



Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia

Vol. 10, No 2 | 2021

Antropoceno Sônico – Práticas Sonoras para um Ambiente em Mudança (II)

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/cadernosaa/3739>

DOI: 10.4000/cadernosaa.3739

ISSN: 2238-0361

Publisher

Núcleo de Antropologia Visual da Bahia

Printed version

Number of pages: 24-37

Electronic reference

Carsten Wergin and Edwin Lee Mulligan, “Listening “Care-Fully”: Acoustemologies of Hope in the Face of Human-Made Environmental Degradation”, *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia* [Online], Vol. 10, No 2 | 2021, Online since 01 October 2021, connection on 02 October 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/cadernosaa/3739> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/cadernosaa.3739>

Listening “Care-Fully”: Acoustemologies of Hope in the Face of Human-Made Environmental Degradation

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The article explores a means through which eco-acoustic engagements with the environment can inspire hope in the face of human-made environmental degradation. Based on a discussion of entangled ethnographic experiences in Germany and Australia, the author shows how listening “care-fully” to people and places can foster new forms of collaboration that allow for alternative imaginings of the “buen vivir” and contest the modernist rationale and related dwellings of allegedly objective matters of fact – in this case, the exploration of natural resources through the controversial technology of fracking on sacred Aboriginal land.

Keywords: acoustemology, Australia, *buen vivir*, indigeneity, resources, Valhalla

The age of the Anthropocene is characterized by a global crisis in which environmental degradation caused by human impact has reached a devastating degree. Hope that the development of integrative models that foster more sustainable decision-making in a shared planetary future will provide solutions to this crisis is challenged by the obvious shortcomings of the modernist rationale that has brought about many of the problems we face today (cf. Latour 1993, 1998).

¹ Edwin Lee Mulligan, also known by his traditional name Warrda Lumbadij Bundajarrdi, lives as a poet and painter in Noonkanbah and Broome (Australia). In 2015, Edwin Mulligan joined the dance company Marrugeku as a writer and performer for the production of *Cut the Sky*. In 2017, he received the Shinju Matsuri Aboriginal Art Award for his “Seasons – Sharing Country”. Carsten Wergin (wergin@uni-heidelberg.de) is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg (Germany). He would like to express his sincere gratitude to Edwin Mulligan for sharing with him the experiences this paper draws upon, as well as for his careful considerations of and feedback on matters of culture and copyright for previous versions of this article.

Against this backdrop, this article explores practices of “critical listening” as an alternative means of inspiring hope in times of crisis (Robinson 2020). It builds on recent contributions to the anthropology of music and sound as well as original ethnographic examples from the Kimberley region of Northwest Australia to discuss how eco-acoustic engagements with the environment foster “care-full” listening that offers a way to contest the dwelling of allegedly objective matters of fact that have led to unprecedented biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

Drawing on Stephen Feld’s concept of “acoustemology” (Feld 1982), the article offers a complementary perspective to other eco-acoustic engagements with sound and place, as spelled out in the contributions to the double Special Issue of *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*, “A Sonic Anthropocene” (Louro et al. 2021). Feld’s approach is applied here in a multi-sited setting that interlinks diverse localities, narrations, symbolisms and cultural landscapes. As its protagonists engage in “expanded listening” to diverse places (Gallagher et al. 2017), they present readers with ways in which Indigenous storytelling attunes diverse people, from local community members, tourists and travellers to global theatre audiences, to the values that lie beyond the capitalist rationale. How might related eco-acoustic engagements assist in generating sound epistemic disobedience with which to adequately intonate the *Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Povinelli 2016)?

Across the globe, collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups present rich sources for alternative imaginings of the “good life” (*buen vivir*) that uncouple from a modernist overemphasis on progress and development (cf. Gudynas 2015; Moore 2015). Ecuador incorporated *buen vivir* into its state policy in 2008, albeit with ambivalent results (Figueroa-Helland and Raghu 2017). Since then, the concept has been replicated in many other counter-hegemonic movements (Walsh 2010). In line with diverse Indigenous philosophical approaches to nature, it makes itself readily available to challenge late-liberal divisions of the world into natural and cultural components that are either in need of being preserved or ready to be exploited (Descola 2005).

Buen vivir links individual concerns with wellbeing to how a community influences the wellbeing of everyone (cf. Williford 2018). This resonates with many Indigenous groups in Australia who identify themselves closely with the land. If the land that a person is related to through birth and kinship ties is well, then that person is well too. How an individual belongs to a place is thus intimately tied to his/her belonging to the community that shares a responsibility for the land, or what Indigenous people in the Kimberley term “living country”. Much like the concept of *buen vivir*, the country is considered alive not because it provides economic prosperity, but because of a reciprocal wellbeing of people and place. In this sense, *buen vivir* and living country are complementary concepts.

Eco-acoustic perspectives add an important component to the diverse ways in which people envision and nurture related imaginings of the *buen vivir*. As ethnomusicologist Tina Ramnarine argues, “acoustic epistemologies lie at the heart of indigenous [sic] political agendas. They underpin notions of place and home” (2009: 192). Along these lines, sonic engagements allow for the deconstruction of barriers between Indigenous forms of ecological knowledge and scientific conservation models.

Methodological tools such as data sonification, deep listening, field recording and soundscaping can all be mobilized to convey eco-acoustic experiences as both objects and mediums of analysis, “to reorient listening towards the life, agency, and subjectivity of sound within Indigenous frameworks of perception” (Robinson 2020: 15). In contrast to musical collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups that are often complex, unbalanced and developed through non-Indigenous structures of power,² the case studies below demonstrate the extent to which eco-acoustic experiences that are guided by Indigenous custodians are valuable ways to both (re)imagine the *buen vivir* and support environmental and biodiversity conservation in the face of late-liberal political and economic interests.

Elisabeth Blake and Ian Cross explain that “sound forms part of the sensory matrix that humans adapt to biological and social needs, which has implications for how social values for it are manifested in material culture” (Blake and Cross 2015: 88). With this in mind, I argue that listening “carefully” to people and places can foster “radical hope”, as it allows for new reflections on scale, presence, permanence, agency and lived experience (Lear 2006). In other words, an eco-acoustic engagement with the environment offers a means to contest the dwelling of allegedly objective matters of fact. In the following case, these come in the form of continued attempts by the resource industry to drill for oil and gas on sacred Aboriginal land in Northwest Australia’s Kimberley region.

My material stems from two entangled ethnographic moments that I recorded in October 2015 in Germany and May 2017 in Australia. Based on these, I argue that the practice of listening “carefully” to people and place that is exercised in Australian Indigenous contexts fosters collaborations across various scales (see also Norman 2012; Reich 2016). The case studies demonstrate: (1) how intimate relationships between diverse audiences and environments are generated through eco-acoustic engagement; and (2) how this can be put to creative use to advocate for an alternative imagining of the *buen vivir*. This adds to the *Sonic Anthropocene Project* (Louro et al. 2021), a critical and practical approach to place, and shows how multi-sited acoustemology can stimulate wellbeing on a damaged planet.

2 See for example Taylor (2012) for a broader discussion of the impact of capitalism on music production and perception.

Theoretical Background

Steven Feld coined the theory and method of “acoustemology” to open up engagement with environmental sound and sentiment for ethnographic discussion (Feld 1982, 1996, 2015). This approach, which originally drew on fieldwork with the Kaluli people in Papua New Guinea, has now been widely adopted and applied in very diverse domains and practically all parts of the world (see for example Dietze 2000; Duffy and Waitt 2013; Erlmann 2004; Goody 2002; Rice 2010). At the time, Feld observed, in great detail and with innovative recording technology that remains valuable to this day, how the Kaluli navigate their world listening to the *Voices of the Rainforest* that speak to them (Feld and Leonard 2019) – how, for example, a long-distance walker is able to find his/her destination without a map or physical path to follow, guided only by the acoustic experiences offered along the way: the sounds of animals, winds or footsteps on different terrain (Feld 1994).

Such an acoustemology – in the literal sense of “knowing through sound” – is what I first experienced when working with Indigenous people in the Kimberley region of Northwest Australia. With about 50,000 inhabitants and 423,000 km² of landmass, the Kimberley remains one of the most remote regions in the world, famously described in tourist advertisements as Australia’s “last frontier”. It holds significant Indigenous heritage value that is under intense pressure due to resource exploration proposals, in particular shale gas extracted by the use of the controversial technology of fracking. Resulting conflicts over “extraction vs. preservation” have activated new and situated debates about the future of the region (cf. Wergin 2018).

The heritage of the Kimberley is unique in various ways. Pristine landscapes and endemic fauna and flora attract domestic and international tourists who seek extraordinary experiences. These tourism experiences are considered upmarket because their remoteness is used to justify significant costs for plane fares and transfers to secluded holiday lodges by 4WD, small plane or helicopter. Meanwhile, luxury cruises with a limited capacity (30 passengers or less) offer access to gorges where Indigenous guides take visitors to Aboriginal rock art sites. Such visits are often accompanied by a related story from *Bugarrigarra* (The Dreaming), a term used by West Kimberley people to describe their ancestral law and culture. This provides additional food for thought to nurture the “hunger” for extraordinary experiences that attracts so many foreign visitors to the region.

Foundational to *Bugarrigarra* is the recognition of living country as the source of both physical and spiritual wellbeing. Settler-colonialism continues to have devastating consequences for this worldview. While Indigenous people are no longer forced to leave their homelands and resettle in places they feel no connection to, resource explorations remain the cause of the destruction of cultural sites until this day. Despite these consequences, living country remains a vital source of wellbeing for the people in the Kimberley.

When I commenced fieldwork in the region back in 2012, the first interview I conducted was with the owner of a luxury hotel. S/he was non-Indigenous, in his/her mid-50s, and had grown up in the area. Our conversation went from the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture and the violence of settler-colonialism to the particularities of the local environment – the semi-arid climate with its humidity but also the cool westerly winds that blow from the sea. S/he pointed to the need for those particularities to be recognized in the architecture of a hotel: for the building to be designed with, rather than in spite of, the presumably harsh environmental conditions.

These particularities turned out to be valuable in their own right, as their recognition increased the value of his/her property in two ways: the design added uniqueness and economized on expenses for air-conditioning. In other words, awareness of and responsibility for the land and the values in place worked towards wellbeing for both the tourism entrepreneur and the environment. This is close to what Aboriginal law and culture proffer: the inter-relationship of people and place, a reciprocal, “care-full” acknowledgement of interdependent responsibilities. This argument is what motivated me to think about my field site not in transcultural but rather in “transecological” terms.

While the notion of transculturality opens up a theoretical toolkit with which to acknowledge processuality as that which precedes cultural entities, the term transecology adds an ecological dimension to this acknowledgement (Wergin 2019). This approach is strongly based on my experiences with ancestral law and culture that continue to spell out diverse ways in which the wellbeing of the land is intertwined with the wellbeing of its people, and vice versa.³ What came to interest me in the course of the research discussed here was how such entanglement with the land is “thickened” not only through story or architecture, but also through sound, dance and other aesthetic means (Wright and Carlyle 2021). Or, to sum it up in a poignant question, what is the acoustemology of living country in the Kimberley?

Both Indigenous and Western music traditions play a central role here. Aboriginal people were long employed as cattle drovers, which led to the musical genre of country and western becoming popular among them. Missionaries also provided Western musical education to Indigenous children, which included singing hymns and learning musical instruments such as the violin or organ. One of the most emblematic results of such transcultural encounters is the musical *Bran Nue Dae*, composed by the late Jimmy Chi from Broome,

3 The Indigenous group I was most closely affiliated with during my fieldwork is the Goolarabooloo. They are the custodians of parts of a song cycle known as the Northern Tradition. This song cycle leads from Broome, a well-known tourist town, north along the Indian Ocean coast. I first learnt about Indigenous perceptions of the environment and their responsibility for living country through my participation in the Lurujarri Heritage Trail, a nine-day walk organised annually by the Goolarabooloo. It takes Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants along the song cycle while its custodians share *Bugarrigarra* stories and show people how to fish, collect bush foods and build boomerangs and clapping sticks (Wergin 2016).

a town that in tourism contexts is considered the “gateway to the Kimberley”, from which many of the luxury cruises, scenic flights and 4WD trips set out.

The musical celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2019. The opening lines of one of its best-known songs, “Nothing”, are a cynical commentary on how Aboriginal children were taken away from their families and forced into Western education in Christian boarding schools. They read, “There is nothing I would rather be / Than to be an Aborigine / And watch you take my precious land away” (Perkins 2009). On stage, the song is sung by an Indigenous boy in school uniform who has just managed to withdraw his hand from being whipped by a priest.

This scenario is reminiscent of a not-too-distant past. The bitter irony for the Aboriginal child who is “educated” in a Christian boarding school is that this education literally takes place far away from any *buen vivir* on living country, and this resonates with an ongoing need to adequately integrate marginalized voices in debates on global transformations (Altman 2010; Chabay 2010; in’t Veld 2010; Lea 2006; Taylor-Gooby 2013). This includes what has become known as the “ontological turn” in anthropology, which has been criticized for not changing but only sugar-coating the fact that Indigenous people lack proper recognition, in particular for the ways in which they offer alternative means of engagement with the environment in their law and culture (Neimanis 2015; Todd 2016). What is argued in the following section is that such acknowledgement can be achieved if one takes into account the potential of multi-sited acoustemologies. To do so, the case study below assembles a “transecology” of song, dance, Indigenous stories of the *Bugarrigarra*, Norse mythology and people and landscapes in sociopolitical movement and conflict.

Sounding Valhalla

In 2015, Marrugeku, a dance company from the Kimberley, performed *Cut the Sky* in Ludwigshafen (Germany). The piece mixes contemporary and traditional dance with live music and *Bugarrigarra* stories to tell about the heated conflicts over “extraction vs. preservation” in the region.

On their Internet platform, the plot of *Cut the Sky* is told as follows:

In a burnt landscape a group of climate change refugees face yet another extreme weather event. Propelled back and forward in time, they revisit conflict with mining companies, the destruction of fauna and relegation of the marginalised, while contemplating the gift of a human life and the life giving force of the sun. Butterflies swarm searching for water, dancers disintegrate into the light, a song is sung calling for rain.⁴

A couple of days after their performance in Ludwigshafen, I went on a longer walk through the Odenwald, a nearby forest, with Edwin Lee Mulligan,

4 Source: <http://www.marrugeku.com.au/productions/cut-the-sky/> (retrieved June 15, 2021)

the Aboriginal songman and storyteller on whose poems *Cut the Sky* is based. We were joined by Bruce Gorring, the then managing director of Marrugeku, who describes himself as a “*kartiya* (non-Aboriginal person) of European and Chinese heritage”.⁵ The rest of the crew had headed towards Munich to visit what they considered iconic German heritage sites, including the concentration camp in Dachau and Neuschwanstein Castle. Edwin and Bruce wanted to get out into the fresh air, so I took them up the Heiligenberg to the Thingstätte, a 3,000-place amphitheatre built by the Nazis.

Edwin Lee Mulligan holds responsibilities for land near Noonkanbah, a cattle station where in 1978 Aboriginal people from all over the Kimberley came together in a joint protest against the mining company AMAX and their plans to drill for oil on sacred land. Noonkanbah (which translates to “common ground”) is made up of numerous “increase sites” that offer plenty of water and food. Because of this, it is a place where Aboriginal clan groups traditionally meet for ceremony and “law business”.

On our descent from the Thingstätte, I asked Edwin what had inspired *Cut the Sky* and he told me the related *Bugarrigarra* story. A tree in whose trunk water occasionally accumulates marks a sacred place near Noonkanbah station. One has to watch and listen to the sounds of particular birds in order to know when this phenomenon will occur. It is said that two boys once came to the area in search of water and shelter but were refused by the local people. They thus turned into spirits and took away the water when the people went out hunting. Upon their return, the boys would only respond to the people in the same way as they were greeted previously, with a refusal to help.

“That story,” Edwin told us, “is a warning not to be greedy.” It has a contemporary edge to it, since mining companies are again working on the land at Noonkanbah. These companies have given names to their drill sites, and the one near the tree of the two boys is named Valhalla (Bennett Resources 2020). I was struck by the name and how it seemed to unintentionally correlate not only two mythical stories from opposite ends of the globe that both involve trees, but also our eco-acoustic experiences of them in Germany and Australia.

I told Edwin and Bruce that in *Götterdämmerung*, the fourth and final opera of the famous *Ring des Nibelungen* by Richard Wagner, the German composer draws on Norse mythology to tell about Valhalla, a majestic hall in Asgard. The King of Gods, Wotan, had used branches from Yggdrasil, a mythical tree that connects the nine worlds of Norse cosmology, to build a spear. When he broke the branches off, the tree fell sick. So Wotan built Valhalla to reinstate his power.

5 Excerpt from his own biographical notes. Source: <https://www.notredame.edu.au/research/nulungu/staff/Bruce-Gorring> (retrieved June 29, 2021).

Bruce, Edwin and I began a lively discussion about the mining company's interest in fracking near the sacred tree of the two boys and how this will affect both the wellbeing of the land and that of the people involved in it, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. We were fascinated by the linkages between the places that the name Valhalla conjured up. Little did we know that this was to set the grounds for a "care-full" collaboration that lasted for more than two years and culminated in a joint trip to Noonkanbah (see below).

The fracking tower at the Australian Valhalla is particularly prominent, and the reason why a model of such a tower features prominently in the stage setting of *Cut the Sky*. Previously, Edwin had researched the drilling activities around this tower. He had asked for a job with the mining company, and for a few weeks had worked at their gates to check who came onto the land. Though often put forward in support of industrialisation proposals, here again jobs such as security guard that were offered to the local Noonkanbah community were limited, and demanded or provided few to no qualifications.⁶

During his time as security guard at the gates, Edwin counted seven different companies involved in exploratory drills. He also found out that workers had given the fracking tower at Valhalla a name. With its many pipes sticking out like branches, they called it their "Christmas Tree". In light of this, Edwin became a strong opponent of the company and fracking, since in his view it continued the long history of exploitation of both living country and its people. His experience became the background story for Marrugeku's *Cut the Sky*.

One and a half years after our visit to the Thingstätte, Bruce, Edwin and I were again on a day trip, this time by car from Broome to Noonkanbah (about 470 km one way). It was mid-May and an average 34 degrees Celsius. The three of us had just left the funeral of Dickie Cox, a significant figure in the Noonkanbah protests of 1978, and headed towards Valhalla where Edwin had offered to retell the story of the two boys. But before arriving there, he took us to a site he called the Ears of the Dingo so that we could introduce ourselves to the ancestral beings (Figure 1).

For the land to share its richness with you, it is necessary to follow a protocol to introduce yourself. Across Australia, this is commonly known as a "Welcome to Country". It grants permission to enter and assures visitors that they are protected if they walk with the people and the land, i.e., if they are motivated by a desire to share their experience "on country" and not by a feeling of entitlement because they merely paid for a tour.

The way Edwin explained to us how to introduce ourselves to the land provides the grounds for the eco-acoustic argument put forward here: "You chuck your line in here, you catch the fish from here, you have good hearing

6 For the purpose, local men are trained by professional security firms in how to arrest and handcuff intruders. In this particular case, most of those trainers were former Australian soldiers who had fought in the Afghan war.

for listening [...] Like the dingo always has his ears listening.” Afterwards, “You got a moment of silence to reflect the reason why you came here”. Finally, the environment takes notice of your presence and makes you aware that it recognizes you, through birds that sing and blows of the wind: “See the birds taking notice of our activity? [...] They call us, and they’re calling out to other birds [...] There, another wind.”⁷



Figure 1: The Ears of the Dingo (Photo: C.W.)

The *Bugarrigarra* story of the two dingos cannot be recounted because of cultural restrictions. They are important creation beings for the area, and Edwin Mulligan owns and protects their story by sharing glimpses of it with visitors who come to Noonkanbah to experience the place with him. This is very much in line with what this “common ground” used to be, since, as mentioned above, the land is considered an “increase site”, with plenty of food and water that facilitated meetings of hundreds of Aboriginal people. Today, Edwin also offers cultural heritage tours out of the town of Derby, from where he takes people there.⁸

What is relevant for the argument put forward here is that in the above case, the Welcome to Country is done through different ways of listening “carefully”. Edwin explained how to prepare yourself to greet the ancestral beings and to connect to the land by throwing in a stone, which provides “good hearing for listening”. Then he urged us to take “a moment of silence to reflect on why you came here”, thus listening not only to outside influences but also to oneself – opening up and allowing oneself to connect with the environment.

7 The distortion the wind caused is audible in the audio recording of this event that is archived for personal use.

8 For further information visit <https://lamartij.com> (retrieved June 21, 2021).

The blowing wind literally made us feel that our presence had been noticed. Then the birds called out to let all others know about our presence.

How Edwin Mulligan guides visitors through the Ears of the Dingo provides them with eco-acoustic means to “decolonize” their listening and the way in which they perceive the environment. His “care-full” introduction to the local acoustemology turns what Robinson (2020) describes as a “hungry listening” of tourists, who seek out extraordinary experiences, into a “care-full” engagement with the diverse aesthetic layers that make up the place. The significance of the land might be represented in writing, but fully unfolds only through such multisensory engagement. As Robinson (2020: 254) states:

Such work does not necessarily centralize Indigenous stories or music, but might instead turn a critical lens toward individual inheritances of (hetero)normative, ableist, colonial and racializing formations for compositional and presentational practice, and deconstruct these structures through aesthetically marking what has been previously unmarked.

In other words, “care-full” listening provides a means through which to experience a place beyond modernist constraints, because it recalibrates the eco-acoustic engagement away from expectation of extraordinary experiences and towards the appreciation of values that are already in place (Wergin 2016). As such, it offers rich sources for artistic (Indigenous) activism like Marrugeku, and can equally provide means through which governments, non-governmental organisations, industry and activists can encounter each other on more equitable terms.

Such efforts to decolonize listening practices require hard labour and emotional investment from Indigenous custodians like Edwin Mulligan. The contribution that is required in order for such processes to “take place” thus cannot be overemphasized, and must not be taken for granted either – not least so that a newly acquired skill of “care-full” listening will not fall back into “hungry listening”.

Related approaches to “care-full” listening can span places as diverse as Noonkanbah in Australia and the Odenwald in Germany. Such multi-sited acoustemology as the one described here not only connects diverse localities but also allows for rather unconventional ties between *Bugarrigarra* stories and resource exploration proposals, Norse and Germanic mythologies. In this sense, “care-full” listening invokes local entities while also allowing for the exploration of transecological entanglements across diverse localities and scales.

It is beyond the scope of this article to engage in a detailed analysis of the diverse aesthetic layers that make up the eco-acoustic experience discussed above. Nevertheless, multi-sited acoustemology proves a useful tool to further engage in the diverse hyper-objects like capitalism or climate change that know no boundaries but that are at the heart of the sonic Anthropocene. In this particular case, it connects the threats that stem from the exploration of resources on sacred land in Australia to the Thingstätte in Germany, a former

manifestation of Nazi propaganda that today welcomes a great abundance of weekend hikers, tourists and travellers in search of extraordinary experiences.

This calls for further explorations that add to sound(scape) studies a willingness to “follow” various sounds, stories, people, objects (Marcus 1998). As the above case studies have shown, such multisensory engagement raises hope for alternative imaginings of the *buen vivir* that span various dimensions and intersecting questions of aesthetics, historicity and decolonialism, climate change and resource exploration, Indigeneity and resilience, in and through the acknowledgement of music and sound as world-making activities.

Conclusion

This contribution has brought together song, dance, Indigenous stories, people and landscapes affected by sociopolitical movement and conflict. It has shown how eco-acoustic experiences open up temporary and geographical scales through which to decolonize notions of presence, permanence and agency. In regards to ongoing conflicts over the exploitation of both people and land, such acoustic experiences provide hope, as they enable us to alter our perceptions of the environment and its inherent values. Through them, people like Edwin Lee Mulligan know about the powers of the land at Noonkanbah that are linked also to the *Bugarrigarra* story about the two boys that reminds us that the place can punish and expel greedy people. He shares this story through Marrugeku and also with visitors on his tours, since such shared experiences assist in protecting the place from resource exploitation.⁹

They also bring together the stories of three presumably different mythical trees: Yggdrasil (the mythical, life-giving tree of Norse mythology), the fracking tower at Valhalla named “Christmas Tree” and the tree of the two boys. Despite their religious, geographical and temporal differences, what they share is a call for more nuanced decision-making processes about the future that take diverse world(view)s seriously, through multisensory interactions that expand what is perceived as valuable in and of a place (cf. Howes 2019) instead of trying to reduce its value to one imagining of a Christmas tree with plenty of gifts underneath.

9 On a practical note, this might well have impacted the findings of Bennett Resources (BNR), which in a document prepared in support of the formal referral of the BNR Valhalla Gas Exploration and Appraisal Program (the Proposal) under Section 38 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EPA) concluded that “Based upon the predicted outcomes for the Proposal, BNR do not believe that the Proposal will result in a significant impact to terrestrial environment quality. The environmental mitigation measures intended to manage and minimise impacts on terrestrial environmental quality are considered effective. Consequently, BNR believes that the EPA’s objective to: “*To maintain the quality of land and soils so that environmental values are protected*” can be met.” (Bennett Resources 2020: 55).

Along these lines, the above has shown how an eco-acoustic engagement opens up a means through which to think of a place differently. In this sense, experiencing the Ears of the Dingo with Edwin is not an encounter with another world(view) that might be played out against the modernist one, but a world-making activity in which diverse collaborators – be they Indigenous or non-Indigenous artists, poets, academics, tourists or travellers – are brought together through care and concern.

Multi-sited acoustemologies raise awareness of possible extinction (including human extinction) as a common threat that knows no boundaries. In an increasingly uncertain planetary future, listening “care-fully” thus needs to become a mandatory exercise. Ethnographic practice can draw on its qualities to journey across sounds, mythologies, people and places, highlighting not only the ruptures and turbulences but also the potentialities of eco-acoustic entanglement. Emphasis on the latter opens up spaces in a sonic Anthropocene that are yet to be explored. ARE YOU LISTENING?

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Date received: 2020-10-02

Date accepted: 2021-07-19