

Unexpected Sources of Hope

Climate Change, Community and the Future

What are the processes and possible impacts of climate change for current and future generations in this region? What might we learn from past experience and current thinking in the region about how to adapt to changing circumstances? Can diverse efforts to enhance 'adaptive capacity' contribute to the articulation of a shared vision for the future? How can we visualize a future that enables us to take more effective action in the present? What can be done to prevent a deepening of social divisions in the region when times are tough? How can people in this region work with outsiders to develop more effective strategies for enhancing adaptive capacity?

Of course, there are no easy answers to questions of this magnitude, and adaptive capacity requires adaptive thinking. *Unexpected Sources of Hope: Climate Change, Community and the Future* presents an opportunity to rethink citizen engagement that flows from the local to the national and the global, and in reverse. This project is aimed at exploring the proposition that community participation in future visioning would contribute to a stronger sense of local citizenship and desire to contribute to future planning, policy development and implementation.

Many people in the region helped to give birth to the characters Georgia D'Ambrosia, Duncan and Angus McCrae, Danny and Nguyen Pham and to the scenario that subsequently gave birth to Jack Murphy and Billy Lovett. After that these characters take on a life of their own, in the telling of the stories. Creating and sharing alternative narratives and visions about sustainable futures is an important starting point for creating a sense of hope and as a catalyst for social innovation. Stories capture us as much as we capture them. We hope that these stories will trigger other creative responses so that the conversation can be continued in many ways and through many forms of interaction.



Yaso Nadarajah, Martin Mulligan, Jodi-Anne Smith,
Louise le Nay and Christina Hindhaugh

with Damein Bell, Peter Cook, Coralie Coulson, Cicely Fenton, Victoria Finch, Peter Hayes,
Pat Learmonth, Olive McVicker, Terrie Nicholson, Sue Pizzey, Rosie Rowe, Howard Templeton,
Judy Warne, Richard Weatherly and Yael Zalchendler

Cover image: *The Puma, The Stranger & The Mountain*

Illustration by Trevor Flinn, Dunkeld.

Image from private collection (used with permission of artist)

Image altered, with light introduced (with permission of artist)

I make sculpture and video as a means of investigating legends and to further understand my place in regional Victoria. I want to tell stories that draw the viewer into a more poetic world, a world of both humour and perversity. At the moment my interest lies in the story of The Grampians puma, a creature believed to inhabit the region in which I grew up, preying on the unwary.

My childhood was idyllic, yet I can still vividly recall walking with friends in the mountains and scaring each other with puma stories. Fertile imaginations and encounters with dead animals created all sorts of horrifying possibilities. Like many local youths, after finishing high school I went to Melbourne to pursue further study. After completing a BA in Art History, I spent about six months overseas, and on my return I decided to start making art. It was while studying sculpture at The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) that I developed a particular interest in installation, video and printmaking. After completing a BFA in Sculpture, I eventually returned to Dunkeld in 2007 and have attempted to continue my art practice.

Trevor Flinn

Over the past eighteen months, Trevor has transformed his town's once derelict and unloved railway station into a vibrant contemporary art space. In early 2007, Trevor received funding support from Next Wave to begin work on developing the old Dunkeld Station into an arts space. With this small seed funding, Trevor was able to transform the old station's ravaged interior into something resembling an exhibition arena as well as converting one end of the building into a space suitable for projecting video. The remaining grant money was used by Trevor to create a new body of work (based on local legend and the landscape) that would become the basis of the old station's first exhibition: *The Puma, The Stranger & The Mountain*.

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Prologue

I'm now going to ask my young author friends to look at their stories and work out where the ideas came from. What idea started the story? What other ideas joined in? When you do this, you may come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as an invented story. Fiction is just a rearrangement of actual experience

Joy Cowley, 2008

Stories are fundamental to the way we learn and to the way we communicate. They are the most efficient way of storing, retrieving, and conveying information. Because hearing a story requires active participation by the listener, stories are the most profoundly social form of human interaction and communication.

Terrence Gargiulo, 2006

Our people who gnawed at the fringe
of the edible leaf of this country
left all the margins of action, a rural security
and left to me
what serves as a base for poetry
a doubtful song that has a dying fall

Judith Wright, *For a Pastoral Family*, 1979-1980

From time to time that mythical Australian monster, the Bunyip, stirs in his swamps or mountain gullies. For a few weeks some little township is terrified by mysterious bellowings at night, by the tracks of some large beast discovered by day. Dogs howl. Cattle disappear. Men carry shotguns and women lock their bedroom doors. Then it is discovered that the Bunyip was just an outsize wild dog, a mad bull or, in one case, a sea-going crocodile that strayed too far south. The scare is over. But the legend of the Bunyip persists. Some day he really will appear and ravage Reedy Creek or Upper Coolangabooloo.

A.D. Hope, *The Bunyip Stages A Comeback*, 1956

Not all opportunities for community-based research can be founded on such a long history of engagement as the Local-Global Project in the Hamilton region that was initiated by RMIT University's Globalism Research Centre.¹ This length of engagement has enabled Melbourne-based researchers to build the kinds of relationships with local people that enable us to tackle some very challenging issues in pioneering ways. Such relationships are based on face-to-face dialogues in which we are all confronted by unfamiliar 'otherness' and differences; dialogues in which active participants acquire deeper understanding and new perspectives through listening, talking and reflecting. In many ways, this process is what community education writers such as Mel King and Gloria Anzaldua² have described as an 'opening up'; of enabling creative spaces in which issues can be negotiated and new meanings can be constructed. At the end of 2006, the Critical Reference Group of the Local-Global Project in the Hamilton region decided to prioritize an investigation of the local impacts of what was then called 'global warming', in order to increase community awareness of all the associated issues. However, there were no existing manuals for engaging communities with a challenge as deep and complex as climate change and so we had to develop a methodology of our own; a methodology that would not focus on the technical mitigation of climate change impacts, but rather develop the adaptive capacity of the community for the many uncertainties that lie ahead. This methodology was forged within the creative space that had been constructed within the Hamilton region Local-Global Project; it required courage, co-operation, commitment, and above all curiosity on the part of all those who participated.

More will be said in the Epilogue about the methodology that has been created for engaging the Hamilton region community with the challenges of climate change. However, it emphasizes the creation of 'future stories' set well into a challenging future and so we will begin by moving directly into that future. We move from prologue to what Edith Sizoo has called a 'vivid and profound polylogue'.³ A polylogue, a multiple of voices, is characterized as being informal rather than formal, expressive rather than instrumental, elliptical rather than linear, collective rather than individualistic.⁴ The polylogue itself is a process for engagement with diversity and complexity and it creates rich material for the storyteller.

In the best of the stories we begin to hear the voices of a variety of recognizable characters and we are lured into an imaginary world by deceptively simple sentences that say a lot more than you think they do in the first reading. The stories that follow offer glimpses of life in the Hamilton region in the period between 2030 and 2050 and have been put together by a range of people who participated in the 2008 Scenarios Mapping Workshop in Hamilton. In many ways these stories may paint a rather bleak picture of what the future might look like for the Hamilton region but they are also stories about hope, resilience and creativity in the face of tough challenges. There is a music that is made in the songs of hope, and it is this music that reminds us of our resilient common humanity.

When we allow ourselves to get lost in extraordinary stories, we might find that we have the capacity to reinvent ourselves. Stories can be like dreams in a minor key.

¹ For a description of this relationship and some of its outcomes see M. Mulligan and Y Nadarajah, 'Towards a rationale and a methodology for "community-engaged research"', *Local Environment International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2008, pp. 81-94.

² Mel King and Gloria Anzaldua's work with communities is described by Leonie Sandercock in *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*, Wiley, England, 1998.

³ Y. Nadarajah in 'The Outsider within—Commencing Fieldwork in the Kuala Lumpur/ Petaling Jaya Corridor, Malaysia', *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2007.

⁴ *ibid.*

They lead us inexorably into the dark laws of nature, the harsh realities of the land, the courage and creativity of humans, and the difficult relationships between humans and all the other beings on Planet Earth. By dwelling within the consciousness of other human beings, we encounter patience and impatience, humility and arrogance, beauty and profanity, life and death, resilience and vulnerability. What path will we choose? How can we live up to the potential we can imagine? How will we build on these stories we want to live by? How will our children draw threads from these stories to weave their tapestry of the future?

The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge the crucial roles that have been played in the creation of the following stories by a wide range of people. First, we would like to acknowledge those who played an important role in the Climate Change Forum held in Hamilton in April 2007 and in the subsequent Scenarios Mapping Workshop held in February 2008. These include: Damein Bell, Iris Bergman, Bob Cadden, Rob Chaffe, Dr. Paul Collits, Rev. Peter Cook, Coralie Coulson, Lisa Downs, Colin Dunkley, Bruce Farquharson, John Fenton, Dr. Doug Fleming, Dr. Peter Golding, John Graham, Cathy Harbison, Tim Harold, Christina Hindhaugh, Paul James, Sally Jones, John Kiely, Helen Lane, Pat Learmonth, Rachel Malseed, Olive McVicker, Maria O'Connell, Sue Pizzey, David Ralston, Rosie Rowe, Andy Scerri, Darren Shelden, Leon Soste, Dr. Tom Stephens, Jay Tan, Howard Templeton, Judy Warne, Richard Weatherly, Maree Willey and Tony Williams. The scenarios and stories created on the day of the workshop would not have taken root if not for the efforts of two much admired local writers, Christina Hindhaugh and Louise Le Nay—who gathered them into their folds to unfurl in richness and depth. We thank especially members of this workshop who worked with Christina Hindhaugh and Louise Le Nay to further the scenario and stories.

It was Professor Peter Hayes, who first suggested the use of scenarios mapping methods for addressing climate change and other future challenges for the Hamilton region, and worked closely with Dr Jodi-Anne Smith to design and facilitate the scenarios mapping workshop. We would like to acknowledge all the members of the Critical Reference Group for the Local-Global Project in the Hamilton region who worked with Dr Nadarajah and Dr Mulligan for four years in developing a range of projects related to the impacts of global changes on the Hamilton region. In particular, we would like to thank the Hamilton region facilitators of the Local-Global Project—Cicely Fenton, Vicki Finch and Terrie Nicholson—for their tireless efforts and collective wisdom in turning ideas into action and we would like to acknowledge the vital contribution of other staff within the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT in Melbourne who have worked on our projects in the Hamilton region; in particular Yael Zalchendler and Wasana Weeraratne; and Todd Bennet for layout. We would also like to acknowledge the more recent contributions of Kalpana Ramani and Lakshmi Venugopal with copyediting and referencing.

Finally, but not least, we thank Trevor Flinn who has so generously shared one of his prints from his new range of work; Naup Waup (RMIT international student 1994); Jing (RMIT international student 1995) and Judy Warne (Dunkeld) for their artistic contributions.

Now the story begins...

Polylogue

Unexpected Sources of Hope

It's the year 2030. Hamilton's economy is in recession. Bored and idle youth roam the streets. The back wall of the Art Gallery is smeared with graffiti and windows smashed down McLuckies Lane. Unemployment is high but the emergence of some new industries is providing fresh opportunities at last. The population has been swollen by an influx of farming families from the northern Dundas tableland, forced to sell their farms to multi-national corporations due to long-term drought. Mineral sands mining is finished, the local processing plant closed. The blue gum industry is static—no more plantings due to low rainfall.

The local economy is not only recessed it is totally depressed.

As always, this impacts most harshly upon the disadvantaged. In central Gray Street, Hamilton, there is a soup kitchen and drop-in centre run on a voluntary basis by the combined churches, which have enjoyed a healthy increase in worshippers. Because of the current fiery hot summers, with more days over thirty-five degrees than ever before, the entire central block of Gray Street is enclosed by a giant temperature-controlled perspex dome and this has eased the high rates of thermal stress among downtown shoppers. The traffic flow on surrounding streets is light; expensive bio-hydrogen vehicles owned only by the affluent. Every roof in town bristles with solar panels.

Because of continuing drought, food costs have soared and poor nutrition is creating further health problems. So on the old Coles supermarket and carpark site the Council has established a bi-weekly produce market so district people can meet to sell and/or swap home-grown fruit, vegetables, jams, sauces, clothing and bric-a-brac. The whole market area is protected from the sun by brightly covered shade-cloth sails, and is a scene of great bustle and activity each Tuesday and Thursday with barter being the predominant method of trade.

The Art Gallery has a new wing devoted to local district artists and the current exhibition is internationally renowned Hamilton photographer Hanif Guerrero's work on the Great Grampians Fire of 2012 which burned from Mirranatwa to Penshurst, wiping out most of Dunkeld. Archaeologists have since uncovered a section of a very large sandstone wall...

At the library next door there is a small historical display of printed books. The principal collection is in the form of e-books, distributed online.

In the southern car park, behind Gray Street, a fleet of delivery vehicles is housed. Because of the extreme cost of travel, most people order their food online and it is delivered weekly all around the shire.

On the site of the old Hamilton Club a call-centre has been established. It's a government sponsored initiative to provide jobs for 200 long-term unemployed. This company tele-markets Australian holiday packages to buyers in India, which is where the world's recreational wealth predominates. A government subsidized day-care centre operates on the same site so that children can be cared for while their parents work. Men are still paid a higher hourly rate than women.

Old Monivae Homestead on the Port Fairy Road is now the headquarters of Hamilton's international accounting firm, Gatto-Mochbel, which employs 150 chartered accountants to deliver e-accounting solutions online for Chinese merchant banks.

The Hamilton hospital has a special emergency wing to treat heat stress, dehydration and people with acute breathing difficulties, a condition which has become chronic among babies, the elderly and the infirm. Due to poor water quality, dysentery and gastro infections are endemic. During the Teenies (2010–2020) the Western District Health Service had to cope with a resurgence of encephalitis as well as a severe bird flu epidemic, but at least the general population has now been protected by immunization against any further cancer, Parkinson's Disease or early-onset Dementia.

In the farming areas south of Hamilton the low rainfall has precipitated a grain boom. On farms previously too wet to grow crops—the land around Penshurst, Macarthur and Hawkesdale—there are now bumper harvests of GMO cereals and oil seeds, which are sold at high prices to a hungry world. The farms are huge monocultures—canola, wheat, barley. The impact of these monocultures on local flora and fauna has long polarized farmers and green groups, and it is still a source of friction in the community.

Eco-vandals are slashing tractor tyres and are suspected of lighting fires.

This isolated area of high prosperity promotes envy from outsiders and a siege mentality has developed among these southern farming families. Some farms are now entirely protected by laser alarm systems and security fencing.

North of Hamilton on the Dundas tableland, the unrelenting dry seasons have decimated cereal cropping, and this has been replaced by broad-acre animal protein production for the Middle East, mainly from a new hybrid ruminant called a shoat—a cross between a goat and a sheep.

Most farms around Coleraine, Brit Brit and Balmoral now average 8000 ha in size, are corporate owned, and totally without wire fences. 'Virtual fencing' controls the shoat flocks electronically from the farm office by means of tiny nano-technology transponder implants which guide and/or train the animals' eating/drinking habits by tiny electric shocks. Feed and water supplies are monitored online with video cameras, and consequently these macro-farms require few farm labourers.

Through cloning and genetic modification, the shoat flocks are worm and external parasite resistant; they thrive on low-grade pasture and weeds, and minimum moisture. Their feed is supplemented with mineral nutrients and rumen biota to maximize production and reduce methane output.

However, animal welfare is now an international market imperative and these farming corporations' risk management strategies include implanting each animal with a wellbeing microchip which monitors the animal's heat-stress levels at all times. A wellbeing score is mandatory alongside weight-gain and other performance indicators in sales brochures.

Around Vasey, Gringegalonga and Cavendish the giant farms are interspersed with a few small remaining family farms, usually run by elderly farmers who struggle on in a cottage-industry type enterprise, clinging on to the old ways and in reality running down their asset rather than selling out and moving into town. Some small landholders have gained federal government Land Stewardship contracts to stay on their farms and manage the environment, but the continuing drought and consequent onslaught of pests and weeds make this a difficult and depressing job. Some innovative small farms are breeding kangaroos and possums for meat and skins. In Coleraine there is a new abattoir devoted to native animal slaughter which employs fortu people. North from Balmoral most farmers have leased their land out to solar energy companies and the Kanagulk plains shimmer in the sun from hundreds of thousands of solar panels pointing towards the sun.

Throughout the district water is rationed and extremely expensive. Water supply (through the National Water Grid) is controlled federally. Hamilton has been kept on Level 5 water restrictions for the past seven years. Green lawns are a memory; flower gardens rare. Most families have a productive vegetable patch, recycling water from their own domestic supply. A devoted army of service-club volunteers keeps alive the historic European trees in the Hamilton Botanic Gardens, watering by hand with water saved from each household outflow. No-flush eco-toilets are mandated and odour is a problem.

Hamilton has led the way in establishing a local bio-fuel factory using algae from Lake Hamilton. It employs thirty-seven people and supplies fuel for government emergency vehicles and public transport.

The district roads have broken down in an alarming way due to a lack of bitumen, which, being an oil-based product is no longer procurable. The main arterial highways are cemented, but all other regional roads have reverted to gravel and corrugated dust tracks, virtually impassable at any speed above twenty kph in a wheeled vehicle.

The new generation of hovercraft (fuelled by bio-fuel) is beginning to replace b-doubles on these gravel roads, although parking them is a problem in a high wind. Most freight was transferred back to a restored rail system during the Teenies (2010–2020) but the continual damage to tracks caused by climate extremes has made rail transport increasingly problematic. And after the tragic derailment of the Melbourne-Portland VFT in 2014 at Glenthompson, due to buckled tracks, resulted in the death of seventeen people with sixty-five injured, the system has fallen out of favour.

A happy consequence however of the prohibitively high travel costs has been a resurgence of social activity in the small communities like Balmoral, Warrayure, Nareeb Nareeb-Woodhouse and Wannon. People get together to make their own fun locally and village halls once again resound with music, plays and balls, all featuring family participation. Quiz Nights, Bingo Nights, Bush Dances and Religious Revival meetings have become the mortar for small communities who can no longer travel to larger towns.

On a global level, the melting of the ice caps has caused the ocean levels to rise and several Pacific islands have become submerged in the last decade, their inhabitants relocated to bigger islands, to New Zealand, to the east coast of Australia.

Hamilton has been assigned three thousand refugees from around a submerged Saigon, and a further 1500 from a small archipelago in Indonesia. The Indonesians are mostly Muslim. All these climate refugees are being housed in tents at the showgrounds. Consultation about this relocation was scant. The initial goodwill towards these displaced people has fallen away. After several months, the showgrounds has turned into a dustbowl. Local sentiments range from 'disgruntled' to 'mad as hell'.

These 'fobs' (Fresh Off the Boat) have language differences, cultural differences, religious differences and emerging health problems. Health screens were not conducted at the border, due to a lack of staff, and many diseases are now emerging, including a spike in TB infections and Hepatitis G. Added to this, the lack of manageable hygiene in the refugee camp has resulted in several cholera outbreaks, which health authorities have struggled to contain. Gastroenteritis is rife. A rash of skin disorders and some birth defects are being researched. There seems to be a link between these and the new generation of water treatment chemicals.

The birth rate is climbing, and so, unfortunately is infant mortality. Health services, chronically understaffed and under funded, are struggling to cater for the increasing



Some say that the newly constructed blocks look strangely like the dome-shaped houses that were constructed for the Tsunami-affected victims in the south-east coast of Sri Lanka.

(Photograph by Yaso Nadarajah, 2009)

population. Loss of a domestic pet has been magnified in the papers to a 'spate of pet losses' and a letter campaign has raised the notion of refugees hunting for domestic animals at night. This has increased suspicion and hostility.

People thought the use of the showgrounds was temporary, but it is now looking permanent, although there is a housing construction plan underway. The local building contractors stand to make a lot of money. Some contractors have already laid off regular workers and have illegally hired refugee labourers at a fraction of the wage. The plan is to put some refugee families into the smaller northern towns, either into empty housing (left by vacating farmers) or into newly constructed government housing. These small communities are encouraged to be self-sufficient because of the cost of transporting produce, and it is felt that the islander lifestyle of the former Indonesians will suit this. Small dairies, butter factories, bakeries are being developed. In this subsistence economy, some towns have put aside common land for vegetable growing and trade is by barter.

Some say that the newly constructed blocks look strangely like the dome-shaped houses that were constructed for the Tsunami-affected victims in the south-east coast of Sri Lanka.

Resentment towards refugees is gathering pace. They seem to be getting a sweet deal, while the poor in the population are still waiting for housing. In fact, building materials are in short supply. Cement, adobe-style materials require too much water, timber is rationed. Research is being undertaken all over Australia to find low-cost, low-water building alternatives.

There are regular complaints that refugees refuse to contribute to the community. Emergency service groups such as SES, CFA and Red Cross are lobbying the government to extend National Service to young refugees. Currently all Australian school leavers are required to spend two years 'Nasho' training and serving in one of the emergency services. There is a petition being circulated around the churches to include refugee youth in Nasho.

The town kids (mostly male) form gangs, out of boredom and a desire to 'belong'. There are Towners, FOBS (refugees) and Offlanders (children of those who have moved in to town from farms). These kids are part of Gen Zed. They harbour resentment towards Gen X who failed to fix the mess left by the hated, profligate Baby Boomers. A booming trade in illegal drugs—including the new scourge, Hammer—takes place under the overpass by the old railway yards.

A temporary mosque which is erected for the refugees is regularly damaged by graffiti. There are community meetings to gather support to oppose the construction of a permanent mosque.

The indigenous population in the south is now in possession of what is considered some 'prime' farm land. The elders have resisted attempts to buy them out by major farming corporations. They operate a traditional community, hunting, fishing and farming for themselves with sales of smoked eel and bush tucker to Hamilton and beyond. Way back in 2008—in the midst of an earlier drought—there had been great opposition to the elders' proposal to re-flood Lake Condah, but it has turned into a complete success.

Health professionals, church and community leaders are aware that mental health is deteriorating. Depression is wide-spread, especially amongst the young. But the community is determined to overcome this and has come together to plan a series of food expos, cultural festivals and general celebrations. The century is reaching its silver jubilee, and a number of events are being planned, sponsored by the Geoff Handbury Old Folks Foundation. Highlights include a visit from the Geelong Premiership team of 2007 (still heroes because the club failed to maintain the standards of its 'glory years'), an address by Nobel laureate and Cavendish local—Martha Duncan—who won the Biology Prize for developing the shoat. However, the main attraction was the Farewell performance from Dame Kylie Minogue, who has finally decided to retire at the age of sixty-two.

Georgia D'Ambrosia and Angus McCrae

Getting ready

Georgia has just finished medical training. She was runner up to top-of-the-class—which she thinks is not too shabby at all, considering she went to three 21sts in the week before her final and a pretty wild thirtieth from which she can't actually remember getting home.

She's now SRN 1 with an Intensive Care specialty and a certificate in Rural and Remote Area Care. This last she did because she was told it would look good on her CV. The way Rural and Remote Care's been going over the last twenty years—it seems that no matter how much money is thrown at the problem there's always a shortage of practitioners in the country. She wrote a paper on Depression among Ageing Farmers, incorporating the Big Drift to the cities, and paying a fair amount of attention to the latest catch-phrase—'community splintering'—which is largely blamed on the acquisition of old farms by large corporations. She got a High Distinction for that one. She knows her stuff.

So, now she's setting out on her first appointment: Hamilton, Western Victoria. She can see how her life is panning out; a year here, to get some experience under her belt, then back to the city. Because, despite swearing undying fascination for rural problems in her interview; she has no intention of staying. It'll be hot, dry and uncultured; she's pretty sure, a lot of rough young guys with incipient drinking problems, and older guys with full-blown alcoholism. Melanoma, Depression, Alcohol Dependence. That'll be her life for the next year. She's ready for it.

Getting there

It's February. Georgia drives down in the heat, past dried salt pans, some big mining operations, dead-looking towns. Everything is silvery-grey under a blistering blue sky. The few people she passes wave to her. Country manners—cute. Or maybe they were just admiring her new Sunburst Coupe, with its snazzy little solar unit above the rear spoiler, compliments of the Department of Rural Health. Not many people have their own cars now, since the draconian Fuel and Emissions Act of 2025. Close to Hamilton there are some mean-looking high fences around the paddocks, though what they're protecting is a mystery. Everything is grey, dry, dead! Even the razor-wire protected, GM eucalypt plantation—which, if you believe all the hype about these new trees, is said to get by on the smell of a damp cloth—looks drooping and desperate.

Georgia arrives in the late afternoon. Hamilton is as she predicted—one of those Grand Old Towns gone downhill. Some nice buildings; a lot of disrepair. A colourful market place, but not operating today. In fact, there's no one much around. Georgia looks hopefully for a Coffee Place, but can't see one. Typical, she thinks. She finds her accommodation. An old house on the edge of the city block that is subdivided and sublet to itinerant workers. She unloads her car feeling a wave of homesickness.

What a dump!

Setting up

Georgia is part of a team of five. The four others have been here either all their lives, or so much of it that they've become part of the furniture. They're all overworked. So, there's no settling in period. Georgia's in the thick of it before she's properly unpacked her suitcase. Her job, to begin with, is to set up some Information Nights. They've been listed as urgent for about six months, but there's never been enough staff to get them going. Georgia's confident. She can do this sort of stuff on her head.

She sets out her Male Health Display disks, her Dry Fungal Lung Diseases disks, her Staying Well in Mind and Body disks. She sends out advertising to all the bush nursing bodies in the Hamilton catchment. The reply is enthusiastic, and before long she's heading off to Harrow to deliver her first Information Night.

It's a fizzer.

The turn-out is poor. It's apparent that those who do show up expect a supper to be provided, and there's nothing except wheatmeal biscuits and tea and coffee. It's evident that Georgia's youth is a turn-off; especially when she launches into her talk at the deep end, by discussing the link between depression, libido, impotence and age in rural areas. There's a couple of walk-outs. At the end of an uninspiring evening, Georgia finds herself packing up chairs, aided by one elderly farmer, who appears to have taken pity on her. His name is Duncan Macrae, and he explains that he was dropped off by his son, and will have to wait around to be collected anyway, and it's better to be busy than idle.

Duncan Macrae is a local wool grower—an endangered species. He tells Georgia about his family merino stud, that's been operating for 150 years. He raises superfine wool, 17-19 micron. She doesn't know what that means, but she knows she is meant to be impressed. Duncan offers to show it to her—since she's living here now, she should get to know a bit about the local industry, even if serious wool growing is becoming a thing of the past, he adds with bitterness. Duncan also suggests that if Georgia's not attached, he could introduce her to his son, Angus. Angus could do with a wife. He's a cowboy; he needs to be slowed down a bit. He's all about change. Georgia thanks Duncan for the offer, but explains she's not in the market for a husband. And when Angus comes in looking for his father, she's not sorry. He's uptight and impatient. She doesn't like the way he talks to his father. If Angus McCrae is an example of eligible bachelors in this outpost, she's going to have a lonely time over the next year!

In the thick of it

Georgia gets better at her Information Nights. After some discussion with the others in her office, she learns to take things bit-by-bit, to organise good suppers, to play guessing-games with real prizes, to tell jokes, to gain the confidence of her audience before bringing up the touchy subject of Dick Droop.

She gets into the swing of things in town, too. She learns that during the heat of summer the shops take an afternoon siesta, before opening for evening trading. She looks forward to the big monthly market, when everyone converges on Hamilton to buy, sell or trade. She knows where to go for coffee and for olives—all grown locally. She goes square dancing every fortnight (she can't believe it herself) and she actually loves it. Angus McCrae goes to square dancing too. She is forced to dance with him for the progressive jigs, but she avoids him generally—there are plenty of other more charming people to dance with. She's still planning on getting back to the city sometime, but at least now she's going to enjoy her time here.

Autumn brings the cooler weather, and news of major flooding overseas (not here, unfortunately, it still never seems to rain enough in the Western District). Several Pacific islands have been deemed no longer able to support life, and their inhabitants have been taken to New Zealand, Queensland and South America. In May, there's news of another flood. This time it's Saigon that's been deluged by the rising waters of the Mekong River. Millions of people are officially homeless.

Georgia gets called in to a crisis meeting early one morning. She discovers that Hamilton is about to welcome three thousand refugees. The Council has been in discussion with the Federal Government over the last few days, and the decision

has been made quickly. They've been offered lots of incentives—more money for infrastructure, a greater assignment of water, cheap housing materials—all they had to do was say yes to the refugees, and they did. The first truckloads of refugees will be arriving in a week.

There isn't time to question the wisdom of the decision. Questions like: What do we house them in, till the new housing is built?; How do we feed them, give them water, until the new assignment of water arrives?; have not been considered. Do we have the resources to clothe and educate them? All questions that must be answered on the run. But for now it's all hands to the pump. The showgrounds are transformed into a refugee camp, in readiness. There's tents for housing, tents for cooking, tents for schooling and healthcare, there's pipes being run from a central 'watering point' to connect up to Hamilton water supply.

Five Vietnamese interpreters are sent up from Melbourne.

But all is not smooth-sailing with the general public. There's outrage about the suddenness of the decision. How dare the Council agree to an influx of refugees without proper consultation? There are angry letters to the newspaper, and a large container of rubbish dumped on Council Chamber steps (symbolic of Hamilton becoming a 'dumping ground').

Georgia finds herself pushing through a mob of placard waving demonstrators every time she tries to get into the showgrounds to deliver supplies. She works fifteen hour days getting the place ready. She's assisted by interested volunteers, and delegations from all the local churches. She runs into the McCraes twice, bringing bales of straw on one occasion, and setting up a small market garden in a corner of the showgrounds, on another. Duncan's always ready to stop and chat, but Angus is always busy, never quite meeting her gaze. Obviously finds her a bore, she decides.

The first truckload of refugees arrives before the camp is properly set up. No matter. Georgia is in charge of health checks on admittance. She thought she'd be ticking boxes, but it's all a disaster. These people are a mass of malaria, cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis. There's kidney failure, tapeworm, malnutrition, impetigo and every pox in the book. Because of climate shock—being moved from the equator to southern Australia, and a particularly cold winter—the effects of hypothermia are everywhere.

To make matters worse—and this is the biggest shock of all—not one person is Vietnamese. The interpreters are bewildered. There are crisis meetings, and eventually the mistake is tracked down. As well as the Vietnamese, Australia has taken seven hundred refugees from a small Indonesian archipelago that has been sunk by rising waters. That they've been sent to Hamilton is certainly a paperwork error, but now that they're here, they're staying. These people are Muslim, they speak a dialect that no one knows, and they're terrified. Just as they're being settled into the refugee camp, the Vietnamese refugees arrive in three big convoys.

Georgia's fifteen hour days have got even longer. Sometimes, she doesn't go home at all, just finds a corner of her office and lies down with a pillow for an hour or two. There's a shortage of supplies—bandages, penicillin. There's a shortage of blankets. There's tension between the two refugee groups.

One night, walking home from the showgrounds in the dark, Georgia slips on the broken pavement and breaks two ribs. She's not far from the Uniting Church, where she used to go for square dancing, and it's Angus McCrae who finds her, helps her up, and gets her to the hospital. The doctor who examines her, pronounces her malnourished and suffering from exhaustion. He tells her to go home and sleep for three weeks. Angus thinks she'd be better off being looked after and takes her home to the farm. Duncan and Maggie McCrae are delighted to have her there, and after her initial objections fade away, Georgia finds she's glad to be there.

For one thing, Angus is out all day working on the farm. Maggie cooks brilliant food, and sings and does the farm accounts. Duncan chats and takes Georgia for walks to see the last stand of red gums on his property, the waterhole (now practically dry) where he used to swim as a boy, the old schoolhouse and the railway siding—now disused and overgrown.

Over meals, Georgia hears the circular arguments about ‘succession planning’, and realises that the same arguments are taking place at night in kitchens in every farm in the district. Angus wants to turn the place over to crops. The price for grain is going up and up. The land, which used to be too wet for cropping, is now ideal. Duncan’s family has been breeding merinos here for over 150 years. If Angus pulls up all the fences and puts the place under canola, barley, wheat, legumes, the hard work of developing the stud will go down the toilet. They need to stick to the game plan with sheep, Duncan argues, lower the micron to 16-17, and lift wool production, and their profits will follow. Angus reminds his father that the price for wool has dropped off the chart.

Georgia wonders why they can’t do a bit of both—cropping and wool production. Angus tells her, in a slightly long-suffering tone of voice, that nowadays it’s all or nothing. If the land is to be used for crops, he doesn’t want the soil compacted by animals. He wants all the space for a proper rotation, on a scale large enough to make some money. They’re not in the business of subsistence farming.

And so the argument continues, round and round, over and over. Between arguments, Georgia walks and rides, attends a bush dance at the local church hall with Angus, assists with drenching and crutching, sings roundelays with Maggie. Then her three weeks are over, and she’s back in the thick of it. But she keeps close to the McCraes now, visits on the weekends for rest and good food—and the inevitable argument, which she’s starting to enjoy.

Christmas rolls around, like death and taxes, but the Christmases have changed a bit in Hamilton now. Still traditional, yet with Vietnamese carols, and Indonesian food. The combined churches in Hamilton do a Christmas celebration that somehow manages to include everyone. Georgia and the McCraes stay in town for church service and carols, before going home to the farm. Then New Year is around, and Australia Day, and the hot dry days of February, and the end of Georgia’s contract.

It’s come so fast that she can’t believe she’s been here for a whole year. She should be glad to be at the end of her contract. And she is. She really is ... Damn! She thinks she is.

That’s when Angus pops the question.

Typical. He could have chosen a better time. Just when she’s about to pack up and hand over, she’s given the offer of joining a family she’s come to really love, and a man she realises she rather likes being around. It’s just not what she was planning! On one hand, she can go back to the city, to another appointment, to the old five-year plan she made for herself on graduation.

On the other hand, there’s this place. The Western District. She remembers all those first impressions—the heat, the dust, the relentless blue sky. Well, that was just the surface, she’s come to realise. A true impression of one small part of this place. As true, she realises now, as crisp winter mornings, and mist sitting on the paddocks as far the eye can see. And the rampant glorious green of spring growth. Pods of jumping lambs, and great swathes of golden canola. And blue wrens, and parties, and the smell of the woolshed.

So, what to do? How easy will it be to walk away? What are the consequences of staying?

Life sure has a way of slapping you sideways when you least expect it!

Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project, 2030

Old Jack Murphy sat down at a wooden table outside the Lake Condah Indigenous Discovery Centre cafe, knees creaking after his long walk around the lake. He ordered tea and a toasted sandwich. ('Everything made on the premises' the sign boasted. That was impressive if it was true, he thought, grudgingly). There were tourists spilling out of a bus in the car park, spreading out like grain from a burst sack. They moved towards the wetlands, the grasslands, the lake, binoculars at the ready, sunglasses and hats, sunshades twinkling open above their heads. They were festive, but intent. On a mission. That thought made Jack laugh, and wish there was someone with him to enjoy the irony. On a mission, on a Mission. Bloody hell, times had changed a bit, hadn't they?

His tea and toastie arrived, and, with it, a family of chestnut teal ducks, who took up a vantage point nearby to watch him eat, ready to accept any scraps in the offering. That was ironic, too. He was here to look at them, and here they were, looking right back at him.

He could hear the tourists, still. Some of them had reached the shores of the lake and were marvelling, just as he had marvelled a few hours ago. He knew what they were seeing. Wood duck, black duck, chestnut teal and mallards, swans and pelicans. If he hadn't witnessed it himself, he wouldn't have believed it. Old Jack hadn't seen such bird life on a single sheet of water since climate change had really hit the district twenty years earlier. The sight had hit him like a brick—bringing with it so many memories, so many emotions. His childhood: camping with his family at Glendinning, a vision of the long-billed corellas coming in by their thousands to nest in the trees over the water. The battering sound of their wings, the gossiping and shrieking, the sheer magnitude of life as it had been, in the last decades of the twentieth century, before anyone knew enough about what was happening to the climate to be really afraid.

Just south of where he was sitting, Jack could hear a guide telling a visitor group how his Kerrup-Jmara ancestors had first dammed Lake Condah millenniums ago. How, once the lake filled, his ancestors made stone eel traps and fish traps and lived off the lake's bounty for thousands of years. Thousands of years. The thought of all that time gave Jack something to think about, too. When Europeans came—filled to the brim with their certainties about land management—they'd drained all the water away. Thousands of years of use, and it was gone within a few generations of European occupation. So that it wouldn't flood the nearby farm land, they reckoned at the time. Jack could remember a time when people spoke about water like it was an inconvenience. A necessary inconvenience. The memory of that high-handed arrogance made him shift uncomfortably in his seat.

'It was dry for a hundred years after that,' the guide was saying. 'During the 1980s there were some scientists came down and studied the eel traps and carried on like they'd invented the wheel, or something. Called them artefacts. If the water had still been there, they wouldn't have been artefacts—they'd just have been working eel traps.' Everyone laughed. More irony. The guide went on: 'But when our mob got the land rights back, we decided to fill it again. Got government backing. Got all the experts in. And after the engineers and hydrologists and geologists had all done their thing, the site they chose for the new weir was the very same spot my people had built their stone weir 8000 year ago!'

Everyone was laughing now. Funny how laughter could make you sad, thought Jack. And a bit guilty.

Old Jack sipped his tea and looked the other way. Next door to the cafe and Discovery Centre was a gallery displaying indigenous art and crafts and further along the road stood the imposing Lake Condah Bush Foods Processing Plant and outlet. A side door of the plant suddenly swung open and Billy Lovett emerged pushing a pallet of boxes. Jack knew Billy through the Heywood footy club. He'd coached him in the Under Twelves, years ago. He called out to him.

Billy looked round as he headed for a delivery van parked nearby. 'Jack! What brings you out this way? Get lost on your way to the shop, or something?'

'Haven't been out here for twenty years,' admitted Jack. 'Can't get over the bird life!'

'A lot can happen in twenty years.'

'My oath.' Jack shrugged helplessly. 'I'm pretty bloody speechless, Billy.'

'That'd be a first.'

Billy grinned, assuming the chat was over, and started pushing his pallet away. Jack was suddenly aware that he had questions. He wanted to talk. 'Need a hand?' he offered, unconvincingly.

'Nah, thanks. She's right.'

'What're you shifting?'

Billy hesitated, apologetic. 'I'd love to explain but I gotta go, Jack—smoked eels for the Hamilton Market. Got to catch the Heywood bus at twelve.' He began loading the boxes from the pallet to the back of the van.

Jack got to his feet and limped over to him. 'That lake of yours, it's like ... I don't know ... it's like ... It's a bloody miracle, Billy.'

A smile—a touch of irony again: 'You reckon?'

'You know, me and some of my mates round here were dead set against your mob re-building that weir,' Jack said. 'Thought it'd flood our paddocks again. That was pretty funny! It's hardly rained since!'

'Yeah, it's been dry.'

'So, how did it fill that way? How'd you get the birdlife back like this?'

'No miracle. Management. Time. Commitment. You know about that stuff, Jack. You used to preach those virtues to us kids in the under-12s.'

'Good fishing now, I bet?'

'Yes, terrific. Toupong and tench mostly. Come down sometime, I'll take you out. Right now I've got to go, though!'

'Stop! Look! Quick! Over there, see?' Jack pointed excitedly towards the northern side of the Lake. 'Are they Cape Barren geese?'

'Likely.' Billy shaded his eyes and looked in the direction that Jack was pointing. 'One of the guides reported seeing a flock last week. Pretty rare, aren't they?'

'Haven't seen one in years!' said Jack excitedly. 'When I was a kid they just mooched around in the paddocks along the river. We took 'em for granted ... and then they just weren't there anymore.'

'We got stilts, too.'

'You're having me on.'

'Black-winged stilts, spoonbills, egrets ... even red-necked stint ...'

'How long did it take for them to come back?'

Billy had the driver's door open, about to get in, but hesitated. 'Not long—a pair of swans arrived one day to nest and then some mountain ducks and we knew then it was going to be okay ... When the brolgas turned up three years ago, we threw a party.'

'Brolgas!'

'You want to bring your binoculars next time. And maybe a camera.'

The war of emotions in Jack was overwhelming. 'Look...' he started to say, and then stopped. Billy stopped too, sensing Jack's need. Jack shrugged. 'I don't know, mate. It's just when I think how I mouthed off about your land rights and all; I thought your mob was going to pinch my farm. In my head it was like you were going to fill the whole bloody place up with weeds or vermin ...'

'And we didn't.'

'This land looks in better shape than my farm and most of the district. Billy. That's what I wanted to say. Climate change has wrecked our modern pastures, the paddock trees are buggered, mostly, and we're battling plagues of insect pests because the bird life's gone. But in that patch of scrub over there I found two flame robins and a white-browed scrub wren ...'

'All feeding on insects. I know.' Billy grinned. 'What I didn't know was that you were a bloody bird fancier!'

'All me life, son. It's a noble pastime.'

'I'm not arguing. I love it, too. My grandpop used to say: when you care for the land, you care for the people. And when you care for the people, you care for the land.' Billy glanced again at his watch, then slammed the van driver's door shut and gestured to Jack's table. 'May as well join you for a cuppa,' he said. 'You up for another one?'

'What about your bus?'

'I already missed it,' said Billy, smiling. 'No worries. I'll get the later one.' He ordered his tea and sat down beside the old man. 'What do you know about hawks? Can you tell a Collared Sparrowhawk from a Brown Goshawk?'

'The Sparrowhawk's tail is slightly forked. The Goshawk has a rounded tail.'

'How come you never told us about birds during footy training?'

'Guess I thought you bloody tearaways didn't give a toss.'

'Wrong again.'

'I'm having a day of it, son. I'm the bloody Prime Minister of Wrong, today.'

By the time the old farmer and the young Koori had stopped talking, the sun was well into the western sky—and Billy had almost missed the second bus.



Storytelling by the Stream
(Photograph by Damein Bell, 2009)

Danny's story

So you want to know about that statue in Gray Street? Well let me tell you the story.

He was harmless enough, Danny. Everyone said so. Everyone knew him. The slow kid. Danny was always there wandering around the streets like no one loved him, him and that scrawny black dog of his, they were always together for such a long time. Lots of people took an interest, though you wouldn't necessarily have known about it. The school took an interest first off. He was one of the pile of country kids who moved in with their families in the early 2020s. They were from the north, where the country was so dry it was only good for solar plantations. Some of the farmers made a bit, when the government started their purchasing drive. But Danny's folks weren't landowners. His dad did labouring, when there was any. He'd done a stint in the meatworks and got laid off like the rest of them. Some people said that Butch Brady was allergic to work, anyhow. He was a drinker ... enough said about that, I guess. Danny's mum never was in good health. Her face was that creased you'd think she'd been through a wringer, or something. She didn't talk much. They had that little place out near the tip. It looked like it'd just slide over onto its side if you gave it a push. That was Danny's place.



Danny: Who am I behind my face?
Judy Warne 1990

His mum died when he was about nine. The truant officer came up to the house one afternoon to talk about why Danny was never in school, and he found her there, dead at the kitchen table. Danny had made her a pot of tea and was just sitting there, watching over her. Bit spooky, really. Anyway, that triggered a whole lot of interest. There were grief counsellors, and church people, all falling over themselves to help out. But Butch didn't want help. He ran them off his place. Said he'd get Danny to school without their help. And Danny went off to school every morning, so Butch was true to his word. And since it was well known how Butch could turn violent, there was a sort of tacit agreement that no one would tell him the truth—that Danny left for school every morning, but he never actually arrived in class. I suppose, when you think about it, more could have been done, but they were busy times. The reffos were being sorted out up at the showgrounds, there was that cholera outbreak in 2025, and there just weren't enough health workers, or social workers, or even church workers, to cover everyone.

Danny spent his days talking to people. He'd wander up Gray Street and talk to all the shop people. He'd have lunch at the soup kitchen, and, as often as not, someone would have put aside something for the dog as well, and maybe a clean shirt, or shoes for Danny, if something had turned up in the Goodwill bins.

On market days he went from stall to stall. Everyone knew him. You could leave him to mind your table, if you needed to dash off for anything. You could always trust him. I don't think he could read or write, but he knew money. And he could barter

like a natural. That's where he discovered art. He found this book at my stall. To tell you the truth, I don't even remember where I got it. I'd offered it to the Antiquities people, because it was a good one. But it was a bit fire damaged, and they never wanted it. 'How much for this?' says Danny. And I say: 'What can you give me?' and he thinks about it and says: 'Keep it till next time, and I'll bring something.'

Now, I never expected he had anything to barter, but true to his word he turned up the next market day lugging a load of stuff in a sheet of old bale wrap. He had everything—light fittings, cans, plastic bottles, cutlery, crockery. I suppose he got it from the tip, although I would have thought that had been picked over years ago. Someone said: 'You got enough here to open your own stall.' And that's how he got started. I gave him the book for an apostle spoon. He always carried that book around with him in his backpack. Sitting up at his stall, he'd be leafing through it. He must have known every page by heart. He made a bit of money, too. It was back when there was a lot of money in recycled plastic, and Danny had the biggest supply I've ever seen. Said he collected them for the colours, or something. At the end of market day, he'd go over to the library. He had a friend there—the librarian. He'd show her a picture from his book, and they'd look it up on the web together and learn about the artist. Escher was his favourite. The one with all the interconnecting staircases, and pictures that play tricks on you when you look at them long enough. It was the librarian that got him painting, too. Next thing, he was painting on everything—sheets of metal, old bits of crockery, bark. And people were paying for his stuff. The council got him to paint that mural on the Post Office. That generated a bit of interest in the newspapers.

Then the church got involved, asking if Danny would take on a few of the reffo kids, get them painting too. Danny was about eighteen by then. He was that chuffed, being put in charge of a group of kids. You couldn't have met a prouder boy. That lot, they painted everything. All those fantastic pictures up along the fences at the showgrounds—a few of them are still there. And then they got the job of doing the mural on the council chambers. The whole place was starting to look that vibrant and alive again. You'd walk down the street smiling, you couldn't help it. Danny's pictures were just full of life and happiness and good memories; and always with the black dog down in a corner somewhere. That was Danny's signature. The black dog. His dog. 'Beetle'.

It was about the only cheerful thing around at the time. It was just when things were getting bad in other areas. The unemployment, resentment over the refugees, the trouble with the kids in town. There were gangs starting up. The town kids had a gang, the out-of-towners had another one. They hated each other, but both of those gangs hated the Reffo kids. Mostly boys, they were. Around the 14 to 16 year old stage. The Trouble stage, with a capital 'T'..

Someone started damaging the murals. Still don't know who, to this day. See, Danny got on with all the different groups. He'd talk to everyone. He didn't care about boundaries, or racial issues. And everyone liked him. And it was like everyone wanted to claim him, or something. For a kid with no family to speak of, there were a lot of people around here ready to stand up for him.

They reckon it was Danny started the Gangland War back in 2035. Not deliberately or anything. But it was through him the war started. There'd been all this rubbish in the papers about the reffos. Taking our jobs, thieving and damaging public property. And I have to admit, there's no smoke without fire, and there had been thieving. But people were hard up in those times, on all sides of the issue. And there's no way you can blame every crime in town on the reffos. They were the scapegoats. If someone had a bag pinched, it was the reffos. If someone's window got broke, it was the reffos. If someone saw something lurking in the shadows at the back of the dunny, they'd be

saying it was the reffos. It was just out of control. Anyway, this day, Danny had been in town, as usual, at the market. And when he started packing up to go home, he couldn't find the dog. He was asking everyone. Everyone was looking. It was like the dog had become a fixture in town. And when he asked this gang of boys—Townners, they were, they said they figured the reffos had eaten old Beetle. And Danny was beside himself. And someone from some gang or other decided to carry out a payback, and then it was on for one and all.

We all remember those days and nights. Windows smashed, property destroyed. I don't think there's been a time like it. People whose houses were torched had to run to the Town Hall. And the army had to put a guard around the showgrounds.

And when it was all over, and they were sifting through the rubble of Hamilton, they found seven people dead. And one of them was Danny. He must have been caught in the cross-fire. There's no way he would have been fighting. That wasn't Danny. We all knew that.

As for the dog. After the ruckus, they found old Beetle, too. He hadn't been eaten. It had been a hot day, that last day, and he was near twenty years old, blind and deaf. And he'd taken himself over to the library, and lay down there under the computers in the reference room, where he used to sit with Danny and the librarian after every market day. And he'd died there, as peaceful as that. Poor old Beetle.

So that's why there's the statue of Danny in Gray Street now, and why there's a scholarship at the Art School named for him. And it's why there were a lot of changes after the gang wars. We all knew we'd lost the plot. We were all a bit ashamed. Don't get me wrong. It was a terrible time. But it cleared the air, too. And it made a few people change their ways. And it's important to remember that Danny was harmless. That's the whole point. It's often the meekest, the most harmless, and the simplest of us that brings about the winds of change.

Nguyen Pham's campaign speech in 2050

Nu is thirty-four. She arrived with the boat people at the age of fourteen.

No English. Lived in a tent with her parents, grandparents and two brothers and young disabled sister, for two years before being rehoused on the edge of town in a caravan park for a further eighteen months.

Her father, Tehn, was a teacher back home, but a lack of English meant that he was a council cleaner (when he finally got work).

Later, when they were assigned a home on the outskirts of town (on the Port Fairy Road), Tehn worked hard establishing a small vegetable garden to help sustain his family. All the children were expected to work in this enterprise, and it prospered. Tehn encouraged the family to attend the local Uniting Church, and the minister recognised Tehn's dedication and initiative, and organised a meeting with Brett Todd's father (a local businessman) who backed him in the development of his vegetable production.

Brett and Nu are friends at school in spite of the fact that their brothers are leaders of local, opposing street gangs.

In the gang wars of 2035, Nu's brother was stabbed and later died. The tragedy of this drew the community together around the grieving families.

It was a watershed moment for the town and for Nu.

Nu won a scholarship to study at the University of Southern Asia, Hamilton Campus. She studied Economics and Cello. After graduation she worked for an Indian company in the US before returning to Hamilton to marry Brett, who was then a youth worker.

Now Nu is a partner at Archer-Mochbel. She works at Monivae on International Mergers. She is a patron of the Hamilton Youth Orchestra, plays in a string quartet and organises tours with Music Aviva. She was pregnant with her first child when she decided to run for the position of Mayor. As she contemplates the possibility of becoming Mayor, Nu recalls that her grandparents never acquired enough English to allow them the freedom to travel around Australia; in fact they were limited to movement within their community. Her surviving brother had taken over the family company and was able to promote the hydroponic model to other areas. Nu's mother had started work as a piece worker for a recycled clothing company and now was specialising in making Solar Block garments for outdoor workers and her enterprise employed twelve local disabled people. Nu contemplated all this as she made her first big public speech in her campaign to become Mayor.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm standing as your candidate for Mayor of Hamilton, and I want to tell you why I'm ready, willing and able for the task.

I believe the Southern Grampians Shire has a wonderful future. Sure, we've been through difficult times, but that's what makes us strong. We've learned a lot along the way and now if we grasp our opportunities and work together we can make this place a wonderful place for our children and grandchildren. And I now have a vested interest in seeing that wish fulfilled.

When I arrived here in 2030 this was different place—a place of unemployment, fear, and I was aware that I and my family were unwanted, and we weren't surprised. This place had few opportunities and suddenly it was swamped by strangers. But people who value life look for a chance—we don't wallow in misery, the bad times teach us how to work for the good times. I was only fourteen when we arrived here—I had two brothers and a disabled sister, and we all lived in a tent the size of a hatbox on the showgrounds along with 3000 other refugees. The next tent was about one metre from our tent and one of the children living next door had TB and I can still hear the sound of her coughing on a still night.

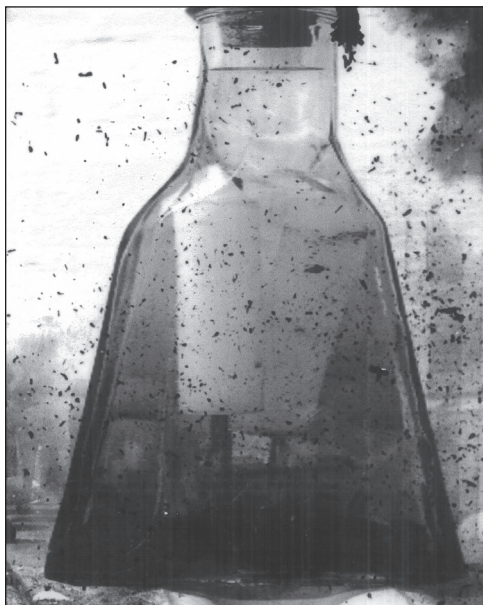
Within days of our arrival, we were in the school system. We'd barely learned where to fill our pans of water in the mornings before we were on the school bus being stared at. Didn't have uniforms no shoes, no language. Red Cross came with clothes. I wore a pair of boys gym boots and they were black and pink and I'll never forget them. I wore nothing else for my first six months and when my mother finally took them away I cried. They were my first real possession.

There was hostility, we were unwanted, but there were heaps of people coming through with things to give us. My grandmother used to say— 'Why are they being so kind, they don't know us?' We had offers of English, toys—my little brother was given a fire truck. He'll hate me for telling you this but he slept with it for ten years. One retired farmer came in with vegetable seeds for us to plant a communal garden, and that was the start of my father's career. He worked for years as a cleaner but his heart and his head were in gardening, and as you all know he now has the largest hydroponic garden in Victoria.

We learned to dig and prune and grow things. We learned to barter at the market, and before I was eighteen, I was speaking English as good as anyone! I had some wonderful teachers at Baimbridge College. They supported me and all my family over the tragedy of Van's death. My brother was always troubled and found solace in gang life—we all remember with horror the gang wars, the seven tragic deaths and my brother was one of them. It touched every sector of the community. The whole of Hamilton was affected—everyone had a connection with one of the victims.

But strangely enough this was a watershed event for our city; because even the worst event can generate a sliver of good. Nasho came out of it. The people who came to visit my parents were from every walk of life. The outpouring of grief unified us. And for the first time in the face of all this awfulness we felt we belonged.

But strangely, we never really belonged either. Can it be because my grandfather did not start off here? Did not own land? What will it mean to belong here in the future? That's the challenge I want to address if I am elected Mayor.



Secrecy and Openness

Jing 1995

'The bottle signifies the body containing all the secrets of life. It collects all the significant elements of diversified cultures and struggles to grasp the translating self between east and west.'

Jing, RMIT international student, 1995

Epilogue

We have inherited mixed landscapes, mental and physical, and the dream of a pristine, restored land is just that. The skylark singing in the Tasmanian sky and the pheasant in the cornrows may be monuments to a failed vision, but they are more enduring than the bronze and marble statues in town squares commemorating the settlers who died in Europe's wars. To someone raised in the countryside and ecologically aware, such species are at once biological intruders and reminders of childhood, aliens that help define their personal relation to the land. We confront a mix of Europe and the native countryside, inextricably intertwined, tied together by memory and knowledge, tempered by settler history. We must use these ambiguous legacies as we seek—as our predecessors did—to find a place in the land and the land's place in our lives.

Thomas Dunlap, 1997⁵

Introduction

What prompted us to begin this journey of working together to address this issue that is now called climate change? Much of the public discussion on climate change impacts in Australia has focused on national policy initiatives that would, for example, reduce carbon emissions. There has been much less discussion about how local and regional communities might adapt to the reality of climate change impacts over the next fifty to one hundred years. What would it mean to reassess the way we have lived, especially in the last hundred years? How have we severed our ancient reciprocity with our natural world? The complexity of a systemic change, in this case global climate change, can also affect the degree to which it and its effects are perceivable to individuals. Furthermore, climate change impact occurs at the intersection of ecological, social and economic systems and it cannot be understood from one perspective alone. Much progress has been made in recent decades in understanding the characteristics of complex systems—whether it be the interplay between positive and negative feedback loops, the properties of 'self-organizing systems', the adaptive resilience of complex ecosystems, or the multiple causes and consequences of climate. However, as environmental problems continue to become more global in scope and form it has become even more imperative to ground our understanding of such complex systems in the realities of everyday life.

It is very important to note that climate change is just one dimension of the problems we face in an increasingly uncertain world. Population growth and declines in agricultural production are already creating food shortages in many parts of the world. The need to plan for the time when global oil supplies cannot meet global demand—forcing dramatic changes to a global economy that relies so heavily on oil and oil-based products—remains immanent even if oil prices have declined with the onset of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). The GFC itself has been the result of unsustainable practices within the global economic system and no-one can really predict when and how this particular crisis might end or if the recovery will be sustainable. Then there is the ever-present threat of global pandemics of infectious diseases, including the existing and enduring pandemic of HIV-AIDS that has decimated communities in Africa and other countries of the 'global south'. Globalization has brought us new ways of living and new opportunities, but it has

⁵ T. R. Dunlap, 'Remaking the Land: The Acclimatization Movement and Anglo Ideas of Nature', *Journal of World History*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1997, p. 319.

also increased global risks to the sustainability of human life. Climate change might be the most indiscriminating and enduring crisis of them all but it is probably more helpful to think that we have a crisis of sustainability that has many causes and many consequences and that it is already upon us. The post-Enlightenment promise of certainty and predictability has proved to be a cruel illusion and, above all, we need to learn how to live with chronic uncertainty. While the methodology that created the foregoing future stories was focused on the challenge of climate change, it was able to take account of many 'drivers of uncertainty' that we must now contemplate in imaging our way into the future.

In what ways will our lives change over the next twenty to fifty years? How will we know what to do, and how to do it? What can we look forward to as well as fear? Why should we think so far ahead? What small things can we do now that might make a big difference in twenty to thirty years time? How can we learn to be more resilient and enjoy that challenge? How can we see climate change as a challenge to our creativity? What will stimulate our sense of fun and adventure? How can we ensure that co-operation prevails over competition and division? Why can't we leave all this to governments and the experts? How? What? Why? The questions are many and none of us can answer them on our own. It is certainly tempting to believe that the increasingly sophisticated tools of technology will mitigate the worst impacts of climate change to the extent that the crisis will pass. However, as mentioned above, it is not just the question of climate change we need to worry about if we are to pass the test of sustainability, the real challenge—for community members and researchers alike—is to find ways to live in better balance with other people and with the biosphere of Planet Earth. Ultimately, climate change is a test of the kind of community we can create at all levels from the local to the national to the global.

As mentioned in the Preface, the project that led to the creation of the foregoing future stories began with the holding of a community forum, in April 2007, on the possible impacts of climate change for the Hamilton region. The principal outcome of this forum was an agreement that the challenge of climate change cannot be left to the 'experts' and that more opportunities need to be created for community members to come together to discuss their fears, hopes and bright ideas for the future. More dialogue involving experts, agitators and concerned citizens might help to unpack the complexities and uncertainties that can paralyse effective local action. However, it was also clear that more of the same will not be good enough because we need to harness a collective and fertile imagination to create some links between immediate action and preferred future outcomes. And how might a myriad of individual actions become a confluence rather than a dissipation of energy and morale? It was Professor Peter Hayes who suggested to the forum that the next logical step might be the holding of a scenarios mapping workshop that could intensify the dialogue and produce ideas and insights for future action. As will be discussed below, scenarios mapping methods were first used by the military and large multinational corporations and they offer a way of extending our imagination into the future without focusing on narrow outcomes and possibilities. The use of such methods in a wide, community context, is still in its infancy but it offered a way to build on the promising dialogue begun at the 2007 forum. And so plans were put in place for the scenarios mapping workshop in February 2008 that began the process of creating the challenging yet plausible future stories contained in this volume. The promise of this process was that it would challenge a wide range of people in the community at personal and collective levels. While many of us are willing to make important changes in our own lives, individual efforts alone will not be enough. While we may welcome efforts to introduce a comprehensive national carbon emissions trading scheme that will help to reorient the national economy we know that you cannot build a new house with one tool or new ways of thinking with new

market mechanisms. Deep down, we know that if we are to make the transition to a more sustainable world, it will require an enormous social and cultural shift in our attitudes, values and behaviours. The challenge is knowing how to begin and how to sustain the momentum.

Planning for the 2008 Scenarios Mapping Workshop involved consultation with farmers, schoolteachers, health workers, leaders of the indigenous community, environmentalists, social planners and welfare workers, a prominent and highly regarded clergyman, the Department of Primary Industry, elected members of the shire council and some council staff, and even a publican. A special effort was made to ensure that talented local writers would participate and several visual artists were also involved. Researchers from RMIT University in Melbourne were brought in to help with the running of the workshop and a very experienced scenario mapping facilitator was employed to be the overall facilitator, with a less experienced 'scenarist' as her main assistant. Very few of those who participated in the workshop had experience with the methodology and the Climate Change Research Program at RMIT University provided a generous budget to ensure its success. Even more importantly, however, local facilitators of RMIT University's Local-Global Research Project, which had initiated this work on climate change, worked tirelessly to ensure that a good mix of community members were among the forty workshop participants. Without detailed local knowledge of the regional community on the part of the local organisers the workshop would have failed in its major objectives.

Of course, it is important to avoid any counterposing of local and national action on climate change, just as it is foolish to counterpose efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change (which may rely heavily on technology) with efforts to adapt to those impacts (which require social change). Any action taken in the Hamilton region must be based on a thorough understanding of action being taken at national and global levels. However, researchers and thinkers, such as Fritze Williamson and Wiseman⁶; Ebi and Semanza⁷ and Hill⁸ are suggesting that climate change adaptation will involve a 'relocalization' of social life; for example, if it becomes much more costly and difficult to travel. Furthermore, it is in times of crisis that people turn to their local communities for help and sustenance and this increases the expectations of local government. Of course, effective local government relies on the active engagement of responsible local citizens but it has been the neglected tier for democratic practice in Australia and much more can be done to enhance active citizen participation in the processes of local government and in the practice of local and regional strategic planning. Climate change presents an opportunity to rethink citizen engagement in policy-making processes that flow from the local to the national as well as the reverse. This project is aimed at exploring the proposition that community participation in future visioning could help to stimulate a stronger sense of local citizenship and a stronger desire to contribute to future planning through policy development and implementation. Visualizations of our future landscapes can make the challenge of climate change more tangible and urgent for local citizens.

The 2008 scenarios mapping workshop in Hamilton had lofty aims, a significant investment and a great deal of work that went into the planning and implementation. However, the outcomes of such an intense exploration of the possible impacts of

⁶ J. Fritze, L. Williamson and J. Wiseman, *Draft Report: Community engagement and climate change: benefits, challenges and strategies*, Department of Planning and Community Development, Victorian Government, Melbourne, 2008.

⁷ K. L. Ebi and J. C. Semenza, 'Community-based adaptation to the health impacts of climate change', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, vol. 35, no. 5, 2008, pp. 501-507

⁸ S. B. Hill, 'Taking Appropriate Next Steps to Progressive Change: A Social Ecology Perspective', presented at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, Canada, 2007.

multiple 'drivers of uncertainty' that are global in scale are necessarily rather raw and diffuse. But taking from the work of Fritz et al, we too were keen to begin the process of creating alternate visions and narratives about sustainable living.

Creating and sharing alternative visions and narratives about sustainable futures is an important starting point for creating a sense of hope and as a catalyst for social innovation. Changing the climate change narrative can involve creating and disseminating shared visions of a 'climate friendly' and resilient neighbourhood, region, nation and world. Future stories can build on local characters and contexts to re-imagine energy and food production and distribution systems. This work can also include developing narratives to address uncertainty and complexity associated with climate change⁹

Indeed a number of participants, who may have expected much neater outcomes, expressed doubts about what had been achieved. Rolls of butcher's paper and piles of notes taken by working group scribes were mulled over and a report on discernable outcomes was prepared by workshop facilitators for circulation to those who had participated. One participant, Rosie Rowe, took the initiative to raise implications for health care professionals within the primary care organization in which she was working and she subsequently helped to develop a regional plan for responding to the health implications of climate change that was distributed across Victoria as a model for such health planning. However, the main outcome of the workshop began when local writer and workshop participant, Christina Hindaugh, began to mine the copious notes and records of the event to build on the future scenarios and stories that working groups had begun to create. Christina recruited her 'neighbour' and fellow writer Louise Le Nay to help her in this daunting endeavour and, in consultation with people who had participated in different working groups at the workshop they began to piece together the common scenario and four stories contained in this volume. Of course, Christina and Louise have put some of their own sense of people and places into the creation of these stories but they relied on the rich raw material created in the workshop and also in further discussions with Yaso Nadarajah, Martin Mulligan and group community leaders of the scenarios workshop. Yaso Nadarajah and Martin Mulligan hope to build on what has been achieved in this project in the Hamilton region by initiating a similar process in at least one other Victorian region (possibly an urban one) and in other countries in which they have worked, such as Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka. While this is a local project it is also part of a broader research initiative. This local to local comparison is also to provide rich and substantial material, for not just the local communities involved, but also to extend and deepen the evidence and recommendations emerging from this research for policy initiatives and climate change adaptation strategies.

Working from the Local to the Global and Back Again

As mentioned in the preface to this volume, the Local-Global Research Project has been working on a range of local-global issues in the Hamilton region for a period of five years. Our work in this region has been based on a long period of engagement with the region by Yaso Nadarajah from RMIT University in Melbourne. Rather ironically, the process of engagement between 'outside' researchers and local community 'insiders' that we initiated in the Hamilton region has become a kind of template for community-engaged research in other local communities in Australia and in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and India. A key element of this has been to take the word 'engagement' seriously, and considerable time and effort

⁹ Fritz et al, *Draft Report: Community engagement and climate change*, pp. 22-23.

went into building trust and a 'creative space' in which insights and understandings could be shared and developed into lines of inquiry. Bridging cultural gaps between those who came from an urban university and diverse cultural backgrounds with the 'locals' who came from a range of locales within the Hamilton region was always going to be a challenge; but it also provides the deep scholarly understanding—generating the insight that provides the basis for sustainable local action and applied research. It was made possible by the building of strong personal relationships and good strategic partnerships. Out of these partnerships came the articulation of related research initiatives which then became part of the university's strategic research agenda through the formation of the Global Cities Research Institute in 2007.

Nothing that is simultaneously creative, challenging, relevant and pragmatic can be achieved without collective and courageous efforts of different and diverse groups. As was mentioned in the Prologue, the Local-Global Project Critical Reference Group decided at the end of 2006 that 'global warming' was a critical challenge to consider because the region was in the grip of a prolonged drought that might be seen as a taste of things to come. With CSIRO reports¹⁰ already predicting long-term reductions in rainfall and increased frequency and severity of droughts for the region, it seemed prudent to think in more detail about what this could mean for all sectors of the regional community. Already some individual farmers and government agencies were working on strategies for adapting to climate change in the region but the public forum held in April 2007 demonstrated that they were largely working in isolation from each other.

The forum also revealed that there continue to be differences of opinion among the 'experts' about the causes and consequences of climate change but most people at the forum agreed that it would be foolish to wait for total consensus among the experts before planning adaptations that would range from significant shifts in farming practices to equally significant shifts in planning for future health care needs. It then required a leap in imagination to say that climate change impacts should not be considered in isolation from other great 'drivers of uncertainty'—such as further shifts in global markets and the growing need to radically reduce dependence on oil and oil-based products. RMIT researchers suggested scenarios mapping as the best way to contemplate a future with such overlapping uncertainties. Some participants in the scenarios mapping workshop continued to harbour doubts about climate change predictions but they committed to the exercise of working through the possible consequences and then Christina Hindhaugh and Louise Le Nay showed courage in taking the materials generated of the workshop in order to create the challenging yet plausible future stories featured in this volume.

Of course, climate change and other 'drivers of uncertainty' can be seen as great threats to the ways in which we currently live. Writers such as Thomas Homer-Dixon and David Korten have suggested that the intersection of global environmental, economic and health crises could easily lead to increased conflict and a possible breakdown of order at local, national and global levels.¹¹ However, Homer-Dixon and George Monbiot¹² have also argued that we are on the brink of profound and prolonged crises because we have failed to really understand what it would take to live sustainably on Planet Earth. The crisis can also be seen as an opportunity to break out of past illusions and radically rethink our priorities in life. This suggests that responses to climate change must go far beyond clever technical adaptations and a reliance on market mechanisms to reduce carbon emissions because the

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Meteorology, *Climate change in Australia: technical report 2007*, CSIRO.

¹¹ T. Homer-Dixon, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity and the Renewal of Civilization*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2007

¹² G. Monbiot, *Bring on the Apocalypse: Six Arguments for Global Justice*, Atlantic Books, London, 2009.

challenge of sustainability in a globalized world must also be worked out at the level of philosophy, morality and ethics. Climate change does not only challenge us at the level of ecological understanding but also at the level of our emotions and our capacity to sustain hope in very difficult times. It requires a leap of imagination to think beyond current ways of addressing challenges and, as the title of this volume indicates, we might find some unexpected sources of hope if we can learn to think outside the square.

It needs to be noted that very few of the RMIT researchers had experience with scenarios mapping methodologies and so the planning and implementation of the 2008 workshop was a steep learning curve for researchers and community members alike. Together we were determined to adapt the methodology to suit our particular needs but we were convinced that it could deepen local dialogue in response to questions such as: What are the processes and possible impacts of climate change for current and future generations in this region? What might we learn from past experience and current thinking in the region about how to adapt to changing circumstances? Can separate efforts to enhance 'adaptive capacity' contribute to the articulation of a shared vision for the future? How can we visualize a future that enables us to take more effective action in the present? What can be done to prevent a deepening of social divisions in the region when times are tough? How can people in this region work with people in other regions and with 'useful outsiders' to develop more effective strategies for enhancing adaptive capacity? Of course, there are no easy answers to questions of this magnitude and adaptive capacity requires adaptive thinking. That is why we have settled on the idea of producing future stories that can make people think and talk about the future. We hope that these stories will trigger other creative responses, perhaps using other art forms, so that the conversation can be continued in many ways and through many forms of interaction. These stories begin a process that we hope will engage the imagination as much as the rational—a collective myth that encourages, not just dialogue, but also caring, creative and enterprising alternatives to how we respond—not just to climate change, but our future together, locally, globally.

Community Engaged Research Methodology

This partnership forged between researchers based in the Globalism Research Centre (GRC) at RMIT University in Melbourne and the Critical Reference Group in the Hamilton region has led to the formulation of a research methodology that has been called 'community engaged research'. This methodology aims to retain the distinction between 'local knowledge' and 'expert knowledge' (as discussed above) and the GRC researchers introduced a range of research methods that could work well in combination to evoke local knowledge and experience. Component research methods were tried out, and refined, in consultation with CRG members in the Hamilton region and the information collected was not only used to produce research reports but also to plan community events, such as the two International Food and Thought Mela held in Hamilton in 2006 and 2008. The research has led to the publication of two 'Hamilton editions' of the *Local Global* journal that combines articles written by community members and papers written by university-based researchers. The community engaged research methodology that was developed and refined for use in the Hamilton region is utilized by GRC researchers in other communities in Australia and in countries such as Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and India.

This community engaged research methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative elements and a combination of methods that complement each other in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. In the Hamilton region a broad-ranging survey of community life was mailed out randomly to households and around

120 were returned. A more targeted survey was conducted of people attending community events. Lengthy 'strategic conversations' were held with a wide range of community 'activists' and some 'life stories' were also collated. A long list of interesting stories was drawn up and, on the advice of community members, this was turned into a short list of stories that were documented for analysis. A 'photo narrative' technique—in which people living in the community were given cameras to take images related to their daily experiences—was used to reach people who may have a relatively undeveloped 'sense of community'. This latter technique relies on interviewing the photographers about their choice of images they have captured. More recently, the community engaged research methodology used by GRC researchers has also involved the collection of brief 'community member profiles' that can be seen as a qualitative sampling of community life. Of course, not all of these methods can be used in every study of local community life and a 'minimum set' would combine the random survey with a collection of stories and the completion of a range of 'strategic conversations'.

The research methods outlined above create diverse forms of 'data' ranging from statistical analysis of the survey results to lengthy transcripts of 'strategic conversations'. As well as collecting 'fresh data', this methodology also draws on existing data sets such as census outcomes, and researchers start by creating a 'social profile' of the community concerned. All the material thus generated can be subjected to 'empirical analysis' that simply aims to identify important, sometimes unexpected, patterns in the data collected and this level of analysis has been called 'community mapping'.¹³ However, the results of this can be subjected to another level of analysis—'conjectural analysis'—that relates the mapping of specific community experiences to broader social processes and influences. In our research, we are particularly interested in comparative experiences across diverse communities related to themes such as authority-participation, inclusion-exclusion, and mobility-identity.

Whenever it has been possible to get this depth of understanding of a local community, it has provided a good foundation for an exploration of community responses to challenges and changes that are current and emerging. The methodology that helped us prepare a report for VicHealth¹⁴ on strategies for enhancing the wellbeing of local communities in Victoria also helped to imagine how the regional community might respond to the long-term challenge of climate change.

Scenarios Mapping

The idea of developing detailed future scenarios in order to enhance current planning first arose within the US military and from there it was picked up by business corporations.¹⁵ Their benefit to business of using this technique was famously demonstrated by Shell Oil when it was able to use some scenarios planning conducted in 1972 to adapt to a sharp rise in the global price of oil in 1973. When the first global 'oil shock' hit in 1973 Shell Oil found itself ahead of the game simply because it had already contemplated this possibility in imagining future scenarios. Having experienced the benefits of scenarios mapping Shell Oil further developed the techniques used and trained expert facilitators to run scenarios mapping workshops across the organization. The methodology pioneered by Shell Oil was subsequently picked up by other business corporations and then by a range of United Nations agencies.

¹³ M. Mulligan and Y. Nadarajah, 2008

¹⁴ M. Mulligan, K. Humphrey, P. James, C. Scanlon, P. Smith and N. Welch, *Creating Community; Celebrations, Arts and Wellbeing within and Across Local Communities*, Globalism Institute, Melbourne, 2006

¹⁵ As cited in D. Searce and K. Fulton, *What If? The Art of Scenario Thinking for Nonprofits*, unpublished work, Global Business Network, Emeryville, CA, 2004.

In this methodology scenarios are seen as being coherent, internally consistent and plausible stories about the future. They are not predictions. The scenario process is used to enable stakeholders to generate a dialogue about the complexity and uncertainties affecting the future; to organise and test their assumptions about the future, and to provide a framework for longer term thinking, identification of ways to adapt to change and make decisions.¹⁶ Scenarios have been used to explore sustainability issues at the global level for many decades. Some resulting work—such as the work by Meadows et al published under the title the ‘Limits to growth’ in 1972—used computer modelling and quantitative techniques.¹⁷ Other projects¹⁸ relied on qualitative techniques for the articulation of possible scenarios. In 2002 the Stockholm Environment Institute completed a rather ambitious project to plot some future global scenarios¹⁹ and work on imaging the possible consequences of climate change beyond 2012 probably began with a project completed in 2005.

Meanwhile, the use of scenarios mapping methodologies spread from business to civic situations in the 1990s. Kahane²⁰ states that:

The purpose of a civic scenario project is to build the leadership to change the course of a country’s history. A group of influential leaders—a microcosm of the society, representing all the principal stakeholders—works together to uncover what has happened, is happening, might happen, and should happen in their country, and what they must do—what they cannot not do—to enact that vision. Through a structured process of action and reflection, with each other and with other societal leaders, they build the shared understanding and commitment necessary to bring forth a better future.

Kahane, in conjunction with Generon Consulting, has used this process to explore the future of countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, and South Africa. The Nautilus Institute based in the USA has used scenarios mapping to explore the future of US-Korean relations and US-China relations. They also use the methodology for exploring possible responses to complex global problems such as energy supply, nuclear threat, climate change adaptation and security issues. Scenarios mapping has also been used in the non-profit sector²¹ and the government policy arena. Another increasing use of scenarios mapping is as a tool for regional planning. Examples from the USA include the Meadowlark Project for the Northern Great Plains region; the Charlotte Crossroads Project for Charlotte; and the Valley Futures project which includes scenarios for each of the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento region and the North Valley.

The Power of Stories

Stories serve as foci for bringing groups together. In group settings they can enable people to externalise ideas or issues that have not previously been shared or discussed and they can thus create a space for discussions that might empower individuals to take action on the ideas or issues raised. In this sense, stories can become motivators for action but a non-didactic story—which is the kind of story that is most likely to have broad appeal and durability—allows individuals to reach their

¹⁶ Business Council for Sustainable Development, *Exploring Sustainable Development. Global Scenarios 2000-2050 Summary Brochure*, WBCSD, Geneva 2007

¹⁷ D. H. Meadows, D. L. Meadows, J. Randers and W.W. Behrens III, *Limits to Growth*, Universe Books, 1972

¹⁸ See World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2007

¹⁹ P. Raskin, *Global Scenarios in Historic Perspective in Scenario Assessment Report Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, Coordinating Lead Author, 2004

²⁰ A. Kahane, *Destino Columbia: A Scenario-Planning Process for the New Millennium*, Global Business Network, Deeper News, California 1998

²¹ See Scarce and Fulton, *What If?*, 2004

own conclusions about what action is required. Thinking about sustainability requires a relational understanding of the world, where self, other, and the environment come together in a multitude of ways. The stories that are featured in this volume were eventually crafted by experienced storytellers but they were also built by the collective effort of diverse members of the community who had different ways of seeing the issues that are driving the stories. It is the act of creative collaboration that enables such stories to carry the essence of interactions between humans, and between humans and the more-than-human world. Such stories weave together different ways of knowing and since negotiations were held with locals to edit them and make the stories credible - it means that a wide range of people living in the region can resonate with them. Well crafted local stories enable local people to see themselves in different settings and in different times.

... [T]here is good reason for the ubiquity of stories: narrative is the fundamental human device for enabling collective action. First, narratives play an important role in constituting mind: enabling memory, structuring cognition, making meaning, and establishing identity. Second, because we are creatures constituted by narrative, we can be called by stories: engrossed by them, moved emotionally by them, persuaded by them, and ultimately motivated to act by them. Third, because narratives are shared, they can operate at both the individual and the collective level, constructing common desires, enlisting participation in a common drama, and scripting collective acts of meaning. Narratives are particularly important tools for empowering communities of resistance, which face significant obstacles to collective action and which, therefore, operate at considerable disadvantage in the political arena. It should be no surprise then that narrative politics is particularly prevalent in social movements.²²

The strength of scenarios mapping is that it can stretch our imagination well into the future, way beyond the timeframes we are used to working with. As Richard Sennett²³ has observed, many people in the contemporary world are trying to create 'narratives' of their own lives that can make their experiences 'cohere' in the context of great uncertainty and change. People try to make sense of daily experience by inserting it into a narrative framework that has a capacity to place particular experiences within a narrative flow that can move from the past into the future. The creation of the stories that are featured in this volume was an unexpected, yet delightful, outcome of the 2008 scenarios mapping workshop. Many people helped to give birth to Georgia D'Ambrosia, Duncan and Angus McCrae, Danny and Nguyen Pham and to the scenario that subsequently gave birth to Jack Murphy and Billy Lovett and after that these characters began to take on a life of their own, in the telling of their stories. This is the way in which stories capture us as much as we capture them. So the scenarios mapping methodology has enabled us to move from CSIRO modelling about future impacts of climate change in the Hamilton region to the creation of characters that can capture the imagination of a wide range of people living in the region.

The deceptively simple stories that are featured in this volume actually inscribe a multiplicity of complex conceptual and structural factors that can be constantly revisited and re-examined when captured in a non-prescriptive story form. In making such a strong claim about the centrality of narratives in community collective action, we are not arguing that the creation of narratives itself enables action. However,

²² F. Mayer, 'Narrative and Collective Action: The Power of Public Stories', presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Marriott, Loews Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA, 31 August, 2006, p. 2

²³ R. Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, Yale University Press, London, 2006.

we are arguing that stories can trigger diverse individual and collective action that engages the imagination as well as the rational mind. It is the capacity to engage the imagination that enables stories to take us well into the future and create scenarios that are grounded in existing awareness. As Mayer²⁴ has said, the creation of stories can help a community share their conceptions of possible futures and in doing so they demonstrate how 'it is that an individual might receive identity and expressive benefits from participation in the pursuit of that good'.

As Mayer²⁵ also pointed out the ubiquity of stories in all aspects of social life should prompt us to realise how they are important in helping us take action in the world, and yet their capacity to motivate collective action has been undervalued by those who worry about adapting to challenging futures. As Mayer argues narratives play an important role in constituting mind; enabling memory, structuring cognition, making meaning and establishing identity. Indeed, he suggests we are creatures constituted by narratives, captivated by stories; moved emotionally by them, persuaded by them, and ultimately motivated to act by them and because narratives can be shared so easily they can operate at both the individual and the collective level. In doing so, they can construct common desires and enlist participation in a common drama. These are big claims regarding the power of story but we hope that they can be supported by the circulation of stories included in this volume throughout the community. What are the implications of these stories for the personal and professional activities of people living and working in the Hamilton region?

Let that discussion begin ...

²⁴ F. Mayer, 'Narrative and Collective Action', p. 38

²⁵ *ibid*

ACT IV

SONG-PRELUDE

[There enter a troupe of young things, and they introduce themselves in a song as follows:]

The Song of Returning Youth

*Again and again we say 'Good-bye,'
To come back again and again
Oh, who are you?
I am the flower vakul.
And who are you?
I am the flower parul.
And who are these?
We are mango blossoms landed on the shore of light.
We laugh and take leave when the time beckons us.
We rush into the arms of the ever-returning.
But who are you?
I am the flower shimul.
And who are you?
I am the kamini bunch
And who are these?
We are the jostling crowd of new leaves.*

Rabindranath Tagore, *The Cycle of Spring*, Act IV, 1917

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