

Thesis abstract

The (re)Indigenisation of space: weaving narratives of resistance to embed *Nura* [Country] in design

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Space, for Aboriginal peoples, is full of Country. Furthermore, space, place, land, ground, geography, geology, cartography, topography, site, location, landscape, terrain, environment are *held* by Country. Deploying Indigenous theoretical and methodological approaches, I investigate an Indigenous experience and comprehension of space. By reconsidering and contesting the notion of *terra nullius* — an “empty land” — the research considers how First Peoples occupy, use, narrate, sense, dream and contest their spaces.

Narratives and oral recordings are key to First Peoples’ expressions of their lived experiences of both culture and colonial trauma. Trauma is embedded in First Peoples’ lands and spaces via the invidious forces of invasion and colonisation, described here through select colonial archives and existing white historiography. Critiquing this historical narrative of colonisation, the research deploys instead Indigenous perspectives including lived experiences, oral histories, yarns, reflective practice and wider reading of Indigenous literature. These permit a focus on the (re)Indigenisation of space in order to investigate the question: “What is the presence and space of Country in contemporary Indigenous lives?” The thesis therefore offers a (re)interpretation of the relationship between First Peoples and the

land that is based on connectivity and relationality, as opposed to colonial writings that have inferred, stated or demanded that First Peoples’ relations with land were and are non-existent and even lost.

This research speaks through a Budawang/Yuin woman’s worldview. It considers the importance of stories for holding knowledges and connecting to land, and examines the micro and macro connections between Country, people and making. First Peoples’ cultural practices connect to Dreaming and Country. They hold memory of culture and offer a means of (re)connecting to heritage. My investigation brings narratives, remembrance and Country together in a cultural, spatial and performative practice of weaving, exploring spatial reclamation and restoration of Indigenous spatial values. It “names up” methods, linking them with narratives, considering how space can be (re)Indigenised. It rethinks and reframes the values that inform Aboriginal understandings of space through Indigenous spatial knowledges and narratives. By offering a reinterpretation and retranslation of Aboriginal methods of reclaiming space, it likewise reflects on the sustainability of Indigenous cultures from a spatial perspective.

As foundational research in the area of Indigenous space, this research has the capacity to impact policy and practice in

relation to the planning of spaces to ensure they are designed equitably, relationally and with a connection to Country.

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