

26-27 September 2017

# DECOLONISING SETTLER CITIES

Program and Book of Abstracts



Urban Theory Symposium 2017



Curtin University



**RMIT**  
UNIVERSITY

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Front cover: Mural by Laural Nannup in North Perth. Photograph by Kathryn Locke.

## Venues and Maps

### DAY 1 Tuesday 26 September

Botanic Gardens and Parks Association (Building 1) Board Room, 1 Kattidj Close, Kings Park



#### Parking:

Please be aware you will need to arrive early (before 9am) to find parking due to the school holiday period.

#### Transport:

Depending where you are accommodated in the CBD, allow 35 minutes for public transport.

Uber: Search for “Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority”.

Alternatively, a taxi can be arranged through your hotel reception.

### DAY 2 Wednesday 27 September

Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Room 230, Curtin University



#### Parking:

Download the CelloPark app onto your phone to park in any zone (apart from staff parking). Alternatively, parking meters are available for visitor bays closest to the building.

#### Transport:

Allow up to 45 minutes for public transport from the city

Uber: Search for “Centre for Aboriginal Studies”.

Alternatively, taxis can be arranged through most hotels.

## Acknowledgements

Kaya, wandju nidja Noongar Boodja.

Hello, welcome to Noongar Country. We acknowledge the Wadjuk Noongar elders, past, present and future, who are the owners and guardians of Kaarta Gar-up and Curtin University where Decolonising Settler Cities will be held.

Decolonising Settler Cities is hosted by:

- Translational Research Network for Aboriginal Knowledges and Wellbeing, Curtin University
- The Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University
- The School of Built Environment, Curtin University
- The Centre for Urban Research, RMIT

We would like to thank our funders:

- The School of Built Environment, Curtin University
- The Institute of Australian Geographers
- This work is supported by an International Workshop Award from the Antipode Foundation.

We would also like to thank the Botanical Gardens and Parks Authority of Western Australia for giving us the use of their conference room in Kaarta Gar-up for the first day of Decolonising Settler Cities.

## Principles

Decolonising Settler Cities will support a decolonising politics through:

1. Finding ways to appropriately centre Indigenous experiences, theories, knowledges and perspectives on the Australian city;
2. Creating spaces for conversation and mutual learning that are respectful, critically aware and diverse;
3. Working to de-centre colonialist white stream categories of knowing, thinking and imagining the city;
4. Identifying how mutual learning and delicate, respectful, collaborative imaginings between different streams of understanding in cities (including Indigenous and white stream) can be cultivated and encouraged;
5. Co-designing respectful methods for producing knowledge, teaching and learning about urban Australia; and
6. Developing a set of practical outcomes and actions that participants in the symposium will take forward both individually and as a group.

Decolonising Settler Cities is strongly committed to supporting Indigenist research approaches. Indigenist research provides the basis for understanding the lived experiences (narratives) of Indigenous people shaping “powerful instruments by which to measure equality and social justice” (Rigney, 1999, p. 116). Indigenist research begins by “centring Aboriginal ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing, in alignment with aspects of western qualitative research frameworks” (Martin, 2003, p. 12). By beginning with and foregrounding an Indigenous worldview, Indigenist research addresses the trap of appropriating “the cultural knowledge and experiences of their Indigenous participants, and then, using the theoretical frameworks of Western knowledge” reinterpreting those experiences and presenting them as their own (Wright, 2011, p. 28). The expectations and constraints of research must be informed by and respectful of Indigenous worldviews to be capable of contributing to the shared project of decolonisation.

## Program

Monday, 25th September	
18.00	Informal Dinner in CBD

Tuesday, 26th September	
08.30 – 09.00	Registration and Coffee
09:00 – 09.05	Welcome
09:05 – 09.20	Welcome to Country by Noel Nannup
09:20 – 09:30	Opening of Decolonising Settler Cities by Pro-Vice Chancellor of Humanities, Alan Dench
09:30 – 09.35	Housekeeping
09:35 – 11.00	Yarning Circle—Practicing Decolonisation
11:00 – 11.30	<b>Morning Tea</b>
11:30 – 12.30	Youth Panel
12:30 – 13.15	<b>Lunch</b>
	TREATY / SOVEREIGNTY AND THE SETTLER CITY
13:15 – 13.45	Tony Birch
13:45 – 14.15	Dennis Eggington
14:15 – 14.45	Hannah McGlade
	WORKING INSIDE SETTLER–COLONIAL INSTITUTIONS
14:45 – 15.15	Warrick Fort
15:15 – 15.45	Desiree Harris and Sarah Prout-Quicke
15:45 – 16.15	Helen Corbett and Shaphan Cox
16:15 – 16.30	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>
16:30 – 18.00	Meeting Kaarta Gar-up with Noel Nannup
19:30	Dinner Together (optional)

## Wednesday, 27th September

<b>09:00 – 09.30</b>	Welcome to the Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS) by CAS Director Marion Kickett
<b>09:30 – 11.00</b>	Next steps toward decolonial practice: Discussion
<b>11.00 – 11.30</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>
	<b>DECOLONISING PRACTICES I</b>
<b>11.30 – 12.00</b>	Glendra Stubbs and Elizabeth Rice
<b>12.00 – 12.30</b>	Angela Foley
<b>12.30 – 13.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
	<b>DECOLONISING PRACTICES II</b>
<b>13.30 – 14.00</b>	Linda Kennedy
<b>14.00 – 14.30</b>	Greg Grabasch
<b>14.30 – 15.00</b>	Richard Walley
<b>15.00 – 15.30</b>	<b>Afternoon Tea</b>
	<b>LAND AND THE SETTLER COLONIAL CITY</b>
<b>15:30 – 16.00</b>	Oren Yiftachel
<b>16:00 – 16.30</b>	Libby Porter
<b>16.30 – 17.00</b>	Kurt Iveson
<b>17.00 – 17.50</b>	Farewells

# Presentations and Abstracts

DAY ONE

YOUTH PANEL

Lead by Cheryl Kickett-Tucker.

PROFESSOR TONY BIRCH

Tony Birch is an academic, novelist, educator, and inaugural recipient of the Dr Bruce McGuinness Indigenous Research Fellowship at Victoria University. Tony is the author of the books *Shadowboxing* (2006), *Father's Day* (2009), *Blood* (2011), shortlisted for the Miles Franklin literary award, *The Promise* (2014) and *Ghost River* (2016).

PROFESSOR DENNIS EGGINGTON

CEO, Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia

This presentation examines what a treaty between the Western Australian government and the Nyungar nation would look like at a structural level. We will discuss the history of Perth, including the ways Nyungar people were historically ostracised and excluded from Perth city and the ways that the settler society continues to remove Nyungar and other First Nations people from the Perth CBD, with 'Move On Orders' and 'Prohibited Behaviour Orders'. Further, we will consider how the concept of 'extinguishment' of any native title over the lands of the Perth CBD does not reconcile with the Whadjuk Nyungar people's continuing bond with their country, even where it has been developed and built upon by settlers, and how we could recognise this unique and important relationship to strengthen our community.



Hannah McGlade is a Nyungar human rights lawyer and academic who has published widely on many aspects of Aboriginal legal issues, especially those affecting the lives of Aboriginal women and children. Hannah will provide an overview of Treaty discussions that took place in the 1990s across Australia as part of a national dialogue on Aboriginal rights that occurred in the wake of the historic decision of the High Court in *Mabo v Queensland*. Reflecting on the past and considering contemporary Aboriginal justice claims, she will consider why ‘Treaty’ is once again a matter of national debate and significance.

***Settler Governance and Decolonisation***

Settler governance systems form major barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ efforts to “claim rights, practice culture, enact laws and act in their interests in urban locations”, as evidenced by the extraordinary over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the settler systems of child protection, out-of-home care and juvenile detention. This presentation identifies and discusses some of the barriers to achieving Aboriginal self-determination in the areas of child and juvenile wellbeing. It draws on the *Bringing them home* report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work in this area since the report’s publication, and the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the most recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expression of what matters most to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, which states: “Our children ... should be our hope for the future.”

***Contested identities: the experience of Indigenous students moving from rural/remote areas to Perth for University***

In 2016, Desiree Harris began a masters by research project at UWA to explore the aspirations, choices and experiences of Indigenous Australians who migrate to urban locations for education, and the impacts migration might have on their lives. The findings of the study indicate that Indigenous spaces, such as Indigenous student centres at their universities, play a significant role in individual migration experiences. They become spaces to develop a sense of place, to build new and translocal networks, and nurture identities. In grappling with the city and urban universities as settler spaces, these migrants confront dominant culture assumptions which consign 'authentic' Indigeneity to a rural past.

This session will both report on the findings of the study and provide an opportunity for some of the participants to reflect on how they have created a sense of home in the city, and how they make sense of, and contest, settler authenticity discourses.

***Activism and Academia: Reflections on three decades of engagement***

In 1992 Steve Mickler published a report *Gambling on the First Race* that hit back at a particularly nefarious form of talkback radio operating in Perth. Building on collaborations established through the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the report brought a group of Aboriginal activist's and cultural studies academics together. Fast forward two decades and the media and social landscape of Perth had not changed much. In February 2012 a Nyoongar Tent Embassy (NTE) was established on Heirisson Island in the Matagarup mud flats adjacent to the Perth CBD. While media coverage initially focussed on land and justice claims, reporting quickly shifted to representations of a criminal nuisance requiring a police solution. Helen Ulli Corbett, using her connections from the earlier collaboration, made contact with Curtin University and renewed the earlier collaboration to produce *Setting up the Nyoongar Tent Embassy*. This presentation discusses the circumstances and impacts of the collaborations that generated these two reports, over two decades apart, in the context of Decolonising Settler Cities.

***Writing' Wurundjeri Country: Positioning decolonising work in urban spaces and places***

Wurundjeri Country prevails in tangible and intangible ways just the same as it does for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Countries in Australia. In this case, 182 years of urban settlement upon Wurundjeri Country has produced the overlay that is metropolitan Melbourne and more. My work is based on urban places and partnerships using arts-based inquiry and poststructural theory to produce, amongst other things, text. I argue that the 'writing' involved to encounter Country means being open to new and old texts, voices, signs, marks, gestures, silence, making, lines, data, things and performances. As a non-Indigenous woman operating across various 'contact zones', I will discuss some of the positioning involved in my attempt to practice decolonisation on Wurundjeri Country while moving between the non-formal, not-for profit sector (Merri Creek Management Committee and Wurundjeri Tribe Council), the formal, doctoral sphere (University of Western Sydney) and the formal teaching space (RMIT University).

WARRICK FORT

***Resisting the marginalisation of Aboriginal ontologies through entrepreneurial practice***

Aboriginal ontologies have long been considered by many Australians as out of place within cities, and incompatible with Western notions of economic progress and growth, creating particular barriers for Aboriginal people who want to engage in entrepreneurship. However, many Aboriginal entrepreneurs living in the Perth metropolitan area are achieving business success while maintaining distinctive connections to kin, culture and Country. The presentation addresses these issues in three cases to illustrate an alternative picture of the entrepreneurship-ontology dynamic.

There is general recognition that innovative spatial design solutions can be achieved through meaningful consultation with community user groups. However, often the consultation processes implemented by designers and decision makers are mainstream and standardised. Linda will discuss her exploration into the decolonisation of community engagement and consultation processes based on Yuin perspectives with reference to a case study of a recent project on the Yuin coast in NSW.

GREG GRABASCH  
UDLA

***Co-Design with Aboriginal Peoples (a local example)  
Beaconsfield – Nyungar Elders Housing Project***

The Beaconsfield Elders Housing Project adopts a methodology that focuses on delivering a meaningful co-design process in order to garner a shared outcome. As a non-indigenous consultant, initially there is necessity to address our urban design studio's approach to working alongside Australia's Indigenous custodians. We are continually evolving a design philosophy that hinges around the understanding that the health of a community has a reciprocal relationship with how empowered participants are engaged with their environment, or have a say in changing their existing condition into a preferred one. Real change will only come from agency being given to participants, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, in order to better direct their present circumstance.

There is historical circumstance we cannot change. For example as a non-indigenous design consultant (an urban designer) our practice heritage is still dominantly based within a westernised system that understands land not as a principal entity, but as a resource commodity within an ongoing imperial project of dispossession. In recognition of this background, working as a non-indigenous consultant and learning from local people requires constant self-checking and assessment in motives and approach. It also requires developing a background of relationship and trust, including developing a non-adversarial approach to design and planning. As a team that will include stakeholder, urban designer and end user, we will share the presentation and ongoing learnings from the Beaconsfield Elders Housing Project, providing practical ways to de-centre the existing colonised command and control approach to land development.

Richard Walley is a Nyoongar man, artist, actor, writer, educator and successful administrator of arts and Aboriginal service organisations. Richard was twice Chairperson of the Aboriginal Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council, and, while in a leadership role of the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship, helped establish the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Housing Board. Richard has provided cultural advice for a range of projects in and around the CBD, including Yagan Square and Point Fraser. Richard will talk about his perspectives on working with organisations like the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority that shape public space, and the contemporary involvement of Aboriginal people in urban design.

OREN YIFTACHEL

A leading international urbanist and researcher of the global South, Oren Yiftachel is one of the main critical geographers and social scientists working in Israel/Palestine. He will present research drawing on his work with Bedouin residents of the Negev on land ownership and community planning in the context of new, exciting directions for urban research from the cities of the South East.

LIBBY PORTER

Australian cities tend to make invisible surviving practices of Indigenous connection to place. In this talk, Libby and a research partner from the Bunurong community will speak together about a project to recover stories of Bunurong belonging and place making in the contemporary city and how this can help us think differently about decolonising practices in the cities of tomorrow.

Kurt grew up on a bush block in outer suburban Sydney in the 1970s. Not far from that house are some rock carvings where he and his friends used to play near. A couple of years ago, the Guringai people, who would have made those impressions in the rock, made a land claim over this area when it reverted to crown land. Hornsby Council has opposed that claim, on the grounds that they want to protect the area from further development. In this presentation, I interrogate the tensions within urban development and rights to land that reduce Aboriginal people's control over country in many ways, while they are simultaneously told they must embrace colonial modernity and the mainstream economy.

## Urban Theory Symposium Series

Decolonising Settler Cities is the second in the Urban Theory Symposium series. It is the joint initiative of the Urban Geography Study Group and the Indigenous Peoples' Knowledges and Rights Study Group of the Institution of Australian Geographers, and has been strongly supported by the Critical Development Study Group.

The Urban Theory Symposium series aims:

1. To provide a critical space where a range of urban geographical and planning theory related questions can be interrogated and further developed;
2. To facilitate a debate about the politics of urban research, and questions of urban contest and transformation; and
3. To create an active and collegial platform to explore and critique emerging urban and planning theory, with a view to further activate and characterise planning and urban geographical scholarship in Australia.

Our pursuit of these goals in Decolonising Settler Cities is only possible through mutual learning and reflexivity. The partnership, presence and contribution of Indigenous practitioners and academics who are engaging with urban issues is essential, and dialogue needs to occur with a range of groups who are focussed on issues of justice and healing for Indigenous Australians. Mutual learning through dialogue is the basis for participants' reflexive practice through which we can interrogate our own blind spots and work towards more sophisticated, informed and just understandings and perspectives.

## References used in this document

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