# 1ST DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

# RECORDING: 29.09.14 Governance Lunch Meeting

ATTENDEES: MS Michaela Spencer

EO Elspeth Oppermann

JS Jan Salmon

JG Jackie Gould

AD Allan Dale (skype)

AS Anne Stephens (skype)

MINUTES RECORDED: 1 MIN 35 MIN 33 SEC

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED: 1 MIN 20 MIN 30 SEC

REF (RECORDING): 1st Draft Transcript 29.09.14 Governance Lunch Meeting

Transcribed by: On Time Typing. [info@ontimetyping.com](mailto:info@ontimetyping.com)

*Note 1 Inaudible words indicated by ‘….’.*

*Audio Quality: AD’s and AS’s comments: poor (mostly inaudible/only partly inaudible). Comments by all other people: reasonably good audio quality.*

*Transcript Quality (given it is only a 1st draft): AD and AS’s comments: poor/reasonable. Comments by all other people: good accuracy.*

*As requested, this is a 1st Draft Transcript i.e. it has been transcribed only once against the audio recording and has not been proofread, and is therefore not guaranteed to be highly accurate. However, this transcript is a generally accurate representation of the recording in respect to the comments that were audible.*

*TRANSCRIPT:*

*0:00:00*

MS We all know each other so I’ll dispense with the introductions. The good news is our little group has just hit the international stage. Helen has presented us as part of a talk, she’s just recently given in London for the open university and a transforming data workshop. So her presentation slides are up on the website, she’s just posted a blog post that includes those slides and another blog post about the Indigenous advancement strategy so you might want to check those out. I thought I’d tell you what she said about us. She says the governance research lunchtime discussions collective is enacting a politics of dissensus in its governance. So we’re doing the politics of dissensus. It’s an open forum where researchers and service deliveries focus on governance and are invited to tell stories about their research. The stated aim is to collect stories told in the meetings together as a book of edited stories to be published open source, and the stories are of researching and delivering services around governance and variously narrate doing data or doing stories. She’s trying to hold us together as people that do data collect data, … research and perhaps people that tell stories as the information that comes from their research. So she suggests we’re inverting the politics of consensus because we’re learning to work together with and through and across our differences in this group as we talk about governance together. And apparently it was very well received. The concept of governance as dissensus sort of took off a bit. So that’s quite nice. I was just saying to Elspeth that this sort of thing highlights that our website at the moment isn’t public so Helen just took a screen shot and put it on her slide, she didn’t advertise the link at all, but we might want to think about if we do want to go public with the website in which case she could have advertised a link and we’re also just about to publish a learning communities journal on objects of governance where our link could also appear. The group is mentioned, Michael and Helen have chosen to mention the group in the editorial so we could also put the link in there and we didn’t include the link in Michael’s last conversation but I think we could have. So there’s a few things hovering around where if we wanted to go public with the website it would be being advertised and put out there. So we might come back to that at the end or I might send an email about that. It’s just something to have in mind. So the two main things on the agenda to talk about is obviously a paper that you’ve put forward Alan and I think Tom might turn up, one of the other authors he said he’d be here, so he’ll pop in at some point. And also the Indigenous advancement strategy that I was going to say a bit about and might kick us off on a conversation about. So did you want to set us going … Alan?

AD Great. Gidday everyone. … So I think the … we had from … gets a mention behind the … direction’s been taken, the course of conversation to treat ourselves and … in the last week or two as well which is great. I think the person … bit of momentum about how to … … research around this. There are two big things for me, … cigarette … conversation where we’re headed. Probably a common basis is some serious methodological conversations as well. In that context, … different things but they’re all the … in the bigger picture whether it’s sort of actual policy stuff like the one I’m going to talk about now, or … a detailed institutional organisation … as the case may be. So … it’s all good, I think there’s opportunity for us to start thinking much more seriously about how it … I think the CRN …, … … the idea of the sessions starting regularly and a book around these governance stories I can’t see still … and the sort of logical … step after we … CRN. … So that will make sense hopefully. So … for the … today I’m understanding you’ve got the paper in front of you?

MS Yep I do.

*Note: all of the following comments by AD were barely audible.*

AD Hopefully I won’t talk for too long, … a sense that you’ve already got a paper … … conversations around it. But the two things I wanted to bring to your attention are … and try and communicate … is apart from people getting their head around … and national concepts, around natural resource management or community based natural resource management I’d also like to tease out some of the conversations around the use of governance systems analysis as a methodological basis for … detail. … talking about. So I’ll start with a bit of history just to give people the concepts about why we’re interested in this whole system of what we’re calling the name really … natural resources governance nationally. And I should say, Tom and I and others have been working on starting to tease some of these national conversations into some more constrained specific conversations about … … … climate change cluster … … climate cluster to obtain some of the stuff and … a discussion in Northern Australia. So yeah. My background is … pretty heavily a background in the natural resources management sector so I’ve played a lot of different roles in life and sort of a researcher in this field, in CSIRO, through to being in charge of natural resources management policy in Queensland, … in Darwin, through to actually … with CEOs and CEOs of community based natural resource management bodies on a regional scale and … … But on a day to day basis I’m involved in a whole lot of … community based natural resources activities … Indigenous communities and in the mainstream … sector and things like that. So I’m a bit of a beast in … involved in all bits of systems and … And over the last ten (10) to fifteen (15) years what’s really distressed me to a certain extent is … in terms of major policy reform around this sector. So I’ll talk a bit about what the sector is first. It’s the way governance around supporting community based action in natural resource management so it’s a bit distinct from the whole regulatory natural resources agenda. It’s the positive side of the equation where at national level we’ve got policies that flow down to the community level to support more community driven, … community agendas in relation to positive if you like proactive natural resource management. It’s very big sector in the sense of things nationally and that’s why it’s been very important to get the governance part of it right. But since about the middle of the 1990s, we’ve actually gone through now three to four major philosophical shifts in the policy framework and the delivery framework for these things and what we wanted to do is get a sense of which of the governance theories actually apply in the developing of … and redesign of those policy settings. And what we’ve basically found is that there was probably only one period in that entire period where there was a really solid use of governance theory to actually inform the development of the policy frameworks nationally, and there was three phases where there was basically virtually no governance theory, no cohesive governance theory that we could apply. So little slivers of ideas or agendas or ideologies that are applied in a fairly fragmented way. So it’s in this sector which you might … from one philosophy to a totally different philosophy and back to another philosophy, and the end result of that is significant. If you like a retardation of the building where you actually see the … and the national … outcomes. Significant continued sort of underlying capacity building level with individuals, communities and groups, … activity. Various … marginalisation of science and the … of science within the … process. And in the … very rich governance framework for collaborating …. So that’s what we’ve been really interested in. … so the part about … … policy governance, but really around 2000 and … … early 2000s there was some real governance theory actually … the whole system nationally and a couple of really key principles came out of that in terms of what we were trying to achieve. … ask … was vertically integrated systems so it’s … national policy objectives, … through to … … capability and … ground … … one of the key principles that’s … … In trying to … … So trying to evolve decision making capability to the best and most appropriate … And really had that strong sense of bio… you know, the Commonwealth sets policies, … the constitution … what they should be doing, and supporting the sciences and … through regional … first and … … There was a lot of principles that … ended up … both … very seriously engaged decision making and … national, state, regional and in some cases local states. And overall the sort of … … out in the … So instead of a really … approach trying to … some of these problems outside let’s start at the scene, … … and … … Was there any actual … … five or about ten years ago the study of the … … research with good results. The CEO … … … … in a form … … ism. So try and … policy is.

*Sound dropped out.*

MS Nearly there.

*Some discussion about IT; not transcribed. Alan has dropped out; Anne is still present.*

MS Hello, sorry. …We missed a bit of what you said, it’s also trying to reconnect back to Anne.

AD …

AS I can hear everyone.

MS Yay okay Anne’s here. …

AS We got to federalism and it was an amazing ten years to work here.

MS Can you go from the amazing ten years.

AD Some … bit of sense of if you really have the desire to go and … … try and make governance framework work then you get … tactical problems actually … relatively quickly. They take that space and … … … So I was just saying it was a bit of a challenge for us … thinking about this next … about federalism so .. … federalism … ?

AD … … … white paper in relation to federalism in … state. But one of the big things of this … has there’s been really significant general shift towards a socialisation … and almost … … top approach to how governance is being managed at a national level, not just the … … … continues … … process … … So that’s all I want to say on the history of that. There’s a fair bit of detail but … … systems analysis for you and … Anne and … chair … talk through that framework and … and … and … … but as a tool to enable a conversation with … … governance systems and different styles, … … … how do we explain something with … and … and talk … starting to say well where are the … strength and weaknesses and … 2013. So I think around 2013 because we’d just about now got off our … … started. … … right through to key directions that we found … … and … questions. … … … there really is a need to have this multi … … subsidy only. And without a strong national policy the … … and some serious support … mobilisation … scales the whole system starts falling apart very quickly and it massively increases transaction costs and people actually … … conservation. And … … system. I probably not that … but I would say that … … … to irrational … versus … … caring for our country, you actually probably start to … capability out in the community than they put back in. and we did that because … everybody gets their … very … success rate is about ten per cent and you actually created a culture of … and … and …cation. So there’s a bit of an argument … to say … that the system actually … resources on … not even … rather than … … And that’s a pretty serious conflict. The second thing I want to say is that, … … going down that path … the possibility of … for research and … so the … research into thinking and planning and doing at national levels … and local level, it’s totally undermined by that sort of shift to a national centralised system. And in my view I’ve seen … … a really substantial marginalisation of … knowledge. Local, indigenous, research and development knowledge are all types of knowledge … … system … Finally, … talk about the … … any sense of … management to environmental account, then we start … … … if we’re not … we’ve got no idea of … other’s point of view and we shift back to this … digits or … outputs, and … outputs are only useful for political … money spent, it’s completely useless for actually showing that there’s been a result for the money spent. And one of my arguments here is, governance is really … centralised cargo cult thing are only interested in outputs because all they really want to do is demonstrate that they spent the money effectively. They don’t actually need to demonstrate what the outcomes and … were. So any systems mean that the shoo sort of open accounting of the outcomes and … management actually is open … pretty quickly by us and that’s … very much. So just to finish off the discussion, we really need to … the … so leading to a more enduring national … architecture, governance architecture for natural resource management, in the … … We will continue to enhance sort of that with approaches and start national …, national stage and regional … and a real focus on … methods. This system actually let the states off the system even though the states have all the responsibility for all natural resources management in a constitutional sense. In those questions … the Commonwealth … those people with constitutional responsibility can probably … in their system. And then finally that really … regional capability, … building, a really strong focus here on rebuilding the use of … research and develop … base. So … in terms of the … I hope it gives everybody a bit of a sense of what I’m trying to say. Now … used, and how it sort of led us … … service. … discussions with the Commonwealth. … insisting on it. That’s it fellas.

MS Great thank you so much. …

AD … … one.

MS No not at all.

? Can I start?

MS You can start

? Sorry I hadn’t read the paper because I didn’t get it but I’m curious about the very last point there about having conversations with the Commonwealth about how to improve the system. Are they coming to you for that discussion or are you going to them? What kinds of discussions are you having?

AD We’ve been asked, we’ve even raised this question a … is the Commonwealth.

? Yeah, that would … mind.

AD So it’s simply … office, you know Greg Hunt, and basically there’s a direct engagement with the … office around some of this stuff and we’ve done that through long relationships with the range … … the ranger place, so … talk to the Commonwealth. We’ve kept … national parks federation, conservation sector, ICN, … engaged in this process in regional groups nationally so it raises that conversation we’ve … these things among the sectors. So … the information themselves … case. But it also … have these directly consider those conversations. The part that is much more difficult but this is actually covered through the regional planning … and so we have a very poor … when you get back to the Commonwealth who basically have this, actually raises the issue of … are totally separate from the people … They are … in the Commonwealth about who prioritises the research and gets funding. That just another of those problems … I would probably say, I’d find …, the … … stuff is truly can be … any time, any …, by the Commonwealth, so two or three weeks ago I vetted all this stuff through the Senate time into the … policy framework. So you can go and … … in the head and say I don’t like … and … Fine. And then we can say that degree I’m actually … … committee … stuck into review. So … person because you’re dealing with philosophical … discussions, very anal informal … responsible.

MS Do you have a sense of how those ideas have been received and to what extent they’ve been recognised and taken on board to a ?

AD Well it is largely an issue of strategy, you know, all these things so but we don’t want to steer the Commonwealth out there, it’s. and I will say the government driver in that is to shift towards a carbon … approach and it’s very interesting in terms of the politics of this so it’s actually the Coalition that’s set up a much more robust program, not because it was political policy but it was actually, we listened to the department for a while, there was some key players in the department like Mary understood this agenda and we had this little window of opportunity where the party had a bit of knitting, it was, there was not a … against that … and it … and then … said no, no, no. we’ll have to go back to cargo cotton. And it totally destroyed the system. Then we had seven years of car… bulking, it’s quite easy for the … whilst politically you just keep going and going, trading that cotton, but what … we’ve had seven years of … support for cargo cotton. So it’s shifting with the departmental people and Mary … Because they’re now a culture back in the other way of … which is where is the minister, where is the minister, where is the minister.

AD It’s pretty tough. But that’s why we’re doing this work, someone’s got to be in there to try to get the culture back to something that … theoretically … …

MS So is that the sort of take home message you’re pushing that we really need some more explicit about what we’re doing in governance and that we are doing governance and looking at governance and thinking about it in those terms, if we are going to produce a system that works?

AD So okay. I don’t get out and … write some pages.

*Laughing.*

JG A lot of resonance and the things that you’re saying now with the article that was sent around about multicultural services for migrants.

MS That was from Mike

JG Sorry I can’t remember where I read it. it was a Word document sent around and some of the stuff that’s been said as well about the outsourcing of Indigenous services, and the tendency to find bigger and bigger corporation NGO activities, to deliver services, that isn’t provided by government, that then actually is their new … on the ground capacity as a result, but have that capacity to undertake the reporting of those outputs on paper but not necessary to be delivering coherent services on the ground. So there’s a lot of these trends that’s not dependent on …, it’s a broad attendance within government. And so how within these different sectors, is it something that we tackle. Or like if evidence is coming out and being fed through the system to the relevant NRM decision makers but it’s also coming in the Indigenous policy and it’s also coming from water social service, is that the best way to slowly force … up to the system? Just put it into a bit of context.

AD Oh definitely. I know this is the … but eventually we will and strength and value and us surviving these conversations and starting to go … across CDU and … and … Because as I want to tell you, the conversations we had about education … in … which is totally different set of sectors, the issues are so similar you know. The same … terms apply to … we’ve got the actual business and trying to establish a rapport was actually a medical. Another … strength … … working in Indigenous sector and in health sector, in our own sector, but the principles would be much the same.

AS I … a wider reference with this ins … … condition … advancement structures too. … a great … by …. Music that’s shared and they’re all right an there’s actually a lot of … … … … similar … … … …

MS Excuse me, Anne could you just try turning the video off again as you’re very fragmented and we’d like to hear what you’re saying.

*Some comments about IT.*

MS Could you repeat that last little bit?

AS Just that the potential was of capacity and skill in this system that’s going to be lost in this new … strategy, because this is it’s just what it’s … you know, that the resources aren’t sucked out of it from the continued need to build and … And with the knowledge base that’s in the … now will be lost and everything refunded … … On a … … can be … … start discussing it, I’m so concerned about how outcomes are … …

AD Yeah.

MS Yeah.

AD There’s a very, very logical link between the TNS conversation coming out, but what I am seeing with the RNS … is it’s almost identical with the … farmer and he will read …

MS Yeah.

AS And people are going to come through the system back in other ways but that comes through that can be … three years and Simon has been there five million dollars ($5 million) or whatever but he can use we’re going to see people coming through the hospital systems and through the institutional systems and you know, it’s still … society that are outside this … measure.

MS That’s what I mean, in some terms though certain people would have seen the Caring for Our Country initiative as a success wouldn’t they because whilst it didn’t achieve natural resource management outcomes it achieved a marketisation of that sector, and that was sort of what it set out to do didn’t it?

AD So one of the things we’re saying about the … … universally there sees it’s not all good or bad, there’s millions of things there’s bits that are good and other bits that are not so healthy, and quite often people take the bits and work on one system at this end and actually fix some bits, … some work and fix some bits again. But … swap around. But … I should say quite explicitly that there are some things in Canberra, I can’t remember which were the right ones or wrong ones, but it’s the generation of … strengthen the system. This essence is … … and explicitly … steps forward on the … … where the Indigenous … and working on country frameworks, and interestingly what they did in those frameworks is adopt in principal … and apply them to Indigenous … And that’s why it works. The other thing was the … which to the Commonwealth would be the most significant and successful part of Caring for Country. The … only happened because of the flavour that was established under the previous framework and considering … it actually got some … from the resident … and that’s actually what made it successful. So it actually got protected from Caring from Country. So there are some components of Caring for Country that were valuable when … system, the marketization of …, was an important step, but you can’t nationalise an … nation. You can regionalise that and naturalise it but if you nationalise it you’re actually taking it over and taking it …

MS Interesting.

AS Really. But would economic theory say though that … is too small to be regionalised Alan? Are you … scale of returning so far back into the national …?

AD In any … the … nationally … … … you think you can …tise it at the state level. and you think you can … ise regionally and globally. But depending on the outcomes and policies … So you’d be running back to total rational … …ation, the non-market things that need to happen like the ...ation, collaboration, and partnership will be … lost. So it’s a bit like also realising not to … partner too, … this year on strategies side, I think we’re missing some strategy. …ise programs are only one tool. But we need to be an applied and sweet tool. And it would be something at a market is everything and by the way if we nationalise the market, we do all the … is going to happen.

? Which is a risk for the future of Indigenous owned programs.

AD No, there’s something now we have a huge risk of … but what, and the work done in the (seafol) because you can be subsumed into a national program that undermines the principles of what the work is. So.

JG/JS? And all the value of the programs is either the spaces in between the official tasks and the men working and the relationships between programs and .. and community stakeholders and all those kind of layers of; and the work that goes on between groups as they try and collaborate to pool resources rather than have to compete for those resources and that sort of stuff.

? …

MS I’m having a bit of a panic attack here.

Laughing.

JG/JS? I can tell you’re working up to saying something.

MS It’s just really dawning on me which is probably very naïve just how much all of this real work, I feel like we’re at the very beginning edge of a massive change in our national governance or support … and I’ve probably .. the federal paper that you just raised Alan, but we’ve seen this in NRM, we’re seeing it in Indigenous land management strategy, we’re seeing it in the education sector, and I know that that’s what this government has been talking about this having a market based system but it’s really happening now and it’s such a, like the Chinese cultural revolution or Pol Pot taking us back to year zero, but it’s just obviously happening in so many sectors. And I think what we do with GSA or GSA more broadly connected to other ways of thinking about governance is to say what’s missed out here, what’s excluded what’s not talked about, what’s our boundary critique of just, what is not being measured. And really making it as explicit as possible that you are out, yeah exactly as you are saying; the outcomes that you are measuring are not really outcomes, they are usually what you may call outputs and all of this other stuff that’s not being talked about is so important; and then you start to count the cost of what happens when we don’t explicitly engage with this stuff. Yeah and I’ve seen all those … pictures but I hadn’t realised that really there’s this massive national shift which I don’t know has been achieved anywhere else really. Not to that extent.

? Not in the global context … not on a level.

MS we need Jan but, we need Alan … and.

? Alan … has been trying to tackle this.

MS Yeah but Australia, where are we going? I don’t think any other country has latched on to this sort of pure neoliberal agenda in quite this way. I’m not aware of any one else that has.

AS And I don’t have any … training federal governance … ALP … having to reverse this trained.

MS They were well into it, I mean.

? … it started there.

MS It did yeah. They’re to blame partly.

AS Well the work that this group does and this is …, oh we’re at the … side, it’s not like you know … work doing … because obviously … look up on policy and everything will change again.

MS And reversing this will be really difficult, like you’ve all been saying because …

? And it’s coming through, carbon economies and all sorts of things and, like I’ve been sitting here listening to Alan thinking what a resource to be able to see all the shifts and changes that have happened over the last couple of decades and to be able to connect what’s been left out in some and picked up in others and that kind of flux that’s going on. because I feel like we’re not going to be able to get out of this era but maybe there’s things that we pick on like, we don’t want to lose this, we don’t you know. Threading through what’s been lost, what’s been gained at particular points in time.

MS And to say that for any of your outputs that you want to account for there’s all this invisible stuff that has to happen to make them actually happen.

? Yeah.

AD Mmm. Yes. The … is the issue for us, it’s starting to get to the point where the application of GSA … … analysis and gets to the systems over time, and different sectors or certain systems over periods of time, and some things become really clear for me, almost immediately and I’m starting to now think and that’s sort of that … analysis. And we talked a bit about this … two weeks ago that, went to that … where we talked about some of those big things starting to come through consistently. One thing is, there generally is a focus, a reasonable capability and … at a policy level, there’s a lot more effort at policy level and then things really start to fall apart at strategy and … level. so policies come together, it’s nice and easy … policy, … and that’s about it. We all talk some … that. There’s a very consistent increase in localisation in research in … integration into those systems. There’s a whole lot of things that are starting to pick up when you look at different parts of different sectors in different regions. The other thing that it shows is that you can actually have complete different approaches within the one government, so it’s time to not see the pre … approach … being dictated by certain ministers or portfolio and the next portfolio, and this … person’s … management. They’re totally chalk and cheese, one’s … much more … and the other one’s challenged completely in the opposite direction under the one government. So there’s actually a new philosophical problem … realise … which brings me back to my conspiracy, there’s this pop up theory.

*Laughing.*

AD … with someone. And it just depends on where the … are in the system.

AS And another thing question too is … the states and the federal policy … and how Labor and Liberal clash and now unfortunately their collusion might be … … goals of so that … masters or whatever.

AD … … … my ideal principles would be you’ve got to franchise all parts of the system obviously so that it … state … will leave too much in the … industry … other sectors to sort of fight back a bit. But at the same time we … the states now … … … bash up the states and they’re … …

MS That’s treating our negative feedback words for bashing people up.

AD So in my experience particularly in early 2000 in the state, you virtually had a very rare alignment of good capability in bureaucracy, pretty good support in policy political side, and gee, … … very good … you know. But … … defences going on and stuff and the stuff from … later and … some form of … …

MS I guess what’s.

AD I know people that … (cassowaries and chaplains).

MS Holding this conversation.

AD Would they have a conversation line?

MS What was the topic?

AD It was about (cassowaries and chaplains).

Laughing.

MS I didn’t say that.

? … probably you don’t remember.

AD I won’t say … chaplains in Far North Queensland but still, … basically … took on … chaplains and … far more … It took a while in … … and it took a while because apart from … initiating the (chaplaincy) program, he has got a little … favourably feds through … constitutional responsibility were actually … things, through what the constitution says through the states. So … this particular way of doing it and the feds just went through the new piece of legislation and said they can actually not … the states. And so then he took them back to court again and he won again hands down. Because the constitution says you can’t not … the states. So my … there is with the centralisation of culture, it’s really starting to be a real argument … social … it’s a different discussion. But while the … it’s the best … to get away with … and … … worst cargo cult in … because realistically to involve this just go to the feds and try to slow down the … and have … systems. So that’s all of the reasons why … so influential in establishing the national (chaplaincy) program. Because the people of the day can just jump over the top of the entire sort of constitutional system and actually get a really good outcome. … very very dangerous.

AS Have you ever done any comparative work for the … … … and working in other countries …?

AD I had a … when I’ve seen it I … international … day. … So some of those areas are interesting … internationals being Jeff … examples of … different sectors and different countries.

MS That’s a good time to bring in the … environment to side of things with my little comparison. I mean it’s the same conversation really that I was trying to initiative talking about the IAS and making a comparison to the Tasmanian forests and … which obviously was part of my PhD studies so like, not to move on from this conversation but to add to it, I think that, I was, guess, trying to think in the way that we just talked about that there’s a suite of these initiatives that seem to be emerging in Australia and all sorts of areas and I’ve been really struck by some of the similarities I guess and also some of the differences between this Tasmanian forest agreement that really had a good go at emerging coming together from 2010 and then coming into law in 2013 and this now Indigenous advancement strategy but there’s also some important differences I think.

AD I’m sure.

MS Are people familiar with either of these. Alan is. Good. Okay with the kind of contemporary Indigenous knowledge in governance team we’ve been reading the IAS like just everywhere we turn. There’s Prime Minister and Cabinet were calling us up talking about knowledge, strange things that are happening, we’ve got two hundred or something new staff, everyone’s behaving differently and there’s all these changes happening and we’re being asked by the Uni to put in applications to the fund and the Uni’s process for looking at those applications is just quite insane, they’re kind of collecting everybody’s proposals to the Indigenous advancement strategy and you sort of try and pull it into one institutional proposal that will go to the strategy I think. People in the ground up team have beginning to opt out, they’re a consultancy so they can actually put their own proposals to the indigenous advancement strategy for funding separate to the university so we’re meeting strange kind of disjunctions there. But the strategy’s three main areas are kids in schools, adults in work and making communities safer, just really put me in mind of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement’s three priority categories which are timber, quotas for the industry, protection of high conservation value forests for conservation and creating resilient communities. And this kind of funnelling into particular order and categories or perhaps markets in which these strategies work seems to be quite similar. What was really interesting in Tassie as I sort of came across the forest agreement and was caught up in it unexpectedly was there were these kind of two narratives working in conjunction and one was that they wanted a peaceful Tasmania and one was that they wanted a prosperous Tasmania so the capacity to solve the conflicts that had gone on before, so the problems between resource use and conservation were tied up with them making Tasmania a kind of new prosperous state with different ways of actually exploiting and working with forests. So I was kind of thinking of that in terms of the Indigenous advancement strategy and thinking about the process that went on to create the Tasmanian forest agreement which was that people actually sat in a room and over three many long years brought out exactly what they wanted the Tasmanian forest agreement to look like. So the conservationists and the forestry industry and the unions were all sitting together in this space and it was tenuous the whole time, it was never sure if any kind of solution or agreement was going to come out of these discussions that normally warring parties were engaged in, and what they were trying to do was just square something that was impossible. So the conservation groups had tried to identify all the areas of high conservation value forests that existed in Tasmania and this was a brand new category so it wasn’t biodiverse forests, it wasn’t just native forests or pristine forests, it was high conservation value forests which took in just drew on all sorts of rationales as to what counts as high conservation, it could be it was good tourist value, it could just be that people liked it, it could be that it was biodiverse. So it sort of collected together all these reasons why people would like a particular forest area and propose it for protection. And then the industry were trying to work out exactly what quotes they needed to fulfil to survive like how much timber they need to log every year in order to survive as an industry and then the group sat trying to square these categories together, and can we protect all of Tasmania’s high conservation forests, can we still have activity which … And I think what came up in the discussions all the time was the difference between trying to protect on the ground places as sort of. Sorry I’m not explaining this well.

? Yeah. Laughing.

AD You’re doing fine.

MS As sort of yeah something that’s immovable that’s on the ground that’s to do with a presettlement landscape, that’s to do with how you actually know your place on the ground. And then how you actually work timber markets and so there’s this interesting tension between the broad scale markets and then on the ground liveability or what counts as forests there. So on the one hand everyone was trying to marketise and the other high conservation value forests have now got forests for timber, they’ve got forests for tourism etc. but also still the conservation’s saying what’s important is that there’s presettlement landscapes that need to exist and this is about environment and it’s about sustainability; and really insisting that that capacity on the ground, what people knew about in terms of the species that they knew, the rivers they walked along, that really local knowledge, was somehow still held as part of the discussions. And that’s what I’m really worried might get missed out with the Indigenous advancement strategy because it’s not people sitting down negotiating what should it be, it’s already been decided, the categories have been decided, how the categories are going to be worked out seems to be a completely ad hoc process of who’s proposing what and then somehow the Prime Minister and Cabinet will work out which applications for funding succeed, which ones don’t. And so they’ve got this capacity the socially engineered north, just through choosing who they fund and who they don’t. so I feel like both of these strategies were problematic in certain ways I think but I was really interested to see the difference between the struggle of producing the Tasmanian forest agreement and then perhaps the not struggle of this new strategy that’s just been imposed, we’ve got a month to put in applications for funding. And any Indigenous group that wants money over $50,000 has to be incorporated. So it automatically you are forced to become a corporation if you want to go for large pots of money and then comply with whatever that means. So it’s exactly what Alan was talking about when you lose capacity on the ground I think. It’s this sort of tension that comes.

JG/JS? And Indigenous groups cannot move that quick. The spurious relations and to force them into a corporation is the other side of it is, the government doesn’t have the capacity to develop its governance in that timeframe anyway.

MS No it doesn’t.

JG/JS? So I’d be really curious to hear about if you had engagement with the … Cabinet. Yeah. I mean to suddenly have this group of people in government who have no on the ground experience to suddenly be vetting thousands, presumably, of applications but with no actual capacity to vet them. To judge the merit of them. And within their team to then administer. Because the red tape for them as well is … on the ground … … and the reporting requirements and everything that they then have to presumably process. So for me the big scary part of it is that sudden broad sweeping policy reform with no governance capacity in government undermining the existing capacity of people on the ground who are delivering services at the moment, to suddenly have to restructure themselves to fit a totally different, to .. in a totally different structure of funding and policy, it just seems. … transparency.

? It’s going to be for the large firms who can get together the most wonderful glossy.

? Yeah.

? Which proves that all accountable down to the last cent, and it will exclude and.

? And it gets back to what Alan has been saying before about it all being about people who can write about good outputs on paper, but not necessarily actually delivering on the ground. Because that’s the only things that the people in MC can read is this glossy thing and so they will have no choice but to go oh well, cost effective wise this is how they’re going to get the most outputs that is the most efficient use of dollars; when that glossy report actually has very little to do with what successes or failures may occur on the ground.

? And also like if that in a way they’re assuming that people will be happy to earn money out of their land. I mean that’s kind of a preposition of it, that your resources are your social environmental etc. capital that exists in the land, you have access to it and you’re prepared to not exploit it but it becomes part of the way that you earn money as an Indigenous corporation. And left out of that is perhaps cultural knowledge or language practice or whatever that is not necessarily valued, it’s value is in different terms.

MS You were saying cargo cult and I get the metaphor of the connection but the other phrase that keeps coming to mind is divide and rule which is, make everyone scurry for scarce resources so they don’t have time to complain about the system or to mobilise to respond to the system.

AD Mmm.

MS Yeah I was talking to this lady on the plane back from Cairns who was coming from Nhulunbuy and she was, .. plane from Nhulunbuy was coming to Darwin for a meeting about the IAS and they were all saying, it’s so insane but we don’t have time to complain. We don’t have time to do anything else but scrabble for the barest amount of money that we can because we’re so scared about the outcomes.

AD Yeah. I … significant … answer. And what you were saying about capacity within … could not support that strongly enough. There is no capacity at that central level to assess any applications. There’s no … … … market based outcomes that … … but we will see the most bizarre things … and people on the ground will just go what the heck has happened to us.

JS Even the language is just amazing it talks about.

AS … … power the system is … There is … … … … assessment is going to be one of those … … … … all that sort of stuff … … ….?

MS No. It’s not very clear. NO you were just saying because it’s so random, it will just be who’s connected to who that determines the outcomes rather than the quality of what they’re proposing?

AS Yes.

MS And who’s got the best capacity to get in the ear of this minister or that minister who then goes oh, you know, that one.

JS But the language.

MS Sorry Anne, Jan’s just trying to get a word in, we’ll just.

JS Yes. In that one pager it talks about particularly those organisations that employ Indigenous people and that understand what needs to be done to improve Indigenous life outcomes. Now, I don’t think you could be much more explicit in terms of the how, anti-Indigenous framing of outcomes.

MS well this is what Trevor and Julie are coming up against as well. Where was it. In might have been Ramingining, there’s a new corporation that’s basically, it’s calling itself an Indigenous corporation but it’s got nobody Indigenous. It’s not an Indigenous corporation. It hasn’t been negotiated, it hasn’t it’s policy is clearly written by whitefella. There’s another Indigenous corporation in town that they’re kind of competing with and it’s like what. Yeah. Who’s coming in that has the right to speak in this situation and for what means, it’s not being interrogated very closely and the government simply doesn’t care, it’s trying to cover its back by making corporation law, and regulations do all the work for it so it doesn’t have to regulate and it doesn’t have to. Is that the other side of this that they think that market and market systems and existing legislation will do the work for them, they’re just privatising.

? Yeah.

MS There are some major parallels to the international development arena. Alan I (don’t) think that’s totally right. There was a period in the UK a couple of years back where the UK or .. was very seriously considering KPMG to deliver their Aid in Somalia. No seriously I’m not kidding. Because they were having all these meetings about how do we professionalise this sector because partly because the stakes were really high for the stakes, but because the engineering sector has got more and more professionalised over the last ten or so years. But they were seriously going how do we make this as professional and corporate as possible because we don’t want to be liable for what happens. And we want it to be regulated in a way that’s much more controllable than all these fragmented NGOs on the ground. And the pulled away from that because they realised it was pretty nuts but they did use that as a kind of a leverage point to get or to lean on, NGOs to get their shit together.

AD Yeah.

MS We have to I guess, something that it makes me think of from all these different points is that we’re not the ones on the ground scrambling. I mean we are to certain degrees to make sure our own bread and butter research wise continues to get funded but in the bigger picture of things we’re able to sit back and watch what’s going on and critique it and it’s all fairly doom and gloom but how can we start working now to contribute to collecting the information and making the observations necessary; so that as it does fail and fall apart we can be as constructive in our arguments.

? Yeah.

? Yeah.

MS Knowing that they’ll only be, there may be certain tendencies in where the blame goes, for the … and how we can contribute to that debate being as robust as possible but also as productive as possible. So without just going ‘everyone’s done a terrible job’ let’s go well, because as soon as you say that, governments don’t listen to you as soon as you criticise them too strongly. So finding the lines of argument where we can play a small role and when the right minister is paying attention or the department hasn’t become totally over run by the neoliberalism agenda of the seven year dismissal a few people there who will enter engagement with those community based ideologies. How can we have the research and the data and arguments ready to go to support those people.

AD It brings us back to the conversation … how we .. influence. … … one of the things I’d really encourage … is what is the influence going to be … working within this and.

MS Say that last bit again? What is the.

AD What is the influence strategy with … the work we’re doing. The IAS stage I tend to just work on the … … … in supporting … Indigenous communities and supporting or undertaking research that supports their aspirational agendas and it’s one key thing that needs to be the foundation for that. Deciding what … and who is supporting ... key part but it’s also about having the right engagement strategy in national policy so both ministers and opposition, keeping departmental engagement as strong as possible, continuing the … of … building and building everyone’s understanding of how the system does work as opposed to just particular … … These are the things that … very strongly about as we sharpen up some of this stuff.

AS Alan one of the questions I’ve framed in my mind too might be, is how transparent are the government’s and the … … its totality going to be, that it’s going to make evidence and things just like … data and information available to us in order to do some of that work.

AD Part of the reason for doing it is to keep the debates going. Isn’t it. … issue number two is, it’s pretty hard to highlight a … foundation … because the … systems. So it is a bit hard to actually find a lot of the data but the issue is never useful as a lot of that stuff will actually … because it’s very framed around particular outcomes you know. So I … well it’s actually useful in this conversation until … … …

AS Actually there is a lot of data out there but it’s not the data you’re really interested in. coming from the … framework we’ve been trying for the last three years to extract education department data, health department data, and it’s very difficult to get important data that you need to establish what’s happening.

AD Yeah.

MS Yeah. …. Same with … which feeds back into Alan’s comment about does your research really keep back into your strategy and is there a link there.

AD Yeah.

? I would really appreciate being able to just keep these conversations going at a different scale so that they work at because I’m about to be going out to Milingimbi and supporting a group to form a corporation and so in a way, part of my work and part of some of the other people in our team’s work is actually, for us to be informed in what we’re involved in would be really handy. Like and these conversations help that. So that as you actually deciding the structure of the corporation or the way in which it wants to present itself etc. and that there’s a researcher on the ground helping with that work but that researcher can be as kind of savvy and clued in to what’s going on as possible to sort of, have that in the conversation as the work’s done in communities. So that’s also something we could be helping each other with. I’m completely self-interested in asking that.

AD Yeah.

AS … … information … collective … we do do work achieving this sort of stuff and this idea of … … what we collect from organisations themselves and what they … reporting. And we might have established. You know …, difficult … data extracted in a timely way, same with health, it’s so hard to get that sort of information. And the other thing I’m thinking is we should … on the … outcomes of certain …. Set in place in … business … noticing system … … You know.

AD I was just going to add a bit to the chaos conversation. This might be a conversation for one of the … …. When Michael … is back …

MS Sorry.

AD Because this might be heading to a really useful conversation I reckon around bigger issues and the bigger picture of how we might support communities whether they’re able to … … entire … … So that they’re … getting stronger. For me one of the conversations that is starting to frame up at the moment really seriously nationally is the reality of the fact that we have a dual system, so there’s a mainstream Australian democratic system and … system and there’s the Indigenous governance and cultural system. And the two aren’t necessarily at odds with each other. There’s necessarily a huge interface and scope in regional relations.

MS Yes.

AD But it’s higher cost agenda is about mainstream. So here everything about crushing out that concept of identity and cultural foundations and.

JS? Yeah getting kids to school, attendance and that sort of thing. Meanwhile some of the really good preschool programs are likely to disappear.

? .. of funding.

AD And their place names. … concept of place. … just watching the relationship and … … … discussion on those sort of issues and just sort of read through the conversations that have been going on around what hasn’t happened. And what has happened is basically the … people … doesn’t actually support place and identity, and it’s the recipe for marginalisation and significant mobilisation. in the same … if we totally focus on mainstream two or three years down the track, third fourth fifth generation disenfranchised Indigenous youth and …, it’s those … and marginalisation and mobilisation will be there.

MS We just get suicide rates rather than suicide bombers.

AD That’s right. So either people internalise that marginalisation or they externalise it and … and … probably externalise it as well.

MS I really agree this is an incredibly productive conversation for us to keep having for when Helen and Michael come back and it’s amazing to see how our conversation here has paralleled that presentation of Helen’s … when she was talking about normalisation and how we … data and all that. So the links and the common thinking is definitely there but we’ve also got this nice difference in where we work and what we work with. Which is really productive difference. It really is.

? Yeah.

MS So I’m quite excited about the possibilities with that. We’ve only got ten minutes left and I had said that at the end of this we will talk a bit about how the group’s going to work for us and in a way we’ve just started doing that already. I don’t know if people want to spend a bit of time on that or just continue with the discussion.

MS I just see on that note that I think a lot of us would… the group is pulling in two different directions. And maybe that’s not the case, it’s just my observation but I just felt like some of it was more practical like what do we do with and some of it was more theoretical and I think we need both but I think we also need a clear concept across the group of what we’re trying to achieve. So the people who I felt really wanted that political agenda was Linda and Mike but they’re not here so it feels like it’s not right to have that conversation without them?

? Yeah.

MS As part of it. I don’t’ know what everybody else thinks.

AD I think what it picks up pretty strongly is the way it… on paper as well. I think the value in that is the opportunity to provide some theoretical materials for theoretical thinking and … these conversations and actually using the practical methodological foundation research is important. So I’m pretty convinced that the strength of this group will be the inter relationship between both those things so I’m actually very positive about that being … sort of two different directions, I think the two things are essential to each other.

? Yeah.

MS So maybe we need to do is just have that conversation with everyone and say they’re both strengths but maybe have a bit of a code about how we conduct that nexus so they’re not pulling apart but working together.

? Yeah.

AD Yeah.

MS Even if that’s just the way we design the sessions or questions or whatever it may be that make this work together and make sure we have that conversation properly rather than just side by side.

AD Yeah. You pull that together and what I’ll probably do is … practicalities, working in community … or … … It’s always just useful the way … was just saying, what … is practical … in theory and all the discussion about where we’re going. You keep … about where we’re going and what we’re doing, but that gets informed every time we have a conversation around practicalities and … logical names and some really great conversation around … theory and …

AS Can I add something? What interests me is how we … say all the time we need to strategies something around whatever, you know, and we said when Jackie was asking about the government, … government, and we were saying yeah we can strategise ways to engage the government with this and do that and stuff. I think that’s a really interesting … why are we doing, how do we ,…., how are we learning and we … and how do we find those principles ….? For us to do some of that strategic thinking even if we’re not actually involved in what comes out of that strategic thinking, it is interesting to … have that discussion and there’s much to be learned from different perspectives on how and what we are able to … and inputs.

AD Yeah.

MS So there’s maybe certain things that we want to keep hovering on the agenda, to keep revisiting strategy and how we’re working together etc. and just touch on that in each discussion we have.

? Yeah and maybe not the CRN but the governance book when that comes back into focus, maybe that will be an opportunity to think about how we’re situating that book both in terms of in relation to the national debate but also in terms of who are we and what are we doing and what do we want.

AD Yeah. There’s plenty of … … time and opportunity to keep talking about it … but as you say … touched on …. You know, framing up … agenda and … and I don’t want to stress, I saw … … before this … … CRN … … thinking seriously about this opportunity to … … government.

MS So Michael has talked about … and I sitting down with the transcripts when he gets back and going through and seeing some of the interesting things we’ve said. That’s probably not inconsistent with what you’ve just said about waiting. When we could start on it I guess. But yeah you’re saying. Do you know when the CRN book will be finished?

AD …

? Last …

AD I would have thought it would be all done and dusted by April May next year.

MS So you’re quite happy to have the book for this group to still being very slow basically on the back burner for a while.

AD I think if we tried to do anything else Michaela would be … for the chapters … …

MS Good to know.

JS? So the only thing I’m thinking, if you’re sitting down with Michael, is that the section you’re heading up in the CRN book, on the governance stuff might be useful just to hand over as part of that conversation? Just like Alan … word groups just so you know where we’re coming from. Because certainly from my perspective, after our meeting in Cairns over the last two weeks my thinking has changed a lot about the space and maybe. That would be useful for Michaela and Michael to get a sense of what’s going on.

AD …

MS Okay. All right that might be it.

? Can I just ask did that paper get emailed around or is it linked on the website?

MS Alan’s paper should have been on the agenda.

? It might be on does it just stay there.

MS I can send it to you again. And Helen’s paper is attached to a blog post on the website, I’ll send you the links. But I’m trying to get people to go to the website so maybe your homework is to visit. I’ll send out a link again but take a look at it, see if there’s anything there you don’t want to enter the public domain because it would be quite nice for the website to go public soon but if people say no that’s fine but it seems a shame, to have it sitting there, and not be able to give people the link. Still feel free to recommend changes, I’m happy to take anything down or put anything up I’m not precious about it, I just need a bit of feedback on if it’s okay to go public.

? Will you ask the rest of the group first … ?

MS I will send an email, but not today. All right, good conversation and it’ll be first week of November that the next one will be on.

*All said goodbye.*

*End of meeting at: 01:20:30.*

*Some discussion after the meeting between Michaela and JS and JG about Michaela’s work in Milingimbi and JS and JG’s work, not transcribed.*

*End of Recording.*