

University of Wollongong - Research Online

Thesis Collection

Title: Place-making in the East Kimberley: a study of land interests and symbolic capital in North West Australia

Author: Ruth Lane

Year: 2003

Repository DOI:

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Research Online is the open access repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

2003

Place-making in the East Kimberley: a study of land interests and symbolic capital in North West Australia

Ruth Lane
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

University of Wollongong

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation

Lane, Ruth, Place-making in the East Kimberley: a study of land interests and symbolic capital in North West Australia, Doctor of Philosophy thesis, School of Geosciences, University of Wollongong, 2003.
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/1977>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

PLACE-MAKING IN THE EAST KIMBERLEY

*A study of land interests and symbolic capital
in North West Australia*

Ruth Lane

BSc Hons, Grad Dip Museum Studies, MA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY FROM THE SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, 2003

Certification

I, Ruth Lane, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Geosciences, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Lane', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ruth Lane

25 February, 2003

Abstract

This thesis addresses the relationship between representations of place and embodied activity and experience. To translate this question into the context of the East Kimberley in the late 1990s, I focus on the manner in which planning processes since the 1960s have represented the East Kimberley as a place and ascribed value to land. Employing the concept of 'land interests', I describe in detail changing relationships to land for Aboriginal people, farmers and tourists since the 1960s. I focus on mobility, as an indicator of their embodied experience, and tease out aspects of the social identities of these groups that are produced through their changing relationships with land. Each land interest has produced representations of place, and I explore the paths by which these representations have gained a public or political audience over time.

In the late 1990s two developments dominated spatial politics in the region. A significant Native Title claim was lodged in the Federal Court of Australia by the Miriwung and Gajerrong Aboriginal groups, and the Wesfarmers-Marubeni consortium put forward a proposal to greatly expand the existing area of irrigated agriculture in the Ord Valley for corporate farming of sugar cane. At the same time the region's tourism industry continued to expand. I analyse these developments in order to expose the iterative processes that operate between the production of place-images and rhetoric about place, and changes to land tenure, land use and management. In particular, I show how place-images, narratives and discourses about ~~change~~ and the past are mobilised in the context of contemporary spatial politics and planning processes.

Central to my analysis is Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic capital'. Contemporary planning processes deploy specific forms of symbolic capital that align more closely with the interests of farmers and tourists than with Aboriginal people. In Chapter 8 I concentrate on 'authenticity' as a form of symbolic capital operating in both tourism and native title. In Chapter 9 I focus on the Ord Stage Two proposal, highlighting the manner in which 'productivity' and 'sustainability' are deployed as key forms of symbolic capital that justify why the scheme should proceed. The legal concepts of Aboriginal Land Rights and Native Title generate a new form of symbolic capital associated with continuity of Aboriginal cultural traditions and relationships with place. I analyse the potential for this to influence the way concepts such as 'authenticity' and 'sustainability' are interpreted. Planning associated with Ord Stage Two and with the various national parks in the East Kimberly relies on a notion of bounded or stratified space, which may be challenged by the recognition of co-existing Aboriginal land interests.

In conclusion, I consider how planning processes might better accommodate the fluid nature of people's relations to place and to each other. The history of unequal power relations and the differential influence of some representations of place over others structures the spatial politics in which any planning occurs. However, processes that recognise emerging forms of symbolic capital that are shared by different land interests are more likely to allow synergies to occur. A 'progressive sense of place' (Massey 1993) could then develop in which both places and social relations would be recognised as always in a state of becoming.

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been produced without the support of a range of institutions and individuals. An Australian Postgraduate Award provided me with a living allowance for three and a half years. Fieldwork was supported by a grant from the Environment Research Institute at the University of Wollongong, and by an ARC Large Grant awarded to Lesley Head and Richard Fullagar (No. A59905957). Particular thanks are due to the Northern Territory Archives Service for their sponsorship of the interview component of the project. Interviews were recorded on digital audio tape recorders lent by the Northern Territory Archives Service. Recordings were subsequently lodged with the Archive where they were transcribed in full. The Archive then assumed responsibility for contacting interviewees to ask them to set the conditions of access for both audiotapes and transcripts. The Native Title Transcripts were available for public access at the Federal Court Office in Perth, and I am grateful to staff there for their assistance. The State Library and Information Service of Western Australia permitted me to make copies of archival films relating to the East Kimberley. Other archival films were obtained through the Australian Broadcasting Commission and Screensound Australia.

I am most grateful to Bruce Shaw for making available his field notes from a sociological research project conducted in Kununurra in 1970. Various scholars with lengthy experience working with Miriung and Gajerrong people provided valuable perspectives that assisted my interpretation of material in the Native Title transcripts, particularly Patrick Sullivan, Frances Kofod and Ken Mulvaney. Further assistance was drawn from scholars who had engaged extensively with the complex issues of Native Title and Aboriginal Land Rights. Tim Rowse was particularly helpful with this aspect of my work. In 1999 I participated in a

Visiting Scholars Program at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the Australian National University. I drew further inspiration from various conferences and seminars at which I presented papers during the course of the work.

My supervisors, Lesley Head and Gordon Waitt, provided continuing inspiration and valuable criticism throughout the project. Special thanks is also due to fellow PhD students who provided much needed sounding boards at critical times. They include Ingereth Macfarlane, Jane Lydon, Jenny Atchison and Yasmine Musharbash. During fieldwork, I benefited from discussions with Cath Elderton, Sue Jackson, Daniel Suggit and Scott Goodson, among others. The generosity of friends and family in providing me with cars, accommodation or other support greatly helped my capacity to survive the years on low income. Particular thanks are due to Andrew Loughhead, Helen Harper, Michael Duffy, Sally Stephens and Sue Hardisty, and to my parents, Ron and Joan Lane. My final thanks must go to all those who assisted me in the course of fieldwork, especially to Biddy Simon and her family, and to those who volunteered their time and knowledge for interviews.

Table of Contents

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND FRAMING

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
1.1 Research question and scope	2
1.2 Rationale	3
1.3 Implications	6
1.4 Structure of the thesis	7
<i>Chapter 2: Theoretical framing - a relational approach to place.....</i>	<i>11</i>
2.1 Relational approaches to place	11
2.2 Social relations and place making processes.....	15
2.2.1 Social identifications as ‘land interests’	16
2.2.2 Mobility	18
2.2.3 Representations of place and people	20
2.3 Methodological strategies.....	21
2.3.1 Relationships and ‘interests’ on my part	27

PART 2: DEVELOPMENT OF LAND INTERESTS

<i>Chapter 3: Becoming a region</i>	<i>31</i>
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2 Approach and methods	32
3.3 Nineteenth century exploration.....	33
3.4 Early twentieth century scientific surveys	36

3.5	The 1940s – rural reconstruction, water resources and scientific surveys .	41
3.5.1	Rural reconstruction	43
3.5.2	Land surveys and scientific initiatives	47
3.6	Conclusion	53
Chapter 4:	<i>Aboriginal land interests</i>	55
4.1	Introduction	55
4.2	Sources and methods	56
4.2.1	Fieldwork	56
4.2.2	Native Title hearings and transcripts	59
4.2.3	Narrative forms and performative contexts.....	65
4.3	‘Station times’.....	67
4.3.1	Seasonal mobility and social groupings	69
4.3.2	Ngarranggarni, ceremony and religious life - station times	73
4.3.3	Environmental changes associated with pastoralism.....	76
4.3.4	Burning practices.....	79
4.4	1960s experience of town and farms.....	84
4.4.1	Residence and land use around Kununurra	85
4.4.2	Mobility in employment and education	89
4.4.3	Summary.....	91
4.5	Contemporary land use and mobility	91
4.5.1	The outstation movement	92
4.5.2	Ceremonies and meetings.....	95
4.5.2	Contemporary land use practices.....	98
4.5.3	Outstations, land use and mobility	98

4.5.4	Around Kununurra	102
4.5.5	Too many people.....	102
4.5.6	‘Too much grass’	103
4.5.7	Arts and crafts production	106
4.5.7	Summary	108
4.6	Conclusion	111
<i>Chapter 5: Land interests of Ord Valley farmers</i>		<i>115</i>
5.1	Introduction	115
5.2	Methods	116
5.2	1960s – Diversion Dam and the first farms	121
5.2.1	Economic rationalism versus ‘the national interest’	122
5.2.2	The farmers	126
5.2.3	Media reporting of the Ord Scheme.....	133
5.2.4	Summary	140
5.3	1970s – Argyle Dam and failure of cotton farms	141
5.3.1	Ord River Irrigation Area Review.....	142
5.3.2	Farmers	143
5.3.2	Media reporting.....	148
5.2.3	Summary	151
5.4	1990s farmers	152
5.4.1	Background	153
5.4.2	Motivations and first impressions.....	154
5.4.3	Changes over time	156
5.4.4	Seasonal fluctuations.....	159

5.4.5	Social identifications.....	160
5.4.6	Media reporting of Ord Stage Two.....	163
5.4.7	Summary.....	165
5.5	Conclusion	166
<i>Chapter 6: Tourism land interests.....</i>		<i>169</i>
6.1	Introduction	169
6.2	Methods.....	171
6.2.1	Historical sources.....	171
6.2.2	Interviews with tourism operators	172
6.2.3	Tourist survey.....	173
6.3	Historical developments	179
6.3.1	Tourism in the 1960s and '70s.....	179
6.3.2	Tourism in the 1980s.....	182
6.4	1990s tourism.....	187
6.5	1990s Tourism Operators	193
6.4.1	Values and aesthetics	199
6.5	1990s tourists	202
6.5.1	Demographic characteristics of tourists	202
6.5.2	Holiday-maker classification.....	203
6.5.3	Holiday Motivation.....	206
6.5.4	Sources of information.....	207
6.5.5	Personal constructs of tourists.....	208
6.6	Conclusion	211

PART III: CONTEMPORARY PLACE-MAKING PROCESSES

Chapter 7: Introduction to Part III..... 213

7.1 Land interests and symbolic capital..... 214

7.2 Role of boundaries in place-making processes..... 216

7.3 Spatial politics, social identifications and difference 218

Chapter 8: ‘Authenticity’ as symbolic capital in tourism and native title 221

8.1 Introduction 221

8.1.1 Authenticity and land interests of tourists and Aboriginal people..... 223

8.1.2 National parks as bounded places..... 224

8.2 Approach and methods..... 225

8.3 Authenticity as symbolic capital in tourism and Native Title 226

8.3.1 Authenticity in tourism..... 226

8.3.2 Authenticity in Native Title and Aboriginal Land Rights..... 228

8.4 Contemporary tourism experiences and motivations for visiting the East Kimberley..... 230

8.5 Tourism operator perspectives on cultural tourism 235

8.5.1 Tourism operators..... 235

8.5.2 Aboriginal perspectives on tourism 240

8.6 Conclusion - authenticity within grids of difference 247

Chapter 9: The Ord Stage Two ‘Project Area’ in contemporary spatial politics 253

9.1 Introduction 253

9.2 Approach and methods..... 256

9.3	Ord Stage Two versus Ord Stage One – change and continuity.....	257
9.4	How ‘The Project Area’ defines land interests	260
9.5	Responses to Ord Stage Two.....	265
9.5.1	Aboriginal people.....	265
9.5.2	Horticulturalists.....	274
9.5.3	‘The Project Area’ and tourism land use interests	278
9.6	Conclusion	283
<i>Chapter 10: Conclusion.....</i>		<i>287</i>
10.1	Dynamic subjects.....	288
10.2	Contemporary spatial politics – symbolic capital at work.....	290
10.3	Methodological reflections	292
10.4	A relational approach to land use planning?	295
<i>Postscript.....</i>		<i>297</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>		<i>299</i>
<i>Appendix A: Field work schedule.....</i>		<i>323</i>
<i>Appendix B: 1998 Federal Court of Australia determination</i>		<i>324</i>
<i>Appendix C: Timeline for Ord River Irrigation Scheme.....</i>		<i>327</i>
<i>Appendix D: Check list of questions for farmers.....</i>		<i>334</i>
<i>Appendix E: Key dates for media reporting</i>		<i>335</i>
<i>Appendix F: Check list of questions for tourism operators</i>		<i>336</i>
<i>Appendix G: Tourist Questionnaire</i>		<i>337</i>

List of Tables

Table 1.	Summary of fieldwork conducted	25
Table 2.	Summary information about interviewees and associated farms	118
Table 3.	List of binary terms used in questionnaire	179
Table 4.	Dates for gazettal of national parks in the East Kimberley	184
Table 5.	Respondents' Demographic Characteristics	203
Table 6.	Top Three holiday-maker classifications derived from respondents' rank order of importance	204
Table 7.	Dominant mode of transport	204
Table 8.	Respondents' mean motivation scores for visiting the Kimberley by order of importance (reproduced from Waitt et al. in press). The mean motivation score was calculated by averaging respondents' scores on an attitudinal Likert scale for several questions, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 6 is 'strongly agree'	204
Table 9.	Sources of information about the Kimberley (reproduced from Waitt et al. in press). Information sources were ranked according to the scale: Rank 1 (very important), Rank 2 (slightly important) and Rank 3 (not important)	207
Table 10.	Framework of government policy objectives and legislation structuring the impact assessment for the Ord Stage Two Project Area	259
Table 11.	Contrast between the Wesfarmers/Marubeni proposal and an alternative model for Aboriginal involvement and land use in the Ord Stage Two project	273

List of Figures

Unless otherwise acknowledged, all photographs are attributable to the author.

Figure 1.	Welcome sign greeting visitors arriving at Kununurra Airport.	1
Figure 2.	View of Ord Valley looking north from Mirima National Park.	4
Figure 3.	North West Australia showing location of the East Kimberley.	5
Figure 4.	'The life-time-lines of non-representational theory' (Thrift 1999: 303).	13
Figure 5.	'Two-way, interactive mode of investigation' (Shotter 1993: 26).	22
Figure 6.	Biddy Simon, May 1998.	57
Figure 7.	East Kimberley pastoral stations, Aboriginal settlements, existing irrigation area and new irrigation areas proposed for the Ord Stage Two development.	64
Figure 8.	Ration camp at Ord River Station, 1938. Courtesy, Battye Library, 50202P.	69
Figure 9.	Aboriginal stockmen at a cattle camp on Argyle Station 1930s, photograph, Reg Durack. Courtesy, Battye Library, 61513P.	70
Figure 10.	Evidence of soil erosion due to grazing at Keep River National Park.	77
Figure 11.	Grass fire on road to Wyndham. Fires from a range of sources are common occurrences during the dry season.	79
Figure 12.	Kununurra town layout, 2002. Based on information from the Department of Land Administration, Western Australia.	87
Figure 13.	Miriuwung women performing a public ceremony at the Women's Crisis Accommodation Centre in Kununurra, 1999.	98
Figure 14.	Marralam Outstation, May 1998.	100
Figure 15.	Aboriginal settlements or 'outstations' in the Ord Valley.	101
Figure 16.	Road sign erected by WA Bush Fires Authority. The use of a hand print and the red, yellow and black colours associated with the Aboriginal land rights movement indicates that the sign is directed at Aboriginal people.	103
Figure 17.	Performance of Kurirr-Kurirr ceremony by Kija men in 1978. Courtesy, Kim Akerman.	107
Figure 18.	Artworks by Paddy Carlton, on wall of Kununurra Police Station. Local Aboriginal youth have frequent interactions with police.	108
Figure 19.	Farm locations for interviewees showing 1960s and 1990s farms.	119
Figure 20.	Ploughing Pilot Farm, 1965. Courtesy Kununurra Historical Society.	122
Figure 21.	Di Oliver outside her home on Ivanhoe Plain, Ord Valley 1999.	127
Figure 22.	Kununurra township, January 1967. Courtesy, Kununurra Historical Society.	130

Figure 23.	Advertisements by the Western Australian Department of Industrial Development in <i>The Australian Financial Review</i> in May 1963, advertising the land ballots for the Ord Irrigation Scheme and promoting development in the region to investors.	136
Figure 24.	Advertisement promoting investment in the Ord Valley cotton industry, published in <i>The West Australian</i> in September 1963 by the Department of Industrial Development, Western Australia.	137
Figure 25.	Spike Dessert, Ivanhoe Plain, Ord Valley, November 1998.	144
Figure 26.	Aerial spraying of cotton crops, Ord Valley 1960s. Courtesy, Kununurra Historical Society.	145
Figure 27.	John Mack, Ord Valley 1999.	155
Figure 28.	Jill Parker, Packsaddle Plain, 1999.	156
Figure 29.	Carlton Reach, Ord River 1953, prior to dam construction. Courtesy, Kununurra Historical Society.	158
Figure 30.	Dense vegetation and cumbungi along the banks of Lake Kununurra, Ord River 1999.	158
Figure 31.	Gordon Waitt conducting survey with tourist.	173
Figure 32.	Image of Rock Wallaby from postcard produced by AUSCAPE PRINTS (no date).	175
Figure 33.	Image of crocodile from AAT King's Australian Tours Brochure.	176
Figure 34.	Image of Parry's Lagoon from postcard produced by AUSCAPE PRINTS (no date).	176
Figure 35.	Tourist with barramundi fish. From travel brochure	177
Figure 36.	Ord valley farm lands. From postcard produced by AUSCAPE PRINTS (no date).	177
Figure 37.	Argyle Dam. From postcard produced by Red Dirt Arts (no date).	178
Figure 38.	National parks in North West Australia	185
Figure 39.	National parks and nature reserves in the East Kimberley	186
Figure 40.	Brochure obtained from the Kununurra Tourist Information Centre in 1999 promoting ecotourism in the Ord Valley.	189
Figure 41.	Waringarri Arts, Kununurra 1999.	190
Figure 42.	Kevin Kelly at the Red Rock Gallery, Kununurra 2001.	191
Figure 43.	Distinctive 'honeycomb' rock formations in Purnululu National Park, 1999.	192
Figure 44.	Rock art site with interpretive signage. Keep River National Park, 2001.	193
Figure 45.	Jenny and Jeff Hayley of Triangle Tours, Kununurra, 1999.	194

Figure 46.	The Desert Inn Backpackers, Kununurra, 1999.	195
Figure 47.	Kenton May at the Kununurra Backpackers, Kununurra, 1999.	196
Figure 48.	Andrew McEwan, Kununurra, 1999.	198
Figure 49.	Responses to tourist attractions mapped onto the repertory grid.	209
Figure 50.	Corroboree image from questionnaire	231
Figure 51.	Personal constructs of domestic tourists compared with those of international tourists.	232
Figure 52.	The proposed Project Area for Ord Stage Two, showing farmlands, conservation area and Aboriginal land claims.	264
Figure 53.	Bush meeting of Miriuwung women convened by the Northern Land Council to discuss the Ord Stage Two proposal.	266

List of Acronyms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
CSIR	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
EIS	Environmental Impact Assessment
ERMP	Environmental Review and Management Plan
FCA	Federal Court of Australia
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
KLC	Kimberley Land Council
KRS	Kimberley Research Station
KST	Kimberley Specialists in Tourism
NLC	Northern Land Council
ORIA	Ord River Irrigation Area
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service