[RE] COLLECT
[RE] CONNECT
[RE] IMAGINE
THE COUNTRY

Jason Galea

AR3EX115 Explore Lab 37

[RE] IMAGINE THE COUNTRY

RESEARCH PAPER + BOOKLET

Please be advised.

This thesis may contain the names and images of deceased individuals. Every effort has been made to seek permission to include these names/images, and no disrespect is intended towards the deceased's loved ones. The content in this thesis has been obtained from publicly available sources and previously published materials. Information specific to the First Nations People has been drawn from published works, as well as personal communications and or publicly available recordings.

To Uncle Reg Abrahams, thank you for your time, insight and for opening my eyes to the wonders of our landscape and Australia's First Nation history, hidden right under its surface.

To my mentors, René van der Velde, Taneha Kuzniecow Bacchin, and Georgios Karvelas, thank you for supporting me throughout this journey. Your immense support and guidance have helped this project develop in ways it wouldn't have without your mentorship.

To Bina, your unwavering support and encouragement, has been invaluable in completing this project. I couldnt have done it without you. Thank you.

I would like to acknowledge the Wathaurong people of the Kulin Nations, the traditional owners of the land where this research has taken place. I pay my respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging, and I recognize the ongoing custodianship of the land and water by all members of their communities.

COUNTRY AS NOURISHING TERRAIN

Country is a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is lived in and lived with.

Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country' or 'going up the country'. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease.

Deborah Bird Rose, 1996. | Nourishing Terrains

CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS + KEY WORDS

Caring For Country:
Indigenous notion of stewardship and responsibility for the well-being of the land in Aboriginal Australian culture.

First Nations People:
Indigenous peoples who are the original inhabitants of a particular region, such as Aboriginal Australians.

Country:
Country is a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is lived in and lived with.

Customary Law:
Customary law refers to the legal systems and practices uniquely belonging to Indigenous Australians of Australia.

Dreaming / Dreamtime
The sacred time in First Nation culture when ancestral beings created the word. It represents the time when all things were formed.

Social Constructionism:
The idea that reality is socially constructed and shaped by cultural beliefs and practices.

Fire Stick Farming:
Traditional Aboriginal land management technique using controlled fires to enhance biodiversity and reduce fuel loads.

Socio Spatial:
Emphasises the environments and the people and societies that occupy them interact.

Totem:
A natural object, plant or animal that is inherited by members of a clan or family as their spiritual emblem and is often linked to their identity and responsibilities.

Wathaurong:
The name of a First Nations Clan within Victoria, Australia.

Wurdi Youang:
An Aboriginal stone arrangement in Victoria, Australia, with possible astronomical and cultural significance.

You Yangs:
A mountain range in Victoria, Australia, holding cultural and spiritual importance for the Wathaurong people.

ABSTRACT

The Victorian Volcanic Plains (VVP) harbor Australia's most critically endangered ecosystem, spanning over 2.3 million hectares and representing the third largest volcanic plains globally. However, large-scale ecological transformations resulting from agricultural practices and urban development have left less than 1% of the original vegetation in a pre-colonial state. Urgency to address this crisis necessitates concerted inquiry and informed conservation efforts. Reevaluation of current agricultural land management practices and societal perceptions is imperative to salvage what remains. This research proposes a transformative shift, drawing on historical insights and the wisdom of Australia's First Nations People. By engaging with their lessons, views, laws, and dynamics inherent in the world's oldest continuing culture, a rural urban specific approach distinct from transplanted European practices is envisioned.

This study delineates fundamental First Nations views, laws, and dynamics, examining their manifestation in spatial ecologies. Through collaboration and engagement, insights are translated into spatial, practical, and programmatic forms, facilitating a reassessment of the VVP landscape. The objective is to showcase a future where Indigenous People and their knowledge are widely recognised and appreciated, fostering collaborative stewardship of the land.

Drawing from interdisciplinary fields including Australian Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Social Constructionism, and Cultural Anthropology, the methodology ensures the avoidance of cultural appropriation and respects intellectual property rights. Seminal authors and interviews with First Nations People provide a contextual framework, informing the exploration of social-spatial and architectural interpretations. Despite acknowledging non-Indigenous background biases, the commitment to authentic representation underscores the importance of challenging academic standards.

Structured into three parts, this thesis looks into First Nations perspectives, laws, and dynamics within the landscape, focusing specifically on the VVP. Through an appropriate integration of traditional and Western knowledge, seven key principles guiding First Nations views are elaborated, culminating in design outcomes aligned with each principle. The application of these principles in the VVP unveils numerous interventions for environmental and social sustainability, initiating novel ways of interacting with the landscape. This research serves as a foundation for collaborative design outcomes, promoting a future where Indigenous voices are authentically represented and honored within the urban landscape.

Figure 1

Frederick McCubbin

'The Pioneer' | 1904

PREFACE: OF THE WORLDS OLDEST CONTINUING CULTURE

The love for the landscape of my Australian backyard runs deep within me, it is shaped by its rugged terrain and muted colours. This imagined reality that I hold of the Australian landscape has also been shaped by Australian culture, the romanticised harshness of the bush and the old poems of Aussie battlers and stockmen who toiled against the environment to earn a living. These representations of my home country are akin to a set of drawings that were seeded from its colonialist history. There is however another perspective to this imagined view of Australia. That of the world's oldest continuing culture, The First Nations people of Australia. Their love for this country was also born from an imagination of this land. This perception, however, was formed from a different set of cultural drawings; drawings rooted in care, reciprocity and fragility. These drawings constructed over the course 65,000 years have been largely concealed by colonialist rule.

It is time for a new set of drawings.

Our current perceptions and representations of the landscapes we encounter are framed and bounded by our socio-cultural upbringings. The theory of Social Constructionism posits that our societal representations and eco-cultural identities impact the modification of our landscapes and our relationships to those landscapes. In the context of Australia's social and ecological environment, the prevailing colonial landscape has resulted in

large-scale destruction of ecosystems and far-reaching social issues for First Nations People.

The 2021 Australia State of Environment report (SOE) paints a grim picture of the nation's environment, deteriorating due to climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, and resource extraction. These pressures are endangering numerous species and ecosystems, leading to abrupt ecological changes. The report's key findings emphasise that our current environmental management systems are inadequate and will lead to further extinctions and ecosystem decline.

While this ecological crisis is placing strain on Australia, the nation's social issues relating to First Nations People are also prevalent. Indigenous Australians remain the most disadvantaged and marginalised group within Australia. This systematic devaluing of First Nation People and their culture is innately tied to the ongoing legacy of Australian colonisation.

However, amidst these challenges, there are threads of hope. The inclusion and adoption of First Nations systems of caring for country and land management is an emerging practice throughout Australia. This need for greater recognition and inclusion is also reflected in the SOE report, which urges that Indigenous knowledge and connections to Country are vital for sustainability and healing the country as well as First Nations people.

This thesis is a call for a new set of drawings, a new narrative that recognises and celebrates the wisdom of the First Nations People of Australia. It is time for us to learn from the world's oldest continuing culture and work together towards a sustainable and resilient future.

FIRST NATION LANGUAGE MAP OF AUSTRALIA

Figure 2

Dave Foster
Australian Aboriginal Language Map | 1996

KALAW KAWAW YA
KALA LAGAW YA
MERIAM
MURALAG
MIR
YOLNGU
NGANDI
WARNINDILYAKWA
WIK
BAKANH
KUNJEN
YANUWA
GARAWA
LARDIL
GANGALIDDA
KURTJAR
AGWAMIN
KUKU-YALANJI
WAMBAYA
WARUMUNGU
KAYTEJ
WAKAYA
BULARNU
ALYAWARRE
ANDEGEREBENHA
ARRERNTE
MBARA
BADHUN
WUNUMURA
GUGU
BIRI
YIRANDALI
YILBA
MIYAN
GUWA
ININGAI
MALAWALI
PITTA PITTA
KUUNGKARI
BIRRIA
DHARWALA
GAYIRI
GANGULU
BIDJARA
GARINGBAL
WADJIGU
GUNGABULA
GURENG GURENG
WULI WULI
YIMAN
MANDANDANJI
BARUNGGAM
BIGAMBUL
KOOMA
GUNGGARI
YANDRUWANDHA
WANGKUMARA
KULLILLA
DIERI
ARABANA
KUYANI
DHIRARI
WANGKANGURRU
YARAWARKA
NGAMINI
KARENGGAPA
BANDJIGALI
WANDJIWALGU
WILYALI
DANGGALI
BARKINDJI
BARINDJI
WONGAIBON
WAILWAN
KAMILAROI
WIRADJURI
BUNDJALUNG
NGARABAL
YUGGERA
GUMBAINGGIR
NGANYAYWANA
BIRIPI
GEAWEGAL
WORIMI
DARKINUNG
DHARUG
GUNDUNGURRA
NGUNAWAL
YUIN
BIDWELL
KURNAI
BOONWURRUNG
TAUNGURONG
WAVEROO
WERGAIA
JARDWADJALI
DJABWURUNG
MERU
NGARGAD
BANGGARLA
NAWU
KOKATHA
NARANGGA
PERAMANGK
PYEMMAIRRENER
TYERRENOTEPANNER
PEERAPPER
TOMMEGINNE
LAIRMAIRRENER
PAREDAREME
TOOGEE
NUENONNE

INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VICTORIAN VOLCANIC PLAINS

The natural temperate grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains [VVP] is Australia's most critically endangered ecosystem.[1] Spanning over 2.3 million hectares, it forms the third largest volcanic plains globally. The profound ecological transformation caused by agricultural practices and urban development has caused a stark reality, where less than 1% of the original vegetation persists in a state reflective of its pre-colonial condition.[2] The imperative to address this ecological crisis emerges as a pivotal concern, underscoring the pressing need for concerted inquiry and informed conservation efforts. With agricultural land comprising of over 50% of the total area of Victoria, and ongoing housing development within Melbourne's Growth corridors continually contributing to ecological pressures, it is imperative that we reevaluate our approaches to living and farming in Australia.

The current agricultural land management practices, and indeed how society relates, interacts, and perceives our Victorian grass plains, need to undergo a transformative shift if we are to salvage what little remains. I posit that, in order to look forward we must first look back to not only the historical roots of the problem, considering colonialist factors but also the deep insights of the First Nations People of Australia. It is crucial that we engage with the people, their lessons, views, laws, and dynamics inherent in the world's oldest continuing culture as it interacts with the landscape. This approach provides a foundation for reimagining a way of living within the landscape that is specific to Australia rather than a 'transplanted' European practice.[3]

This research endeavours to delineate the fundamental views, laws, and dynamics of the First Nations People and explore how they manifest in the form of spatial ecologies. Subsequently, it aims to translate these insights into spatial, practical, and programmatic forms, fostering a spatial reassessment of the agricultural and natural landscape of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. The

1 "*Less than 2% remaining*," Adrian Marshall, Grassy Plains Network, last modified July 07, 2023, https://grassyplains.net.au/grasslands/.

2 "Biodiversity of the Western Volcanic Plains: *Conservation status categories*," EcoLinc, Science and Technology Innovation Centre Bacchus March, last modified July 07, 2023, https://bwvp.ecolinc.vic.edu.au/about.

3 Pascoe and Gammage, *First Knowledges: Country: Future Fire, Future Farming*, 15.

research aims to create design principles which can inform a new social and spatial landscape for the Victorian Volcanic Plains, My objective is to highlight both the value of First Nations Peoples knowledge as well as the values inherent within the VVP which is hidden directly under its surface. My hopes is that through uncovering research works like this and evocative redesigning of this landscape, we can showcase a future where Indigenous peoples knowledge is widely recognised and appreciated, allowing us to collaboratively 'walk together' in caring for this Country.

The research represents a critical focus within the broader fields of Australian Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Social Constructionism and Cultural Anthropology. The methodology for data collection the analysis in relation to the First Nations spatial ecologies is critical to ensure that the research does not impose, culturally appropriate nor impinge on intellectual property rights of First Nations People. Therefore the collection of and engagement on topics has been attempted to be done in as much collaboration as possible with First Nations People. The implementation of ethnographic and theoretical literature primarily from seminal authors on the topic of First Nations social and cultural studies like Deborah Bird Rose, Bruce Pascoe, Bill Gammage, W.E.H. Stanner and Nancy D. Munn are used in conjunction with further interviews with First Nations People like Bruce Pascoe and Aboriginal Elder Trevor Reg Abrahams to gain an understanding about various cultural and social values. The research uses a combination of historic and scientific literature to build a historical and ecological contextual framework for the VVP and includes interviews with Landscape Architect and Founder of the Grassy Plains Network, Adrian Marshall for further political and environmental context. Further literature was also utilised for the Social-Spatial and Architectural interpretation of space, Seminal authors like Australian architect and anthropologist Paul Memmott was used to help with the interpretation of social/spatial practises.

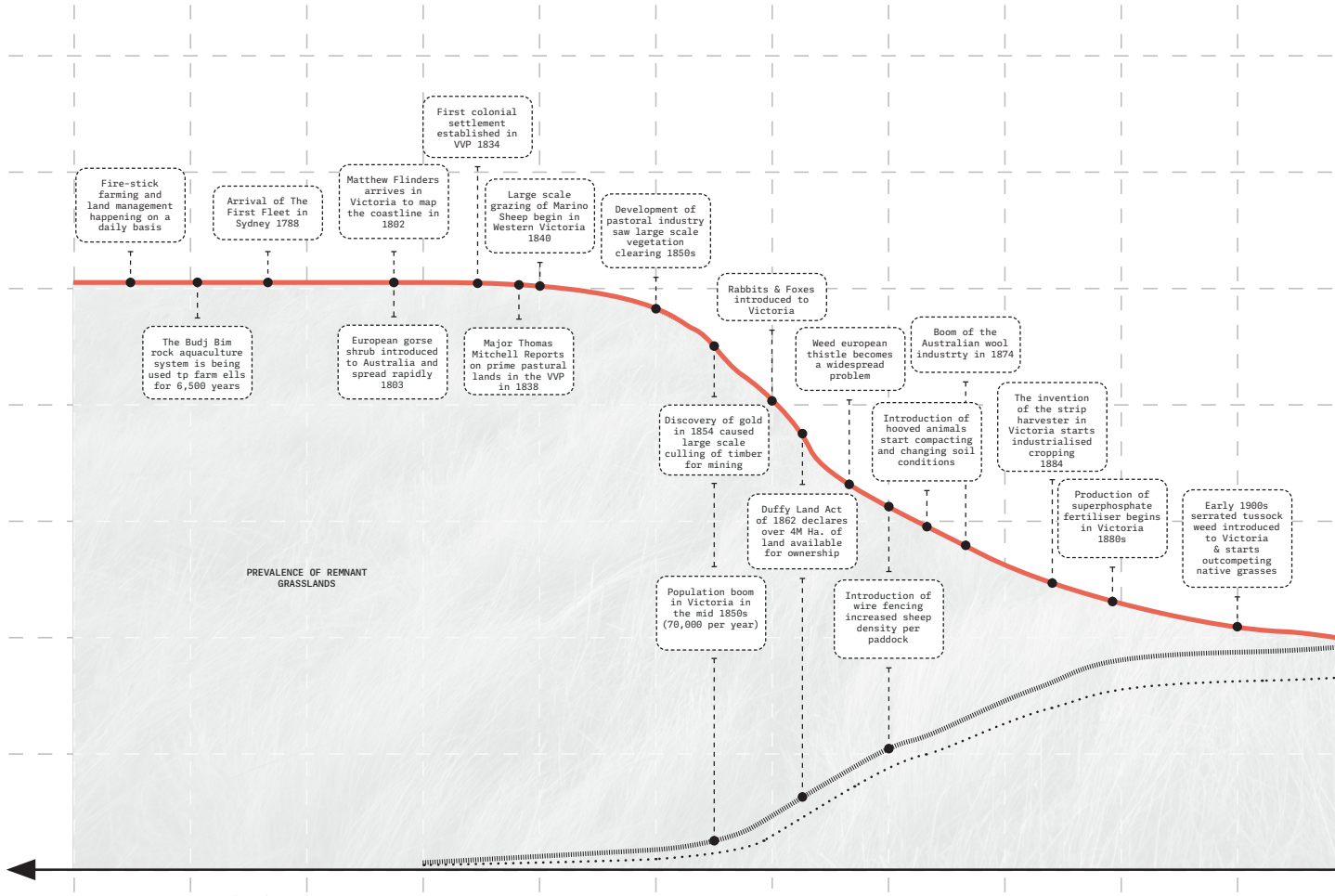
It is important to note that while all care is taken to avoid cultural bias in relation to discussing and analysing information, it is relevant to mention the research's non-indigenous background which may have influenced the research process and subsequent findings. Ultimately this underscores the importance of

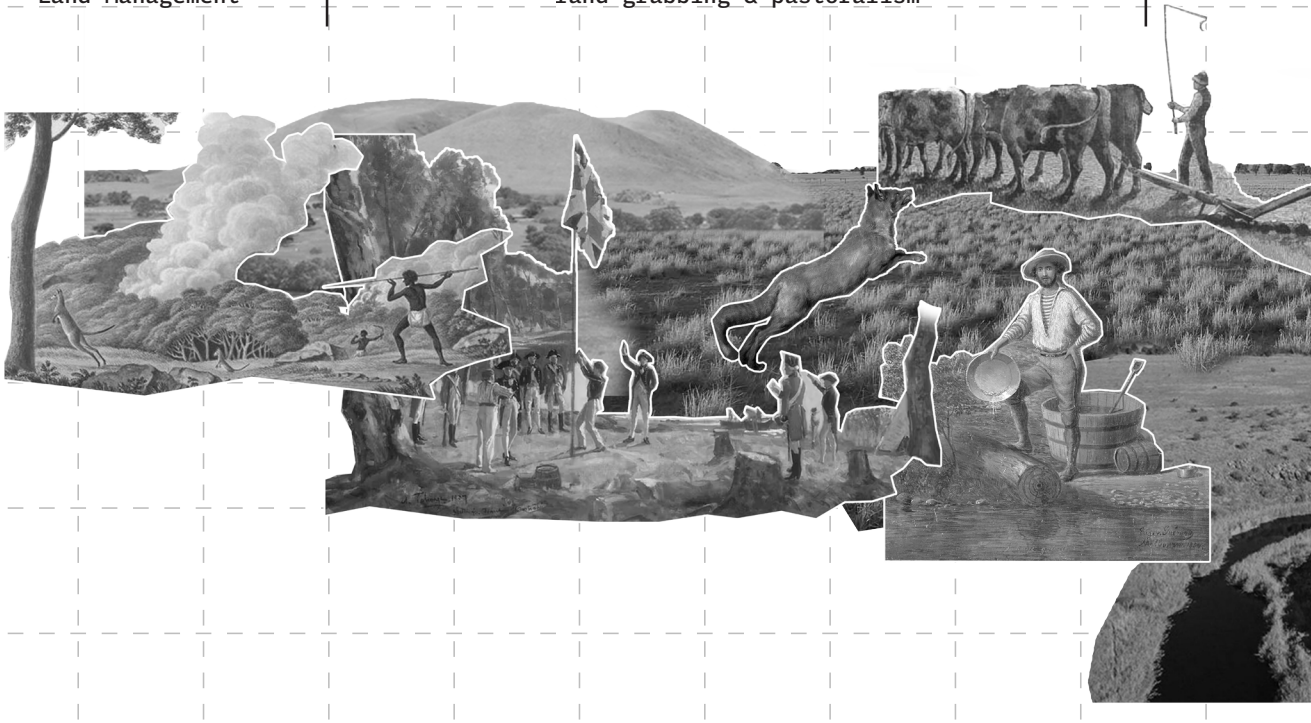
challenging academic standards and personalised educational assignments that do not propitiate that indigenous people could be represented authentically through their voices. Furthermore, it is imperative to highlight that the creative design choices reflect a certain degree of bias, stemming from the research's formal education in architecture and status as a local of the research area.

This thesis comprises three parts dedicated to exploring the perspectives, laws, and dynamics of First Nations Peoples in the landscape, specifically focusing on the Victorian Volcanic Plains. In the initial chapter, a discussion on the literature regarding the integration of traditional and Western knowledge, with a principal concern for ethical engagement. The second chapter delineates seven key principles governing First Nations views, laws, and dynamics within the landscape. This is achieved by elucidating each practice, drawing parallels with non-Indigenous examples, and culminating in speculation on design outcomes at various scales, programs, or processes aligned with each principle. The concluding chapter explores the application of these principles and design outcomes in the targeted VVP area. Through the documentation and analysis of First Nations Spatial Ecologies, numerous potential design and policy interventions emerge, providing avenues for creating a more environmentally and socially sustainable landscape. This initiates new ways of interacting, valuing and indeed living within the VVP.

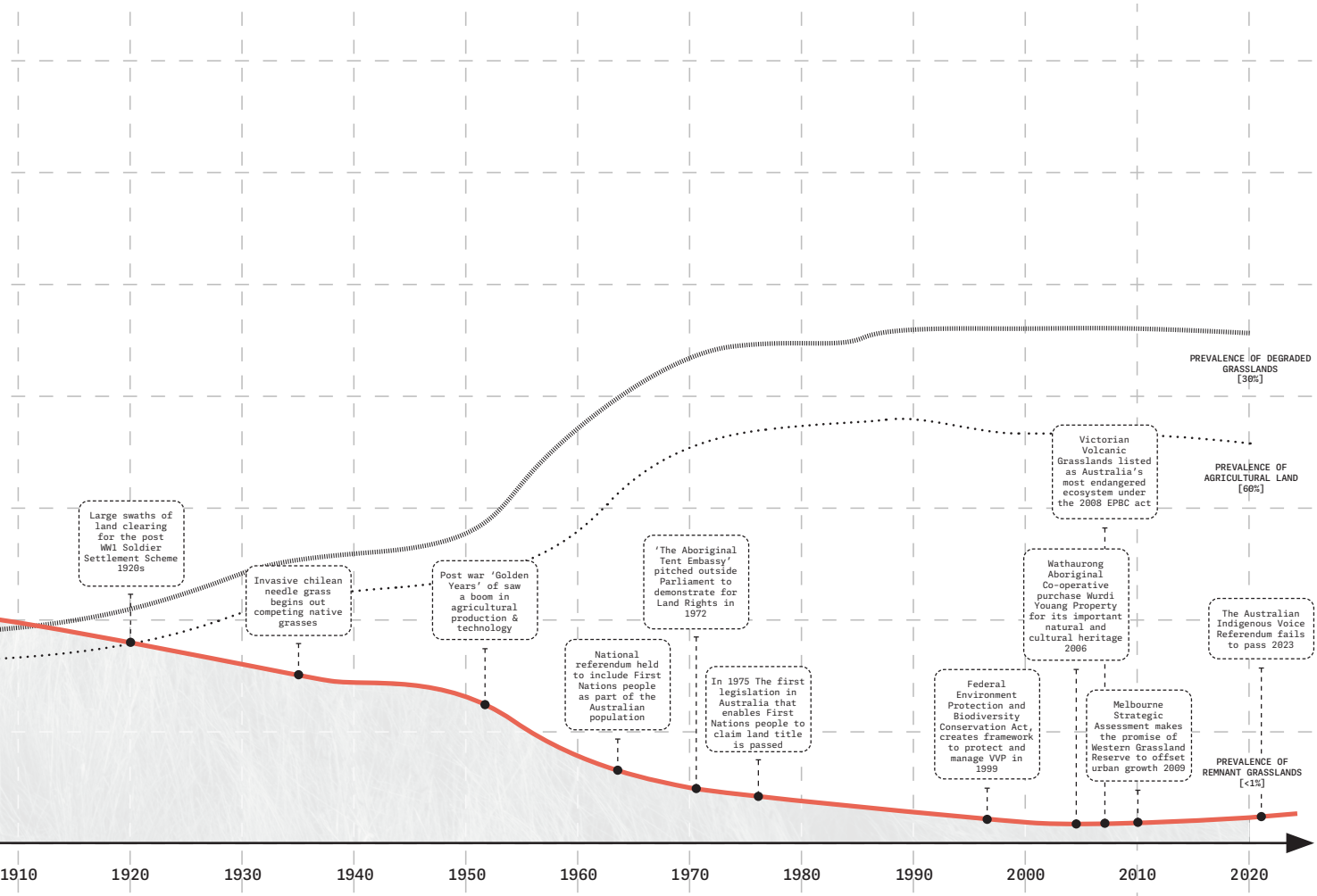
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This timeline illustrates the impact of colonization on the decline of the natural temperate grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains (VVP), juxtaposed with the expansion of agricultural land use and development. It traces the significant milestones that directly contributed to the proliferation of these activities, leading to cascading effects on the devastation of native vegetation, wildlife, and overall ecological balance in the region. Ultimately, these developments have culminated in the designation of the VVP as Australia's most threatened ecosystem.





Legend:
Remnant grassland
Degraded grassland
Agricultrual/developed land



Industralised Agriculture: monoculture & development

Ecological Genesis: grassland preservation efforts

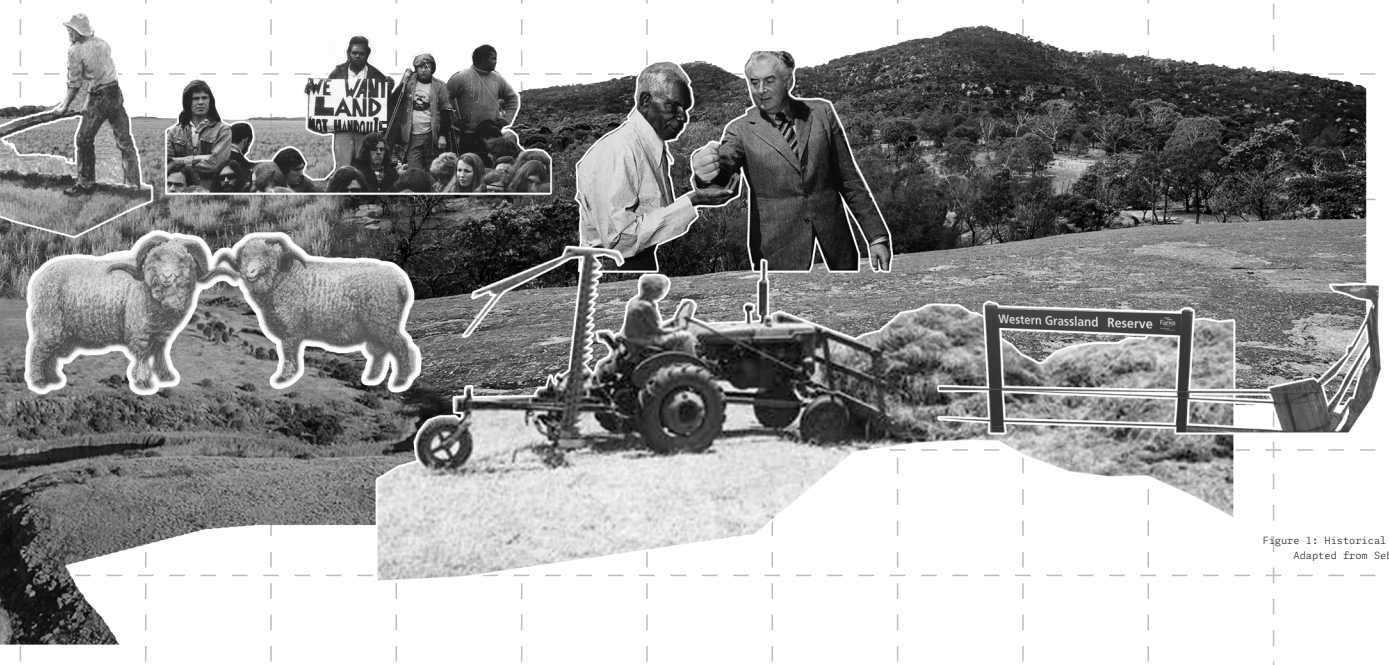
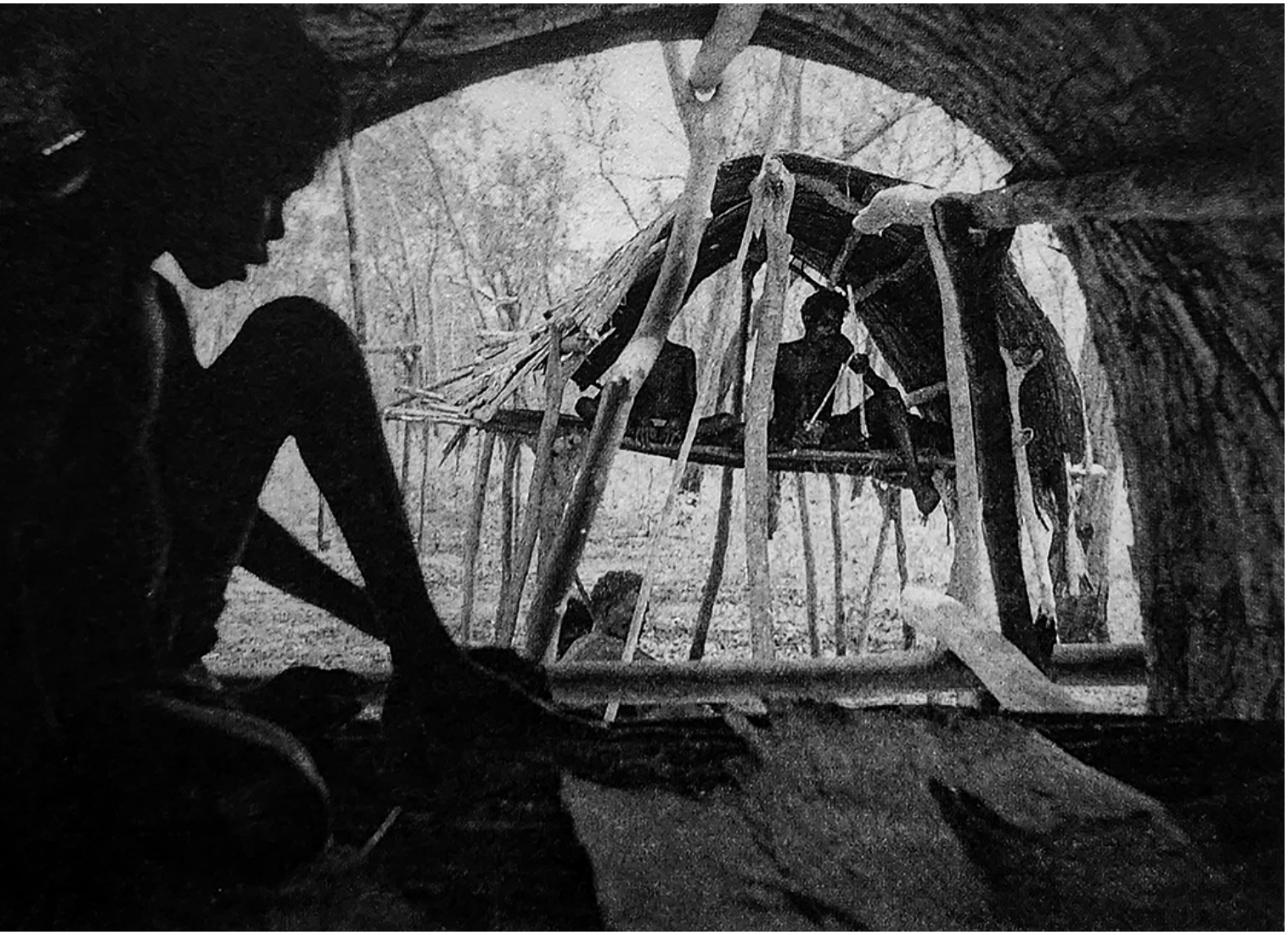


Figure 1: Historical Context of the VVP.
Adapted from Sebastian Cocks, 2022.

[1] TWO WAYS OF KNOWING: Combining First Nations + Western knowledge



Alan Dyer
Photograph

1 TWO WAYS OF KNOWING: COMBINING FIRST NATIONS + WESTERN KNOWLEDGE

Before conducting research about discussing topics relating to First Nations culture and history. It is important set a foundation for this thesis when dealing with traditional knowledge and its application and combination with other knowledge systems. This combination of traditional and "Western" knowledge has been happening since first contact however it is important to understand that the things we see and also not see can be influenced by our underlying socio-cultural experiences. This chapter therefore briefly investigates the theoretical and methodological approaches of combining these two distinct knowledge systems. The discussion derived from this integration inform the subsequent chapters, ultimately guiding the development of design principles for a more sustainable and culturally sensitive management of the VVP.

The methodology and theoretical background for this research is rooted in understanding both traditional and Western knowledge systems. Recognising the unique insights each brings, this paper seeks to create a dialogue between them, fostering a richer understanding of the Victorian Volcanic Plains.

The analysis and interpretation of the First Nations Principles form a key part of this methodology. These principles, offer guidance for sustainable land management and new ways of thinking about spatial design. They will be studied through review of existing literature, as well as through engagement with First Nations People.

Simultaneously, Western ecological knowledge, with its emphasis on scientific inquiry and data-driven insights, will be utilised to provide a understanding of the historical and current state of the VVP. This includes an examination of the impact of agricultural practices and urban development on this critically endangered ecosystem

The challenge lies in integrating these two ways of knowing together. This research acknowledges the risk of '*cognitive mining*', where only parts of traditional knowledge that align with specific criteria are considered.[4] To attempt to avoid this, the research takes a holistic

4 Mazzocchi, "Western Science and Traditional Knowledge: Despite Their Variations, Differ-

approach, respecting the integrity of traditional knowledge systems while also recognising the underlying biases from my non indigenous background as well as contributions of Western ecological data.

An example of combining traditional knowledge and western knowledge can be seen in the case study of the Grassland monitoring program at Point Illias, Victoria, between the Wathaurong Co Op, Parks Victoria and various other entities. Here the initiative was to create a partnership approach to costal grassland management with the aim to design a monitoring program to inform grassland management which acknowledged traditional and western perspectives.[5] As Wathaurung Traditional Owners Corp. Project Officeer Chase Aghan and Dr Brad Farmilo, two members of case study stated that currently predominantly ecology monitoring programmes are typically focused on goals rooted in western science and that there is a large opportunity to consider alternative views (traditional knowledge) to improve ecology and cultural aspects of the study. The success in this case study can be seen through the use and adaption of both knowledge systems to identify priorities that normally would have been omitted.

Combining traditional and Western knowledge is not without its challenges. As Mazzocchi (2006) points out, "Trying to analyse and validate traditional knowledge systems by using external (scientific) criteria carries the risk of distorting such systems in the process. At the same time, we cannot extract just those parts of traditional knowledge that seem to measure up to scientific criteria and ignore the rest. This process of cognitive mining would atomize the overall system and threaten traditional knowledge with dispossession."

This underscores the inherent risk of cognitive mining, where traditional knowledge is dissected and evaluated based on Western scientific criteria. This approach can distort the holistic nature of traditional knowledge systems and lead to a form of dispossession.

In this context, it's worth considering the words of Tasmanian author Richard Flanagan; "We have a very foolish

ent Forms of Knowledge Can Learn from Each Other."

5 "SWIFFT seminar notes - Native Grasslands," State Wide Flora and Fauna Teams, accessed March 08, 2024, https://www.swifft.net.au/cb_pages/swifft_seminar_notes_-_native_grasslands.php#two%20ways%20of%20thinking.

notion in Western countries that progress delivers freedom. But progress doesn't necessarily bring moral virtue."[6] This quote highlights the potential pitfalls of equating progress with moral and ecological virtue, a notion often prevalent in Western societies. It serves as a reminder that progress, as understood in Western terms, may not always align with the values and wisdom inherent in traditional knowledge systems.

Furthermore, cultural differences, communication barriers, and differing values and beliefs between traditional and Western knowledge systems can pose significant challenges. These challenges need to be acknowledged and addressed in a respectful and sensitive manner throughout the research process.

Despite these challenges, the integration of traditional and Western knowledge holds immense potential for fostering a deeper understanding of the VVP and informing sustainable land management practices. The key lies in finding a balance that respects and values both ways of knowing.

The integration of traditional and Western knowledge is not purely an academic exercise, but a step towards addressing the social inequality and ecological crisis of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. By combining these two ways of knowing, we can develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the VVP. Allowing us to see the landscape not just as a physical space, but as a living entity intertwined with cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions.

Moreover, this integrative approach can lead to novel solutions for sustainable land management. By drawing on the knowledge of the First Nations People and the scientific insights of Western ecology, we can develop strategies that respect the integrity of the land while also meeting the needs of contemporary society.

The combination of traditional and Western knowledge is not just important, but essential for the future of the VVP. It holds the potential of new insights, new solutions, and a new way of living in harmony with the land.

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6 Flanagan, *Question 7*, 242.

Figure 3

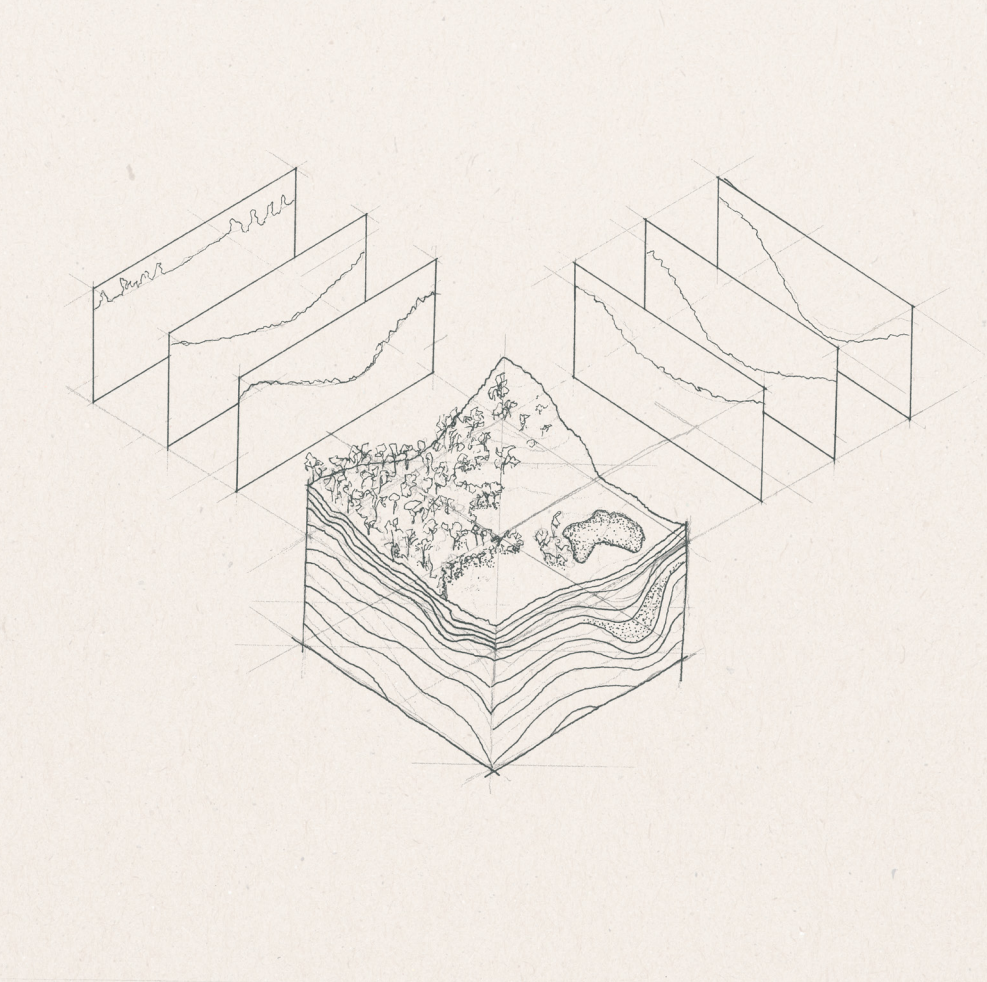
Uncle Reg showing a floret of rigid panic (walwhalleya proluta)

[2] FIRST NATION SPATIAL ECOLOGIES:

views, laws + dynamics in landscape

Figure 4

Sketch depecting the various cultural and physical layeres present within First Nations Landscapes



2.1
LAYERED COUNTRY

The concept of a 'Layered Country' is a unique perspective held by the First Nations People. It's a view that sees the landscape as a living entity, a complex whole that is both material and abstract. This perspective is deeply rooted in their understanding of 'Country' as a multidimensional entity that includes people, animals, plants, Dreamings, and the elements of earth, water, and air. Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose in her book *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of the Landscape and Wilderness,* describes this as follows,

> "People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy.

> Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like 'spending a day in the country' or 'going up the country'. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life." "Country is multi-dimensional, it consists of people, animals, plants Dreamings; underground, earth soils, minerals and water, and air… it exists both in and through time."[7]

This description of layered country suggests a relationship or a state of interaction between First Nations People and their place which is drastically different to the way we currently interact with the landscape.

In Western thought, a similar concept can be found in the idea of a 'Palimpsest'. This term, often used in geology and philosophy, refers to something that has been written and rewritten, much like the layers of sedimentary rock that form over time. It's also used to describe the cultural and historical layers that define a place or landscape. However, while the Western concept of a Palimpsest acknowledges the physical and historical layers of a landscape, it lacks the spiritual and ecological dimensions inherent in the First Nations' concept of a 'Layered Country'.

As described by Ashcroft et al. in their 1995 book, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, "One of the more interesting aspects of [Australia's] palimpsest is the rewriting, through Aboriginal textuality, of a place which would seem to have been overwritten by the coloniser. … the 'place' in aboriginal culture, rather than existing as a visual construct, is a kind of 'ground of being'." [8] This quote underscores the dynamic nature of the 'place' in Aboriginal culture, which is constantly being rewritten and redefined, much like a palimpsest. Yet, unlike the Western concept, this rewriting is not just a physical or historical process, but a spiritual and ecological one that acknowledges the 'place' as a living entity, a 'ground of being'.

In conceptualising how this 'ground of being' influences our interactions within processes like agriculture, it's important to consider the multiple parties involved.

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7 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 8.

8 Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 392.

This includes the person harvesting, the country giving and receiving physical output, and the past and future ancestors who have performed and will perform this same action. This acknowledgement of a temporal dimension adds embedded knowledge throughout the landscape, a concept I discuss further in chapter 2.5. As Daly Pulkara, of the Gurindji people, puts it when discussing the concept of quiet country, "…all the care of generations of people is evident to those who know how to see it."[9]

When we examine this portrayal through the relationship between agricultural space and natural space, we can see how these spaces begin to embody a multi-viewed spatial organisation. In this organisation, the process of agricultural practices can overlap with natural processes, leading to overlapped spaces that hold values not delegated to one particular task or zone. This is a departure from the current land zoning practices in the VVP. As local Western Grasslands expert Peter Wlodzarczyk points out in an interview for this paper, current land use is concerned with singular definitions and zoning of space. 'A road is a road, food production is food production, nature is nature… However they (First Nations People) don't see it this way, they see the landscape in a multitude of ways.' [10]

The connection between this and the construction and alteration of agricultural and natural areas is apparent in the need for heightened consideration of various aspects within the landscape, such as animals, plants, water, and people. This involves acknowledging the historical, present, and future elements of the environment. Ensuring a thoughtful design of space becomes crucial in maintaining a balance, as each landscape possesses its vitality with various imperatives, where humans represent just one facet. This multi-valued space suits urbanistic and landscape design but also can be realised spatially on a smaller scale, in processes of hybrid rooms and spaces in which multiple or seemingly contrasting programs exist within the same space.

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9 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 19.

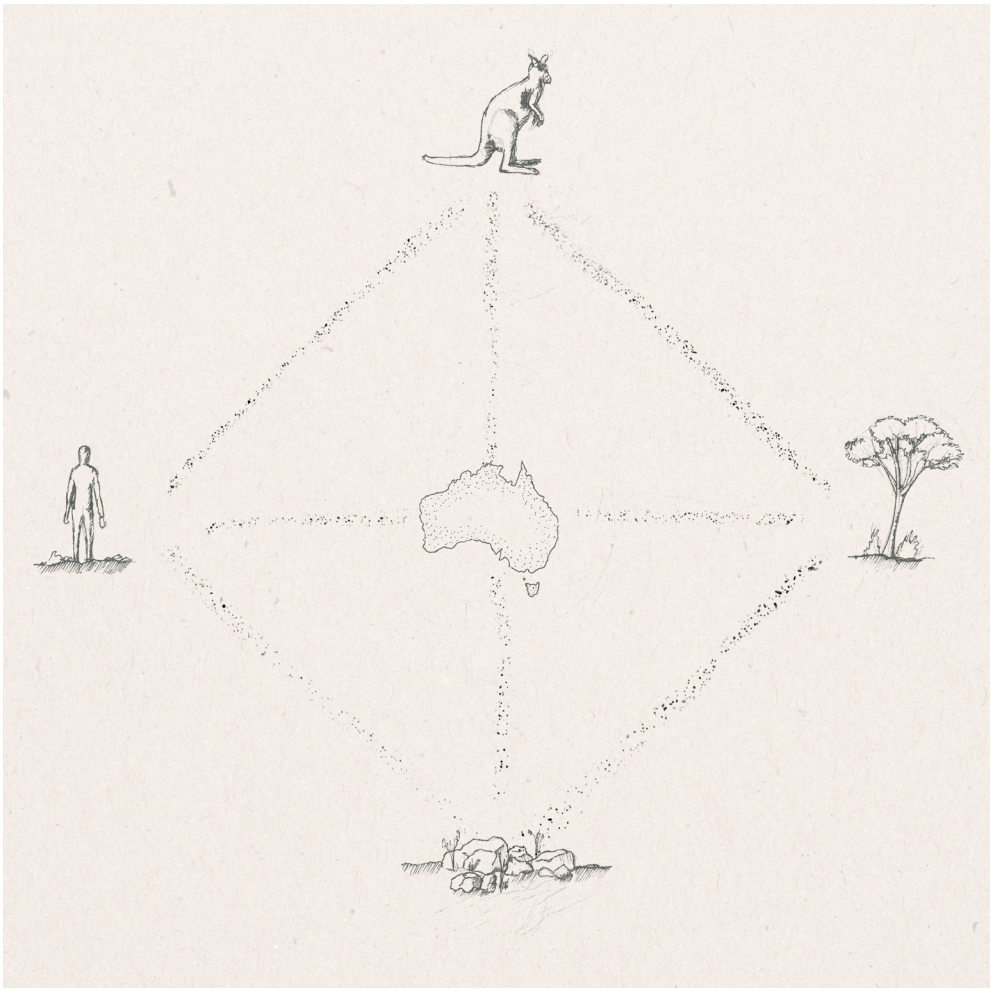
10 Peter Wlodarczyk, interview by author, November 21, 2023.

Figure 5

Fred Williams
You Yangs Landscape |
1963

Figure 6

Sketch depecting the connection described as totemic law



2.2
‘THE DREAMING’ + TOTEMIC LOCI

First Nations’ law systems often referred to as ‘Dreaming’ or ‘The Dream Time’ is an abstract term that has been widely adopted by numerous Australian Aboriginal Nations, and is typically used to describe the sacred and heroic time of creation when humans and nature came to be. It is important to mention that *history* and *time* are not implicated in descriptions of Dreaming. Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in his anthology *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938 – 1973* describes this conceptual abstraction by stating. “We shall not understand *The Dreaming* fully except as a complex of meanings. …[First Nations People]

may call his totem, or the place from which his spirit came, his Dreaming. He may also explain the existence of a custom, or law of life, as causally due to The Dreaming."[11] This representation of First Nations' Dreaming is difficult to define however this form of law is important to attempt to conceptualise to understand its influence on how First Nations People perceive and interact with Country.

The Dreaming is a form of static law, fundamental to how First Nations People see the world. Nganyintja Ilyatjari, a Pitjantjatjara woman describes dreaming as "This Law is the way we live, our rules. This Law is our ceremonies, our songs, our stories; all of these things came from the Dreaming. One thing that I can tell you though is that our Law is not like European Law which is always changing new government and new laws; but our Law cannot change, we did not make it. The Law was made by the Dreamings many, many years ago and given to our ancestors and they gave it to us."[12] This representation of law suggests a mutualist/ eco-centric worldview in which humans are just one aspect of a greater whole.

The concept of Totems and Loci within First Nations' Law is an integral aspect of 'The Dreaming', often linked to the representation of spiritual beings, animals, natural elements, or specific locations that carry deep meaning for a particular group or individual. Totems are commonly inherited during birth and typically form a tripartite relationship involving a person/family, an animal species, and a specific place or material object. This three-way relationship connects the person to the care and responsibility over their particular totems, making an inextricable link between the wellbeing of the individual and the wellbeing of their totem place and species.[13]

The Dreaming laws as well as Totems ultimately add a social valuation to the ecology of a landscape by including it within fundamental laws and principles of care. These values directly affect how First Nations People interact with country, including food production, dwelling, travelling and spiritually. This form of social constructionism has similarities to other non-indigenous

11 Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938 - 1973*, 23.

12 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 27.

13 Rose, 28.

schools of thought like 'Posthumanism' and 'Ontological Pluralism', here these philosophies examine the implication of anthropomorphism and promote stepping away from monotheistic worldviews. In Dirk Sijmons' book *In the Anthropocene, Site Matters in Four Ways*, Sijmons describes these philosophies as " [The] expanding circle of moral concern and extending subjectivities beyond the human species… Humans must not feel superior to other living creatures forming part of the web of life. Posthumanism crumbles the once-solid border between culture and nature." [14] Here we can see similarities to Dreaming laws in regards to eco-centric perspectives and providing value to the non-human. However, where these philosophies differ is the lack of sacrality towards space and its resistance to agriculture with the latter. In First Nations' law, there are no explicit justifications for the right to human life, and consequently, no justification for food production. However, it's essential to note that this right is not exclusive to humans; it is a shared aspect among other nonhuman entities. Consequently, there exists no standpoint from which the interests of one group can be detached from the interests of others in the long term. This implies that activities such as agriculture or material extraction are permissible, but with the caveat that they must be conducted to an extent that does not burden other species. Rose D. succinctly articulates this principle as "The interdependence of all life within the country constitutes a harsh but indispensable lesson; those who destroy their country ultimately destroy themselves." [15]

Site and spatial design with Dreaming and Totem Loci in mind must be done on the urbanistic scale as well as on a policy-making scale, Examples of this can be seen with the attribution of legal rights to places like the Whanganui River in New Zealand after 140 years of negotiations by the Māori People.[16] This legal attribution is a step in the right direction of acknowledging indigenous cultural value, however policy should not been seen as the final outcome but rather as a starting point in engaging with First Nations' laws and cultural values. Secondly, in relation to the role of architects and urban designers, greater

14 Sijmons, *In the Anthropocene, Site Matters in Four Ways*, 120–21.

15 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 10.

16 Sijmons, *In the Anthropocene, Site Matters in Four Ways*, 121.

engagement with nonhuman entities as a form of client is imperative when designing with First Nation values in mind. Designers must broaden their idea of the client to encompass flora, fauna, landscapes, materials and sacrality. This can be seen to some degree with the emergence of critical regionalism within architecture, however, it still requires a greater designing with longer timescales in mind. To encompass the life of a forest or grass plain, including its own needs and wants. This eco-timescale can be seen in many of the landscape-managing practices of First Nations People. Like the documented moving of Tasmanian rainforests and grass plains over centuries through the intervention of 'fire-stick farming' for example.[17] Finally, on a finer scale, spatial design concerning agriculture and nature requires programmatic support to enable a reconnection to the responsibilities of care of flora, fauna and place akin to the tripartite relationship of Totem Loci. This could be enabled through the design and coordination of hybrid space of human and nonhuman programs.

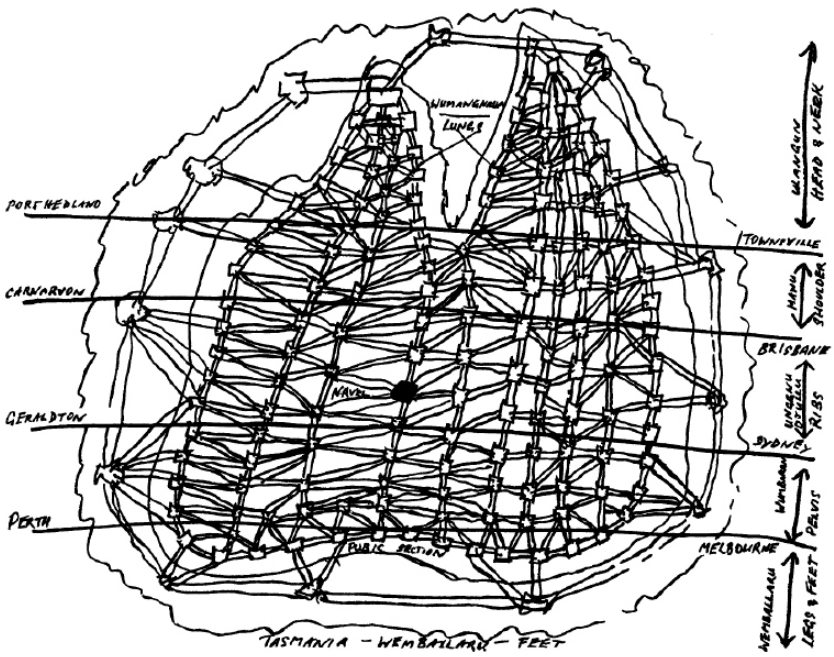


Figure 7

David Mowaljarlai
'Bandaiyan' The Body of Australia | 1990

17 Pascoe and Gammage, *First Knowledges: Country: Future Fire, Future Farming*, 83–84.

2.3
EMBODIED SPATIAL DYNAMICS IN LANDSCAPES

This section delves into three interconnected spatial dynamics that shape First Nations People's interaction with the landscape: 'Mobile Spatial Hierarchies', 'Concentrated Loci of Place', and 'Detouring and Negative Space'.

'Mobile Spatial Hierarchies' pertain to personal space definitions based on multiple internal and external inputs. This concept is closely tied to 'Concentrated Loci of Place', which describes culturally significant places defined by a central point radiating influence outward, creating a gradient-like boundary. These two concepts interact dynamically during the process of 'Detouring and Negative Space', which outlines human movement within and between spaces.

Each of these dynamics influences and is influenced by the others, forming a complex system that underscores the fluidity of space in First Nations Peoples' conception of borders and territories.

2.3.1
MOBILE SPATIAL HIERARCHIES

The term 'mobile spatial hierarchies' is not a formally classified term used by First Nations People, however, I will be building from a similar term 'indexical spatial field' used by American Anthropologist Nancy D. Munn in her paper *"Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape"* to represent the boarder and hierarchical spatial qualities of the principle. 'Mobile spatial hierarchies' refers to the personal definition of space concerning an individual and their multiple internal and external inputs which form hierarchical transient boundaries around them. Munn describes this as "… a spatial field [which] extends from the actor, it can also be understood as a culturally defined, corporeal-sensual field of significant distances stretching out from the body in a particular stance or action at a given locale or as it moves through locales." [18] This method of defining space is ego-centric as it relies on the sensorial and mental input of the actor within their environment. Using movement and tactile reach, vision, vocal reach and hearing to form various hierarchical boundaries that enable an

18 Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape," 22:451.

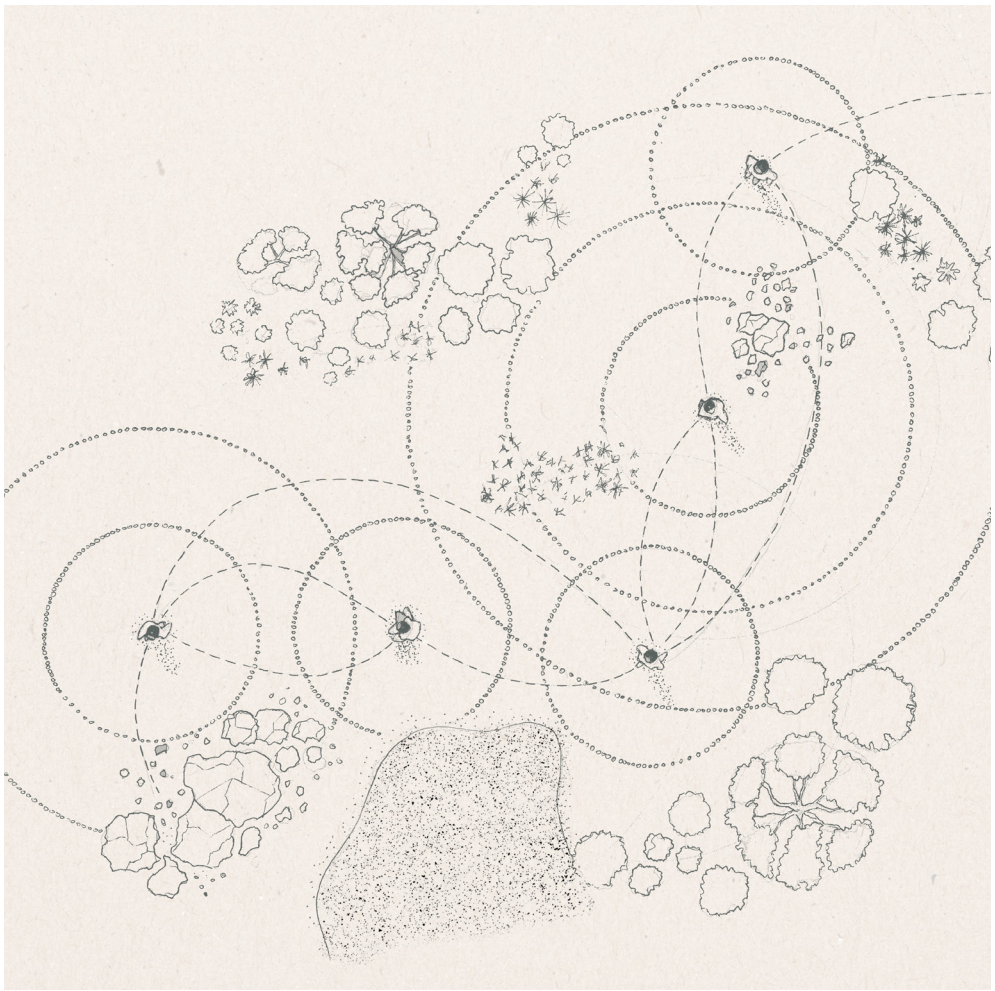


Figure 8

Sketch depecting the boundaried formed by Mobial Spatial Hierarchies

acute awareness of the landscape or space in which the person is in. This awareness is sometimes described by First Nations People as a 'connection' or 'reading' of Country which is discussed later in chapter 2.5.

In this conception, the understanding of space and boundaries is intricately tied to the reciprocal relationship between an individual and the presence of actors within the landscape. In this way, First Nations People "… do not move just in a landscape but in a humanised realm saturated with significance."[19] This way of interpreting and responding to the

19 Rapoport, "Australian Aborigines and the Definition of Place," 8.

landscape is evident in various rituals among First Nations Peoples, particularly in the context of 'gendered space'. As such, Warlpiri women, possessing special rights in specific men's rituals, may stand closer to certain performances than other women. Additionally, some senior Warlpiri men may be allowed to enter women's ceremonial grounds, while others observe these rituals from a distance. The regulation of a person's sensual-spatial field in this context is achieved through the management of distancing.[20]

2.3.2 CONCENTRATED LOCI OF PLACE

The principle of 'concentrated loci of place' has a strong interrelation with 'mobile spatial hierarchies.' This form of loci is used to describe the specific types of First Nations' Places which typically hold strong cultural and ecological value in the form of sacred space.[21] Unlike mobile spatial boundaries discussed above, these cultural places define space not through delineated fixed boundaries but rather from a central foci point in a landscape whose influence radiates outwards creating a gradient-like boundary that is in a constant state of flux.[22] Due to the gravitational field-like structure of these spaces, boundaries tend to be transient and interact with an individual's 'mobile spatial field' to form a responsive sphere of influence around a location. This is why some individuals who possess certain rights may be able to travel at a different distance from the loci than others.[23] The types of places that typically show this form of spatial field tend to be totemic or sacred rather than for food production or dwelling.

20 Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape," 22:452.

21 Rapoport, "Australian Aborigines and the Definition of Place," 5.

22 Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape," 22:454.

23 Moyle, "Songs, Ceremonies, and Sites: The Aboriginal Case." 72.

Figure 9

Penny Tweedie
Photograph 'Woman wearing chonical mat as body screen'
Gunyah Goondie + Wurley The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia, 2023

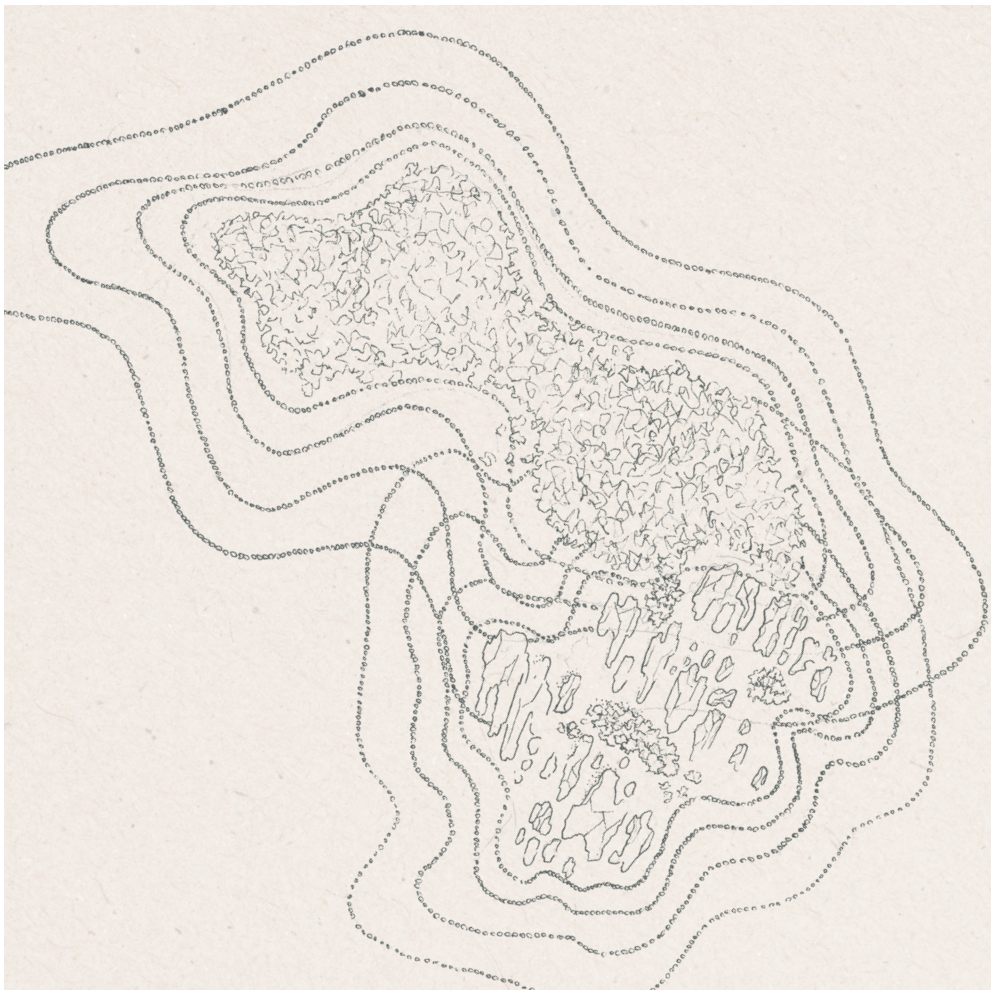


Figure 10

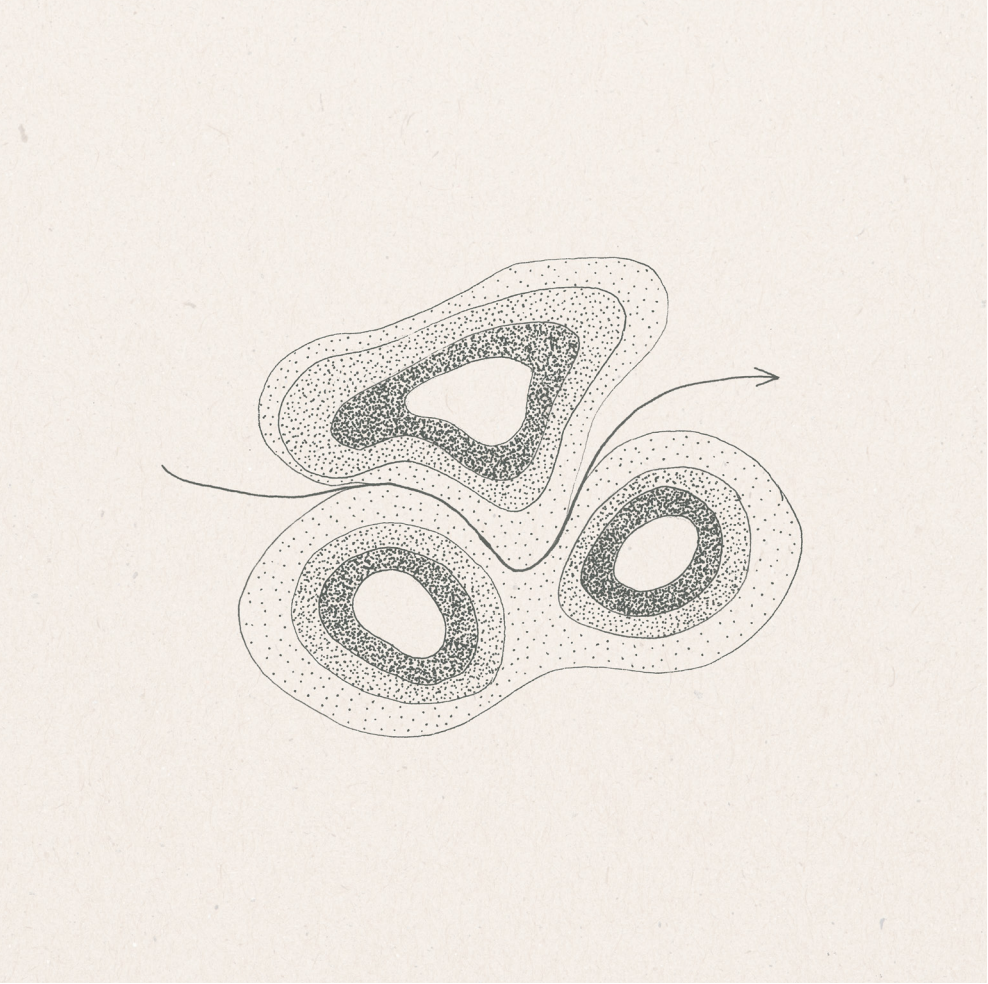
Sketch depecting the transient boundaries present in Concentrated Loci of Place

However, it is important to note that the delineation between sacred and profane space is difficult to quantify as most aspects of the topography are connected to Dreamtime and thus connected to a form of sacred place.[24]

24 Rapoport, "Australian Aborigines and the Definition of Place," 6.

Figure 11

Sketch depecting positive and negative space and its creation of new movement forms



2.3.3
DETOURING + NEGATIVE SPACE

The concepts of 'detouring' and 'negative space' outline the details of human movement within and between spaces, establishing an interaction between the individual's 'mobile spatial hierarchy' and the previously discussed 'concentrated loci of space.' Detouring, as a practice, is employed to circumvent specific locations, motivated either by ritualistic considerations or intrinsic landscape features. Munn provides further insight into the motives behind detouring, describing it as an action undertaken by First Nations People to avoid ritualistic gatherings or contemporary events, as well as to navigate around enduring powers

embedded in the landscape by ancestral activities. Within the act of detouring, First Nations People not only establish transient boundaries but also craft 'negative space'—an area lying beyond the actors' immediate spatial field of vision. This negative space, a product of intentional bodily movements, signifies the creation of perimetric boundaries.

APPLICATION OF SPATIAL DYNAMICS

The three variations in spatial dynamics range from egocentric (mobile spatial fields) to allocentric (concentrated loci of place), including the interaction between them represented as spatial detouring. All these forms of space and movement through space highlight the lack of definitive boundaries in the conception of First Nations Peoples' space. As such space is then viewed as a fluid concept, markedly different from the current pre-determined and static limits seen in zoning and fencing around land in the Australian landscape and many other countries today.

Other theories of spatial definition outside of First Nation schools of thought also challenge conventional ideas of space like Henri Lefebvre's concept named 'The Production of Space,' which ultimately challenges the conventional idea of space as a passive static container filled by individuals.[25] Lefebvre introduces 'Perceived' and 'Conceived Space,' a basic duality explaining the interplay between our direct sensory experience (Perceived Space) and the abstract, planned space shaped by societal structures (Conceived Space). Perceived Space is subjective, influenced by personal emotions, while Conceived Space is intellectual and institutional, reflecting organised and controlled spatial concepts. Lefebvre's theory underscores the social nature of space, rejecting the notion of it as a static backdrop.[26] Theories like this share some similarities to the dynamic boundaries and socially defined spaces of First Nations people.

With these alternative ways of conceiving space in mind, landscape and spatial design can be implemented to address the three spatial dynamic principles, on three differing scales.

25 "*Lecture 2: The Production of Urban Space*," YouTube video, 11.07, posted by "Eliza Jane," June 06,2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WnQYqtETKw&t=117s (14/04/2024).

26 "*Lecture 2: The Production of Urban Space,*" YouTube video.

Firstly the engagement of 'mobile spatial hierarchies' within spatial design can occur on the scale of the human body by developing a deeper connection between user experience and an environment. This connection can be heightened through involvement of the sensorial in the experience of architecture and landscape. Designing with an emphasis to engage the body and the mind to the flux conditions of a landscape. Architect Juhani Pallasmaa describes this form of sensory thought as "Human consciousness is an embodied consciousness and we are connected with the world through our senses. Our hands and entire body possess embodied skills and wisdom"[27] This form of sensorial engagement has to be enabled through the curation of a spatial form of elemental hierarchy allowing users of the space to find value in the seemingly profane landscapes. Through changing of view lines or perspectives or similarly through the curating of experience in the form of agricultural or land care acts can be used to develop connection and deeper engagement to the landscape and thus develop greater awareness of the spatial qualities of a particular space. These thematics have been partially addressed with Australian architects like Richard Leplastier with his emphasis on 'framing the view' or with Glenn Murcutt through designing architecture that "Allows nature to act as part of our daily experience."[28]

Secondly, the activation of the urban scale is relevant when looking at how these spatial dynamics can be engaged. In particular significant space like topography, sacred places or ecologically sensitive biomes, can utilise the principle of 'concentrated loci of place' by enabling new ways in which the public perceive and interact with Country. This would require greater collaboration on the policy and urban design level between First Nations Peoples and Local Governments / Designers to understand where sensitive areas are, what their meaning is and how to interact with that space. Greater efforts must be made to ensure sacred sites are respected and appropriate boundaries of interaction are established between it and individuals living adjacent to them. The extreme consequences of

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27 Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* , 14.

28 "Belonging – Glenn Murcutt," YouTube video, 21.35, posted by "Aureliano Ramella," Jan 02, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYEbgU7xZHA&list=PL40Mg1xyhCY2TSMSLo4UP-kOZn12tNYD-p&index=3 (Feb 11,2024).

Figure 12

Before and after photographs shoing part of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters that were blasted by Rio Tinto in May 2020.

PKKP Aboriginal Corporation Photgraph

neglecting sacred space can be seen in the destruction of the 46,000-year-old Juukan Gorge sacred rock shelter in Western Australia in by mining company Rio Tinto in 2020.[29] Examples like this are extreme but exemplify what can happen when policy is neglected.

Finally, on a social design scale, appropriate interaction between society and these sacred/sensitive spaces can be influenced through design intended to moderate movement through or around a space, which can be seen with examples like the closure of the Uluru climb due to the sacrality of the site.[30] Furthermore designing of paths and walking areas which can adapt to the shifting requirements of distance required around a particular site and allow the experience of a sacred space through the curation of intentional view points or obstructions of views could be implemented to engage with sacred space in a respectful and meaningful way.

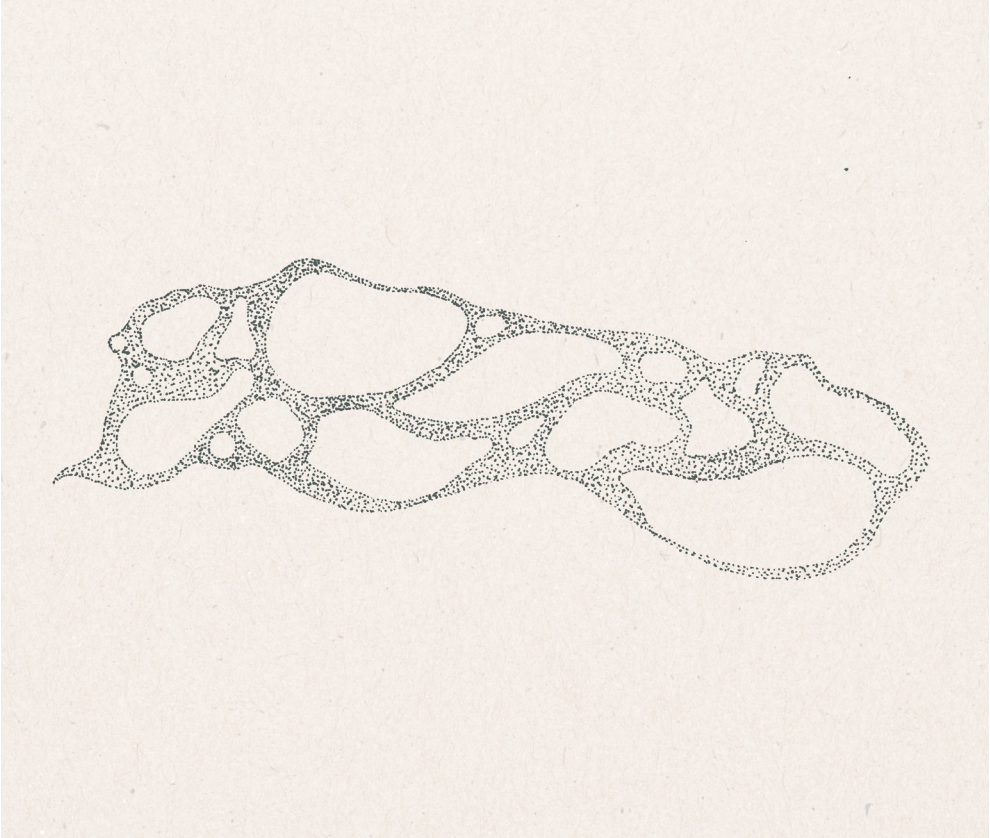
Although our perception of space is entrenched through our societal and cultural context it is not fixed. Returning back to Lefebvre's concept of how we conceive and perceive space suggests a state of malleability in the way society views and interacts with space. With this being so, the changing of the current social conception of space in Australia through social constructionism can be achieved gradually through policy and design changes on both the small and large scale.

29 *"A year on from the Juukan Gorge destruction, Aboriginal sacred sites remain unprotected,"* The Guardian, May 24, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/may/24/a-year-on-from-the-juukan-gorge-destruction-aboriginal-sacred-sites-remain-unprotected.

30 *"A year on from the Juukan Gorge destruction, Aboriginal sacred sites remain unprotected,"* The Guardian,

Figure 13

Sketch depecting the connections between territory networks



2.4

INVIOLABLE TERRITORY + COGNITIVE NETWORKS

The First Nations' territories of pre-1788 Australia comprised around 500 Aboriginal nations, many of which have differing cultures and languages. These nations while being distinct from each other have a complex interrelationship which resulted in land care and knowledge systems comprising the scale of the continent. Rose D. describes this network as countries that are a "unique and inviolable whole"[31], understood by all people, species and the Country itself in being this way. Each Country is surrounded by other unique Countries combining to create larger "whole clusters of alliance networks"[32] These networks were upheld by both cultural

31 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 12.

32 Rose, 13.

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and natural principles, like Songlines, rituals and trade networks, but also forms of natural connections like animal movements and atmospheric circulation of wind. Through these connections, First Nations People could collaborate with other nations without comprehending the inner workings of each other's Country, thus keeping knowledge localised. A Key example of this universal application of care was in the form of 'Fire Stick Farming' a method of land management using fire which is further discussed in chapter 2.8. In a paper by Rhys Jones, *Fire Stick Farming*, Jones discusses its universal application stating that " bushfires were systematically and universally lit by Aborigines all over the continent." [33] It is important to note that although the use of fire was universal, its application and therefore its knowledge was specific for each nation.[34]

The key to First Nations' 'Inviolable Territory Networks', seems to lie in the cultural understanding of territory and space and conceptions of ownership. While First Nation Peoples value Country as an integral part of their culture, the notion of ownership over the landscape is not apparent and therefore the view of territory is seen differently when compared to the *Lockean Proviso*, notions of property rights adopted by European culture.[35] This lack of territorial ownership influences how people use space, particularly its resources. As explained by Architect Amos Rapoport in his paper *Australian Aborigines and the Definition of Place*, "While each local group is associated with a geographic range there is considerable visiting among groups which do not maintain exclusive rights to resources but have flexible arrangements."[36]

When these contrasting views of property collide in the context of Australia, we can see the destructive impact of Western property views on First Nations perspectives and the landscape. Scottish Explorer Major Thomas Mitchell's first observations of the Western Volcanic Plains in 1838 illustrate this relationship between territorial ownership and its influence on the landscape. Mitchell noted how

33 Jones, "Fire-Stick Farming," 4.

34 Pascoe and Gammage, *First Knowledges: Country: Future Fire, Future Farming*, 89.

35 Narveson, "Property Rights: Original Acquisition and Lockean Provisos ," 205–7.

36 Rapoport, "Australian Aborigines and the Definition of Place," 1.

the land appeared available for "civilized use", remarking: "This land is open and available in its present state for all purposes of civilized man. We traversed it in two directions with heavy carts, meeting no obstruction. I named this region Australia Felix … flocks might be put out upon its hills or plough at once set to work in the plains."[37]

Interestingly, the idea of shared territory is not exclusive to First Nations People. European societies, particularly in colonial territories, have implemented the concept of the 'common', granting farmers free use of publicly owned fields for grazing livestock. However, without proper safeguards, commons can suffer ecological and economic losses due to overexploitation. This phenomenon, coined 'The Tragedy of the Commons' by ecologist Garrett Hardin, illustrates how capitalist interests can lead to overuse, eventually destroying the shared resource. Ecological damage from such exploitation was evident in a common established in the You Yangs, forested mountain range in the Western Volcanic Plains in 1845, where unrestricted timber cutting and cattle grazing decimated native eucalyptus forests.[38]

Despite its historical drawbacks, commons that prioritise ecological preservation over resource extraction—unlike the You Yangs common—could draw inspiration from the 'inviolable territory networks' discussed earlier. Such ecologically focused commons would challenge traditional land ownership concepts and facilitate greater sharing of knowledge, resources, and land care responsibilities. The Yambulla project, led by landscape architect Jim Osborne on the NSW and Victorian East border, exemplifies these principles. Converting 1500ha of private land into a shared management landscape, Yambulla embraces joint custodianship with the Bidhawal and Youin Peoples. Osborne envisions it as a self-sustainable shared landscape and a model for collaborative, productive, and restorative land management practices.[39] This approach could be adopted by private landowners as well as on crown land. Additionally, this new ownership model would advocate for the removal of fences where feasible, aligning with

37 Sinatra and Murphy, *Listen to the People, Listen to the Land* , 35.

38 Galea, "Silence in The Western Volcanic Plains. The You Yangs Epistemicide," 2023.

39 Jim Osborne, interview by author, Dec 05, 2023.

Figure 14

Etching depecting a heard of cows on the You Yangs Common.

Sanuel Cavert
'Scene in the You Yangs' | 1885

Munn's perspective that topographical boundaries demarcating owned places pose significant challenges ecologically and socially. [40]

40 Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape," 22:449.

Figure 15

Sketch depecting the landscape as memory tool and archive

2.5
SONGLINES + COUNTRY AS ARCHIVE

This chapter explores the knowledge systems of First Nation People, analysing how ownership and utilisation unfold through Songlines and the distinctive practice of storing information within the landscape, denoted here as 'Country as archive.' It is important to note that First Nations' culture views knowledge as significantly local, tied to specific landscapes or places, and regards it as intellectual property. Consequently, the sharing of knowledge through song, dance, and ritual is reserved for particular individuals. "If there is one thing that is absolutely not free, in Aboriginal Land tenure systems and in Aboriginal politics, it is knowledge," succinctly notes Rose D. [41] Understanding people

41 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 32.

and their country hinges crucially on the ownership and transmission of knowledge.

Songlines, also known as Dreaming Tracks or Dreaming Paths, are a form of knowledge map connecting people with the knowledge of the sacred and topographic landscape. Professor Mike Smith, former director of research at the National Museum of Australia describes Songlines as 'Ecclesiastical maps' which are "… a framework for relating people to land. …showing the relative positions of totemic sites"[42] This description is fitting as Songlines are not typically used for getting from point A to B but rather the travel path and landscape are used as a form of archive and memory tool for storing knowledge. Authors Margo Neale and Lynne Kelly of the book *Songlines: The Power and Promise* describe the utilisation of Songlines by Melbourne Koori Elder.

> "He told me that the key to his way of knowing was his Country, and that singing the names of sacred sites along the Songlines created in his mind a set of subheadings to the entire knowledge base of his culture, a place for knowing about every animal, plant and person. He could sing his Songlines even when away from Country because he could move through the space in his imagination. His Country was always part of him."[43]

Knowledge in the form of Songlines is indicative of schools of thought like 'Bioregionalism' and 'Place-Based Education' (PBE) theories. Smith and Gruenewald (2008), in their seminal book *"Place-Based Education in the Global Age: Local Diversity,"* explore educational theory, policy, and philosophy, advocating for the development of Place-Based Education Systems (PBE). [44] This framework responds to the globalisation of knowledge, making a case for "the educational counterpart of a broader movement toward reclaiming the significance of the local in the global age." Smith and Gruenewald emphasise the need to celebrate and promote 'local knowledge' alongside or above 'universal knowledge,' aligning with concepts such as 'Bioregional Education' and programs

42 Smith, "The Metaphysics of Songlines," 218–19.

43 Neale and Kelly, *First Knowledges: Songlines: The Power and Promise*, 15–16.

44 Smith and Gruenewald, *Place-Based Education in the Global Age - Local Diversity*, 212.

focused on 'local,' 'traditional,' and/or 'indigenous knowledge.'

Utilising the qualities from Songlines particularly in the form of its localised knowledge and 'Country as archive' could be realised through design on the larger topographic scale as well as the intimate detail scale of a particular locale or site. This type of design would require a focus on the kinesthetics of interaction with people and place particularly through visual and auditory means. These experiential processes need to encompass both cultural and topographic education to show the value of the landscape. The designing of indigenous-led and curated forms of art and cultural exhibits over large areas could be an implementation of Songlines, helping to reengage people with the sacred and ecological value of the landscape. Initiatives like this are already in place like the internationally known Songlines touring exhibition titled. *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* This exhibition is a collection of over 300 artworks showcasing five Songlines from Australia's western and central deserts.[45] This form of knowledge transfer is multilayered as it creates knowledge transfer and communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and also between Indigenous people in general helping to strengthen culture. Neale M and Kelly L, Describe this transfer of knowledge regarding one of the paintings of the exhibition titled Yarrkalpa. (Hunting Ground) "This process of knowledge transfer enacted with paint on canvas may on the surface appear to be only a Western process, but on viewing the time-lapse footage of the ten-day painting process compressed into forty minutes, you are left in no doubt that what you are witnessing is ceremony on canvas." [46]

45 Nationnal Museum Australia, "Songlines Touring Exhibition." (June 02, 2024). https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/songlines-touring

46 Neale and Kelly, *First Knowledges: Songlines: The Power and Promise*, 52.

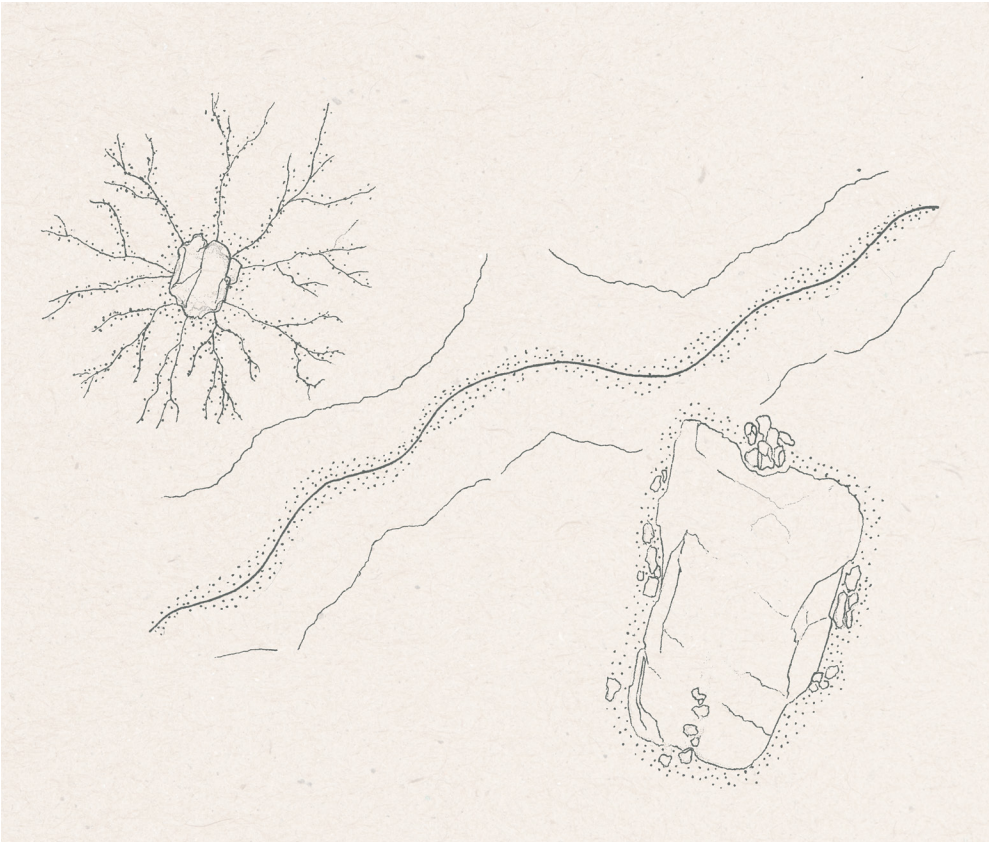
Figure 16

Kumpaya Girgirba, et al.

'Yarrkalpa': Hunting Ground | 2013

Figure 17

Sketch depecting spatial imprinting and its various effects from static objects to journeys



2.6
SPATIAL IMPRINTING PHYSICAL + SPIRITUAL

The term spatial imprinting is a term I developed to describe principles of perceived transformations within the landscape, typically by the result of changes caused by sacred/totemic ancestors but also the readable changes produced by past peoples. This 'imprinting' has been discussed by Munn in her paper *Excluded Spaces*, while describing the causal formation of 'concentrated Loci' The transformation of an ancestor's body in the process of action like running, standing, sitting, or in fragmented pieces after a conflict all produce spatial "forms conveying some momentary action in events at a given location."[47] Furthermore, this imprinting can also be a representation of a trace from an actor, for example,

47 Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape," 22:11.

footprints or movement of topographic objects. This explains why travelling actors in First Nations stories can be "transfixed in more than one place" across the landscape.[48] I draw similarities of this ancestral 'imprinting' with the actions of past people which can also be read within the landscape. An example of this is the Budj Bim eel trap system developed by the Gunditjmara people in South West Victoria, The 6000-year-old aquaculture system is considered a part of The Dreaming for the Gunditjmara people and the constant rebuilding of this system adds to the continuation of The Dreaming story.[49] Moreover, this imprinting can also be seen with the conceptualisation of a quasi-fourth dimension concerning object creation within Yolngu culture. An account provided by an 18-year-old Yolngu woman articulates the utilisation of a fourth tense in their language. This linguistic construct embodies the notion that, when engaged in crafting an object like a fish trap today, the individual is concurrently participating in the collaborative creation of a fish trap alongside others from the past and those yet to come in the future. The introduction of this tense underscores a fundamentally distinct relationship with both the human and the natural environment, offering a novel perspective on temporal continuity in craftsmanship and human modification of the landscapes and objects.

This connection of human action with various actors like the ecosystem and ancestors is reminiscent of the pioneering theories of the German Naturalist and Geographer Alexander von Humboldt. He proposed that nature is interconnected and that human activity has a causal link with climate change.[50] This realisation is described as a "great chain of causes and effects," where "no single fact can be considered in isolation." Although Humboldt's theories lack the sacrality and deep connection found in First Nations Peoples' interactions with the environment, they share a similar principle with spatial imprinting. This is illustrated by a comment from Page and

48 Munn, 22:11.

49 "Gunditjmara Culture: Gunditjmara Country," Bundj Bim Cultural Landscape, accessed March 02, 2024, https://www.budjbim.com.au/about-us/our-culture/

50 "The Invention of Place: Alexander von Humboldt and the Meaning of Home," The Journal of Sustainability Education, accessed March 07, 2024, https://www.susted.com/wordpress/content/the-invention-of-place-alexander-von-humboldt-and-the-meaning-of-home_2016_03/

Memmott about Frank Gurrmanamana, a Djunawunya man in Arnhem Land, and his spiritual process of making a fish trap: "While he makes it, he sings it into life and talks to it like it is an ancestor. He describes the sites that the ancestors made, drawing on the power of the fish-trap ancestors to make his trap. It is a ceremony, a meaningful conversation with the object that reinforces the mnemonic. As he makes it, he becomes it, so it is more than just remembering."[51]

Incorporating 'spatial imprinting' into design within agricultural and natural landscapes requires reintroducing the sacrality of human activity. This sacrality should be present in agricultural and extractive acts like harvesting, cultivating, and mining, as well as in creative acts like handcraft making, building, and landscape construction. Shifting our mentality to view these activities as sacred fosters a sense of responsibility toward our environments and encourages an embedded ownership of the things we interact with. Juhani Pallasmaa, in his book *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture*, articulates a similar view on embodying identity within crafted objects.[52] Architecture and landscape architecture can address the principle of 'spatial imprinting' by intentionally incorporating material wealth and embodied craftsmanship in their design and construction. This value is evident in ancient structures and works of art, which resonate with the depth of their creation.

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51 Page and Memmott, *First Knowledges: Design: Building On Country*, 24.

52 Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* , 42–57.

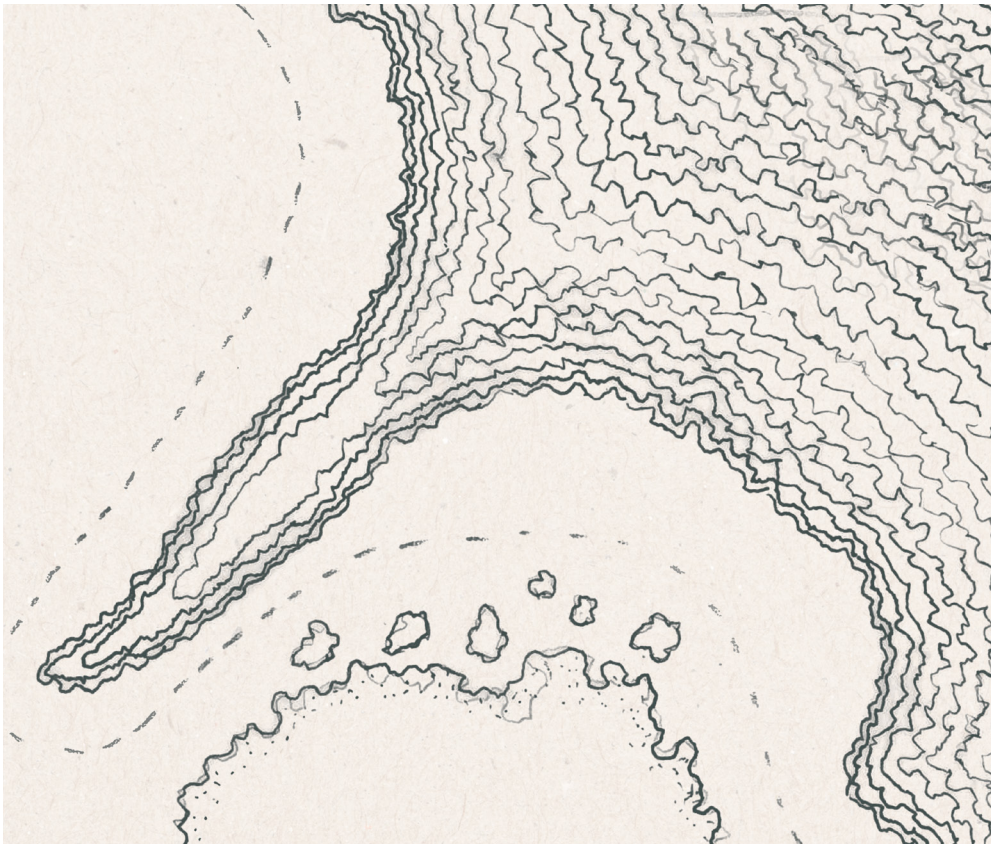
Figure 18

Tyson Lovett-Murray
Tae Rak channel and holding pond

Figure 19
Connah Jones
‘Ariel photograph of Bayley island fish traps’ | 1982

Figure 20

Sketch depecting burning pattern of VVP Fire-Stick Farming



2.7
CARING FOR COUNTRY + FIRE-STICK FARMING

The notion of 'Caring for Country' is rooted in First Nations Peoples cultural perspectives and represents a holistic approach to land management and environmental stewardship. It goes beyond a simple concept of land care and encompasses a deep spiritual and cultural connection between the peoples and the Country they inhabit. As articulated by Rose D. First Nations' land management practises most notably their intricate use of fire are "responsible for the long-term productivity and biodiversity of this continent."[53] Apart from fire management, alternative strategies encompass selective harvesting, the establishment and management of sanctuaries, and the active facilitation of plant and animal regeneration. These

53 Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, 9–19.

practices are structured on a national level but entail shared responsibilities along Dreaming tracks and other social and ritual relationships.[54] For this chapter I will be focusing only on the use of 'Fire' and 'no Fire' often described as 'fire-stick farming.'

Before 1788 'fire stick farming' was implemented daily throughout the entirety of the continent.[55] Fire was used as a management tool, utilising it in a plethora of ways. (See figure … for an adapted list of uses for fires from Pascoe B. and Gammage B.'s book *Country: Future Fire Future Farming.)* To emphasise the significance and intricacy of fire management, it's noteworthy that there were numerous words for the use and type of 'Fire' in First Nations' Languages, distinct names existed for every specific burn, tailored to the region, vegetation type, and animal habitats. Furthermore, distinct vocabulary was employed to depict the various landscapes in their states before, during, or after a controlled burn.[56]

The burning methods employed varied significantly, influenced by both the region and the intended ecological results. Most documented practices highlight a technique known as 'mosaic burning.' This approach, a form of fire stick farming, creates a patchwork of burnt and unburnt areas. The burnt patches provide opportunities for plant regeneration and serve as feeding and hunting grounds for animals. Conversely, the unburnt patches function as refuges, enabling plants and animals to recolonise the previously burnt ground. This intricate interplay between burnt and unburnt areas underscores the complexity and effectiveness of mosaic burning"[57]

The notion of Fire Stick Farming is becoming a buzzword in current Australian Land management circles, and the reintroduction of fire to the Australian landscape is on the rise. Positive Examples can be seen with collaboration efforts between First Nations' Parties like the Wadawurrung Co-Op, Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Private Landowners however also on the rise is the misuse of fire known as 'Indiscriminate burning.' This form of

54 Rose, 9–19.

55 Jones, "Fire-Stick Farming," 4.

56 Pascoe and Gammage, *First Knowledges: Country: Future Fire, Future Farming*, 87.

57 Pascoe and Gammage, 108.

burning does not take the local burning methods nor the needs of the particular country into account when conducting a burn, further damaging already sensitive ecosystems. Indiscriminate burning can be conducted by First Nations or non-indigenous people. Although many destructive burns are not done in malice there needs to be greater education and allowing for 'testing' new methods of burning as much of the traditional methods have been lost after colonisation. [58]

When considering the practice of fire-stick farming with designing for agriculture and natural space, I believe design must address this on the scale of the building but also the landscape scale. Firstly all spatial design outcomes will need to be built to resist light fire and should be designed to support the practice of fire-stick farming, in a similar way in which we design for other weather conditions or human land care activities. This could be in material choice but also could be a form of adaptable architecture that can be moved or be placed into a 'fire mode' in which the building protects itself. Secondly, concerning spatial design, Public landscapes need to become available for the testing and implementation of fire-stick farming. As discussed above, much of the specificities of fire farming have been lost and so space in which these things can be tested safely should be implemented through design. With this, regional policy would be required to shift its current fear of fire and enable and encourage the responsible use of this tool in public areas. Sectioning off zones during controlled burns is much like the process of tree felling in public areas currently.

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58 Robbie Williams, *"Before the colonists came, we burned small and burned often to avoid big fires. It's time to relearn cultural burning,"* The Conversation, June 21, 2023. accessed March 07, 2024, https://theconversation.com/before-the-colonists-came-we-burned-small-and-burned-often-to-avoid-big-fires-its-time-to-relearn-cultural-burning-201475

[3] RE-IMAGINING THE PLAINS

application + testing within the agricultural + natural context

Penny Tweedie
Photograph

TEST 1

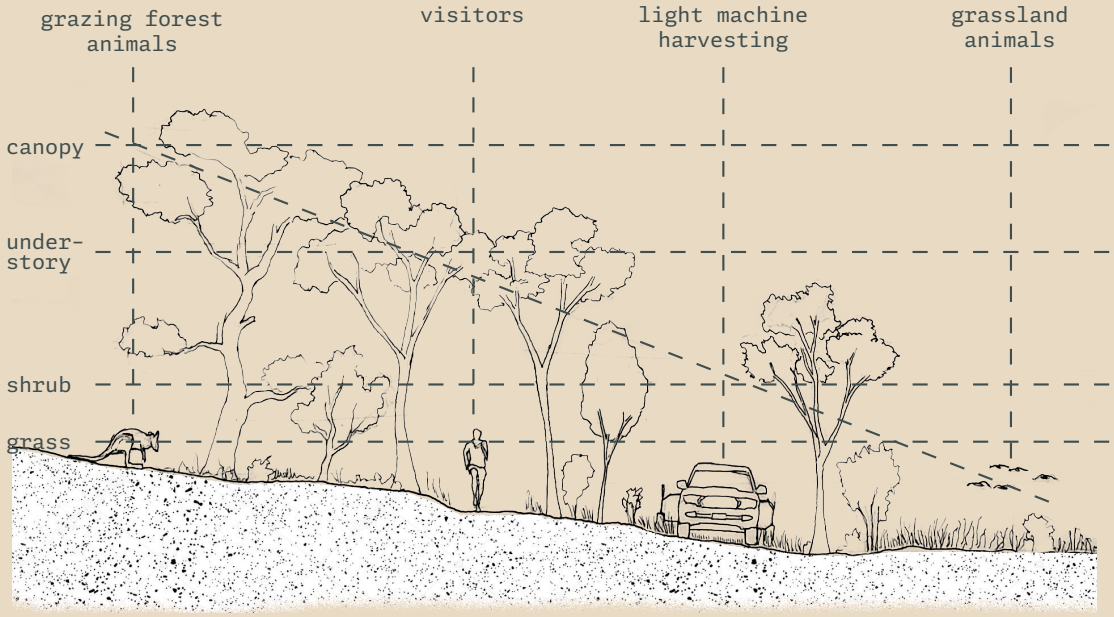
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL SPACE

DESIGN IDEA

The concept of Multi-Dimensional Space draws from First Nations principles 2.1, Layered Country, and 2.4, Inviolable Territory Networks. This design approach aims to create theoretical frameworks for application within the Victorian Volcanic Plains, addressing both urban and individual farm scales. The focus is on developing hybrid spaces that support various human activities, such as farming, dwelling, recreation, and hiking, alongside non-human activities, including nature reserves, migration paths, and growth corridors for flora and fauna. By embracing the concept of inviolable territory networks, this design idea promotes spaces that are not strictly defined by borders, allowing them to fluctuate and adapt to specific conditions and contexts.

Figure i (below)
Sketch depecting the overlapping of programatic space on a farm scale

Figure ii (opposite)
Sketch depecting the overlapping of zoning types on a rural urban scale



SCALES OF APPLICATION

At the urban scale, Multi-Dimensional Space re-evaluates the zoning of rural areas. It considers how different programmatic zones, from human to non-human needs, can be strategically placed to optimise economic and environmental benefits. The design explores opportunities for overlapping zones to create hybrid spaces where multiple activities can coexist, as illustrated in figure ii.

At the farm scale, as shown in figure i. the overlaying of diverse programmatic spaces fosters richer environments. While such spaces may be less productive in terms of agricultural output, they enhance biodiversity and support a variety of programs and outputs, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient landscape.

TEST 2

THE ECO-COMMONS

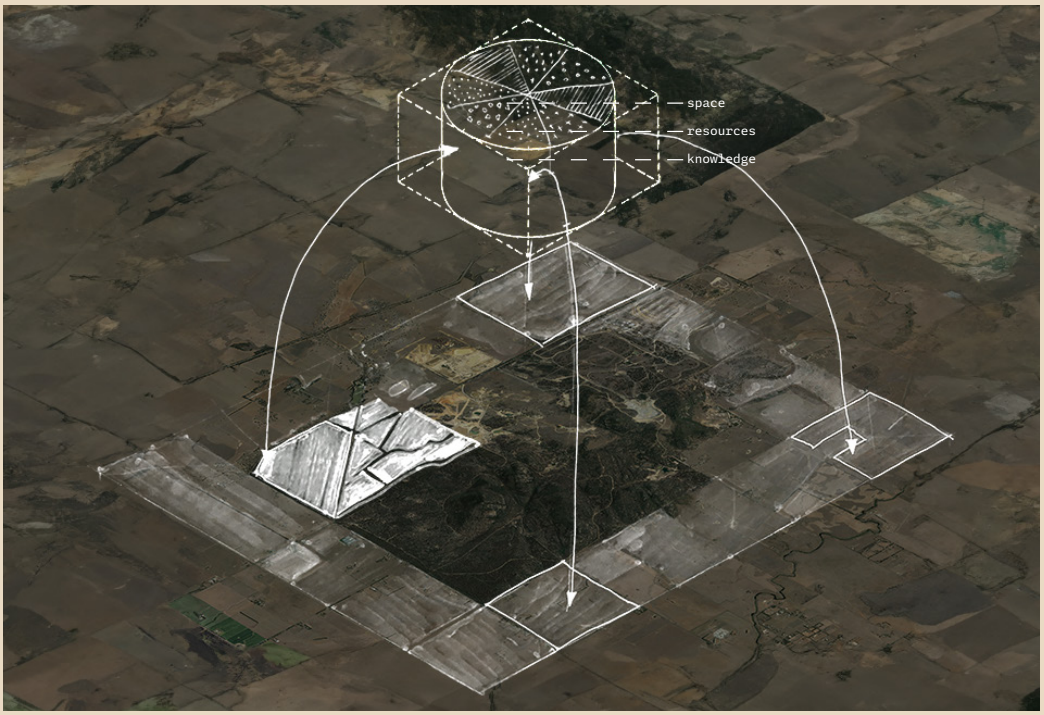


Figure iii (left)
Sketch depecting the sharing of verious resources via and eco-commons approach

Figure iv (right)
Graph depecting the distribution of care regimes within the rural urban context of the VVP

DESIGN IDEA

The Eco-Commons concept is derived from the First Nations principles 2.4, Inviolable Territory Networks, 2.5, Knowledge Archive, and 2.7, Caring for Country. This design idea reinterprets the traditional commons found in and around the Victorian Volcanic Plains.

The Eco-Commons aims to create spaces focused on ecological restoration and the utilisation of First Nations knowledge of the region. It emphasises not only the sharing of resources but also the sharing of space and knowledge systems.

SCALES OF APPLICATION

At the community scale, the Eco-Commons envisions areas where resources, spaces, and knowledge are shared among various stakeholders, including visitors, farmers, government bodies, First Nations peoples, and local residents. This approach fosters different forms of care regimes tailored to the specific needs and uses of these groups.

At the regional scale, the Eco-Commons are not confined to a single location but are distributed across the Victorian Volcanic Plains. This distribution allows for the interaction and integration of diverse resources, knowledge systems, and people, contributing to a cohesive landscape.

Figures iii and iv illustrate the practical application of the Eco-Commons design. These drawings depict a theoretical spatial organisation of these commons, and the care regimes embedded within it. Highlighting how different user groups can engage with the space, knowledge and resources. The visual representations underscore the potential for ecological restoration and cultural reconciliation through the interconnected network of Eco-Commons spread across the Victorian Volcanic Plains.

CARE REGIMES:

	visitor	farmer	government	first nations	residents
space	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
resources	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

TEST 3

SCALE: ENTITY OF PLACE

DESIGN IDEA

The design concept

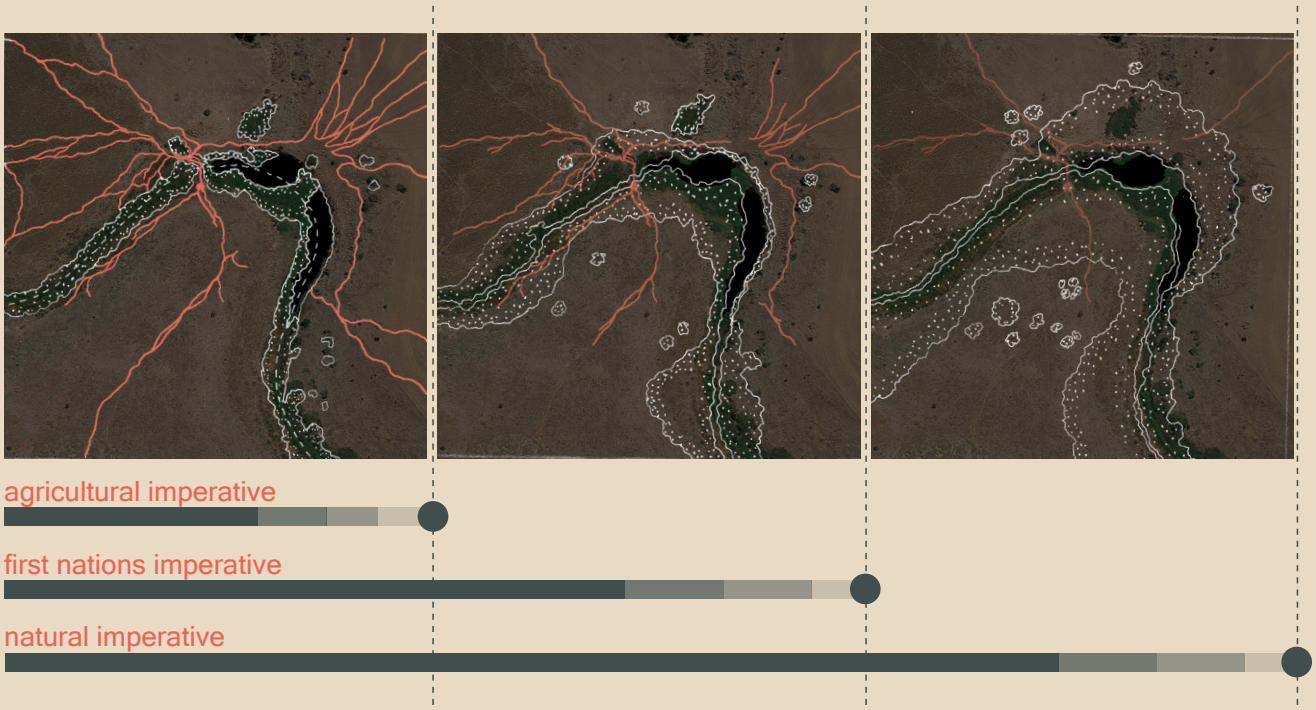
The design concept of Design Scale: Entity of Place integrates the First Nations principles 2.2, The Dreaming and Totemic Loci, and 2.3, Concentrated Loci of Place. This idea examines who we actually design for when working within the Victorian Volcanic Plains landscape. It considers various "clients" of the landscape, including agricultural imperatives, First Nations imperatives, and natural imperatives, as well as other potential stakeholders. The aim is to understand the different perspectives and needs that have historically shaped and continue to influence the landscape.

SCALES OF APPLICATION

At the landscape scale, Scale: Entity of Place acknowledges the layered history of the landscape, from its natural state prior to human contact to the tended Indigenous version, and finally to its current state, influenced by agricultural, rural, and domestic development. This design idea encourages spatial designers to consider these successive layers and imperatives when designing within the landscape.

At the project scale, the design approach varies depending on the specific program—whether it is agricultural, natural, or cultural. For example, designing for an agricultural program involves

Figure v (right)
Sketch depecting three design imperarives and their effect onto the landscape



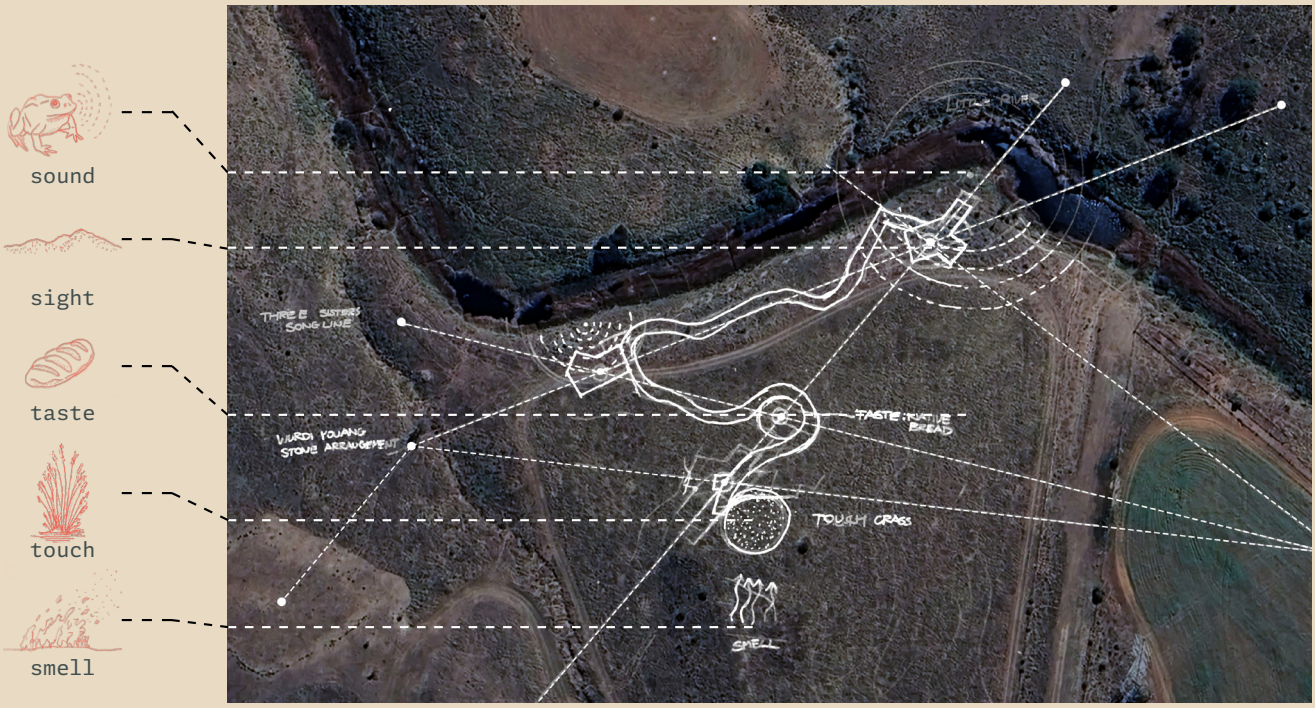
different considerations and outputs compared to designing for a natural program. Additionally, this design principle recognises the importance of considering different timescales, often longer, and integrating First Nations principles to ensure cultural sensitivity and sustainability.

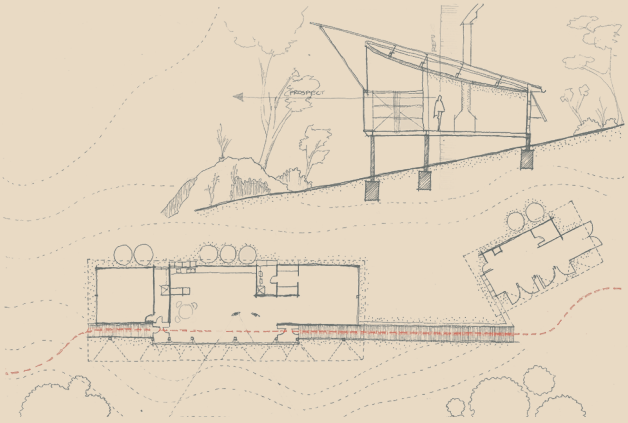
Policies play a critical role in this design scale. Designing policies that explicitly recognise animals, plants, flora, fauna, and other non-human entities as key imperatives is essential. Such policies would ensure that non-human clients are considered in the design and planning processes, promoting a holistic and inclusive approach to landscape management. Recognising these non-human entities in policy frameworks helps protect biodiversity and supports ecological health, aligning with Indigenous perspectives on the interconnectedness of all life forms.

Figure v illustrate the application of the Scale: Entity of Place concept. This drawing shows how different imperatives—agricultural, natural, and First Nations—change the overall design within the landscape. It highlights the need for spatial designers to create environments that respect and reflect the diverse histories and needs of the Victorian Volcanic Plains.

TEST 4

SCALE: THE SENSORIAL





DESIGN IDEA

The design concept of Scale: The Sensorial utilises the First Nations design principles 2.3a, Mobile Spatial Hierarchies, 2.3b, Detouring and Negative Space, and 2.5, Songlines and Country as Archive. This design idea focuses on the human scale, exploring how sensory curation through the hierarchy of space can add value to a landscape that might otherwise be perceived as profane. The key objective is to understand how human engagement with the landscape, through sensory experience, movement and activities, can enhance the perceived value of the space.

SCALES OF APPLICATION

At the human scale, The Sensorial examines how different forms of engagement—such as moving through space or participating in specific activities—affect our perception of the landscape. This involves considering various perspectives, whether standing while surveying the landscape and raking or getting down to a lower level to pick up and harvest seeds and grasses. These activities create different sensory experiences and connections to the land.

This design idea also recognises the importance of detouring and negative space, which involves creating paths and areas that encourage exploration and discovery, rather than straightforward movement. By integrating these elements, the landscape becomes a dynamic environment where human interaction is continuously shaped and reshaped by the sensory experiences.

Figure vi shows how the influence of sensory elements such as sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell can dictate the placement of architectural elements and the curation of movement through spaces. For instance, soundscapes of native birds might influence the positioning of points of rest, while pathways could be placed in areas where specific fragrant plants create enhancing experiences during a particular season.

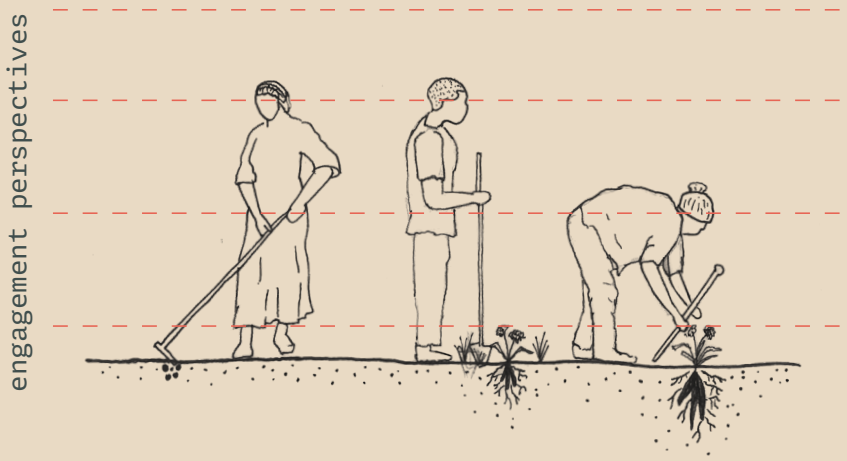


Figure vi (left)
Sketch depecting a path design which considers sensorial and phemenological aspects

Figure vii (bottom left)
Sketch depecting prospect and refuge in Simpson-Lee House by Glenn Murcutt

Figure viii (bottom right)
Sketch depecting the various levels of engagement in a landscape while performing a farming activity

TEST 5

SCALE: THE SACRED

Figure ix (right)
Sketch depecting various (assumed) sacred sites and their effects on movement through the landscape on an urbanistic scale

DESIGN IDEA

The design idea of The Sacred draws upon the principles of 2.3a Mobile Spatial Hierarchies, 2.3b Concentrated Loci of Place, and 2.3c Detouring and Negative Space. These principles guide the reinstatement of sacred spaces within the Victorian Volcanic Plains landscape and explore how these spaces can influence movement and interaction within the environment.

SCALES OF APPLICATION

At the urbanistic scale, The Sacred focuses on the broader landscape context rather than individual sites. It examines how the reinstatement of sacred spaces can contribute to the overall fabric of the landscape and influence patterns of movement and circulation around them. This scale considers the interconnectedness of sacred sites and their role in shaping

the cultural and ecological identity of the region.

On this scale, the design prioritises respect for the sacredness of place and suggests ways to facilitate movement through the landscape. Rather than imposing static pathways, the design embraces the idea of shifting and evolving spaces that respond to the dynamic needs of the community and the environment.

Figure ix illustrate the application of The Sacred at the urbanistic scale. Utilising various natural elements within the landscape as sacred spaces within the Victorian Volcanic Plains landscape and the integration of dynamic movement patterns.

TEST 6

CONNECTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Figure x (below)
Sketch depecting various sacred sites within Victoria and their estimated connection though major Victorian songlines

DESIGN IDEA

The design idea of "Connection Through Knowledge," focuses on creating connections through Songlines and Embedded Knowledge Systems. This concept is informed by First Nations Principles 2.1 Layered Country, 2.4 Inviolable Territory Networks, and 2.5 Songlines and Country as Archive. It aims to reintegrate the original Songlines and Embedded Knowledge Systems into the landscape of the Victorian state, helping to reestablish a stronger interconnected landscape for the Victorian Volcanic Plains.

SCALES OF APPLICATION

At the larger scale of the Victorian state, Connection Through Knowledge explores long interconnecting exhibitions of space and knowledge.

By re-meshing the larger landscape and reconnecting with the original Songlines of the region, the design ensures that the cultural history of the Songlines is preserved and kept alive. This creates a strong network that spans the entirety of the Victorian state, enforcing reengagement with the sacred and ecology of place within the landscape.

Use of Drawings

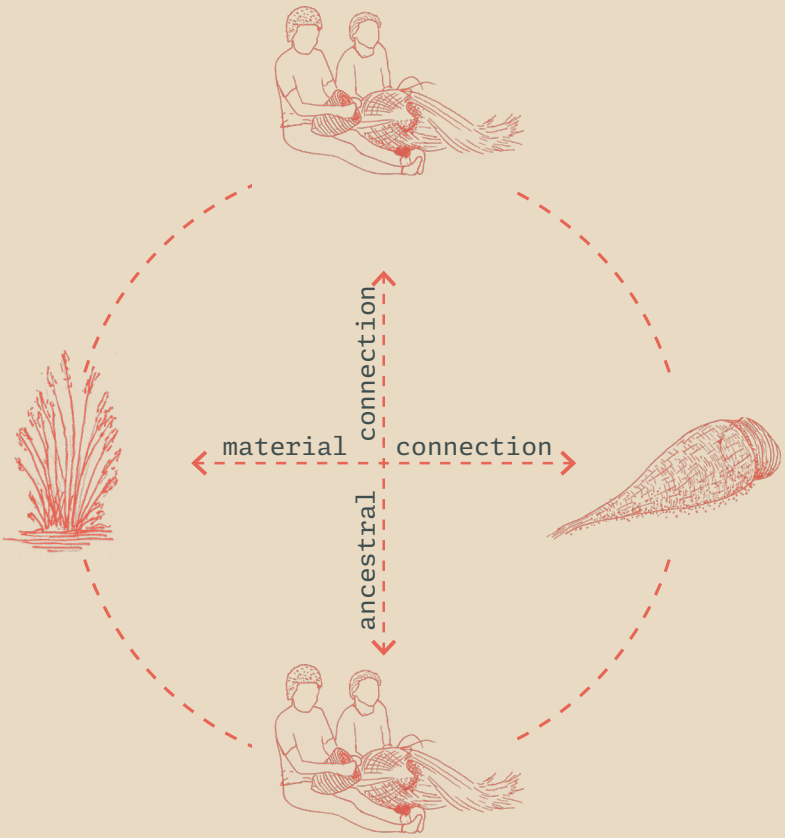
Figure x depicts the possible application of Connection Through Knowledge within the Victorian Volcanic Plains landscape. This drawing illustrates possibility to create stronger connection of the original major victorian songlines, connecting the major cultural landscapes together across the state.

TEST 7

HUMAN EMBODIED MATERALITY

Figure xi (below)
Sketch showing the importance of embodied materality with its connection to craft and material connection

Figure xii (below + right)
Two sketches depecting fire stick farming and intergrating how we design and interact with these processes



DESIGN IDEA

The principle of Human Embodied Materiality, drawing from First Nations principles 2.4, 2.6, and 2.7, aims to promote embodied human activity within the landscape. This approach encourages handcraft making and other acts that emphasise the value of human interaction with the environment.

SCALES OF APPLICATION

Materiality plays a significant role in this concept, with the use of local materials and skills in the creation of space, further emphasising the embodied human value. This principle also embraces traditional landcare acts such as Fire Stick Farming and Harvesting of grasses, which are integral to the management and preservation of the landscape.

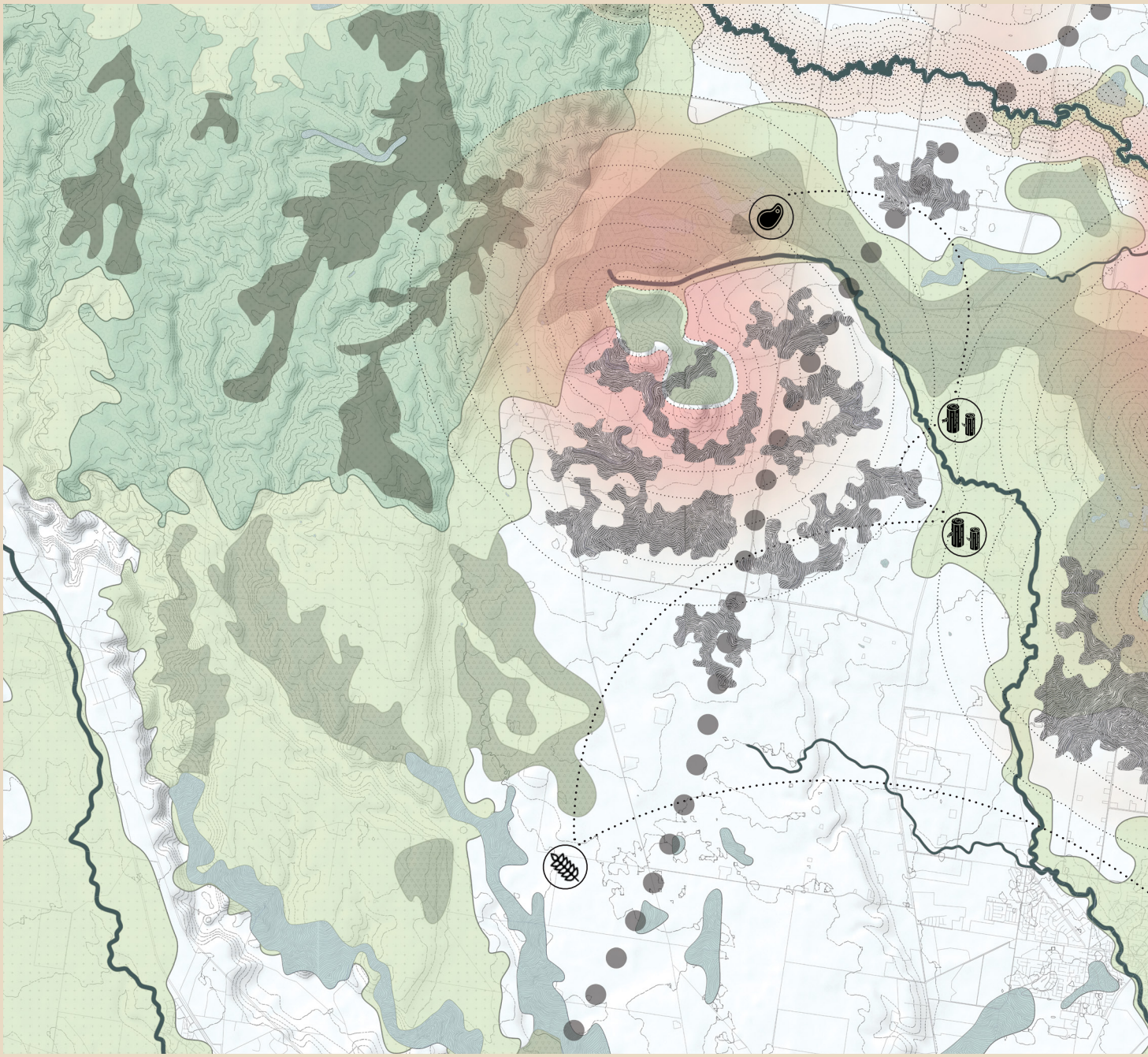
At the community level, Human Embodied Materiality seeks to create a demand for a local food chain and market. This is closely related to the sharing of space and the creation of Multiview spaces, where various activities and interactions can coexist.

In terms of infrastructure, the design of structures that can withstand fire, either passively or actively, is a key consideration. These structures engage with both human and non-human processes around the creation and management of fire, contributing to a resilient and adaptable landscape.

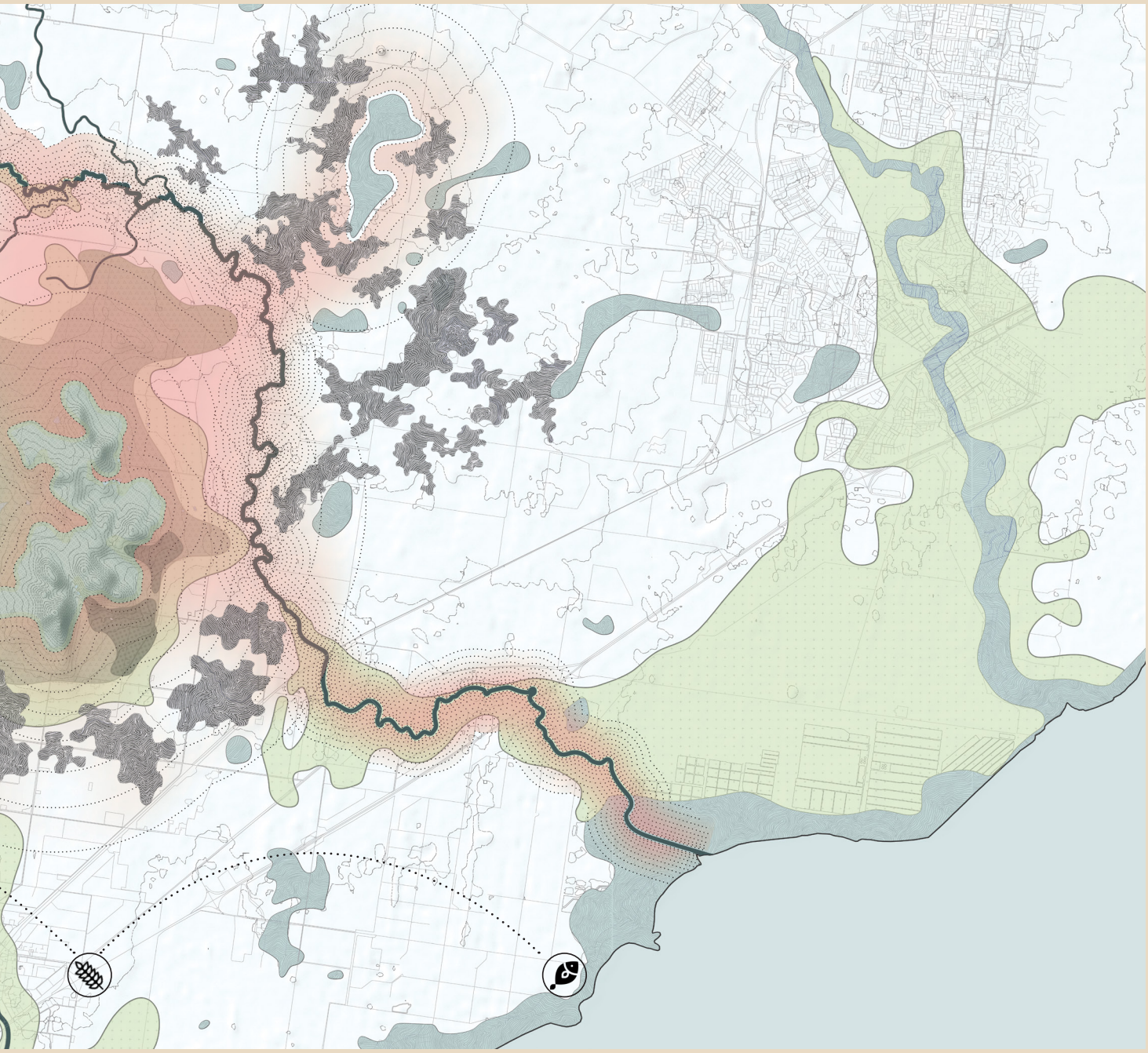
At the policy level, the use of fire as a tool within public areas is advocated, further integrating this natural element into the management and care of the landscape. This approach, as illustrated in figure xii, fosters a rich environment that, while perhaps less productive in conventional terms, enhances biodiversity and supports a variety of programmes and outputs, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient landscape.

TEST 8: RE-READING THE LANDSCAPE

SPATIAL SYNTHESIS MAPPING



CURRENT CONDITION + SACRED SPACE + MULTI-DIMENSIONAL



5km

+ ECO-COMMONS + LOCAL KNOWLEDGE + FIRE REGIMES

[4] DISCUSSION + CONCLUSION

D.F. Thomson
Photograph

DISCUSSION + CONCLUSION

This research aimed to delineate the fundamental views, laws, and dynamics of the First Nations People and explore how they manifest in the form of spatial ecologies. Subsequently, it aimed to translate these insights into spatial and programmatic forms to create a spatial reassessment of the agricultural and natural landscape of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. Creating design principles which can inform a new social and spatial landscape for the Victorian Volcanic Plains. The research revealed four major themes within First Nation principles, predominantly being grouped under 'views and laws', 'boundaries and territories', 'knowledge and archive' and 'interactions'. Subsequently these First Nations principles where then concluded into seven design ideas which were theoretically implemented into the Victorian Volcanic Plains and culminated in a spatial synthesis map of a portion of the VVP. The seven design ideas being 3.1 multidimensional space, 3.1 eco-commons, 3.3 design scale: entity of place 3.4 design scale: the sensorial, 3.5 design scale: the sacred, 3.6 connection through knowledge and finally 3.7 human embodied materiality and care regimes.

Key findings emerged from these design ideas, particularly highlighting how our perception and experience of space can differ when viewed from a First Nations perspective. For instance, the design idea of Multidimensional Space, informed by the non-singular definitions or 'zoning' of space outlined in 2.1 Layered Country, emerged as a key concept for potential implementation within the larger VVP landscape. This could enable a greater balance between the various imperatives of the landscape. Another significant finding came from the design idea of the Eco-Commons, influenced by principles 2.4, 2.5, and 2.7. This idea proposed spaces that would enable new forms of ownership at the urban scale. It suggested that sharing space, resources, and knowledge between different areas could reinforce stronger care regimes for the landscape. Finally, the importance of movement emerged as a pivotal design consideration from multiple design ideas. This importance lies in both human and nonhuman movement. As such, it was found that reassessing

how we design for movement is crucial. This includes designing for sensory curation of space via the human senses and designing space that considers and allows for other nonhuman movements, such as ecological and cultural changes.

The findings of this research have implications for the understanding and management of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. The exploration of First Nations Spatial Ecologies has revealed various potential design implications from urbanistic scales to smaller phenomenological scale interventions. These design ideas and interventions couldn't be tested within the scope of this thesis and therefor the successfulness of these theoretical changes cannot be measured against the current state of the landscape. The documenting and displaying of First Nations cultural perspectives has been successful. It has opened the dialogue for myself and others to address and learn from First Nations Perspectives and to do this collaboratively. So when considering the implications of the results from this perspective I believe they are a successful. However in future research it would be beneficial to attempt to further take the applied design ideas and objectively measure them against the current conditions of the VVPs. The assessing of these changes to determine the most likely beneficial design ideas could be concluded by using a territory, place, scale and network (TPSN) assessment.

While this research provides valuable insights into First Nations spatial ecologies and their potential application in the Victorian Volcanic Plains, it is not without limitations. The scope of the research was confined to theoretical implementation of design ideas, and the effectiveness of these interventions could not be empirically tested against the current state of the landscape.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas for future research have emerged. Further research could explore the practical implementation and assessment of the proposed design ideas, using objective measures like the TPSN framework to evaluate their impact on the current conditions of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. Additionally, future studies could investigate the potential for integrating other First Nations principles not

covered in this research. There is also a need for research exploring the socio-cultural implications of these design interventions, particularly in terms of their impact on First Nations communities and their cultural practices

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of integrating First Nations principles in our approach to land management and urban planning. It highlights the value of viewing the landscape through a different lens—one that respects the interconnectedness of all life forms, acknowledges the sacredness of place, and recognises the importance of sensory experiences in shaping our relationship with the environment. As we face the escalating challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, the wisdom of First Nations spatial ecologies offers a path towards a more sustainable and resilient future. It is a call to action for further research, policy changes, and most importantly, a shift in our mindset and approach towards our interaction with Country and culture.

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Jason Galea

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