

**Can we improve the backdrop?**

**Let's take a look?**

**Must we not at least give it our best shot?**

Chris Henggeler, Kachana, February 2021



Rogogo Farm was situated on the northern edge of the watershed between the great Zambesi and Limpopo Rivers. Growing up (1960-1978) in that setting sensitised me to water-security. Unsurprisingly it was perennially flowing water that attracted me to Australia's Kimberley. Hundreds of hours flying (1985–1999) the Dunham River catchment, gave me a bird's eye perspective of a "replay scenario in miniature", of what I had witnessed in Southern Africa: **When it rained, rivers flooded; as floods subsided, waterholes began filling with sand; during drier months, springs stopped flowing, river-flow ceased and water became scarce.** (A trend of replacing unmanaged herbivores with fire added a local flavour.) At a conference in Orange (NSW, Australia) Allan Savory enabled me to put personal observations into a global context.



***"It will soon be unacceptable for any economist, politician, or corporate CEO to remain environmentally illiterate..."*** ALLAN SAVORY

Concurring with Allan's statement at the time, Kachana Pastoral Company, presented [an argument for Environmental Literacy](#) (2001)

In the years since, neither did our witness to both the challenge and to possible solutions result in the needed change in trends at broader landscape levels, nor did these words of Allan turn out to be prophetic.

Yet, "The year of Corona" proved that radical change is possible after all!

This begs the question: Instead of persisting in counterproductive reactive measures that do battle with nature, does time remain to proactively bring about radical change in a manner that embraces natural processes?

Mid-2020 we offered:

[We have a "broken global air-conditioner"! - We broke it so let's fix it](#)

Later in the year, after a 5254-kilometre low-level flight across some of northern Australia, we further elaborated on the challenge:

[Challenging North Australian Landscape Management Paradigms](#)

Already in January 2020, before the politics of Corona took everybody's attention off the ball, we had shared that the future of Kachana was at a cross-roads: [More FIRE or more herbivores?](#)  
We are exploring new options, but first, we take a closer look at the back-drop.

**With the onset of 2021, notions that would have sounded radically counter-narrative only 100 years ago, are today beginning to reverberate from different disciplines.**

(As late as early 2020 the label "conspiracy theories" was used to effectively silence such notions.)

## **At the philosophical level (Academia)**

Here is a pick of three eminent individuals (of many), coming from differing disciplines, but arriving at a similar conclusion:

**Without radical turnaround we are headed for "lights out" within the foreseeable future.**

1. The political constellation: Chomsky

**This generation is the first and will also be the last generation confronted with determining the survival of our species**

One generation ~ 25 years

[Noam Chomsky at HLS Dec 1, 2020](#)

2. The medical perspective: Bush

**Alone, based on the trend of decline in sperm-count, we can calculate the extinction of our species. There are other indicators.**

He estimates 50 – 80 years, but even if it were to take 200 the implications are the same

[Bush and Kennedy compare notes on the science](#)

3. An ecological analysis and conclusion: Jehne

**Nature will again stabilise climate. - Will she do it now and with our help, or after and without us?**

We have a closing window of "about 8 years" within which to initiate effective action...

Walter Jehne: [The Soil Carbon Sponge, Climate Solutions and Healthy Water Cycles](#)

## At technical levels, some conclude: “60 harvests left”

Other than Carbon-rhetoric this is what politics appears to be reacting to.

Reactions include paralysis, denial, wilful ignorance, exploration, political elbowing, ...

One positive downstream effect at operational levels appears to be an incremental shift towards regenerative production. ([Diana Rogers](#) and others are proactively speeding up this process.)

## At pro-active strategic and tactic levels

*(Reactive strategic and tactic responses are irrelevant in this discussion. – They tend to be encumbered with conventional extractive paradigms that bet on technical solutions to ecological challenges. There seems no need to detail any of them here.)*

My thinking aligns with people who advocate that **radical turnabout remains possible**.

- Motivators within the regenerative paradigm
  - Responses to health
  - Focus on production (also addressing supply, consumption, etc.)
  - Focus on carbon emissions and legacy-load
- Zach Bush draws attention a unique opportunity to capitalise on natural responses to extinction pressure!
- Allan Savory alerts to the global context and points out solutions that tap into free renewable energy (the issue is management – the key is not only a holistic perspective and understanding, but to actually manage holistically)

### “Proof of concept”

That radical turn-around can be achieved in extreme situations has repeatedly been demonstrated:

- Liebig Ranches, Gelukverwacht, and many other examples in Southern Africa
- Kachana
- Dinbangombe
- Pleistocene Park
- Bela Bela

This was not science, but management. In each case required skill-sets were/are applied and adapted as the dynamics changed/changes.

However, as history demonstrates, if such models are to endure, they require political support.

*What does not exist are models that any fool can build or manage. – Ecosystems (from a back-yard scale to broader landscapes that include major river systems,) are dynamic living entities subjected to all kinds of internal and external influences. They do not come with instruction booklets like household appliances or automobiles do. As with starting off and then training any horse (be it for racing, dressage, show jumping, cattle-work, rodeo, draught-work, or other), if we wish succeed, certain levels of skill and a willingness for interaction are required.*

What counts are the outcomes. These we can measure.

What matters is that we work with the dynamics at hand to release synergistic potential. Get it wrong or work against dominant dynamics and we very quickly discover all sorts of unique qualities of dysfunction.

Trust, love and other such dynamics, can at times be understood, but we can hardly consider them to be measurable in absolute terms. (Yet they remain vital ingredients.)

*Spend some time observing a barn-yard chicken!*

*She does what she does, never once being aware that she is being an effective chicken.*

*Yet the moment a chicken is sick, she suddenly knows all about her limitations.*

Reductionist scientific approaches play valuable roles in furthering human understanding and knowledge, but when working with living processes a focus on influencing function with reference to defined outcomes brings us further than “impartial analysis” that is removed from context.

Simply because some life processes cannot be studied under laboratory conditions, this must not discount their importance.

Long, long before we developed spectator-sports with universally accepted rules, people have known how to have fun playing with a ball. We are fast running out of time to revive the latent synergies within us, as well as those within our landscapes, that made such things possible.

As desirable as fool-proof user-manuals for landscapes may be, rather than awaiting academic consensus, should we not just step up to the challenge and make more use of the bunch of useful guidelines we already have?

Diagnosis:

As discussions revolve around academia vs science, at the end of the day more will be said than done.

Using Allan Savory’s words: “War over.” (i.e. lost!)

**At the core I feel it boils down to this:**

**People (in general) focus on “form” instead of on “function”!**

(Given that ‘form follows function’, should we not pay greater attention to function and to the influences thereof? – In societies where fashion trumps function this will require some marketing. Influencing and managing function to display new and desirable forms, is one way to address this! – In his discussion with Kennedy [link above] this appears to be a point that Zach Buch also makes.)

If my own youngsters are anything to go by, we need to create conditions that invite commitment. For that to happen we require a back-drop that is not going to be a trap.

Side note on the young Kachana Henggelers

- *3 capable people (32,31,26); two now married to two further capable people; all wishing to get on with life*
- *Despite all of dad’s warnings over the years the Titanic steams ahead, and people party on*
- *Each makes the best of a “bad” situation... (they earn fair honest money in their chosen fields of expertise)*
- *Discouraged by the notion of “no cashflow in sight” when taking on ecological liabilities, they continue to offer valuable support to work on Kachana only from the side-line.*

**We require competent players back out in the field giving it their everything, not placing bets as spectators!**