Pursuing Social Justice Through Collaborative Archaeologies in Aboriginal Australia

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies the emergence of the pursuit of social justice as a core focus of collaborative archaeologies in Aboriginal Australia. A wide range of case studies are examined, especially in relation to efforts to redress a 'deep colonisation' that silences Indigenous histories and fails to engage with Indigenous voices or experiences. This research is part of a wider global movement of community-based, activist and engaged archaeology that encompasses two principle approaches to social justice: the redistribution of resources and goods and the politics of recognition. It is informed by a more general concern with human rights, structural violence and ethical globalisation. In Australia, social justice archaeologies are both confronting, in terms of frontier violence, intentional structural violence and racism, but

also inspirational/aspirational, in terms of Aboriginal nation building and the cultural facilitation of Aboriginal research ethics. The development of collaborative projects between Indigenous peoples and (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) archaeologists can be challenging. Indigenous archaeologists face particular challenges, including balancing sometimes conflicting expectations from communities with the demands of the profession. For non-Indigenous archaeologists, the challenge lies in the shift from working *with* Indigenous peoples to working *for* Indigenous peoples as part of a process in which social justice outcomes are a product, rather than a by-product, of archaeological research.

Résumé: Cet article identifie l'émergence d'une aspiration à la justice sociale en tant que finalité essentielle des archéologies collaboratives dans l'Australie Aborigène. Une grande variété d'études de cas sont examinées, notamment relativement aux efforts visant à corriger une « colonisation profonde » qui réduit au silence les histoires indigènes et échoue à capter et comprendre les voix ou expériences indigènes. Cette recherche fait partie d'un mouvement international plus vaste d'une archéologie communautaire, militante et engagée englobant les deux approches principales de la justice sociale identifiées par Fraser (2009): la redistribution des ressources et des biens et la politique de reconnaissance. Il est inspiré par une préoccupation plus générale portant sur les droits humains, la violence structurelle et la mondialisation éthique. En Australie, les archéologies de la justice sociale se définissent tant par la confrontation (en termes de violence frontalière, de violence structurelle intentionnelle et de racisme intentionnel) que par l'inspiration/l'aspiration en termes de construction d'une nation aborigène et de la facilitation culturelle d'une éthique de recherche aborigène. Le développement de projets collaboratifs entre les peuples indigènes et les archéologues (indigènes et non-indigènes) peut présenter des difficultés. Les archéologues indigènes font face à un défi particulier, qui est parfois de parvenir à un équilibre entre les attentes contradictoires des communautés et les impératifs de la profession. Pour les archéologues non-indigènes, la difficulté réside dans le fait de passer d'une collaboration avec les peuples indigènes à un travail au service de ces derniers dans le cadre d'un processus pour lequel les résultats en matière de justice sociale sont un produit, plutôt qu'un sous-produit de la recherche archéologique.

Resumen: Este artículo identifica el surgimiento de la búsqueda de la justicia social como un foco central de las arqueologías colaborativas en la Australia aborigen. Se examina una amplia gama de estudios de casos, especialmente en relación con los esfuerzos para reparar una ''colonización profunda'' que silencia las historias indígenas y no logra relacionarse con las voces o experiencias indígenas. Esta investigación es parte de un

movimiento global más amplio de arqueología comunitaria, activista y comprometida que abarca los dos enfoques principales para la justicia social identificados por Fraser (2009): la redistribución de recursos y bienes y las políticas de reconocimiento. Está informado por una preocupación más general con los derechos humanos, la violencia estructural y la globalización ética. En Australia, las arqueologías de justicia social son confrontativas (en términos de violencia fronteriza, violencia estructural intencional y racismo intencional) e inspiradoras/aspiracionales en términos de la construcción de la nación aborigen y la facilitación cultural de la ética de la investigación aborigen. El desarrollo de proyectos de colaboración entre los pueblos indígenas y los arqueólogos (indígenas y no indígenas) puede ser un desafío. Los arqueólogos indígenas enfrentan un desafío particular, el de equilibrar las expectativas a veces conflictivas de las comunidades con las demandas de la profesión. Para los arqueólogos no indígenas, el desafío radica en pasar de trabajar con los pueblos indígenas a trabajar para los pueblos indígenas como parte de un proceso en el que los resultados de la justicia social son un producto, más que un subproducto, de la investigación arqueológica.

Introduction

When British invaders arrived on Australian shores in 1770 to establish a permanent colony called New South Wales, they classified Aboriginal people as nomadic. Seeing no evidence of 'improving' the land through agriculture, they assumed that Aboriginal people had no basis for land tenure. This led to the doctrine of *terra nullius* (land belonging to no-one) which was used to justify a hostile takeover of land. Dispossession eventually led to the ethnocide of Aboriginal peoples (Marcus 2001), aided by introduced diseases that rapidly decimated populations (Reynolds 2001). The subsequent decline in the numbers of Aboriginal people (Butlin 1983), as with many other Indigenous peoples across the European imperial footprint, was seen as inevitable, the result of 'primitive' bodies and technology being superseded by a more 'evolved' culture (eg. Bates 1938). During the first 150 years of British colonisation, Aboriginal people were thought to have

been in Australia for a few thousand years at most. They lay lightly on the land and could be lightly dismissed.

During the early and mid parts of the 20th century Australian Aboriginal people were constructed as a dying race (see Bates 1938, also critiques by Langford 1983; Gosden 2006), primarily of interest as a Palaeolithic parallel (Porr and Mathews 2017). Such beliefs were underpinned by influential colonists like R.H. Pulleine, who infamously described Aboriginal people as 'an unchanging people in an unchanging environment' (1929: 310). In Pulleine's time (the early 20th century), this was a common European perception of Aboriginal people and in some ways is still a commonly understood public view, resurfacing whenever Aboriginal culture is described as 'primitive', or 'stone age' (eg. Huffadine and Carney 2016). By the late 20th century however, Australian archaeology began to play a role in challenging this narrative as one of the outcomes of Aboriginal activism and working closely with Aboriginal people. This eventually generated new kinds of understandings of how Aboriginal people perceived the epistemology of their ancestors' material culture in terms of their identity and in proving the longevity of their occupation of the continent. The strengthening relationship between archaeologists and Aboriginal people influenced new ways of thinking about methodologies for archaeological research (Ross 1996; Upcher 1996; Marshall 2002). For some archaeologists, working closely with Aboriginal communities forced them to confront colonial legacies of the discipline and acknowledge Aboriginal people as the rightful owners of the cultural heritage that is the archaeological signature of the continent (eg. Ucko 1983; McBryde 1985). One of the contemporary ramifications of this is increasing acknowledgement of adverse historical events, such as massacres (eg. Lydon and Ryan 2018), and a renewed pursuit of social justice for Aboriginal people.

In Australia, social justice archaeologies are both confronting in terms of frontier violence, intentional structural violence and intentional racism and also inspirational/aspirational in terms of Aboriginal nation building and the cultural facilitation of Aboriginal research ethics. Social justice research by Aboriginal people and archaeologists, as well as by Aboriginal archaeologists, is currently being undertaken in many regions of Australia (Figure 1) and is part of a wider social justice movement in archaeology (eg. Atalay et al. 2014; Gnecco and Lippert 2015) and beyond (eg. Fraser 2009). This paper focuses on a range of research projects currently being undertaken by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers affiliated with Flinders University in South Australia. They demonstrate how a change of focus from archaeology as a product to archaeology as a process in Australia has resulted in a new outcome: archaeologies of social justice, which has as its central concern ethical collaborations with Indigenous people. In this paper, our aim is to demonstrate the capacity of archaeology to adapt
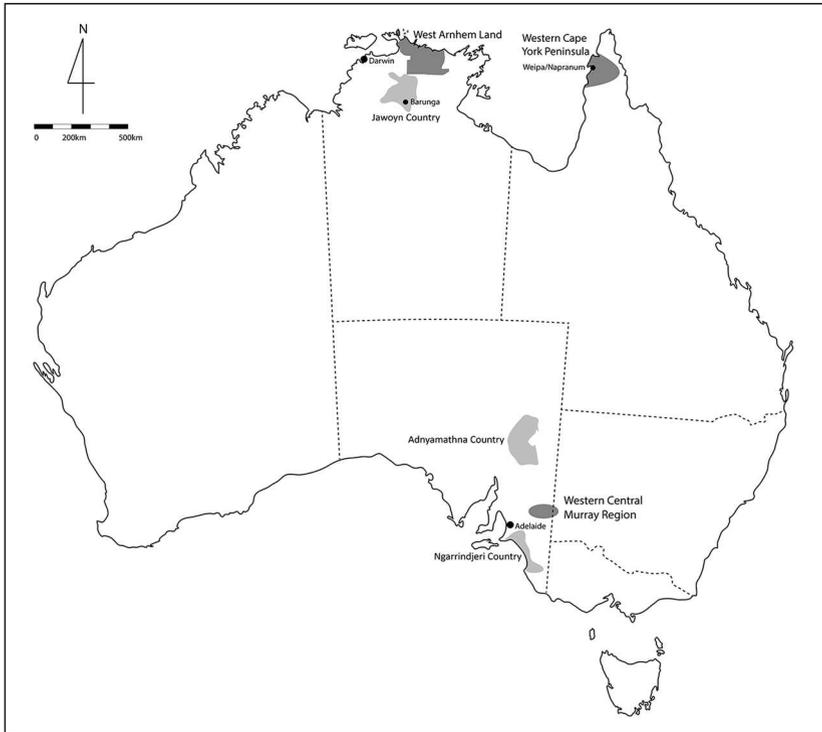
Figure 1. Location of case studies

generative practices that produce social justice outcomes for peoples whose histories and voices are under-represented, and to capture the diversity and richness of Aboriginal Australia, past and present. The core difference between the work detailed in this paper and prior archaeological research in Australia is that at Flinders University our approach combines Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, academic and community, local, national and international perspectives on the past and present to provide diverse insights into how archaeology can generate, rather than constrict, practices through innovative methodologies. This approach is explicitly aimed at highlighting divergent and disparate voices and experiences and tackling often thorny social problems. One of the most illuminating elements of this synthesis is the examples of violence, both structural and physical, that demonstrate an underlying racism prevalent in Australian society, even though the number of people in Australia who identify as Indigenous is increasing (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016).

In this paper, the inconsistent use of the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' reflects the preferences of different authors, which is part of a wider

global debate on the use of these terms (eg. Ouzman 2005). This is particularly a characteristic of the individual narratives at the beginning of this paper, in which Aboriginal authors communicate their preferences and experiences, especially because of the ontological and epistemological challenges they face as Indigenous people working in an historically colonial discipline. Together, these different narratives provide new insights into contemporary challenges, particularly in terms of the best ways to train a new generation of practitioners in archaeological collaborations, and the changes to institutional structures that are needed to facilitate collaborative archaeologies and enable them to reach their full potential. We hope that our ideas will support others who are interested in this work globally.

Aboriginal Ethics

Ipso facto, archaeological research in Australia is undertaken on a continent that was, and is, Indigenous land. Archaeological research is conducted in consultation with Aboriginal people, who never ceded sovereignty after the British invasion. Therefore, it is essential to understand ethics as perceived by Aboriginal people, as it relates to a particular place or region in Australia. While collaborative research is widely and productively discussed within Indigenous archaeologies (see Nicholas 2010; Atalay et al. 2014; Ferguson et al. 2015; Gnecco and Lippert 2015; Zimmerman and Branam 2014), ethics, as perceived by Indigenous people, has received little attention in the literature. In this article, we explore ethics through the eyes of five young Aboriginal people trained in archaeology at Flinders University. Their narratives serve as a foundation for understanding ethics as they inform all of the projects outlined in this paper.

Jacinta Koolmatrie Narrative (Applying for Ethics and Being Truly Ethical)

One of the main issues I came across when starting my research is that I, as an Adnyamathanha person, was required to obtain approval from a university ethics committee that was not Adnyamathanha. Although I have received approval, the application requires much information that is difficult to relate to archaeological work, especially with an Indigenous community. As I began my research, I was highly aware of the heartache that Adnyamathanha people have felt when archaeologists, and researchers in general, do not consult with the right community members when working on Adnyamathanha *yarta* (land). To combat the negative effects researchers have had in my community, I have employed a method of research that

not only prioritises Adnyamathanha knowledge, but more specifically, the position of Adnyamathanha Elders. Elders are the main holders of knowledge in my community. We do not have a hierarchical structure akin to Western modes of gaining knowledge through educational institutions; rather we acknowledge the experience that one has had and the knowledge that we have been gifted by our ancestors. By seeking approval from Elders from each family group you are genuinely receiving approval from Adnyamathanha people as a whole. These standards are in no way excessive; rather they are what researchers should be doing if they want to truly work ethically.

Jasmine Willika Narrative (Blekbalawei: The Elders as Government)

I am a Jawoyn woman from the Manyallaluk community of the Northern Territory in Australia. Since 1990, archaeological researchers and senior Elders have collaborated with the Barunga, Beswick and Manyallaluk communities to keep cultural heritage safe. It is important that non-Aboriginal people respect the knowledge of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have had stronger control when it comes to dealing with archaeological and anthropological research (Jackson and Smith 2005) since the introduction of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* in the Northern Territory. For example, when community Elders take researchers to a particular site they can simultaneously direct them away from other sites that they don't want researchers to know about. This is because there are many sacred sites in the Jawoyn region to which access is restricted because of cultural factors like age, knowledge status or gender. Researchers who come to our communities are only allowed to visit sites accompanied by traditional custodians.

Until recently, Olgaman Phyllis was the traditional owner of Bagala clan lands. When she passed away, her late brother's children took on this role. The traditional owners of country, like Olgaman, meet and assist representatives of government and others who seek access to country. Government and other people must listen to what they have to say. Olgaman Phyllis stated that often non-Aboriginal visitors do not understand that the community has rules that are to be obeyed to show respect to country (Wiynjorroc et al. 2005: 316). Researchers, like archaeologists and anthropologists, sometimes do their work without knowing what is important to the Aboriginal communities. Sometimes Elders do not tell them what they want to know—they are afraid that non-Aboriginal people will take their knowledge and claim it as their own. Also, researchers often focus on one part of society. For example, they may study rock art, but overlook oral

histories that would enrich their interpretations. On Jawoyn country, archaeologists need to get permission from the traditional owners first and also talk to our representative organisation, the Jawoyn Association, about what they want to do. Also, they need to get permits from the Northern Land Council in the Northern Territory because this is the proper process to get permission to access our country to conduct research. It is the traditional owner's responsibility to guide researchers so they follow cultural protocols (see Wiynjorroc et al. 2005: 319).

Brandon Isaac Pamkal Narrative (Life Chances and Helping the Community)

For the last few years, I have worked with Flinders University as a community researcher. I work with them when they come to visit for our field school every year. Working with Flinders University made me want to study. After a couple of years working with them, I moved to Adelaide to start studying archaeology. Also, I wanted to follow my family member (Jasmine Willika). After I started university I had a dream. In that dream, an old lady came and told me to keep going with my studies. The next day my mum told me that a family member had passed away. She did not have to tell me who it was. I already knew. That old lady came to me in my dreams on the night she passed away.

I am studying at university because I want to get a good job and make a better life for my son. I also want to make life better for other Aboriginal children from other communities in the Katherine region in the Northern Territory. I want them to see me going to university and succeeding, so that they might follow me. I think if I can do the hard work first, then it might look a bit easier for the younger people in the community. One day, I want to go back to Katherine and get a job. There are no job opportunities in Werenbun, where I live, but if I get qualified, I'll have opportunities in Katherine. For me, university is a road to those opportunities.

When I work on the field school, I help the students learn about rock art, and we have been recording the graveyard at Barunga community. The first few times I went to rock art sites with students I felt a little bit shy. The first time I went to that rock art site, nothing happened, but the second time, I felt something, like my ancestors were happy for me to be there. They were supporting me. That rock art, it's like 'do not disturb'. It's all right, but it's not all that interesting. It's really only for *Gitjan* (Traditional Owners), *Junggayi* (Custodians) and the old people. But that graveyard, that's important to the whole community. Everyone cares about that. We all have family members in that graveyard. Sometimes, we don't know which grave they're in, as this was never recorded for people in Aboriginal communities. Even today where you

are buried is not recorded. My father is there in that graveyard at Barunga but I can't show his grave to my little son. I want to keep working on recording the graveyards in all of our communities, so people can know where their family members are buried.

Chris Wilson Narrative (Government and Sovereignty)

Archaeological research in the Ngarrindjeri community is closely associated with relationships between the state, culture and ideas of sovereignty. Understanding and navigating these relationships were the most problematic aspects of my doctoral research (Wilson 2017). The challenges became apparent following ethics clearance by Flinders University, when I liaised with the State Government Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division (AARD, now Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation) to obtain permits to undertake surveys and excavations. Section 21 of the State *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988* states that 'all persons must apply for permission to the Minister to excavate and thus disturb an Aboriginal Site'. Further, if materials are to be removed and transported elsewhere it is necessary to apply for permission under s.23. I was advised by AARD to apply for permits under both s.21 and s.23, even though I was a Ngarrindjeri man with community support for my research. This procedure failed to recognise both my personal identity and Ngarrindjeri governance structures, part of a wider pattern of structural violence that inhibits Indigenous nation building in Australia.

This issue was discussed with Uncle Tom Trevorrow who, although he did not agree with the process, gave approval for me to apply for both sections for the purposes of my research. As a Ngarrindjeri person and archaeologist, this process created a true 'cultural dilemma' in which approval had to be sought from the Minister to 're-engage' with a site and its material past for the purposes of research, even though the culturally appropriate body was the Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee. Another dilemma arose during my second field season when there were concerns that the excavation permit would not be approved by AARD in time. However, under s.37 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, Aboriginal people should not be prevented from carrying out traditional activities, such as digging in the earth, at Aboriginal sites. An AARD representative informed me of that. As a Ngarrindjeri person, I would not be prosecuted for excavating the site, even though I did not have a permit. The situation has now changed, due to the landmark agreement between the Ngarrindjeri and the State Government which recognised Ngarrindjeri nationhood and put in place appropriate systems of governance (see Hemming et al. 2016). All other Aboriginal archaeologists are required to satisfy government

requirements that are contrary to traditional systems of governance, even on their own lands. The wider recognition of Aboriginal nationhood and governance would allow greater Aboriginal control over cultural heritage without having to continuously deal with government agencies.

Kellie Pollard Narrative (Indigenous Benefits and Institutional Structures)

For more than 20 years, Australian archaeologists have worked in collaborative scenarios with Indigenous people. Australian archaeology has benefitted enormously from these interactions through access to data, sites on country, Indigenous knowledge and the enrichment of archaeological interpretations. Have Aboriginal people benefitted as much as archaeologists? Although these collaborations have built an Aboriginal workforce over 20 years that is very skilled in archaeological field methods, the academy has not seen a corresponding advance in cohorts of Aboriginal archaeology students or Aboriginal archaeology graduates. By 2019, only three Aboriginal students have obtained a PhD in archaeology in Australia, two of whom are authors of this paper. Clearly, there needs to be significant changes at an institutional level if collaborations are to produce social justice outcomes in terms of Aboriginal aspirations for equality of academic involvement. Real change would mean courses co-designed by Aboriginal people and Aboriginal graduates, and, in best practice, taught by Aboriginal people. It would mean acknowledging that Aboriginal epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies are equal to the Western equivalents in terms of pedagogy and research. It would mean appointing the first Aboriginal professor of archaeology before waiting another 20 years.

In Australian academia, Aboriginal graduates want to influence changes to institutional structures to effect equality of involvement. Further, institutions need fully recognise the qualitatively different barriers that Aboriginal students face to studying, such as being the first in their family to go to university, or being the only Aboriginal person in a cohort of non-Aboriginal students and the challenges and experiences that produces. First-generation students at university do not have the social capital that comes from having family members who have traversed the terrain before them, and who can therefore mentor them through higher education. Like other first-generation students from minority backgrounds, Aboriginal students need appropriate support to navigate complex university processes. Dedicated tutorial support for Aboriginal students is insufficient, especially for students from remote communities who do not speak English as a first language. As a result of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have shorter life spans, resulting in significantly greater health burdens. They have less access

to educational opportunities and, when employed, they have lower income levels (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016). Even if an Aboriginal student is in good health, it is likely that many of their family members are not, and the student will have to deal with the physical and mental health burdens of kin during their candidature, which is a significant distraction from studies. Because of the way the kinship system works in Aboriginal families, Aboriginal students have priorities that are not always commensurate with the pressures that studying imposes. This creates tension and stress that affects retention rates. Aboriginal students have different epistemological and ontological frameworks and worldviews that influence how they study and, in archaeology, how they approach understanding the past.

Just as theory, method and practice in archaeology have responded to fluctuations in social, historical, economic or political influence over the centuries (Trigger 1980, 2006), so too the needs and expectations of Aboriginal communities in Australia changed with time in response to external pressures on their ambitions and aspirations for political and economic emancipation. In archaeology, what does this look like? When an archaeologist or institution that teaches archaeology seeks Aboriginal endorsement of a research proposal, it extends an opportunity to Indigenous people to build their learning capacities towards realising their goals. Understanding Western methods of inquiry is a vital learning opportunity for Indigenous communities, one that enables them to negotiate knowledge in real-world contexts, as well as negotiate more effectively with non-Indigenous researchers and government representatives to achieve their goals. The different values of Indigenous and non-Indigenous motives for doing research must also be recognised. Indigenous people in Australia value the benefits of research to their whole community, not the individual. Comparatively, non-Indigenous researchers are tutored and trained in a system that values individualism and the benefits to personal careers. As part of collaborations with Indigenous peoples in Australia, some non-Indigenous researchers argue it is up to them to demonstrate a commitment to alleviating disadvantage when they work with communities (cf. Roberts and Campbell 2012). If this happens, it will take archaeologists beyond normal disciplinary parameters, to operate 'outside the box', as part of an archaeology that is genuinely engaged with the aspirations of Indigenous communities (Smith 2015).

Frontier Violence, Historical Trauma and the Deep Colonisation of Forgetfulness

The individual narratives outlined above highlight a range of issues that have informed archaeological practice in Australia, steadily guiding it towards the pursuit of social justice. One outcome has been an increased

emphasis on acknowledging the injustices of the past, itself part of a wider social movement focused on truth-telling (see Australian Reconcilation Council 2017a, b). Another is a focus on a range of particularly confronting aspects of the recent past, such as frontier violence and historical trauma (eg. Adams et al. 2018; Burke et al. 2018). The Western Central Murray Region (see Figure 1) was one such area of violent encounter, associated with the opening of overland stock routes between New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia (Hemming et al. 2000; Burke et al. 2016). All along the Murray River Aboriginal people faced physical contact with Europeans from 1830 onwards and the subsequent incursion of settlement and pastoral expansion led to dispossession, displacement and starvation that catalysed Aboriginal resistance. This, in turn, outraged colonists, ultimately leading to punitive parties and massacres, such as at Rufus River, in which around 30 Aboriginal people were murdered (Moorhouse 1843). Such cycles of frontier violence were commonplace across Australia and continued in some places into the 20th century.

The 'frontier' is in fact a deceptively simple label for the complex, convoluted and layered nature of Aboriginal–European interactions in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The frontier was violent, sporadic and irregular in its progression (Godwin 2001). It was brought into being on any occasion when European expansion met Aboriginal existence and resistance. This process was aided and abetted by various governance structures that prioritised capitalist endeavour in all its forms and legalised the active repression of Aboriginal people through instruments such as the Native Police, as well as legislation constraining Aboriginal people to reserves and missions.

Further, for Indigenous nations the colonialism of frontier times is not a thing of the past—it continues in the present (see Stanner 1969; Rose 1991; Smith and Beck 2003; Ralph and Smith 2014). The recognition of ongoing colonialism is a key component of the pursuit of social justice. Hemming and Rigney (2010) observe that:

> Southern South Australia is characterised as settled from the perspective of the coloniser. For Indigenous people, however, it continues to look like a frontier: a place where protectors, translators, traders, and vagabonds occupy the space studying, collecting, interpreting, authenticating, and colonising (Hemming and Rigney 2010:101).

The effects of the frontier through generations of Aboriginal families remain poorly understood by non-Indigenous Australians. Whilst elements of structural violence are common to all areas (eg. the compartmentalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders via 'processes of race, governance and labour' [see Burke et al. 2016: 145]), the extent and nature of physical violence towards Aboriginal people differed in response to varia-

tions in the capitalist endeavour, state intervention and the reactions of different Aboriginal groups. Aboriginal communities in western Cape York Peninsula in Queensland (see Figure 1), for example, experienced invasion relatively late (post-1864) and suffered long-term interventions from a range of agents as a result of the establishment and expansion of capitalist industry from the 1860s onwards (Kidd 1997; Morrison et al. 2015; McNaughton et al. 2016). Invasion in this region resulted in extreme violence and brutality, including direct attacks on Aboriginal families and entire clan groups. This resulted in deaths and the forced relocation of families to newly founded colonial centres (Kidd 1997). This region represents a chilling and late example of what Beckert (2014) and others have termed 'war capitalism', in which frontier capitalists engaged in unrestrained violence towards Indigenous groups with little or no accountability. In doing so, they created the necessary conditions for the development of new Western industries (Morrison et al. 2019), paralleling the situation in other parts of the world (Gosden 2004).

Traumatic histories such as these are not solely 'of the past': they continue to have repercussions in the present. The historic forced relocation of Aboriginal people from their homelands into centralised settlements, for example, supplied advantage to large multinational mining companies. In Cape York Peninsula in the 1950s, the Commonwealth Aluminium Company (Comalco) began exploiting Aboriginal homelands containing the world's largest deposit of bauxite (Taylor et al. 2008). This had a marked impact on the fabric of local Aboriginal communities, bringing significant influxes of non-Indigenous mine workers to the region and causing the construction of new infrastructure at unprecedented scales, resulting in catastrophic changes to Aboriginal social organisation and economic independence. Landscapes were radically altered (Figure 2), with one clan group, the Alngith people, experiencing the loss of some 60–70% of their homelands through strip mining (McNaughton et al. 2016).

The tangible impacts of mining on Aboriginal homelands and on cultural heritage places are well known in Australia—most particularly to community members on whose homelands mining occurs—but the more insidious impacts derive not from material or economic transformations, but from impacts on the social and cultural aspects of Aboriginal life. As Trigger (1997:168) argued, central to 'mining culture' is a pro-development ideology that equates it with making the landscape productive, 'civilised' and familiar, a trope that still informs the national identity. Mining and development are thus given a 'moral priority', with other ways of viewing and valuing landscapes often dismissed as 'esoteric, impractical and without equivalent cultural foundation' (Trigger 1997: 176). This process is associated with the imposition of new worldviews of place and landscape as outsiders—new 'locals'—arrive and construct fresh cultural geographies.

Figure 2. Strip mining on Aboriginal lands, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland

These transformations reflect an ongoing, 'deep colonisation' that silences pre-existing constructions of place and history (Rose 1991; Howitt and Suchet-Pearson 2006:323).

This deep colonisation is reinforced by a desire to replace shameful histories with narratives that emphasise achievement and attainment, the genesis of which can be attributed to the growth of nationalism prior to the Federation of Australia in 1901 (Gunstone 2012). Many Aboriginal people also suppressed painful memories, but for different reasons. Their strategy was to use erasure as a way of protecting themselves from the hurt of not being able to defend themselves and their children. However, over the last decade Aboriginal people have increasingly urged archaeologists to conduct research into these matters, drawing on archival evidence and oral histories to tell stories that cannot be told by the archaeological evidence alone (eg. Burke et al. 2016).

Other Forms of Frontier Engagement

Until recently, archaeologists have largely failed to adequately support Indigenous communities in critiquing orthodox views of colonial history, focussing instead on places associated with now-outdated views of an 'au-

thentic' pre-colonial past. While this omission reflects disciplinary approaches and priorities prevalent before the 2000s, it is nevertheless the case that Australian archaeologists have contributed to what the anthropologist William Stanner (1969:25) identified as a 'cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale' by selectively representing local histories in ways that have depoliticised and oppressed Aboriginal cultural values, epistemologies and histories.

But, archaeologists, like any citizens in Australian society, can choose to tackle the legacies of violence and dispossession on a number of levels. At an individual level, non-Indigenous archaeologists can grapple with their personal responses to the colonial past. At a disciplinary level, archaeologists can decide to work in partnership with Indigenous communities to reveal the ramifications of invasion history. They can help Indigenous communities for the benefit of truth-telling and healing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. To do so would articulate with current international trends, such as the use of archaeology as therapy (eg. Schaepe et al. 2017). As Falzetti (2015) argues in her essay on the archival erasure of North American Indigenous histories, 'Making the violence of epistemic erasures apparent … provides a moment to acknowledge, teach, protest, and mourn that which is lost'.

The willingness of Aboriginal people to work with archaeologists to enable this process is demonstrated in western Cape York, where Elders have shared personal experiences of what is commonly referred to as 'real' or 'proper' history, emphasising the interests, priorities, knowledge, experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal community members. To this end, research has begun to illustrate the economic and cultural significance of 'bush food' (food produced from Country), such as 'sugarbag' (wild honey), for Aboriginal children detained against their will in Christian Missions in the 1930s–1960s, demonstrating the continuity of Aboriginal foodways despite missionary and government agendas (eg. Morrison et al. 2010). Other projects explore the contribution of Aboriginal labour and knowledge to the establishment and operation of the first mission in the Cape York region, providing diverse examples of Aboriginal agency, autonomy and sovereignty (Morrison et al. 2015; McNaughton et al. 2016). While these are early steps in a longer-term research program, they constitute evidence of the ongoing role of Aboriginal peoples in subtly critiquing and reshaping scholarly research and, in doing so, countering the dominance of colonial constructions of history, place, people, memory and landscape.

Frontier experiences can also highlight the adaptability and resourcefulness of Aboriginal people in retaining economic and social agency. While there were reported cases of conflict (eg. King 1827: 90) in western Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, the remoteness of this region allowed Abo-

riginal people to adapt and reorganise local economic and social strategies as part of a longer history of cultural contact. The earliest contacts were with the Macassar people of the Indonesian south-east archipelago, who, from the 17th century, sailed annually from Indonesia to Arnhem land to procure and process a desired species of marine sea worm—'trepang'—that was found in abundance in the waters off the coast of east Arnhem land (Macknight 1976). This ancient trading system gave rise to what Altman (2009) later characterised as a hybrid economy—the continuity of traditional hunting and food gathering and exchange practices combined with working for government benefits on programs that sought to alleviate unemployment of Aboriginal people in remote Australia. By the 1870s, in addition to maintaining traditional practices of hunting for food, Aboriginal people were also employed in various introduced European industries, such as buffalo shooting, mining, fishing, pastoralism and timber getting. Altman's (2009) model argues that the new cultural capital generated through participation in these industries strengthened customary practices, such as ceremony, trade, and exchange, rather than diminishing customs and traditions.

The vigour of western Arnhem Land Aboriginal responses to colonial conflict is demonstrated in the proliferation of contact period rock art in the Wellington Range and East Alligator River areas (Wesley 2015) (see Figure 1). The archaeological remains from occupation complexes such as Djulirri, Malarrak and Maliwawa provide tangible evidence of the material capital generated via contact (Wesley 2015), reflected in introduced materials such as iron hatchets/adzes and beads, as well as modified materials such as flaked glass and shovelnose iron spears (Wesley 2015). Depictions in rock art of new technologies, such as firearms and ships, demonstrate an increasingly close relationship between Aboriginal peoples and introduced technologies (May et al. 2015; Wesley 2013). It was not until the early 20th century that significant disruption to Aboriginal customary practices and land tenure began to take hold through the establishment of mission settlements, the collapse of the buffalo shooting industry and the issuing of formal pastoral leases.

Structural Violence, Colourblind Racism and Everyday Racism

Not all violence is overt or related to the experiences of previous generations. In the contemporary era, it is more commonly inflicted through structures which naturalise or deny inequality in various ways. Structural violence arises from the uneven distribution of resources, such as income, housing, education and medical services (Bernbeck 2008). Within the dom-

Figure 3. 'No alcohol, no pornography' sign, entrance to Barunga community, Northern Territory

inant society, these structural inequalites are reinforced by colorblind racism, in which inequalities are explained in terms of individual circumstances or cultural factors (see Burke 2019) and by the everyday acceptance of racial markers that reinforce inequalities (Smith et al. 2017). A recent Australian example is the race-based *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, commonly known as 'The Intervention', enacted in response to a report of alleged child sexual abuse in remote Aboriginal communities (Anderson and Wild 2007). As a consequence of the manipulation of facts contained in this report, this Act was implemented through suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, which protects Australians against discrimination on the basis of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. At the time of the implementation of the Act, 72% of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory lived outside urban areas, and 570 remote Aboriginal communities had populations of fewer than 200 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

The material manifestations of the Intervention are the focus of research in the Barunga region of the Northern Territory (eg. Smith and Jackson 2008; Ralph and Smith 2014). These include signs like 'No Alcohol, No Pornography' that can be seen outside of numerous remote Aboriginal communities (Figure 3) that were erected even at places with self-imposed

alcohol bans and restrictions. Given the high level of modesty in these communities, accusations of using pornography were viewed with bitterness and offence. One adult female stated in Kriol, the *lingua franca* of the region, 'I never bin see that at Barunga, not Eva Valley nowhere in Aboriginal community. Nothing. That white fella, him make that, eh? Blackfella don't do that' (Smith and Jackson 2008:77). Such government-endorsed blanket accusations are a form of structural violence, part of a pattern of everyday racism in which disparities are normalised by the dominant society and the injured group does not have sufficient power to change the situation (see Smith et al. 2017).

One social justice outcome from the Barunga research is the recording of unmarked graves, a project undertaken at the request of community Elders. Even in 2019, the vast majority of graves of Aboriginal people in remote Northern Territory communities are still not recorded in any register. When someone dies they are buried, but without any written record of which grave belongs to whom. This means that virtually every member of the Barunga community has a relative lying in an unmarked grave in the local cemetery without knowing exactly where they are. For Jasmine Willika, it is her sister and grandmother. For Joyce Bulumbara, her father. For Isaac Pamkal, his father and grandmother. While the identity of the person buried in an unmarked grave is remembered by loved ones for some time, and various forms of material culture may mark it, there was no cultural tradition of headstones, or money to pay for them even if there had been. (In traditional burials, a person's bones were put in a wide hollow log known as a *lorrkon* and placed in a cave.) After a while, people forget who is buried where and in time the remembering generation also dies, blurring the identities of burials more and more. This makes it difficult to mourn properly, or to care for a person by caring for their grave. Other distressing ramifications arise from environmental events, such as the floods that hit the region in 1998, and which caused a number of unidentified coffins to rise to the surface in the neighbouring community of Beswick/Wugularr. In the past, the dead have also been accidentally unearthed at Barunga by those digging new graves. Today, family members select grave sites after consulting the *Junggayi*, the senior traditional custodian. To redress this situation, our cemetery recording project is being undertaken collaboratively by community people, Aboriginal archaeology students and non-Aboriginal archaeologists (Figure 4). It includes the training of local people to record new burials and maintain a burial register.

This is a Territory-wide problem, the result of structural racism. While the graves of people in major towns must be registered, it has not been compulsory to record the location of graves of Aboriginal people in remote areas. This situation dates back to the 1890s when the South Australian

Figure 4. Recording graves at Barunga cemetery 2018

government administered the NT, although, at the time of writing, new cemetery legislation has been drafted. This has similar requirements for urban and regional cemeteries, but does not take into account cultural factors, such as the preference of Aboriginal people to be buried close to family members rather than in a linear progression next to people who died immediately before and after, and who are potential strangers to them.

A separate lens into structural violence and racism is the research initiated by Pollard (2019a), who worked for the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation to study the material evidence of Aboriginal people who, because of a shortage of accommodation or through personal choice, end up staying in the 'long grass'—a colloquial term for the open public spaces in and around the city of Darwin in the Northern Territory (see Figure 1). Her study revealed that over 90% of 'long-grass' people live a lifestyle that is akin to being homeless (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011; Pollard 2019b), although many are classified as 'transient visitors' rather than via the statisti-

Figure 5. Aboriginal camps in the 'long grass', Darwin, Northern Territory

cal criterion of 'no usual address' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012). These Aboriginal people come to Darwin for a variety of reasons connected to health or familial responsibilities, such as visiting relatives in hospital, watching family play sport, or escaping the punitive restrictions of the intervention policy in remote communities. Although the long grass is shared public space, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people behave differently in these spaces. For example, when Aboriginal people express agency by choosing to sleep in tents, cook a meal on a fire, eat freshly gathered bushfood (Figure 5) or drink alcohol in the long grass, such behaviour challenges mainstream values about the proper use of shared public spaces. Darwin City Council by-laws make it illegal to sleep or camp in public spaces, leave food scraps in public, or drink alcohol in areas not specifically delineated for that purpose between certain hours. Aboriginal people in the long grass do all these things and risk consequences such as fines for these transgressions.

Aboriginal people make camps in the long grass, but this is not a recent phenomenon. Pollard (2019a) found that archaeological evidence demonstrates a cultural continuum of Aboriginal camps in public spaces following contact with Europeans from 1869 continuing to the present. These camps contain evidence of the use of introduced European materials, such as corrugated iron and hessian bags to construct huts of traditional design, or tools such as flakes and blades made on 19th-century European-manufactured bottle glass. The continuum that underpins this blending of worlds

continues to manifest in contemporary Aboriginal camps in a diverse array of material evidence, such as discarded or cached clothes and personal belongings, literature, sleeping materials, medicinal items, cooking paraphernalia and improvised items. Hunted and collected bush foods, such as freshly gathered mud crabs, marine and freshwater turtle, fish and shellfish (*Telescopium telescopium*) and terrestrial protein like wild goose, possum or goanna, are evident at camps, and their prevalence suggests their role as a dietary staple for Aboriginal people. Moreover, like other Australians, Aboriginal people in the long grass eat processed take-away foods, but the remains of bush food and shop-bought, processed food show a fusion of traditional and contemporary economies. These remains reflect innovative, creative and distinctly cultural ways of adapting to transience as part of a resistance to colonisation over 130 years.

Indigenous Nation Building, Healing 'Country' and Transforming Archaeologies

Indigenous communities working with archaeologists and anthropologists across Australia have had an active role in the reframing of notions of heritage and history. This has not only shaped local accounts of history, but has contributed new approaches and perspectives on the role of archaeology and anthropology. The Ngarrindjeri nation in South Australia (Hemming et al. 2016) has sought to answer fundamental questions about social justice and develop strategies for positively transforming the lives of Ngarrindjeri people. Under the guidance of Ngarrindjeri leaders such as Tom Trevorrow, Matthew Rigney and George Trevorrow (all deceased), this work has entailed a transformative relationship with archaeology as a discipline and a theorised engagement with its discourses and practices enacted on 'Country' in contemporary cultural heritage management (CHM) (Hemming and Rigney 2010; Wallis et al. 2008; Wallis and Gorman 2010). Understanding the complex histories and 'genealogies' of archaeology as CHM, as well as its materialisation in the actions and assemblages of the everyday 'contact zone', is crucial in developing strategies for social justice and self-determination (Hemming and Rigney 2010). Governmentality has been a useful theoretical lens for understanding the colonising impacts of CHM and Natural Resource Management (NRM) on Ngarrindjeri *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (lands, waters, spirit and all living things) (see Foucault 1991; Ngarrindjeri Nation 2006).

Ngarrindjeri *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (Sea Country) incorporates the mouth of Australia's longest River—the Murray (*Murrundi*). Since the early 19th century, Ngarrindjeri have experienced violent and increasingly complex forms of colonisation. *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (lands, waters, spirit, all living

things) has been re-defined, exploited and managed as *terra nullius*, pastoral and farming land, a natural resource, national park and an archaeological landscape/resource. This translation has produced terrible consequences for Ngarrindjeri and identifying the power of this translation/re-definition is a key part of the answer to the following question posed by Ngarrindjeri leaders in *Coming to Terms: Aboriginal Title in South Australia*:

> Our Old People, our Elders, and our families have been subjected to oppressive laws for a long time. These laws have denied our Elders equal human status; they have taken our land; they have imprisoned some of us on Reserves and Missions; they have placed us in gaols; they have wrecked our communities and our economy. For all of us we need to understand why the laws have failed to protect our rights to land… We need to find answers to these questions for ourselves and our brothers and sisters from other Aboriginal communities in South Australia and across Australia.
> (Trevorrow et al. 2010: vii)

The questions raised by Ngarrindjeri leaders resonate with Indigenous nations across the world, uniting 'colonised' peoples through a shared traumatic history of scientific study and 'collection', colonising engagements with archaeology and the monumental work of bringing home the 'first Stolen Generations' (see Hemming and Wilson 2010).

For colonisers to understand Ngarrindjeri *Yarluwar-Ruwe* as a Ngarrindjeri living body, essential to the well-being of an Indigenous nation, requires theoretical, political, legal and education work (see Rigney and Hemming 2014; Hemming et al. 2017). Emerging from a devastating dispute centred around archaeology, anthropology and cultural heritage legislation in regard to the construction of a bridge to Hindmarsh Island in South Australia (see Bell 1998), Ngarrindjeri leaders and non-Indigenous partners learned hard lessons about the characteristics of contemporary settler colonialism, the 'cunning of recognition' and 'patriarchal white sovereignty' (see Simons 2003; Hemming and Trevorrow 2005). Ngarrindjeri people worked to establish a process for radically transforming contact zone relations through the development of the *Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan* (Listen to Ngarrindjeri Talking) strategy for just engagement and the Speaking as Country Deed (see Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation 2014; Hemming et al. 2016). This adopted an Indigenous nation building approach to identifying, organising and acting as a nation and Speaking as Country (Cornell 2015). It enabled Ngarrindjeri to centre Ngarrindjeri ways of being (*Yannarumi*) in interactions with the settler State and created the opportunity for Ngarrindjeri to employ several Flinders-trained archaeologists in an

ongoing Ngarrindjeri *Yarluwar-Ruwe* program for 'Caring as Country'. Moreover, the Ngarrindjeri–Flinders collaboration has produced a significant body of co-authored archaeological papers (eg. Moffat et al. 2010; Disspain et al. 2012; Wilson et al. 2012), as well as the first Indigenous Australian to be awarded a PhD in archaeology (Wilson 2017).

Discussion

Australian archaeology plays a central role in the pursuit of social justice, especially in relation to attempting to redress a 'deep colonisation' that silences Indigenous histories and fails to engage with Indigenous voices or experiences. The emergence of an archaeology for social justice in Australia has been shaped by close collaborations between archaeologists and Indigenous Australians over the last two decades. The research documented here is part of a wider movement of community-based, activist and engaged archaeology (Marshall 2002; Atalay et al. 2014; Schmidt and Pikirayi 2016; Chesson et al. 2019) that encompasses the two main approaches to social justice identified by Fraser (2009): the redistribution of resources and goods and the politics of recognition. This movement has been informed by a more general concern with human rights, structural violence and ethical globalisation (eg. Lilley 1999; Gorman 2007; Silverman and Ruggles 2007; Bernbeck 2008; Mizoguchi and Smith 2019).

A concern with an archaeology for social justice has grown at Flinders University over the last 20 years, at a time when many Australian universities have lessened their commitment to Indigenous archaeology following a series of high profile and contentious debates in the 1990s and early 2000s regarding repainting rock art (Bowdler 1988; Mowaljarlai et al. 1988), and the return of Aboriginal cultural heritage materials (Harris 1996). While the research collaborations documented in this paper emerge from a shared vision emanating from a single institution, comparable collaborative processes can be identified at other Australian universities, most notably at the University of Western Australia (Porr and Matthews 2017), Monash University (eg. David et al. 2006: Brady et al. 2016) and Griffith University (eg. May et al. 2015; Taçon and Brady 2016). The core focus on social justice as a product of archaeological research has emerged as part of a strengthening of disciplinary and community collaborations that is encouraged through national assessment processes, such as the Excellence in Research for Australia assessment (ARC 2017a), in which disciplines are assessed as a group, and the Engagement and Impact assessment, which seeks evidence of 'the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, technologies and methods, and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity' (ARC 2017b: 11).

The pursuit of social justice in archaeology engenders new theoretical and methodological challenges reflective of recognising Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. For example, fostering a genuinely Indigenous-focused practice begs critique of the geographic and chronological frameworks implicit in how research questions are usually framed. The continuity of culture in Indigenous Australia renders the traditional divisions between prehistoric, historical and contemporary archaeology meaningless, while recognition of the Aboriginal relationship to Country erodes boundaries between natural and cultural. In addition, the continued centring of social justice outcomes as a product of archaeological research will continue to erode disciplinary boundaries. This has the potential to make substantial contributions to important global trends. For example, the core tenets of post-humanism—that human behaviours and their impact need to be understood in relation to a wider web that includes animals, 'things' and the environment—are akin to Indigenous worldviews of an interconnected world, as is the current emphasis on post-disciplinary research (see Mizoguchi and Smith 2019:148–160). It also fits with wider social justice movements, such as the call for truth-telling regarding Australia's past (Referendum Council 2017; Uluru Statement from the Heart 2017).

Properly planned, university courses have the capacity to provide high-level impact on issues such as reconciliation, truth-telling and social cohesion. It is critical that academic curricula include greater recognition of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and research agendas (cf. Ross et al. 2013), as this will be one of the next great challenges for Australian archaeology. While numerous scholars have attempted to include Indigenous perspectives into archaeological ontologies and epistemologies (eg. Byrne and Nugent 2004; Harrison 2004; Ross et al. 2013), this has not yet permeated to the academy as a whole. This should be redressed through a concerted Australia-wide effort supported by both State and Federal governments. In our view, all graduates of Australian universities should have studied a topic on Indigenous Australia and the history of colonisation.

While the development of collaborative projects between Indigenous peoples and (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) archaeologists can be challenging, the way forward is clear. Indigenous archaeologists face a particular challenge, that of balancing sometimes conflicting expectations from communities and their own cultural values, ontologies and epistomologies with the demands and oppressions of the profession. For non-Indigenous archaeologists, the challenge lies in shifting from working *with* Indigenous peoples to working *for* Indigenous peoples. How we do this is a matter for each individual to decide, and considerable work remains to be done to centre social justice outcomes an intentional product, rather than an unintentional by-product, of archaeological research.

Acknowledgements

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