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. As she puts it, “The challenge for environmentalist thinking... is to shift the core of its cultural imagination from a sense of place to a less territorial and more systemic sense of planet” (56). This does not mean giving up on local place, only to recognize the imbrication of the local with the global. Heise considers a range of terms to capture this

imbrication (most notably, “eco-cosmopolitanism”) and she interrogates a number of texts (books, films, plays) that explore it (7). Is this enough though?

Inspired by Carter’s creative-arts emphasis, *Flows & Catchments* usefully supplements Heise’s work, we suggest, through its deployment of an energizing metaphor (“flows” and “catchments”) that itself “flows” through the various “catchments” of discrete and cross-artform creative-arts practices contained within *Flows & Catchment*. Here, “a Rapport of complex regionality” might be figured in the terms of the Creative Arts as a series of rapport-based investigations (also place-based, with all that means) into the “flows” and “catchments” of globalization itself as a hybrid of the local-global. In other words, as transformed within the crucible of the Creative Arts, the notions of “flows” and “catchments” are sufficiently both abstract and literal to meet the notions of the “local” and the “global”, which are also always already both abstract and literal, in the same expansive domain.

We could put this another way. If it is true that “An innovative dimension of [PBR’s] subjective approach to research lies in its capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalised or not yet recognised in established social practices and discourses” then why should this not include the perhaps “newest” and most “unrecognized” reality of our times: the problem of specifically *globalized* well-being (Barrett and Bolt 4). Considered in this fashion, the Creative Arts moves beyond being a heuristic for well-being across and within places. In the process, it becomes another “voice” within the sort of academic debates that concern Heise (not to mention Carter), enquiring into the relations of the local and the global not necessarily through “allegories” (Heise’s preferred form) but through drawing upon the full array of available creative resources, across all forms, genres and artistic approaches. Through PBR, the Creative Arts can speak into the ongoing conceptual aporia of

local-global relations and, just perhaps, tease out fresh meanings “either marginalised or not yet recognised” (Ibid. 4).

In this, we suggest in conclusion, lies *Flows & Catchments*'s additional value as a transportable methodology (of well-being) that is potentially appropriate to places outside of the Volcanic Plains where similar, interscalar local-global challenges are being faced. Its guiding metaphor, project design, and PBR methodology, delve into the Volcanic Plains as local place while also making for the horizons of planetary (globalized) space.

In sum, *Flows & Catchments* makes available imaginations of other iterations of itself, elsewhere and otherwise.

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