

Part two: decolonization as a process

## Acknowledging the land in architecture

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Land acknowledgments are becoming a more common custom in some circles and found wings through Zoom calls due to Covid lockdowns. However in a broader sense acknowledging the land remains a political topic primarily constrained to high-level discussions. In global discourses of architecture, land, either through acknowledgments, restitution or in curriculum reform and practice remains almost entirely mute. Furthermore, the custom and content of land acknowledgement, though a valuable starting point, tend to remain in the context of meeting formalities instead of embodying self-reflection and engendering real change. Left as such threatens that they become transactional statements of peacemaking that reinforce reframed existing power arrangements and singularity. In an effort to leverage this newly adopted custom as a decolonizing process, we explore ways of acknowledging the land by suspending western knowledge systems and using drawing as a ritual practice. The intent of this ritual is to counter the instruments that have (and do) define, measure, and delineate land framed as terra nullius to colonial and capitalist ends. Adopting a drawing method that enlivens, animates, and names the land, has brought us to a deeper form of acknowledgment in which we experience the land as having its own agency. The foundational centrality of land in architecture and its intrinsic presence in practice emerged through collaborations in virtual cross-cultural sketching school and panel discussions focusing on decolonizing practice and education, coordinated by the Global Studio at the RAIC Centre for Architecture. Our findings discussed in this chapter argue the necessity to amplify land's presence in architecture and the built environment. We discuss the spiritual and political notions of land acknowledgment, and then contextualize this within architecture. We then outline our proposed method of drawing and conclude by discussing this technique and its potential for developing deeper forms of land acknowledgment in colonised and other contested places.

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