Paper / Proposal Title:
Decolonising design practices and research: reframing design led research methods.

Author(s) Name:
Jason De Santolo, Jacqueline Gothe

University or Company Affiliation:
School of Design University of Technology Sydney

Abstract (300 words):
Much of design teaching, learning and research in Australia is determined by Eurocentric traditions and the colonial project in a neoliberal landscape. In this situation Indigenous Peoples continue to experience erasure, silencing and appropriation of practices and knowledges. The School of Design at UTS is committed to subverting this trajectory and in this talk we are describing a deep interactive model that seeks to address the role of the design educator/practitioner/researcher on unceded Gadigal Lands in the city of Sydney, Australia.

In this paper the authors will reflect upon the challenges of facilitating Visual Communication Design and Emergent Practices, an online studio experience, during Covid and in the context of climate crisis, bushfires and Black Lives Matter uprising (In Your Backyard Studio). This iteration is the result of three years of deep collaboration with Local Elders, Indigenous scholars and practitioners.

In this research-focussed studio 180 final year visual communication design students are led by Local Elders, cultural and research advisors with the support of studio leaders. Drawing on design led research methods in a process that infuses Indigenous research principles (Archibald, Lee-Morgan, De Santolo 2019) and builds on the longitudinal research into the role of ‘the emplaced designer’ in Indigenous-led projects on Country (Gothe 2018), In Your Backyard Studio provides students with strength based design capabilities including the principles of United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples
As a transformational studio this experience creates the condition of possibility for the re-orientation of the future for creative and professional practitioners re-directed towards relational and respectful negotiation of difference, and the capacity to action Indigenous self-determination in complex scenarios.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr Jason De Santolo (Garawa and Barunggam) is a researcher & creative producer. He is Associate Professor of Indigenous Research and Practice in the School of Design at University of Technology Sydney. Jason co-edited Decolonizing Research: Indigenous storywork as methodology (2019) with Jo-Ann Archibald and Jenny Lee-Morgan (Zed Books). His latest documentary Warburdar Bununu/Water Shield (2019) explores water contamination in his homelands and Borroloola, Northern Territory.

Dr Jacqueline Gothe is a design researcher in visual communication design and information design. Her research approach emphasizes research through design as a knowledge creating paradigm. She has widely researched the application of communication and design principles in land management investigating transdisciplinary approaches in environmental projects. Jacqueline’s work as a visual communication designer and researcher in contemporary Australia acknowledges that a visual dialogue with land is a project of recognition and revisioning – the recognition of the lived experiences, culture and knowledge of generations of Aboriginal people and the revisioning of landscapes through a collective act of will. Practices of collaboration and co-creation are central to this investigation of the materialisation of transcultural and transdisciplinary knowledges to inform change in land management. Since 2011 she has worked in partnership with Firesticks, an Indigenous-led network that mentors, shares and supports the revival of cultural burning practices in natural resource and fire management contexts. Her communication and information design contribution to Firesticks has been recognised by the International Institute of Information Design Awards (IIID).