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country  
culture  
people  
future

**2014 National Native Title Conference  
Paper**

***LIFE GIVING CORPORATIONS TO  
SUPPORT COMMUNITY  
What's Possible?***

***by Michael Meegan & Michael Prince***



*“Most of the great political struggles of the past 5,000 years can be reduced to the simple question: who will own land, water and the other essentials for living --- and to what end?”*

*From David Korten's Foreword to  
Owning Our Future by Marjorie Kelly*



# Introduction

## *Question:*

- What attracted you to this particular session?



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# Our Context

## Our Context

Under the weight of compliance expectations how much time is set aside:-

- for conversations enabling intention and purpose to be clearly articulated alongside compliance issues.
- for reflection on what individual and collective aspirations lie in the hearts and minds of the traditional owners.
- to create an entity explicitly designed to deliver on those aspirations and be held accountable to do so.



## Our Context

### *Questions:*

- How would you describe the context in which you are working?
- What's similar and different to what we've described?



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# Key Ideas from Owning Our Future



## Key Ideas from Owing Our Future

In her book, **Owing Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution**, Marjorie Kelly, argues our global future requires a fundamental shift of values and practice FROM the dominant **Extractive** model (*maximising financial profit*) of ownership design TO a more diverse range of ownership designs that are more **Generative** (*creating the conditions for life*). This involves a values shift:

- *from maximising Profit to Sustaining Life,*
- *from Growth to Sufficiency, and from*
- *Individualism to Community.*





## The Architecture of Ownership – The Design of Economic Power

EXTRACTIVE OWNERSHIP	GENERATIVE OWNERSHIP
1. <i>Financial Purpose</i> : maximising short term profits in the short term	1. <i>Living Purpose</i> : creating the conditions for life over the long term
2. <i>Absentee Membership</i> : ownership disconnected from the life of the enterprise	2. <i>Rooted Membership</i> : ownership in human hands
3. <i>Governance by Markets</i> : control by capital markets on autopilot	3. <i>Mission-Controlled Governance</i> : control by those dedicated to social mission
4. <i>Casino Finance</i> : capital as master	4. <i>Stakeholder Finance</i> : capital as friend
5. <i>Commodity Networks</i> : trading focused solely on price and profits	5. <i>Ethical Networks</i> : collective support for ecological and social norms



## Examples of Generative Ownership

- The ***Community Forests of Mexico***: granting ownership rights to local communities -- incentives to be stewards of the forest: enterprises employ people harvesting timber, making wooden furniture, and caring for the forest.
- The **Manufactured Housing Park Program**, first devised in New Hampshire, now spread across US. Uses a cooperative ownership model to help people in mobile homes to purchase the land on which their homes stand.
- The **North End Lobster Co-operative**, one of more than 20 Lobster cooperatives State of Maine. In 2002, a *community development corporation* (CDC) helped a group of 5 lobster fishermen obtain \$380,000 in financing to secure shared waterfront property. The co-op now has 24 lobstermen as members -- activity from this property supports more than 40 families.



## Key Ideas

### *Questions:*

- *Where do you see more GENERATIVE and EXTRACTIVE economic ownership models happening in the Australian Indigenous context?*
- *What's most useful or significant for you about Kelly's ideas?*
- *What do you agree/disagree with and why?*
- *What do you want to find out more about?*



# How might we use these ideas ?

## The Power of New Language & Different Conversations

*“Language was the first technology of humans –  
but like other technologies not fully understood.*

*People thought it was merely a tool for  
describing the world, and didn't know that  
it was a tool for creating it.”*

*Walter Truett Anderson – The Future The Self*

**1. The Power of New Language:** Kelly gives us richer language and vocabulary for observing, understanding, and making sense of what's happening around us in the global, national and local economy and why. It helps us see things more clearly and, perhaps assist us with the choices we make.

It gives us a common language to think and talk with others about appropriate models for economic development. It allows us to think and talk about these issues with greater rigour and clarity.

## **2. Connecting Ends & Means - Aspirations, Purpose & Values with the Mechanism:**

Kelly's language, purpose, values and design elements provides us with a frame for talking about what is most important to us (aspirations and values) and helps us link these explicitly with economic development models that serve our most deeply held human values.

Provides us with a language “bridge” through which indigenous communities and advisors can better understand and articulate what is of most fundamental importance and how we get there (what technical form it takes).



- 3. Conserving & Transforming Culture:** A potentially useful framework for indigenous communities to clarify amongst themselves what they really want. A helpful “bridge” between “conserving” traditional values and “transforming”: identifying appropriate and necessary cultural adaptations that need to be embraced to sustain life for the future.
- 4. Hope, Alternatives & Possibilities:** Kelly demonstrates and give us hope that there IS an alternative to the Extractive Ownership model (if that what is wanted), that it is NOT the only game in town. And more than that there are myriad of diverse, partial and imperfect global examples that are emerging in this new economy.



## How might we use these ideas ?

### *Questions:*

- *Which of these ideas could be useful for you?*
- *How else might Kelly's ideas be of use to you?*





## Conclusion & Next Steps

*Behind the workings of our economy lies the invisible issue that few of us focus on --- the issue of ownership. ... Our well-being, indeed our future as a species, depends on restoring our relationships to one another and with the land, the water, the sky, and the other generative resources of nature that indigenous people traditionally considered it their obligation to hold and manage in sacred trust. The architecture of ownership is key.*

*(from David Korten's Foreword to Marjorie Kelly's book)*

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