

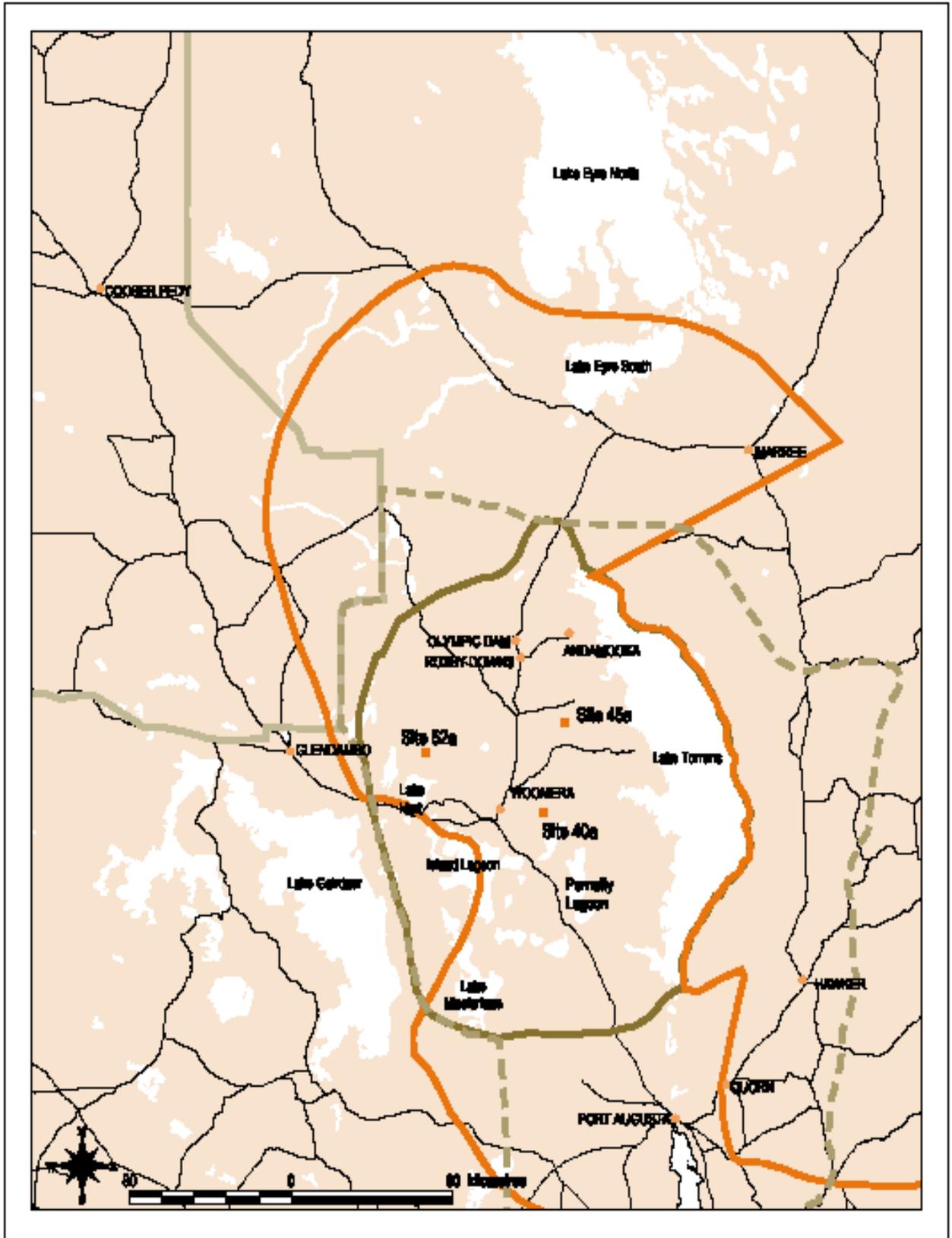
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White Fellas Owning the Land Black Fellas Belonging to the Land

Mapping Institutionalised Racism in Australia

List of Acronyms

EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
WPA	Woomera Prohibited Area
IDF	Ideological-Discursive Formations
MR	Member Recourses



- Towns
- Potential Recreatory Sites
- Roads
- Salt lakes
- 8C203 - Kuyni
- 8C257 - Antjarinja Native Title Claim
- 8C264 - Barngala Native Title Claim
- 8C262 - Kolatpa Native Title Claim

FIGURE 11.2
Native Title claims of
August 2001

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1 Introduction

Even though there is a certain degree of acknowledgement about the history of colonisation and the ownership claims of traditional land from indigenous people, access to land and the environment is not a privilege everybody can benefit from today. Access to resources and the holding of dominant perceptions about the environment is very much about power.

The western world today is accumulating huge amounts of nuclear waste and governments are trying to find ways of storing this waste in the safest possible way. The storage has come to be one of the big issues for indigenous people in various countries since their traditional land is often targeted for the use as repositories. This often results in confrontation between the traditional landowners of previously isolated areas and the advocates of nuclear development. In the reports promoting the use of indigenous land there has rarely been a focus on the impact of nuclear waste on indigenous people. Marginalisation and dispossession of indigenous groups through nuclear development has continued and in this essay I will look deeper into the structures that allow a new form of colonisation to control the life of the Aboriginal people in the South Australian desert.

Mapping the nuclear landscape opens space for critical narratives to emerge, what constitutes objectivity, power, racism and cultural marginalization. It provides an avenue to explore how culture and politics transform “nature”. The zones of sacrifice that comprise the local landscapes can be pieced together to reveal regional, national and global patterns of deterritoriality. What is seen as unusable, sparsely populated, arid geographic space is used as a dumping ground to allow more powerful regions to continue their present form of energy production. Nuclear colonialism creates a relationship of exploitation between the core and periphery (Kuletz 1998:8).

1.1 Question and objective of the research

Does the National Radioactive Waste Repository Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) contain a racist discourse, and if it does, what are the features and reasons for the discourse formation?

I want to support the Aboriginal movement against the dispossession of their land. The aim of the thesis is to describe the construction of the structures in the draft EIS, to show how certain discourses and meanings systematically are privileged

1.2 Outline

In this very first chapter I will introduce my theory, methodology and empirical material. The following chapter is presenting the background context, the history of Australia and the difference in how the traditional Aboriginal culture and the culture of the colonisers relates to the land and ecology. This chapter also contains an introduction to the term terra nullis (empty land) and the conquest of traditional indigenous land in Australia. The background context partly serves as a guide to the analysis.

In chapter 3 I will describe the current political context and give some details on the proposed repository to make the reading of the analysis easier. The last two chapters

(analysis and conclusion) are both relating to the earlier presented material and are the major focus of the essay.

1.3 Theory

I will use discourse analysis as the method and the theoretical inspiration mainly comes from Norman Faircloughs development of the critical discourse analysis, but I will also refer to other discourse theorists.

There are four premises keeping the field of discourse analysis together: First the researcher must adapt a critical view on knowledge, there is no objective knowledge, our knowledge and views of the world are products of our ways of categorizing the world. Secondly the researcher must recognize the importance of a historical and cultural context. Views of the world and identities change over time. The theory is anti-essentialist, the social world is constructed socially and there is no natural character, same thing is to apply on humans. Thirdly there is a connection between knowledge and social processes, knowledge is reached in social interaction, where common truths are constructed. Fourth and last, there is a connection between knowledge and social action. Different views of the world will lead to different social action and the social construction will therefore lead to concrete effects (Winther & Phillips. 2000:7ff).

Language is the key to social reality, it is through language that the representations of reality are constructed; it is through the discourse the physical world gains value. Language is not a neutral tool for communication and knowledge production, the language holds certain, already established, values and code-systems. Stories and texts can be seen as different ways of interpreting reality and some socially established models favour interpretations of reality in a way that excludes other models. Established models are therefore first of all a question of the power to define problems and solutions (Winther & Phillips. 2000:13f, de los Reyes 2001:12).

My analysis contains elements from post-colonial theory. Post-colonial studies stand at the intersection of debates about race, colonialism, gender, politics and language. The elements of post-colonial analysis increasingly makes clear the nature and impact of inherited colonial power relations, and their continuing effect on modern global culture and politics, the structures of power established by the colonizing process remain pervasive, though often hidden in cultural relations (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998:1).

1.3.1 Race as a social construction

Discourses are historical constructions, which in different situations and environments give meaning and legitimacy to hierarchies. In a social constructionist analysis, race is not a self-evident and natural category. Race is created in the interaction between people and is a historically grounded social construction, dynamic and shifting. Varied social understandings of racial identities coexist and compete within the same social space; the discursive processes are complex and unstable (Weedon 1987:21, de los Reyes 2000:113, Morris and Cowlshaw 1997:3, Nobles 2000:11). The meaning we give to ethnicity will therefore be different in different social and historical contexts.

In this essay I will make no difference between cultural- or biological racism. To speak about Aboriginality is to enter a labyrinth full of trapdoors. The moment the question about who or what is Aboriginal is asked, a historical landscape is entered, full of essential and timeless truths, which have been set in place by self-professed experts and authorities all too ready to define the meaning of Aboriginality. As with this study, my interest is in the way race serves power relations, rather than in the concept of race per se.

There is no way for me to define indigenous Australians, but I do recognise peoples right to self-determination and the right to self-definition. This right includes the right to inherit a collective identity, and to transform that identity creatively according to the self-defined aspirations. “It must include the freedom to live outside the cage created by other peoples’ images and projections” (Dodson 2003:28ff).

Seeing race as a social construction I still want to acknowledge the occasions in which strategical essentialism has been successfully mobilized for anti-racism or anti-sexism, and those frequent occasions where successful anti-racist practice has relied strongly upon common-sense phenotypical characterizations without deconstructing these first. Cultural identity often gets constructed and cultural change often initiated at the borders between different ideological systems – on the borderlands between, for instance, Aboriginals and non Aboriginal scientists/politicians, where opposition requires cultural identification. On the other hand, borders are never static or absolute, and are always permeable at highly contested sites such as the south Australian desert, opening the way for cultural change through confrontation and interaction (Kuletz 1998:142, Werherell & Potter 1992:71).

1.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Political and economic structures are constructed in historical contexts and favour specific groups. The aim of the critique is to describe and interfere in the construction of these structures, to show how certain discourses and meanings systematically are privileged. The aim of the critical researcher is to demonstrate how some dominant discourses marginalize others (Alvesson 2000:159f).

Norman Faircloughs Critical Discourse Analysis is about language and power, or more precisely about connections between language use and unequal relations of power. According to Fairclough there is no external relationship between language and society, but an internal and dialectic relationship. Linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways that are determined socially and they have social effects. Even when people are mostly conscious of their own individuality and think themselves to be cut off from social influences they still use language in ways which are subject to social convention (Fairclough 2001:19ff).

Social phenomena are linguistic in the sense that language activity that goes on in social contexts (as all language activity does) is not merely a reflection or expression of social processes and practices, it is a *part* of those processes and practices (Fairclough 2001:19).

1.3.3 Common sense, ideology, racism and power

According to Teun Van Dijk it is within the study of discourse that we need to examine the role of text and talk in the social, political and cultural structures and processes that define systems of ethnic and racial dominance of white groups over minorities. Van Dijk points out that the logic of these relationships is relatively straightforward; firstly the white dominant group is able to reproduce its abuse of power through an integrated system of discriminatory practices and sustaining ideologies and other social cognitions. Secondly, parts of the discriminatory practices are directly enacted by text and talk, for example, by derogation, intimidation, inferiorization, and exclusion in everyday conversations, institutional dialogues, letters, evaluative reports, laws and many other forms of institutional text and talk directed to minority groups and their members. Thirdly and last the social cognitions that construct minorities are (re)produced to maintain the framework that supports discriminatory actions in the first place. Whereas discriminatory acts may be verbal or nonverbal, influencing the social minds of white group members is mainly discursive: majority group members often speak and write about minorities, formulating and communicating personal and socially shared opinions, attitudes, and ideologies (Van Dijk 1993:97). I am going to use Van Dijk's theoretical framework as a complement to Fairclough's, even though, in many ways, they are cross sectional.

Discourses, in Foucault's work, are ways of constituting knowledge. Discourses constitute the unconscious and conscious mind of the subject, which they seek to govern. The most powerful discourses in our society have firm institutional bases, in law, for example, or in medicine, social welfare, education and in the organization of family and work (Weedon 1987:109). Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions, which directly or indirectly legitimise existing power relations. Practices that appear to be universal and commonsensical often originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and have become naturalized. Because these discourses sustain unequal power relations, they are functioning ideologically. Ideological power, the power to project one's practices as universal and common sense, is a significant complement to economic and political power (Fairclough 2001:27).

Ideological common sense is common sense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power. Common-sense assumptions also consolidate solidarity relations among members of a particular social grouping, assumptions that are often taken for granted - there's no point in spelling out what everyone assumes. But taking so much for granted is also an important sign that you "belong". Ideology is most effective when it is least visible. If it becomes obvious that a particular aspect of common sense is sustaining power inequalities at someone's expense, it ceases to be common sense, and may cease to have the capacity to sustain power inequalities, i.e. to function ideologically (Fairclough 2001:70f). Van Dijk has developed the concept of mental models, which is in large to compare with Fairclough's concept of common sense. Van Dijk argues that even personal, unique models of an event may have strong social dimensions. Often you construct your mental model through reading newspapers and television news reports, you share your

knowledge with others. Conversely, scripts and attitudes are developed by generalizing and abstracting from those model fragments we share with others (Van Dijk 1993:99). Basically, the enactment of social power entails (more or less legitimate or illegitimate) social control over others. This control applies to the range of possible actions and cognitions of others: actors that are more powerful have the means and resources to influence the actions or the minds of the less powerful. However, because actions are also cognitively based (on intentions, that is, on mental models of future activities), we may assume that, with the exception of the exercise of bodily force, most forms of power enactment first of all control the minds of people. Since mind control is typically one of the goals and consequences of text and talk, systematic discourse analysis also allows us to examine the detailed enactment of power and power abuse, and hence dominance, ethnic dominance and racism (Van Dijk 1993:100).

According to Fairclough, social institutions contain diverse ideological-discursive formations (IDF). These formations are associated with different groups within the institution and one of them is usually dominant. Each IDF is a sort of speech community with its own discourse norms. Institutional subjects are constructed, in accordance with the norms of an IDF, in subject positions whose ideological underpinnings they may be unaware of. A characteristic of a dominant IDF is the capacity to naturalize ideologies, to win acceptance for them as non-ideological common sense (Fairclough 1995:27). Not all whites participate equally in the discursive reproduction of racism. There are enormous variations in power amongst white people, to do with class, gender and other factors. White power none the less reproduces itself overwhelmingly because it is not seen as whiteness, but as normal (Dyer 1997:9f).

Certain elites have more power and control over access to the means of public communication, such as official propaganda, information campaigns, the mass media, advertising, scholarly publications, textbooks and so on. This implies that consensus is largely preformulated and persuasively conveyed, top-down, by politicians, bureaucrats, scholars, journalists, writers as well as corporate managers. According to Van Dijk their interest in the domain of ethnic affairs is largely similar, most of them belong to the white dominant group. There is also a lot of interaction and mutual influence of elite discourses: scholarly reports are being read by politicians and journalists, politicians in turn are being read by all other elites. It can be described as a routine communicative cooperation and coordination (Van Dijk 1993:102).

Racism needs to be seen as a series of ideological effects, with a flexible, fluid and varying content. Ideology is not a set of ideas which simply legitimate disadvantage, but part of the mechanisms which institute disadvantage. Ideology is crucial to the reproduction of society, working through various specific institutions and state apparatuses such as the media and the education system. Ideology, primarily, is a form of practical action, instantiated in policy statements, in the statements of political spin doctors, in memos, in speeches, in documents, in newspapers, in conversations, accounts, explanations, versions, anecdotes and stories. Ideologies are transformed from the categories and logic of thought into discursive practice. Discourse is an active, compelling and a pervasive part of social life (Werherell & Potter 1992:59ff).

The objective of a critical discourse analysis is to denaturalise these naturalized ideologies. Denaturalisation involves showing how social structures determine properties of discourse and how discourse in turn determines social structures (Fairclough 1995:27). There are also some commitments to discourse analysis to perform historical analyses and locate contemporary discourse within some changing social, economic and political context and to examine the power of ideology as rationalization and justification. This includes investigating in a more localized fashion how different political ideologies actively construct and create group and class alliances and new types of identity and subject positions. A question that should be answered in this essay is how ideological discourse turns into popular discourse, recognized as truth, and comes to work as effective rhetoric (Werherell & Potter 1992:61).

1.3.4 The concept of racism

Racism is all the processes which, intentionally or not, result in the (continued) exclusion of a subordinate group, commonly captured by the concept of institutional racism. Racism is also all those activities and practices which are intended to protect the advantages of a dominant group and/or to maintain or widen the unequal position of a subordinate group (Miles 1989:50f). The dominant and subordinate groups are usually designated by reference to skin colour, or culture. Racist ideology distorts social reality, reflects economic and political structures, and acts as a condition of existence shaping those structures.

There are circumstances where exclusionary practices arise from, and therefore embody, a racist discourse but which may no longer be explicitly justified by such a discourse. There are also circumstances where an explicitly racist discourse is modified in such a way that the explicitly racist content is eliminated, but other words carry the original meaning. What both circumstances have in common is that the racist discourse becomes silent, but is nevertheless embodied (or institutionalised) in the continuation of exclusionary practices or in the use of the new discourse. The concept of institutional racism refers to circumstances where racism is embodied in exclusionary practices or in a formally non-racialised discourse (Miles 1989:50f). Institutional or systematic racism is the discrimination against (or oppression of) certain groups of people by the institutions and systems which regulate our society: the legal and medical systems, the educational system, the public service. The institutions and systems often reflect the values and attitudes of the people who established and maintain them, the representatives of the dominant class in society (Zelinka 1996:12).

In Australia, discrimination based on race is abhorred as immoral, and Aboriginal people live in an unprecedented time of formal equality. But there are dramatic disparities in the conditions of life between Aboriginal people and others on every statistical indicator of social wellbeing. Yet within popular liberal discourse, race is treated as a conceptually flawed category and dismissed as if it no longer mattered. Racial consciousnesses, and identification by race, are named as problems rather than as the racialised effects of social and economic inequality. Racial tension is put down to rural rednecks, racial insults is said to steam from poor attitudes from footballers and police

discrimination said to be due to a few rotten apples in the force at the same time as bureaucratic indifference and public contempt are left unnamed and unacknowledged. But race matters because racism remains even though seldom expressed in its regressive forms of biological determinism, but appearing in new forms, for example, of cultural determinism (Morris & Cowlshaw 1997:5, Cowlshaw 1997:179).

Racist discourse has the effect of categorizing, allocating and discriminating between certain groups, it is discourse that justifies, sustains and legitimates those practices which maintain the power and dominance of white Australians (Werherell & Potter 1992:70). Racist discourse, in this essay, should be seen as discourse (of whatever content) that has the effect of establishing, sustaining and reinforcing oppressive power relations between those defined. I will study ideology per se, but the subject picked for this essay makes it visible that ideology per se leads to ideological practice and ideological outcomes.

1.4 Methodological stages

Fairclough distinguishes three dimensions, or stages, of critical discourse analysis Description, interpretation and explanation. **Description** is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text. Since I am not a linguistic and don't have the proper knowledge to perform a deep level analysis of the description dimension. I won't put emphasis on the description phase, even though I will make a simplified description of the text that I am going to analyse. Questions that I will ask in the description phase will put emphasis on vocabulary and textual structures. It has been necessary for me to modify Faircloughs methodology to fit my level of analysis but I will follow the basic structure of the two phases; **interpretation** and **explanation**.

The relationship between text and social structures is an indirect, mediated one. It is mediated first of all by the discourse that the text is a part of. The values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, where texts are produced and interpreted against a background of common-sense assumptions, which give textual features their values. These discourse processes, and their dependence on background assumptions, are the concern of the interpretation.

The relationship is mediated, secondly, by the social context of the discourse, because the discourses in which these values are embedded themselves only become real, socially operative, as parts of institutional and societal processes of struggle; and because the common-sense assumptions of discourse incorporate ideologies which accord with particular power relations. The relationship of discourses to processes of struggle and to power relations is the concern of the explanation (Fairclough 2001:117).

1.4.1 Interpretation

You can't simply decode an utterance because the researcher will go through the interpretation actively matching features of the utterance with representations stored in the long-term memory. These representations include shapes of words, grammatical forms of sentence, structures, the expected sequence of events in a particular situation type etc. Some of these representations/prototypes are linguistic and some are not, but Fairclough

refer collectively to them as member resources (MR). The comprehension is the outcome of interactions between the utterance being interpreted, and MR. The attention to the process of production and comprehension is essential to an understanding of the interrelations of language, power and ideology. MR are socially determined and ideologically shaped, though their common-sense and automatic character typically disguises that fact. Routine and un-selfconsciousness resort to MR in the ordinary business of discourse is a powerful mechanism for sustaining the relations of power that ultimately underlie them (Fairclough 2001:9). Interpretations are generated through a combination of what is in the text and what is in the interpreter. In the role of helping to generate interpretations, we may refer to MR as interpretative procedures (Fairclough 2001:118).

Fairclough summarizes the interpretation process in three questions:

1. Context: what interpretation(s) are participants giving to the situational and intertextual contexts?
2. Discourse type(s): what discourse type(s) are being drawn upon (hence what rules, systems or principles of phonology, grammar, sentence cohesion, vocabulary, semantics and pragmatics; and what schemata, frames and scripts)?
3. Difference and change: are answers to questions 1 and 2 different for different participants? and do they change during the course of the interaction? (Fairclough 2001:134)

1.4.2 Explanation

The objective in this phase is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them. The social determinations and effects are mediated by MR: that is, social structures shape MR, which in turn shape discourse; and discourses sustain or change MR, which in turn sustain or change structures. The social structures in focus are relations of power, and the social processes and practices in focus are processes and practices of social struggle, within a matrix of power relations.

The explanation phase can have two dimensions, depending on whether the emphasis is upon process or structure, upon process of struggle or upon relations of power. We can see discourses as parts of social struggles, and contextualize them in terms of these broader (non-discourse) struggles, and the effects of these struggles on structures. This puts the emphasis on the social effects of discourse, on creativity, and on the future. On the other hand, we can show what power relationships determine discourses; these relationships are themselves the outcome of struggles, and are established (and, ideally, naturalized) by those with power. This puts the emphasis on the social determination of discourse, and on the past - on the results of past struggles. Both social effects of discourse and social determinants of discourse should be investigated at three levels of social organization: the societal level, the institutional level, and the situational level.

We can take it as a working assumption that any discourse will have determinants and effects at all three levels, though the societal and institutional levels will be clearly distinct only for more institutional types of discourse, and that any discourse is therefore shaped by institutional and societal power relations, and contributes to institutional and societal struggles. In terms of effects, a discourse may reproduce its own social determinants and the MR which it draws upon with virtually no change, or it may to a greater or lesser degree contribute to their transformation (Fairclough 2001:135ff).

The stage of explanation involves a specific perspective on MR: they are seen specifically as ideologies. That is, the assumptions about culture, social relationships, and social identities, incorporated in MR, are seen as determined by particular power relations in the society or institution, and in terms of their contribution to struggles to sustain or change these power relations - they are seen ideologically. The following three questions can be asked in the explanation phase;

1. Social determinants: what power relations at situational, institutional and societal levels help shape this discourse?
2. Ideologies: what elements of MR which are drawn upon have an ideological character?
3. Effects: how is this discourse positioned in relation to struggles at the situational, institutional and societal levels? Are these struggles overt or covert? Is the discourse normative with respect to MR or creative? Does it contribute to sustaining existing power relations, or transforming them? (Fairclough 2001:138).

1.4.3 Limitations of the method

The processes of production and interpretation take place in people's heads, and it is therefore not possible to observe them as one might observe processes in the physical world. The only access that the analyst has to them is in fact through her capacity to herself engage in the discourse process she is investigating. In other words, the analyst must draw upon her own MR in order to explain how participants draw upon theirs. The analysis of discourse process is necessarily an insider's or a member's task. For me to analyse documents from a non-western community, lets say from the Australian indigenous community would have been almost impossible. I am a Swedish student in political science and the fact that I am going to analyse documents produced by the Australian government can be seen as a problem in terms of whether I will be able to interpret them without missing out on important background knowledge. I have drawn the conclusion, though, that this might complicated my work and that I have to be aware and look for background information more actively, still I don't think this problem will be overwhelming. Since I myself am a product of the same westernised knowledge system, that will make my task possible to go through with (Fairclough 2001:139).

Social subjects are, according to Fairclough, constrained to operate within the subject positions set up in discourse types, and are in that sense passive (Fairclough 2001:32). The discursive constitution of subjectivity addresses and constitutes the individual's mind. Subjectivity is most obviously the site of the consensual regulation of individuals. This occurs through the identification by the individual with particular

subject positions within discourses. The discursive constitution of subjectivity is a constantly repeated process, which begins at birth and is repeated continually through life (Weedon 1987:112). The lack of being able to explain any agency carried out by individual humans is a problem that all the different forms of discourse analysis shares (Winther & Phillips. 2000:93f).

1.5 Material

The Material that I am going to analyse is a Draft EIS produced by the Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training. The name of the report is National Radioactive Waste Repository Draft EIS and it is produced at federal level in Australia. The objectives of the EIS is to investigate the Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) as a potential area for housing a national near-surface repository for low level and intermediate level radioactive waste. One preferred and two alternative sites have been selected for the national repository, following a site selection process. All sites are located in desert country in central-north South Australia (Draft EIS 2002:1).

In 1993 the National Health and Medical Research Council released the Code of practice for the near-surface disposal of radioactive waste in Australia. The code includes 13 criteria designed to ensure that the selected site has characteristics that will facilitate appropriate isolation of waste and the long-term stability of the site. The criterias take into account a range of social, technical and environmental criteria, including:

- Rainfall, potential for flooding and site drainage
- Depth to the watertable, and fluctuations in the height of the watertable; suitability of groundwater for other purposes
- Geology, geochemical and geotechnical factors
- Seismic and volcanic activity
- Population density and projected population growth
- Potential of the land for other uses, or significant natural resources
- Access for transport
- Ecological, cultural or historical significance
- Land tenure (Draft EIS 2002:9)

The environmental impact assessment is required to define those elements of the environment that may be affected by a proposed development, and identify the significance, risks and consequences of the potential impacts of the proposal at a local, regional and national level.

As such the EIS will be assessed, and will be the basis for a decision by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. The aim of the Draft EIS is to provide:

- A source of information so that interested individuals and groups may gain an understanding of the proposal, the need for the proposal, the alternatives, the environment that it would affect, the impacts that may occur (including

those on the community and its safety) and the measures to be taken to minimise these impacts.

- A forum for public consultation and informed comment on the proposal.
- A framework in which decision makers may consider the environmental aspects of the proposal in parallel with economic, technical and other factors (Draft EIS 2002:7)

When I refer to the Department in the following text it will be synonymous with the Department of Education, Science and Training.

2 Background Context

Through the colonial expansion of Europe, racism spread widely over the world. Apart from its geographical spread, no other brand of racism (than the western) has developed such a flourishing mythology and ideology. In folklore, as well as in literature and science, racism is a deeply ingrained component of the West (Miles 1989:50f).

The first permanent European settlement in Australia began on 26 January 1788 when governor Arthur Phillip arrived from England with the First Fleet at Sydney Cove in Port Jackson. Outbreaks of violence between European colonists and the native Australians tended to occur in the frontier areas shortly after the initial wave of Europeans arrived. Aboriginal people refer to this period of colonialism as the “killing times” (Clarke 2003:189ff).

2.1 A history of racism

The term “European colonists” when used in relation to Australia during the eighteenth centuries refers to people who would have generally considered themselves to be English, Irish, Welsh, Cornish, Prussian, French or Scottish. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this term chiefly refers to “White Australians”, in other words people of European extraction who live in Australia and who do not link their identity to indigenous Australians (Clarke 2003:4). The term ‘Australian’ referred originally to the indigenous peoples of Australia, not to the settlers of 1788. The transformation in the meaning of the word was linked to a growing need to develop an identity for settlers who could never go ‘home’ to Europe. The transformation of meaning has had important results for Aboriginal Australians: They have lost the identification of themselves with their country while, through it, settler Australians have legitimated their own claim to Aboriginal land (Marcus 1997:29).

The history of racism is in large part intertwined with the history of colonization. Capitalist imperatives and needs for expansion resulted in British colonization in various areas of the world. British perceptions of colonized people were structured, however, by pre-existing racist ideologies. Concepts of race, and the very noticing of skin colour, are often collectively shared and disseminated as popular ideologies, partly because of the long history within western cultures of the elaboration, articulation and application of these ideas (Werherell & Potter 1992:18ff).

Over much of Australia the “discovery” of new lands by the colonisers was quickly followed by distinct waves of European settlement. The first wave was represented by the establishment of sheep and cattle stations, this was followed by phases of more intensive farming, and the establishment of towns and railway systems, eventually leading to urban development in some cases.

The first contact between colonisers and Native Australians is brutal in the extreme. By thinking of native Australians as sub-human, the colonisers legitimated the brutality with which they battled for control of the land. The intensity of physical violence inflicted on native Australians was severe and widespread. indigenous people across Australia found themselves under a system of formal and informal controls, which

deprived them of basic human rights, interfered in their domestic relationships and sought to destroy their culture. The different policies pursued by the white government regarding native Australians must be considered genocidal in terms of the United Nations Convention (Zelinka 1996:7). The age, when the British first occupied Australia, was characterised by the certainties that Christianity was the one true religion and that European civilisation was the pinnacle of human progress (Markus 1994:18). European missionaries and other officials attempted to mould Aboriginal people into an image of the European working class, by changing their appearance, restricting their movements, making them live in permanent houses, and by generally suppressing all forms of indigenous cultures. Eventually, Aboriginal people were encouraged to look and live like Europeans and much of the hunting and gathering knowledge was considered by the Europeans to be of little value to the “civilising” process (Clarke 2003:201).

The Aborigines Protection Acts 1909-43 placed all Aboriginal peoples under the protection of the Welfare Board, depriving them of the basic civil, political and economic rights, which were the birthright of all other Australians. Aboriginal people could not enter public places, such as government institutions or pubs, could not marry or move freely without permission, and in many cases could not vote. The assumption was that Aboriginal people were incompetent to look after their own affairs, they were seen as degenerates, drunkards and criminals unable to fulfill their status as social subjects. Aboriginal people were not even considered to be full citizens until 1967 (Clarke 2003:55).

Any person wishing to go outside the limited bounds of the definition had/have to give up their public Aboriginality. To be an Australian citizen, for a person of Aboriginal heritage, meant nothing less than becoming a white Australian with a black skin (Dodson 2003:35, Anderson 2003:45). Under the gaze of the coloniser, Aboriginality changed from being a daily practice to being a problem to be solved (Dodson 2003:27).

Indigenous resistance was either denied, absent or invisible in the discourse of Australian settlement and nationhood. The history of colonialism in Australia has primarily been told by white male historians, a story of white men and unhindered ‘settlement’ (Moreton-Robinson 2003:128).

2.2 Relationships to the land

In this chapter I will acknowledge some differences between traditional indigenous and non-indigenous approaches to land management, in doing this I still want to emphasise that there is no single over-arching Aboriginal point of view (motivations are both pragmatic and spiritual) and not one single point of view of the colonisers (Papadakis 1993:48f). My aim is to highlight some aspects of the relationship between human beings and nature and to present the main discourses within the societies of the original inhabitants and the colonisers. Traditional Native culture can be characterized in part as possessing and intersubjective relationship with nature, whereas the western scientific culture tends to separate the human (subject) and the nonhuman “other” (nature/object, Kuletz 1998:4)

Aboriginal cultures have never been static, but are vibrant and capable of changing in tune with the variable Australian landscape. The circumstances of two cultures coming into contact never results in the instantaneous absorption of one by the other. At some stage there is a period of accommodation resulting in a blending of ideas and practices, even if one culture over time gains the upper hand and becomes the dominant force. To suggest that there is an Aboriginal socioecology, or an Aboriginal ecological ethos, outside of the reality of this culturally synthetic world is both accurate and misleading. Traditional practices and beliefs – that is, those handed down from precontact times – can be as much a part of contemporary Aboriginal people as assimilated customs and beliefs (Kuletz 1998:208, Clarke 2003:209).

2.2.1 Aboriginal settlement

It is generally thought that humans first encountered the shores of Australia some time about 50,000 years ago, during a period of low sea level. The period in which Aboriginal people have lived in Australia is immense, providing ample time for biological and cultural adaptations to the landscape. The number of people who had lived in Australia before the arrival of European invaders in 1788 must number in the hundreds of millions (Clarke 2003:5ff).

The impact on the natural environment caused by indigenous Australians is probably far greater than has been widely assumed, but the romantic view of the relationship between Aboriginals and their environment is not totally without foundation. The relationship has been described as the longest and most successful conservation campaign in history because of the fact that they for tens of thousands of years was a part of the environment rather than destroyed it in the name of progress. Aboriginals exploited nature for food, weapons and tools, but overall a profound respect for natural surroundings were demonstrated, a surrounding that was imbued with symbolic meaning.

Papadakis describes how the landscape did not exist until it had been sung into existence and that there hardly is a rock or a creek in Australia that could not or had not been sung. This closeness to the landscape produced a considerably knowledge of the surroundings, something that hardly any of the white settlers recognised or appreciated. The natural world is perceived as possessing a level of intersubjectivity that the colonisers usually only granted to other humans (Papadakis 1993:47f, Clarke 2003:56, Kuletz 1998:192ff). The land is often expressed as synonymous to life. Land isn't simply a resource to be exploited. "It provides us with food and materials for life, but it also provides an identity and it must be looked after, both physically and spiritually" (Bayet-Charlton 2003:175).

While western Europeans often tend to think of themselves as separate from the "natural" world, many Aboriginal people consider that the social and physical aspects of their existence closely intermesh. Furthermore, many Aboriginal people believe that their spiritual ancestors have given social relevance to the landscape, imbuing it with their power and humanising it (Clarke 2003:15).

Depending on the look of the ecological areas different lifestyles were carried out through the continent before the European invasion. But even though the communities

were complex and differed from each other in many ways all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people held spiritual beliefs relating to why they existed and why their world was like it was. The indigenous Australians traditionally had a strong physical and spiritual bond with the Australian landscape through the Dreaming. “The dreaming lays down the laws concerning the accessing of resources from the environment. The environment relates directly to social organisation, kinship and social obligations, sacred law, offences against property and persons, marriage, and an individual’s relationship with the land” (Bayet-Charlton 2003:172). The land and the meaning behind it passes on information to each generation about how certain resources can be gained in different areas and how restriction and taboos apply to other areas. As a result of these checks and balances, sanctuaries occur through the environment where certain species can be reproduced without threat of destruction. It is the indigenous peoples’ duty to be custodians of the land. The humans have a responsibility for the well being of the land, the plants and animals upon which their livelihood depend (Bayet-Charlton 2003:173f, Kirk 1986:38, Clarke 2003:16).

Land ownership, access and use, are often considered priority number one for Australia’s indigenous people. Sometimes it is even considered that without land there is no base for the structure of Aboriginal culture. This is not the same as saying that Aboriginal people still are hunters and gatherers, the land has been dispossessed, but a lot of indigenous groups are looking to alternatives for land management that will enable them to meet traditional obligations (Bayet-Charlton 2003:175, Clarke 2003:31). As British crown land became alienated for sale in the newly proclaimed Australian colonies, the Aboriginal inhabitants became trespassers in their own clan territories. Many of the places the Europeans liked to settle and build upon, such as high ground near water sources, had been favoured camping grounds for Aboriginal people for hundreds of years. The middens built by Aboriginal cooking fires formed excellent foundations for building houses, and Europeans were drawn to many of the same places in the landscape that were held special by Aboriginal people (Clarke 2003:202).

In Australia many Aboriginal cultures survive to the present. Even in parts of Australia where cultural changes have been felt most keenly – in south eastern Australia – the descendants of pre-European Aboriginal groups maintain an identity. This in spite of twentieth century government policies of indigenous assimilation into the predominantly European community, and discouragement of Aboriginal lifestyles, customs and traditions (Clarke 2003:208ff).

2.2.2 White settlement

There was a vast difference between Aboriginals and Europeans in the early days of colonialism in terms of their impact on the environment and of the technologies they used to exploit it. Different discourses existed within the colonisers’ settlement, the relationship human-nature was influenced by romanticism, nationalism and scientific interests. But the far most dominant discourse was that of conquest, of dominating the natural environment (Papadakis 1993:47ff). The earth’s resources are represented in economic discourse as a natural endowment, a free gift of nature, which can be exploited

in order to create wealth. In rational economic doctrine, such exploitation is presented as a virtue; rip it up and ship it out and hence build capital for the nation (Robinson 1996:137).

The predominant vision of conquest and colonisation was influenced by a number of considerations. Australia served as an extension to the overburdened prison system in Britain and it probably served commercial as well as military, strategic and nationalistic purposes. The Europeans had little or no practical understanding of the bush and most of them regarded the new terrain as hostile and alien. The landscape was in many cases found unattractive and monotonous and according to the colonisers improvements were needed. Improvements were equal to production, to populate with sheep, cattle and civilised men.

During the time of settlement western philosophers argued in favour of the knowing human subject. The French philosopher Descartes summarized these thoughts in the sentence 'I think, therefore I am'. Human reason and human beings were placed in a superior position towards nature. Apart from the celebration of human reason, another significant strand in the development of European perceptions of nature is religion. The appeal in the book of Genesis for human beings to exercise 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that move upon earth' can represent the connection between the Judaeo-Christian tradition and a colonialist view

In the nineteenth century, the modification and destruction of nature proceeded at a rapid pace. Yet as far as most of the settlers were concerned, the changes were creative rather than destructive, leading to the improvement of material conditions of existence for large numbers of people (Papadakis 1993:50ff).

The Euro-centric work ethic held by the settlers dictated that the land must be toiled with your own sweat and the environment possessed, changed and exploited to its fullest extent. To the settlers [...] natural Australia was an uncouth waste. They were programmed to change, improve, dominate, exploit (Bayet-Carlton 2003:173).

The European imperialists imagined the new lands, peoples, flora and fauna as the primitive precursors of their own divinely ordered state of civilisation. The divine order required the conquest of the wild. Nature was seen as an enemy, something to be conquered, subdued, or avoided (Lattas 1997:223, Langton 1997:80, Marcus 1997:39).

2.2.3 Terra nullis and the conquest of indigenous land

In the indigenous community the clan was the fundamental unit dictating ownership (even though this ownership is not understood in the European way) to tracts of land, rituals and sites over much of Australia with the exception of the Western Desert. Most clans are named and based on descent from a single Dreaming Ancestor. However, in everyday life, Aboriginal people were not restricted to moving around as a clan where all members were identified with a particular Dreaming Ancestor. Instead, they assembled in various groupings, the composition of which depended on the situation. Membership could

change from time to time and bands were linked to other bands and wider groups through the sharing of some cultural characteristics. Each band had a hunting and gathering territory or range, which would normally take in the country or estates of several clans. People usually had a range of rights to country. In northern and central Australia these relationships are still a lived reality for many Aboriginal people (Clarke 2003:37ff).

The land in Australia was conquered by the colonisers without consultation or compensation. The British claimed Australia by right of discovery, declaring it to be *terra nullis*, an empty land devoid of a sovereign power waiting for colonial exploitation (Markus 1994:20, Clarke 2003:53). Australian history is commonly described as a history of winners, winners who fought battles with the land before conquering it. Control of the Australian landscape was vital to the settler psyche. This history is a history of *terra nullis*, in order to uphold the lie of an empty land, Europeans have either denied the indigenous peoples' presence, or have completely devalued their cultures. The colonisers explored an empty land awaiting the immediate reception of civilised man. When Australia was mapped it was mapped without a recognised people or history and was instead given a British history, the maps concealed the presence and histories of the indigenous people (Birch 2003:152ff). As much as guns and warships, maps have been the weapons of imperialism (Hartley 1988:282).

The introduction of "civilisation" was followed by the destruction of plant and animal life on a large scale, a development accentuated by the coincidence of white settlement with the Industrial Revolution. The prospects for the survival of the Aboriginals were generally regarded as weak. They had either to adapt or to face extinction (Papadakis 1993:51, Kuletz 1998:193).

Indigenous Australians were often bracketed in the category of worthless species. This can be illustrated by a quote of a member of the Western Australian legislative assembly in 1892; "It will be a happy day for Western Australia and Australia at large when the natives and the kangaroo disappear [...] In dealing with this matter all maudlin sentiment should be abolished" (cited by Whitelock 1985:43f). In the process of improvements and exploitation the indigenous people were dispossessed of their land and cultural roots.

The western land ethic dictated that progress and development was the ultimate justification for the dispossession of the original custodians. The Aboriginal population were perceived as savages who did not exploit the land to its potential (according to European agricultural expectations), thus Aboriginal people were considered to have no right to property ownership. The entire continent was perceived to be empty of meaningful human occupation, bringing about the term *terra nullis* (Bayet-Carlton 2003:173).

The British government regarded the native Australians as having no claim to the land because, according to the colonisers, they had made no impact on it that was worthy. The British destroyed the native Australians in order to clear the land for sheep and cattle, they quietened their consciences by thinking of native Australians as a lower form of life.

Aboriginal people were seen as the bewildered remnants of the Stone Age. As such, the invading culture was able to construct its own identity as the masters of nature and the torchbearers of civilisation. These Aboriginal people were sentenced to a colonial reality - an authenticity - based on notions of Aboriginal life as primitive and uncivilised (Yarwood & Knowling 1982:11ff, Anderson 2003:45).

The welfare for the Aboriginal population sank increasingly into the background of colonial development. European transformation of the Australian landscape, through land clearance, fencing, irrigation, road and railway building, and the establishment of towns forever removed the possibility of a society of hunters and gatherers existing in all but the most remote areas (Clarke 2003:207).

Existing along the side of the discourse of terra nullis there is a discourse claiming that the white settler can be 'like' an Aborigine. An example of that is the common known movie about Crocodile Dundee, this identity has sometimes become a source of power, in terms of access to the land. In Alice Springs, for example, settlers who have a basic knowledge of local Dreaming Ancestors are quick to point out that they too have 'birth rights' in the Yiperinya Caterpillar Dreaming sites of the town. Uluru (Ayers rock) is another example that has been transformed from an Aboriginal sacred site to an Australian, which belongs to all by birthright. The black man verifies the white man's authenticity (Marcus 1997:31ff, Bird Rose 1997:123ff).

It is often a central assumption of technological societies that there is a virtue in overpowering nature and native peoples. The indigenous problem today is directly related to the needs of technological societies to find and obtain remotely located areas in order to fuel a demand for growth and technological fulfilment. All these acts are made possible by one fundamental rationalization: that the urban society represents the ultimate expression of evolution. There is an attitude and belief that native societies represent an earlier, lower form on the evolutionary ladder, upon which the western people occupy the highest rung. Along with the native inhabitants, these dry, arid regions are perceived and discursively interpreted as marginal within the dominant western perspective. Environmental science discourse often supports the pre-existing settler discourse about desert lands as barren wasteland by organizing bio-regions within hierarchies of value according to productive capacity. Deserts become marginal lands and are placed at the bottom of the ladder of economic productivity (Kuletz 1998:9ff).

3 The current political context

Under this headline I will discuss and present some of the variables around the nuclear industry. I will also shortly describe the political context in Australia, where the debate around the proposed repository is taking place.

3.1 The nuclear industry: Dispossession and development

Through the world the intersecting interest between governments, companies and indigenous peoples are woven into complex webs of social, political, and economic relations, which shape development opportunities and constraints for each group.

The injection of capital and infrastructural resources into previously neglected areas may give better access to the benefits of regional economic development, but there have been few circumstances where the indigenous groups' developmental goals have been successfully linked to those of the governments. On the contrary, the increased marginalisation and disempowerment of local indigenous peoples as a consequence of nuclear developments has illustrated the difficulty of matching development outcomes to local aspirations, and it has focused on the frequency with which goals are in conflict (Conell & Richard 1991:2).

Nuclear power has in many ways been fundamental to capitalist expansion and in post-colonial societies the potential of the transformation of natural heritage has been a cornerstone of the strategies of economic development. The view of the industry is often that Aboriginal people are causing large tracts of the countryside to be locked away from "purposeful" activity, to the detriment of the industry and the nation (Sutton 1995:1).

For indigenous people, land is central to social identity and as indigenous peoples endeavour to secure a future consistent with their changing goals, values and visions, the nuclear industry is an ambivalent phenomenon, presenting, on the one hand, opportunities for production of wealth from traditional tribal lands, and on the other hand, threatening destruction of those lands and the social fabric woven from them. For many people in previously marginalized regions, it is not a question of ideology, of being pro- or anti- development or pro- or anti- nuclear development. The dominant imperative is survival, which generally includes the notion of survival with cultural integrity.

In the search for national development, Australian federal and national government and different companies joined together to exploit new frontiers, often with little or no reference to the goals and priorities of the landowners. Agreements have been signed between national and state governments and companies to secure development in previously remote and isolated areas. While some indigenous peoples have participated in the arrangements, others have faced long and often unsuccessful court battles for recognition as interested parties in negotiations.

Conflicts over land use and land rights have often been exacerbated in situations where indigenous peoples, corporations, and governments have been unequal protagonists. Corporations, often with little historic connection to the country or the land, have provided the crucial technology, invariably with government support. In the changing relationships between federal and state government and corporations, indigenous

people have been only of marginal consideration until they have elevated their concerns to the national and international agenda, usually through their own actions. Indigenous peoples have often been succored by political rhetoric but undermined by the co-national goals. Invariably they have been the weakest party in the discussion and negotiation.

For almost all indigenous peoples, even in the industrialized country of Australia, land remains the fundamental resource - the key to cultural survival and economic viability. Social and economic organization, resource management and philosophy of life are all intricately related to systems of land tenure. The prerequisite for successful survival of tribal groups as an ethnic minority is the retention of autonomy: cultural, social, economic, and at the core of this is the retention of rights to traditionally owned land. Compensation, or tribal reserves, are much less adequate substitutes. In Australia, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders face a bewildering diversity of statutes dealing with land rights, ranging from a limited veto power over exploration of Aboriginal land in the northern Territory, to no land rights legislation at all in several states.

It is inevitable that the nuclear industry has a variety of impacts on physical and social environments. Land is destroyed and associated infrastructure and agriculture and related activities become more difficult. Local communities have inevitably faced the burden of the heaviest costs, in environmental and social terms. In Australia most states require the Environmental Impact Statement to precede work on major projects, but the extent to which the concerns of Aboriginal communities might be addressed in the impact assessment process varies widely.

It is too easy to argue that the problem is solved by replacing rights with money; this approach oversimplifies the complex sets of interactions and changes set in train by the development of the nuclear industry on indigenous land. The social, economic, and environmental impact of the nuclear industry is most extreme around the site itself, a situation that has sometimes engendered dramatic contrast between those who have been able to obtain excellent access to the new sources of income and those who have not. Yet even within small communities the impact is variable. Whilst in many cases it is too early to talk of class formation, the nuclear industry has led to the restructuring of traditional social orders, new forms of social stratification, and frictions within and between communities.

The impact of compensation on local social structure and culture represents a further challenge to the indigenous order. While indigenous cultures are internally dynamic, the introduction of new institutions may further marginalize traditional authority structures and erode the values that distinguish these communities. The emergence of new forms of power, leadership, and authority have contributed to conflict not only between local groups and nuclear industry interest, but also between groups within the landowners, some of whom have failed to benefit from the industry in the same ways or to the same extent as others. At every site there are diverse interests within the local communities; some landowners actively seek participation, others merely wish to withdraw to maintain a more traditional lifestyle. Such diversity has contributed to the inevitability of inequitable outcomes from nuclear developments (Connell & Richard 1991:4-13, Kuletz 1998:94).

Indigenous people are not simply passive recipients of the impacts, negative and positive, of the nuclear industry. But one area in which the contrast between governments and Aboriginal communities is very clear involves the legal framework in which the latter operate. This can vary greatly between one Aboriginal community and another, but in general Aboriginal people, unlike governments, do not exercise political sovereignty over land, which they own or claim.

Negotiation is also an expensive business. Legal, economic and negotiation expertise must be obtained, fieldwork conducted, legal proceedings undertaken, and travel expenses incurred in bringing Aboriginal people and their advisers to negotiating sessions. The problem is that Aboriginal communities and organisations often do not have access to the money needed for up-front expenditure to allow them to make maximum use of their negotiation position (O’Faircheallaigh 1996:184ff).

3.2 The Howard government

In June 1992, the High Court of Australia overturned the doctrine of *terra nullis*. The decision established native title as part of the common law of Australia. The High Court decision was followed 18 months later by the Commonwealth’s Native Title Act 1993, the legislative regime under which claims to native title may now proceed in order for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to - gain legal ownership of that most basic of resources - their country (Edmunds 1996:121).

Since the 1992 High Court decision many white politicians have tried to stir up white anxieties, targeting blacks by encouraging white fears (Vinding 2001:177f). The election of the Howard Coalition government in 1996 and the subsequent rise of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party marked the rise of a renewed conservatism in Australian cultural policy. In this conservative ideology it is the (white) ‘Aussie battler’ who has become the endangered species or the dispossessed (Anderson 2003:20).

The Prime Minister John Howard, who has been his own minister in charge of Aboriginal and Islander affairs, has generally avoided policy debate on indigenous issues. He has been content with one-liners and old-fashioned platitudes, and the abruptness of his language and responses to reform or recognition proposed by or for Aborigines, betrays his disdain and lack of understanding. When Aboriginal leaders began to travel abroad to explain their situation and ask for foreign support, he called this “stunts” (Vinding 2001:177f).

3.3 The proposed repository

The Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) is declared under Defence Force Regulation 35 as a prohibited area for the purposes of ‘the testing of war material’. Following World War 2 Great Britain sought to develop a facility for weapons research and testing. The Long Range Weapons Organisation was established in 1947 as a joint venture between the British and Australian governments to undertake the firing, observation and recovery of long-range weapons. The WPA is in the north-west of the State of South Australia and is approximately 127,000 square kilometres (12.7 million hectares). Its south-eastern corner is located approximately 450 kilometres north north-west of Adelaide. Several small

pieces of land within the WPA are Commonwealth-owned land. About two-thirds of the land is State Crown land, covered by pastoral leases issued by south Australia. Currently, the area comprises 23 pastoral leases.

The dump will have an ‘institutional control period’ of 100 years. This means the dump’s operator is only responsible under law for 100 years. It is also claimed that the dump will only have an ‘engineering integrity’ of 300 years. However, some wastes intended to store have half lives extending far beyond these minimal amounts of time. For example, the half life of Radium 226, typically found amongst low-level waste, is 1600 years. Radium gives rise to Radon gas and its decay products are the main agents of lung cancer in uranium miners (Irait Wanti web page).

There are four Aboriginal groups with native title claims pending in the region - the Antankirinja, Kokatha, Bangarla and Kuyani. The Arabunna and Nukunu also have an interest in the land. Aboriginal groups in the region have “enormous concerns” about the dump. The Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta women's group, which includes women from several Aboriginal groups in the Billa Kalina region, recently visited Melbourne to build the campaign against the nuclear dump.

The federal government has attempted several manoeuvres to override Aboriginal opposition. One ploy was to negotiate with some Aboriginal groups but not others. Aboriginal groups do not have the legal power to veto the establishment of a dump. If Aboriginal groups do get involved in clearances (for test drilling) they face the possibility that the government will point to that involvement as an indication of consent. If they refuse to participate, who will protect Aboriginal heritage, dreaming and sacred sites? (Green Left web page)

4 Analysis

Social subjects are constrained to operate within the subject positions set up in discourse types, and are in that sense passive (Fairclough 2001:32) The Department as an author is placed in a subject position and is relatively bound by the historical and current structures. The Department is not just producing a discourse, but is also bound within the discourse.

4.1 Description of the Draft EIS

The Draft EIS is 334 pages long, out of them one chapter directly targets the issues supposed to be relevant to the indigenous population. The focus of chapter 11 “Cultural Heritage” is Aboriginal and European Heritage, a total of 9 pages are devoted to the question about the Aboriginal community and heritage.

In the draft EIS the chapter “Land use and Activity” states that the assessment considers the existing situation of human activity since European settlement. The assessment identifies the potential for the situation to change and evaluates possible impacts during the various stages of the national repository’s life. The assessment is taken from a primarily non-Aboriginal cultural perspective (Draft EIS 2002:219).

In the introduction to the chapter about cultural heritage a consultation process with the Aboriginal people is described, the process has ” sought their views” (Draft EIS 2002:45) on sites selected. In this very first sentence the classification scheme of “us and them” are drawn upon. By naming the Aboriginal point of view as “theirs” the authors indirectly classifies themselves as non-Aboriginals, or not representing the Aboriginal point of view. This tells the reader something about the author just as much as it tells something about the Aboriginal point of view.

The Department is using very positive sentences describing the repository, and the larger-scale structure of the text is that of convincing and promoting the use of the area as a national waste repository.

At the initial meetings with the various Aboriginal groups, the Commonwealth and expert consultants explained: the site selection process; what the national repository would look like; how it would operate; what types of waste it would accept; the measures to be taken to ensure that the effect of the facility on the environment would be minimal; how transport of the waste to the site would be managed to ensure its safety; and how the repository would be designed so as to not pose a risk to groundwater and fauna and flora (Draft EIS 2002:247).

As the quota above shows, the Department describes themselves as the active agent explaining to the Aboriginal groups (as passive agents) about the technical circumstances around the repository. The objective of the EIS is not to promote the high security of the repository. But since the Department is doing so, they reveal a hidden agenda of attempting to convince instead of deliberating.

4.2 Interpretation and Explanation

Under this headline I will put emphasis upon the structure of the Draft EIS and upon the relations of power that the analysed text expresses. I will highlight the power relationships between the white dominant group, represented by the Department of Education, Science and Training, and the Aboriginal groups in the relevant region.

4.2.1 Heritage and current land-use

By excluding the Aboriginal community from the chapter about use and activity (see 4.1) and placing the issues of the community under the chapter about heritage the Department implies that the current relationship between the land and the Aboriginals is less important (or non-existing). The Department belongs to the majority group members (that Teun Van Dijk specified) who often speak and write about minorities, formulating and communicating personal and socially shared opinions, attitudes, and ideologies. I am questioning whether the relevant Aboriginal groups in the area would choose to present their issues under the headline “heritage”, since the choice of this placement is signalling a lack of current Aboriginal activity in the region. The attitude that the indigenous community belongs to history can be seen as another way of expressing the old colonial thought of the Aboriginal culture as dying and not belonging to the modern developing industrial society.

The Department recognises in one sentence that the Aboriginal peoples have had a continuing presence in the region (Draft EIS 2002:247), but the chapter about heritage does not present any examples of this presence, it does however present examples of a historical presence. Land use and activity is primarily referred to the white settlement.

In general terms, the extent of post-European-settlement human activity in this region has been limited to key centres that are either located on transport routes or supporting mining, Defence or research activities. The only other settlements in the area are associated with large rangeland grazing properties; homesteads are sparsely scattered through the region.

The lack of obvious, easily accessible and usable water sources, limited transport and urban infrastructure, and the open desert environment have significantly limited human activity in this region since European settlement (Draft EIS 2002:222).

The activities in the area (historical and current) are described as confined to mining, tourism, defence research, testing (and other uses of the WPA) and the detention of asylum seekers.

The Department is clearly influenced by the institutional practices, described by Fairclough, which people draw upon without thinking. In this case the practice is that of the common sense around what land use really is. This ideological-discursive formation originates in the thought of the white mans view on the Australian land as essentially an economic resource, and not only in the land as an economic resource, in the report the thought of land use is developed to only count if the use is performed by the European

settlement. To show how this is happening I have to place the report in a social context. Eileen Unkari Crombie and Eileen Wani Wingfield from the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta women describe the land as very much alive:

We really know the land. We were born on the manta, born on the earth. And never mind our country is in the desert, that's where we belong, in the beautiful desert country (Eileen Unkari Crombie, Irata Wanti web page).

This Government think it's in the middle of nowhere just like it's got nothing here but we know there is a Tjukur [lore] here all over and we live here and our old peoples lived here and died and the younger generations have got to live on and we know the Tjukur very strong it's all around here. That's why we talk about it we don't want them to mess it up. Everybody thinks this country has nothing here no sites. This country is full of sites like I said everywhere we go there is a site for us. We keep that in our head. We don't keep it on the paper and when it's damaged we got to dance. We got to do that because that's, what we got here [...] This is a very special place for us because we live here, we travel everywhere for our dreamtime stories and [...] sites (Eileen Wani Wingfield, Irata Wanti web page).

We have to go back whether the land has been poisoned or not. We've got nowhere else to go. Our life exists with our land. It is our foundation. It is our past, present and future. Our lands are sacred (Kevin Buzzacott, Keepers of Lake Eyre web page)

The impression that the draft EIS gives is that there is no current Aboriginal use of the land, the use that is described is historical. However, in fact there are several Aboriginal groups claiming the right to the very specific area where the repository is planned and several organisations are actively opposing the repository. Land use, as described in the report, is very much a product of historical and current ideological discourses where the dominant classes constitute knowledge about current land use by excluding indigenous people.

Understanding the politics of presence and invisibility in this contested landscape also shows how some cultural representations – stories- of land and nature get lost or buried. If elder Aboriginals who talk about their land aren't taken seriously, then how can their knowledge about nature exist in the future? One should not be able to easily dismiss collective knowledge of a region's natural history by a people who have continuously inhabited the region for 50 000 years.

4.2.2 Protest and critic against the project

The Department describes how the region in the last few years has attracted regular protest and demonstration events, which are aimed at displaying opposition to nuclear activity and have been focused on the Olympic Dam (the largest uranium mine in the

world). In 2002 the focus is described to have been on the detention centre for asylum seekers near Woomera. These activities are described as potential dangers to the repository, since they can disrupt access and traffic conditions (Draft EIS 2002:222).

The activism by anti-nuclear protestors is described as having caused minor disruption to activities, to personnel access, and is associated with “graffiti and other vandalism, trespass and property damage” (Draft EIS 2002:224). It is remarkable how the activism is described under the chapter about land use, but not mentioned in the chapter about cultural heritage. In the chapter about cultural heritage the information and consultation process, with natives, is described and, as described in 4.1, this process is only described in positive terms. Much of the protests are carried out by Aboriginal groups but this is not mentioned in the report. The criticism from the Aboriginal communities is excluded from the institutional dialogues and this evaluative report, just as Teun van Dijk mean happens in a discriminatory act. The majority group members write about the minority and use its resources to influence the mind of the reader in a way that does not acknowledge the resistance that actually exists outside the pages of the draft EIS.

4.2.3 Value of the land

Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions, which directly or indirectly legitimise existing power relations. Practices that appear to be universal and commonsensical often originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and have become naturalized. Ideological power, the power to project one’s practices as universal and common sense (Fairclough 2001:27), is heavily used in the draft EIS, on purpose or not. As I described in chapter 2.2.3, to the white man, the Australian land was essentially an economic resource, the key to social status and political power. The British government regarded the native Australians as having no claim to the land because, according to the colonisers, they had made no impact on it that was worthy. The Aboriginal people were sentenced to a colonial reality based on notions of Aboriginal life as primitive and uncivilised. These ideological values have again been reproduced in the draft EIS. Firstly by not acknowledging the Aboriginal communities in the chapter about current land use, but also in the chapter about cultural heritage. The land is, from an Aboriginal point of view, often expressed as synonymous to life and provides an identity, and it must be looked after, both physically and spiritually. The spiritual and cultural significance of the land where the waste dump is proposed is of great value according to the Aboriginal consultants for the draft EIS. But the authors of the chapter about cultural heritage keep referring to the land as primarily an economic resource.

As far as can be determined, few if any Aboriginal people in the claimant groups gain an income from the pastoral industry in the project area, except perhaps through casual station work (Draft EIS 2002:249).

The project should have no impact on the ability of Aboriginal communities to generate income from current or future land uses on pastoral leases in the region [...] Further opportunities for the involvement of Aboriginal people may be

available during the construction stage, including involvement in fencing or other works, or through site visits (Draft EIS 2002:254)

Here the text is contradictory and is clearly aimed for an Aboriginal public. In the beginning of the chapter where Aboriginal attitudes to the project are described, it is absolutely clear that the main issues for the community are not about economic values.

Attitudes expressed at meetings and in writing varied between and within groups and ranged from opposition to the proposal to guarded neutrality conditional on cultural heritage issues being assessed appropriately, and landscapes and places of spiritual and cultural significance being properly protected (of specific concern to Aboriginal groups was the potential of the project to adversely affect the values that the landscape of the central-north region of South Australia has for them).

These values include most importantly cultural heritage values, not expressed solely as sites or places that might be physically avoided, but in a number of religious narratives generically called Tjukurrpa, that incorporate different parts of the regional landscape. (Draft EIS 2002:249).

The Department is aware of the priorities for the Aboriginal groups, but still they do not answer the questions raised by the Aboriginal communities. The questions that are answered in the draft EIS are the questions that most likely would have been asked if the conflict was between white settlers/communities in the outback and the federal government.

I am not trying to say that the questions answered are irrelevant or that the repository should not be placed on this specific piece of land. What I am looking at is the language used and not used to talk about the Aboriginal communities, and I find it quite patronising.

Racism needs to be seen as a series of ideological effects and racism, intentionally or not, exclude groups. Ideology is not a set of ideas which simply legitimate disadvantage, but part of the mechanisms that institute disadvantage (Werherell & Potter 1992:59ff). The disadvantage that I find in this text is the lack of serious considerations about the issues important to the Aboriginal communities. Denaturalisation involves showing how social structures determine properties of discourse and how discourse in turn determines social structures. The social structure in this case is that of a dominant white group creating a discourse about what issues are important to consider in the building of the repository. By using a language not answering the issues raised by the indigenous population the discourse reproduces and gives power to an already existing racist social structure. According to Fairclough (2001) common-sense assumptions consolidate solidarity relations among members of a particular social grouping and assumptions are often taken for granted - there's no point in spelling out what everyone assumes. Taking so much for granted is an important sign that you "belong". There is no point spelling out in the Draft EIS that the most important questions are about the economic value and use of the land, this is something the reader already knows and the benefits of the land are therefore referred to as economic without any explaining "why"

they are economic and not spiritual. Ideology is most effective when it is least visible. If it becomes obvious that a particular aspect of common sense is sustaining power inequalities at someone's expense, it ceases to be common sense (Fairclough 2001:70f). Imagine the Department referring to the Aboriginal system of knowledge; imagine the Department arguing against the use of the land because it would interfere with the spiritual and emotional concerns of the population.

There is an acknowledgement in the heritage chapter that the area of investigation is of cultural interest to Aboriginal groups, and elders within the Aboriginal communities in the region have also been involved in the clearance process. The chapter contains an extensive description of artefact scatters found in the region and the Antakirinja, Barnjala and Kokotha claimant groups and the Andamooka Land Council Association and archaeologists have investigated the impact of the repository on the artefacts. The conclusion on the issues with the artefacts was resolved because no archaeological constraints were identified with any of the three proposed repository areas. The report tells the reader that a variety of Aboriginal groups have been involved in the research but when it comes to answering the question about the impact of the repository, the report only refers to the archaeologists, the speakers of the white group. The story does not tell us what the conclusion of the Aboriginal elders was.

The Draft EIS describes the sites in question as “located in stony desert country with sparse saltbush” (Draft EIS 2002:318), this is what the authors see when they look at the country, but again that its not what the Aboriginal groups see when they look at the same country. One set of ideology has been prioritised here and that is the ideology of the Department. The conclusion of the chapter about land use and activity is that “The proposed repository is consistent with the existing land use, and the South Australian Government's Planning Strategy for the region” (Draft EIS 2002:327). The conclusion of the chapter about cultural heritage is that “No archaeological constraints with any of the three proposed repository areas were identified during the work” (Draft EIS 2002:328).

The chapter about land use did not acknowledge any Aboriginal concerns whatsoever and therefore the conclusion can be that the repository is consistent with current land use. The conclusion of the heritage chapter is just as positive to the repository as the land use chapter. No archaeological constraints are identified. A characteristic of a dominant IDF is the capacity to naturalize ideologies, to win acceptance for them as non-ideological common sense, the ability to be positive to the repository lies in this case in the way the questions are asked and by whom they are asked and answered. The conclusion is conveyed, top-down, by the Department and just as Van Dijk (1993) points out, their interests in the domain of ethnic affairs are affected by the fact that they belong to and represent the white dominant group. All the information that comes from the Aboriginal groups gets organized and translated through white experts. Some Aboriginal representation has been allowed, but no real decision making.

Scientific discourses and representations legitimate the designation of areas within this region as nuclear-waste dumping grounds – a brutal objectification of the non-human world. Legitimizing such destructive practices has helped to further marginalize the

indigenous inhabitants of the region, contributing to a practice of environmental racism. Consequently the epistemological foundations that dominate how people understand the natural world and their relationship to it contribute to the ways in which they attempt to resolve environmental crisis (Kuletz 1998:5). In the building of a repository a new form of colonisation is emerging. “Nuclear colonialism” exists within a larger history of colonialism, where displacement and marginalisation of the indigenous population is a part of the European conquest.

5 Conclusion

Australia's radioactive waste is stored in more than one hundred temporary locations around the country, including towns, suburbs and hospitals. In many cases it is stored in facilities that were neither designed nor located for the long-term storage of radioactive material (Department of Education, Science and Training web page). The investigation and consultation process for the repository have extended over a period of 10 years (Draft EIS 2002:319). The problem with the waste is acute and the consultation process for the repository has been an expensive and time-consuming story. Australia needs to solve the problem as soon as possible and if the federal government is to start a new investigation process it might take another 10 years to find an alternative to the proposed repository. The conclusion is that the need for the population to accept the proposed repository as a final solution is huge; the government just can't afford a new process. I want to make clear that I'm not questioning the need for the repository, but rather the discourses that exist within the consultation process and in the Draft EIS.

Once revealed, the nuclear landscape can be perceived and experienced differently. It can be seen as one landscape superimposed upon another: a landscape of national sacrifice, and expendable landscape, over what many natives understand as a geography of the sacred, a geography where spiritual and cultural life is woven directly into the landscape itself. Different cultures create very different landscapes. One group views areas within the region as sacred landscapes and Aboriginal homelands, and the other sees the same areas as wastelands of little economic and productive value, suitable primarily for environmental experimentation and ultimately sacrifice. The social determinants that shape this discourse are that of a colonial history where Aboriginal communities generally have been, and still are, excluded from institutional processes. The Member Recourses that are drawn upon are those of the dominant group, here represented by the Department, and the ideology and relationship to the land that are characterised by an economic interest. The discourses within the draft EIS are in no way changing existing power relations, but are sustaining existing structures.

According to Dodson (2003:36) the constructions of Aboriginality, in all their variations, have marked the boundaries which define and evaluate the so-called modern world. Whether indigenous people have been portrayed as noble and ignoble, heroic or wretched has depended on what the colonising culture wanted to say or think about itself. By ignoring the spiritual values, the draft EIS is saying something about the white man's world. The lack of questioning values and cultures represented by white Australia shows one piece of a larger puzzle. Discourse dominance may be defined as the communicative control of knowledge, beliefs and opinions of those who have few (re)sources to oppose such influence. This also means that the discursive control of ethnic attitudes – and indirectly, of the discrimination – is a prominent component in the overall system of the enactment and reproduction of racism.

All cultures undergo change through time, so does Aboriginal cultures, and also the colonial culture in Australia. But one of the groups has had the resources to dominate the politics and to control the changes on a larger scale. The concept of institutional racism

refers to circumstances where racism is embodied in exclusionary practices or in a formally non-racialised discourse. The discourse in the Draft EIS is not racialised in the way that it introduces the opinions and facts presented as an outcome of a western knowledge system. The facts that are presented are presented as universal and as common-sense but the outcomes have racialised effects of social inequality.

My question in the introductory chapter of the thesis was whether the National Radioactive Waste Repository Draft EIS contains a racist discourse, and if it does, what the features and reasons were for the discourse formation? My answer is shortly that the social determinants shaping the discourse in the EIS is the extremely racist history of colonisation in Australia. The historical and current exclusion of Aboriginal influence in the political process is one variable contributing to the reproduced exclusion in the EIS. At a situational level the urgency for the Department to find a location for the repository may be a heavy influence. At the societal level the fact the indigenous community is a minority group and the view of the indigenous culture as a dying culture is helping to shape and ratify the discourse. The MR drawn upon in the discourse is the Member Recourses of the white dominant group in Australia, the colonisers, and the discourse formation contributes to sustaining existing racialised power relations. The different relationships to the natural world are constructed out of social contexts and to whatever extent scientific accounts may legitimate the placement and safety of the repository, they are (just like Aboriginal accounts) not without cultural biases and cultural foundations.

Nuclear waste is for the time being perhaps the price we have to pay for living in a westernised “developed” society. But the contradiction is that the price is payed by those who benefit least from the nuclear industry. As stated earlier, there is a huge difference in the conditions of life between Aboriginal people and others on every statistical indicator of social wellbeing.

Finally I just want to highlight the importance of textual analysis. The values of the textual features in the Draft EIS become real and socially operative, because they have a concrete effect in the social practice of building a repository. This effect can be seen as an extension of the discourse of terra nullis and the conquest of “empty” land.

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