

Undoing colonial geography
&
Doing Post/Anti/De/colonial geography

Archie Davies, 2023
a.davies@qmul.ac.uk



Structure

- 1) The colonial history of geography – spatial technologies of imperialism, white supremacy and settler colonialism
- 2) Anti-colonial spatial technologies
- 3) Naming and distinguishing de/anti/post colonial currents in contemporary geography:
- 4) Changing research questions and research practice

Geography as a discipline of empire

Imperialism → a system of domination over space, encompassing 'the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory' (Said, 1993:9).

Colonialism → Conquest, territorial expansion, and processes of colonization

Settler colonialism → the implanting of settlements on a distant territory, often associated with racial domination and even genocide

Geography contributed to the knowledge that enabled colonial expansion and domination

- Royal Geographical Society
- Mapping Places
- Travel writing
- Exploration



IMPERIAL FEDERATION - MAP OF THE WORLD SHOWING THE EXTENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN 1886.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION FURNISHED BY CAPTAIN J. C. COLEMAN, R.F. FORMERLY R.M.A. BRITISH TERRITORIES COLOURED RED.

WESTWARD THE COURSE OF
EMPIRE TAKES
ITS WAY



Painted by Emanuel Swedenborg 1862



"PORTUGAL NÃO É UM PAÍS PEQUENO"

DEP. LEG. 124072



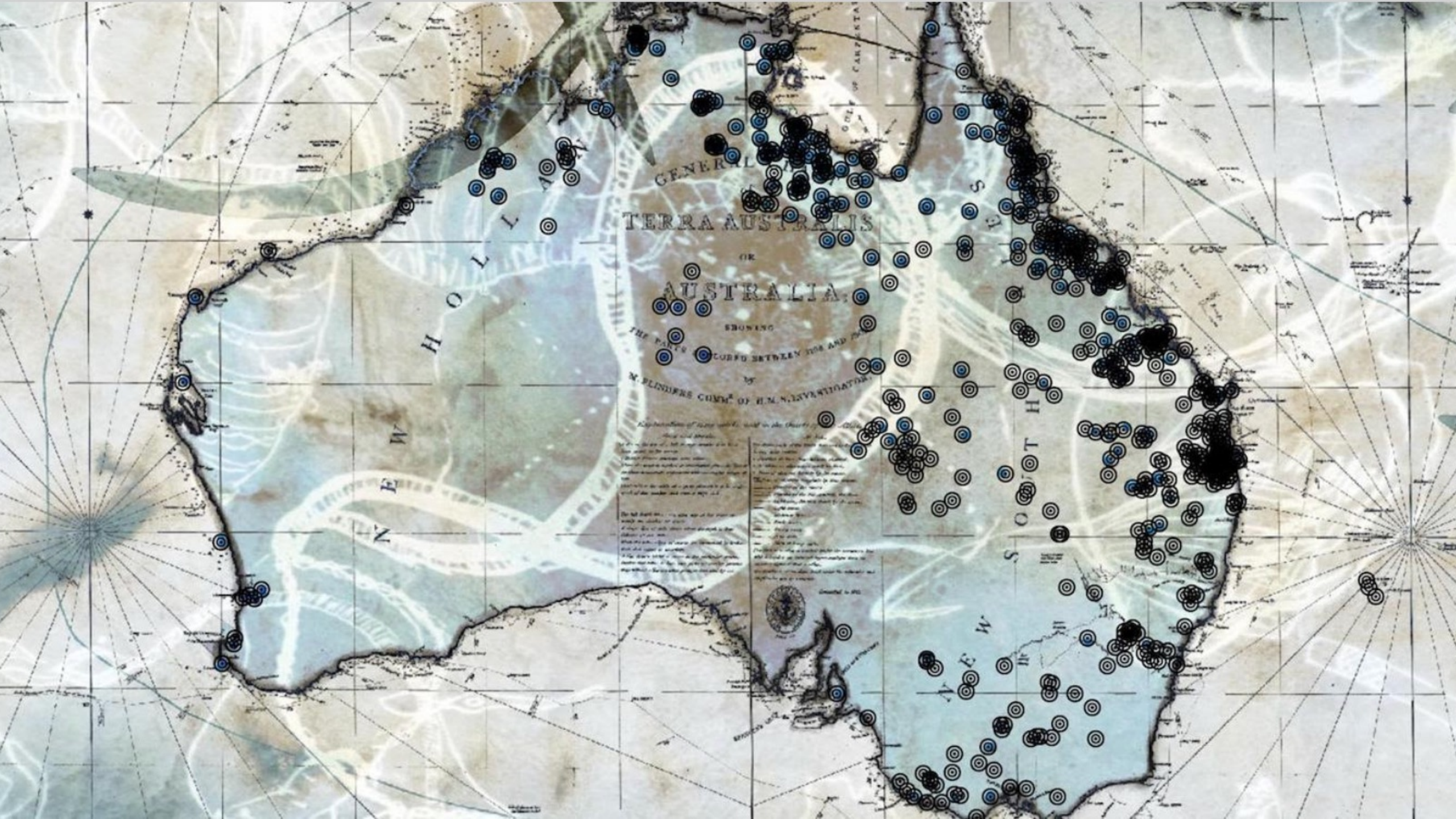
Superfície do IMPÉRIO COLONIAL PORTUGUÊS
comparada com a dos principais países da Europa

Portugal (Cont.)	89.106 K ^m ²	Espanha (Cont.)	505.202 K ^m ²
Açores	2.392 "		
Madeira	870 "	França	560.986 "
Cabo Verde	3.930 "		
Guiné	36.126 "	Inglaterra	244.734 "
S. Tomé e Príncipe	971 "		
Angola	1.255.755 "	Italia	308.717 "
Moçambique	756.112 "		
Estado da Índia	3.806 "	Alemanha	477.000 "
Macau	14 "		
Timor	18.989 "		
Total	2.168.071 K^m²	Total	2.096.639 K^m²



MAPA ORGANIZADO POR
HENRIQUE GALVÃO





GENERAL
TERRA AUSTRALIS
OR
AUSTRALIA

NEW
HOLLAND

SOUTH
AUSTRALIA

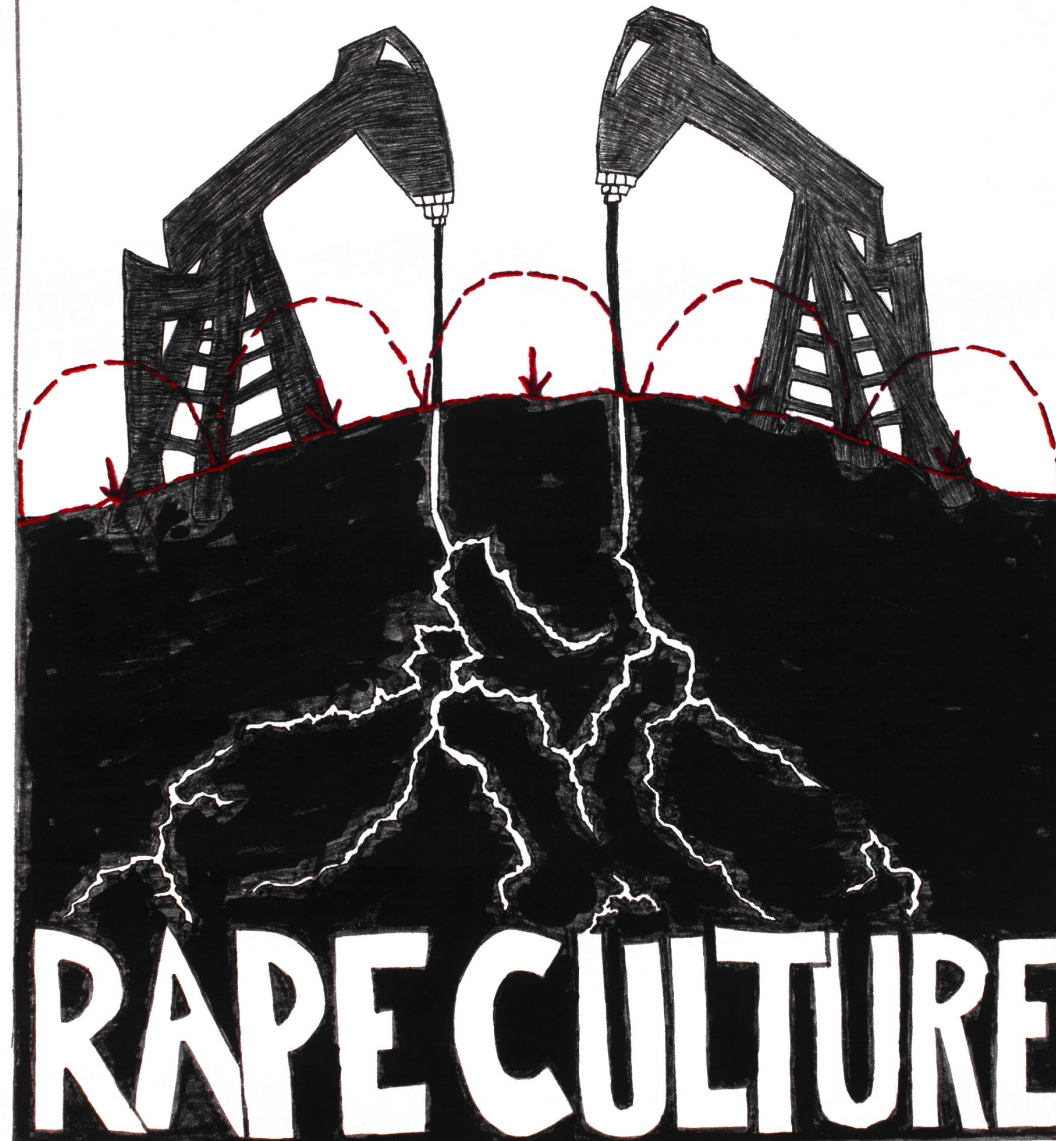
THE BAY OF CAROLINA
THE BAY OF CAROLINA
THE BAY OF CAROLINA

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTINENT OF AUSTRALIA
The continent of Australia is situated in the southern part of the globe, and is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the west, the Pacific Ocean to the east, and the Antarctic Ocean to the south. It is the largest continent on the globe, and is divided into several parts by rivers and mountains. The climate is generally hot and dry, and the soil is fertile. The inhabitants are of various nations, and are generally of a dark complexion. The language is different in different parts of the continent.

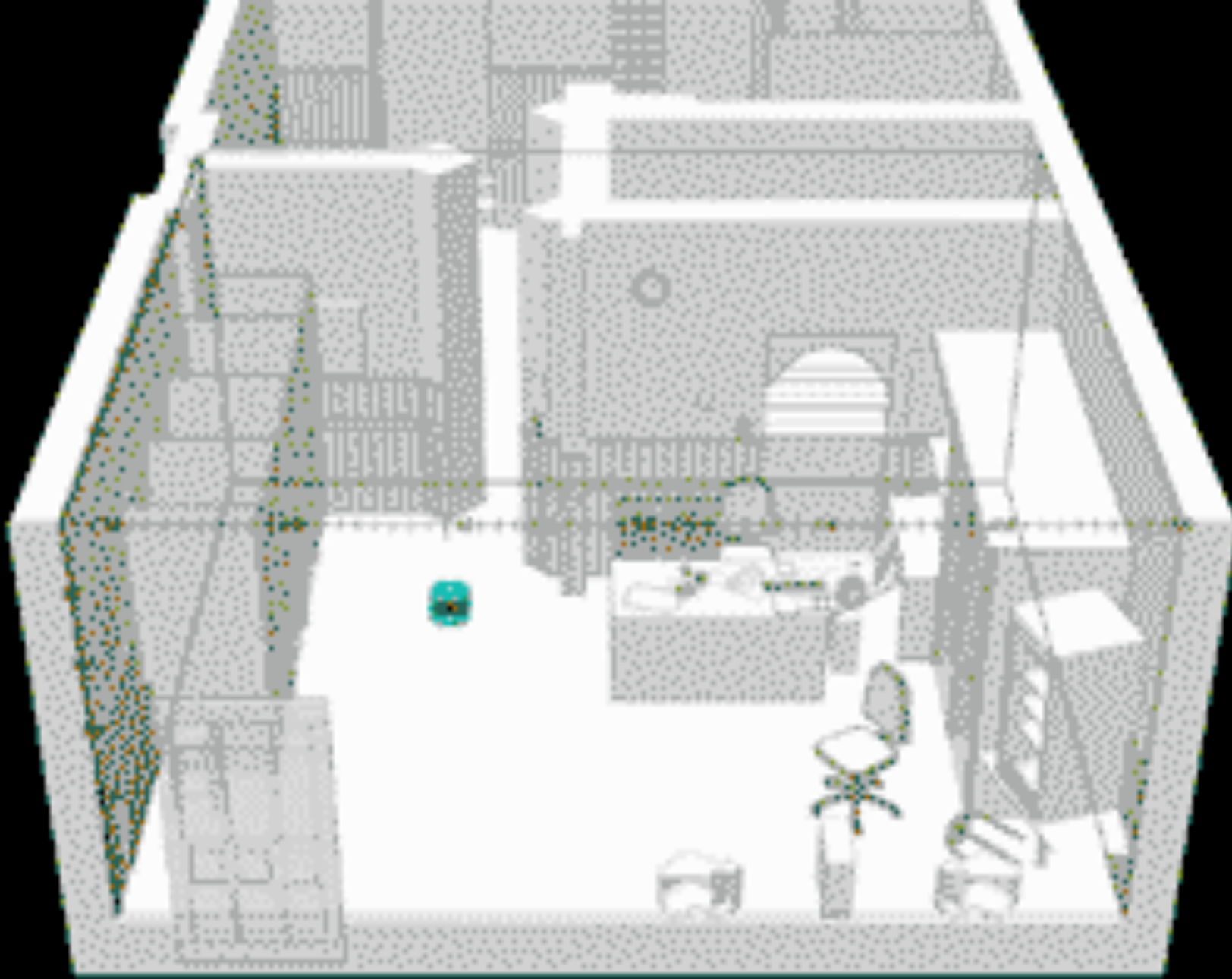




TERRA NULLIUS IS



RAPE CULTURE



Anticolonialism

- Historical event of struggle against imperial rule in colonized countries
- Political movement and scholarly practice
- Predecessor to postcolonial theory
- A revolutionary philosophy, and a philosophy of revolution
- Philosophy and practices of freedom
- Freedom Dreams – Kelley
- Decolonize Minds – Fanon, Ngugi, ++



Anticolonial Geography

- Historical connections between anticolonial struggles and geographers
 - Geographical dimensions of anticolonial thought
 - Fanon, Césaire, Cabral
- Geographical thought that explicitly draws on an anticolonial history of political thought and practice, particularly from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America
- Emphasizes ongoing colonial power structures particularly at the level of the state and global capitalism



Postcolonial Geography

- Space --- Identity / Hybridity --- Knowledge
- Examination of links between colonial power and colonial knowledge
- Role of geography in colonial dominion
- Character of geographical representations and imaginaries in colonial discursive regimes
- epistemological politics
- Recovery and reemphasis on spatial practices of colonized subjects
- Resisting and rewriting colonial imaginaries of space, world, nature
- Critiquing masked universalisms



Postcolonialism

- **Edward Said:**
 - Imaginative geographies
 - Orientalist discourses
 - Co-production
 - Centrality of Geography to ideas of the West
- **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:**
 - Subaltern voice and experience
 - Translation



Decoloniality

“Decolonial scholars build on postcolonial scholarship and examine ongoing socio spatial transformations not solely in relation to enduring Western influences, and rather seek theoretical-conceptual frameworks and political inspiration from anti-colonial writers including WEB du Bois, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Gloria Anzaldua, LT Smith, as well as movements such as the ‘500 years of resistance’, the World Social Forum and the Zapatistas.

Decolonial approaches emerge from, and engage with, a wide range of critical and radical scholarship, including critical Black scholarship, Indigenous theory, feminist and queer theory (especially that informed by non-metropolitan concerns), and the modernity-coloniality-decoloniality (MCD) school (Asher 2013; Maldonado-Torres 2016).” (Radcliffe 2017).



Decolonial Geography

‘We situate decolonial geographies within embodied theories and praxes of liberation to elucidate the connective fabric of various decolonial struggles. We conclude by elaborating on constellations in formation, as embodied in the present, to envision radical spatial visions of the future’

Daigle and Ramírez, 2019

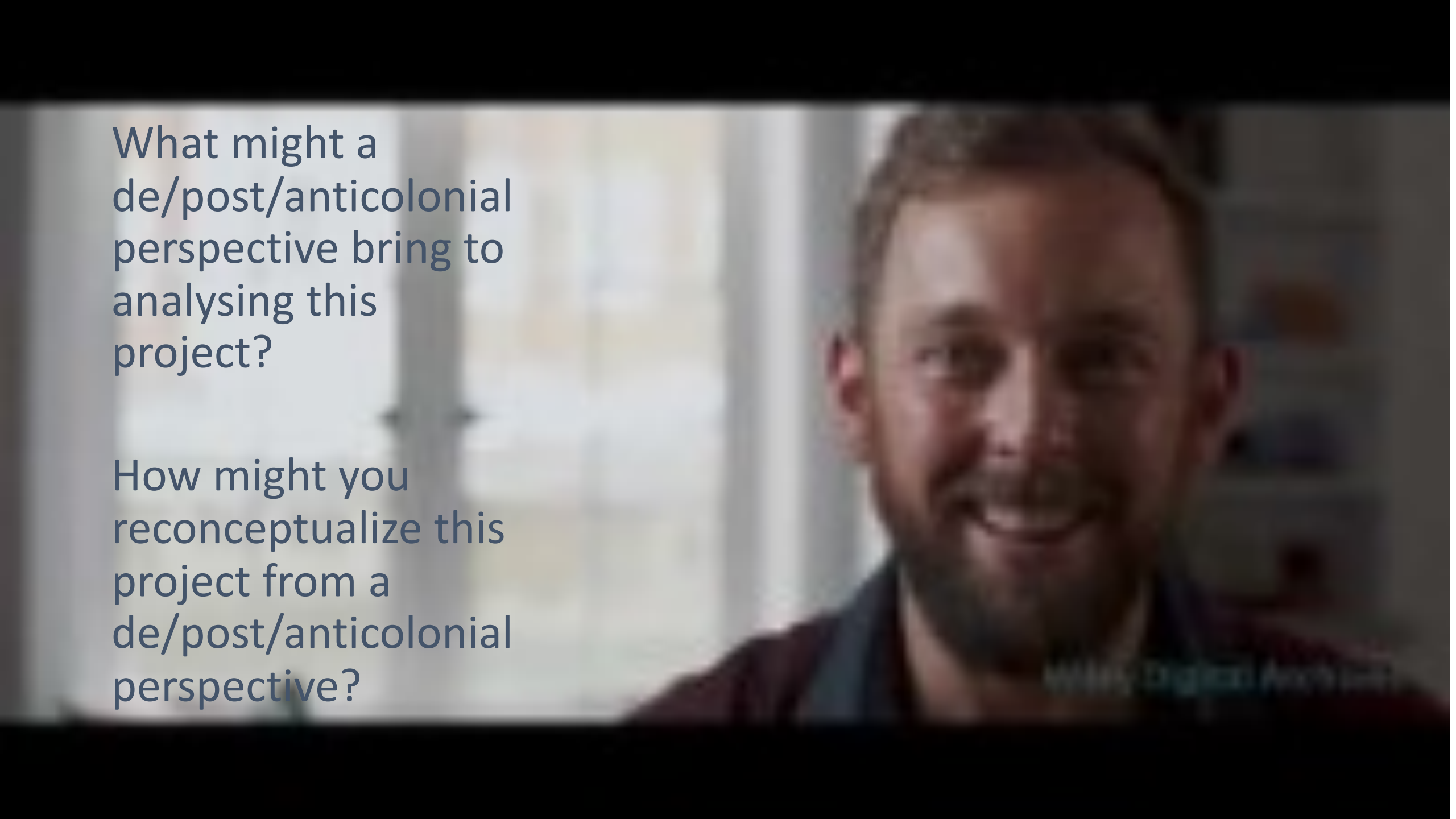
1. What is the role of g/Geography in analysing colonialism, both historically and in its contemporary legacies and manifestations?
2. How current debates about decolonizing geographies do fit within wider developments in social science more generally?
3. How have anticolonial / decolonial / Black geographies (etc) challenged the production of knowledges that are exclusively 'western' and ethnocentric?
4. How might ideas and critiques inform the way you approach your own research?

Activity 1: Discuss the paper: 'The 2017 RGS-IBG chair's theme: decolonising geographical knowledges, or reproducing coloniality?' (Esson et al 2017)

'The discipline needs to ensure that the terms on which geographers start debates about decolonisation and decoloniality are determined by those on the margins who have been racialised as Indigenous and non-white by coloniality.'

'front-loading of critical consciousness building by academics undermines and dilutes decolonial movements, as it is a prime example of what Tuck and Yang (2012) call 'moves to innocence': strategies and positionings that aim to relieve those who benefit from coloniality of feelings of guilt or complicity, without having to change their privileged position at all.'

- Discuss:
 - Is G/geography ready to, or capable of, responding to the challenge to 'decolonize'?
 - What is unique and what is shared between G/geography and other disciplines?

A blurred background image of a man with short brown hair and a beard, smiling. He is wearing a dark jacket over a blue shirt. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a window with light coming through.

What might a de/post/anticolonial perspective bring to analysing this project?

How might you reconceptualize this project from a de/post/anticolonial perspective?