

# **The Scale Politics of Reconciliation**

**Sherrie Ann Cross**

BSc (Macquarie) PGDip Env Stud (Macquarie) MSc.Soc (Hons) (First Class) (UNSW)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

Department of Human Geography  
Macquarie University

October 2008



# Table of Contents

<b>1) Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1: Preamble	1
1.2: Researching the scale politics of reconciliation: from the political and the personal to geographical scale	5
1.3: The two central ideas: erasure of scale and Contemporary Indigenous Governances	16
1.4: The role of associated issues: self-determination, self-scaling, treaty and colonisation	20
1.5: What this study is not about	22
1.6: Positionality	28
1.7: Thesis structure – summary of the argument and the evidence	31
<b>2) Methodology</b>	<b>35</b>
2.1: Introduction	35
2.2: Terminology, categories and referencing	35
2.3: The research challenge	38
2.4: Project design	39
2.5: Ethical engagement	41
2.6: Recruitment: how and whom; response rates	47
2.7: Interview and follow-up	48
2.8: Analytical method	52
2.9: Forming the body of evidence	52
2.10: Partnerships	54
2.11: Conclusion	56
<b>3) Literature Review</b>	<b>57</b>
3.1 Introduction and overview	57
3.2: Reconciliation literature	60
3.3: From critical geographies to geographies of Indigenous governance	78
3.4: Conclusion	109
<b>4) Conceptual Framework: Scale, Scale Erasure and Contemporary Indigenous Governances</b>	<b>113</b>
4.1: Introduction	113
4.2: Foundational principles of scale	114
4.3: New directions in scale	121
4.4: Conclusion	138
<b>5) Indigenous Affairs Policy 1972 – 2000: a scaled analysis</b>	<b>141</b>
5.1: Preamble	141
5.2: Government scaling and resistance in the era of self determination, 1972 to 1991	144
5.3: The policy of reconciliation, 1991 – 2000	156
5.4: Conclusion	181
<b>6) Contemporary Indigenous Governances</b>	<b>186</b>
6.1: Introduction	186
6. 2: Discourses – assessments of the concept, ideology and performance of the policy of reconciliation	186
6.3: Contemporary Indigenous Governances	208
6.4: Conclusion	219

<b>7) Scaled policy mechanisms and the erasure of Indigenous scales of governance</b>	<b>223</b>
7.1 Introduction	223
7.2 Scaled mechanisms of exclusion	225
7.3: Scaled mechanisms and the management of discourse and dissent	239
7.4: Conclusion	265
<b>8) The View from the National Scale</b>	<b>271</b>
8.1: Introduction	271
8.2: Nation scale reflections: recognising community dissent, diversity and interests	279
8.3: Nation scale reflections: constructions of community interest	292
8.4: National scale interests and functioning	316
8.5: Conclusion	328
<b>9) Conclusion</b>	<b>333</b>
9.1: Summary of the thesis argument and implications	335
9.2: Hindsight	348
9.3: Future directions	353
9.4: Overall summary of the thesis	354
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>Appendix 1a: Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation</b>	<b>373</b>
<b>Appendix 1b: Roadmap for Reconciliation: national strategies to advance reconciliation</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Participant Information</b>	<b>378</b>
<b>Appendix 3a: Interview Schedule – CAR members/politicians</b>	<b>380</b>
<b>Appendix 3b Interview Schedule – Indigenous community members and social justice group members; also Mayors and business sector</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>Appendix 3c Interview Schedule – Local Reconciliation Groups</b>	<b>382</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Project Consent Form</b>	<b>383</b>
<b>Appendix 5a: Sample Covering Letter, Indigenous community members</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>Appendix 5b: Sample Covering Letter, CAR members and politicians</b>	<b>386</b>
<b>Appendix 6a: Final consent letter, Class 1 Participants</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>Appendix 6b: Final consent letter, Class 2 Participants</b>	<b>389</b>
<b>Appendix 6c: Note in final consent letters</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>Appendix 6d: Appendices for final consent letters</b>	<b>392</b>
<b>Appendix 7: Response rates and participant numbers</b>	<b>394</b>
<b>Appendix 8: Coding symbols, all interviewees</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>Appendix 9: Class 1 Participants’ codes and interview details</b>	<b>396</b>
<b>Appendix 10: Class 2 Participants’ interview details</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>Appendix 11: Interviewees eliminated from the study (24)</b>	<b>401</b>
<b>Appendix 12: no reply, declined or could not follow up initial agreement (57)</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>Appendix 13: CAR terms and complete list of CAR members by sector</b>	<b>403</b>
<b>Appendix 14: Redfern Park Speech,</b>	<b>409</b>
<b>Appendix 15: Eva Valley Statement</b>	<b>414</b>

## **DECLARATION**

I, Sherrie Ann Cross, certify that the research embodied in this thesis is original; that the ideas of others used in the research have been duly cited; and that this thesis (and parts thereof) have not been used towards a degree at other institutions of tertiary education. Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee 27JUL2001-D042 and HE27AUG2004-DO3091.

(Sherrie Ann Cross)

15 October 2008



## ABSTRACT

This thesis shows that Indigenous self determination is impossible without a fundamental restructuring of the political relations between Indigenous communities and Australian federal governments. Continuing colonial relations are examined through the case study of reconciliation policy as a phenomenon of political scaling.

The scaled processes, procedures and structures of the policy are examined through interviews with two groups:

- 1) Members of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and politicians with portfolio responsibility for the policy; and
- 2) Members of Indigenous local and discursive communities

This exercise provides insight into how the scaled mechanisms of the policy—as reflected in the community consultations for constructing the documents of reconciliation—enacted different sets of processes in different domains. At the public level, the scaled consultative processes were represented as a democratic exercise that privileged Indigenous participation at national and local levels. Simultaneously, the national scale at which policy agents operated integrated them with government policy and the limited options that it provided for Indigenous self determination. For Indigenous communities, the scaled policy mechanisms deepened the imposition of government agendas and facilitated a multi-scaled management of dissent. This management operated at various scales through exclusion, marginalisation, repression, bureaucratic expedience and manipulation of public Indigenous discourse.

These various processes are conceptualised as scale erasure. The assertion of colonial power through a series of government top-down scaled structures and mechanisms produced an erasure of Indigenous scales of governance. This study shows that Indigenous community governance is a diverse, active, ongoing and changing domain, which spans urban, rural/regional and remote, as well as discursive contexts. These are all conceived of as Contemporary Indigenous Governances because they are the contemporary outcomes of historical and geographical processes, and of contemporary Indigenous community agency. Yet the scales at which these governances operate and could be extended for formal representation have been truncated and erased by successive colonial government policies.

This thesis highlights 1) the fundamental philosophical, political and procedural differences between top-down government policy, and that which could be constructed from, and accountable to Indigenous communities and 2) the prospect of the latter for the construction of sustainable self-determination.

## Acknowledgements

This project epitomises the principle that knowledge is produced socially because it has been advanced with numerous sources of personal and institutional input, exchange and support. I am one of a group.

I am deeply grateful to both my primary supervisor, Professor Richard Howitt and my secondary supervisor, Professor Robert Fagan for their intellectual mentorship. Both have steered me through richly rewarding and sometimes different, but nevertheless complementary processes of development. Indeed, I have often felt overwhelmed by the privilege of having had such a dynamic combination of supervisors. Both have, in distinct ways, generated an environment of intellectual freedom and nurturing as well one of robust intellectual inquiry. While some of the ideas specific to this thesis were produced directly in association with Professor Howitt, I would also claim a degree of independence for others. However, none of these could have been possible without the environment of unstintingly generous exchange and development of ideas provided by Professor Howitt.

I am equally grateful to the study participants. They have been generous in their time and effort, and in giving permission for use of their interview material. Further, many participants have been crucial in the development of ideas. Along with supervisors and the published literatures, their engagements have had a vital and distinct role in moulding my (previously embryonic) understandings on the pivotal importance of Indigenous community processes for constructing a grounded, rather than abstract conception of Indigenous rights.

I wholeheartedly thank Barbara Nicholson for her generous friendship and support, her field mentorship and the initial exchange of ideas that gave me the confidence to make reconciliation policy a subject of inquiry.

I am also especially grateful for the support, friendship and intellectual exchange provided by on-campus associates, in particular Terry Widders of the Institute of Indigenous Studies, and my fellow postgraduates in the Geography Department, Ann El Khoury and Verity Greenwood.

I cannot itemise the off-campus support given by friends and family members, but I cannot omit my partner, Michael Bradley. Without his wholehearted and indefatigable practical and emotional support, I could not have completed the project. This has been demanding, and with an engineering background, he had no previous grounding in the area of Indigenous rights. Nevertheless he has welcomed his role in producing what we hope to be a contribution to that area. If only more people had his instinctive egalitarianism and generosity of spirit in embracing seemingly strange and confronting new ideas.

I do also thank my parents for transferring their genuinely egalitarian ethos. My elderly mother, Sylvia Cross has been unremittingly supportive, and also patient of my inability at times to attend properly to her needs. And although my father, Alan Cross died seventeen years ago, I have been sustained by the knowledge that he would have wholeheartedly supported a project centred on Indigenous rights.

I also want to thank the Australian Government for providing an Australian Postgraduate Award, Macquarie University for its generous provision of postgraduate support arrangements, and the Research Office for its advice and kind support.



