The theme for this issue is an important anniversary milestone for Social Alternatives, that of celebrating forty years of continuous publishing. In those forty years, the journal has continued to carry out its compelling social responsibility to bring social, cultural and environmental matters to the forefront for change. In so doing, it has pursued its commitment to sharing understanding the world in new ways and communicating alternative solutions to shape our values, beliefs, customs, rituals and behavior in a world abundant with wicked problems.

For the front cover design, an important consideration was to present a positive graphic which looked forward to the next forty years in publishing. It was also essential to find a graphic way of embracing the diversity of material in this special anniversary issue of the journal. After working through a few design ideas, binoculars as the prime conceptual image seemed to fulfill these requirements. Binoculars allow one to zoom into, to expose and bring attention to, the challenges of our time. Binoculars allow one to to see ‘beyond’ – to perhaps see into the future – how the world could be, and also a future of continued publishing. As Eddy and Matthews (2018: 3) state in their Introduction to this special issue, ‘Contributors were asked to give account of the way that the journal has given them the opportunity to speak back to conventional assumptions about social and political issues and to open up new ways of conceptualising solutions’.

Reference

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Hayley Baxter
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University of Sydney
Griffith University

EDITORS

BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
TBA

POETRY EDITOR
Elia Jeffery,
e.jeffery@socialalternatives.com

COVER DESIGN,
DESKTOP PUBLISHING
AND ART DIRECTION
Debra Livingston
University of the Sunshine Coast
debra@socialalternatives.com

WEB SITE
Julie Matthews and
Debra Livingston
julie@socialalternatives.com

EDITORIAL CONTACTS

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Lee-anne Bye
Operations Manager
Social Alternatives
Faculty of Arts, Business and Law
Maroochydore DC Qld 4558
lee-anne@socialalternatives.com

GENERAL ENQUIRIES
Julie Matthews
University of Adelaide
julie@socialalternatives.com

CO-ORDINATING EDITOR
Bronwyn Stevens
bestevens@bibliol61.com

SHORT STORY EDITOR
Clare Archer-Lean
University of the Sunshine Coast
carcher@usc.edu.au

Social Alternatives

Social Alternatives is an independent, quarterly refereed journal which aims to promote public debate, commentary and dialogue about contemporary social, political, economic and environmental issues.

Social Alternatives analyses, critiques and reviews contemporary social issues and problems. The journal seeks to generate insights, knowledge and understanding of our contemporary circumstances in order to determine local, national and global implications. We are committed to the principles of social justice and to creating spaces of dialogue intended to stimulate social alternatives to current conditions. Social Alternatives values the capacity of intellectual and artistic endeavour to prompt imaginative solutions and alternatives and publishes refereed articles, review essays, commentaries and book reviews as well as short stories, poems, images and cartoons.

The journal has grappled with matters of contemporary concern for four decades, publishing articles and themed issues on topics such as peace and conflict, racism, Indigenous rights, social justice, human rights, inequality and the environment. Please show your support by subscribing to the journal. For other enquiries please contact a member of the Editorial Collective.

The Editorial Collective

Editorial decisions are made democratically by the Social Alternatives editorial collective. Each edition involves the work and cooperation of a guest editor, liaison editor (to assist guest editors), general editor, poetry editor, short story editor, book review editor, cover designer and desktop publisher. A liaison editor is responsible for managing the editing and publication process. After contributions are blind refereed, the editorial collective has final control over publication. Where necessary the editorial collective calls on the advisory board to assist with refereeing articles.

Contributions

Social Alternatives accepts work focused on the aims of the journal. The journal also accepts proposals for themed issues from guest editors. Proposals may emerge from workshops, networks or conferences. For specific enquiries about the submission of articles, short stories, poetry or book reviews please contact an editor with appropriate responsibilities.

Submissions of articles, commentaries, reviews and fictional works are subject to double blind peer review and should be emailed to the general article editor. Authors are encouraged to consider and reference papers previously published in Social Alternatives to promote ongoing discussion. Submissions should be double-spaced with page numbers on the bottom right. Academic articles should be approximately 3,000-5,000 words, commentaries and review essays between 800 to 1,500 words, book reviews 800 words, short stories 1,000 words and poetry up to 25 lines. Submissions must include:

• copyright release form
• title page listing contributing authors, contact details, affiliation and short bio of approximately 80 words
• abstract should be a maximum of 150 words
• three - five keywords.

Please use Australian/English spelling and follow Harvard referencing. Submit tables, graphs, pictures and diagrams on separate pages. Remove in-text references identifying authors and replace with [name removed for the review process].

For further information please consult our website:
http://www.socialalternatives.com/ and our Facebook page.
Introduction
3 Social Alternatives: A unique, independent and collective endeavour..............Elizabeth Eddy and Julie Matthews

Commentaries
6 1978: Another country, another world, a better world?..................................................Patrick Weller
10 The Importance of Being Extreme...............................................................................Verity Burgmann
14 Political Economy: What can (still) be done?.................................................................Geoff Dow
18 Why the Alternative?.........................................................................................................Graham Maddox
21 Leaping Toward a Different Future................................................................................Richard Hil
24 Sharing Water ... in the Public Interest........................................................................Claudia Baldwin
27 Towards Peace, Equity and Sustainability.....................................................................Frank Stilwell
31 Climate Change: Where to from here?............................................................................Ian Lowe
35 Prelude to Action..............................................................................................................Julie Matthews
38 Recollections..................................................................................................................Don Alexander
41 Ralph Summy: A journey in pursuit of nonviolence.......................................................Hilary Summy
44 The Muse and Amusement of Social Alternatives Poetry..............................................John Synott
47 Graphic Design, the Communication of Social Issues and the Evolution of the Social Alternatives Design Framework over Forty Years.................................................Debra Livingston

General Articles
53 The Influence of Feminist Organisations on Public Policy Responses to Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women: A systematic literature review..........................................................Paige Fletcher and Cassandra Star
62 The Challenges Remain: A 'new' view of old perspectives on the history of women’s football in Australia.................................................................Lee McGowan and Greg Downes

Short Story
71 Rain In The Creek..............................................................................................................Louise Henry

Gallery Showcase
73 Reverse Alchemy..............................................................................................................Anthony W. Thompson

Poetry
13 Refugee Train................................................................................................................Steve Evans
13 A Message from Our Ancestors......................................................................................Alison Flett
20 The Absquatulator.........................................................................................................David Adès
30 Bulrush........................................................................................................................Jane Downing
30 Locator beacon..............................................................................................................Sarah Penwarden
34 Back..............................................................................................................................Steve Evans
37 Bird bath sky................................................................................................................Sarah Penwarden
40 5 ways to understand the outback.................................................................................Alison Flett
52 In the Dog Box of the Day..........................................................................................David Adès
61 Easter.............................................................................................................................Alison Flett
70 Detention Deficit Disorder..........................................................................................Jane Downing
We present this special edition issue of Social Alternatives to celebrate our 40th anniversary and renewed commitment to the social and political project of ‘providing a radical outlet for the communication of new ideas’ and ‘formulating alternatives to existing policies and structures’ (Summy 1977: 4). Contributions for this issue were invited from past and current members of the editorial collective, the advisory board and guest editors. Contributors were asked to give account of the way that the journal has given them the opportunity to speak back to conventional assumptions about social and political issues and to open up new ways of conceptualising solutions.

In the first set of articles, the contributions of Patrick Weller, Verity Burgman, Geoff Dow, Graham Maddox and Richard Hil draw attention to the way the world has changed since the radicalised times of the late 1970s. This is followed by a second set of contributions where Claudia Baldwin, Frank Stilwell and Ian Lowe take the opportunity to highlight some issues of contemporary significance, namely water sharing, peace, equality and sustainability and climate change. Finally, Julie Matthews, Don Alexander, Hilary Summy, John Synott and Debra Livingston provide personal reflections and historical accounts which offer insights into the trajectory of the journal, as well as its effort to remain committed to providing an outlet for creative arts such as poetry and artwork.

As Patrick Weller wryly observes in ‘1978: Another country, another world, a better world?’, the political world of the 1970s (2018: 6) – when the journal began – was a very different one to that of today. Indeed, one would have to be over the age of 55 to remember the political ferment of the era, and for those of us who lived through those times there is a tendency to regard the world of yesterday as better than the world of today. While the 1970s lacked the speed and immediacy of internet communication technologies, it was not without its challenges. Then, as today, the challenges of tomorrow were not yet imagined. In her article ‘The importance of being extreme’, Verity Burgman argues that ‘constant radicalism is the price of progress’ (2018: 12). Social transformation and progressive change is best accomplished when social movements undertake radical action. By demanding more, important partial victories are achieved.

Geoff Dow has been a contributor since the very first issue of Social Alternatives. His contribution in this issue, ‘Political economy: what can (still) be done?’, reiterates his argument that the economic crisis of the 1970s, namely unemployment and inflation, was not a product of globalisation but of policy mistakes and political errors (2018: 14). Unfortunately however, just good ideas and analysis are inadequate: there is no shortage of possible solutions. Rather, the current problem is compounded by lack of clarity and ineffective politics. Graham Maddox observes in his piece, ‘Why the Alternative?’, that the journal emerged in Australia at a time when people’s faith in the electoral system had been shattered – a time when a non-elected official entered the political realm to overturn the votes of the people in the 1974 general election. The struggle continues for a form of democracy able to provide alternative means of dealing with the domination of capital (often foreign), the condition of Aboriginal people, asylum seekers, the unemployed and under-employed, single parents and young people (2018: 18). Richard Hil reminds us in ‘Leaping toward a different future’ that we need to understand the immense significance of the notion of ‘the social’ and its complex relationship with economic and political spheres. The notion of ‘the social’ not only provides ‘a broader appreciation of the world in which we live, embracing as it does all the other influences that impact on ecologies and everyday life’ (2018: 21), but provides a means of challenging the ‘fiscal metrics’ of neoliberal capitalism which has come to dominate the current era.

Beginning the set of articles on some contemporary issues, Claudia Baldwin’s contribution, ‘Sharing water ... in the public interest’, examines the ‘simple’ idea that water should be fairly distributed to people and the environment and, further, details ways in which it can be shared. Baldwin underlines the journal’s role in raising questions about: ‘what is the “public interest” and how
can independent auditing ensure the publics' interests are met?' (2018: 26). As a 'focal point for progressive thought' (2018: 27), in 'Towards Peace, Equity and Sustainability' Frank Stilwell points out that in a world that is becoming more liable to violence, inequality, and economic and environmental crisis – a ‘selfie society’ of individualism and narcissism (2018: 30) – it is all the more important to sustain analysis and debate around questions of peace, equity and sustainability. Recalling his analysis of future energy alternatives in this journal forty years ago (Lowe 1977: 63-69), Ian Lowe's article ‘Climate change: Where to from here?’ provides a terse reminder that the 1970’s energy crisis and consequent price inflation destabilised many elected governments. While climate change had not yet hit the global agenda, then as now, the major obstacle to change is the obsession with growth. Then as now governments still act as though the current environmental emergency will be solved by more growth and human consumption; ‘There is no realistic prospect to slowing climate change … unless we can escape from the toxic meme of growth’ (2018: 33).

The personal and historical accounts open with Julie Matthews' reflection in 'Prelude to action'. She recalls her work as a secondary school teacher pre-internet, Google searches, blogs and Facebook, when Social Alternatives provided valuable access to 'views and perspectives that would otherwise have been impossible to locate and engage with' (2018: 36). Don Alexander's article, 'Recollections', gives no apologies for the idealistic and progressive left leanings of the journal's editorial collective regarding the broad spectrum of values relating to peace. Peace, he observes, means a great deal more than the absence of violence and concerns issues of 'race, environment, gender, belief systems, politics and any other matters that impeded harmony on our planet (2018: 39). A moving account of Ralph Summy's personal and political trajectory leading to the inception of the journal is delivered by Hilary Summy in the article 'Ralph Summy: A journey in pursuit of nonviolence'. She reminds us that generating nonviolent alternatives in a quest for peace and social justice was ‘an idea whose time had come’ (2018: 41), and, one might add, is still to come. In ‘The muse and amusement of Social Alternatives poetry’, John Synott celebrates the visibility offered by the journal for politically-oriented poetic voices that may not easily find publication (2018: 44). Politically-oriented poetry is not invariably polemical, but has rigour and aesthetic value in poetic art form as well as progressive content. Finally Debra Livingston's (2018) account in ‘Graphic design, the communication of social issues and the evolution of the Social Alternatives design framework over forty years’ highlights the way that changes in graphic design and digital production technologies have made the process more complex while also enhancing the opportunity for graphic aesthetics to express the social issues under discussion in each issue of the journal.

Over the last ten years, the journal itself as an artefact – its content, its format and its raison d'etre – has been under discussion. The editorial collective, most of whom work or have worked in higher education, have grappled with intersecting impacts of a highly digitalised communication sphere and the demands of the higher education sector. Of concern to us is where the journal sits, or should sit, in terms of its readership and contributors, although always guided by its enduring mission. For its first two decades, Social Alternatives effortlessly traversed a borderland providing academic peer-reviewed material as well as less formal but nonetheless valuable material such as discussions, interview transcripts and opinion pieces. Those active in social movements were invited to guest edit or contribute material so that we were able to circulate key thinking on developments and actions around social and political issues. The explosion of digital publication outlets including webpages, blogs, and social media have provided activists with innumerable opportunities to communicate and educate. Similarly, Social Alternatives has had a digital presence including a website and Facebook page for more than a decade.

The entire journal is available in both electronic copy and hard copy to subscribers and libraries, and we work hard to create thematic issues addressing topics of contemporary concern. However, we are aware that most of our readers and researchers now access articles individually via data bases such as Proquest, Informit and Ebsco. So, while we endeavour to produce an organic journal with a coherent theme that includes components such as commentaries, poetry, book reviews, cover design, photo-essays, opinion pieces and short stories we realise that the journal is less frequently engaged with as a complete issue. This understandably creates some tension in terms of the academic balance.

This tension overlaps into another problematic area. Universities in Australia, and to some extent elsewhere, have been at the mercy of various iterations of ‘research quality’ frameworks. These frameworks dictate where academics can publish, and shape and impact the careers and even employability of academics. Additionally, the publications sphere has been flooded with new online journals, many of questionable quality and which can be regarded as ‘predatory’, ‘vanity’, or ‘paid for service’. Of equal concern is the for-profit publications sector where the four main publishing houses generate millions of dollars in profits while relying on the voluntary services of academic peer reviewers.

Since members of the editorial collective and advisory board are mostly academics or retired academics who provide their services voluntarily, we have found ourselves moving more closely towards the traditional
We seek to balance specifically Australian content and international content. We recognise that there are few avenues for publishing specifically Australian material and aim to maintain that avenue. We are also committed to opening up and participating in discussions on global matters, in part as Australia has been taking on stronger roles on the world stage, but particularly in recognition of the struggles of people all around the world to achieve peace, equality, social justice and environmental integrity.

Navigating these demands, organising our production process and making the journal financially viable is an ongoing concern. We have become more ‘professional’, and editing that was once undertaken by the editorial collective members is now outsourced to paid editors: our source of funding is increasingly derived from data-base copyright payments rather than the subscription base. Data base requirements commit us to timely delivery of four issues a year – a far cry from the relaxed and sociable manner of journal production in the early years.

Nevertheless, we on the editorial collective (and how we debate that term ‘collective’: become an editorial ‘board’ or remain a ‘collective’), as well as those on our advisory board, are proud to bring to the world the material we publish, with its continuing focus on political, economic, environmental and social alternatives. We wish to thank all our contributors for their faith and trust in our capacity to produce and circulate their work in this unique, wholly independent and collectively organised journal.

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Vale Barbara Anne Young AO

It is with much regret that we report the passing of Barbara Young who died on the 26th of January 2018. Barbara played a very important role in the life of this journal. She was the operations and business manager of Social Alternatives for several years. Her efficiency and organisational skills played a vital role in sustaining the journal and ensuring it was placed on a sound financial footing. She was a lively host for meetings of the Editorial Collective and for mail-outs from her home. Barbara was active in many humanitarian causes. She was the first national president of the Save the Children Fund and a past chair of the Refugee Council of Australia. She was awarded an OA for her work for children’s rights and refugees. The world is poorer for Barbara’s passing.
Forty years ago Social Alternatives was launched into a world that seems so very different from today. Forty years is half a lifetime, itself almost a full working life for many. Few under the age of 55 are likely to have active political memories of that year, assuming that most children have little political awareness before the age of 15. Almost no one under the age of 60 will have voted in the 1977 election, even with the voting age being reduced from 21 to 18. Politics in the mid-seventies becomes history, as did the Vietnam war, the Cuban Missile crisis, the referendum to ban the Communist party and the Second World War. People talk about it, even reminisce, but it was so long ago.

When times are tough (that is, almost all the time for many) there is a tendency to look back to some period, usually sufficiently out of memory that it can only be interpreted by history and recollection, and to compare the current conditions with better days. I recently listened to a presentation from an excellent journalist about the decline in Australian leadership and politics. Performance today was compared to better times back ... well, sometime in the past. Now, by contrast, politicians are more cynical; they break promises, only care about winning. Society was better because people cared for others. Cricketers played like gentlemen, abiding by the spirit as well as the letter of the game. Immigrants settled in without stress or rancour. Our country (add the name) was a better place to live then.

Politicians grow in respect often after they have left office. A statesman, one observer notes, is a dead politician. We have the capacity to damn a person while they are in office, but in retrospect admire their achievements and declare that they were among the best leaders the country has had. But only later, seldom at the time. Paul Keating had more successive negative polls as prime minister than any office holder before or since (Bonham 2018). Twenty years later he is highly rated as an effective leader (Wilson 2016). Fickle lot, we electors! History dulls the anger and modifies the self-righteousness.

But is it so? Was the world a better place then than now?

Look around the world and ask what was happening in 1978. The USSR still existed, coming into the last decade of a sclerotic dictatorship of old men, determined not to surrender to the next generation. If the worst of the murderous regimes had passed, it was still an enclosed and unpleasant regime. A decade later the USSR would disintegrate, fortunes would be made by a few and Russia would only later start seeking to revive those glorious days of the Great Patriotic War when its troops destroyed Nazi Germany. As its opponents’ triumphalism celebrated their victory, did they foresee the Putin revival of Russian nationalism?

If the USSR was going into decline, China was emerging from the dark days of the cultural revolution. Deng Xiaoping was returning to begin the transformation of the Chinese economy. In 1978, China’s GDP per capita (in current $) was $156 (India’s was then $203). By 1994 it had risen to $473. In 2015 it was $8069. (By contrast India was only $1613 in 2015.) Perhaps the most symbolic change was the reopening of the Chinese university system. It had been closed down in 1966; many had had no opportunity to further their education from then on. They had been ‘sent out’ to the countryside to be re-educated. In 1977 and 1978, six months apart, the government organised two competitive entry exams, allowing those who had missed out to compete on merit. In 1977, 5.7 million applied: 5% were successful, the oldest was 37 and the youngest 13. In 1978, 6.1 million applied; the success rate rose to 7%. For the others who had been without an education for long years, the doors began to close. No wonder the classes of 77/78 are regarded with awe; just getting there was so hard, especially to the best universities. Many of the graduates of those years are now in key positions in the Chinese society. Since 1978 the Chinese economy has grown to the extent that it has brought 400 million people out of poverty. Now the definition that is used (around $2.50 a day) scarcely makes them rich, but nor do they still suffer the grinding poverty of 1978.

1978: Another country, another world, a better world?

Patrick Weller

Commentary
The United Kingdom was just grey. The country had joined the Common Market and then, in a referendum, voted to stay there in the hope that it would improve its ailing economy. The other signs were less promising. Northern Ireland was a deadly battlefield. The first sprigs of Scottish Nationalism were beginning to sprout. However, the principal difficulties were economic and industrial. The government had gone cap in hand to ask the IMF to bale its economy out of the mire in 1976. The Labour Government of Jim Callaghan relied on an uncomfortable alliance with the Liberals in parliament as it had lost the small majority won in late 1974. It suffered regular humiliation as its backbenchers defeated its legislation on the floor of the House of Commons. The winter of 1978/79 was to be known as the winter of discontent, as strikes left the dead unburied and the rubbish uncollected. It was just a few months until, in March 1979 the Liberals withdrew, the government lost a vote of no confidence and an election was called. The winner? Margaret Thatcher. The old world of broad consensus between the two main political parties that had largely survived for the 35 post-war years was never to be reconstructed. How do we now characterise a country split by Brexit and an anachronistic hankering in rhetoric for its old long-gone empire.

In the United States the defeat in Vietnam and the devastating scenes of soldiers fleeing by helicopter from the roof of the US embassy in Saigon were still fresh. American exceptionalism was questioned. The US president was Jimmy Carter, both decent and ineffective in Iran where the US-backed Shah was driven from his country and in the next two years the US embassy would be occupied and its diplomats held in captivity for months on end. Here was the beginning of the fundamentalism that the US has, despite its constant battles, been powerless to prevent.

Nor was Australia either comfortable or relaxed. The events of 1975, when the Opposition for the second time in 18 months exercised its numbers in the Senate to drive to an election a party that had been in power for only three years, and where the Governor General used his reserve powers to ambush and sack a prime minister, were a mere three years earlier. The Liberal campaign slogan in 1975 had been ‘Turn on the Lights’. It led to a headline in the National Times ‘Yes, Turn on the lights. You can’t trust the buggers in the dark!’ The bitterness remained. Relations between parties were often toxic, unforgiving and rancorous. That was nothing unusual: the sectarian battles between Protestant and Catholic, the conscription crises of 1916/17, the parliamentary bastardry of the depression years, the Labor split and the Vietnam moratoriums had all been fought with a degree of narrow-minded determination that had long characterised Australian politics.

Nor, for those who look for inspiration outside the political arena, was cricket exempt, as Kerry Packer hired most of the leading players for his World Series Cricket, an upheaval far greater (and in the tensions far more damaging) than the minor case of the cricket ball and the sandpaper. And if cricket really wanted moral cases they came a decade later with the unauthorised tours of apartheid South Africa. But then cricket was always full of dubious practices. Even if bodyline may have been potentially its most deadly period, the shady practices go back to the beginning. WG Grace may not have been a professional, but he was no gentleman in any but the most nominal terms on the cricket field.

Good old days? Better times then? In dreams, not often in practice. Has it got any better in the last 40 years? It is different certainly, a story of false triumphalism. When the USSR collapsed the American reaction was that capitalism had been victorious and that soon everyone would follow the US example. Fukuyama’s (1989) essay The End of History? was a leading example, implying that the inevitability of the US model was a given fact, the height to which all could aspire. The US trumped everyone in its certainty of its own exceptionalism. It watched while the Soviet army had become bogged down in Afghanistan, unable to support a puppet regime. It watched, but seemed to learn nothing. Now as its troops are in their seventeenth year of conflict there, doing no better than the Soviets, the conflict provides another example of the inability of military might to crush local guerrilla insurgencies. Iraq, Syria, Yemen follow Vietnam.

In other arenas the assumption that liberal democracy will triumph is undermined by the number of illiberal democracies, those places where determined leaders may win elections and then seek to assure they never lose another one. They assert that as they represent the national good, opposition is regarded as undermining national security. If Russia is most apparent, the leaders in the Philippines, Hungary and Turkey have used an election to win office and now find it has served its purposes. Add that to the emergence of radical Islam and the world is now a dangerous place, not from traditional warfare but from terrorism. The US can still win the wars with overwhelming force but that seems rather pointless when no one else wants to fight that way.

The other real hope was the emergence of an interlinked global economy. The European Union was the precursor. Germany and France had fought three wars in 70 years. No more; intertwined economies made it far less useful. As the Soviet bloc collapsed, the European project extended its reach into the old eastern Europe. In one crucial way at least it has been a success. The period since 1945 has been the longest period of peace in western European history. There has been no conflict between those powers that had been fighting regularly and viciously for hundreds of years. Such conflict as there was resulted primarily from the collapse of regimes, particularly the Yugoslav state. Economic integration worked, not without stress, but think of the past alternatives.
If this account was to look back (rather than forward) 40 years from 1978, then consider what had happened in the 40 years since 1938: the Soviet purges and murder of thousand of its citizens and its Gulags, the Japanese occupation of China, the Holocaust, 40 plus million dead before 1945 in Europe and the East, the war in Korea, the great leap forward and the cultural revolution in China, the Cuban missile crisis and the arms race, MAD as government policy, Vietnam. For all the problems of the last 40 years, they have not been nearly as traumatic as the previous 40. Australia was on the fringes, and fortunate to be there.

In some places there have been advances in politics and society, not fast enough maybe, but advances nonetheless: primarily in those places where there has been no civil war. Thousands have been brought out of extreme poverty; electricity has been spread to improve lives; international trade has increased opportunities, again not without some costs but to broader benefit. Improved transport allows easier travel. Social media and communications have opened debate and participation in ways which may both involve more people but make governing at times harder and more immediate. The position of women is better, though far from yet equal; Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand have all had women prime ministers. It may have been fraught in Australia and fleeting in Canada, but the examples of Britain and particularly New Zealand provide examples of strong determined and effective leadership (and also, in both countries women leaders who seem to fail too). Automation has removed the working tedium from many lives. On many criteria the last 40 years have been remarkable. Australia’s economy has grown consistently in ways which may both involve more people but make governing at times harder and more immediate. The position of women is better, though far from yet equal; Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand have all had women prime ministers. It may have been fraught in Australia and fleeting in Canada, but the examples of Britain and particularly New Zealand provide examples of strong determined and effective leadership (and also, in both countries women leaders who seem to fail too). Automation has removed the working tedium from many lives. On many criteria the last 40 years have been remarkable. Australia’s economy has grown consistently and it alone of the advanced economies did not sink into recession during the global financial crisis and the growth of inequality has been less marked in Australia than in other places.

Yet of course we are still dissatisfied. Our leaders lack vision; our society is divided; our solutions are inadequate. Journalists can write of the decline of Australian leadership (proving that they are far too young to remember Billy McMahon! If they could, they would never talk of decline).

Now some years are better than others, some conditions are preferable to others. We can provide a number of defensible propositions that are evidence of reasonable government. We are fairly safe from external invasion. We can usually get adequate health care. Literacy rates are high; education is available. Food and housing is in adequate supply. Murder is rare, and we think life is more valuable than any constitutional right to bear arms and shoot up schools or restaurants or as a means of ‘self defence’ when someone looks different. We have a rule of law and an honest judiciary. On these and on many other positions (each one of which is a matter of degree, never a case of absolutes, so always possible to improve) we do ok, far from perfectly perhaps but the aspirations are there even when we are not sure how to achieve them.

It was always so. It will always be so. The political process is about managing crisis and pain; it is about puzzling over the way the existing problems can be ameliorated. As one problem is solved, others inevitably appear. As technological change accelerates, so the need for speedy reactions seems to increase. Governments must acknowledge the problems and appreciate the possibilities; only then can they try to manage a response, conciliating a variety of opinions and interests, of winners and losers, of ideologies and beliefs. The solutions are never enough for the idealists who want a better way of governing. But governments do not, despite their best intentions, control much of what happens; they can but seek to channel responses in desirable ways. Often the decisions please no one because there are no right answers – just compromises between the devotees of diametrically different options.

So observers and critics concentrate on those areas where aspirations fall short, where new problems are identified and where advocates are vocal. In a world of the internet everyone can access data and opinions (of varying accuracy and worth). Governments must react, even while they have a lack of information and while they know they can never satisfy the very different interests that are demanding change. In reality governments can seldom ‘solve’ problems. Poverty, technological change, crime, economic management are ever-present. What governments can do is mediate between demands in such a way that they ameliorate the stress, assist the needy and reduce the tension. Governments ‘puzzle’, consider the options and pick a course of action. They cannot wait till everything is known, nor can they be certain of success, even if the political contest demands that they talk as though they have chosen the only available option, that it will work and nothing else will. It is not true and they know it is not true; the rhetoric is part of the political dynamic. There is a neat picture of governing that identifies the continuity of the endeavour.

In political activity men [sic] sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbour for shelter nor appointed destination. The enterprise is keeping afloat on an even keel (Oakeshott 1991:60).

There will always be problems. Some like climate change are real existential threats. Others may be passing fads, but fought with intensity and absolute conviction of the rightness of the cause. Other challenges such as economic management, alleviation of poverty and social equality will be ever-present, because they are relative,
and besides, they are not entirely in the control of any government but still present challenges that, in good times or bad, must be managed.

If Social Alternatives wants another review in 2058 (another 40 years), we can anticipate now what some of the challenges will be. Others will not have even been imagined. The one thing of which we can be sure is that the government will be criticised by someone for lack of a leadership or vision. As long as, that is, that we retain our liberal democratic system. Can we be sure of this? Will other liberal democracies survive?

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Author
Patrick Weller AO, FASSA, is a Professor Emeritus in the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University. He was professor of politics at Griffith from 1984 to 2015. He is the author, co-author or editor of some 40 books on Australian politics, international organisations and comparative institutions, including Malcolm Fraser PM (1989), Don’t tell the Prime Minister (2002), Cabinet Government in Australia, 1901-2006 (2007), Inside the World Bank (2009), Kevin Rudd, twice Prime Minister (2014), The Working World of International Organisations (2018) and The Prime Ministers’ Craft (2018).
To mark the 40th anniversary of Social Alternatives it is appropriate to ponder social transformation and ask how progressive change is best accomplished. I would argue that the history of social movement activity suggests that reforms are more likely to be achieved when activists behave in extremist, even confrontational ways. Social movements rarely achieve all they want, but they secure important partial victories by demanding considerably more and matching radical rhetoric with radical action. This reality is frequently obscured, because movement moderates often claim sole ownership of victories that have been assisted massively by those within the same movement whom moderates derided for being excessive and embarrassing.

Social movements are hugely strengthened when they include the bold and the brave, who make extravagant political claims and engage in extremist postures. Divisions within social movements are too frequently seized upon by detractors as symptoms of disorientation or decline; more often, divisions about ultimate goal or desirable tactics are a sign of vitality and a source of strength. By carving out political space for themselves, extremists manoeuvre moderate proponents of the same progressive viewpoint into an advantageous political position within the wider society. The moderates emerge as the voice of compromise and reason, because the extremists have influenced the spectrum of political debate, shifting it to a point where less radical versions of the challenging viewpoint seem reasonable – so reforms are conceded.

**Lessons From the Past**

Women in Britain did not get the vote by asking nicely. They tried that for years and got nowhere. Then the Suffragettes within the broader campaign for female enfranchisement turned to direct action and refused to be bound by laws women had no part in making. This monstrous regimen of women was condemned for its tactics; but its polarising effect was to strengthen the position of those who argued politely within the mainstream political parties for votes for women, resulting in Reform Acts in 1918 and 1928. In Australia, victories against conscription in referenda in 1916 and 1917 were achieved not just by simple anti-conscriptionists but also by radicals who opposed militarism outright and engaged in confronting behaviour to wage war against war. Though annoying to many anti-conscriptionists, the extreme anti-militarists helped the anti-conscription position emerge as the moderate and reasonable compromise that could attract majority support. The people of India did not gain national independence without a mass movement of civil disobedience, tactics decried by the rich and powerful worldwide. Gandhi’s non-violent direct action methods were adopted, wisely, by the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s.

The civil rights movement achieved reforms because it dared to dream of complete racial equality and physically challenged segregation. Rebellious actions by many brave African Americans, such as Rosa Parks’ refusal to move from the whites-only section of a bus, were crucial in achieving a small, formal part of the dream expressed so movingly by Martin Luther King. Herbert Haines’ examination of the civil rights movement concludes its achievements were brought about because it demanded so much more. In response to the challenge posed by its ‘radical flank’, the civil rights movement mainstream was buttressed financially and politically by institutions of government and civil society; and significant policy reforms were enacted (Haines 1988).

**The ‘Radical Flank Effect’**

Growing out of Haines’ study of the American civil rights movement, political scientists developed the concept of the ‘radical flank effect’ to explain the phenomenon whereby extremism brings reforms more effectively than those less extreme are able to achieve alone. In certain circumstances, the existence of a ‘radical flank’, threatening to authorities, undermines public tolerance for the movement as a whole, making it easier for its enemies to portray it as undesirable, enabling authorities to repress the entire movement, not just its radical wing. Mostly, however, existence of a ‘radical flank’ ensures that the forces of order take the movement more seriously, often...
making concessions. ‘The moderate flank’, according to Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper, ‘can present itself as a reasonable compromise partner, so that authorities give it power in order to undercut the radicals (although the moderates must distance themselves from the radicals to garner these benefits). If nothing else, radical flanks, by creating a perception of crisis, often focus public attention on a new set of issues and a new movement’ (Goodwin and Jasper 2009: 411).

This argument in no way downplays the importance of moderates within any broader movement, for example, the ‘femocrat’ ‘sisters in suits’ of second-wave feminism. Crucial to the ‘radical flank’ hypothesis is the existence of a ‘moderate flank’ with strength on its own terms. This was certainly true of the anti-conscription movement during the Great War, with its rich panoply of groups such as the Women’s Peace Army, the No Conscription Fellowship, the ACTU Anti-Conscription Alliance and Irish Australian organisations. Their contribution in persuading Australians to oppose conscription was immense, but the cause was aided greatly by a more extreme movement that drew the wrath of reactionaries and whose very existence positioned the anti-conscriptionist argument as the middle ground. Disputes between extremists and moderates are often as helpful in securing reforms as their collaboration.

**Australian Social Movements in the Past Half Century**

Though unaware of Haines’ research, I came to similar conclusions in my first book-length study of Australian social movements from the 1960s to the 1990s: their gains were achieved not by moderate and respectable means, but by militant and disrespectful activity:

It has been the more implacable, more truly oppositional sections of these movements that have destabilised the prevailing bases of power and challenged conservative ideological certainties to the point where the consensual mechanisms of capitalist democracy accede to the more moderate demands of other sections of the same movement. In making these liberal concessions, the system protects itself from political developments considerably more dangerous: it reforms and modernises itself and, at the same time, raises the political profile of the least threatening sections of the social movements (Burgmann 1993: 262).

For example, the ending of conscription for Vietnam was not achieved simply by the Whitlam Labor Government but by those who shifted public opinion by broadening the spectrum of debate: law-breaking draft-dodgers, Save Our Sons militants who also faced jail, Monash students collecting money for the Viet-Cong. The Gurindji strike and walk-off in 1967 and the confrontationist Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House from 1972 prompted the first land rights legislation: polite petitions from indigenous communities and organisations over the previous decades had been ignored. Homosexual law reform is often attributed to forward-thinking political leaders such as South Australian Premier Don Dunstan, but it would not have happened without years of homosexual liberation protests at a time when police repression was severe: brave activists coming out on national television, publicly confronting problematic psychiatrists and conservative clerics, and laying themselves on the line on the very first Mardi Gras demonstration in 1978. In 1982-3, the Franklin River in Tasmania was saved from damming by worksite blockades: protesters chaining themselves to equipment, drawing attention to the issue, persuading the public and pressuring the incoming Hawke Labor Government to intervene in defence of the river.

The example of the Suffragettes has already been invoked. During the ‘second-wave’ of feminism from the late 1960s, it was the ‘bra-burning’ women’s liberationists, demanding complete sexual equality and being confrontational on the streets, who frightened governments into passing legislation to mitigate the effects of sexism. Important reforms such as laws promoting equality of opportunity in education and employment, outlawing discrimination on grounds of sex, and providing funding for child-care were enacted in many countries in response to a vigorous women’s movement demanding considerably more: an end to patriarchy. In Australia many ‘femocrats’ believed such achievements were theirs, but their entry into the corridors of power occurred due to the movement on the ground that unsettled patriarchal complacency, because it was demanding much more than these reforms, significant though these have been.

A spectacular example of extremism bringing valuable reforms is the green bans movement. Between 1970 and 1975, builders labourers, mostly in Sydney, insisted on exercising a social responsibility for their own labour. Collectively, they withdrew their labour from projects that were environmentally damaging or socially irresponsible. For example, they refused to tear down the oldest buildings in the country, in the Rocks, and to replace them with the concrete and glass skyscrapers the developers and the corrupt Askin Government thought were a grand idea for the area. They declined to build a car-park for the Opera House in the Botanic Gardens, which would have killed the ancient fig trees. They would not build on Kelly’s Bush on the harbour foreshore, where a developer wanted to turn a public reserve into luxury apartments for the super-rich. More than 40 green bans were imposed, protecting whole neighbourhoods or significant individual sites, preventing five billion dollars of ‘development’ at mid-70s prices. To avoid the challenge and chaos of green bans in future, state and federal governments...
initiated or improved legislation to ensure more socially responsive and ecologically responsible planning and development; and the culture of urban planning was similarly transformed. Extreme industrial action achieved long-term reforms.

The Unpredictable Can Happen: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Notwithstanding the importance of being extreme, social movement action might encounter unexpected setbacks. The fate of the anti-globalisation movement – or anti-capitalist or anti-corporate movement – is a prime example. Its achievements were real but short-lived, due to repression and reaction in the wake of 9/11. ‘Human Need not Corporate Greed’ and ‘Another World is Possible’ were the anti-capitalist movement’s principal slogans. The extremism of this movement was apparent not only in its rhetoric but also in its ‘summit-hopping’ strategy of blockading the citadels of corporate power, which helped anti-capitalism become a politically effective social movement for several years around the turn of the millennium.

Important transnational institutions — the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Economic Forum (WEF) and GO8— responded to the challenge of anti-capitalist extremists, who had created a serious public relations problem for these institutions, coyly termed a ‘legitimation deficit’ by political scientists. Disconcerted by demonstrators contesting the consequences of their decision-making, these institutions sought to make strategic compromises to assuage the protest movement.

In response to ‘dramatic public explosions against neoliberal globalism’, according to James Goodman, the WEF became an advocate of ‘globalisation with a human face’ (Goodman 2000: 45-47). On 23 July 2001, the meeting of the GO8 in Genoa issued a press release which deplored the anti-capitalist protests and pledged to do more to ensure the world’s poor shared in the benefits of globalisation. Without huge protests to deplore, there would be no promises to the poor. International magazine Marketing reported on 30 August 2001: ‘Even the IMF and World Bank have agreed to meet with anti-globalisation activists.’ The World Bank conceded that many of its neoliberal policies had exacerbated poverty and dedicated itself to eliminating poverty. World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz stated in 2002:

"Without anti-capitalist utopians to destabilise transnational corporate institutions and unsettle their proponents, there would have been no reform movement.

If 9/11 had not closed the ranks of corporate globalisers and effectively re-stabilised the capitalist world order, more might have been achieved. In a brief space of time the anti-capitalist movement, like many social movements before and since, showed that reforms are more likely to be achieved when a social movement demands a different, better future, especially if such utopianism is expressed in actively confrontationist ways.

Some Final Comments

The impact upon the WTO of the summit-hopping strategy was felt immediately – during the Battle of Seattle in late 1999. With a state of civic emergency declared, a 7pm curfew imposed and demonstrators kept down with bullets and tear gas, this action in the streets stiffened the resolve of the African delegates inside the WTO, according to Jeff St Clair, ‘They refused to buckle to US demands and coaxing. They hung together and the talks collapsed’ (St Clair 1999: 96).

Extremists reinforce the convictions of moderates. They keep moderates focused on achieving reforms, to justify their seats at the table or positions within the corridors of power. For instance, ‘femocrats’ felt answerable to the broader women’s movement – so long as it maintained its rage.

Speaking at an National Tertiary Education Union Climate Change Forum in Melbourne on 28 April 2011, federal Greens MP, Adam Bandt, argued that the bargaining power of progressive reformers working from above is strengthened by a loud and angry social movement acting from below. He pointed out it would be much easier for the Greens to extract adequate carbon pricing legislation from the Gillard Labor government if there were thousands on the streets regularly and vociferously protesting for $70 tonne, as a counterweight to Gina Rinehart and Clive Palmer pleading for no price at all. Lack of militant direct action weakens the position of reformers within institutions. Constant radicalism is the price of progress.

References


A Message from Our Ancestors

What is it that keeps repeating itself, that stays
bivouacked beneath the skin through all our body’s orogenies?

It’s something that flitters in the gills now hardened to malleus and incus
tapping out the world’s music against the miniature stapes
that tiniest of tuning forks that sings the thousand songs
along the corridors of our brain.

It’s something that rapid-fires the memories of the now-extinct through our skeleton’s kindling
the smoke unwinding behind our eyes when we rage or grieve or lust.

It’s the opposite of an echo: a sound that folds in and in on itself, till it’s only the stifled moan
of the things we do not know we know, the things that we find

hunkered, muttering, in the dank caves of our brain.

STEVIE EVANS,
ADELAIDE, SA

ALISON FLETT,
KARUNA LAND, ADELAIDE, SA

Refugee Train

The open rail trucks reach the border just after dawn. They have travelled all night, hauled behind the ancient locomotive. Eleven trucks, each jammed with hundreds of people shoulder to shoulder, tight as toy soldiers in a presentation box. The weaker ones are out of sight dead or dying at the others’ feet.

The real soldiers are standing in dark uniforms on the rubble beside the tracks, their rifles loose in the cradle of their arms held like small children sleeping— these the men who, in an hour, will turn them back.

STEVE EVANS,
ADELAIDE, SA

Author

Verity Burgmann FASSA is Adjunct Professor in Social Sciences at Monash University and Director of the ‘Reason In Revolt’ website at www.reasoninrevolt.net.au, a digitized record of Australian radical activism. Until 2013, she was Professor of Political Science at the University of Melbourne. Amongst other research projects, she is author of numerous studies of social movements in Australia and internationally, including Power and Protest (1993); Green Bans, Red Union (1998, 2017); Unions and the Environment (2002); Power, Profit and Protest (2003); Climate Politics and the Climate Movement in Australia (2012) and Globalization and Labour in the Twenty-First Century (2016).

In the first issue of *Social Alternatives*, Jon Stanford and I complained that the economic crisis then emerging (unemployment and inflation, signalling the end of the long postwar boom) was driven more by policy mistakes, institutional belligerence and political error than by global forces over which Australia had insufficient domestic or deliberative control. Over the ensuing four decades, I haven’t altered my diagnosis much; although it does need to be augmented now to reflect my realisation that ideas and analyses are insufficient for policy critique. Problems that had well-discussed solutions then have continued, unnecessarily, to foment, while the discursive environment has worsened commensurately, contaminating clarity of thought and locking-in ineffective politics almost everywhere. In this 40-year commemoration, I document my engagement with the hopes and disappointments of an era.

*Social Alternatives* continued to document sporadically my increasing disillusionment with the politics of economic policy in Australia (and consequently with politics generally; see my 2017 contribution). The optimism some of us originally peddled around the mid-1970s had been occasioned by a widespread hopefulness in the Australian polity at the time, as well as, more importantly, by the promise of uncommon conceptual understandings – those that had been referred to as the post-Keynesian critique and reconstruction of economic theory – and which seemed then to be consolidating. Specifically, we knew that slumps in production and employment could be alleviated (not eliminated) by diligent injections of new investment (if necessary by the state) to counter the loss of industry such as occurs during all cycles of economic activity. We suspected, but perhaps didn’t emphasise enough, that something more analytically confronting and more intellectually intractable was threatening to undermine our policy proposals. We also understood that the post-1974 inflation, socially divisive and economically destructive as it was, could be countered by intelligent public control over income distribution – particularly as Australia already had comprehensive and effective mechanisms for wage regulation (known for almost a century as the centralised arbitration system). Confidence in the polity’s capacity to achieve diverse objectives, and to some extent democratise economic governance, was based on a belief – unjustified – that lessons had been learned from the errors of the 1930s, and that realignments in Australian politics – associated first with Whitlam then later with Hawke – would be principled and informed enough to do what could be done to effect reasonably expected promises (full employment without inflation).

Before 1974, my own encounters with political economy had been shaped by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy’s popular *Monopoly Capital* (1966). For the next decade debates around this book set the tone for much leftist (that is, both Marxist and reformist) discourse on capitalism and problems in the advanced western economies (inequality, unemployment, stagnationist tendencies, class biases). The times encouraged us to understand Marx’s political economy as a guide to post-1945 capitalism and, to this end, Paul Sweezy’s earlier work (*The Theory of Capitalist Development* 1942) has proven permanently valuable. Radical appropriations of the Baran and Sweezy theses appeared fairly quickly, particularly Paul Mattick’s *Marx and Keynes: The limits of mixed economy* (1969) and David Horowitz’s *The Fate of Midas* (1973). The latter author subsequently turned against Marxism, but at the time these two volumes piqued my life-long interest in (a) crisis tendencies and (b) what could be done about them. Both accepted the key tenets of the Marxist worldview; and both were surprisingly conciliatory towards the (apparently) more mild-mannered and moralistic Keynesian critique of market economies. The scope for disagreement here is immediately apparent: orthodox traditions denied there were enduring crisis tendencies, citing the spreading affluence associated with the long postwar boom; while many Marxists wanted to maintain that, as the state and politics were domains established to legally facilitate and protect capital’s defining conditions (private property, market mechanisms, commodified production, undemocratic control of production etc.), no voluntarist political activity (by political parties or unions, for example) would be able to achieve lasting successes. Controversy still centres on the extent to which the state in a capitalist society was a capitalist state, as Marxism seemed to suggest. Almost wholly unremarked was the
bloody-mindedness that has played so vicious a role in recent times.

For Mattick and Horowitz a key conceptual conundrum was whether room existed for a fusion of Marxian and Keynesian approaches to understanding (and managing) capitalism. Marxism and Keynesianism seemed jointly to affirm the recurrent classical proposition that capitalism would always be bedevilled by the difficulty of ensuring high employment. But conventional interest in ‘counter-cyclical’ policy gradually dissolved, and Keynes came to be regarded by liberal economists as an interventionist with decreasing relevance. For much of Marxism, the ‘Keynesian revolution’ was a sideshow whose effect would be mainly to prop up capitalist economies in bad times, imparting an aura of improvability without disrupting either longterm inequities or the naivety of reformists’ efforts.

I still regret that I did not pursue these overlaps and disparities, their causes and implications, more comprehensively in Social Alternatives over the years. The full potential of a more Keynesian Marxism, or of a more Marxian Keynesianism, has not been well investigated. Under different categorisations, the issues do, nonetheless, frame controversy in political economy and social science generally, as for the past two centuries – since the disciplines’ emergence. Many of the most significant disputes have never been resolved.

The Keynesian critique of orthodoxy was that market economies did not guarantee full employment, nor optimal use of resources, nor rational allocation of finance to productive activity. Together these failings implied that capitalism does not ensure wealth creation in accordance with available technical capacities. While the central claim of the market theorists is that capitalism gets the job done, the Keynesians have been able to retort it doesn’t do this as well as it should. Post-Keynesianism is really an attempt to reconcile the analyses and policy implications of Marxian and Keynesian political economy. From the former comes the major attempt to identify underlying non-volitional aspects of modern economies which nonetheless can be said to cause the disruptions that orthodox analysis denies. From the latter comes a more detailed understanding of why private control of an economy is so disruptive – because fluctuations in investment (and its decision-making protocols) cause fluctuations in everything else (production, employment, incomes, living standards, even in state capacity and the milieu of policy intervention).

Anticipating a pregnant theme in post-Keynesian political economy, Mattick and Horowitz separately saw in Marxism and Keynesianism an intersecting endorsement of overproduction and underconsumption – key components of the boom-bust cycle – as well as of unemployment and underdevelopment – key checks to liberals’ hubris in an otherwise affluent world. Today the global economy is characterised by excess capacity in almost every industry – a conundrum that undermines orthodoxy’s insistence on scarcity as the universal problem for humanity. Even without the financial crisis of the 2000s, the Keynesian proposition that private investment is chronically unable to guarantee public affluence or productive deployment has been one that is difficult to dismiss. The stagflation of the decades after 1974 as well as the bias today in favour of consumption at the expense of investment (revealed by infrastructure shortfalls in almost every sector almost everywhere) together point to a host of unsettled political dilemmas to whose clarification Marxian and Keynesian analyses can contribute.

Mattick and Horowitz, in my view, introduced a strand of Marxist theorising that was far less dismissive of reformist politics than radicalism had typically favoured. And since then, contemporary political economy was becoming more and more receptive to the conclusion that politics and purposeful public institutions mattered for capitalism’s successes and failures. The emerging convergence between Marxism and Keynesianism of course remains intellectually contentious for reasons that can be readily imagined, but disputation has been intensified by the increasing prominence of comparative analysis of economic performances and an institutionalism that has been inspired explicitly by sociology. This intellectual momentum has forced subscribers to historical materialism and political economy generally to confront an issue they had long been inclined to deny: the idea that contrived or deliberated activity (the essence of all politics) is not only possible, but unavoidable.

Such claims had prevailed, at least putatively, in the work of Thorstein Veblen, Karl Polanyi, Joseph Schumpeter, economic sociologists such as Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, in what was becoming known as the ‘social economy’ tradition (previously Christian social thought), the ‘historical school’ tradition in Germany and Britain (Adolph Wagner, Gustav Schmoller, Arnold Toynbee) and among mercantilist-protectionists across the centuries from Giovanni Botero in the sixteenth century to Friedrich List in the nineteenth. Together these more-or-less compatible types of analysis are now labelled heterodox political economy – that is, methodologically compatible, disdaining prioritisation of rationalist and formalist assumptions about human motivations, despite occasionally varying political emphases. (I attempted to draw attention to these strands of heterodoxy in 2004, and, with Howard Guille, I attempted to note briefly their force and contemporary attractiveness in Social Alternatives in 2011.)

Notwithstanding longstanding challenges to mainstream Economics, a further thorn in its side was being honed by John Kenneth Galbraith. His The Affluent Society
(originally 1958) and The New Industrial State (1967) together spawned an institutionalist critique of modern economic success – drawing attention to the potential for advertising to corrupt genuine consumer sentiment and for large corporations to corrupt the idea that suppliers would normally be responsive to consumer preferences. Galbraith's writing was as insightful and as sardonic as John Maynard Keynes's – both witty and acerbic and impertinent in their critiques of prosperity. And they had an antipodean equivalent in Ted Wheelwright's contribution to that original 1977 issue of Social Alternatives, something continued by Frank Stilwell into this century (2009, not to mention in the 80 issues of the Journal of Australian Political Economy).

It was not until the late 1980s (and the premature abandonment of what we had thought to be firm official commitment to much lauded new tripartite political institutions of economic management) that I came to appreciate that the custodians of policy prudence were more concerned with conforming to the juggernaut of international liberalism than with nudging Australian statist in the direction of enhanced competence and independence. Despite the 'revolution' associated with his name, what Keynes had called the powerful 'ideas of economists' – in Australia and elsewhere – discouraged the required increases in state capacity, though the polity should have been potent enough to resist. Our official institutions (the Treasury, the Reserve Bank and key parts of the federal and state bureaucracies) remained so Machiavellian and were so successful in narrowing policy ambitions (especially industrial relations experiments) that early forays into economic rationalism were immediately effective.

Of course, 'new' economic dislocations, among them those associated with globalisation (of production, trade, finance and management), were being registered, however, the typical policy response was resort to orthodox liberalism. Hence, alternative traditions of enquiry and strategy were being systematically dismantled or ignored, so that critical understanding of the issues themselves was superseded by an often-unspoken but still intransigent view that unconventional 'solutions' were impossible. The structural changes (industrial decline and relocation) that began in the mid-1970s exemplified rather than negated Marxian political economy (as Sweezy's chapters on crises immediately show). Marxism has often been regarded as the antithesis of Keynesianism, thanks to the priority accorded to structural limitations on politics in the former, and a propensity for naive optimism in the latter. However, whenever they addressed the same issues (internally-generated tendencies to sectoral disruption and systemic crisis), Marxism and Keynesianism usually reached similar conclusions ('adjectives excepted', adds Geoff Harcourt 2012: 24, 132). In fact, in one respect, it may be claimed that Keynes was more radical than Marx – calling in 1936 for a ‘socialisation’ of investment and thereby acknowledging the radical uncertainty at the heart of any capitalist economy. Simply, capitalists can never be certain that their profit expectations will be realised; the possibility of under- or over-investment never evaporates; instability is endemic.

By its peak, twentieth century Marxism could claim dominance of critical social science; however, conundrums persisted. For me, these concerned not difficulties over the labour theory of value or the meaning of revolution or the specification of crisis tendencies; they were and remain methodological. Marxism's reluctance to deal with them is one it shares with all forms of historical materialism including orthodox liberal Economics. The materialist conception of history biases orthodox and radical political economy equally towards presumptions that endorse and re-endorse political impotence. Yet, as the heterodox traditions mentioned above have contended, neither reality nor human morality is well served by such austere choices; abstract and essentialist and formalist and deductive bases for knowledge need to yield (eventually) to more empirical and historical and intuitive and deductive methods. Marxism always claimed an awareness that the structural aspects of capitalism could be mediated by human decisions; but its practice very, very often belied this, presupposing that the logic of accumulation would normally determine the history, the actual course, of capital accumulation.

It has been the 'non-economistic' economists (often historians and economic sociologists) who have understood that this is not so. Since its zenith in the 1890s, the respectability of interdisciplinarity in economic thinking has waned, at least in the Anglophone world. But its great advocates (mentioned above) were responsible also for a methodological distinctiveness that should be revived (perhaps by Social Alternatives, as I suggested in 2013 and as Paul Boreham and I hoped in 1979)!

The connection between Keynes the Cambridge economist and his accomplices in the Bloomsbury group is instructive. Keynes's father, also an economist, insisted that political economy would discredit itself if it did not understand that its subject matter was not universal. Wherever economic activity depended on institutions, empirical methods were to be preferred. 'If pure induction is inadequate, pure deduction is equally inadequate' he concluded in The Scope and Method of Political Economy (1890: 172). In London such inferences became de rigueur. Virginia Woolf in literature, Lytton Strachey in opinionated biographical essays and Roger Fry in art history all concurred that verisimilitude was less important than presentation of ‘infinite complexity’ in the derivation of reliable knowledge. Keynes himself, as early as 1905, had decided that intellect should foster genius in analysis.
and genius in intuition – so that they could constrain and guide each other (Mini 1991 ch.3).

The expansion of politics, as experienced throughout the twentieth century (and since) has included state efforts to ‘manage’ the economy (through institutions and policies), state attempts to ensure and hasten accumulation (industry policy), state policies to manage income distribution (in Australia, complex wage fixation mechanisms), state policies which ‘decommodify’ (welfare state provision), state development of public enterprise (with distinctive political responsibilities) to create or increase non-market demand, and state sponsorship of non-market auspices for economic development (infrastructure provision, subsidies etc). These all involve policy and, being political, cannot be specified abstractly. They imply an anti-rationalist method and an anti-liberal disposition. Market mechanisms do not provide norms for economic behaviour – and so the normally postulated motivations for market behaviour do not necessarily need to be respected.

Neither do they help explain actual problems for capital. A main reason why capital is unable to behave rationally is that irrespective of business’s knowledge of its environment the structural relationships between different sectors of a developed economy are produced by forces far removed from the general level of activity or from demand conditions elsewhere. Rather, where some capital goods-producing sectors’ output becomes the input for another sector, the requirements of particular industries become complex (more organisational, more problems of construction and engineering than of allocation) and unrelated to resource scarcity. Such features of an advanced economy can be derived from either Marxian or Keynesian reasoning and have given rise to the term ‘disequilibrium economics’ to describe the main preoccupations of, say, post-Keynesianism.

Paul Sweezy was among the first Anglo-American Marxists to deal with these causes of cycles, crises, breakdown, disproportionality, excess (or under-) capacity and imbalance; in Australia one of his main followers has been Joseph Halevi whose discussions explain why disjunction and depression can become chronic in advanced capitalism (1992). With factors such as these in play, it is obvious that transitions between one structure of industry and its successor constitute the primary phenomenon to be addressed. Reaching full employment is perhaps possible; but remaining there more than momentarily is probably not. The Keynesian full employment project will be never-ending, never completed. Post-Keynesianism therefore depicts modern economies as ‘abnormal’ most of the time – to such an extent that considerations of disturbance, and recovery from disruptive events, may now be said to define this particular strand of heterodoxy. Stability is unlikely and the task of discovering or forging employment-generating ‘solutions’ to persistent stagnationist tendencies will be unending, every ‘solution’ a new beginning.

The task ahead, for both activists and thinkers, will continue to be daunting and, without redoubled efforts, as likely to fail as to succeed. I hope Social Alternatives can shunt us towards the latter.

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Author
As the article itself indicates, Geoff Dow taught and researched political economy at Griffith University and the University of Queensland over the past four to five decades. He has long argued that interchange between diverse forms of heterodoxy (including post-Keynesianism) and more radical strands of intellectual enquiry (including Marxism) is necessary to supplant the current impasse in and hollowing-out of politics. To this end, interdisciplinary open-mindedness should be re-instated in our universities.

Social Alternatives Vol. 37 No 2, 2018 17
The very name, Social Alternatives, implies that something is wrong, that change needs to be made. The journal emerged shortly after a political crisis in 1975 that destroyed not only any sensible reading of the Australian Constitution, but also undermined people’s faith in the electoral system as a means of allowing fair representation of the people’s interests. The details of the crisis have been worked over many times, and the ludicrous circumstances that allowed the non-elected highest official of the land to stomp into the realm of politics and destroy the votes of the people in the previous (1974) general elections are plain to see.

The only reasonable conclusion one could draw from the whole affair was that just one side of politics, led by the Liberal-Country (National) Party Coalition, was legitimate to rule, and that they would do ‘whatever it takes’ to stay in office, as Nationals’ leaders Doug Anthony and Ian Sinclair repeated endlessly in public. In purely institutional terms, they cared nothing for the erosion of constitutional government. But equally sinister is the mode of politics that they entrenched, and continue to impose to this day.

The crisis put Australian society in a turmoil. One could think that in many another democratic country the place would erupt in industrial chaos, if not in open rebellion. Take Paris in 1968, for example. The uprising of students and workers changed the whole outlook on how politics is done. In Australia the trade unions were ready for a big fight, but the president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, secretly an aspiring politician, told them to go home and contest at the ballot box. It now has come to light that Hawke may have been thinking of his own long-term plan to become prime minister; docility would surely put Whitlam quietly aside.

The 1975 political crisis left the progressive side of politics in disarray, if not abject despair. The Labor Party took on the criticisms that the conservative side had hurled at Whitlam, and wore the stigma that Labor could not manage the economy. Labor leaders like Hawke and Neville Wran sharply distanced themselves from Whitlam. There is no doubt that Whitlam had had budgetary problems, but that should not have been a call for Labor to adopt the Coalition formulas, largely dictated by the powerful corporations, for economic management. In office as prime minister from 1983, Hawke announced himself as ‘the high priest of consensus’, and was determined to reconcile labour demands to business interests. He fashioned an ‘Accord’ between labour and government by trading wage restraint in return for an improved ‘social wage’. Part of the social program entailed reviving Whitlam’s public health scheme that had been dismantled by the usurper, Fraser. Hawke also improved the lot of poorer families with children, and widened the scope of superannuation schemes for the benefit of lower paid workers.

The other side of Hawke’s program materially opened the way for the expansion of capitalist control over the economy. The conservative opposition were overjoyed when Hawke introduced congenial policies that they had not had the courage to introduce when they were in office. Floating the Australian dollar and implementing financial deregulation were Liberal-National policies. The privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank was a patent disaster, as were the selling off of telecommunications, the QANTAS airline, and the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories. American political scientist, Benjamin Barber, has pronounced ‘privatization’ to be the death of democracy. Whitlam had run into trouble with a major cut to tariffs, but Hawke pursued the policy perhaps more astutely, opening up the Australian economy to competition in a world ‘that does not owe us a living’. It also gave away important levers that Australian governments had had on the economy. Hawke himself numbered wealthy magnates among his closest friends, and it is little wonder that Howard now presumes to pronounce Hawke ‘Labor’s best prime minister’.

The underlying factor is inequality, growing exponentially by the day. The ideology behind it is called neo-liberalism. Its foundation may be traced back to the monetarist recommendations of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, and the shoals of American agitators who have fought to roll back the democratic impulses projected by the Roosevelt administration. The neo-liberals claim to promote individual freedom, by eliminating virtually all
collective, that is government-sponsored, action except ‘homeland security’ and defence (both lucrative sources of transferring public moneys into private hands). Since democracy has classically implied giving effect to the collective will of the people, it is crucially an attack on democracy. In the United States it was argued that democracy would be safer in the hands of elites, and the more apathetic the bulk of citizens were, the more effective the system would be. They happily turned the meaning of democracy on its head: simply, elites compete for the people’s vote.

International capital spread the neo-liberal word around the world, and called it cosmopolitanism. Massive transnational corporations and vast monetary funds were called cosmopolitan. Now here is another concept that has been stood on its head. Once cosmopolitanism meant a community embracing the whole world – something that could not really be envisaged. Yet, beginning with Diogenes’s calling himself a cosmopolites, a citizen of the world, the subsequent Stoic philosophy expanded the idea into the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humankind. It embraced radical equality of all people, and, although the poor are always with us, it absorbed the Athenian ideal that there is no shame in being poor, but it is shameful not to join the fight against poverty.

Now the ‘traditional rulers of Australia’ – not the Aboriginal peoples but the conservative (neo-liberal) politicians in the Coalition, ‘born to rule’ – care little for the poor in our community. In fact, they perpetually treat them with contempt. To be out of work is a personal failure. They repeatedly denounce the laziness of those who fail to obtain work, and launch sustained assaults on ‘dole cheats’, as though this applies to all people out of work, while piously turning a blind eye to wealthy tax cheats. They call welfare recipients ‘leaners’, while their friends among the massive financiers, who have probably never lifted anything, are called ‘lifters’. They can only see support for the disadvantaged as a problem of deficit budgeting, and the poor are often the first to have their payments squeezed. They proclaim that the best form of welfare is a job, although they do little to help raise the level of payment for the employed, since the ‘living wage’ was long ago abandoned. At the height of insolence, the multi-million-dollar prime minister attacks welfare policy proposals as ‘the politics of envy’. Surely, it is only right that others should envy his privilege!

The conservative politician’s attitude is reflected in the opinions of the capitalists who support them. A prominent Australian entrepreneur, Gerry Harvey, is on the public record as saying that the abject poor do not count in our society. When asked whether his business would contribute to a charity to help the homeless, he replied that he would not contribute since he would not assist ‘a whole heap of no-hopers to survive for no good reason’. These people are ‘just a drag on the whole community’, and society would be better off without them. WRONG. In a democracy, they are the community, or at least a part of it, and it has been said that the character of a society is best assessed by how it treats its least advantaged people. Harvey might reflect that homelessness is part of the structural overhang of decades of maltreatment of our First Australians, while the ranks are also swelled by women fleeing domestic violence. As Pericles of Athens would have said, it is the shame of a society not to combat poverty within it.

Prime Minister Turnbull wishes to give massive tax cuts to the biggest companies acting in Australia, many of them transnational, and many of them contriving already to pay no tax at all. His proposal is a lethal threat to the Budget, yet he persists in the mantra that his bounty will provide the new jobs that will be ‘the best form of welfare’ for the unemployed. He is fully wedded to the market ideology, that the free interchange of goods and money in the marketplace is the sure guarantee of freedom for citizens. Yet his rhetoric takes no account of monopolies and oligopolies that conspire to distort the market interchange, even if the doubtful proposition that the free market provides personal freedom is acceptable. Yet the market produces winners and losers, and players enjoy the freedom to go broke. That of course is the proof of market efficiency, when businesses that cannot keep up are thrust out of the marketplace.

What the market ideology denies is that creation of wealth is a social product. While business leaders rail that public controls on their activities are red tape causing inefficiency, the idea that there could be a marketplace without basic rules of operation is unthinkable. The movement of population, the allocation of public lands, the growth of town centres, all have a profound influence on the success of players in the market. Land speculators may or may not have a town expand to enfold their semi-rural holdings, but they themselves have little influence on the process, and it is the dynamics of the community that ultimately makes the wealth. Yet the successful businessperson continues to boast of the fruits of enterprise. Meanwhile, the richest woman in Australia (with mainly inherited wealth) scolds the poor for not working hard enough to improve their lot. While the government boasts the creation of new jobs under its watch, with a 5.5 per cent unemployment rate in January 2018, there are still not enough jobs to go around; but who cares? Blame the jobless themselves for not repairing the economy. In any case, what are the real unemployment figures? They include large numbers of underemployed, part-time workers. The median Australian wage is a weekly $664.00. This is to say that work is not welfare, but the creation of a class of working poor.

Neo-liberalism has run riot in the United States. In the richest economy in the world, 15 per cent of its own
citizens live in dire poverty. Costs of health care are prohibitive except for the well off, and a Harvard medical study in 2009 discovered that about 45,000 Americans were dying each year from lack of health care. Swimming against the stream, some political writers condemn the current state of American ‘democracy’ outright. John Kenneth Galbraith recognised the trend some time ago. It was one thing to state plainly that the country was run by elites, but it is quite another to recognise that the ruling elites are either integrated into the industrial military complex that Eisenhower warned against, or are wholly beholden to it. Benjamin Barber, for example, has shown how citizens have been collapsed into consumers, and public squares have been replaced by private shopping malls where all activity is controlled by the owners. Galbraith’s son now says that the vaunted freedom of Americans has been reduced to the ‘freedom to shop’. The venerable teacher of political thought, Sheldon S. Wolin, in his last days exploded with indignation at what America had become. He found that freedom, and the constrictions of citizenship under covert direction from big business had become so severe that the United States was now languishing under a new form of totalitarian dictatorship. Unlike the dictatorships of the Second World War, the new regime subjected people to no individual person, but to a grinding complex of hidden authority and latent coercion. Australia is going the same way.

Of course, the struggle of democracy against oligarchic rule did not begin in the age of neo-liberalism. Democracy has always been a struggle against the powerful few, from its first days in the fifth century BC to today. It has always been the alternative. Democracy has always, ideally, been a system in motion. The Athenian democracy, despite some eminent mistakes, continued to enact measure to improve the lot of its ordinary inhabitants throughout its career. One could theorise the modern two-party representative democracy as the politics of dialectic. Ideally again, the parties ruling and being ruled in turn replace one another with new programs to improve the condition of the community. Traditionally, conservative parties find the best solutions in sticking to what already exists, while progressive parties seek real change for the better. A truly progressive party will first and foremost devise plans to improve the position of the most disadvantaged. The Alternative, therefore, would seem to fall to the lot of progressive parties.

As we have seen, progressive parties, or at least the parties of whom progress is most expected, can sometimes be regressive, as in the case of Hawke and Keating. Former Labor leader and ambassador, Kim Beazley, recently said that the Hawke Government, ‘for better or worse’, created modern Australia. Unfortunately, things are now worse than ever, in terms of the control over society of big, often foreign, capital, and the deterioration in the condition of Aboriginal peoples, asylum seekers, the unemployed, the underemployed, single parents and young people starting out with limited resources behind them. The final question is, what if democracy is successful in eliminating poverty and creating a respectable level of equality? What then of the alternative? We do not even have to accept the biblical ‘the poor you will always have with you’ to recognise at the least that ‘elites will always be with us’, manipulating power to create subordination of the many to their own private advantage. Social Alternatives will be needed for a long, long time.

Author

Graham Maddox FASSA is Professor Emeritus of Politics at the University of New England. His most recent books are: Stepping Up to the Plate: America, and Australian Democracy, Melbourne University Press, 2016; and The Rich Tradition of Republicanism, Pamphleteer, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016.

The Absquatulator

The absquatulator is restless as a sea,
seeking the next thing and the next,
breaking wave after breaking wave.

She sits next to exits, keeps watch on doors,
leaves early, looks always to be somewhere else,
thinks life is elsewhere but doesn’t know where.

Her aquamarine eyes skid skittishly
past your face, gaze beyond you searching
for another, someone to spirit her away.

She moves from lover to lover,
one after the other slipping through
her fingers, slipping out of her life,
like each promise momentarily held,
each gift, each season, each flickering thought,
each never to be answered question.

David Adès,
Castle Hill, NSW
Over the past 40 years Social Alternatives has played a key role in promoting critical scholarship, informed commentary and debate in Australia. It has done so through a variety of mediums such as scholarly articles, commentaries, poetry, cartoons and book reviews. Some of Australia’s leading progressive thinkers have contributed to the journal. I commend all those past and present participants – editors, writers, artists and others – who have helped advance the reputation of Social Alternatives as one of Australia’s leading progressive publications.

Here I’d like to focus on the two words that have for so long been emblazoned across the journal’s cover — ‘social’ and ‘alternatives’. Tellingly, the founders of the journal did not call it Economic or Political Alternatives. Social Alternatives has remained true to the view that the ‘social’ should not be subsumed under the ‘economic’, especially in the current era when everything is bottom-lined or reduced to a fiscal metric. The ‘social’ signifies a much broader appreciation of the world in which we live, embracing as it does all the other influences that impact on ecologies and everyday life.

Central to this conception is an appreciation of our complex interrelationship with each other, planet Earth and all the species and ecosystems that inhabit it. At its core, the social, especially when considered in light of the grave threat that is anthropogenic climate change, embraces a profoundly spiritual dimension that enfolds beliefs and practices common to Australia’s First Nations people.

The Wreckage of Disconnection

My argument - and it’s hardly novel - is that if we are to address and overcome the intersecting crises that confront us - social, economic, political, nuclear, climate - then we need a profoundly different sense of human consciousness - a quantum shift in collective consciousness - that recognises our complex interconnections with the planet and each other, and our innate tendency to altruism and the social. This characterisation runs counter to the rampant individualism and competitiveness advocated by followers of neoliberalism.

As noted by human rights lawyer Payam Achaean in his 2017 Massey Lectures, In Search of a Better World: A Human Rights Odyssey, ‘...we are not incorrigibly selfish and aggressive creatures ... there’s a duality to human nature, and ... the purpose of civilization is to unlock the potential that exists within us’. Our interdependence and sense of ‘oneness’ rather than othering, says Achaean, is not a new age extravaganza but rather a ‘hard and painful reality’ when considered in the context of the existential threats that face us.

Essentially, Achaean is suggesting an urgent and comprehensive rethinking of who we are and the steps necessary for creating a better world. The overarching ‘crises of disconnection’, as Tim Hollo of the Green Institute calls them – disconnection from ourselves, each other, and the planet – are of course deeply enmeshed in questions of power, interest and privilege, as well as the values and beliefs that underpin the current neoliberal order.

Without a significant shift in consciousness, and a leap toward a profoundly different way of doing things, we are facing a calamitous future in which extinction is a distinct possibility - an eventuality evidenced throughout the Earth’s history, as noted in Josephine Wilson’s latest work, Extinctions. What all this suggests is the need for engagement with generative, empowering social and political movements that ultimately can relieve us of the destructive structures of neoliberal capitalism.

The shift to alternatives is already underway and is manifested in new, localised, collaborative, cooperative, sharing and sustainable initiatives as well as in more inclusive and engaged forms of socio-political relationships that offer the prospect of real democratic participation (as articulated in ‘new democracy’ discourses). But, as George Monbiot argues in Out of the Wreckage, such alternatives need to be predicated on a story about us, or as Clive Hamilton has postulated in Defiant Earth, on what it means to be human in a complex interconnected world. What we’re talking about here is a rupture with the recent past, a past rooted in rapid industrial development, patriarchy, class warfare, colonisation and environmental destruction. It’s also a
departure from some of the values associated with the Enlightenment.

‘Man’ Over Nature

It was during this period of intellectual and political ferment, spanning the late 1600s to the early nineteenth century, that thinkers like Francis Bacon, René Descartes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, Adam Smith and others set forth the case for reason and religious tolerance. They did so in part to counter the excesses of theocratic rule which resulted in incalculable cruelties being inflicted upon tens of millions of people, especially women. For the proponents of the Enlightenment it was the rigours of scientific method, underpinned by rationalist assumptions about the world that would give rise to accumulated bodies of human knowledge deemed necessary for the good life.

And it was science-based truths rather than superstition or blind religious faith that would guide the human spirit. Knowledge production was celebrated in itself and found expression in Denis Diderot’s *Encyclopedia* – a treasure trove of human accomplishment that owed its existence more to faith in reason that any deity.

Not that religious faith was abandoned in favour of scientific method. Rather, the elevation of science as the arbiter of certain truths was, for many, a celebration of the universal order established by God. At the heart of both the Enlightenment and Judeo-Christian belief was the assumption that through the accomplishments of science and reason ‘man’ could master the world by taking control of its resources for the betterment of human kind.

From this perspective the Earth, endowed with endless riches and elemental powers, was regarded as a resource to be harnessed for human satisfaction and sustenance. Aesthetics and ecological concerns played second fiddle to the voracious demands of industrial development which utilised all that science could offer in the quest for ‘progress’.

When, toward the end of the eighteenth century, the early settlers arrived in Australia and began logging old forests and trammelling over Indigenous lands, as noted in Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu*, there was, generally speaking, little regard for conservation or a deep spiritual connection with the land. A profound sense of the unfamiliar coupled with harsh and inhospitable environments – made worse by destructive farming practices – led many settlers to lament their fate as they desperately sought to eke out a living. This instrumental approach to the environment – more than occasionally tempered by romantic imagery – has resonated down the centuries, leading to widespread land degradation and environmental destruction.

The persistence of the ‘man-over-nature’ paradigm is remarkable despite growing acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledges and critiques by environmentalists and others which, in a variety of ways, have blown apart many of its essential assumptions. Nonetheless, in addressing a gathering of Tasmanian loggers in May 2014, former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott congratulated his then Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, ‘who appreciates that the environment is meant for man and not just the other way around’.

This was preceded by remarks that appeared to laud ‘the forest’, not simply as ‘a place of beauty, but [as] a source of resources; of the ultimate renewable resource, of the ultimate biodegradable resource’. Abbott added that, ‘we will never build a strong economy by trashing our environment, but we will never help our environment by trashing the economy either’. Conspicuous by its absence in this part of the speech was any mention of the logging of old growth forest and the fact that activists had spent decades trying to prevent such destruction to ‘the forest’.

Abbott’s views were in many senses a celebration of the past, of an enduring connection with settlers whose supposed love of the environment was tempered by the practical realities of economy. Abbott’s speech was an attempt to re-centre loggers in a much bigger story about land, conquest, tradition and economy.

It’s a story that continues to resonate in the industrial practices of today’s extractive, farming and building industries which have contributed so greatly to the material wealth of this nation but also to the depletion and degradation of the environment. There is little or no sense here of the critical importance of ‘the forest’ in all its enduring complexity and wonder, and its essential role in preserving life on Earth.

Blessed Unrest

Despite the Abbotts of this world, things are changing, and changing rapidly. Growing public awareness of the harm caused by fossil fuel extractivism has, for example, led to a spike in clean energy investment and (to some extent) the ‘greening’ of many industrial sectors. Solar and wind farms, and various forms of energy democracy are evidence of a partial shift in the mindset of governments, private companies, and local communities. Yet while there is indeed a strong desire for change, a ‘blessed unrest’ and even a ‘great awakening’, it’s clearly not proceeding quickly enough given that we are witnessing even greater levels of CO₂ emissions and the allied despoliation of our environment.

Multinational corporations seem hellbent on profit maximisation at any cost, even if this means taking us to the very brink of environmental catastrophe. Despite
this, there is a real sense of change, some of which is reflected in public polls and surveys indicating growing public disillusionment with mainstream political parties, and with democracy itself.

While this has resulted in a shift to the political right in some countries, a phenomenon which I believe will be temporary once the bankruptcy of divisive politics is exposed, the more enduring spirit of change rests in those social movements that are seeking fundamental system change, not just a tinkering with the status quo. Recently, a host of books have appeared that give expression to this zeitgeist: from Rutgers Bregman’s *Utopia for Realists* and Naomi Klein’s *No Is Not Enough*, to *Post-capitalism* by Paul Mason, *Doughnut Economics* by Kate Raworth, and *Drawdown* by Paul Hawken. Many of the radical alternatives spelt out in these texts have been echoed in one of the most important manifestoes of recent times: The Leap Manifesto (which is reprinted at the end of Naomi Klein’s book).

**Leap!**

The manifesto derives from discussions involving NGOs, activist groups, academics and others. And although written largely for a Canadian audience, Leap is applicable worldwide. It sets out the urgency of the crises before us, and the values, ideas and policies that will inform rapid progressive change. Leap has attracted considerable global interest, some of it hostile – libertarians view it as a dangerous intrusion into the free market – while others regard it as the catalyst for informed hope. So, what comprises the key elements of this manifesto? Here are a few pointers:

- Respect the rights of the original caretakers of the land, and ensure compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous People
- End fossil fuel extraction and subsidies
- Promote localised energy democracy
- Promote a universal energy building program
- Build high speed rail
- Advance local and ecologically-based agricultural systems
- End all destructive trade deals
- Ensure immigration status
- Welcome refugees
- Ensure full protection for all workers
- Expand low carbon jobs – caregiving, teaching, social work, the arts, public interest media
- Introduce a universal basic annual income
- Introduce a financial transaction tax
- Increase the taxes on corporations and the wealthy
- Introduce a carbon tax
- Cut military spending
- Take corporate money out of political campaigns

These are just some of the suggestions for a progressive policy framework. There are other proposals too, like free health and education, more investment in social programs, a public banking system, affordable housing, the empowerment of women, and measures to confront what George Monbiot refers to as the ‘loneliness epidemic’. Yet questions remain, like what sort of state apparatus do we want or need? Do we need a military? How do we curb arms proliferation? These issues have yet to be worked out, along with the tactics and strategies necessary for promoting rapid change.

As one of the founders of the Leap Manifesto, Naomi Klein asserts it is not enough to simply say what we’re against. We have to be able to articulate some sense of what a post-neoliberal world might look like. We can’t just hit and hope. Above all, we need a movement that is capable of telling a persuasive story about a better future, as well as the practicalities of how to make this happen.

As activist academic Aidan Ricketts reminds us, this transformation should not be about blueprints or rigid programs, or a simple privileging of one ideology over another. Nor should it suggest the need for more demagogues, self-appointed leaders and proselytisers – we’ve had our fill of those! The transformation to a more just, peaceful and sustainable future will be part incremental, part revolutionary and part obsolescence and displacement. It won’t be easy, and it will at points mean confrontation with power at its most violent and ugly.

But there’s one thing upon which we can all agree: neoliberal capitalism is well past its sell-by date. Let’s hasten its demise.

**Author**

Dr Richard Hil is Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University, Gold Coast, Honorary Associate at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, and Convenor of the Ngara Institute. Richard’s publications are many and varied, including his last two books *Whackademia: An insider’s Account of the Troubled University*, published in 2013 by New South, and *Selling Students Short: Why You Won’t Get the University Education You Deserve*, published by Allen and Unwin in 2015. Richard is currently co-authoring *Fallujah – A People’s History*. 
A few years ago in 2010, Social Alternatives published my article ‘Rules for the Magic Pudding: Managing Lockyer groundwater’. I had just finished researching how to build consensus among landholders around water-sharing using the Lockyer (around Gatton) and the Lower Balonne (near St George and Dirranbandi) catchments as Australian case studies.

The ideal of fair water-sharing, simplistically, is to make sure water gets all the way down a river so that people and the environment get what they need and there is still enough to flow to the ocean. However, around the globe there are many instances of poor governance practices which create opportunities for ‘water grabbing’ by powerful actors while local livelihoods and the environment are negatively impacted. This results in inequitable sharing of costs and benefits (Mehta et al. 2012) and the risk of serious environmental damage. Upstream extraction affecting those downstream is of particular concern across boundaries, both between states within countries, and between countries. Only one-third of trans-boundary basins have treaties, basin commissions or other forms of cooperative arrangements which apply to shared water resources. Examples of rivers involved in contested rights and management, among others, include the Jordan, Tigris-Euphrates, Niger, and La Plata (UNEP 2006, and Rieu-Clarke and Loures 2009 in Baldwin 2017). In many cases, parochial decision-makers favour or defend their own constituents and infringements that are overlooked to secure their own political longevity rather than the public interest.

Enforcement and independent auditing of water use are central to fairness and justice considerations of ‘public interest’ in the allocation of the water that is vital to life and livelihoods. For instance, at times of water shortages, everyone has to cut down a bit to achieve that goal. If water has not been over-allocated through licencing and permitting, then a flexible system can ensure everyone proportionally reduces extraction, while sustaining an environmental flow. This requires good information with decisions arrived at through processes that result in fair outcomes that can be monitored.

One might argue that in a privileged democratic country such as Australia, we do have the means to ensure that fairness and justice underpin governance of water sharing. The Lockyer and the Lower Balonne catchments in the Murray-Darling (M-D) Basin provide a good example of the downstream-upstream and cross-boundary dilemma and the necessity for good governance practices that operate in the public interest.

A drought had hit both the Lockyer and Lower Balonne hard and farmers were doing it tough, unless they were ‘lucky’ enough to be at the top of their catchment and had a method of storing large amounts of water. I wrote about how in one area, the Lockyer, farmers were working on how to collaborate and co-manage the resource partly because they knew that sufficient water for all irrigators (big and small, in its many sub-catchments) would help the entire rural community to survive. However, in the Lower Balonne catchment at the top of the multi-state Murray-Darling system, irrigators and pastoralists were not talking to each other. At that time, water was being pumped into large private off-stream storages (dams) with low levees built to capture overland flow for intensive cotton irrigation. This prevented the river flowing downstream to nourish pastoral country in Queensland and northern New South Wales. Queensland irrigators stated that ‘it was wasteful to let water flow over the border’, and NSW landholders retorted that ‘the only water coming from Queensland was in XXXX’ (XXXX is a Brisbane-made beer).

The Queensland Government had actually contributed to the rift with a poor water planning process that ignored some basic principles and ground rules for negotiating a fair outcome. With the justification that supporting cotton would promote regional economic development to a greater extent than grazing, the government fostered a neo-liberal policy that privileged big industry at the expense of broader public interests (Parkins et al. 2016) with little regard to social and environmental effects.

Australia has some good (but not perfect) environmental and natural resource legislation. For the most part, the community should be assured that it can go about its daily business, knowing that decisions will be made in the public interest, and that existing laws will at least be enforced in spite of their imperfections. Investigations
into water rorting by irrigators in the Darling River system in NSW with alleged complicity of the NSW Government (Besser 2017), and misdemeanours in the upper reaches of Queensland Murray-Darling system illustrate that legislation and water planning (which had involved lengthy community engagement processes to seek consensus) are not enough. Enforcement and independent auditing are essential.

The National Water Initiative (NWI) 2004 committed the Australian States to reduce over-allocation and recognise the range of needs of water, for livelihood, for the environment, and for ‘other public benefits – mitigating pollution, public health (e.g. limiting noxious algal blooms), indigenous and cultural values, recreation, fisheries, tourism, navigation and amenity values’ (COAG 2004: 29). This is enacted through water planning as well as other measures, including market approaches.

In the NWI, ‘public benefit’ covers a broad range of community interests, and the Agreement specifies that statutory water plans need to give the same level of security to environmental and other public benefit outcomes as it does to consumptive uses (NWI 209, s. 35(i)). While the issue of public benefit versus private interest appears to be settled through water planning processes, the case of the Murray-Darling indicates it is not accepted in practice.

Most States have policy and legislation requiring elected officials and public administration to act in the public interest, yet ‘public interest’ is seldom defined and is left open to interpretation. ‘Big cotton’ and resource industries such as mining argue that development will bring badly needed regional employment to stem the flow of young people from the country to city, in the public interest ... but should this be at all costs? Land speculation and the construction industry rely on the argument that development brings jobs, in the public interest, in spite of housing affordability being a major issue in Australian cities. More evidence is needed of where the benefits accrue and disbenefits lie, and whether these arguments have basis in fact, but that is not the purpose of this article.

In order to seek guidance on what is in the public interest, principles of good governance might provide some insight. While these vary slightly depending on the source, in terms of natural resource management, Lockwood et al. (2010) have identified the following eight principles:

1) Legitimacy derived from authority, earned acceptance, and integrity and honesty (and lack of deception);
2) Transparency including accessibility to information and rationale for decisions made;
3) Accountability in terms of accepting responsibility for decisions but also compliance with regulatory requirements;
4) Inclusiveness through engagement and ongoing dialogue;
5) Fairness refers to respect of stakeholders’ views, independence and absence of personal bias in decision-making, and fair distribution of costs and benefits of decisions;
6) Integration – alignment of policy and recognition of connectivity across governance organisations to avoid duplication and efficient deployment of public resources;
7) Capability in terms of skills, leadership, knowledge; and
8) Adaptability – using new knowledge and learning to reflect on and incorporate into decision-making, as well as anticipation and management of threats, opportunities and risks.

A number of these principles are underpinned by the concept of fairness which can be applied to an analysis of M-D water management. To further clarify fairness, I refer to the Social Justice Framework, which describes three types of justice: procedural, distributinal, and interactional justice (Lukasiewicz and Baldwin 2017; Lukasiewicz 2017).

Procedural justice refers to the decision-making process itself and includes: a) representativeness – i.e. who is allowed to participate, or whose interests are included in the decision-making process; b) the level of power that participants have to affect the decision; and c) the process rules – the rules of the process that ensure fairness.

Distributive justice refers to how the resource benefits and costs are distributed or allocated, according to need, equity, self or public interest, and efficiency.

Interactional justice concerns the interpersonal relations between stakeholders and decision-makers such as mutual respect, recognition, truthfulness, propriety, and trust.

In the lower Balonne, government was not perceived as being impartial; some proponents had greater access to power and entitlements. Appointment of a non-neutral chair of the government water planning advisory committee, an irrigator, and terms of reference which made it difficult for graziers to participate, demonstrated bias. Regulations and avoiding scrutiny enabled infrastructure which led to inadequate distribution of costs and benefits. These were influenced by large corporations which maximised private gain to the
detriment of the environment and economic wellbeing of others. Interactional justice was so poor that graziers formally withdrew from a water planning process that they saw as biased, even though they knew their voices would not be heard (Baldwin 2017).

So, in this case of the upper Murray Darling system, public interest in terms of fairness and wellbeing of broader society were not met. Likewise, the environment and other public benefits required under the NWI were given low priority. Hence, this brings us back to compliance and independent auditing.

The National Water Commission (NWC) was established to oversee NWI water reforms, report on progress in every State and identify areas for improvement. Closed in its tenth year in late 2014, it made final recommendations that ‘Governments should not “mark their own scorecards” on water reform’ (NWC 2014: 4) – endorsing independent auditing. Since the NWC closure, the Productivity Commission (PC) has been given responsibility for triennial assessment, independent oversight, and public reporting of progress in water reform in achieving economic, social, and environmental outcomes. Its first final report on National Water Reform has not yet been released although the draft report commented on improving policy settings regarding environmental water management and extractive industries, among other things (PC 2017). The Murray Darling controversy prompted other action. The PC recently released a discussion paper to assist preparation of submissions to an inquiry to assess whether current associated State water resource plans, including those for monitoring, compliance, reporting and evaluation, are sufficient to achieve objectives of the plan (PC 2018). Whether this will result in fair outcomes in the public interest are as yet unknown.

Journals such as Social Alternatives have an important role to play, to raise questions and stimulate discussion about issues that apply across many fields – what is the ‘public interest’ and how can independent auditing ensure the publics’ interests are met?

References

Author
Claudia Baldwin, BA, MA (UW, Canada), PhD (UQ), Associate Professor teaches Regional and Urban Planning at University of the Sunshine Coast. Her research interests focus around engaging communities for change. She specialises in using participatory and visual methods to research institutional and social-environmental change on topics as diverse as water allocation, coastal planning, rural and regional land use, and climate change adaptation as well as affordable housing and ability and age-friendly communities. Her book, Integrated Water Planning: Achieving Sustainable Outcomes (2014) is based around the need for appropriate evidenced-based water planning in developed and developing countries. She did some work for the National Water Commission in evaluating progress towards water reforms in Australia.
Social Alternatives has been a focal point for progressive thought in Australia since its inception. Concerns with peace, equity and sustainability have been recurrent features. The need to continue with analysis and debate around these issues is obvious and ongoing. The events and processes currently reshaping the world around us, making it more liable to violence, inequality, and economic and environmental crisis, require our collective attention, analysis and activism.

Peace

Peace is the most fundamental requirement. It is more than seven decades since the last world war and the dropping of atomic bombs by the United States on Japanese cities. Yet warfare in different parts of the world has been almost perpetual ever since, sometimes caused by and nearly always exacerbated by the unhelpful involvement of the world’s ‘super-power’ nations. The current geo-political tensions evoke awesome fears of annihilation. Terrorism seems an ever-present fear. The power of the military industrial complex remains enormous.

Australia is, disturbingly, a player in all this. Successive Australian governments have kowtowed to US military might. Doing deals with the Trump Administration on refugee settlement and trade, in exchange for confirmations of our ‘security’ commitments, locks us further into the ‘deputy sheriff’ role. At a time when the sheriff is particularly narcissistic and unpredictable, this seems like a particularly bad idea. So too is the Turnbull Government’s appalling decision to use billions of public money to subsidise production and export of armaments from Australia. Meanwhile, ‘across the ditch’, Jacinda Adern’s Government is showing a more principled, independent and peaceable policy direction.

On a positive note, the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) last year was a wonderful morale boost for local peace activists. On an international scale, it adds to the moral authority and momentum of all who are pushing for the global Treaty to abolish nuclear weapons. Turnbull’s Government, not surprisingly, is opposed: indeed, Malcolm has not even seen fit to congratulate the Australians who founded the ICAN organisation in Melbourne on their magnificent Nobel Peace Prize award. Much political work is needed if a future Australian government is to sign the international Treaty and help to lead a movement to make it a reality.

My personal involvement in these issues is through the Council for Peace with Justice, the activist group associated with the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, and through the Evatt Foundation. The latter organisation tries to continue the leading role that Dr H.V. (‘Bert’) Evatt played in promoting peace and human rights. Evatt is, to this day, probably Australia’s most significant figure on the world stage. He was President of the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 when the UN Declaration of Human Rights was established. Later this year, the Evatt Foundation will be putting on events to commemorate 70 years since the Declaration. This may help to trigger debates about modern human rights issues. I hope it will also stimulate demands that Australia, rather than continuing to be deputy sheriff to the warmongering United States, should be a leading voice among the middle-sized and smaller nations concerned with peace. The latter role is what Evatt advocated and it is now even more appropriate and necessary.

Equity

The second set of challenges is almost as fundamental and currently particularly pressing. Inequalities of income and wealth have been growing significantly in almost all countries of the world during the last couple of decades. Some of the most populous poor nations, most obviously China and India, have made huge strides in economic development but have simultaneously seen massive increases in economic inequality. China now has more billionaires than any country other than the USA. Meanwhile, in the affluent nations, the incomes and accumulated wealth of the richest 1% of people has been soaring ever higher, capturing the lion’s share of the modest overall growth in income and wealth that has occurred since the onset of the Global Financial Crisis a
decade ago. Meanwhile, for the bulk of the people, wages have flat-lined, even provoking calls from the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia for policies that would boost wage incomes to stimulate growth in demand for goods and services. So what has been the Turnbull Government’s response? A push for corporate tax cuts, favouring ‘the big end of town’. Oh dear …

There is now abundant evidence on the economic, social and environmental costs of growing economic inequality. Societies in which there are huge gaps in living standards between rich and poor people tend to have more intense social conflicts, violence and crime. They also have higher incidence of social problems such as mental and physical ill-health, obesity, prison incarceration and low educational attainment, as research by British epidemiologists Wilkinson and Pickett have demonstrated. Economic inequality does not reliably boost productivity and economic growth, as economists have traditionally claimed: recent research, even by such normally conservative institutions as the International Monetary Fund and the OECD, suggests a contrary tendency. The most inequitable economies fare more poorly (Mr Turnbull please note). There is also growing evidence of more environmentally damaging activities in more economically unequal societies. Moreover, as this year’s Sydney Peace Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz has recurrently pointed out, democracy works less well in the presence of large economic inequalities because they tend to corrupt our political institutions.

Thomas Piketty’s blockbuster book helped to highlight the long-term nature of the tendencies towards increased inequality of wealth as well as income, and there is an array of other relevant literature. I am currently writing a book on the topic that I hope will provide a particularly clear guide to the issues and evidence. It will be global in coverage, not specifically Australian, this time. It will take stock of the current state of knowledge and point towards the policies and possibilities of making a difference – features of the book that I hope will be helpful for activists as well as students and fellow researchers. All being well, Polity Press should be publishing it later this year. Indeed, writing this article is a short break from beavering away at completing the manuscript …

Sustainability

Sustainability is essential, of course. Our economy and society must exist in harmony with nature if there is to be a future worth having. Achieving more peaceful and equitable societies would go some considerable way toward achieving this goal. Just stopping munitions production would help the environment. Reducing inequality would help too because, as British academic Danny Dorling emphasises in his recent book, it is the consumption practices of the more unequal societies that lead to the most resource-depleting and environmentally-degrading impacts. Social balance and ecological sustainability tend to go together.

Challenging the consumerist ideologies and practices that underpin the modern capitalist economy is also necessary because they cause such wasteful and ultimately unsatisfying uses of resources. As Clive Hamilton has said, consumerism all too often involves people buying things they don’t need with money they don’t have to impress people they don’t like. As a society, we would be better off with less unnecessary private consumption and a broader spread of public goods that would facilitate sustainability for all. Embracing the principles of a ‘steady state economy’, or a ‘circular economy’ in which waste of resources is reduced to a minimum, points to one way forward. It would be so much better for society if our best human talent were put into design and implementation of such living arrangements rather than into the design and marketing of products that add nothing to wellbeing nor sustainability.

These concerns with peace, equality and sustainability necessarily permeate all aspects of life in the current era. Indeed, there is nothing particularly new about this, is there? As they say, we live in exciting times – but isn’t that always the case? The challenge for progressive analysts and activists is to work out how best to ‘make a difference’ so that attractive futures become more likely and doomsday scenarios less so. Throughout my life, I have been encouraged that so many other fellow travellers and people of good intent share these values and intentions, whatever perverse policies the community of concerned fellow citizens is always in my mind when reading (and sometimes writing for) Social Alternatives. Of course, it can be deeply distressing to see that our efforts have resulted in quite modest changes. Reactionary interests and ideologies seem to make a step or two backwards necessary for every step forward. All of which makes it even more essential to have clarity and confidence about the process by which progressive social change may occur.

Making Progress

Thinking about how the foregoing concerns can come together in the process of progressive social and political change is crucially important. Some of the articles I have written for Social Alternatives and other publications have adopted, or been based on, a particular model comprising four elements: critique, vision, strategy and organisation. Anyone who has been involved in activism – or even thinking about it – implicitly understands these four elements. We need critique (C) to understand what
is wrong with the current economic social and political order. We need vision (V) to see the more desirable future that we struggle to attain. We need strategy (S) to get from here to there. We need organisation (O) to make it happen, providing a vehicle that can take us to the desired destination. The outcome: C + V = S + O = success!

All easier said than done, of course, and never guaranteed. If progressive social change were simply a matter of identifying the right formula, it would happen more readily and more regularly than it actually does. However, there is much to gain by being explicit about what we are doing when trying to change the world – or even our own small locality within it – for the better.

Most of us, as social analysts, are quite good at critique. This, one might say, is the easy bit. Critique involves more than grumbling, however: it involves serious intellectual engagement and analysis of the existing situation. Academics are, or should be, well trained in this: it may be regarded as their distinctive stock-in-trade. More broadly, all concerned citizens have the capacity to identify what they regard as the key social problems of the era and the underlying causes that need redress. Concurrently though, there is much scope for lively disagreement.

Vision is also something else in which we can all healthily engage. It is a process of imagining an ideal world or, at least, a better one than currently exists. More than that, it is a serious intellectual process of working out what is desirable and attainable. Great thinkers throughout the history of literature and political writing have made memorable contributions, sometimes describing dystopias as well as utopias. Social Alternatives, as the very title of the journal implies, is an ideal forum for continuing this process, taking account of what we now know about human behaviour and wellbeing, technological possibilities and environmental constraints.

Strategy is the third key ingredient in seeking social change, but it is deeply challenging. People sharing the same critique and vision may still strongly disagree about the best strategic way forward. Indeed, strategy has always been the most difficult issue for political activists. On a small scale, there are alternative avenues (not to mention alleys, side streets, crossroads and cul-de-sacs) on the journey to just about every social goal. Debating their relative merits and making collective choices is seldom easy. Wrestling with the bigger questions about reform and revolution, and much else besides, is yet tougher going. Should we be putting all our eggs in the basket of piecemeal reform to deal with particular current problems, or should we be thinking of more long-term social transformation? And, if the latter, how can the necessary energies be mobilised to produce it?

Posing such questions leads into considering the appropriate forms of organisation. Some see this as a matter of getting political parties to drive reform. Personally, I chose many years ago to combine my academic work and community roles with being a member of the Greens. But I recognise that each of us may make quite different decisions about whether party membership is the way to go and, if so, whether the Labor Party, for example, may be a better vehicle because of its better prospect of actually forming government in Australia. There is the trade union movement too, representing the interests of labour, and a wide range of social movements committed to peace, environment, gender equality, indigenous rights, fighting poverty, more affordable housing and many other matters. One of my earlier articles for Social Alternatives sought to take stock of this diverse and sometimes perplexing situation, arguing the case for a multi-pronged and cooperative effort, whatever the primary organisational focus each of us chooses to make in our own lives.

Social Alternatives

Evidently, there is no shortage of issues to consider. I hope the fourfold critique, vision, strategy and organisation model can help clarify our thoughts. A journal like Social Alternatives is well placed to be a forum for discussing these huge challenges.

As coordinating editor of the Journal of Australian Political Economy, I should emphasise that journal’s similar concerns (while taking the opportunity for a free plug!). As its title would lead you to expect JAPE has a primary focus on economic issues, and its in-depth articles reflect the journal’s academic status. It seeks to foster a strong tradition of political economic analysis in this country, especially encouraging younger contributors. This requires challenging mainstream economic theories and policies and engaging more critically with the development of the Australian economy and international capital. Evidently, SA and JAPE are complementary journals. As every good political economist knows, you cannot understand the economy without understanding its relationship to society (yes, people do matter in economics), while you cannot understand the society without some consideration of the economic factors shaping it. The journal Australian Options that I also help to edit has similar concerns but features shorter articles, more akin to Social Alternatives in this respect. Good, regular publications that analyse contemporary social, economic, environmental and political issues are essential, just as we need committed educators and researchers teaching progressive ideas and pushing out the frontiers of knowledge.

Long may the efforts continue, providing food for thought and encouraging individuals and groups trying to drive
progressive social change. The dominant ideology and culture has become increasingly individualistic and narcissistic (‘the selfie society’), and selfie Presidents and Prime Ministers recurrently put their own interests ahead of any feasible public good. We really do need social alternatives. Onward ...

Author
Frank Stilwell is Professor Emeritus in Political Economy in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Sydney, where he began teaching in 1970. He is a well-known critic of conventional economics, and an advocate of alternative economic strategies for social justice and ecological sustainability. He has written a dozen books on political economic issues and co-edited half a dozen others. He is the coordinating editor of the Journal of Australian Political Economy, Vice President of the Evatt Foundation, an executive member of the Council for Peace with Justice and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia.

Bulrush

Swallows land on the long stalks that
bend as if they are taking
the whole weight
of a pole-vaulter

At a peewee shadow
the flock rise as one
synchronised chaos
reflected in the glass of the pond
Up on the swirls of a ribbon gymnast
Tails like tiny sickle moons
Each a silhouette of a child’s broach circa 1950
pinned to the clouds

Drop back
Bulrushes bend
sigh

Welcome

JANE DOWNING,
ALBURY, NSW

Locator beacon

Last month we flew from one island
to the next, above pinkish clouds,
over a hundred river mouths,
sailing across the top of
my ancestor’s mountain;
a smattering of snow,
tuft of cloud at its top.

We landed near the lights
of the southern city,
where at dawn, its sand dunes
and beach road
reminded me of Iona;
you were amazed at the roar of the sea,
which we could hear from here, the hills.

As a child, you lived in a series of one-horse towns;
no company but the hills
wrapping their silence around you.
We drove the old sea route,
waves cascading –
your mother’s lace curtains –
with no-one there to witness them.

We flew back in the dark,
past plains, gaining altitude:
a lone light among stars,
blinking in swift
descent.

SARAH PENWARDEN,
AUCKLAND, NZ
Climate Change: Where to from here?

IAN LOWE

Introduction

Forty years ago, I analysed Australia’s future energy alternatives in the very first issue of *Social Alternatives* (Lowe 1977). This was a few years after the ‘energy crisis’ of the early 1970s, so the oil price had already increased in five years from under two dollars a barrel to about ten dollars. The consequent price inflation had also destabilised most elected governments. The phenomenon of ‘stagflation’ – inflation without economic growth – discredited Keynesian economics and kick-started the Chicago Schools’ great leap backwards to the neo-liberal economic theories that have done untold damage. Although the oil crisis demonstrated that Hubbert’s 1956 theory of ‘peak oil’ was correct, most decision-makers chose to ignore it. I argued that the future would demand a move away from petroleum fuels as they inevitably became more expensive. My discussion did not include any reference to climate change, which only became an issue outside the small community of relevant scientists after the 1985 Villach conference. Within a few years, it became clear that climate change was significant and would demand a new approach to energy supply and use (Lowe 1989). Vested interests and extremely conservative politicians have prolonged the fossil fuel industry for another three decades, largely through carefully orchestrated misinformation, but rapid change is now occurring at the global and local level. While an optimist might think that even Coalition governments will have to bow to the inevitable, the fixation with growth remains a fundamental obstacle. I will summarise the developments in climate science and the changing politics of climate change in Australia, before speculating on the future prospects.

The science

In 1985, the global scientific community warned that human activity was changing the global climate. The Villach conference statement related observed climate changes to the measured increases in greenhouse-gas concentrations; for the first time, climate scientists spoke up as a global body and suggested a relationship between human activity and the changing climate. The 1987 report of the World Council on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, considered the evidence of limited oil resources and the emerging consensus about climate change (WCED 1987). Recognising the fundamental importance of energy to modern civilisation, it concluded that new energy systems were needed to power human development, but noted that the changes would require ‘new dimensions of political will and institutional cooperation’. In 1989, it was clear that human activity was measurably increasing the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane. It was also clear that the climate was changing, the most obvious observables being increasing temperatures and different rainfall patterns. However, most cautious scientists thought that the link between the two sets of changes was not proven; they thought it was too early to say with confidence that the changes to our climate were being caused by the increasing levels of greenhouse gases.

The science advanced rapidly. In 1992, the Rio Earth Summit concluded that the climate-change problem was sufficiently urgent to justify developing the Framework Convention on Climate Change. By 1997, the science had provided such convincing evidence of the problem that the global community agreed to the Kyoto Protocol. That agreement was concluded despite the concerted opposition of energy-intensive industries, the commercial world generally and a few rogue states like Saudi Arabia and Australia. The Howard government agreed to the protocol at the Kyoto meeting and trumpeted it as a great deal for Australia; indeed it was, although a bad deal for the planet, as our delegation had persuaded the rest of the world to give us a uniquely generous target. The United States, Canada, Japan and the European Union as a whole were expected to reduce their emissions below the 1990 level by 2012. Norway, Iceland and New Zealand were given more generous targets because those three countries already got more than 85 per cent of their electricity from renewable sources, mainly hydro-electricity and geothermal power, with a significant contribution from wind power in the case of Norway. Australia was alone among those countries heavily reliant on coal in having a target that allowed emissions to increase. Further, in what is known around the world as ‘the Australian clause’, the Kyoto agreement allowed...
land use change to be counted. So the reduction in the rate of land clearing since 1990 saw Australia credited as having lowered its emissions. While the developed world overall reduced its carbon emissions per unit of economic output by about 25 per cent between 1970 and 2000, largely through the efficiency improvements spurred by the oil crisis of the 1970s, Australia’s performance had only improved about 4 per cent over the same time. Despite the favourable treatment we received, our government joined the Bush administration in refusing to ratify the agreement, delaying the point at which the treaty became legally binding. It also disbanded the National Greenhouse Advisory Panel and did little to rein in Australia’s spiralling greenhouse-gas production. More fundamentally, it continued to base the entire pattern of Australian economic development on an implicit assumption that it makes financial sense to export large volumes of low-value commodities, a practice that is only possible for as long as ocean freight is inexpensive (and for as long as it is seen as acceptable to keep burning coal, despite its massive contribution to climate change).

In 2018, there is no longer any serious challenge to the science showing that human activity is changing the global climate in a wide range of ways. The 2016 Paris agreement was recognition by political leaders from all around the world that we face a serious collective problem, demanding concerted global action to slow climate change. A small group still say the science is uncertain, but a recent review pointed out the obvious fact that there is no coherent alternative theory. As Nuccitelli (2015) put it:

There is no cohesive, consistent alternative theory to human-caused global warming. Some blame global warming on the sun, others on orbital cycles of other planets, others on ocean cycles, and so on. There is a 97% expert consensus on a cohesive theory that’s overwhelmingly supported by the scientific evidence, but the 2–3% of papers that reject that consensus are all over the map, even contradicting each other. The one thing they seem to have in common is methodological flaws like cherry picking, curve fitting, ignoring inconvenient data, and disregarding known physics.

The politics
Australian Coalition governments have consistently acted as if the issue of climate change could safely be ignored. The Howard government’s studied inaction became an obvious electoral liability as the 2007 election approached, leading to what appeared a panic move to set up a task force to examine the possibility of using nuclear power. The UMPNER review (Commonwealth of Australia 2007) provided little comfort, even though it was chaired by the head of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. It found that building one nuclear power station would take at least ten and more probably fifteen years; it also said a carbon price and other forms of public financial support would be needed for nuclear power to be feasible. The Rudd government was elected in 2007 with a clear mandate for action, the incoming Prime Minister having declared that climate change was the biggest moral challenge of our time. His Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme failed to pass the Senate as it was opposed by the Coalition and the Greens on opposite grounds, the Coalition seeing it as unjustified interference in the market and the Greens regarding it as an inadequate response. It could easily have been very different. Malcolm Turnbull, as Leader of the Opposition, was prepared to support the plan. This led to a challenge to his leadership by disgruntled Liberals opposed to the whole idea of responding to climate change. By a margin of one vote, with one of Turnbull’s supporters absent due to illness, Tony Abbott secured the leadership and committed the Opposition to frustrating the government’s plan. When he could conceivably have called a double dissolution to resolve the issue, Kevin Rudd chose instead to drop the proposal. I think that was the root cause of the collapse in his standing; if he could abandon the greatest moral challenge of our time, what did he stand for? The ALP, concerned by poll data showing rapidly falling support, chose to remove Rudd and replace him with Julia Gillard.

She said before the 2010 election that there would be no carbon tax under her leadership. When the election produced a hung parliament, she negotiated with the Greens and other cross-benchers to obtain support for a minority government. They introduced a coherent package of measures to respond to climate change: a modest carbon price, a renewable energy target, a carbon farming initiative and measures to protect biodiversity. But Abbott campaigned vigorously against the scheme, calling the carbon price a great big tax on everything, and was elected in 2013.

The Abbott government was so hostile to the whole idea of responding to climate change that it tried to roll back all the Gillard measures. They dissolved the Climate Commission, but it appealed to the community and was crowd-funded as the Climate Council. They scrapped the carbon price, dishonestly claiming that power prices would be reduced, and pared back the renewable energy target. When thirty consecutive negative Newspolls provided the impetus for Malcolm Turnbull to overthrow Abbott and regain the leadership, there was widespread hope that his previously-expressed views would be reflected in a renewed commitment to action. Australia accepted the 2015 Paris agreement to try to keep the increase in average global temperature below two degrees, so we do have international treaty obligations to play a responsible role. The Academy of Science concluded that achieving the Paris target will require global emissions of greenhouse gases to peak by 2020 and then decline rapidly. Unfortunately, it has become apparent that Turnbull paid a high price to become PM.
He had to assure the dissident elements in the Coalition that he would not tackle this contentious issue. Appeasing the small group on his government benches that still does not accept the science, the Turnbull administration has no coherent response to climate change. States like South Australia have been attacked for promoting renewable energy, Ministers have assured the community that coal still has a bright future, the government is still supporting the irresponsible proposal to develop new mines in the Galilee Basin, and there has even been a suggestion that the government could subsidise a new coal-fired power station in northern Queensland!

Gore (2006) described global climate change as ‘an inconvenient truth’, but some intelligent people are still finding reasons to deny the link between human activity and the changing global climate, more than twenty years after the relationship was established to the satisfaction of scientists working in that field. As Oreskes and Conway (2010) have shown, those who still deny the science of climate change usually have a very conservative view of the world. They mindlessly support unfettered markets to produce wealth and wellbeing. They refuse to accept that human wealth-producing activity could change the global climate, because that would demand government action to curb some profitable activities. So, the science is seen as biased, unreliable, or part of a global conspiracy to hold back progress. In a revealing comment some years after he left office, Mr Howard said that he preferred to trust his instinct rather than the predictions of climate science; in other words, he prefers to cling to his myths (Howard cited in Miller, 2013) rather than accept the science. Since we are now on track for much greater increases in average temperature than the Paris target of two degrees, espousing a business-as-usual approach requires denying or trying to discredit the science.

Prospects

Where can we go from here? There is good news and bad news. The good news is that the community has moved on, in Australia as in other countries. In the USA, thirteen States and dozens of cities have adopted serious programs to slow climate change, despite the systematic refusal of the national Congress to act. The Weatherill government in South Australia oversaw a massive investment in wind and solar power, so the State now gets about 50 per cent of its electricity from renewables, with further expansion planned. Several large-scale solar power installations are under way in Queensland. Perhaps more importantly, the community has voted with its wallets and roofs. About 1.6 million households now have solar panels providing some or all of their electricity, while about a million use solar hot water. Use of active solar power installations are under way in Queensland, and there has even been a suggestion that the government could subsidise a new coal-fired power station in northern Queensland!

The bad news is that Coalition governments still act as if the science can be ignored. That problem is not confined to climate change. As discussed earlier, Hubbert (1956) argued that US oil production would peak in the early 1970s and then decline; when this prediction proved accurate, the same approach was used to show that global production of conventional oil would peak about 2010 and then decline (Deffeyes 2001). Although there is solid evidence for this theory of ‘peak oil’, most transport planning still implicitly assumes unlimited petroleum fuels. More generally, the first global systems models showed in the early 1970s that there are limits to the scale of resource use and productive economic activity that the natural systems of the planet can accommodate (Meadows et al. 1972), but forty years later most decision-makers still behave as if limitless growth is possible. The ‘standard world model’ of The Limits to Growth, based on extrapolating the growth trends that existed in 1970, led to economic and ecological decline in the early to middle decades of this century. Recent comparisons with forty years of data show that the global community is still on that gloomy trajectory (Turner 2013). Five reports on the state of the Australian environment have shown we have serious problems (State of the Environment Advisory Council 1996; State of the Environment Council 2016). Similarly, five reports on the global environmental outlook have documented the crisis at the global level, highlighted by the dramatic decline in biodiversity (UNEP 2015).

Despite the detailed explanations of the environmental emergency we face, most decision-makers still behave as if the problems caused by growth in human consumption can either be safely ignored or, even more improbably, solved by even more growth. The persistent delusion is that all our social and environmental problems can be solved by economic growth. While Coalition administrations are more obviously acting on behalf of the business community, ALP governments also seem committed to promoting growth. Unless we can escape from the toxic meme of growth, there is no realistic prospect to slowing climate change and shaping a future that could, at least in principle, be sustainable.

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A month afterwards, when he returned from the dead, his mother saw him approaching their house. She screamed. She cried with fear and joy and slapped him for a fake and monster and cried some more with both arms around him.

Much thinner and subdued, he sat in the kitchen receiving wary visitors, the bowl of home made corn soup left untouched. We doubted, tested, asked whose cousin had red hair or a limp, and he knew it all, adding anecdotes to prove that he was real. What was it like, we asked? What was death? No fun, he said, but not that bad. There’s music, though you wouldn’t sing to it, and the weather is like an endless autumn afternoon when the clouds roll in. You get used to things.

Mostly, I just read to pass the time.

Then his sister asked, So why did you come back? He looked at her a while and said, Sometimes they make mistakes. They told me to tell you it’s not too bad, that you might even like it. That you’d see your recent weeks here as a bonus. She just stared back at his pale face, silent in her bliss and dread.

**Back**

Author

Ian Lowe AO is emeritus professor of science, technology and society at Griffith University and an adjunct professor at two other universities. He has filled a wide range of advisory roles for all levels of government, including chairing Brisbane’s environment advisory committee for several years, and he chaired the advisory council that produced the first independent national report on the state of the environment in 1996. He has been a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering since 2005. The International Academy of Sciences, Health and Ecology recently awarded him the Konrad Lorenz Gold Medal for his contributions to sustainable futures.

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Drilling and Production Practice, American Petroleum Institute, 7-25.

Steve Evans,
AdeLAdE, SA
In Kenya on March 2018 the last male Northern white rhino died. In 1960 there were two thousand Northern white rhinos in the world. Now none remain. Despite the best efforts of scientists and geneticists, extinction has yet to be undone or undeleted. Poaching, habitat loss, war and global apathy has made for yet another annihilated species. My lifetime bears witness to the utter disregard of my own species, for the devastation we are able to wreak on the lives of both human and non-human entities.

Southern white rhinos guarded day and night from poachers at Mosi-Oa-Tunay National Park, Zambia (copyright Julie Matthews).

I want in this brief biographical reflection to speak about the importance of Social Alternatives to my personal commitment to social and environmental justice and my professional commitment to providing young people with alternative visions of current conditions. I want also to make reference to the theoretical ideas that have nurtured my professional and personal ethics.

This year, I was fortunate enough to stand in the awesome presence of the splendid Southern white rhinos of Zambia pictured above. The now extinct Northern white rhinos are an entirely different species to the Southern white rhinos. As a child of the 1960s raised in a small terraced house in a working-class suburb in Leicester, an industrial city located in the centre of England, I could never have imagined such an encounter. Neither, I might add, could my teachers have imagined that I should have such an encounter. In England during the 1970s the eleven-plus (11-plus) examination was used to stream those students destined for university and professional careers into prestigious grammar schools, and those destined for technical and vocational occupations into secondary modern schools. The girls in my working class neighbourhood entered into secondary modern schools to be groomed to become wives, shop assistants or factory workers. Cookery and needlework were compulsory, biology and science were optional, and to my lasting disappointment physics and languages were not offered. Eventually I decided to become a school teacher; I never really wanted to be teacher, but for a working class, 11-plus ‘failure’, teaching seemed to be a better option then joining the civil service. I had come across many teachers, but I had never encountered a civil servant.

Gaining university entry for me was rather tricky. It involved entering then dropping out of a grammar school due to culture shock, entering then dropping out of a Further Education College due to other distractions, and finally studying at night school while working in a chemist shop in Cambridge. By the time I began my studies of sociology and anthropology at Brookes University in Oxford I had worked in several hotels, lived in several cities and spent a year travelling across Europe and through India. My studies of sociology reinforced what I had already realised when at high school – that education was class biased; that grammar schools were mainly populated by middle-class children, and secondary modern schools by working-class children. Problematically, or perhaps fortuitous, I was too Asian to be working class. My father is English, my mother was Japanese, and according to most of my working-class schoolmates, I was a Chinese immigrant who should go back to my own country.

I came across Social Alternatives in the 1980s while a secondary school teacher who was studying for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at the
University of Leicester. My tutor, Professor Barry Dufour, encouraged us to regard ourselves as self-directed, autonomous, critical educators whose role it was to engage creatively with the resources laid before us in policy, curricula and texts. We were urged to seek out resources and to develop our own pedagogical approaches (Dufour 1982). Barry introduced us to the work of Lawrence Stenhouse (1971) and the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP), which sought to develop an approach to curriculum development that relied on the teacher as researcher rather than as an imparter of knowledge. Stenhouse’s notion of procedural neutrality provided a professional ethic for engaging with controversial issues in the classroom. This pedagogical approach not only informed my approach to teaching and later my work as an academic and researcher, but also raised questions and afforded challenges that I continue to struggle with.

The foundational ethics of the HCP were the educational values of rationality, imagination, sensitivity and readiness to listen to others. The idea of promoting student understanding so that they could take responsibility for the implications of their opinions and points of view appeared to me to be necessary and entirely reasonable in face of escalating global and social, political, economic and environmental problems. Troubling for me and other teachers of colour was the project’s aspiration to neutrality and the abandonment of teacher expertise in order to allow divergent and minority opinions into group discussions. Procedural neutrality does enable flawed or fallacious views to be confronted, but in the case of racism it still gives voice to bigoted and stereotypical notions that are excruciatingly painful for students and teachers of colour to hear, and exceedingly problematic when unleashed in classroom environments. Farrukh Dhondy and other teachers withdrew from the project. Stenhouse et al. (1982) later noted that those teachers who withdrew from the study had a stronger commitment to antiracism than to teaching. This seemingly simple dichotomy belies the fact that for many of us it is impossible to teach without our bodies and our political commitment to justice and equality.

In the days before the Internet, Google searches, blogs, Facebook and fake news, Barry Dufour urged us to locate resources and materials that offered a broad range of alternative perspectives about controversial issues. We were encouraged to access resources produced by agencies and organisations such as pressure groups, non-government organisations, the mainstream and alternative press. In fact, a memorable assignment at this time involved collating and sharing with other pre-service teachers, a resource bank concerned with controversial issues of the day, such as nuclear power, racism, sustainability and so on. Here in 1980s England, Social Alternatives, along with the New Internationalist, provided us with immediate access to views and perspectives that would otherwise have been impossible to locate and engage with.

Having completed my teacher training, my first teaching job at a large comprehensive school in Leicestershire in the early 1980s involved me in the Integrated Humanities project, a teacher-initiated curriculum supported by Doug Holly, a colleague of Barry’s at the University of Leicester (Holly 1986). We developed courses with titles like ‘Conflict and Cooperation’, ‘Sustainability and Unsustainability’, ‘Freedom and Constraint’. Again, I relied on Social Alternatives to provide me with materials and perspectives on the topics I was teaching. I had the library subscribe to the journal.

After moving to Australia I worked as a sessional teacher, a research assistant, a doctoral student, and a sociology lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast. It was only when I was undertaking a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of Queensland in 1999 that I met Don Alexander and found that the journal was an entirely independent Australian publication. We fell into conversation and I expressed my surprise and delight to discover the location of a resource that had been so valuable in my teaching career. Later I was invited to guest edit an issue and then to become a member of the editorial collective. Since that time, I have taken on a range of roles in the journal, however by far the most exhilarating part of my journey with Social Alternatives has been that of introducing new members to the collective; colleagues whose commitment, skill, passion and capacity to take the journal to new heights far exceeded my own; colleagues committed to sustaining our intellectual and academic independence in publishing themed editions, articles and reflective commentaries such as this one; colleagues committed to sustaining creativity in publishing poems, short stories, and cover designs; and colleagues committed to securing our originality and survival in an
academic publishing world increasingly dominated by bizarre assessment metrics and monopolistic publishing houses.

Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, was quoted as declaring: ‘Man [sic] is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever more brightly upon our horizon’ (Foucault, cited in Spivak 1988). During the course of my academic career I have seen the proliferation of increasingly complex ways of speaking about complexity, the proliferation of officious and managerialist means of pursuing education and its functional gearing to the imperatives of fast-capitalism. While the breakneck speed of change often appears to be beyond our control, never before have we had more control and more opportunity to make social alternatives and do things differently.

To close in the vein of doing things differently I will take the opportunity to end this brief reflection with the poignantly hopeful lyrics of the Jackson Browne song ‘If I Could Be Anywhere’:

And we won’t make it ‘less we’re smarter and stronger
The world’s going to shake itself free of our greed somehow
And the world can’t take it, that you can see
If the oceans don’t make it, neither will we
The world’s going to shake itself all the way free somehow
If I could be anywhere
If I could be anywhere in time
If I could be anywhere and change the outcome, it would have to be now.

References
Browne, J. 2014 ‘If I could be anywhere’ (Recorded by Jackson Browne), Standing in the Breach, Inside Recording.

Author
Julie Matthews is Associate Professor and Associate Head, Research in the School of Education at the University of Adelaide. She is a sociologist of education who has published over 100 refereed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. Her current projects focus on anti-radicalisation education and she has undertaken research in the fields of minority education, reconciliation, refugee education, anti-racist education, international education and education for sustainability. Before joining the university in 2013 she was Director of Research in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and Associate Director of the Sustainability Research Centre, at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Bird bath sky

I want to plant a garden
in my backyard, for the solace,
a hit of silence, for while there are trees,
I want a waterfall, slippery rocks, a pond where branches ripple; birds will drink,
my mind will become
an unbroken pool.

I want a garden
in my suburb, to water my summer-dry lawns, my brown grasses,
my empty afternoons of the road where no-one turns.

In the scale-light
of the bird bath,
I will see a stippling sky,
paint-brushed blue from edge to edge;
insects skim the freckly pond,
fan palms sway, one tiny feather falls.

Sarah Penwarden,
Auckland, NZ
W hile still in my teens in Los Angeles, many years ago, I sat down on a park bench next to an old lady. It was not suspicious to do so in those days, even in LA. She said she wanted to tell me a story about a time when she was my age. Without waiting for permission, and with a faint accent, she told me of her younger life in Romania. The story was told of mountain climbing adventures, hunting for meat for the table, bringing water from a stream a hundred metres from the house, and helping to bury her grandparents in nearby plots. I listened with interest because having grown up in a big city, most of what she said was foreign to my understanding of life. What struck me most though, was what she said at the end of her narrative. ‘You may not believe most of what I have told you, and you have no way of checking, but those are stories from my mind. I believe them.’ I had no doubts about her sincerity, but I silently questioned her ability to recount past events in such detail. This began my acceptance of what I’ll call subjective reality. Individual stories, without corroboration, are subject to the numerous whims of our memory. These whims may be entirely fiction, but if the teller believes them, they have the credibility of subjective reality. The story-teller is allowed to embellish for the sake of making the story more interesting. Perhaps the woman from Romania did just that, with the most honourable of intentions. Most likely I will do the same with my brief recollections of my approximately thirty plus years associated with Social Alternatives (SA).

As a young, and as yet, temporary academic at the University of Queensland, I was enormously flattered when I was invited along to a meeting of the Editorial Collective. The meeting was held in the small office of one of SA’s originators. I knew that Ralph Summy, and three of his colleagues, had begun the journal several years before my arrival. Ralph was the only one to survive the early years. I think this was because he was the only one with the fervent belief in the causes assigned to Social Alternatives. The reasons for the departures of the other founders were never publicised.

Though I was still humbled to be in the company of established academics, I was impressed with how casual my first meeting progressed. That remained true throughout my tenure. At my initial meeting, they were discussing what to present in the following edition. Boxes that were filled with journals ready to be mailed out provided the chairs for some of the members. I arrived early, so I didn’t have to compete for box space. There seemed to be no chairperson, though I later learned this was not the case. Control of the meetings was rotated among the Collective. No hands were raised nor were there any raised voices. It was like I had imagined a Quaker meeting might be. Only rarely was a vote taken. Discussion produced agreement.

After attending a couple of meetings, I was asked if I would like to be a member of the Editorial Collective. Following a couple of heartbeats, I said ‘yes’. To be on the Editorial Collective of a refereed journal meant a lot to me. I had no idea what my involvement entailed, but I looked forward to making whatever contribution I could. The journal expressed very lofty aspirations and I wanted to be part of the quest for them.

The structure of SA has always been simple. A key person was the ‘business manager’. During my involvement, there was a woman named Helen who left soon after I arrived. She was followed by Les Hoey, Di Watson and Barbara Young. They all had interesting identity features. Les had been a successful businessman and the cousin of the infamous Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Di ran her own magazine, Brisbane Circle, concurrent with her role with SA. Barbara was the last business manager before I left, and she was fantastic. A widow, she had to juggle her work with SA along with looking after her severely disabled son, and her highly commendable work with refugees. She was recognised with an Order of Australia (AO) for her humanitarian work. All of our business managers fulfilled their roles in different ways, but they all helped hold SA together through some very difficult years.

As well as the business managers, there was the Advisory Panel. This was comprised of invited academics from universities all over the world who served to referee the articles. Three ‘blind’ referees were used to accept,
reject or rework each article, though occasionally only two would be used. Their job was usually made easier by the fact that most editions had a Guest Editor who would screen the contributions before they went out to referees. Members of the Advisory Panel were happy to accept the offer because it usually meant no work, but a valuable CV entry.

The Guest Editor was the biggest job. We tried to follow the four seasons with four issues a year. The Guest Editor was told when all of his/her articles had to be in for review. They were always given a great deal of lead time. One year’s advance notice was not uncommon. The Guest Editor was assigned a theme within our range of interests and then challenged to get between six and ten authors to write articles of a couple of thousand words each. This may seem easy because most academics’ egos puff up when asked to write something. The reality is that, at least in my experience, about half don’t deliver. Those who do deliver often need lots of encouraging. We used to counsel Guest Editors to invite more than they needed and to be prepared for fall out.

The permanent part of SA was, of course, the Editorial Collective. This group decides on the contents of SA, and, most importantly, its continuity. With the exception of the business manager, everyone is associated with a university. This may sound snooty, but it was a matter of convenience more than anything. During my time with Social Alternatives, academics at the Sandstone Seven universities had discretionary time to devote to journal activity – in fact it was encouraged. Much has changed since then with the development of a more corporate mentality at the tertiary education level. Over my years with SA, the Collective had about six or seven stable members. A few came in, didn’t like what they saw, and they left. There were no contracts and no real obligations. This probably made for a greater commitment than if one felt he/she had to be there. There was and still is a division of labour that is unequal. The literary editor, the poetry editor, short story editor and the general articles editor have different work loads and they would vary from edition to edition, but I never heard anyone complain.

Among the activities that served to hold us together, two stand out: the mailouts and the launches. Things are different now with the utilisation of more technology, but during most of my time with SA mailouts consisted of members of the collective and the business manager stuffing journals into envelopes along with renewal notices where appropriate. Sometimes we even included paid advertising, usually from publishers. When I first joined we had a subscriber list in the thousands. This meant mailouts could take three or four hours if we had enough people to do the job. Five or six were adequate.

Over the years, subscribers have dropped off to a couple of hundred. This is due to many factors, not least of which is that all journals can now be read online. To compensate for the reduced numbers, SA has increased its number of institutional subscribers. Many readers now pay a fee to institutions who then disseminate SA on the internet. Others may read it through their university or public libraries. This is likely the case with other journals as well.

At its peak, the mailouts were terrific social occasions. Usually these were held in the homes of the business managers. The boxes would be collected from the printers, and the business managers would provide the stamped envelopes as well as any inserts. Sometimes the mailouts would take place in members’ homes. When the work was done we would have a few glasses of wine, some snacks, and then solve all the problems of the world. The themes of future editions were often suggested at these events. There was one of our business managers who grumbled about the cost of the wine and snacks, but the others actually undertook to provide them. Given the reduced numbers and different procedures, what I described may no longer occur. Pity, if that’s the case.

The launch of each edition is something that ended many years ago. For those of us who took part, especially the Guest Editor, they were celebrations of the completion of work over several months. We held the launches at cafés around Brisbane, and as well as the Guest Editor we occasionally had an invited speaker to say a few words. Most often though, it was an in-house affair. We celebrated with our SA family. We congratulated one another and cemented the bonds that held us together in the Editorial Collective.

There was never any dispute about where SA belonged on the political continuum. With no apologies, we were firmly fixed on the progressive left. The broad spectrum of peace issues formed the basis of SA’s collective values at the beginning, and still do. We always held the unspoken agreement that peace meant a great deal more than the absence of violent conflict. This allowed us to address concerns about race, environment, gender, belief systems, politics and any other matters that impeded harmony on our planet. Unrealistic idealists? Probably, but that’s what has held SA together. An individual with concerns for peace and all that entails is strengthened by the company of others. Having a journal for the promotion of these ideas strengthens them even further.

This is where subjective reality has a dynamic role to play. Our emotions and perceptions tell us what is true and what is real. What others think only provides confirmation or denial. What I have written about my recollections of SA is personal and truthful, though I realise few details

Social Alternatives Vol. 37 No 2, 2018 39
have been provided. Many of my best years have been embellished by my association with SA and to add details would be to bore the reader. The details may also contain a fair bit of subjective reality. It has been a great trip and I am glad I was asked to come along.

On the fortieth anniversary of Social Alternatives, the question must be raised about its relevance to today’s world. When it began, the world was full of geopolitical turmoil, and gender, racial and environmental conflict. Is the situation in the world different today? Not really. The same problems remain but in different guises with different players. Maybe they can’t be solved. We may have to continue to live with conflict, but a heightened awareness may allow for the accommodation of disagreement. This is a major role for Social Alternatives. Let’s continue to disagree, dissent, and protest through the pages of SA against anything that is against social harmony and world peace. It’s a small, very small voice, but there are others out there and together we may make a difference.

Author

Don Alexander was on the Editorial Collective of Social Alternatives for over twenty-five years. During this time he was also on staff within the Education Department of the University of Queensland. His Ph.D. was entitled ‘From Citizen to Individual’, an exploration of several political aspects of secondary school curriculum development. His broad scholarly interests include most of the social and political activities in the contemporary world. He is now happily retired in Brisbane.

5 ways to understand the outback

1. Drive hard and hard into hot night until you see the flicker of distant homes. Know then there are those who live out here, who have long been here, who are even now raising their eyes to watch your headlamps sweep pathways through their outside.

2. Learn the word home, how it can mean no more than your body. Learn its noises and silences, its desert and bush, its open skies. Come to love its fickle moods, its fierce light and its rain.


4. Learn the word home, how it can mean the world. Learn its noises and silences, its thump of blood, its twisted grin. See how little and brittle it is, how one day it must end. Come to love its never-ending birling in the dark.

5. Be born here. Birth yourself from dust and bone, brigalow and spinifex, bat and skink. Blink and blink your grit-bitten eyes until they clear, until you hear the old dreams, the ones you used to know.

Alison Flett, Karuna Land, Adelaide, SA
Ralph Summy: A journey in pursuit of nonviolence

HILARY SUMMY

The goal of Social Alternatives from its inception in 1977 was to provide a forum for discussing and analysing problems, with an emphasis on formulating nonviolent alternatives in a quest for peace and social justice. It was an idea whose time had come. The previous decade had seen great changes both in Australia and overseas; it was a period of student unrest that led to new ways of thinking. Ralph played a major role in the upheaval that took place at the University of Queensland during the sixties and into the seventies. According to Ralph, it was an exciting time to be part of a 'new awakening' that embraced innovative ideas and activities.

It was in this environment that the idea of a radical journal took root. Ralph had made some public comments about academics being good at criticising and analysing problems but not providing solutions. A colleague and former student, Bruce Dickson, responded with the suggestion that Ralph start a journal with a solutions-based approach. Gathering a few like-minded friends to work on the first issue, Social Alternatives was launched in December 1977. Some forty years on, the journal continues to examine contemporary issues and explore the many facets of nonviolent solutions, although the format has evolved over time and technology has changed the modus operandi.

While the time was ripe for the genesis of such a journal on the social/political front, its creation also seemed a logical progression in Ralph's personal journey. He claims that all his adult life he has been driven to work towards a fair and equitable society. This article shines a light on Ralph's personal story, in an attempt to understand his motivation in pursuing such lofty ideals and to discover the evolution of his ideas.

Ralph was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and lived in a small town nearby, Lanark Manor, until the age of ten. He had one sibling, a sister eight years his senior. He was a happy child and had a comfortable middle-class upbringing. However, he became aware of injustice and inequality from an early age, growing up in the shadow of the 'Great Depression'. The family moved from Lanark Manor to Kansas City in 1939 where they lived until 1947 before moving to Houston.

Ralph enjoyed school and achieved high grades, winning a scholarship to attend the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy. He then went on to Harvard where he majored in Economics. The Harvard years proved to be a difficult time for Ralph, however. He rebelled against authority and took on board issues of social justice, and freedom for individuals to choose and take responsibility for their actions. He did not enjoy serving in the navy reserve for two months per year (a requirement of his Harvard scholarship). On the whole, the four years at Harvard was not the positive experience it could have been, due in large part to a restlessness and an unwillingness to conform to the status quo. On graduation day Ralph's housemaster advised him not to squander his abilities in the future, adding, to Ralph's surprise, 'you have too much to offer'.

After graduation Ralph obtained a position as a cadet journalist on the Houston Post. Less than a year later he was drafted into the US Army and shipped to Germany to serve with the American occupation troops. Although he was not happy with this turn of events, he felt fortunate that he had not been sent to Korea, as this was the height of the Korean War. Instead he was assigned a job as a journalist to work in the Public Information Office of the 16th Infantry Regiment at Schweinfurt. One of his assignments was to write a history of the Regiment's bloody landing on Omaha Beach, D-Day, 1944. While researching this project he was confronted with the horrific slaughter and human waste of war. Due to this searing experience, he became quite anti-militaristic, to the point that he had to be disciplined and was denied an automatic promotion.

During his two year stint in the army he read prodigiously, mostly war novels or books with powerful political messages related to peace and justice. He says that this preoccupation helped to keep him sane; it also influenced the development of his peace ideals. Among the books that made a big impression on him were Tolstoy's War
On leaving the army Ralph felt uncertain about his future. He wanted to be a writer, but lacked the confidence and financial means to take the gamble. Instead he found employment in the trust department of a leading bank in Boston. During this time he was drawn into the activities of an anti-nuclear group called the Greater Boston Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). He had been to see the movie *On the Beach* based on Neville Shute’s iconic novel about a nuclear holocaust. As he was leaving the theatre he saw a SANE poster flapping in the breeze with the prophetic words, ‘There’s still time brother’. This proved to be a turning point for Ralph. He volunteered to act as the chief organiser for an anti-nuclear rally. As publicity for the rally mounted, Ralph’s role became known to bank officials who gave him the option of either ceasing any association with SANE or leaving the bank. The year was 1960 and while Senator McCarthy had been dead for three years, McCarthyism in the form of a virulent anti-communism was very much alive. Any peace activity was considered highly suspect.

Sealing his fate, Ralph chose to leave the bank. He was elected Director of the Boston chapter of SANE. The rally, staged on 1 October 1960, was so successful that it attracted the attention of Senator Thomas Dodd, Chairman of the Senate Internal Security Sub-committee. Ralph was requested by the national body of SANE to sign a statement to the effect that the Boston chapter was not part of a communist or communist-front organisation. This issue caused a furore among the members, many urging Ralph to sign the statement. Ralph refused to sign on principle. He felt strongly that to act out of fear would mean succumbing to the very anti-freedom, anti-democratic measures attributed to the enemy; no one should be forced to declare their patriotism under oath. In the end he decided there was no alternative but to hand in his resignation. He was soon to discover that he had been blacklisted due to his ‘un-American’ activities and was unable to find full-time employment. He managed to get by with the odd casual labouring job and supervising a summer camp for under-privileged boys. Along with about seventy other disenchanted former SANE members, Ralph decided to leave the US permanently and find a less repressive country in which to settle. He chose Australia, as did a number of these ‘nuclear refugees’.

Ralph arrived in Sydney in February 1962, aged 33, to begin a new life. Almost immediately he was offered a teaching position at Drummoyne Boys High School, teaching English and history. From the beginning he knew he had discovered his profession. He was employed as a casual and decided to enrol in a Diploma of Education to enable him to get permanent work. He also enrolled in a Masters in politics at Sydney University. He joined a local peace group which shared his concerns about nuclear testing and the build-up of nuclear stockpiles. It was considered a great triumph for the nuclear protest movement around the world when, in 1963, the three largest nuclear powers agreed to permanently refrain from testing in the atmosphere. The ordeal he had been through in Boston now seemed worthwhile and the efforts of the peace movement vindicated.

After two years in Sydney, Ralph moved to Brisbane where he secured a job as tutor in political science at the University of Queensland, teaching courses in Australian and US politics. He became involved in the anti-nuclear activities of the Queensland Peace Committee, serving on its executive body. As the principal link to the University, he attempted to involve other academic staff and encouraged students to become interested in the topic of war and peace. Soon the focus of peace activities shifted from nuclear issues to the war in Vietnam, in line with New Left student movements occurring in a number of other countries. Ralph played a major role in the student-led civil liberties campaign that developed as a result of the repressive measures imposed by the reactionary Queensland Government of the day. Other issues that arose were the mining of uranium for nuclear weapons and South Africa’s apartheid regime. Ralph played a role in a campaign of nonviolent resistance during a rugby union tour by the Springboks in the early 1970s. His abiding concern was the problem of how to keep radical politics nonviolent. He published widely in the area of nonviolent political action, as well as American political ideas and the Australian peace movement.

In 1974, while on sabbatical leave in the US, he met the doyen of nonviolent political action, Gene Sharp, who had just written a three volume tome on *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. This was a defining moment for Ralph. He read voraciously on the subject of nonviolence from all the available literature. On his return to Australia he designed and pressed for a course, ‘The Politics of Nonviolent Change’, in the political science department at UQ. It was met with considerable opposition from colleagues, but in the end received the approval of the department head. Soon after, he was approached by a visiting peace scholar from India, Sugata Dasgupta, who suggested that Ralph include a course on Gandhian ideals. This course, ‘Nonviolence and the New Society’,
was approved by the department about a year later. Building upon these two nonviolence subjects, in 1991 Ralph managed to establish, with a great deal of resistance, an interdisciplinary peace and conflict resolution program within the department. It was now possible for students to undertake a major/double major in peace and conflict studies. Over the next five years the programme grew by leaps and bounds, with over 200 students enrolling in the introductory course by the time of Ralph’s retirement in early 1997. The success of the program later led to the establishing of the Rotary Peace Centre and the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (ACPACS) at UQ.

Perhaps the highpoint in Ralph’s pursuit of nonviolence climaxed with the organising and running of the 16th Biennial Conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) held at UQ in July 1996. The conference theme was ‘Creating Nonviolent Futures’. Ralph convened the Nonviolence Commission. Around nine hundred delegates attended with at least a third from overseas. The five day conference was considered a triumph. Much of its success was due to a large number of students who volunteered to help, myself included. We had a dedicated organising committee of which I was secretary and Ralph the chair, with John Synott as programme director.

On a personal note, organising the event cemented a relationship that had developed between Ralph and me. I had taken a couple of Ralph’s courses the previous year and while he was on sabbatical leave in Canberra that year we developed a mutual attraction. We spent time together on occasions when he flew back to Brisbane for meetings. We tried to keep our relationship under wraps initially but suspicions were aroused when I took over his office as organising secretary, and even shared his email. We decided that if we could survive the stress of organising a conference, we could survive a marriage, and so we married in December of that year. 1996 was Ralph’s last full year at the University of Queensland; in his view it was also one of the most hectic, yet rewarding.

Although officially retired early the following year, having served 33 years at UQ, Ralph was not ready for retirement. He accepted a position as Director of the Matsunaga Institute for Peace at the University of Hawai‘i. We packed our bags and departed for Honolulu in August 1997. Ralph's main task was to set up a viable peace studies program. Having achieved what he set out to do, Ralph retired for a second time and we returned to Brisbane at the end of 1999. However, for Ralph there was no such thing as retirement. He continued to write (mostly on the topic of nonviolence), give guest lectures, examine doctoral theses, and serve on the editorial collective of *Social Alternatives* – and play tennis of course. Sadly, he is now incapacitated due to a variant of Parkinsons (MSA), but his legacy continues. We have enjoyed a long, happy and fruitful life together based on love and respect, shared values and common interests (apart from his passion for sport!).

Looking back over Ralph’s life, it is clear that he followed his inclination towards peace and justice from a very early age. Even when his principles jeopardised his safety or wellbeing, he never caved in to fear, or gave up the struggle in the face of adversity. While it took many years to formulate his methodology within a framework of nonviolence, his commitment to peace has never wavered. Albert Camus captures well the essence of Ralph’s dedication to peace and nonviolence with the words, ‘Peace is the only battle worth waging’. *Social Alternatives* played a major role in the battle Ralph has waged for peace, and it continues to be an important vehicle for conveying nonviolent alternatives.

**Author**

Hilary Summy is a peace historian and independent scholar. The subject of her PhD thesis is the League of Nations Union in Australia from 1921 to 1945, and the relational positions taken up by other peace groups during this volatile period. The author of *‘Peace Angel’ of World War I: Dissent of Margaret Thorp*, she has also written numerous articles.
When I accepted the assignment to write a commentary on forty years of poetry published in Social Alternatives I welcomed the prospect of a reflective review of this journal that has been a major occupation of my life. However, after some weeks of working at this apparently simple task, I report that it has been a journey of many complexities. To be true to the topic, I had to research poetry back through 40 years of Social Alternatives volumes, which is a long time span, and then to follow the poetry through its varied shapes and forms, sounds and meanings. With this vast continent of verses, words, rhymes, symbols, alliterations and a wilderness of oblique refusals to be any of those semiotic memes, I admit to failure. I cannot grasp the whole canon of poetry published in this journal, it being as vast as Stephen Hawking's expanding universe, and as dense as a black hole when a sun sets into itself. Therefore, in this indulgent reflection, I have been able to put up only some significant poetry flags for you, that are signposts along the poetry journey of this wonderful publication.

I had the privilege to be Poetry Editor of Social Alternatives from 2002 to 2012, after being on the Editorial Collective since the late 1990s. My appointment as editor followed in the footsteps of Laurence Burke, John Knight and Wendy Morgan (as co-editor with John Knight for many years). Their editorial work established that Social Alternatives was not only a publication of critical articles on politics, social movements and cultural debates but a journal that presented poetry from poets involved in those social movements. They published poetry that expressed the voices of poets engaged in the anti-nuclear weapons, anti-conscription and anti-Vietnam war campaigns, the campaigns for women's liberation, the campaigns for Aboriginal Land rights, the movement for environmental protection, and other 'new left' analyses and proposals for change towards a communitarian and ecologically sustainable world.

Social Alternatives was awarded the 1987 Media Peace Prize. The first issue of 1988 was on the theme of 'Black Alternatives on the Bicentennial', since 1988 was dedicated to national celebration of 200 years since the Invasion of Aboriginal Australia. All of the content of the issue, including articles, poetry and graphics were authored by Indigenous writers and artists. In the opening article, Kevin Carmody wrote: ‘Before White Australia begins to assemble for a piece of the celebration cake it should take note that the chief ingredient is blood, and it will leave an indelible and bitter stain’ (Carmody 1997: 3).

Three decades later, we still cannot celebrate harmony and solidarity between Indigenous Australians and the rest of us living on Aboriginal land. With every progress has come a new complexity stained with that blood, its causes and consequences, as Carmody asserted.

Edited by Laurence Burke, the poetry in that particular 1988 issue was composed by Aboriginal poets. Amid some powerful poems, these lines (14 -19) from Kokowara’s We Endure evoke the hollowness of the Bicentennial celebration:

Beyond the killing times,
In the embers of a thousand camp fires,
In the cold winter wind that lifts the red sands
from the desert's infinity,
There our Spirit dwells.
We and the land are one.
We endure.


One of the reasons for the emergence of Social Alternatives was to present an informed, articulate, radical forum that challenged the oppressive laws and authoritarian culture of the long-entrenched Joh Bjelke-Peterson Government in Queensland. It was no coincidence that Social Alternatives emerged in Queensland where new social movements clamoured for change. Most of the poets published in Social Alternatives through its early decades were Queensland poets. And the poetry in SA − and short stories, at that time under the editorship of Duncan Richardson – expressed voices
of protest and dissent, not just in content but in form; presenting experimental, discordant verse structures and language usages to demand social and political change.

Through the 1990s the journal sometimes allowed space for an editorial by the Poetry Editor and in ‘Lines from the Poetry Editor’, John Knight wrote, regarding his task, that:

The more substantial task has been selecting a limited number of poems from a great array of really impressive work and this necessarily implies a degree of editorial subjectivity…

It’s certainly the case, for example, that we haven’t published a great deal of rhyming verse. It’s also true that on occasion we’ve published some verse which could appear more than a little vulgar. And I do look favourably on verse which resonates in some degree with the progressive agendas for which Social Alternatives stands (Knight 1994: 3).

In these words Knight expressed the core tradition of poetry in Social Alternatives: progressive stylistically and radical in content – and the other way around. Particularly in the earlier decades, these aspects provided opportunities for poets to publish work that would be rejected by more prominent, conservative and formal poetry journals. Looking back on the poetry from the nineties and noughties I see in these decades more poetry per issue in Social Alternatives than any time before or since, so one might call that period the heyday of poetry for Social Alternatives, when more than 20 poems would appear per issue. Then and now, the journal provides visibility for poetic voices that may not find publication elsewhere. The more substantial task has been selecting a limited number of poems from a great array of really impressive work and this necessarily implies a degree of editorial subjectivity…

By the millennium, the core issues of radical mobilisation had been resolved or transformed: the Vietnam War and conscription ended; the National Party government fell; the reforms recommended by the Fitzgerald Report into police corruption were being implemented; national land rights legislation for Indigenous peoples had been established and the Mabo decision had been handed down; some major goals of the national women’s liberation movement had been achieved. In addition, the Dawkins reforms into higher education helped to end the period of student political activism and the campuses entered the era of HECS debt for students, and managerialist-dominated, corporate-style universities that sucked much – but not all – of the energy out of student activism. Social Alternatives, that had emerged from the new left, entered a transformative period in response to changes of the time.

By the time I became Poetry Editor in mid-2001, Queensland and Australia were experiencing benefits and disruptions from globalisation in economics, technology and culture. The Social Alternatives Editorial Collective turned the critical lens of the journal toward social debates and contemporary issues of the new century. Issue themes such as cultural diversity, international feminism, climate change, terrorism, peace education and the impacts of new technologies are examples from the new decade. The capacity to place Social Alternatives online brought new readership. These trends also resulted in a broader submission base of poetry, such that poems from USA, Ireland, India, El Salvador and many other locations, including widely around Australia, were sent by email rather than through the post. As editor – and for some years with the valuable support of Bonnie Stanton as editorial assistant – these presented opportunities for me to publish work from the global community of poets as they responded to the lived experiences and crises of the millennium.

Other internal changes to the publication process of the journal, towards it becoming a more formally academic, research-oriented, refereed journal than previously, resulted in a re-balancing of poetry content, until we settled on around ten poems each issue. One bonus was that I was able to introduce a policy of having a guest poetry editor for one issue each year, whereby our guest editor collected and prepared the poems and I supported them through to publication. This proved successful and was a further way of diversifying content and reaching new audiences.

One of the significant issues from those years was vol. 26.4 2007, titled ‘Celebrating 30 Years of Publishing’, that was a celebration of 30 years of Social Alternatives, just as this issue is to celebrate 40 years of its existence. Let me put another context on that history. Unlike every other long-lasting journal in Australia, Social Alternatives has never applied for a government grant. It has survived on its volunteer staff, subscriptions, sales and a small amount of advertising, particularly from the University of Queensland, where the journal was established by Ralph Summy and others. In the 30th celebration issue we included a commentary: ‘Social Alternatives Poetry Editors Discourse on Poetry’, by John Knight, Wendy Morgan and myself (Morgan et al. 2007: 58-60). All three editors focused on the tradition that is known by poets in Australia and, these days, abroad. Social Alternatives is a journal which accepts poetry on the themes of
human experience in the context of social upheaval and change. However, as John and Wendy stated (59), ‘we have rejected the promotion of politics over poetics and aesthetics.’

Nevertheless, all life is politics in another sense and the journal has continued to attract submissions and publish a wonderful range of poetry that expresses the experiences, struggles and epiphanies of poets immersed in their own lives, aware of the cultural, social and political changes of this moment in history.

After I left the poetry editor role in mid-2012, we were fortunate to have poet and emerging novelist Maxine Beneba Clarke step into the role for three years. Maxine brought new poetic voices and interests into the journal and, for the first time, the poetry editor of Social Alternatives was someone who resided outside Brisbane, with Maxine based in Melbourne. Maxine was followed from 2015-2017 by Mark Roberts, already an editor of his own e-zine in Newcastle, who brought material from his networks and further expanded the reach of Social Alternatives as a publication for poetry as well as articles. Recently, Ella Jeffrey has taken on the role of poetry editor and will bring her own poetic enthusiasms and interests. Best wishes to Ella, a PhD student who is based in Brisbane. The work of all the editors in creating the distinctive reputation of Social Alternatives poetry is a valuable one in Australian poetry publishing, and represents an on-going anthology of over 2000 poems with a political orientation that is unlikely to be repeated in this country, so it is important to maintain it.

The key people that have established the tradition whose flag-posts I have traced somewhat in this commentary are the hundreds of poets published in Social Alternatives, as well as those who have submitted poetry that didn’t appear. On behalf of those who have had the privilege to be Poetry Editor of Social Alternatives, we salute you! And we thank you. One of the many joys of being in the editorial role is to dialogue with poets and work on poems together to prepare them for publication. I greatly appreciate the relationships we form as part of our conversations about poems and how to make them better. Now that I am outside the editor’s role, my world is smaller without you but richer on account of those collaborations.

One of the founders of Social Alternatives, Ralph Summy, only ever published one poem in his lifetime, and he is unlikely to do another, as he passes his days with illness in Berlasco nursing home. He and I had some argument over the best form for Vale Viva, which appeared in the 30th celebration issue as an obituary tribute to Les Hoey, another member of the Collective. The poem recollects their decades of working together to produce Social Alternatives. It is not inappropriate for Vale Viva to be the only poem ever to be re-published in Social Alternatives, since its meaning has changed because Ralph’s words are, indeed, now locked away in him. It is good to hear him again. That’s what poetry means to a poet.

Vale Viva

On hearing the news
I shed a tear
I smiled a thought.

The part we shared
Still remains -
The work/the play ... the time/the place ...
The laugh/the frown
The pain/the joy ... the face/the voice.

Wins/losses
Within me locked
Until I too depart.

Ralph Summy, Brisbane

References
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Author
John Synott is a novelist and poet, Adjunct Professor at the University of Sydney, author and editor of books and articles on peace education, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and sociology of globalisation. He was a member of the Editorial Collective of Social Alternatives from 1998-2012 and Poetry Editor from 2001-2012.
Since it began forty years ago, the graphic design framework and the production technologies of *Social Alternatives* have changed considerably, and it is now a less complex process than in the early years of production. Moreover, digital technologies have enhanced the opportunity for the graphic design process of the front cover to include collaboration with the theme editor. In this way, the graphic designer brings to the production their contribution to the social issues under discussion in each issue of the journal.

From Offset Lithography to the Digital

While today's production process for *Social Alternatives* is predominantly digital, forty years ago it employed what was then the prime production technology – offset lithography. Offset lithography is based on the elementary principle that oil and water do not mix. Many readers may be familiar with the handcraft of the lithographic or planographic process in which artists use a grounded smooth stone for printing artworks. The artist first makes marks on the polished stone, the stone is then rolled with oil-based ink, and the damp paper rubbed across the stone to produce a print. This was the chief way of reproducing works of art and illustrations for books and magazines from the early 19th century. A more sophisticated approach to offset lithography emerged over the 20th century using photosensitive films.

The cover of *Social Alternatives* in its early years was accordingly a handcrafted practice, where four separate photosensitive films were exposed to create the cover – Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black (CMYK) – this includes the use of ‘Black film’ (K) for inside type. CMYK is an ISO, International Standards Organisation, meaning a global system of print. The film is then exposed using UV light onto flexible metal plates and the acid-etched plates are wrapped separately around large drums on the press. The flexible metal plates are mounted on the plate cylinder and as it rotates, come into contact first with the rollers wetted by a dampening solution or water that adheres to the rough, or negative, portions of the image. The plate then comes in contact with the roller coated with ink, which adheres to the smooth, or positive portions of the image. The large rollers rotate, pressing the colour onto the paper in a single pass through the press. The single colour printed document is again placed at the beginning of the press for the next colour required to reach the desired colour combination.

The offset lithographic process is used today for large paper and volume printing. However, *Social Alternatives* now uses a printing process that is done in just one pass, combining all colours through a digital press that works similarly to a photocopier.

Technologies for Creating Artwork and Digitalisation

Forty years ago, creating the artwork for the *Social Alternatives* cover design was just as complex as the printing process. The printery completed the whole process for the journal production including the cover image. That is, typesetting in the days before desktop computers was either performed in-house at the printery or sent to typesetters who specialised in the production of type only for the graphic design industry. If the graphic designer created the artwork specifically for the cover design, then this would be handcrafted.

In reality, inserting and manipulating type in a layout was often one of the most tedious elements of graphic print design. That is because letters and words were manually cut and pasted to create the desired design, leaving little room for error. Laying out the components onto an A3 (420 x 297mm) gridded artboard using a type of removable wax glue, or rubber cement and solvent were
the staple of a design studio. Bromides (camera-ready artwork in black and white) or black ink drawings that represented the theme for the issue were glued onto the paste-up artboard along with the logo and any graphic shapes. If the cover design required a photograph or a colour illustration, a photographic transparency was supplied with the artwork. The graphic designer would mock-up the artwork giving detailed instructions to the printer on colour using the Pantone colour system (ISO) and the placement of photographs or illustrations. The production of Social Alternatives in its early years was achieved by the placement of graphical cover content positioned on a marked-up A3 grid board. Previously, only the front side of the cover was designed in colour. This was to make it easier to create the artwork and less expensive to print. The printed journal was then folded to A4 size (210 x 297mm). In 2004, although desktop publishing was advancing, it was time consuming and software was in its infancy, hence only digital low-resolution PDFs of many of the following cover designs are archived.

I would like to mention here that the ink used previously was mineral-based, containing hazardous materials. These ranged from heavy metals used in colouring to petroleum-based solvents (used to disperse pigments and accelerate the drying process). Nowadays, ink is plant-based made from soybeans. While walking around the workshop of a printery on a graphic design excursion, the presenter picked up a spatula coated with bright yellow ink and placed it on his tongue to the shock and amusement of the fledgling student group. He was demonstrating that inks made from a renewable resource are biodegradable and safer as well as printing with brighter colours than the mineral based inks. The yellow was certainly bright and remained on his tongue for the rest of the presentation.

Digital design technology quickly evolved throughout the 1980s and 1990s, along with type manipulation, photography and hand-drawn graphics, which transitioned from handcrafting in a studio to production on desktop computers. These tasks, previously done by printers and typesetters, transited to the responsibility of the graphic designer. Even though computer desktop publishing moved forward at a rapid pace in the 1980s, graphic design was not that easy to produce given that computers were extremely slow with small amounts of RAM (Random Access Memory). The second generation Macintosh (1984) had 512K RAM and a five-megabyte hard drive, compared to the many gigabytes we use today. My first computer system as a freelance designer consisted of the latest Macintosh 8500 with an 18" screen, and once put on the desk stayed in that position because it was just too heavy to move. The peripherals included a CD burner, with CDs costing $25 each and a black and white printer. All together this cost $15,000 excluding the software required.

Even though the digital revolution was making giant moves within the design industry, many graphic designers at this time remained true to the craft and continued with traditional methods. So, when did Social Alternatives transform to ‘digital’ desktop publishing?

On the Social Alternatives website, the archives begin in 1998 with Volume no. 17 (1), although there are hard copy archives stored previous to this time. The change to digital volumes perhaps came in late 2002 as the cover designs began to advance more complex design components. For example, Volume no. 21 (4) displayed the type on a curve – this was much harder to achieve handmade. Also, the Volume no. 22 (1) ‘Bio-Ethics: Cloning and Stem Cell Research’ cover showed a question mark made up of images of mice. This had a strong perspective giving the graphic depth whereas previous designs were non-dimensional graphics. This type of replication was difficult to achieve when handmade.

Moreover, the changes to the table of contents format throughout the volumes reveal a consistency suggesting the changeover from handcraft to digital occurred in 2003. This meant that the designer could design a template for following issues using desktop publishing software. Creating a digital template for the journal meant that the template could be shared amongst designers. Inconsistency of the layout previous to 2003 may also have been due to the different designers or printeries employed.

Graphic Design and Collaboration

My introduction to Social Alternatives came from an invitation by an editor and collective member to design the cover for Volume 23 (4) ‘Globalisation, Environment and Social Justice’ in 2004. We thought it was important to discuss ideas and concepts for the cover design given that this was also an introduction to designing concepts for social and ethical issues for me. Working closely with clients prior to changing career paths to academia always included the opportunity to share knowledge about the product to be designed, particularly for market awareness. Similarly, Social Alternatives' readers are people who work, research and write in the social sciences area and are not only academics but also an interested public.

Steen (2013: 16) suggests that ‘many innovative projects are currently organised as co-design processes (i.e., as
processes of creative cooperation). He cites Kleinsmann and Valkenburg (2008: 370) who describe co-design as:

The process in which actors from different disciplines share their knowledge about both the design process and the design content ... in order to create shared understanding on both aspects ... and to achieve the larger common objective: the new [graphic] to be designed. This definition draws attention to the sharing and combining of knowledge and to developing shared understanding ...

For the 2004/4 issue, liaising with the editor brought an objective and informed view about the variety of articles that focused on a broad range of topics addressing global environmental social justice. The designer’s role is so much more than making things look aesthetically pleasing for the client – it is to communicate and inform the target market allowing people to make informed choices. Further, it is an ethical decision in which the designer contributes a social responsibility to their community or, more specifically, what the designer can do in their profession to contribute to making their community a better place through communicating a socially conscious design. For me, designing this Social Alternatives cover was an opportunity to contribute visual social design in a meaningful way. The 2004/4 cover design combined the logo, the title, graphic symbolism of scales, a miniature crowd of people and world map with a photographic grid overlay of a variety of industrial images that are mixed with images of nature. Using desktop software, the design was easily expanded to feature both the back and front of the cover. This design helped communicate the broad array of articles and became for me a framework to follow in future issues. Adhering to a framework helps the design process and the designer to work more efficiently as it creates a structure that can give focus and support to problem solving.

It was helpful to draw from Cynthia Mononutu, the manager of Hong Kong-based design studio Leap Design, who has designed for many charities offering assistance to people based on need irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation. Mononutu (2015) created a ‘design thinking’ framework for ideation in designing socially responsible problems.

Even though the buzz-word ‘design thinking’ is more connected to solving problems for user-orientated products, it can also be applied to visual communication as it focuses on the cognitive processes and problems designers encounter during the developmental stages of the design concept. Developing a framework for social issues within the emergent stage can alert the designer to what Rittel and Webber (1973) describe as ‘wicked problems’.

Wicked Problems and ‘Design Action’

In 1973, these Berkeley professors published an article in Policy Sciences introducing the notion of ‘wicked’ social problems (Logue 2012). In general, a wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve due to incomplete or contradictory knowledge from a number of environmental factors. Since its conception, ‘wicked problems’ have infiltrated every aspect of socio-political issues, and the ‘term has become a kind of catch-all, a shorthand used to describe the big challenges facing Australia and the world, and the role of research responding to these challenges’ (Harris 2012). The notion of ‘wicked problems’ is not necessarily an evil concept, but can be defined as a:

social or cultural problem that is difficult to solve for four reasons: 1) incomplete or contradictory knowledge; 2) the high number of stakeholders, people, and opinions involved; 3) the potential of a large financial burden to make progress; and 4) interconnection with other problems (Kolko 2012).

The wickedness in terms of a design problem lies in the essential impossibility of doing justice to an open-ended and controversial problem with a limited amount of design resources, such as time, money, human resources, creativity, and patience. Here, creative thinking through developing a structured framework, collaboration with editors and stakeholders can overcome some of these problems. A design framework enables the designer to follow a path of research drawn from the variety of cultural issues voiced in the articles towards a successful solution that suits the overall theme. Here, the graphic designer is responsible for interpreting and reinterpreting...
cultural messages from the articles or editorial into visual vernaculars suitable for the journal cover or in broader terms, for the specific target audience. Mononutu (2015) noted Bush’s (2003) observations that:

Design is linked to culture since social actions cannot be understood outside the cultural contexts. This understanding constructs our social worlds: culture creates a world that makes sense. ‘In order to conduct a social practice we need to give it a certain meaning, have a conception of it, be able to think meaningfully about it’ (Bush 2003). Furthermore, [Bush] pointed out that the production of social meanings is, therefore, a necessary precondition for the functioning of all social practices, and an account of the cultural conditions of social practices must form part of the sociological explanation of how they work.

For example, Milton Glaser, famous for the symbolic ‘I ♥ New York’ slogan and logo in 1977, addressed The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), the professional organisation for design conference in 2005, to encourage those working in the design field to become ‘designer/citizens’ to take part and act in a world of ‘wicked problems’ through design thinking:

In my lifetime, I’ve witnessed a world war, the Holocaust, McCarthyism, Vietnam, Korea, the threat of nuclear annihilation, the Cold War – and in these times, AIDS, genocide in Africa and Bosnia, 9/11, global warming, the war on Iraq, the acceptance of torture, the Patriot Act, the tsunami, the devastation of New Orleans and the gulf coast and overshadowing everything else in our minds – the emergence of international terrorism ... My personal response to this condition has led me to become more active in civic life. As designers, we’ve been concerned about our role in society for a very long time. It’s important to remember that even modernism had social reform as its basic principle, but the need to act seems more imperative than ever (Glaser 2005).

Glaser is suggesting that rather than focusing purely on commercial gain, designers can give their abilities and donate time to become active citizens, to use the power of design not only to draw attention to, but also to help enact positive change in response to social issues around the world. It is important for designers to create a ‘design action’ that offers visual communication and graphic design services for organisations, non-profits, and other groups dedicated to social change.

My first cover design for Social Alternatives was a positive ‘design action’ or another theoretical variation, coined – ‘human centred design’ – for social change. ‘Human-centred design practice’ or ‘design thinking’ is a process that starts with understanding the type of research or exploration required, the generation of various ideas or concepts, roughing out those ideas and importantly to have an empathy with the collective or organisation you are designing for. Essentially, ‘human centred design’ is to focus on the user experience throughout the research by designing, obtaining feedback from the editor in the case of the Social Alternatives cover, and if necessary a redesign. Human centred design is defined as the process that places human needs and limitations at a higher priority compared with other targets, such as any self-centred ideologies, during the differential stages of design thinking and production. Combined with colours, typography, layout and graphics – the classic elements of visual design – this plays an important role in the overall impact of a concept design on readers.

Glendennig (2017), a practitioner and design student at the Maryland Institute College of Art, joined a team of six students in MICA’s Centre for Social Design to work on a project focused on HIV stigma and trust. He outlined a specific ‘design action’ plan, which brought about a positive change for HIV stigma in the city of Baltimore.

In my lifetime, I’ve witnessed a world war, the Holocaust, McCarthyism, Vietnam, Korea, the threat of nuclear annihilation, the Cold War – and in these times, AIDS, genocide in Africa and Bosnia, 9/11, global warming, the war on Iraq, the acceptance of torture, the Patriot Act, the tsunami, the devastation of New Orleans and the gulf coast and overshadowing everything else in our minds – the emergence of international terrorism ... My personal response to this condition has led me to become more active in civic life. As designers, we’ve been concerned about our role in society for a very long time. It’s important to remember that even modernism had social reform as its basic principle, but the need to act seems more imperative than ever (Glaser 2005).

Figure 2: Plan of design action for human-centred design: MICA Centre for Social Design, Maryland Institute College of Art 2017.

Not only does the designer need to be aware of ‘design thinking, human centred design, design action and wicked problems’ when designing for social causes but also the theory of semiotics – signs and symbols that underpin design outcomes. Semiotics, also known as semiology, is the study of the interpretation of signs. This was developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and further established by the post-structuralist theorist of culture, Roland Barthes. Barthes broke down the process of reading signs and focused on their interpretation to include different cultures or societies. The distinction between signifier and signified is crucial to all media where signs imbue both a signifier, being the physical form of the sign as we perceive it through our senses, and the signified, the meaning that is interpreted:

Semiology aims to take any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits, images, gestures, musical sounds, objects and the complex
association of these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least of signification (Barthes 1967: 9).

Semiotics, signs and symbols were important when designing my second Social Alternatives cover for editor John Janzekovic’s theme issue, ‘Humanitarian Intervention’. John requested as many as possible logos identifying humanitarian non-for-profit agencies to be included on the cover. The logos subsequently depicted on the cover are symbols, visual signs that support and identity individual identities for each agency or organisation. Logos are signatures that bridge communication between the public and the organisation. Symbols can be meaningful in many other ways. For example, the cover design includes an imitation of a Russian Kalashnikov rifle that is imbued with sixties flower power and psychedelic symbolic references to denote the concept of peace when aggression is a reality. Fired by the gun is a secular peace symbol, the dove, popularised by Pablo Picasso after World War II that was adopted as an emblem of the peace movement.

Figure 3: 2005 Social Alternatives, Vol. 24 No. 3, Humanitarian Intervention.

Since joining the Social Alternatives collective I have designed the covers from Volume 25 Issue 2, 2006 onwards. Designing four covers a year requires extensive exploration for each issue in order to provide visual metaphors as universal symbols for readers. The theory of semiotics is paramount when designing the Social Alternatives covers, particularly for their use in interpretation and meaning for the viewer.

Semiotics differs from linguistics in that it generalises the definition of a sign to encompass signs in any medium or sensory modality. Here the designer reflects on the many themed issues advanced by the editorial, as there were many options to pursue in which semiotics rely on the signifier, the symbol that delivers the most powerful connotation or meaning to address the overall issue theme. As graphic designers we are describing the message using metaphors. This is achieved through the use of symbolic visuals as tools for meaning that serve as a container for cognitive constructions about the theme and the designer’s thoughts on the theme. Ursyn (2013: 212) suggests that ‘signs, symbols, and metaphors in art, graphic design and visual storytelling may support visual communication, organise and structure information graphically and convey human insight about the represented information through the key characteristics of the visualisation metaphor’.

The effectiveness of universal symbols depends on two important attributes: one, user recognition and comprehension of non-verbal (or textural) aesthetics and two, involvement of relevant users as key to the design of graphical symbols. What Ursyn (2013) alludes is that by ascribing metaphors they make invisible concepts perceivable; they are inherent in our thoughts and thus enable visualisation of abstract concepts. These effectively convey intended messages across language and culture. Consistent use of graphic symbolism increases recognition and thus comprehension value over time. The use of graphical symbols when designing the Social Alternatives covers has been consistent since Volume 25, (2), 2006, with an update to the logo (header) and inside layout published from Volume 27, (1), 2008.

The process by which the Social Alternatives journal cover design, from complex handcrafted methods to the digital workflow, has evolved and changed the aesthetic since its introduction forty years ago and has become a recognised identity for alternative views on many global social issues. Changing to the digital production process did not mean that the cover designs were always of a purely digital nature. Handcrafted methods still contributed where possible as I had grown up through the analogue to digital revolution with a history in drawing, printmaking, painting, graphic design and photography. When traditional methods are employed for issue themes that warrant a handcrafted aesthetic, digital software is only a vehicle to bring together the cover design for printing. The most important aspect for the Social Alternatives cover design is the process and methodologies used to produce consistency of design in layout and cover design that has impact, familiarity for subscribers and a semiology that communicates the issue theme.

References
In the Dog Box of the Day

In the dog box of the day there is no escaping yourself,
the lines of code in your DNA every reinvention, every put-on persona
fails to sway.

You might fool others — perambulating restlessly inside their own parameters,
their bouncing pin-balls of thoughts, ideas, beliefs, cloying universes
too small for great ambitions, locked in, however much they twist and turn,
and maybe even fool yourself that you’re fooling yourself,
but wool over eyes is temporary, slips off to reveal the grip of ennui.

This is what you have to work with:
the clay from which you fashion your life and every hard-won secret delight.

DAVID ADES,
CASTLE HILL, NSW
The Influence of Feminist Organisations on Public Policy Responses to Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women: A systematic literature review

PAIGE FLETCHER AND CASSANDRA STAR

Violence against women remains a critical threat to women’s safety around the world. This paper examines the existing literature on feminist organisations’ influence in producing policy outcomes to determine whether feminist activism has an influence over public policy. Forty-nine relevant studies were identified, reviewed and analysed. Feminist organisations were found to have significant influence over public policies across governmental levels and political systems. The research findings conflicted on whether internal or external advocacy by feminist organisations is most beneficial to achieve desired policy outcomes. Collaboration was found to be the most commonly used activist technique of feminist organisations to achieve change. The use of collaboration encompassed collaborating with the state, other feminist organisations, and other social movement organisations. Significant gaps were identified within the literature. Future research should provide an Australian context to the influence of feminist organisations on public policies, as well as comparative studies on the types of feminist activism to determine which is most effective in securing policy outcomes. Future research should aim to provide conclusive evidence on how feminist activism influences policy.

Introduction

Due to the differences in approaches to, and effectiveness of, lobbying, feminist organisations have differing impacts on public policies. This paper explores the influence of feminist organisations on policy and sets to examine which activist techniques are commonly used and which lead to desired policy outcomes. This is a critical issue as increased awareness of gendered violence has resulted in increased public pressure to address domestic and family violence in Australia (Dumas 2016; Goldsworthy and Raj 2015) and internationally (O’Connor 1999: 938-950). This follows ineffective policies on violence against women, failing to address the root cause of gendered violence.

Background and context

Feminist social movements can be observed across cultures and time in Western democracies, but all share the same goal of liberating women from the patriarchal shackles which confine and subordinate women. The successes of the feminist social movement have challenged many contributors to women’s oppression; however, these have not achieved the goal of women’s liberation. Women across the globe experience different political rights and recognition; one universal manifestation of women’s suppression that knows no bounds is men’s violence against women.

The earliest documented feminist activism within Australia was the Women’s Liberation Movement, as feminists began rejecting the degradation and subordination of women, in the form of abuse at the hands of their husbands. At the time, women had no legislative, political, or social rights and standing within society and were completely dependent on their husbands (Lake 1999: 3). Women were economically isolated, relying on their male partners for financial support. This creates an unequal division of power, thus leaving women unable to be independent and therefore open to the risk of spousal abuse.

This feminist fight continues, as women in Australia still experience high levels of domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW). Data from 2013-2014 shows that one woman dies each week as a result of DV and VAW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018: ix). Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety reports women are most likely to experience abuse at the hands of a previous male
partner and 75 per cent of women surveyed reported experiencing this abuse repeatedly (Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children & ANROWS 2014: 3). While it is unclear if the incidence rate of VAW has increased, or whether there has been an increase in the reporting of these incidences to police, the general public has become increasingly aware of domestic and family violence (FV).

This increased awareness can be attributed to the work of Australian feminist organisations. In recent years, feminist organisations have raised awareness of the prevalence of VAW and DV in Australia, showcasing the scant progress made towards the rights of women, especially women's safety. The advocacy of feminist organisations in raising awareness, promoting debate, and lobbying for policy and legislative action is vital for the implementation of feminist public policies that not only protect women from DV and VAW, but also liberate women.

The term feminist policy refers to the application of a gendered perspective on approaches to, and development of, policy (McPhail 2003: 41-42). This is necessary as feminists have long argued that the claim of policy as gender neutral is an insulting lie, as under a patriarchy men are considered the norm, while women the ‘other’. Therefore, gender neutral refers to the norm, and thus policy is created from the male perspective and does little to consider or address the impact of such policy on the oppressed gender (McPhail 2003: 41).

Weldon and Htun (2013) argue that the policies implemented by governments reveal what they regard as of high importance. Governments who do not create policies aimed at addressing gendered violence and who do not commit to reducing VAW, therefore, do not value women's rights. To address this, feminist organisations lobby governments and the general public to raise awareness of the issue of gendered violence, advocating for policies to reduce this violence. This advocacy, if successful ultimately influences public policy (Htun and Weldon, 2013: 239):

It is well established that social movements shape public and government agendas and create the political will to address particular issues.

The independence of the feminist movement is vital for success. Bush (1992: 603) argues that as a consequence of collaboration with the state, in some cases, the policy outcomes of the feminist movement do not address the actual cause: gender inequality and power imbalance. This demonstrates the importance of an independent feminist movement. Weldon and Htun (2013: 235 – 236) found that a strong feminist presence increased the likelihood of the introduction of governmental policy addressing VAW and that a stronger feminist narrative resulted in a more comprehensive policy. However, organisational autonomy does not guarantee the interests of women. Molyneux (1998: 8) argued that autonomous feminist organisations might need to collaborate with other organisations to achieve influence over policy. She contended that this makes the movement vulnerable to co-option (Molyneux 1998: 8). The Australian feminist movement has a strong history of independent feminist organisations lobbying both state and federal governments and achieving results. The notion of autonomy in regards to feminist organisations does pose a dilemma as many feminist organisations in Australia rely on governmental funding in some form.

Methods

A systematic literature review was the key method used to examine the current research on the influence of feminist activism on policy. The literature was gathered from three databases and only the literature that met the inclusion criteria was consulted, examined and analysed.

The research question ‘is feminist activism effective in influencing public policy?’ was used as a guideline for the search string. The search string used to search databases is compromised of three topics. The first was feminist activism. All of the following terms were searched in all three databases as follows: feminism OR feminist OR activism OR “feminist activism” OR activist OR “women's rights” OR “feminist movement” OR lobbying OR “feminist lobbying”. Influence was the second topic: change OR influence OR impact OR affect OR effect. The third topic was public policy: “public policy” OR policy OR politics OR law OR legislation OR “social policy”.

Three databases were used to access literature. Scopus was consulted as the first database. The search was limited to social sciences, arts and humanities and only articles were selected. Two thousand hits from the search were extracted in Endnote to evaluate. Only 31 met the inclusion criteria and were relevant to the research question. Humanities and Social Sciences Collection Informit database was consulted second, and the search was limited to abstracts and journals. This search produced 46 hits and of those only one article was relevant to the research question and met the inclusion criteria. The selection process to narrow the literature was as follows: articles relating to lobbying, social movements, political activism, cyber activism, feminist lobbying and/or activism were all included in the data pool. Articles excluded were any articles unrelated to political lobbying, activism, social movements, and/
or feminist activism and lobbying, as well as non-English articles and multiples of the same article across databases. Social Sciences Abstracts was the third database consulted using the search string previously outlined. The search was also limited to abstracts, scholarly (peer reviewed) journals, and academic journals were selected as publication type. The publications selected to ensure only relevant articles were gathered included Women’s Studies International Form, Social Movement Studies, Women’s Studies Quarterly, Women and Politics, PS: Political Science and Politics, Policy Studies Journal, Journal of Social Issues, Journal of Public Policy, Feminist Formations, Gender and Society and Social Science Journal. This was done to exclude any irrelevant journals, such as those not focussed on politics or policymaking. This search limited to only the listed journals produced 126 hits, and of those, 14 were relevant to the research question and thus included in the data pool. Overall, 49 articles were extracted, examined and analysed.

Results

Main findings

The literature highlights strong connections between women’s organisations and legislative or other policy outcomes. Women’s advocacy groups and lobbyists are consistently found to promote policy change internationally, including in democracies and authoritarian regimes, as well as at national and state levels. The literature is conflicting, however, on the most effective activists techniques used by feminist organisations.

Weldon and Htun (2013) find that external feminist activism is the strongest and most powerful method of creating policy change, more so than increased women’s participation within parliament and legislative roles. This is supported by Lyons (2008) who argues feminist lobbying is the most effective method of producing policy change, particularly through the collaboration between the feminist organisations and policy makers. Several studies in the review provide country specific examples in which feminist organisations have successfully produced policy and legislative outcomes. Bhatia and Tambe’s (2013) findings validate the success of feminist activism in India, which resulted in the increase of legal age to marry. A study conducted by Coe (2009: 429, 437) provides an example of feminist organisations successfully influencing policy change regarding women’s reproductive rights in Latin America. Policy reform on access to contraceptives, through agenda setting and involvement in policymaking decisions resulted. Medie (2013: 391-396) highlights the success of feminist organisations in Liberia, who saw a range of policy reforms to address sexual assault and rape, including changes to the judicial system, and rape law reform. Cagna and Rao (2016: 280) examine the influence of feminist organisations on domestic violence legislation in China, Indonesia, and India and find that the lobbying of these feminist organisations resulted in the implementation of domestic violence laws. One challenge, however, which was highlighted, was the lack of female parliamentarians. Feminist organisations in all three nations struggled to establish women’s rights on the agenda as the majority of parliamentarians were men who viewed violence against women as a “natural” part of women’s social standing (Cagna & Rao 2016; 281). Burgess (2012: 167-168) examines an Ethiopian women’s legal association and finds several successes in influencing legal reform, despite significant restrictions and setbacks. These studies provide examples of feminist organisations’ success in influencing public policies and legislative outcomes.

Conversely, the analysis also finds that internal feminist activism, namely the role of feminist bureaucrats, commonly known as ‘femocrats’, are critical in achieving feminist policy outcomes. Ball and Charles (2006: 174) find increased women’s participation plays a key role, as women in elected roles are able to influence the agenda and policy. This is supported by Murphy (1997: 42), who finds a high percentage of women in the legislature results in more policy reform to increase police responsibility for safer options for women who are victims of DV. The findings of Kim and Kim (2011: 392) indicate that the collaboration between femocrats within the government and feminist organisations is key in securing effective public policies in South Korea. This is attributed to the pooling of resources and consequential access to feminist research, which is utilised in the bureaucracy (Kim and Kim, 2011: 392). Furthermore, Andrew’s (2015: 368) examination of the Women’s Electoral Lobby, which predominantly consists of femocrats, finds the organisation ran several successful campaigns through active involvement in policy, such as submission to inquiries (Andrew 2015: 369).

An emergent theme in the review was that success arose from collaboration between internal and external feminist activism. Harris (2008: 51) finds that the government-focussed lobbying of feminist organisations in conjunction with the internal work of femocrats produces the highest number of policy outcomes for women and gender equality. Bustelo’s (2014: 7) examination of Spain finds that a major weakness in securing gender equality is the lack of involvement of the feminist movement in policy.

The review also highlights that feminist lobbying might produce the opposite of intended policy outcomes. Hughes et al. (2015: 366) find that increased pressure to implement gender quotas with strong connections to
non-governmental women’s organisations reduces the likelihood of actually implementing gender quotas. They attribute this to the intimidating affect that feminism has on the patriarchy and the rise of men's rights activists to oppose the advancement of women’s rights (Hughes et al., 2015: 368). Anagnostou (2013) observes a similar effect in Greece, despite gender equality’s inclusion on the policy agenda. Feminist activism saw the courts rule that gender discrimination is acceptable under certain circumstances (Anagnostou 2013: 147).

Analysis of the review also indicates that feminist activism should not be solely assessed against policy and legislative outcomes, but cultural and societal shifts should also be considered. Daniele (2014: 30) examines the revolution in Tunisia and argues feminist activism was pivotal in the evolution of Tunisian society. This was achieved by challenging of the status of women, which in turn contributed to the liberation of the Tunisian people (Daniele 2014: 28). Coe (2012: 156) supports this, arguing that the feminist social movement in Peru challenges gender and cultural norms, promoting an inclusive society. She argues that feminist social movements not only have an influence over policy and legislation, but also advocate for a woman-friendly society (Coe, 2012: 163). The findings of McCammon and McGrath (2015: 134) support this. They contend lawyers can have a strong influence on policy development and outcomes, leading to cultural shifts, for example, through the framing of the legal argument as a human rights issue (McCammon and McGrath 2015: 134). Additionally, Outshoorn (2012: 147-148) argues that policy outcomes are not the only means of assessing the effectiveness of feminist social movements. She argues a change in discourse demonstrates effectiveness as educating the public results in the challenging of social norms, which contributes to gender equality (Outshoorn 2012: 147-148). The analysis is inconclusive on whether feminist organisations working internally with the state or independently is most influential in achieving policy outcomes. Differing activist techniques, however, do have differing impacts on influencing policy outcomes.

Activist techniques

A large proportion of the surveyed literature explores the techniques used by feminist organisations and examines which techniques prove to be the most effective means of successfully influencing policy and legislative outcomes. Schmitt and Yancey Martin (1999: 368) examine a feminist organisation in Southern California and find the organisation used several different methods to achieve policy outcomes. The organisations that successfully influence policy and legislative reform often re-framed the problem and solution to issues to appeal to members of Congress (Schmitt & Yancey Martin 1999: 368). Schmitt and Yancey Martin (1999: 368) explain this can be achieved through negotiation rather than the traditional method of demonstrations by social movements. This supports the findings of Prosser and Denniss (2015: 509) within an Australian context. Successful lobbyists need to structure their cause as an opportunity to MPs, rather than as an issue that needs to be addressed. This is further reinforced by Coulter and Meyer (2015: 38, 45-46), who find feminist activism is successful in producing reform when only one problem is presented alongside the solution. When multiple issues distract feminist lobbying, it reduces the likelihood of attaining policy outcomes.

Another insight into the potential shortcomings of feminist activism evident in the literature was the involvement of grassroots connections. A study conducted by Cluverius (2017: 288) uncovers that in the US, the use of mass emails to lobby politicians as a cost saving exercise lacks individual personal stories. The lack of personalisation of this kind is a failing of grassroots lobbying approaches (Cluverius 2017: 287). However, Allen and Guru (2011: 7) find a lack of organisational connection to grassroots creates weaknesses within lobbying, which leads to an inability to influence public policy and legislative reform. Indeed, Disney and Gelb (2000: 73) identify several factors that contribute to the success of feminist activism, including grassroots connections.

The review overwhelmingly recognises collaboration as critical for lobbying success. There is, however, debate on the source of collaboration that lobbyists should engage with to effectively influence policy change. Within the analysis, it is consistently argued that feminist organisations are most effective in influencing policy when they collaborate with the state. This is attributed to a range of reasons, including direct access to policy makers and politicians. Collaboration was one of the techniques identified by Schmitt and Yancey Martin (1999) that was adopted by a feminist organisation running a rape crisis centre. They find that the organisation worked with other organisations and the government through state departments to ensure consistency in the understandings of rape and sexual assault (Schmitt & Yancey Martin, 1999: 369). Furthermore, Cagna and Rao (2016: 51) find that personal relationships with policy makers are key for success. Harris (2008: 51) claims policy outcomes are achieved for the joint work of feminist organisations and the femocrats from within the government. Baig (2016: 210) contends women's organisations should collaborate with both governmental and non-governmental organisations to achieve the best results. Lastly Ambrosetti et al. (2013: 415) argue Egyptian feminist organisations were unsuccessful in promoting cultural and policy change due to the
lack of collaboration between the non-governmental organisations and the government.

Alternatively, the collaboration of feminist organisations with governments can have adverse effects. Arat-Koc (2012) reasons that feminist organisations’ collaboration with the state can be harmful under some governments and structures. The study finds that under a neoliberal government, Canadian women were treated as objects of discussion, rather than as contributors to the discussion of gender equality (Arat-Koc 2012: 6). In addition, Arat-Koc (2012: 7) determines that the rights of women of colour are dismissed, instead being treated as cultural concerns.

Other studies within the literature review highlight that feminist organisations should collaborate with each other to achieve the most effective policy outcomes. Klouer (2011: 500) finds there is strength in numbers, as the larger the lobbying group, the increased likelihood of the passing of a complex policy proposal. Collaboration between lobbyists was found to be important due to the ability to pool knowledge and resources (Kluver, 2011: 502). Nelson and Yackee (2012: 349) ascertain that the most effective technique to produce policy outcomes is to form a lobbyist coalition. They argue these coalitions send a strong message to governments and policy makers, which further increases the possibility of policy outcomes (Nelson and Yackee, 2012: 349). A longitudinal study conducted by Scott (2013: 631) determines that the collaboration between lobbyists, such as sharing of information and resources, increases the likelihood of the development of a policy agenda.

The analysis finds collaboration also important for feminist research, which plays a key role in policy development. Artz et al. (2017) finds that the use of feminist research allows for reform in a range of South African laws, including abortion law, equality law, and domestic violence and sexual assault (Artz et al. 2017: 82). They call for a feminist perspective to be applied to all research and for collaboration with non-government organisations (Artz et al. 2017: 86-87, 89).

With that said, the literature also found that collaboration between the feminist social movement and other social movements is actually harmful to the cause. Weldon and Htun (2013: 238-239) identify that feminist organisations are most effective in promoting and producing policy outcomes when organisations are autonomous. This is supported by Bhattacharjya et al (2013: 286) who argue women’s rights and gender equality is often ignored within progressive social movements due to the patriarchal influence of male members. This highlights the importance of autonomous feminist organisations, not just from the government, but also from other social movements. Overall, the literature remains inconclusive on the most effective collaborative relationships for organisations.

Several other techniques used by feminist organisations are explored in the literature. Clear (2017.: 138) argues that the use of high profile individuals on organisation boards allows for greater access to policy makers and thus greater influence. It is also found that bargaining with politicians is an effective technique used by lobbyists. Elgar (2014: 365) uncovers that organisations in Latin America most commonly used the tactic of threatening to withhold votes from politicians in order to gain their cooperation on reproductive rights policies. Other methods include mobilisation in the form of public protests and lobbying not only politicians but also the media (Elga, 2014: 365). Another approach used by American interest groups is the selective lobbying of congress by notifying them of which groups in society are supportive of certain policies (Grasse and Heidbreder 2011: 570). The media is found to have an important role in the effectiveness of activists and lobbyists. Sobbrio (2009) examines the relationship between lobbyists and the media to assess whether the media is effective in promoting the lobbyists’ cause. They emphasise that media outlets express biased reporting, regardless of whether the intention is to support the lobbyists’ cause or hinder it (Sobbrio 2009: 20-21). Thus, organisations need to be aware of public campaigns run via the media, as the message may negatively influence public opinion. This will ultimately affect whether or not the issue is placed on the political agenda.

Finally, the analysis indicates that the most crucial phase of policy creation for lobbyists is the agenda setting and pre-policy phase. Pettinicchio (2016: 158, 163) argues the pre-policy phase is vital for lobbyists to utilise to promote discourse as a means of not just influencing the policy agenda, but also as a means of creating public awareness and challenging cultural and societal beliefs. Additionally, McKay (2012: 127) determines the lobbying against a policy proposal is more effective in influencing policy change rather than lobbying in support of a proposal. The framing of lobbying against a policy effectively highlights the lack of support by the general public on the proposed policy (McKay 2012: 132). The findings of the analysis showcase a wide array of activist techniques utilised by feminist organisations to achieve influence over public policy. This influence, however, is not without challenges.

**Feminist organisations’ struggles**

The analysis explores a range of issues faced by feminist organisations and their activism. Most commonly
experienced are funding concerns and loyalty to the feminist movement. Feminist organisations are often challenged as legitimate organisations by governments, and additionally struggle to prove themselves to the feminist movement. Sawyers and Meyer (1999: 193, 195-196) find the splitting of the feminist social movement into factions – the liberal movement and radical movement – has contributed to the overall decline of the movement. Schmitt and Yancey Martin (1999: 381) report that feminist organisations contend with maintaining the approval of the feminist movement as a whole, and endeavour to not be viewed as compromising the feminist goal when working alongside the state. Feminist organisations can struggle with this split, as found by Schmitt and Yancey (1999). Radical feminism is anti-establishment: in order for feminists to gain women’s empowerment, feminists cannot work within patriarchal institutions. Thus the different factions within the feminist movement present challenges for successful activism.

The role of the state in reinforcing gendered violence introduces additional contestation into the movement. Franzway (2016) argues that challenges faced by the feminist movement and organisations in influencing legislative and policy outcomes for domestic violence are that citizenship is gendered, and therefore entwined with power and violence. She argues that male dominance is reinforced by the state through gendered citizenship (Franzway 2016: 22). Following on, Roth (2004: 152) finds that for institutionalised feminist organisations, the challenge is often the eventual resulting decline of the feminist agenda, despite a feminist-friendly setting. This greatly affects organisations’ ability to influence public policies, as the agenda-setting phase is crucial for successful lobbying (Pettinicchio, 2016: 163). Furthermore, another struggle experienced by feminist organisations is that the advocacy by women’s organisations is simply not considered by the state or international organisations, such as the United Nations (Gabizon 2016).

Funding is a major obstacle for feminist organisations, particularly for non-government and not-for-profit organisations. Rodgers and Knight (2011: 573) argue funding is vital to the success of the feminist movement as it provides organisations with a platform. Non-governmental organisations are often strained by a lack of stable monetary flow. Disney and Gelb (2000: 50) find competition between feminist organisations increasingly common during the 1980s when government funding became obsolete. In addition, in multiple policy domains, the state has threatened the financial support of critical non-government organisations (Maddison et al. 2004). This reinforces the challenge of organisations to remain loyal to the feminist movement but also maintain the government’s satisfaction.

Lastly, the political setting in which the organisations exist is another issue raised in the analysis. Organisations in democracies versus authoritarian regimes experience different challenges. Burgess (2012) examines an Ethiopian women’s legal association and finds that despite many challenges, they have been successful in producing legal and policy reform for advancing the rights of Ethiopian women. One struggle faced by the organisation was restrictions imposed by the authoritarian regime. Feminist organisations face greater success in democracies (Burgess 2012: 167). These challenges raised in the analysis can seriously impede feminist organisations’ ability to influence public policy. It also highlights a critical new area for lobbying success – online activism.

The role of social media in activism and lobbying for policy change

The role of social media in activism and lobbying for policy outcomes was also explored within the analysis. Social media is an important tool to be utilised by social movements. Curtin and McGarty (2016: 228, 231) argue social media is central for activism, as it allows for the organisation of protests, lobbying, and discourse. A shared social identity over similar interests and opinions is a strong predictor of participation in collective action (Curtin and McGarty, 2016: 231). Social media allows for individuals to connect over shared interests and opinions, and provides a platform for collective action to occur. Milan (2015: 890, 893) supports these findings, arguing that social media and digital technology allow for greater collective action and engagement between activists. McLean and Maalsen (2017) examine the role of Destroy The Joint in influencing the mainstreaming of feminism within Australia. They reveal that while the ideas of Destroy The Joint are not new, the collective action formed by the online activism of the organisation provides a platform for these ideas to be put into action (McLean and Maalsen, 2017: 31). Breindl (2013: 1421) examine online activist campaigns and argue that these campaigns differ from traditional lobbying as they lack knowledgeable structured arguments. With that said, social media activism campaigns were determined to be successful in producing policy reform, however, this is dependent on the cause being lobbied (Breindl 2013: 1434). Social media is becoming an increasingly popular means of activism. Overall, the analysis has demonstrated feminist organisations have an influential role in public policy agendas, formulation and outcomes. However, the extent of influence is inconclusive.

Discussion

This systematic literature review highlights several key issues and gaps within the existing academic literature. Firstly, there was a significant lack of Australian context
within the literature. Out of the 49 studies that met the inclusion criteria, six were Australian focused. In contrast, the preponderance of the literature was specific to the United States of America. Additionally, there were several case studies of feminist organisations across the globe, including from within authoritarian regimes. There remains a distinct lack of Australian context within the literature, thus there is an urgent need for research to fill this gap.

For example, the Australian political system differs from the political system of the US. Within the US, lobbyists hold much greater power over politicians, the political system, and policy (Gilens and Page 2014; Smith 1995). As such, studies examining the influence of feminist organisations on policy in the US are not readily applicable to feminist organisations within Australia. Activist techniques that have been demonstrated to be effective in regards to policy outcomes in the US may not be as successful for Australian feminist organisations, and vice versa. As such, the need for Australian specific research to examine the role of feminist organisations in influencing policy outcomes is vital.

Secondly, of the literature analysed, a large portion of the literature is of case studies of specific organisations and their impacts on policy around the world. As a result, there is a critical lack of comparative studies examining different types of feminist activism. Whilst case studies are beneficial in understanding how individual feminist organisations and activism has been successful in producing policy outcomes, there remains limited research enabling isolation of critical factors most successful in producing effective policy outcomes. This knowledge is valuable for feminist organisations to provide an understanding of which techniques are most likely to result in successful policy and legislative outcomes. As such, feminist activists and organisations could utilise this knowledge to address the underlying causes of DV and VAW. This could see a rise in the implementation of feminist policy, as feminist activism would be deliberate in the techniques used for policy outcomes.

Thirdly, while the literature did determine feminist activism to be successful in influencing public policy, the findings were conflicting and therefore present an inconclusive picture of which type of feminist activism is most effective. Conclusive evidence allows for feminist organisations to adapt lobbying and activist techniques to ensure policy outcomes to ultimately reduce VAW and gendered violence. In a time of reduced resources for non-government organisations, hard choices have to be made about activism undertaken, due to the need to compete in a crowded marketplace of interests – further research would enable evidence-based choices to be made. In addition, conclusive research will aid in the understanding of the role in which feminist activism has on the production and implementation of policy.

There is a range of research needed to address these gaps in the current literature. Future studies should examine the role of feminist organisations in influencing public policy in Australia, as well as international comparative studies of the most effective types of feminist activism. This future research will assist in providing conclusive evidence on the most effective means of feminist activism for policy outcomes.

**Conclusion**

This paper analysed the academic literature on the role of feminist activism in influencing public policy. The literature overwhelmingly confirms that feminist activism is successful in influencing policy. The current literature was, however, limited in offering an explanation for how feminist activism most effectively influences public policy. This understanding is critical as it allows for effective public policies targeting the reduction of VAW and gendered violence.

The three major gaps were the distinct lack of Australian focused research, the lack of comparative studies on approaches to feminist activism to determine the most effective techniques, and the overall conflicting evidence in the literature. Future research is urgently needed to determine the factors critical for effective advocacy of feminist organisations on public policy for the Australian context. Future studies should explore the types of feminist activism most effective in influencing policy outcomes and should provide case studies of Australian specific feminist activism resulting in successful DV and FV policy outcomes. This research will ensure that effective public policies to end VAW are formed and implemented.

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**Authors**

Paige Fletcher holds a Bachelor of Behavioural Science in Psychology and Public Policy and Honours in Public Policy, focusing on feminist organisations’ influence on Australian state and federal domestic violence public policies. She is particularly interested in the role of feminist organisations in the creation and implementation of feminist public policies.

Cassandra Star is an Associate Professor of Public Policy. Her research centres on environmental politics and policy, with a focus on the role, actions and influence of non-government organisations. She is interested in both the political influence of the movement, but also the formal and informal networks between groups in the non-government sector.

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**Easter**

Days pass.
Delicate skies.
Brittle sunlight.

The pardalote chick
on the path outside my house
cremples slowly in on itself.

Feathers loosen and lift;
inner solids turn to liquid, to gas;
skin dips—a sling of flesh—a palimpsest.

Now there's only
the quiet web of bones
the thin yellow cold

that clatters through them
and the slow persistent tapping
of branches against my window

like the sound of an egg tooth
working away at the
fragile protective shell.

**Alison Flett, Karuna Land, Adelaide, SA**
The Challenges Remain: A ‘new’ view of old perspectives on the history of women’s football in Australia

LEE McGOWAN and GREG DOWNES

Examination of the relationship of Australian women with football as a contested project and its contemporary positioning as an increasingly popular, televised sport supported by exponential growth in participation underlines a fraught set of commonalities. These commonalities have influenced the historic and the contemporaneous Australian female footballers’ experience. Building on oral and traditional historical research, this paper collates and explores findings from three surveys. They focus on a bibliographical review, an account of women’s football (soccer) games, and consideration of the contemporaneous challenges facing female football (soccer) players. The study presents new knowledge around early Australian, specifically Brisbane, women’s football (soccer) before considering common factors informing and influencing the current state of play. Oral histories from prominent participants in the game’s development are drawn on to offer insight of the challenges and obstructions faced by players, coaches and administrators in the modern game. In bringing these sources together, the paper contributes to broadening understandings of Australian women’s football heritage and culture and in identifying aspects for future work in the field.

Introduction

On September 25, 1921, 10,000 people watched two women’s teams, Brisbane North and Brisbane South, play football (soccer) at the Brisbane Cricket Ground, or the ‘Gabba’ as it is known today. The attendance was remarkable, but still a great deal smaller than the 40,000-50,000 crowds turning up to watch English team, the Dick, Kerr Ladies, during the same period (Tate 2016: 5).

The Brisbane match is significant in that it is widely acknowledged as the first public game of women’s football (soccer) in Australia. It has garnered attention as an event in and of itself, arguably at the expense of deeper exploration of the strong movement in Brisbane women’s football that led up to and followed the match and continued afterwards in 1922.

Despite calls to address the need for such an exploration by football historians such as Hay et al. (2014: 610), academic theorists such as Adair (2009: 417), and leaders in women’s football, such as Watson (1997: 3), historical documentation of Australian women’s football (soccer) or academic scrutiny of the game’s heritage, development, and rise to its current prominence in a highly competitive sporting landscape are relatively sparse. In uncovering and examining new information, this paper builds on those few sources available, including Downes et al.’s consideration of origins (2015), Hay et al.’s potted history (2014) and Williams’s work on international aspects of the women’s game (2003, 2007, 2013). It broadens discussion on the challenges faced by female footballers before considering the constancy of those challenges in the contestation and establishment of women’s football during key periods in its development in Australia.

The term ‘soccer’ remains a very popular descriptor for the Australian version of the game known globally as football. It is important to note that, even though this article is written for an Australian journal, and acknowledging that there are several codes described as women’s football (Rugby League, Rugby Union, and Football by Australian Rules (AFL)), it focuses on British or Association Football or Soccer as played by Australian women. The authors follow their own preference and that of the national and State governing bodies, clubs and fan communities, referring to ‘football’ as a term that is interchangeable with ‘soccer’.

This paper is written by two male scholars with expertise in developing football histories. They come to this work as researchers and as ‘Soccer Dads’ – fathers supporting...
Building on oral and traditional historical methods of approach, this research collates and explores findings from three surveys. They focus on a bibliographical review, an account of women's football games, and consideration of the contemporaneous challenges facing female football players. The paper presents new knowledge around early Australian, specifically Brisbane, women's football, considers common factors informing and influencing the current state of play, and draws on oral histories from prominent participants in the game's development to offer insight into a range of those challenges and obstructions faced by players, coaches and administrators in the modern game. The philosophical positioning of the discussion is situated within a framework of critical social theories, particularly where personal experience is valued through understanding of the underlying social justice issues, provides access to subjugated knowledges and the unique viewpoints of oppressed minorities (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011: 3) and enables knowledge creation processes that link individual experiences with the broader context (Leavy 2011: 10). The issues arising out of a collection of oral histories are discussed in the latter half of the paper. The first part will note what is previously known and offer new knowledge of early women's football. Before this discussion takes place, it is necessary to illustrate the contemporary context of football played by women in Australia.

Women's Football in Australia

In a year filled with accolades for her abilities as a player, star striker Samantha Kerr’s most important is arguably the 2018 Young Australian of the Year Award. In its recognition for a female footballer’s achievements in the public as well as the sports mainstream, the award is symbolic of cultural changes around the women's game. While it marks her own remarkable personal achievements on the field, and off, and underlines the rise of the Matildas on the international stage, it also speaks to and recognises growing acceptance of women’s football as an integral part of the Australian sporting landscape.

Following far-reaching but not surprising victories at the inaugural Tournament of Nations (2017), the national women's football team, nicknamed the Matildas, were placed a record-high fourth in FIFA's Women's World Rankings. This is a significant achievement in a fiercely competitive field. The 2018 W-League Grand Final, the pinnacle of the country's professional women's football, reached an estimated television audience of 440,000 across the two channels screening the game. The match day attendance of over 4,600 was the highest in the competition's 10-year history. In support of the top-tier game, there is significant interest in State-level competition and a complex network of grassroots clubs and organisations. Football Federation Australia announced in late 2016, with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, that football has become the country’s number one participation sport. Data collected a year earlier suggests that 39% of girls aged 6-13 play football (Roy Morgan Research 2015a). The percentage of girls in the same age bracket and women in the over-35 age bracket playing football now exceeds those playing netball (Roy Morgan Research 2015b). In 2017, Football Brisbane registered 5,010 female players (Football Brisbane). In comparison in 1976, their founding year, the South Queensland Women's Soccer Association—covering South West and South East Queensland, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast—registered 1,070 players (Watson 1997: 6). The same levels of growth are mirrored in all Australian States.

The emergent discipline of women's football studies has seen the development of research on the contemporary women's game in the USA (Grainey 2012), China (Aihua et al. 2012: 2372-2387), Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa (Saavedra 2004: 225–253), New Zealand (Cox and Pringle 2012: 217-234), England (Williams 2003), Scotland (Macbeth 2007: 3-24), France (Prudhomme-Poncet 2007: 27-40) and Norway (Ov die Skogvang 2007: 41-54).

It is important to note that women have been playing football in Australia for at least 115 years. According to Hay et al., it may even be longer (2014: 614). Yet collectively, very little is known about Australian women's football. While this situation is changing, academic research capturing the history, and even the current state of play, is limited to the academic work of Downes et al. (2015: 2150-2170), Adair (2009: 417), Williams (2007: 157-176), and an earlier paper by Hay (2006: 166). Several non-academic works have facilitated knowledge growth. Two short books by Elaine Watson (1994, 1997) capture the game’s development in the period between 1974 and 1997. Hay et al. dedicate a single chapter to women’s soccer in their comprehensive work on the male game, *The History of Football in Australia: A Game of Two Halves* (2014: 609-653). Football writer Joe Gorman makes various notes and offers limited discussion in his book *The Death and Rise of Australian Football* (2017: 56, 82, 84, 86, 163, 200, 237, 268, 326). A small number of online platforms provide ongoing and updated information, including: *The World Game*, which has dedicated pages for the Matildas and the W-League; *FourFourTwo*, which infrequently features coverage of
the women's game; The Women's Game, an Australian website dedicated to covering women's sport with a strong focus on its origins in women's football; Matildas, the FFA-auspicied site dedicated to the Matildas; and W-League, the FFA-auspicied site dedicated to the W-League. For the most part these works will only ever touch on the harassment, discrimination and marginalisation Australian women have faced throughout the game's history. This lack of research and focus on explicit harassment is in contrast to the degree such prejudice has been studied in the United Kingdom, particularly in the work of Jayne Caudwell on gender (2013, 2011b, 2011c), feminism (2011a, 2011b) and sexuality (2002), in the work of Ruth Jeanes and Tess Kay on gender identity (2007), Jo Welford's work on tokenism (2011: 365–38) and negotiating barriers to entry (with Kay 2007: 151-171), a subject Barbara Cox and Richard Pringle examine in their native Kiwi context (2012: 217-234).

The unfair and inequitable treatment, often perpetrated by organisations and the men who run them, has received severe criticism in the United Kingdom context (See Caudwell 2013). Protestation and formal acclamation, by women and men, have driven policy and structural change, particularly since the 1990s, assisted access and participation in playing and the running of the game, but the challenges remain (See Pfister and Pope 2018; Culvin 2018, Caudwell 2013). A glance through the comments section in a recent newspaper article, ‘Women's football takes centre stage in museum exhibition’, on the UK’s National Football Museum current exhibit on women's football (Kessel 2018) highlights that blatant and overt forms of misogyny and sexism continue to be openly expressed in relation to the game. Before discussion of the challenges and their commonalities across historical periods, it is important to establish what is known of early women's football in Australia, and specifically Brisbane, a city that seems to have been at the forefront of its development.

Before and After the Game at the Gabba

There is newspaper evidence to suggest that a ‘ladies’ team formed in Parramatta (NSW) in 1903. In 1908 a ‘ladies’ football team was started in Candelo (NSW) (Downes et al. 2015: 2152). It is understandably difficult to unearth additional detail on these teams and whether or not they played competitively. A game was reported in 1916, in West Wallsend in Northern New South Wales (Downes et al. 2015: 2152). It speaks to a pattern of men's football catching alight wherever migrant, predominantly European, men were employed in the mining industry. It is possible that the women who travelled with them also began playing football, and not coincidentally that organised women’s football teams and competitions emerged in close geographic-relation to well-known mining towns – mapping this phenomenon is an area for further and more detailed future research. We do know of the success of English teams, including the Dick, Kerr Ladies who by 1920 were regularly attracting crowds of 30,000-40,000 (Newsham 2014: 35) and being reported in Australian newspapers, such as the Hobart Mercury, 25 June 1921 (Downes et al. 2015: 2167).

Newspapers of the day also reported two clubs forming in Toowoomba, City and Rovers (Darling Downs Gazette, 30 June 1921: 23). Brisbane's first team, Latrobe Ladies, appear to have formed only a few days later (Half, Telegraph, 7 July 1921: 4). On 8 July that year, a group of over 100 women, keen to play, met in the Brisbane Gymnasium and voted to establish ‘The Queensland Women’s Ladies Soccer Football Association’ (Brisbane Courier 9 July 1921: 6). The announcement of this meeting and the likelihood the Association would be formed prompted a group in Sydney to meet a few days earlier and do likewise (Telegraph, Brisbane, 5 July 1921: 7). Competition between the States appears to be another constant. Credited with the Latrobe Ladies side’s establishment, R.J. Powell attended the meeting and offered the Latrobe model, including suggestions of uniforms, as an exemplar for new teams. Two were formed immediately, Brisbane City and South Brisbane, to join Powell's Latrobe side. These articles also note a determination to form three additional teams through further discussion with local sports clubs. Training nights were arranged and run by Mr W.G. Betts, Brisbane Gymnasium’s ‘physical culture instructor’ (Brisbane Courier 9 July 1921: 6). Early controversies arose first with a prejudiced Chair:

A climax has been reached in Soccer football affairs in this city. Strange to say, the fair sex appear to be at the back of it. The Queensland Football Association executive recently decided to accept the affiliation of the newly-formed Queensland Women’s Soccer Football Association. The chairman, Mr. J. W. Kendall immediately resigned as a protest against that decision (Half, The Week, Brisbane 26 August 1921: 21).

When Queensland Football Association refused to allow women to play, they changed their minds when the women's representatives successfully negotiated playing a curtain-raiser for a forthcoming Australia Rules Football match (Half, The Week, Brisbane 26 August 1921: 21). The argument presented suggests the men's committee feared having their code embarrassed by the quality of the women’s match and only agreed to let them stage the opening match at the Gabba to preserve their own dignity. J.W. Kendall, chair of the Queensland Football
Association, resigned in protest at the Ladies Soccer Football Association’s application for affiliation. He was convinced to return to the role and only begrudgingly allowed women to play under threat of the resignation of several other board members. This kind of antagonistic treatment, as noted by Downes et al. (2015: 2153), is indicative of the attitudes toward women who wanted to play.

The match at the Brisbane Cricket Ground (the Gabba), Woolloogabba, Brisbane, 25 September 1921 was well-received by the crowd. The Week, Brisbane (Half, 30 September 1921: 20) animatedly (and arguably patronisingly) reports with some surprise at, ‘the skilful treatment of the game by these young ladies’, and notes ‘the girls showed remarkable stamina’, and ‘evidence of keen training’. On the day, The Reds, of North Brisbane, won by two goals to nil over the Blues, of South Brisbane. The Blues were captained by Miss G Wenlock who also played for Latrobe (Brisbane Courier 26 September 1921: 4). The recent discovery of a series of photos of the match highlight moments of play, including what looks like a goal being scored, the celebrated local vocalist, Amy Rochelle who kicked off the match (Brisbane Courier, Brisbane 26 September 1921: 11), and the crowd held back with rope stationed around the edges of the cricket pitch, a football pitch positioned at its centre (McGowan 2018).

At least one historian, Peter Eedy has noted that the men’s match at the top-of-the-bill drew the crowd that day at the Gabba (2014), but, while the novelty factor would have contributed, the match may well have drawn the crowd on its own. Besides women’s matches attracting very large crowds in England and France at the time, only a few weeks later, a headline match in Ipswich, a much smaller city south west of Brisbane, drew 3000 people as the headlining competitive match between Brisbane North and Brisbane South (Queensland Times 18 October 1921: 4). We now know of a number of additional matches that took place across September and October 1921, possibly involving as many as the four Brisbane teams already noted (Half, Telegraph, Brisbane, 8 September 1921: 6).

By the end of 1921, the English Football Association’s views on women’s football were well-known in the Australian British Association Football community (Express and Telegraph, Adelaide, 21 February 1922: 1). The all-male-run institution cited medical and aesthetic reasons to determine that football was ‘unsuitable’ for women (Williams 2003: 34) and openly questioned the appropriation of substantial funds being raised, including the players’ remuneration (Newsham 2014). In early February 1922, the British Association Interstate Conference in Melbourne elected to follow their EFA counterparts and ban women from playing. However, at the second annual general meeting of the ‘Queensland Ladies Soccer Football Association’, 22 February 1922, its members responded in kind (as noted in Downes et al. 2015: 2153). Notes from the meeting capture an enthusiasm to build on the first season of women’s football and declared more matches would be played (Brisbane Courier, 25 February 1922: 4). A team photo of the 1922 Brisbane City team highlights additional players (McGowan 2018). Matches were reported in June and in August of that year. Women’s matches were subjected to salacious objectification and the derogatory and patronising tone in often sensationalist reporting – using a moniker, ‘Right Half’, an Australian reporter notes the way ‘English reporters describe a player as “a living breathing Venus De Milo” and “the prettiest little thing”’, (Half, The Week, Brisbane, 1 July 1921: 18). It is highly possible, that as a consequence, the women participating in the Brisbane competition did not advertise or invite reporters to matches as they had in 1921. While the incidences that were reported are not evidence of a sustained competition or a thriving football community, between their reporting and the women’s own reluctance to bring them to the paper’s knowledge, it may be possible to assume there was a much stronger movement of women’s football during this period (see also Downes et al. 2015: 2153). It would be a mistake to jump to conclusions about the state of play with regards to women’s participation in football in this period, but there is growing evidence of interest during (Brisbane Courier, 19 June 1922: 8) and beyond 1922 (Telegraph, Brisbane, 8 September 1926) as well as in other parts of the country (as noted in Downes et al. 2015: 2152-2153).

By 1924, Brisbane women, like women across the rest of Australia and in the United Kingdom were being ‘encouraged’ to play hockey, netball (known as women’s basketball until 1970) and the less well-known vigor. The commonalities these sports had over football were the uniform – primarily that they included a skirt – and that they were perceived as appropriately feminine in action. It is no coincidence recruitment figures of these alternatives exponentially increase in a period football was being discouraged.

Reviewing reports and newspaper discussion of the 1921 and 1922 matches, it is clear that arguments put forward by male-run institutions were dressed in rhetoric that suggests women should be protected from themselves as well as those predatory commercial organisations that might exploit them (Downes et al. 2015: 2153) and that they were ill-conceived, obstructive and born of self-interest. The next section of this paper highlights additional barriers put in place to prevent women from kicking a ball or at least slowing their progress. They
The environments for female players and coaches have never been as ‘freely’ available and small number of tangible ways. Levels of access and discrimination widespread in the 1920s has only recently begun to recede in a diminishing status, where senior women’s teams have been subjected to widespread gendered prejudice and discrimination ranging from the allocation of playing fields – often relegated to the ‘back paddock’, refusal training space and provided with second hand equipment – to a lack of financial and media support and significant diminishment of status, where senior women’s teams are regarded as less important than junior boy’s teams. Annette Hughes, a pioneer of the women’s game in Victoria, noted that, women’s teams are still second, or third, or fourth-class citizens. We never were sure we were going to have the main field even though we were at the top level, and as I’ve said, the boys would get them over us (in Downes 2015: 179).

The institutional gender discrimination widespread in the 1920s has only recently begun to recede in a small number of tangible ways. Levels of access and remuneration have never been as ‘freely’ available and the environments for female players and coaches have improved, but many of the overarching historic concerns are contemporaneously prevalent.

The view that football played by women is ‘not taken seriously’ is at the forefront of many discussions with those still involved in the game, whether it be the challenges of becoming a qualified coach or celebrating winning the minor Premiership – even as they held the trophy aloft to celebrate before their fans, 2018 competition winners, Brisbane Roar, were being ushered off the Suncorp stadium pitch to make way for the men’s match that followed immediately afterwards. At an institutional level women’s football has been treated with what can be described as unjust and unfair attitudes. The W-League is the country’s longest running top-tier women’s sporting competition. The lack of emphasis placed on its funding, structure and organisation by the FFA, the sport’s governing body, becomes most apparent when compared with the funding and structure of arguably its closest competitor for media attention, the AFLW. The AFLW was initiated in 2016 with a funding block of around $4m from the governing body, who also recommended their sponsors contribute, collectively, around the same amount (Stensholt 2016). The FFA’s reticence to improve the structure to incorporate a full home and away contest, in line with those of equal standing overseas, further illustrates a lack of respect, particularly when at the grassroots and State-level competitions are formatted that way.

Deep-rooted opinions on the appropriateness of football for women, possibly a legacy of the 1921 ban and the declaration that football was ‘unsuitable’, are often expressed in more derogatory sentiment (Caudwell 2011b: 332). In their 2007 study, Welford and Kay note that women’s football was seen as essentially amateur in nature (2007: 151). Today, attitudes towards the sport from those outside it appear not to have changed. Where male peers gain approval through proof of ability (Welford and Kay 2007: 152), female footballers have to work harder to play, to advocate, to continue to work for an employer understanding of the demands of a professional football career, and to afford to attend matches and training. Experiences shared by those interviewed describe their efforts as being trivialised, not recognised by clubs, interested only in their male counterparts. The women also described being seen as a novelty, an annoyance, and incapable of playing the game at a worthy standard. Yet in terms of success, including FIFA World Cup qualification and Asian Federation Standings, in a little over 50 years of focused development the Matildas have achieved a great deal more than the Socceroos, the men’s national team.

The direct result of the lack of financial support, and the hardships created as a consequence, is the...
and that of aspiring to be a coach. While some were aspect of football support this argument. They describe interviews with the women involved in the coaching due to the male dominance of sport (Welford 2011: 371). Leadership and decision-making roles such as coaching participants are female. The movement of women into still predominantly occupied by men, even when the career pathways and job opportunities are more limited than they are for male players. Coaching roles are not as frequently subjected to the same issues. As male players are expected to face these challenges. Male players feel, and often are, disadvantaged by a lack of assistance and the financial support that would enable them to continue to play without having to be concerned about their cost of living. Motherhood provides additional challenges, in terms of support, funding and access to training and playing. Yet women are expected to face these challenges. Male players are not as frequently subjected to the same issues. As a result, many female footballers are forced to choose between family and football. This is exacerbated by the general lack of understanding by the administrators of the game and in the wider community. Nicky Leitch, a former Matilda, describes the difficult life choices women footballers often face if they wish to stay in the game:

She’s got to make a choice around her, she starts to think about having children and cement her marriage and she’s got to give her career up to do that, where a bloke can, you know, biologically, just continue to play and still be a dad. So, you know there’s lots of things that you’ve got to weigh up as a female that impacts incredibly on your elite athlete status (in Downes 2015).

If women manage to stay in football, the options for career pathways and job opportunities are more limited than they are for male players. Coaching roles are still predominantly occupied by men, even when the participants are female. The movement of women into leadership and decision-making roles such as coaching and management is a particularly significant challenge due to the male dominance of sport (Welford 2011: 371). Interviews with the women involved in the coaching aspect of football support this argument. They describe differences in the level of acceptance as a player and that of aspiring to be a coach. While some were acknowledged and respected as players, they were also patronised and discriminated against as a coach. Current ‘mini’ Matildas coach, Raeanne Dower notes difficulties in accessing or entering Coaching Certificate courses as a result of not attaining the relevant level of experience for entry requirements, already difficult where there are fewer opportunities supported by clubs, fewer teams in the competition, and fewer top-tier matches to coach. Lyn Ketter, Brisbane and Queensland’s first qualified female coach, gained her Level 2 Coaching Certificate in 1976 at Tallebudgera National Training Centre. She returned to the training program in 1977 to attain the Level 3 qualification to enable her to coach senior teams. Two days into the five-day course, she was asked to leave because of her gender (Watson 1997: 25) – an invention of rules, was used by a male official, to enact what was clearly a discriminatory practice. Today, Nicky Leitch, a highly qualified coach with experience in coaching boys’ representative teams, finds she is discriminated against because of her gender:

I did my qualification with Ange Postecoglou. So, you know, you look at the level that Ange is coaching now and I go you know what, I can coach like he can and I could still coach like he can except he’s a man and he’s got a pathway and a job opportunity and I’m a woman and I don’t. I was very well qualified and easily could have done the job but because I was female I certainly wasn’t given the opportunity and that’s unfortunate. I think, that is still what happens in the game and you know men are accepted as coaches in women’s sport yet women aren’t accepted as coaches in men’s sport (in Downes 2015).

The game has different meanings for women (Scranton et al. 1999: 107) and we see this reflected in the interviews. Female footballers tend to give back to the game. Even before their playing careers are ending, women like Lyn Ketter, Nicky Leitch and Raeanne Dower find themselves coaching teams and managing clubs and competitions. Family sits at the centre of all of these things. Team photos often feature children, and as administrators they invest time, energy and resources in clearing pathways for future players. Heather Reid AM former CEO of Capital Football in Canberra looks back at her time in the game:

Sometimes I wonder why I’ve done it, why I’ve been involved so long but you know I guess I love the game, as I said before I love football and I love the diversity and I love the opportunities that are there for a whole range of people and I love the way football brings social inclusion, it brings people from different backgrounds together (in Downes 2015).
This sense of community is pervasive. It can be seen in the way teams play, in the way the game is championed and supported, and the ways it has been fought for across its 100-year history. While men do have a considerable influence, women will impose their own values and practices on the game and incorporate their own meanings into their activities (Scraton et al. 1999: 107). Women enjoy a love and passion for the game, the physicality and competitiveness of the contest, and at the same time incorporate values more closely associated with being female, including a sense of connectedness, sharing and supporting one another (Scraton et al. 1999: 107). This is communicated in memories and experiences the women share as they look back at their journey and recall those moments which help to define their presence in the game. Theresa Deas, former Matilda and FFA Hall of Fame recipient, has been involved throughout her life. She states,

Let’s not forget that prior to 2000 that most of the women’s national players who were Victorian based, paid for everything themselves. It was through sheer dedication to the sport that they became who they are and that the reason you play sport in the first place, is not purely for financial gain. We play sport for the love of the game and that it is where my motivation came from and continues to come from (in Downes 2015).

Female players in a male-dominated sport, such as football, are often treated differently because of their gender (Caudwell 2011b: 330-331) and this is reflected in the media. Media attention, the lack of it and under-representation has been the subject of research in relation to women and sport (Hibberd 2012: 602; Williams 2003: 109-117). There has been a distinct lack of media attention, or an emphasis on the unusual or bizarre. However, this was not a major theme of discussion among the women interviewed who were, for the most part, aggrieved at the lack of attention their game received in relation to the men’s game and agreed that woman’s football needed increased promotion if it was to succeed and develop. It is possible that the situation is changing for today’s players. The Matildas are attracting unprecedented levels of media attention (Feller 2018), the W-League’s popularity is at its highest and the rising tide of interest will establish a place on the broader landscape for women’s sport and for women’s football in particular. SBS have also agreed to televise a number of W-League games per season and as many Matildas matches as they are able (SBS The World Game 2017). While a majority of clubs in the W-League and in the State leagues that sit below it are coached by men, the number of women coaching in football has exponentially increased, but the numbers remain disproportionate. Women constitute 6% of the footballers, coaches and administrators honoured in the Australian Football Hall of Fame (Downes et al. 2015: 2165).

In his address at the 1999 FIFA Woman’s World Cup, former FIFA President Sepp Blatter’s noted that ‘the future is feminine’. He also noted that the wearing of tighter uniforms might attract a larger audience to women’s football (Williams 2003: 1, Tate 2016: 1). His commentary highlights a well-established concern that women are discriminated against through their sexualisation (Caudwell 2002: 25). This sexualisation of athletes occurs in every aspect of elite sports and is possibly too large an issue to be discussed at length here. It should be noted that FIFA have been able to exploit growing interest in the women’s game as a lucrative lever for advertising revenue. While genuine interest and development of the women’s game is taking place it could start with some very practical measures. Australian players and coaches, including Raeanne Dower, and former National team coach Fred Robins, argue that while the women’s game is played on the same-sized pitches, with the same-sized ball and follow the same rules as the men’s game, the women who play should arguably, simply, be described as footballers without the gender prefix of women or female.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is very little real difference in terms of the challenges faced by female footballers in the 1920s and those today’s players face. They have become more sophisticated and complex, but they are fundamentally the same, in terms of funding, access, support and opportunity. The strengths in terms of community capacity and development are common throughout women’s football history too. This paper highlights the necessity for further research. There are a number of areas for consideration in further unpacking the challenges and the possible solutions or opportunities and benefits to women in the game. It would appear that, at least parts of, Sepp Blatter’s commentary were very close. For Australian women in football, the future is bright. The paper argues that at a realistic level, where we can better recognise the achievements of those women who worked hard to build the platform that our current players stand on, it can be even brighter.

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Authors

Dr Lee McGowan is a researcher and writer at the Queensland University of Technology. He has gained a number of awards for his writing and a commendation for his research. He has written football-related fiction and non-fiction for a range of publications. His PhD, Faster than Words, mapped the first history of the football novel. His current project, With the Ball at Her Feet https://www.withtheballatherfeet.com.au/1920s.html), has seen him curate an exhibit, present on ABC612 radio and contribute to Australian Story. He is currently working on Football in Fiction, an academic text for Routledge.

Dr Greg Downes has a keen interest in women’s sport and women’s football in particular, and has been heavily involved in the sport at a local and regional level as a father, manager, coach and administrator. His Masters and PhD research focused on The Future of Women’s Football in the Asian Football Confederation (2008) and An Oral history of Australian Women’s Football (2015). He teaches at Victoria University and continues his research in women’s football and women’s sports history.

Detention Deficit Disorder

How do you write a poem about Manus and Nauru

We’ve seen the razor wire footage/ listened to the reports

succumbed to Attention Deficit Disorder – look a celebrity died

Will a well chosen image connect

Move someone to action (not me)

like poetry in the old days recited in the heat of revolution

Does this need a personal anecdote
to give it a punch above lecture/harangue

a poignant quote*

A crisis point to bring into focus the human face

that reveals the inhumanity of our country of the Fair Go

turning a willfully blind eye

and blaming the hypocrisy of smiling politicians

Will a reference to Hitler help any (no)

How could the Germans not have known?

It’s not as if we don’t

History will not be kind

An Apology will be too late

Having written a poem will not have been enough

* ‘Poetry is about the grief. Politics is about the grievance’. Robert Frost

JAne DOWNING,
ALbury, nSW
It had been raining for days. The kind of rain that soaks the ground so completely the worms all surface from under the soggy earth. Michael, along with older brother Eric and younger sister Amy, troop down the headland leading away from the house to a part of the creek that snakes round the edge of the cane paddock. They look to see how high the water has crept up over-night — maybe there will be a crocodile that has floated down the creek, out of its usual territory. As always, Eric is out in front.

‘Ya gotta be real stealthy, like a hunter, hey?’

Amy stomps along the water’s edge, splashing Eric as much as possible.

‘Go on then, that’s just the way to attract a croc,’ he says.

‘Yeah, right!’

He lunges at her and she leaps away, then slips in mush obscured under the water. Amy squeals and lands on her back at the swollen edge of the creek. Eric grabs her foot and yanks her back onto the headland.

Through the rain they all scan the surface of the muddy water carefully, it swirls, deceptively slow, around and between the trees and saplings that grow thick along the banks of the creek. It is a cold, cloudy soup covered in skipping, hovering insects that irritate the space above. Michael jogs along the thin strip of land running between the water’s edge and the sugar cane. Large broken branches occasionally surface and roll over lazily before being sucked back under. Amy runs after him, bouncing off her toes, ready to shoot off in a panic if she needs to.

‘C’mon hunter boy!’ calls Michael to Eric, ‘Too scared, are ya?’

‘Talkin’ about ya’self?’

Eric jogs disdainfully after them picking up speed and passing Amy easily.

‘Bit slow aren’t ya?’

She gives him a shove that barely interrupts his gliding run and he kicks up water and mud into her face with his slapping planet feet.

‘Yuck! Idiot!’

Eric looks back and grins. Up ahead, Michael stops and bends down trying to look at something through the branches.

‘Have a closer look mate!’

Eric ploughs into him and knocks him flying into the churning, watery sludge. Michael plunges head first into the murky interior of the creek; he feels things tickle and scrape his skin. He hits up against one of the saplings, grabs for it and pulls himself up out of the water filling his knocked-out lungs with air. He can see Eric further back up the creek where he went in, laughing triumphantly when he feels a heavy tug. Something has hold of his t-shirt and he instinctively clutches harder onto the tree trunk, hooking in his elbows. But the pull is powerful and the bark scrapes the soft insides of his forearms as his body stretches out behind him. His breathing comes hard and sharp, but the pull is insistent, giving him no choice as his palms, then fingers pull rubber-band tight.

‘Michael!’ Amy yells.

A slap of something wraps around his ankle and he is wrenched backwards and up, the water sucking its way along his elongated body. He feels with his hands the heavy branch underwater his t-shirt is caught on. Wriggling and jerking his body to escape, his lungs a trapped-bird shuddering for air. He cannot hear anything anymore, not the rushing water, the deep thuds or the high pings of objects striking each other. A fleeting thought—he pulls his shirt up as high as it will go and lifts his arms over his head, the bulky log hauls it off and he surges out free.

A painful, dragging inhalation, dizziness and trembling. He feels himself being hauled up the squelching ground. Remotely he can hear Amy and Eric calling his name; they shake him. He coughs, convulses and Eric is hoisting him onto his feet, arms circling his belly and squeezing him, jerking upwards, water shooting up out of his stomach and spilling from his mouth. He coughs again and leans forward, hands on his knees and concentrates on the air pouring into his lungs, relief. Eric shuffles about him.

‘You right mate?’

Gentle hand on his shoulder; Michael stands up slowly, nods his head. The water, deceptively nonchalant, meanders mindlessly beside them.

‘Look, what’s that?’

Amy is pointing a little further downstream; something is floating in the water, pushing up against a bunch of skinny saplings.
'Prob'bly the log Michael was stuck on.'

‘No, it’s not,’ she says.

They make their way carefully along the water’s edge.

‘Looks like clothes.’ Michael’s hoarse voice is barely audible.

Eric comes to a standstill, as if a photograph of him has been inserted where he stands.

‘It’s a person,’ he says.

‘No way.’ Unbelieving, Amy crouches down and crawls a little closer.

‘We’d better go get Dad; he was in the shed earlier.’ Eric’s voice is different, serious, responsible, but no-one moves yet, eyes trapped.

‘C’mon.’ Michael suddenly turns and starts limping back along the headland towards the house and shed. Amy runs ahead, yelling out for their father. Eric keeps pace with Michael, silent in their progress. Ahead they see their father emerge from the front end of the shed, lured by the shouts, his loose-limbed stride familiar, Amy bouncing about him like a willie wagtail. He meets them partway.

‘What’s this then?’

‘It’s a body—in the creek,’ says Eric.

His father’s measured look takes in Michael, streaked with mud and blood from angry scratches, bits of leaves and grass and dead insects stuck to his wet skin, his sagging hand-me-down shorts the only thing covering him.

‘What the bloody hell happened to you?’

‘Fell in the creek,’ Michael shrugs.

‘That was stupid.’

Eric looks down quickly. Nobody says anything else until they reach the spot where the water had wedged the body against a large clump of guinea grass. Michael worrying that somehow it would be gone and they’d get in trouble for wasting their father’s time. But no, it is still there, face down, weighted somehow by the crush of the current. Dad stops short, his eyes flick back at his three children. He stands motionless for a long moment before finally bending and taking off his boots to wade in, the water rising quickly about him as he carefully picks his way down the flooding bank. Reaching out his hand he clutches the closest bit of clothing and pulls. Leaning back, his feet planted in the unstable mud, the water playing tug-of-war with the body, not willing to give it up.

‘Eric!’

Eric plunges in beside his father. Together they haul at the body and it comes away from the water’s grip. On the headland Dad turns the body over and quickly sucks in his breath and shakes his head.

Eric says, ‘Old Mr Antonini?’

Yeah.’ Dad’s voice slow and sad.

He squats down beside the body and places his hand on the man’s chest, pressing his lips together.

‘Amy and Michael run back up to the house and tell your mother. Ask her to bring the small tarp, alright?’

Michael is eager to leave, the sick feeling in his stomach from swallowing the creek water expanding throughout his body as he looks at the dead man's motionless eyes. Mr Antonini from the next farm over, swollen, covered in streaks of mud and debris, scratches gouged into his skin. Walking back, exhaustion fills every muscle. Amy is pale and silent beside him, her hands contracting into fists.

Amy blurts out the message to Mum and presses her face into her mother’s yielding waist. Mum’s eyebrows shoot up, framing all the circles her other features have become, and she puts her hand to her mouth and turns away for a moment. She calls the police and collects the tarp. She places her hand on Michael’s head.

‘Look at the state of you. Go and have a shower. Both of you.’

The night shifts around him, Michael can’t sleep, he creeps out of bed and sees the light on under his parent’s bedroom door. He crawls across the hall and lies down, ear to the lighted strip, listening to the reassuring murmur of his parents’ voices.

‘It’s bloody heart-breaking, the whole thing.’

‘Because Serena died last year?’

‘That and those bloody parasites that pass for his sons.’

‘I never saw him in town anymore....’

His father mumbles something in reply. Michael stretches out full-length along the carpet in the corridor. He stands motionless for a long moment before finally bending and taking off his boots to wade in, the water rising quickly about him as he carefully picks his way down the flooding bank. Reaching out his hand he clutches the closest bit of clothing and pulls. Leaning back, his feet planted in the unstable mud, the water playing tug-of-war with the body, not willing to give it up.

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Louise Henry lives in Cairns, is currently studying for a PhD in Creative Writing at JCU and grew up on a cane farm.
**Reverse Alchemy**

**ANTHONY W. THOMPSON**

Anthony W. Thompson is currently the Director of the School of Communications and Professor of Photography and Visual/Media studies at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. He earned a B.S. in Physics from the University of Dallas and an M.F.A. in Photography from Washington University in St. Louis.

A native of Colorado, Professor Thompson has also lived and worked in Rome, Italy as a freelance photographer, and as a commercial advertising photographer in several midwest studios.

Professor Thompson's photographs and artwork have been included in the Midwest Photographer's Project Collection at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, and have been exhibited throughout the United States and abroad. His artwork is often about the meanings we attribute to, or derive from, our experiences of place and/or technology, and the relationship of art and science as ways of knowing.

**Drone Over Charleston**

Anthony has been very interested in the creative possibilities made possible of combining new digital technologies with vintage non-silver processes.

*Reverse Alchemy* is a project in Photogravure, often integrating sculptural elements that Anthony has created to be photographed. Alchemy was historically concerned with the transformation of base matter into something precious. The alchemy concept refers to my interest in this ongoing transformation of the photographic medium, as well as the transformation of matter that is itself the essence of art making and practice. The sculptures created out of natural materials to be photographed, and the prints that result, are in essence a transformation of simple materials into objects of meaning or significance. The reverse aspect in the title alludes, albeit ironically, to what the work is ultimately about: the ways in which contemporary society/culture can sometimes transform the precious into the base – with devastating consequences – and the concurrent human struggle to resist that degradation.
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Mission Accomplished
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