

Wildman, P. (2016). *A call for an Archaic Renaissance ConFest through CRAFT: exploring the six principles for Futuring our Australian Bush Mechanic way*. Paper presented to the 2016 ConFest Event, Melbourne. 6pgs.

A call for an Archaic Renaissance ConFest through CRAFT: exploring the six principles for Futuring our Australian Bush Mechanic way

Prepared for ConFest Melbourne March 2016

Paul Wildman

e: paul@kalgrove.com Skype: phwildman Mob: 0412027818

3500words over 8pgs

The night is long and the task great and many of us will fall before the dawn, in our struggle to CRAFT a socially just world in a sustainable dance with Gaia. PW 2016

We urgently need to redress this functional and structural mismatch in our educational systems (action-less conception and concept-less action) with its praising of the abstract and rubbishing of the practical that has emerged over the past 30 years. PW 2015

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Background.....	3
The six emergent Principles of Bush Mechanics/Artificering.....	5
1. Exemplar Project Principle – Global Resolutique	5
2. Inner-Outer Worlds Principle	5
3. Social Holon Principle	5
4. Global Problematique Principle.....	6
5. Harmonisation Principle	6
6. Deep Learning Principle	6
The Doula Artificer.....	6
Conclusion	8
References.....	8
Acknowledgement	8
References.....	8

Introduction

Of particular interest in our discussion below is that together we regret the separation of Science from Arts and Craft i.e. math'ematics from 'myth'ematics' with the lowering of relevance of the latter to objet d'art i.e. art objects and even items of scorn and disbelief. So we focus on the object not the person and certainly not the relationship between the two and hardly ever this relationships relationship to Gaia i.e. to the bigger picture. In this article I suggest we move from this kitsch meaning of craft as individual art object the big picture meaning of craft that I call CRAFT which means Community Resilience though Action/Artificering for Futures Transitions. It is, I argue, through CRAFT that we can start a renaissance in hands on community work aimed at engaging a positive futures for our children's children – something they now lack. In short to demonstrate this I conclude by recommending a ConFest based on an Archaic Renaissance.

Background

With the spotlight on Australian values, now is an ideal time to report the development of a new approach to futuring that is based on the uniquely Australian concept of the 'bush mechanic'. I have been researching this concept since the 2000, with specific research aimed at seeking to identify commonalities in process between several bush mechanics (see the six principles below). This action oriented research in futures began in 2002. The 'bush mechanic', or artificer approach to futuring is one that my research indicates as having immediate practical outcomes for practitioners and their environment, at the same time as it develops a body of expertise that will stand us in good stead in any future emergencies.

In Australia there is a term for someone who links thinking and doing, and can act forward wisely and solve problems with what is available while developing innovations in the field that respond to broader needs,' I explain in a series of 2005 articles and in particular in one jointly with Bob Dick in our 2005 article.

A 'bush mechanic' or Artificer is committed to self reliance and excellence at her task and **is not to be confused with a 'backyard mechanic'** who does shoddy work. And a Bushy can look both ways to the mechanic and the bench as well as to the bush to find patterns in nature, as with indigenous folks.

Going further, Bush Mechanic in the Australian vernacular means something similar to the German 'volk handwerker'. Mechanic can be translated as 'arbeit' or labour or handwerker – a chiro-worker/chiro-praxiser so to speak. Intriguingly Mechanic is also a cognate of Spiel or play as Mechanisch. So we have the tri-unity of Mechankier (practical person), Mechanic (Handwerker), and Mechanisch (as in play).

We should be deeply concerned about the separation of learning and practice as well as the commercialisation and focus on school NAPLAN scores not student development that has taken place in Australian and indeed western education systems over the past generation. Kids and Adults Education today is essentially paymore, playless, handless, and indeed anti-practical. Indeed play has just been eliminated even from pre-school curriculum with the advent of the national preschool curriculum – yes completely eliminated yes for kinder that have been on earth for 48mths yes 48mths is deemed too old for Mechanisch. For me this is the final decay of culture into an amorphous centralised elite controlled Animal Farm. We have to DTE-DIY now there is nothing else 'left'.

My research indicates that, in conventional social innovations, over 80% of our energy is absorbed in action as implementation and compliance rather than design and planning

implementation of an idea. So in effect we prefer passive reacting to Government rules rather than path-breaking innovation. In turn this leads to more and more recycling rather than reuse or repair. This is hugely wasteful of embodied energy in our homes, cars, tools, food and equipment. So rather than repair and sharing use for instance as in the Sharehood/Streetbank (<http://www.pigswillfly.com.au/2013/11/sharehood-streetbank-australia/>) and Bush Mechanics we bow to planned obsolescence and throw away and buy a 'new' model.

This compares with up to 80% of the energy expended in the conventional education process as conceptualisation not action. This functional structural mismatch in education (action-less conception and concept-less action) has emerged over the past 200 years and has been identified and explored by many educational innovators. We have yet to address this though and one approach would be to apply the understandings coming from the Bush Mechanic approach to kids and adults learning and futures/foresight.

The 'bush mechanic' approach to futuring proposes re-braiding ideas and action in projects aimed at improving our skills to day to improve our futures tomorrow. This is a lost art/map where chiro (the hand) drove cogno (our brain development) – today much of science and basically all of the social sciences see it as the other way round.¹ In effect, this is a post-industrial form of what in medieval times was called 'artificing' -- a Middle Age precursor to today's technician.

By placing futures, and futures learning, within the context of practical work we can put thinking and doing back together again, re-braiding them in a practical approach to innovation. Ideally the learning that takes place in these practical approaches will be captured in a collection of 'exemplar projects', equivalent to the artificer's 'master piece' or the 'journeyman's piece' of the middle ages. So in the case of the bush mechanic her standpoint is firmly her actions (as expressions of her intentions, plans, articles and books) towards establishing an 'exemplar project' that demonstrates that a better world is possible tomorrow for our children – a future Nature can live with.

It is my hope that the concept of bush mechanics will help to demonstrate how such an ancient even archaic approach to futuring can help create a better tomorrow today -- a future our children can live with. After the apocalypse whether it be peak oil, civil breakdown, global warming, a world re-made and re-newed by hand will be crucial.

With a strong background in action learning – another powerful concept developed in Australia – I approached this initiative using 'Grounded Theory', which differs from other research because it works from the bottom up. In other words, Grounded Theory (GT) does not test a 'general hypothesis' nor does it seek to test 'grand theory'. Rather GT sets out to build a theory that can account for the grounded categories as they are observed in the field, and does this by establishing key categories/patterns in one's field notes. I undertook this research under the watchful eye of Assoc. Professor Bob Dick (see: <http://www.aral.com.au/>)

¹ **A New View of Newton:** It was Plato who introduced 'the division between those who know and do not act and those who act and do not know'. As myself with Sohail Inayatullah explained in our 1996 article in the Journal *Futures*. 'After Plato in the West we have doggedly followed a staunchly mechanist view, identified with Newton, that 'The Universe was a mechanical one whose order was maintained by a distant God'. Newton in fact wrote more on alchemy than mathematics: he saw the universe tintured and enlivened by spirit, emotion and love. These works remain unpublished. The results of this split are readily seen today in dualities of the specialisation of skills, separation of academia from actual social change projects, separation of producing from consuming e.g. we are moving rapidly away from being 'prosumers' - having our own gardens, making our own clothes, sharing our equipment and abilities as in the Sharehood/Shedhood and Permaculture and other Bush Mechanic type activities.

). Like action research, its aim is to understand the reality, to discover the patterns and ultimately build a theory that emerges from ones data.

Another key feature of the ‘bush mechanic’ approach is that it is specifically located within a conscious awareness of the ‘global problematique’ (see page 1), indeed it is a form of what I call ‘DTE craft Koinonia’.² The nesting of individuals and societies within this global holarchy, and clear recognition of the need to develop local solutions to address global problems in today’s world in order to create a better future – a sort of ‘as below – so above’ approach.

I am collecting exemplar projects and to this end have developed an evaluation form based on the results of my research using the following six principles. ConFest folk who would like their projects included are invited to contact me on paul@kalgrove.com , <http://crafters-circle.com/craft4.html> and <http://www.kal.net.au/> top right menu bar has ‘adult learning’ where the results of this research are available as public domain and global commons.

The six emergent Principles of Bush Mechanics/Artificering

These six principles represent the key categories that emerged identified in the 15year long Participatory Action Research study of six Bush Mechanics in Australia (boat mechanic, biochar monk, theatre prop maker, innovative builder, disability busy, and global governance practitioner). By applying Grounded Theory to entries in a learning journal made in the field as I built my own Exemplar Project (a boat) over a four year period. In this regard they also represent **commonalities in process** between these most disparate of Bushy’s. These are listed in the following principles:

1. Exemplar Project Principle – Global Resolutique

Skills plus!! The learning from the doing of the bush mechanic is captured and preserved in ‘exemplar projects’. The bush mechanic’s textbook is learning enacted wherein thinking and doing are braided together in an EP, which exists in the ‘real’ or physical world not only in the mind. An EP is hand on and skills-intensive. It can be on an individual or community basis and shows in a ‘concrete manner that a better world is possible tomorrow for our children’. Here the Artificer is a prosumer extraordinaire – producing and consuming not a dependent consumer. This is in the legacy of the Journeyman’s Piece from the Middle Ages. *Exemplar Principle.*

2. Inner-Outer Worlds Principle

A balanced life: Such that the exemplar project can be seen as ‘walking ones talk’ and acting as what may be called a psychonaut linking one’s inner ‘I’ and outer ‘that’ realms of being. A Bush Mechanic’s work blends internal and external ethics and meaning making, for example, redefining psychological markers such as autonomy, agency, responsibility income, status, time and task in a way that balances internal and external considerations. *Individuation Principle.*

3. Social Holon Principle

Do unto others.....: Mutual Help – the Golden Rule. In the artificers I worked and studied with this principle is manifest in a ‘fair-go’ and a certain ‘collaborative autonomy’ a sort of

² DTE – Down To Earth; Koinonia – community/family fellowship with mutual aid and joint participation.

‘shed/kitchen/sewing-machine/ garden-hood collective’ which represents a grand exemplar of what Dr Les Spencer calls ‘col-individualism’³. *Relationship Principle*.

4. Global Problematique Principle

The big picture comes to visit: The Bush Mechanic sees herself as a global citizen, locating the EP in a global and indeed Gaian context. And responding the challenges of the Global Problematique by being systemically and ecologically aware and acting locally, concretely, participatively, anticipatively and proactively, through the design building and use of ones exemplar project. *Gaia Principle*.

5. Harmonisation Principle

Aummm Yumm: Here we have harmonisation of diversity rather than the centralisation of conformity whereby all the various sub-systems involved in the exemplar project fit together i.e. interface efficaciously, like the components in an outboard boat motor. This includes resources and its use and users, have to fit in the overall ‘pattern language’ ‘D’esign that harmonises the parts in a way that overall is ‘fitness in use’. This is the principle of ‘dynamic balance’, systems design and is the integral principle. Here the Artificer can experience ‘work, action and learning as pleasure’ as per Dr Jim Cairns’s original challenge. *Harmony Principle*.

6. Deep Learning Principle

Yearning for Learning: Learning, yearning, earning and concerning link together with all of the above and this includes learning from and within ones ‘lived life’ with the engagement of establishing the exemplar project and its place in the lived life of the Artificer and her community viz. Life Long Deep Learning. For me this is the true meaning of Adult Learning. *Action Learning Principle*.

The Doula Artificer

Today we find the shards of what used to be a much wider and deeper distribution of Artificers.

In the second half of the 10thC and the first half of the 20thC linked through Mechanics Institutes, Schools of Art and Craft, and Workers Education Associations today these have all but

disappeared. Several of these I have identified include:

- (1) **Bush Mechanic** (techne/artefact builder; P1 with tinctures of the other 5 principles)
- (2) **Hobbyist** (as per Bush Mechanic; P1)
- (3) **Doula⁴ Artificer** (holding the space for the midwife to assist the wife/crafter give birth; P3)
- (4) **Agape Artificer** (relationship/nurturance facilitator; P3)
- (3) **Eco-Artificer** (ecological praxis; P4) inc. Permaculturist, Eco-activist, wilders,

³ Les defines ‘colindivity’ as a linking of micro-networks was called a ‘collectivity’. A linking of an indivity and a collectivity in cooperative activity was called a ‘colindivity’ - a social form where individuals following their individual action and interests work well with groups of people who are following their collective passion & way, and each aspect of this web of micro-networks and individuals was doing their own thing in a loose self-organising kind of way. See: <http://confest.org.au/2014-sep-beaufort/article-list/184-les-spencer-potential-reasons-for-site-visits>

⁴ Doula means midwife’s midwife that is someone (often the birthing mother’s/wife’s mother) mother who holds the space for the midwife to assist the wife to have a positive birth and a healthy baby. Here baby can mean idea, social enterprise launch etc. See: <http://www.bellybelly.com.au/articles/pregnancy/doulas-what-is-a-doula> & Wildman (2016). In short a most fascinating form of facilitation powerfully yin and too often overlooked in favour of more yang/direct methods.

survivalists

(4) **Artisan-Artificer** (DTE DIY crafter, artistic, artisan specialist; P1)

(5) **Community-Artificer** (community Animateur, community psychologist; P3)

(6) **Green Activist** (P4) inc. hacktivist, deep green

(7) **Social Justice Crusader** (P4) and documentary maker e.g.

<http://redearthfilms.com.au/tag/jason-bray/>

(6) **Systems Design practitioner** (P5)

(7) **Pedagogical artificer** (learning, education; P6).

There may well be others however in all instances the pattern that connects is, I submit, to large extent identified in the above Six Principles with a particular one predominating in each of these respective types of Bush Mechanics I researched.^{5, 6} This is the challenge for the next generation because if we are unable to reintroduce these principles in to our earning, yearning and learning activities individually and collectively not only will we have failed our children's children we will have failed Gaia and deep environmental and socio-economic harmful change will have, I fear, become unavoidable.

So where does this leave us today?

Today our world is very unbalanced, to my mind this has emerged since the Enlightenment we find almost the deification of 'reason' and its western offspring 'science' alongside the death of god. Whereas in indigenous cultures and in particular the Renaissance which, ultimately gave birth to the Enlightenment, 'reason' is/was defined as to include arts and crafts, creativity, intuition and emotion.⁷ I argue that we need a new Renaissance that respects this indigenous and even archaic respect for craft in short we need an *Archaic Renaissance*.

In the Enlightenment sense Science becomes 'S'cience and God becomes 'g'od⁸. For me this is best and most ominously expressed in 'Transhumanism' so that we seek to become other than who we are without seeking first to become fully human. See <http://crafters-circle.com/craft4.html>. In today's world 'Science' is senior to family, learning, social systems, arts and crafts, ecological systems, and ultimately even senior to our 'humanity'. As such 'S'cience most importantly eliminates, with its techno fixes, the need for a spiritual or soulful component in any solution to our pressing global problematique. Whereas in

⁵ We can also see this pattern, to greater and lesser extents at play in emergent sub-cultures such as hackers, punkers (cyber, steam etc), preppers, survivalists. There is however two sides to this coin and in some instances the Artificer can be negative such as a jihadist.

⁶ Hanna Arendt (1963) claims this is the challenge for modernity: to re-braid thinking and doing.' Such a challenge is welcomed by the Bush Mechanic. And Adorno (2003:xxvi) from *Can There be Education after Auschwitz ~ To see the newness of the old as well as the oldness of the new*. It is in initiatives such as Sharehood, Permaculture and Bush Mechanics that we see the new in and from the old. All of these initiatives are outside and alongside the mainstream business and education and maybe it's on the periphery that we should look for ways to take us forward through the approaching miasma. This is for me a potent test of authenticity.

⁷ **Enlightenment:** 1700-1800 'Age of Reason' in Europe inc. Britain, France and Germany saw the ascendancy of 'reason' that now excluded 'dreams, arts, creativity, intuition and therefore poetry'.

Renaissance: 1300-1600 'Age of Humanism' in Europe esp. Italy which followed the Black Death and to a point harked back to the Ancient Greeks. Included in the Renaissance's definition of 'reason' were all of the above attributes evicted by the Enlightenment.

⁸ **Please Note:** here I use the word 'God' however much of this article also requires us to reinvokethe 'Goddess' I would suggest in an Indigenous and Wiccan sense. We in the West have lost our 'Goddess', she still lives though.... Wildman (2015).

many indigenous cultures 'science' is fitted into the broader culture and so sits as an equal alongside and within these arenas.

Conclusion

What sort of outcomes can we find when we look to the 'pack and take' from this paper? Well we can well look to the urgent need for an Archaic Renaissance (see: <http://www.crafters-connect.com/craft-issue-8/>). And yes, you guessed it, I argue we urgently need an 'Archaic Renaissance' as theme for a ConFest gathering and ASAP!!!

Thank you.

References

Acknowledgement: This article draws from and acknowledges: Wildman, P. (2005). Bush Mechanics: Futuring the Australian Way. *Future News*, September. pg7. Special thanks to the Editor Jan Lee Martin (RIP) in this regard for her early recognition of the importance of CRAFT and its representation in the Australian Bush Mechanic.

References:

<http://www.crafters-connect.com/craft-issue-8/> a call for an Archaic Renaissance

Adorno, Theodor W. (2003) Education after Auschwitz. Ch. 2 in Adorno, T. (2003). *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*. Stanford, Stanford University Press. 525pgs.pgs 19-33. First published approx. 1971.

Arendt, H. (1963). *On Revolution*. London: Penguin. 350 pgs.

Dick, B. and P. Wildman (2005). *Critical Futures Praxis: futures, action research and change*. Prosperity Press, Brisbane: 28pgs.

Wildman, P. and S. Inayatullah (1996). Ways of Knowing and the Pedagogies of the Future. *Futures*. 28(8): pgs723-740.

Wildman, P., (2005) Bush Mechanics - artificing a future we can live with. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 2005: p.91-100.

Wildman, P., (2005). Futuring and the Artifice of Ingenuity. *Futures Bulletin - World Futures Studies Federation*, 30(2&3): p. 10-11, 21-23.

Wildman, P. (2005). Bush Mechanics - artificing a future we can live with. *Journal of Futures Studies*: p.91-100.

Wildman, P. (2015). *Crafter Goddesses and Gods: Artificers in Folklore towards an Archaic Renaissance of Crafter Oriented Indigenous Spirituality*. Brisbane. The Kalgrove Institute. 13pgs.

Wildman, P. (2016). *Doula (Australia) and Plunkett (New Zealand) Nurses*. Brisbane: The Kalgrove Institute. 10pgs.

Wildman, P. and B. Dick (2005). *Artificer Learning: A workshop for and about bush mechanicing*. Brisbane: ALARPM (Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association). Seminar-Workshop 3 hrs.