

2019

# Site Evaluation: Reading Country



Kinniburgh, J  
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Prepared by:

Jo Paterson Kinniburgh, University of Technology of Sydney



For:



With the support of



This document was prepared as a teaching guide for placemaking academics to engage their students in the topic mentioned in the title. It is part of a 12 module series created through a multi-university collaboration including Curtin University, University of Notre Dame, the University of Technology of Sydney, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, The University of Adelaide and the University of Melbourne. The module was informed by practitioners through an intensive skillset and gap analysis workshop in Oct 2017.

This module envisioned as a 1-week delivery includes:

- This template including ~10 hours of content as follows
  - A total of ~3 hours of presumed in-class exercises (no more than 1-hour lecture)
  - A total of ~7 hours of personal study time (i.e. readings/short essays/videos to watch)
- The slides/materials used for the lecture.
- List of 'mandatory' reading and recommended readings relevant to the module content.

The document is subdivided into two sections.

1. Section 1: Provides an outline of the aims of the module
2. Section 2: Expands on the specific topic covered by this module and the recommended exercises for tutorial activities.

# 1 Section 1: Module outline

## Overview

This module provides an introduction to the idea of ‘site’ as a basis for informed approaches to placemaking. It proceeds on the understanding that places are particular to their locations, shaped by a myriad of features that constitute the sites we inhabit. Knowledge of a site’s particular characteristics serves to shape our understandings of place, providing an informed basis for collective decision making. In built environment disciplines, Site Analysis and Evaluation are fundamental skills. In placemaking practices, this is expanded to consider the community that engage with the site. Seldom is this spatial condition of ‘site’ approached to consider any community whose relationship to the site has previously been marginalised or erased. It can be challenging, but meaningful, to uncover these kinds of relationships, and to make a genuine contribution to challenging erasure and marginalisation.

**“This is not a site, it is a Songline. A connection to the memories of family that have been embedded in this Country and its earth, water, stars and sky since time began. Miluni is the mud that has squelched between the toes of feet that carry our stories and knowledges and miluni brings those memories, our knowledges through time and space to me here today. I do not see a “site”. I feel Country and it welcomes me home.”**

Shannon Foster, Sydney D’harawal Knowledge Keeper (Foster, Paterson Kinniburgh & Wann 2019 reading provided)

In this module, participants will encounter the Indigenous Australian concept of Country, and use this to critique disciplinary approaches to site within built environment disciplines.

This module begins with a series of readings and videos for students to read and watch before going on a walk on Country with local Aboriginal community members. The module will introduce students to the act of reading Country from a local Aboriginal perspective. Working in groups students will respond to their ‘Walk on Country’ to construct an expanded understanding of their ‘site’.

**NOTE:** Facilitators are advised that to do this module effectively, local On-Country, Indigenous, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community should be involved. The facilitator should check which Aboriginal peoples are On-Country, which means that you do not bring in communities from other parts of Australia. This is because knowledge of Country is very specific to each area. Within your own Institution, you can contact the institute or centre for Indigenous education and research. Before making contact with community members, the facilitator should ensure that adequate budget is assigned so that all Indigenous community are paid for their involvement. Once you have contacted community, you can ask them to speak about what is important to them about connecting to Country. Ask if they would consider taking students on a walk so that rather than sitting in a classroom and hearing about connecting to Country, the students can experience it for themselves.

**NOTE 2:** The module may be delivered as a standalone module or as part of a larger subject. It presents a breadth overview of the components relevant to placemaking



## Assumed knowledge

- It is expected that all participants have pre-existing disciplinary-specific skills in 'Site Analysis,' including researching and documenting existing environmental, physical and spatial conditions through drawing, mapping and diagramming; archival research; fieldwork; and precedent/case studies.
- There is an expectation that in this module, students will need to extend beyond simple site analysis techniques, to generate a critical position that considers Aboriginal understandings of Country.

## Summary of materials referred to in this Module

The following should be easily accessible through the PlaceAgency web platform, local council and developer websites, or university library databases (journal articles etc). Some are for your reference, and some are needed by students for their activities.

### Resources needed for student's independent study outside the classroom.

- Video available through the PlaceAgency online portal: Foster, Shannon. 2019. [Shannon Foster D'harawal Sydney educator on Kai'ee'magh Georges River.](#)
- Foster, S., Paterson Kinniburgh, J. & Wann Country (2020) There's No Place Like (Without) Country, In D. Hes and C. Hernandez-Santin (eds.) *Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Foster, Shannon. 2018. White Bread Dreaming. In Heiss, Anita. *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*. Black Inc.
- Bodkin-Andrews, Gawaiian; Bodkin, Frances; Andrews, Gavin and Whittaker, Alison (2016). Mudjil'dya'djurali Dabuwa'wurrata (how the white waratah became red): D'harawal storytelling and Welcome to Country "controversies" [online]. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, Vol. 12, No. 5: 480-497.
- Greenaway, Jefa. 2015. Reflections on Indigenous Placemaking. *Architecture AU*, Discourse, 28 April 2015.
- CoM and MSI. (2016). Caring for Country: an urban application. The possibilities for Melbourne. Melbourne: City of Melbourne and Monash Sustainability

### Resources needed for students' in-class activities.

- To facilitate the production of the normative Site Analysis drawing at the Introductory Lecture, provide a printout of the 'site' at scale to each group
- Students should bring drawing equipment: A3 paper; butchers paper, trace or greaseproof paper; pencils; eraser; and scale rule or ruler to every class.

### Additional resources

- Facilitators are advised that to do this module effectively, local On-Country, Indigenous, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community should be involved. The facilitator should check which Aboriginal peoples are On-Country, which means that you prioritise local knowledge and community (a protocol often disregarded due to ignorance in urban Australian settings) and you don't bring in the community from other parts of Australia. This is because knowledge of Country is very specific to each area, and

local communities are erased on their own Country when people from elsewhere are consulted. Within your own Institution, you can contact the institute or centre for Indigenous education and research for advice. Before making contact with community members, **the facilitator should ensure that adequate budget is assigned so that all Indigenous community are paid for their involvement.** Once you have contacted community, you can ask them to speak about what is important to them about connecting to Country and if there is a particular place they would like to speak about. Ask if they would consider taking students on a walk there so that rather than sitting in a classroom and hearing about connecting to Country, the students can experience it for themselves.

## Objectives of the Module

To increase students' understanding of:

- Site Evaluation as a generative process, that is inherently political;
- The importance of Aboriginal knowledges of Country to a practice of 'placemaking' in the Australian context;
- skills 'Reading Site/Country' that extrapolate on existing (undergraduate) 'Site Analysis' skills in order to devise a critical project framing

## Module Content

1. The Case Study
2. Site and Country
3. Practicing in respectful ways
4. Listening to Country, Walking on Country, Reading Country

## Learning outcomes

Using the Blooms Taxonomy of learning, upon completion of this module students will be able to:

- Understand key concepts associated with the reading of Country
- Explain key ideas or concepts fundamental to respectful engagement with Aboriginal communities and knowledges
- Use the information in a new way to demonstrate an enhanced understanding of 'site' as Country
- Integrate Indigenous perspectives of Country to a place-making approach.

## Enhanced capabilities

Early in the PlaceAgency program development workshops were held with academics, community and industry representatives. During these, a total of 62 skills were identified from which 9 capabilities were identified as relevant within the context of this module. All of these were included in the final module. These are listed below and their location within the module noted.

Cognitive Skills (Head)	Affective Skills (Heart)	Practical Skills (Hand)
<p><b>Understanding site evaluation as a generative process</b> - (not a passive reading) that is ongoing through a project</p> <p><b>Understanding the generative potential of friction in a placemaking project</b></p> <p><b>Knowing key precedents and case studies for site evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Understanding site evaluation as a political process</b></p>	<p><b>Awareness of frictions with respect to 'site'</b></p>	<p><b>Explicitly acknowledging indigenous relations to site</b></p> <p><b>Reading/listening to multiple perspectives (including overlooked perspectives) of site</b></p> <p><b>Interrogating new case studies</b></p> <p><b>Reading and applying theories of social change</b></p>

## Module Overview (10 hours)

Table 1: Summary of the activities considered within this module and the time equivalency.

In white content that is either delivered in-person or online but requiring some element of students listening/discussing with the group etc. In grey, self-study activities, videos, etc.

ACTIVITY	TIME	NOTES	
A	Readings	3.5 hrs	<p>In order of appearance, read:</p> <p>Foster, S., Paterson Kinniburgh, J. &amp; Wann Country (2020) <i>There's No Place Like (Without) Country</i>, In D. Hes and C. Hernandez-Santin (eds.) <i>Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment</i>. Palgrave Macmillan</p> <p>Foster, Shannon. 2018. <i>White Bread Dreaming</i>. In Heiss, Anita. <i>Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia</i>. Black Inc.</p> <p>Bodkin-Andrews, Gawaian; Bodkin, Frances; Andrews, Gavin and Whittaker, Alison (2016). <i>Mudjil'dya'djurali Dabuwa'wurrata (how the white waratah became red): D'harawal storytelling and Welcome to Country "controversies"</i> [online]. <i>AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples</i>, Vol. 12, No. 5: 480-497.</p> <p>Greenaway, Jefa. 2015. <i>Reflections on Indigenous Placemaking</i>. <i>Architecture AU</i>, Discourse, 28 April 2015.</p> <p>Optional reading: CoM and MSI. (2016). <i>Caring for Country: an urban application. The possibilities for Melbourne</i>. Melbourne: City of Melbourne and Monash Sustainability</p>
B	Videos	20 min	<p>Watch the video: Foster, Shannon. 2019. <a href="#">Shannon Foster D'harawal Sydney</a></p>

			<a href="#"><u>educator on Kai'ee'magh Georges River.</u></a>
C	Online research on case study used for a major assignment	1 hr	Conduct online research on the case study analysed. Please note that session incorporates a site visit so research should strictly desk-based. One idea is to create a timeline for the site extending to precolonial times.
D	Lecture	1 hr	Key concepts of Site as Country. And a case study to illustrate engaging with First Nation Communities in Australia.
E	Tutorial	4 Hr	Perform a site visit to analyse the case study area. This analysis will occur in three stages:  Activity 1: Site Analysis through Traditional approaches. (1 hr)  Activity 2: Walking on Country with a local Indigenous community member's (1 hr)  Activity 3: Reading Country: Site Analysis through the Country lens. (1hr)
F	Journal questions	30 mins	Journal questions 3.1. What has this session taught you about the cultural significance of this Country? (max 150 words) 3.2. How would you approach sites in future to integrate Aboriginal culture and knowledges into a project? Are there other forms of marginalisation, other peoples excluded from normative approaches to site, and how might you consider these in future? (max 100 words)
	<b>TOTAL MODULE</b>	<b>10hrs</b>	



## 2 Section 2:

### Introduction to Module –

This module provides an introduction to the idea of site as a basis for informed approaches to placemaking. It proceeds on the understanding that places are particular to their locations, shaped by a myriad of features that constitute the sites we inhabit. Knowledge of a site's particular characteristics serves to shape our understandings of place, providing an informed basis for collective decision making. In built environment disciplines, Site Analysis and Evaluation are fundamental skills. Site and place are approached as spatial conditions, seen and understood in terms of the parcel of land in question. Sometimes 'site' is considered in context of neighbouring sites or a region. In placemaking practices, this spatial condition is expanded to consider notions of community that might engage with the site: Local residents for whom the site has meaning; members of a collective or organisation that might use the site, such as community gardeners, or a local cultural group; or a demographic, such as youth. In this module, you will consider the idea that even these community-engaged processes perpetuate erasure and marginalisation precisely through their conceptualisations of 'Site' and what constitutes the community. Seldom is this spatial condition of 'site' approached to consider any community whose relationship to the site has been marginalised or erased. It can be challenging, but meaningful, to uncover these kinds of relationships, and to make a genuine contribution to challenging erasure and marginalisation.

Participants will encounter the Indigenous Australian concept of Country in this module, and use this as a framework to critique disciplinary approaches to site within built environment disciplines. Chapter 4 in the *Fundamentals Of Placemaking In The Built Environment* book is a central reading: Foster, S., Paterson Kinniburgh, J. & Wann Country (2020) *There's No Place Like (Without) Country*. The chapter challenges students to respond to Aboriginal knowledges of Country, to think about the peoples and cultures of the place and to challenge the politics of marginalisation and erasure embedded in normative disciplinary site analyses.

It is recommended that these ideas be applied to a site analysis task, preferably for a site that students can work on for a design project. It is the intention that as a result of the module, students can think differently about how they approach site, and can demonstrate an enhanced understanding of site as Country. Successful negotiation of these objectives will be demonstrated through the integration of Indigenous perspectives of Country in the site analysis - not in the form of iconography, but as a way of reading Country.

This module begins with a series of readings and videos for students to read and watch before going on a walk on Country with local Aboriginal community members. The module will introduce students to the act of reading Country from a local Aboriginal perspective. Working in groups students will respond to their 'Walk on Country' to construct an expanded understanding of their 'site'.

### About the case study on the Lecture slides

The case study presents in the lectures comprises the work of a group of students as part of the SUBJUNCTIVE SPACE: Alternate Histories for 'Other' Spatial Futurity Sandbox Studio.

The studio engaged with history archives to scour traces of First Nations history, including architectural documents, artworks, photography and oral or verbatim reports for evidence of overlooked spatial histories. The students explored an experimental reading of archival material for its potential to resist: to reconfigure spaces by accounting for occupations at and by the margins; and by challenging hegemonies that deem them unworthy. Throughout the project, we worked closely with Shannon Foster, local Sydney D'harawal Knowledge



Keeper who provided her input on First Nation’s perspectives on Country and shared cultural stories with the students. At the end of the studio, each group of students developed a 3D printed sculpture representing these stories.

In short, the process they followed is:

1. Talking up Country: This step is about identifying the Indigenous narratives of place. Reflecting on cultural practices, metaphors, and ecological understanding of the local people. For instance, sharing the story of the relationship between plants and the group. It is about finding the layers of meaning that a single element has on the landscape and identifying how this meaning is different when applying a 'professional lens' for example.
2. Walking up Country: A meditation of sorts, it is a process to bring these narratives back into the sun. Listening to Country reflecting on what she teaches us and respecting her as our mother. Here I ask, have you spent time at the place just letting Country speak to you?
3. Singing up Country: creating songlines that represent these narratives and key learnings and using them to have a positive impact in the future. This is done in a sustainable way.

## 2.1 Site analysis through traditional approaches

This part of the exercise parts from traditional approaches to place analysis (i.e. the power of 10, behavioural observations and/or day in the life. It is not prescriptive but rather informed on section C with the desk-based analysis. Students will use skills they already possess to conduct site analysis. During in-class time, they will get into groups to bring their findings together and produce a site analysis or drawing.

Instructions	Delivery	Time	The objective of the exercise
Students assemble in groups and contribute their research to collaboratively produce a site analysis drawing	In class	25 min	This task allows students to familiarise themselves with the site, and to produce a collaborative interpretation of site
What factors have you found that affect the site? Environmental, climatic, infrastructural, orientation, topographical...etc	In class	5 min	This task encourages students to reflect on the material they have collated
What have you omitted to create a narrative?	In class	5 min	This task encourages students to reflect on the material they have omitted
Class discussion Ask a group to share drawings they have prepared. Ask them to focus on 'what is included?' and 'what is omitted?' Ask if the readings and videos they did to prepare for class caused them to attempt to include information they would ordinarily have overlooked.		10 min	

## 2.2 Walking on Country

To do this module effectively, local On-Country, Indigenous, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community should be invited to take students on a walk on Country. The facilitator should check which Aboriginal peoples are On-Country, which means that you prioritise local knowledge and community (a protocol often disregarded due to ignorance in urban Australian settings). Working with local community means you don't bring in community from other parts of Australia. This is because knowledge of Country is very specific to each area, and local communities are further erased and marginalised on their own Country when this protocol is not observed. Within your own Institution, you can contact the institute or centre for Indigenous education and research for advice. Before making contact with community members, the facilitator should ensure that an adequate budget is assigned so that all Indigenous community are paid for their involvement. Once you have contacted community, you can ask them to speak about what is important to them about connecting to Country and if there is a particular place they would like to speak about. Ask if they would consider taking students on a walk there so that rather than sitting in a classroom and hearing about connecting to Country, the students can experience it for themselves.

Instructions	Delivery	Time	The objective of the exercise
<p>Site Visit: A Walk on Country</p> <p>1 hour walking on Country with local Aboriginal community member/s</p> <p>Students to engage their senses for this walk – they should listen, look and where appropriate touch, taste, smell.</p> <p>No photography, digital recordings or phones during the walk.</p>	On-site	1 hr	<p>Students engage in embodied encounters with Country and her knowledges/culture, developing an expanded understanding of 'Reading Site' to 'Reading Country'</p>

## 2.3 Reading Country

The concepts of 'Reading Site' and the socio-political influence of physical interventions are central to the module. Students will be asked to incorporate these with an understanding of multiple world views, and complexity as part of reading site, by addressing the site for their projects, through classroom activities and in personal study time in an on-going way throughout the course. This last part asks students to respond to what they have learned from the site through Indigenous knowledges.

Note: this activity could be performed as group work after the end of the tutorial if you don't have flexibility for the long engagement session.

Instructions	Delivery	Time	The objective of the exercise
<p>In the same groups, the students now document Country producing a new drawing based <u>solely</u> on their walk on Country.</p> <p>Remind students not to include familiar iconography or preconceived information.</p>	In-class	1 hour 30 mins	This exercise asks students to synthesise a range of experiences, encounters, knowledges and to interpret them through the experience of being on Country
<p><b>Class Discussion</b></p> <p>Ask groups to share the drawing they have prepared, and to discuss the drawing through the three questions only.</p> <p>Based on the two site analyses, and through the readings answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What have you uncovered about the cultural significance of this Country?</li> <li>- How can a site analysis process consider ideas of Country and Aboriginal ways of understanding this place?</li> <li>- How would you approach sites in future to integrate Aboriginal culture and knowledges into a project?</li> </ul>	In class	30mins	This exercise helps students to develop critical approaches and to develop self-awareness about their own learning experience.
<p><b>Wrap Up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What assumptions about Site Analysis were challenged through this process?</li> <li>• How does even a brief encounter of Country change the way students understand 'site'?</li> </ul> <p>Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the marginalisation that they perpetuate when they neglect to consider Aboriginal knowledges of Country.</li> <li>• what other forms of marginalisation and erasure from the built environment are perpetuated by our disciplinary approaches to site.</li> </ul>	In-class	10 mins	Bringing in the key aha moments.



**Imagine. Inspire. Connect. Create.**