

Exploring Narratives of the 'Good Life' in the North Australian town of Broome

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Abstract: There is a large body of research on social justice and the city that focuses on the need to address social inequalities and racialised difference through emancipatory action. This critical urban research is valuable in addressing and analysing conflicting perceptions of place in ways that can privilege the voices of those who have been/are marginalised. Such research however, has neglected to explore diversity and rights to place in regional towns of northern Australia. These are places where Indigenous populations are projected to increase to half the overall population by 2040, compared to southern cities where they will remain at two or three per cent. Insights into experiences of living with difference in regional towns are therefore crucial and will strengthen urban research that so far has focused on large metropolitan cities. This paper emphasises the need for a more ethnographically and empirically informed re-imagining of what it is to live a 'good life'. It focuses on Broome, a north Australian town in the Kimberley that has a rich polyethnic history. As the gateway to the Kimberley, Broome is located in one of the most ecologically and culturally diverse regions of the world. The paper will explore official and popular narratives of the 'good life' in Broome and generate knowledges that privilege insights of Indigenous residents.

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Introduction

The city is the arena 'in which we conduct our private and public lives, in which we establish networks of social interaction, and in which we are able to secure work and provide for material needs' (Paddison & McCann, 2014, p. 3). Today, 89% of Australia's population live in urban places with 45% of all Australians born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas (World Bank, 2014). These are spaces of thrown-togetherness (Massey, 2005), where diverse groups who would otherwise rarely meet come together and share worlds. In the growth and development of multicultural Australian cities however, 'the reality of urban life seemed not to live up to the utopian promise of planning' (Fincher & Iveson, 2008, p. 2). Contemporary research in rapidly developing southern cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, show evidence of social/political exclusion and inequality among the working-class, migrants, people of colour, Indigenous Australians and women (Baum, O'Connor, & Stimson, 2005; Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Saunders, Naidoo, & Griffiths, 2007). There is a large body of research on social justice and the city that focuses on the need to address social inequalities difference through emancipatory actions (Fincher & Iveson, 2012; Fraser, 2009; Harvey, 2009, 2013; Holston, 1998; Mitchell, 2003; Sandercock, 1998; Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003; Young, 2011). There is little research, however, that explores the complexity of diversity in north Australian cities and regional towns, in particular, places with a hyper-visible Aboriginal population.

This paper responds to a call to look to 'ordinary' off-the-map places in order to grasp the complexity of experiences and visions for urban Australia (Robinson, 2006, 2008). Broome is a coastal town in north-west Australia that has an urban population of 12,767 and a predicted annual growth rate of 2.3 – 3.2% (Mulholland & Piscicelli, 2012). As a regional town it services a large number of remote Aboriginal communities in the surrounding Kimberley region. Also, as a tourist town and self-proclaimed gateway to the Kimberley, it experiences very large swells in population during the dry season from May to October. It is projected to enter a phase of rapid urbanisation over the coming years, but there seems to be little understanding of what the challenge of living with difference might mean for a regional town with a history of conflict and competing visions for the future.

There are currently a number of economic, community and regional development proposals, policies and agendas that have been the subject of recent debate and opposition. For example, the development of an onshore gas processing hub at James Price Point by Woodside and the State

Government was shelved in April 2013 after much protest. There has been a persistent and growing opposition to an extractive mining process known as fracking, with a blockade led by a Yawuru Traditional Owner and *Lock the Gate Alliance* activist group. This year, a number of local protest events have been staged as part of the more recent call for the closure of Aboriginal communities. There is currently an ongoing public opposition campaign - *Stop the Forced Closure of Aboriginal Communities*. This latter protest which has a national and global reach, claims that the proposed withdrawal of essential services of up to 150 remote Aboriginal communities, is part of a racist development agenda akin to assimilation (Evans, 2015). It is claimed that this proposal in conjunction with a number of other state and national policies, favour approaches to north Australia that view it as a colonial frontier (Torres & Miriwoong, 2015).

This paper seeks to address on one hand, the evident gap in the literature on urban social justice that has so far focussed on southern cities; and explore how diverse and alternative visions of the future come into tension with dominant visions of the 'good life'. These dominant visions can be found in development policies which are often constructed far from the source of their affected spaces and are somewhat disconnected from the everyday lives, histories and future visions of 'ordinary people' who inhabit these spaces. I argue that notions of the good life need to be diversified not merely to include neoliberal and exclusionary development agendas, but also alternative visions which might be more sympathetic to ecological conservation, non-western values and above all else, where plurality might be privileged.

This paper begins with a concise account of the 'good life' in popular history that emphasises Broome's polyethnic identity and demonstrates how historical accounts circulate affectively imbued memories of place that are romantically nostalgic. Such accounts represent these narratives as times when things were once better than they are today. As Broome is a popular tourist destination, this paper will then draw on dominant representations of Broome that have outcomes for the everyday lives of residents. Through these crafted representations of Broome, these spaces that are experienced as everyday spaces by locals, are transformed into spaces of desire and consumption. It is argued here that these representations depoliticise local everyday ecologies of experience and centre a homogenous vision of place. In closing, this paper will turn its attention to the emancipatory visions and actions that manifest themselves in this remote northern town. Through the use of participant interviews, the paper explores how alternative visions of the good life are imagined and performed outside of the dominant closed circles of representation. Such a focus reorientates our constitutions of a good life towards other promising notions of a just good life that values plurality in the planning of urban and regional centres in Australia.

Good Life as a concept

As urban and social researchers, we are concerned with how development policies and officially sanctioned narratives of place order public space and cityscapes. We are aware that colonial narratives of Melbourne and Sydney shape how we imagine or move about in the city today (Mitchell, 2015); and how Indigenous stories of place prove connection to country in native title proceedings and thus shape the partition of landscapes and people (Bartlett, 2004). We are concerned with 'stories' and 'trajectories', and how time and space are intimately intertwined and connected (Massey, 2005). The good life is a spatial and temporal concept and force that is imagined in relation to the present (Berlant, 2011). There are differing conceptions of the good life which have often been overlooked or not taken seriously by prevailing strategies of development (Lambert, 2014). What constitutes the good life and how it is imagined for a range of different people, can provide urban researchers with invaluable information as to how cities and other ordinary places might better accommodate diversity and plurality.

We can think of places in terms of sensations that have the capacity to affect us – we are moved and affected (Thrift, 2008; Zwicky, 2014). Some iterations of it come in the form of nostalgia for the 'good ol' days' or a certain felt optimism for a utopic future. Nostalgia / memories of place, often become forces that can generate narratives, or be the object of state-sanctioned accounts of history (Bonnett, 2015). Optimism felt and shared by the proponents of planning and development visions also form biases that privilege these imaginations (Flyvbjerg, 2008). The good life is thus intrinsically entwined in the narratives of place and the development visions that circulate within contemporary urban life.

When discussing what constitutes a life, it is foundational to ask what a 'just' life is. Here the good life enters the realm of ethics, which attaches itself to a subliminal understanding or moral code of what is

just – we try to find resonating components of fairness. From this ethical perspective, the good life then might be common ground for ‘what should be retained as the minimal basis from which, and within which, ethical questions should be raised, negotiated, and interpreted’ (Herlinghaus, 2013). An imagination of the good life then is an imagination of what might be perceived to be just conditions in order to live a life. As Lauren Berlant explains, the good life is ‘that moral-intimate-economic thing’ that pervades political, economic, family and love life (2011, p. 2). The moral aspect is that philosophical question as to what makes a life *go well?* (Abad, 2012); the intimate being an ‘enduring reciprocity’ in all aspects of our relations with other bodies (Berlant, 2011); and the economic being that popular ‘thing’ on the horizon that we should all aspire to such as happiness (Ahmed, 2010).

Often it is on the ‘horizon’ of our imagination represented as an object-target to be consumed or strived for (Anderson, 2014). It can be imagined as a utopic place, where it is neatly contained as an impossible space for the body to dwell right now, but can be attained in the future. As Michel Foucault (1986) states, these ‘are sites with no real place’ that ‘present society itself in a perfected form’ but ‘are fundamentally unreal spaces’ (p.24). Ultimately how we imagine the good life in this first vein, is as the proverbial carrot-and-stick: places that are nowhere (Maclaran & Brown, 2005), whose purpose is to remedy the deficiencies of the present world (Kozinets, 2001). Imagining the good life as an impossible space is dangerous, as we run the risk of planning for, or fantasising over a scenario that benefits a narrow group of people.

Importantly, imagining the good life carries with it a mosaic of affectively charged spaces in-mind that affect how we act in the here-and-now. It is always felt even if imagined; it is informed by and can conjure up ‘felt’ scenes. In this research, the good life becomes both a generative force and analytical tool that affects how bodies move, dwell and act in social life. Theorising the good life in this way renders it an actionable vision of the future, a more attainable, ‘pragmatism of the possible’, version of the utopian imagination (Amin, 2006, p. 1010). The mere act of imagining life becomes an actual potential and therefore a very real space that can be apprehended through thought-in-the-act (Manning & Massumi, 2014). Imagining the good life as a real space can resource collective events such as protests or other emancipatory projects, with atmospheres of hope that can radically reorientate bodies towards alternative just futures (Anderson, 2009, 2014).

Good life and Social Justice

In a highly cited piece of urban literature, *The Good City*, Ash Amin (2006) sets out a significant contention for the good life, the city and emancipatory politics. Provoked by Zygmunt Bauman’s (2003) analysis of contemporary modernity, Amin questions Bauman’s claim that the city is no longer the site of utopia that might have been imagined previously. Bauman argues that the imagination of utopia was an urban project premised on the exclusion of others:

Once the right places had been allocated to everyone inside, and once those for whom no place was reserved had died out, left of their own accord or been forced out of the city – no further exercise of the power of exemption would be needed (p. 15).

Ultimately its promise of being a good place has evidently become an increasingly irrelevant notion for many of its ordinary inhabitants who find it increasingly difficult to engage and pursue a version that does not include them. Amin (2006) on the other hand chooses to read Bauman’s cynical conceptualisation of the city and the state of utopia, as one that should demand we ‘rethink ideas of the good life’ (p. 1010). Instead of thinking that the place of the good life should be ‘faraway and deracinated citadels of achievement that need no further work’, Amin argues ‘towards a pragmatism of the possible based on the continual effort to spin webs of social justice and human well-being and emancipation out of prevailing circumstances’ (p.1010).

Firstly Amin asks us to rethink what the good life can be and how such a vision could be multiple and fluid. It acknowledges that ‘different people have different ideas about what is worthwhile or what constitutes the good life for human beings’ (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks, & Meyer, 1992, p. 1). So in essence, a re-imagining of the good life will perhaps first require the conditions where difference and plurality is tolerated if not embraced. Secondly, the good life must be free of arbitrary distinction – the good life will be constituted by ‘multiple and mobile attachments freed from the moorings of territory and

nation' (p. 1010). These conditions are often made possible through the emancipatory projects that seek to liberate social groups from the categories that have come to define their unequal position in society. Such an understanding means that the good life is implicitly concerned with notions of what is ethical in local contexts.

According to John Friedmann (2000), imagining the good life is akin to utopian thinking: 'the capacity to imagine a future that departs significantly from what we know to be a general condition in the present' (p. 462) – and like utopian thinking, 'it has two moments that are inextricably connected: critique and constructive vision' (p. 463). Social movements are often conceptualised as oppositional resistance projects (Hynes, 2013), though there is little analysis given as to what is imagined in place of the object of critique. The *Buen Vivir* movement in South America is one interesting case study that demonstrates the linkage between critiquing the historical-present and fostering a plural and fluid conception of the good life. *Buen Vivir* literally translates to 'good life'. It is a concept used to describe alternatives to orthodox development and prosperity. The term is actively used by social movements, and has even reached its way into two new Constitutions in Ecuador and Bolivia. It is:

...a plural concept that refers to alternatives to development emerging from indigenous traditions, and in this sense the concept explores possibilities beyond the modern Eurocentric tradition (Gudynas, 2011).

For the *Buen Vivir* movement, the good life 'is part of a long quest for alternative lifestyles, forged in the heat of the struggle by humanity for emancipation and life' (Acosta, 2009, p. 195). The movement emerged in the early 2000s as a response to the numerous negative social, economic and environmental effects of traditional strategies for development that have impacted on Latin Americans in the past 40 years. It is an alternative development paradigm premised on a sense of community and virtuous interactions with other humans and nature.

Most importantly in relation to this project, the *Buen Vivir* movement is a pluralistic umbrella term that incorporates many understandings of the good life. It is made up of numerous cosmologies of different indigenous groups in Latin America. 'These varied 'ontologies' provide a rich complex of 'cosmologies' which, despite their differences, offer spaces for exchange, learning and mutual respect for very different and pluralistic visions of the future' (Thomson, 2011). Such case studies show us that turning our attention to resistance movements, understanding how their imagination of the good life is actualised, is imperative to understanding how we might embrace other possibilities. If we allow for the good life to be solely the object of economic development agendas, it remains as an object of desire on the horizon. This is dangerous as it becomes unattainable, with marginalised people often becoming the first to realise this (Fainstein, 2010). The good life must be attainable for it to be real, therefore we should aim to understand how other people imagine the good life in the name of social justice.

Broome Background

Geographically closer to Jakarta than Canberra, Broome is one of the most remote urban locations in Australia and shares histories implicated by 'the identity politics of Asian, White and Indigenous Australians' (Ganter, Martinez, & Lee, 2005, p. 3). Its shores were enmeshed in a trading network that linked it to south-east Asia and China. This coastal region known as Gularabulu, 'the coast where the sun goes down' (Roe, 1995) comprises of eight distinct Aboriginal groups that inhabited the Dampier peninsula and surrounds (Rabbitt, 2013). Broome – traditionally home the Djugun and Yawuru people – served as a traditional law and meeting ground. Its significance as both a regional centre and contact zone between diverse cultures predates our colonial history. This region of Australia has traditionally orientated itself toward an exchange with its northern neighbours, its relationship with which it was far more connected to than its continental ones.

Whilst it's social, cultural and economic links are more entwined with Asian sea traders than other southern peoples, its recent development trajectory has been affected mostly by industries of the Commonwealth. The discovery of the pearl *Pinctada Maxima* in 1861 was the largest pearl to be discovered in the world at that time and spurred the development of an industrial colonial outpost. The industry quickly gave reason to establish a global industry at Roebuck Bay (Edmonds, 1996). By the late 19th century Australia had become the largest pearling industry in the world, more specifically Broome had become the pearling capital of the industry (Frost, 2004). From 1861 up until the first waves of Asian immigration, consisting of Japanese indentured labours, working alongside Koepangers, Malays, Timorese, Aboriginal and White labourers (Oliver, 2011).

The labour force of Broome around the turn of the century was racially diverse. Labour supply was of primary concern until 1915, when the industry was exempted by the Commonwealth government from the White Australia policies (Moore, 1994). Broome was the only Australian settlement to be granted such an exemption. For a period of decades leading up to significant events such as WWI, the great depression and WWII, the multicultural make-up of Broome was quite different from south Australian cities. Its demographic composition for a period predating WWII was almost wholly determined by the aspirations and trajectories set out by Anglo captains of industry.

Narratives of Broome

Nostalgia and the good life

Broome is often imagined as a multicultural and racially harmonious town where the locals are friendly and the cosmopolitan vibe pervades every aspect of life (Choo, 2011; Rabbitt, 1994). The pearling industry although inherently racist and abhorrent by today's standards, shaped this identity, granting exemptions to the 'White standard' the rest of Australia was subject to. However this cosmopolitan veneer is conflicted by tensions in the early 20th century between cultural groups, culminating in what is now known as the *Broome race riots* (Choo, 2011). Living within a highly stratified social system, tensions between Koepang and Ambonese indentured labourers and Japanese divers, served as a flashpoint that precipitated violent street fighting. The inequality experienced in Broome was not exclusive to this time or the pearling industry. A boundary fence known as the *common gate* demarcated the boundary that prohibited Aboriginal people from entering the town up until 1954 and the *Citizenship Act* maintained this segregation until the 1970's (Fox, 2008).

Despite segregation, this time is still often revered as the good ol' days. For one Yawuru elder Edith, the good life is constituted by a sense of community. She describes a time when this multicultural Broome used to be community minded:

Edith: ...when I was young we didn't have a child minding centre here, and I raised – oh gosh – thousands of pounds it would have been in those days. We only had a population of 500 people, and that mainly from the Asian people and the Aboriginal people that money come from, because there wasn't many White people here. And we got a child minding centre and then when we grew up we had no sport for coloured kids, so my sister went to Darwin and learnt basketball and the rules and everything and they came back and taught us. The tennis club then shifted and the Shire gave us some courts that we could use, they were used by the Aboriginal and coloured kids.

Interviewer: Do you think that still exists here in Broome, that cohesiveness?

Edith: No, it's gone. It's all gone

In the face of such evident prejudice and discrimination, Edith still expresses a nostalgia for the sense of community such circumstances perhaps fostered. This romanticism is also a prevalent theme in Australian literature and historical narratives. Sarah Yu (1999) highlights this portrayal of Broome through Stuart Gore's novel *Overlanding with Annabel* written in 1956:

Romantic Broome – the pearling centre of the North West ... the locale of exciting novels! White-sailed luggers skimming across azure seas in the early dawn. Colourful Asiatics jostling in Sheba Lane – the street o' Pearls. And languorous tropical nights beneath the glittering Southern Cross (p. 59).

Likewise, President Campbell of the Shire of Broome recalls when the town operated in what is popularly and affectionately known as *Broome Time*:

'The days of Broome Time are well gone. 30 years ago we used to have siestas; they shut shop at around 2pm, didn't open till 6pm and stayed open till about 9pm. Doesn't happen anymore ... 20 years ago we used to wait for the plane to go over and then drive to the airport is just there, so you'd hear the plane go over, and then you'd drive over and catch the plane'

The history of Broome as an ethnically and racially diverse industrial town that suffered from legislated racial segregation and inequality does not seem to hinder the romantic narrative of this place. The next section discusses how contemporary romantic narratives of Broome are represented in tourism marketing material.

Romantic narratives – tourism and the good life

Broome and the Kimberley region boasts one of the most virgin natural ecosystems and is internationally renowned for its natural amenity. A vibrant cultural heritage together with expansive remote wilderness, rugged landscapes, pristine coastal and marine areas, provide the central components of an iconic nature-based and cultural tourism destination (Hughes, 2014). Broome's tourism pioneer Alistair McAlpine, noted his initial attraction, stating that Broome's atmosphere is an 'intangible but fragile asset, which could be destroyed by accident or simply by turning the town into just another hell of high-rise hotels and apartments edging the most beautiful beach in the world' (McAlpine, 1998, p. 140). Today, large resorts that edge Cable Beach offer 'unique activities and experiences, including complimentary daily yoga, regular yoga retreats, exciting whale watching tours and fishing charters' in a 'perfect blend of nature with style, and simplicity with sophistication' (Eco Beach Broome Resort, 2014). For these resorts, Broome is portrayed as an 'idyllic, seaside location complete with Indian Ocean sunsets, gently swaying palm trees and Kimberley charm' where you can enjoy 'the finest food, stylish accommodation and unique experiences' (Cable Beach Club Resort & Spa, 2015). Such representations promote a sensuous experience of 'idyllic' places through an incorporation of nature.

These are images of anticipated experiences that are perpetuated by a very specific representation that is both formative and reinforcing of tourists' imaginations of place (Su, 2010). As discussed earlier, these imaginations are always informed by our sensuous connections to these spaces. We understand that these tourism imaginaries are 'temporary time apart from, yet intimately connected to, our daily lives' in the city (Desmond, 2011, p. 175.). Our encounters with, and the meanings we make of an imagination of a distant space, are:

'shaped in part by our connection of a novel experience with our anticipation of it. This anticipation is based on pre-encounter images, public discourse, and life-experiences which form the basis for our anticipation' (Desmond, 2011, p. 175.)

Promotional material in the form of brochures, commercials and postcards aid in creating a self-reinforcing closed circle of representation that informs an anticipation of the experience of distant places (Garrod, 2008; Urry, 1990). How specific destinations are imagined as real places are shaped through a process of industry marketing. These representations form – or self-fulfil – a specific imaginary of a destination and provides new affective understandings to individuals distant from its source (Strauss, 2006).

Tourism's 'foundational imaginaries circulate and perpetuate themselves', always being on the horizon of what we can obtain in the here-and-now (Salazar, 2012, p. 4). What they do is apprehend our capacity to be affected by images that provoke a sensuous desire for faraway places – this affect becomes the object of these representations. Ben Anderson (2014) discusses how a desired affect becomes the object of interventions made by such representational forces. He argues that there are mediative tools that intervene in the affective dimension of our lives, creating desirable – or undesirable – images and representations that bring about bodily conditions. An image of a tropical beach at sunset can manipulate the capacity for consumers to desire such a space that is connected to, but apart from, their everyday lives. The manipulation of these affects is not a new condition and should be viewed as not being recently apprehended by neo-liberal apparatuses but rather life that has come into the sphere of influence of power.

We are very aware of how these interventions influence how we act, especially when we consider its impact on our spending and consumerism. This is not new, such entanglements between our affective states – emotions, feelings etc. – and power structures have existed long before neo-liberal practices have sought to manipulate them. The same might be said for aspects of life that aren't captured by material consumerism or mainstream economic trajectories. The next section explores how life enters this sphere of influence or power through protest, and how the tension associated with a threat to the good life, fuel resistance movements that increases the body's capacity to act.

The 'Good life': Oppositional force

In March 2015, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott asserted that the existence of remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia (WA), was tantamount to a funding of Aboriginal 'lifestyle choices' by the Australian taxpayer:

What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices if these lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have (Martin & Owens, 2015).

This statement was made in support of WA Premier Barnett's proposed closure of up to 150 remote WA Aboriginal communities, due to the cessation of federal funding. The proposal was initially rationalised economically, but has quickly become a moral-ethical imperative to close communities regarded by the state as being a breeding ground for the sexual abuse of children and extreme levels of alcohol and drug abuse (Powell & O'Connor, 2015; Whitmont, 2015). Aided by a rhetoric of moral panic, the government is employing on-the-go fiscal policy measures that will significantly alter the development trajectory of Indigenous lives on country, outstations, and in towns and cities.

In response to this, an opposition campaign called *Stop the Forced Closure of Aboriginal Communities* (SOS) – under the hashtag #SOSBLAKAUSTRALIA – is rapidly growing (Bainbridge, 2015). Organised and promoted by participants in this research, there have been three global calls to action already since March. Major demonstrations occurring in public spaces of large Australian cities (Image 1), regional towns and remote communities are attracting mainstream media attention due to their disruptive capacity in large city centres (Davidson, 2015). There have been two marches through the tourist streets of Broome in March and May of 2015, with a third planned for November. In May of this year, Kimberley Land Council CEO Anthony Watson, declared that he is willing to 'kill tourism' in Broome with an occupation of the internationally renowned Cable Beach, if meaningful consultation is not had (Whitmont, 2015).

Image 1 – Community Closure Protest March 2015, Flinders Street Station, Melbourne



Source: David Kelly

This research argues that there is an implicit imagination of what the good life might be in resistance movements and emancipatory projects, that has otherwise been written off as fantasy, self-indulgence or selfishness (Hurley & Whinnett, 2015). On the one hand, this movement is an oppositional force to a vision that excludes all others – such is the dominant vision of utopia (Bauman, 2003). In an interview with Djugun woman, Mary highlights this oppositional tension: 'It might be your [the government] idea of a good life, but it's not ours' ... 'ours is land, country, culture and community – not concrete and greed'. This opposition is a critique and rejection of post-modern projects such as the hedonistic tourist

town, but it also injects an alternative vision. This is evident when another activist and Yawuru man Ben argues, it is not about rejecting modernity, but a responsible and contextual blending of worlds:

the way the world's turned out and the way we have been colonised, it's come to a time where we have to accept modernity ... but and it's up to us and it's up to our individual families and groups to make sure that balance is properly done and it's a balance, it's not one sided ... you see a lot of people disregarding even some of their responsibilities to look after the country and then you've got the fortunate ones who have grown up out in the communities and have a stronger connection to country and a stronger understanding of the country.

In 2010, WA Premier Colin Barnett declared that the region just north of Broome called James Price Point that was the site for the development of the proposed gas processing hub, is:

'Flat as a table. An unremarkable beach. There are no cliffs, there are no hills, there are no communities probably within 30-40 kilometres. It is not the Kimberley that Qantas uses for its ads' (Manning, 2009).

This region of the coast is particularly remarkable, with large dunes, monsoon vine thicket forests, huge pindan cliffs and numerous communities within walking distance. According to Broome activist Wes, Colin Barnett's conception of the good life does not share in their connection to country, nature or people – but he is hopeful that such a connection can be made:

'We were all convinced at the height of the James Price Point protests that if we could get Barnett to spend even just two days on country, he would get. He would get it like we get it'

It is hopeful imaginations such as this have driven resistance movements in and around Broome in recent years. Unwavering commitment to the idea that an alternative conception of the good life *is* good, instills hope in an otherwise exhausted town where years of activism has taken its toll. Numerous research participants cite incidents of lateral violence against them, declining employment prospects, illness and conflict that have worn them down through activism. Still embodying exhaustion, activists in the SOS campaign utilise this imagination of the good life – where multiple worlds co-exist – to create atmospheres of hope. These atmospheres are resources in such campaigns that give public protests the energy needed to confront what seems to be an immutable development agenda (Anderson, 2009). Mary explains:

Mining, protesting, community closures, the SOS stuff is weaved through it, why people do protests obviously. All of that protest stuff comes from the threat of your community, your connection being broken. Connection to your country, connection to your home and then being told your community, your home's being closed.

Through problematising how other people live their lives, there is a threat that the good life as a real space – community on country – for Indigenous Australians in particular, is being phased out of the mainstream idea of what the good life is. This alternative good life is seen as not being conducive to a 'full participation in Australian society' as the most senior of policy makers sees it. Despite continual betrayal and prolonged exhaustion, Aboriginal activists in Broome continue to provoke others into understanding and experiencing the good life. For them, such understandings prove that this life is not fantasy, but an achievable goal. Such visions do not problematise other ways of living, but should foster conditions where diverse versions are allowed to co-flourish.

Conclusion

Whilst the city has often been the object of planning for the good life, it's potential to be a good space for the good citizen is becoming an increasingly redundant notion for the most marginalised in Australian society. Given growing socio-economic inequality, exclusion, issues of equitable access to transport, housing and employment, the city has lost some of the glitter that once held such promise. Indeed the 'promise' of the city has not been lost, but rather shifted to more hedonistic pursuits that privileges a here-and-now mentality. Attentions have become orientated toward an affective imagining of desirable places that may be consumed in another time or space. With little consideration for an urban social

condition that is imagined as a good space – that is a space that benefits more than less – in the planning of cities other ‘ordinary’ spaces have been treated as frontier lands in need of ‘development’.

However, despite colonisation, policies of assimilation and prolonged exhaustion, Indigenous activists in Broome continue to offer their understanding and experience the good life as an alternative to environmentally degrading economically driven development proposals. In the planning of urban spaces in Australia, it is crucial that we privilege the understandings and visions of those ‘for whom no place was reserved’ in our colonial cities. Taking seriously the alternative constitutions of the good life that are located outside of the closed circuits of desire and consumption, can give hope to a ‘good space’ rather than resigning to an otherwise immutable vision that disenfranchises many. This good space is a real and imagined space that has an excessive capacity to embrace plurality in the planning of future Australian cities, towns and communities.

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