

# Textures of Place: Laws, Geographies, Poetics

16 December 2013,  
UTS Faculty of Law



David Wills, *Depending on the Day* (2009)  
<[turnstile.net.au](http://turnstile.net.au)>

Giambattista Vico observed there is a relation between the place we think and the structure of how we think. For example, Rene Descartes, famous for the striking linearity of Cartesian reason, wrote from the flatlands of the Netherlands whereas Vico, writing from the Italian foothills, produced a mythopoetic mode of scientific thinking much more dynamic, rhythmic and non-linear. Similarly, and more locally, UTS Faculty of Law is located off the not-quite-right-angled-bend where George Street transitions into Broadway, the main high street of Sydney, which is a bend in the road that follows a Gadigal track that follows the lie of the land. This bend is reflected in David Wills' 'Depending on the Day': a recording of the steps he walked along the streets nearby.

With an imported form of Anglo-Australian common law, resting uncomfortably alongside indigenous forms of law, questions of how place structures thinking, including contemporary legal thought, requires attendance. Taking seriously Vico's observation of the relation between the place of thought and the content and structure of that thought, this symposium is the beginning of a conversation and an opening up of ideas about the ways in which textures, traces, fragments and fractures of place contribute to the patterning and poetic geography of modern law. For despite recent attention to temporal and spatial aspects of law, questions of place remain obscured in law. Of course, questions of place have long been contemplated by geographers, historians, architects, artists, writers and urban planners, amongst others. Bringing together scholars from diverse disciplines, and through the generosity of interdisciplinary conversation, this symposium opens up textures of place and seeks to unravel ways in which textures of place not only matter, but also matter in the context of law.

Questions asked might include: What, then, does it mean to live with a colonial form of law on unceded indigenous land when the textures of place speak so loudly? How can we understand textures of place? Places of texture? How do different forms of law write the land, and how might we take responsibility for those writings? In what ways does law texture place, and place texture law? Is it possible, and if so, what might it mean to dream a poetic geography as a way of thinking through law? In other words, how might we attend to the textures of place? These are questions of form and formation, authority and authorisation, time and space, movement and place, poetry, art and public ceremony and above all, questions of lawful conduct and of being in place.

Contact Dr. Olivia Barr:  
[olivia.barr@uts.edu.au](mailto:olivia.barr@uts.edu.au)

# Programme

10:30 - 10:45 *Registration & coffee*

10:45 - 11:00 **Introduction to Textures of Place**  
Olivia Barr  
Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney

11:00 - 12:00 **Panel 1: Textures of Place**

Ross Gibson, 'The Aesthetic Estate: Multi-Modal Testimonies about Home-Terrain'  
Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney

Stephen Muecke, 'Living Law: Reconfiguring Law after Modernist Universalism'  
School of the Arts and Media, University of New South Wales

Alison Young, 'Encountered Textures: Image, City, Lawscape'  
School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne

Chair: Katrina Schlunke  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney

12:00 - 12:05 *short break*

12:05 - 1:00 **Panel 1 Discussion**  
Discussant: Katherine Biber  
Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney

1:00 - 2:00 *lunch*

2:00 - 3:00 **Panel 2: Lawful Place?**

Benedict Anderson, 'Spacing Politics: Problematising Geography, Questioning Archaeology'  
Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology, Sydney

Nicole Graham, 'The Lawscape of Longwall Mining'  
Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney

Christine Black, 'The Lawful Place of the Unseen: The Unreal Worlds of Traditional Healers and Cyberspace'  
Griffith Centre for Coastal Management, Griffith University

Chair: Marett Leiboff  
Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong

3:00 - 3:05 *short break*

3:05 - 4:00 **Panel 2 Discussion**  
Discussant: Fleur Johns  
Sydney Law School, University of Sydney

4:00 - 4:30 *Afternoon tea*

4:30 - 5:30 **Keynote Address**  
Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 'Surface'  
Westminster Law School, University of Westminster

Chair: Honni van Rijswijk  
Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney

## Keynote Address

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# ‘Surface’

## Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos

Professor of Law & Theory  
The Westminster Law & Theory Centre  
University of Westminster, London

### Surface

A new spatial semiotics has rushed in the legal discourse. Yet, despite the prominent connection between law and geography, law’s engagement with *space* is being increasingly despatialised. In this paper, I explore the potential that space has for the law in terms of its ethical and material input. The paper has three main parts: the first deals with the connection between law and space. The second looks at one of the main distinctions in legal geography, the one between space and place, and attempts to critique it from the point of view of property. The third and final part looks into the emerging concept of spatial justice, which involves spatiality, temporality and materiality. On the whole, the paper aims at constructing one flat ontological surface on which various legal foldings take place.

### Biography

Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, LLB, LLM, PhD, is Professor of Law & Theory at the University of Westminster, and founder and Director of The Westminster Law & Theory Centre, a centre that brings together radical interdisciplinary research. His research interests include environmental law, human rights, EU law, law and literature, law and space, continental philosophy, gender studies, law and art, and so on, all areas in which he has published. He lectures around the world and holds permanent professorial affiliations with the Centre for Politics, Management and Philosophy, Business School, Copenhagen since 2006, and the University Institute of Architecture, Venice since 2009. Andreas has been awarded the 2011 OUP National Award for the Law Teacher of the Year, and is now a member of the Judging Committee. His books include the edited volumes *Law and the City* (2007), *Law and Ecology* (2011) *Radical Encounters* (2013), and the monographs *Absent Environments* (2007) and *Niklas Luhmann: Law, Justice, Society* (2009). Forthcoming books include an edited collection by Springer called *Space and Knowledge* and a research monograph with the title *Right Here: Law, Geography and Spatial Justice*.

## Speaker Bio's

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**Ross Gibson** is Professor of Contemporary Arts at the University of Sydney. As part of his research he makes books, films and art installations investigating the use of narrative and private ritual in the comprehension of everyday experience. His recent works include the books 'Seven Versions of an Australian Badland' (2002) and 'The Summer Exercises' (2009), the video installation 'Street X-Rays' (2005), the interactive audiovisual environment 'BYSTANDER' (a collaboration with Kate Richards) (2007), and the durational work 'Conversations II' for the 2008 Biennale of Sydney.

**Stephen Muecke** is Professor of Ethnography at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, where he is part of the Environmental Humanities programme. He has written extensively on Indigenous Australia, especially in the Kimberley, and on the Indian Ocean. Recent books are *Butcher Joe*, Documenta 13, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 2011 and *Contingency in Madagascar*, with photographer Max Pam, in Intellect Books' Critical Photography Series, 2012.

**Professor Alison Young** teaches and researches in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne. She has an LL.B (Hons) from Edinburgh University and a Masters and PhD in Criminology from Cambridge University. She is the author of *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination* (2014, Routledge), *The Scene of Violence* (2010), *Street/Studio* (2010), *Judging the Image* (2005) and *Imagining Crime* (1996), as well as numerous articles on the intersections of law, crime and culture. She is currently carrying out an ARC Discovery Project examining the reception of street art in the cultural field, focusing upon its transformative potential in urban space. She is an Honorary Professor in the Law School at City University, London, and an Adjunct Professor in the Law School, Griffith University.

**Benedict Anderson** works in scenography, dance dramaturgy, architecture and film. Project venues include: Laboral Gijon and ARCO Art Fair Madrid Spain, Fondation Cartier Paris, CDC Toulouse, Es Space Pier Paolo Pasolini, Valenciennes and Lisbon Architecture Triennial. Positions include: Post-graduate Advisor, Bauhaus Dessau, Gäst Professor Institut für Raumgestaltung University of Innsbruck, Gäst Doctor/ Dozent TU Berlin. He studied scenography at St. Martins London and won prizes for his scenographic work and academic research (MA, Ph.D). He is partner in the Berlin firm Thinkbuild Architecture, Professor of Spatial Design and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Design Practices, University of Technology, Sydney.

**Dr Nicole Graham**, BA (Hons) LLB (Hons) University Medal, PG Cert HED, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney. Nicole has received awards for her teaching and has taught in law, cultural studies and environmental management programs. Her research is concerned with the relationship between property and the environment in modern law and culture and is the subject of her book *Landscape: Property, Environment, Law* (Routledge, 2011).

**Dr C.F. Black** is a descendant of the Kombumerri/Munaljahlai Peoples and the Celts of the British Isles. She is also the author of *The Land is the Source of the Law: A Dialogic Encounter with an Indigenous Jurisprudence* (Routledge, 2011). Dr Black is currently working on her next book *The Legendary Tales of the Windwatchers: Visualizing Indigenous Jurisprudence through the Narrative*, which is also being considered by the Discourses of Law Series with Routledge. She is also a writer/poet, as well as an emerging artist and has exhibited in both the US and Australia. Her works explore the relationship between law and the art/image as an expression of the relationship between land, law and the sense of the unseen. Her photography has also been noted in Beijing in which she combines nature and its relationship to the Chinese psyche. Her work is decidedly political and looks to global issues from the perspective of classical Indigenous legal paradigm. In relation to her academic affiliation, she is presently an adjunct to Griffith University.