

Collective biography methodology for sustainable places

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Reading this paper

This paper is the outcome of a writing collaboration by the three authors listed. We have approached the task with each author writing a discrete part reflecting her contribution to the paper and then a conclusion arising out of collaborative discussions of the overall work. In the Introduction, the first author draws on her work on the 'Bubbles on the Surface' project and other projects with Indigenous Australians, together with her own experience of place, to introduce the concept of place pedagogies. She then relates this to a wider western literature on the significance of place in the Literature Review. In the Methodology section, the second author introduces collective biography and its origins in Haug's concept of memory work (1987) and Davies & Gannon's (2006) development of this. In the Findings and Discussion section, the third author considers how exploring place pedagogies using collective biography may enrich research in the field of adult and vocational learning.

Introduction

One of the few words shared by many Indigenous languages across Australia is 'ngurra', translated as meaning camp, home, country of belonging. These are inseparable concepts. One's deepest and most intimate attachments, sense of identity and home, are to the features of country to which one belongs. This attachment always includes water places because of the vital link between water and life. So, for example, in my paper about the methodology of the *Bubbles on the Surface* project in this symposium, I spoke about Chrissiejoy's intimate attachment to *Terewah*, the Narran Lake, stretching back to a time before memory 'I don't remember a time without the Lake'. She went on to describe the features of the Lake and its presence in her life in vivid detail, even though she had left the camp by the Lake over thirty years previously. When I recorded her stories in her home in Sydney, in a tiny cluttered lounge room, curtains drawn, each time I asked her a question about the Lake, there was a long pause. It was as if she was travelling through time and space in the landscapes of her memories to that campfire by the Narran Lake so many years ago.

This sense of deep attachment expressed through memory was shared by all of our Aboriginal research partners. Badger described the Darling River between Menindee and Bourke as the place of his deepest attachment: 'that's where my really sentimental particular place', and 'the Darling River, that's what I love the most, the river'. Although he still lives in this country, it was the different spots on the river where he camped, fished and heard stories as a child with his grandmother that became the story places of

his art works. Daphne talked about the energy and intensity expressed in her paintings as generated from her deep connections to her home country and one of my favourite paintings is of her mother doing the washing in the bore drain with all the kids playing in the water. Lorina told countless stories of growing up on, in, and by the Culgoa River as the fabric of her childhood memories:

We used to play in the river, in the river bed when it was dry, so ride our motorbikes down the creek bed, the river bed, play games and sit in the river bed, draw stories. Most of my life was down the river actually, whenever I came home from school we went to the river, before we went to school we walked, sometimes we walked along the river, sometimes we wagged school and stayed down the river, yeah wag school and spend our whole day at the river.

And yet, I also felt connected to these stories of water places in this old dry land. How did I make those connections and what was the process of that learning? In my first trip out to the Narran Lake to explore the country prior to beginning the research I wrote about a series of images that began with a process of undoing the self at a motel in Moree. The images of whiteness *White/is not a colour/I usually write* were images of lack of connection. In the catalogue writing they were left hanging, suspended, and in its place I wrote about my own indigenous roots in Scotland. While this was an important journey in the thinking that underpins my own relationship to this project about water in the drylands of the Murray Darling Basin, here I want to take up another trajectory about my own early memories of water places.

These early memories have surfaced quite surprisingly through another (dis)placement. I recently moved from northern NSW where I had lived for twenty years, to south east Victoria to take up a new position. In my home country in northern NSW I feel deeply connected to the local landscapes and to the broader landscapes of that country that connect me to the west and to the Narran Lakes. I have done substantial work with Aboriginal people in northern NSW that also connects me deeply to these places. In searching for a connection to the new place where I find myself living and working, I began to write about a tiny wetlands that formed in the first drought-breaking rain in some scrappy scrub on the edge of town:

Walking out of the scrub at the edge of the playing field there's a big puddle of water lying since recent rains. My heart rises the first time I see this water appear after drought. The second time there is already an amazing chorus of frogs. My son tells me they sing in chorus so the females can choose a mate. But where do they come from? There have been no frogs singing since that first day at dawn. Why aren't they singing? Is it the time, or are they all gone again? It's Sunday morning so I wander over to the little wetland. I think about knowing a place day in and day out, over seasons and years to really know what is going on, I think about how places teach us. I crouch down beside the water in the pose of the child, crouching down beside this place just to see what I can see. I smell the rank smell of childhood water holes filled with water after rain. Peering in to the shallow pool I enter a still, tea coloured world of decaying leaves and grass, tiny creatures minutely disturbing with their movements. But there are no tadpoles at the edges of this water. Why, I do not know. I walk a little

further, feet squelching in the mud, looking for telltale signs of frog's eggs with their tiny black dots of tadpoles coming into being, the sort of clear gelatinous globs on the smooth surface of the water. How did I learn that these were baby tadpoles?

This trajectory has taken me back to the tadpole holes of my childhood in a similar piece of scrappy bush in suburban Sydney:

Mostly when it rains we head down to the stormwater drain to catch the rush of foamy water in the concrete canal. But later I crawl through tunnels of tea tree scrub to the tadpole holes. They are there longer, long after the stormwater drain has dwindled to its usual trickle. Crouching beside tea tree water, in the rank smell of decaying plants, blobs of clear jelly appear with tiny dark spots. Day by day the black specks grow into baby tadpoles. Tiny tadpoles that flicker in the stillness of leaves and debris. Then huge ones, slow and sluggish, stirring clouds of mud, growing legs. Losing their tails, turning into frogs, something exquisitely exciting about this change of form. They are the prize ones. I collect them in jars and take them home to watch. I know when the tadpole holes come and go, that after rain they fill up, frogs' eggs appear, baby tadpoles grow and turn into frogs. Then they dry up again and other things take my attention. Finding new red gum tips or velvety nasturtiums to take home for my mum.

This return to the sensory memories of my childhood experiences led me to wonder if all children have the potential to develop a sense of indigenous attachment to place based on intimate childhood attachments. I was not aware until after I wrote about these early place memories that my pedagogical interest in the nearby Morwell River wetlands is also related to those early memories of water places. The little puddle that I pass on my daily walk that was so quickly and surprisingly inhabited by frogs with the first rain is, of course, linked to the larger wetlands as a place of memory and learning. The water places of my childhood were typical of the lurky places on the edge of towns and cities formed by drainage channels. The place of my childhood water memories was an area where the shapes of the landscape were not completely erased in the grid of bitumen streets and houses. It was a place that was traversed by a concrete drain that carried storm water away, revealing the prior water catchment patterns of the land with remnant pools inhabited by tadpoles and frogs.

At the Morwell River Wetlands, I learn about how a part natural, part artificial wetlands is re-inhabited. Frogs are a good measure of how well the wetlands is doing, and I begin to learn to identify the different frogs by their calls, to know the relationship between frog calls and the rhythms of water in the wetlands, the dry times and wet. This links me back to Chrissiejoy's Narran Lake, a huge and internationally significant wetland, but a wetland nevertheless. The frogs are an important part of Chrissiejoy's memories and knowledge system based on the Lake:

The frogs would start to croak of a night and you'd hear them coming days and days and days before the rain. You knew it was coming because of the frogs and all the birds that would start to come in. Millinbu was always one of the first to come back. Frogs normally, day to day frogs, they're called yuwiya but when you talk about them as our educator, like teaching you, if you took notice of them then when the lake was going to come back they were called millinbu. Millinbu was always one of the first to come back.

They could come out of their wet slime, they probably had to be up and above the ground before the water started.

Chrissiejoy and I are linked through our intimate connections to these water places of our childhood memories even while being situated historically and politically on either side of an abyss produced by our locations in the colonial histories of Australia. The work of the project '*Bubbles on the surface*' is to move beyond identity politics to inhabit a contact zone of memory, to create a conversation across this space of difference. The basis of this is our love of country, and more precisely a commonality founded on our deep attachments to the places of our childhood.

Literature review

In each of the books that I have read recently about the global water crisis somewhere the authors make a declaration of their primary attachments to water places. Shiva, whose passionate book argues for a return of the sacred, and of the commons, confesses that she was born in a valley bounded by the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers: 'The rivers have nurtured me and shaped my sense of the sacred from childhood. One of the most moving experiences I had in recent years was immersing my father's ashes in the Ganges at Rishikesh' (2002, 133). Pearce, the author of *When the Rivers Run Dry* tells us that he was brought up in a village where two small rivers began their journey to the sea:

One, the river Len flows west to the Medway and the Thames estuary. It powered a mill, I remember, and filled a lake in a park. Then one day it flooded and I couldn't get to school. That struck me: the power of a river unleashed.

The other river, the Stour, flowed east through the cathedral city of Canterbury, took in some extra water bubbling up from the bowels of the East Kent coal mines and finished in a marshy mess called Pegwell Bay. It's currently in the news for the first time, because my childhood backwater of Kent is to spawn a New Town and there are plans to dam the Stour to fill the taps (2006, 18).

He then goes on to recount his research into the plight of the world's rivers. In *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama explores place attachments through the storylines which underpin collective cultural attachments to landscapes. He begins by declaring his childhood attachment to the Thames with a piece of memory writing:

It was the low gull-swept estuary, the marriage bed of salt and fresh water, stretching as far as the eye could see from my northern Essex bank toward a thin black horizon on the other side. ... On most days the wind brought us a mixed draught of aroma, olfactory messages from both the city and the sea: heavy traffic and fresh fish. And between them hung the smell of the old man himself: sharp and moldy as if it exuded from some vast subfluvial fungus growing in the primeval sludge (1996, 3-4).

This writing illuminates the embodied nature of our early place attachments reflected in memories of smell, taste, sight and touch. He begins the section on water with a similar quote from Bachelard about reverie and the rivers of childhood:

I was born in a country of brooks and rivers, in a corner of Champagne, called Le Vallage for the great number of its valleys. The most beautiful of its places for me was

the hollow of a valley by the side of fresh water, in the shade of willows ... My pleasure still is to follow the stream, to walk along its banks in the right direction, in the direction of the flowing water, the water that leads life towards the next village ... Dreaming beside the river, I gave my imagination to the water, the green, clear water, the water that makes the meadows green. ... The stream doesn't have to be ours; the water doesn't have to be ours. The anonymous water knows all my secrets. And the same memory issues from every spring (Bachelard in Schama, 1996, 244).

It is interesting to read these pieces of memory writing as a third generation immigrant in Australia who has worked for many years with postcolonial questions of belonging. I can immediately recognise Bachelard's stream as one I grew up with in the traditions of English literature transported by early Australian writers and poets. It is not, however reminiscent of any of the 'streams' that I knew in the Australian landscape. The water places of my childhood, the tadpole holes and stormwater drain of suburban Sydney, or even the intermittent waterholes and shallow rocky rivers of childhood holidays were quite different. Even moreso were the dry sandy river beds in the desert of Central Australia or the intermittent rivers and lakes of the drylands of western NSW of the Bubbles project.

Schama writes about the importance of retrieving memories and place practices that were always there but have been displaced over time:

I unequivocally share the dismay at the ongoing degradation of the planet, and much of the foreboding about the possibilities of its restoration to good health. The point of *Landscape and Memory* is not to contest the reality of this crisis. It is, rather, by revealing the richness, and complexity of our landscape tradition ... Instead of assuming the mutually exclusive character of Western culture and nature, I want to suggest the strength of the links that have bound them together.

That strength is often hidden beneath layers of the commonplace. So *Landscape and Memory* is constructed as an excavation below our normal sight-level to recover the veins of myth and memory that lie beneath the surface (1996, 14).

This process of excavation for Schama is part of the necessary work of restoring the planet to good health. The work and learning of water in the Bubbles project has a similar dimension made more complex by the fact that the traditions within which indigenous people were intertwined within its deep environmental histories belong to Indigenous Australians. The process through which non Indigenous Australians can learn these traditions is complicated by colonial histories and by the fact that non Indigenous Australians have also been displaced from their traditional lands and place practices. The work of the Bubbles project is to bring the landscape traditions and memories of the water places in the Murray Darling Basin to the surface so that non Indigenous Australians can learn. This, of course, involves complex political and ethical sensitivities and responsibilities, which are not the subject of this paper. A good beginning point is for non-Indigenous Australians to become aware of their own place attachments in the Australian landscape.

Schroder, in her discussion of the importance of the native science movement in Ecuador recounts an exercise that ‘highlights the primacy of place in human experience’:

He invited us to close our eyes and remember, first the bedroom of our childhood, then the house, and then the neighbourhood. ... we will be able to recreate the landscape in amazing concrete detail (106). The strong visceral feelings that accompany this exercise attest to the primal connections that even contemporary, urban Westerners have with particular places (Peat in Schroder, 2006, 312).

As we present this paper to you, we are aware of the many different and rich perspectives and recollections that will be aroused through these images. For this reason we invite you to undertake a similar exercise to share their earliest memories of water places. We have framed this invitation within a collective biography methodology to enable participation in a full process of collective memory sharing, writing and publication.

Methodology: Collective biography

Working with women on a community place-making project recently, I found that there is pleasure as well as purpose in reflecting on life experiences doing collective biography, in salvaging memory from accusations of indulgence, to look for meaning beyond the self. Participants described the process of remembering as a gift, and certainly collective biography does allow memories to unfold at participants’ own pace as they ease into the memory work. It can also be a mercurial journey following sensual responses and glimpses of forgotten experiences:

We retrieve memories sometimes as words spoken, sometimes as visual images, or smells, or as tastes vividly registered on the tongue. We can struggle to retrieve memory that exists “before it is called” one thing or another ... and in doing so arrive at something that can be recognised as truthful, though elusively so – competing with other powerful memories that hold an equally weighted truth. And always each memory is vulnerable to the landscape of desire and the discourses through which it is called upon (Davies, 2000, 43).

Davies gestures here towards the commonplace that Schama says hides the strength of connection between nature and culture (1996, 14). The commonplace is the site where everyday lived experience; subjectivity and emotions, elusive feelings and vulnerability are mediated. The meanings and explanations of dominant culture colonise imagination with already determined explanations – clichés, stereotypes and powerful gender, race, and class identifications. Collective biography peels through the veneer to memories lodged in the body, through stages that limber up and stretch the participants into remembering and listening, reflection and analysis. The process troubles the mutually exclusive (Schama, 1996,14) splits of binary pairs – self/other, nature/culture.

I am drawn to use collective biography as a research methodology because it takes everyday experience as the basis of knowledge (Onyx & Small 2001: 775), and is

underpinned by three elements that are also crucial aspects of the indigenous attachments to place that Author has conceptualised in the pedagogies of place (Author 2008). In the frame of place pedagogies, stories and other forms of representation of lived experience are central to knowing place, the body is the acknowledged arbiter of experience, and contact zones where difference is experienced are sites of productive exchange. As a process that seeks embodied stories through group processes of storytelling, collective biography is then, a powerful means for non-indigenous people to excavate their own deep place connections.

The process paces remembering through distinct phases and facilitates the identification of common storylines that although are individually nuanced, can reveal the effects of dominant discourses (Davies & Gannon 2006: 5). In this way the relationship between the individual and the social, the personal and the political can be analysed. The process can therefore be seen to involve the two elements my colleague has previously spoken about in her work with Chrissiejoy. Firstly, becoming critically aware of individual experiences and attachments. Secondly, of the connections shared across differences. In this regard collective biography is both a decolonising methodology and a step towards reinhabiting the connections of culture and nature so necessary to a sustainable future (Schama,1996:14; Gruenewald, 2003).

Collective biography had its origins in the memory work attributed to Frigga Haug (1987: 14) who wrote that memory-work is 'explicitly presented as a bridge to span the gap between 'theory' and 'experience'.' Haug and her co researchers used memory-work as a collaborative research method to explore the 'how' of women's lives, 'the process by which women become part of society. We sought to identify the ways in which human beings reproduce social structures by constructing themselves into those structures' (Haug 1987: 43). They explained that human beings live 'according to whole series of imperatives: social pressures, natural limitations, the imperative of economic survival, the given conditions of history and culture' (1987:45). On account of these imperatives, our lives are collectively shaped in generalisable ways that we take up as individuals and make our own through personal experience. However, Haug was committed to the belief that the heterogeneity of everyday life requires flexibility in the use of method (1987, 71), and certainly memory-work has since been applied in diverse situations and developed by many researchers around the world (see Small, 2001 & 2007, 5). In 2007 at The Memory-Work Conference at University of Technology, Sydney, researchers set out to examine the method in an interdisciplinary forum. The diversity of disciplines and research projects represented (see Small, 2007) is indicative of the extent to which the method has been increasingly adapted, for example with children and around sensitive topics. In these and other instances all the participants do not necessarily share academic goals and cannot share in the final analysis (Small, 2007, p7).

Bronwyn Davies has significantly developed collective biography from Haug's memory work (2000, Davies & Gannon, 2006) and although memory-work and collective biography are similar processes, I use Davies' collective biography because it begins with *speaking* memories rather than *writing*. In my research with women who are participants

rather than co researchers I have found that removing the expectation of writing the first memory significantly frees up the memory work and helps consolidate group process early on.

When researchers or participants come together for a collective biography workshop, the focus of the research provides a theoretical frame and theme for the memory work (in the case of this symposium the theme is 'place' and 'water'). Then when the topic is chosen and the group decided, the participants meet usually over a series of sessions to explore the topic.

There are four phases in Davies conception of collective biography - three phases of memory-work following Haug's plan, with an additional talking phase to begin. The first phase involves sharing memories stimulated by the theme or prompt for the session. The participants take turns to share their first memory response. This first memory telling is intended to be spontaneous, as free as possible from the internal editing and censoring that generally happens before we speak. For this reason, it is important to establish the groundwork for respectful listening and confidentiality right at the beginning but over time, trust is often built. Onyx and Small (2001, 779) refer to Davies' first phase of the process as 'talking story', and they note that the stories that emerge from talking story often take the participants by surprise. These unexpected stories often become the written stories rather than the initial memory.

While the topic provides an entrée to past experiences, detail is recovered from the traces of sensory experiences and emotions. Remembered images, smell, sounds or touch open pathways of exploration to flesh out detail. As each person speaks their memory, the other participants listen with care, and later have the opportunity to ask questions, seeking clarification of the memory. This iterative process helps the storyteller to refine their own memory-story and get closer to the detail of the embodied experience, and it engages the other participants in the quest to understand the teller's story also opening the memory of related experiences in their own lives.

The second phase involves writing up the personal stories that have developed from the memory work and discussion (Onyx & Small, 2001, 777). The preferred technique is to write in as much detail as possible, without interpretation and in the third person. Then the written stories are read to the group in the third phase. After written stories are read aloud, the listeners discuss each individual story to further clarify inconsistencies or highlight places when the meaning is brushed over by clichés or simple description. Onyx and Small offer suggestions to guide critique of the stories in the group such as looking for indicators of taken-for-granted aspects and the social meaning of the events (2001, 777). The group can then seek out absences in the memory story, and finally the memory may be rewritten (2001, 777). Threads of connection in the participants' experiences, similarities and differences begin to emerge as the conversation moves between the individual stories.

In the last phase the final memory stories become texts for analysis. This involves theorising the relationship between the 'common sense' linking the individual stories, and intertextually with academic literature (Onyx & Small, 2001, 777). Davies and Gannon explain that their collective biography approach 'begins, proceeds and ends with a focus on theory, as we understand it through the lens of lived experience, with our bodies and our memories as discursive/textual sites' (2006, 14).

Each phase will vary with the initial intention and purpose of the research and the make up of the group depending on the approach to collaboration chosen. The final written text or report might be written collaboratively or by the facilitator. It may involve blending individual voices or could maintain the semblance of conversation building bridges of theory and analysis between each voice. The level of collaboration should be designed in advance to suit the particular project.

Collective biography fosters the process of re/memory but memory is fluid and multilayered. The memory stories that emerge are a response to that particular topic at that time as Davies et al. (2006) explain: 'memory is not able to produce experiences identical with the original events since they must be filtered through the present context and historical moment'. Yet, collective biography provides the opportunity to become aware of and analyse the filtering of cultural storylines through individual experience.

Findings and discussion: Place pedagogy and collective biography in adult and vocational learning research

In this section, I, as third author, consider the potential of place pedagogies and collective biography to contribute fresh conceptual and methodological frameworks to contemporary debates in adult and work-related education. The particular debates that concern me, and many scholars in this field internationally, are how communities are shaped through globalisation, and how people in those communities understand and imagine their futures in the spaces created by globalizing forces. The questions that frame my very tentative enquiry here, are: What can a study of place offer us in the context of a globalised economy, as participants in global networks? What fresh ways of seeing and speaking can collective biography offer work and learning studies researchers and communities in helping to make sense and imagine possibilities in a globalised economy? The particular frame I use for developing this analysis draws on Farrell & Fenwick's (2007) collection *Educating the Global Workforce*, and on a new project I am developing on 'Women Working and learning in Shepparton's, part of a larger study with two colleagues on 'The role of work-related education in building sustainable regional communities'.

First to Shepparton... Shepparton is a regional town and community in northern Victoria, Australia. It is at the centre of the fruit processing industry in Australia, with the town's major employer recently bought out by Coca Cola Amatil. Shepparton has become a centre for the resettlement of refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan and the Congo. Like many regional centres, it suffers from youth migration to the big cities, and high levels (about 70%) of Indigenous unemployment. The region is also highly reliant for skilled labour on migrants brought into Australia on 457 and 422 visa schemes, many from the Indian subcontinent (health professionals) and China (tradespeople). Shepparton then is a case study of globalisation, at the centre of the global movement of peoples, skills and capital. The problems it faces in developing and sustaining a skilled workforce are extensive, compounded by the long running drought. The townspeople and her industries are completely reliant on dwindling water supplies. The deregulation of work under 'Workchoices' industrial relations laws, together with changes to 'welfare to work' laws place further pressure on people's (especially women's) capacity to find appropriate training and employment.

The 'Women working and learning in Shepparton' project is a component of a developing research program that specifically seeks to tackle these issues by engaging with women to explore and analyse collectively our understandings of working and learning in that place. In a series of workshops that draw on the work of Haug (1987) and Davies & Gannon (2006), I am working with small groups of Shepparton women, to explore what it means to work live and learn in Shepparton—as long-term locals or as newer arrivals. Notions of place as articulated by my co-author above, are particularly poignant for many in the community suffering major *dis-place-ment*—through war zones, famine, refugee camps and now across continents to the Australian outback. What might 'place' mean for these women? How might people's attachments to places of origin be articulated and valued, and life-supporting attachments to new places be forged?

At a literal level, some of the 'work' going on here is about learning about new places, learning how to exist and maybe even prosper in new and foreign landscapes, a critical part I imagine of the work of those moving globally. That work goes on at a metaphoric level too for those displaced—by changes to labour markets leaving older workers or seasonal fruit pickers vulnerable with the drying up of lower-skilled unqualified work; or by the failure of local firms over many years to offer training opportunities for young people, preferring instead to look overseas or to national labour markets for skilled workers in preference to training their own. Add to this mix entrenched racism over successive generations that leaves Indigenous peoples completely marginalised in the training game.

As Farrell and Fenwick (2007) and Farrell (2006) argue, the concept of a global workforce is a problematic one. Workers in different industries and in big and small workplaces are connected through information and communication technologies (ICTs) to global networks of supply, production and sales. But people still go to school, work, live and love in landscapes with trees, mountains, rivers, oceans, puddles, fires, and

vistas; and in the context of relationships shaped through the narratives and lessons of those landscapes.

In framing their collection, Farrell & Fenwick suggest that researchers in adult and work-related education take up Appadurai's invitation (2001, 2002) to explore globalisation from below, to examine 'the problems of ordinary people in the global everyday', with a critical eye kept on who benefits from work-related education and whose knowledges get counted in knowledge-based economies (p.24). What we propose in this paper is that we explore new methodological and conceptual frameworks for taking up this invitation, that speak to people's profound attachments to particular places and the memories embodied in those places, that engage communities in collaborative research agendas over questions that concern them; and to identify, as my colleague explained earlier, 'common storylines that are individually nuanced but reveal the effects of dominant discourses' that may constrain people's sense of what's possible. Instead we look to frameworks and ways of working that enable people—including us as co-researchers and co-authors—to imagine, articulate and act towards life-affirming possible futures.

Conclusions

Our original purpose in this paper was to present a framework to enable conference participants to engage in a collective biography workshop about their own memories of water places. This framework is intended to link the theoretical work of the *Bubbles on the Surface* project with people's local place memories across continents and places. We have presented an understanding of how people learn about place and community that underpins the *Bubbles on the Surface* project and an outline of the methodology of collective biography in order to facilitate such a workshop. This was linked to global literature about memory and water places because the key activity of collective biography as it is framed here is to access people's memories of their own local water places and attachments.

The paper develops the idea that learning place and forming community are critical processes in the development of sustainable communities and places. The development of sustainable communities and places, and in particular water places, is one of the major challenges facing the world today. It is a challenge that must be conceptualised in terms of education and learning but it, in turn, involves re-conceptualising those concepts to include the learning of place and community.

The challenge for work-related education globally is often couched uncritically in systemic or policy terms of how to meet current and future perceived skill needs to support sustained economic growth. Farrell and Fenwick (2007) suggest the challenge looks different if we ask instead, what are 'the skills and knowledge that people and communities enact to leverage global networks at local sites' (p.25). In these early stages, we suggest a pedagogy of place offers ways of understanding people's relationships to

particular places, the ways features of landscape and attachment to land and water interact with the effects of globalisation to produce scenarios specific to that place; for example, the long running drought, its effects on the fruit processing industry in Shepparton with its dependence on water, and what senses different peoples in that community make of their futures in this context. A pedagogy of place literally grounds people's experiences of the global in an iterative process through collective biography of invocations of the local. It's a way of paying attention, and responding, to the knowledges of place that are embedded and embodied in local communities.

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