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Local Indigenous Perspectives of Community and Co-Management Arrangements

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Abstract

In recent years the Haida of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia and the Yolngu of north-east Arnhem Land, Australia have had to negotiate and interpret various co-management programs operating within their territories. In both areas, various community management organisations have been established to respond to government management regimes and resource allocation programs, and to ensure native law and responsibility provides the template for contemporary agreements. This paper focuses on one such indigenous initiative, the Dhimurru Aboriginal Land Management Organisation in north-east Arnhem Land, a Yolngu community management response to increased coastal degradation associated with the nearby Nabalco mine. Now that native title is recognised in Australia and Canada, indigenous *and* non-indigenous legal systems are bound to consider the issues and potential for co-management agreements that recognise indigenous management regimes. It is within the philosophy and practices of indigenous community institutions like Dhimurru that innovative management dialogue might be found.

Introduction

In Australia's Northern Territory (NT) and Canada's northern British Columbia (BC), past and present colonialism continues to focus upon what Edward Said (1993, 6) has termed the 'struggle over geography'. In both regions, the legacy of frontier visions and interactions is imprinted on many components of contemporary human-environment and cultural interactions, a process which has attempted to convert indigenous people and place into an unexplored backdrop for the progression of the New World colonial achievement. Numerous investigators have responded to Said's work on the intent and impact of European codification of the New World 'other' by examining how indigenous cultures and terrains have been interpreted, modified and reinterpreted in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Yet as Robert Young (1995, 164) argues, such analyses are often limited by a 'homogenization of the history of colonialism' and require refinement to incorporate the various geographical and historical contexts over which indigenous *and* non-indigenous dialogue occurs.

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Investigation into co-management agreements with indigenous peoples is no exception. Recent official acceptance that native title exists in NT and BC calls for a renewed struggle to, as Nonie Sharp suggests, 're-imagine' a geography of co-existence which recognises indigenous cultural identity and responsibility in the management of terrains and resources.² Based on the theory and practice of devolving decision-making to the indigenous community, co-management offers a valuable mechanism by which conventional geographical and cultural understandings can be decolonised and localised. Yet assessments of the benefits and other outcomes of various co-management strategies within and between nation-states often concentrate on regional and national legislative or political strategies, while the local context is considered either homogenous or irrelevant.³

This paper argues that a *local* perspective on community and co-management not only highlights the complex and multifaceted relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous managers, but also promotes the achievement of co-management partnerships that are framed by the distinctiveness of indigenous law and place - the essence of native title. A review of Yolngu⁴ and Haida⁵ co-management partnerships and aspirations reveals that both communities insist that agreements be drawn from native regimes of law and management. A glimpse into the philosophy and practices of Dhimurru Aboriginal Land Management Organisation (hereafter 'Dhimurru') in north-east Arnhem Land provides some useful starting points for the encouragement of an innovative management dialogue which reflects the essence of these claims.

Indigenous calls for co-management in the Arafura and Pacific

In recent years, Aboriginal groups in both Australia and Canada have responded to the many options and challenges offered by co-management partnerships for a range of environments and resources within their traditional territories. To organise their efforts and facilitate dialogue with relevant government agencies, indigenous laws and procedures have been applied to form community management organisations. Harvey Feit has shown that community (self) management systems provide both a structure and a process through which indigenous people can respond to state forms of management whilst preserving the legitimacy of their system of rights and responsibilities:

[Community management] is the direct exercise of effectual managerial and regulatory practices with respect to wildlife and land. The legitimacy and authority for such practices are determined at the local level by reference to community-based systems of knowledge, values and practices. Furthermore, they are especially embedded in local practices and knowledge with respect to world view, property rights, social authority, and the definition of the sacred (Feit 1988, 74).

² See N. Sharp's paper delivered at this conference.

³ Many examples can be found amongst the nation / province /state-wide approaches to and assessment of co-management agreements with indigenous groups, cf. Robinson 1998.

⁴ The term 'Yolngu' refers to the indigenous people of north-east Arnhem Land, discussed later in this paper (cf. Williams 1986).

⁵ The term 'Haida' refers to the indigenous people of the Haida Gwaii. Like other groups along the north-west coast, the Haida are divided into a series of corporate houses which govern territories and resources through a highly structured regime headed by a chief and based on rank, status and hierarchy (cf. McFeat 1966).

The Yolngu of north-east Arnhem Land and the Haida from Haida Gwaii regions have both had to re-work traditional structures and categories in order to re-negotiate the many continuing external pressures and changes which have made an impact on their local and regional lives. For both groups, the coastal-marine environment and resources furnishes an integral component of their economic and cultural identity. Informed by an appreciation of their distinctive systems and perspectives of their territories, Yolngu and Haida spokespeople have insisted that co-management dialogue recognise and incorporate those interpretations of human-environment relationships and responsibilities. Through various political, legal and co-management strategies, Yolngu and Haida have tried to convince government and commercial agencies that their regimes of indigenous law and management should be publicly endorsed and legally sanctioned (Table 1).

Table 1 - Coastal - marine co-management options considered in Yolngu (NT) and Haida (BC) territories**

Co-management options considered in Yolngu territories (NT)	Implemented? *	Co-management options considered in Haida territories (BC)	Implemented? *
Manbuynga ga Rulyapa Indigenous Marine Protection Strategy	no	Gwaii Hannas Archipelago Protection Strategy - lands & non-tidal waters - marine area	yes no
Non-Statutory Aboriginal fisheries consultative committees	yes (not complete)	Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy Interim Measures Agreements (Federal)	yes
Land and sea co-management agreements under Aboriginal Land (NT) Act 1976	yes (not complete)	Fisheries Joint Stewardship Interim Measures Agreement (Provincial)	yes
Co-management agreements under Native Title (Commonwealth) Act 1993	no	Co-management agreements under 1986 Comprehensive (Native Title) Claim Policy	no

** See Robinson (1998) for an outline of each co-management strategy.

* By agreement with indigenous group and relevant government agency.

Within these claims, Yolngu and Haida have insisted on greater control over the management of traditional environments which necessarily include the sea. On behalf of the Anindilyakwa Yolngu people, Josif (1993, 21-22) explained how they 'see themselves as the primary caretakers of their marine environment'. Senior Yolngu lawmakers have emphasised the complex web of relationships between Yolngu people, totems and resources that are linked in waters of the sea, and warn that environmental degradation threatens the sustainability of their culture; accordingly they argue, 'Yolngu management principles' form the basis of a proposed indigenous marine protection strategy (Ginytirrang Mala 1994).

Similar statements have been made by the Haida. Their concerns and aspirations for the fisheries resource have repeatedly focused on the need to exercise a right of stewardship 'in respect of our ancestors and generations yet to come' (Kavanagh 1992, 20). Richardson and Green explain how co-management offers a positive opportunity to recognise and maintain the continuum of these Haida rights:

The relationship of Haida people to Haida Gwaii and to its fishery resources in particular ... is deeply embedded in our history and our culture ... Our relationship to the resources of Haida Gwaii cannot be managed by governments of another culture, with a different set of values. This is perhaps the most important reason for co-management - to provide a means for different cultures with conflicting values to share in a resource (Richardson and Green 1989, 259).

In response to relentless pressure from the Haida, and key court rulings where Aboriginal constitutional rights, including the right to fish, were tested and affirmed, Canadian governments have signed various interim co-management agreements.⁶ The Haida Fisheries Committee was established to represent Haida community interests in a joint management plan with the Provincial government to ensure more effective control over recreational fishing in the area, and to negotiate various fishery programs and agreements with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans under the national Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy.⁷ Another Haida community management organisation was established to develop and implement a co-management strategy for the Gwaii Hannas archipelago. Significantly however, consensus over the marine component of Gwaii Hannas agreement has yet to be achieved.

In the NT, control and management of marine areas and resources have also become increasingly important legal and political issues since the Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 officially converted over 80% of the land along the Territory's coastline to Aboriginal ownership. Despite land claim testimonies repeatedly detailing how the sea is an integral part of indigenous traditional country, the legislation (s. 73) only allows two kilometres of the sea to be enclosed from the low water mark. Few sea closures have been granted and the process generally criticised as failing to provide adequate mechanisms to enable indigenous perspectives or participation to be incorporated into the control and management of the coastal-marine area. A native title sea claim is currently being tested nearby in the waters around the NT's Croker Island under the Native Title (Cmlth) Act 1993 and includes Minjilang community demands to have their system of coastal-marine management recognised and implemented.⁸

⁶ Notzke (1995) provides a useful overview of relevant court cases and government policies, and of their impact on co-management arrangements for Canada's natural resources.

⁷ The provincial - Haida recreational fishery program is outlined in the Interim Measures Agreement: A Memorandum of Understanding of Joint Stewardship Between the Government of the Province of British Columbia and the Council of the Haida Nation, undated. Programs and agreements offered by the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy are documented in DFO 1995.

⁸ National Native Title Tribunal ref #DC 94/6.

Although indigenous communities in both the NT and BC seek co-management agreements that reflect the extent and content of native title, to date all agreements with government agencies have been contained to issues of common concern.⁹ The opening statement of the Gwaii Hannas Archipelago ‘reasons for agreement’ written by the Council of the Haida nation and the Government of Canada provides a case in point:

The parties maintain viewpoints regarding the Archipelago that converge with respect to objectives concerning the care, protection and enjoyment of the Archipelago ... and diverge with respect to sovereignty, title or ownership.

The Haida Nation sees the Archipelago as Haida Lands, subject to the collective and individual rights of the Haida citizens, the sovereignty of the Hereditary Chiefs; and jurisdiction of the Council of the Haida Nation. The Haida Nation owns these lands and waters by virtue of heredity, subject to the laws of the Constitution of the Haida Nation, and the legislative jurisdiction of the Haida House of Assembly.

The Government of Canada views the Archipelago as Crown land, subject to certain private rights or interest, and subject to the sovereignty of her Majesty the Queen and the legislative jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada and the Legislature of the Province of British Columbia (Gwaii Hannas Agreement 30 January, 1993).

While legal pluralism is recognised as an important mechanism in the presentation and realisation of native claims to traditional terrains and resources, there has been comparatively little attention on how such rights might be actualised within indigenous community life. An essential component of native title is the notion that indigenous resource use and environmental management are expressions of distinct local indigenous legal systems. Post-native title co-management agreements will be bound under indigenous and non-indigenous legal systems to recognise these indigenous management regimes. How might the official recognition of native title change the operation of co-managed geographies? A sketch of the philosophy and practices of Dhimurru in north-east Arnhem Land provides some useful starting points.

⁹ Historic treaties between colonisers and Aboriginal people were not made for the NT or the majority of BC, and so the content and rights of contemporary native title claims are being determined by case-by-case experience.

Dhimurru - A Yolngu community approach to coastal management

Like all parts of Yolngu country, north-east Arnhem Land is a place where cultural and community heritage is remembered in people's everyday lives. It is a place embedded in country where spirit-beings have moved through time and space to mould the morphology of the land; their pathways identified with one or other of the Dhuwa or Yirritja moieties which divide and order relationships between people, groups, totems, country and living resources. Through these connections, Yolngu own and manage their territories to form a mosaic of discrete local property and managerial group rights, and shared regional cultural and economic exchange group relationships (Williams 1986; Keen 1995).

In more recent centuries, Yolngu knowledge and tenure systems have had to find new ways to interpret the experience of contact and changes imposed by external agents. In 1963, this included the Australian government excising 140 square miles of the Arnhem Land reserve to allow the Nabalco mining company to extract bauxite from the area. Despite Yolngu lodging various protests through political and legal arenas, Nabalco's operations were allowed to continue.¹⁰ Over the following years, the mining industry grew, the non-indigenous population in the nearby Nhulunbuy township increased, and the Yolngu had to cope with and accommodate to the new social, environmental and cultural pressures (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - North-east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

In 1976, the Land Rights Act (NT) officially converted the country within and surrounding the Nabalco mining lease to become Aboriginal land. Not only does this give the Yolngu people the right to use the land for food and the maintenance of their culture; it also confers on them the right to make decisions concerning how and when, and for what purpose, other people may use or be on these areas. Subject to the conditions of the nearby Nabalco mining lease, non-indigenous residents of the Nhulunbuy mining township have access to designated recreational areas throughout north-east Arnhem Land. However until recently, Nabalco played no part in the management of the area other than in the provision and upgrading of access tracks (Northern Land Council [NLC] files: 91/395). The latter developments were subsequently linked to the disturbance of sacred sites and illegal fishing in estuarine and inshore waters. Yolngu Dhimurru rangers remember how 'Balanda' (non-indigenous people) 'were going all over the place', 'not observing Yolngu law', 'moving around here and there ... without asking ... without control', and 'making the country sick' with rubbish and pollution (Author's fieldnotes 1994, 1995).

In late 1992, the Yolngu living in and around Yirrkala¹¹ responded to a growing concern over the increasing and unauthorised use of their traditional lands by establishing Dhimurru. Traditional owners representing approximately twenty clans met to discuss how the area used by non-indigenous residents should be managed. The elders and community formed Dhimurru to announce a 'right name for an important and good idea' and to provide a collective metaphor and mechanism 'to co-ordinate our decision-making' for a 'Yolngu based land management system with land management information developed by non-Aboriginal

¹⁰ This has been documented and discussed in Williams (1986).

¹¹ A small township that emerged and is located at an old Methodist mission site.

people' (NLC files 90/90). Through Dhimurru, the Yolngu community felt they could maintain and exercise their traditional rights whilst conserving the natural and cultural values of the area.

Ganma and Negotiating Boundaries of Knowledge

The wind carries the moisture right up high into the atmosphere, and we get the feeling that maybe it's going to rain, and that makes us feel happy. And so we're sitting here, and suddenly we feel a cool breeze. Then the Dhimurru wind arrives from the east bringing rain. This is a giver of life to the plants (Dhimurru).

All Yolngu people who feel the rain from the Dhimurru wind on their territories and are interconnected 'through culture and sacred sites' and 'fresh and salt water mixing together' in their country have the right and obligation to 'work together' in the care of north-east Arnhem Land (NLC files 90/90; 91/395). As an essential part of Yolngu cultural-ecological geographies that binds individual, clan and country together, meanings and metaphors associated with water are used as a fundamental principle to guide Dhimurru's management principles and activities. For Yolngu people, water 'gives life' to spiritual forms, memories, people, plants, animals fish and country. Held and renewed in 'Yolngu people's minds and bodies', 'from the Dhimurru wind' and 'in all living things', water reflects the differences in relationships and knowledge, and at the same time provides a common medium to 'care for the life of Yolngu and country' (Authors fieldnotes 1995).

Symbolism and bonds associated with water are particularly important at resolving fundamental divisions established through Dhuwa and Yirritja moiety meanings, people, clans and places. Kinship relationships form the framework through which Yolngu negotiate the many social, conceptual and geographical 'boundaries' between Yolngu individuals, moieties and groups. Apart from the patrilineal clan's primary rights to the estate, managerial rights to territory are reckoned through matrilineal links that accommodate land use and management responsibilities (Williams 1986, 77). Through interweaving child-mother (*Yothu-Yindi*) relationships, a spiritual conception, associated with contact at a sacred waterhole, shares the water in the womb before a child of opposite moiety to the mother is conceived (Keen 1990). Entwined by the mixed and distinct waters of *Yothu-Yindi*, all Yolngu are custodians of other moieties' land and totems, thus enabling the co-operative care for the entire region. As senior

Yolngu women asserted, such association is a deeply personal and spiritual attachment which binds Yolngu people to the sustainability of their pasts and futures:

Through time, over time and in time. We are joined to each other, to our grandmothers, to our children by the water in our bodies ... Water is the giver of life ... It is part of our power (Author's fieldnotes, 1994).

Through these laws and principles of responsibility, the Yolngu community have drawn on their discrete and shared connections with water to create a *Ganma* theory of knowledge sharing and dialogue to guide community and co-management. As elder and educator Raymattja Marika explained, knowledge sharing and outcomes are based on equality and difference:

There is always a dynamic interaction of knowledge traditions. Fresh water from the land, bubbling up in fresh water springs to make waterholes, and salt water from the sea are interacting with each other with the energy of the tide and the energy of the bubbling spring. When the tide is high the water rises to its full. When the tide goes out the water reduces its capacity ... In this way the Dhuwa and Yirritja sides of Yolngu life work together. And in this way Balanda [white people] and Yolngu traditions can work together. There must be balance, if not either one will be stronger and will harm the other (Marika-Mununggiritj 1990).

The *Ganma* place and metaphor of knowledge is neither Yirritja or Dhuwa - neither salty nor fresh, nor on the land or sea. In the frothy interface where the 'salt' and 'freshwater' boundaries interact, new knowledge is negotiated in a process of community decision-making that respects an openness of format; the assumptions are that change must be expected and that outcomes may require future review. Decisions thus remain susceptible to re-interpretation, their worth determined by the quality and balance of the salt and fresh water flows and their power and meaning maintained by their connection to the local processes and systems from which they are generated.

Balanced through this cultural-legal framework, management decision-making and dialogue is carefully controlled to ensure Yolngu input and knowledge is appropriate for the context, place or purpose. Morphy (1991, 78) observed that Yolngu control this process of knowledge-sharing 'by providing boundaries between what should and should not be known by particular categories of people and individuals' to give power and context to Yolngu law and interpretation. The framework also guides Dhimurru's management principles and daily activities. Traditional elders' interpretations of the region's cultural heritage frame and connect the management of designated recreational areas and inform where and how local and regional areas should be managed. Daily operations begin and are guided with frequent radioed consultations with appropriate elders as Yolngu Dhimurru rangers ensure that appropriate protocols and procedures are negotiated as vehicles cross the network of boundaries delineating clan rights and responsibilities.

Outcomes of management decisions are also formulated and formalised through the Dhimurru general and executive committees whose membership draws from Yolngu representatives of clan groups recognised as having an interest in the area (Figure 2). All management decisions and directions are clarified through regular committee meetings, which provide an opportunity for the Yolngu representatives to confer on the management of their estates and the whole region.



Figure 2 - Management structure of Dhimurru

Dhimurru's management autonomy is partly achieved through their co-operative funding and support arrangements. Contributions to Dhimurru's operations are met by traditional owners from mining royalty receipts (contributes approximately 35% towards operational costs), corporate contributions (approximately 15%), recreational user permit fees (approximately 12%) and various program grants. Training and assistance is also received from various Aboriginal and conservation government agencies and assistance from the Northern Land Council and local Yolngu organisations. All government and commercial assistance received is under the agreement of Dhimurru's management principles and control, an issue which has created significant obstacles for the achievement of some co-management agreements, particularly in the coastal -sea.¹² Even so, Dhimurru's *Ganma* management philosophies and principles are based on inclusion rather than exclusion, and so partnerships are encouraged that enhance 'positive interactions with the non Aboriginal world and the sponsoring of co-operative, respectful, educative and mutually beneficial relationships' (Dhimurru 1992).

Dhimurru's management and activities in the *Nanydjaka* (Cape Arnhem) region is one example where co-operative community and co-management has been achieved. *Nanydjaka* is a popular coastal destination for Nhulunbuy residents, and for Yolngu people who fish and hunt for the wealth of turtle and marine resources found in the area. Responding to growing concerns that 4WD tracks were found too close to sacred areas and were causing significant damage to nearby coastal dunes and turtle nests, Dhimurru, traditional owners and the parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory (PWCNT) have begun to develop management plans and strategies to protect the coast's cultural and ecological significance.

Dhimurru's management role for the *Nanydjaka* began with a visit from appropriate Gumatj elders to describe and record the local 'big and little names', learnt 'from a long time ago' and through the teachings of past generations. The visit ended with a commitment from both Dhuwa and Yirritja Gumatj clan members, and other Yolngu linked to the area, to care for the region and the necessity for younger Yolngu to 'receive instruction from the old people

¹² Funding and support arrangements operating at time of fieldwork in 1996.

to pass on the wealth of traditional culture and ecological knowledge they possess' (*Nanydjaka*, Dhimurru files). Guided by this cultural management framework, Dhimurru managers now visit *Nanydjaka* frequently to check visitor permits and activities, restore areas damaged by vehicles and inform the Dhimurru committee of the region's health, and of their own activities. Young Yolngu community rangers often join these visits as part of their training through government programs and the on-ground expertise of older Dhimurru rangers and traditional owners.

To develop an appropriate turtle strategy for *Nanydjaka* and the wider region, PWCNT and Dhimurru also established a 'Miyapunu' turtle agreement in 1995. To date, work on this project has involved quantifying indigenous harvesting activities and identifying the effects of commercial and recreational fishing activities to help Yolngu make informed decisions about future management of turtle resources in the area (Kennett *et al.* 1997). Through Miyapunu, new indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge about turtle is being negotiated and shared and resulted in Dhimurru closing a section of the *Nanydjaka* beach to protect turtle nests and eggs from excessive harvesting activities and vehicle traffic.

Through Dhimurru, Yolngu and Yolngu - Balanda perspectives are balanced to guide human interaction with the *Nanydjaka* coastal region. The flexibility of Dhimurru's structure, function and membership allows various Yolngu individuals and perspectives to move in and out of management decision-making as appropriate for the given place, area, region, resource or activity. Necessarily then, Dhimurru serves a wider purpose than the environmental maintenance of recreational areas. In the development and implementation of Dhimurru's management plans sacred sites and stories are recorded, younger Yolngu community rangers are trained and Dhimurru acts an important bridge between Yolngu authorities, government agencies and the general community.

Just as importantly, Dhimurru's 'management' role also includes the facilitation of appropriate dialogue and interaction with living and sacred elements of Yolngu territories. Ranger Nanikiya Mununggiritj emphasised how Dhimurru's *Ganma* principles were informed:

Yolngu Dhimurru rangers are called *wangawu milngu* - 'watchers'. We can see country, country can see us ... Our job is to make sure management for [the region] is right ... talking and listening to everything and everyone ... elders, country, law, past, future ... talking and listening to everything and everyone (Author's fieldnotes 1994).

Dhimurru rangers often keenly discuss the various connections between Yolngu people, laws and country as possible avenues or threats to the sustainability of their local and regional cultural-ecological geographies. Connections are drawn from laws and understandings to link country and to inform the suitable role of Yolngu. So while Western forms of management would find it difficult to relate a living creature in the sea to burning the bush, for Dhimurru's senior cultural adviser and elder Djalalingba Yunupingu, the links are obvious:

I care for the fire. The fire burnt the traditional way ... Take about two, three year for the right time got to be burnt. Got to look for animal. Kill animal, few, not much ... That's the law for the Yolngu people. That's their ceremony ground, ceremony area, traditional way. All right, we look after around the country, all around the beach. At the time turtles coming out, lay eggs, don't take the eggs. Let them grow ... We take care of all the animals from sea to bush ... the landcare, all around Dhimurru country, our county (Yunupingu 1995, 65-66).

As part of an autonomous system, Djalalingba's role is to care for all components of country because, as senior elder in the Gumatj clan, he is the repository of the details and purpose of the handed-down knowledge of Gumatj territory; and that in turn, decides the dialogue with country for future generations. Which area to burn, how many turtle to harvest and where harvesting should or should not occur, become serious past, present and future management decisions. With the assistance of other elders and managers, Djalalingba is in constant communication with the ecological and sacred elements of country which confers ritual responsibilities and the right to permit and decide resource-use and management of clan estates.

Turtle populations and fire move through and across clan countries, leaving meaning and resources to be used and shared by the Yolngu community according to their kin relations to each other and country. Williams reports that Yolngu emphasise the precise planning and direction required to interact with fire, so that the right country is appropriately burnt and purified after a Yolngu person's death, or the resources available after a burn are properly allocated 'according to the normal rules that govern land use' (Williams 1986, 88, 98). Similar protocols exist for sharing turtle and turtle egg harvests, and can include closing areas of coastline to the hunting of turtles and eggs after the death of a traditional owner from a coastal estate.

Dialogue between Yolngu and country is therefore reciprocated and embedded in each other, and both are vital for the sustainability of life and the land. Yolngu testimonies under the Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 have described severe personal sickness if country or sites to which they are spiritually linked are mismanaged, damaged or disturbed. Dhimurru rangers warn that country would 'turn to rubbish' if not properly cared for by Yolngu who know the appropriate regime of law and management. With the suitable categorisation of social relations, cultural-ecological knowledge, and use of country, the Yolngu system is balanced and the country responds.¹³ Senior elder Wulanybuma Wunungmurra connected contemporary use of fire and marine resources to explain how the sequence of catching, cooking, distributing and eating turtles expressed Yolngu management perspectives and practices:

Through Yolngu kinship all species are shared. Let's say a Dhuwa animal comes into a Yirritja place. Who owns that animal? Who is allowed to eat the animal and who pays who? You see points of connection ... that links commonness and acceptance. That is what tells you. Anybody coming into that boundary is connected or linked by that connection ... the law connects them ... so the land owners would get some, the totem owner would get some and you, the fisherman would get some (Dhimurru files: Yirrkala community meeting notes 24/3/1994).

Knowledge of how places, country, individuals and communities are connected, informs when and where savanna is burnt, how and where turtle eggs can be harvested, why these decisions have to be made, and who has the right to contribute to their outcome. As Yolngu rangers constantly insisted, the essence of Dhimurru's purpose was for Yolngu to be 'out here in country' where they could watch, listen and take part in the communicating system.

¹³ Also see analysis in Rose's conference paper.

It is therefore with growing concern that Yolngu observe turtle and other marine species caught in debris from fishing vessels on Arnhem Land shores; they express frustration that the principles of Dhimurru's co-management agreements change - and often cease - at the shoreline. Instead, Yolngu dialogue is obliged to assimilate other community, government and commercial interests in addressing government management agendas. As Yolngu people have often commented, this change in management dialogue on either side of the coast threatens the brackish pool of knowledge sharing and negotiation from which *Ganma* principles are drawn.

Towards localised co-management regimes

Through metaphors and associations with water, Dhimurru finds points of connection to guide *Ganma* decision-making based on Yolngu systems and perspectives of management. Other points of connection have been linked to form the various community management organisations in both Yolngu and Haida territories. Through such mechanisms, indigenous people can respond to and control the impact of historical colonial processes that continue to encroach on their daily lives and re-imagine a geography of co-existence that recognises their local system of law and responsibility.

Obviously but importantly, the indigenous and historical geography of Haida territories is both locally and regionally different. For instance, as an integral component to BC's heritage, use of and jurisdiction over the Pacific ocean's coastal resources has been central to the history of indigenous-settler relations and contemporary native claim negotiations (Newell 1993). However as a Haida Fishery officer observed, co-operative fishery strategies and allocations achieved thus far still 'tend to assimilate the interests of First Nation communities along BC's coast' within government-formulated agreements. The Haida Fisheries Committee emphasises that one of its vital roles is to control the content of agreements with government fishery agencies, and ensure their implications on Haida communities 'reflect the uniqueness of *how* and *why* Haida manage the fish resources in Gwaii Hannas' (Haida Fishery officer, Author's fieldnotes 1996).

The Haida like the Yolngu, draw on their distinctive laws to form the template and focus of contemporary management regimes. It is from the content and dialogue within indigenous institutions that *native*, rather than *government* regimes of co-management might be re-imagined. While the outcome of this negotiation and re-negotiation process is far from clear, Yolngu and Haida people are certain about one endpoint. Future co-management systems will be drawn from indigenous relationships to their geographies and will remain alive in their places of origin.

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