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Frances Morphy

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THE YOLŊU IN PLACE: DESIGNING A POPULATION SURVEY FOR NORTH EAST ARNHEM LAND

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Abstract

This Working Paper presents a preliminary discussion of the Gumurr Miwatj Yolŋu Population Project. The first phase, a comprehensive household survey of the Yolŋu population of the major communities and homelands of the Gumurr Miwatj and Gumurr Miyarrka regions of north east Arnhem Land, is now complete.

The project is simultaneously a conventional demography of a regional population and a modelling of the locally grounded, kin-based dynamics that structure the population as a distinctive social formation in space and time. The body of the paper sets out the model of the regional population that underpins the design of the survey, and then reflects on the design and scope of the survey instrument.

Whereas conventional demographic profiling tends to focus on individuals as units that make up 'populations', anthropology is more concerned with the sociocultural contexts within which people act and are acted upon. The innovative contribution of the project lies in its attempt to integrate these very different perspectives in a single study.

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The project could not have come to fruition without the support of key Yolŋu organisations and the hard work of the many Yolŋu people who were involved as field assistants and interviewers. They will be acknowledged in full in the final report on the project. For this preliminary paper the author would like to thank individually the participants in the workshop convened to design the survey form — Milminyina Dhamarrandji, Marrpalawuy Gumana-Marika, Naminapu Maymuru-White and Djarpirr Mununggurr — and also Yananymul Mununggurr for input that resulted in further refinements to the design.

Lastly the author thanks the two reviewers who provided valuable comments on the submitted paper. I have followed their suggestions for improvement — a task made easier by the fact that they were in substantial agreement about what was needed.

Glossary

bäpurru	patrilineal clan
barrkimirr(i)	married in; term applied to a woman living on her husband's country
bunbu	shelter, dwelling
bunbu-mulkanhayŋu	resident; literally 'dwelling-holder'
buŋgawa	leader, 'boss'
dhiyakuwuy	belonging to this (place)
dhiyala	hereabouts
dhiyalaŋumi	in this place
Djalkiripuyŋu	name for the Blue Mud Bay connubium
Djambarrpuyŋu	name for a group of western Yolŋu-matha dialects; collective term for the group of clans that speak these dialects
djuŋgayarr	'manager'; ceremonial relationship of a person to their mother's clan
djuŋgayi	alternative form of djuŋgayarr, q.v.
Gumatj	name for a group of eastern Yolŋu-matha dialects; collective term for the group of clans that speak these dialects
Gumurr Miwatj	name for the easternmost part of the Yolŋu region
Gumurr Miyarrka	name for the region around Arnhem Bay, west of Gumurr Miwatj
Gupapuyŋu	name for a group of western Yolŋu-matha dialects; collective term for the group of clans that speak these dialects
gutharra	actual or classificatory daughter's daughter's child (woman speaking); actual or classificatory sister's's daughter's child (man speaking)
guwarr	temporary, impermanent
likan	elbow, connection
märi	actual or classificatory mother's mother or mother's mother's brother
miyalk	woman, female
ŋändi	actual or classificatory mother
ŋändi-pulu	mother's clan
ŋändi-wataŋu	the relationship of a person to their mother's clan; literally 'mother-own'
ŋäpaki	white person
ŋapipi	actual or classificatory mother's brother
ŋuli	habitual (action or event)
ŋunhiyi	that previously referred to (thing, person or place)
ŋurru	nose, prow of canoe
ŋurruŋu	leader
wäŋa	place
wäŋa-wataŋu	land owner
wärriku	temporary, impermanent
waku	own child (woman speaking), (classificatory) sister's child
withiyan	come to visit
yäku	name
yindi-pulu	matrilineal kindred
Yolŋu	'person' in the languages of north east Arnhem Land; with initial capital now used to refer to the speakers of these languages
Yolŋu-matha	language name for the group of dialects spoken in north east Arnhem Land; literally 'Yolŋu-tongue'

Introduction

This Working Paper presents a preliminary discussion of the Gumurr Miwatj Yolŋu Population Project (GMYPP) which was initiated in March 2010. The first phase, a comprehensive household survey of the Yolŋu population of the major communities and homelands of the Gumurr Miwatj and Gumurr Miyarrka regions of north east Arnhem Land (see Figure 1), was completed in October 2010. The population database has now been compiled as an Excel spreadsheet, and verification and cleaning of this database are currently underway. The paper sets out the model of the regional population that underpins the design of the survey, and then reflects on the design and scope of the survey instrument. The results of the survey are the subject of a longer report, to be published later in 2012. The database itself is ultimately intended as a resource for local Yolŋu people and their organisations.

The Yolŋu communities of the region in question are situated in what has become the hinterland of a bauxite mine and alumina refinery on the Gove peninsula. Nabalco began production there in 1972 under an agreement with the Commonwealth government that predated the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) (*ALRA*). The events surrounding the establishment of the mine led ultimately — and ironically for the Yolŋu — to the passing of the *ALRA* (for a brief summary see Morphy 2008a: 100–1; see also Williams 1986 for a detailed discussion). The mine was bought by Alcan Inc. in 2001, and subsequently by Rio Tinto (which then became Rio Tinto Alcan (RTA)) in 2007. In 2011 RTA devolved its responsibility for the Gove operation to a newly created business unit, Pacific Aluminium.

GMYPP forms part of the larger Australian Research Council Linkage Project ‘Poverty in the Midst of Plenty: Economic Empowerment, Wealth Creation, and Institutional Reform for Sustainable Indigenous and Local Communities’, in which several mining companies, among them Rio Tinto, are participating as linkage partners. In the 1980s and early 1990s the Australian mining industry ‘experienced trauma coming to terms with rapidly evolving community expectations over the control of exploration and mining access to land’ (Harvey 2002: 1). In particular, in the aftermath of the *Mabo* and *Wik* High Court decisions and the passing of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) (*NTA*) ‘the position that some in the resources industry had been advocating for some time began to be taken seriously, that is, there would be no solutions borne out of adversarial approaches and litigation: instead mining access to

Aboriginal land needed to be based on soundly built relationships' (Harvey and Nish 2005: 502). Harvey and Nish outline two reasons why this might be so. At the national level there is the necessity to acknowledge and work within the new rights-based legal framework, and at the local level enlightened self-interest dictates that companies need to maintain a 'social license to operate' (Harvey and Nish 2005: 504) if their operations are to run smoothly and without local opposition.

Taylor has noted 'a push for profiling regional social and economic conditions' (2009: 51) as a result of changes in the attitude of the mining industry towards their regional role, particularly those in regions with large indigenous populations. Hitherto, such population profiling (e.g. Taylor 1999, 2004, 2006; Taylor and Scambary 2005) has primarily reflected the perspective of the mining companies and government agencies operating in these regions. It has been focused on indicators such as the health, education and employment status of the local indigenous population, with a view to providing a baseline against which changes in those indicators can be measured in the context of a drive to build 'sustainable' regional economies in mining hinterlands.

Although the GMYPP is designed in part to provide such a population profile, its direct relevance to the research concerns of the wider project lies more in its potential contribution to the process of characterising 'community' in the context of agreement-making between local indigenous populations and those, such as government agencies and mining companies, who seek to engage with them. In this respect, the concerns of the project are more anthropological than strictly demographic; it is in the work of anthropologists (e.g. Holcombe 2009; Levitus 1991, 1999, 2005, 2009; Martin 2009; Scambary 2009) that we find detailed attention paid to the effects of mining and mining agreements on the social fabric of affected indigenous groups through the 'corporatisation' of the 'Aboriginal interest' (Levitus 2009: 75). Whereas demographic profiling tends to focus on individuals as units that make up 'populations', anthropology is more concerned with the sociocultural contexts within which people act and are acted upon. The innovative contribution of the GMYPP lies in its attempt to integrate these very different perspectives in a single study.

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Figure 1. The survey area and some surrounding communities

Note: The communities surveyed were the major settlements of Yirrkala, Gunyangara (Ski Beach) and Gapuwiyak, and all associated satellite communities (that is, the Laynhapuy homelands, the cattle station at Garrathiya, and the small communities at Dhanaya, Galupa, Birritjimi and Biranybirany). Yolŋu permanently or temporarily resident in the mining town of Nhulunbuy were also counted.

The completed GMYPP database will first of all provide a conventional demographic profile of the regional population according to age and sex. There are several reasons for undertaking such an exercise. The most important of these is the inadequacy of the count in the National Census in remote areas, in successive years (see Martin and Taylor 1996; Martin et al. 2002; Morphy 2007a). Before 2006, the administration of a post-enumeration survey (PES) designed to estimate the degree of undercounting of the national population, and thus to produce the estimated resident population (ERP), excluded very remote regions of the country where

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Aboriginal people are a large percentage of the total population. In 2006, when the PES was applied for the first time in these regions, it was found that up to 16 per cent of Aboriginal people had not been counted in the Northern Territory (ABS 2008; Taylor 2012: 63). It can be argued that the ERP provides a reliable estimate of the population and its demographic characteristics at the national or state level (Taylor 2011: 290), but that:

> the ABS method of calculating small area-level indigenous estimates via a top-down pro rata distribution of undercount parameters obtained for much higher level geographies does not necessarily provide good estimates at every reduction in scale. Ideally, population modelling should be conducted at the level at which it is intended to be used (Taylor 2012: 63).

The database will also form the basis for an analysis of the sociocultural factors that pattern the distribution and mobility of the population across the region. It will show the region as a series of overlapping kin-based social networks, reflecting the way in which Yolŋu themselves see their region. Using extensive genealogical materials collected in the area since the early 1970s in conjunction with the data on the contemporary population, it is also hoped to reveal both subregional variations in the Yolŋu social system and changes that have taken place over time, particularly since the advent of mining to the region in the late 1960s. This feature of the design has been motivated by many discussions over the last decade with Yolŋu people who feel frustrated that *ŋäpaki* (white people) do not seem to understand or accord value to their locally grounded, kin-based networks or to take them into account in socio-economic planning for the region. The latest manifestation of this ignorance or indifference is the current policy focus on 'growth towns' (Northern Territory Government 2012) and the systematic neglect of homelands, which in the view of government are remote, isolated, and the sites of 'limited' economies (Australian Government 2008). From the Yolŋu point of view, however, the homelands are certainly not 'remote', nor are they isolated in any social sense; rather, they are important anchoring points for kin networks that extend throughout the region and beyond (see Morphy 2010a).

As O'Faircheallaigh writes: 'Aboriginal people … operate within cultural contexts and according to social norms very different to those prevalent in non-Aboriginal society. Thus while Aboriginal people are perfectly capable of creating their own constructions of public programs or policies, major barriers may exist to the accurate communication of these constructions' (2002: 10). In documenting these networks through the population survey, it is

hoped that the Yolŋu view of their region, with its complex social geography, can be represented in terms that are comprehensible to non-Yolŋu, and therefore become amenable to consideration in policy and development contexts. The currently popular language of 'partnership' between government and Aboriginal communities is, and is likely to remain, empty rhetoric unless agency is given to Aboriginal people through recognition of their distinct forms of sociality and the regimes of value that underlie them.

Modelling the regional population

The Yolŋu population of the region is distributed between two major settlements — the ex-mission of Yirrkala (established by the Methodist Overseas Mission in the 1930s) and Gapuwiyak (originally established as an outstation from Galiwin'ku in the 1960s) — and a series of smaller communities (see Figure 1). Gunyangara, Galupa and Birritjimi are near the refinery site. The majority of the small homelands or outstation communities in the surrounding region, 26 in all, come under the umbrella of the Laynhapuy Homelands Association (LHA), which has its headquarters at Yirrkala and a branch office at Gapuwiyak. LHA has been in existence as a separately incorporated Association since 1985, and in 2012 became a Corporation under the Commonwealth's *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (*CATSI* Act). The cattle station homestead at Garrathiya and two further homelands communities — Biranybirany and Dhanaya — are serviced from Gunyangara, although Biranybirany also receives some services from LHA.

At a broad scale of description the distribution of the contemporary Yolŋu population can be explained with reference to the establishment of Yirrkala mission, and to postcolonial developments such as the coming of mining to the region in the late 1960s and the 'homelands movement' that began in the early 1970s. In terms of services there is a settlement hierarchy in the region, with the mining town of Nhulunbuy at the apex as the regional administrative and service centre. The two biggest settlements, Yirrkala and Gapuwiyak, operate as service hubs for the homelands communities in their subregions. Access to services, and to some extent to employment, has some influence on patterns of residence and a great deal of influence on short-term mobility within the region. However, in order to understand the detail of residence and mobility patterns in the region as a whole it is necessary to take account of Yolŋu patterns of land ownership and kinship connections which have their origins in the precolonial Yolŋu

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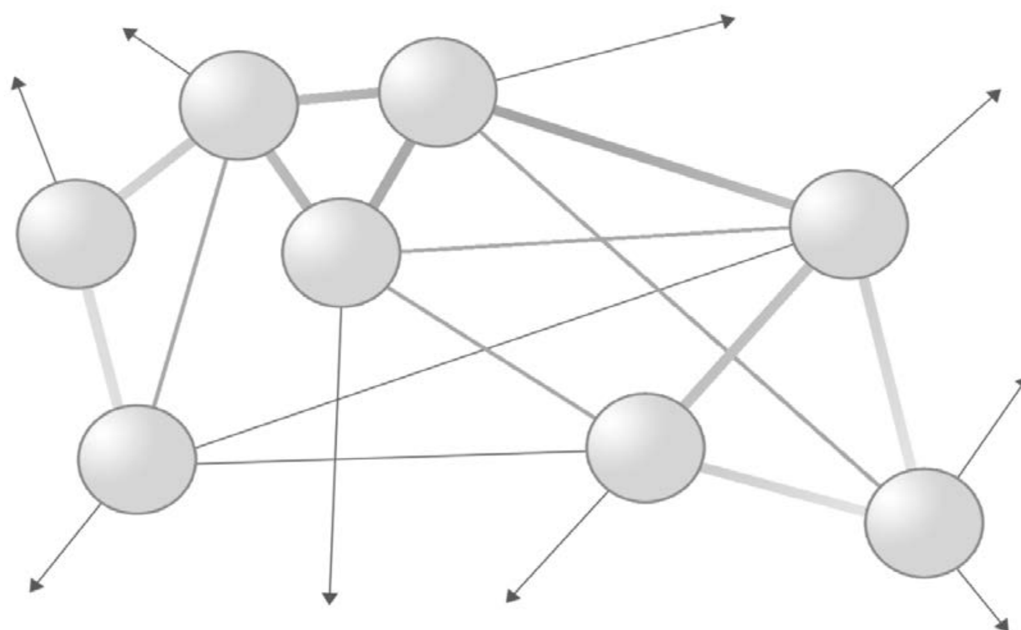
socio-economic system and its associated regime of value. The trajectory of that system has been influenced through response to its encapsulation within the Australian settler state, but it maintains a high degree of relative autonomy with respect to the settler society and its regime of value (see Morphy 2008a, 2008b: 121, 2010a; Morphy and Morphy 2012: 50–1).

The vast majority of the regional Yolŋu population live either at the hub communities or the homelands. There are very few permanent Yolŋu residents in the mining town, and those who do live there are usually in households that also contain non-Yolŋu (and most commonly non-indigenous) household members. Many of the Yolŋu in town at any one time are temporary visitors staying at the local Aboriginal Hostel, and their reason for being there is often health-related, since the region's hospital is located in the town. There is also a group of semi-permanent 'town campers' whose numbers are augmented from time to time by others who come in from surrounding communities for short periods. The reason for the presence of the camping population is usually related to the relative ease of access to alcohol in town.

Figure 2. A two-dimensional model for anchored kin networks



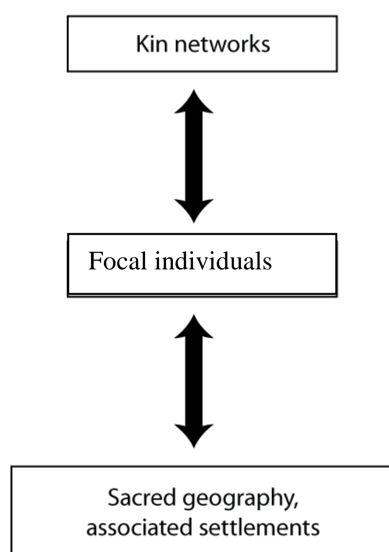
The model shown in Figure 2 can be applied at its most abstract and general level anywhere that Aboriginal sociality continues to be founded in locally grounded, extended kin networks (see

Morphy 2010a). It is useful for thinking about the structure of such networks and also the resulting distribution of the population in space. It formed the basis for the design of a recent population survey in the Fitzroy Valley in Western Australia (see Morphy 2010b: 4–9), a region with a very different colonial history from Arnhem Land.

In the Yolŋu case the circles can represent, in the first instance, the land-owning patrilineal clans (*bäpurru*). Different weights of line represent relative densities of connection through marriage and ceremonial ties; the thick lines symbolise the densest degrees of connection and the thinnest lines the least dense. In the second instance the circles can be taken to represent the actual settlements where people live, with the lines representing varying volumes of movement between them. Finally, the circles can represent focal individuals around whom kin groupings coalesce on the ground, who are also themselves connected in extended kin networks.

To link the different layers that the model represents, it is necessary to conceptualise it as three-dimensional (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The anchors in the system (the third dimension)



Seen in this way, a significant property of the model is its layered structure, which comprises three relatively autonomous subsystems. The basal layer, that which is ontologically prior in Yolŋu thought, is spatial (see H. Morphy 1991, 1995). It is the sacred ancestral geography of the region that produces the patchwork of clan estates and, today, their associated settlements

(see Morphy 2010a). The intermediate layer, connecting the other two, picks out particular individuals who live at those places at particular stages in their life-cycle, as focal. Such individuals tend to be senior *wäŋa-wataŋu* (members of the landowning clan; literally 'place-own'), or senior *djuŋgayarr* (a term explained below). These are the people around whom kin networks tend to coalesce residentially. The surface layer represents the living Yolŋu population on the surface of the land, organised in kin networks. This, then, is a model for a population structured as a kin-based social field with particular properties that relate people to each other and to particular localities.

In the Yolŋu case, long-term relationships of bestowal and marriage link *bäpurru* to one another, and these links are modelled by Yolŋu in terms of kinship. In their primary meanings *märi* and *gutharra* are kin terms. *Märi* refers to a person's mother's mother and her brother, and *gutharra* is the reciprocal term, used by a woman and her brother to refer to her daughter's children. The preferred form of marriage in the Yolŋu system is between a man and his male *märi's* daughter's daughter (who may also be his actual mother's brother's daughter) — that is, his matrilateral cross-cousin. This kinship relationship may be projected to the level of the *bäpurru* in the following way. Two *bäpurru* may be said to stand in a relationship of *märi–gutharra*, because over time the male members of the *märi* clan bestow many of their daughters as mothers-in-law to male members of the *gutharra* clan.

The relationship between a person and their mother's *bäpurru* is also significant. Both men and women in a sibling set call the children of the women *waku*. Thus a person is *waku* to both their *ŋändi* (mother) and their *ŋapipi* (mother's brother), and they also stand in a *waku* relationship to their mother's *bäpurru* as a whole. They are *ŋändi–wataŋu* (mother-own), and have special responsibilities to their *ŋändi* clan. In fulfilling these responsibilities they are termed *djuŋgayarr* (or *djuŋgayi*), often translated into English as 'manager' or 'caretaker' or sometimes 'policeman'. In essence they have a duty of care to their mother's estate. In the Blue Mud Bay area (and possibly to a lesser extent elsewhere in the region) this relationship is also projected to the *bäpurru* level, so that two *bäpurru* may be said to stand in a *ŋändi-waku* relationship. In the past, and to a considerable extent in the present, the majority of bestowal arrangements involve members of *bäpurru* with geographically contiguous estates, so that over time 'connubia' — that is, regional groupings of *bäpurru* linked in sets of bestowal relationships — tend to emerge.

This is reflected in today's settlement geography, because each clan estate tends to have a homeland settlement situated on it.

Figure 4. Kinship in space and time: a regional system

Figure 4 shows the group-level kinship links between the *bäpurru* of the homeland settlements of the northern Blue Mud Bay area, with the settlements serving as proxies for the *bäpurru* on whose land they are located. Note the density of connections between the Blue Mud Bay *bäpurru*, but also the fact that there are links outwards in most directions. The existence of these

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connubia is not merely statistical — they are not simply an emergent property of the local system of kinship and bestowal. They are recognised by Yolŋu as a property of the system, and are often associated with regional names (see Morphy 2010a). For example the northern Blue Mud Bay clans, whose homelands are the starred ones on this map, are the Djalkiripuyŋu. These cultural properties of connubia are a factor in their reproduction over time. The genealogies from Blue Mud Bay show that Djalkiripuyŋu has existed as a connubium since at least the late eighteenth century.

The less dense chains of connection are the result of individuals or sets of siblings forging ties of marriage and kinship with groups outside the connubium. Every person potentially has a unique kindred, or kin network (see H. Morphy 1997: 130–2). The terms *ŋändi-pulu* (literally mother-more) and *yindi-pulu* (literally big-more) are egocentric terms referring respectively to an individual's mother's clan and their maternal line (including their *märi* clan). Thus the connubia are not bounded entities — they are linked to other connubial clusters across the region by less dense networks that reflect the kindreds of particular individuals.

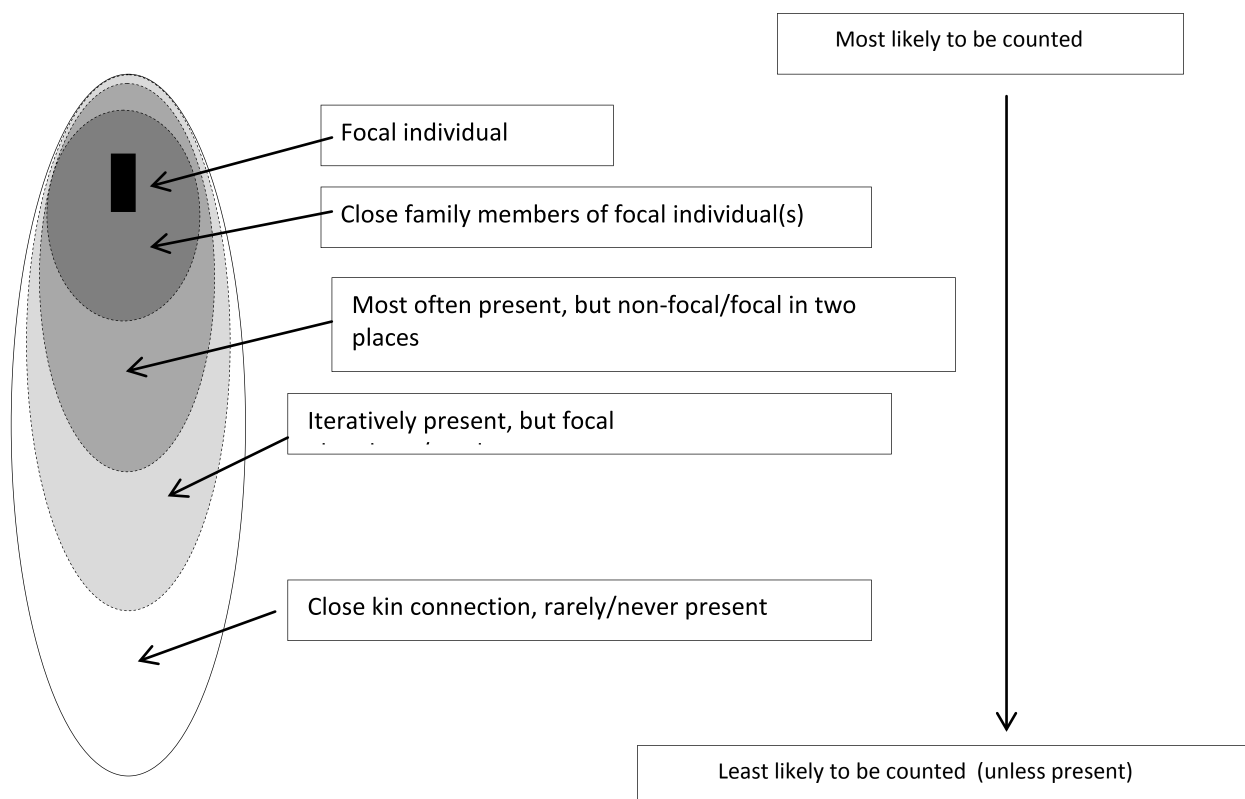
It should be clear at this stage that the conventional binary defintion of the relationship between people and place that is used in the census and other similar surveys, that of 'resident' versus 'visitor', is likely to prove inadequate for characterising Yolŋu relationships to place. This binary categorisation is framed solely in terms of arbitrary time limitations: if a person stays somewhere for more than six months in the year they are deemed a resident of that place. The binary definition rests on the premise that the 'normal' citizen is anchored to a particular place by work, and that if they leave that place for any length of time it is to go 'on holiday'. Then they become a 'visitor' to that other place. This definition sits uneasily over some growing sectors of the mainstream population, for example fly-in fly-out workers in the mining industry; and it sits uneasily over the majority of the Yolŋu population.

Yolŋu patterns of residence and movement between places are not primarily regulated by the constraints of work. They depend on a complex set of factors, both kin-related and service related, and on contingent events such as deaths, illness, and 'getting stuck' because of problems with vehicles or a shortage of cash. What is significant about everyday relationships

to place is not primarily the time spent in each place, but connections to place and kin and the repeated return to the same set of places through time.

Figure 5 models a more complex set of attachments to place than is allowed for by the resident–visitor binary. (The right-hand side of the Figure shows a hierarchy of probability that is of relevance for the design of the population survey instrument. It will be discussed in detail in the following section.) Arguably this model could apply more generally than in the Yolŋu case, and a similar model (using a different terminology) proved useful in the case of the Fitzroy Valley study (Morphy 2010b: 7–9). Attachment to a community and also to the dwellings within it is modelled as a continuum. The most securely attached are the 'focal' individuals, around whom the rest of the population coalesces (see Barber 2008 for an insightful case study of this phenomenon).

Figure 5. Types of attachment to dwellings and/or settlements



On homelands communities, as noted above, most focal individuals tend to be senior *wäŋa-wataŋu* (members of the land-owning clan) who have chosen to base themselves on their

country. Other individuals who may be focal are senior (usually male) *djuŋgayarr* and also senior wives or widows of senior male *wäŋa-wataŋu*. These last are *barrkimirr(i)*, a term that can be applied to any woman who is living on her husband's country.

Focality does not entail immobility. Focal individuals are often away from home, sometimes for long periods, because they tend to have extensive ceremonial obligations. Moreover, they are often on the boards of one or several organisations that require them to attend meetings away from home. Nor is focality a life-long status. Many people who are focal in their senior years were much more residentially mobile at other times of their lives, some people become focal much earlier than others, and some people are never focal, or are only intermittently so over the course of their life. The focality of some individuals transcends their lifetime; this is particularly the case for people remembered as the instigators of the homelands movement in the 1970s who are still linked in people's minds to the particular places that they established as the homelands settlements.

At any one point in time, all inhabited communities will have one or more resident focal individuals. The Yolŋu-matha term for a focal person is *ŋurruŋu* or *buŋgawa*. It is revealing to examine the etymology of these words, which denote authority over others at every level from the extended family to the region, and are often translated by Yolŋu as 'boss'. *Buŋgawa* is a loan word from Buginese (one of the many loanwords from the languages of the Indonesian archipelago introduced by the Macassan trepangers — sea cucumber traders — who came seasonally to the north Australian coast over several hundred years – see Langton 2011). In the context in which Yolŋu first heard it, it would have meant 'ship's captain'. *Ŋurruŋu* is derived from the word *ŋurru* 'nose, prow (of canoe or boat)'. Yolŋu use this term in contexts where English-speakers would use 'head' (as in 'head of household', 'family head'), revealing subtle but important differences between the qualities that are considered central to effective leadership. The English term is inherently hierarchical — the leader sits at the top of a vertical hierarchy. The Yolŋu term is horizontally oriented — the leader is someone who carries others behind them (see Morphy 2008b: 128–9 for further comments on Yolŋu leadership).

Not every inhabited dwelling in a community will contain a focal individual. There are two common reasons for this. First, 'household', defined in terms of commensality, is not

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necessarily, or even often, coterminous with the dwelling in Yolŋu communities (see Morphy 2010a). A frequent pattern is to have a cluster of two or more contiguous dwellings occupied by an extended family that routinely pools its resources. One dwelling in the cluster may contain a senior focal person (or married couple) with some of their children, grandchildren, or other members of their extended family. Neighbouring dwellings may contain others of their adult children, or other wives of the senior male focal person and her children. Second, and this is more common in the western part of the survey area, there may be a dwelling designated as the 'young men's camp' where unmarried males between the ages of around 13 or 14 to their mid-30s sleep. All of these young men will have close relatives in other dwellings, and in terms of commensality and sharing of resources they are in some respects members of the 'households' of these kin.

The categorisations that underlie the framing of the census assume that every private dwelling has at least one primary reference person (formerly the 'head of household', but now, more neutrally, 'person 1'). In the 2006 census, Yolŋu interpreted the label 'person 1' as referring to the *buŋgawa* of the dwelling, and this was not necessarily someone who lived in that dwelling. For example, at one homeland there were three dwellings side by side. In the middle dwelling lived the oldest male *wäŋa-wataŋu* (a widower) with one of his daughters and her children. The dwellings on either side contained two of his sons and members of their families. When these three dwellings were enumerated, everyone wanted to put the old man in the middle dwelling as 'person 1' for all three dwellings because 'he is *buŋgawa* for us'.

The other layers of attachment in the model shown in Figure 5 are separated by dotted lines. This is to signal that in reality they form a continuum rather than a set of discrete categories; individuals may move up and down this continuum, and at any one point in time their precise location on the continuum may be perceived differentially by themselves and others. The inner ring comprises close family members of focal individuals who are considered to live mainly at the dwelling and/or community in question. These may be, but are not necessarily, members of the focal person's 'nuclear family'. Membership of this layer can only be described in probabilistic terms. Those more likely to belong are 'middle-aged' (in Yolŋu thought this is people from their mid-30s to about 50 years of age) male *wäŋa-wataŋu* who are on a trajectory towards focal status, their wives and their children. Those less likely to belong include young,

unattached males (and increasingly females) in the 15 to 35 year-old age cohort, and also the children of such individuals, who are either mobile in company with their mothers or cared for sequentially by one or more grandmother, at possibly more than one community.

The next layer contains people who are thought of as being based at least some of the time in the dwelling/community, but who are also thought of similarly in at least one other community. Some people, including focal people, live in more than one place. Some homelands are not occupied all the year round; for logistical reasons people, including the focal people for that place, stay in a bigger community during the wet season and at their homeland in the dry. Others most likely to belong in this layer are the more 'settled' among the 15 to 35 year-olds, who live for periods of time sequentially at two or more communities where they have close family. Newly married couples, who are likely to live in the early years of their marriage at the wife's home community and later at the husband's, may have a period of transition where they spend some time as 'semi-focal' members of both communities. Some 'middle-aged' people who are on a trajectory to focal status, but who for reasons of work or family commitments live elsewhere for prolonged periods, also fall into this layer.

The next layer of connection is filled predominantly by the less 'settled' members of the 15 to 35 cohort, with a bias towards males in the lower part of the age range. It is typical for people with this attachment profile to have their status characterised differently according to the perspective of the individual who is making the judgement. Such people would tend to be characterised as 'homeless' in census definitions of attachment to place, but they are not so regarded by their relatives. Rather, they have many 'homes' that they move between.

The outer layer comprises those who, for a wide variety of reasons, are rarely or never present in the community but are still recognised and remembered as kin. For many, there is at least the potential for moving back up the continuum of attachment at some point. This mixed bag includes dialysis patients in Darwin and often members of their family who have gone to stay with them, others who have moved out of the region because of work, marriage or because of family disputes, people serving prison sentences, and people who are in the 'long grass' (a colloquial term for living rough), mostly in Darwin.

Designing the survey form

As a first step, the population was counted through a dwelling-based survey. A draft version of the survey form was workshopped with four Yolŋu colleagues. Designing the survey instrument was challenging, given the purposes of the survey. The first objective was to make a comprehensive head count of the population and collect basic demographic information on age and sex. The design had to take into account the complexity of the relationship between persons and dwellings to minimise the potential for undercounting.

Residence patterns are not the only reason that Yolŋu are 'difficult to pin down' as individuals. The Yolŋu region is one of the few remaining places in Australia where precolonial naming practices have continued in everyday use, alongside the adoption of 'surnames' and non-Yolŋu given names. Most Yolŋu have multiple given names (at least two, and up to six or seven). Most names have two or even three living bearers. At any one time a person may be known by two or three of their names, including their English name, and some of their names may be 'out of use' because of the recent death of a person with the same or a similar sounding name. In administrative records such as birth and death registers, and health or Centrelink records, an individual might be listed under a different name in each case (health records in particular often use the person's English name rather than one of their Yolŋu names).

Surnaming practices are also variable. In the 1970s, surname use was consistently patrilineal, with members of a clan (or in some cases members of a group of ceremonially related clans) sharing the same surname (often the name of an apical ancestor). Married women tended to keep their own clan surname. Since then, however, some women have begun to follow the prevailing practice in settler Australian society of adopting their husband's surname on marriage. With the rise of pregnancy outside traditional marriage arrangements, increasing numbers of children are known by their mother's surname or by the surname of the clan to which they would have belonged had they been the issue of a 'proper' marriage. If paternity is publicly acknowledged they may use their actual father's surname. Some children thus have three potential surnames, and may appear in records (or on a survey form) under any of them.

The first group decision at the workshop was to use Yolŋu-matha for the form rather than English, for several reasons. A Yolŋu-matha dialect is the first language of the vast majority of

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Yolŋu, including those were to act as interviewers for the survey. While observing the conduct of the 2001 and 2006 censuses in the region (Morphy 2002, 2007a) I was forcibly struck by the socially awkward situation in which both interviewers and interviewees found themselves, whereby people who normally speak to one another in Yolŋu-matha had to converse for a lengthy period in English. The use of Yolŋu-matha was a clear signal to the interviewees (reinforced in the information that was given to them about the purposes of the survey) that the survey was being undertaken not by 'government' but by Yolŋu for Yolŋu. Another important reason relates to the points made in the previous section. Since this survey was attempting to reflect Yolŋu categorisations of their relationships to each other and to place, it was necessary to make use of Yolŋu concepts and terms for such relationships.

The necessity to choose one particular variant of the language (it would have been logistically far too complex to produce multiple versions of the form) was not without its drawbacks. Gumatj was chosen because it is one of the most commonly spoken variants in the area around Yirrkala and Nhulunbuy, where a large part of the population of the region lives. Although most Yolŋu-matha speakers understand Gumatj, like all other Yolŋu variants it is socially marked as intrinsically belonging to a particular country and to the clan that owns that country. People refer to these patrilects as 'languages', and they are one of the basic markers of a person's identity. Many of the interviewers opted to use their own clan 'language' rather than Gumatj when reading out the questions on the form. This procedure was relatively unproblematic for interviewers and interviewees in the eastern part of the region who are accustomed to hearing or speaking Gumatj on a daily basis. It was more of a problem in the west of the region, where Gumatj is less often heard, and where the variants of the language are dialectally more different from Gumatj than is the case with eastern variants. A few people in the west commented that it would have been desirable to have an alternative version of the form available in one of the western Yolŋu-matha 'languages', such as Djambarrpuyŋu or Gupapuyŋu. In general, however, people were highly appreciative of the fact that the survey was not conducted in English.

Although initially all questions were formulated in Yolŋu-matha, it became clear during a subsequent test run that some questions were better asked in English because they related to the bureaucratic requirements of the state rather than to Yolŋu concerns. Or perhaps they related to Yolŋu as 'citizens' of the state rather than to more locally inflected concerns, thus highlighting

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the dual nature of the survey enterprise. 'Date of birth' was not conveniently translatable into Yolŋu-matha without an elaborate circumlocution, and the test run showed that the interviewers often substituted the English term when asking for this information. It was also decided after the test run to use 'male and 'female' instead of the Yolŋu-matha equivalents. The most commonly used word for a female person in Yolŋu-matha is *miyalk*, which begins with an 'm', and people tended to use just the initial letter of the word when filling in the gender column. People are accustomed to using the English gender terms when form-filling, and found it confusing to have to use M for *miyalk* when in English M stands for 'male'. A more unexpected change was the need to introduce the English term 'surname'. Although Yolŋu have used clan-based surnames since the 1930s, and although these are Yolŋu rather than English names, it turns out that there is no unambiguous translation for 'surname' in Yolŋu-matha. There are various possible approximations, and the one chosen at the workshop after some discussion was *l̲ikan yäku* (literally 'connection name') but in the test run this usually failed to elicit the name that the person was known to use as their surname. So, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, it appears that Yolŋu have not fully embraced the surname as a Yolŋu concept.

Some questions inside the form were relatively easy to formulate (and would have been difficult to formulate effectively in English). According to the model outlined above, it was necessary to know for each person their own clan, their *ŋän̲di* (mother's) clan and their *märi* (mother's mother's) clan, in order to investigate the influence of these affiliations on patterns of residence and mobility. The collection of this data on clan affiliation and aspects of the individual's kindred is the most straightforward and systematic way to capture people's permanent relationships to the particular places that are most salient to them, and also, in combination with the extant genealogies, to map continuities and changes in the structure of regional kin networks.

The more difficult task is working out how to capture people's relationships to place in linear time because, as indicated above, the standard census definitions of relationship to place in terms of a simple binary — resident versus visitor — are not adequate to the task. Observation of the census in 2001 and 2006 (Morphy 2002, 2007a) showed that certain kinds of people were systematically missed or double counted when the categories 'resident' and 'visitor' were employed. The people most likely to be successfully captured by a category such as 'resident'

are focal people who are strongly associated with a particular dwelling at a particular place. Their close family members who live with them are also likely to be counted.

At this point the difficulties begin (see Figure 5). In large, extended family households, some people are 'less focal' than others. Non-focal members of the household who are absent are likely to be forgotten. In the homelands formerly serviced from Gapuwiyak, dual residence has been informally institutionalised: it is common for a focal person to be registered as a 'household head' for a house at the outstation, and a close family member such as a spouse, sibling, son or daughter to be registered as the 'household head' for a house at Gapuwiyak. The entire family then uses these two houses as their residences, both seasonally and on a temporary basis, for example, when people who spend most of their time at their outstation in the dry season come in to Gapuwiyak to shop and socialise. With respect to the service hub communities and more permanently occupied homelands, these kinds of arrangements are more fluid and less institutionalised. People do come to Yirrkala from the Laynhapuy homelands, and regularly stay with a particular set of relatives (and vice versa), but there is not the same seasonal movement of whole extended families (though such movements will occur temporarily, for example to attend funerals).

All of these scenarios are perfectly easy to describe, but trying to impose categories such as 'resident' and 'visitor' over these patterns is problematic. The people most likely to be missed by a survey are those who are 'resident' nowhere — or who are 'visitors' everywhere they go. These people are not visitors in the way envisaged by the binary categorisation, because wherever they stay they are staying with close kin, and they sometimes spend long periods of time at particular places. The survey instrument designed at the workshop aims deliberately to 'double count', in order to try and pick up these 'hard to count' people in at least one place.

There are practical problems with this approach; if one is trying to get a picture for each dwelling of everyone who is connected to it in some way, this could be a large number of people. The workshop participants settled on having two forms for each house, which entailed devising some form of binary categorisation. One possibility was to have a 'Form 1' for everybody who happens to be at the dwelling on the day of the count, and to make distinctions between them on the basis of questions about why they are there, and another form, 'Form 2',

for everyone else who usually or sometimes stays there, but is away just now. This was the strategy used in the Fitzroy Valley study (Morphy 2010b), but it was not foolproof. It was found that people wanted to put 'absent usual residents' on the same list as 'present usual residents' with 'visitors' on a different list, whether they were present or absent. In other words, people were happier with something similar to the census binary categorisation of 'resident' versus 'visitor'.

The workshop participants decided, after much discussion, that this may also be true for Yolŋu, but that it would be necessary to frame the definitions in ways that Yolŋu would find intuitively more salient than 'resident' and 'visitor'. Figures 6 and 7 show the form of wording that was devised to help interviewers decide who should go on which form. It was printed on the front page of the form, as a reminder to the interviewers and also for them to read out to the interviewees before beginning the questions in the body of the form. The terminology used in the instructions was then also used in the formulation of questions about relationships to place. Form 1 (Figure 6) was intended for those who were, roughly speaking, 'usual residents' — that is, focal individuals and those belonging in the two inner layers of Figure 5. Form 2 (Figure 7) was intended for everyone else with some kind of relationship to the dwelling. Each Figure shows the Yolŋu-matha (Gumatj patrilect) instructions in italic, followed by an English gloss in normal font and a free translation in bold.

Figure 6. Form 1: Instructions to the interviewer

Djorra' dhuwala-nydja bun̲bu-mulkanhyaŋu-wu yolŋu-wu.
Paper this-EMPH dwelling-holder-GEN person-GEN
This form is for people who hold this dwelling.

Nhe wukirrinyamirri dhipala djorra'-lili yäku,
2SG will be writing this+ALL form-ALL name
You are to write their names in this form,

ga ŋunhi-yi yolŋu ŋayi yaka dhiyala-ŋumi.
and those-PM person 3SG not this+LOC-place
including the names of those in this category who are not here at the moment.

Note: EMPH = emphasis, marking topic or focus of the sentence; GEN = genitive case; 2SG = second person singular (you); ALL = allative case; PM = previously mentioned in the discourse; 3SG = third person singular (he/she); LOC = locative case.

In the introductory sentence in Figure 6, the term *bu<u>n</u>bu-mulkanhayŋu* (‘dwelling-holder’) was arrived at after much discussion. *Bu<u>n</u>bu* is the general term for ‘shelter’, and can thus be used to cover everything from a permanent house to a bough or tarpaulin shelter. There is a word for ‘house’, but it is currently out of use because of its similarity to the name of a recently deceased person, and *wäŋa*, although commonly used to refer to houses, is a more general term for ‘place’. It was felt that the use of *wäŋa* was inadvisable since people might interpret it to refer to the community in general rather than to the dwelling in question.

The nominalised verb-form *mulkanhayŋu* was suggested by the Yolŋu workshop participants, who thought that it conveyed the idea of primary attachment to that particular dwelling at one point in linear time. In the last line of text in Figure 6, the form *ŋunhiyi* appears. The suffix *–yi* is a discourse-level particle signalling that the ‘those’ in question have been mentioned previously in the discourse; that is, they are ‘those of the category of people who are *bu<u>n</u>bu-mulkanhayŋu*’. Just as circumlocutions are sometimes necessary when translating English into Yolŋu-matha, so the converse also holds.

Another case in point is the form *dhiyalaŋumi*. Yolŋu-matha makes a distinction between ‘hereabouts’ (*dhiyala*) and a more locally precise form *dhiyalaŋumi* ‘at this precise place where we are now’. This distinction is much more salient in Yolŋu-matha discourse than the equivalent English distinction. In interpreting the first part of the instruction about people who live in the house, English speakers would be likely to list those who are ‘hereabouts’ (at work for example, or visiting at another dwelling at the time of the survey) among the present residents, and to think only of those who are *not* hereabouts as absent. Yolŋu, on the other hand, are likely to list in the first instance only those people who are *actually present at the dwelling* at the time of the count. The use of the more precise locator *dhiyalaŋumi* in the second part of the instruction is a prompt to the interviewer that the survey is interested in *all* ‘absent’ people, including those who are not right here at the moment, but are ‘hereabouts’, as well as those who are away at some other place.

Form 2 (Figure 7) was designed to collect data on a more diverse set of relationships to place. In the first instance it attempted to capture ‘visitors’, as represented in the third layer of Figure 5. The first set of instructions in Figure 7 applied to this group. In the second clause of the first

sentence is the phrase *withiyan wärriku*, which is a commonly used phrase. In combination with the particle *ŋuli*, which denotes an action that is repeated or habitual, it picks out people who are thought of as regular visitors from elsewhere. *Wärriku* and its synonym *guwarr* have a range of meanings: 'temporary, makeshift, ad hoc', all denoting an impermanent kind of relationship in time. It is this notion of 'impermanence' rather than any particular span of linear time that is most salient in Yolŋu thinking about 'visitors'.

Figure 7. Form 2: Instructions to interviewers

Dhuwala-nydja djorra':
This-EMPH form:
This form:

ŋuri-ki walala-ŋgu yolŋu'yulŋu-wu ŋunhi walala ŋuli withiyan wärriku.
those-GEN 3PL-GEN people-GEN that 3PL HABIT come and go temporary
is for people who are in the habit of coming for temporary visits.

Nhe wukirri yolŋu'yulŋu-nha yäku ŋunhi walala yukurra nhina dhiyala-ŋumi,
2SG write+IMP people-ACC name that 3PL CONT sit this+LOC-place
Write down the names of people who are staying here now,

ga ŋunhi-yi yolŋu-nha walala-nha ŋunhi wiripu-ŋura wäŋa-ŋura yukurra nhina.
and those-PM person-ACC 3PL-ACC that other-LOC place-LOC CONT sit
and those in this category who are staying somewhere else at the moment.

Ga bulu dhuwala-nydja djorra':
And also this-EMPH form:
And this form is also:

ŋuri-ki walala-ŋgu yolŋu'yulŋu-wu ŋunhi wäŋa-wuy dhiyaku-wuy,
those-GEN 3pl-GEN people-GEN that place-REL this-REL
for those people who really belong to this place,

yurru walala dhiyaŋu-nydja djunama nhina yukurra wiripu-ŋumi wäŋa-ŋura,
but 3PL this time-EMPH now sit CONT other-LOC place-LOC
but are staying somewhere else just now,

marr-ruŋiyinya-miriw
somewhat-returning-PRIV
and don't come back much.

Note: 3PL = third person plural (they); HABIT = habitually, repeatedly, frequently; IMP = imperative; ACC = accusative case; CONT = continuous aspect; REL = intrinsically connected to; PRIV = privative (without, lacking).

The second part of the instruction spells out with some considerable precision the instruction to collect the names of visitors who are present now and also those of people who are thought of as regular visitors, but who are somewhere else at the moment.

The second group of people for whom this form was intended was those who were thought of as belonging to the place, but who were absent and did not come back much, if at all. The instructions concerning them begin with *Ga bulu dhuwala-nydja djorra…* (And this form is also [for]…). The use of the noun phrase *wäŋawuy dhiyakuwuy* is significant. Absent people in this category may well not be considered as absent members of a particular household, but rather just as absent members of the community or extended family, and so the more general term for place, *wäŋa*, was used instead of *bu<u>n</u>bu* in this case. The case suffix *–wuy* is very hard to translate into English, because it depends for its meaning on culturally-specific ideas about relationships between things (objects or beings) and their attributes that have no direct equivalent in the English-speaking world. With respect to the relationship between a person and a place, *-wuy* can denote a range of related meanings such as 'intrinsically belonging to', 'originating from', and 'closely associated with'. Thus a person who is *wäŋawuy dhiyakuwuy* has a permanent and close association with the place through their kin and/or spiritual connections, even if they are now far away and unlikely to return.

What worked — and what did not work so well

In considering the success of the survey design, two features of the methodology must be borne in mind. The first is that unlike the census methodology which attempts to count every individual only once, there was a deliberate attempt to count people wherever they had a relationship to a place. So an individual might be counted on Form 1 at any dwelling they were considered to be *bu<u>n</u>bu-mulkaŋayŋu*, and on Form 2 at any other place they were connected to in some way. Some people were listed as *bu<u>n</u>bu-mulkaŋayŋu* at more than one place; these are people who have more than one place of residence. People counted more than once can subsequently be identified in the electronically managed data, and all information about their relationship to various places constitutes data about their connections. This is very time-consuming (mainly because of the Yolŋu naming practices described above, and the difficulty of getting date of birth information), but productive.

As well as being a device for building up a picture of relationship to place, this methodology was also a form of insurance against missing non-focal or very mobile people. As a strategy, this was reasonably successful. For example, some people, around 150 in all, were not recorded anywhere on a Form 1, but did get counted on one or more Form 2s. In some cases, people had been missed off a Form 1 because they were an absent from the community where they normally lived, and were 'forgotten' because they were not focal people in the particular dwelling where they lived. It will be possible to say something about the age and sex characteristics of this group on the basis of information collected about them on Form 2 at other places. The same applies to people who appear on a Form 2 who are not said to be resident anywhere — the most mobile sector of the population.

Perhaps the most interesting group comprised those for whom the methodology did not produce unambiguous designations of their residential status. For example a person might be put on a Form 2 at community X as a 'visitor' from community Y, and at community Y they would be counted on a Form 2 as a 'visitor' from community X. There are instances where three communities are involved in this way. Such results are a product of people's differing perceptions of the residential status of an individual who is either non-focal, or in transition between being a 'visitor' and a 'resident', or who is simply very mobile. For the census (and arguably the state) these people are a 'problem' because they evade categorisation. One crucial difference between the methodology employed here and the census methodology is that such people can be captured as a 'normal' part of the population; their numbers as a proportion of the population and their demographic profile can be described.

Two short case studies will serve to illustrate some of these points. Here, data from the current survey is compared with data collected in 2006 during the observation of the census enumeration in the same region (see Morphy 2007a). Some details have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals concerned.

Case 1

In 2006, an elderly widow was a focal person at her own homeland community, where she was the most senior living *wäŋa-wataŋu*. She had lived for many years at her husband's homeland, but left after his death to return to her own country. Her adult

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children and their children remained behind, and she often returned there to stay for a while with her daughter. In the 2006 census she was counted at her daughter's dwelling as a visitor from her own community, and at a dwelling in her own community as an 'absent resident'.

In the 2010 survey this woman was not listed on any Form 1. She was, however, listed as a 'visitor' from her own community at a family member's dwelling at Yirrkala. The reasons for this state of affairs cannot be gleaned solely from the survey data. In 2010 she was spending most of her time at Yirrkala and rarely returning home because of a family dispute that had occurred there. She was no longer focal from the perspective of her kin at her homeland community, and was not even mentioned on any Form 2 there. However her kin at Yirrkala still considered her a visitor from there, although she spent more time at their dwelling in Yirrkala than anywhere else.

Case 2

A young girl (aged 6 in 2006 and 10 in 2010), the daughter of an unmarried, very young mother, was not counted in the 2006 census. At that stage she was highly mobile because she was mainly in the care of three of her grandmothers (her own actual mother's mother and father's mother, and the younger sister of her mother's mother), who all lived in different places. These three places were enumerated on different days, and it so happened that she was never present at an enumeration event. As is often the case with children and other non-focal people, she was simply 'forgotten' in her absence (or considered as an 'absent visitor' — a category not allowed for in the census enumeration).

In the 2010 survey, the girl appeared on two Form 1s, and on one Form 2, each in a different community. She was considered to be *bu̲nbu-mulkaŋayŋu* (i.e. she appeared on Form 1) at the dwellings of her actual and classificatory mother's mothers, and as an absent 'visitor' (on Form 2) at the dwelling of her paternal grandmother. Her mother also appeared in the same three places with the same status. Although this cannot be deduced from the survey information, it is the case that the child's mother is now taking more responsibility for her care, and they move around together. The fact that they are

considered as *bu<u>n</u>bu-mulkaŋayŋu* in two places suggests that both mother and daughter are beginning to 'settle down' in the eyes of their senior relatives.

The strategy has been described above as only reasonably successful because of limitations in the design of Form 2. The existence of a second form was in itself something of a problem, since people tended to feel quite tired after completing Form 1. The problem was compounded by the fact that people often think of their regular visitors in terms of groups or categories rather than as individuals. Good information on individuals was usually forthcoming if they happened to be visiting at the time. However, when it came to absent regular visitors, people who knew me well and who could estimate the extent of my genealogical knowledge would say things like: 'our regular visitors are X and his/her family — you know who they are so we don't have to go through them one by one do we?' Or even more generally, 'the people who live at X visit us because they are *ŋä<u>nd</u>i-wataŋu* for here'. Needless to say, when the interviewer was another Yolŋu person, genealogical knowledge could also be assumed, and my assistants often found it hard to persuade people to fill out this form in detail.

The attempt to capture people from the outermost layer (see Figure 5) was largely unsuccessful. Such people, who are infrequently or never present, are not generally thought of as attached to particular dwellings. Thus the dwelling, and therefore the survey form attached to a particular dwelling, is the wrong frame of reference. The attempt to collect data in terms of their relationship to the *wäŋa* (place) rather than to the *bu<u>n</u>bu* (dwelling) did not overcome this framing problem. The better way to capture these individuals was to ask people to think about absent members of their extended families who fitted this profile, and also to check the genealogies for people who had not been counted anywhere in the region. This phase of the survey is currently still in process.

Having a Yolŋu inflection on the definition of 'resident' and 'visitor' goes some way to clarifying relationships to place. However, the problem with the status of the dwelling remains. Any binary categorisation of relationship to a dwelling rests on the premise that the dwelling is a container that houses a bounded group (Morphy 2007b). People either belong inside the boundary, or they do not. The composition of the group associated with a dwelling may change over time, but at any one time each individual who is present is a resident — or they are not. Yolŋu dwellings have a less bounded and more dynamic status; they are anchoring points for

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kinship networks. At any one time certain individuals are focal to those networks, and often tend to be classifiable as residents of a particular dwelling, but they and other 'residents' are often the minority of people who will pass through that dwelling and stay there for varying periods of time throughout the course of a year. Understanding the relationship between Yolŋu and their dwellings ultimately requires attention to units of social organisation much larger than the dwelling-based 'household', and that is an absolute limitation on the utility of the dwelling-based survey methodology.

Conclusion

This paper has been primarily concerned with the practical difficulties of devising categories to frame questions for a dwelling-based survey of a population for whom the dwelling is an anchoring point for a network of kin rather than a 'bounded container' for a (nuclear-family) household. It is necessary to address these difficulties if an understanding of the sociocultural factors that underlie the patterns of residence and mobility within the Yolŋu region are to emerge clearly from the analysis of the data. And such an analysis is a prerequisite to the definition of 'community' for the purposes of regional planning — and agreement making. Community is an inherently context-dependent term. In some contexts it assumes a primarily geographical focus, as when a mining company in negotiation with the Northern Land Council attempts to ascertain the spatial boundaries of an 'area affected', as defined (or left undefined, see Altman 1997: 177) under the *ALRA*, by the operations of its mine. Such boundaries will always be problematic and open to contestation because they are arbitrary lines on a map. They will inevitably cross-cut social networks on the ground. However the locally grounded kin networks revealed by the GMYPP are in principle able to be mapped. They provide an alternative and more inclusive mapping than one based solely on land ownership, and a more socially nuanced mapping than one based solely on the location of settlements and towns in relation to a mine site. It is conceivable that an 'area affected' could be designed in part with reference to a cluster of such networks, which are at once spatial and social in nature.

In most circumstances, however, 'community' is understood as primarily a social rather than a spatial phenomenon. The GMYPP does not set out to define 'communities' in this sense, but it does model the kinds of relationships that serve as the potential building blocks of community in the Yolŋu social universe. A full answer to the question of the model's usefulness must await

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the detailed analysis of the data on kin networks. However, at this point it is safe to say that, in the Yolŋu case (as in other cases, see e.g. Altman 1997; Altman and Smith 1994; Levitus 1991, 1999, 2005; O'Faircheallaigh 1988, 2002), the singling out for monetary compensation of certain segments of a regional network (in this case, primarily two clans on whose land the mine and mining town are situated) in the original settlement of the 1970s has contributed to some very marked changes in the social fabric of the region that many Yolŋu deplore (see Martin 1995).

Local dissatisfaction has persisted, and the reasons for it have remained remarkably consistent over the years, pointing to an enduring set of underlying tensions. In the 1990s these were expressed in Martin (1995) in terms of two sets of factors. The first was the fracturing of 'community' and the exacerbation of political tensions between certain Yolŋu leaders resulting from the exclusivity of the royalty arrangements. The second was the strong feeling that not all those clans who had rights of ownership in a sense underpinned by Yolŋu *rom* (customary law) rather than by the definition of Traditional Owner (as interpreted by the Northern Land Council) had been adequately considered as potential parties to the agreement. In June 2011, Rio Tinto Alcan signed off on a new 'regional' agreement; the major beneficiaries are the same two Yolŋu clans (ATNS 2011). The objections on the part of other Yolŋu groups (see 7.30 NT 2010) to the terms of this agreement are not unexpected, and nor is the form that they take surprising. The networked model of Yolŋu sociality outlined in this paper can act as a lens through which to view the articulation of these objections, and can hopefully form the basis, in the future, for designing measures to ameliorate the effects of the new agreement.

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