

# Final Report – Songlines IMJ/Nomads Palace

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Project Title: Songlines Indigenous Musical Journeys and Nomads Palace (STIG-IDP-002596)

Report prepared by: Thomas Dick, Sam Cook, Patrick McCloskey, Ben Farr-Wharton, Tristan Schultz, Anthony McFadden, and Kerry Brown

## Songlines & Nomads Palace Project

### Introduction

This project has secured funding from Southern Cross University and the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism T-QUAL, Strategic Tourism Investment Grants for Indigenous Product Development to conduct a feasibility study into the integration of indigenous cultural practice/performance with current tourism research ideas. There are two specific products earmarked for development:

- **Songlines: Indigenous Musical Journeys** (adapted from and involving artists of the Song Peoples Sessions) - an iconic cultural journey where domestic and international tourists could travel from Darwin to remote communities and festivals in the Northern Territory following the songs through a mix of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal music – Patrick McCloskey, **Wantok Musik Foundation**.
- **Nomads Palace** - the worlds first travelling venue that exclusively features a programme of world-class Indigenous arts and culture – Sam Cook, **Kiss My Blak Arts**.

The project is a collaboration between partners, lead by Southern Cross University (SCU), with cutting edge research in the fields of:

- A Network Approach to tourism enterprise and regional development using the Value Adding Web (and Music Hub) research – SCU, Ben Farr-Wharton, and Pr Kerry Brown

### Songlines: Indigenous Musical Journeys

Preliminary research indicates that there is an opportunity to establish an iconic cultural journey where domestic and international tourists could travel from Darwin to remote communities and festivals in the Northern Territory following the songs through a mix of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal music. This concept has evolved out of the Song Peoples Sessions: a collaboration between traditional and contemporary Australian Indigenous musicians to support the protection of intangible cultural heritage and maintenance of Indigenous languages and traditional song cycles, creating new forms of musical cultural expression.

### Nomads Palace

Nomads Palace is a concept in development that looks to create the worlds first travelling venue, featuring a programme of world-class Indigenous arts and culture. The venue would be hosted in residence by major arts festivals and events worldwide, presenting a programme of excellence curated exclusively to configurations, limited only by ones imagination.

Major festivals and events have an interest in Indigenous arts and to varying degrees, provide a programming window into the cultural expression of the worlds First Nations peoples. Quite often this opportunity is limited and often comes with repeated hard lessons learned in areas of cultural

competency and bio-culturally diverse communications. It also comes with sustainability issues for the Indigenous arts sector who have no clearly defined pathway into this market and tend to individualise engagements that generally are one-off.

Nomads Palace is a proposition that will create a stable engagement with Indigenous arts and culture, in a way that is ethical, authentic and environmentally sustainable. It addresses the areas of cultural competency by its curatorial role that can be customised thematically to meet the themes or requirements of its host. The residency model and its ability to be fully supported by alternative energies enables a cost savings that cannot be provided by the current competitor. On innovation alone, it sets itself apart as an emergent way of providing sustainable solutions to the arts.

Nomads Palace is potentially a vehicle for supporting the development of an Indigenous Touring Circuit for musicians to provide pathways for cultural performers while at the same supporting the development of a stronger tourism sector by enhancing the quality of the cultural performances.

Both the Songlines IMJ product and Nomads Palace are designed to be used as a **model for development of similar products** or strategies around Australia.

This project is in effect the first stage towards development of a quality Indigenous tourism product/s or experiences that will support the industry's capacity to reflect world's best practice and products.

### Feasibility Studies

This report includes an individual Feasibility Study from each of the two projects above. The idea of combining the two projects into an integrated business structure was explored. However, all parties agreed that the initiatives were independent and standalone projects. Each Feasibility Study has been prepared to suit its particular context. Each has its own recommendations.

The report also includes a list of research outputs published through the course of the project.

Various programming and scheduling issues have arisen since the original planning of the project which have caused significant delays to the project. Primarily, these issues have arisen because of the success of the fundamental elements of the tourism products that are under development. For example, in Borroloola, the community has been awarded funding to conduct deeper cultural mapping to inform the development of the Songlines IMJ initiative. At the same time, the Borroloola Songwomen have also been the recipient of a National Indigenous Music Award – which has increased their profile and necessitated a follow-up recording which is took place in August-September.

The success of the Songlines IMJ is directly related to the development of the cultural mapping project and the delivery of the 2014 West Island Sea Turtle Camp by the li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers which took place between early September and mid October. Annually the dry season is full with project activity as this is the time of year to get tangible outcomes on the ground. Once this activity was all finished, in October, when the build up begins and the warmer weather starts to hit in, this is when community planning and approvals for the next year's activities most often take place. October is when specific development of tourism product for the IMJ was able to occur with consultations and workshops by Rachel Hore and Shellie Morris. This then allowed for the necessary discussions amongst traditional owners and custodians for approvals and consent processes to occur in the ensuing months.

On the Nomads Palace side, Sam was invited to set up Nomads Palace as a part of several exciting initiatives in Brisbane. These activities have meant that the planned physical structure of Nomads Palace has been modified to occupy a position of primacy in the semi-permanent Containerval marketplace, in the prestigious Northshore area of Brisbane, adjacent to the Cruise Ship Terminal in Hamilton. Sam has been extremely busy establishing this presence throughout the last 8 months.

## Conclusion

Indigenous tourism is widely viewed as an avenue which may increase the economic prosperity of Indigenous people, especially in remote communities. Successive Australian Governments have endeavoured to increase Aboriginal participation in tourism industries and promote Indigenous

entrepreneurship. Increasing Indigenous participation rates in creative industries (i.e. tourism) is congruent with raising the living standards and enhancing the employment horizons of First Nation peoples in remote areas.

This funding from Southern Cross University and the (former) Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism T-QUAL, Strategic Tourism Investment Grants for Indigenous Product Development has been used to conduct a feasibility study into the Nomads Palace and Songlines Indigenous Musical Journeys initiatives.

These two initiatives utilise 'placemaking' and creativity principles to transform the conventional lens of cultural tourism into a flexible and authentic experience which is co-created between host and tourist. The project reflects a shift in strategic tourism modelling and is aligned with 'creative tourism' systems and synergistic relationships between creative activities, environments, people and place.

## Research Outputs: Publications and Presentations

### Ecologies of Peace - Music and Tourism in Indigenous Australia and Melanesia

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

**Tristan Schultz**, *Griffith University*

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#### Abstract

This presentation will explore some preliminary research being conducted as a part of an innovative project bringing together critical approaches to cultural heritage, tourism, and indigenous design philosophies. The research investigates systems of social inclusion and Indigenous knowledge shared through tourism experiences providing opportunities for increasing respect for and awareness of Indigenous perspectives and ways of being and seeing. The project assists Indigenous communities to establish their own locally controlled cultural legacies including local processes for the maintenance, preservation and repatriation of representations of their intangible cultural heritage. At its core the project respects and celebrates the process of Indigenous traditional singing and song to Indigenous cultural practices and its integral importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identity, traditional stories, customary law, connection to country, ceremony, dance, the performing arts and the visual arts. The authors have conducted a literature review as a prelude to a sustained community engagement program aimed at exploring philosophies around 'the event' and 'experience'. In particular how participants/tourists 'experiences' in these communities living on the margins of mainstream Australian society might work towards disengaging participants/tourists from their existent ecology of mind so they can see different philosophical foundations in these communities as options for alternative futures in mainstream society. What might the participants (tourists) walk away with and take to their localities as a different mode of living in their worlds? Whatever they walk away with, how does this add to cultural expansion? Considering multiple global and local crises in need of urgent answers, what can be learned from these resilient communities living on the margins? How can this 'designed event' go on ontologically designing?

#### Presented at:

5th IMC World Forum on Music. Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, Brisbane. Nov. 2013.

### Vanuatu Women's Water Music

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

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#### Abstract

Melanesia is the most culturally and linguistically diverse place on the planet. Some of the most profound cultural signifiers of Melanesians are their practices of singing their ecologies and cosmologies. In this context music becomes a powerful vehicle for leveraging cultural values. This presentation looks at issues of performance, sustainability and local communities in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.

#### Presented at:

5th IMC World Forum on Music. Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, Brisbane. Nov. 2013.

### Design thinking: re-thinking the tourism experience

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

**Tristan Schultz**, *Griffith University*

**Samantha Cook**, *Nomads Palace*

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#### Abstract

This paper presents some preliminary research being conducted as a part of an innovative project bringing together critical approaches to design thinking at the intersection of popular culture and tourism. The research investigates systems of social inclusion and knowledge shared through tourism experiences providing opportunities for increasing respect for and awareness of both local, and tourist, perspectives and ways of being and seeing. The authors have conducted a literature review as a prelude to a sustained community engagement program aimed at exploring philosophies around design of 'the event' and the 'experience'. In particular how participants/tourists 'experiences' in

destination communities of Australian society might work towards disengaging participants/tourists from their existent ecology of mind so they can see different philosophical foundations in these communities as options for alternative futures in mainstream society. What might the participants (tourists) walk away with and take to their localities as a different mode of living in their worlds? Whatever they walk away with, how does this add to cultural expansion? Considering multiple global and local crises in need of urgent answers, what can be learned from these destination communities? How can this 'designed event' go on ontologically designing the tourists' perspective long after the tourism 'experience'?

**Presented at:**

PopCAANZ 4th Annual International Conference. Brisbane. Jun. 2013.

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## Featured Installations and Performances by Leweton Women's Water Music

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

**Sandy Sur**, *Leweton Cultural Group*

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### Abstract

The Leweton Cultural Group hail from the remote northern tropical islands of Vanuatu and they travel the world performing the Na Mag and Ne Lang dances as a prelude to the mystical water music, dressed in their traditional costumes of Gaua and Mere Lava made from flowers and leaves, coconuts and pandanus. Their performance is truly mesmerizing as they reimagine the old with contemporary expressions of Matto - bringing together traditional beats and rhythms with ukulele-led melodies and soaring vocal harmonies. The Leweton Cultural Group will also facilitate traditional weaving, cooking, percussion, and storytelling workshops.

"A rare glimpse into an ancient but living tradition" – Randy Raine-Reusch, Rainforest World Music Festival

Come and join the men and women of the Leweton Cultural Group from northern Vanuatu as they demonstrate their traditional cultural activities. In these collaborative and engaging sessions, the Leweton Cultural Group work with participants to create toys, utensils, and baskets using traditional weaving techniques. Traditional cooking techniques are also demonstrated and participants will have the opportunity to taste customary food.

"Mesmerising, stirring, unforgettable... the Leweton Cultural Group add a truly unique performance element to each festival." – Vanuatu Daily Post

**Presented at:**

Floating Land Festival, Sunshine Coast; Zillmere Multicultural Festival, Zillmere; Brisbane Powerhouse, Brisbane; Cairns Esplanade, Cairns; Balance-Unbalance International Conference. Central Queensland University, Australia. Jun. 2013

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## The Ecology Of Indigenous Cultural Expression As A Force For Building Peace, Self- Determination And Sustainability

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

**Tristan Schultz**, *Griffith University*

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### Abstract

This presentation will explore some preliminary research being conducted as a part of an innovative project bringing together critical approaches to cultural heritage, tourism, and indigenous design philosophies. The research investigates systems of social inclusion and Indigenous knowledge shared through tourism experiences providing opportunities for increasing respect for and awareness of Indigenous perspectives and ways of being and seeing.

The project assists Indigenous communities to establish their own locally controlled cultural legacies including local processes for the maintenance, preservation and repatriation of representations of their intangible cultural heritage. At its core the project respects and celebrates the process of Indigenous traditional singing and song to Indigenous cultural practices and its integral importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identity, traditional stories, customary law, connection to country, ceremony, dance, the performing arts and the visual arts.

The authors have conducted a literature review as a prelude to a sustained community engagement program aimed at exploring philosophies around 'the event' and 'experience'. In particular how participants/tourists 'experiences' in these communities living on the margins of mainstream Australian society might work towards disengaging participants/tourists from their existent ecology of mind so they can see different philosophical foundations in these communities as options for alternative futures in mainstream society. What might the participants (tourists) walk away

with and take to their localities as a different mode of living in their worlds? Whatever they walk away with, how does this add to cultural expansion? Considering multiple global and local crises in need of urgent answers, what can be learned from these resilient communities living on the margins? How can this 'designed event' go on ontologically designing?

**Presented at:**

Balance-Unbalance International Conference. Central Queensland University, Australia. Jun. 2013.

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## Creating Policy that Supports Living Cultural Expression in Melanesia

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

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### Abstract

In Vanuatu, communities have expressed a desire to continue leading lifestyles based on a traditional economic base. In the context of economic globalisation, however, this possibility is being ignored or denied by government policy decisions made on the basis of 'economic rationalism'. There is growing concern that these government decisions are in fact destructive of 'popular cultural expressions', and do not respect the values of the community in relation to its development.

In 2006, an 'Economic opportunities fact-finding mission' to the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu was sponsored by NZAID and AusAID. The report that followed recognized that 'many of the functions of modern growth – well-being, stability, equity, social cohesion and sustainable livelihoods for an expanded population – are also well provided for through Vanuatu's strong and deeply held customary values including its custom economy', and stated that efforts to promote this economy 'should be supported'.

This research project is concerned with the possibility that elements of the modern lifestyle, such as the cash economy and Western interpretations of sustainable development, are denying the indigenous people of Vanuatu the choice to maintain their existing lifestyles. It is an established fact that imperialism, colonisation, and missionisation, have had devastating effects on the lifestyles, cultures, economies, and societies of indigenous people around the world, in the Pacific, and in Vanuatu. Is it still possible for ni-Vanuatu people to maintain their existing lifestyles? What do these concepts (sustainable development, cash economy, etc) mean to ni-Vanuatu people? Do they have a different meaning in Vanuatu than they do in Australia? If so, what does this mean for policy-makers in Vanuatu? What does it mean for policy-makers in Europe and Australia (concerned with the so-called "arc of instability")? And what does it mean for local communities in Vanuatu?

**Presented at:**

Public Policy Network Conference. Brisbane. Jan. 2013.

Available at: [http://works.bepress.com/knomadic\\_dsta/25](http://works.bepress.com/knomadic_dsta/25)

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## Giving Voice To Cultural Enterprises From The Global South

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**Ben Farr-Wharton**, *Southern Cross University*

**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

**Jaime Ruiz-Gutiérrez**, *Universidad de los Andes*

**Siegrid Guillaumon**, *Universidade Católica de Brasília*

**Tania Casado**, *Universidade de São Paulo – FEA/USP*

**Lucas Gomes**, *Universidade Católica de Brasília*

**Luke Johnston**, *Further Arts*

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### Abstract

Over the last decade-and-a-half there has been a rise in the amount of academic research exploring the conceptual and historical interactions of 'culture' and 'the market' (see for example Caves (2000), Cunningham (2002), Pratt (2004), Throsby (2008), O'Connor (2009), O'Connor (2010)). Although contentious, the impetus for this has largely been the establishment of the 'creative industry' discourse and how it has been applied globally in policy and practice (Cunningham 2009). Despite this, with only a few notable exceptions, the theory and concepts that underpin this discourse have largely been derived through research contexts that are Anglo/Euro-centric and metropolitan. The purpose of this paper is to initiate a new, open platform from which to critique the way arts enterprises operate with

respect to a more global application. To achieve this, the paper merges Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury's (2012) Institutional Logics perspective and Osborne's (2006) New Public Governance approach to present an applied theoretical model of arts enterprise institutional alignment, which can equally be applied to arts enterprises from all over the world. The model gives credence to the multiple forces that shape, and are shaped by arts organizations from the contexts they operate within. Using this model, the paper explores 3 cases of arts enterprises stemming from, what has been termed, the 'Global South' (Connell, 2007; Cunningham 2009), to provide a juxtaposition to the dominant discourse of arts enterprise analysis.

**Presented at:**

The 12th International Conference on Arts and Cultural Management. School of Management, Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, Colombia. Jan. 2013.

Available at: [http://works.bepress.com/knomadic\\_dsta/32](http://works.bepress.com/knomadic_dsta/32)

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## Reconciling kastom, tourism, art in the Pacific: the case of the Leweton Cultural Group and "water music"

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

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### Abstract

Post-colonial Vanuatu is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world. Ni-Vanuatu cultural performers present themselves as local, national, and international actors simultaneously by allowing outsiders to witness and engage with their living cultural expressions or "kastom". Contemporary ni-Vanuatu communities are establishing themselves as distinct and differentiated "cultural villages", often in urban settings away from traditional or kastom places.

**Presented at:**

The Public Policy Network Conference, University of Canberra, Canberra. Jan. 2014.

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## Building Regional Partnerships to Support Grassroots Film Production in Vanuatu: Examples from the field

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

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**Presented at:**

Australian Association for Pacific Studies Conference: Oceanscapes, University of Sydney, Sydney. Apr 2014

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## Nomads Palace and the World Music Industry

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**Thomas Dick**, *Southern Cross University*

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**Presented at:**

Sounds Aotearoa and the Performing Arts Network of New Zealand Expo, Wellington, NZ.

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## Encountering Aboriginal cultural expressions in tourism – peace, proximity, obligation, responsibility

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**Tristan Schultz**, *Griffith University*

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### Abstract

The interaction between tourism operator and tourist is a complex exchange of meanings, interpretations and sensibilities. Australian Aboriginal tourism ventures offer the opportunity for a rich exchange between Aboriginal Australians and participants in tourism encounters. The quality of this exchange is a matter of how the participants come to view the content, and how this might lead towards a new view, experience, or perhaps even a shifted mode of being; an ontological shift. What is at stake in any exchange is the perpetuation of a Eurocentric gaze; to view an Aboriginal cultural expression as merely aesthetic appearance; as a spectacle. This is problematic because gazing at Aboriginal cultural expressions as a spectacle simplifies, reduces and pays no respect to the complexities of Indigenous

Knowledge (IK) that is the non-text based relational systems of knowledge that many Aboriginal people regard as constituting those expressions. Therefore, the gaze delegitimises non phonetic-alphabetic forms of writing knowledge and as such it is logocentric. Aboriginal cultural expressions such as traditional dancing or singing are 'giving', mediating signification of Indigenous Knowledge through corporeal movement and/or oral transmission, it is up to observers to 'give' in return. The nature of this mutual and equitable exchange is in no way understood, yet urgently begs engagement for cultural destruction to cease. As part of the feasibility study of the Indigenous Music Journeys project in the Borroloola and Gulf Country region of the Northern Territory, a project team at SCU would like to engage the community and project stakeholders in a conversation in relation to the position of tourism outlined here.

**Presented at:**

Remote Indigenous Enterprise in Arts and Tourism Research Exchange, Australian National University, Canberra, 2013

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## Nomads Palace: A world first in green design and culture

*Sam Cook, Nomads Palace/Southern Cross University*

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### Abstract

An introduction to the project Nomads Palace - the world's first green designed multi-arts travelling venue dedicated to the world's indigenous peoples. Currently in development by a leading team of indigenous architects and key creatives, Nomads Palace incorporates sustainable technologies, such as solar power production, alongside architectural solutions to re-purpose environmental and waste products, including plastic refuse. The end outcome is a state of the art 400 capacity venue, programmed by a team of indigenous festival directors that can remain in residence at festivals, events, outdoor spaces and venues. Come hear about this worldchanging innovation and how it can transform your upcoming event.

**Presented at:**

WOMEX October 2013, Cardiff, Wales.

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## Nomads Palace: Where Technology and Innovation Meet Culture

*Sam Cook, Nomads Palace/Southern Cross University*

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### Abstract

Introducing the world's first green-designed multi-arts travelling venue dedicated to the world's Indigenous people. This Indigenous led, solar driven project is a change agent for honouring our cultures and fostering sustainable outcomes for communities. See how it relates to creative education spaces and learning our way.

**Presented at:**

World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education May 2014, Hawaii, USA.