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**Indigenous
Education
and Research
Centre**

Non-Indigenous narratives of Australian land: A history of the present

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Philosophy (Indigenous) at James Cook University in 2024

Indigenous Education and Research Centre

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Abstract

Through a Foucauldian archaeological and genealogical analysis, this thesis examines contemporary non-Indigenous Australian land narratives and critically evaluates their role in shaping the current landscape of Australia. Since colonisation, the land in Australia has been inscribed as and, therefore, has become an object of a nation-economy binary, and the Australian population are subject to this binary. This thesis argues that this binary structure is not a result of any individual or group's relationship with the land or relationships formed between each other but rather a relationship between the architecture of the nation and the nation's economy. The nation-economy binary objectifies land through discourse, legitimising how it can be possessed. From an Indigenous standpoint, objectifying the land solely through a nation's economic terms ignores the cultural significance, stewardship, and sustainability that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have practised on the land for millennia. Foucault's power-knowledge theory is utilised to demonstrate discursive practices, objectification, and subjectivities, which can be mapped through past economic and legal narratives.

Three examples are analysed to illustrate the emergence of innovative laws and regulations enacted that keep the land under national control and how, through these acts and legislation, people began to refer to the land as a nation's property and an economic asset. Firstly, by mapping the emergence of the nation-economy binary during the colonial mercantilism period through to the political formation of the new nation of Australia shows how the logic of the nation-economy binary functions to remove Indigenous authority over their lands, which resulted in the 2020 destruction of the Juukan Gorge caves in Western Australia, for example. Secondly, by exploring how the logic of the nation-economy binary reconceptualises Indigenous land into national parks, this thesis will show how a new economy was established through reimagining parts of the land as objects of national significance. Finally, by describing the relationship between the nation-economy binary and Western science, this thesis will demonstrate how climate change discourse is constructed in a way that makes Indigenous knowledges subject to Western scientific epistemologies.

By exploring these topics, I demonstrate how the nation-economy binary shapes our present-day thinking and places the contemporary Indigenous position within the context of the binary.

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1. Introduction

The territory of a country is, in reality, the property of its occupiers, which the nominees of the Crown administer advantageously only as to facilitate its settlement and culture.

(Roberts, 1968, p. 227)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people¹ of the continent now colonially referred to as Australia (here after known as Australia) have a natural and legitimate relationships with the land that predates Western civilisation (Carlson & Farrelly, 2023). In these relationships, Indigenous identities formed cultural ties to geographic locations on the Australian continent dating back more than 65,000 years and included a pre-colonial form of customary land inheritance. Through mutual respect for the land, known as *caring for Country*², Aboriginal Australians have cultivated sacred and metaphysical relationships with their landscapes, maintained through ancestral stories and traditional activities unique to their traditional homelands (Dudgeon et al., 2010; Tacon, 2019). Music, song, and stars guide Torres Strait Islanders' connection with their lands, a relationship that dates back nearly 8,000 years, and guides Islanders' everyday social lives in addition to gardening, hunting, and navigating their traditional waters (Lui, 2022). Since the British Empire annexed Aboriginal peoples' lands in 1788, differing ideologies over land use and land ownership have resulted in Aboriginal peoples being forcibly pushed out of their traditional lands and communities. In the Torres Strait, when colonisation arrived, communities were placed under British administrative control to make way for the colony's commercial pursuits. Since colonisation, knowledge about Indigenous peoples' relationships to the land has been primarily represented and interpreted through the corpus of [Western] knowledge (Nakata, 2006, p. 269). In the past, this corpus of knowledge contributed to segregation and assimilation policies that moved Indigenous people from their ancestral lands. In the present day, this ongoing corpus of Western knowledge continues to keep Indigenous ownership to their ancestral lands in a state of flux.

In postcolonial³ Australia, Indigenous people have worked within Western systems to share their narratives of their relationships with the land. As a result, there now exists a wealth of Indigenous,

¹ I recognise there are a number of ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people like to be referred to – including through traditional Country names, as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, as Indigenous, and as First Nations, and there is a complex history of naming practices, with problematics behind each of these terms. In this thesis, given that I am mostly referring to a general Indigenous position, I will most frequently be using the term Indigenous Australians, but also to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as is appropriate..

² In this thesis I will shift between using the term 'the land' when talking about land as a Western conceptualisation of place, and 'Country' as an Indigenous conceptualisation of place.

³ Many Indigenous people recognise that Australia is not post-colonial (Moreton-Robinson, 2003): Indigenous people still live under an introduced government. I use the term 'postcolonial' (without a hyphen) to demonstrate that despite the ongoing presence of the colonial nation-state, Indigenous people live in a time in which we can disrupt dominant narratives (Bhambra, 2014). I choose postcolonial over settler colonial, which risks 're-inscribing a dominant-subordinate' binary between the settler/coloniser and the Indigenous/colonised, and limits the forms of thinking available to make sense of Indigenous peoples' position (Takagi, 2004, p. 281).

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anthropological, autobiographical, cultural, creative, and social knowledge evidencing the importance of land to Indigenous people. Yet, Indigenous people continue to be excluded from owning their land for traditional and cultural purposes. For many Indigenous people, their conscious and material claim (of belonging) to land evolved over thousands of years, without the need for a written legal system. However, in only a few hundred years, non-Indigenous people who have settled in Australia have transformed their knowledge of land use, access, and ownership into a legal regime called land tenure.

This thesis aims to use an Indigenous standpoint to analyse how that land is objectified. Australia has become a rich nation due to pastoral, agricultural, and extractive industries, and the land, as an object of the economy, has created success for the nation via the subjectification of people through economic narratives. By examining the conditions that have led to the modern-day land laws and land rights legal positions, this thesis seeks to trace the genealogy of how the land in Australia has shifted from a metaphysical social code of belonging to a contemporary legal discourse based on possession. In this thesis, I argue that the land has been inscribed as and, therefore, has become an object of a nation-economy binary, and people living in Western economies have also become subject to this binary.

To understand the binary nature of the nation-economy binary, and how the political characteristics work with and for each other, it is necessary to consider the elements of the pair. Predefining terms can be a precarious position, especially when they are abstract and ideological in nature. Jeffrey (2015) suggests that when writing about notions of the ‘political-geographical’, we should recognise how the ‘characteristics’ of a political territory are produced through a corpus, and by asserting concrete definitions, we are contributing a form of ‘political labor’ to the discourse (p. 61). As such, acknowledging a definition of the nation can serve as a legitimization of its sovereign power. Rather than offering a definition, a discussion of thoughts about what, when, why, and how is offered instead in the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter of the thesis (see 6.1 How does the Nation-Economy Binary Shape Our Thinking, p. 58). Defining economy may seem more straightforward; however, as we cannot separate the idea of an economy from its relationship with a ‘nation’s polity,’ consideration will be given to the economic doctrine Australia currently subscribes to (Sullivan, 2009, p. 168). By interrogating the precarious terms of the binary, thought can be given to how the nation and the economy are not merely in a state of existence. Rather, it is human actions that make them come to be and keep them productive.

In present-day Australia, people tend to speak about land through the legal discourse of land tenure, regulated by state and territory governments. The modern-day land tenure system is characterised by two complex mechanisms. The first mechanism is a colonial import that ensures land is subject to ownership and transferable by deed, whether by the Crown or individuals. The second mechanism is Native Title, which gives formal recognition to the worldview Indigenous communities have towards their ancestral lands. Before Native Title was legislated in 1993, Aboriginal communities could apply to have their lands returned through the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* (NT), a legal mechanism that allowed access to land through grant freeholds or perpetual titles administered on a case-by-case basis and managed through Aboriginal Land Councils (Aboriginal

Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth). Native Title is not a return of the land, not even in a limited capacity, as it often only affords claimants the rights to carry out traditional activities, negotiate on land use and access, and be financially compensated for government or mining developments on the land. But it is not the full return of land to the rightful custodians (Laing, 2007). It is important to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' pre-colonial laws and customs do not form a part of Australian common law, and as it currently stands, these land tenure systems are derived from Western concepts.

The introduction of land tenure into Australia has not destroyed Indigenous belonging to land but has instead subjugated it to the Western discourse of possession. Moran (2002) suggests that non-Indigenous narratives try to claim a 'historical and spiritual' possession of the land, legitimised by the 'suffering' and 'hard work' used to build an economy in a 'hostile' environment, thus shaping the distinct richness of Australia today (p. 1022). The recognition of Native Title signifies a shift in this discourse. However, Native Title can also be seen as a form of 'window-dressing' (Moran, 2002, p. 1036), a way of maintaining control over Indigenous discourses of land, dehumanising the 'ontological belonging' to the land that Indigenous people have conceptualised over thousands of years (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 4). A discourse of possession places economic narratives at the centre of non-Indigenous relationships to the land, displacing Indigenous peoples' relationships to the land, practices of caring for Country, protecting cultural heritage, and the ability to maintain the environment for future generations. To fully comprehend the contemporary non-Indigenous views of Indigenous land, it is important to acknowledge the intersections between the past and present. The influence non-Indigenous discourses have had on current understandings of Australian land, and the societal events that have contributed to the current conditions, continue to deprive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of traditional and legal custodianship over their lands.

1.1 Background of Australian Land Tenure Systems

When considering the possession of a territory, the context and justification for control must be understood. During the 17th and 18th centuries, European discourses viewed land ownership as something that could be recognised through evidence of occupation and cultivation. As argued by John Locke in *Second Treatises of Government* (1689), when found in its original state, land could be considered unowned as ownership was sanctioned through the act of labouring upon it to produce natural resources, such as farming (Grant, 1987; Kramer, 1997). Later the term *terra nullius* was coined which encompassed Locke's view. Introduced into international law by Emmerich de Vattel's 1758 *Law of Nations*, *terra nullius* meaning 'nobody's land', was used to distinguish between land that had been cultivated and occupied by people and land that was deemed 'desert uninhabited' (Banner, 2005; Webb, 2016, p. 115). In addition, in *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1753), Sir William Blackstone claimed the right of occupancy in 'desert and uncultivated' lands by 'peopling them from the mother-country'. Nearly a century before Lieutenant James Cook considered occupying Aboriginal

land, the possessive language used to describe land ownership had been long utilised to legitimise colonisation (Blackstone, 1753, p. 84).

Lieutenant James Cook declared Indigenous lands for the Crown. The arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 established the beginning of the British colonisation of Indigenous nations. The breaking of ground to form the colony of New South Wales by the naval military declared in totality Aboriginal lands as the rightful property of England's Crown, King George III (Fry, 1947). For the first thirty years, the landholding system in New South Wales was based on socage and copyhold, where agricultural workers paid rent or bondage to land possessors in exchange for the use of the land (Fry, 1947; Hepburn, 2006; Turner, 2006). The first settlers were made up of the military and their convict charges, and the settlements were kept confined to official settlement areas. Indigenous people, at the same time, had to navigate a rapidly changing social and cultural landscape, dealing with new languages, introduced diseases, and violence arising during the exploration of their lands (Australian Government, 2010). A type of martial law was enacted since the colony was managed by the British military, which oversaw convicts and protected explorers and surveyors (Jackson et al., 2017). Indigenous places and pathways were methodically renamed and recontextualised, and British authorities struggled to administer large and often inaccessible tracts of land.

In the new Colony of New South Wales, the failure of having no land policy became evident. The colony's primary revenue during this period came from land leased by the Crown, distributed through grants to former convicts and non-commissioned officers for a quit rent to be paid after five years of improving and cultivating the land (La Croix, 1992; Queensland State Archives, 2018). High quit rents imposed a significant burden on occupants, who were forced out of their homes if they could not pay. Land grants were given out and withdrawn without notice by the governor's administration and often resold to the highest bidder or sold by the grantee in the black market (Roberts, 1968). As the settlers' population shifted, from either arriving free, being born free or being freed convicts, a legal system with the ability to legislate civil jurisdiction was needed to settle disputes outside of the military's control (Beazley, 2020). The British Imperial Parliament introduced the *Australian Courts Act 1828* to enforce English law as the common law of the emerging nation (Fry, 1947). Laws also needed to account for the availability of workers the government desperately needed to make colonies self-sufficient, as the convict system was slowly replaced with immigration. In newspaper-published letters by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the colony's problem was described as being due to too many landholders and not enough labourers (Kittrell, 1973; La Croix, 1992; Wakefield & Mills, 1929). Wakefield described a plan for the South Australian colonial office to auction land for an adequate price and use the proceeds to fund immigration from the motherland, bringing about a balance between landowners and tenants (Fry, 1947; La Croix, 1992; Roberts, 1968; Wakefield & Mills, 1929). The plan had positives and negatives. It put into focus the need for a link between the demand for labour and immigration policy. However, it did not include a policy for regulating the price of land.

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At the same time, the New South Wales colonial administrators had been using a policy of concentration of settlement, restricting settlers to living and working within designated areas. Due to limited land availability, high quit rents, and increasing population, some colonists resorted to squatting on what they considered unoccupied lands outside the settlements (Kittrell, 1973; La Croix, 1992). Squatting amplified conflicts with Aboriginal groups on their homelands, what is now commonly referred to as the Australian Frontier Wars and Massacres (Reynolds, 2006; Van Der Walle, 2019; Wood, 2009). For example, during the Squatting Age between 1830 and 1850, settlers carried out an estimated 156 massacres, culminating in the deaths of approximately 3,847 Aboriginal peoples, across regions in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia (Lyndall et al., 2017). Colonial administrators were faced with major challenges: responding to the illegal act of squatting on land they considered as the Crown's, and protecting colonists who had legally been granted land (Lyndall et al., 2017). For Aboriginal groups, the colonial government allocated reserves on land deemed 'wasteland' or economically unviable to the nations economy to be used as reserves, stations, or mission settlements. These parcels of land were designated to keep Aboriginal people separated from the general population (Nethery, 2009). For non-Indigenous people, the *Squatting Act 1839* (NSW) created a system of pastoral licences that allowed settlers to occupy land outside of colonial districts, efficiently removing the concentration policy (Fry, 1947). As the population grew, land economically useful to non-Indigenous people became scarcer as large tracts were being held in monopoly by squatters. The colonial administration needed to adapt their methods of land administration to ensure the economy could meet market demands for goods.

Ongoing resistance from settlers against mechanisms to control land through licensing continued to be an administrative challenge. For instance, the Eureka Stockade of 1854 was a protest by miners against the high monthly fees charged for gold mining licences and leases. The standoff between the miners and the police was violent, but it resulted in the removal of the licence fee (Fry, 1947). Where miners won their case for reduced fees, their mineral freeholds were also withdrawn and replaced with non-perpetual mining licences, as coal, petroleum, and mineral resources legally became the property of the Crown (Fry, 1947). To encourage the legal process of purchasing land and promote agriculture over mining, the *Squatting Act* was replaced with the *Robertson Land Acts 1861* (NSW), offering fixed-price land holdings subject to meeting conditions of production (Egerton, 1950; Pike, 1961; Queensland State Archives, 2018). The system aimed to break up the monopoly of the squatters and induce settlers who would commit to improving the land in exchange for 'possessory interest' (Weaver, 2003, p. 107). This labour in exchange for land apparatus proved successful in each of the separate colonies. For example, in the colony of Queensland from 1860 to 1894, a succession of legislation required the selector to purchase acreages of minimum sizes, fulfil yearly rent payments, make mandatory improvements to the land, and begin cultivating demand products such as timber, sugar, coffee and small livestock (Queensland State Archives, 2018). After a predetermined period and once these conditions were met, the landholder could apply to transfer the land into an ordinary type of

freehold (Fry, 1947). The exchange of labour for land through legislation signalled to the population that undesirable situations could be managed by positively engaging in the government's economy.

In 1858, the Torrens system of land title was introduced in South Australia to address the ongoing manipulation of land tenures and provide landholders with some form of protection for their titles (Low, 2009). The son of South Australia's Colonisation Committee Chairman and appointed colony executive Sir Robert Richard Torrens imposed into law an 'indefeasibility of title' by creating a state-managed registration and land transfer system to capture all interests of the land (Low, 2009, p. 205). The system was eventually installed in all British colonies in Australia. It stabilised the property markets, accelerated land-specific enterprises, and promoted 'rational colonialism' by elevating the rights of settlers central to the establishment of a new country (Weaver, 2003, p. 243). In Australia, the colonial offices' aspiration to manage the legal regime of land titles, under the control of the state colonies, provided the political and economic security the British Empire sought.

By this time, Aboriginal groups in each of the emerging states and territories found themselves subject to the legal mechanisms introduced by the colonial offices. The reserves and missions originally created by the colonial administration to separate Indigenous people from the settler population became, in certain instances, secure and permanent residences for Aboriginal communities, and who sought to use their land to gain economic wealth from their own contributions. For example, Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve was established in Victoria in the 1860s by the colonial office, after repeated submissions by senior members of the Kulin nation was made for farming land as compensation for the loss of their traditional livelihood (Goodall, 1990). Senior Coranderrk man William Barak led land demands in 1859, Aboriginal people wanted to cultivate, build homes, and return to self-sufficiency (Goodall, 1990). Evidence exists showing that some Aboriginal communities attempted to negotiate for their lands through either direct contact with the government, recruitment of a white figure, or the direct action of purchasing, leasing, or squatting back on their lands (Goodall, 1990). These examples of Indigenous people exerting rights to the land continued over the years. Regardless of changing state laws and Aboriginal legislation, which often worked to contradict Aboriginal people's protests for land rights, some applications did prove successful and remain today as Aboriginal-controlled communities (Goodall, 1990). This could be because the goal for Aboriginal people to secure land aligned with the political aim of keeping their populations contained in Crown reserves (Goodall, 1990). A politically organised land rights movement, however, would not fully transpire for another hundred years.

Colonial settlement of the lands and waters of the Torres Strait Islands came in the form of missionary settlements. In 1871, the London Missionary Society arrived on Erub (Darnley Island) at a time of limited administrative control. The colonial administration's primary role at that time was to regulate pearl diving and shipping, not the Islanders. Hence, the missionaries set up an island council that oversaw law-making and education, creating a form of 'indirect colonial rule' (Ash et al., 2010, p. 58). In 1879, the State of Queensland officially annexed the Torres Strait region, and Honourable John

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Douglas was appointed as a representative by the Queensland colonial administration to oversee colonial affairs in the region and bring the Islands' population under the same colonial laws that governed the rest of Australia (Ash et al., 2010). After federation, in each state and territory, Indigenous rights to lands could only be created and granted by state or territory governments. This practice maintained Indigenous peoples as subjects of the settler. But in 1993, Eddie Koiki Mabo, on behalf of the Meriam People from the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait, successfully brought a claim to the High Court to overturn the principle of *terra nullius* – nobody's land (*Mabo v Queensland (No 2)*) (*Mabo case* 1992). Some of the last lands of the nation to be annexed under colonial common law would become the first lands to have Native Title rights recognised by contemporary common law.

Native Title in Australia is often thought of as a relatively new feature of land tenure, designed as a need to preserve Indigenous communities who still practice traditional activities and to protect Indigenous artefacts, not as a way Indigenous peoples to assert their sovereignty and right to protect their lands. Indigenous relationships to the land and rights to property have, however, contributed to Western ideas of Native Title long before the Australian High Court's decision. The following examples show how British colonial law functioned specifically to prevent private purchases by institutionalising two principles: Indigenous lands and Indigenous peoples were protected by the Crown (Dorsett & Godden, 1998). In North America, the *Royal Proclamation of 1763* instructed British colonial administrators to formally purchase land from the First Nations peoples by excluding the right to make private purchases. In Canada, before the 1830s, several signed treaties signified First Nations peoples as British 'trading partners' and 'allies' against the French, ensuring land could only be sold to the Crown (Dorsett & Godden, 1998, p. 15). In Canada and North America, these colonial documents were eventually legally disputed or interpreted differently, giving way to subsequent legislation that kept First Nations people at the whim of Western legal compliance (Dorsett & Godden, 1998). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Waitangi Treaty and *Native Land Purchase Ordinance 1846* gave the Crown the sole right to purchase land from the Māori people and dispose of it through grants. However, today, the complex terms of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Waitangi Treaty, and the loss of ancestral land continue to be a highly contested issue for present-day Māori people who challenge the economic objectification of the land above its environmental value (Dorsett & Godden, 1998; Rowe, 2021).

In Australia, Batman's Treaty of 1835 was an agreement made between the Kulin Nation and John Batman for the sale of 600,000 acres near Melbourne in exchange for material goods and annual rent (Attwood, 2020). For both the British colonial government of New South Wales and the settler population, this event showed that two narratives existed for the land: 'constructive possession and actual possession' (Attwood, 2020, p. 46). As a legal tenement, the treaty was not recognised, but language around Crown ownership and Indigenous dispossession eventually found a setting, and that was through Eddie Koiki Mabo's fight for Native Title.

Native Title, in its original 1993 form, gives successful claimants rights to carry out traditional activities on their lands, such as fishing, hunting, camping, and gathering of bush medicine, and be entitled to compensation. However, it also requires an Indigenous community to prove to the court a continued connection to their Country, and they must form a corporation called a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023). For Indigenous groups, proving continuous connection to Country against the rupture caused by colonisation can be a time-consuming and distressing experience. Also, the liability placed on communities to manage their claim as a business entity can also prove burdensome as Native Title rights and interests are mostly limited to ‘personal, domestic or communal purposes’, not commercial (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2023). Native Title may only be claimed in areas where connection has not been extinguished, and in most cases, it is non-exclusive, meaning that the Traditional Owners do not have the right to control access to or use of their land (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2023). The land in Australia is not discussed regarding the ways we relate to each other, nor do discussions consider the land as agentic and indifferent to our relationship with the law. Rather, the land is discussed in terms of economic and national benefits, displacing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s ability to own their lands and care for their Country.

1.2 Research Background

The beginning of this research project came from a 2020 newspaper article on a non-Indigenous family who owns a cattle station in northwest Queensland. The article described an award the family had received in recognition of their continued intergenerational ownership of the land – squatters turned into a successful business (C. Charles, 2020). This article stood out for me as I read in it a sense of belonging that would never be afforded my own family (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). On my Aboriginal father’s side, my two great grandmothers were shifted as young girls out of their birthplaces of Lake Nash and Sandover Desert⁴ to Headingly Station Queensland, where they became housemaids. Eventually, they both married white pastoralists and along with their children and grandchildren, lived on various cattle stations for their remaining lives. As a result, I have never been to the ancestral lands of my Aboriginal grandmothers, as they went on to lose their traditional language and identities. For my mob, this loss of belonging to Country is felt every day in the nuances of language around non-Indigenous inter-generational ownership of the land and Indigenous belonging to Country. My family’s connection to our ancestral ties may have been broken by colonisation, but my experience as an Indigenous person is not the experience of all Indigenous people.

⁴ Lake Nash is on the ancestral lands of the Alyawarre people, and Sandover Desert encompasses the ancestral lands of the Antekerrpenhe from who (according to government records and oral history) my grandmothers are descendants. Both places now lay within the borders of present-day Northern Territory.

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In the present day there are communities who still have a strong connection to their Country and traditions or are working to rebuild these connections. The news article reiterated for me that the ways in which we talk about Indigenous peoples' rights to their own lands becomes more and more caught up in the institutionalisation of the land as a family business. This includes the ways in which Native Title, and the pressure it places on families to conform to its interrogations and legal constraints, can often make or break a whole community. As an Indigenous person unable to participate in the limited rights offered by Native Title, I wondered how it was that non-Indigenous ownership of land over a few years was to be celebrated while thousands of years of Indigenous ownership was not. In addition, how have Indigenous people come to accept Native Title as a lesser form of tenure rather than insisting on a return of land. Therefore, I suggest that my perspective as a self-described outsider offered a pragmatic starting point for further exploring the land rights discourse. And, in order to understand how non-Indigenous connections to the land continue to displace Indigenous peoples from Country, I look to my Indigenous standpoint to ask how this has come to be.

Regardless of the wealth of Indigenous, anthropological, autobiographical, cultural, and social research evidencing the importance of Country to Indigenous peoples, they are not afforded the same vocabulary. Indigenous peoples and their claim to the past remain different from non-Indigenous peoples. From an Indigenous standpoint, I considered how discourse in Australia normalises the invasion and theft of Indigenous land, especially discourse presented in easily accessible mediums such as newspapers.

In their position as major distributors of narratives, the Australian news media (hereafter known as the media) have the power to reproduce societal discourses, shaping truths according to the thoughts and considerations of Australia's dominant society. For researchers, Australian newspapers can be an important source for gathering evidence of how the present-day nation of Australia emerged. During colonial times, the media was used as a way to sustain a link between settlers and British nationalism by bringing to attention the operations of colonial administrators or colonists expressing social, scientific, or religious rhetoric (Anderson, 1983; Melleuish & Stephen, 2023; Walsh, 2010). In modern times, colonial newspapers have reappraised Australia's real history from the 'patronising and patriotic' narratives (Baxter, 2021; Ryan, 2021). It is from this point that I sought to find out how non-Indigenous narratives of the land have been propelled and promoted through the media to become a normalised presence. I then carried out a literature review on the analysis of media discourse.

A solid body of literature currently analyses how Indigenous people's relationships to the land are represented in the media. Land rights and Native Title are often framed as political or cultural events based on Western ideologies of capitalism, or 'possessive investment,' where the right to privileges exists for those who hold power over the land (Due & Riggs, 2010, p. 29; see also Pickerill, 2008). While media tell of Indigenous knowledges enhancing Australia's 'cultural value,' events that lead to Indigenous-held tenure reveal 'ideological' juxtapositions against possessive ownership or

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modern contexts for traditional hunting (Walliss, 2014, p. 291; see also Koerner, 2015; Watkin Lui et al., 2016; Whittaker, 1994). Government rhetoric on land rights and Native Title is important to the media as it provides an accessible and consistent supply of knowledge (Banerjee, 2000). Politicians and corporations are often considered the authoritative figure on Indigenous-held tenure, only second to non-Indigenous academics, as little attention is given to whose ‘epistemology and ontology’ informs understanding of the topic (Koerner, 2015, p. 98; see also McCallum & Holland, 2010; Pickerill, 2008). However, an Indigenous voice may be considered an authority if their views align with the ideologies of the media outlet (McCallum & Waller, 2016). Televised exposure of Indigenous narratives in the lead-up to the successful 1967 referendum is evidence of how the media can be an important tool for improving Indigenous rights (Waller & McCallum, 2018). The media can be used to address power imbalances in consultations about the land, acting in the role of public relations to ensure genuine dialogue between land users. But when there is a failure to identify the deeper ‘structural explanations’ of Indigenous displacement, it results in driving forward the ‘institutional memory’ of Australia’s (colonial) national identity (Banerjee, 2000, p. 10; see also Foxwell-Norton et al., 2013; Waller et al., 2020).

Non-Indigenous discourse in the media, however, is a normalised presence, seemingly inconspicuous due to its nature of being a production of the dominant population. Exploring non-Indigenous narratives in the media could only provide a frame of reference relevant to the context of a particular topic. I quickly realised it would be an overwhelming project to read into every conversation about the land. To narrow down the focus of the research, I carried out a synchronic search using key search words. These keywords were taken from three topics identified as common themes in the current literature and relevant to present-day issues: that Native Title and land rights create a challenge for the economy, climate change and Indigenous perspectives, and land being reinscribed as ‘wildcountry’ through the exclusion of people. Media articles relating to all three topics in the years 2020 and 2021 amounted to over 2000. While reading through the contents of each article, I identified how land ‘economy’ and land ‘ownership’ were recurring concepts. In the present day, the way land is managed is discussed through budgets, investments, and global trade, making the land an object of the economy. Who had access to make economic decisions for the land depends on the interests of the nation and not necessarily individual ownership. According to the media, land management depends more on the goals of the nation’s economy and less so on relationships between people. This is regardless of the media implying that people’s relationships with the land create conflicts and debates between people, polarising public opinions (Colvin et al., 2020).

Thinking about the relationship between a nation and the economy is not new. For Alexandre Le Maître’s 1682 ‘utopian’ vision, political sovereignty being the centre of an economy was necessary for ensuring ‘maximum economic development’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 15). The organisation of space, secured through political decrees, allows for not just the effective circulation of commodities but also security (Foucault, 2007, pp. 17 & 22). Security becomes important for a population, especially when

a sovereign power requires the allegiance of its population (Chisholm & Smith, 1990; Foucault, 2007; Weaver, 2003). There is also much research about the broader Australian population's relationships to land. Research undertaken regarding non-Indigenous Australians' relationships to land in social and cultural dimensions lies in humanities disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, history, and economics. The history of colonial land settlement is often written precisely, presenting Western politics, policy, and land laws as being an agreed-upon experiment of localised capitalism that progressed unsurprisingly into a global economy (Egerton, 1950; McLean, 2012; Ransom, 1968; Roberts, 1968; Weaver, 2003). Contemporary research on non-Indigenous narratives of the land often focuses on the binaries of race and identity, as Indigenous claims to land promote a false threat to the investment made by non-Indigenous people (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Potter, 2003; Riggs & Augoustinos, 2004). Research often over-characterises the settler-colonial societies' capacity for ideology, romance, and ambition, all while typifying Indigenous peoples as non-autonomous entities in the formation of the nation and its economic ideations (Wolfe, 2006).

This review is not exhaustive. Instead, it suggests that humanities research outside media studies is much alike. Much research looks at problem-solving the past by investigating events, consequences, power struggles, and acts of domination. It seeks to analyse events after the fact. The arguments, however, fall short of interrogating how Western knowledge systems are, in the present day, maintained as the voice of authority by way of the past.

1.3 The Proposition of This Thesis

Postcolonisation, migration, and present-day hybridity cannot account for the ongoing replication of how land is objectified; rather, there must exist a subconscious structure or mechanism that imagines for us that the land is an object. This thesis argues that this structure is not a result of any one person or group's relationship to the land, or the result of relationships formed between people, but rather a binary relationship that emerged during the formation of the nation and the nation's economy. The objectification of land by the nation-economy binary through discourse legitimises how the land can be possessed, and people are subject to this binary. Examining how non-Indigenous people have constructed narratives about land makes clear how people, whether they are Indigenous, migrants, settlers, miners, the poor, convicts, or pastoralists, have been positioned by the nation-economy binary.

Where non-Indigenous people may speak of the independent evolution of the economy of land, an Indigenous standpoint shows that this is not the only narrative. Non-Indigenous narratives often emphasise the economic value of land, portraying it as a commodity to be bought, sold, and exploited for profit. This perspective reinforces the power dynamics of the nation-economy binary, where individuals are seen as owners or workers dependent on land for their livelihoods. These narratives overlook or marginalise alternative relationships with the land, for example, Indigenous people's relationship to land, which prioritises cultural significance, stewardship, and sustainable

practices such as caring for Country. Tracing the genealogy of these narratives can determine if historical continuity exists in modern-day non-Indigenous narratives of land and considers the subtle ways power over the land moves through non-Indigenous discourses.

1.4 Research Question and Approach to the Thesis

This research project asks:

What is the history of contemporary non-Indigenous narratives of the land in Australia?

This research utilises a Foucauldian archaeological and genealogical analysis to understand the ways that non-Indigenous people in Australia currently speak about the land and how these narratives have displaced Indigenous people's relationships with the land. Archaeological discourse analysis is a historiography of epistemes (thoughts and ideas) and how discursive formations emerge within a field of history to form knowledge systems (Foucault, 1972). A genealogical analysis is not a search for (historical) origins; rather, a genealogy is used to show how knowledge systems operate within their historical contexts and result in the emergence of social or cultural power (force) relations (Foucault, 1982a). The contribution this research project will make to the field of land rights discourse is an archaeological and genealogical exploration of the formation of non-Indigenous narratives of land within past networks and mechanisms of power.

1.5 Thesis Structure

Chapter One introduces the ideas of Locke, de Vattel, and Blackstone that emerged pre-annexation and contributed to Western regimes of thought. These discursive formations converged with the actions of colonisation and progressed throughout Australia's colonisation and the British annexation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands. The introduction also included a rationale or warrant for research that discusses how Indigenous and, to a lesser degree, non-Indigenous relationships to the land have been scrutinised by various institutions, such as the media, governments, and the humanities. A gap exists in the current literature regarding how non-Indigenous people's narratives of land have emerged since colonisation, focusing on how land is spoken about as an object of the economy and how these narratives have worked to displace Indigenous people's relationships with the land. This thesis, written from the standpoint of an Indigenous person, will contribute to the land rights and Native Title discourse.

Chapter Two outlines the methodology for this research, including justifying the use of Foucault's archaeological and genealogical tools for historical analysis. The theoretical positions of Foucault can often be considered precarious as his style of nominalist history removes consequential landmarks of the past as points of reference. Rather, it focuses on discursive practices, objectification, and subjectivities. His position can be one of discovery, where across all our political, scientific, economic, and social pursuits, we can learn to concern ourselves with recognising resistance. Where there is resistance, there is the existence of power. This chapter also explores Indigenous standpoint theory and how it is used in this thesis to offer an alternative position on current land discourse

practices. Finally, the chapter describes how data for this thesis was collected and the research methods used to analyse the collected data.

The research findings are shared in Chapters Three to Five. In this thesis I have chosen three case studies to demonstrate the emergence, the consolidation and the contemporary logic of the nation-economy binary. Using three case studies allows me to show the continuities in non-Indigenous thinking about land, and how this thinking has been co-opted into present-day Indigenous dilemmas.

Chapter Three begins by mapping the emergence of the nation-economy binary during the colonial periods of mercantilism. Mercantilism was a global project; it allowed for the conceptualisation of controlling populations who used land in distant locations. This is what Foucault recognises as the emergence of governmentality, activities meant to control the conduct of people (Curtis, 2002; Foucault, 2007). This chapter describes how, as the new Australian nation was being formed, making the land an object of the economy entailed the reflexive actions of creating innovative laws and legislations to keep land under the control of the Crown. Thus, these acts and legislations normalised how people spoke about land as an object of the nation and its economy. These narratives also function as a mechanism that keeps the heritage of non-Indigenous people's relationships to land as the dominant discourse, resulting in the minimisation or loss of Indigenous heritage. As an exemplar, this chapter discusses the 2020 destruction of the Juukan Gorge caves to describe how the nation-economy binary functions to remove Indigenous authority over their lands.

Chapter Four continues the analysis of the nation-economy binary by demonstrating how non-Indigenous narratives of the land extend to places thought of as 'wild country.' These tracts of land, once perceived as economically unusable by non-Indigenous people, have since been designated by the nation as objects of national significance, reconceptualised as national parks, tourism hubs or reserves. It has been inscribed into the population that these places are to be protected from people, but they also perform profitably. As an exemplar, this chapter explores how Indigenous people's relationship to national parks is not ownership, existing instead within regulatory mechanisms of the nation-economy binary.

Chapter Five analyses how climate change policy has two functions: controlling the cost of climate change mitigation and managing who has the authority to intervene in climate change affairs. In Australia, we draw on Western science to maintain the nation-economy binary, improving the land's availability for resource production. As a result of protecting national trade and economic interests, these sciences and technologies are considered 'in the interests of the nation' by government rhetoric. Indigenous people's knowledges of the land, and goals for mitigating climate change, are subject to Western scientific epistemologies and are considered more useful due to their contribution to the economy.

Chapter Six provides a comprehensive examination of the theoretical contributions of this research. By linking the findings to a range of topics, this chapter outlines the research's practical relevance, demonstrating how the nation-economy binary shapes our present-day thinking. Moreover,

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the contemporary Indigenous position within the context of the binary provides a unique viewpoint on the subject. Lastly, it reflects on the outcomes of utilising Foucault for the analysis, highlighting its role in uncovering new insights and expanding understanding of the topic.

2. Theoretical Framework and Concepts

We must not fetishize our methods.
(Gordon, 2014)

History is often thought of as being a collection of facts about the past, and historians are trained to gather evidence around major events, their origins, and consequences and present it as a form of truth. However, to search for the origins of truth is a gainless exercise, as it merely leads the historian into a labyrinth (Dean, 1994). It is now possible to research history using many methods and forms, focusing on different events, societies, and source material and bringing about new evidence of the past that changes present systems of thought. The telling of the past is not definitive; rather, it is the result of a historian's interpretation, and as knowledge is gathered over many years, it changes how we experience our present, making it necessary to understand that the practice of a historian exists within the conditions of their 'relationships to the present' (Kessler-Harris, 2011, p. 3). What historians write about the past is influenced by all their thoughts within their present. Writing a history of power may have once been about winners and losers, physical violence, or political subterfuge. But, as the experiences of diverse or minority groups are shared globally, writing a history of power has needed to take a more nuanced approach. Foucault proposes that we approach this by doing an archaeological analysis of systems of thought and a genealogical investigation of how these systems inform the emergence of apparatuses, mechanisms, and techniques that act upon our social positions (Foucault, 2007). This is known as Foucault's theory of power-knowledge. Power-knowledge theory provides a critical approach to examining how different historical periods used knowledge to describe objects and how these objects are then subjected to a network of power relations that function to modify the behaviour of the individual (Foucault, 2007).

In Foucault's view of power-knowledge, power is productive insofar as it is produced and transmitted through knowledge, created by the dominant population, and dispersed as a form of truth (Foucault, 1991). Archaeology is not the quest for the origins of these dominant discourses, nor is genealogy a search for the origins of events. Rather, they are the discovery of how knowledge has been experimented with, resulting in the emergence of events and concepts that function to dominate objects and create subjects (Foucault, 1972). These ideas or approaches inform the research philosophy and conceptual framework for this thesis. Qualitative research, as a field of inquiry, has become a paradigm for scientific investigation of complex human interactions and patterns of behaviour. A qualitative research framework such as Foucault's theory is a useful poststructural epistemology as it allows attention to be given to the multiplicities of narratives (Bacchi, 2015; Foucault, 1972; Koopman, 2013). Foucault's theory has been operationalised, becoming an essential tool qualitative researchers can integrate into their theoretical toolbox. For instance, it can be used as part of a mixed method or adapted to create ongoing processes of inquiry for discourse analysis. Thus,

this methodology chapter outlines the research strategy specific to this thesis, how it will establish the field of inquiry, and the approach used to investigate and interpret non-Indigenous narratives of land.

2.1 The Research Philosophy

Ontology is the philosophical study of belief systems or how we perceive the world. An early English dictionary describes ontology as ‘An account of being in the abstract’ (B. Smith, 2012, p. 47). The belief systems address questions such as ‘What kinds of things exist in the world?’ or ‘What is reality, and what are its characteristics?’ (Benton & Craib, 2001, p. 4). Ontology is simply about identifying what is true – based on one’s worldview – and naming or creating the knowability of all those parts. While these different perspectives may question the reality of the world, the development of an ontology, or abstract knowledge of reality, is subject to epistemological considerations.

Knowledge has many sources, limits, and structures, and epistemology studies how we acquire this knowledge (Benton & Craib, 2001). It is within the epistemological frameworks of research that reality, belief systems, and knowledge acquisition are examined. When studying social behaviour, the epistemology of empiricism/positivism, widely used by the sciences, may not be suitable as the testability of observable and measurable data can become unreliable and, therefore, meaningless (Benton & Craib, 2001; see also Walter, 2019). Social behaviour can be studied using subjectivism/interpretivism, especially if researchers focus on the specifics of individuals’ meanings and actions. However, the data is subject to the context of power relations and ontological systems (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). In contrast, postmodernism/poststructuralism focuses on power relations and social behaviour but emphasises the importance of understanding how society interprets its reality through discourse. It argues that, as these interpretations evolve or change, so can modes of power (Benton & Craib, 2001; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Postmodern and poststructural epistemological frameworks have been developed in fields such as philosophy, theology, and science due to the work of thinkers such as Michel Foucault.

2.2 Foucault

Born 1926 in western France, Michel Foucault attended school during the German occupation (Gutting & Oksala, 2022). Majoring in philosophy at the University of Ulm in Paris 1946, Foucault also gained a qualification in psychology and licences to teach both psychology and philosophy in Europe and the United States (Elden, 2021; Gutting & Oksala, 2022). Struggling with his homosexuality and influenced by his studies of Marxism, structuralism, and Nietzsche, Foucault’s research reinforced his sympathy for marginalised groups as the subjects and objects of political and institutional power (Brown et al., 1996; Gutting, 2005; Kelly, 2008). As French history was taught in alignment with philosophy, Foucault also found himself rejecting Kantian ideas of the Enlightenment, that humans become rational beings by behaving out of a sense of moral duty implied by empirical judgment. Instead, he argued that empirical forms of knowledge cannot account for the effects of ‘the discursive regime’ and how ‘power circulate[s] among scientific Statements’ (Foucault, 2020, p. 113; McLear, 2021). From this, Foucault’s

power-knowledge theory emerged. In his earliest major work, *The History of Madness* (1960), Foucault maps how persons deemed unreasonable members of society became the object of moral discourse, creating patterns of judgment and punishment in medical institutions (Scott et al., 2017). Continuing his research, Foucault undertook a deliberate archaeological search for the discursive emergence of the subject in his next book, *Birth of the Clinic* (1963), a history of knowledge classification within the medical field (Scott et al., 2017). Foucault was formulating how knowledge becomes functional in society through institutional practices, and the archaeological and genealogical inquiry into the formation of the subject became the major theme of Foucault's power-knowledge histories.

To Foucault, a subject is an individual who exists within the dividing experiences of knowledge and power 'subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscious or self-knowledge' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 208). In short, the subject is objectified by how others experience them and how they experience themselves. Hence, the subject cannot be constant. Rather, they can only be found at the location of a 'specific historical and cultural juncture', and it is by studying the political practices at the time of the juncture that practices of subjectification will become apparent (Barker, 1998, p. 77). The concept of subjectification refers to the process where a person turns themselves into a subject by using the domains of knowledge available to them; these domains of knowledge create conditions in which fields of power emerge to act upon the subject's experiences (Foucault, 1991). These fields of power, for example, are easily recognisable in the fashion world, with the objectification of women's bodies and the knowledge it produces subjecting women to suggestions of an idealised body. However, Foucault's theory of subjectification and domains of experience has been questioned. Noam Chomsky, a linguist, argues that humans as a species must possess a fundamental biological language that enables us to rationalise from a wide range of experiences (Foucault, 1991, p. 3). In other words, there must be a testable, rational explanation for why humans behave as they do. German philosopher Emmanuel Kant and French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes also prescribe a universal experience of humanity (Avais & Legroski, 2022). However, Chomsky, Kant, and Descartes' theories used in human behaviour research cannot account for the ways knowledge exerts a form of power over free-thinking subjects.

It has been alleged that Foucault was obsessed with seeing power relations everywhere. However, his theory was shaped by the texts of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche, a nineteenth-century German philosopher, rejected the proposition that subjects have fixed perspectives; rather, every activity is governed by a centre of power (Anderson, 2022). In *The Will to Power* (1967), Foucault translates Nietzsches claim that there is no [pre-existing] subject, knowledge, or truth, that subjects, knowledge, and truth are the inventions of humans (Foucault, 2020, p. 15). For Nietzsche, knowledge does not originate from instinct. It is a 'spark between two swords,' which Foucault translates as 'the surface effect of actions' (p. 8). Nietzsche's ideas about actions, Foucault explains, result from relations of 'violence, dominance, power, and force' between 'knowledge and the things it has created' (Foucault, 1972, p. 9). These forces of relations can be recognised in the 'descent' of discourse and the 'emergence'

of concepts that influence the events of history (Foucault, 1991, p. 80). It is possible to argue that Nietzsche's texts are as difficult to read and interpret as Foucault's. Yet, Foucault wrote historical inquiries utilising Nietzsche's perspective of power-knowledge in discourse that are continuing to influence present-day research. Foucault's theory offers an original and critical way of doing historical research, not in chronological order, but by presenting the history of political and scientific knowledge systems as present-day problems.

Foucault believed that history is not simply a chronological account of events but a study of the possible meanings used by individuals to shape the present. In his book *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault proposes a method of analysis that focuses on the 'field of discourses, practices, and institutions in which the subject is embedded' as justification for his historical approach (p. 80). The methods are not concerned with the historical formation of scientific discourse. Rather, they are concerned with the way discursive practices have an epistemological context, thus creating a 'corpus of knowledge' that is then taken up by the scientific community (p. 33). By analysing historical documents, Foucault uses Nietzsche's concepts of 'descent' and 'emergence' to 'diagnose' the elements of discourse that unite and displace knowledge (Dean, 1994, p. 15). The Statements in these documents contain rules concerning the formation of objects, theories, concepts, and strategies, and these discursive practices are necessary for scientific claims of truth (Behrent, 2013). Foucault was interested in the way Statements changed over time yet continued to refer to the same object. An archaeological discourse analysis looks for the epistemological commonalities of these Statements, identifying where a concept surfaced and revealing the matrix they belong to. Depending on the period of history and context in which Statements are produced, objects can appear ordinary until rejection or intolerance of that object surfaces. That object then emerges as a subject of discourse (Foucault, 1972). 'Delimitation' is the practice of those who claim the authority to define and name objects and classify objects into categories of subjects, also known as 'grids of specification' (p. 42). By observing the discursive elements of 'specificity, symmetry, nearness, and interplay' within Statements, discourse analysis can clarify how Statements are used to reposition the subject and describe how ideas and knowledge systems have evolved (Dean, 1994, p. 16; Koopman, 2013). Yet, archaeological analysis of discourse lacks a measurement as it does not show how these multiplicities of knowledge have claimed mechanisms of power by way of knowledge progressing from past to present.

If archaeology is the framework used to identify the rules of Statements or discursive practices, genealogy takes it to the next level by discerning the contingencies of how and why these Statements become true. A genealogy examines discursive and non-discursive elements to reveal the emergence of objects and subjects via regimes of practice. The model for a genealogical analysis is found in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1975), which examines the transformation of punishment from public events to the discrete modern-day judicial systems we now experience (Foucault, 1982a). The analytical tools Foucault uses in *Discipline and Punish* may appear as a revised version of the archaeological analysis. It is a correlative history, an analysis of near-related, symmetrical

discourse that grows and emerges from rules created within a domain of knowledge. In Foucault's essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1971), Foucault states, 'Genealogy opposes itself to the search for 'origins,' origin is linked to 'the site of truth,' truth being claimed by knowledge' (Foucault, 1991, p. 79). All knowledge claims to be true; however, the nature of truth differs from one knower to another. When these differences are made known to each other, it creates a force from which new discursive and non-discursive concepts emerge. Power works through the dominant knowledge system and is evident when the body becomes subject to its discourse. A 'power-knowledge regime,' therefore, 'governs our present-day experience' through an ensemble of 'institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific Statements' (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). Identifying problematic discursive and non-discursive elements in the present-day archive can diagnose taken-for-granted truths, thus creating a history of the present.

The archive comprises all the documents and materials left behind that have been used to describe and fix subjects over time. It is all the traces of evidence left behind by a particular historical period, rather than a specific place. The archive is not exhaustive, nor can it be 'described in its totality'; rather, it manifests in 'fragments,' (Foucault, 1972, p. 30). The subject of a discourse is the accumulation of documents, objects, laws, architecture, and changes in linguistics. The 'greater the time that separates us from it,' the deeper we need to go to show the contingencies that shaped them (Foucault, 1972, p. 130). The archive is Foucault's projection into history, all the Statements and events that give rise to and impact the subject. In *Discipline and Punishment*, for example, Foucault takes a diachronic approach to the archival evidence concerning changes in Western judicial systems by following its trajectory through complex relationships between knowledge systems and regimes of power (Foucault, 1982a). Archival evidence is not meant to be utilised exhaustively to establish causal relations but selectively to render the problem knowable (Knights, 1992). Therefore, importance should be placed on the exemplarity of evidence used in a genealogy as this evidence shows the functions of discursive elements within their historical context, which determines the existence of continuities.

2.3 How Foucault is Being Operationalised

A common criticism of using Foucault's theory to undertake a genealogical analysis is that he does not adhere to an applied method. Despite his previous methodological experimentations, Foucault admitted to being 'mortified' by them (Dean, 1994, p. 29; see also Foucault, 1972). Foucault does not clearly delineate how to apply the dual arms of archaeology or genealogy to discourse analysis. Instead, he offers it as a toolkit. While genealogy is often considered a superior improvement upon archaeology, it may be seen only as a method for claiming 'doubt and critique,' for raising more questions than answers (Garland, 2014, p. 366; see also Hook, 2005; Kearins & Hooper, 2002). Dean (1994), however, notes that '[d]espite a concern with discourses as rule-governed systems to produce thought, Foucault never sought to apply a particular system or to allow his heuristics to solidify into a fixed, formal method (p. 14). This suggests that Foucault viewed his theoretical undertakings as a pragmatic exploration into

present-day discourse, and a criticism against the intellectual self-indulgence exerted by academic disciplines (Gordon, 2014). Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to produce for themselves an effective methodology for using Foucault's theory or closely examine the usefulness of how Foucault's theory has been operationalised elsewhere.

Although Foucault never explicitly explained the concept of problematisation, his frequent use of the word has made it an essential component of a genealogical discourse analysis. Everyone is subject to certain forms of problematisations, defined by the social power relations in which they are embedded (Gutting, 2005). It is also possible for the subject to be aware of these social power relations and try to resist them (Gutting, 2005). For a history of the present to be an 'effective history', it must show how, through a string of problematic relationships, the 'institutions and practices we value and take for granted today' are more dangerous than they appear to be (Garland, 2014, p. 372). Problematisations are concepts taken for granted today, and a genealogical analysis shows the history of their emergence. Taking a pragmatic approach to present-day discursive practices, researchers can determine the problematisation relevant to current positions of resistance. For example, by mapping how discourse in law shapes colonial mechanisms, questions can be raised around the 'historical roots' of state policies and their effects on present-day social conflicts (Kearins & Hooper, 2002; Meitzner Yoder, 2020; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Porter, 2007). This approach differs from that of Carol Bacchi (2012), who uses problematisations to analyse the underlying assumptions of present-day government policy. Creating a problematised view of governments and bureaucracies within historiography fails to consider the necessary role governments may play in creating society, as well as the ethical implications for researchers faced with political activism (Bacchi, 2012; Rajchman, 1983). Because a Foucauldian analysis is concerned with diagnostics, not solutions, opponents suggest, 'Foucault's challenge has no content to it' and offers no political alternatives or solutions (Roth, 1981, p. 45 see also Koopman, 2013). Therefore, it is worth considering how problematisations are a diagnostic process, not a solution-oriented one, and that a Foucauldian analysis is a response to existing conditions and cannot offer an alternative political vision.

2.4 Indigenous Standpoint Theory

My motivations and experiences as an Indigenous person and academic also underpin the analytical position used to carry out this research project. Emerging from feminist standpoint theory, Martin Nakata's (2007) Indigenous standpoint theory is not an 'Indigenous way of doing knowledge' nor a position of Indigenous authority; rather, it is a method of inquiry (2007, p. 214). It is a position from which investigations can be made into productions of knowledge about who I am as an Indigenous person, knowing that how I see myself is shaped by how others see us through the prevalent discourses of Indigeneity, which are shaped by history, as well as who I know myself to be (Nakata, 2007). In this project, I use Indigenous standpoint theory as a mode of analysis for thinking and questioning how the population of Australia, as a nation, have come to see the land and Country as, first and foremost, an

economic proposition. From my position, Country has brought me up. Therefore, I have a responsibility to care for our Country in the same way I care for family. Indigenous peoples more commonly look at the land from the perspective of custodians or guardians, giving form to how the land is considered a resource to provide. Nonetheless, knowledge produced about Indigenous peoples by the [Western] corpus has proved problematic as it forms assumptions from which concepts emerge that act upon the physical experiences of Indigenous peoples (Nakata, 2007).

For example, Indigenous peoples not living on Country are often distinguished as being different from traditionally orientated groups and have been described as dispossessed from culture because of being away from Country (Fredericks, 2013). However, research has shown that Indigenous peoples, regardless of their location, can experience a relatedness to Country through kinship systems formed within a community's local Indigenous population (Fredericks, 2013). For Indigenous peoples, knowing the relationship between families helps in forming common relatives or social relations, and gives recognition to a person as being someone of place. This shows that Indigenous people's knowledge of their culture differs from the subject position formed through historical contexts. This production of knowledge works to affect the Indigenous experience. Recognising that Indigeneity is a constituted position allows us to defend ourselves from the 'push-pull of black or white perspectives' and acknowledge that even though tension exists between Indigenous agency and discursive power, this interface can be a productive place where I can develop my own analytical skills to better reject discursive prepositions (Nakata, 2007, p. 216). Therefore, my standpoint as an Indigenous person is not a pre-given Indigenous truth. Rather, it is a site from which I reflect on my position as a researcher and how Indigenous subjectivities are produced, how this knowledge shapes me, and how the knowledge I produce, from my standpoint, will subject others to an assessment of non-Indigenous narratives of the land.

2.5 Research Strategy

To make the most of the limited time I had with a masters project, I applied a set of principles as fixed points of reflection to assess the validity of my analysis. Rather than methods, Hansen and Triantafillou (2022) offer values that the researcher can use to guide their approach, suggesting that a Foucauldian genealogy should have 'curiosity, nominalism, conceptual grounding, and exemplarity as fixed points of reflection' to help systemise the questions for analysis (p. 2). According to Hansen and Triantafillou (2022), the researcher must be curious about how a power concept is legitimated. They recommend taking a nominalist approach to measuring the development and progress of the concept as it is located within abstract discourses and actions, back to its explicit conditions. Power must also be conceptually grounded, defined by its historical location and clearly explained within and outside its discursive boundaries. Finally, there needs to be a reflection of the concepts and their functions within their contexts to determine points of similarity or difference in the present day. When regimes of truth are evident in the data and concepts are defined explicitly within the context in which they are presented,

this approach allows the researcher to engage with similarities and differences in power practices across the political spectrum (p. 10). This approach to analysing non-Indigenous narratives of the land provides relevant criteria for tracing how these narratives have described the land as an object of the economy.

2.6 Data Collection Method

As this study aims to gain insight into how non-Indigenous narratives of land displace Indigenous people's relationships with the land, the primary data source is written and spoken texts that form the archive. For the archaeological element, sourcing narratives is a critical component. To narrow the direction of my research, I focused on three problematisations relevant to present-day discourses found in the media: the destruction of the Juukan Gorge Caves in Western Australia; the regulation of Australia's protected areas as 'wildcountry'; and the knowledge systems of climate change. Data was collated from primary and secondary sources, including books, diaries, journal articles, legal documents, and media articles. These were sourced from databases and libraries, including OneSearch, Informit, SAGE Publications, Wiley Online Library, Taylor and Francis Online, JSTOR Journal Archives, and the James Cook University Library. The genealogical element of these three problematisations focuses on the historical contingencies of non-Indigenous narratives of the land and how they displace Indigenous people's relationship with the land. The genealogical element uses data from primary and secondary historical documents sourced from OneSearch, TROVE, government gazettes, Text Queensland, and the Parliament of Australia's Hansard. The search terms combined words within each problematisation, including alternative spellings and synonyms. Zotero software was used to store referenced literature.

2.7 Methodological Limitations

Due to the time constraints of a master's research thesis, I was restricted regarding how wide I could take my enquiry. Therefore, my analysis was limited to three topics. The focus was to follow points of historical practices that could be researched onsite. Being located on campus at James Cook University Townsville, the availability of primary and secondary documents was confined to the campus library and online data.

2.8 Summary

For a history of our present-day land narratives to be effective, it must show how, through a string of problematic relationships, the 'institutions and practices we value and take for granted today' are more dangerous than they appear to be (Garland, 2014, p. 372). The theoretical framework for this study is Foucault's archaeology, genealogy, and the creation of the subject through power-knowledge. These may seem like three separate frameworks, but for a history of the present, they are interrelated. Foucault's archaeology of knowledge investigates discursive formations, or epistemes, to see how discursive practices give rise to subjects through power relations. Genealogy then exposes the hierarchies and tactics of knowledge regimes to show how power uses knowledge to subject bodies into

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conducting themselves in a certain way. Although there is criticism that Foucault's genealogical approach is not solution-based, for this study, it provides a diagnostic tool for our present-day conditions. How power-knowledge operates regarding the formation of non-Indigenous narratives of the land will provide a deeper understanding of how Indigenous people's relationships to their lands have been displaced.

3. Nation-Economy Binary and the Destruction of Juukan Gorge

If European Australians, as the learned critics maintain, turned out an obdurate, alienated people, it was because of the nature of the society they constructed in Australia, not because of the landscape.

(Lines, 1999, p. 278)

In this chapter, the development of the nation-economy binary in Australia is mapped from the development of colonial mercantilism through to the destruction of the Juukan Gorge caves in Western Australia (WA). A rigorous tactic for controlling populations in distant locations, mercantilism was a global practice that Foucault identifies with the emergence of governmentality (Foucault, 2007). This chapter also describes how, after the failure of mercantilism and the eventual annexation of Aboriginal Australia, new laws and regulations became necessary to keep the land as an object of the British Empire's economy. For settlers in colonial Australia, their relationships with the land had to meet conditions and expectations set by the economy, and it was only through acts and legislation that people could speak about the land. These discursive practices strengthened economic narratives in the settler population and minimised or erased Indigenous peoples' relationships to the land, eventually resulting in the destruction of the culturally significant Juukan Gorge site. This first analytical chapter argues that monopolising land through the mechanisms and knowledge structures of Western economic policy and legalities is an apparatus of a binary formed between the nation of Australia and its economy. The surfaces of emergence become obvious when tracing through history how the land in Australia and its population have been subjected to the discourse of this binary.

A site of national and international significance, Juukan Gorge was a series of rock shelters located in Western Australia's Pilbara region. With evidence of continuous human occupation dating back some 46,000 years, Juukan Gorge formed part of the lands the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) have, since time immemorial, held responsibility for, and includes their present-day Native Title claim. It was also located on a mining lease granted to the multinational mining company Rio Tinto by the Western Australian Government (Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021). The legal framework created to protect Aboriginal heritage in WA, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 (WA)*, required Rio Tinto to regularly engage with PKKP people as the Traditional Owners of the land, to negotiate the conditions of their operations on PKKP land and assess potential impacts on sites of significance (Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021). However, despite the relationship between Rio Tinto and the PKKP Native Title group, and the so-called protective mechanisms of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 (WA)* (AHA), the Juukan Gorge caves were destroyed by Rio Tinto. This was against the wishes of the PKKP people. With the destruction of the site, Rio Tinto had an economic gain of \$135 million dollars (Turner, 2020). Evidence presented in the *Inquiry into the destruction of the 46,000-year-old caves at Juukan Gorge (2020)* showed that Rio Tinto was legally allowed to mine the sites as they had been approved by the WA Government under Section-18 of the AHA (Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021). At that time, under

WA's Section 18 of the *AHA*, the relevant state minister had the legal right to override the requests of Native Title holders to grant consent for the blast, eliminating the usual criminal implications for such actions (Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021). Rio Tinto's actions in destroying the 46,000-year-old caves were, therefore, deemed a legal action, as they had followed the government's due process regarding the handling of Aboriginal people's cultural heritage. The PKKP people were the outliers, having played no role in either the development of the *AHA* or the process of approvals made on their behalf by the WA Government.

The media portrayed the event as a global tragedy, and over sixty financial institutions, such as AustralianSuper, Cbus, and HESTA made public demands for mining companies around the world to review their relationships with Indigenous communities (Ker, 2020; Laurie, 2020). There was a worldwide consensus of disappointment towards Rio Tinto and the refusal of the WA Government to submit that their protective mechanisms contributed to the destruction. Native Title holders called for greater veto powers to ensure the protection of their ancestral lands; however, this was refused, suggesting they could be used as 'deliberate weapons against the resource sector' (Ramsey, 2021). Lobby groups representing WA's extractive industries declared that 'a quasi-right of veto', such as rights allowed under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* (NT), would create uncertainty and affect 'mining prosperity' (Fitzgerald, 2023; Thompson, 2021). Juukan Gorge's destruction exemplifies how views of Australian land as a resource come from a national view, which sees resources as belonging to the nation and the nation's control and protective mechanisms depending on the land tenure. How has it come to be that Australia's national interest is anchored on economic values? How has knowledge of these values been regulated in such a way that the land is merely an object of the economy, and people are positioned as economic subjects? What were the conditions that made it possible for an event like this to occur?

In mapping non-Indigenous narratives of land in the archive of government documents, gazettes, parliamentary debates, and media articles from 1651 to 1993, when land in Australia was spoken about, two other concepts also emerged: the nation and the economy. Colonists spoke about how the new land would produce and support a growing nation, and as the population grew, it would expand the economic wealth of the British Empire (Hook et al., 1812). For example, land had to be cleared and protected from 'the natives' to develop an agricultural sector to feed the growing colonies' populations (Sheep on the Thirds, 1824). The nation and the economy were administered through the apparatus of the colonial offices, by way of the media, 'in the national interest' – a theme that continued from colonisation to the destruction of Juukan Gorge. This governmentality allowed colonial administrators to subject land to economic narratives and, at the same time, excluded people (migrants, convicts, Indigenous people, and others) from having a position in the emerging nation. Instead, they became subordinate to the mechanisms that sought to keep them from contributing to or benefiting from the land. By mapping how people are positioned in this binary pair, I will demonstrate how the creation of subjectivities made it possible to exercise control over people, leading to their

displacement – not just physical displacement but also the ability of Indigenous peoples to make decisions about their lands.

3.1 Genealogy

3.1.1 *Mercantilism: Conceptualising the Nation-Economy Binary*

Coined by Adam Smith in his book *Wealth of Nations* (1776), mercantilism describes the authoritative economic practices used by nations like France, Spain, and England to ensure their countries' exports exceed imports (Brown, 1983). While it had been practised by many nations involved in colonialism, the British have been credited for legislating the thoughts behind mercantilism, in particular, that economic uncertainties on foreign shores could be secured by controlling the actions of others (Conti, 2018). From 1500 to 1650, Britain's resources were invested in imperial colonies and trading ports around the world for exports and transportation, and the economic wealth of the mother country was highly dependent on the economic interactions between itself and its colonies (Ekelund, 2004). The expanding empire's land holdings, prestige, and profits often came under threat of violent interference from Portuguese and Spanish colonists or intrusion into trade by nations such as the Dutch and the French (Egerton, 1950). To ensure that commodities could be secured, the British legislated nationalistic and protectionist ideologies through institutionalised discursive mechanisms.

Decreed by the British Government in 1661 to administer levies, duties, and taxes on commodities exported from the Americas, Africa, and China and limit imports into colonies to only those from British-owned plantations, the Navigation Acts were meant to unite the British realm under the ideals of nationalism (Firth & Rait, 1911). The possibility of war and piracy made it necessary to encourage more shipbuilding. Trade items were then removed from plantations by British ships, manned by British mariners and crew, and taken to warehouses in England to be resold back to the colonies at a considerable profit (Firth & Rait, 1911). The Navigation Acts sought to close Britain's colonial economic system by removing their colonies' rights to negotiate and participate in international trade, often resulting in the colonies being left without food and materials to sustain their populations. Crown subjects and those involved in the economy of the Empire found themselves restrained within the British Government's mercantile system. Colonial administrations had become institutionalised autocracies under the Navigation Acts. The Governor of Barbados in 1667, Lord William Willoughby, saw conditions in the Caribbean Islands deteriorate under the Navigation Acts. In correspondence, he expressed how locals had 'no clothes sufficient to hide their nakedness or food to fill their bellies' and that the removal of free trade had limited the livelihoods of colonists (Egerton, 1950, p. 67). The politics of British territory were geo-strategically compelled through commercial mechanisms to secure legal control over the people's economic freedoms. They would also control material trade by way of exclusion. In doing so, British subjects were required to assert their birthright or risk being excluded from the economy.

Black markets, depressions, increasing credit lending, war with Spain, bankruptcies, war with France, and the rising local demands brought on by the Industrialisation of England waned the effects of the Navigation Acts. The regulations of the Navigation Act went through multiple revisions between the 1650s and 1770s. Nonetheless, the concept remained the same: the Navigation Acts were to maintain a relationship between British nationalism and their colonial economies. The burdens these acts placed on the colonies were heavy. As subordinates to the empire, the second- and third-generation settlers in the American colonies could not use the instruments of government to serve their own economic interests (Sawers, 1992). British merchants dominated the markets of staples such as tobacco and rice, which were exported out of the American colonies and imported elsewhere, reducing the income of colonial plantations, and forcing them into precarious dependency on British merchants (Sawers, 1992). People living in colonies had to resort to the black markets, trading with Dutch, French, and Spanish merchants until the economy became ‘a separate field of human action,’ forming a division unwanted by the British Government (Conti, 2018). Geographic locations for British subjects became either economic positions on a map where power was transferred by way of administration, or the confines in which they could be subjected to technologies of security. British authority in the closed trade system forced colonial subjects into poverty, as they were unable to negotiate for the import of material goods or use the land for purposes other than exports to the motherland.

The mechanisms of the Navigation Acts acted on colonies not as individuals but as a collective. In the American colonies, the assemblies considered the negative effects of the Navigation Acts to be a nationalistic sacrifice. This formed an argument for independence from the empire. By the 1770s, the American colonies refused further cooperation in Britain’s closed economy; they desired economic independence and political sovereignty (Ransom, 1968). In 1775, the American War for Independence broke out (Sawers, 1992). Lasting eight years, England lost the American colonies and, with them, the political and economic control of productive land. Egerton (1950) suggests that the British colonial scheme observed the outcomes shaped by the mercantile system and, from this knowledge, sought new criteria that would, in the future, produce a more stable, favourable outcome for the growth of the empire and its economy.

As world trade grew and populations moved around the globe, philosophical and social thinkers analysed the unsettled positions of government, society, and the land they sought to expand their national growth. The Navigation Acts stimulated the practice of nationalism and protectionism through legislation. A profound contributor to Western political philosophy and modern liberal thought, John Locke supported the British Government’s legislation. Locke’s texts legitimated legislation as a necessary instrument of government by theorising that the conditions for a ‘Social Contract’ require, ‘with the agreement of the majority’, a legislative body to define and protect ‘the rights of individuals to life, liberty and property’ (Mack & Meadowcroft, 2013, p. 67). Locke linked individuals to a political system of governance and linked land to the economy by asserting that

ownership could be evidenced by the amount of labour invested into it, a claim that makes landowners economic subjects regardless of how they came into possession of the land (Kramer, 1997). Productive land was needed for the empire, colonists required security and land ownership, and the British Government could offer both to the right population.

3.1.2 *Command: Controlling the Australian Economy*

After losing the American colonies in 1783, the British Government looked to alternative locations to relocate their transportation system and possibly restore their agricultural trade. The east coast of Indigenous Australia had been previously mapped by Lieutenant James Cook and botanist Joseph Banks in 1770. Given its nearness to Asia, they recommended Gamay (Botany Bay) as a place to establish a penal colony (Banks, 1896; Cook, 1955; Egerton, 1950). On February 7th, 1788 at Camp Cove, Australia, Judge Advocate David Collins read aloud instructions contained in a commission signed by the King of England, George III, to Captain Arthur Phillip of the British Royal Navy, who was appointed first Governor-in-chief of the soon-to-be-established penal colony (Beazley, 2020). This speech marked the founding of the new colony, and it was here that ideas about a new nation and the nation's economy were introduced. In previous colonies, mercenaries had opened trade, and Britain controlled shipping and port facilities. However, upon arriving in Australia, the British found that Indigenous peoples had no recruitable economy. This provided an opportunity to create one from the ground up, for which British Government colonies would be solely responsible (McLean, 2012). The commission was the first of three instructions that outlined various techniques to be executed on all objects useful to the new economy. Production and protection of land were two recurring themes in the documents, with the meaning of each interchangeable with ideas of economy and containment, revealing the significant political and economic investment Britain planned for their new venture.

Governor Phillip's instructions provided a political rationale for defining the objects of the new government in a language that made them governable. The instructions also outlined the measures to be taken to secure economic activity and create a system of conduct in the new nation (Dean, 2010). The instructions considered the land as economically empty and people as lawless (convicts) or stateless (Indigenous peoples). The 600 male and 180 female convicts transported in the First Fleet had been categorised as necessary for land cultivation. An instruction requested that 'immediately upon your landing,' the new government was expected to 'proceed to the cultivation of the Land, distributing the Convicts for that purpose' (United Kingdom, 1787, p. 9). Regulating populations of people by classifying them as subordinate to economic production was a well-used mechanism bought in from other colonies with slavery practices. Yet, this was not considered 'slavery' as the justification was judicial: 'specified in their several sentences or Orders of Transportation' (p. 8). As competing land users, Aboriginal peoples were to be counted and a 'report' drawn to consider the ways they could 'be turned to the advantage of this country' (p. 16). To the British, an unknown population posed a risk to their economic goals. Therefore, by defining and describing the population in relation

to their productiveness, the colonial office could diagnose what security measures were needed to protect their interests.

Government practices regulate human behaviour in many ways, by punishing through a prison system or policies of discipline and reward. The first thirty years of Australia's settlement were controlled under a 'command economy,'⁵ a political system where the government dictated production levels and prices (McLean, 2012). Land tenures, stock, staffing, and exports became the subject of early colonial papers like the *Sydney Gazette*, a semi-official newspaper produced by the government from 1803 to 1842. Regulating behaviour was seen as a negative unless it informed people that their rights and freedoms were being protected from a less desirable position, economic exclusion. For example, convicts transported to Australia could be released from punishment, recognised as free settlers, and receive land subsidies if they submitted their time and labour to build new towns. Free settlers could receive larger portions of land in exchange for committing to the task of populating and contributing to the colonial scheme (Roberts, 1968). In essence, these actions were persuaded via intimidating mechanisms made publicly known through the *Sydney Gazette*. It served as a tool for overseeing and managing social behaviour.

Land is essential to the nation as it defines its sovereignty borders. Yet, the epistemological notion of property for land users is influenced by the context in which the claimant stands. As well as introducing people and structures related to their economic heritage (materiality), British colonial society also introduced to Australia the idea that land belonged to the Crown.⁶ The colonial organisation in Australia had eyes on vast amounts of territory, and their economic principles of legislative coercion were appropriate to the task of obtaining and securing a hold on it. The Governor's instructions were clear that the British Government did not conceive a future where they would negotiate for land the same way as they had previously done with European powers. The British, by using their strength in controlling people through organisational structures, used this opportunity to shape the context of Australian land ownership to their will. To release the Crown from the burden of subsidising the new colonies, the Australian colonial government pushed the population towards self-sufficiency (United Kingdom, 1787). Labour – cheap and manageable – was necessary for the swift development of the agriculture sector needed to feed the population. As immigration was not worthwhile for Britain's elite population at that time, labour came in the form of convicts (Karskens, 2013). This penal part of history is well developed, but little is suggested of how the

⁵ Unlike an open market economy which relies on market forces for its life cycle, a 'command economy' is governed by a highly centralized or authoritarian state system who maintains total control through bureaucratic directives (Grossman, 1990).

⁶ In the modern sense, the concept of the Crown remains contentiously relevant regarding Australia's legal and constitutional experience as members of the Commonwealth of nations, the present-day usage in Australia, however, is more to identify the body of politics – Federal and State governments - to which executive powers have been transferred (Saunders, 2015; Twomey, 2006).

subject positions of people in Australia contributed to the formation of its land tenure system. Resistance from land users and Indigenous groups forced the government to reimagine organisational structures based on the society they were trying to construct. As it exists today, the Australian land tenure system was obtained from English common law. There is a case to argue that the introduced feudal doctrine of land tenure is sustained in Australian land laws, recognisable under the distinctive imperial link to ‘absolute Crown ownership’ (Hepburn, 2006, p. 51). This may be because the historical monument of feudalism suited the economic and social system under construction.

3.1.3 Feudalism: Controlling the Economy of People

Control of land extended to control of people on the land. The binary between the nation and the nation's economy excludes individuals; however, the nation needs human activity in the form of labour that only a population can provide. Australia's emerging population, therefore, needed to be one that endorsed the nation's economic scheme. But what would a population like this look like? Free settlers required allegiances to the English law, including its legislative and judicial systems, to be afforded the least restrictions when accessing land and the most protections in using land to build individual economic wealth (Windeyer, 1962). For example, during the first twenty years of settlement, land was distributed amongst the population based on acts of service to the realm. Free settlers were often civil servants and military personnel. Non-commissioned officers were allocated 130 acres, private soldiers 80 acres, and freed convicts 30 acres, and if married and with children, more land could be claimed (‘Extract from the ROYAL Additional Instructions, Dated Aug. 20, 1789.’, 1803). When the colonial government allocated land to people, the empire also transferred its economic objectives and a form of political power to them., landholders were allocated or could request convicts as workers, and the efficiency of the convict economy suggests that the human capital was ‘vetted before transportation’ to ensure a mix of skills and education (McLean, 2012, p. 47). The population, therefore, became a way for the Crown to manage the security of land and people in such a large territory. As landholders regulated both people and the spaces people occupied, they instituted themselves into judicial positions of power. This process refashioned the doctrines of the feudal system.

There are a few distinct meanings of feudalism. In studies of Medieval history, researchers often categorise feudalism based on the political relationship between local lords or military personnel who would administer judicial procedures and property called ‘fiefs’ to free dependants in return for labour and service (Brown, 2023). Marxists refer to it as a mode of economic production, a social system structured by the obligations of lower-class peoples to offer labour services to land owners in exchange for occupying a farm (Turner, 2006). Foucault suggests that feudalism was a form of pastoral power; unlike religion, which aims to protect people in the next life, the pastoral power of feudalism was aimed at guaranteeing the wellbeing of people in this life (Foucault, 2007). As the Crown is thousands of kilometres away from Australia, the feudal system is a decentralised institution

of power. Nevertheless, it established predetermined subject positions – subordinate workers – to which land tenure was granted, leased, or licensed in exchange for goods, resources, or rent. When the penal colony was installed, socage and copyhold were the only land tenure systems accepted by English law. Without free immigrants investing in land, convicts were expected to work for military personnel rather than a manorial lord in exchange for land tenure. Convicts were surrounded by unfamiliar bushland, and with a ban on shipbuilding, were dependent on the military for their protection and food. This guaranteed a willing workforce for the colony (United Kingdom, 1787). Land became an apparatus by which the nation could not only secure people to place but also organise them according to the interests of the economy. Throughout the colonial period, land regulations had two functions: improve the economy on behalf of the nation and maintain security of land on behalf of the Crown. The efficiency of this knowledge acts as a regime of truth that speaks to the declaration of sovereignty over Australian soil; it maintains people in the subject position which had been pre-imposed on them (Babie, 2013).

The ‘limits of location’ ordered by Governor Darling in 1826 were meant to ensure people could only take up land in defined areas. However, overcrowding forced resistance from resident-colonists and released convicts, who took it upon themselves to move into unsurveyed regions, resulting in what is now known as the ‘squatting age’ (Roberts, 1968, p. 59). In response, the *Squatting Act* of 1839 tried to situate land users as potential criminals, declaring that ‘occupation of unalienated lands of New South Wales’ as ‘derogatory to the rights of the Crown’ and applied penalties to those found living on or making use of the natural materials on land beyond the border districts without licence (‘The New Squatting Act.,’ 1839). As a population, the squatters functioned as a political entity. Their rapid expansion into sheep and cattle grew their economic wealth quickly, along with their ability to negotiate with the colonial office. Keeping colonists in support of national goals was important to achieving economic goals, and agricultural and pastoral licences emerged from the Squatting Acts. Control over people changed from limiting the spaces they lived to regulating their occupations and livelihoods. That this was a mere policy change and not military intervention could be down to the fact that the squatters-turned-pastoralists were of British stock. In 1847, the Order of Council created new pastoral tenures – long leases for annual fees – retaining the right of resumption by the Crown, thus bringing an end to concentrated settlements (Egerton, 1950; Fry, 1946; Roberts, 1968). La Croix (1992) points out how the transformation of law-breaking squatters into respectable graziers exposes how regulations and land tenure systems were created to enforce the property rights of the government and ensure the land was contracted to economic ‘wealth-maximisers’ (p. 23).

Land users, deemed economic ‘wealth maximisers’, became subject to a form of pastoral power assumed by the colonial government. An wealthy population resulted in a economically healthy nation (Foucault, 1982b). Where land ownership was a function of power, legislative acts and judicial systems maintained the Crown’s monopoly by concentrating control of the land through a knowledge system where leases and licences for land were subject to conditions of economic development. The

gold rush of the 1850s and 1860s introduced mining licences and leases in exchange for annual fees. The *Robertson Land Act 1861* and *Crown Lands Act 1884* imposed similar conditions of development and occupation. Selection tenures or conditional purchases could transform agricultural and mining tenures into freehold property after the conditions of the purchase were fulfilled (Egerton, 1950; Roberts, 1968). This system assigned property rights to those who were functioning according to the rules of the economy and effectively isolated all those who were not. The security of Australian land operated according to patterns of economic development, and the legislative strategy the government invented privileged people who positioned themselves as commercial subjects. Each colonial state and territory, thereafter, instituted its own system of Crown leasehold, freehold, and reserve tenures, ensuring that each tenure provided returns for the different levels of government and preserved the economic value of land (Fry, 1947).

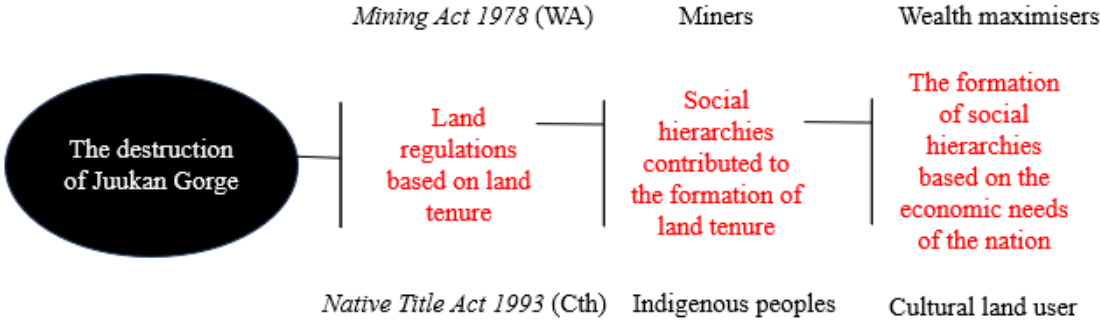
3.2 Discussion: The Destruction of Juukan Gorge

In the newly emerging Australian nation, the formation of social hierarchies determined who could use, access, and own land based on the economic needs of the nation (refer to Figure 1). This matrix of economic privilege, however, did not extend to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. The Indigenous peoples' economic and land philosophy had been built upon reciprocity between land and people, and their economic development primarily focused on ecological knowledge of the land, its complex nature, and the importance of using cultural activities for maintaining this knowledge (Pascoe, 2014). As far as the English law was concerned, Indigenous rights to land in Australia were non-existent due to the legal premise of *terra nullius*. As such, Indigenous peoples were overlooked as 'property law subjects' (Babie, 2013, p. 1096). Economic equality was also determined as unnecessary for controlling Indigenous peoples as their 'personhood, culture, and governance systems' were a paradox to early settlers; they resisted the invasion of their lands, resisted economic paradigms, and their community refused assimilation into the settler population (Havemann, 2005, p. 57; see also Nakata, 2002). Incorporating the Indigenous population into the economy was also not considered crucial, as frontier violence, disease, and land clearing had reduced the population to a minority. Records suggest that the Aboriginal population in Queensland alone dropped from 100,000 to 26,670 in a little over a hundred years (Chesterman & Galligan, 1997). Some people in colonial society saw this decimation of Indigenous people as a natural extension of survival of the fittest, as promoted by social Darwinists. Racial categorisation helped rationalise the various mechanisms the colonial and federal governments introduced, which kept Indigenous populations on the fringes of the new nation (Nethery, 2009). Indigenous knowledges of the land had not been deemed suitable for the nation's economic goals, despite many fledgling industries relying on unpaid and unrecognised Indigenous knowledges and labour. Therefore, Indigenous peoples, as cultural land users, were not afforded the same patterns of economic security economic wealth-maximisers were given. It is from these power

struggles that Native Title eventually emerged. Native Title was a way to incorporate Indigenous peoples into the logic of the nation-economy binary.

Figure 1

Exemplar 1: logic of the nation-economy binary



Note. Diagram author’s own (2024).

Land tenure systems became a technology of power that imposed the beliefs of the Crown on land users. Such beliefs included that land was for producing economic materialities and belonged to the Crown. By subscribing to this political program, users of Australian land would be afforded some political protections. The British government’s history of dealing with Indigenous groups from previous colonial projects meant that they had gathered a knowledge bank useful in shaping how politics and law should be exercised upon Indigenous peoples’ relationships to the land. As a result, Native Title recognition ‘was made – or not made – in the context of British colonisation’ (Attwood, 2020). Claims of sovereignty and the giving of recognition are both philosophical and legal ideas introduced by colonisation, and these imperial ideologies are often transactional (Attwood, 2020). Land tenure keeps the economy tight by controlling people’s actions and how they contribute to the economy through binding agreements. However, this also limits Indigenous peoples’ ability to respond to cultural heritage protection. For example, Traditional Owners who are recognised under Native Title rarely have the right to reject mining operations on their lands, and while cultural heritage is seen as an asset for the nation-economy, Indigenous peoples’ cultural heritage can create a distinctive confrontation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders of the land (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023). Indigenous heritage is recognised by the Commonwealth Government under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (ATSHP Act), and under environmental law, the government can make special declarations to protect sites and objects of significance to Indigenous

peoples. However, for a site or object to be considered, an Indigenous person must first petition the government (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2016).

Since colonisation, multiple land regulations surfaced to impose terms upon land tenure systems (refer Figure 1). The nation-economy binary incorporates all that is relevant to the national interest. Protecting heritage can be in the nation's interest. If heritage is the handing down of values, culture, and artefacts, then colonial society worked to preserve knowledge of their superiority and right of inheritance. The economic heritage of colonial Britain had succeeded in supplanting the Indigenous heritage of living on and caring for their Country. Such ideas are evident in the writing of the time, such as those by the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS), which was founded in 1901 after Federation (Royal Australian Historical Society, 2024). Research and journal articles produced by RAHS members were highly subjective, reflecting topics of interest that shifted away from purely British ideals and into emerging Australian topics and traditions. For example, Walker (1903) declares in *Some Notes on the Marine Explorers from the Years 1770 to 1843*, 'to this beautiful land of which we are so proud, and of whose infantile steps, we, as a society, are never weary of recounting, nor of endeavoring to build up a fabric of true history, which shall stand the test of time' (p. 149). Colonial documents, buildings, and war memorials reflected ideas ultimately linked to European practices. This encouraged and promoted one side of Australia's history, preserving specific community values by articulating how Australia's history was to be talked about.

Preserving a nation's social values and cultural history is valuable to preserving national identity. However, when Gough Whitlam said in 1969 that '[the Federal Government] should see itself as the curator and not the liquidator of the national estate,' it was unclear what this 'new nationalism' agenda was that would underpin heritage management for the next 40 years (J. P. Lesh, 2019, pp. 113 & 114). After ratifying the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), the Federal Government drafted the *International Council on Monuments and Sites Burra Charter* (1979) (Burra Charter). This led to the nation's heritage being assigned into four categories: built environments, natural environments, Aboriginal sites, and cultural property (Lesh, 2017). In the context of Australia's colonial occupation, binding the mechanisms of heritage to legislation describes how heritage was to be regulated and also specifies who has access to the practices of heritage preservation. For example, in all revisions of the Burra Charter, the document marginalises Indigenous people; their inclusion in heritage management and preservation are as mere 'audiences' waiting to be 'offered the opportunity for an active role' in their heritage (Waterton et al., 2006, p. 350).

The destruction of Juukan Gorge was, therefore, made possible by how the nation's economy intercepted Indigenous people's rights to protect their lands. The PKKP Native Title recognition meant that both Rio Tinto and the government were required to enter negotiations with their Native Titles Prescribed Body Corporate (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023; Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021). However, where the government requires companies like Rio

Tinto to have Traditional Owner agreements, these are often enigmatic in ‘that they can underwrite a company’s commitments and procedures as described in public disclosures on the one hand, and its actual decisions and impacts on the other hand’ according to the rights allowed them under the *Mining Act 1978* (WA) (Thompson, 2020). For example, the PKKP’s attempts to stop the destruction of the caves were complicated by pressures to secure royalties under Native Title laws that led them to accept non-disclosure provisions by Rio Tinto (Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021). Regardless that these restrictions made it impossible to oppose the destruction of Juukan Gorge, Western Australian Liberal Senator Dean Smith said the real issue was ‘governance and transparency in Indigenous corporations’, ruling out any changes that would ‘affect the mining industry that earns over \$100 billion a year for the national economy’ (‘Barbaric destruction’, 2020). Public calls for Native Title to include rights to veto were rejected as the government considered veto ‘a contentious term’ (Allam, 2020). Rather, they prefer legislative protection for Traditional Owners under state and federal heritage management systems (Thompson, 2021). Actions like these show the systematic weakness Indigenous people have when they are subjected to the actions of the economy.

The inquiry into the Juukan Gorge event may have resulted in the Federal budget allocating \$500,000 towards increasing Indigenous heritage protections. Still, it was overshadowed by a \$2.7 million package for a pilot program designed to escalate mining developments in priority regional areas (Gredley, 2021). These legislative regimes are determined by the economic heritage that has emerged from the nation’s dominant identity. This identity preferences the social hierarchy of economic wealth-maximisers like Rio Tinto, for whom Australia accounts for eighty percent of their earnings. Indigenous MP Linda Burney responded to the event by stating ‘Weighing up is money versus irreplaceable cultural material. That happens to be, you know, tens of thousands of years old. And Australia must come to terms with that’ (Ker & Kehoe, 2020). In Australia, how land is regulated is based on the type of land tenure held. The nation-economy binary subjects people to land tenure systems that describe how they can use the land – a form of population control. Native Title places Indigenous peoples in a position within this social hierarchy. When the Traditional Owners, therefore, seem to have all these ‘affordances’ to protect their lands, how they emerge within the framework of the nation-economy binary becomes evident.

According to the nation of Australia, and the legal system introduced by British common law, Australian land has and never will be held in proprietary ownership. That is, land does not fully belong to those who hold title over it. The Australian state and federal governments – on behalf of the Crown – hold exclusive rights to negotiate for its use. Even when a person or entity holds a freehold title (as opposed to Crown land), their use of the land is governed by local, state, and national legislation. This is best explained by exploring how cultural heritage is now the predominant structure used to protect the land. While it may seem that cultural heritage is used to protect Indigenous rights, cultural heritage was designed to protect the interests of the economy. Indigenous cultural heritage has been drawn into this. There is often a misconception that Native Title can be used as a protective mechanism of

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Indigenous culture, but, as the destruction of Juukan Gorge shows, Native Title is subordinate to the national economy and its objectives.

Government control of land use is a technology of power: controlling fluctuating climates (by shaping the landscape) and people (by shaping governmentalities). The historical residue of this exclusive position over land may appear unique to the context of Australia's colonial appropriation. However, the conditions for this land monopoly have manifested through trial and error. The economy has been monopolised by excluding the actions of people through the use of mercantilism. A Command Economy also monopolises land and coerces the actions of both the economy and people. People then become economic wealth-maximisers of the economy through the creation of land acts and legislation that emerged from the foundations of the Feudal. Land has become an object of the economy and the nation. The Crown and government, creating land tenures and legislating the terms of land use, subject the Australian population to the discourses of this binary.

4. Making 'WildCountry'⁷ Productive: Australia's Protected Area System

Australia is an undeveloped enterprise that could, under-skilled management, enrich its shareholders.

Former Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, 1923-29
(n.d., as cited in Lines, 1992, p.163)

The previous chapter showed how the land and waters of Australia have become an object of the nation-economy binary and how people who use the land are subject to this binary. As a result of this binary, the land is often spoken about as existing in varying states of economic production for the nation's benefit. By governing the actions of people who use the land, the economic possibilities of the land may be realised. This chapter examines how, in Australia during the period of *terra nullius*, productive land was immediately taken up by settlers to be used for agriculture, pastoral, or extractive industries. After federation, narratives worked to reconceptualise new ways of making unproductive land productive. Tracts of land once deemed 'wastelands' by the Crown eventually emerged as what we now recognise as Australian protected areas. This chapter describes how the Australian settler imagination of the country reinforces the discourse that Australian protected areas should be kept freely available for the use of all people and made profitable as national parks. It argues that Indigenous people's lands, categorised by federal and state governments as Australian protected areas, are co-managed to ensure these lands are made freely available for the use of the nation and kept profitable for the benefit of the economy.

Indigenous peoples of Australia often describe their relationship with the land in terms of custodianship, not for profit making, but for cultural and ecological continuity. The land provides not only material resources but also a reciprocal frame of reference that determines how an Indigenous person identifies themselves and uses that identity to relate with others and their surroundings. Within this custodianship system is the concept of Caring for Country, which is important for both the environmental wellbeing of the land and of Indigenous peoples. However, as Chapter Three described, the imported colonial narrative of *terra nullius* (nobody's land) to the Australian land extended to Indigenous peoples. They were considered as 'nobody', and their rights as humans were ignored. As the settler population spread across the land, colonial imaginations romanticised some regions they considered incapable of being touched by humans due to their beauty, wilderness, or unproductiveness. Civilising the wilderness was imperative to nation-building. However, imagining the land as being unpeopled ignored the violent history of forcing Indigenous peoples from these regions (Pickerill, 2008). Moving forward, Land rights and Native Title reforms have recognised

⁷ The term 'WildCountry' refers to Jenny Pickerill's 2008 article *From wilderness to 'WildCountry': the power of language in environmental campaigns in Australia*. Her article explores the power of language used by environmental campaigners, how their discourse often ignores Indigenous knowledges of the lands and adds to the complexity of Indigenous land rights movements.

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Indigenous peoples' relationships to their lands, while, at the same time, the narrative of the economy has turned unproductive regions into environmental resources. Where Indigenous peoples have been given legal permission to practice caring for their Country, governments have also realised the financial potential of eco-tourism. Thus, Indigenous peoples' relationships with present-day Australian protected areas only become possible if Indigenous peoples' economy of the land benefits the nation-economy binary. This is often through tourism.

As of 2022, the Australian Protected Area System has become a network of ecosystems covering almost 170 million hectares, or 22.10% of Australian-owned regions⁸ (Australian Government, 2022). These systems are classified by their level of protection, from strict restrictions on human visitation to being considered culturally and spiritually compatible national parks or monuments (Australian Government, 2022). These systems' governance structure comprises a mix of state, Commonwealth, Indigenous, and private management. In Australia, the Australian Protected Area System demonstrates the nation's low sensitivity to Indigenous cultural importance, especially because many Indigenous places of cultural importance, that are also considered environmentally beneficial or visually appealing, are often leased back to the tourism industry to ensure that these lands are preserved as assets for the Nation. They benefit the economy. Indigenous people's ability to access, own, or manage these regions as places of cultural significance is limited through legal land tenure mechanisms, and their right to do so is often targeted by the concerns of non-Indigenous peoples. These people emphasise, through narratives, the value that wildCountry has towards their own national identities.

Take for example, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Country. For non-Indigenous people, it was first recorded by explorer William Gosse. In 1873, he named it Ayers Rock. In 1920, it became an Aboriginal reserve, and tourism started in the 1930s (Walliss, 2014). Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was officially declared a national park in 1958 and handed back in 1985 on the condition the government could lease it for 99 years (Walliss, 2014). The narratives expressed by the population, as represented by the media and political debates, show how people are subject to the logic of the nation-economy binary in their broader experience of national identity. Narrative descriptors often describe Uluru as a 'timeless' representation of Australia. However, tourism management plans express authentic concern about the environmental impact tourism has on the region, which shows the obligation the region has as a place of economic production. For example, the 1985 hand back of Uluru-Kata Tjuta to Traditional Owners Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people, and the climbing ban of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta rock, illustrate how easily public discourse can become negative when Indigenous management of the land becomes a possibility. In the 1980s, the media gave voice to depictions of Uluru-Kata Tjuta as a 'symbol of

⁸ Inclusive of ocean waters and the Antarctic.

national stability’ and that the Labor Government was handing over ‘the heart of this country’ (Telegraph Sydney, 1983; Sydney Morning Herald, 1985). In 2019, the announcement of a climbing ban on the sacred Uluru rock elicited repeated public negativity towards Indigenous management, calling the ban ‘ridiculous,’ blaming ‘leftie idiots’, and denying that the practice was opposed by Indigenous elders (La Canna, 2016; Meade, 2019). Media narratives disseminate the perception that Indigenous management of nature reserves leads to total national exclusion, making it difficult for Indigenous peoples to self-manage their lands. Indigenous people could have the right to decide if Australian protected areas can be made culturally safe and inclusive while also providing an opportunity for an Indigenous economy and contributing to self-determination.

How has it come to be that Australian protected areas are considered the best mechanism for protecting the environment, yet Indigenous ownership is not? Since time immemorial, Indigenous people have maintained food and climate security through their relationship with the land. Yet, in less than 300 years, Australia has been reimagined as a sovereign nation of settlers who have turned a spectacular landscape into an object of economic wealth. When resources could not be extracted, people’s imaginations created a wealth of descriptions that led to a taming of the land into the economy’s service, for example, in providing experiences. These narratives of the land also worked to justify ownership of the land, not just on the physical level, but in the Western idealisation of environmental heritage. The environment of Australia has been regulated to declare certain places as wilderness, effectively removing Indigenous peoples from the landscape.

When mapping articles referencing the creation of Australian protected areas in Australia, it was apparent that the land, when newly explored by settlers, was classified as either productive or unproductive to benefit the Nation’s economy. Transcribed from European imaginaries, explorers, surveyors, and the colonial government expressed ideas of economic wealth for the empire. Australian land was considered wild and untamed yet adaptable to the economic functions of production and consumption. Additionally, it was deemed possible to remake the land ideologically European upon being landscaped and made productive. However, after a period of uncontrolled land grabbing, the colonial government struggled to maintain its hold on the land. Settlers and squatters expanded their territories in a bid to increase their economic wealth. From this emerged Australia’s land tenure system.

As economically viable land was taken up and the population of towns increased, taming the land into the economy also became about pacifying the social concerns of ‘toil-hardened/weary citizens’ (Eden, 1879). Social and cultural leisure increased in demand, and land that had not been transformed into agricultural, pastoral, or mining leaseholds, found a new subject position as a symbol of national pride. By mapping the emergence of land as an object of national identity, this chapter demonstrates how national parks became useful to the government; the government were able to maintain the management of land that could not be used for industry and turned social and cultural environmental activities into an economic practice that could benefit the nation-economy

binary. Indigenous people's rights to protect and manage land were excluded during the formation of these Australian protected areas. Landscapes that were once homelands for Indigenous peoples have since been restructured into human-made ideals of 'wildernesses' (Pickerill, 2008). This genealogy shows how the characterisation of Australian places in settler discourses worked to obscure Indigenous people's practices of Caring for the Country and, instead, realised national parks as an economic industry of the nation.

4.1 Genealogy

4.1.1 *Taming the Land: Grid of Specification*

Regardless that the Australian landscape had been known by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for over 60,000 years, settlers considered Indigenous people's intelligence and knowledge of their lands empty. As Cook and Banks navigated the east coast of the Australian continent, they wondered how people could have lived on the land for so long and yet not thought of doing anything different to it. Both Cook and Banks thought that Indigenous peoples did not consider gaining economic wealth from their lands as they appeared 'happy in not knowing the use of them' (Cook, 1955, p. 92). Locke's land labour theory – that land belonged to human beings who established their rights over natural resources – underpinned Cook's justification for suggesting colonising Australia. He thought that there existed, for Europeans, a divine right or 'providence' to increase their economic wealth, as they had the industrial capabilities to transition Indigenous land into a new commercial enterprise for the British Empire (p. 316). Therefore, Cook saw Australia as an untouched place, as existing in a 'pure state of nature,' waiting for the 'industry of man' to be 'transplanted' (p. 89). By imagining that Indigenous peoples were unable to recognise economic or material wealth, it could be suggested to incoming explorers and settlers that Indigenous peoples would not place a value on the economic wealth to be extracted from the land. In doing so, this silenced Indigenous people.

Previous global colonial enterprises had followed a particular pattern: private merchants identified new economic opportunities in lands abroad, and a foreign government expanded into the trade by invading or investing capital in the trade and purchasing of lands from the local population. However, Australia was considered empty of people and open for exploration. In the wake of the American Revolution, and with rising pressures from industrialisation, the administrators of the new colonial government needed to carefully consider the management of the population through land ownership in exchange for the industry necessary to create a self-supported society. However, to do this, the administrators first required knowledge of the resources the Australian land had to offer. They needed what Foucault would describe as *Grids of Specification*, a matrix by which the land could be described, classified, and separated into its economic values (Foucault, 1972, p. 42). Classification of the land into economic grids was imperative to the expansion of settlement as no land policy existed that would encourage suitable 'gentleman farmers' to travel over three months by sea to a foreign land.

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The colonial government relied on English opportunists, explorers, and surveyors to map the landscapes of Australia so that it could be divided into areas of economic priority: timber, agriculture, pastoralism, and mining. According to Watkin Tench, a marine officer on the First Fleet, this land offered ‘destruction from every flash of lightning,’ and possessed a coast of 200 acres that could not be cultivated. The colony had expected ‘murmuring rills and refreshing springs,’ but instead found ‘tributary streams’ that were ‘baffling to transient observers’ (Tench, 2011, p. 9). In addition, Tench noted that the governor desired to make prisoners out of Indigenous peoples to find out whether the country had any resources for extending their lives (Tench, 2011). Maritime geography was undertaken by Captain Phillip Parker King and interior geography by John Oxley. In their initial inspections, they gave the impression that Australia was a ‘land of contrarities, where the laws of nature seem reversed’ (Field, 1825, p. V). From Moreton Bay to Port Curtis, John Oxley described ‘sandbanks’, ‘shoals of soft mud’, and ‘strong swells’ for the consideration of trade vessels (pp. 1 & 3). John Uniacke compared ‘[d]eep rich valleys’ ‘clothed with magnificent trees’ and ‘beautiful uniformity’ to scenes of ‘tremendous’ floodplains where ‘unrelenting’ mosquitoes and sandflies forced them from the lands (p. 27). The ‘structure and agricultural importance’ that the colonial government sought for further settlements were transcribed back to London within glossaries specifying useful native trees, animals, and Indigenous peoples’ ‘novel’ hunting techniques (p. 192).

By 1803, the cultivated lands of settlers in Sydney had succeeded in fattening cattle and growing maize, and in the waters, Governor King was encouraging the ‘pursuit as much as possible’ to seal hunting in the Bass Strait (Lines, 1999). Indigenous peoples were dealing with the introduction of introduced diseases and loss of access to food sources, and settlers looked inland to expand their land holdings. For example, Gregory Blaxland, an English farmer and pioneer, became the first settler to successfully cross the New South Wales Blue Mountains in a search to expand his pastoral holdings. Arriving in Australia in 1805, his initial land grant of 4000 acres had swelled to almost 10,000 acres by 1812, yet it became insufficient for his growing cattle and sheep numbers (Conway, 1966). In 1813, he set out on his speculative journey. Blaxland (1870) wrote of ‘the important alterations’ that could be made to the prosperity of the colony as his exploration marked out a road and opened the possibility for ‘unlimited pasturage’. In response to the knowledge that there existed western plains that could support much-needed agriculture for crops, which was the greater need for a self-supporting colony, then-colonial Governor Lachlan Macquarie developed policies that ensured new land was taken up by settlers who showed ‘a spirit of cultivation’ and agreement to ‘experimental farming’ (Roberts, 1968, p. 30). This push inland reiterated the importance of categorising the land for use. Surveyors officiated boundaries for settlers, land policies conducted the appropriate use of the land, and the military protected colonial interests and settlers from Indigenous people’s resistance to the loss of their access to their lands.

4.1.2 *Taming the Population: Defining Parameters and Limits*

Imagining the land without Indigenous peoples left room for reimagining it as an extension of English heritage. Newly discovered and young in mind, the landscape became, for settlers, a space in which personal economic wealth-building was limited only so far as they could fence the boundaries of their estates. Fencing was critical to the settlers as it defined the line between production and waste. Productive land was envisioned as selections that replicated English village flora and fauna. Beauty was not just for the scenery but also extended to food production. Grain grown equal to ‘average English growth’ produced ‘bread whiter and softer,’ and vegetables ‘plethoric,’ and introduced species such as cattle and sheep ‘improved by artificial culture’ did not revert to their natural ‘wild’ state and lose value (W.C, 1873). The heritage of the English economy valued not just human industry but also the industry of the land.

The lands’ ability to yield to the colony’s imagination was also valued. Common reasoning by colonists of the time saw land as an extension of the English. It was textually terraformed to fit the beauty standards of the settler. This imagination is evidenced in the literary landscapes of authors such as Charles Thompson, Banjo Patterson, Henry Lawson, Mary Gilmore, and Charles Harpur. For example, Charles Thompson, in his dismay at Indigenous peoples’ refusal to be taught agricultural skills in the government institution of ‘Blacktown,’ described the region in a poem as an ‘ill-fated hamlet’ in which ‘neglected ground’ failed to give Indigenous peoples ‘instruction in the rural art’ (Tompson, 1973). The Blacktown Native Institute closed in 1829 after attempts at ‘Europeanizing’ Indigenous children resulted in several deaths (Andrew & Hibberd, 2022). Assimilating land by subjecting it to the narratives of the economy became an easier task than assimilating Indigenous peoples.

For settlers, the land was deemed wild and untameable until it was named and reshaped by the English industry. Until then, the land provided a different type of resource, one of atmosphere. A mental gaze of the landscape grew in the settler’s imagination of Australia’s land, producing a new language that would eventually become synonymous with Australia’s distinctive literary heritage. For example, Charles Harpur (1845) describes some landscapes as ‘Ne’er visited’ and harbouring ‘a nameless creek’ in a ‘solitary place’. His description evokes land as a sublime living entity, a gothic force to be tamed. Alternatively, Banjo Patterson creates a romantic vision of the bush through poetry and ballads where heroic horses and bushmen are enshrined into the national identity, the exceptional relationship between settler and land (‘Current Literature’, 1895). This vision of a national identity is also expressed by Henry Lawson who depicts the realism of a landscape being ‘humanized’ through industry and calls for ‘Sons of the South’ to make a republic of the ‘Paradise’ that is Australia (Lawson, 1887). Eventually, when people looked out into the bush, they no longer saw English heritage but experienced a new identity of place, something noteworthy and to be proud of. Land was no longer unknown but a transcendent power that they were a part of.

Describing the new identity by describing the landscape is how the relationship between settlers and land was rationalised. It justified economic wealth-building through land grabs. Laws that confined settlers to the city resulted in overcrowding and pollution. While the government worked to contain both people and land to the boundaries of legislation, settlers resisted this confinement by turning to the imaginary of the literary landscape. They went out into the bush to forge productive relationships with their nation. Those who did not have the economic means to purchase land resorted to squatting. Those left in the cities yearned instead for the illusion of land by requesting that the government release unused land for the benefit of the population. Romantics argued that nature was good for people's health. People could experience and possess the beautiful work of nature. Natural prosperity became a national asset. In response to this discussion, the government had to seriously consider the position of unused land. All land was considered the Crown's, and the experience of squatters' indiscriminate fencing of land that pushed them into a class of 'territorial autocracy' was not an event to risk being repeated (Argus, 1874, p. 4). Notions of nationalism were entangled with the descriptors of landscape, thus creating new meaning. As a result, the government realised that uncivilised land and uncontented populations – those who could not be civilised – must be managed.

4.1.3 Fortifying the Land: Creating Patterns of Consistency

Australia's first national park was created on 26 April 1879 and located south of Sydney. It was later named the Royal National Park after Queen Elizabeth II visited in 1954. Within 37 years of the first park being created, each of Australia's states had a national park: South Australia (1891), Victoria (1898), Western Australia (1898), Queensland (1908), and Tasmania (1916). For settlers, national parks became the human-made ideal of a 'wilderness' and a method for pacifying social concerns. Through national parks, settler populations could embody the themes of early exploration and experience the sublime and beauty of the Australian landscape. This relationship with the land layered the sentimentalities of the national identity with social and cultural heritage. Selection and squatting resulted in some landscapes coming into the possession of private owners. Some of the public argued that land not resulting in agriculture or grazing should be back under the control of the Crown. As a result, it would be in the hands of the people who would make use of the landscape's beauty.

Sir, – Does it not seem quite wrong that the beautiful work of nature in the shape of the wonderful limestone caves that exist on our island should be mostly possessed by private persons? They should be a national asset of the people, and if our governments had been wise, they should have seen that they were possessed for the people and posterity. (Examiner, 1936, p. 10)

The public was pushing back against private ownership of large tracts of land and also arguing that '[p]ermanently reserving areas of sea and land for scientific and other public purposes' balanced

the demand put on marine life and created an outlet for those with ‘intelligent curiosity’ (Mercury, 1902, p. 6). This growing interest can be seen in how the government represented the protection of land in the ‘National Interest.’ Perceptions of land changed to incorporate ‘public leisure and recreation’ for the public. Still, land had to be preserved for ‘possible future uses such as the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme’ (Parliament of Australia, 2007, p. 2). What is often in the national interest is represented through the national economy. Therefore, practices and mechanisms had to be implemented to protect the ownership of land for the Crown and control the economy of national parks. Protecting Australia’s landscape through national parks was not just about protecting land but also about protecting the economic resources narrative that had been produced from the landscapes. These narratives constructed an element of identity and tempered the nation’s yearning for British economic heritage. The economic heritage of creating productive land and people made a new industry/identity from the environment. Environmental tourism (exoticism) pleasure-seekers were insulated from the dangers experienced by early explorers. Tourism, underpinned by the productivity mechanism continued the silencing of Indigenous people’s needs to protect the Country.

Australia has a long history of recognising the value of land as ‘wilderness’ rather than areas that could be returned to Indigenous ownership. The lands of the Wik Mungkan, Southern Kaanju, and Ayapathu Aboriginal peoples (Wik peoples) were gazetted into what is now known as Oyala Thumotang National Park by Bjelke-Petersen’s government in 1988 to limit Aboriginal ownership of land (Langton, 2014). The Western Australian Martu people’s negotiation for their lands has meant that their relationship with it has shifted across various phases: jointly managing stations in 2004, then becoming an Indigenous Protected Area in 2012, Native Title recognised in 2013, and in 2023 ‘Indigenous land use and management agreements were signed’ for the creation of The Matuwa Kurrara National Park (Milne, 2023). When future land use is yet to be determined, ongoing political advocacy by Indigenous and conservation communities can work to recover and sustain the land. The patterns of past colonisation have diverged into patterns of economic consistency when it comes to objectifying the land for the benefit of the nation. In 1988, the height of ‘Aboriginality as a saleable product’ could be seen. In the making of ‘unproductive’ Indigenous lands productive through the goals of the tourism industry, Indigenous peoples are made subject to the conditions of co-management. Therefore, access to protect Country is made available only insofar as it is productive for the economy and contributes to the postcard pride of the Australian nation.

4.2 Discussion: Economising the Nature of Australia

Today, national parks are considered objects of diversity, beauty, uniqueness, and economic wealth. Each of these narratives can be interpreted subjectively. For Indigenous peoples, Australian protected areas form part of the lands of which they are the Traditional custodians. For Australia’s economy, national parks are a resource used to provide goods and services. For the nation, they are a ‘major contribution to Australia’s national and international appeal’ (Parliament of Australia, 2007).

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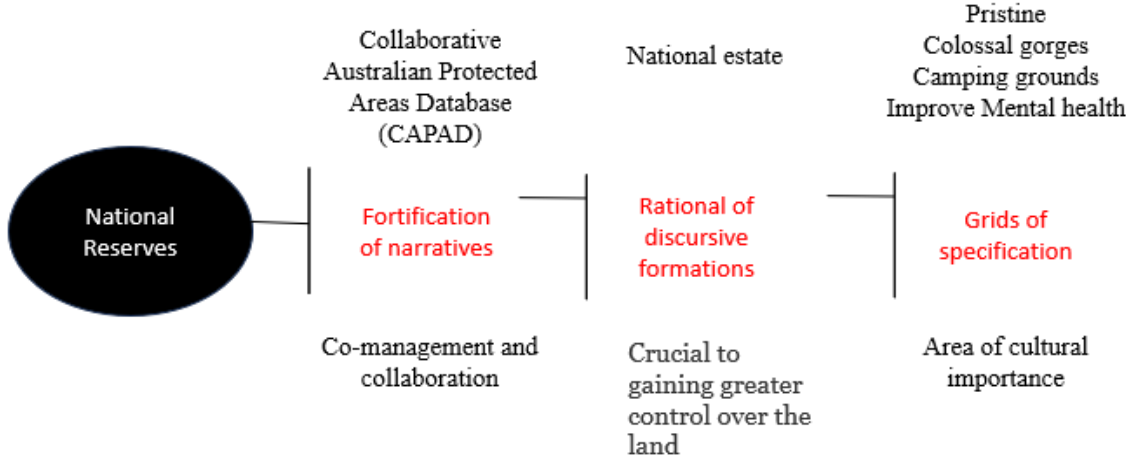
According to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water (DCCEEW), Australian protected areas are a 'complex patchwork' of estates overlaid by land tenure and heritage systems. The Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD) reflects these complex relationships to land through grids of specification, classifying the land according to discursive differentiation (Foucault, 1972). When categorised, the land becomes subject to sets of rules governed by their discursive formations.

The rationale for Australia's first national park was to address the sanitary measures and adverse health effects created by urban living. Presently, the media reports that national parks offset health costs by approximately \$145 billion (Layt, 2019). The health benefits of nature are not new concepts, but charging users for the privilege is. In 1996, a senate inquiry looked at the question of 'balancing public access' with the costs of maintaining public assets such as national parks. The arguments against paying for entry differed depending on cultural attitudes, but the main reasons were based around the 'fundamental rights' to public places as 'citizens' and not as 'customers', free entry being considered a 'strong Australian cultural tradition', and charging users for 'value-added services' being inconclusive (Parliament of Australia, 2007). National parks have multiple values, such as cultural importance, natural beauty, and rare characteristics such as fossil reserves. However, official recognition of these objects does not create the heritage value for all groups, so groups may focus on public recreation in one area, conservation in another or Indigenous heritage (Lesh, 2017). Each group is motivated by their separate goals.

As seen in Figure 2, land conservation is often considered the primary objective for creating a national park, and the mechanisms used to protect land can be treated as value-added services. The value of cultural heritage is categorised alongside other activities such as recreational camping, hiking or mountain climbing, commercial tours, fishing, or vehicle permits – all form part of the governance system that has emerged through economic management obligations to visitor spending. For example, visitor spending in Queensland national parks generated \$2.64 billion, with an additional 'consumer surplus' of \$238 million, meaning national parks are considered 'an economically important tourism resource' (Queensland Government, 2020). Indigenous peoples often do not envisage the land as a place for passive pursuits. Rather, protecting Country is primary and tourism secondary, as seen in 2021 when the Traditional Owners of Kakadu in the Northern Territory threatened to close access to the park due to the deteriorating conditions of the lands under the government's Parks Australia management (Heaney, 2021). Even though the area is under a co-management system, structures built in the landscape without elders' permission, 'staff cuts, lack of jobs for local Indigenous people, and a series of uncontrolled fires in the park' have resulted in tourist operators refunding clients that complained because they couldn't get to the destinations that were promised' (Harvey et al., 2021). This shows how re-designing the land to suit public recreation often results in the separate goals of cultural heritage and conservation being relegated to secondary goals.

Figure 2

Exemplar 2: logic of the nation-economy binary



Note. Diagram author’s own (2024).

For Indigenous peoples, Australian protected areas make up the lands of which they have been the Traditional custodians for thousands of years. Today, approximately 22.10% of Australia is categorised as a protected area of some description. Of this, 46% is recognised as an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) (Australian Government, 2022). However, it is important to recognise that Indigenous protected areas are ‘state-recognised’ and do not differentiate between land tenure systems that result in Indigenous communities being given this status by privately-owned non-Indigenous conservation organisations (Tran et al., 2020, p. 2). Status of ownership is important to Indigenous communities as it increases the political influence through recognition. Having land returned through Native Title, a land claim in the form of a national park provides the possibility for preserving traditional practices, maintaining places of cultural heritage, and contributing to economic developments (Barton, 2021; Tran et al., 2020).

While legislation created by governments to support Indigenous protected areas can create socio-cultural and economic benefits for Indigenous lives overall, co-management frameworks emphasise ‘State–Indigenous relationships’ (Tran et al., 2020). The biggest challenge for Indigenous peoples regarding ‘ownership’ and ‘co-management’ of national parks is the lack of certainty over their legal rights and titles when state policies and legislations change to accommodate external investments. National parks are categorised as ‘common property,’ and as a natural resource, their economic value is often considered a ‘rival’ to mining, forestry, pastoral, and agricultural resources (Mules, 2005). In 2018, all of Australia’s states and territories agreed on ‘[a] common national approach’ for assessing development based on criteria considered in the *Environmental Economic Accounting Strategy and Action Plan* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018, p. 5). Indigenous ecological and socio-cultural goals are a mere subsection of one of the four outcomes developed to deliver a

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common national approach. Indigenous co-managed national parks may provide a meaningful avenue for land, water, and biodiversity protection, and provide opportunity for Indigenous self-determination, but only if this recognition exists within mechanisms created and acknowledged by the nation-economy binary. The exclusive removal of people from areas considered wildernesses may preserve the natural conditions of the land; however, the nation's climate change concerns routinely use science to establish regional developments under climate change economic policy, thus rendering Indigenous knowledges subject to Western scientific epistemologies.

5. Climate Change: Future-Proofing the Economy

Climate change threatens global economic prosperity, security, and livelihoods.

(Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2022)

Australian land is frequently an object on which new types of economies are built for emerging populations, eventually becoming a nation whose lives are shaped by land systematically manipulated into an economic order. As per the previous data chapters, land tenure practices show that populations could be controlled by connecting human labour to land use, and land could be made profitable by categorising the economic value of its natural resources. These techniques work by changing the discursive approach to land use so that the user of land is subjected to the logic of the nation-economy binary. In the present day, protecting Australian land from the threat of climate change is taking on a new narrative. This narrative, led by the political and scientific population, is focused on how economic and political agendas can use climate data to maintain the economic position of the land. This chapter examines how the discourse of climate change in Australia preferences Western scientific epistemes brought to Australia with the dual influences of the Enlightenment and Industrialisation periods, which emerged to benefit the British Empire. One justified truth through scientific reasoning, and the other gave those truths power through commodification.

A 2021 class action brought about by members of Torres Strait Island communities alleges that the Commonwealth Government has breached its duty of care to the Torres Strait Islander population. The case argues that the Australian Government has not taken ‘reasonable steps’ to protect the environment, land, and culture of Torres Strait Islanders and must reduce ‘emissions by 74% by 2030’ to ensure the region’s islands are not inundated by rising sea levels (Doherty, 2021; Phi Finney McDonald, 2023). Modelled on a case in the Netherlands which resulted in the Dutch High Court ruling in favour of the defendant’s demands for the government to reduce carbon emissions sooner than planned, the case hopes to change the current net zero by 2050 carbon plan adopted by the Australian Government (SBS News, 2021). While cases like these are no longer novel, with lawsuits being brought against governments and corporations globally, for Australia, the implications of this case could be profound (Bateman, 2021). If a duty of care is established, it would affect the Australian Government’s current international obligation regarding climate targets and impact the ability of the federal and state governments to approve carbon-intensive projects in the future.

How has it come to be that climate change is a problem for Western science and not Indigenous peoples? Why are Indigenous peoples described as being at greater risk from climate change? And how is it that Indigenous knowledges of climate change are subject to Western scientific narratives? Evidence from Aboriginal peoples’ stories, supported by archaeologists and biologists, suggest that we have inhabited the Australian continent since the Pleistocene period, approximately 51,000 to 71,000 years

ago (Charles & O'Brien, 2020). Since then, the continent has 'experienced many environmental and climatic changes', including an 'ice age' (Charles & O'Brien, 2020). Through careful observation of environmental phenomena, the land in Australia has been understood and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for a millennium of generations, passed down through methods of Caring for Country. These methods included how and when to intervene in environmental biological processes to maintain a natural balance for flora, fauna, and humans. However, the invasion and settlement of the Australian continent through British colonisation brought with it foreign farming principles and views on scientific practices, which have displaced Indigenous knowledges and practices. The genealogy will show how Western scientific narratives are the nation's preferred discourse as a voice of authority on climate change due to its usefulness to the economy, thereby relegating Indigenous knowledges of climate change subject to economic narratives.

5.1 Genealogy

5.1.1 The Order of Things: Colonial Experimentation

During the colonial period, European powers transformed knowledge production globally, and philosophy underpinned these activities. The philosopher's pursuit of knowledge is considered the rational and systematic study of the biological and physical world and may be described by distinct periods and events in Western history (Grayling, 2020). It was during the ancient Greek period that mythologising nature gave way to rational thought. 'Proto-scientific explanations' of atoms discussed invisible entities other than gods, mathematical concepts such as Pythagorean theorem was demonstrated, and Socratic moral, ethical, and virtue practice was documented during this period (Graham, 2023). The Medieval period saw the appointment of Christianity as the state religion of Rome. During this time, philosophical commentary was translated from Greek into other languages, and there was a rise in the study of theology and metaphysics (MacDonald & Kretzmann, 2016; Marenbon, 2023). The Renaissance coincided with the discovery of new continents and the opening of trade routes. Slavery and colonialism brought awareness to legal and political discourses, and instruments invented for navigation, trade and banking developed the study of mathematics and astronomy. The development of the printing press allowed other social groups, such as women, access to religious or scholarly texts (Ashworth, 2016). The catalyst for separating philosophical thought from scientific enquiry was the rise of modern thought during the reformation period when resistance rode against religious power structures and turned interests towards the occult and magic (Grayling, 2020). This disentanglement of thought systems is credited to Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes. Descartes was a rationalist, Bacon an empiricist. They both rejected the assumptions created by 'occult sciences' and described and applied methods to their investigations (Grayling, 2020, p. 196). Important thinkers who came after were then grouped as either rationalists or empiricist, one of them being John Locke.

Born in England, John Locke was a trained physician, government administrator, and philosopher and contributed knowledge to many topics during the period now known as the Enlightenment. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Essay)*, published by Locke in 1690, was central to modern scientific epistemology as it considered how humans acquire ideas through experience (Bristow, 2023). Locke argues that the human mind is not born with preconceived knowledge; rather, minds have intuitive ideas based on perception, and these ideas may be transformed into knowledge through empirical observation or demonstration – evidence provides certainty (Grayling, 2020). For example, since I observe that all the flowers in my garden smell sweet, a probability now exists that flowers outside my garden also smell sweet, but I should not draw conclusions from my limited experience. Locke’s interest in knowledge theory was motivated by his associations with scientists Voltaire, Sir Isaac Newton, and his fellowship at the Royal Society, who engaged empirical methods in their research (Grayling, 2020). *Essay* was soon absorbed into university curriculum and translated into other languages. Locke, with his political discourse in the *Two Treatises of Government*, also influenced both the scientific and political fields that shaped the processes of industrialisation (Bristow, 2023).

The Enlightenment period had made scientific discourse an authority of knowledge production. In turn, from the production of scientific knowledge, new technologies for extractive industries, warfare, and agriculture emerged (Kaldor, 1977). The first Industrial Revolution proved positive for the British economy yet bad for imperial expansion (Deane, 1980). The threat of an open economy posed a risk to Britain’s hypothesis that Australia could be a new settlement if it ‘proved economically valuable’ (Lockwood, 1964, p. 23). Financially, losing the Americas heightened Britain’s need to consider new methods for securing control of Australian land (refer Chapter 1). The application of Wakefield’s theory for ‘systematic colonisation’ by the South Australian Colonial Office in 1831 is one example of experimentations with land policy. Edwards Gibbon Wakefield’s plan had three principal methods: 1. Sell land for a ‘sufficient price,’ 2. Use the funds to cover immigration costs for British labourers, 3. Place land tax levies and later land sales into an immigration fund (Kittrell, 1973; Wakefield & Mills, 1929). However, without a formula for determining land prices, the method was incomplete. While the theory was never fully realised, it did influence regulations for the disposal of ‘wastelands’ in New South Wales and Tasmania (Kittrell, 1973; Pretty, 1967).

5.1.2 Privileging the Episteme: Western Knowledge of Climate Change

The Enlightenment period may have shaped our understanding of nature, but industrialisation transformed our relationship with it (Lines, 1999). Immigrants to Australia took a risk settling in an unknown environment, and knowledge was imperative for a successful transition. Scientific organisations like The Royal Society of Victoria 1854, The Royal Society of New South Wales 1869, The Royal Society of Queensland 1884, and The Royal Australian Historical Society 1901 drew upon

'colonial-era data' to produce knowledge about the land (O'Gorman et al., 2016, p. 893). This knowledge was then distributed through newspapers, government gazettes, or agricultural events held by the Royal Australian historical societies. These articles and events showcased the latest scientific methods for improving 'breed stock' and introduced farming technologies (Anderson, 2003, p. 423; Buckton, 2023). They encouraged settlers to be 'enterprising' and 'progressive' through the 'experiment of growing' crops ('Sydney', 1805; 'Sydney Gazette', 1805). Agricultural research produced by Sir Joseph Banks, 'the respectable friend to Science and Mankind,' was given freely to the public discourse ('Culture of Tobacco', 1803). Scientific data collected in Australia during the colonial era produced new knowledge of the land, and by translating this knowledge to settlers, they could be solicited to advance the colonial government's economic goals.

For settlers in colonial Australia, systematically recording data on the climate was necessary to overcome the obvious differences between European and Australian climates. Scientific mapping and measurement of Australia's weather patterns began when the First Fleet docked, and research suggests the influence of the Western calendar kept European settlers 'structurally blind' to the unique seasons of Australia (McDougall, 2022; O'Brien, 2014, p. 195). This may explain the ontological differences between Indigenous and settler understandings of time. However, the logic of the nation-economy binary is to use data to justify economic development. For example, in the 1870s, New South Wales Government Astronomer Henry Chamberlain Russell recorded daily rainfall and river levels of the Murray-Darling River systems (O'Gorman, 2014). By analysing the data, Russell theorised that an 'unlimited supply of good water' existed below the ground (Miller, 2014; Russell, 1879). Russell's speculation signalled the possibilities of economic wealth and land reform. Wells were sunk, agriculture was enhanced through irrigation networks, and water was allocated a market value regulated by the government (State Library South Australia, 2010). This interplay of economic and scientific concepts, the slight weaving into each domain's 'sphere of application,' helped settlers overcome the land's natural and economic limitations (Foucault, 1970, p. 180).

By forming a reciprocal relationship between governance and science, discourse could be exchanged, substituted, or reconstituted until one represented the other. The direction to a 'federated science' in Australia began in 1888 when Russell was elected the first president of The Australian (and Aotearoa/New Zealand) Association for the Advancement of Science (MacLeod, 1988, p. 11). However, conditions after the First World War demanded scientific disciplines fulfil government goals linking research to 'productive industry,' and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) was formed (p. 11). In 1915, Prime Minister W.M. (Billy) Hughes founded the Advisory Council for Science and Industry – now CSIRO – with the expectation that scientific method could increase 'productivity from fifteen to twenty percent' by 'develop(ing) great mineral wealth' to 'make that which was unprofitable to work profitably' (Daroczy, 2015). CSIRO narratives became embedded into discussion of improving the commercial activity of the nation, from the growing of crop varieties, developing of the energy sector, improving technology for extractive industries, and

informing environmental and land management practices (Daroczy, 2015; Friedel & Morton, 2022). Formalising the use of scientific discourse as part of national goal-setting created a ‘paradox of values’ (Foucault, 1970, p. 182). Human goals for acquiring knowledge of the natural world have become exchangeable with the knowledge for acquiring economic wealth (Foucault, 1970). This exchange is useful to the nation-economy binary for employing a voice of authority regarding climate change policy.

5.1.3 Governmentality of Climate Change: Regimes of Practices

Australia’s national commitment to climate change, even when based on impartial scientific knowledge, acts as a discourse of resemblance, a similitude of the nation-economy binary into a climate-economy binary. The logic of this binary is the same: to ensure that land is maintained as an object of the economy and can be established in Australia’s political obstacles to committing to ‘Net Zero’ carbon emissions (Department of Climate Change, energy, the Environment and Water, 2022). Prime Minister Bob Hawke responded to the Toronto targets in 1989 in his speech *Statement on the Environment*. He focused on the viability of the forest industry and management strategies for the Murray-Darling Basin but did little to reduce emissions other than commit to banning CFCs (Hawke, 1989). In 1994, Prime Minister Paul Keating took a ‘no regrets’ stance, only considering measures that did not impact the economy or trade competitiveness (Davies, 2017). The Howard government followed this narrative in 1996, stating that Australia’s ‘overall objective in climate’ was ‘to safeguard our national trade and economic interests’ (Davies, 2018). The Howard Government followed the actions of the United States Government in refusing to sign the 1997 international Kyoto Protocol treaty. This suggested his goals were for ‘geopolitics more than science’ (Rowley, 2014). Howard sought to reduce emissions through economic policy by incentivising emission reductions through an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) (Taberner & Zorzetto, 2020). That politics are unable to separate immediate economic and geopolitical strategies from long-term risks considered by climate science implies that science discourse is not meeting the goals of the economy.

What was required was a clear delineation of perspectives. In 2007, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd commissioned the Garnaut Climate Change Review (Garnaut, 2008). The report analysed the effects of climate change on the Australian economy and recommended domestic and international policy intervention on economic activities (Garnaut, 2008). The report suggested that Australia’s economic practices of ‘protectionism, xenophobia,’ ‘self-interested pressure groups and arbitrary interventions,’ along with strong ties to Asian economies, presented a challenge to Australia’s climate change policy (pp. xx). It suggested that solutions needed to be ‘found in removing the links between economic activity’ and emissions (pp. xxi). The Climate Change Authority was established under the *Climate Change Authority Act 2011* to provide independent advice to the Australian Government; this act was amended in 2019 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). For an Indigenous person to be appointed to the board by the minister for the environment and minister for agriculture, they must have

‘management or care of indigenous held land’ (within the meaning of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005*) (Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2019). Therefore, Indigenous people’s ability to contribute knowledge to the Climate Change Authority has been limited by their ability to be recognised by the government’s land tenure system.

While this review of climate policy is not exhaustive, it tracks a trend towards representing the economy as the primary subject of climate change, especially regarding the promotion of funding, technology, advancement, and protection of the environment. Communities are seen as secondary to the plight. Recognising the difference in hierarchy can be seen when comparing narratives from the 1990 Twenty-First South Pacific Forum to the Australian Government’s 2021 National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021–2025 report. Held in Port Vila, Vanuatu and attended by various heads of government from the Pacific region, the forum recognised the environment as being of ‘fundamental importance to Pacific countries and peoples,’ with environmental concerns, climate change, and future energy programs discussed as its top three priorities of the region (Forum Secretariat, 1990). By contrast, the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021 to 2025 used only two of the 47-page report on Indigenous content. The remainder focused on the economy, prosperity of the nation, productive investments, the need to protect infrastructure, and insurance (Australian Government, 2021).

5.2 Discussion: Climate Change and Western Epistemologies

Western sciences privilege the epistemological stance that truth must be empirically demonstrable to become knowledge, and we as humans can subject things to speculative reasoning until scientific knowledge validates the substance of our beliefs. As a result, these ‘truths’ become the justification for subjecting populations to presumptions. The European Enlightenment philosophy that expanded into Western social, political, and economic science was brought to Indigenous Australia by European settlers. During settlement, the biological stability of the Australian landscape was not credited to interventions by the Indigenous population, as the enlightened, with industrialisation as proof, saw no evidence of Western-style farming practices within the Indigenous landscape. As a result, Western scientific discourse is often considered an ‘authoritative discourse’, as it comes from a neutral position that is generally unquestioned (Nichols & Petzold, 2021, p. 644). It sits within the same taken-for-granted realm that the nation, economy, and climate occupy, going unnoticed until it acts upon a subject with negative consequences. These negative consequences of Western science have historically subjected Indigenous peoples to mechanisms that sought to reshape Indigenous societies into a ‘civilised’ one (Buchan, 2006). Scientific data collection resulted in the long process of exploitation that made material things – and people – turn into objects of economic value.

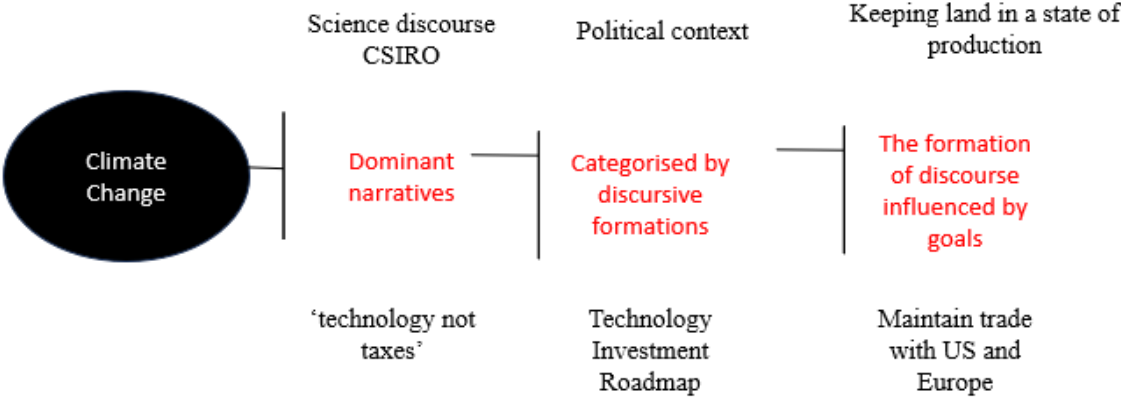
Australian land has been the object of renewal for the nation many times: new economies rise for emerging populations whose lives are constructed on land systematically manipulated into an economic order. Even parts of the land that seemed without the possibility of progress, like national

parks, have been transformed into places that contribute significantly to the national economy. This narrative is also disseminated to nations in the Pacific region that depend on our national economy. The discourse of ‘longer dry seasons’ and ‘rising sea waters’ from Indigenous communities juxtapose government announcements for ‘climate bomb’ gas developments and limited reductions in greenhouse targets (Fitzsimmons, 2021; Rae, 2023). Indigenous peoples are often excluded from these discourses, but they are regularly described as being at a ‘greater risk’ from climate change and becoming ‘climate refugees’ in their own countries (Park, 2021). As Indigenous peoples often experience lower levels of wellbeing, economic wealth, and education, along with other socio-cultural characteristics, they are often at the mercy of socio-political agendas. Therefore, Indigenous knowledge of their environments is often mediated through the lens of Western science, which generally describes Indigenous knowledge as a cultural practice rather than a scientific one.

In the present-day, the rights of Indigenous peoples are being acknowledged, but as climate patterns change, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’ human and cultural rights remain at risk, especially if global and national economics remain the primary subject of climate change discourse (Smallhorn-West, 2023). Modern political technology and market economies, once used to develop the Australian nation, now appear to be a roadblock to effectively addressing climate change science. When Indigenous communities contribute to climate knowledge, the overemphasis on catastrophe often dominates the narratives. ‘We are drowning,’ the President of Palau, Surangel Whipps Jr, told world leaders and the ‘large emitters with their insatiable appetite for advancement’ at the 2021 Conference of Parties in Glasgow (COP26) regarding increasing sea-level rises (Magick, 2021). Research suggests that Pacific Island communities have become innovation hubs, combining traditional knowledge with science to experiment with salt-tolerant crops, restore traditional wells, and operationalise sustainable climate goals to mitigate the threat of migration (Mcleod et al., 2019). Figure 3 shows how the author of the *Garnaut Report*, Ross Garnaut, suggested that after COP26, the Morrison government’s ‘technology investment road map’ to get to net zero by 2050 was merely a pledge for advancement without an ‘engine,’ as the government refused to break their ‘financial alliances’ with large gas emitters such as China (Hartcher, 2021).

Figure 3

Exemplar 3: logic of the nation-economy binary



Note. Diagram author’s own (2024)

As of 2020, media reports on climate issues affecting the Pacific Islands focus primarily on positioning Pacific communities as ‘emblems of climate vulnerability’, effectively ‘undermin[ing] the resiliency’ and advocacy the Pacific peoples contribute to climate change strategies (Shea et al., 2020, p. 105). The juxtaposition in this narrative is in the objectification of the Pacific Island nations. By the logic of the nation-economy binary, when it comes to securing the region from perceived threats, Australia struggles to decrease its economic dependence on high gas emitters like China for the security of the Pacific region’s environment. Instead, it prioritises security agreements with the West to secure the region's economy from an increasing Chinese presence (Hurst & Butler, 2023). Indigenous communities in the Pacific region have a level of agency in contributing to climate policy. However, this is discursively and physically shaped by the economic narratives of the nation-economy binary.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson, Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s (Watson, 2020)

There exists a wealth of Indigenous, anthropological, autobiographical, cultural, creative, and social knowledge evidencing the importance of the land to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Yet, Indigenous people continue to be excluded from owning their lands for traditional and cultural purposes, such as caring for Country. Research suggests that Indigenous narratives of the land create conflicts and debates, polarising public opinions, whereas non-Indigenous narratives of the land draw upon the goals of the nation's economy. This suggests that the land is an object of the economy. From an Indigenous standpoint, objectifying the land solely through economic discourse ignores the cultural significance, stewardship, and sustainability that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have practised for millennia. How is it that the land in Australia has become an object of the economy, and we, as a nation, are subject to economic discourse? How does this discourse displace Indigenous people's relationships with the land? The purpose of this research was to explore the history of contemporary non-Indigenous narratives of the land in Australia in hopes of answering these questions.

The findings of this research support the argument that the land in Australia has been inscribed as, and therefore has become, an object of a nation-economy binary. The nation's peoples are also subject to this binary. By operationalising Foucault's power-knowledge theory, this thesis mapped the emergence of the nation-economy binary from the colonial mercantilism period to the political formation of the new nation of Australia. The research revealed how the economic goals of the nation led to the legal exclusion of Indigenous narratives of their lands, resulting in the 2020 destruction of the Juukan Gorge caves in Western Australia. It also demonstrated how the nation's population reconceptualised Indigenous lands as objects of national significance, thus establishing a new economy by monetising national parks. And finally, by describing the relationship between the economy and Western science, national climate change discourse is shown to be assembled in a way that makes Indigenous knowledges of climate change subject to Western scientific epistemologies. The implication of this research is that non-Indigenous narratives of Australian land, when mapped through past economic and legal narratives, reveal present-day continuities of past discursive practices, objectification, and subjectivities.

To further explain the theoretical nature and implications of this research project, this conclusion presents a series of questions answered in a discussion format.

6.1 How Does the Nation-Economy Binary Shape Our Thinking?

According to the Parliament of Australia, the Australian nation was established on January 1st, 1901, when the British colonies of New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia unified under a Commonwealth (Parliament of Australia, 2022). Researchers suggest that the modern nation is an ‘invention of traditions’ (Mock, 2011, p. 13), conceived through the coming together of a national consciousness, set upon the backdrop of nationalism as an ideology (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012). Nationalism can be regarded as an essential characteristic of modern politics, especially as politics is about legitimating control of a nation (Mock, 2011). A nation, however, does not imply homogeneity or unification without division because, before this contemporary state of existence in Australia, there were many Indigenous nations. Smith (2002) considers how, historically, communities who ‘possessed territory,’ ‘shared myths,’ ‘memories,’ ‘common laws and customs’ are, in a premodern sense, the emergence of the concept of nations and are, in their right, legitimate (p. 15). Further, nationalism, when wielded as a technique of the nation, can marginalise minorities, even the ‘host community’ itself (Chisholm & Smith, 1990). Globalisation is considered to have contributed to the formation of structures and ideologies that see modern nations as territorial representations. It helps subjects conceptualise a ‘home’ to be protected and encourages national loyalties to ‘transcend’ spatial limitations, which were all necessary to ensure the success of colonisation (Chisholm & Smith, 1990, p. 3; Guibernau, 2004, p. 137). Successful colonisation is often evident in settler nations where nationalistic epistemologies from the mother nation, like economic ones, become the dominate discourse underpinning the identity of the nation.

As a developed nation, Australia has a mixed economy and uses policy to improve living standards in Australia and the international competitiveness of its industries. Economic policy is influenced by government spending, Reserve Bank rates, and foreign exchange rates and is used to promote the nation's economic growth (Dolamore, 2013). Australia’s economic history does not appear unique when compared to other nations of similar historical influences; however, Australia’s economic wealth and ability to survive global economic events is often attributed to several factors, such as the isolated nature from which Australia’s economy emerged and the affordances government provided to the evolution of exports based on capitalistic enterprises (Kaldor, 1977; McLean, 2012). Isolation may have provided a proving ground for capitalistic economic ideologies such as protecting young and emerging industries, encouraging risk-taking, and greater state intervention in export-led growth, but present-day globalisation does not explain economic wealth inequality at the local level (McLean, 2004; Millmow, 2017). Therefore, when government officials cite ‘national economy’ or ‘national interest,’ it is important to consider that no ‘explicit’ reference is made to who are the recipients of the wins and losses of the nation-economy (Chisholm & Smith, 1990, p. 5). A nation’s economy is human-made and requires human activity to function, but it is also independent of the individual. It could be because having a population acting exclusively for the nation is a necessary component for the economy to take on an autonomy independent from the needs of the individual.

This is why, in the analysis chapters of this thesis, the nation-economy binary was shown to work by reinscribing the individual into a functioning population that operates for the benefit of the nation and the economy, placing at risk the environmental value of the land in Australia, and turning the Indigenous relationship with the land from a cultural one into an economic one.

The nation-economy binary could be viewed as an assemblage, a combination of two mutually exclusive elements. This thesis has shown that for each element, there have been multiple ways of expressing their terms. A nation can exist with or without writing systems, be experienced through its nearness or from afar, and be recreated to represent a culture rather than a race. An economy can exist without monetary policy, be engaged through alternative acts of reciprocity, and be a communal activity, not restricted to a privileged few. It is not from any one source of power that these elements are deconstructed and reassembled. Rather, it has been the result of knowledge unifying specific propositions of each element until all other possible combinations have been discontinued. The current conditions of the nation-economy binary are, therefore, merely a possibility. The closeness in which they interact with each other makes it difficult to see from the position of an individual, as populations are essential for a productive economy to ensure that the majority function according to the goals of the nation. How do you control a population's behaviour? By introducing ideologies of nationalism, excluding those who do not co-operate, and installing mechanisms that function to ensure the rules of discourse self-perpetuate, they become naturalised to the point where all other possibilities appear unnatural.

It is possible to see how the logic of the nation-economy binary shapes our everyday thoughts in many different topics. Take, for example, an individual who interacts at the local level of their community and its economy, where it is assumed that the individual has the right to shelter. However, the current housing and cost of living crisis in Australia shows that the individual is subject to the ups and downs of a housing economy: housing is not guaranteed, and homelessness is a possibility. The default thinking around this crisis is often about rental profits, accumulation of economic wealth, taxpayer funds allocated to social housing, and tax reductions or capital gains discounts for property investors (Troy, 2023). In a nation with a low population and high economic wealth, how is it that we have turned people into the homeless? How have people become subjects of a housing economy? What are the existing rules for engaging in the housing economy, and who is excluded? This thinking can also extend to human rights issues on immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers coming into Australia who are subjected to economic narratives around long-term unemployment and job stealing (Bourke, 2016). With the current context of low unemployment and skills shortages in Australia, how has it come to be that minorities are subjects of the employment economy? How are these systems of thought, which may act as an intervention against variables in the population, being expressed through the immigration system (Foucault, 2007)? This thinking can even go further into global topics by considering how Australia is subject to the economic goals of other nations. How is Australia subject to other nations'

national and economic goals, and how do their systems of thought reflect through our relationships, for example, with China and the United States?

6.2 What Does the Nation-Economy Binary Mean for the Contemporary Indigenous Position?

Previous research suggests that settler colonialism has maintained positions of power, and those positions have been maintained into the present day (Banerjee, 2000; Banerjee & Osuri, 2000; Baxter, 2021; Waller et al., 2020; Walliss, 2014). However, this thesis suggests that there is no individual field of human action that works exclusively to disengage Indigenous people's relationships to land. Actions that override Indigenous relationships to land have been exerted through economic decision-making and policymaking at a government level. Mechanisms and techniques of the nation-economy binary do not often work to benefit individual biases and prejudices in the present day; rather, the apparatus of the nation-economy binary has become so normalised that it may be difficult for non-Indigenous peoples to distinguish how the logic of the binary influences their actions of actual discrimination. At a national level, Indigenous relationships to the land may not interrupt the pervasive and fundamental principles that emerged prior to and during the colonisation of Indigenous land in Australia. However, there is a possibility that relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people could be changed at a local level (Beazley, 2020; Due & Riggs, 2010; Fry, 1946; Lines, 1999; Porter, 2007). There is also an opportunity for individuals to investigate the possibilities of different types of relationships, ones that may consider how Indigenous perspectives can become a normalised element around the economic and political decision-making of land use.

Being subject to the economy is not necessarily bad as it provides a basis from which Indigenous peoples can exercise self-determination, gain access to protect the land according to cultural and traditional practices, and provide a foundation for circulating new knowledge systems based on the ontologies and epistemologies of their communities. But Indigenous peoples need to recognise that this subject position comes with a preconceived framework, and they may find themselves caught up in the logic of the apparatus, doing its political work. This is often evident in the ways Native Title correlates to a business-on-business framework, effectively removing the human face from Indigenous people's relationship to the land. Indigenous people's goals for the land fall within many categories and contexts, and the results of the analysis highlight that the current mechanisms available to achieve those goals are limited and narrow, as the nation-economy binary does not serve individual – or Indigenous – interests. The findings suggest that knowledge systems relating to the land have secured the land against multiple ways of thinking. By recognising how these knowledge systems function, Indigenous people can be aware of, resist, adapt to, and use the subject positions it places them in. Indeed, some already do. Based on this information, there is cautious optimism that it is possible for non-Indigenous people to also recognise their own subject positions, acknowledge how efficiently they have been institutionalised by the nation-economy's discursive practices, and reflect on how subject positions do not exist in a state of permanence. As Indigenous

peoples and their communities continue to engage in their own knowledge productions, a new corpus of knowledge will emerge, opening possibilities for different types of conversations about the land.

6.3 What Did an Archaeological/Genealogical Analysis Allow Me to Achieve?

The task was to analyse the historical context of non-Indigenous Statements to describe the way they function in the present-day. Operationalising Foucault's power-knowledge theory allowed the study to focus on the historical context of discourse, not on its formalisation but on the rules that give contingency to discursive practice, such as those used to keep land under control of the nation and the economy (Foucault, 1972, p. 199). Foucault's toolbox taught me not to look at history in reverse, as is often done, but rather probe through it to expose the extent to which knowledge seeks to 'dominate' the conduct of individuals through discursive practices (Foucault, 1980, p. 95). Different historical periods are concerned with different types of conduct, and the production of knowledge produces a political 'truth' that creates a relationship of force relevant to the conduct of the period (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). This truth is used to 'judge' and 'classify' and 'make intelligible' individuals applicable to the knowledge of that period. So, when the individual acts separately from the prescribed goals of the apparatus, there exists an authority to 'condemn' (Foucault, 1980, p. 94). Evident in narratives that describe Indigenous land rights as obstacles to the economy, Indigenous people are then subject to public discourse that takes on the role of condemner. The population as a condemner is useful as a technique to ensure that conduct is codified. Like the role of the judicial system, the population circulates knowledge of acceptable conduct, forcing individuals to choose sides, for example, economic inclusion or exclusion (Foucault, 1980). Power, therefore, can be seen through acts of domination as well as acts of resistance (squatters, frontier wars, reserve systems, land legislation). Power can also be seen in how knowledge innovates through laws and legislation to reshape resistance. Thus, we get a history of the subject.

A search for the subject using Foucault's archaeological and genealogical analysis taught me, as a researcher, to have patience, work deliberately, and produce texts pragmatically. This is because the subject is not simply the person; instead, it is the term that describes the 'possibility of being a certain kind of person' (Heyes, 2010, p. 159). Patience is needed to discern from within Statements how subject positions play a role within the context of their period; for example, how in the present-day is a Traditional landowner both a cultural land user and an economic participant? Working deliberately through historical texts makes it possible to see how the individual is placed within complex relations of power (Foucault, 1982b). These complex relations are the constraints placed upon the individual by negative or oppressive discourse, the truth that an individual knows about themselves in relation to the oppressive discourse, and how the individual recognises themselves as a political object. For example, Indigenous peoples are often considered colonised peoples; however, it does not form a part of who they know themselves to be (Nakata, 2007). Without this knowing, there would be no Survival Day marches on the 26th of January. The political subject may also find

themselves ‘entrusting’ sovereignty to govern the conduct of themselves and others. However, sovereignty, too, is constituted by the same complex relations of power used in the production of truth.

Finally, a note of caution must be given to the purpose of Foucault’s theoretical toolbox. Foucault vehemently denied that his perspective is akin to Marxism in that the State is an instrument of oppression used by the ruling class (Foucault, 1980). Topics like these are taught in history as events, and a search for the ways a government or sovereign has subjected people to forces of power is recognisable as being morally or ethically wrong only after the event, like feudalism or transportation. A Marxist perspective may show how the individual is affected by class systems that serve the interests of capitalism; however, Foucault would argue that, on an individual level, if we could resist this type of power that seemingly comes top down, it would only prove its fragility (Foucault, 1980). Instead, power circulates at the level of the population who accepts a knowledge system as a truth. Not only do they constitute themselves according to that knowledge, but they also become part of the network of power. The State then uses populations as a technique of power.

A researcher operationalising Foucault can find themselves teetering on the edge of over-analysing government systems rather than subject positions. Therefore, I would argue that at a theoretical level, Foucault’s toolbox is not for evaluating events after they have happened but is useful for problematising the present, in this case, by showing how the nation-economy binary is manufactured by an acceptance of current knowledge around how the land can provide and by providing points for reflecting on other possibilities.

6.4 Limitations of the Research

There are at least three limitations concerning the results of this study. The first limitation concerns the depth and breadth to which the analysis could have been applied. It is acknowledged that the historical enquiry could have taken in more archival material for examination and analysis. Foucault suggests that ‘establishing a whole corpus’ of primary and secondary data into a topic does pose a problem for undertaking a history of the present, and by not undertaking a more thorough examination, the research risks being presented as an oversimplification in its efforts to understanding the theoretical nature of the nation-economy binary (Foucault, 1980, p. 38). A complete examination, however, would require time, which emphasises the second limitation of this study.

As this project was a masters by research, there was not the time to undertake a comprehensive approach to the archival material. Rather, I used two strategies to validate the terms of my investigations. Firstly, I took into consideration the historiography of economic settlement in Australia. Secondly, I verified this research by analysing primary and secondary materials that best exemplified the subjectivities related to the described problematisations, using fixed points of reflection (Foucault, 1980; Hansen & Triantafillou, 2022). My limited time only allowed an investigation into the blank areas of these histories and finding of the spaces in which something could have been said but was not (Foucault, 1980).

Gaining access to primary and secondary materials was the third limitation of the research. Primary and secondary data sources were limited to what could be accessed through the James Cook Eddie Koiki Mabo Library either manually or digitally, online open research databases like Research Data Australia, and government websites like Hansard and TROVE. Funding was not available to access materials external to these locations. It is not known what the absence of certain kinds of materials may have had on the outcome of this research; however, the theoretical value this research makes warrants further investigation into the Statements made on the land in the national interest.

6.5 Final Reflection and Possibilities for Future Research

The land in Australia has created economic success for this nation through pastoral, agricultural, and extractive industries. However, with the urgency of climate change, we, as a population, need to think about the future we are building for the nation. This study has shown that policy and legislation are needed to ensure change, but good intentions do not transcribe very well through this mode of commitment. Change is often not meaningful enough to ensure the protection of future generations. As a result, it will be the future generations of Australia, and the world, that will inherit our present problems unless we change our nation's culture. There exists a continuance of colonial discourse in modern narratives of the land, and consideration should be given to what potentials exist for alternative futures based on how we relate to each other in the present. What are the possibilities for our future if we continue to remain bound by the limited rules of the nation-economy binary? Indigenous people's inability to access, manage and even own their lands comes at the cost of losing the cultural activities and knowledge systems that benefit the sustainability of Australia's landscape and the environment.

The global call for net zero is not just a political or economic objective; rather, it is a global target for preventing human tragedy. Such tragedies include the loss of lives and loss of ecological diversity caused by extreme weather conditions, sea-level rises, and increased temperatures. Ultimately, the land will continue to remain long after humans. The spiritual notion of the land being 'the mother' cannot be written into land tenure, nor can it be replicated through environmental legislation. In terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current findings by undertaking a global meta-analysis of alternative land use and ownership models, either applied or conceptualised within other Indigenous-settler nations. Such studies could consider how the logic of the nation-economy binary extends to these models and if they offer an alternative approach to land relationships. Further studies could examine what possibilities exist for producing socio-ecological relationships at a local level, with the aim of creating pathways for similar dialogue. If the goal is an integrative approach between Indigenous knowledges and environmental ethics, communities could benefit from future research that analyses the overlap between Indigenous-led, government- and corporate-environmental practices. This could be achieved by investigating the formation of subject positions at the local level and analysing how the nation-economy binary plays out through those

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relationships. Finally, to defend ourselves against *ourselves*, human relationships must be prioritised above the binary of the nation-economy, how we relate to each other must become a place of possibility, especially to ensure the divide between nature and culture is bridged.

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