



ARTICLE

# Growing Out of the Modernity Metacrisis – A Sensing Heuristic for Seeding Alternative Futures

Karen Cieri<sup>1</sup>  and Yin Paradies<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Australia and <sup>2</sup>Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia

**Corresponding author:** Yin Paradies; Email: [yin.paradies@deakin.edu.au](mailto:yin.paradies@deakin.edu.au)

(Received 01 April 2025; revised 15 November 2025; accepted 21 November 2025)

## Abstract

We are in a metacrisis caused by exponential growth, extraction and entitlement. When we strive to abolish the abundant absurdities of the current system (i.e., modernity) with rehabilitative or reformist responses, we risk reproducing, even reinforcing, the very dynamics we seek to transform. The sensing seed is a visual heuristic and practice of resonant embodied ethics to aid in unravelling the machinations of modernity. The seed identifies three polarities that reflect salient patterns of modernity: separateness, linearity and abstraction. The sensing seed is designed to surface the many materialisations of modernity while elucidating ethical entrées that are decolonially discordant with dominant dispositions by enabling reflexive, visceral and committed praxes of the many adjacent alternatives available, but largely imperceptible, even unimaginable, to modern humans. Through radical acceptance, attention to aesthetics and action, we can show up, cultivate connexion, kindle kin, grow groundward, tarry with trouble, abide in aporias and wallow in wiser lifeways akin to those of our pre-modern (i.e., primal) ancestors.

**Keywords:** Cosmology; indigenous; heuristic; metacrisis; modernity; primal; worldview

## Introduction

Modernity is characterised by colonial-capitalist configurations; the conditions for which predominately emerged in the so-called ‘cradle of civilisation’ more than ten millennia ago (Paradies, 2020). The extreme and increasing inequity of our societies is underpinned by paternalistic violence masquerading as ‘caring’ we-know-what’s-best-for-you relations (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021), debt/usury, (privatised) property, institutions and nation-states. Modernity has become intensively globalised in the last five centuries, causing the diminishment and destitution of many, along with the sixth mass extinction. Importantly, modernity’s industrial-consumer modes of existence are unsustainable due to basic biology, chemistry and physics (Bendell, 2024). We are facing a metacrisis maelstrom manifested by the common underlying myths, manacles and malaises of modernity that are beyond the scope of this article to convey (see Allen, 2022a; Elani, 2021; Machado de Oliveira, 2021, 2025; Paradies, 2020). Suffice to say that although modernity is adept at amnesia and anaesthesia, its problems are not solely of (intentional) ignorance, which we can simply think or inform our way out of. Rather, we are psycho-physiologically habituated to the (un)conscious conditioning and constructs of colonial-modernity. As such, we are called to learn ways of sensing and enacting shifts in fundamental patterns of thought, feeling and interactions moment-by-moment to find other-wise ways of belonging, becoming and knowing.

We write from our connections to the Wakaya, Wurundjeri and Larrakia Country in so-called Australia. Here like most of the Earth, modernity has come to dominate through the colonisation

of Country by European empires. Finding orthogonal ways to the patterns of modernity is inherently decolonising work, to both ensure the well-being of all (primal) peoples and to learn from their life-sustaining ways. Here, we use the term ‘primal’ to denote peoples of the past before modernity (i.e., ~10,000 years ago or earlier) and peoples of the present who have, to varying degrees, cultural continuity with pre-modern peoples. This includes those peoples who are now known as ‘indigenous’ as well as various traditional place-based peoples who are not generally labelled ‘indigenous’. The etymology of ‘primal’ is the same as that of ‘primitive’, meaning first, original and, also, in front, or leading, ahead of. Although only tiny glimpses of primal life are now available to us, as far as we know, for more than 95% of our estimated 315,000 year-history as a species (Richter *et al.*, 2017), primal lifeways were ubiquitous. Notwithstanding a kaleidoscopic cornucopia of cultural configurations, primal peoples share(d) many key characteristics. These included being as strong as elite rowers (Macintosh *et al.*, 2017), as fast as Olympic sprinters (Geography Scout, 2023), with physical prowess and sensory sensitivity (Konishi, 2012). Primal people lived vivid, varied, flourishing, happy, playful, meaningful, exceptionally healthy, well-nourished, virtually mentally and physically disease-free (Bregman, 2020) and fairly long (~70 years) lives (Gurven & Kaplan, 2007).

Although there is no simple and definitive way to differentiate between primal and modern living (nor should there be), we attempt to illustrate these contrasting lifeways through the sensing seed below. In our experience, although few objections are proffered when generalisations are made about modernity (see, for example, Paradies, 2020), vociferous protests frequently ensue when broad-brush claims are made about primality. We feel this asymmetry is unwarranted and that puzzling out patterns of primality are just as important as making out modes of modernity. As noted by other Indigenous authors, ‘it is possible to speak about Indigenous [cultural aspects] in general terms’ (Wildcat & Voth, 2023: 479) given a communal ideology and similar worldviews (Solomon & Wane, 2005: 54). What we describe in this article are not wishful idealisations, but rather, are claims drawn from ample established evidence detailed in robust references (Martin & Shirk, 2007). Knee-jerk accusations of romanticisation risk the dangers of diminutisation and the re-inscription of ‘there is no (radical) alternative to modernity’s motifs, which is precisely how and why we now find ourselves mired in a metacrisis.

## The sensing seed

Having shared selected specifics of both primal and modern societies, we now delve more deeply into how these contrasting cultures and ethics can be related and applied in practice to qualities of the human psyche and modes of collective sense-seeking through a heuristic we call the sensing seed. The sensing seed draws from aspects of Paradies (undated),<sup>1</sup> Cieri (2025) and the worldview manifestations in Topa and Narvaez (2022). The shape of the sensing seed is a product of participatory action research exploring ways of intercultural collaboration to address the metacrisis from within the nexus of school education, health, social services, the natural environment and decolonisation (Cieri, 2025). The participants in this collaboration focussed squarely on transforming their own mental models, narratives and group culture. One of the learnings of this research was that to move beyond general intentions of ‘decolonising’, find alternatives to ‘business as usual’, or make ‘systems change’ is tricky, in practice. How do practitioners of all types, usually with no training in philosophy, identify other options and find common language for the necessary shifts, especially in the busyness and pressure of the moment?

The sensing seed, like many primal heuristics, operate by setting up binary, contrasting or polar concepts, ‘categorising things thematically’ (Orcher *et al.*, 2025). While it is fairly typical for (post-) modern tastes to recoil at dichotomies, significant syncopations and fulsome frissons can emerge from the cacophonous collision of juxtaposed judgements (Palmer *et al.*, 2025). Moreover, primal

<sup>1</sup>Available at: <https://www.anamcarahomestead.com.au/resources>

polarities are pervasive, including, for example, moieties,<sup>2</sup> earth/sky, sun/moon, day/night and the yin/yang, while also being pervasive in what modern science considers to be the primary building blocks of reality (e.g., wave and particle, proton and electron, matter and anti-matter etc.). The diversity of such dualisms is likely related to human physical bilateral symmetry along the left-right axis. Although the dichotomising heuristics below are somewhat heavy-handed, they, nonetheless, accentuate differences between lifeways (Mika, 2020) as disjunctive opportunities for learning (Stewart, 2023) and discovery (i.e., the etymological root meaning of 'heuristic').

Within the sensing seed, the polarised patterns of primal and modern sensing are placed within two concentric seed-shaped circles. Modernity is centred in the inner circle because it is dominant but also to disrupt the notion that what is central is most important. The outer shell embodies primal perspectives. The space beyond this central circle of modernity is larger, with potentially infinite room to expand outwards, visually emphasising that to stay within the dominant modernity paradigm is 'partial'. That said, many modern manners are not 'wrong' per se; rather, the way they are prioritised is problematic; pervasive patterns pushing out a plethora of potent potentialities. Trauma lies on the boundary line between the inner and outer seed-circles. This emphasises both the ongoing injury and harm inherent in modernity, as well as the original and ongoing severance from our whole selves that obstructs the frothing flow between the inner and outer seed perspectives. With this sensing seed, we can explore experiments to embrace more nourishing ways of thinking, feeling, relating and responding, within any given context. A simplified version of the sensing seed is shown in Figure 1, with a more detailed version in Figure 2.<sup>3</sup>

### Three primary patterns

The sensing seed is based on three commonly identified aspects of life: Belonging (identity, positionality), Becoming (causality, order, agency) and Knowing (awareness, comprehension), as shown in bold around the outermost rim of the seed. Each of these patterns has both modern and primal polarities shown within the dark green segments. The modern polarities reflect three salient patterns of modernity: separateness, linearity and abstraction. The lower segment (Belonging) is the tap root, and the two upper segments are the leaves, of a sprouting plant. As such, these three parts are not separate, but, rather, aspects of the same irreducible germinating whole.

#### **Belonging – Towards irreducible wholes**

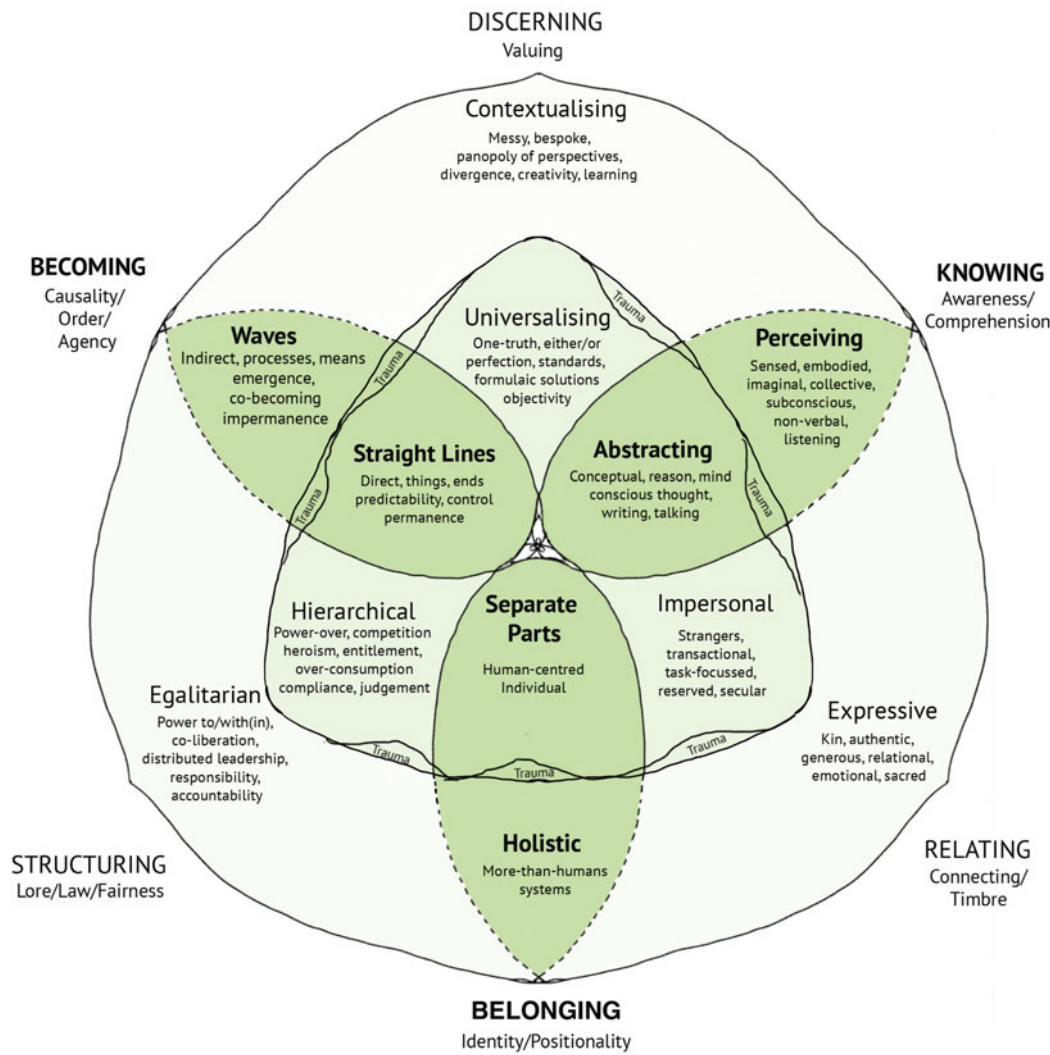
The Belonging patterns are profoundly intertwined in how we experience existence, our subjectivity. The extent to which we consider ourselves as singular or entangled and how we position ourselves within or outside of (other) life; how our longing to belong is enabled or not. Belonging can be polarised as Separate Parts vs. Holistic. The modernist Separate Parts paradigm takes for granted that the individual human self is paramount, that we are each framed, insulated entities; distinct from all others, that we consist of isolated parts/silos. This perspective is about alienation, rigidity, dichotomy, deconstructing the world and knowledge with a reductive singular focus, within a fractured narrow definition of 'relevance'.

The primal Holistic paradigm contends that we, and all our parts, belong together. We are Country, an Aboriginal Australian concept encompassing the land, water, sky, winds, animals, rocks, plants, stories, songs, dreams, intuitions, feelings, histories, presents and futures etc., as they flow through us in mixing, merging waves of resonating place-time (Paradies & Joyce, 2024). I am,

<sup>2</sup>One of two complementary social or kinship groups into which a primal culture can be divided, often based on descent, marriage rules or ritual roles, with each half defined in relation to the other.

<sup>3</sup>To ensure legibility, we recommend printing Figure 2 on A3-, rather than A4-, sized paper.

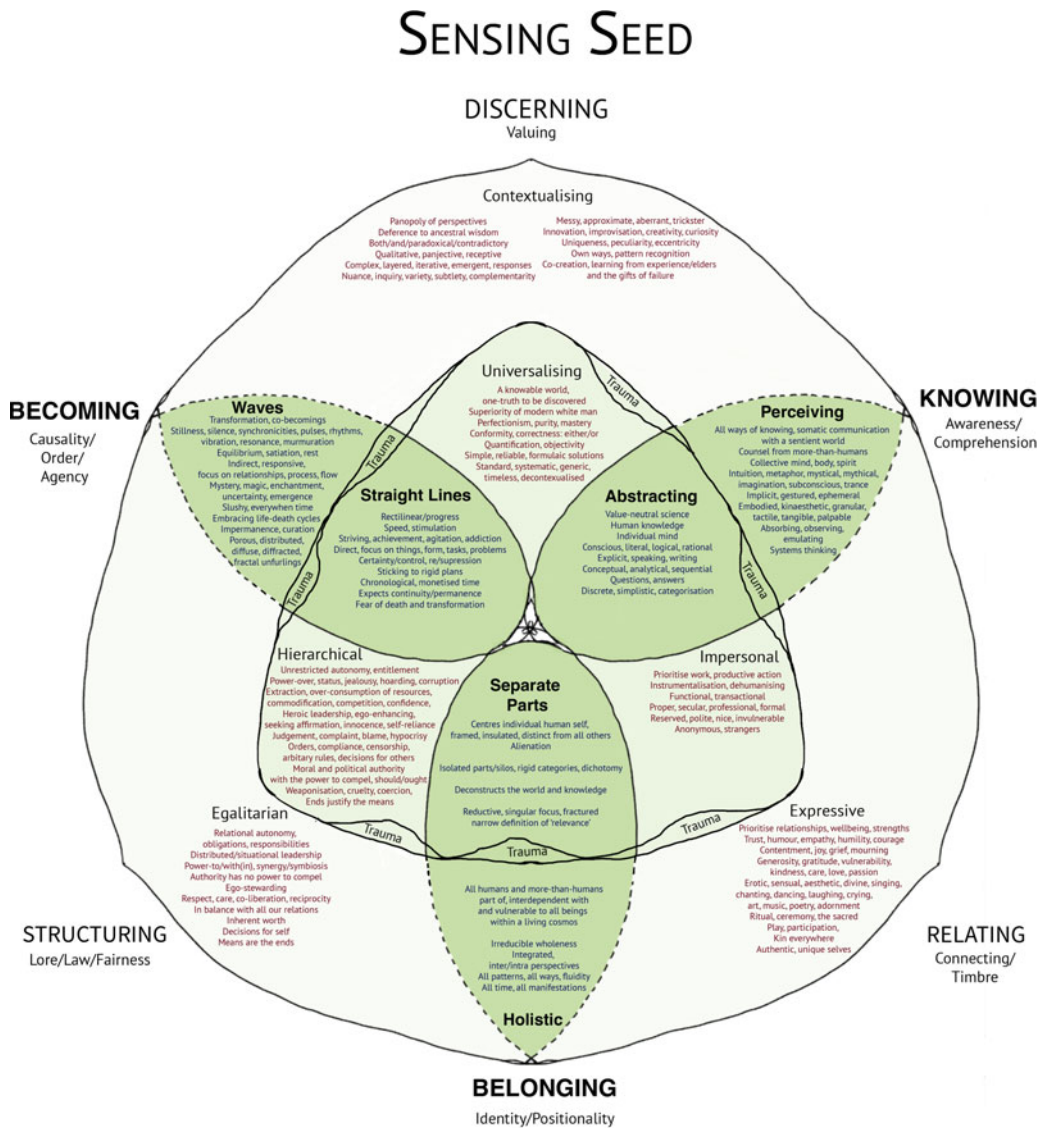
# SENSING SEED



Prepared by Karen Cieri and Yin Paradies

Figure 1. Simplified sensing seed.

you are, the universe looking at itself from trillions of points of view, that come and go eternally and infinitely (Watts, 2006). This is a movement from fixed, separate roles to pluri-directional and more-than-human fluidity in which all (more-than-)humans are part of, irrevocably interdependent with and vulnerable to, all beings within a living cosmos. This worldview



Prepared by Karen Cieri and Yin Paradies

Figure 2. Detailed sensing seed.

privileges irreducible wholeness, integrated systems, diverse inter/intra perspectives, all patterns, ways, temporalities and manifestations.

Practices that emerged within the action research to move towards patterns of Belonging, involved asking 'who or what is missing?' or 'how would we be doing this if we were actually from the same team, organisation or family?' and intentionally expanding our sense of what and who is part of a story and needs to be involved. Pondering the implications of understanding phenomena as collective and systemic rather than discrete and individualistic. Considering and working towards the inclusion of opposites and paradoxes, or how 'out-of-scope' issues might actually have a common root that could be addressed for the benefit of all. Creating space to reflect on our sense of connectedness to Country and all that is.



### ***Becoming – Towards life-waves***

Becoming pertains to our assumptions about the nature of causality, order and who, or what, has agency. Becoming encompasses the natural order of the cosmos, the way energy flows as well as the arithmetics and geometries of life. The polarities of Becoming are Straight Lines and Waves. The Straight Lines segment in the inner circle pertains to rectilinearity, progress, speed, stimulation, striving, achievement, agitation, addiction, a direct (hyper-)focus on things, form, tasks, problems, certainty, control, sticking to rigid plans, re/suppression; chronological, monetised time; fear of death/transformation; and expectations of continuity/permanence. Imagine a straight highway focussing directly on solving specific problems, or desired results, one-at-a-time, tackling tangible tasks expediently, always looking forward, never back. This operates as a dopamine-fuelled drive for solutions and certainty, pushing us to eliminate uncertainty, jump to conclusions and act decisively within a limited (time) frame of reference.

On the contrary, primal peoples inhabit(ed) an animate existence-scape eliciting states of consciousness very different to those experienced by the vast majority of modern humans. This involves/d, among other aspects, a blurring or permeability between the literal/metaphorical, linear/spiral time, spiritual/material, being/becoming and place/time. The Waves segment is about transformation and co-becoming, stillness, silence, synchronicities, pulses, rhythms, vibration, resonance and murmuration. The importance of equilibrium, satiation, rest and a responsive focus on relationships, process, flow, mystery, magic, uncertainty, enchantment, emergence, embracing life-death cycles, impermanence and curation within slushy, everywhen time. Life as a more-than-human web of energetic relationships with their multidirectional effects pulsing in cycles of cadence.

The 'waves of life' perspective reminds us that we are all porous, distributed, diffuse, diffracted, fractal unfurlings; membranous fields in relational flux that are complex, variegated and porous to the dynamic natures of all else. We are all composed of, and participants in, enacting the uncoils of the cosmos. Reality is a blended continuum, or an indivisible duration, in which there is no essential difference between me and the rest of the universe, at any time or place (Allen, 2022b), and hence, I have not really come from anywhere else and there is nowhere else for me to go. All is alive, sentient, communicative and able to act (i.e., agential) (Paradies & Joyce, 2024).

In practice, the participant co-researchers found the single most powerful action to move towards primal patterns of Becoming is to become sensitive to noticing their habitual task-focus and learn instead to value and foreground process and relationships in each moment. Recognising that every action or task shapes relationships as much as gets 'things' done, and those relationships are generally the more enduring and influential 'product'. This entails attending to what is emerging, reflecting on the histories that have brought us to this point and appreciating how our actions will continue to ripple long after our projects are completed. We are also invited to consider the ways that Country is a conscious participant in, rather than a pleasing backdrop or mechanistic life-support system for, our work.

### ***Knowing – Towards sensory sensitivity***

The third polarity is called Knowing; the ways we become aware of, and comprehend, the world. It is about presence, qualities of attention or modes of thought. The antipodes of Knowing are Abstracting and Perceiving, contrasting the rational and abstract conceptual thought that modernity preferences with wide-angled deep listening (Ungunmerr-Baumann *et al.*, 2022).

Abstracting is about human (as juxtaposed with more-than-human) knowledge, so-called value-neutral science, individual mind, the conscious and explicit, speaking, writing, the literal, logical, rational, conceptual, analytical and sequential, questions / answers as well as discrete,

simplistic categorisation that tends to occur at the expense of other(-wise) axio-onto-epistemologies.

With sensory sensitivity (Konishi, 2012), primal people had oral traditions (embedded in place-times) stretching back tens of thousands of years with fidelity (Barras, 2020) in stories with up to forty layers (Noon & De Napoli, 2022), re-membered via feats of memory that would astound modern sensibilities. The Perceiving part in the primal circle of the seed comprises all ways of knowing; somatic communication with a sentient world; counsel from more-than-humans; collective mind, body, spirit; intuition, metaphor, imagination, trance; the mystical, mythical, subconscious (e.g., flow states), the implicit, gestured and ephemeral; the embodied, kinaesthetic, granular, tactile, tangible and palpable; as well as absorbing, observing, emulating and systems thinking. This perspective is about tuning in with the antennae of your body – skin, hair, gut and bones – stirring synaesthesia and awakening aesthesis; reverberating with the enormous exosomatic living library that is Country (Irwin & White, 2022). Sensing resonance and dissonance between the inner natures of every (in)tangible being, time after time as we co-become via kinaesthetic ethics (Geurts, 2002), communicative engagement (Mathews, 2022) and somatic attunement.

Moving towards primal patterns of Knowing involves practice that support pattern recognition and insight through the body such as mindfulness, reflecting on intuitions, dreams and synchronicity. The extensive use of alliteration and simile throughout this article and in the seed is intended to encourage us to slow down and feel for patterns all around us, including connotations, relationships, constellations and fractals of meaning. To do so, develops a sense of what a pattern might mean, imply or be appropriate for, if applied in the specific complexity of a given situation. The outer circle of the seed aligns with patterns of ethical care and responsibility. The seed helps us hone our sensitivity to the aesthetics of patterns so that our practices can be guided by a felt, embodied ethic.

### Three combination patterns

There are also secondary patterns of the sensing seed, which, like combinations of the three primary colours, create blended palettes.

### *Structuring – Towards responsibilities*

Combining Becoming and Belonging produces Structuring; how we organise the world and make decisions. In other words, the law, or lore, explicit and implicit rules, guidelines, expectations or protocols by which we conduct ourselves, along with what we consider to be fair. The two divergences of Structuring are Hierarchical and Egalitarian. Hierarchy is a mingling of Straight Lines and Separate Parts while Egalitarian is the rippling of Holistic Waves.

Hierarchical styles of Structuring are emblematic of modernity (Veronica, 2024), concerned with power-over, entitlement, judgement, complaint, unrestricted autonomy, heroic leadership, status, jealousy, hoarding, hypocrisy, innocence, blame, moral and political authority with power to compel, ego-enhancing, seeking affirmation, self-reliance, weaponisation, extraction, over-consumption of finite resources, arbitrary rules, commodification, competition, confidence, coercion, compliance, censorship, corruption, cruelty, orders, shoulds/oughts, decisions for others and ends justifying means.

Primal peoples were socially/sexually egalitarian (Topa & Narvaez, 2022) and lived largely peaceably (Hames, 2019) lives. The Egalitarian part of the primal outer circle of the seed is epitomised by relational autonomy (i.e., independent agency harmonising within interdependent relations), obligations, responsibilities, distributed/situational leadership, power-to/with(in) and synergy/symbiosis, authority without power to compel (i.e., no command-obedience system;

Graham, 2023), ego-stewarding, respect, care, co-liberation, reciprocity, in balance with all our relations, inherent worth, decisions for self and means as the ends.

In practice, moving towards primal patterns of Structuring, could involve cultivating cultures of service and working for mutual benefit. To ask for and accept help. To respond when we see things we feel are done poorly or unethically by being part of making positive change.

### ***Discerning – Valuing distinctiveness***

Discerning is a blend of Becoming and Knowing, focused on valuing. The modern polarity of Discerning is Universalising (Abstracting and Straight Lines). Universalising is embedded in paradigms of a knowable world; one-truth to be discovered; the generic, timeless and decontextualised; quantification, objectivity, standardisation, systemisation, stratification; simple reliable formulaic solutions; conformity, correctness: either/or-ness; perfectionism, purity, mastery and the superiority of modern white man.

On the contrary, primal people cultivated capacities to craft and improvise with miraculous skill, subtlety and assiduity (Allen, 2022b); they boast(ed) dynamic versatile adaptive cultures. The Contextualising (a combination of Perceiving and Waves) part of the seed refers to these bespoke broths that continuously and creatively crystallise. Contextualising is grounded in a panoply of perspectives; the messy, approximate, aberrant and trickster; deference to ancestral wisdom; innovation, improvisation, creativity; curiosity; the both, and, paradoxical and contradictory; uniqueness, peculiarity, eccentricity; qualitativity, panjectivity – consciousness in context (Allen, 2021), receptivity; own ways, pattern recognition; complex, layered, iterative, emergent, responses; co-creation, learning from experience/elders and the gifts of failure; as well as nuance, inquiry, variety, subtlety and complementarity.

In practice, moving towards primal patterns of Discerning includes all acts of respectful encompassing efforts to understand distinct perspectives and ways. Looking for the ‘third way’, the unexpected innovative solution. The alliteration throughout this paper is an invitation to employ any and all approaches that unsettle default neural pathways and excite new ones. Disrupting patterns of modernity involves noticing and staying with what feels annoying, out of place, odd, discordant or wrong (Machado de Oliveira, 2025). These emotions have information for us about what we consider to be ‘good’, ‘right’ and of ‘value’. It’s these reactions that are provoked when indigenous scholars don’t conform to convention (Gatwiri *et al.*, 2025).

### ***Relating – Towards authentic connection***

Relating is a combination of Belonging and Knowing. This pattern pertains to our timbre/tone of connecting and interacting with the world. The modern sense of Relating tends towards the Impersonal (Separate Parts and Abstracting), prioritising strangers, work, productive action, instrumentalisation and dehumanisation; alongside that which is proper, functional, secular, professional, formal, reserved, polite, nice, invulnerable and transactional. This is a view of ourselves as separate individuals combined with a rational, emotionally detached mindset in which we are an anonymous fungible unit, rather than a unique distinctive person.

The primal aspect of Relating is Expressive (Holistic and Perceiving), an embodied felt sense of our sacred kinship everywhere, reverent relationality and bodily belonging with everyone and everything. Primal people were at ease with pain, discomfort (Lee & Daly, 2005) and revelatory austerity (via fasting, exertion and privation within ceremony and ritual), of which they experience(d) much more than ‘privileged’ modern humans. Expressive enactments entail prioritising authentic, unique selves, relationships, well-being, strengths; trust, humour, empathy, humility, courage; contentment, joy, grief, mourning; generosity, gratitude, vulnerability, kindness, care, love, passion; the erotic, sensual, aesthetic, divine, sacred; singing, chanting,



dancing, laughing, crying, art, music, poetry, adornment; ritual, ceremony, play (i.e., child-like rather than childish) and participation with kin everywhere.

In practice, to move towards primal patterns of Relating, might involve opening ourselves up to care and being cared for. To reflect on ways our family relationships could be models for our interactions with all humans and more-than-humans. Ritual practices of gratitude, commemoration and recognition. Fostering actual, authentic, caring relationships and kinship between people, especially those who we consider ‘other’. To play more and carve out space to acknowledge the sacred spirit that is felt when our heads, hands and hearts connect with those of others.

### **Practice suggestions – Resonant embodied ethics**

The parts of the sensing seed outline some salient patterns of modernity that must be outgrown to enact an ethic of care. The seed then supports practitioners to explore, through embodied resonance, a profusion of perpendicular patterns. These sensing seed patterns are best surfaced through an ongoing process of inquiry, helping to perceive preferences for practice in the here-and-now that echo the aesthetics of primal cycles, as sensory rehabilitation (Goodchild, 2021). Trying to apply such patterns to the seamless suffusion of life is unavoidably arbitrary, with various overlapping elements that cannot easily be visually mapped. Because boundaries, terms and concepts are contextual and cultural, finding names for patterns is also tricky. However, imprints of ‘imperfection’ within the sensing seed are instructive in themselves in surfacing our presumed premises about the patterns of life.

As there is benefit in shifting patterns in real-time (Isaacs, 2001), there is a ‘tour of the hand’ tool to assist in embedding the sensing seed themes into the soil of everyday life, by mapping key themes onto the fingers and palm of the hand.<sup>4</sup> The sensing seed is best engaged by attending to, sensing into, responding to and anticipating the sagacity of the small, the nuanced minutiae of the mundane. We invite you to pick just a couple of contrasting words and work with them for, say, a week, focusing on the barely noticeable and the seemingly inconsequential. Then continue to work with each small section of the sensing seed over time, slowly but surely. While decolonising practice will never make perfect, it will make passable, at the same time as it primes possibilities.

In reflecting on how the seed has rooted into our daily lives, the following three practices from the action research are the most fruitful. Reflecting regularly on these three salient patterns of modernity touches on the whole seed:

- Holistic – What else? Who else? What are and how do we include others views?
- Waves – Value the process and the relationships it generates as much as getting things ‘done’. Let the task be the opportunity to spend time enjoying and learning together, which is often the real and enduring benefit.
- Perceiving – Feel; let your body be a messenger. Notice and connect with other beings and dynamics around you as persons; let your close, cherished relationships be both a crucible and a guide for relating more generally.

Although we are all straight jacketed by scripts of modernity in manifold ways, the sensing seed can help each of us find cracks to crank open in countering coloniality. This is always easier to do with others via communities of practice/place. However, this endeavour is also intrinsically inner and individual, rippling outwards from personal application of theory into practice. The sensing seed is also a useful tool for analysing texts and plans to see if they resonate with the directions we are intending to traverse and to reveal aspects we are overlooking. For example, it could be used to

<sup>4</sup>Available at <https://karencieri.wordpress.com/2025/09/02/the-sensing-seed-is-always-at-hand/>

map the themes in this metacrisis special issue. Doing so may foreground our collective blind spots or repeated responses that perpetuate the metacrisis.

## Conclusion

Rather than modern environmental education, it is (past) time for a deeply participatory, mutual and embodied primal educational environment. That is a 'leading forth' (the root meaning of educate) to the state of being encircled (root meaning of environment) by primal perspectives and practices moment-by-moment – as an invitation to maturation. Opening ourselves up to exploring primal ways of belonging, becoming and knowing enables new provocations for addressing our tangled metacrisis predicaments. As we become more fluent in identifying typical modern and primal patterns, we can intentionally disrupt business-as-usual to enact liveness unusual ways which could lead us to radical eutopian<sup>5</sup> futures. It is with this conviction that we offer the sensing seed, bursting with breakthroughs that might find and further open the fissures in modernity's faltering foundations, so that we can return to more relational futures.

**Financial support.** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency, commercial or not-for-profit.

**Ethical standards.** Nothing to note.

## References

- Allen, D. (2021). *Self and unself*. Expressive Egg Books.
- Allen, D. (2022a). *33 myths of the system: A guide to the world* (2nd ed.). Expressive Egg Books.
- Allen, D. (2022b). *Ad radicem*. Expressive Egg Books.
- Gatwiri, K., Krupa, Z., & Abid, M. (2025). Maintaining standards or gatekeeping the academy? Reflections of peer review experiences by racially and culturally minoritized scholars in Australia. *Sociology Compass* 19(8), e70079.
- Barras, C. (2020). Is an Aboriginal tale of an ancient volcano the oldest story ever told? *Science*, 11 February. Available at: <https://www.science.org/content/article/aboriginal-tale-ancient-volcano-oldest-story-ever-told> (accessed 11 December 2025).
- Bendell, J. (2024). The nine lies of the fake green fairytale, Prof Jem Bendell – living with metacrisis and collapse, 25 August. Available at: <https://jembendell.com/2024/08/25/the-nine-lies-of-the-fake-green-fairytale/> (accessed 11 December 2025).
- Bregman, R. (2020). *Humankind: A hopeful history*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Cieri, K. (2025). Collaborating for co-liberation through resonant ethics: Seeding change in the early childhood ecosystem of the Northern Territory (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Charles Darwin University.
- Elani, R. (2021). *Wyrđ: Against the modern world*. Night Forest Press.
- Geography Scout. (2023). Australia's 20,000 year old human footprints, Geography Scout, viewed 11 December 2025. <https://geographyscout.com/history-culture/australias-20000-year-old-human-footprints/>
- Geurts, K. L. (2002). On rocks, walks, and talks in West Africa: Cultural categories and an anthropology of the senses. *Ethos*, 30(3), 178–198. <https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.2002.30.3.178>
- Goodchild, M. (2021). Relational systems thinking: That's how change is going to come, from our Earth Mother. *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change*, 1(1), 75–103. <https://doi.org/10.47061/jabsc.v1i1.577>
- Graeber, D., & Wengrow, D. (2021). *The dawn of everything: A new history of humanity*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Graham, M. (2023). The law of obligation, aboriginal ethics: Australia becoming, Australia dreaming. *Parrhesia*, 37, 1–21.
- Gurven, M., & Kaplan, H. (2007). Longevity among hunter-gatherers: A cross-cultural examination. *Population and Development Review*, 33(2), 321–365. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2007.00171.x>
- Hames, R. (2019). Pacifying hunter-gatherers. *Human Nature*, 30, 155–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-019-09353-z>
- Irwin, R., & White, T. H. (2022). Technē and indigenous exosomatic memory: Heidegger, Stiegler, and cutting the Gordian knot of modernity. In M.A. Peters, P. Jandrić & S. Hayes (Eds.), *Bioinformational philosophy and postdigital knowledge ecologies* (pp. 77–95). Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95006-4>
- Isaacs, W. N. (2001). Toward an action theory of dialogue. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 24(7-8), 709–748. <https://doi.org/10.1081/PAD-100104771>

<sup>5</sup>Meaning 'good place' rather than utopia as an ideal society or state of perfect happiness.

- Konishi, S. (2012). *Aboriginal male in the Enlightenment world*. Pickering & Chatto Publishers.
- Lee, R. B., & Daly, R. (2005). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of hunters and gatherers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Machado de Oliveira, V. (2025). *Outgrowing modernity: Navigating complexity, complicity, and collapse with accountability and compassion*. Penguin Random House.
- Machado de Oliveira, V. M. (2021). *Hospicing modernity*. North Atlantic Books.
- Macintosh, A. A., Pinhasi, R., & Stock, J. T. (2017). Prehistoric women's manual labour exceeded that of athletes through the first 5,500 years of farming in Central Europe. *Science Advances*, 3(11), eaao3893. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aao3893>
- Martin, L. L., & Shirk, S. (2007). Immediate-return societies: What can they tell us about the self and social relationships in our society? In J.V. Wood, A. Tesser & J.G. Holmes (Eds.), *The self and social relationships* (pp. 161–182). Psychology Press.
- Mathews, F. (2022). Conservation needs to include a story about feeling. *Biological Conservation*, 272, 109668. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2022.109668>
- Mika, C. (2020). When nothingness revokes certainty: A Māori speculation. In B. Hokowhitu et al., (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of critical indigenous studies* (pp. 203–214). Taylor & Francis.
- Noon, K., & De Napoli, K. (2022). *First knowledges astronomy: Sky country*. Thames & Hudson Australia.
- Orcher, P., Palmer, V. J., & Yunkaporta, T. (2025). Danger is a signal, not a state: Bigaagarri—An indigenous protocol for dancing around threats to wellbeing. *Social Sciences*, 14(1), 27. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14010027>
- Palmer, P., Bourke, E., & Mac a' Ghoill, P. (2025). *Decolonial deep mapping*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491853>
- Paradies, Y. (2020). Unsettling truths: Modernity, (de-)coloniality and indigenous futures. *Postcolonial Studies*, 23(4), 438–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1809069>
- Paradies, Y., & Joyce, C.W. (2024). From esotericism to embodied ritual: Care for country as religious experience. *Religions*, 15(2), 182. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020182>
- Richter, D., Grün, R., Joannes-Boyau, R., Steele, T.E., Amani, F., Rué, M., Fernandes, P., Raynal, J.-P., Geraads, D., Ben-Ncer, A., Hublin, J.-J., & McPherron, S.P. (2017). The age of the hominin fossils from Jebel Irhoud, Morocco, and the origins of the middle stone age. *Nature*, 546(7657), 293–296. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature22335>
- Solomon, A., & Wane, N. (2005). Indigenous healers and healing in a modern world. In R. Moodley & W. West (Eds.), *Integrating traditional healing practices into counselling and psychotherapy* (pp. 52–60). SAGE.
- Stewart, G.T. (2023). Is there such a thing as Māori science? It depends. E-Tangata website. <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/is-there-such-thing-as-maori-science-it-depends/> (accessed 11 December 2025).
- Topa, W., & Narvaez, D. (2022). *Restoring the kinship worldview*. North Atlantic Books.
- Ungunmerr-Baumann, M. R., Groom, R. A., Schuberg, E. L., Atkinson, J., Atkinson, C., Wallace, R., & Morris, G. (2022). Dadirri: An indigenous place-based research methodology. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 18(1), 94–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801221085353>
- Veronica, D. (2024). The paradigm of hierarchy: Unearthing the roots of inequality and inhumanity: How one idea defined & divided us & how we can unite again, self-published.
- Watts, A. (2006). *Eastern wisdom, modern life: Collected talks 1960–1969*. New World Library.
- Wildcat, M., & Voth, D. (2023). Indigenous relationality: Definitions and methods. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 19(2), 475–483. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801231152211>

## Authors Biographies

**Karen Cieri** lives as part of unceded Larrakia Country in Garramilla (Darwin) in the Northern Territory of Australia. Karen is most inspired by exploring the metaphysics of co-becoming and collective ways of coming-to-know. Karen has submitted for examination her doctorate thesis on participatory action research into collaborative, community-led and ethical ways of working, particularly within early childhood education and integrated service settings.

**Yin Paradies** is an Aboriginal animist anarchist abolitionist actionist spreading decolonial kinship from, and as part of, unceded Wurundjeri land in Naarm (Melbourne), so-called Australia. Yin is committed to understanding and interrupting the devastating impacts of modern societies. He seeks meaningful mutuality of becoming and embodied relationality with all life through transformed ways of knowing, being and doing that are grounded in discernment, wisdom, humility, respect and generosity.

---

**Cite this article:** Cieri, K., & Paradies, Y. (2026). Growing Out of the Modernity Metacrisis – A Sensing Heuristic for Seeding Alternative Futures. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ae.2025.10102>