being there...
I would like to acknowledge the local Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and all other people in the places of Coober Pedy and Tweed Heads for welcoming me into their communities whilst undertaking this masters and the project work that has informed it. It is with respect for them that I have framed my work in terms of culture describing the inherent relationship between people and place. I thank them for grounding me... It was a privilege and an education being there.

I would like to respectfully acknowledge the elders and traditional owners, both past and present, of each of these regions.

With great admiration, I would also like to thank the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, their families and the many hard-working souls involved in the ‘Irati Wanti’ campaign. I applaud their on-going commitment to the preservation of Indigenous culture and country through building understanding, wherever they are.
BEING THERE
Pinning Something Down

This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Landscape Architecture

Georgina Wright

School of Architecture & Design
RMIT University
August 2007

Declaration by the Candidate

I, Georgina Wright, declare that:

- except where due acknowledgement has been made, this work is that of myself alone;
- this work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award;
- the content of the thesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program;
- any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Signed:

Date: August 31, 2007
Main Questions:

1. How can the Landscape Architectural profession most appropriately engage with ‘local distinctiveness’ of place through design processes to ensure that the identity of place is maintained?

2. Can we build analytical & consultative design techniques which reflect Aboriginal Australia’s cognition of ‘landscape as culture’ and better value the landscape in these terms?

Auxiliary Questions through Chapters in PART IV of the Document:

1. PROJECT BRIEF. Using notions of ‘respect’ and stewardship for the landscape what is a brief for a landscape design project?

2. SITE ANALYSIS. In terms of maintaining local identity, what are the key modes of engagement and productive representation at the analytical phase?

3. CONSULTATION (client & community). What is the potential for site and community based ‘experience learning’ in the design process?

The hazard of any project is that once completed it doesn’t have the opportunity to evolve.

The outcome presented may be one interpretation, but the process holds many.

The project is never complete...
NAVIGATING THIS DOCUMENT:
Framed by the Introduction and Conclusion, this document is divided into 4 parts...

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Acknowledgements
In the 2006 Census there were 7,125 persons usually resident in Tweed Heads. Of the total population 1.9% were Indigenous persons. 69.4% stated they were born in Australia. Other common responses were: England 6.6%, New Zealand 3.9%, Scotland 1.1%, China 0.6% and Netherlands 0.5%. The most common languages other than English spoken at home were: Mandarin 0.4%, Italian 0.4%, Japanese 0.4%, German 0.4% and French 0.2%.

In the 2006 Census there were 1,916 persons usually resident in Coober Pedy. Of the total population 14.0% were Indigenous persons, compared with 2.3% Indigenous persons in Australia.

54.5% were born in Australia. Other common responses were: Greece 4.9%, Croatia 2.8%, England 2.7%, Germany 2.3% and South Eastern Europe 2.2%. The most common languages other than English spoken at home were: Greek 7.1%, Croatian 2.6%, German 2.5%, Serbian 2.2% and Hungarian 1.4%. 
INTRODUCTION

‘Being There’ is about developing appropriate design processes which have the opportunity to give local communities a voice through the language of landscape.

In Landscape Architectural practice, phrases such as ‘community ownership’ allude to a deeper engagement with the local condition of a project and its site. This document and the work it discusses represent an exploration into hitting the ground through design processes that engage with the local community and the distinct landscape fabric of the individual site.

In terms of Landscape Architectural Practice, I would argue that ‘design’ refers to the entire project process. The minute we look at a plan or walk onto a site, we are designing. Through critical reflection on built work at the culmination of our consultancy, it also could be argued that the design process is never complete. Based on this premise and harnessing this as a critique, I intend to explore the role of design specifically in the ‘local’ landscape. I will frame this discussion in terms of the practice based techniques of consultation, site and literature analysis and design outcomes.

Specifically, this Masters contrasts my former mode of landscape architectural practice with an exploration into Aboriginal cognition of landscape and place. This discussion is framed firstly by on-the-ground experience gained while working with communities in Coober Pedy in Outback South Australia and then developed through projects in Tweed Heads on the northern New South Wales coast.

My Research aimed to learn from Australia’s Indigenous conscience to attain more culturally, ecologically and socially accurate modes of engagement with the landscape throughout design practice. In terms of Australian discourse, this research is most appropriately positioned at the outset with the work of Jim Sinatra and Phin Murphy in documenting the narratives of Australians and their relationship to ‘country’ as a process in privileging local knowledge and emotion in land management practices. Their book ‘Listen to the People, Listen to the Land’ published almost 10 years ago “offers the possibility to land managers and environmentalists that feeling about the land in a personal way is legitimate and effective” (Rogers 2000).

However, as the body of research has developed, the insight of Architects working on Indigenous Housing projects in remote communities, and the public design work of practitioners such as Taylor Cullity Lethlean and architect Gregory Burgess have revealed more precise discussions with regards to practice based techniques in engaging place through consultation and negotiating politics. This shift in the research resulted from my desire to develop my practice in respect for “local knowledge which, through the strength of individuality, is required to forge productive yet sensitive philosophies regarding living and working with the land for mutual benefit [and] a landscape ethos that is sensitive to place” (Sinatra Murphy 1999).

Whilst ‘Listen to the People, Listen to the Land’ conveys the contrast between Aboriginal and ‘western’ landscape narratives as an example of the need for ‘seeing things both ways’ as a designer, in the early 1970’s Architects in outback Australia were employing techniques to address these contrasting perspectives. Early work in this field by practitioners such as Andrew McPhee significantly shifted the potential for architectural form to address specific local conditions both socially and environmentally. Within the intensely political and culturally controversial process of designing ‘Architecture for Aborigines’, practitioners learnt quickly that a successful project was dependant upon changing the pace of consultation to provide honest solutions to local ‘problems’ (McPhee 2007). It is these techniques in consultation and communication which this research explores in terms of culture, politics, place and importantly; time.

Initially, through my experience of the Australian Outback and ‘Anangu’* culture, and inspired by the local insight evident in some of the projects undertaken by Sinatra Murphy, this project began as a case study into the implications of our country’s inherent geographical distance and cultural isolation for landscape architectural design. At the culmination of my research the implementation of a Masterplan and an open space project on the Eastern Coastline of Australia has been prefixed by a need to ‘hit the ground’ with a respectful built project in a complex political climate. Both lines of investigation have challenged a series of techniques developed to engage community and address local politics through the design process.

Stretching between Coober Pedy and Tweed Heads ‘Being There’ has become an exploration into the Landscape Architectural practice of engaging intimately with site and community through grounded techniques. In addition, the work aspires to engage with the idea of evolutionary design processes, which envisage landscape projects as points of open-ended interaction with site and place. After all, while most processes in design are temporal, the process of the landscape and the values of people will continue to alter each site long after practical completion of the built project.

‘Being there’ is not only about spending time in one place, but also the techniques that these opportunities have given me such as documenting information gleaned through the eyes of local experts. As a practitioner, I can not do this without appropriately engaging in the richness and complexity of place defined and revealed through the challenge of communication.

The key communication techniques revealed by ‘being there’ are sitting down, grounding the design brief and bringing these together through site based consultative design processes. These techniques are framed by my experience in Coober Pedy and tested by Project Processes in Tweed. My experience with local Aboriginal communities has re-affirmed that in engaging with each new place and its’ people my design practice “must recognise the current uses, play with the weekly rhythms and rituals and above all understand the meaning of public space as well as private space which is specific to each culture” (Girard 1999).

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*Coober Pedy & Tweed Heads. Montage of satellite imagery and abstraction of Aboriginal language groups map. The seemingly uniform density of the information registered by this map contrasts how common maps negate the complexity of Australia’s Landscape, reducing the Country to political boundaries and movement networks.

Notes on Census Data:
The Coober Pedy Council refers to a population of approximately 4,500. This is possibly more accurate, but given the disparate and transient nature of the community, Census data is hard to gain. This anomaly in the data is evidence in itself of the complexity in negotiating work in Coober Pedy, and remote communities generally...

*‘Anangu’ is Pitjantji tjara for ‘person’, used widely as a term of identification by Indigenous people of the Western Desert Region. Godward, C 1982
Just a day in office for Georgina

By COLLEEN DAVIS

Landscape architect Georgina Wright's first weeks in Tweed Council were spent in a mix of meetings and ploughing through piles of paperwork.

The biggest challenge will be creating a space that acknowledges and respects everything about the Tweed Heads, including the massive breadth of needs and history.

Are you listening?

by Alex Kelly

Stories of the earth shaking, of being packed up and moved in cattle trucks, of burying family after the floods came......

From Sunday 28 September through Wednesday 2 October people from around Australia and the world convened at 10 Mile Bush Camp at the invitation of the senior traditional Aboriginal women - the Kupa Piti Kungka Tja. The Kuna Kulin "Are you listening?" bush camp was called after the Kungka travelled to the Nuclear Free Gathering in Silverton in July. The following day in their campaign against the proposed nuclear waste dump this would be the first time that they would travel to so many people on their country. The Kungka extended the invitation for people to come "Wanting to Time" and talk about the poison, talk about Muralinga.

About 300 people made the journey to Coorong Pedy to meet the Kungka, listen to their stories and share their own. Families, friends, supporters, community groups, politicians and locals all gathered under a marquee amidst swirling dust, big winds and storms to listen to stories of the 1953 atomic bomb test and the devastating impact they had on people's families, health and lives. While these stories of sadness and loss Kulin Kulin was also a celebration of strength and survival and

Plan is for everyone

Boat harbour project receives wide acceptance

Everyone at bush camp gathers for closing foma on Wednesday evening, before the long journey home.

to Country, family and culture was warned through all of the meetings as was a firm opposition to this poison - uranium - disrupting more lives and families. As well as sharing their painful knowledge the Kungka and local Tjigas were generous enough to share their cultural stories and performed foma - ceremony - on the last night at camp. They invited all women present to learn one of the Seven Sisters creation stories through dance and the image of hundreds of shy gigling women learning foma from the Kungka was beautiful beyond words.

From this meeting people will travel back to their respective communities with stories to share and a deeper understanding of the issues, far beyond simply academic or ideological opposition to the nuclear industry. On October 15th there will be actions and screenings, art exhibitions and vigils around Australia to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the bomb. In addition to immediate actions there are longer term plans, networks and connections and no doubt many more replies than anyone can imagine.

In the dirt out there at 10 Mile Bush Camp a remarkable coming together occurred between people of different races, languages, ages and backgrounds. We were talking about the bomb, the history and future, and the story deepening and growing the history and the pain, but with hope and vision to prevent the same Intif - poison - from disrupting the future.

Irrigation office extends gratitude to the local community and businesses for their support of Kuliar Kulin.

More Page 12
Negotiating Existing Conditions:

The Contrasting Contexts of Coober Pedy and Tweed Heads

In 2003 I moved to Coober Pedy to work with The Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta* who spearheaded the national environmental campaign “Irati Wanti – The Poison Leave it” against the proposed National Radioactive Waste Repository near Woomera in South Australia. My work within this campaign provided a series of techniques to facilitate cross-cultural communication, through the development of projects framed as campaign propaganda; such as business cards, banner design, Postcards and information booklets for artwork distribution. Upon arrival in the remote outback community, I also commenced my Masters. In the second year, I co-ran the Coober Pedy Regional Times. Writing articles, coordinating and designing advertisements, visiting and photographing events and conducting interviews gave me intricate insight to the mining community of Coober Pedy and the Station communities of Outback South Australia.

After two years in Coober Pedy, I returned to Melbourne for six months before moving to Tweed Heads on the Northern New South Wales Coast to take a 12 month position with Tweed Shire Council as a Project Officer Implementing an Open Space Design in the Heart of Tweed Heads on the Border to Coolangatta on the Queensland’s Gold Coast.

At the outset, the factors shaping my experiences in Coober Pedy and Tweed Heads appeared to differ in every possible way. Geographically, ecologically, politically, culturally, economically, socially and professionally these two places seemed diametrically opposed. The only external threads that strung these contrasting parameters together were my engagement with each place through the landscape and specifically through local Indigenous perspectives. Ultimately however, this was the most contrasting of all comparisons, primarily because my engagement with the local Aboriginal community in each place hinged off and was defined by all of the aforementioned factors.

In his discussion of the work undertaken by the collaborative ‘And Studios’ projects in Western Australia, Grant Revell acknowledges that “the autonomy of the University [UWA] ensures that the integrity of both design process and ultimate outcomes are manifest outside any commercially driven enterprise” (Revell 2000). In relation to this and in contrast to the lack of commercialism whilst working with the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta in Coober Pedy, the array of stakeholders in the Jack Evans boat Harbour had resulted in a brief for a project with an inherently commercial agenda. This was primarily to construct a cultural landscape image in an urban context.

Whilst in Coober Pedy I was positioned in a role working for and with the Kungka Tjuta solely, in Tweed Heads I found myself employed by Local Government and as a Council officer accountable to the entire local community and a myriad of other bureaucratic institutions. Here, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, although integral to one key project within the Harbour Landscape became stakeholders amongst many in a highly contested site.

Similarly to ‘And Studios’ it could be said that the work undertaken in supporting the Irati Wanti campaign valued ‘genuine and exhaustive collaboration across all particular cultures – where project ownership and design participation [was] overseen and maintained by’ the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta. This is evidenced most clearly by the design of the ‘Totem 1 – Emu Fields’ memorial postcard where collaboratively we compiled an image of their narrative, through a process of detailed digital curation until it conveyed only the most vital information to be legible from any cultural perspective; a process I would liken to Sinatra Murphy’s concept of ‘seeing both ways’ or the consultation undertaken by Gregory Burgess in developing the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Cultural Centre.

In contrast, in Tweed Heads although I was able to instill the local Indigenous community ownership and design participation in the project process; it was overseen and will ultimately be maintained by a far more complex cross-cultural and political structure. Where in Coober Pedy the design outcome for the post-card conveyed the voices of the Kungka Tjuta, design processes at the Jack Evans Boat Harbour are comparable to Kevin Taylor’s description of the complexity surrounding the controversial Cleve Gardens project in St Kilda; “What is important here, to gain a full understanding of the complex flux between design, politics and social forces acting on the site, is the way in which design re-emerged on a number of occasions to attempt to represent a range of publics” (Taylor 1998).

Whilst the Irati Wanti work had to represent one public, the Jack Evans Boat Harbour design process was re-interpreted and shifted according to a cross-section of the public, be they local residents, the Indigenous community, internal Council staff or State Government bodies.

As I elaborate on in the conclusion, this is how my concept design in Tweed Heads forms a cross-cultural brief for the site, rather than a finished spatial design outcome.

Effectively, my role in the Irati Wanti campaign as an activist was in direct contrast to the hierarchical system that I found myself working within at Tweed Shire Council. Initially I had envisaged that my experience and capacity to work with communities as developed in Coober Pedy could extend directly into my Landscape Architectural practice. However, in Local Government my practice needed to facilitate productive cross-cultural discussion about place through the design process, whilst in the Irati Wanti campaign my design processes supported a singular argument for place and people. Although contrasting in this way, on each occasion I still found myself outside my former mode of practice as a Landscape Architect. Ironically, through both situations my practice shifted in a similar way, allowing me to position myself productively within cultural projects by engaging design process as a place specific tool in negotiation and communication.

The main challenge in shifting my practice was taking the time to communicate. Whilst it was enforced upon me as a cultural necessity in Coober Pedy, I had to define processes and mechanisms to create time in the fast moving pace of an urban open space project with political complexity at Tweed Heads. In both instances, the time I spent ‘being there’ spanned two years.
Mangroves montage... A moment of ‘something’ in Tweed, inspired by the unknown of the environment across the water, the constructed edge with emerging mangroves and the remnant caravan park beyond.

“Place means more than allocation or a physical setting, it implies a certain character, identity or atmosphere, however frustratingly intangible”

Kim Dovey, 1989
My project aims to embrace the special ‘something’ about places that I have experienced but been unable to ‘pin down’ using conventional modes of Landscape Architectural representation. The intent is that by defining or representing the individuality of ‘place’, I am able to maintain its distinct value and identity through the design process. One key consideration in Landscape Architecture is the need to respect ‘place’ as already designed whether the site is functioning well or not.

By embracing the ‘existing condition’ through rigorous yet reflective project development, will a ‘new’ landscape project have a greater chance at functioning across a number of levels in an intensifying climate of development and change?

“A place is not an object or a setting so much as a kind of interactive relationship between people and setting together with a set of meanings that both emerge from and inform this experience and interaction”

(Dovey 1989)

Throughout my project, I refer to the notion of ‘place’. I use this term based on my experience whilst working with public artists and community cultural development workers in Tweed Heads. The above quote by Kim Dovey, was offered to a multi-disciplinary public art forum with distinct reference to notions of ‘place-making’.

In more ‘universal’ definitions, place is “a particular point or part of space or of surface; an area set aside for a specific purpose; suitable, appropriate or customary surroundings” or “right or original position” (OED date).

For the purposes of my discussion ‘place’ refers to the registration and function of a space, as part of the broader landscape ‘surface’ with specific respect to its existing and historic context. ‘Place’ becomes the materials, the tools and the intention or project goals, and should be deeply engaged with the design process.

In this way ‘place’ is not something that needs to be distinctly defined or labeled but a combination of many layers, each holding its own richness; the ‘something’ about a place that is hard to define.

In the catalogue of a 1935 Paris based exhibition entitled “Documentary and Antigraphic photographs”, photographer Julian Levy states “After discarding all the accepted virtues, there remains in the anti-graphic photo something that is in the many ways more dynamic, startling and inimitable”. This project is about the ‘anti-graphic’ landscape. It is about the ‘something’ that allows unique space to exist. It is this ‘something’ that, if neglected or ignored, can be easily designed out, changing the original uniqueness of place irreversibly.

In both cases, Coober Pedy and the Jack Evans Boat Harbour exist in some sense through the chaos of rapid development, technological constraint and ultimately despite a period of neglect. Through an in depth on-the-ground experience in Coober Pedy, I endeavoured to develop mechanisms for translating experience into propositional analysis.

As with the inherently evolutionary nature of the landscape itself, this project is not about a finished ‘as-built’ design. It is intended to be a critical engagement in design process. It endeavors to tease out the role that process plays in embracing site and creating unique landscapes that will never be finished and in turn always have the opportunity to be “dynamic, startling and inimitable”.

In addition to being a Masters, this work also stands as my commitment to the sites, communities and cultures that have been neglected by design process, denied their voice in the built outcome of projects and tragically lost their sense of place. I hope that my future design practice can act archaeologically, to reveal and respect the ‘place’ of each site I engage in.
THREADS: COOBER PEDY (KUPA PITI)
*a lesson in hitting the ground running...*
The ‘dog tracked’ hillsides of Coober Pedy, managed to illustrate what I was trying to describe as the indefinable nature of the place. The landscape is public, private, thoroughfare, wall, ground plane, image and vantage point all in one... This image is about the moment of arrival to site and the overwhelming 1:1 experience.

Based on a panoramic photo taken from the perspective of the local Tourist Scenic Lookout, this simple sketch of the pedestrian movement network sought to investigate the difficulty of translating the actual form and function of place into the representational techniques of my former mode of practice.

The drawing demonstrates the potential of the panoramic image to translate dense layers of site information. In its current state it remains purely representational and acts to frame the discussion. The drawing defined the ‘something’ about place that I was struggling to identify when I first arrived.

In contrast to the Coober Pedy Town Plan overlay which traced the same base photograph (pages 10-11), this image was a test in a qualitative representation of landscape and place.

Once I had gained insight into the nuances of the Coober Pedy desire lines, I applied the knowledge along with other insights to the Grounds panorama (pages 18-19). The Coober Pedy Grounds Project, undertaken eighteen months after this sketch was about translating this mode of representation into an analytical and propositional tool.

In combination with the ‘Town Plan’ and ‘Grounds’ Projects, the other Coober Pedy Projects, presented over the following pages offered the opportunity to retrospectively develop tools to represent and communicate the ‘something’ in Tweed Heads...
COOBER PEDY (KUPA PITI) : THE PLACE

Through its very name tourists engage with Coober Pedy at face value, the name stemming from local Aboriginal dialect, the words 'kupa', meaning white man or un-initiated man and 'piti' meaning waterhole. 'Kupa Piti' means 'white mans burrow', ironic when considering its metaphoric accuracy in relation to the devastating impact of rabbits on the Australian landscape.

In 'Kupa Piti' tourists experience fascination with the number of Aboriginal people in the street, the quirky nature of the place's infrastructure, the stones that come from within it's depths, and at the end of the day the sunset over the intangible horizon. The township is constrained by various forces, the most extreme of which is the inherently Australian, remote and arid nature of the landscape.

Located remotely within Australia’s largest desert environment, Coober Pedy is an extreme example of the relationship between culture, infrastructure and ecology and how they weave together to form the landscape canvas. My original intent in selecting Coober Pedy as a study site was to draw out the implications that these key elements have for people in terms of their relationship to place.

The largest producer of Opal in the world and backdropped by the moon-scape like mine fields, Coober Pedy is an anthropocentric melting pot made up of a large Anangu* community combined with a permanent and transient population from over forty global nationalities. Coober Pedy’s multi-culturalism is evidenced amongst other things by it's social clubs, comprising, Serbian, Croatian, United Yugoslavian, Italian and Greek Clubs in addition to the RSL and the local Pub. Although exemplified by the extent of it, Coober Pedy’s multi-culturalism is inherently and undeniably Australian.

The town water supply comes from an artesian bore 24 kilometres north of town. The water is pumped through an underground pipeline to the water works where it is treated by reverse osmosis. Based on my interests in larger systems of geology and hydrology, I was curious to discover an alternative registration of differing cultures in the landscape through landform and water use. However, the Coober Pedy landscape is definitively multicultural through occupation and the concept of designing ‘culture’ into place in my eyes would have amounted to developing a theme park, undermining an already rich landscape setting.

‘Kupa Piti’ provided a study site and testing ground for the exploration of landscape architectural processes that recognise the various constraints and influencing forces that define the individuality of place. It also defined the necessity for appropriate tools or representation and communication in any public process.
My study has involved teasing out a set of key threads through a series of projects undertaken in Coober Pedy. These threads represent key points of reference in my design practice. They are site, culture, ecology, politics, theory, practice and design. The above diagram was an attempt to represent how each project related to or allowed me to explore the threads. For example the ‘culture’ thread, revealed discussions in terms of; the legibility of landscape systems through infrastructure and occupation, recognising local systems in occupation of public space, Anangu processes of ‘sitting down’ or holding meetings, interpretation and communication through language & diagram, and ultimately by recognising the individuality or uniqueness of space.
Although I was in Coober Pedy for the Irati Wanti Campaign, I had automatically separated that work from the focus of my Masters upon arrival. As such, upon commencing my research in Coober Pedy I analysed the town zoning and development control plans through my former practice based processes and modes of representation. This failed to identify propositional techniques to engage with hydrology, politics and culture. Following this I realised that my Masters needed to go beyond these themes. Hydrology, politics and culture were just a small part of the notion of ‘landscape systems’ with which I wanted to engage. Hey to moving beyond these broad themes, was defining how they are legible through habitation or occupation. Ultimately I needed to draw out the intrinsic relationship between country and people.

To learn from the landscape I needed to associate with it within the realms of the individual, the community and their perception. Rather than designing culture into the landscape, it became apparent that it was necessary to engage with the various existing cultures to achieve locally distinct and respectful outcomes in public space. I needed to step back from my practice based approach and engage differently in place. I realised that the processes I had been engaged in as an activist working with the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta were already allowing me insight into how I might achieve this.

Stepping back from each campaign project, I began to recognise tools applicable to design practice which could enable site specific and rich lines of communication. These drew me to look at my remoteness from the places I knew intimately as an opportunity. In addition to the Campaign projects, I started to undertake investigations into how I might communicate the many layers of information I was learning about the landscape by ‘being there’.

My drive in doing these projects became the ability to talk about how I practice Landscape Architecture with some of the local community members I had met through work at the Times. Following the series of articles I ran about the amendment to the Coober Pedy Town Plan and the Council’s apparent lack of consultation with the community, which resulted at the biggest attendance at a Council meeting in many years. What the Plan amendment report issue raised for me, was the importance of simple and cross-cultural communication tools in both analytical and propositional discussion forums.

Returning to my original Masters Brief, I expanded my threads of investigation to 7 main streams of thought or key components of landscape architectural practice. Developing a matrix (following pages) of the projects allowed me to map these threads through all of the projects I developed in Coober Pedy and define the pivotal projects that may offer some insight into shifting my mode of practice to engage more intimately with people and place through communication technique.

The key projects are described in the following pages and are:

- The Coober Pedy Town Plan
- Designing’ Coober Pedy – the hunch
- Totem 1 Atomic Test Memorial Postcard
- Kulini Kulini – Are You Listening” Bush Camp
- Alice and Back’ – The Road Strips
- The ‘Automatic Door’ Concept
- The ‘Grounds’ Project

Learning to K.I.S.S. Interpretation & process.

I came to Coober Pedy with my own agenda, as a Landscape Architect. However, it was not my environment and I soon came to realise that the agenda belongs to those that live there.

My project is a test in ‘keeping it simple’ for the audiences’ sake. It is an exercise in appropriate interpretation and application.

Text from GRC Presentation 2
**CULTURE & COMMUNICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Intent/interest/questions</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Discoveries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALICE AND BACK - THE ROAD STRIPS</td>
<td>2003 - 2004</td>
<td>Road Strips</td>
<td>Readability of the broader context of the landscape through a key infrastructural element.</td>
<td>A view over Coober Pedy landscape topography. This may seem simple but there is much learning in that about the area, native land use, movement patterns, orange systems, etc. An intimate knowledge of these things allows the shaping of key elements that tell about the community. It is a deep and understanding base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds Panorama</td>
<td>2004 - 2006</td>
<td>Grounds Panorama</td>
<td>Attention to the ground in the new development of the grounds.</td>
<td>Precisely align the ground in the development of the grounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE AUTOMATIC DOOR CONCEPT**

A concept study on how Landscape Architecture can enhance usability, engaging with the impact of water on the infrastructure and culture of public spaces, from the analytical image to the built work.

**THE COOBER PEDY TOWN PLAN**

A concept study on how Landscape Architecture can enhance usability, engaging with the impact of water on the infrastructure and culture of public spaces, from the analytical image to the built work.

**THE GROUNDS PROJECT**

A concept study on how Landscape Architecture can enhance usability, engaging with the impact of water on the infrastructure and culture of public spaces, from the analytical image to the built work.
Mapping the chronology of my work in Coober Pedy, the matrix (previous spread) became a tool for collating a large body of project work. It provided an opportunity to reveal and learn from the manner in which various project processes engaged in the design ‘threads’. The threads were mapped out across the matrix as they occurred in each project.

Based on the density of the threads to key projects, the matrix provided key moments of interaction or learning. Read as a network the cumulative density of the threads revealed the key projects from which I could draw tools to enrich my practice processes.

Beyond the Matrix itself, the diagrams shown on this spread are examples of how I started to think about the threads of information in terms of:
- design / infrastructure (red),
- ecology / systems (green),
- politics / community (blue) &
- culture / communication (grey)

THE GROUNDS PROJECT

THE COOBER PEDY TOWN PLAN

TOTEM 1 MEMORIAL POSTCARD
THE DESIGN HUNCH

SITTING DOWN - KULINI KULINI BUSH CAMP

TOTEM 1 MEMORIAL POSTCARD

THE GROUNDS PROJECT
My initial work in Coober Pedy intended to unpack the Coober Pedy Town Plan, to reveal the forces that had shaped the township and the level of governance within which I could frame an argument to design there.

Unable to fathom the complexity of place in Coober Pedy, I began my research, as with most of my practice-based work, at the strategic level. I quickly realised through the Coober Pedy Town Plan project that planning principals and the criteria they set had little bearing on the quality and character of the place.

The planning maps did reference the geology and hydrology as contextual landscape systems through the broad identification of the ‘Precious Stones Mining’ and ‘Environmental Conservation’ zones.

Effectively, in a mining town remote from supplies of fresh water, the legibility of both geology and hydrology in the landscape is obvious. Beyond the Boundary of the town, the mounded dumps from the mining process and the eery moonscape they create, signify the geology of place more than I imagined any landscape design ever could.
In contrast to the ‘Town Centre Zone’ Map (right), the experience of the Coober Pedy Main Street defined the key Public Open Space in Coober Pedy as the Road (above). The spaces adjacent to the Main Street defined key opportunities for interaction.

(below) The existing maintenance, signage and infrastructure of Coober Pedy all contradict the requirements of each zoning overlay, when experienced on the ground.

(above) The Coober Pedy Town Centre Zone Plan, overlaid over a panorama of the Township. This image was a test in exploring the relevance of legislative definition on the Coober Pedy township.
The ‘design for water sensitivity’ image (right) represents the
brief I originally set myself for designing open space in Coober
Pedy. It was about applying notions of water sensitive urban
design (WSUD) to foster functional public spaces. Being there,
allowed me to see that the application of my former modes of
Landscape Architectural practice would result in a fundamentally
flawed process.

Although on many levels a WSUD project of this nature has
great potential in Coober Pedy it is not locally practical. As
revealed through my analysis of the Coober Pedy Town Plan,
local satisfaction with the landscape identity ‘as it is’ and issues
of maintenance and safety denote the importance of prioritising a
functional landscape. Ironically, given the arid context WSUD is
not a priority. In contrast, the final project brief (opposite image)
is more grounded in Coober Pedy experience.

It was from this point that I embraced ‘being there’ as a brief for
exploring modes of practice for my Masters, and ultimately my
future work.

Effectively, at the outset there was no project brief for my work in
Coober Pedy. My initial response, as a landscape architect was
that the brief for the township would require the resolution of a
series of environmental, social & infrastructural issues through
streetscape design.

In contrast, the brief for the Irati Wanti campaign was about
fostering respect through processes of ‘sitting down’ and
representing place for its preservation.

After ‘Being There’ and based on the success and failure of
each Coober Pedy project, the grounds mapping formed a new
brief for country and culture. The grounds panoramic mapping
proposed the development of a design strategy based on
existing landscape patterns of function and ‘identity’. Embracing
‘being there’ as a tool, these notions now form the brief for my
Landscape Architectural practice.
COOBER PEDY TOWNSHIP IS DYING..

The opal has run dry.
The tourism dollar is passing by in express traffic headed for calmer waters.
The poker machines have taken over and the culture is that of air-conditioned, beer swilling comfort...
Government support slips away. The fresh deliveries stretch to a fortnightly cycle.
But still people want to stay on. They have lived here all of their life, or for 20 years at least..

Opal, the desert, Coober Pedy...
Something... Everything about this place is... Their way life...
Can public space, through function, infrastructure and over time evolve to carry the weight of this dilemma?

That's the extreme version... BUT......

COOBER PEDY NEEDS, CONSOLIDATION.
FOR THE TOURISM DOLLAR
FOR THE LOCAL PEOPLE
FOR THE COMMUNITY
FOR THE CULTURE
FOR THE PLACE

EVERYTHING TO BUILD YOUR OWN CITY EXISTS IN OR ON THE GROUND AROUND COOBER PEDY..
It is an entire township of hoarders... They can do it themselves. Perhaps a little guidance...
They know how to build, and often even what, but what is the strategy for the gradual re-occupation of the landscape by form???

Opportunities for design as denoted by the mapping of the Main Street as a series of Public Open spaces (opposite page, top, centre). In contrast to zoning, the key points of possible design intervention are defined by shifts in the streetscape infrastructure such as changes in level or verandah spaces.
Across the expanse of the Central Australian desert country, the impact of human settlement is marked by a myriad of fence lines and cattle tracks. Amidst this iconic landscape of ‘bigness’ the dramatic and now irreversible impact of the Nuclear Tests undertaken during the 1950’s and 60’s is hidden from most Australians. In the case of the ‘Maralinga’ and ‘Emu Fields’ bomb sites, the Anangu community has never been able to reinhabit their country. The many social and political issues that have evolved from these events are unknown to the majority of the Australian population. This means that current campaigns for desert ‘country and culture’ have been difficult to voice. The ramifications of restricted access due to pollution and radioactivity of the sites are ongoing. There remains an inability to acknowledge this loss of country, its history or its culture on the actual bomb sites.

In collaboration with the Kungka Tjuta, I designed a commemorative postcard for the first nuclear test which was conducted at Emu Fields on October 15th, 1953. Fifty years after the event, the memorial card was released nationally on publicly accessible ‘Avant Card’ racks in every major city in Australia. The postcard was about learning from the past for appropriate actions in the future. The image was chosen to acknowledge, and make public and accessible an understanding of the impact of the nuclear tests on the unconditional relationship between country and people, known as ‘culture’.

The postcard image consisted of five vital components in the memory of the event; the sky, the horizon and landscape texture, the earth, faces of anangu elders and community members involved in the struggle for country and a silhouette of the Atomic Cloud itself. We decided that it did not need any words, and the Kungkas discussed that the image was “scary and sad enough on it’s own”. They also told me that it was “beautiful” in the way that it showed their relationship with country.

The Kungkas decided that the image was too important to be sent, as with most campaign postcards, to the Government in protest. It was their story, and they just wanted to share it; for people to learn from it. Over the months to come, people touched by the card sent back messages of sorrow, respect and support. The combination of landscape, people and the familiar form of an atomic mushroom cloud in the image, had brought the truth home about a desert that many consider barren and uninhabitable. It provided an accessible glimpse of event and place which could be taken into the publics collective memory. It is memory which leads to respect, and in this case the overwhelming nationwide opposition to the dump.

On October 15, 2003 The Australian Senate passed a resolution presented by Penny Wong, South Australian Labor Senator after meeting the Kungkas the preceding April. The motion, amongst other important statements, acknowledged “that 15 October marks the 50th Anniversary of the first atomic test conducted by the British Government in northern South Australia” and that it “expresses concern for those Indigenous peoples whose lands and health over generations have been detrimentally affected by this and subsequent atomic tests conducted”.

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“From an Indigenous perspective, Landscape is ‘country’ – a locus of identity and a political idea. It embodies ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ meanings belonging to systems of knowledge that are fundamentally religious. It is, simultaneously, a contested site of colonial conflict.”

(Kleinart & Neale, 2000)
Key to my Masters is the notion of sitting down. The orchestration of Bush Camp, provided insight into the need to appropriately and respectfully orientate myself to place for my design work. One of the key processes was negotiating a site for the camp. Beyond the logistics of water supply (donated by Council and trucked in to the tanks) and toilets (pits were drilled by a local miner and ramshackle shelters built) we needed to ensure that at all times country and culture was respected. Bringing strangers to the elders camp, meant finding the right place for them to sleep as well as the ‘middleground’ at the campsite between men’s, women’s and visitor’s camps on which to sit down and talk.

The site was mapped and decisions made on the ground with the elders pointing out sacred areas, no go zones, lines of site, prevailing winds, fire sites and so on. Inevitably the weather throughout the event, evidenced the richness of a Country that so many of the visitors had previously thought relatively empty. From sweltering heat and dust storms to electrical storms and flash flooding, stranding many knee deep in desert mud, the bush camp was a true introduction to place.

Learning from this experience, I take into my practice, the intent always to ground myself in place. I need to experience all site conditions with the people that live there to be able to respectfully engage with it for design.

I need to do this by “sitting down”.

Being unable to tell the story of Kulini Kulini better than the campaigners I worked with on it, I have included excerpts from “Talking Straight Out”, the book of the Kungka Tjuta and the Irati Wanti Campaign (below).

“Having travelled far and wide to spread their Irati Wanti message, it was now time for everyone to leave the comfort of their own homes and come to the Kungka’s place. Anangu came from Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Yalata, Oak Valley, Port Augusta, Mimili and Indulkana to join the Kungkas.

By Monday over 300 people had passed by the registration caravan... Over the next three days families, friends, supporters, community groups, locals, greenies, media and politicians all gathered under a marquis amidst swirling dust, gale force winds and storms to sit on the ‘manta’-ground and ‘kulini’-listen.

Elders recalled their experiences of the Atomic bomb tests in the 1950s and 60s and their impact on their families, health and lives. Half a century later, the waste dump posed a similar threat to people’s lives and land. The courage and generosity of the elders who spoke at Bush Camp inspired a collective will to support the Kungkas’ campaign to stop the ‘irati’-poison from returning.”

(source) Talking Straight Out: Stories from the Irati Wanti Campaign, 2005
At the Silverton Gathering managing the Kungkas Artwork Stall, with Eileen ‘Kampakuta’ Brown and Emily ‘Munyungka’ Austin.

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‘KULINI KULINI’ Are you listening?

INVITATION TO ALL FROM THE KUPA PITU KUNGKA TJUTA

Senior Aboriginal Women of Coober Pedy

“Kungka Tjuta, Wati Tjuta, Tjiltji Tjuta, tjukur kuilla nyinakatintyu”
Many women, many men, many kids, sit down all together and listen to the story.
“We are going to stand up and fight strong. And you fellas have got to help us.”

10 Mile Creek BUSH CAMP
Coober Pedy, South Australia

1953 First Atomic Bomb tested in South Australia 2003 Proposed National Nuclear Waste Dump
SAME COUNTRY. SAME PEOPLE. SAME POISON. 50 YEARS. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

Sept 29 - Oct 1 2003

Camp setup 2pm Sunday Sept 28
www.iratiwanti.org/kulinikulini.php PO Box 1043 Coober Pedy SA 5723 phone (08) 8672 3413 email kungkatjuta@iratiwanti.org

10 Mile Creek Camp, before and during (above) Kulini Kulini - Are you Listening? Bush Camp.
The Alice & Back road strips project was an exploration into ‘journey’ and registering the legibility of familiar elements of the landscape for their difference. We experience road and streetscapes every day, whether they are kerbed and channelled or not. The change in aggregate, surface, shoulder width, camber and other registrations are opportunities to acknowledge the changes in the landscape that lie beyond.

The camera lens was opened to the same aperture and focus, and the portrait frame at ninety degrees became the benchmark. The snapshot was triggered by change in road surface, whether the road shoulder, vegetation, horizon or sky changed behind it or not. On road trips, we are mesmerized by the motion of the road, rapid motion drawing our eyes to the tangible elements of horizon and sky. When we stop, these elements are less tangible than the surface under foot and the appeal of vegetated shelter.

This project was an exploration into registration of the broader systems in our personal space, using the road as familiar, as a reference point. As shape-shifting infrastructure, the road becomes a point of registration and experiential mapping. It shapes our memory. It reveals the potential for everyday infrastructure to register and trigger experience.
“Time and change are connected to Place. Real change is best understood by staying in one place. When I travel, I see differences rather than change... The challenge has been... to make change an integral part of the works purpose so that, if anything, it becomes stronger and more complete as it falls apart and disappears. I need to make works that anticipate, but do not attempt to predict or control the future. In order to understand time, I must work with the past, present and future”.

(Goldsworthy, 2000)
The Automatic Door...  
*fields of perspective*

This was a photo I took whilst documenting the ‘road strips’ on the ‘Alice and Back’ trip. When I took ‘THE AUTOMATIC DOOR’ image on a bus full of RMIT Landscape Architecture students, I was thinking about how each person had a different perception of the landscape that lay beyond, varying from it being ‘boring’ and ‘the same’ to as in my case; a series of intricate tonal shifts in an expansive landscape. Although our opinions may have differed, due to our shared education if I did comment on something, such as the change of aggregate colour in the road, even the most disinterested landscape student would share my understanding. In this case, for example; how infrastructural and economic systems in road construction had collided with the geology of the landscape through necessity for materials (thus the Road Strips project). Having driven the road with friends from different backgrounds however, the change in road colour becomes something different to them.

What perturbed me in this thought process was that whilst as designers we draw upon a broad array of information about a site to shape our designs, the people who use them are rarely aware of the information behind the decisions we make. In addition, the Automatic Door image represented that although Landscape Architects often engage in the same layers of information through similar processes in analysis and consultation it is actually a personal agenda and even sense of taste that shape the design outcome.

In contrast to this; what if the analytical insight of a Landscape Architect were handed to the community to shape their own space, thus removing ownership of design from the consultant? What would their local perspective bring to the design outcome that the aesthetic judgement of a practitioner would normally curate? Whilst initially this idea fosters visions of clay tiles with local kids’ hand prints, I am quick to reiterate, that the community would work with our tools for designing space. That said; is it even possible to make these tools accessible for people outside of our profession in a meaningful and productive way?

As such, I felt that I needed to find a representational technique within which anyone could extract and insert information or position their agenda spatially within the landscape. This would allow a multiple reading of the landscape through a singular communication tool. The intent is, that through a technique such as this both grounds of information could meet at the middle, for unique design outcomes that aren’t constrained by the individual designers’ perspective.
The 'grounds project' was about exploring the potential for representing and analysing my own fascination in and experience of Coober Pedy in a propositional manner. It was about breaking through my critique of design as a generator of form and function alone resulting in projects that don’t really engage the local. It was about finding a way to document what I saw through the ‘Automatic door’.

The grounds project offered the potential to enrich design process by documenting and learning from the act of actually ‘being there’.

From my hilltop home this 360 degree panorama captured a perspective of Coober Pedy rarely experienced by tourists or visitors. Tracing this panorama, I intended to draw out key relationships in the landscape through the overlaps in each individual photograph.

In my former mode of practice, the landscape panorama was a tool for representing the existing condition. Showing most physical qualities of the site, its sweeping form covered everything that the local person could want to discuss.

Whilst the Grounds Mapping documented the zones from the local Development Plan in terms of ‘physical implications’, it also registered my Geomorphologic understandings as evidenced by ‘broader systems’, and mapped my experience based local knowledge of place in terms of ‘Culture and Politics’.

Upon reflection of the Coober Pedy Grounds analysis with regards to the consultation process, using the photographic overlaps as a series of lenses to draw out particular relationships has the potential to alter this use of panoramic information. By extracting local narratives from the existing conditions, the ‘grounded’ panorama pins down intimate relationships across the breadth of the site. This reveals a set of propositional palettes for design. For example, the ‘Post Office Hill’ overlap reveals the opportunity for designing with the existing ‘junk’ to compositionally facilitate the growth of pockets of vegetation and ultimately create a series of local ‘pocket parks’ throughout the fabric of the towncape.

In contrast, the ‘Junction - Water’ overlap implies the potential for the design of a bushfoods farm (an idea that came from local Anangu mob) within the conservation zone that is dissected by local ‘short cuts’ or public access networks.
“Design exists in the space between possibility and reality and it is through representation that designers mediate this zone”

(Raxworthy 2002)
Water reserve - Sketch book - not a grid in sight.

March 2003

Settlement → Hydrological Reliance → Current State

Potential "Whitefella" way.

Contradicts multicultural
hydrological accumulation

→ Always more than one way.

Settlement by shelter

Within Topography

Planning DOC
Zoning - Key Areas
Defined by this heritage
On my arrival to Coober Pedy in 2003, sitting on the hill overlooking town (we tried to do this each sunset) I pointed out my fascination with the way the town is nestled in the Mesas as the edge of an ancient oceanic shelf. Emily Johnston who had been there working on the campaign and with the elders in their aged care facility for years said. “George, you just look at things differently. I never noticed that about the landscape before, and I have been here for much longer than you”.

When you visit a place, you bring your agenda, which is fine, as long as that agenda is flexible to site, context and learning from those that have come before. I may have taken a ‘different way’ of looking at things to Coober Pedy, but I had not come to ‘know’ the place as my companions who had lived here your years intrinsically did.

**INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES**

Individually we enjoy our own parts of a place. Collectively we can build a richer understanding of place, by bringing together all of those parts. We don’t have to know everything about a place to appreciate it, but the opportunity exists to learn more, and gain a deeper understanding. This has the potential to be achieved in the designed and built public realm if the hidden or unknown information about a place is strategically overlapped with individual use and experience.

**NAVIGATING UNFAMILIAR LANDSCAPES**

In between Coober Pedy and Tweed, based in Melbourne for six months, I returned to tutoring first year Landscape Architecture at RMIT. During one of Renee van der Velde’s lectures on settlement patterns and the nature of the grid as an organisational system, I began to realise that my landscape architectural techniques were restrained in Coober Pedy quite simply by the difference of place. Not having a grid, or other recognisable system for reading the landscape, I was forced to navigate it in an alternative way; through the experience of sitting down as a combined form of both site analysis and community and stakeholder consultation.

**REMOTE**:

Upon returning from Coober Pedy to Melbourne, noting the differences between my navigation of familiar landscapes and those I had visited, I had entitled my project ‘Remote’. The concept of ‘remote’ came from travel, from my outback experience; being remote from Landscape Architectural practice, remote from my local, remote from technology, theory, and academia. It also came from the way other people helped me to read the landscape in a myriad of different ways continually shifting perspectives from my initial arrival in Coober Pedy until the time I left two years later.

Travel and being a visitor is as much about respecting our individual vantage as it is documenting the existing condition. In this way we can reveal the inherent values of the landscape, be they cultural, industrial, ecological or political.

**PRACTICE BASED EXPERIENCE**

The concept of the ‘Automatic Door’ came from the desire to develop tools for engaging with and communicating places that are remote from self. The process in testing this through the Grounds Project had entailed letting go of my former modes of practice and allowing the immediate experience to take over and inform my practice.

The Coober Pedy experience was about taking on board the fact that my way of seeing is an inherent mode of practice that we all see things differently through the ‘automatic door’ that we all focus on different grounds in our field of vision. Ultimately, what is important is that the same landscape, viewed from the same vantage point can inspire a myriad of fascinations in each individual.

The Grounds Panorama has the potential to document a myriad of personal experiences and understandings about site across a number of scales. In turn, by documenting a deeper and more technical knowledge nase about a place, it is a representational tool with the potential to unpack design analysis and make it accessible for a consultative design process. It is a tool in documenting the process of ‘sitting down’.

Taking into consideration the limitations placed on my earlier practice work by client time frames and budgets, the challenge for the design practitioner is ‘being there’ in the first place. By being specific about the outcomes that they contribute to design practice, the process of ‘Sitting Down’ in terms of Site Analysis and Consultation and ‘The Grounds Analysis’ as a representational tool enabled me to embrace ‘Being There’ as a necessary mode of practice in my Tweed Heads work.
Proposed multiple stage consultative Design process

I later resolved that rather than being about the amount of contact the designer has with the stakeholders, the key rich design is about how the information gleaned through consultation and then processed / used in design generation as a propositional basis.
Re-Grounding Design Process

As explored through the Grounds Analysis the broader context of any site contains complex sets of information at each ‘time-based’ layer. These range from the ancient geo-morphological, to the thin layer on the surface shaped by human occupation. Landscape Architects understand and engage with this information as a vital tool in documenting the factors which influence experience of space.

Ultimately, the intended outcome of any project brief will be about shaping a particular experience of landscape. Landscape experience can be defined in a number of ways and is explored, dissected and communicated differently across all stages of the design process.

To refine this notion of landscape experience as a tool for shaping design, the techniques for engaging with it are defined in terms of three scales or grounds:

2. Middle-ground: The local landscape - SITE scale – The place of practice. Defining and documenting site, drawing links between the systems and the 1:1 experience – the design forum.
3. Fore-ground: Intimate landscape - The 1:1, the personal experience, textural and tactile - photography & text – design detail. The challenge in design lies in registering the 'system' based information in the 1:1 and vice versa.

Experience of place is about that moment of arrival; the impact or grown attraction to place that you cannot quite put your finger on.

By removing or re-orientating components of a site in the fore-ground, based on mapped ‘systems’ or background information, design outcomes can unintentionally negate the ‘special something’ that has given a site its identity.

I needed to develop mechanisms that reveal the specificity of site and provided the opportunity for me to design respectfully. These mechanisms needed to operate within the ‘local’ scale of landscape, in the middle-ground and reflect their registration at the greater scale.

SHIFTING PRACTICE PROCESSES

Based on My Coober Pedy projects, I have envisaged three stages at which my design practice can shift to more appropriately engage the local in terms of people and place.

Following my introduction of Tweed Heads, the remainder of this document explores shifts in practice at the Design Brief, Site Analysis and Community Consultation phases of the project. The following specific processes developed in Coober Pedy were engaged to develop the design project through a consultative design process which I envisaged early in my Masters research (see opposite page);

THE PROJECT BRIEF

- Test / re-frame the brief based on the Coober Pedy experience in terms of the legibility and appropriateness of proposed design outcomes in the context of the existing landscape conditions, both physical and social.
- Engage additional processes in documenting, critiquing and re-communicating the implications of the design project in response to the brief.
- Re-consider the design brief at the conclusion of the Concept design phase to ensure that is embraces all of the information revealed through the design process itself. The brief should be an active document, rather than a benchmark through which the design process is restrained.

- Embrace a critical review of the brief to challenge the Analytical and Consultation phases of the project.

SITE ANALYSIS

- Clearly and legibly document the hidden layers of information about the site; be they policy, strategy, ecologically or historically based.
- Embracing the additional information revealed through analysis (above) employ additional communication techniques, based on the ‘Grounds analysis’ to reveal and discuss the implications of the site’s existing condition for consultation purposes and design proving

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

- Always engage the community and other stakeholders in communication through the site itself using the processes of ‘sitting down’ in terms of spending time on site and documenting the information gained through consultation.
- Allow the design process to continually expand the information gleaned through site analysis, and shift the design focus.
- Employ a ‘skills sharing’ based approach, embracing the knowledge of each person contributing to the project as an expert in their own right.
Given the position of my work in Tweed Heads within a heavily Planning focused context, I have included below, an excerpt from the pending Tweed Heads Vision Statement, which is being developed in collaboration with the State Government Department of Planning. Whilst giving glimpses into the insight of the ‘place’ through landscape ‘character’ statements, this body of text is indicative of many of the approaches taken thus far in developing a design approach to the place.

By including this, it is my intention to contrast the work which preceded my projects with the engaged understanding of place that developed through the design process rather than as part of the original brief. In this context; important to note, is the obvious lack of reference to the local Aboriginal and Tores Strait Islander community.

Similarly to Coober Pedy, in many instances the only experience external cultures may have of the local Indigenous community is through those that live in the Jack Evans Parkland as part of the ‘homeless’ community. Through the analysis process, my brief may have been defined to ‘design out’ these people, considering them as ‘undesirables’; however the Indigenous Public Placemaking Project process revealed that the habitation of these community members reflects upon the heritage of the site to the local Indigenous population since settlement.

TWEED HEADS VISION STATEMENT - ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS (draft)

The landscape character of the Tweed Heads City Centre is defined by the meeting of the river and coast. The undulating topography is the result of the northern edges of the ancient Tweed Shield volcano being shaped by the Tweed River as it flowed to the ocean. This shaping of the landscape is revealed on the approach into Tweed Heads from the Pacific Highway, where the mountains drop away to the expanse of the Tweed River valley and the Ocean beyond. The Town Centre is set on the Northern edge of the Tweed Valley marking a transition point between humid sub-tropical and warm temperate climatic zones. The unique landscape in which the township is nestled is evidenced by the diversity of microclimates created by the estuarine environment in contrast to the rich volcanic landscape which stretches inland. This diversity provides opportunity for developing the character of the landscape in contrast to the townships stretching north from the Queensland border which in combination with the river edge, marks the extent of Tweed Heads town centre.

The Tweed River and Inlets are an undervalued resource as a focus for public life – an important alternative to the beach lifestyle privileged north of the township. Visible from the culturally rich headland at Point Danger a ribbon of landscape stretches to the south defining the town centres relationship to both coastal and riverine environments. This network of parkland offers the opportunity for a recreational trail to link the significant and unique open space opportunities evident at Flagstaff Hill, Duranbah Beach, the Jack Evans Boat Harbour and the Tweed River Foreshore with Wharf and Bay Streets, the Civic and Campus Precincts, the Southern Boat Harbour and the Regional Cycleway along the Tweed Coast to the south and north to the Gold Coast regional pathway networks.

Adjacent to the Town Centre Public Open space and commercial precincts, the built environment is dominated by residential development from single dwellings to Multi-storey apartments. Currently, there is little development in the public realm of these areas to ensure a unified and identifiable landscape. A consistent approach to all opportunities for development of the landscape character, from streetscapes to private landscapes is integral to achieve both a high level of amenity and a cohesive identity for the city centre.

Appropriate landscape design in subtropical climates such as Tweed Heads is an essential tool in defining the nature and character of development, improving livability for residents and the amenity for visitors to the region. In addition, there are well-documented techniques in sub-tropical design which integrate architectural form with open space and landscape treatments to capitalise on the natural conditions for more sustainable development with regards to energy efficiency and water conservation.
FORMER mayor accused of misinformation over plan

BY LEONIE BRANN

The local government's plan for the redevelopment of the Tweed Heads Harbour, including the creation of a new marina and a pedestrian walkway, has been met with criticism from residents and local businesses.

"I don't think it's going to work," said Mr. Dowman, a local business owner. "The plan is too ambitious and will cost too much money."

"I worry about the impact on the local economy," added Mrs. Jameson, a resident of the area. "We need more green spaces and less development."
THE JACK EVANS BOAT HARBOUR PROJECT

In mid 2005 I moved to Tweed Shire to take up a position as the Tweed Heads Master Plan Project Officer. Specifically, I was engaged to implement the first stage of the Master Plan which entailed the design of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour parklands which sits adjacent to the Tweed Heads CBD.

In addition, the Indigenous Public Place-making Project (IPPP) was a companion project comprising a proposal for a community driven design for an Indigenous botanic garden on the Old Border Caravan Park (OBCP) within the Jack Evans Boat Harbour Parklands. It was here, working in a multi-disciplinary manner, that my practice had the opportunity and needed to shift to become a highly specific and inclusive design process. with the local Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander community, in consideration with the broader community and a myriad of stakeholders.

The Jack Evans Boat Harbour Project work began as a benchmark for what I am calling my ‘normative’ or ‘former’ mode of practice. Through the development of processes based in ‘being there’ at the initial Concept Design for the entire Harbour site I developed alternative techniques in Site Analysis for the purposes of negotiating the project brief itself and then to engage the myriad of conflicting political and cultural pressures in a design brief for the IPPP project. The richest outcome of this initial work was the re-negotiation of an alternative timeframe. The remainder of this document (Part IV) discusses this process.

Tweed Heads and the Jack Evans Boat Harbour project provided and opportunity for me to challenge some of my proposed modes of practice once constrained by the conventions of site, client and community.

The project outcome, a concept design, has revealed opportunities for a ‘grounded’ mode of practice. This mode of practice re-envisages constraints as opportunities. Critique of this Design Concept as an outcome of the first stage of development of this project, and the conclusions drawn from this Masters project will re-write the brief for the next phase of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour design consultancy, to be undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team external to Council.

DEFINING THE SCOPE

I will discuss the work in terms of two main projects, with reference to additional projects which I managed in conjunction. These two components are;

1. The Jack Evans Boat Harbour Concept Design which embraced the entire site as defined by a preceding Masterplan
2. The Indigenous Public Placemaking Project (IPPP) comprising a large section of the Concept Design Project.

JEBH CONCEPT DESIGN PROCESSES

Integral to the Tweed Heads work at the Concept Design Phase were the following key projects and processes: These are also discussed in detail for their contribution to my shift in practice in the following section of the document.

SITE ANALYSIS 1: Policy & Strategic Literature Review. Mapping the physical implications of strategic and Policy based information within the project site so that it is legible for the community, State Government stakeholders, other consultants and Tweed Shire Council. This ensures that it is applied as a set of opportunities to the design process rather that constraints at the culmination of the project.

SITE ANALYSIS 2: The Functioning Site. Existing and proposed use, management, ecologies, infrastructures and access.

COMMUNICATION & CONTESTATION. Review of past site politics through media releases, letters to the editor, letters to Council, and previous community consultation processes. In addition, throughout the design process, ongoing reference to these layers of information, engaging the local media to inform the community and undertaking public project launches for consultation periods etc.

SUPPORTING PROJECT: Strategic Cultural Development

Initiation and management of a Public Art Strategy by consultants to ensure that the Masterplan proposals were appropriately translated into the actuality of ‘place’ and reflected the requirements of the Tweed Shire ‘Placemaking and Public Art Policy’.

INDIGENOUS PUBLIC PLACEMAKING PROJECT (IPPP) PROCESSES

The concept for the IPPP and its subsequent project Brief was developed by Council in close liaison with the local Indigenous Community through a Community Cultural Development based project (see excerpt from the ‘City of the Arts’ below)

CONSULTATIVE DESIGN PROCESS. In addition to the process already undertaken during the JEBH Concept Design, the process for the IPPP, working in a cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary forum further developed notions of Site Analysis by documenting information already gleaned in a format comparable to the Grounds Analysis and discussing the implications of the analysis with the community representatives on site. Upon this basis the design process continued to operate through a series of intensive workshops.

Tweed Shire City of the Arts 2003 – 2005 Shaping a Distinctive Environment program (SADE).

In February 2003 the NSW Ministry for the Arts announced that Tweed Shire was to become the State’s fifth City of the Arts. Laying the foundation for the two-year City of the Arts Place Making Program, SADE was developed to animate categories, scope and priorities identified in Tweed Shire Council’s Place Making & Public Art Policy. The two-year program has delivered a strategic and dynamic balance of advocacy and advisory activities designed to increase broad participation in, and appreciation of, art and its relationship to local identity and sense of place. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander component of the City of the Arts Proposal put forth the creation of an Indigenous Cultural Garden at the Jack Evans Boat Harbour. Seeded by the City of the Arts Program The ‘Indigenous Public Placemaking Project’ was a key component of my work in Tweed Heads.

Indigenous Public Placemaking Project

The vision for the Jack Evans Boat Harbour states that it should creates “diverse, vibrant, culturally rich, recreational and tourism centrepiece for the Tweed Heads Town Centre”. The IPPP is an important Indigenous cultural project. It is a collaborative initiative with many stakeholders and partners and has evolved through consultation at many levels. The project is being developed via a staged process and when completed will become an important regional place acknowledging Aboriginal culture.
For some time there has been a push to revitalise Central Tweed Heads. As well as the urban fabric this has included the structure of the economic focus of the area, in particular the part that the tourism and retail sectors play in the future of the area.

In August 2002, the then Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning NSW established a Ministerial Taskforce to provide advice and recommendations on the revitalisation of Tweed Heads Central Business District. The Taskforce finalised the preparation of a Masterplan, launched on 27 August 2004. Tweed Shire Council subsequently adopted the Masterplan in 7 October 2004, conditioned upon capital and recurrent costs being suitably linked to funding sources.

The Tweed Heads Masterplan represents a vision document that is detailed as individual proposals and specific elements. Their feasibility needs to be tested and if practical the proposals will need to be established into Council land use and other policy documents.

The vision for the Tweed Heads Masterplan incorporates 10 years of future development for the Tweed Heads town centre. The Masterplan proposals are intended to be broadly conceptual and do not involve detailed levels of investigation or highly resolved outcomes.

To achieve this vision the Masterplan puts forward, a large amount of infrastructure development and capital expenditure will be required. Funding for this development will be reliant on both public and private investment.

Several elements from the entire Masterplan were assessed as either potentially unachievable, to be privately funded or of a low priority in the short term. The Jack Evans Boat Harbour, Stage 1, comprising the existing JEBH Parklands has been prioritised.
THE ‘STANDARD’ BRIEF

The Tweed Heads Masterplan formed the brief for the JEBH project as the Tweed Shire’s stage of implementation. The proposed form, although delineated by an urban design driven analysis appeared to be driven purely by current trends in design, referencing projects such as Cairnes Foreshore. The original design incorporated a swimming lagoon (pool) across a large proportion of the Old Border Caravan Park site and represented the ‘Indigenous Gardens’ as a pond and bridge (see bottom image). The original concept also proposed a large amount of land reclamation in the deepest part of the harbour waters.

Framed by the Tweed Heads Masterplan the brief for a detailed design of the site was outcome driven, and it was an outcome that I was expected to produce as part of my role as the master plan project officer.

(left) Excerpts from the Tweed Heads Master Plan; top left, the Tweed Heads Masterplan; top right, the proposed JEBH Lagoon edge and boardwalk; middle, the strategic analysis map; bottom, the JEBH Concept plan.

All of the THMP maps and plans defied conventions in communication and were orientated, East-West, without a north point. In critique of this it should be noted that, vital to the project is registration of Tweed Heads and the JEBH site on the East-West hinge that is the New South Wales / Queensland State Border. The border signifies, importantly to the community and the entire Shire, the need for a locally ‘Tweed’ distinct Regional Public open space. By negating the conventions of representation to fit the page, the THMP document neglects the importance of the State border and its significance with regards to local identity and place.
Using notions of respect and stewardship for the landscape what is the true brief for a landscape design project? Process VS Product.

RESPECT: WORKING WITH LANDSCAPE

The JEBH project in Tweed Heads emanated from a planning and urban design driven configuration of space. In critique of this, and based on my work in Coober Pedy when I commenced the project, I intended that it evolve to become a process in engaging differently with site and community in terms of respect and stewardship.

Landscape Architecture should not only be about ‘finished work’ as described by most project briefs for public space. Rather it should embrace our capacity to intervene, shape and redirect the evolution of public space through design process. The successful project brief respects and embraces the individuality of each project and place. In this way, the design outcome will be a celebration of that respect.

In responding to project briefs as a Landscape Architect, I typically preface a proposed design process with a set of outcomes. In this manner, simple statements regarding ‘respectful project process’ and ‘design intent’ convince the client that my modes of practice will result in a landscape that they and the community want.

In contrast, Indigenous landscapes are not defined by designed and built outcomes. They exist within the inherent and evolving relationship of sustenance, nurture and narrative that is defined as ‘culture’. The people-landscape relationship is about respect for past, present and future. Respect is learnt through the landscape, and synonymous with the responsibilities of Aboriginal culture.

This landscape of respect approach can be translated into the practice of privileging design process over product. It requires a set of mechanisms with the capacity to define design as a process of respectfully engaging in place. As Landscape Architects, we know these mechanisms as site analysis, community consultation and representation.

As a result of my Coober Pedy experience, and working within the constraints of the Masterplan, I changed the design focus from formal built outcome, to defining a set of goals for the design of landscape by engaging with people and place. This opened an argument for engaging in the project process through site and community. Accordingly, through the analysis process, my first port of call was to ‘ground’ the brief in both. Effectively, the masterplan was to be grounded by what had originally been framed as constraint.

Taking the lead from Aboriginal communities, Australian Culture is in many ways about an ongoing stewardship; our sense of ‘country’, no matter what our heritage. By engaging in site specific and local patterns of stewardship, Landscape Architecture can foster public places that nurture the ecology, politics, economics and social values that are intrinsic to landscape and ultimately, Australian culture.

Where spatial and social intensities are seen as ‘issues’ in typical project briefs, the practice of stewardship through design looks to engage with them as potential design generators. With this in mind, the challenge lies in defining a project brief that embraces the complexities of both the site and its users. Through a flexible design process these local complexities become distinct and specific design generators rather than constraints.

As landscape architects, acting as stewards for the places defined by our project briefs, the design process becomes a campaign, arguing the value of any given site. While a built project flags the end of the campaign the argument remains, and the resultant place needs to be spatially and infrastructurally responsive to the pressures of change over time.

Ultimately, the brief for landscape is written when the built project reflects the values of place as defined by the site and its community. The designed space should retain the ecological, infrastructural and social tensions of place and through function and experience, give each a voice.

A preferred project brief defines the necessity for a landscape of respect. Respect comes out of understanding place. As landscape architects, we develop understanding through design process and the grounding mechanisms of consultation, site analysis, and representation. This masters, and the work it discusses focus on site analysis and consultation as key processes in validating a project brief.
GROUNDING THE TWEED HEADS
MASTER PLAN

Council and the State Government led facilitation team for the project were determined to see the Masterplan implemented as it stood, believing it to be an adequate brief for design and documentation. My short experience of the site, early in the project allowed me to form an argument for developing a ‘brief’, and applying design processes to do that. The Masterplan didn’t hit the ground. My first stage in developing the project was about re-writing a brief for a design process that would. The biggest challenge was ensuring that we were allowed the time necessary to achieve it. A series of mappings challenged the proposed design with the existing condition (left). For example the location of the proposed swimming lagoon at the site of a major sewerage pumping station (shown in yellow) or the extent of infill up to 50 metres into the harbour (shown in green) were clearly problematic. I was then left with the challenge to prove the design potential of my new process and brief.

TESTING THE BRIEF THROUGH DESIGN

The first stage in re-designing the project brief was to develop a preliminary schematic design.

As a Landscape Architect, defaulting to my former mode of practice, my initial response led me to design compositionally, graphically delineating the information I had gained in the beginnings of an analytical process (opposite images). Even now, the JEBH Concept Plan as it has been finalised and endorsed still reflects an analytical / propositional mode of practice. Based on this self reflection and critique, it was not until the completion of the Community endorsed concept plan through the processes of consultation and contestation, site analysis and design that the true project brief for the JEBH has been realised.

THE RESPECTFUL BRIEF

In addition to the JEBH Design process and outcomes, the Indigenous Public Placemaking Project reflects a more successful design process which is grounded in people and place. Embracing my Coober Pedy experience and notions of respect, in contrast to the way I had initially approached the JEBH design allowed me to present proposals for a new mode of practice.

The schematic concept plan (right) was shaped by an analytical design process and formed the basis for the IPPP. The success of this technique in propositional analysis is evidenced by key moments of success in the final ‘Goorimahbah’ Design Concept. ‘Goorimahbah, stewarded by processes in consultation and contestation, was grounded by analytical proposition.'
Breaking down and applying the programs defined by the THMP brief to the analytical, propositional composition of site.
When existing modes of occupation and use are considered through design process, they can provide platforms upon which to argue the local development of project sites. In turn this allows prioritization of specific ‘moments’ within budgetary and strategic management of a ‘site’.

For example, policies on access and safety provided a clear argument for the boardwalk and plaza proposals. Since the endorsement of the Concept plans, and moving into the next phase of implementation in a climate of intense budgetary constraint, each of these landscape elements has been challenged due to their estimated costs. Referring back to the original mappings on policy, I have been able to argue the legitimacy and necessity of implementing these elements as part of the first stage works.

Making policy work for design is a process of sifting through the series of acronyms that summarise departments and key planning documents and agendas. In New South Wales LEPs, DAs, EOI’s and so on form a language that is foreign to the average person. They are further complicated by differences across borders and in between councils and shires creating different dialects.

The problem is, as with the languages of academia, once we finally figure it all out, we are inside it, and still unable to communicate the implications directly to the general public. As consultants, we need to map the physical implications of legislative documents on each site as we analyse it. In turn, the physical outcomes of site design should then map and drive policy change.

Engaging with strategic and policy information spatially by mapping it on the site is a technique I have maintained since my earliest modes of practice. Previously, it was a tool for ticking the boxes. During the development of the JEBH process, this form of literature/site analysis became instead tool for debating the physical parameters of the design proposition.

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What is analysis if not expanding the project brief with the existing condition? Documentation of the ‘existing condition’ then becomes the imaging of culture, be it archaeological, geological, infrastructural, ecological, social or other. It ensures that the proposed landscape is a montage, building upon the existing condition, rather than a well engineered work of art painted on a stage one drainage and grading canvas.

THE SITE CONTEXT: GROUNDING STRATEGY

At the scale of the individual project site designers have the opportunity for critical reflection on and the challenging of strategic documents. Design outcomes should re-direct and guide policy reform. Strategic documents do not need to develop each site in detail. They do however; need to build a rich enough understanding of place, to allow for techniques in implementation at the local scale when gaps in budgetary and development staging allow opportunities for strategic implementation. For example, as discussed on the opposite page, the JEBH is now being implemented in a staged manner, prioritising the Boardwalk and Plaza areas, based on strategic and policy based requirements for access and safety.

COMMUNICATING THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Political campaigns are won utilizing images and issues that inspire local passion and a sense of justice. The ‘totem 1’ postcard in Coober Pedy, for example, was a process in engaging with the political and environmentl history and culture of place to make a statement about current conditions and argue for a shift in political stance by the Government.

Based on this concept, modes of representation allowing clients, the public and other disciplines to understand the strategic potential of Landscape Architecture continues to be one of our biggest challenges. Being able to map and communicate the implication of Policy for the design process is one key that may ensure its appropriate application, implementation and subsequent evolution. In this way, as an integral component in the process of implementing open space projects, policy and strategic information can drive place design with as much legitimacy as lines of sight or movement through space.

SITE ANALYSIS

backgrounds & foregounds....

The Tweed Heads Public Art Strategy was developed by sydney consultants Milne and Stonehouse, who spent a lot of time in Tweed Heads burying themselves in place, projects, information and people. Working closely we developed a document which is an applicable synthesis of the existing condition.
The Jack Evans Boat Harbour as with all landscape is complicated by a myriad of site conditions. The rapid climate of development is continually changing the built and environmental fabric of the JEBH's context.

The key physical site analysis maps were developed through the process of sitting down. To gather the information I liaised with:

- Tweed Shire Council (TSC) engineers across all facets of the discipline
- TSC planners
- TSC Recreation Services manager
- TSC Groundspersons and Open Space supervisors
- TSC Ecologists and Coasts and Waterways managers
- Local community on-site over several months at different times of day, on each day of the week, in a variety of climatic conditions
- Big Trev, the paddle boat hire guy.
- Adjacent Business owners
- Festival and Event co-ordinators
- State Government stakeholders
- Adjacent Residents (primarily through the media)
- The TSC Cultural development and Aboriginal liaison Officers.
- The local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

As a simple example of how these stakeholders shaped the design, the promenade proposed in the centre of the OBCP site is a multifunctional space addressing a myriad of requirements including; heavy vehicle access for weekly maintenance of the sewerage pumping station, completion of the final link of the New South Wales Coastal Cycleways project, becoming a display plaza for vintage cars during the nationally renowned Winter-sun festival, providing key sight and pedestrian connectivity to Hill Street and the Gold Coast pedestrian network, Providing organization and Marquee space for annual events such as the Tweed River Festival, a performance space for the annual lantern parade, market space and the incorporation of structures for rotational banners reflecting seasons and festivals as denoted by the Public Art Strategy.
foregrounding' local systems & values of place

Successful site analysis teases out the intricacies that make space a 'place'. At 1:1 unique local agendas shape the tactile landscape; the systems and surfaces that make it function in a particular way. Ultimately, the minute we engage in site information, we commence the design process. Our chosen analytical process will denote the types of outcomes we achieve.

As landscape architects, knowledge of place is built from layers of site information. In my practice, this information is most often distilled through mapping; two dimensionally documenting the broader ecological and infrastructural shaping of the site; the landscape systems.

In contrast, my interpretation of an Indigenous cognition of 'landscape as culture' requires the expansion of landscape architectural technique to incorporate the documentation of often 'intangible' information gained through "on-the-ground experience". In practice, where I may formerly have mapped a drainage line and its specification, I now ensure that I explore the physical manifestations of these lines on site. As evidenced by the JEBH images (left) each of the lines on a map are unique to site and have distinct impact on the design outcome.

How do we practically source and document the existing conditions and the functioning relationships of place as we experience them, so that we can respect them through the design process?

The challenge is to frame a mode of representation that discusses the relationships between 'on-the-ground' and 'systems' based information. This mode of representation has the potential to define a set of distinct local conditions and formal language for both application and preservation of designed form in the site.

Accordingly it could be summised that, as exemplified by the OBCP promenade (discussed opposite) site analysis has many intents & outcomes;

- Information: Closer understanding of the formative pressures of the site
- Design generation: Revelation of formal opportunities for design.
- Communication: Framing the discussion through the consultation process for design development and intent.

Each time I visited the site with a specific lens based on my interdisciplinary liaison. These photos represent my engagement with the site while there, with the project hydrological and civil engineers and in contrast, the mangrove image was taken whilst on site with the Artists engaged for the IPPP. Seeing the site through these lenses has allowed me to hit the ground more accurately.

Although mapped in a similar fashion to my former normative mode of practice, the tactile knowledge of these items throughout the design process has shaped the design concept outcome. As tested against a panorama of the site (pages 44-45) this process of translation has drawn on the ‘grounds’ analysis from Coober Pedy.
Storm water catchment and water quality to be assessed and alternative points for drainage outlet or surface water infiltration through installing soak pits and vegetated swales.

Assess potential benefits of Gross Pollutant Traps in key areas upstream from drainage outlet to minimise rubbish volumes entering harbour.

Design to incorporate solutions such as sail and surf life saving training, snorkelling, scuba diving instruction and swimming lessons.

Storm water catchment and water quality to be assessed and alternative points for drainage outlet or surface water infiltration through installing soak pits and vegetated swales.

Assess potential benefits of Gross Pollutant Traps in key areas upstream from drainage outlet to minimise rubbish volumes entering harbour.

Concern with the Masterplan relates to the issue of current and future water quality of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour.

The site should also provide educational experiences and opportunities to learn.

The design of the JEBH should allow for Dragon Boat races and the Surf Club’s daily training.

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Assess potential benefits of Gross Pollutant Traps in key areas upstream from drainage outlet to minimise rubbish volumes entering harbour.

Concern with the Masterplan relates to the issue of current and future water quality of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour.

The site should also provide educational experiences and opportunities to learn.

The design of the JEBH should allow for Dragon Boat races and the Surf Club’s daily training.

It is recommended that a walkway be constructed around the whole circumference of the lagoon.

Storm water catchment and water quality to be assessed and alternative points for drainage outlet or surface water infiltration through installing soak pits and vegetated swales.
In Tweed Heads, when faced with the analytical process at the JEBH, I needed to ensure that my analysis engaged on a number of levels, to again draw out the local landscape systems. The Grounds panorama technique extracted the physical implications, broader systems, culture and politics I had experienced through their evidence in the landscape. Translated to normative practice, these themes can be drawn from easily accessible layers of information such as: for ‘physical Implications’ the preceptive experience of the individual user; for ‘culture and politics’ the local NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) arena as evidenced by letters to Council and local print media and the ‘broader systems’ through the actual patterns of use revealed by spending time on site, historic mappings and narratives and infrastructural management processes. Ultimately, the most important outcome from the project however, is that all of the information is mapped in a common language; a visual perspective, which is tangible to the broader community in terms of their personal experience.

In the context of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour Project it became a key tool in engaging the Aboriginal community in the complexity of the design process by documenting the physical implications of a dense layer of information in the one project. By doing this, the design focus shifted from one of placing a series of objects in the landscape, to designing with landscape to amplify important cultural relationships to place.
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES FROM THE TWEED HEADS MASTERPLAN

- Urban focus to entice wider community
- Special places to congregate
- Historical connections
- Clear infrastructure and access to transport/facilities, health and education
- Safety
- Promote outdoor recreation
- Open spaces with local focus leisure and recreation activities

The Jack Evans Boat Harbour landscape design aims at generating a series of distinct activity spaces and cultural facilities to serve residence and tourists.
CONSULTATION & CONTESTATION
(the middleground – the discussion)

What is the potential for the application of on site and community based experience in the design process?

Public Open Space is a forum for public agendas. It is the argument that exists between the thresholds of less accessible private and corporate spaces most often defined by architecture. In contrast to buildings, with public space as its canvas Landscape Architecture has the potential to be a democratic artwork, facilitating anthropocentric expression through use. This is evidenced across all scales of landscape, from the domestic ‘nature strip’ to infrastructural and ecological systems.

It is here that I position the key shift in my practice in terms of the potential for consultation to be part of a multi-disciplinary and flexible consultative design process.

Australian communities ‘own’ their local parks. They are places for expression, an extension of their own backyards. Local and larger regional parks, especially those with recreational facilities and amenities are cultural event spaces, from the humble family ‘barbie’ to major festivals.

Before settlement, however, these places were more than backyards to the urban, suburban or township fabric; they were sites of subsistence and ceremony to their traditional owners. They were not identified as green nodes in built form but as ‘country’, as an inherent part of all culture. That said, similarly to today’s parks, gathering and ceremonial spaces were defined by specific relationships in movement and interaction.

An indigenous ‘site’ could be described as contextually responsive, defining broader cultural and functional orientations to country. In contrast, today’s urban park sites are often leftovers, gaps or lines of ecological infrastructure in the ‘usable’ (built) landscape.

As exposed moments of what came before settlement, each and every open space is an opportunity to re-orientate our relationship to country. Starting in our parks and streetscapes an ecological, infrastructural approach to landscape design can teach individuals, families and communities new modes of occupation which respect and sustain the environment. The JEBH project embraced the need to remediate the drainage design for improved water quality. This was represented and communicated to the community throughout the process in the form of the analytical mappings (page 42-43). In addition, the desire for this improvement based on use was framed by the community consultation mapping (opposite) with the documentation of, for example, a clear statement from the Tweed Heads Environment Group.

While communities have close emotional and functional ties to their local landscapes, they often do not fully understand their meaning. We need to educate the broader community about the function of our open spaces, to gain their support if re-shaping ‘place’ through design.

As a designer, I see the potential of constructing images, be it landscape or other in an attempt to respectfully understand people’s relationship to country and protect that relationship in the form of ‘places’ for future generations. This cultural landscape mapping is about current experience in combination with or contrast to historic memory. To do this, consultation has formed a key part in revealing the experience of place. In my process, it is at the foreground of the design process.

Drawing on the Bush Camp project, the notion of ‘sitting down’ has defined the need for a forum through which I can engage in place with people, not only at what my former mode of practice deemed as the consultation phase, but also at the analytical and concept design phases. During the JEBH project, ‘sitting down’ was explored through the information gathering processes at the analytical stage (see page 42) and to a greater extent throughout the IPPP design process explained further on pages 56 & 65.

Although steering committees are frequently involved, processes of consultation and research into the local landscape agenda are often restricted to a ‘site visit’. These visits are then reflected by the equally tokenistic presentation of the concept for community feedback.

Some of the key data sourced for the Community Consultation mapping for the JEBH (left) was derived from letters and feedback provided during the ‘Consultation Process’ for the original Tweed Heads Town Centre Masterplan process. Although there was great opposition to the proposed swimming lagoon, it had remained in the original Masterplan along with other controversial proposals, and was subsequently endorsed by Council.

In combination with the analytical mapping framing the issue of the Sewerage Treatment Plant located on the site of the proposed swimming Lagoon (page 34), the mapping of specific opposition from three key community groups, galvanised the removal of the lagoon from the new design process.
In a similar way to the early artists ‘European’ depiction of the ‘terra nullius’ landscape, we deny the spirituality of place, in lieu of modes of representation and seeking the relevant context data. We don’t spend enough time sitting down with the local community in their places.

Landscape experience is defined by qualities such as outlook and natural beauty, most often defined by geomorphology and natural systems. In this physical sense, the attraction of each place is defined by its capacity to embrace as much of its formative context as possible. In the JEBH, based on this idea, the Historic Mapping, which I originally predicted to be a form generating tool, actually became one of the key images in the consultation process. It evoked memory and a deeper consideration of what this place meant to each individual.

Our parks, streetscapes and ecological infrastructures are amongst the myriad of everyday places which provide an accessible opportunity to respect and learn from our past. In the meantime, much new development blankets them with funky design agendas that deny their inherent memory. Due to the relative youth of our nation, multiple layers of cultural history are still evident in many urban places. In my opinion, there is an undeniable need for every design project to embrace significant sites of cultural heritage from ancient indigenous to more contemporary events of habitation. The challenge lies in accurately sourcing the foreground information, and using it to inform spatial and experiential moments in the design outcome.

There is a distinct difference between analytically documenting or describing information about a place, and allowing people to interpret it for them-selves. True appreciation of analytical information and discussions of site may be enhanced by embracing the personal experiences of stakeholders. The layer of interpretation and information that we provide as designers runs a fine line between actual experience, and spelling it all out. The story of place is owned by individual experience.

Engaging with broader landscape systems of site provides a cultural framework for the narrative of the ‘day to day’ landscape. However, sitting down, spending time, consulting and contesting the landscape with the people who know it best shapes the finished surfaces of our design projects. Although I did not design the Coober Pedy Masterplan as discussed on pages 30-31, the ‘Grounds Analysis’ did allow me to distil the information gleaned from ‘sitting down’ and my day-to-day experience of the town and community in a manner that would productively inform my decision making processes as a Landscape Architect.

Site and community are the two key elements that can instil “landscape memory”. Landscape memory is a key tool in the design process.

Without the sense of ‘memory’ that landscape provides future generations, we are unable to learn from place, its history and the mistakes that have been made. Public spaces frequently exist as inaccessible vacuums denying the ability for visitors to fully experience their uniqueness as a place. Unique identities are derived from more than the shape of the landscape. They come from a combination of ecological and cultural history.

The challenge lies in finding design tools to communicate the history of site.

‘Sitting down’ is about spending time on site experiencing place and talking with the community that ‘owns’ and uses it. It is also about applying the design process as a discussion and translation of the information. In this way, the design outcome extends the discussion of place, people and the culture of local landscapes. Having learned this in Coober Pedy I wanted to take it into another context.

One of the keys to Community consultation and negotiating contestation is being there. With reference to site, it is about spending time to learn the intrinsic information of place. ‘Respect’ is not simply about polite interactions with local places, it is about building an appreciation for and learning from site and people.

By communicating my practice based appreciation of landscape, I have in turn gained respect for the culture and modes of engagement defined by my practice. Each time we sit down with clients, communities, stakeholders and other practitioners the discussion of place needs to drive a combined mode of practice, into which each discipline lends their insight. Accordingly, to consult appropriately the design process needs to be flexible and granted the benefit of time. Time is the key to really being there.

As Landscape Architects, we need to gain public respect for our profession and it’s mode of operation in the multi-disciplinary context to move forward with the support of the community at each site.
TESTING SITTING DOWN AS A PROPOSITIONAL PROCESS.
THE IPPP COMMUNITY BBQ

Based on the process of 'sitting down' the IPPP barbeque was an invitation from Councils Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC) for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to attend an "information and design gathering event".

Techniques for sourcing 'themes' for specific artworks and allowing the themes to drive the engagement with and shaping of the site for design.

SHARING DESIGN PROCESS

The Design process with the artists was a creative curation of information about the cultural heritage of the region. It was intended to spatially ground the community’s themes and ideas in the physicality of site. Engaging with the site analysis, the information and ideas gleaned through the consultation Barbeque and personal understandings of site, the eight design workshops undertaken by myself working with local artists were a form of ‘sitting down’.

Allowing us to share our approach to place and design, and glean new formal and compositional techniques, the workshops tested the propositional potential of the process of sitting down. Seeing landscape as object through the eyes of the artist, and sharing my holistic approach through physical analysis, we worked together to compose a landscape that would carry cultural stories and also be spatially successful in terms of function and aesthetics.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

The community members/meeting participants were asked to break into groups and address the following issues surrounding the project:

- What is the purpose of the site?
- Artists - Artistic ideas and concepts for the site.
- The Environment - vegetation.
- Indigenous Protocols.
- Traditional and contemporary stories.
- Equipment and Structures.
- History - historical sites, stories, events etc.
- Language - local Indigenous language use.
- Themes - eg sea and water
- Educational

In Attendance: Aunty Kath Lena, Aunty Joyce Summers, Katrina Yeletica-Bell, Mark Deamon, Bob Stockee, Russell Logan, Val and Johnny Mye, Lesley Buckney, Councillor Mr (TSC), Lesley Buckney (TSC), Georgina Wright (TSC), Glenda Nalder, Angelina Hurley (Indigenous Facilitator), and other local Indigenous community members, Elders and organisational representatives.

Indigenous Protocols
- Local Indigenous cultural protocols and intellectual property is to be adhered to and recognised at all times. This encompasses the appropriate and correct consultation, permission and approval processes to be followed.
- An acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the area should be displayed somewhere.
The IPPP Community BBQ allowed me to map a brief for the implications of the community’s memory and perception of place for the design process with the Artists. This plan formed the design brief and ultimately shaped the ‘Goorimbah - Place of Stories’ Parkland Design.

**Equipment & Structures**
The following ideas were suggested as equipment and structures to be installed in the park:
- Seating out of natural hardforms
- Water features
- An amphitheatre - for performances and events
- Photo display wall made out of prospects to display photos.
- BBQs
- Seating
- Shading
- Toilets
- Kids interactive displays, artworks, and playground
- Gardens eg bush tucker and medicinal trees
- Decorative gateway
- Mosaics
- A shelter from bad weather. Some sort of outside cover. Security may be needed.
- Good lighting must be provided for good vision and safety.

**SITE PURPOSE**
What was the purpose of the site? What do the community members want the park to do and/or to achieve?
- They wanted it to be:
  - Inclusive.
  - Interactive.
  - Interpretive.
  - Peaceful.
  - Family friendly.
  - Serene.
  - Educational.
  - Historical.
- To represent local and surrounding Indigenous cultures and groups.
- To create an environment and place the Indigenous people and community can and will claim.
- That is it a meeting spot for the communities.

**Traditional and contemporary stories**
Creation Stories - A set of traditional local stories were researched and read out.
- Razorback - Place where the Pelican Played.
- Sea Spirit Stories.

**The Environment (vegetation)**
Community voiced the importance of the inclusion of native vegetation to be in the park. The re-establishment of local native plants. Forest trees and natives were preferred. Also a distinctive boundary of vegetation boarding Queensland and NSW, forming a clear demarcation between the areas. The area should provide shade and serenity.

**The following vegetation was identified:**
- Pandanus perdunculatus (Pandanus)
- Carpentaria gliocarpa (plaza)
- Xanthorrhoea johnsonii (Spears grass tree)
- Livistona australis (Cabbage palm)
- Acorna smithii (Lilly Pilly)
- Melaleuca quinquenervia (Broadleaved paperbark)
- Cyathoe cooperi (Tree fern)

**ARTISTIC IDEAS & CONCEPTS**
The artistic ideas that developed out of the workshop:
- **Sculptures:** Animal sculptures and signage with local words of the animals. Sea spirit poles.
- **Remembrance Design:** Families, community groups traditional area clans. Recognition of famous and/or significant events and/or people through images. Design a special path.
- **Materiality:** Sand as an important material (glass) or other design.
- **Futures trail**
- **Art displays** that are changeable.
- **Recognition of hidden sites**
- **Active Participation.** It would also be good to have the children’s creative participation.

**Themes**
The following Aquatic themes to coincide with surrounding public spaces and public art were identified:
- Fishing/Maritime Themes: Representation of fishing industry and men. The history of how the industry fed and employed families. It was a part of Indigenous culture both traditionally and in the present also. It is a social issue for the Indigenous community in the area. Boats were also a part of the community and fishing industry lives.
- Sea and water
- Living on the water
- The sea
- Animals

**History**
**historical sites, locations, stories, events, people etc**
Historical information writing may somehow be displayed throughout the park in the form of plaques, accompanying artworks and sculpture, photo and/or just a displays on their own.

**The following significant locations were identified:**
- Mt Warning
- Mt Murumba
- Razorback Lookout
- Cooberpotta Swamp
- Point Danger
- Tweed Estuary
- Joongumrayheen
- chungura ngenan
- Goodlabor
- Jack Evans Harbour
- Chabow

**Language**
- local Indigenous language use.
- The use of local Indigenous language is to be investigated, researched and permission gained.
- The park should be named from and in Indigenous language.
- Language - Bunjalung.

**Educational**
The site should also provide educational experiences and opportunities to learn.
- the creation of animal sculptures footprints of the specific animals could line the pathway to the animal which is identified by their local Indigenous name on its signage. Also perhaps accompanied by a traditional story about that animal.
- These sculptures could also double as equipment eg seats, statues children can play on etc.
These images all reflect the beauty in incidental landscape moments shaped by infrastructure, maintenance and neglect.
"Being there" has been a process of recovering from a retaliation to conventional design, whilst working within the processes framed by a design project. Based on my notions of travel and experiencing the ‘something’ of landscape, the progression of this project has confronted me with apathy for designed form. As a cathartic exercise this Masters has grounded my intended mode of Landscape Architectural practice in working with site and communities as a process within design.

At the outset of my Masters, I rejected the idea of design having the potential to assist rural and remote communities such as Coober Pedy. Being there, and engaging in the nuances of its functioning landscapes; I was confident that a township located by geology and shaped by infrastructural necessity, held no place for design practice as I had previously understood and applied it. Over time, and through the process of this masters I came to realise that there were clues for design technique within what I had formally deemed ‘incidental landscapes’.

As evidenced by my experience of Coober Pedy there is an inherent beauty in the existing condition of infrastructural form and how it interprets place through the spatial negotiation of key threads in the landscape. My former practice engaged with geological, hydrological, ecological and infrastructural systems based modes of analysis in a mapping and diagrammatic manner. I had been unable to pinpoint a way of working with the unique spatial fabric shaped by these incidental landscape relationships to create a design outcome that was not purely compositional and functional.

Ultimately the clue to untangling the threads within the existing condition of place, and the techniques for designing there, lay in gaining a local understanding. As I confronted the design for regionally significant parklands in Tweed Heads, defaulting to the design practice of composing abstract form as organised, ungrounded objects, I was enabled to make a shift in my practice which drew from my Coober Pedy experience. This concluding chapter refers to key design moments from the Jack Evans Boat Harbour Project to reflect on the design practice of grounding design by ‘being there’.

*Postcards from the landscape architectural tourist...*

When we visit a place with which we aren’t familiar, we learn more about ourselves through how we experience...

As a landscape architect, I have a fascination with incidental landscapes, where an abandoned factory can become a sublime landscape, rhythmic infrastructure draws you beyond the horizon, and ‘empty spaces’ are so much fuller than those that people like to visit.

As evidenced by my experience of Coober Pedy there is an inherent beauty in the existing condition of infrastructural form and how it interprets place through the spatial negotiation of key threads in the landscape. My former practice engaged with geological, hydrological, ecological and infrastructural systems based modes of analysis in a mapping and diagrammatic manner. I had been unable to pinpoint a way of working with the unique spatial fabric shaped by these incidental landscape relationships to create a design outcome that was not purely compositional and functional.

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Can we build analytical & consultative design techniques which reflect Aboriginal Australia’s cognition of ‘landscape as culture’ and appropriately ‘value’ the landscape?

Closely informed by the community, and learning from Indigenous Australia’s landscape conscience, I see the role of design as one in registering memory and invoking stewardship of our environment and culture. For my design to be successful in these terms, it needs to do several things, commencing with site and community engagement and culminating in detailed incorporation of local values in the design resolution.

“Landscape may still embrace naturalistic and phenomenological experience but its full efficacy is extended to that of synthetic and strategic art form, one that aligns diverse and competing forces... into newly liberating and interactive alliances”

Every place is distinct. The question remains whether ‘place-making’ as a design practice embraces distinctiveness or homogenizes it through the siting of artwork objects and interpretive signage. If the site is offered as a benchmark upon which to base the success of a design process then designed interventions in that site should be critiqued in terms of their response to site. What, then, is the place of precedent in our practice? I would argue that precedent in practice is not evidenced by the built project outcome, but by the process from which the outcome was derived.

As a consultant, working in sites that I am unfamiliar with, I embrace the responsibility to engage the ‘local’. Whilst project briefs may not define any level or even tokenistic modes of consultation I have a responsibility to ‘site’ to firmly embed design outcomes in people and place.

As explored through these projects direct community consultation is one tool for engaging the local, and remains effective as a key component, contributing to the multidisciplinary team, especially if every local engaged is respected as an ‘expert’ in their perception of the site.

In the case of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour Project, there were a range of tools used as part of the design process to engage with site and community. These were integral to the definition of place. The tools I have developed beyond my former mode of practice, through the process of ‘sitting down’ include;

- Mapping of cumulated community comment on and memories about the site
- Engaging through strategic reference to an existing Community Cultural Development program which defined ‘distinctiveness of place’.
- The Indigenous Public Placemaking design workshop process, working collaboratively with artists.
- Resolution of the engineering and functional site issues with potential for the landscape to shift and evolve following the completion of the design.

In terms of Landscape Architectural practice and in opposition to the predominantly compositional description of design frequently published in journals and literature, I would argue that Landscape Architectural design outcomes can only be accurately evaluated when positioned in the context of place.

If the success of our built design projects were defined by the value of the process that led to them, rather than aesthetical judgement of the form that results from that process our capacity for ‘designing the local’ as a profession could be greatly improved. Importantly, through this open, un-predetermined mode of practice we could more easily fight the campaign for landscape and place driven design with out clients.
FISHING NET - GATEWAY STRUCTURE
- This idea originated from members of the local fishing community who wanted to see the maritime themes and culture extend into this site from their current location in What Street.
- The artist then considered the texture and form of natural woven fishing nets and baskets and thought that this texture carried across the site could be a distinctive way to represent the region and the fishing culture.
- Looking further into the design and location, the ‘net’ idea formed the perfect brief for the design of some kind of woven/gateway feature in the entry of the park, located over one of the major paths carrying the broader community to the ‘meeting and story sharing place’.

REGIONAL STORY SHARING
- At the entry is the important part of the site from the corner of Boundary and Coral Street. The visitor is greeted by the regional form of ‘Wollumbin’, silhouetted in the form of a lifted stone face, carved from local rock. The story wall adjacent to this feature, can include a regional map and information accordingly.
- This hard surface area in the bottom right corner of the ‘meeting space’ offers the opportunity to use paving patterns to reference the shaping of the region’s landscape in the form of the Goanna, the texture of its scales, its prints indelible in the pavement in smooth stainless steel patterns that reflect the light and create interest.
- Interwoven in this pattern and accompanying the adjacent grassed amphitheatre space for viewing performances, key language and its translation could be laid in the pavement. As people move across the site, they may discover a word in the pattern, and then it’s translation. In this way, the space tells a story through its experience.

PARK SIGNAGE
- MIDDENS & WATER
- BUSH FOOD & WOLLUMBIN
- Feature botanical collection
- BBQ & picnic
- GOWONDA (dolphin) STORY
- MEEBING (eagle) BBQ & picnic
- Story sharing space
- NGAMAHL (goanna)
- Open space for play
- Shady parklands
- SALTWATER PEOPLE (stories and culture)
- Beach access
- 3 BROTHERS
- Proposed sculptures
- SALTWATER CULTURE, 3 BROTHERS SCULPTURE & MANGROVES
- This area responded to community discussion about the importance of the coastline to the community. These places of culture and the landscape of sustenance and survival before European colonisation are visible in a relatively ‘natural’ state across the Tweed River, especially from this section of the site.
- The proposed “3 brothers” sculptures work in two ways, sharing the ancient story of the shaping of the coastline, and at the base of the sculptures creating the perfect environment for the mangroves that are already colonising the site.
- In conjunction to this, the adjacent story wall becomes quite tall at the base of an existing boulder and incorporates artwork and text describing the culture of the ‘saltwater people’, their ties to the land and even more recent history directly relating to the site.
- Due to the height of the story wall, the landscape in the park rises up, providing higher ground from which visitors and the local community can look out across the Tweed River to the Spit beyond.

MIDDENS & DOLPHIN STORY
- Although there is not a specific site mapped, it is known by the community that an important midden used to exist in this area.
- This site itself is also important for its proximity to the Hill Street link through to Coolangatta, which marks the edge of a stretch of land that used to be broken by the Tweed River and Ocean meeting in high seas.
- This story wall is identified to tell the stories of the moving sands, discussing the midden sites and other layers of history that have been swept across the landscape by the moving waters.
- The ‘Meeting’ Story belongs to the culture of this beach and the sands and the movement along it.
THE CONTESTED SITE

Project sites often exist in a state of aesthetic amnesia. Through actively and locally engaging processes of site analysis and cultural research, design has the potential to embrace the inherent landscape memory for its future development and preservation.

Open space is a commodified resource. Over the past eleven years, it is landscape memory that has preserved the prime real estate of Jack Evans Boat Harbour as a public asset in a climate of intense development. However, this memory has also compromised the need for change, holding the site static. The argument to value the JEBH as economic, ecological and social infrastructure through its re-design will eventually foster change in the site. Through the intensity of the design process, its investment in the local condition and the registration of landscape memory, the JEBH campaign has reaffirmed its position in the political agenda. As a campaign image, within a climate of rapid development, the design of the JEBH defines an argument for the preservation of the 'The Tweed' through landscape which contrasts the neighbouring Gold Coast.

In terms of developing a mode of practice which engages with 'community and place' as culture, directly through the communication tool of the site itself, due to the political and cultural complexity of the project the Jack Evans Boat Harbour has been a successful testing ground. All public sites are constrained by contestation. As a test in designing a contested site through a specific cultural agenda, the resultant concept design has offered a way for me to move my practice forward in the terms of 'landscape and people as culture', and of 'local distinctiveness'.

How can we most appropriately engage with 'local distinctiveness' of place through the design process?

Communities are defensive about their sites because they are landscapes of memory as well as lifestyle. No matter how young, each community member will have a story about their local park that defines it as a special place. Site based analytical process can't capture the memories of all individuals. It can however document communal landscape memory. For example, the historic mappings of the changing relationship between water and land in the harbour of Tweed Heads allowed me to document the spatial actuality of this memory and ground it on the site. This mapping became a point of discussion across all disciplines and in all public forums as the project developed. Although it may appear tokenistic, the designed registration of this information through textural or formal composition memorialises that local connection to place for future generations.

While, the overall Jack Evans Boat Harbour concept design formally reflects typical modes of analytical and consultative development, there are in it's midst moments that have embraced 'liberating and interactive alliances'. In these moments shaped primarily by the Indigenous Public Placemaking Project, art form and infrastructural form meet to reveal their formative landscape pressures. Although the outcomes of these moments are spatially successful in terms of the experience they propose to shape on the site, it may be argued that the resultant landscape forms are an abstraction of one culture in lieu of the existing culture of place. I would argue that the IPPP process has engaged in cultural processes rather than abstracted culture, and that the site itself has been the key tool in engaging cultural process.
Artists Rhonda Billett and Garth Lena with their artworks developed in conjunction with the design for the ‘Goorimahbah - Place of Stories’ Parklands. The artists chose to represent the process of design outcome in their normative mode of practice.

DESIGN OUTCOMES - LIVING MEMORIES

In critiquing the ‘thematic’ outcomes of the design project, the important factor remember in the project process is that the original design brief set out by the SADEE program brief denoted the ‘siting’ of public art on the JEBH, and the designing of Indigenous gardens by local Artists. The intent behind this brief was the creation of a cultural ‘place’ for a largely dis-enfranchised indigenous community where they could tell share story and document their culture. The artists selected were chosen on the merits of their representation of Aboriginal culture through art (sculpture and painting).

Although the final design concept defines sites for specific sculptural form and imagery, the consultative design process shifted their way of communicating culture from their chosen mediums to the landscape itself.

For example, the process of ‘sitting down’ revealed the importance of the relationship between Fingal, the river mouth and Tweed Heads. The community and artists addressed this connection through spatially embodying memories of the relationship between lifestyle and ecology in the designed landscape form.

Through the IPPP design workshop process, the artists and I were able to align our design techniques for a more richly referenced formation of space. Sited at the clearest vantage point to Fingal, Garth’s “3 Brothers” sculpture is proposed as an intervention in landscape and infrastructure. Where mangroves already exist, siltation around a caged footing would allow more to colonise. In time, the ecosystem of Fingal will be a living, tangible and educational element claiming the hard edge of the harbour.

As an example, the insertion of the 3 brothers sculpture, whether it be interpreted by signage or simply through experiencing it, marks several layers of the site’s memory. From the ecological fluctuations of the water edge condition to infrastructural development of the harbour and ultimately people’s interaction with the harbour edge as a place, this moment epitomises the potential for being there through the design process. Drawing on the landscape threads of the existing condition, it pins down the ‘something’ about place.

“Design Process: Appropriation of or Engaging with Aboriginal Culture?”

Although the focus of this Masters has been to draw from an Indigenous cognition of landscape for the purposes of developing consultative design process through local place, it can’t be escaped that the IPPPP project, whilst testing this theory has resulted in what reads as a highly contrived design form. As a practitioner, my personal criticism of the Design Concept is that it reads in Plan form as an abstraction of Aboriginal culture, a translation of the message conveyed by artwork onto the ground plain. It is in fact, in opposition to how I had originally envisaged the landscape design throughout my earlier concept design work. However, shifting from the Aboriginal community brief for interpretive signage, totem poles, water features and carved bollards, the manipulation of topography and it’s definition through the story walls is intended to create the opportunity for a deeper experience of place responding to the existing condition of site. In this case, the plan driven design forms were about reorienting the site user to key facets of the landscape, specifically drawing relationships to the local Aboriginal Community’s occupational history with the coastal landscape. Rather than simply drawing ancestral mythology and narratives across the landscape as the concept plan (left) would indicate, the sense of ‘Aboriginality’ in the project is drawn from this cultural relationship with saltwater country. Intending to avoid
a cultural theme-park, the intent in engaging the existing condition of the site through a consultative design process grounded in analysis and communication was to “imbue [landscape] with Aboriginal Identity through client involvement and authorization, through respecting Aboriginal Social practices and revering existing places and histories without attempting to abstract them into semiotic devices” (Fantin 2003).

Similarly to the Architectural forms of Burgess in projects such as Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Brambuk Cultural Centres, Goorimahbah is ultimately intended to be programmed for the dissemination of cultural history. In the case of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta project, the intensive consultation process undertaken by Burgess and Taylor Cullity Lethlean, has resulted in a designed form that embraces the community’s relationship to country, resulting in a project which, in contrast to earlier interpretive cultural centre projects “presents a messy co-existence with interpretation, tours, souvenirs and infrastructure producing parallel yet conflicting messages and values” (Walliss 2005). In contrast to Fantin’s discussion of these types of projects as “abstractions of Aboriginal histories and environmental relationships as a medium to represent Aboriginal Identity in Building form”, I would argue that the process of engaging deeply with the Aboriginal community can result in a design form which is not about representation of culture but employing the spatial relationships which are inherent in existence in the landscape. In its roughest embodiment of a consultative design process, the IPPP design outcome has at very least drawn simple spatial orientations through simple tools such as lines of site and movement. The richness of the design concept lays in how it will actually hit the ground when it is built with the potential to create a space of ‘messy co-existence’, where as the Aboriginal community rightly pointed out in consultation although ‘it is good to be able to tell the story of their history for future generations of all backgrounds, the spaces shaped by the story walls offer the opportunity to become a place of reconciliation where families will barbeque or picnic, kids will kick the footy, teenagers will hang out and big events can happen’.

THE GROUNDED PRACTICE

Based on my experiences of the JEBH project my practice has evolved with the intent to always challenge briefs within local Government in a number of process driven ways. These are processes are tools in “being there” and include; project duration (sitting down time), critique of Policy and strategic implementation (the campaign for the local landscape), modes of consultation (engaging the locals as experts in place) and ensuring multi-disciplinary design processes. Although, project time frames and budgets rarely allow these modes of practice, the campaign to employ them is grounded in Council’s existence as representatives of the people and their places.

If I were to write a brief for Coober Pedy now it would begin with the requirement to “engage in the place and processes at hand”. Being there was a process in realising that the project brief, the design process and the outcome were one and the same; to respect country and culture. The apparent simplicity of the ‘brief’ does not reflect the complexity of the process...

With this Masters I have explored techniques through which my future design practice can act archaeologically, to reveal and respect the ‘place’ of each site I engage with. In doing this, through experience of two specific places, I have been able to explore a set of mechanisms to engage the local in my practice. More importantly I have been enabled to design differently without fear of creating cultural theme-parks, and with developed processes in engaging culture for unique design outcomes. ‘Being there’, is not about spending time alone. It is about documenting information gleaned through the lenses of local experts by ‘sitting down’.

Formerly I entered the site and allowed my perception of it to compose a design. My new mode of practice engages the site as a designed form upon which we are developing the next stage. In this mode of design the processes of analysis and consultation act as lenses in curating the existing condition, defining its successes and failures in the cultural terms of people and place. Here, in contrast to my former practice, the intent is that design recovers landscape, rather than recreating it.

There is a “need for utopian single visions to be replaced by multiple visions, frameworks where different meanings and cultures can co-exist.

Adaptive transformations, which use, re-use and shift existing infrastructures, become more appropriate forms of vision - visions building on and working with existing contexts and meanings and cultures”

(Cumberlidge & Musgrave 2007)
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