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Video link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EL2CGhnlop0&feature=youtu.be

I have worked for 20 plus years at Western Sydney University (WSU) in the area of 'Social Ecology', which has affinities with 'living theory'. Our version of Social Ecology arose in the late 1980's to look at the epistemology of lived experience. Though it emerged from Agriculture, its focus has always been the lived experience of 'relationship to life'. It is influenced by self-organising systems theory and self-reflective approaches to the relationships through which we encounter ourselves in a complex world: to self, society, the physical world and the world of ideas. Strong grounding influences were Gregory Bateson, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. Work has since extended into social-ecological relationships, ecopedagogies, ecopsychology and indigenous ways of knowing (and associated research processes). Central is the perspective of the participant in circumstances that challenge contemporary consciousness: ecological ways of knowing are central to this challenge. In this regard, contemporary commentators with whom we see ourselves in conversation include such writers as Edmund O'Sullivan, Four Arrows, David Abram and Andreas Weber.

I entered the field with strong interests in embodied learning and creative practice. This has allowed me to conceive the construction of knowledge as grounded in the body and expanded through our various tools of imagination and communication. As such I am constantly drawn to question our methods of knowing and communicating in the academic environment (this is detailed further in the short attached video).

From its early days Social Ecology, at WSU, was built around research through participatory action research. Early, this expanded into heuristics, under the influence of van Manen and Mousatkas. Hermeneutic phenomenology has also been significant in this work along with ethnography and auto-ethnography. I was introduced to 'living theory' by my colleague Dr Mohamed Moustakim. Though familiar with Whitehead and McNiff through action research the generative power of the term 'living theory' and the abundance of scholars who have coalesced around it, was both surprising and reassuring to me. As someone who has always worked across disciplines and has constantly sought to find language appropriate to my ongoing search for meaning, I have frequently felt isolated. This has been reinforced as university policy has contributed to the retirement of colleagues and the diminution of our staff and student base. I welcome the opportunity to be part of larger interdisciplinary conversations generated by the need to understand the complex experience we encounter day by day. I celebrate the emergent process of knowing and developing systems for containing that knowing sufficiently to communicate it and draw others into conversation: to live, work and think in shared space in a rapidly changing world where awe, fear and everyday pragmatics argue for attention day in, day out.