3. Postcolonizing housing

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POSTCOLONIALISM AND ITS RELATIONS

The term 'postcolonial' is commonly used to periodize an era after decolonization in regions of the world that were once occupied by predominantly European imperial and mercantile forces, or where those forces removed and displaced native peoples. Postcolonialism, as a concept, is spatio-temporally contingent and is applied to situations where societies and racialized communities impacted by the aftermaths of colonial invasion and rule deal with legacy frameworks that mediate relations to social difference, property and knowledge that did not exist prior to colonization. As Libby Porter (2010, p. 16) states, to 'be "post" colonial is to be always and forever implicated, though in constantly shifting ways, in colonialism's enduring philosophies'. Critical applications of postcolonial theory mostly attend to spatial contexts in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America, but the theory has also been applied to regions such as North America, Australia and New Zealand, and even European contexts such as Ireland and Iceland. The central focus is on the politics and consequences of localized forms of hierarchy and social stratification that linger, impacting upon how rights and resources are distributed according to colonial notions of gender, race and ethnicity that also intersect with class, caste, sexuality and religion, among others.

This is a simplified version of postcolonialism. In practice, postcolonial theory consists of a contested and diverse body of scholarship that attracts much of its critique from the prefix *post*. Much of the critique argues that postcolonial theory paradoxically universalizes the colonial experience, belying the fact that in places such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and United States the colonizers still dominate most nodes of political power. Ananya Roy (2016) and Partha Chatterjee (2011) both argue that postcolonial theory can be understood as a subaltern refusal to accept the universalizing logic Western epistemological traditions found in critical discourses, most notably Marxist and other European emancipatory schools of thought. In this sense, it is a refusal to imagine the world and the place of the post-colony through the lens of European philosophy, which is imbued with narrow remits for understanding place, knowledge and power. Edward Said (1978) understands the dominant view of former colonies as *imaginative geographies*, responsible for the construction of colonized places—or the Orient—as other/periphery and the West as normative/centre. These imagined geographies instil within them a power to make knowledge, to designate authority to represent otherness, and to have exclusive sovereignty over territory and resources as well as the absolute capacity 'to produce death' (Mbembe, 2019, p. 34).

Postcolonialism, broadly understood, is a lens through which critical analyses of implications, legacies and ongoing processes of coloniality flow. Whilst there is a strong current of scholars who explicitly position themselves as postcolonial researchers, and academic journals, institutes and presses that mark out postcolonial studies as a field of research, there are many variations and perspectives evident within the broader scholarship. Subaltern studies, for instance, emerged in the 1980s with a group of Indian and south Asian scholars who sought

to take back authorship and representation, to have experiences and conditions described by those that inhabit them. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) remains a critical intervention in the field, directly challenging contemporary analyses of colonialism, particularly Marxism's interpretation of labour, inherent Eurocentrism and the presumption of a diminished subaltern agency.

There is also an established scholarship that concentrates on the Global South as a social geography outside Anglophone, European and North American regions of the world, but also as a conceptual heuristic used to both critically and uncritically interrogate a world order that upholds the north/south divide (Levander & Mignolo, 2011). What these perspectives hold in common is a geographical focus on regions of the world where the colonizers left. Postcolonialism, subaltern studies and a focus on the Global South, therefore, tend to focus on the spaces of historical colonial power and invasion, and the era that follows. But for prominent critics such as Goenpul academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015, p. 4), the application of postcolonialism in contexts such as Australia is confronted by the reality that the colonizers have yet to relinquish their power, and that Indigenous connection to place is ubiquitous and ongoing:

> Indigenous belonging challenges the assumption that Australia is postcolonial because our relation to land, what I conceptualize as an ontological belonging, is omnipresent, and continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal dispossession.

The case of Australia is a form of colonialism characterized by invasion, war, genocide and ongoing claims to land and resources that enable migrant settlement. It is, as Patrick Wolfe (1997, p. 418) coined, a 'settler colony' unlike those described by postcolonial scholars in the 1980s, who Wolfe criticizes for their 'homage paid to difference' but failure 'to accommodate such basic structural distinctions'. From the perspective of Indigenous peoples in Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Palestine or Tibet, colonization never ceased. For Wolfe, the act of invasion is a *structure not an event*, and its ongoing motive that can be comprehended today in the actions and policies of the settler state is a *logic of elimination* that seeks to destroy and replace Indigenous people and claims (Wolfe, 2006).

Acknowledging that structural distinctions are evident in all postcolonial contexts, this chapter attempts to outline the condition of housing in just one such context: Australia. A full global account of postcolonial housing is not possible. Rather, this chapter focuses on the representation of peripheral housing/dwelling practices, the technologies of policy that facilitate the reproduction of colonial power, and the material effects of displacement and dispossession that impact communities that bear the brunt of settler sovereignty.

POSTCOLONIZING HOUSING

Taking settler-colonialism as a basis for understanding the ongoing structures that impact upon Indigenous people, and by extension migrants and diasporas from other countries with histories of colonial rule, this chapter outlines some fundamental ways that the 'postcolonial' housing condition impacts upon capacities to dwell. Drawing on Indigenous critique, it establishes these housing contexts as *postcolonizing*, as places where power relations are imbricated by acts of colonial dispossession—its historical-present enactments and the denial of them—and where ongoing ontological connection and belonging of Indigenous peoples to land is

omnipresent (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Three fundamental conditions of a postcolonizing housing context include the representation of Indigenous and diasporic practices of dwelling as unviable and dysfunctional; a settler-state pursuit of logics of abandonment and elimination; and the dispossession of populations of the rights and resources they need to dwell.

A postcolonizing housing context involves a distinction between Indigenous forms of dwelling and all others that are part of a migrant/diasporic settler state. All Indigenous practices of dwelling are fundamentally impacted by dispossession and have unceded claims to ontological belonging that all other forms of dwelling do not. It would be simple to make this distinction by juxtaposing Indigenous tenures on recognizably Indigenous titles against the other (settler) private and public property regimes. But it is not enough, nor entirely accurate, to show how Indigenous people and lands are exploited, expropriated and repossessed in order to secure exclusively settler forms of dwelling. The theft and transfer of Indigenous land to advance the colonial project involves the erasure of Indigenous dwelling by displacing the relations that scaffold Indigenous dwelling—this does not have to involve material dislocation. One tendency in describing the geography and socio-political context of a postcolonial rather than postcolonizing housing context is to locate housing struggles in settings that have transitioned from the colonial rule to a present-day situation of self-rule. But this belies a fundamental understanding in postcolonial theory that colonial relations and authorities are still concerns for today, and that in most settings beset by imperial incursion, the colonizers never left.

Postcolonial housing is not a well-defined field, if indeed it can be identified at all. And so defining the parameters of postcolonizing housing studies is fraught and always incomplete. One central insight for housing scholars is that for Indigenous and migrant communities that dwell in a subordinate relationship with colonial power, policies that govern housing and its relations are always potential tools to sever relations between people and place. Housing is a life-giving infrastructure so central to people's ideas of themselves and their place in the world that radical adjustments to its function jeopardizes its utility as a place for assembling social and cultural resources needed to live a good life. Postcolonizing housing policy must be understood as always having the power to keep unassimilated bodies moving, or stuck in ruins, with the effect of displacing relations. When deployed nefariously, housing policy ensures that settlers can manipulate the relations of others, have the freedom to put down their own new relations, or to maintain their tenuous embeddedness in place. The totality of this ensures that settler futures figure large in the imagination of tomorrow, to ensure a place for whiteness and bodies that complement settler sensibilities.

With these understandings, the next section describes how Indigenous practices of dwelling are represented as unviable and dysfunctional through the use of sexual paternalism and neoliberal economics. I then move to describe the settler-state logic of abandonment and elimination inherent in housing policies, before outlining how the intent of dispossession and displacement is not limited to the case study I describe, but bleeds out into other jurisdictions of the settler state.

REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIGENOUS DWELLING

At the core of postcolonial critique is the status and distribution of authority to make meanings and maintain discourses that become popular imaginaries of peoples and places. Who has the authority to speak, how do audiences recognize those voices and what does this say about the

impact that colonial regimes of knowledge have on directing the content and discourse of these narratives?

Rubibi (aka Broome) is popularly imagined as an idyllic tourist town in the tropical north-west of Australia. Closer to Jakarta than to Canberra, it is remote and hard to reach for southern city dwellers, especially during the wet season when unsealed roads flood and the number of incoming flights taper off. It functions economically as the administrative centre and tourism gateway to the Kimberley region, a place known for its natural beauty. Its stable population of 15,000 swells to 50,000 during tourist season. With steep rents, overcrowding and a 17-year waitlist for public housing, the public parks, beaches and coastal dune systems host a hypervisible itinerant Aboriginal population. Despite being eminently photographable, racialized poverty is a jarring public presence that disrupts the salience of the popular tourism imaginaries. Indeed, the disparities between Indigenous and settler (white) populations in Australia are profound. Indigenous people in Australia are among the most incarcerated peoples globally (Gibson, 2021), and youth suicide rates in remote regions are said to be the highest in the world (Coroner's Court of Western Australia, 2019). There are massive gaps in life expectancy, health outcomes, employment, income, household overcrowding and homelessness (Australia Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2020).

Statistics such as these play a major role in constructing damaging and stigmatizing stereotypes, and crystalize in narratives of decline and deficit. Aboriginal discourses of decline have legitimated racialized invasions into remote Indigenous lands since 1788. These paternalistic interventions have intensified in the past two decades in the wake of the self-determination era of the 1970s, with policy postures and attitudes toward Aboriginal livelihoods taking on increasing neoliberal and utilitarian logics (Strakosch, 2016). In the Northern Territory during 2007, the Commonwealth government declared a State of Emergency that facilitated the *Northern Territory Emergency Response* (hereafter 'the Intervention')—a militarized intervention that suspended the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and certain rights for Indigenous people. Through manipulation of the legislature and public policy, the Intervention violated the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, enabled via hyper-negative representations of remote Aboriginal communities as failed societies (Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015). Anthropologist Jon Altman (2007, p. 9) argues that in laying the groundwork for the Intervention, negative portrayals of remote Aboriginal lifestyles were critical:

> When proclaimed on 21 June the 'national emergency' was about child sex abuse, but very quickly—in July and into August—it came to focus on the issue of dysfunction. Then on 29 August, in his first visit to the 'national emergency jurisdiction', the Prime Minister indicated that the intervention was actually about mainstreaming or normalizing remote living Indigenous Australians.

Since the Intervention, there have been ongoing Darwinian experiments in the quarantining of welfare payments based upon behavioural outcomes such as school attendance rates of children. The rollout of cashless welfare cards—formulated by mining-magnate billionaire Andrew Forrest—has placed further government controls on the economic and social lives of remote-living Aboriginal people. The Intervention marked a shift away from self-determination to a more forceful form of assimilation driven by a fixation on sameness. The creation of a discourse which represented remote communities as failed and in decline facilitated the re-emergence of paternalistic Indigenous policy (McCallum & Waller, 2013). Since the Intervention, successive governments have embarked on a 'project to eliminate the lifeways

of the people who live on Aboriginal homelands' which has been directly compared to the process of genocide (Altman, 2017, p. 31).

Through discourses of decline, interventionist homeland and housing policies can be viewed as a representational mode of debasement that relies upon depictions of Aboriginal homelands and housing as dysfunctional. At a regional level in Western Australia, interventionism peaked during February 2011, when the Western Australia government declared the closure of a remote Aboriginal community in East Kimberley called Oombulgurri. Utilizing a mix of economic-rational and moralistic language, then-Premier Colin Barnett claimed that the Oombulgurri community was no longer 'viable', citing sexual abuse (Solonec & Seery, 2015). The community was forced to be abandoned by the residents, and in 2014 it was announced by the Premier that a further 150 remote communities may close. The closures were officially announced in response to the cessation of Commonwealth funding for essential service delivery in remote Aboriginal communities. The locations of closures were publicly withheld, effectively issuing every community in the state with a threat of displacement and dispossession—the state abandoning its responsibility to provide infrastructure to facilitate dwelling.

The controversy and threat appeared to be a funding issue between levels of government, yet Premier Barnett changed the terms of the closures by citing sexual and social dysfunction in an official parliamentary speech:

> We are seeing sexually transmitted diseases in children aged from 10 to 14. How many cases of gonorrhoea are there in the wider community? There are none—not a single case. If members opposite think that I as Premier […] will sit by and let those children be abused, they are so wrong. We will not do that. (Western Australia, 2015, p. 1889)

Echoing the rhetoric that preceded the 2007 Northern Territory Intervention, substance and sexual abuse became the core narrative in constructing remote Aboriginal livelihoods as morally wanting and in need of reform. The redistributive responsibility to provide basic housing infrastructure and essential services became contingent upon conformity. In what was a crystallizing moment during the controversy, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott reinforced the conflation of citizenship with economic sameness, stating in relation to the closure of remote Aboriginal communities:

> What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices if those lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have. (March, 2015)

Within days, a social movement emerged and scaled-up rapidly across the country with the aid of social media. From remote communities in the Kimberley region, to large urban centres of the southern colonial administration, the activism grew from quiet acts of resistance to large public demonstrations in Australian cities. This campaign—guided under the moniker 'stop the forced closure of remote Aboriginal communities'—was Indigenous-led 'to support all Aboriginal communities in Australia to remain in their homelands and on Country & enable them to determine their own futures' (SOSBlakAustralia, cited in Kelly, 2018, p. 61).

The campaign encountered much criticism in the mainstream media's dominant political commentary. Much of the public discourse about Aboriginality, including their land rights and lifestyle choices, has so far come to focus on negative accounts of social problems and dysfunction, evidence of a need to 'close the gap' (Gillespie, 2012). At a time when the public

gaze was again turned upon remote Aboriginal modes of dwelling, the national broadcaster ABC framed the issue through a program called *Remote Hope*. The exposé visited communities in the Kimberley region that are under threat, concluding that they found 'grinding poverty, no jobs and little hope' and 'appalling stories of sexual abuse and neglect'; but in hopeful terms, they also found 'community leaders determined to tackle the dysfunction' (Whitmont, 2015, n.p.).

Initially, the proposal to cease providing essential services—including schools and policing—was a response to the discontinuation of the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery*. This agreement shared the responsibility of facilitating significant reform in the provision of housing for Aboriginal people in remote communities, including through addressing overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortage (Council of Australian Governments, 2008). The original rhetoric of the debate concerned how to fund the fiscal black hole that this partnership agreement had previously filled. The justification given for refusing essential services and closing communities changed over a period of weeks from late 2014 to early 2015, marking the junction of economic necessity and moral imperative.

SETTLER-STATE LOGICS OF ELIMINATION

Parity between Indigenous peoples and mainstream settler society has become a common benevolent trope in Australian policy discourse over recent decades, particularly in 'closing the gap' between health, social and economic outcomes (Kowal, 2015). In the production of rhetoric around lifestyle choices, the backdrop of parity is effectively weaponized in neoliberal terms—that lifestyle choices of remote Aboriginal communities are responsible in producing gaps and deficits in terms of morality and budget sheets. Partially driving these representations is a view of remote northern Australia as economically untapped, where dwellings sit above 'underutilised assets' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, p. 85).

Remote Aboriginal communities and lands are concentrated in regions of Australia that are rich in gas reserves, close to offshore drilling platforms, and have been host to primary industries since colonization, primarily pearling, mining and pastoralism. In the *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, the region is characterized as 'the next frontier' for economic development that 'feeds back into jobs and opportunities in Sydney, Melbourne and all major Australian cities' (2015, p. 12). Aboriginal people are characterized by 'poverty, have poor educational and health outcomes and few employment opportunities' (2015, p. 25). On the one hand, the economic potential of Aboriginal lands is inflated, whilst on the other, Aboriginal livelihoods are devalued and problematized. Policies such as this mark the convergence of national economic policies and Indigenous policy, echoing Abbott's lifestyle choice rhetoric: 'it is apparent that if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are to participate equally in the development of the North these fundamental measures of poverty and disadvantage need to be addressed' (2015, p. 25).

As argued by Tess Lea (2020) in her ethnography of Indigenous housing and infrastructure policy in the Northern Territory, the settler-state solution to poverty, disadvantage and socially constructed sexual dysfunction is to rearrange the conditions of Indigenous dwelling on their own land, or to displace communities completely. Through the imbrication of Indigenous policy with economic development, neoliberal logics applied to Aboriginal communities

and lands are diminishing the ability to enact alternative ways of being-in-the-world. The closure of communities in remote Australia creates imagined zones of abandonment that force Aboriginal livelihoods to be evaluated against a set of criteria determined by neoliberal economics (Povinelli, 2011). In conversation with Harvey's (2003) Marxist-derived *accumulation by dispossession*, the assessment of Aboriginal communities in terms of economic participation might be thought of as *accumulation by abandonment*—whereby the windfall of withdrawing infrastructure for dwelling is incentivized by a speculative profit in extractive industries. Altman (2015) contends that it is precisely these policies of abandonment characterized by a refusal to provide services to remote Aboriginal communities that constitute an advancement of the settler-colonial project.

With the advancement of a blended economic and Indigenous policy approach, large industrial development projects have become synonymous with Indigenous advancement within official discourse. The Western Australia state government attributes the failure of large economic developments, reliant on the extraction of natural/mineral resources, to a failure in Indigenous policy, particularly housing. In 2009, a key state development project was proposed to establish an industrial facility to process liquefied natural gas piped from offshore reserves near Rubibi/Broome to Walmadany/James Price Point. Said to be the world's largest onshore gas processing hub, the project failed after four years of intense Aboriginal-led activism. Barnett, in relation to the failure of the James Price Point gas processing hub, stated that:

> I've failed to get the project […] onto James Price Point, I've failed to create the thousands of jobs for West Australians, I've failed to create the opportunity for West Australian industry. And, most important, I have failed the Aboriginal people; they placed their trust in me and I've let them down. (Macmillan & Ceranic, 2013)

For the past 20 years, Western Australia has been one the highest performing mining resource economies in world, fuelled primarily by the extraction of iron ore in the Pilbara region. Since a global downturn in the price of iron ore, as well as the industry moving from construction to production phases, the 'discovery' of offshore and shale rock gas reserves in the Kimberley region have intensified the government's economic ambitions through resource extraction. Parallel renderings of Aboriginal spaces as economically unsustainable and unable to function without the aid of government intervention contributes to white fantasies of Indigenous decline. Wendy Shaw (2007, p. 74), in researching the gentrification of the urban Aboriginal enclave of Redfern, notes that discourses representing Aboriginal spaces in decline form part of a 'whitewish' fantasy that naturalizes 'a general belief in the inevitability of its demise'. The narrative construction of remote Aboriginal lifestyles as morally deficient spaces of sexual and alcohol abuse has aided in producing a discourse of decline that contributes to the imagination of a post-Aboriginal economically productive remote Australia. The need for economic investment coupled with the fiction of Aboriginal decline in the remote Kimberley has enlarged the capacity of corporate-state interests to exploit resource development opportunities.

A lack of any discernible gain in health, social and economic outcomes for remote communities has also hastened the need for economic policies to replace housing policies. In the decade since the *closing the gap* policy era started, the state self-appraisal noted a complete absence of progress across key indicators and targets (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016). Policy reform since the Commonwealth's *Indigenous Advancement Strategy* launched in 2013 has been a source of growing concern and scepticism among Aboriginal people, and indeed, there have been numerous failings in the delivery of resources to Indigenous commu-

nities reported in recent years (Muir et al., 2013). The compounding failures in this area has prompted the emergence of a distorted colonial project in the neoliberal age. Altman (2015, p. 12) states:

> Having failed to deliver anything concrete, the government is now looking to reignite the settler-colonial project to eliminate native societies so vividly described by Patrick Wolfe. With physical elimination through civil war not possible in the present, a more insidious strategy has become evident in the wider arena of Indigenous affairs.

Patrick Wolfe's (2006) 'logic of elimination' is inherent to the settler-colonial project, and neoliberal approaches to Indigenous dwelling ontologies are expressed in housing policy as methods for the gradual elimination of difference. Increased public resources have been directed into the development of northern Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015) where the Indigenous population is projected to increase to half the overall population by 2040, compared to southern cities where they will remain at 2 or 3 per cent (Langton, 2013).

PRACTICES OF DISPOSSESSION AND DISPLACEMENT

The Intervention in the Northern Territory resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous people through both a militarized upheaval of entire communities and the introduction of coercive support arrangements. Support from government was offered on a conditional basis with communities forced into situations where the transfer of land titles became a contingent factor. Housing policy was centred as a solution to the manufactured decline, as Lea (2020, p. 68) states:

> Housing, together with systems of collective land tenure, was positioned at the heart of the dysfunctions wracking Aboriginal communities, causing everything from moral debauchery to welfare lassitude, unemployment to illiteracy.

According to Indigenous people directly impacted by these policies, the Intervention constituted a radical incursion into the livelihoods of remote communities, reproducing them as refugees on their own lands. The Karrabing Film Collective, a coalition of Indigenous grassroots filmmakers in the Northern Territory, highlight the ongoingness of settler-colonialism through land and housing governance, stating that their collective works emerged:

> from the violence of contemporary settler colonialism, following the [Intervention], which enhanced government and police control over the indigenous people in the Northern Territory in Australia. The government intervention caused riots and upheavals, as well as the displacement of entire communities. (Karrabing Film Collective, 2020)

Similarly, residents of the community of Oombulgurri in Western Australia were evicted and displaced. The Oombulgurri community was located in the far north-east of the state, in the Forrest River region of the Kimberley. Occupation of the area pre-dates the European invasion, and the Balanggarra people of the region have a long history of resisting assimilation, often resulting in direct conflict and violent intervention by the colonial state. In 1913, an Anglican mission was established, and in 1926, after years of conflict and tension, the police led a massacre of potentially hundreds of Indigenous people (Solonec & Seery, 2015). The

Anglican mission closed in 1968 and in 1973 Indigenous people from the nearby township of Wyndham relocated to establish Oombulgurri as a self-managed autonomous community.

In 2008, findings from a recent sexual assault taskforce (Operation Sheepshank), along with four suicides in the community, prompted Premier Barnett to introduce a blanket alcohol ban over the community with no support systems in place. He then shut down essential services like the grocery store, school and medical centre, forcing families and people needing care to relocate (Bradley et al., 2015). Following this initial wave of withdrawing essential services, power and water were also cut off and the community was given two days' notice to leave or be forcibly removed. Amnesty International said of the intervention that 'residents were victims of forced eviction as defined by international law' (2014). Families were made homeless overnight and Cissy Gore-Birch, spokesperson for the former residents, suggested 'that the closing down of Oombulgurri had more to do with mining and development agendas than it did with anti-social behaviour' (Bradley et al., 2015, p. 27).

The Intervention and eviction of Oombugurri were fresh in the minds of Kimberley people and indeed of people who live in remote Aboriginal communities around the country. When Premier Barnett announced the closure of communities in 2014, and Prime Minister Abbott characterized the presence of those communities as lifestyle choices, the groundwork for displacement had been established in the minds of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. What followed was a campaign of negative representation and a narrative of moral debauchery, effectively issuing an eviction notice to all communities. After three nationally coordinated protest events in March, May and June of 2015, the state government backed away from the proposal and initiated a consultation roadshow, sending Department of Regional Development bureaucrats to remote regions to initiate dialogue with communities (Regional Services Reform Unit, 2017). The controversy subsided, and in 2017 the policy of community closures was abandoned after Barnett's political party was voted out of government.

Whilst threat of eviction is commonly invoked in regard to remote Aboriginal housing, and indeed physical acts of displacement and dispossession have been consistently carried out by colonial governments since initial colonization, these logics to housing and dwelling impact upon racialized non-Aboriginal people too. In urban centres of the colony such as Sydney and Melbourne, displacement of low-income precariously housed populations—that are more likely to consist of Indigenous, people of colour, ethnic migrants, former asylum seekers and women—is becoming an ever more frequent experience. Whilst the conditions of Indigenous belonging and sovereignty are unique to Indigenous people, for others who do not neatly fit the image of the able-bodied (often propertied) white male in Australian society, the logics of settler-colonialism diminish their self-determined capacity to dwell.

Prior to federation in 1901, housing in the Australian colonies was typified by a gulf between privileged and austere living conditions, with overcrowding and poor health dominating unemployed and working-class households with private landlords. Private landlords (propertied settlers) enjoyed a legally privileged position in society and lending behaviours locked the underclasses out of secure, safe and clean housing—a trend that continues today. Reformers were concerned with a growing political consciousness evident in the labour movement among the poor working-class as well as having concerns about public health, and so set about addressing the slum conditions of Australian cities. The town planning movement, influenced by ideas in the garden city movement in Britain, became a prominent mode of social reform in these early years of Australian federation, and its use is ubiquitous today.

The period immediately after World War II was the most industrious nation-building moment in Australian history and was responsible for building a significant proportion of today's national public housing infrastructure. Public housing was positioned in the Australian housing mix as a small share of total housing stock, but an appropriate tenure type for ordinary working-class citizens. Most houses were built to accommodate families on quarter-acre plots, apart from in Victoria and New South Wales, which instead built large high-rise apartment blocks, medium-density estates, and detached homes on small inner-city blocks as part of a slum renewal response to the deterioration of inner-urban neighbourhoods (Freestone, 2010). At its peak in 1966, public housing totalled 8 per cent of all dwellings in Australia (Hayward, 1996).

But since this time, public housing as a proportion of overall stock has been in decline and the demographics of tenants has shifted from working-class white populations to poor communities of colour that have often been displaced from arenas of war as refugees. In Melbourne, as well as in other major cities, the stock is undermaintained, ageing and unable to meet a rapidly expanding demand, which has catalyzed a broad renewal agenda (Kelly & Porter, 2019). About 16 inner-city estates are currently under renewal in Melbourne, and this will result in the forced displacement of those communities, who are primarily African and Asian migrants (Carrasco et al., 2021). The rationale offered by government is that these communities are hindered by concentrated disadvantage, and that social mix—by deconcentrating these communities and introducing private housing to sites—is needed to elicit better outcomes for those communities.

Social mix policies are nationally and internationally popular, providing social disadvantage as a justification for demographically restructuring racialized communities by displacing those residents and enabling wealthier residents to take their place. As housing policies, they rely on constructing a moral landscape of 'role modelling via propinquity […] as a means of changing the behaviour of social housing residents' (Doney et al., 2013, p. 404), effectively assimilation by housing policy. Capp et al. (2021, p. 2) state that:

> By facilitating mix, poor communities will, in theory, share in the resources of other more affluent groups, reducing class-based and racial anxiety. The idea was central to early colonial socio-spatial arrangements in Australia.

CONCLUSION

Whilst contemporary housing contexts share many similarities, particularly when considered through the lens of finance and flows of capital, a comparative approach to housing studies requires an acknowledgement that there is a wide diversity of housing experiences. These experiences are spatio-temporally contingent and change radically when accounting for intersecting social differences and how these differences encounter power. Housing scholarship is largely aware of the importance of contingency, and in contexts where colonialism's aftermath is continually grappled with, a postcolonial theoretical lens seems like an appropriate fit. But the empirical reality of formerly (and currently) colonized places also differs significantly. The postcolonial place has a different relationship to migrancy than that of the settler-colonial place—the colonizers did not leave and the dispossessed continue to retain sovereignty, despite uneven power relations. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Patrick Wolfe have argued,

postcolonial thought often fails to account for the colonial relationship to migrancy and Indigenous sovereignty.

Following Moreton-Robinson, this chapter presents a way for attending to the housing question in a *postcolonizing housing* context. These are places where power relations are saturated by the ubiquitous knowledge of Indigenous dispossession, but where historical violence is disavowed and ongoing forms of dispossession obscured in plain sight. These are also places where the ontological connection and belonging of Indigenous peoples to land is omnipresent, despite the overbearing presence of settler institutions and politics. Underpinning housing experiences in postcolonizing places are three fundamental conditions: the dominating representation of Indigenous and diasporic practices of dwelling as unviable and dysfunctional; a settler-state pursuit of logics of abandonment and elimination of alternative modes of dwelling; and the dispossession of marginal populations of the rights and resources they require to dwell. We can apply these in different degrees to almost every housing context that is based on extractive logics, rather than those centred on the utility of dwelling. There is an extractive logic at play in non-colonial places that share traits of these conditions. They can be understood as logics that work through policy domains that are not neatly contained in the housing portfolios of ministers, secretaries and policy makers. All social and public policy in postcolonizing places plays a part in facilitating the extractive logics of the settler state and requires Indigenous dispossession to do so.

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