

Archivi Aborigeni in Italia
Aboriginal Records in Italy
The translation of knowledge within the cultural
interface

Monica Galassi

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Under the supervision of
Assoc. Prof Ilaria Vanni Accarigi (Principal Supervisor)
Professor Jason John De Santolo (Co-Supervisor)
Dr Alexander Byrne (External Supervisor)

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Monica Galassi, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, School of International Studies at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. The Australian Government Research Training Program supported this research through a UTS Research Excellence Scholarship.

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Statement

This thesis includes Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) belonging to different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Custodians, or Traditional Owners. ICIP rights are Indigenous heritage and will always remain with these groups. To use, adapt or reference the ICIP contained in this work, the relevant Indigenous groups need to be consulted, and cultural protocols followed. Where ICIP has been included, the relevant protocols were used and appropriate Indigenous people/communities consulted.

Signature:

Date: 28 February 2024

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I wrote the following chapters on the unceded lands of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora nation and Wangal peoples in the area we now call Sydney. I acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners and Custodians and pay my respects to all Elders, past and present. I also acknowledge the richness and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the Australian continent and the surrounding seas.

The work for this PhD research focuses on stories that are still far away from Country. I acknowledge and pay my respects to the incalculable number of Aboriginal peoples who are still *captives of [those] archives* (Fourmile, 1989).

Always was, always will be Aboriginal Land.

Warning

These chapters contain images and information about Aboriginal peoples who have died. The historical documents could include language and historical events that speak of a violent past and can be considered offensive or sensitive today.

Notes to Readers

The Aboriginal language words and names of Countries cited in this thesis are spelled according to the captions and the information provided by the collecting institutions. Spelling could be incorrect and will hopefully be validated by Knowledge Holders in the future. When available, language groups and biographical information are included before or after the initial mention of the names of First Nations peoples or historical figures cited in this work. When not specified, the spelling of the language groups follows the standardised tool of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Language Thesaurus (AIATSIS, n.d.). I enhanced the original material captions by incorporating links to the digital archive prototype whenever available.

The reference style I utilise to include Indigenous material follows the guidelines of the *UTS Library Guide Indigenous Perspectives & Practices: Referencing Indigenous Materials* (University of Technology Sydney, n.d.) in APA 7th reference style. I use the plural form of the word 'Aboriginal peoples' when reference is being made to the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities/geo-cultural community groups across Australia. Thus, I capitalise the following terms as an act of respect and decolonial intent, following best practices in this space: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and peoples; Ancestral Remains; Ancestor/s; Traditional Owners; Traditional Custodians; Language Custodians; Knowledge Holders; Elders; Country; Acknowledgement of Country; Welcome to Country; Stolen Generations Survivors. When referring to *palawa kani* (Tasmania) language and terminology, I use lower cases as advised by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, n.d.).

When not otherwise stated, the translations of the text from Italian to English and vice versa are mine, as well as content from other languages found in the archival material, such as Spanish, French or German. In Italian, I choose to capitalise the term '*Aborigeni*' [Aboriginal] as a gesture of respect, even though this term is typically written in lowercase in Italian grammar. All images are reproduced with permission.

Local Context labels and notices

In the thesis and the digital archive prototype created for this doctoral study, I apply Traditional Knowledge (TK) labels and notices. I utilise them as tools that can reassert cultural authority in heritage collections and data by focusing on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property and Indigenous data sovereignty (J. Anderson & Christen, n.d.). By subscribing the project *Aboriginal Archives in Italy* to the Local Context (n.d.) online platform, I could customise appropriate labels for each chapter and notices for the digital archive. The notices 'Attribution Incomplete' and 'Open to Collaborate' in the digital archive demonstrate the commitment of the three museum partners of this project to establishing meaningful relations with communities. We are currently working on translating the label's text into Italian for the first time so that they can be adopted by other institutions holding First Nations heritage.

Preface

This original research is timely within the broad international debate on displaced cultural material and the relevance of archival sources in current processes of truth-telling and reconciliation in Australia. Indeed, it is a culmination of a longer journey that started with my migration from Italy to Australia in 2010.

Despite moving so far, I still have a strong relationship with Italy. Cultural practices and storytelling have coloured my existence since I was born, but it was only upon leaving my birthplace that I recognised the fragility of these memories when they are not passed on and their meanings are not shared. As a result of this reflection, while living in Australia, I worked on a community archive of my family living in a small rural Italian town. This journey through the memories of my own family and culture forced me to look at matters of self-representation and agency from a different perspective and has influenced the choice of this research topic.

Observing the surprise, happiness, pride, and anger of my grandparents looking at digital photos of their family that they had never had the chance to see before reminded me of the reactions I witnessed when showing images to Aboriginal Elders related to their families, which they didn't know existed in Australian collecting institutions. Before starting to work at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research at UTS, an Indigenous-led centre that "Prides itself on frank and fearless research and advocacy driven by the Indigenous communities it serves" (Jumbunna Institute, 2019), I was part of the first Indigenous Unit at the State Library of NSW (SLNSW). This experience was challenging and instructive at the same time. Challenging as it exposed deep power imbalances and silent discrimination towards Aboriginal people engaging with government institutions in Australia. Instructive because it taught me that archival work is crucial for human rights and needs to be challenged and critiqued.

The photograph below was taken just a month before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and this PhD journey. It was a time when we did not know that digital access to cultural heritage would become more critical than ever. It was also the last occasion I saw my grandfathers before they passed, and it is, therefore, a moment close to my heart. I have felt fortunate to be able to have these conversations, and I have comprehended that the loss of these memories would have been a mortal loss for my present and my future.



Members of my family discussing old photos in December 2019. Contrada Lazzaretto, Ortona (Italy). Photo by Luca Galassi.

This thesis is dedicated to their memories and lives.

Ai miei nonni Pantaleone Galassi (Lunucc) e Pietro Cicconetti

[To my grandparents Pantaleone Galassi (known as Lunucc) and Pietro Cicconetti]



Photo above: Pietro Cicconetti (in the centre) with two friends. Contrada Lazzaretto, Ortona (Italy). Approximately 1945.

Photo below: Pantaleone Galassi at the main street 'Orientale' in Ortona (Italy). Approximately 1950.



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Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning used here
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	<p>Most of the archival material I will be working with does not usually include details on Traditional Countries and peoples, which are mostly unnamed. However, I am aware that many Aboriginal peoples prefer to be introduced by cultural affiliation/clan/Mob/Nation. I have added those whenever possible.</p> <p>I also use the terms 'Indigenous' and 'First Nations' interchangeably when referring to communities outside Australia, being aware that these two terms can be contested.</p>
Aboriginal cultural heritage (material)	<p>Defining what 'cultural heritage' precisely means for Australia's First Nations peoples is no simple task. This is due to the variety of unique Indigenous cultures that have existed in Australia for millennia (ANTAR, 2021, p. 2). Leading Indigenous legal scholar (Meriam and Wuthathi) Terri Janke (1998, p. XVII) provides the following description of Aboriginal cultural heritage: "Intangible and tangible aspects of the whole body of cultural practices, resources and knowledge systems developed, nurtured and refined by Indigenous people and passed on by them as part of expressing their cultural identity".</p> <p>In this research, I focus on one aspect of this rich heritage – the information, knowledges and stories related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities held in institutional settings. Mostly, this information was recorded by non-Indigenous peoples in manuscripts, graphics, logos, photographs, images, moving images (including video), sound, illustrations, files, artworks and other materials. I also include in this definition the documentation associated with these records, which have been displayed or used internally (including archival descriptions and internal documents).</p>
Afro-Italian/ Black Italian people	<p>I use these two terms referring to individuals with African descent who call Italy home. I am aware that everyone would have specific ways to self-identify. I tried to include these details wherever possible.</p>
Ancestral Remains	<p>Human/Ancestral remains (including DNA and hair samples held in collecting institutions). I follow the guidelines and vocabulary suggested by the project <i>Return, Reconcile, Renew</i> (n.d.) established by several organisations and communities to raise awareness and</p>

	<p>understanding about the repatriation process, and to assist practitioners in their efforts. However, I know that each community utilises different terms, such as 'Old People'. As a non-Indigenous person, I decided not to adopt this definition because of my outsider standpoint in this research. I pay my deep respect to all the Ancestors who have been taken and stored far away from home.</p>
Archives	<p>Borrowing from Koori academic Shannon Faulkhead's (Shannon Faulkhead, 2009, p. 67) work, I define an archival record as "Any account, regardless of form, that preserves memory or knowledge of facts and events. A record can be a document, an individual's memory, an image, or a recording. It can also be an actual person, a community, or the land itself". As indicated in the thesis, the Australian archival sector does not official adopt Faulkhead's definition as official.</p>
Australia/The land we now call Australia/Australians	<p>Refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Countries across the continent as a general term (to acknowledge that Aboriginal sovereignty over these lands has never been ceded).</p> <p>In this work I purposively write about the settler state in contraposition to the colonial state to refer to a political system of power that continues to oppress Aboriginal sovereignty and that has never left (Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Reynolds, 2000, 2021).</p>
Content Management System (CMS) Mukurtu	<p>Mukurtu (MOOK-oo-too) is a free, mobile, and open-source platform built with Indigenous communities to manage and share digital cultural heritage. It is a grassroots project aiming to empower communities to manage, share, and exchange their digital heritage in culturally relevant and ethically minded ways. Mukurtu is a Centre for Digital Curation project at Washington State University, USA (Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation at Washington State University, 2015).</p>
Country	<p>Country is a term First Nations peoples use to refer to the lands, waters, and skies to which they are connected through ancestral ties and family origins (<i>What Is Country?</i>, n.d.). I capitalise it in the same manner as one would for a person, demonstrating my respect for Indigenous worldviews.</p>

First Nations Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) researchers and professionals	Academics and professionals who self-identify as First Nation and work in the field of cultural heritage (not necessarily in collecting institutions but also in Indigenous-led organisations or through community programs on Country) and/or undertake research in critical archiving.
Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)	Copyright does not effectively protect or support Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. A key issue with copyright is that it recognises individual ownership – not community or group ownership. In this context, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights or ICIP rights refer to rights for Indigenous peoples to protect their arts and culture from misuse. They are not yet recognised by law but have been implemented by different organisations in Australia and other First Nations settings (Janke, 2021).
Italy	I use the geographic term “Italy” including the Vatican State and the Republic of San Marino. I use Italy as a general term referring to both the periods before and after the unification of Italy in 1861.
Knowledge Holders	I borrow the description provided by The Indigenous Knowledge Institute (IKI) at the University of Melbourne (2022) that defines Knowledge Holders as: “Indigenous people who are engaged in maintaining and, in some cases, reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge traditions”. In my work, I utilise this categorisation very broadly to show respect to First Nations people sharing their stories and knowledge.
Knowledge translation	In these chapters I refer to knowledge translation as the translation of language, contents, and meanings within a transnational context, and as a method key to decolonising research and that involves privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and voices.
Truth-telling	Truth-telling is a global concept that investigates systemic wrongs and makes recommendations towards reparations, and healing. Research in archives is key to rewriting the colonisation process of the Australian continent to embrace a process of national truth-telling (Indigenous Archives Collective, 2021).

Abbreviations and Acronyms

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR)
Centre for the International Study of Contemporary Records and Archives (CISCRA)
Content Management System (CMS)
Galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM)
Indigenous Archives Collective (IAC)
Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP)
International Council of Archives (ICA)
Museo delle Civiltà' (MUCIV)
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA)
National Library of Australia (NLA)
State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW)
The Indigenous Knowledge Institute (IKI) at the University of Melbourne
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

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Abstract

British colonialism has enduring consequences for First Nations peoples, marked by massacres, land appropriations and cultural suppression. In Australia, European travellers, scientists and missionaries documented the histories, languages, and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples. The recorded information (including diaries, journals, official documents, drawings and photographs) was sent, bought and exchanged among private and public collectors and organisations.

This thesis explores the documentation regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Italian collecting institutions. Although several studies have examined the importance of the colonial archives conserved in Australia and Britain, less attention has been paid to records displaced in nations that were not formally involved in the Australian colonial project. Archives in these other nations are understudied because this patrimony is entangled in multiple layers of power and interests. Therefore, no agreed framework exists to manage its access and return to communities. The central argument of this enquiry is that Australian research on Aboriginal histories, which holds potential benefits for communities, is exceedingly concentrated on colonial resources within Australia and Britain. This example is a launching pad for investigating other instances of displaced First Nations archives worldwide and employing critical strategies to analyse them.

Framed within an Indigenous paradigm, this research investigates what insights the Aboriginal records in Italy provide for archival displacement discourse and practice. The concept that pulls these ideas together is the importance of knowledge translation in archival studies to create the settings for structural change. Examining data gathered from archival research, building the first digital archive for Italian collections and yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Italian researchers and practitioners, this study makes two critical contributions to archival science and practice.

The first contribution is the new categorisation of eclipsed archives. These archives distinguish themselves from Aboriginal records in Australia and Great Britain for their political and social function: their visibility or invisibility depended on their usefulness within Italian political agendas. The second contribution entails a novel methodology for modelling practices in Italian archives and analogous situations firmly rooted in Aboriginal worldviews. Through innovative knowledge translation approaches at the

cultural interface, this study has effectively challenged how the contributing institutions administer and share Aboriginal records. Indeed, this doctoral study has effectively opened a space for future dialogue between Italy and Australia.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Why This Research is Needed

1.1. Thesis introduction

Italy. Rome. 21 September 2022.

Auditorium Antonianum. Viale Manzoni.

Ten minutes' walk from the Colosseum.

Colosseum = 2500 years old

Australia. Brewarrina. 3 December 2021.

Fish traps.

Four hours' drive from Moree airport.

Fish traps = 60.000 years old

In 2022, along with colleagues from the Indigenous Archives Collective (IAC), I was invited to present a panel at the International Council of Archives (ICA) in Rome. We planned to discuss the notion of reciprocity in the context of colonial archives in our research and profession. As the only Italian person in the team, I had the role of introducing the group and setting the scene for the conversation for a crowd of archivists coming from all over the world. The first question that crossed my mind was how to effectively speak about relationships when the professionals in question might or might not have been familiar with the longevity and richness of Aboriginal cultures. I started to reflect on how do I communicate the importance of relationality in Indigenous knowledge systems? How do I explain the importance of this work to people so far away in space, cultures and local priorities? Overall, how can I grab their attention while charmed by the multitude of Italian histories represented in Italian streets and institutions?

The words opening this section, accompanied by corresponding photographs, constituted my opening line, and judging by the response of the audience in the room, they were effective.

This thesis examines archival records held in Italian collecting institutions, including knowledges, stories and information about Aboriginal peoples. I call these records *Aboriginal archives* whilst being aware that most of these documents are not produced by First Nations people but by another culture. The naming of Aboriginal archives is to bring to attention the owners of these stories. With this broad statement, I also want to emphasise that a precise definition of this archival material does not currently exist. The nature and extent of these records remain unknown for communities and Italian practitioners alike. From previous research in this space, when attempting to facilitate relationships between Italian cultural institutions and Aboriginal GLAM professionals, I

observed that one of the obstacles was the difference in viewpoints and meanings given to the archive and its information. Therefore, these conversations often did not consider the local specificities of the different perspectives of First Nations peoples. As years passed, these reflections provided the impetus for me to reflect on how I could have approached this work differently. What if I could shift the lens in the way these records have been traditionally looked at?

This study is based on three hypotheses. Firstly, I posit that achieving any structural change in the colonial archive requires archivists to genuinely comprehend the significance of these records for the people depicted in them. Secondly, I believe that as individuals begin to understand why this work is important, they develop an interest in its potential. Lastly, I predict that once people and institutions become interested, it turns out to be evident that previous methodologies have not yielded tangible change. At that juncture, shifting perspectives and applying Indigenous methodologies to the field can be a positive step for all involved. When there is a shared understanding of what is at stake in the colonial archive, the common goal would be to influence the public and, in turn, international relationships between the two countries.

The concept that pulls these ideas together is the importance of knowledge translation in archival studies. For the context of this work, I adopt the definition from Wiradjuri Academic Megan Williams (2021, p. 8) from the Lowitja Institute: “Knowledge translation is the complex series of interactions between knowledge holders, knowledge producers and knowledge users, to achieve research impact, which we define as a positive and sustainable long-term benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, beyond the realm of academia”. In this work, I locate the practice of knowledge translation in the *cultural interface* (Nakata, 2007) , referring to the metaphoric space where Indigenous knowledges and cultures interact with other cultures and ways of being.

In this doctoral study, I argue that these records play a crucial role in Aboriginal self-determination and truth-telling within Australian society, underscoring the need to redefine and reshape approaches to working with them. However, a transformative shift is essential to prioritise Aboriginal worldviews in their care. Consequently, this work seeks to establish a platform for transnational dialogue, placing Aboriginal rights and aspirations at the forefront.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of this research. I begin by analysing the research focus and underlining the need for this study. I then introduce the Italian case and elucidate why it presents an intriguing opportunity to explore First Nations colonial records. In the subsequent section, I reflect on the multiple lenses of my standpoint and discuss the prospects that this multilayered view represents for the study. At this juncture, I realign the conversation with the aim of this thesis, exploring the research questions and delving into the key literature that underpins this study. Before summarising the thesis chapters in the final section, I briefly mention the primary research outcome of this doctoral work.

1.2. Research focus

This thesis derives from a response to the insufficient discourse surrounding archival material physically housed in Italian institutions, offering valuable insights into the histories and life stories of Aboriginal peoples, the First Peoples of Australia. The results of prior research, revealing a wealth of this material, and the disputes surrounding them have generated the fundamental questions that steer this study. The Italian context serves as an entry point for delving into other instances of displaced First Nations archives worldwide and employing critical strategies to scrutinise them. This research explores methods for generating new knowledge and practices that can aid First Nations peoples in accessing their cultural heritage stored overseas in culturally appropriate ways. In doing so, it contributes to the international conversation on Indigenous data sovereignty.

To grasp the peculiarities of this extensive displacement, in this thesis, I categorise archives of colonial provenance of the Australian colonial project into three categories. The first group includes the archival records produced and collected as part of the colonial project (in the case of Australia, the archives of the SLNSW in Sydney, the National Archive in Canberra, or the Royal Society and the British Library in London). The second type comprehends records created and gathered through initiatives that supported the colonial project (the perfect example is the records collected by the Catholic Church held at the Vatican Archive of Propaganda Fidei). The third classification includes the records that are the focus of this study: those produced during the Australian settlement and disseminated worldwide.

The central idea interwoven into this study posits that Australian research on Aboriginal histories, with potential benefits for communities, is disproportionately focused on colonial resources within Australia and Britain. Instead, the importance of this research lies in its emphasis on the intangible heritage that has been displaced in nations that weren't former settler colonisers of Australia but are a by-product of global power dynamics. These testimonies moved because of transnational colonial networks, power relations and dynamics. Generally, these nations do not use English as a first language which is perhaps the principal reason for neglecting their Aboriginal records. Through an analysis of the Italian case, this study reveals the equivalent significance of repositories beyond these two countries, piquing the interest of Aboriginal GLAM scholars and professionals. To address this gap, this thesis underscores the imperative for a renewed categorisation and an innovative approach to managing these archives, aiming to amplify their examination and visibility for Aboriginal people and communities.

1.3. Need for the research

The impetus behind this study is the need to contribute to structural change in the appreciation and utilisation of archival heritage outside Australia and Britain. It is also fuelled by the desire to reciprocate the privilege held as a white Italian woman engaged with Aboriginal knowledges while living in unceded Aboriginal territories. The research needs to expand when considered against the backdrop of the broader concerns and disputes around the protection, access and management of cultural heritage and practices. Attention towards such archives is emphasised by the challenges of respecting data ownership within human rights violations worldwide, such as in cases of rights in records during conflicts and forced migration (Carbone & Gilliland, n.d.; A. J. Gilliland, n.d., 2017a; A. J. Gilliland & Carbone, 2020; Wood et al., 2014). International organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Council of Archives (ICA) have recognised the paramount significance of addressing cultural rights violations, as in for example the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the most recent Tandanya Declaration. Echoing core principles from the UNDRIP, the Tandanya Declaration is a ground-breaking document. For the first time in the history of the ICA, there is an official acknowledgment of the need to challenge the legacies of colonial archives towards a model based on First Nations' worldviews and desire for greater control. It signifies a vital route change in archival practice, commenced decades ago by First Nations activists worldwide.

Australia endorsed the UNDRIP in 1999 after initial opposition in 1997 (Parliament House, Canberra, n.d.). The time needed for the Australian government to endorse the UN Declaration is the marker of a violent and recent colonial past that has remained, until recent times, invisible to the rest of the world. The settlement of Australia by Great Britain had a tremendous impact on the lives and sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples. Land was appropriated under the doctrine of *terra nullius* [no one's land] and identity, language and culture were subjugated. The effects of colonisation and cultural genocide endure today in the shape of staggering gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Government, 2020b; Coleman, 2021; Watego, 2021). This research challenges historical amnesia, which is a fundamental trait within the mindset of settler colonialism (Fanon, 1961/2002; Maddison, 2016; Veracini, 2007, 2022). Appropriation of Ancestral Remains and cultural objects of Aboriginal peoples was part of the settler legacy. Their right to be repatriated to Australia has been an international topic of debate and conflict among various communities, cultural organisations, and governments for decades.

The transnational dispute about access to colonial archives is less known but crucially important. Indeed, along with the appropriation of bodies and objects, people who came to Australia took back evidence of what they saw and experienced. Explorers, missionaries, surveyors, anthropologists, government officials, and private individuals from Britain and other nations wrote diaries, journals, and official documents. They created sketches, they took photographs. Most parts of these testimonies represented, in one way or another, Aboriginal peoples. A substantial amount of this information was sent to collecting institutions in Australia and overseas and exchanged and sold among European museums, archives, churches, cultural societies, and private collectors (Nakata, 2007; Nakata & Langton, 2005; Russell, 2005; Thorpe, 2001).

Complementing the documentation held in the archives of colonial powers, those records remain disseminated across nations, displaced from both the colonial imperative and the peoples they record. I am referring to this documentation as *displaced archives*, denoting any record that has been removed from its original context and whose ownership is disputed (Lowry, 2019b). As many authors in critical archival studies have demonstrated, these testimonies are anything but neutral. Eualeyai/Kamillaroi intellectual and writer Larissa Behrendt, points out that the stories of 'savagery' and 'othering' of Aboriginal

Australian peoples provided a “justification for force, violence and dominance and were used to gain support for plans to eradicate, subdue, tame, contain and control Aboriginal people” (Behrendt, 2016, p. 54). These records were often coloured by racism and orientalist views (Said, 1978), providing more insights into the mindset of the collector than the individuals they sought to portray (J. Jones, 2018). However, they still remain useful sources for Aboriginal peoples to regain family histories, identity and aspects of culture and language.

1.4. Opportunity offered by the Italian case

Italy's role as a custodian of Aboriginal cultural heritage is rooted in decades of connections with the Australian continent. While not formally invested in the invasion of Australia, Italians have played an active role in the occupation of Aboriginal lands and the appropriation of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and cultural objects. In contrast, the Italian contribution to collecting photographs and written documentation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is less widely recognised. Those records are little known in Australia and difficult to access because of language barriers, the recordkeeping practices of Italian institutions, and suspicion about the motives of Australians seeking access due to concerns about the repatriation of cultural materials and Ancestral Remains. This patrimony is entangled in multiple layers of power and interests. There is no agreed framework to manage access and/or return them to their communities of origin. The selection of the Italian context provides an opportunity to investigate and examine records that, until now, have received limited scholarly attention.

Italy also presents an intriguing case history that parallels the Australian continent. Both Italy and Australia were simultaneously “young” and “old” nations (Olcelli, 2018). The history of the modern Italian state unified only in 1861 with the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, cannot be fully grasped without acknowledging that Italy had been disunited since the decline of the Roman Empire. Throughout the centuries, various external powers, including the French, Germans, Spanish, and Austrians, among others, subjugated different geographical regions. The concept of a unified Italian state is therefore a relatively recent development (Beales & Biagini, 2003; Killinger, 2002). At the time of the declaration of the kingdom of Italy, the former Piedmontese Prime Minister

Massimo d’Azeglio declared: “We have made Italy; now we must make Italians” (Killinger, 2002, p. 1).

Another intriguing peculiarity of the Italian case is that, despite sharing commonalities with other European experiences of colonisation of African states, it has not gone through truth-telling and, therefore, a nation-building process (Novati, 2019; Pakenham, 1992). As I will demonstrate, the persistence of a colonial mindset is evident in the administration of colonial documentation in collecting organisations, extending beyond Aboriginal Australia to encompass various communities worldwide. The richness of Italy’s cultural patrimony stands out on the global stage, with Italian collecting institutions preserving heritage from countless communities nationally and internationally. The Italian archives, spread across uncountable organisations throughout the country, remain insufficiently explored. Yet, Italy is also a nation that has experienced extensive loss of cultural heritage throughout its history, marked by various civilisations that have shaped it, culminating in Nazi looting during the Second World War. Another intriguing aspect of the Italian case is its close political and cultural ties with the Vatican State. This connection involves the collection of records from Catholic missions in Australia (Aigner, 2015; Cipollone & Orlandi, 2011b; Schutz, 2022).

These conjunctions make Italy an excellent case study that provides innovative insights into the challenges and possibilities associated with archival records in countries with similar characteristics.

1.5. The multiple lenses of my standpoint

There are many other reasons why I need to tell my story. It is primarily because in Indigenous methodologies, defining who you are, where you are from, and your connections are crucial. Specifying the lens through which your narrative is told is also imperative. I write from the standpoint of a white woman who grew up between culturally distinct north and centre Italian peninsula. Professionally, I was trained as a cultural anthropologist and studied colonial and Aboriginal histories via a Western lens at an Italian University. The paradigm I emerged from has undergone multiple challenges and shifted vastly since commencing my work in Australian archival practice. My drive has constantly been advancing social justice and human rights, and I was especially interested in how the archival profession contributes to this area.

Despite having an anthropological background, I knew little about the Italian legacies of collecting Aboriginal heritage. Therefore, when I started collaborating with the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Data Archive (ATSIDA) at the UTS library in 2011, I found myself taken aback by the multitude of exchanges that unfolded in the past centuries, extending beyond the typical tales of immigration that I was familiar with. When I started travelling around Italy and the Vatican for this project to create the first survey of Aboriginal heritage held in Italy, I came across an unexpected amount of information. Ancestral Remains, cultural objects, and published and unpublished material can be found in many different cultural institutions throughout the Italian peninsula. I was also privileged to undertake short research in the Vatican Archive of Propaganda Fide during this period. The duration was too limited for an in-depth exploration of the over thirty thousand records tied to Oceania in their possession yet ample enough to discern the profound importance of their breadth.

Despite the amount of information found, the search posed difficulties on two fronts. The first obstacle was logistical, as the heritage is dispersed across various institutions, primarily offline. The second challenge was conceptual, with several Italian institutions lacking collaboration when discussing opportunities for digitally returning this data to Aboriginal communities. These reactions denoted and/or implied the tensions embedded in the international conversations about displaced heritage and power dynamics deep-seated in cultural institutions, indicating a clear need for further research in this area (Galassi, 2012).

This necessity has been remarked on by the many people I informed about the records while working in Australian collecting institutions over the following decade. As the ATSIDA project ended prematurely, I felt responsible for notifying as many Aboriginal community members as possible about this heritage overseas. Throughout this period, I have observed, though I cannot articulate on behalf of my Aboriginal colleagues, their interest in accessing and engaging with these records. These experiences and the analysis indicated that it was necessary to forge a transnational dialogue space about the records held in Italy, where communities and institutions could engage directly and not (only) through an intermediary. Given the power dynamics evident in the initial interactions with Italian institutions, striving for a dialogue capable of reshuffling existing power structures, focusing on centring Aboriginal self-determination and sovereignty,

became crucial. Many scholars have endorsed this prerequisite before me and have called for new theories for displaced Aboriginal archives and frameworks to advise professionals in this area (A. J. Gilliland & Caswell, 2016; Lowry, 2019a, 2019b). It became evident from the beginning of this research that the analysis of the Italian case would have benefited other similar contexts.

The multiple lenses of my transnational and transcultural standpoints have helped me to acknowledge and navigate these various perspectives. The need for my critique starts with a deep respect and acknowledgment of the three worlds I am situated in. I am grateful to Australia for providing me with unimaginable opportunities to work in my chosen field, and I feel like I have found a second home. I am honoured to have the chance to work in the field of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The richness and vibrancy of Aboriginal cultures have enriched my life. I am also proud to be Italian and raised with values that accompany me even far away.

However, my position within this study has been a provoking space to navigate as a researcher and individual. Constantly shifting and evolving, the lenses through which I have been approaching this work had to be flexible, and so had to be my attitude. Being Italian but having lived in Australia for a long time has sometimes silently meant for Italian participants that “I wasn’t Italian enough” to understand the current problems and complexities of the Italian cultural sector. Still, my strong Italian accent and attachment to my cultural heritage often exclude me from mainstream white Australia and remind me that in the context of the Australian colonial project, “we were classed somewhere between the Chinese and the blacks” (Dewhirst, 2008, p. 35). Finally, working and having close relationships with people who self-identify as First Nations had a profound impact on my ways of experiencing the world, but I had to constantly remind myself of my role as an ‘outsider researcher’ and ‘cultural learner’ (J.-A. Archibald, 2008, p. 38). I have also tirelessly been aware of the risks and dangers that cultural appropriation brings to Aboriginal peoples and have always double-checked that I wasn’t crossing any boundaries because “Acting politically and gaining self-understanding are linked and must be maintained and held in balance over time” (Land, 2015, p. 161).

In summary, my standpoint of being an Italian woman and ethnographer, living and working in Gadigal Country with considerable experience assisting Aboriginal peoples in accessing archival records, equips me to interrogate the challenge of facilitating

culturally appropriate access to records in Italy. The strength of my perspective within this research is my transnational understanding of Italy and Australia and my transcultural skills in working with these records. Additionally, my European standpoint assisted in developing a model that might be applied to archives displaced to other jurisdictions. Reflections on my standpoint are interwoven throughout this thesis.

1.6. Research approach

The primary focus of this thesis is on Aboriginal records as a collective entity. I do not attempt to delve into the history and information contained in each individual record, although the insights gained during this thesis have proven valuable for a deeper understanding. My objective is to navigate in and out, observing them as a process rather than as isolated bodies.

To interrogate the features and significance of these archives, I pose the following research questions:

(Primary research question):

RQ 1 - What insights do the Aboriginal records in Italy provide for discourse and practice on archival displacement for First Nations peoples?

(Underlying research questions):

RQ 2 - In what manners does the emphasis on Indigenous paradigms contribute to a more thorough understanding of archival displacement?

RQ 3 – What knowledge translation practices can aid in fostering an understanding of diverse knowledge systems within transcultural archiving?

RQ 4 – Which principles and strategies are essential for facilitating future culturally appropriate access to displaced records and information for First Nations peoples?

Framed in an Indigenous paradigm, this research draws on decolonising methodologies and my standpoint to gather data from various sources. My research project seeks to explore Aboriginal displaced records in Italy by:

- (1) investigating the gaps in knowledge of archival holdings that are silenced mainly by Anglophone narratives and that are in general understudied,

- (2) adopting knowledge translation techniques through the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, 2007) to build dialogue between Australia and Italy,
- (3) learning from the collaboration with Italian institutions in the building of a digital archive to share a sample of these records with Aboriginal Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums sector (GLAM) professionals and
- (4) gathering the participants' ideas on the future of these archives.

1.7. Overview of the literature

I approached these questions through interdisciplinary and transnational academic scholarship. The scrutinised concepts contribute to the richness of this study, providing critical theories aligned with Indigenous worldviews that form a cohesive thread in addressing the research questions. In summary, this study is firmly grounded in four distinct areas of literature. The first thread of information delves into the connection between Aboriginal self-determination, sovereignty and displaced cultural heritage material in Europe. The second strand of material centres on the intricate complexities and power structures inherent in displaced archives of colonial origin. The third literature sequence narrows its focus to displaced archives in Italy. The fourth and last strand is concerned with the practice of knowledge translation within the cultural interface.

Initially, I examined the relationship between Aboriginal self-determination, sovereignty and cultural heritage material displaced in Europe. I then focused on accessing information in archives, which the literature reveals is crucial for Australian Aboriginal peoples. This is for two reasons: these records are primarily relevant for genealogy, cultural revival, and reparation due to colonialism, along with the fact that access and control over identity and culture are one of the basic principles of self-determination and sovereignty (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997; Behrendt, 2019; Behrendt Larissa, n.d.; Bowrey, 2016; McKemmish et al., 2012; Nakata, 2012; Nakata & Langton, 2005; Royal Commission, 1998; Russell, 2005, 2006; Thorpe, 2001; Travis, 2023; United Nations General Assembly, 2007). The next step was to explore how digital return can support First Nations communities in this space (Barwick et al., 2020, 2021; Christen, n.d., 2012, 2018, 2019; Nakata & Langton, 2005; Withey, 2015). As the questions that Fourmille (1989) raised about displacement, disconnection, and dispersal of Indigenous information in archives still resonate today, the literature regarding the advancement of international movements of data sovereignty was crucial to this work (J. Anderson &

Christen, 2013, 2019; S. Carroll et al., n.d.; S. R. Carroll et al., n.d.; Maria Elena Duarte, 2013; Marisa Elena Duarte, 2017; A. Gilliland et al., 2019; Karaitiana, n.d.; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Oliver & Evans, n.d.; Russo et al., 2021; Walter & Suina, 2019).

I then looked broadly at the complexities and power structures embedded in displaced archives of colonial provenance (Frings-Hessami, 2019; A. J. Gilliland, 2017b; Grimsted, 2010; Halilovich, 2014; Kecskemeti, 1992; Kecskeméti, 2017; Lovering, 2017; Lowry, 2019b, 2022; Lowry et al., 2020; Maria Montenegro, 2023; Namhila, 2016; Whiting, 2022). Next was the importance of archival testimonies written in languages other than English to provide alternatives to British narratives (Girola, 2010; Jennings, 2011; Khatun, 2019; Lydon, 2006, 2014a; Olcelli, 2018; Verdina, 2017; Verdina & Kinder, 2019). Within this scholarship, I also looked broadly at the existing international frameworks and guidelines (S. Carroll et al., n.d.; S. R. Carroll et al., n.d.; International Council on Archives Expert Matters Indigenous Group, 2019; Lewis et al., 2020; Monash University, 2003-2008; UNESCO, 2015), followed by the literature on the impact of these records on the institutions through their misplacement (Buchanan, 2022; Pratt, 1991, 2007; Spitta, 2009). Finally, I looked at why, according to the literature, the current conversations around the physical and digital return of these records need to find new frameworks to produce practical changes (Cifor & Gilliland, 2016; A. J. Gilliland, 2017b; A. J. Gilliland & Caswell, 2016; J. A. Gilliland et al., 2016; Lowry, 2019a, 2019b) and then the need for participatory models and critical praxis to support this reconceptualising (J. Anderson & Christen, 2019; Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Janke, 2021; Littletree et al., 2020; María Montenegro, 2019a; Nakata, 2007; G. H. Smith, 2004; L. T. Smith, 2012; Steffensen, 2019, 2020; Thorpe, 2019, 2022).

These initial, background literature research processes were followed by a focus on the history of the debate, concentrating specifically on displaced archives in Italy. Considering the limited studies on the topic, this section comprised non-academic books and media articles that can be considered primary materials. I started by contextualising the relationships and exchanges between the two countries to investigate the Italian role in this area. I focused especially on the field of study initiated by Joseph Pugliese (n.d., 2002a), analysing Aboriginal/Italian relationships (Abbondanza & Battiston, 2023a, 2023b; Dewhirst, 2008, 2016; Indelicato, 2020; Mascitelli, 2015; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2011; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Ricatti, 2022; R. Pascoe et al., 2022; Piperoglou & Simic, 2022; Pugliese, 2002a; Ricatti, n.d.; Ricatti & Dutto, 2023).

The literature examination about Aboriginal displaced records in Italy shows that limited studies have been undertaken (Aigner, 2015; Lydon, 2014a, 2020). Some of the key works produced include: the volume *Australia. The Vatican Museum Indigenous Collection* (Aigner, 2018) result of a partnership between the Vatican Museum and the National Museum of Australia and the book *Aborigeno con gli Aborigeni* (Cipollone & Orlandi, 2011b), a description of the life of Monsignor Rudesindo Salvado sourced from its records held at the Vatican Archive of Propaganda Fide. There is also *Nagoyo. The life of Don Angelo Confalonieri among the aborigines of Australia 1846-1848* (Pizzini, 2010). Very little is known about Italian attitudes towards archival repatriation to First Nations peoples, and I could not find any example of literature that expressively targeted Aboriginal documentation from the Australian continent. However, in this thesis I could rely on grey and academic literature that demonstrate different attitudes towards physical repatriation of Ancestral Remains and cultural objects to First Nations peoples. Some examples include the debate around the request from the Australian Government of return of Ancestral Remains (Fantauzzi, 2010; Ferracuti & Lattanzi, 2012; Pennacini, 2021; Pinna, 2018; Prayer, 2008; Totaro, 2009); the concept of the *Object Ambassadeurs* [objects ambassadeurs] developed by the Kanak people in New Caledonia with Italian researchers that proposed possible alternative solutions to the discourse of restitution (Aria, 2015; Paini & Aria, 2015); or the return of two lithic fragments in volcanic tuff from the Mayan site of Copàn (Honduras) in the form of casts to the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia by the D'Albertis Museum (De Palma, 2008, 2019, 2022; Marazzi, 2019). Digital return of museum and archival collections (especially photographic material) in the Italian context has mainly focused on local communities and African heritage, such as the project *Memorie Coloniali* [Colonial Memories] (*Memorie Coloniali*, 2023). As my analysis started to unveil transnational connections and focus on colonial responsibility, I started to draw links between Aboriginal and Afro-Italian academics, activists and allies who are actively challenging the established norms within Italian society and cultural sector (Kan et al., 2022; Ouedraogo et al., 2022; Panico, 2020; Pesarini, 2022; Igiaba Scego, 2010, 2019, 2020a; Tinius & Pesarini, 2023).

The final and last literature exploration concerns the practice of knowledge translation in Indigenous contexts (Brinckley et al., 2022; L. Smith et al., 2019; Smylie et al., 2014; Williams, 2021). The discourse around knowledge translation in Aboriginal research has

been used mainly to address the research-practice gap in the health sector (*Indigenous, Policy, and Community Settings*, 2011; Khayyat Kholghi et al., 2018; Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022; Smylie et al., 2004, 2014; Staiger-Williams & Harper, 2019). Within the archival context, knowledge translation is primarily recognised as the decoding of language, with the acknowledgment that various archival traditions significantly influence this conversion (Foscarini et al., 2021; Frings-Hessami & Oliver, 2022; Ketelaar & Frings-Hessami, 2021; Roberto et al., 2021; Soum-Paris, 2021). I then shifted my attention to examining the experiences of both communities and institutions, identifying a contact zone for dialogue within the archival context by utilising a third space for communication (A. M. Doyle, 2013; McChesney, 2014; María Montenegro, 2023; Nakata, 2002, 2007; Pratt, 1991). The literature about this area of study is very general and does not provide practical information on how these exchanges happen in these encounters.

In brief, the review of the literature conducted reiterates the importance of the research questions addressed in this thesis. It exposes gaps in the data concerning displaced archives of colonial origin, particularly in non-English-speaking European nations. Despite examples of transcultural dialogue between institutions and communities in archival science exist, I identified a lack of studies on knowledge translation practices in transcultural contexts, especially in the field of archival displacement. This deficiency is mirrored in the examination of data sovereignty linked to recordkeeping. Essentially, this implies that First Nations peoples seldom have a voice in the millions of archival records globally that document information about them, their families, and their communities. Very little information has been produced on the history, complexities, and opportunities within this space of the Italian case. It is this gap to which I aim to contribute.

1.8. Major research outcomes

This cross-disciplinary research aims to contribute to the current academic debate on First Nations archival displacement in several ways.

Through this thesis, this study has addressed the research questions integrating five recurring and interrelated threads which will serve me as guiding principles during the data collection. The first thread relates to how these records contribute to self-determination and the sovereignty rights of Aboriginal peoples. The second reflects on colonialism as a transnational historical process and an ongoing practice perpetuating

asymmetric power dynamics in archives. The third strand emphasises the significance of knowledge translation, asserting that achieving structural change is contingent upon developing a transcultural understanding of diverse knowledge systems. The fourth recurring thread is the absence of Aboriginal voices in overseas archives. The fifth and final thread posits that Indigenous methodologies prove most effective in comprehending these records.

This innovative analysis has created the baseline for two ground-breaking outcomes. First, the creation of the new category of *eclipsed archives* to conceptualise archival records that were not part of the Australian colonial project but benefited from it and have since become effectively invisible and unfindable. Second, this study generates a methodology to approach them. My research demonstrates that the records at the cultural interface distinguish themselves from the ones held in Australia or Great Britain for their political and social function. They are an almost pristine source of information overlooked by historiography and archival science. Finally, this thesis' pioneering research design sets my approach apart from previous studies about Aboriginal archival records in countries other than Australia and Britain. For the first time, I looked at the Italian context through an Indigenous decolonising lens. This innovative approach has yielded significant advantages in fostering mutual comprehension and has brought about concrete shifts in how participating institutions now perceive and handle records. I am also mindful that even if this doctoral research focuses on archival collections, it presents broader implications for museums, galleries, universities, and libraries.

The last major research outcome of this doctoral study is the creation of the first digital archive for Aboriginal archival collections held in Italy.¹

1.9. Summary of chapters

This thesis consists of eight chapters, each corresponding to a sequential phase in constructing an argument to tackle the research questions. I advanced the inquiries by:

- Enhancing my comprehension of the contextual backdrop within which this study is situated,

¹ https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/en_au/

- Reflecting on the most efficacious perspective to advance it,
- Experimenting with methods to chart the records,
- Exploring innovative approaches to engage with them,
- Formulating a novel categorisation as a foundation for subsequent studies and
- Offering robust findings on how to address their future.

Approached together, these steps (reflect, shift, learn, transform, define, listen, disrupt) offer a pathway for scholars and practitioners to engage with First Nations archival heritage held outside Australia. These eight stages, to be revisited in the final chapter of the thesis, are part of an innovative methodology for culturally appropriate care of First Nations records situated in countries beyond the borders of the settler state where they originated.

In Chapter 2, ***Reflect. Aboriginal Self-Determination and the Archive***, I expose the contexts in which colonial archives have been produced and disseminated. By setting the scene of this research, I investigate one of the key threads throughout this thesis: the significance of records held outside Australia and Britain for truth-telling in Australian society. I then begin scrutinising another crucial aspect of this research, the role of colonialism in the dispersal of records. I reflect initially on how colonialism as a historical process has contributed to the dispersal of Aboriginal cultural heritage, demonstrating how the dissemination of archival records related to Aboriginal Australians, as well as those of other First Nations communities, is a transnational practice firmly intertwined in far-reaching international relationships. I illustrate in more detail how the accounts of migrants and other international actors documenting their interactions with Aboriginal people have only gained recognition in recent decades. I then mark the commencement of my exploration into colonialism as an ongoing practice, using the Italian context as a narrative backdrop. I extend this overview by delving into the historical background of Italy and its collecting practices of Aboriginal records, identifying the similarities with how African records are managed. This analysis, spanning the whole thesis, reveals that the Aboriginal records in Italy have been administered under Euro-Western frameworks without consideration for the well-being of Aboriginal community members who will, in the future, engage with the records. Consequently, I incorporate Kirsten Thorpe's (2022) *Aboriginal Archival Reforms* to pinpoint areas requiring attention in the research design of this thesis, aiming to redefine how archival displacement has been approached thus far.

In Chapter 3, ***Shift. Inflection in the study of Aboriginal archives in Italy***, I craft an innovative theoretical approach to analyse the records, contributing to this thesis's broader idea of the need for new strategies to approach archival displacement. I contribute to this core idea by introducing two recurring leitmotifs throughout the thesis. The first recurrent motif is the effectiveness of Indigenous methodologies in comprehending archival displacement. The second is the importance of transcultural dialogue of different knowledge systems to break the stall on archival displacement. Consequently, by uniquely positioning the analysis of Italian archives within an Indigenous paradigm (Kovach, 2021; Moreton-Robinson, 2020; L. T. Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008), this study makes its first contribution to knowledge in critical archival and Indigenous studies. In this section, I indicate how I intertwine Indigenous and non-Indigenous frameworks that align with First Nations worldviews and can provide innovative understandings of the Aboriginal records in Italy. I then analyse this research's philosophical underpinning, navigating a decolonising approach to the Italian records and the power structures layered in collecting institutions (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Littletree et al., 2020; L. T. Smith, 2012; Thorpe, 2022). My personal and professional standpoints are critical to this methodology. Next, I move inward to describe which methods to gather data best align with this set of worldviews and beliefs and best serve me in responding to the research questions (P. Atkinson et al., 2021; M. Caswell, 2017; Christen, 2012). Lastly, I describe the frameworks utilised to work with the data gathered through a research interface that provides space for transcultural understanding and aligns with Indigenous worldviews (J.-A. Archibald, 2008; Evans et al., 2017; Shannon Faulkhead, 2009; McKemmish, 1994). This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for addressing the second research question, which explores how adopting an Indigenous paradigm in studying Aboriginal records in Italy can initiate structural change in archival displacement.

In Chapter 4, ***Learn. Mapping Aboriginal Records in Italy***, I advance the central thesis by delving into the specificities and opportunities presented by the Italian case. By pioneering the scrutiny of existing studies with my original archival research, this chapter considers the records in Italy as an interconnected web of information linked through national and transnational trajectories. This enquiry contributes to the argument that new approaches are needed to examine and care for non-British archival records outside the Australian borders. The analysis also shows that the Aboriginal records in Italy represent

a valuable and rich resource, serving the interests of Aboriginal communities and contributing significantly to global historiography. There are different threads here that continue from Chapters 2 and 3. By scrutinising the records through an *archival continuum* paradigm, this evaluation reflects on the opportunities this documentation brings to learning about Aboriginal relationships with Italians, the settler state, and European collectors. It can also provide information on family connections and cultural practices from non-Aboriginal perspectives. Consequently, the Aboriginal records held in Italian institutions can contribute to Aboriginal self-determination and truth-telling in Australian society. Another thread that commenced earlier in this thesis is the presence of knowledge translation practices that have shaped the records since their creation. In this chapter, I present illustrations of how interactions between various individuals, cultures, and languages have generated transculturation. This process gives rise to a third interpretation and a space of encounter, aspects that are reflected in the records. The last concept extended in this chapter is how the ongoing colonial practice embedded in archival practice has veiled aspects of Aboriginal documentation in Italy. The conceptual model *Centring Relationality* (Littletree et al., 2020) has offered a roadmap to highlight overlooked aspects within the Italian collections and provides a framework for an alternative mapping of the collections. This section explores the research questions by analysing the creation and characteristics of the documentation held in Italy. It sets the ground for the next chapter, in which I experiment with innovative praxis for the physical and digital records.

In Chapter 5, ***Transform. Building Pathways for a Praxis with Aboriginal Records in Italy***, I present ground-breaking insights into archival practices that, as demonstrated in this research, have initiated significant structural change in Italian institutions in how their Aboriginal records are appreciated and cared for. By scrutinising two interventions in my research, the digital archive prototype and the exhibition at the D'Albertis Castle curated with Marika Duczynski (Gamilaraay), this chapter operates at a double conceptual level. Firstly, it reflects on which principles have emerged from dialogue at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007): the significance of disseminating knowledge and information beyond the confines of academic and institutional realms, the influence of acknowledging historical responsibilities that extend beyond the constraints imposed by institutional and national legal frameworks, the gravity of adopting a personal and professional standpoint and the value of establishing environments that embrace Indigenous worldviews and objectives within the Italian information sector. Secondly, this

chapter crafts practical and innovative ways to translate knowledge across the cultural interface between Italian and Aboriginal GLAM researchers and practitioners, informing the third research question.

In Chapter 6, **Define. A New Concept: Eclipsed Archives** I demonstrate how a new specific conceptualisation for Aboriginal documentation in Italy is needed. This concept, directly addressing the primary research question of this study, is pivotal in substantiating one of the central arguments of this thesis: that these archives necessitate a new categorisation and methodology for effective management. To accomplish this objective, I first locate the study of Italian records within the broader context of rights of access and management of archives that have been displaced from their original communities and are now held in collecting institutions worldwide. My analysis in this chapter shows that while there are similarities with other cases of archival displacement, the Italian records do not fit within any existing categorisation. I also develop one of the threads in this thesis that analyses colonialism as an ongoing practice. I adopt the framework of archival poetics by Narungga academic and activist poet Natalie Harkin (Baker et al., 2020; Harkin, 2014, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a) and Ann Laura Stoler's (Stoler, 2002, 2010) scaffolds along the grain to investigate the power structures embedded in the governance and management of Aboriginal records in Italy. As a result of this analysis, I create the categorisation of eclipsed archives. I employ the metaphor of the eclipse to characterise records stored in unexpected places, referring to archives that differ from those held in Australia or Great Britain in terms of their political and social function. This metaphor suggests that these records have been positioned in either light or darkness based on the purpose they served or ceased to fulfill for the collectors and the Italian state. I also use the idea of the eclipse to symbolise the significance and agency of both physical and digital records and the pivotal role of the knowledge translation process in the cultural interface. The interest and curiosity evoked by these records have converged these two layers in this study.

In Chapter 7, **Listen. What is the future of the Aboriginal records in Italy?** I contribute to the core concepts of this thesis by analysing the Aboriginal records in Italy against the grain for the first time. Through the method of yarning (P. Atkinson et al., 2021; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010), this chapter assembles the initial goals outlined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander GLAM researchers and practitioners, serving as a blueprint for preserving and managing records within Italian institutions. It also incorporates valuable

insights from the three partner institutions. The innovative approach in this chapter involves interpreting the reflections on Aboriginal and Italian requirements at the cultural interface. This methodological choice has proven beneficial by illuminating obstacles and shared goals between the two contributing groups.

In Chapter 8, ***A Methodology for Eclipsed Records***, I sum up all the evidence gathered (from the archival research, the work on the digital archive prototype and the yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Italian GLAM scholars and professionals) to create a methodology to facilitate culturally appropriate access by First Nations peoples to their displaced records and information. This final chapter concludes the thesis by presenting a recapitulation of findings that effectively addressed the research questions propelling this study. Additionally, it contemplates potential avenues for future research endeavours.

CHAPTER 2. REFLECT
**Examining Archival Displacement Through the Lens of
Indigenous Archival Sovereignty**

In each of these instances the missionaries overlaid what was unrecognisable to them with structures that they could recognise; they replaced the unknown with the known. The Islanders' culture was replaced with the fundamental accoutrements of Western culture; Christianity replaced their religion; English apparel and taboos replaced Islander ideas about clothing the body; English-style buildings replaced the Islanders' homes; English concepts of law, education and work replaced the complex evolutions of the Islanders' social, political and economic structures; the customs and structures of the English lifeworld began to influence that of the Islanders. That this was done intentionally but in ignorance makes no difference to the final result.

Martin Nakata (Torres Strait Islander). *Disciplining the savages Savaging the disciplines*. 2004. P. 24



Figure 2.1. Photo of unidentified people from Mer (Torres Strait Island)²

² Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box SezOceania4586a4615. Photo number 04591. **Caption:** Mer boys (Torres Strait) / Meeting at the missionary house in Mer (Torres Strait); twenty years ago they were naked, wild, at the meeting reproduced here in 1889, no less than £30 in money for the result of the collection for the Mission Society. Gift and photography of AC Haddon. July 1890. Enrico H. Giglioli. **Original text:** Ragazzi Mer (Stretto di Torres) / Riunione alla casa dei missionari a Mer (stretto di Torres); venti anni fa

2.1. Introduction – The research contexts

On 1st April 2022, Pope Francis issued a historic apology to Canadian First peoples for the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the atrocities committed in residential schools, where an unidentified number of children suffered abuses and death (Povoledo & Austen, 2022). This event was prompted by the detection of hundreds of unmarked graves at the sites of a former Catholic residential school (Musa & Elamroussi, 2022). The Canadian National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, requesting Pope Francis to visit Canada and apologise to survivors and their families, urged the access to the Vatican archives where documents related to these religious organisations are deposited (Povoledo & Austen, 2022). In Australia, survivors from the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Training Home on the NSW north coast have advocated for the same investigations. They are urging the NSW Government to inspect the area around the building as they suspect the presence of children's unmarked burial. Hence, they also insist on having the right to access the official documentation of the Training Home (Allam & Collard, 2023). In Western Australia (WA), survivors of the New Norcia Monastery, previously implicated in allegations of sexual abuse of Aboriginal children, are now urged by Noongar Elders and surviving members of the Stolen Generation to inspect the area. The objective is to uncover the burial sites of "The kids that never came back" (Moodie et al., 2021). They ask for the complete disclosure of New Norcia's records on Indigenous children buried in the town, including whether their parents and other authorities were notified of their deaths (Moodie et al., 2021).

These recent instances influence this research in three ways. The initial consideration is that archival displacement and dispersal arise from intricate historical and political interactions, shaping a resilient legacy of colonialism. This facet implies that colonial archives, especially when displaced from their original context, must be examined through a transnational perspective to yield meaningful impacts. To bring to light the similar characteristics of cases of colonial archival displacement the field of transnational history is a valuable lens (Haskins, 2017; Reid & Paisley, 2017) because it shifts the focus from nations and states to examining the circulation of people, goods, technology,

erano nudi, selvaggi, all'adunanza qui riprodotta nel 1889, non meno di sterline 30 in denaro per il risultato della colletta per la Societa' delle Missioni. Dono e fotogr. Di A. C. Haddon. Luglio 1890. Enrico H. Giglioli. Digital archive: <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/men-and-children-mer-missionary-house-mer-island-torres-strait>

and culture in shaping modernity (Paisley & Scully, 2019, p. 1). However, despite the many similarities, the Canadian and Australian contexts show that First Nations histories must be observed considering historical and local specificities.

The second aspect evident in these examples is that archival displacement is a shared experience for First Nations peoples. However, despite the existence of established literatures on archival displacement and Indigenous experiences of the colonial archive, there is still much work to be done to integrate these two areas of study. They frequently address similar questions from distinct viewpoints, and fostering a closer dialogue between them holds great potential for generating new insights. One of the exceptions to this gap is the work of Maria Montenegro's (2019b; 2023) with North American tribes. The author explores how archival displacement gives rise to various forms of Indigenous dispossession and investigates how definitions of place and land shape the understanding of archival displacement across different domains, including land claims (María Montenegro, 2019b; Maria Montenegro, 2023, p. 89). My work builds upon and extends Montenegro's critical inquiry by reimagining the diverse implications of archival displacement through an Indigenous perspective. However, it broadens this concept by delving into the nuanced and underexplored realm of collecting and extraction by non-state actors. The involvement of external entities in colonial processes, such as the Vatican as exemplified in this case, necessitates a recontextualisation beyond conventional political and geographical boundaries to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

The third reflection pertains to the significance and weight inherent in the records housed within colonial archives. In Canada, access to colonial records can serve as additional means to support justice for the violent past of colonisation and exploitation, with repercussions persisting in present times (Ghaddar, 2016; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). In Australia, records produced by the settler state can be equally essential and destructive. Colonial archives are both sites of pain and healing told predominantly from non-Indigenous perspectives (Evans et al., 2018; McKemmish et al., 2011; Russell, 2005; L. T. Smith, 2012; Thorpe, 2022). In most cases, information was appropriated without informed consent (Janke, 1998, 2003). In these specific instances, the records are crucial testimonies that support the truth-telling and healing of First Nations families and trigger a process of recognising the historical responsibilities of the settler state and external entities that have benefited from it, such as the Vatican.

In this chapter, I delve into the contextual backdrop in which this thesis takes shape. I first reflect on the vibrant contexts in which colonial archives were generated and circulated, emphasising how they testify to the vitality of the transcultural relationships that Aboriginal peoples had with multicultural communities before and after the British invasion. Here I explicitly focus on the creation of Aboriginal records transferred to Italy. I then discuss how archival displacement is a global concern for most First Nations communities and present the Italian example and its unique characteristics via the three museum partners in this study. Lastly, I adopt as a blueprint the framework created in the doctoral work of Worimi researcher Kirsten Thorpe (2022) to ensure the research design of this thesis is shaped upon Aboriginal archival worldviews. In her work, Thorpe has investigated which reforms are necessary to meet the archiving needs of Aboriginal peoples, to support their wellbeing, and recognise Indigenous sovereignty within the archival context.

2.2. Aboriginal sovereignty was never ceded

The establishment of a penal colony in NSW by Great Britain in 1788 appears remarkably recent when juxtaposed against the thousands of generations of Aboriginal occupation and land management on the mainland and in the Torres Strait Islander archipelago. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have inhabited the land we call Australia from 'time immemorial' (The Uluru Dialogue, 2017). Irene Watson (Tanganekald and Meintangk) (2017a, p. 111) vividly expresses that Aboriginal peoples have been in this continent "From the time of the first sunrise". Indeed, Australia is a continent, not a country. Within its borders lie the hundreds of Aboriginal homelands that Aboriginal people call their Countries (Kwaymullina, 2017, p. 5). To be more precise, at the time of the British settlement, over 250 languages, including 800 dialects, were spoken (Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2023a). Despite all being threatened, at least 123 Aboriginal languages are in use or being revitalised/revived in Australia today (Australian Government, 2020a), symbolising cultural resilience and vibrancy. Hence, First Nations people in Australia have transmitted and preserved knowledge for thousands of generations through oral communication, cultural practices, and extensive land management. Western science has now aligned with these intricate narratives, substantiating with its own accredited

evidence that Aboriginal peoples have been residing on the Australian continent for a staggering 60,000 years (Clarkson et al., 2017; The Uluru Dialogue, 2017).

In contrast to the experiences in other settler nations, such as Aotearoa, where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Māori Chiefs and the British, Australia did not attempt the establishment of a treaty between the British and Aboriginal people (Watson, 2012). Instead, Australia was claimed as *terra nullius* (Wolfe, 2006). This Latin term signifying the land of no one became the justification for precise and deliberate colonial interests (Watson, 2017b). As discussed by increasingly numerous scholars from Stanner (1969), the colonisation of Australia was not a peaceful settlement but shared the violence, massacres, cultural dispossession and appropriation of land, artefacts and human remains that characterised European colonisation (Reynolds, 2013). Violence, monotheism, and racism challenged the relationships and obligations Indigenous communities had with the natural world (Watson, 2018). No one seriously believed that Australia was an empty territory. Archival evidence of letters between Arthur Phillip (British Governor of the Colony of New South Wales) and the King provides a compelling indication of a much broader political plan to take effective control of the land (Edmonds & Carey, 2016, p. 373). Despite these evidences, the Australian High Court renounced the notion of *terra nullius* only in 1992, with the famous court case *Mabo v Queensland* (Kwaymullina, 2017, p. 10). As later explained in this chapter, the enduring doctrine of *terra nullius* has contributed to silencing Aboriginal voices in archival records. In short, the lack of a treaty indicates that the country was not given: it was taken (Kwaymullina, 2017, p. 9). Aboriginal sovereignty has never been ceded.

In stark contrast to the lack of visibility of Aboriginal peoples in British historical sources, it is now widely acknowledged that they actively engaged in various roles within these relationships (Irish, 2017). This includes serving as guides, hosts, translators, and intermediaries for Europeans. However, Aboriginal voices are rarely present in archival accounts despite the documents containing traces of their presence (Konishi et al., 2015). Wotjobaluk prominent historian Lynette Russell investigated the effect of Aboriginal peoples' participation in sea enterprise and travelling overseas. For Russell, this work challenges previous models that posit Aboriginal responses as merely reactive, either resistant or accommodating, instead of vibrant and active agents in history (Russell, 2014, p. 97). The volumes *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections, and Exchange* (Carey & Lydon, 2019) and *The Routledge Companion to Global Indigenous*

History (McGrath & Lynette, 2021) are particularly interesting for this research. They emphasise the agency of Aboriginal people in the global, transnational networks of colonial relationships and mobility that have played a pivotal role in shaping the world as it stands today.

In this thesis, a comprehensive grasp of the concept of Indigenous sovereignty is indispensable for comprehending its translation across physical and digital borders. The notion of Indigenous sovereignty and why it matters significantly differentiates between settler states, communities, and individuals (Barker, 2005). Indigenous sovereignty stands apart from State sovereignty (Jonas, 2002) and necessitates delineation within the context of colonisation, given that it has been an Aboriginal system of governance since time immemorial (Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Reynolds, 2006). The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) clearly describes that “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands and possessed it under our own laws and customs”, explaining that

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown (The Uluru Dialogue, 2017).

The exercise of sovereignty and sustained land management did not happen in isolation. Even long before Europeans landed on the coast of Australia, Aboriginal peoples were active agents in exchanges with other groups and nations (Paisley, 2012). One well-known example is the pre-European cultural, artistic and commercial routes through the Indonesian archipelago and extending to China (Clarke & Frederick, 2006; Langton & Sloggett, 2014).

After the arrival of the British fleets, the role of migrants in the occupation and dispossession of Aboriginal lands has started to be critically questioned only in the late 1980s (Curthoys, 2000; Dunn et al., n.d.; Moreton-Robinson, 2014; Piperoglou & Simic, 2022; Pugliese, 2002a; Ricatti, 2019). Understanding these connections is an asset for this study, as it aids in contextualising the ways in which testimonies collected and generated by Italian individuals were conveyed and distributed. (see Chapter 4). Historian John Mulvaney (1988) authored one of the earliest articles analysing the

connections of Aboriginal people beyond Australia. The commentary offers compelling examples that highlight the complexities of these transnational relationships. Mulvaney writes about the travel of a group of Aboriginal cricketers to England in 1868 and mentions the saga of the two young Aboriginal boys taken from New Norcia (WA) to Rome (Italy) in 1848-1849. He also analyses the letter that testifies to one of the first encounters between an Aboriginal person and a European, written by Father Vittorio Riccio in 1676, held at the Vatican Archive of Propaganda Fide (see Chapter 4).



Figure 2.2. Photo of unidentified young girl (possibly Italian)³

The interactions that took place were multilayered and multilateral. Dynamic networks were forged across the Australian continent between Aboriginal people and the numerous migrant communities, travellers, and missionaries during and after the British arrival (Ganter, 1999, 2018; Ganter et al., 2006; Griffith University, 2009-2018; McGrath, 2010; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Ricatti, 2022; Piperoglou & Simic, 2022; Stephenson, 2001). However, research on the testimonies of these connections has been limited until recent

³ Photo taken by Luigi Maria D'Albertis in his third world tour (29 January - 9 August 1910). Document from the D'Albertis Museum photographic archive (Genova). Photo number 321 56. 141931.

years and focused mainly on English texts. This gap has been noted by academics, who have recently started to decentre British views so prevalent in Australian historiography. One of the most interesting works in this is Samia Khatun's (2019) *Australianama*. Khatun traces a path into a transnational history of South Asian presence in Australia through the epistemologies of migrants and Aboriginal peoples, drawing on archival materials (including settler records in English). The author adopts storytelling strategies and interpretive keys in non-English language texts to create counter-narratives of the South Asian diaspora (Khatun, 2019, pp. 14–15). This work highlights the role of migrants' histories as precious sources of information and as vibrant knowledge traditions that shaped and negotiated Country and culture with Aboriginal communities. Khatun's pioneering research is particularly relevant to my study as it challenges the prevailing monolingualism in Australian historiography (Chakraborty, 2019). Furthermore, it decentres Western narrative techniques and methodologies.

Since the beginning of this study, the commencement of two critical projects signifies the shift in appreciation and understanding of the importance of non-English sources for studying Australia's past. The first is Lynette Russell's *Global Encounters* (2022) project at Monash University, which aims to radically shift Australia's historical awareness by concentrating on the dynamic history of encounters between First Nations peoples and 'outsiders' over the millennium. The research involves archives in The Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Portugal, France, the UK, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore (*About the project*, 2021; *Global Encounters & First Nations Peoples*, 2022). The second is the *Opening the Multilingual Archive of Australia project at the University of Sydney* (The University of Sydney, n.d.), a repository that groups non-English materials related to the history of Australia, including magazines, personal letters and diaries, newspapers and other publications and visual culture.

Italians, too, are part of these histories and have participated in the displacement of Aboriginal information, cultural objects and Ancestral Remains (see Chapter 4). In 2010, Stefano Girola wrote *The Italian Connection: New Historical Sources on European-Aboriginal Relationships*, highlighting the critical contribution of foreign language documents in enriching historical knowledge of European-Indigenous interactions in Australia, focusing primarily on missionary records (Girola, 2010). Girola argues that these resources have been historically ignored because of the White Australian Policy, which neglected the importance of Aboriginal and non-white Australians' histories

(Girola, 2010, p. 99) and perhaps also because of the monolingualism so prevalent in Australia. Australian scholar Jane Lydon (Lydon, 2006, 2014a, 2014b, 2020, 2021) has published extensively on Italian anthropologist Enrico Giglioli (Chapter 4), who recorded and collected widespread information about Aboriginal Australians. However, Lydon (2014a) observed that "[...] In sharp contrast to the work of many nineteenth-century British observers, Giglioli's accounts of Australian Aboriginal people, comprising two books illustrated with engravings and associated archival and photographic documentation, have not been closely examined by anglophone historians".

As an Italian migrant to Australia, I am part of this history. I recognise the privilege of living here, as many other refugees and migrants worldwide do not have the opportunity to do so. With time and the frustrations of navigating the complex Australian immigration system, I learned I have benefited from the well-established political relationships between the Italian and Australian governments. This process has meant that I had access to potential visa options and medical support that other countries are not entitled to. Thus, I have also been able to possess these rights thanks to the ongoing migration to Australia that slowly started in 1788 when Italy wasn't yet a unified political entity, and the political alliances of the two countries. Even if I was lucky enough to come to Australia as a choice, I was initially conflicted about settling in this country. After my arrival, I quickly realised how racism against Aboriginal peoples was visible and showed in different shapes and forms. It was racism that looked to me to be so embedded in Australian society, yet it was somewhat invisible from overseas, where the colonisation of Australia seems like an old and buried past.

Over time, these observations encouraged a journey of understanding and self-reflection on what being a migrant to this settler nation meant for me. Being aware of the dispossession and the social inequalities that Aboriginal peoples face made me recognise and acknowledge my privilege in being here for two important reasons. First, I have had the advantage of living on unceded Aboriginal land for the last thirteen years. The richness and vibrancy of Aboriginal Countries and cultures made me love this place. However, this richness reminds me that I wake up and live on stolen land daily. Second, I am building a professional career working with cultural collections related to First Nations knowledge and lives. There is tension between my passion for this work and the professional spaces I occupy across the Australian cultural sector, especially considering the precarious number of Aboriginal people employed in the cultural sector in Australia

(Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, 2021). As prominent archival scholar Michelle Casswell has exposed, it is necessary to understand how whiteness in archives perpetuates its own privileges (M. Caswell, 2017). This acknowledgment has incited many self-questions, which pushed me to reflect on my role as an accomplice and ally in this space. The work of Joseph Pugliese (2002a, p. 17) sharply summarises my thoughts when he asserts that “Colonialism will continue to function recursively in a migrant context until that act of dialogue with Indigenous peoples instantiates a process of formal reckoning and acknowledgement”. This is why, within this thesis, I give precedence to the narratives of others, which, page after page, continue to shape my own story.

2. 3. The colonial legacy of cultural heritage displacement

The intricate layers and relationships described have all contributed to the dispersal of Aboriginal knowledge and information by sending information overseas (for example, by mailing letters and postcards, taking notes in diaries, publishing scientific journals, collecting photographs, and drawing portraits and maps). While accounts of such interactions can be found in various sources and collections worldwide, a comprehensive study that officially compiles data on these scattered testimonies is yet to be undertaken. The only comprehensive initiative currently attempting to list Aboriginal cultural heritage worldwide is the *Return of Cultural Heritage* project from AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2023c). Despite not focusing specifically on archival collections, the initiative “Aimed to facilitate and secure the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage materials, including but not limited to objects, photographs, manuscripts and audio-visual records held overseas for cultural renewal, revival, support and maintenance” (2020, p. 2). To provide a glimpse of the extent of this dispersal, it is interesting to look at the *Project Report* (2020, p. 15), which lists the geographical area of the institutions holding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage:

- 83 institutions were located in the United States of America and Canada;
- 55 in Europe (in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Russia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Italy, and the Republic of Ireland);
- 42 in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland);

- 8 in Asia (Japan, India, Philippines);
- 7 in Oceania (New Zealand, Fiji);
- 3 in Africa (South Africa and Zambia); and
- 1 in the Middle East (Israel).

The displacement of Aboriginal cultural heritage is not a singular occurrence; instead, it is embedded in a global legacy of colonialism that has affected diverse First Nations communities across the world to varying degrees. Ricardo Punzulan (2014), referring to the dispersal of Native American photographs, labels it as *Archival Diaspora* to underscore the issue's magnitude for North American communities. Jennifer R. O'Neal (2015), affiliated with The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in the United States, has been a prominent advocate, urging both American and international organisations to uncover dispersed information about Native American communities. This call echoes a demand that originated many years prior, voiced by Vine Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux) in 1978. In the Sámi homeland, which is divided among four nation-states (Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia), the dispersal of records has consistently presented a complex challenge. This complexity is further compounded by the diverse institutional frameworks, archival guidelines, languages, and alterations in archival borders across the years within each state (Lindbach, 2021). The recent project *Digital Access to Sámi Heritage Archive* (2019) is the first initiative congregating records from several European organisations. In the Pacific region, constellated by plentiful islands and populations, many explorers and migrants have traversed the regions and mixed with residents. Collectors and government bureaucrats have created, brought and exported written documentation worldwide. The issues of this dispersal is associated to the complicated management of poorly funded local repositories, threatened by cyclones, storms and floods (Wareham, 2002). The project *Digital Pasifik.org* (n.d.) is a recent attempt to digitally reunite records held in several collecting organisations holding part of this displaced heritage. Furthermore, there are more comprehensive digital repositories, like the extensive *Europeana* project (European Union, n.d.), which seeks to aggregate records from numerous European institutions but with a broad and general focus. Numerous other examples could be cited, but what holds significance for this research is the recognition that this is an extensive and substantial issue on a global scale.

Despite the widespread archival displacement experienced by First Nations peoples globally, and in accordance with the right of each individual to access cultural heritage as recommended by Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1999), there is currently no international regulation in place. This absence of regulation leaves First Nations communities without a guarantee of their rights over their displaced records. All efforts in this regard rely on goodwill and institutional funding, frequently conflicting with the regulations of the countries where these records are housed. Comparably to other instances of archival displacement, a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. The complexity of this topic intensifies when broadening the perspective to include the displacement of various communities, including asylum seekers, ex-colonial countries undergoing formal decolonisation processes, and others. This broader examination will be the focus of reflection in Chapter 6.

2. 4. The specificities of the Italian case

In this expansive tapestry of First Nations cultural heritage displacement, Italy is a notable example, characterised by its intriguing and multifaceted layers. These encompass its close ties with Australia, providing the foundation for Italy to collect Aboriginal cultural heritage, as well as its proximity and interdependence with the Vatican state (see Chapter 4).

Throughout this thesis, the examination of Italy's colonial mindset in the collection and administration of Aboriginal cultural heritage has been a recurrent theme. This aspect has played a pivotal role in shaping the analytical standpoint and methodology employed in this study. In contemplating my standpoint within this research, I have extensively considered not only the potential benefits of fostering a dialogue between Australia and Italy for Aboriginal self-determination but also public discourse on nation-building endeavours within Italy. This is because Italy has chosen to forget its colonial past and is only now slowly undertaking a process of recognition and reawakening. Here, nation-building has been slow and complex because internal colonialism has been, until recently, eagerly understudied. Italian scholars find that the reasons include: the brevity and the small size of the Italian colonial experience, the lack of people migrating to Italy during the occupation, the myth promoted by the Fascist regime that Italian colonialism was more human than the one undertaken by other European nations and the cultural extraneousness of Italy to the process of decolonisation (Del Boca, 2005; Deplano, 2013;

Labanca, 2007). The international commissions never punished Italy for the atrocities committed: this was another of the reasons why the public opinion didn't feel there were any faults to redeem (Labanca, 2007, pp. 436–437).

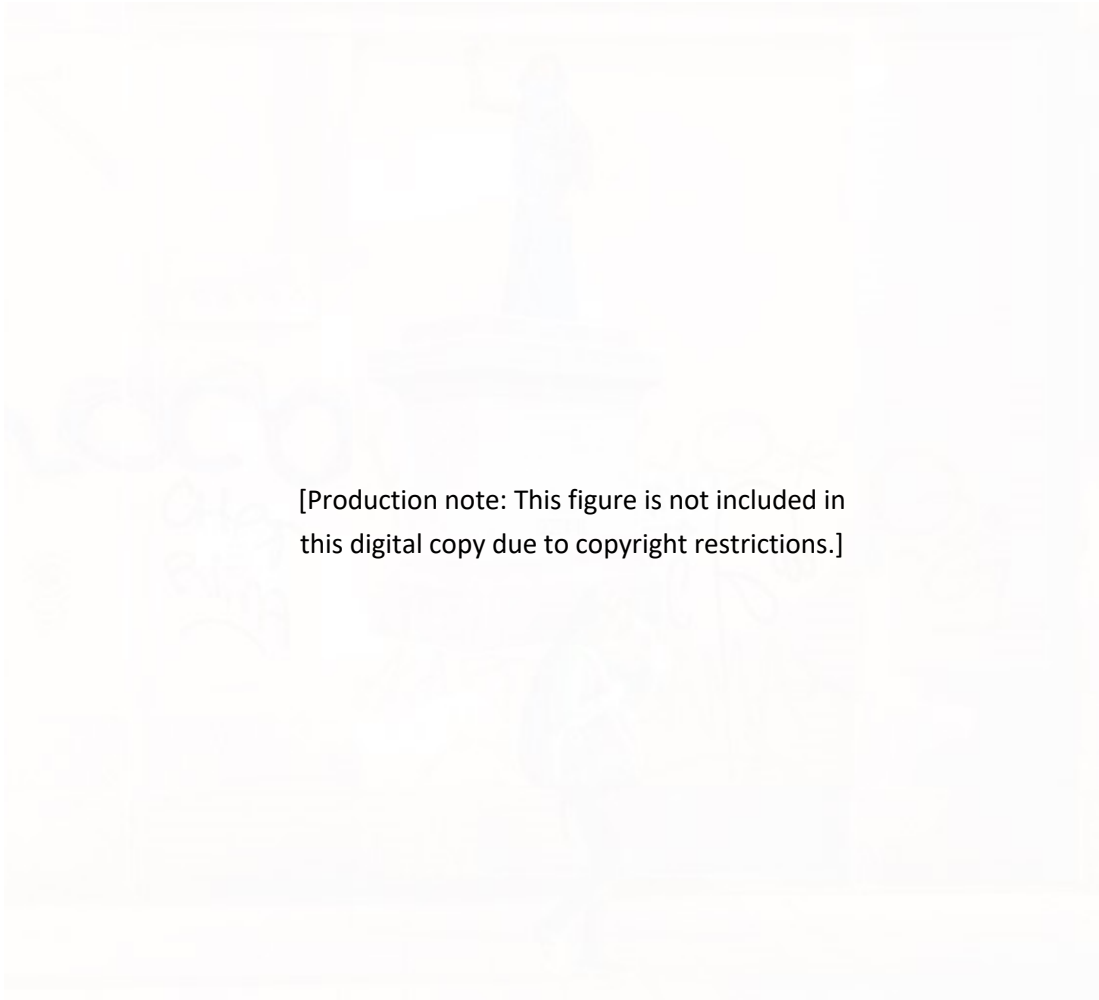
Throughout my formal education as an Italian citizen, there has been a notable absence of any reference to the Italian colonial past. Interestingly, I found many similarities with Australian friends of my generation (in their late 30s), who have had significant gaps in learning Aboriginal histories in school. For me, it took time and personal commitment to learn about Italy's colonisation of Somalia, Eritrea, Libya and its occupation of Ethiopia. Hence, I was as well unconsciously influenced by the idea that Italian colonisers were 'brava gente' [*good people*], an archetype ingrained in Italian society for generations. Thus, as Italian writer of Somali origin, Igiaba Scego asserts

In Africa, the Italians gassed defenceless populations, raped and humiliated and then conveniently forgot everything about it, maintaining that they had never been as bad as others and forging the self-forgiving myth that the Italians were brava gente: nice people. But the truth is that they weren't nice people – they were colonisers on a par with other Europeans. The discriminatory legislation was a forerunner to the racial laws which targeted Italian Jews in 1938 (I. Scego, 2018).

It took me even longer to comprehend how this history has been shaping the current Italian immigration and citizenship policies and, therefore, caused the death of an incalculable number of African asylum seekers who lie without life in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea. The database *Deaths at the Borders* (2015) is an evidence-based platform that shows the blindness and cruelty of the European Union in front of these human tragedies. The lack of truth-telling also perpetuates racism and inequalities in Italian society. Only in 2018, for example, the United Nations sent a delegation to Italy to investigate the “alarming escalation of attacks” against asylum seekers and Roma people (Tondo, 2018). As Gabriele Proglia (2019, p. 114) argues, “The racist imaginary did not end after the fall of the African colonies: it endured but with new targets”.

The Black Lives Matter protests and the growing worldwide discussion over the legitimacy of public statues did have an impact in Italy but have made few tangible changes. For example, the statue of celebrated journalist Indro Montanelli (1909-2001), who claimed a 12-year-old Eritrean child as his sex slave (or, as referred to by the man, “his temporary wife” and “docile tiny pet”) is still proudly standing in Milan, as the major dismissed the request to remove it with the argument that “everyone makes mistakes”

(Ghiglione, 2020). It's hard to believe that Montanelli was alive in my lifetime, right? The statue, delineating a space for confronting the racism and misogyny of Italian colonialism, has been scrutinised by various authors (El Bacha, 2019; Pesarini & Panico, 2021; Schwartz, 2022; Volpi, 2022). However, in the public sphere, without a dedicated commitment to cultural decolonisation, these conversations merely skim the surface of the power dynamics and colonial structures embedded in the numerous histories upon which Italy is constructed (Romeo & Fabbri, 2022). Referring to the killing of several Black Italians and African migrants over the last years (such as Soumaila Sacko, Idy Diene, Samb Modou and Diop Mor), scholar Angelica Pesarini (2020) asks: "Why were there no significant protests for similar episodes in Italy but there was extraordinary mobilisation for the death of a black man on the other side of the ocean?". My standpoint within this research is deep-seated in this complex net of power, as the legacy of this oppression has unconsciously endorsed my representation and inclusion in mainstream white Italian society. As I learned from Pesarini and other Afro-Italian and Aboriginal activists and scholars, without an honest understanding and awareness of one's own privilege and positioning, protests and allyship remain performative acts.



[Production note: This figure is not included in this digital copy due to copyright restrictions.]

Figure 2.3. Mural from street artist Ozmo⁴

Consequently, making available and fostering studies on this unexplored part of the Italian cultural patrimony could influence the delicate nation-building process. It could play a role in how Italians recognise themselves as a nation with a colonial mentality that has, over the years, adopted this mind frame in how other cultures are cared for and represented within collecting institutions. Italian scholar Giulia Grechi (2021, p. 121) utilises the concept of the colonial archive of Arjun Appadurai, as the anticipation of collective memory - not its realisation, but the aspiration to the construction of the memory of a community. Which memory of the Aboriginal, colonial archive can propel

⁴ This artwork depicts a fictional monument to Destà, the Eritrean child “bride” of Indro Montanelli. The mural was vandalised within two days. Photo by Gianfranco Candida, @wallsofmilano. <https://www.collegeart.org/news/2020/08/11/international-news-my-world-now-is-black-in-color-tenley-bick/>

the future of Italian heritage and community? How do we, as Italians, wish to be remembered through the archive? This study is a resource that can contribute to these broader questions. As I will explore in Chapter 6, the process of staging *Italianess* [*staging Italianita*] (Ghezzi, 2022) has not only involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples but all national and international communities who did not fit into the political agendas of the newly born Italian nation-state. This mindset is echoed today by the current Italian government, which seeks to erase uncomfortable reminders of the Italian colonial past that might influence public discourse on African migrants to Italy (Griffini, 2023). In this backdrop, consistent actions by museums, libraries and archives is critical (Peretti, 2024, p. 14). For this reason, examining the roles played by Aboriginal documentation in Italian institutions cannot be isolated from a more comprehensive analysis of the historical context.

In both Italy and Australia, access and control of archives persist as human rights issues. In my first fieldwork for the ATSIDA project, observing Aboriginal cultural heritage displayed in museums in the same rooms of African, Caribbean, Asian and other so-called ethnographic collections [*collezioni etnografiche*] reminded me that the colonial venture extends beyond single countries. Aboriginal cultural heritage in Italy is testimony to these global entanglements. It results from complex transnational relationships that still exist and divide the world between the *West and the Rest* (Hall, 2018) [emphasis added]. As I will elaborate on later in this chapter, the research design of this study is constructed upon archival principles shaped and defined by Aboriginal perspectives that go beyond mere spectatorship or marginal involvement in individual projects within the archive. It entails questioning the entire operational paradigm of institutions, with implications that extend beyond the archival domain. This urgency is equally pronounced within the Italian context. Giulia Grechi (2021, p. 36) explains that:

There is something refractory to archival dynamics, something that remains unarchivable. There are bodies (with their objects) that cannot enter museums because they remain drowned at the bottom of the Mediterranean, an enormous and desperate archive of death and hope, or on the paths between the borders of nations increasingly marked by insurmountable boundaries".

A prominent example of the Italian colonial mindset within collecting institutions is exemplified by the copious archival materials concerning African states formerly under Italian colonial rule. The ongoing management of these materials, as I will illustrate in Chapter 6, serves as a demonstration of this mindset. This unquantifiable number of

records resides in collecting institutions, personal collections and oral histories in Italy and former colonies (Barrera, 2016; Bertella et al., 2013; Chelati Dirar et al., 1997; Falcucci, 2020a, 2020b; Falcucci & Mancosu, 2022; Mancosu, 2022; Palma, 2018; Taddia, 1996; Triulzi, 1995). This documentation lacks any comprehensive cataloguing or listing. One example is the MUCIV work on its African branch, once called the Museum of Colonialism. Born in 1904 and closed in 1971, this institution is now called Museum of Opacities [*Museo delle Opacità*]. One of the curators, Rosa Anna Di Lella, speaks about the importance of archival records related to the objects to shine light on the provenance and histories of this material, records that have been dislocated from the museums and are now scattered across different Italian libraries and archives. Regarding this institution's many years of closure and its complex history, Di Lella remarks how the closure has echoed a tangible physical negation of these memories and their objects in the Italian imagination (Gravano & Grechi, 2020). The curators are now working with members of the African diasporas in Italy and descendants of Italian soldiers to shape the permanent exhibition of the museum and to create spaces for multiple narratives. The significance of the museum's inauguration is underscored by the public debate it has generated (Contini, 2019; Fiorletta, 2019; Imam, 2020; Panico, 2020; Igiaba Scego, 2020b).

The museum in question houses Aboriginal collections and is one of the partners of this study. It was Italy's first national museum, founded in 1875 as the Royal National Ethnographic Prehistoric Museum of Rome. It was opened to the public in 1876 in the building of the Roman College. According to the intentions of its founder, Luigi Pigorini, the new institution was created to gather in a central museum (located, in fact, in the new capital of the Kingdom, Rome) the documentation of Italian, European and extra-European cultures. It also aimed to give a unitary scientific approach to Italian palaeontological studies and research. Between 1975 and 1977, the National Ethnographic Prehistoric Museum was transferred to the Palazzo delle Scienze (its first location), to the Roman suburb Eur. Today, the museum is called Museo delle Civiltà' (MUCIV) [Museum of Civilisation] and is part of a monumental complex in the heart of Rome. It hosts cultural objects, Ancestral Remains, and archival material related to the Australian continent (*Catalogo di Preistoria ed Etnografia Extraeuropea*, n.d.). For this doctoral thesis I have focused on the album created by photographer JW Lindt and on the Giglioli photographic collection, which is composed of approximately 150 images.

The history of the MUCIV, as argued in Chapter 4, is entangled with the D'Albertis Museum in Genova (the second partner of this study). Initially, this institution was the house of captain Enrico Alberto D'Albertis (Fornaroli, 1935), who gifted it to the City of Genova upon his death in 1932. Through his voyages across the world between the 19th and the 20th centuries, the captain gathered stories and artefacts and brought them back to be stored and displayed in his house, inspired by trends in curiosity cabinets and the colonial trophies commonly collected at the time. The museum's collections, presented in a sequence of evocative alcoves furnished according to the revival style of the time, are composed of ethnographic and archaeological materials gathered by the captain across five continents. To these are added those collected by the captain's cousin Luigi Maria, the first European man to explore the Fly River in New Guinea (1872-1878) (*Castello D'Albertis - Museum of World Cultures*, n.d.; De Palma, 2008). For this doctoral research, I initially concentrated solely on the photographic material believed to be produced by D'Albertis. However, the investigation into the collections revealed a series of images captured by JW Lindt, a correspondence exchanged between the two men, and other related materials which I discuss in this thesis.

Not far from Genova, in La Spezia, is the Ethnographic Museum, which I identified through connections with Genova. Named after Giovanni Podenzana (1863-1943), it is one of the oldest La Spezia City Museum departments, founded in 1873. In 1884, Giovanni Podenzana started to build an ethnographic collection that was enlarged by other donations in the following decades, including the materials he brought back from his extended stay living in Australia. In 1905, the museum was moved inside Crozza Palace in Corso Cavour. In 1943, the museum was bombed, and part of the collection was destroyed. In the 1990s, the historical ethnographic collections were displayed in a more central building once an Oratory named after St. Bernardino from Siena. Today the museum hosts, for the most part, local ethnography (*Museo Etnografico Podenzana*, n.d.; Piccioli & Mazz, 1990). The material considered is a set of images, the only surviving diary of Giovanni Podenzana and the long manuscript he wrote for a conference he was invited to after his return from Australia.

2. 5. Applying Aboriginal archival reforms to address archival displacement

The literature reviewed in the introduction of this chapter reveals a dearth of studies on colonial archival displacement that centre Indigenous worldviews and wellbeing into their research design. This concern is also valid in the Italian context, where Aboriginal records have been administered within Italian legal and conceptual frameworks. Under this governance, there have been only marginal enhancements in how GLAM professionals and community members in Australia have come to know and appreciate Aboriginal records within Italian cultural organisations (see Chapter 7). Before outlining the research design for this thesis in the next chapter, it is essential to identify the challenges linked to the current management of Aboriginal archives in Australia, which will be integrated into my strategy. In this section, I utilise the six reforms by Kirsten Thorpe (2022) as urgent actions in the literature related to archival displacement.

(a) Indigenous protocols to support Indigenous wellbeing, sovereignty and archival sovereignty

In her doctoral work, Thorpe (2022) attests to the importance of relying on protocols and guidelines as references for professionals advancing Aboriginal archiving priorities. Australia played a pioneering role in this field. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) Protocols (Byrne, 1995) were the first guides created (Garwood-Houng & Blackburn, 2014). Ground-breaking in their intent, they inspired other examples worldwide, such as the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (First Archivist Circle, 2006). The framework of the *True Tracks* principles by world-renowned legal scholar Terri Janke (2021; 2019) is another valuable roadmap to conduct respectful work with Indigenous knowledge and cultures, respecting and acknowledging the importance of ICIP rights. In her book *True Tracks* (2021, p. 14), the author discusses the principles as tools that “address the deeper relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and the value they place on each other’s knowledge and value systems”. Since then, various Australian collecting institutions and professional associations have developed their own guidelines (Australian Council for the Arts, 2002/2007; National Archive of Australia, 2021; University of Sydney Library & Sentance, 2021).

Internationally, the UNDPR (2007) remains a valuable guide for recognising the significance of Indigenous cultural self-determination. However, it is limited in its nature as it is aspirational and lacks the legal validity to make tangible changes (Watson, 2011, p. 629). The same limitations can be applied to other United Nations frameworks focusing on cultural heritage rights (UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, 2011). The Tandanya Adelaide Declaration (2019), published by the ICA and the National Archives of Australia (NAA), is a landmark document. The Declaration (2019, p. 4) recognises [that displaced archives in colonial states] have been disseminated and stored without the input of the affiliated Indigenous community. [Therefore], there is a need for affiliated Indigenous peoples to gain a degree of control over the access to information created by state-directed governance and cultural authorities. The Declaration focuses on four key areas: knowledge authorities, property and ownership, recognition and identity, research and access, self-determination. However, despite its importance, the Declaration has made little impact in supporting community-led projects in the Australian context so far (Barrowcliffe et al., 2021). When shifting the focus on archival displacement, Charles Kecskeméti (2017) notes that no comprehensive listing has been created on international law on archives. However, the last decade has seen some advancements. One example is The Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM) adopted in 2017 the position paper calling on Britain to return archives removed from British former colonies (Banton, 2012; Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019). Despite the focus on the anglophone world, these examples signal the growing international interest towards decolonising practices in the management and study of intangible heritage.

In summary, the need for Indigenous Protocols to support Indigenous wellbeing and archival sovereignty is respected in my research design by adopting these guidelines in practice. For instance, I adopted the *True Track* principles (Janke, 2021) in the development of an exhibition that I curated in Genova as part of this doctoral study (Chapter 6).

(b) Recognising the archive as a place for Sorry Business

The second reform that Thorpe's (2022, p. 216) research recommends is the need for the colonial archive to recognise itself as an area of Sorry Business, a space for mourning the death and healing from intergenerational trauma. The scholar foresees that

“Truth-telling and justice-seeking processes must be the first step in opening up the archives to be welcoming. Without this, the efforts to create physical and visual components of support [...] may be futile as they are layered on top of these components of Sorry Business” (Thorpe, 2022, p. 216).

As the key literature brings to light, many records in Australian archives document traumatic events, such as the dispossession and removal of communities from their land and culture (J. Atkinson, 2002). Likewise, the British's claim of Australia as *terra nullius* influenced how Aboriginal peoples have been excluded from the national narrative (Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Watson, 2014). Lynette Russell (2005) was one of the first scholars to discuss how archives in Australia are built upon “records of surveillance”, where Aboriginal peoples become the subjects of the “gaze of colonial authorities and experts” (Russell, 2005, p. 141). Therefore, Aboriginal voices and perspectives remain largely invisible. These records are also, in many instances, racist and intrusive (Shannon Faulkhead, 2008; McKemmish et al., 2012; Russell, 2005).

The violence in the archival records mirrors the ferocious colonial history that has stained Australia. Defined as a structural genocide (Wolfe, 2006) driven by a white possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2014), it entailed frontier wars, massacres and assimilation policies (Attwood & Foster, 2003; Dwyer & Ryan, 2012; Goodall, 2021; Reynolds, 2013; L. Ryan, 2012, 2021; The University of Newcastle, n.d.). Only recently has there been widespread recognition of the significant variation in the colonial experience across different parts of the continent. Moreover, it is acknowledged that Aboriginal people were not passive observers of these events; instead, they actively resisted the European invasion (Maynard, 2007; Reynolds, 2006). The profound absence of these histories in the Australian national consciousness was so significant that in the 1968 Boyer Lectures, anthropologist WEH Stanner labelled it the “Great Australian Silence”. The scholar described it as the deliberate neglect of Australia's settler history, identifying it as “a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale” (Stanner, 1969). The *Bringing Them Home* Report (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997) raised the awareness of the Australian public about the historical policies of forced removal of Aboriginal children and their ongoing impacts (Australian Government, n.d.). Shortly after, the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Royal Commission, 1998) identified human rights violations and deaths of Aboriginal people while held in State custody. The recommendations of the two reports stated the need for Australian collecting institutions to support Aboriginal access and search in the archives, and to reclaim control over their

own documentation. A decade later, in 2008, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to victims of the stolen generations, but these recommendations have still not been fulfilled. Significant challenges in accessing Aboriginal personal records in Australian collecting institutions remain.

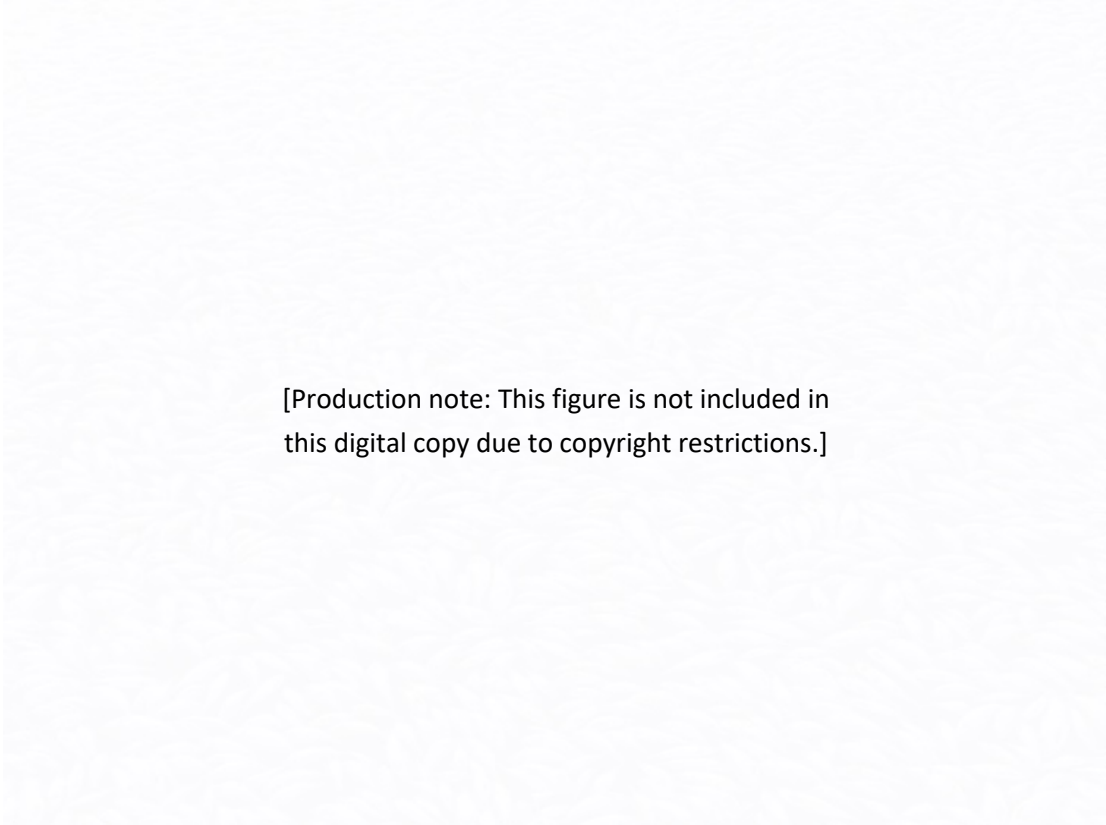
Following the legacy of Henrietta Fourmile (1989), Aboriginal GLAM researchers and activists have fought to access archives nationally and internationally. The severe necessity of action to bring about the systemic changes demanded by First Nations scholars and practitioners worldwide over the last thirty years was made even more explicit with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. When I started my doctoral journey at UTS during Australia's first lockdown, the world's disparities became more pronounced. Or at least, it became evident for the most privileged side of the world who had access to safe housing, medical care, and financial stability before the epidemic.

Against this tumultuous background, the assassination of George Floyd and the global Black Lives Matter protests challenging civil rights also interrogated the dominance of white perspectives in official accounts. Yet, in Australia, despite the initial surge of interest sparked by the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and the persistent efforts of Aboriginal activists, it eventually waned. The culmination of disinterest was the resounding "no" of an Aboriginal voice in parliament from most of the population in 2023. The *Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice* (National Indigenous Australians Agency, Australian Government, 2022) was one of the two recommendations of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (The Uluru Dialogue, 2017). This document endorses two constitutional reforms to empower Aboriginal peoples: the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution, and creating a Makarrata Commission to supervise agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about Australian history (The Uluru Dialogue, 2017). Especially with the recent failure of the first recommendation (the referendum), the path towards truth-telling in Australian society becomes even more crucial. In Victoria, an investigation of Australia's colonial history is in progress via the Yoorrook Justice Royal Commission. Yoorrook actively incorporates Indigenous data sovereignty principles in collecting, managing, storing, and utilising information on the First peoples (Yoorrook Justice Commission, 2022). Dialogue about archives provides a way forward.

Acknowledging the colonial archive as Sorry Business in the research design of this thesis is noteworthy for two main reasons. Firstly, overseas records may contain sensitive or personal information, necessitating careful handling. Secondly, they could harbor valuable information conducive to truth-telling within Australian society, because it might contain images or accounts that can add to Elders' experience about the colonial exploitation of Aboriginal lands. This aspect is urgent because, as Irene Watson (2011, p. 625) explains, "It is our connection to our land that makes us who we are; we are our belonging and relationships to the natural environment and the land of the ancestors. That is who we are, peoples in relation to land. Questions of power to men, women, states and corporations are questions of the colonial (dis)order".

The Barka/Darling River, located in Barkandji Country (NSW), is a poignant example as it symbolises the impact that colonisation had and continues to have on Aboriginal peoples. Once a massive waterway that brought life for thousands of generations, the Barka/Darling River is now the scene of a massive natural disaster threatening Barkandji people and millions of animals and plants (see Figure 2.3 below). That land today tells the story of its misuse driven by commercial interests and its impact on future cultural practices (Norman & Janson-Moore, 2019). The land is an archive (Shannon Faulkhead, 2008), a space that tells the world about this natural disaster.

At the same time, fragments of different Aboriginal Countries are represented in countless ways in archives worldwide. In Italy, Country is shown in photographs (such as in reproductions of carved trees), described in diaries (through the explorer's observations), embodied in the wood of boomerangs and spears, in natural fibres and soil held in ethnographic museums. In Barkandji land, Country expresses loud and clear the necessary conversations about the importance of putting Aboriginal sovereignty first to regain land health and strength. In these dialogues, different narratives can exist overseas that, when read along with peoples' knowledges, can speak a more extensive history that touches all of us. I integrate this aspect in my research design by reflecting on how to insist on praxis that focuses on the importance of learning from Country (see Chapter 3) and the effect that all colonial nations had on exploiting Aboriginal territories (in Chapter 5).



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Figure 2.3. Dead fish in the Menindee weir pool (January 2019)⁵

(c) Indigenous cultural practices and ceremonies in the archives

If the archive is a space of Sorry Business, cultural practices become vital components for Aboriginal people's healing. Guidance of Elders is vital in this process (Thorpe, 2022, p. 219). Thorpe, echoing the study's participants, emphasises the importance of prioritising dignity and respect as a necessary step before progressing towards the healing process. Fundamentally, healing in archives needs to be considered in line with truth-telling and recognition of past harm (Thorpe, 2022, p. 219). In this chapter, I talk at length about the potential importance of displaced records and testimonies expressed in languages other than English. I extend this value in the research design of this work and in the practice of knowledge translation that I adopt to facilitate transnational

⁵ Photo by Graeme McCrabb/AAP Source: Graeme McCrabb/AAP.
<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/death-on-the-darling-colonialisms-final-encounter-with-the-barkandji/4gc24fche>

understanding between Australia and Italy. In these processes, I perceive conflict and honest dialogue about how the records held in Italy have been collected and conserved over time as essential for establishing relationships or fostering connections between communities and institutions. This need has been echoed by the study participants (see Chapter 7). I delve into how the records have served Italian interests in Chapter 6 and have been categorised according to Italian frameworks in Chapter 4.

(c) Returning love to Ancestors who are captured in the archives

This reform promotes archival practices to speak back to the archive, considering its importance for community members. Records are not just pieces of paper but tangible connections with Ancestors. Thorpe demonstrates how information in archives are families' histories and relationships between the living and the deceased. Today, Indigenous artists are engaging in the reconceptualisation and orchestration of artistic 'archival interventions.' Instead of merely adding another version, voice, or story to the reading of Australian history, these artists are generating creative works that serve as catalysts for reconsidering the role and conception of archives. They challenge traditional ideas about how history is retrieved, remembered, and sometimes even dismembered (Grieves & Kelada, 2017, p. 321). An example is the production of Melbourne-based artist Maree Clarke (Mutti Mutti / Wemba Wemba / Boonwurrung). Inspired by colonial photographs in various archives in Australia and overseas, Clarke created a kangaroo teeth necklace, revivifying an art and cultural practice for the first time in over a century (Thorner & Clarke, 2020). In her view, the archive is not only a repository but rather a site of knowledge production where information can be creatively (re)assembled and (re)invigorated and where new makings can counteract the "Fragility of Indigenous knowledge and the errors persistent in historical records" (Thorner & Clarke, 2020). In Thorpe's work, the ability to return love to Ancestors also means that Indigenous people can determine how community members use materials.

In analysing archival displacement, I apply this reform to prompt overseas repositories to acknowledge these places not only as spaces of violence and intergenerational trauma but also as ones where love can be repatriated (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a) to families, communities and Aboriginal GLAM professionals (Chapter 6).

(d) Indigenous stewardship and custodianship of materials held in the archives

Traditional archival methods and practices are inadequate for managing Indigenous records and collections (Thorpe, 2014). In Thorpe's work, this reform calls for institutions to return power to communities. Organisations are custodians of the records; they do not own them. The *Trust and Technology* Project (Monash University, 2003-2008) identified significant archival and legal barriers to Indigenous Australians' control over their knowledge in records held by non-Indigenous individuals and organisations. These barriers were heightened by the recognition that, as "record subjects," they were granted few rights, particularly ownership rights based on legal notions of authorship, and therefore had no rights over the record's disclosure, use, and disposition. The project suggested a participant model wherein Indigenous communities and individuals are viewed as active participants in the process of records creation across time and space (Iacovino, 2010, p. 354). One of the critical issues raised by the project, and recognised in Thorpe's work, is that archival science has yet to recognise Indigenous complex archiving and storing knowledge systems (Shannon Faulkhead, 2008). The necessary reform in the Australian archival context can find parallels in other European countries, including the Italian circumstance. Consequently, in my research design, I paid great attention to the trajectories of the records and their arrival in Italy to bring to light the order of things (Foucault, 1966) in which they are incorporated. With the well-known concept of the order of things, which I refer to many times in this manuscript, Foucault refers to the unconscious structures underlying knowledge production (in the archival space, this represents choices of taxonomies, rules for records ownership, and classifications).

(e) Indigenous data sovereignty and the archives

The Indigenous archival sovereignty principles of the reform proposed by Thorpe (2022, p. 230) are essential for this study because they lay the ground for a deeper analysis of the relationships between Indigenous archival sovereignty and recordkeeping in the context of archival displacement. The scholar identified the following needs:

Include Indigenous decision-making guiding overall management of data and archives on Country; principles of Indigenous data sovereignty extend to the long-term care and use of community archives; local control and Indigenous-led voice regarding telling and ownership of stories relating to their families and communities; processes for access and use are determined locally through governance structures; ongoing ethical responsibility for the spiritual and

emotional care of collections forms part of access procedures and conditions of use (Thorpe, 2022, p. 229).

The intersection of Indigenous data sovereignty principles and archival displacement is critically understudied. Historically, discussions on Indigenous sovereignty have primarily occurred within the academic realms of history, policy, and law. Different authors have prompted the role of the UNDRIP as a milestone in this area, as it emphasises the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and control over culture (Janke, 1998; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Walter, 2018). Tahu Kukutai (Ngāti Tiipa, Ngāti Kinohaku, Te Aupōuri) and John Taylor note that: “Missing from those conversations have been the inherent and inalienable rights and interests of indigenous peoples relating to the collection, ownership and application of data about their people, lifeways and territories”. In this era of open and linked data and interconnected digital networks, there is an urgent need for an Indigenous-led *data voice* that overcomes the ‘Indigenous Data paradox’ (Walter, 2018). This expression is used by Maggie Walter to underscore that “There is an enormous body of data *about* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but almost no data *for or by* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people” [emphasis added]. In practice, as Stephanie Russo Carroll (Ahtna-Native Village of Kluti-Kaah), Tahu Kukutai, and Walter (Russo et al., 2021, p. 692) write, “Indigenous Data Sovereignty means that Indigenous peoples need to be the decision-makers around how data about them are used”.

Throughout this work, I examine different aspects of the records held in Italy, their management and dissemination under the lens of how these could impact Indigenous data sovereignty rights and contribute to these international Indigenous-led advocacy movements.

2. 6. Conclusion

Aboriginal reading of colonial archives brings to light the multifaceted aspects of these intricate places. They are universes where multiple narratives and points of view collide but where Indigenous voices are rarely present. They are fundamental spaces for truth-telling and healing but also ones that carry trauma and persistent injustice. As in the example of the residential school records in the introduction of this chapter, archival displacement is a colonial legacy that has unquestionably impacted most First Nations people across the world. Despite the demonstrated significance of colonial records

dispersed worldwide, it is only in recent times that in Australia, archival science has started to value the importance of sources expressed in languages other than English.

This chapter reflected and provided tangible examples of colonialism as a historical and ongoing course. As a historical process, it created the settings for the creation and dispersal of the records containing information about Aboriginal people. As an ongoing practice, it perpetuates colonial asymmetries across borders in both the physical and digital environment. In this context, Italy serves as a valuable case study: a country with a complex history and contemporary social situation, both of which are reflected in its cultural heritage. The lack of international legislation exacerbates the issue, reinforcing prevailing power imbalances. These disparities are notably evident in the advocacy efforts where families and survivors of Canadian and Australian residential schools must contend to reclaim their records.

To disrupt these inequalities in archival science, control needs to be redistributed. By analysing the reforms needed for colonial archives in Australia through the work of Thorpe (2022), this chapter has demonstrated how some of these reforms can be translated into the broader context of archival displacement. These principles will apply in the next chapter, where I analyse how Indigenous decolonising methodologies to support Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination are employed in archival displacement. As I will extensively demonstrate in this thesis, this decision proved to be a strategic conceptual manoeuvre that paved the way for innovative analysis of the Italian records, capable of reshaping the current epistemologies of the institutions where they are held.

CHAPTER 3. SHIFT
Inflection in the Study of Aboriginal Archives in Italy

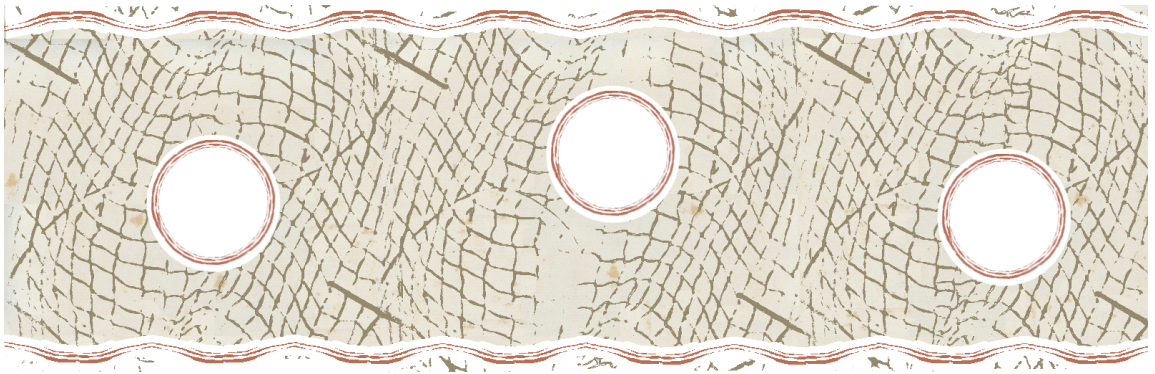


Figure 3.1. Rose Barrowcliffe. (2022). *Aboriginal Archives in Italy* artwork.

“The net or dilly baskets appear many times in the photos. They are important tools for capturing and storing items in Aboriginal culture. The net in the artwork also represents the capturing and storing of knowledge. The netting has metaphorical significance because two or more pieces pull against each other; that tension facilitates the function. Just as in the case of these records, there is tension between the colonial and Indigenous understanding of the records, but that tension can result in a productive outcome. The woven nature of the net also resembles the multiple provenances of these records.”

Rose Barrowcliffe (2022). *Aboriginal Archives in Italy*.



This chapter includes cultural knowledge and art from Butchulla academic and artist Rose Barrowcliffe. To maintain the proper cultural authority of Barrowcliffe's artwork, it should be cited as follows:

Barrowcliffe, R. (2022). *Aboriginal Archives in Italy* [digital artwork]. Butchulla.
<https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/>

3.1. Introduction - A different approach to Aboriginal records in Italy

Butchulla academic, archivist and artist Rose Barrowcliffe created the artwork that opens this chapter in 2022. I commissioned this digital representation to learn about Barrowcliffe's point of view and experience with the Italian records and to convey to those accessing the digital archive the values embedded in this project and its significance. Barrowcliffe's artwork is a fascinating counternarrative to the Western reading of the importance of the archive shared by many First Nations peoples worldwide but that too often remains unheard. As argued in Chapter 2, First Nations academics and community members have advocated for decades to assert their rights to knowledge and personal information dispersed across archives worldwide. The *tension* in the *net of knowledge* [emphasis added] described by Barrowcliffe in the artwork *Aboriginal Archives in Italy* (Barrowcliffe, 2022) originates from unsymmetrical power dynamics. Certainly, the shared theme among these studies is the imperative for a comprehensive shift in the power paradigm regarding the management and comprehension of records within state and national repositories. This shift should centre on Indigenous epistemologies rather than relegating them to the periphery.

In the international context, this disparity becomes even more evident. Upon delving into the literature, I could not pinpoint any inclusive study that prioritised Aboriginal worldviews and needs in analysing the colonial records I encountered in Italian institutions. Consequently, in this work, I drew inspiration not only from Aboriginal scholars but also from the increasing efforts of Afro-Italian academics, activists and allies who are actively challenging the established norms within Italian society and cultural sector (Peretti, 2024; Pesarini, 2022; Igiaba Scego, 2020b; Tinius & Pesarini, 2023). As I will delve into Chapter 6, despite the substantial differences between these two contexts, I discovered parallels in handling records pertaining to the Italian colonial presence in African states and the testimonies describing Aboriginal individuals taken back from Australia.

In this chapter, I apply two significant theoretical moves in studying Aboriginal records that have been displaced to Italy. First, I uniquely position the analysis of Italian archives within an Indigenous paradigm (set of ideas). I developed this research design to demonstrate that the shift from Euro-Western to Indigenous perspectives on the

Aboriginal records in Italy can enrich their understanding. Second, I trace a path for new ways of translating and analysing knowledge through different frameworks that provide space for transcultural experience and align with Indigenous worldviews. The underlying theme woven into this chapter is the imperative to revolutionise the perspectives through which this heritage has been traditionally regarded. This involves examining colonial structures and processes within collecting institutions, paving the way for strategic changes in approach and structure. The first step to facilitate this shift is to structure the research design of this thesis while considering the archival reforms necessary to support Indigenous archival sovereignty (Thorpe, 2022), as examined in the previous chapter.

I start by comprehensively analysing this research's philosophical underpinning (the established ideas). Here, I navigate a decolonising approach to the Italian records and the power structures in collecting institutions (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a; Littletree et al., 2020; L. T. Smith, 2012; Stoler, 2010; Thorpe, 2019). I then move inward to describe which methods to gather data best align with this set of worldviews and beliefs and best served me to respond to the research questions. I adopted the concept of praxis (L. T. Smith, 2015; Steffensen, 2020; Thorpe, 2019) as a cyclical journey to impact research and practice in the information sector. In this section, I explain my sampling strategy, expanding on the selection of criteria for the Aboriginal cultural heritage included in this research project (Shannon Faulkhead, 2009). This piece explains why I made the methodological choice of focusing on textual and visual representations held in archives, excluding cultural objects and Ancestral Remains held in museums from this analysis. I conclude this chapter by focusing on the different frameworks I adopt to find, read, analyse, and translate the data, knowledges, and stories gathered for this study (J.-A. Archibald, 2008; Shannon Faulkhead, 2009; J. A. Gilliland et al., 2016; McKemmish, 1994; Nakata, 2007; Stoler, 2010).

3.2. Theoretical approach

This thesis is grounded in an Indigenous paradigm. It privileges Indigenous research ontologies (the nature of reality), epistemologies (the nature of thinking or knowing), and axiology (the ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge) in the investigation of First Nations displaced records. The decision to frame this doctoral work through Indigenous belief systems and worldviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6) reflects the lack

of dialogue about Aboriginal rights in records in the Italian context. As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, the alternative theoretical Western framework commonly utilised for reading and caring about Italian records has had little impact on how Aboriginal peoples could access and engage with their information held in Europe. This thesis thus approaches the study of the Italian archive within Indigenous worldviews as an alternative analytical framework.

Indigenous and decolonial approaches to the archive have provided this study with strategic ideas and methodologies to disrupt the current view of the records and needs for their care. In the ground-breaking work *Indigenous Methodologies* (Kovach, 2021), Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree and Saulteaux, Canada) provides a conceptual framework for understanding Indigenous paradigms and serves as an entry point for those wanting to learn more broadly about Indigenous research. I am grateful for several concepts I learned from Kovach's work, especially ensuring that this research design interweaves the Indigenous theoretical perspective into *all* aspects of all research actions (Kovach, 2021, p. 46). I have primarily drawn from the work of Shawn Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony*. Wilson is an Opaskwayak Cree man and academic from northern Manitoba (Canada) currently living on Bundjalung land on the east coast of Australia. Wilson's work traced out a path to comprehend the Indigenous concept of relationality and interwoven it within this work. As I will demonstrate in the next section, decolonising methodologies and approaches have assisted in the analysis of the colonial structures existing in collecting institutions and processes for structural changes (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Kovach, 2021; L. T. Smith, 2012; Thorpe, 2019, 2022). Margaret Kovach's (2021) and Shawn Wilson's (2008) work has also equipped me to adopt Indigenous worldviews despite being a non-Indigenous woman. I follow Wilson (2008, p. 193), who states that Indigenous research can be undertaken by "anyone who chooses to follow its tenets" and Kovach (2021) who also incites researchers to utilise Indigenous methodologies if they find them the most appropriate way to achieve their research purpose.

Kovach's and Wilson's works remark on what I learned working in the GLAM space in Australia: that 'Indigenous paradigm' is a generalised term that must be ingrained in the diverse local experiences. In this study, the main reason for adopting the Indigenous paradigm as a broad-spectrum concept is that information held in Italian colonial archives belongs to many First Nations communities in deeply diverse time and space paradigms.

Thus, within this study, I consider the worldviews and values of these different perspectives while acknowledging their localised differences. Indigenous localised methodologies could provide important baselines for studying Italian archives when undertaken by the rightful Knowledge Holders. With the same prerogative, I utilise a general European/Western approach, conscious that European states have different lines to the archive and have diverse historical and cultural backdrops. Kovach's (2021, p. 20) concept of Western paradigms as Eurocentrism is applicable here as she frames it as a term for Western dominance that represents a "Danger zone for Indigenous peoples".

Equally, I am aware there is a risk of flattening complexity when sharply delineating differences between Indigenous and Western paradigms, as they both encompass a range of different philosophical underpinnings but also have similarities. However, even if Indigenous and Euro-Western qualitative research share commonalities, they are separated by incommensurable differences (Held, 2019, p. 7). Indigenous methodologies are deeply diverse but arise from Indigenous thoughts and worldviews (Kovach, 2021, p. 31). For example, (Goenpul, Australia) Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2020) argues that Western theory is mostly human-centred and does not consider Mother Earth in power relationships. As Lester-Irabinna Rigney (Nurungga) (1999, p. 8) argues, "Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-Indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures, and values". In other words, distinctions between Indigenous and Western views in research are pronounced but fluid.

Despite the localised distinctions, there are some aspects that Indigenous worldviews have in common. They share a holistic view of the world because: "If everything is constantly moving and changing, then one has to look at the whole to begin to see patterns" (Little Bear, 2007, p. 78). It follows that Indigenous philosophies share a relational vision of the world (Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Wilson, 2008) and connectedness that "Stretches from birth to death, continues beyond death, and extends to the living and the nonliving" (Chilisa, 2012, p. 3). Another mutual feature of Indigenous approaches to research is that they are rooted in the importance of Country. They are ingrained in the "local" (Held, 2019, p. 5) and therefore "It is the knowledge that is crucial for the survival of society" (Dei, 2000). This rounded, holistic, and relational view of the world has made Indigenous cultures the longest and continuing populations on earth.

Another essential advantage of incorporating Indigenous methodologies in this thesis is that, by acknowledging Indigenous worldviews, respect, and accountability as fundamental values, it establishes the framework for culturally safe and respectful research. It is no longer research *on* or *about* Indigenous peoples. Instead, it is research *for* and *with* them (Rigney, 1999, p. 119; Singh & Major, 2017, p. 5) [emphasis added]. This shift is significant because it moves beyond the public discourse on the *Aboriginal problem* [emphasis added] to a dialogue on the issue of colonialism (Watson, 2007, pp. 29-30). In summary, the theoretical stance described has created an effective, culturally safe and fair research space while honouring Indigenous worldviews.

3.3. Decolonising methodologies for structural change

My thesis draws on two critical methodologies to analyse the Aboriginal records in Italy. I ground this work in decolonising methodologies to examine the colonial structures and processes in collecting institutions and approaches for structural changes and this researcher's standpoint as a lens to connect Aboriginal and Italian perspectives.

The first methodology adopted as a lens to undertake this study pursues the concept of decolonisation as a global challenge shared by communities worldwide. Most share that colonisation is regarded as an ongoing process instead of an event limited in time and space (Coleman, 2021, p. 69). This means that decolonial methodologies support an analysis of colonisation and the systems supporting its ongoing structures. Despite the localised differences in definitions of decolonisation, most share that decolonisation must be unsettling and needs to be more than a "metaphor" (Tuck & Wayne Yang, 2012). Research is part of the problem that has long been considered a colonisation tool for denigrating and subjugating Aboriginal peoples (J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) (Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou, Aotearoa) was one of the first academics who challenged the widely recognised concept that only the West can define, produce, and regulate knowledge and that knowledge can be achieved exclusively through Western scientific methods. Since then, Indigenous research methodologies have become an established element of qualitative research and are increasingly utilised by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (S. Faulkhead et al., 2007; Singh & Major, 2017). They "Form [both] a methodological and political project" (Kovach, 2021, citing Wilson 2008, p. 32).

In the information space, decolonisation is at the centre of concerns for transforming collecting institutions (Thorpe, 2019). Building upon the long history of the concept of praxis in social science, Thorpe (2019) calls for a “Transformation of practice and theory in libraries and archives, encouraging the adoption of transformative praxis to work more effectively with communities in culturally safe ways”. The author argues that the library and archive sectors must first acknowledge the impact of colonisation to find new transformative agendas that stop the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (n.d.). This concept was reiterated in the yarning sessions undertaken for this study. Most participants expressed reservations about using the term *decolonisation* when referring to collecting organisations, as they felt it cannot encapsulate the complexities of this process, which varies significantly for each community and individual worldwide. The shared sentiment was that it is not feasible to decolonise collecting institutions, as they are strategically conceived and built to support colonial processes and practices. Instead, what is deemed important is to reflect on the most basic archival rights that have not been fulfilled yet in archival displacement, such as the right to know and the problematisation of the acquisition of these contents. For this reason, in this study, I refer to decolonial methodologies and actions with a decolonising intent to shift the conversation from decolonisation to the analysis of the processes and systems in which colonisation is built upon in archival displacement.

Other Aboriginal specialists share these concerns. Wiradjuri information professional and writer Raelee Lancaster shares, reflecting on her journey within collecting institutions, that decolonisation is a process that may never be fully achieved. Nonetheless, she contends that investment in Indigenous data sovereignty is “Achievable and necessary” (Lancaster, 2020), a principle also identified as a key requirement to support Aboriginal archival sovereignty. Lancaster refers to the rise of global networks and studies on the matter reflecting a global apprehension about the need to protect against the misuse of Indigenous data and to ensure First Nations peoples are their primary beneficiaries. These movements were born in response to the poor data practice adopted in colonial settings and by settler states (Lovett et al., n.d.). Although Indigenous peoples have produced, kept and shared data since time immemorial, ongoing colonisation projects have resulted in withholding Indigenous knowledges and data systems whilst accumulating enormous datasets that justified the colonialist expansion (J. Taylor & Kukutai, 2016). This data is not neutral. Maggie Walter

(palawa) calls it the *Indigenous Paradox* (2018, p. 258): “There is enormous body of data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but almost no data for or by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This mismatch maps across five categories of data failure, which I have labelled BADDR: Blaming, Aggregate, Decontextualised, Deficit and Restricted”. In the Australian context, as well as in most settler nations, policies that impacts the lives of First Nations people refer to these BADDR datasets, with disastrous impacts (Walter et al., 2020).

First Nations data sovereignty movements raised along with global reflections on data cultures and data justice (Dencik et al., 2023; Dencik & Sanchez-Monedero, 2022; Oliver et al., 2023; Oliver & Evans, n.d.; Rolan et al., 2020). Dencik and Sanchez-Monedero (2022) Arguing that while the exploration of social justice frameworks in information management is not a recent development, the current emphasis on data justice “Has been used to pave the way for a shift in the understanding of what is at stake with datafication beyond digital rights” (n.d.). On various social media platforms, hashtags like #datawarrior have come to symbolize and spread ideas championed by First Nations activists globally. Maggie Walter (2018) traces the origin of the Indigenous data sovereignty movements to the work of Canadian First Nations Peoples, who developed the model now known as OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) in 1998. Following the innovative Canadian approach, other country-specific networks have been established that have been moving at different paces (Russo et al., 2021). Examples include the United States Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network in Arizona (United States), the First Nations Information Governance Centre in Canada, or the Te Mana Raraunga Māori Data Sovereignty Network in Aotearoa (New Zealand). The publication *Data Sovereignty. Towards an Agenda* (J. Taylor & Kukutai, 2016) was a milestone in sparking interest and awareness of the importance of Indigenous-controlled data at a global level.

Yet, to date, there needs to be a more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the emergence of the importance of Indigenous sovereignty as an academic field understood from a cultural heritage perspective (Lilley et al., n.d.; Rolan et al., 2020; Thorpe et al., 2021; Withey, 2015). Prominent scholars Tahu Kukutai (Ngāti Tiipa, Ngāti Kinohaku, Te Aupōuri) and John Taylor (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016, p. 2) note that: “Missing from those conversations have been the inherent and inalienable rights and interests of indigenous peoples relating to the collection, ownership and application of data about their people,

lifeways and territories”. The UNDRIP (2007) is a critical guiding document in this area, as it emphasises the right of First Nations Peoples to self-determination and control over culture (M. Davis, 2016; Janke, 1998; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Tsosie, 2010). For this thesis, I refer to Indigenous data sovereignty in similar terms to the Maiam nayri Wingara Collective (2018), referring to “The right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data. Data ownership can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination, and reuse of Indigenous Data”.

To counter the urgency of Indigenous data sovereignty movements and to analyse “Archives [as] physical reminders of colonial practices” (Christen, 2018, p. 403), the Indigenous research methodology adopted in this study aligns with the views of decolonisation described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. Smith (2012, p. xii) defines “Decolonising methodologies not as a method for revolution in a political sense but which provokes some revolutionary thinking about the roles that knowledge, knowledge production, knowledge hierarchies and knowledge institutions play in decolonisation and social transformation”. This research project also fits within what Kovach (2021, pp. 188–189) considers ‘Decolonising [with an] anti-colonial emphasis’, using the term emphasis to highlight the fluidity of Indigenous episteme. A decolonising anti-colonial emphasis focuses on the power dynamic between Indigeneity and Eurocentrism, as it exists within contemporary contact zones.

While adopting a decolonial lens to analyse colonisation and power dynamics in archives, I utilise my standpoint as a critical aspect of the research approach to unpacking meanings and concepts between Aboriginal and Italian worldviews and fostering relationships. My standpoint is a crucial asset for this study because Indigenous approaches to knowledge understand that where you are placed – your positioning or standpoint – “Will fundamentally influence the way you see the world” (Behrendt, 2019, p. 176). This concept, only recently formally accepted in social sciences, emphasises that “Objective reality can never be captured widely. We know a thing only through its representations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). Anthropologist Gillian Colishaw (2004, p. 68) describes ‘positioning’ as a technical term in social science that refers to the links between an individual’s position within a social order and their social consciousness and, thus, their social theorising. These definitions are in contraposition with the concept of objectivity and neutrality perpetuating within colonial contexts, where “The ‘objectivity’

ideal is [described as] a particularly insidious colonial monster. It is so pervasive as to appear natural" (Dumont, 2020, p. 241). The descriptions found in colonial archival records perfectly illustrate that what has been considered as truth for centuries is only one facet of the coin.

Therefore, asserting my role as a non-Indigenous researcher influenced by Indigenous worldviews is critical in this work. I reject the idea of neutrality in research, and I choose to make visible my standpoint within all the steps of this study to remind readers of the lens through which I am undertaking this journey and telling these stories. This methodology draws from my perspective of being an accomplice in the Aboriginal space and an Italian woman who has lived, studied, and researched in Italy. I recognise that, compared to an ally, an accomplice assumes a greater amount of risk by actively and substantively challenging and overthrowing the systems, institutions, and norms that contribute to inequality. Accomplices confront their own status and privilege, evaluating the risks they can take, and work to embed justice across all aspects of their endeavours (J. C. Jones, 2021; Powell & Kelly, 2017). Thanks to this double positionality, I have a deep knowledge of the cultural context of where these records and relationships are situated and a clear understanding of the tensions around them. Further, this research draws on my standpoint to facilitate the translation of languages and meanings between Italian collecting institutions and Aboriginal peoples and communities.

3.4. Research at the intersection between Indigenous and Euro-Western views of the archive

Complementing the use of Indigenous paradigms in the study of archival displacement, this research makes an additional methodological intervention by facilitating knowledge translation and transfer between diverse archival set of ideas. Therefore, I located this project within a theoretical and methodological approach at the intersections between Indigenous and Eurocentric worldviews to have a space for listening, sharing common understandings, and starting critical discussions about the archive. The ultimate goal was to create the conditions for structural change in collecting institutions. The new translation praxis that I utilise in this study is grounded in the use of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, 2007) as a third space of exchange between Aboriginal GLAM professionals, practitioners and community members and Italian organisations. Within the cultural interface, I adopt three strategic First Nations conceptual models (Marisa

Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a; Littletree et al., 2020) to put knowledge translation into practice in the physical and digital archival context in which this study unfolds. In this section I illustrate the two steps that I undertook to implement this dialogue: first, I located a shared third space to locate knowledge transfer and secondly, I chose First Nations conceptual and working models to operationalise these knowledge translation processes.

In the research design of this study, the first step I take to implement knowledge translation praxis within different knowledge systems is to identify a shared space of dialogue rooted in First Nations worldviews. This step is crucial to assert Indigenous knowledge systems as authoritative and affective in archival research and practice. Respect and acknowledgment of different worldviews are also at the core of the extensive work undertaken by Shannon Faulkhead with Koori (Victoria, Australia) communities. One of the findings of her PhD work was that “To move forward to create a positive space, there needs to be an acknowledgement that two equals, but different [...], and that respect for another culture's knowledge system is vital for respectful cultural discourses to co-exist” (Faulkhead, 2009, p. 61). Margaret Kovach eloquently describes the hope that there is in this work in this compelling quote:

“[...] I wonder what Elder Uncle Charlie would have to say about finding common understandings through differing knowledge-seeking systems and the value of an interpretive approach as a bridge for empathetic learning about each other. In traversing cultural knowledge paradigms, the first level of complexity arises with language. [...] A common colonial language is not the panacea for a mutual understanding between Indigenous and settler peoples. Instead, understanding is a layered endeavour. Given the limitations of language alone and the complexities instilled within the world *understand*, at what point can we say that we do indeed understand something? Is it possible to have understandings across cultures? Yet, for a compassionate world to prevail, seek to understand we must” (Kovach, 2021, p. 24).

In this perspective, the archive itself becomes a contact zone. In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt (1991, p. 6) defines the contact zone as “The space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict”. The records move, change, and propagate agency within this encounter area. Scholar Silvia Spitta's (2009) idea of agency of cultural objects that have been moved from their communities in South America to

Europe has been fundamental for this study. Borrowing the concept of the order of things (Foucault, 1966) explained earlier, Spitta (2009, pp. 4–5) speaks of the power of colonial objects when they are misplaced and that “When things move, things change”. Foucault concept focuses on historical transformations in epistemic structures that influence the organisation of knowledge and categorisation across diverse fields of study. In this context, cultural objects have the power to “destabilise certainties and rearrange cultural tables [...]”.

I am then indebted to Rachel Buchanan’s (Taranaki, Te Ātiawa) (2022) book *Te Motunui Epa*. This volume elegantly narrates the story of five wooden panels carved in the late 1700s by Ancestors in Taranaki and dispersed worldwide by placing their taonga/tūpuna (their voice, their value) at the story’s core. It has enriched me with a working model that embraces the synergies of Indigenous stories through a narration utilised as a decolonial tactic. Through this thesis, I adopt Buchanan’s blueprint to the Italian records to read how they were born, how they moved across time and space and how they communicate to different people. As the carvings travelled unchanged beneath the surface, they did not die: they remained dormant (Buchanan, 2022, p. 26). In similar ways, the Aboriginal records in Italy are living records. Similarly to the Epa, they have been made visible and invisible to fulfill private, political and social interests (see Chapter 6). They were maintained similarly to other “relatives” from different nations, referring to various types of colonial records housed in Italy. This parallels the situation described by Buchanan (2022, p. 46) regarding “Other masks and ancestral figures who were homesick” which were also housed alongside the Epa in shared museum repositories.

Within the archive as a contact zone and a shared arena, the concept of the cultural interface framed by Torres Strait Islander leading academic Martin Nakata (2007) is the scaffold in which all interactions of this thesis take place. It provides a robust framework within the information space for reflecting on where First Nations’ worldviews and Italian perspectives constructed on Eurocentric views of the archives could converge. Nakata (2007, p. 199) describes the cultural interface as being “Constituted by points of intersecting trajectories” with “Competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions” and where there exists “Contradictions, ambiguities, conflict and contestation of meanings that emerge from these various shifting intersections”. The author also explains that:

“It is not strictly about the replacement of one with the other nor the undermining of one by the other. It is about maintaining the continuity of one when having to harness another and working the interaction in ways that serve Indigenous interests, in ways that can uphold distinctiveness and special status as First Peoples. Indigenous interests will include the recovery and maintenance of knowledge but not without understanding, for example, what happens to that knowledge if documented and stored according to disciplines and technologies that have evolved in another Knowledge system” (Nakata, 2002, p. 286).

I delve deeper into the analysis of the adoption of the cultural interface in transnational contexts of archival displacement in Chapter 5.

The second step I undertake in this research design is to implement First Nations conceptual models to operationalise knowledge translation. The discourse around knowledge translation in Aboriginal research has been used mainly to address the research-practice gap in the health sector (*Indigenous, Policy, and Community Settings*, 2011; Khayyat Kholghi et al., 2018; Morton Ninomiya et al., 2022; Smylie et al., 2004, 2014; Staiger-Williams & Harper, 2019). As I will establish in Chapter 5, the literature related to translation and recordkeeping insists on the decoding of languages in transnational contexts. Consequently, I could not rely on comprehensive studies that specifically addressed knowledge translation practice in the context of archival displacement. To fulfill this gap, I utilise three conceptual models to map (Littletree et al., 2020), operationalise (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015) and read (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a) the Italian records within the cultural interface. Despite these three different perspectives originating from different countries and First Nations worldviews, they share the powerful intent of uncovering power asymmetries in the information sector.

The first model I adopt to map the Aboriginal records housed in Italian institutions is Sandy Littletree’s (Diné/Eastern Shoshone), Miranda Belarde-Lewis (Zuni/Tlingit) and Marisa Duarte’s (Pascua Yaqui Tribe) (2020) *Centring Relationality. A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices*. By centring the concept of relationality, this framework proposes a conceptual model that incorporates integral components of the philosophical basis of Indigenous knowledge organisations. This model can serve as a pedagogical tool to assist practitioners in bridging the epistemological schism between Euro-American ways of organising knowledge and First Nations ways of knowing. In this doctoral work, applying this framework proved helpful

in mapping Italian records towards a different knowledge system, enriching the Euro-Western cataloguing approach.

The following methodology I follow to operationalise knowledge translation within the physical and digital archival space is Duarte and Belarde Lewis' (2015) practice of *imagining*. Within the contact zone, decolonial change is a continuing journey that provides a framework for understanding how colonisation works and how to deconstruct its core aims and ways of thinking (Duarte and Belarde Lewis, 2015; Smith, 2012). To disrupt the power structures embedded in the archival profession, it is crucial to understand how these mechanisms are ingrained in systems and processes by keeping colonial structures and practices in our view and observing how they have interacted with Indigenous systems and networks (Christen & Anderson, 2019, pp. 78-79). Duarte and Belarde Lewis (2015) asserts that to understand how decolonisation works as a non-Indigenous researcher, I must "Step[ping] back from normative expectations that (1) all knowledge in the world can be represented in document form, (2) to some degree, already is, and (3) Indigenous ways of knowing belong in state-funded university and government library, archive, and museum collections, especially for the benefit of society's privileged elite" (p. 678). I experiment with the approach of imagining in Chapter 5.

As the archive continues to be a source of urgency in reading power and asymmetrical colonial relations, the third methodology I adopt to read the power structure embedded in the Italian archives is archival poetics by Narungga woman and activist-poet Natalie Harkin (Baker et al., 2020; Harkin, 2014, 2019b). Natalie Harkin's (2019b) book *Archival Poetics* comprises three volumes: *Colonial Archive (1)*, *Haunting (2)* and *Blood Memory*. Combining Harkin's previous artworks, poetics, narrative and archival sources, the scholar weaves a decolonial approach to respond to the state that has written about her Nanna without informed consent or respect. Making visible the horror that the colonial project has perpetuated against Aboriginal peoples is one of the core objectives of Harkin's work. I supplement Harkin's powerful approach with Anna Laura Stoler's (2010) framework along the grain. Stoler insights into the social imaginaries of colonial rules of the Dutch Indian Archives are helpful for this analysis because they provided me with examples of how to read Italian production and analyse the principles and practices of their governance. This work helps me to scrutinise the grain of Italian prose style, tone of persuasion, the genres of documentation collected, and the categories of

confidentiality and classification applied. The Dutch Indian Archives become, for the influential scholar, a “Condensed site of political anxiety”: a site where power relationships are inscribed and where we can observe their intricate technologies of rules (Stoler, 2010, p. 20). In there, “Information is in there, in abundance. It depends on what kind of things we imagine such an archive could allow us to know” (Stoler, 2010, p. 278). In Chapter 6 I adopt these two strategies because, collectively, they offer insightful examples from two instances of archival displacement: one still retained by the settler state (Harkin) and the other transferred from the colonies to European power (Stoler).

3.5. A circular strategy for collecting data

This section addresses the methods adopted to collect and analyse data to investigate the research questions indicated in Chapter 1. The grounding in Indigenous decolonising methodologies aligns with the research design and manifests through adopting Aboriginal participatory action research. This approach aims to correct colonial imbalances through participatory decision-making, centring individuals, places, and intentions in research (Denzin et al., 2008; Wright et al., 2023). Despite being born as a focus of psychology research, this approach aligns with this study because it creates safe spaces for academic enquiry (Shannon Faulkhead, 2008, p. 27). To this aim, I ensured that all the methods adopted in this work would require relational accountability and had the potential to foster relationships (Wilson, 2008, p. 40). Further, the technology I use as a tool for the digital return of archival records aligns with a decolonising strategy. In summary, this research design seeks to capture data within seven interrelated areas of inquiry. I frame it as a cyclical, relational and holistic journey that moves beyond merely engaging in research to focus on developing a transformative praxis in the information sector.

The notion of praxis implemented in this study aims to structural change. The concept of praxis has a very long history which I summarise quoting the words of scholars Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh (2018, p. 19) “As a walking, asking, reflecting, analyzing, theorising, and actioning — in continuous movement, contention, relation, and formation”. The theory and practice of Kaupapa Māori (Māori philosophy and praxis) are helpful here because they focus on understanding the transformation potential of Kaupapa Māori and use these understandings to inform and expand the transformative potential within other Indigenous contexts (L. T. Smith, 2015, p. 29).

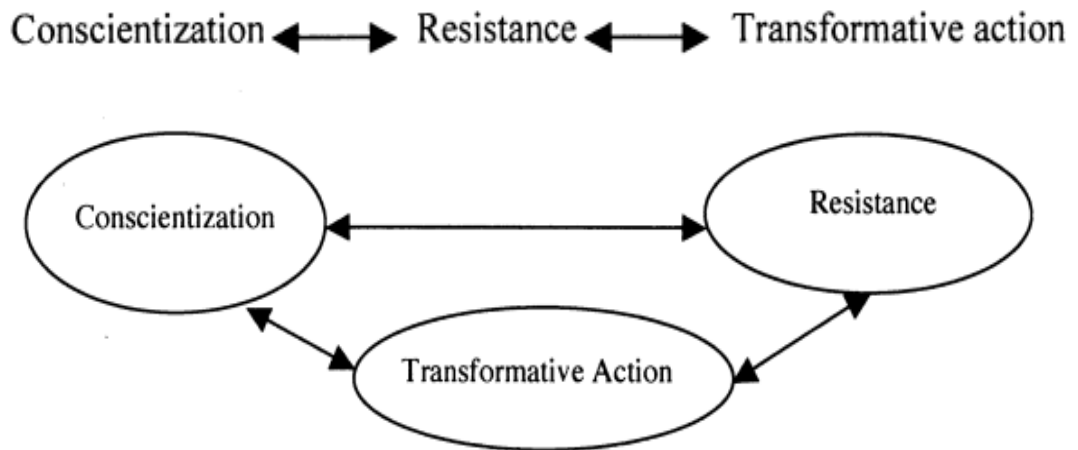


Figure 3.2. Māori intervention on Transformative Action Research

Graham Smith's type of transformative praxis critiques the linear progression of the three stages of conscientisation, resistance and transformative action, usually utilised by transformative action research (described by the writer as a Western type of thinking). Instead, Smith (G. H. Smith, 2004, p. 39) positions a Māori intervention in this framework by stating that “All the components are important; that all need to be held simultaneously; [and that] all stand in equal relation to each other”. This concept might be best understood as a cycle.⁶ The second notion adopted in this thesis focuses on the importance of Country. In the Australian context, a concept that resonates with my transformative approach to data gathering and analysis is Victor Steffensen's (2020) praction. Referring to his work with Elders on Indigenous fire knowledge and land management, Steffensen defines praction as learning from the Country about doing and not merely listening:

“To me, *praction* meant applying an action for the well-being of people, in a way that is culturally in tune with the natural world. An action that is applied to figureenefit the country and, in return, benefit ourselves. If the activity does not benefit the country, then it is not *praction*” (Steffensen, 2020, p. 154).

⁶ Māori intervention in the framework. Both images from Graham 2015, pp. 38-39.

Steffensen's centrality of Country, learning and transforming is essential in Kirsten Thorpe's call for transformative praxis in the information sector. According to Thorpe (2019), "The complex questions that come into play in library and archive practice need to be considered in relation to theory, and vice versa; a transformation will not come without this dialogue in play". It is through dialogue and reflection that librarians and archivists can work more effectively with their respective communities in culturally safe ways.

These three conceptualisations of praxis, together, have informed this thesis's data-gathering strategy. The graph below illustrates this cyclic journey and the steps undertaken to gather data for this PhD research:

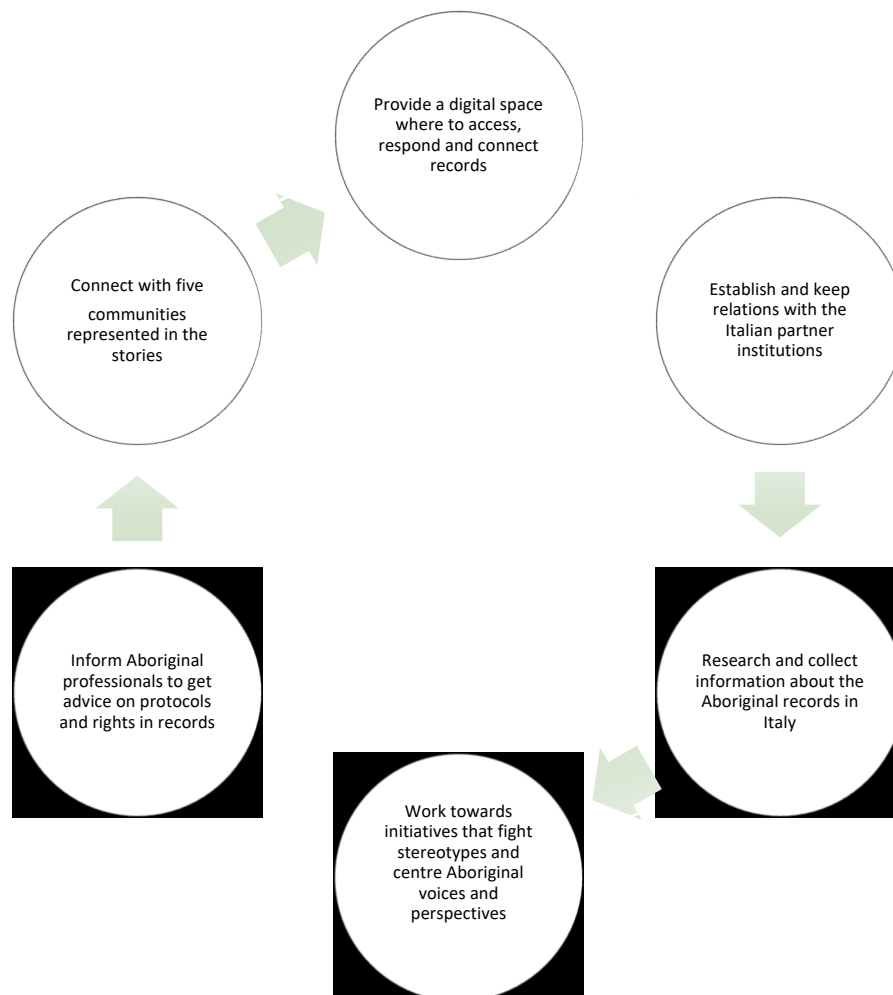


Figure 3.3. Visual representation of thesis data gathering process

To start gathering data for this project, I explored Italian archival collections to find out the presence of records related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples (keeping past research with the ATSIDA project [2010-2012] and existing published literature as a baseline). This method helped me establish (or re-establish) relationships with Italian institutions. I then discussed their interest in making their collections available through the participatory digital archive built for this project. As a result, some of these professionals decided to get involved with the research over the longer term (especially those three whom I call the partner institutions) and, therefore, start digitising or cataloguing their archival collections. In some cases, requesting information about their archives has prompted the Italian institutions' collaborative further work on research, translation, and connections with other organisations. The stories of these organisations and their collections are intertwined in my thesis.

Meanwhile, I built a prototype digital archive and adopted it as a tool to foster conversations and discussions on the records and processes of the museums. In Italy, I shared information about the values of the project with the institution in a series of small online gatherings. In these meetings, I focused on translating Italian concepts relating to the Indigenous worldviews of the archive. I shared information on critical protocols and frameworks utilised in the cultural sector in Australia. Additionally, these gatherings were essential for the institutions to meet and establish connections.

These conversations stimulated the investigation of some of the institutions' epistemological paradigms, such as how they have been cataloguing or describing the materials. They also incited the need for a more formal agreement between the institutions and UTS to put some of these responsibilities into writing. During the writing of the Agreement, the work on the Prototype was ongoing. I started uploading the archival collections shared with me by the institutions and supplementary content (for example, more information on the collector or the institution's history through writing or short videos). In a virtuous circle, the growing awareness of the importance of this material facilitated connections with other institutions holding First Nations archives in Italy and overseas.

Along with the work on the collections in Italy, I held yarns and uncountable hours of informal conversations with 13 people (Aboriginal and Italian) to inform them about my project and to discuss their views on the future of the records in Italy. Their opinions and

requirements are vital testimonies that shape my thesis. Still in Australia but always in close contact with the partner institutions, I informed 5 Aboriginal organisations or Community members about the provenance of the collections to assess their interest.

Organically, this work brought opportunities for conversations about ways to bring light to Aboriginal voices and perspectives in Italy and for the creation of a small community of practice that meets every three months. In these groups, we have started brainstorming the digital archive format and have discussed new ways to implement respectful methods with the archives. This work is ongoing.

In 2021, during the research, I was invited to co-curate a display with Maria Camilla De Palma at the D'Albertis Castle in 2021. Located at the end of a broader exhibition showcasing a mix of objects collected by Captain D'Albertis during his first trip around the world, the display aimed to provide a historical background for the images while reflecting on the complexities of colonial staged photography.⁷ Critically, as the long-term vision for the museum is to acknowledge these untold stories and work towards creating opportunities for future community partnerships, I utilised the display to experiment with applying cultural protocols to respectfully work and talk about these images and stories outside unceded Australia. To guide me through this process, I invited writer and curator Marika Duczynski to become the display's community/cultural advisor. Duczynski is a proud Gamilaraay woman and an experienced professional who has worked for several years in collecting institutions in Australia to facilitate culturally safe access to NSW Aboriginal communities to their cultural heritage. She is also a trusted and valued colleague. Honouring an Indigenous paradigm meant that I acknowledged this connection since the beginning of this work and that trust and respect were vital in motivating my request. As described, the concept of relational sampling of Kovach

⁷ The D'Albertis Museum invited me to collaborate on developing a section of the exhibition titled *Antipodes. The travel album of E. A. D'Albertis and the Australian photographs by J. W. Lindt* at the D'Albertis Museum. The Museum wanted to use the exhibition to bring visibility to the staged photographs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples taken by the photographer JW Lindt for the first time in Genova. From November 2021 to March 2022, *Antipodes* brought together the mix of objects, photographs, personal notes, and ephemera collected by Captain D'Albertis during his first trip around the world, including photographs of Aboriginal Peoples that he took and bought in Australia. The exhibition was curated by the Museum's Director, Maria Camilla De Palma, in collaboration with Ken Orchard, an Australian scholar and international expert in the life and work of the German photographer J W Lindt.

(2021) provided me with a scaffold ingrained within Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies that centre relationality. It was that trust that made this project possible. Despite not having been formally planned as part of this study, the display became an invaluable opportunity to investigate the opportunities of knowledge translation to communicate with the Italian public. I will reflect on this aspect in Chapter 5.

3.6. Participatory and action-based methods

Three data sources are used to develop this research project.

1. Archival research methods to investigate Aboriginal archival collections held across Italian institutions.
2. A prototype of a participatory digital archive was built to make these collections digitally accessible and provide a space for replies to the records under the appropriate cultural protocols.
3. Yarning to gather data on opinions from Aboriginal and Italian perspectives about this PhD project and the future management of these archives in Italy.

1. Archival research

The qualitative archival research method is adopted to locate Aboriginal displaced archives held in Italian organisations. At its simplest, archival research involves the study of collections of documents to gain an understanding of a selected topic. For this research design, it is essential to note that, like other research methods, what and how to research is informed by underlying research philosophies (Mills & Mills, 2018). This process involved extensive analysis of online catalogues I had access to while establishing contacts with researchers and Italian institutions to gather information that might be hard to access online. Additionally, this search concerned widespread historical examination of the relationships between Australia and Italy (for example, through studying the lives of Italian explorers and Catholic Missionaries who came to Australia or the catalogues of Universal Exhibitions).

This information gathering during the archival research comprises accounts by non-Indigenous peoples in manuscripts, drawings, maps, photographs, videos, sound, illustrations, artworks, and other materials. I included the administrative documentation related to the acquisition of Aboriginal collections of the institutions and on the diaries and additional notes of the Italian collector or curator. Moreover, I considered published manuscripts that are not in printing anymore or are difficult to access for the Australian public but that can provide a contextual understanding of the records. The timeframe

considered spans from the earliest records (approximately from the second half of the nineteenth century) to the 1970's. Yet, this timeframe was flexible and receptive to the findings I made. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the records I investigated for this research come from different sources and have different trajectories. They are distributed across museums, archives, geographical and historical organisations, churches, private collectors, and universities. The search proved challenging as a significant portion of the records is unavailable online, and there is a lack of a comprehensive list of Aboriginal archival records in Italy. Most documents are not digitised, or when they are, the keyword search is in Italian and does not follow a unified rule across databases. Often, archival provenance is incorrect or unmarked. Internally, they are recorded in different formats and separated into collections. The organisation's internal description, collection storage and structures change accordingly. Collection divisions are often arbitrary as they follow their own internal logic, or the original categorisation decided by the collector. Besides, there are very few indications of the societal provenance of these records. In other words, the Aboriginal records in Italy are dispersed across sites and collections, and all have their journeys. I examine these differences more in-depth in Chapter 4.

To keep the focus tight, I focus only on what is usually defined as archival documentation, records or archives and exclude other forms of cultural heritage held in Italian institutions. I adopt this demarcation benchmark to limit my research, as previous research has already confirmed the presence of numerous Aboriginal cultural objects in various institutions throughout the Italian peninsula. However, the decision to delineate the meaning of the archive is not just logistical but is, in fact, methodological. I concentrate exclusively on a limited view of what constitutes records to focus on the importance of archives for supporting advocacy for Aboriginal self-determination and sovereignty. Therefore, I exclude from this work the analysis of First Nations Ancestral Remains, Hair samples, DNA samples, cultural objects (Including weapons and material culture), Aboriginal art, and any other item included in international repatriation schemes. I am aware of the need to limit the holistic view of knowledge in Indigenous worldviews by adopting these criteria. Borrowing from Koori leading academic Shannon Faulkhead's (2009, p. 67) work, "A more appropriate definition of a record is any account, regardless of form, that preserves memory or knowledge of facts and events. A record can be a document, an individual's memory, an image, or a recording. It can also be an actual person, a community, or the land itself". On the contrary, museums and other

organisations in Australia and overseas traditionally refer to tangible and intangible to classify cultural heritage. This widely accepted categorisation was first proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). However, this labelling is inadequate for many communities worldwide, as this false dichotomy stands in the way of conceiving heritage more holistically and clearly shows how Western values are deeply embedded in the global heritage idea (Stefano, 2019).

To respect this methodological decision, I exclude collecting institutions that hold exclusively cultural objects or Ancestral Remains and do not publicise Aboriginal Australian archival records. However, this does not mean that they could also keep records. Instead, this is very likely. There could be different case scenarios for these institutions. The most common is that collecting organisations: (a) do not hold archival records. They did not own them in the first place because they got lost during accidents or transferred somewhere else, or (b) the documents are in the organisation but are buried in different collections (in boxes of *Pacific Collections*) or in the administrative documentation (in the old museum's accession catalogues). Sometimes, this documentation is not considered as valuable as the actual objects or Ancestral Remains and is, therefore, understudied or not exposed to the public through online catalogues. Additionally, focusing on the importance of the archive allows me to overcome the debates around physical repatriation in museums, that have proved to be a blocker of conversations in the Italian landscape in previous research (Galassi, 2012). This new focus, rarely undertaken within the Italian cultural sector before, raises curiosity and provides new spaces of dialogue that will hopefully benefit future conversations around the repatriation debate.

2. Digital archive prototype

The second method adopted to gather data for this study is building a prototype of a digital participatory archive called *Aboriginal Archives in Italy. A Space for Reciprocal Collaboration*.⁸ The platform is conceived of as a space to increase online accessibility

⁸ https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/en_au/

of a sample of Aboriginal records held in Italy and to provide opportunities to establish connections with the communities they originate from. It was developed with the following contributions in mind: (a) test the process involved in reconnecting a sample of records held in Italy to the Aboriginal groups and archivists connected to these stories; (b) experiment with its functionalities and its user experience capabilities; (c) create an example for future shared digital platforms and projects of this kind; and (d) bring to light relationships among archival collections held in different Italian institutions. The data collected for this study and included in the digital archive is by no means exhaustive - on the contrary, it was gathered to provide information, examples and resources that could be added to and re-used in the future.

The questions that Yidinji Aboriginal activist Henrietta Fourmille raised in 1988 about displacement, disconnection, and dispersal of Indigenous information in archives still resonate today. In this context, digital technologies represent an opportunity for increasing access and control of this data. In this regard, the benefits and challenges that digital return can provide Indigenous communities have been discussed by several authors especially in the Australian and American context (Barwick et al., 2021; Christen, n.d., 2012, 2018; Janke, 1998; Marsh, 2023; Vaarzon-Morel et al., 2021). Yet, despite the use of digital archives for Italian colonial records is raising (*Memorie Coloniali*, 2023), there is a gap in the literature regarding how these digital return platforms are utilised practically to bridge knowledge gaps between users and institutions.

Like many other First Nations peoples across the world, Julie Gough (2020, p. 852) calls GLAM professionals to extend their research efforts by implementing the digital return of archival records as a crucial way to support community repatriation efforts of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains disseminated in international institutions. However, there is a growing body of scholarship that acknowledges that digital infrastructures used in the library and archival fields are built upon Western traditions and, hence, perpetuate the same colonial

⁹ Video now on permanent display in the D'Albertis Museum in Genova (Italy). Minute 02.59. Film and drone footage by Chris Duczynski. Director/Producer, Malibu Media. Translation of Italian text: "These institutions need to try to make up for some of those damages that have been historically done". https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/en_au/watch-the-videos/

power structures (M. Caswell, 2017; Thorpe et al., 2021). That is, to align the decolonial methodologies adopted in this study with the appropriate methods, the choice of the right technology built with and for Indigenous communities is a pivotal decision that needs to be made. To make these documents available to communities for reply, curation, storytelling, and local translation, I adopted the content management system (CMS) for Indigenous content Mukurtu (Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation at Washington State University, 2015). This platform presents a set of functionalities created for managing Indigenous cultural heritage, including recognition of Indigenous Intellectual Property, rights to respond to records and set flexible cultural protocols. In this work, I frame the digital archive as a participatory prototype. It is participatory because, following the description of Gilliland and McKemmish (2014, p. 4), it provides a negotiated space where the different parties share stewardship and agree on reciprocal respect of community values, practices, beliefs and needs. Thus, I call it a prototype to highlight that consultation to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander user experiences in the platform is a continuing progression.

The digital archive is a crucial component of this research and aligns with Indigenous decolonial methodologies because “Knowledge sharing has become a way to cut across relations of power, not by ‘talking up to power’ but by talking across the power to each other, enhancing connections and relationships” (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 2). Most importantly, the platform is aimed at increasing the accessibility of that information for First Nations researchers and community members to engage directly with these collections to avoid being “Perpetually beholden to, and bewildered by, other researchers’ secondary texts and interpretations, intermittently dispensed to us [Aboriginal Tasmanian], and by being then faced with fragments from which we can make little sense of our history” (Gough, 2020). Additionally, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 5, this study utilises the digital archive as a knowledge translation space to explore “How the digitization and release of the colonial archives can advance collective knowledge in ways that help us move beyond national economies of guilt and innocence, towards a consequent confrontation of colonial legacies that continue to structure the present” (Agostinho, 2019, p. 5).

3. Yarning

Lastly, I use the yarning method to build trust with the research participants and to record community perspectives and interest in records held in Italy. I also include in this work the outcome of the yarning with the Italian professionals who work directly with the records. Once again, the cultural interface has provided me with a useful tool to read these ideas within a shared interface to locate similarities, differences, areas of conflicts and future priorities. Following the categorisations proposed by Bessarab and Ng'andu (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010, p. 40), I engaged in social yarning (the informal conversation that takes place before the research) and research topic yarning (where the purpose is to obtain information relating to the research question). The work of Petah Atkinson (Yorta Yorta), Marilyn Baird and Karen Adams (Wiradjuri) (2021) about yarning as a research method is of great relevance to this research. The authors write about the centrality of relationality and relational accountability in yarning, which has the power to mitigate settler colonial processes in research. These two elements are what differentiate yarning from other research methods, such as interviews. It is not only an exchange of ideas: yarning has "Its grounding as an Aboriginal cultural specified process whereby researcher and participant contribute to the Yarn creating a collaborative space where, ideally, both voices are important" (P. Atkinson et al., 2021, p. 192). It is this relationship that likely enriches the Yarn, resulting in more detailed and nuanced data that prioritises authenticity over mere validity. The method of yarning is connected to storytelling, which in many Indigenous cultures is one way to knowing the social world (Chapter 6). These values underline this research project by making visible and celebrating my relationships with the participants (Atkinson et al. p. 191). As a researcher, I need to put myself on the line as I contribute to the yarn in an equivalent way to the participant (P. Atkinson et al., 2021).

Additionally, the principles for selecting participants are embedded in Indigenous paradigms. I prioritise relational sampling, focusing on people with whom I have an established relationship or who can build trust (Kovach, 2021, p. 169). This principle has shown to be imperative throughout the research process and creates the conditions to continue this work into the future. During my work with the digital archive, I contacted five Aboriginal organisations (such as land councils) and personal contacts to inform them about the presence of Italian collections. I asked people and institutions who could be appropriate for future collaborations. This selection is dictated by the provenance of the archival records shared with me by the partner institutions. Finally, this study involves a range of collaborators from Australia and Italy, who have provided precious information

and research on the records to facilitate examining the Aboriginal communities related to those stories.

3.7. Conceptual models to accompany data collection

This research required multiple frameworks to locate, analyse, translate, and digitally disseminate the records and analyse the data gathered through the yarning sessions. This layered approach is grounded in decolonial tactics to question the current understanding of the records and reclaim Aboriginal-led protocols and practices in their future care.

First, this research required a conceptual model to locate and analyse the archives that could align with Indigenous worldviews. The model of the records continuum developed by Sue McKemmish (J. A. Gilliland et al., 2016, p. 125) is a framework for “Disruptive and radical recordkeeping”, which opens opportunities to decolonise the archive. The continuum does align closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ontologies and epistemologies, as it is a cyclical model where records are always in the process of becoming (McKemmish, 1994). It is a thinking system in which “Archives and recordkeeping encompass the pluralism of evidentiary texts, memory-keeping practices and institutions, bureaucratic and personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs” (J. A. Gilliland et al., 2016, p. 17). A records continuum perspective, therefore, consists of “Developing systems that will make it possible for all the stakeholders to access and use the records when they need them, and that will protect the rights of the people whose information is included in the records” (Frings-Hessami & Oliver, 2022). Barrowcliffe adopts the continuum to represent the trajectories of the Aboriginal records in Italy:

The roots are Dimension 1, the act, and the original event. No part of the tree or record can exist without it. The trunk and bark represent the various actions on the record as it goes through its life. It sheds bark seasonally, which reminded me that people looking at the record at different times would see the tree/record differently. The leaves and flowers travel away from the tree and become part of the larger forest landscape. If you pick up a leaf in a forest, you might be able to trace it back to where it came from, but even if you can't, it still becomes the overall understanding of the environment in which it sits. This represents the information in records being used far beyond the original event or even the record. They can inform a larger narrative even if most people never see the original (Barrowcliffe, 2022, p. 2).

Through the archival continuum, the knowledge produced within this study will become part of the records and will influence their future reading.

Another crucial aspect of this thesis involves establishing a framework for disseminating records through the prototype of the digital archive. Leading scholar Anne Gilliland has provided a schema to facilitate the digital circulation of knowledge regarding Aboriginal archival collections held in Italian institutions. Using the records continuum theory, Gilliland (A. J. Gilliland, 2017b, p. 180) proposes overcoming the physical and nation-states-based thinking applied to displaced records. She suggests moving from trying to “Negotiate ownership, protection and physical relocation of documents across complex and contested histories and boundaries, power imbalances and stewardship capabilities”. Instead, she proposes to focus the archival discourse about displaced records on plural contingent co-created objects while providing pluralised access to them regardless of where they are located. Gilliland’s framework aligns with Indigenous worldviews as it considers knowledge in and outside the institution. As I will explain in Chapter 5, I do not consider the digital archive a singular and isolated platform. I shape it to become a node for different systems talking to each other to link records among institutions. As previously argued, the information held in archives contains only a fraction of Aboriginal knowledge. Most are embedded in Country, shaped, transmitted within peoples, and stored in community archives far away from mainstream organisations.

Lastly, another vital framework is needed to decode the ideas and opinions from the yarning sessions. Jo-ann Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Canada) (2008) framed the concept of Indigenous storywork as a robust methodology to decolonise Western knowledge and assumptions (J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019). It is an Indigenous theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical framework comprising seven principles: respect, responsibilities, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. Within a decolonising methodologies framework, analysing experiences and ideas through a storywork framework provides a way to foster Aboriginal voices and share stories with reverence and respect (J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019, p. 7). In this study, I weave together the stories shared by the participants to craft an innovative methodology to foster culturally appropriate care of First Nations displaced archives.

3.8. Relational accountability, reciprocity and respect

Whilst all kinds of research contain ethical implications and risks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities have mainly been subject to unethical research practices (Chilisa, 2012). This study respects the principles set out in The AIATSIS Code 2020 (previously the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies 2012), which are aligned with the UNDRIP (2007). I also endorse the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2018) that articulates the broad principles and responsibilities for conducting Australian research. To ensure a safe and respectful research experience for the research participants, the ethics, morals, and protocols that drive this study must be embedded in Indigenous research paradigms. This choice is also a way to honour my privilege of accessing information, knowledges, and stories in archives that have been unknown to most. Thus, I am mindful of my positionality within this research as a non-Aboriginal woman gathering, translating, and working with archival records, potentially including sensitive or private information. Likewise, I should not relinquish the trust that participants (both in Australia and Italy) gave me in sharing their stories and ideas. I agree with Wilson (2008, p. 39) when he asserts that methods are “Only tools” and that “Without following the Indigenous axiology of relational accountability, they can still be used in hurtful ways”. Accordingly, I carefully reflected on which values to include in my axiology and my responsibilities in undertaking this journey.

I see it as my first responsibility in the research process to apply rigour when adopting Indigenous research methods. I will apply research rigour in three ways: firstly, by highlighting the limitations of archival collections held in Italian institutions; secondly, by establishing transparency in how I collect the data; and thirdly, by honouring the values of the research in practice.

Firstly, in terms of the limitations of its archival collections, Italian records tell limited narratives because, like most colonial archives, they are told from Eurocentric perspectives. The exchange of Ancestral Remains, cultural objects, manuscripts, photographs and other information between Europe and other colonial countries was uneven (Spitta, 2009, p. 9). As argued in Chapter 2, First Nations voices and perspectives remain primarily invisible within displaced archives. Palawa (Tasmanian) Aboriginal artist Julie Gough (2020, p. 836) describes this material held overseas

(labelling them as “*these things*”) as “Not always or even often overseas-held people/objects, but more about culture in disarray, of which the scattered objects and human remains, fragments far away, are the farthest bounds”. Paraphrasing the words of Butchulla artist Fiona Foley on the narratives of Eliza Fraser’s captivity, Behrendt (2016, p. 60) underlines that these accounts do not represent the community’s views. Instead, they are a mirror that shows colonial Australia as a reflection of itself. My work wants to make visible these power imbalances by transforming the domination of voice and agency of Italian collectors into spaces of critique and counter-narratives.

Rose Barrowcliffe’s artwork (2022) expresses the invisibility of Indigenous voices in Italy, drawing silhouettes of Aboriginal people in archival records, protectively surrounded by the cicatriz circle. Barrowcliffe used peoples’ outlines instead of photographs to respect their and their descendants’ privacy and to remind the public how little is known of these people in the records (Barrowcliffe, 2022, p. 4). Thus, speaking about her artwork, she underlines that “The archival paper background does not ever cross or go beyond the cicatriz border, which indicates that archival records, while useful, are limited in their application. They can never replace traditional knowledge” (Barrowcliffe, 2022, p. 3).

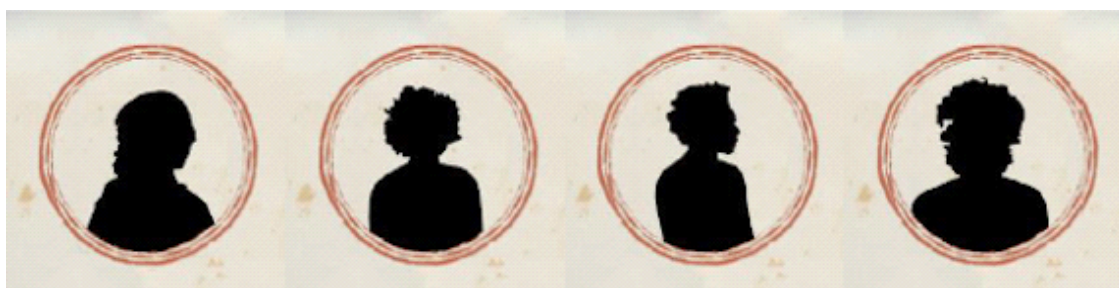


Figure 3.4. Rose Barrowcliffe. (2022). Elements. *Aboriginal Archives in Italy* artwork.

Barrowcliffe remarks on an idea that I touched on in Chapter 2. Information in archives has never been, and will never be, able to replace systems of knowledge transmission that have functioned in Aboriginal communities, on and through Country, with and within people since time immemorial. However, information restricted in archives can play a significant role in contexts such as language revival, revitalisation of cultural practices, and recovering family connections disrupted by colonialism.

Secondly, establishing transparency in how I collect the data is another crucial step to ensuring rigour in this research. This study does not attempt to gather quantitative data about all the archival records held in Italy that contain information related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities. Instead, it focuses on information shared with me by the partner institutions and those found through earlier studies and my own archival and online research. As well, the provenance of this material can be incorrect. All the information I utilise in this work has been given by the museum and is expressed from an Italian point of view (or from the viewpoint of the person who supplied the material in the first place, such as the photographic studio).

Thirdly, the final step taken to apply rigour through the data-gathering process is to genuinely respect the values of the research. In this research axiology, I take pride in honouring the values of relational accountability, reciprocity and respect (Wilson, 2001, 2008) in all aspects of the research design of this study. They create the ground for continuing forging relationships beyond this doctoral journey in a virtuous and long-term circle. Rose Barrowcliffe visually represented these values as the three circles, representing the record continuum and, therefore, the long-lasting application of these principles.

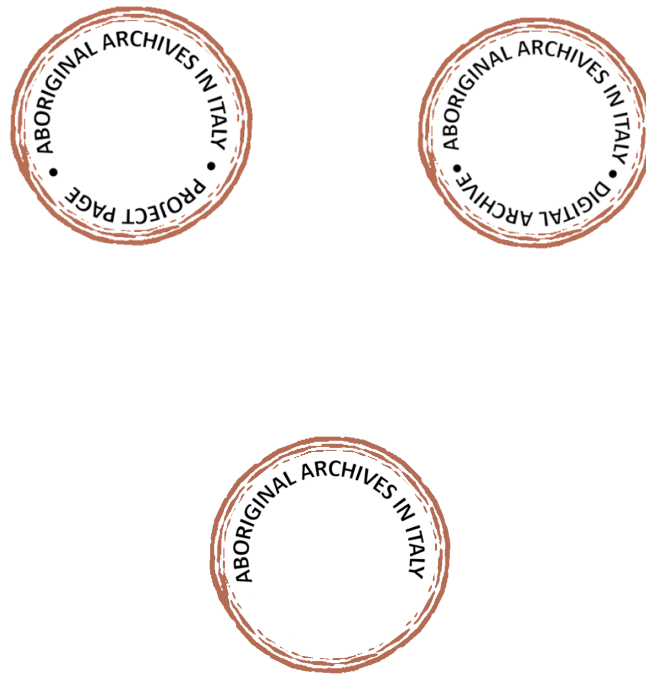


Figure 3.5. Rose Barrowcliffe. (2022). The three circles (logo, project page and digital archive) *Aboriginal Archives in Italy* artwork.

Indigenous axiology is built upon relational accountability with the person telling the story and the researcher's relationship with the story (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). Wilson accurately describes the essential role that relationality has for Indigenous peoples:

Relationality seems to sum up the whole Indigenous paradigm. Just as the components of the paradigms are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships. Ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships (Wilson, 2008, pp. 70–71).

As argued earlier, applying relational accountability in practice means ensuring that my research design is built upon respecting all the relationships within this research and focuses on personal responsibility (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Respecting this value includes committing myself to ongoing learning, deep listening and honouring a relational process based on mutual trust, cooperation, and transparency about the process and the outcomes. Applying these principles is initially based on my sense of personal

responsibility. Being placed within an Indigenous paradigm means openly taking care of the ideas and the stories that have been shared with me, valuing the relationships with the research, including my own, and being conscious of my positionality. One of the ways I demonstrated rigour in research was to seek financial support from my faculty to ensure that the people I engaged in creative projects were paid according to sector guidelines for their commitment and cultural knowledge. I made myself accountable to the relationships in this study by ensuring that everyone becoming part of this endeavour understands and applies its values and principles. A critical outcome made possible by applying relational accountability in this research was the creation of an Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding that took over two years to make. The three Italian institutions have partnered with UTS through my doctoral study to increase the digital accessibility of their collections. The decision-making of communities around respecting and committing to applying cultural protocols and ICIP rights was one of the critical points of the document. To create a tangible impact and lay the ground for future connections and projects with Aboriginal GLAM professionals, Knowledge Holders and community members, the Agreement has a timeframe of three years and goes beyond my PhD timeline.

The principle of reciprocity (or giving back) entails researching so that both the communities and the researcher derive benefits (Chilisa, 2012, p. 7). Through the work undertaken to make digitally accessible the archival records held in Italy, I am committing to giving back knowledge and providing a safe space for response and storytelling where all voices are valued, giving back and adopting knowledge translation that supports local protocols and desires (L. Smith et al., 2019). I also express respect through this research by committing to support Aboriginal sovereignty and creating opportunities for creating international awareness of Aboriginal rights in displaced records and the vibrancy and strength of Aboriginal cultures. For instance, in 2021, I partnered with Gamilaraay curator and writer Marika Duczynski in an exhibition at the D'Albertis Museum.

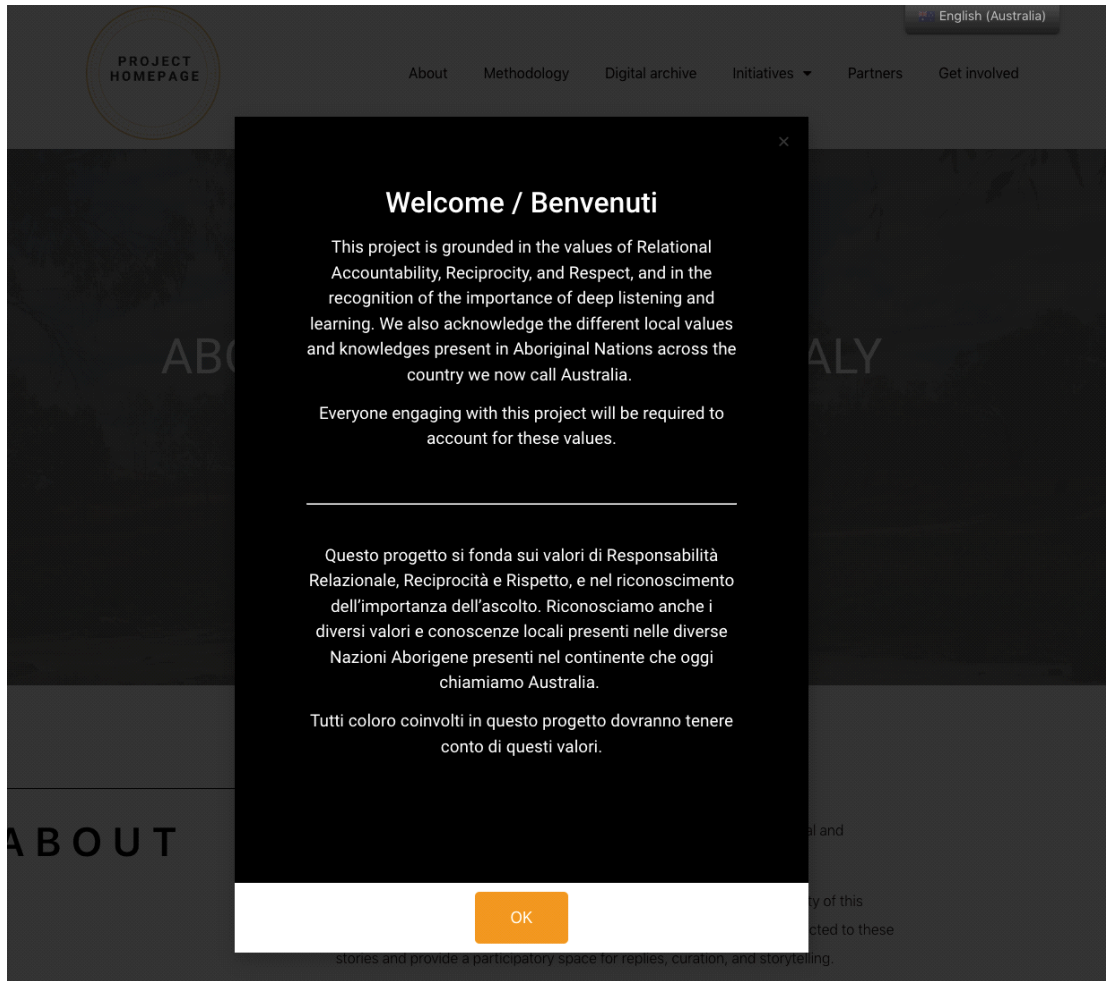


Figure 3.6. Welcome pop-up in the digital archive



Figure 3.7. Part of Marika Duczynski's video⁹

3.9. Limitations

As with many other research projects initiated in 2020, the COVID pandemic has significantly impacted this work. I had to pivot my original research design to online methodologies, including several research periods in Italian archives. The Australian Federal Government, as it is well known, closed its borders, and this meant that I could not conduct in-person fieldwork until 2022. While online methodologies have been fruitful and have permitted ongoing intense exchanges with partner institutions, some elements could only be researched in person. The five months I spent in Italy last year were invaluable in building trust and consulting material unavailable online. The same can be said for the impossibility of reaching regional Australian areas until recently due to the impact of the pandemic and floods in NSW. Consultation on the collections and yarning sessions had to occur mainly online and over the phone.

⁹ Video now on permanent display in the D'Albertis Museum in Genova (Italy). Minute 02.59. Film and drone footage by Chris Duczynski. Director/Producer, Malibu Media. Translation of Italian text: "These institutions need to try to make up for some of those damages that have been historically done". https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/en_au/watch-the-videos/

Another limitation given by the need to set boundaries to finish the research within the prescribed university timeline is the restricted focus on three organisations. The Vatican and church collections and the many cultural organisations disseminated along the Italian peninsula that might hold Aboriginal records need extensive further examination. The same applies to private collections.

Further, this research has demonstrated a gap in Aboriginal data sovereignty in recordkeeping, especially in settings of archival displacement. However, more research is needed to address this enormous issue. Some of the questions I have raised in this study, but investigated only in part, refer to familiar challenges for Aboriginal peoples and communities. Some of these complexities concern where the data is stored. Which cloud service is utilised? Who sees the archival material that is catalogued under a close protocol? How can these records connect with community archives of local organisations? Ultimately, who owns them? Not all the components of this project address these complexities. For instance, the digital archive prototype built for this study is currently self-funded. Negotiations are taking place to host the site at UTS at the end of this research. Likely the institution will utilise the university's cloud service of choice. Ultimately, the museums have legal ownership of the records. No legislation significantly secures community rights in archives if the records have been displaced to other countries with their own legislation. This research highlights that we are still a considerable distance away from establishing a transnational post-custodial (Jeannette A. Bastian, 2002, 2021) archival displacement model in a manner that prioritises Country and Indigenous sovereignty over data as its foundation.

Especially in this new era, where Artificial Intelligence technologies have unwrapped unimaginable opportunities for searching and disclosing displaced archives (Colavizza et al., 2021; *Unlocking Colonial Archive. Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Indigenous and Spanish American Collections*, n.d.), new critical models are needed to not replicate digital colonialism through the use of these technologies (Adams, 2021; *Leveraging UNESCO Normative Instruments for an Ethical Generative AI Use of Indigenous Data*, 2023; Walsh, n.d.). Ultimately, people, relationships and social justice are the background that make these technologies possible (Jaillant & Rees, 2023). This is an area that we must not lose sight of.

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter has shifted the conventional perspectives on examining colonial archives in Italy, introducing a new lens for their analysis. Rose Barrowcliffe's artwork, displayed at the opening of this chapter, reflects on the multiple layers embedded in those records. Barrowcliffe's view aligns with my experience working with the records and powerfully exposes their complexities. These reflections prompted a series of questions about the Italian records. Why is the Euro-Western paradigm historically adopted to analyse the records insufficient? Has it created tangible improvements for Aboriginal peoples and communities wanting to access the records? In this work, the shift from Euro-Western to Indigenous perspectives on the Aboriginal records in Italy provides for the first time a concrete and effective lens to approach the archives and their understanding. As outlined in the previous chapter, incorporating principles from a needed Aboriginal archival reform (Thorpe, 2022) into the research design has anchored this study in the specific needs of Aboriginal GLAM researchers, professionals, and community members. Critically, it has filled a gap in critical archival theories and practice.

A shift in the analysis of Aboriginal records in Italy will explore alternative ways of being and understanding the archive. But can it reveal its power structures? What can these archives do for the people involved? Despite being so far away from unceded Aboriginal Australia, what agency do these records have? This thesis begins with these questions, exploring how connecting peoples, archives, and countries can open opportunities to read and make an impact on displaced archives. In the next chapter, I start reflecting on these questions by closely analysing the records in Italy.

CHAPTER 4. LEARN

Mapping Aboriginal Records in Italy

Indigenous cultures are like Indigenous lands - they are not free to be taken. In Australia, Indigenous peoples have been calling for stronger ways to protect their cultural heritage under the law. They seek their place as the rightful owners of their cultural assets - to negotiate use, to be recognised as the cultural source, to receive payment where benefits accrue, to protect culture from harm and destruction, and to ensure that culture remains intact so it can be handed on to future generations.

Terri Janke. (2021). *True Tracks. Respecting Indigenous knowledge and culture*, NewSouth Publishing (p. 9)

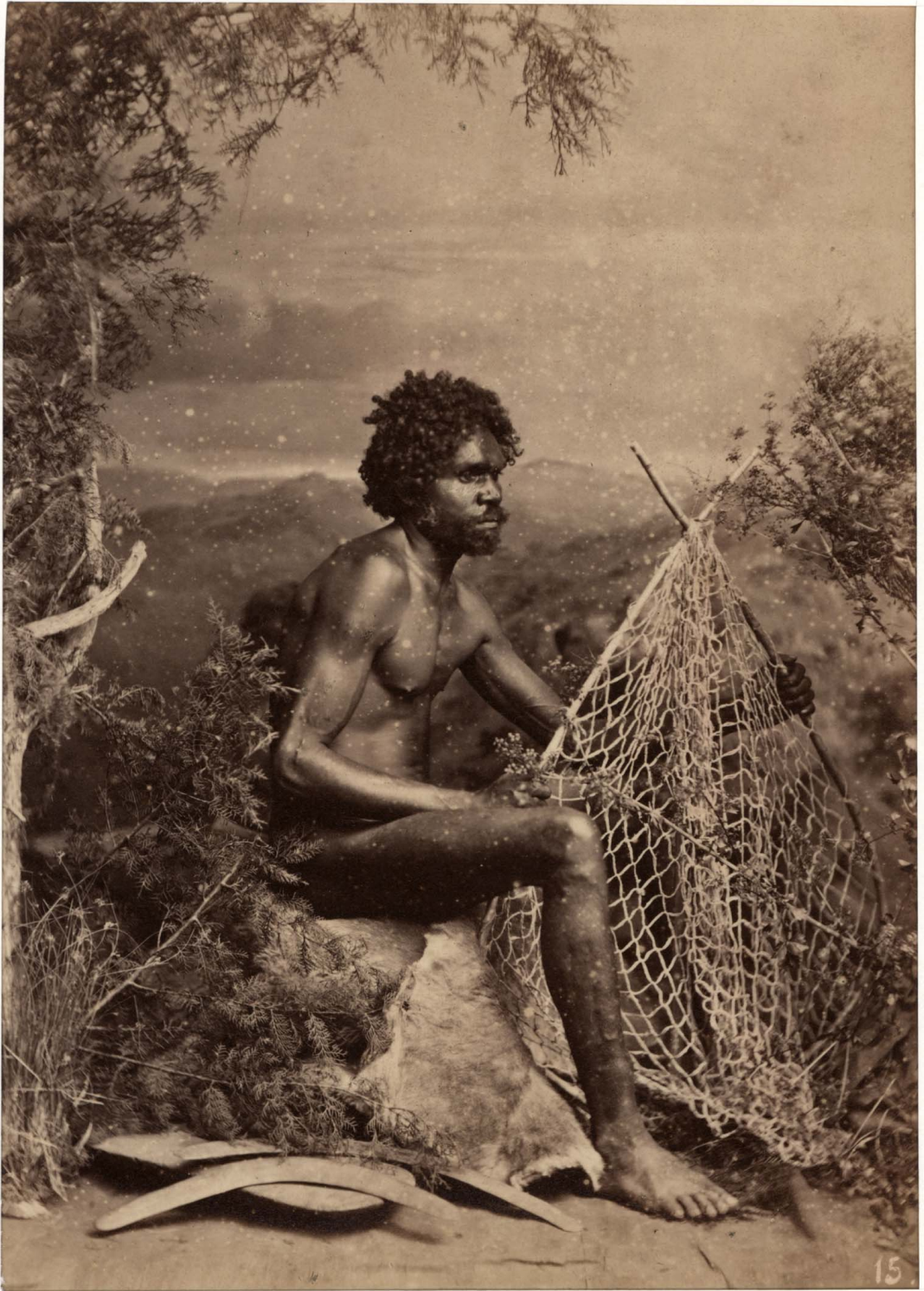


Figure 4.1. Photo of unidentified man (possibly from the Clarence River)¹⁰

4.1. Introduction – How do you map the Italian records?

The opening photograph in this chapter represents one of the most well-known instances of staged photography within the realm of Aboriginal imagery (Braithwaite et al., 2015; Orchard, 1999). These images, commonly referred to as the 'Lindt collections' based on the photographer's name, have been widely circulated in Australia and abroad (Gahan et al., 2017) and most recently re-interpreted by Aboriginal artists.¹¹ As part of this project, I catalogued analogous images in diverse institutions, such as the one housed at the MUCIV. In spite of the existence of these iconic images, when I commenced archival research for this PhD, my resources were limited to a relatively small body of research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander archival records preserved in Italy (Cipollone & Orlandi, 2011b; De Toni, 2020; Lydon, 2006, 2014a, 2014b, 2020; Olcelli, 2013, 2018; Paisley, 2012; Pizzini, 2010; Verdina, 2017; Verdina & Kinder, 2019). The analysis of the literature confirms that this existing body of knowledge focuses on the circumscribed study of one single institution (such as the Vatican Museums), personality (for example, the collector and scientist Enrico Hyler Giglioli), or documentation (the reports by Benedictine missionary Rodesindo Salvado). Further, I could not rely on any examples that could assist in comprehensively mapping Italian collections. Following the pioneering book *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections in Overseas Museums* by Carol Cooper (1989), efforts were made to consolidate the Aboriginal cultural heritage preserved in Italy and the Vatican (Aigner, 2015, 2018; Piccioli & Mazz, 1990). Nevertheless, these endeavours primarily centred on a museum context, providing only limited information on the archival records maintained by these institutions. These studies are crucial for several reasons. They tell stories that could be significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and worldwide historiography. They unveil knowledge that otherwise would have remained silent, providing evidence of the variety and meaning of Italian cultural patrimony.

¹⁰ Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Lindt Album. Photo number 03. The net showed in this portrait was defined by the Bundjalung people as 'tow-row' and is the only known representation across Australian and overseas archives and museums. For additional context and information see (Gahan et al., 2017, pp. 94–96). **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/137>

¹¹ For example, the exhibition *Picturing the Old People* by Genevieve Grieves (Worimi) at the State Library of Victoria in 2005.

Nonetheless, these resources proved insufficient for this study, lacking a comprehensive grasp of the relationships inherent in the documentation. When I started exploring the archives and online catalogues from a continuum perspective (Evans et al., 2017; Frings-Hessami & McKemmish, 2021; McKemmish, 1994, 2001), relationships and connections between records, institutions and links to Australian and Italian histories started to surface. The physical documents, their trajectories, the stories depicted in them, their descriptions and the people who participated in their creation and maintenance have shaped intricate webs of relations across the Italian peninsula and overseas. Indeed, despite Lowry's (2019b, pp. 353–354) argument that positioning the study of displaced archives within a continuum perspective "Could radically reshape how archival displacement is conceived", limited research has benefited from this theoretical perspective. In the same article, Lowry refers to the works of Timothy Lovering (2017) on the 'Expatriated' Rhodesian army records and Michael Karabinos (2018, 2020) / Frings-Hessami (2020) debate around the conceptualisation of the shadow continuum as the few works which attempted this shift in the academic literature related to archival displacement.

The work of others helped highlight the importance of Aboriginal records dispersed across Italian cultural institutions: my research builds on these efforts, which I intertwine throughout this chapter. As the first examination of this kind, this chapter looks at the Aboriginal records in Italy as a net of information, all connected by national and transnational relations. This analysis centres on three interconnected theoretical manoeuvres that underpin the innovative interpretation presented in this chapter, specifically within the Italian context. The first theoretical turn is the analysis of the records through an archival continuum paradigm to encourage a multidimensional analysis of their trajectories. The second conceptual manoeuvre reflects on how encounters of people and records have created spaces of transculturation. Consciously or unconsciously, Aboriginal and Italian people started a language and knowledge translation process that has influenced each other and endures today. The last conceptual move I adopt is to uncover the opportunities that adopting a mapping model based on Indigenous worldviews can bring to understand the records in Italy further. I adopted the work *Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices* (Littletree et al., 2020) as a roadmap to highlight overlooked facets within the Italian collections.

4.2. Paper trails in Italian private and public collections

The relationships that shaped the Aboriginal knowledges held in Italian organisations have been created mainly through encounters and relationships between Aboriginal peoples and priests, sailors, explorers, and migrants. The history of these exchanges is enduring, complex, and understudied. There are numerous private and public collections where stories about encounters are stored, but the exact quantity still needs to be determined. From the information I can access, most of the archival records I have been working with in Italy were obtained legally by commission, purchase, exchange, or donation. Other records were written or recorded by the collectors themselves. However, more wide-ranging studies are needed to analyse the extent of these legal relations, especially within institutions' internal documentation.

Various studies have now indicated that the British vessel Endeavour was not the first to land on the Australian continent or document its existence from a European perspective. One example is the maps of Venetian Franciscan priest and renowned mathematician and cartographer of the Serenissima Republic Vincenzo Maria Coronelli. Approximately in 1690, Coronelli drew maps displaying a section of the New Zealand coastline, portraying it as a substantial landmass, possibly linked to the great Southern Continent. Tasmania is identified as *Terra D'Antonio Diemens*, and a fragment of the Australian coastline is depicted, merging into New Guinea. The original map is at the Marciana Library in Venice (Coronelli, 1692). Another significant representation of the existence of the Australian continent, commonly considered as the first known maps of *Terra Australis* drawn by Europeans, was drawn in 1676 by Dominican missionary Father Vittorio Riccio. I learned during a visit to the Vatican Archive of Propaganda Fide a decade ago that Riccio was travelling on a Dutch ship on his way to Manila when he wrote to the Congregation ninety-four years before James Cook landed in Australia to notify them about this opportunity for colonial expansion (Mulvaney, 1988).

Many years later, the Roman Catholic Church started to be an ongoing presence in the country (Cresciani, 2012; Ganter, 2018; Griffith University, 2009-2018; Kinder, 2018). Most church letters, records and reports and letters were explicitly directed to Propaganda Fide. This archive holds all missionary records sent from and by every mission across the globe. Unquestionably, the Catholic Church also had a role in collecting cultural objects belonging to Aboriginal peoples. One of the most

comprehensive examples is the book *Australia. The Vatican Museum's Indigenous Collection* (Aigner, 2018) depicts the richness of First Nations' cultural objects visible to the public in the *Anima Mundi* section of the Vatican Museums. The oldest part of the Australian collection incorporates artefacts sent by the Benedictine monks of New Norcia to the Propaganda Fide's Borgia Museum between 1852 and 1885. To this nucleus were added other artefacts from the Sacred Heart based in Darwin and with missionaries in the Tiwi Islands, sent for a major exhibition held at the Vatican in 1925 (Aigner, 2018). As part of this work, Katherine Aigner (2015) published one of the most complete lists of Aboriginal artefacts held in Italian museums in an article written for the National Museum of Australia. Most of the knowledge and understanding of these collections come from archival sources. Giuseppe Angelo Colini (1857-1918), who worked closely with Italian Luigi Pigorini, published the volume *Ethnographic Collections of the Borgia Museum* in 1886, where he confirms that a shipment of artefacts from Australia to the Vatican was made as early as 1862 (Aigner, 2018). The previously mentioned report of Rudesindo Salvado "defined how objects were made and used" (Aigner, 2018, p. 50). Other accounts, such as the documentation of Giuseppe Capra (1873-1952) that accompanied the arrival of Aboriginal cultural objects in the Museum of Padova, become part of ethnographic and university museums. Indeed, the extent of information concerning Aboriginal peoples and their knowledge concealed in church museums and archives throughout the Italian peninsula is currently unknown.

Two instances in the literature effectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of these encounters. Rolando Pizzini (2010) edited the book *Nagoyo. La Vita di Don Angelo Confalonieri*, where he analyses the life of Italian Missionary Priest Angelo Confalonieri (1813-1848), who lived and died with Aboriginal communities around the Cobourg Peninsula. This biography is based on the correspondence between Confalonieri and Propaganda Fide and explains why this testimony could be helpful for Aboriginal language revival. Confalonieri wrote two language phrasebooks in Iwaidja, titled *Specimen of the Aboriginal Language or Short Conversation with the Natives of North Australia Port Essington* (McKenna Mark, 2019). Australian linguist Bruce Birch noted the unique nature of these two testimonies in the European recording of that period. Unlike others, Confalonieri's writing attempted to keep track of words and their syntactic and grammatical structure (Birch, 2013, p. 104). Today, this knowledge is divided between the Vatican State and Aotearoa (New Zealand). Likewise, the celebrated book by Giulio Cipollone and Clara Orlandi (2011b) *Aborigeno con gli Aborigeni* offers

information about Aboriginal people in Australia from a European perspective. Mons. Rudesindo Salvado's life in the Benedictine mission of Nuova Norcia in Western Australia has been well documented as its correspondence and Missionary Reports were aggregated in this book. This work was translated into English only in 2016 by Stefano Girola, intending to make it widely accessible to Aboriginal peoples and communities. Other known fragments of Salvado's life are in the San Paolo Archive in Rome (Cipollone & Orlandi, 2011b).

Written accounts of Italian sailors who have travelled to Australia since the 16th Century are dispersed across nations because they mostly sailed with Spanish and Portuguese fleets. The records and publications of Alessandro Malaspina (born into a Tuscany royal family who trained and had long-term political relationships with Spain) are shared between Italy (some of his images are conserved at the Malaspina Museum-Archive in Mulazzo) and Spanish archives (Olcelli, 2018, pp. 43–61). James Mario Matra, an Italian American, was on board the "The Endeavour" with James Cook when he landed in Botany Bay. He is the presumed writer of the unofficial accounts of Cook's first journey (Olcelli, 2018, p. 31). One noteworthy aspect of this kind of record is that it can potentially be disseminated in other European countries that were part of Italian history before its political unification (as in the case of the diplomatic relations of Spain with the Spanish involvement with the Kingdom of Sardinia).

The existing literature and archival research analysis confirm that ethnographers, anthropologists, zoologists, and explorers created and collected most records featuring Aboriginal peoples. This information can be tracked down by enquiring into museums and their historical archives. Still, they reach their full potential only when examined as roadmaps of the relationships between museums, collectors, and scientific communities. In this thesis, I write, for example, about the significance of the photographs of Enrico Giglioli and his relationships with Paolo Mantegazza (1831–1910), who founded the world's first anthropology museum in Firenze in 1869 (P. M. Taylor & Marino, 2019). Or I analysed the travels of cousins Luigi Maria (1841-1901) and Enrico D'Albertis (1846-1932) as they formed trails of significant records at the D'Albertis Museum in Genova and internationally. The example below (Figure 4.1) shows one of the 1198 diapositives that well-known anthropologist Carlo Maxia took in Australia, which are conserved at the Sardinian Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Sarigu et al., 2014). Together,

these testimonies show the critical role of anthropological activities before and after Italian unification.

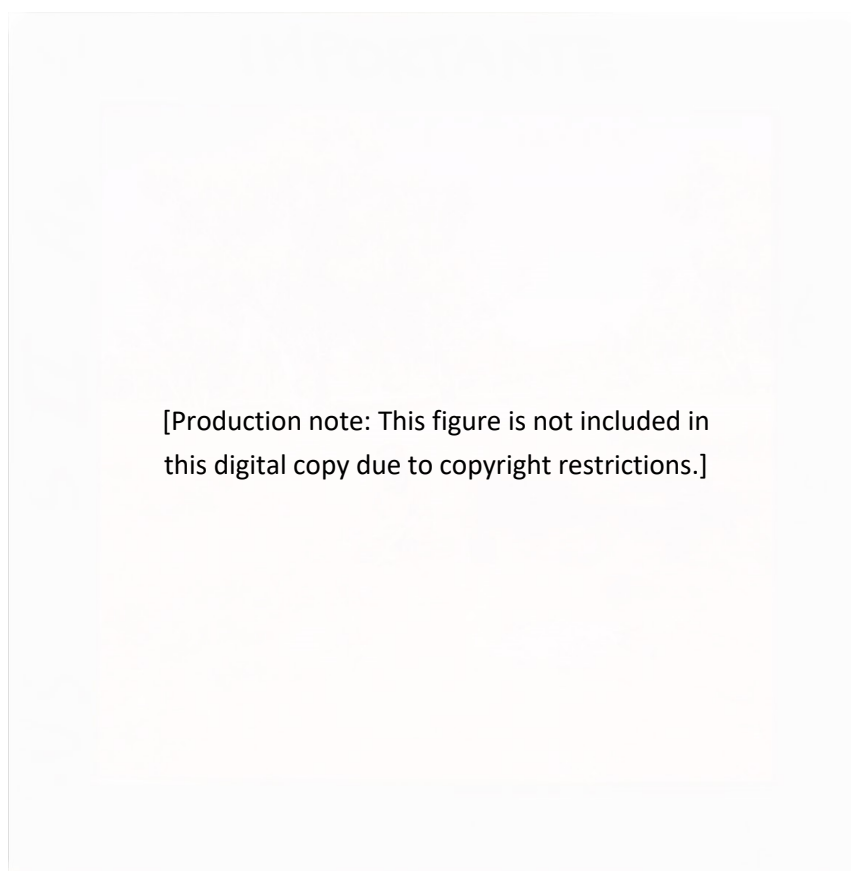


Figure 4.2. Diapositive of unidentified man¹²

An unidentified number of photographs and other audiovisual material, personal notes, letters, books, and scientific journals generate an extensive heritage that hasn't been fully explored. Some examples include the Alinari Archive's photographic collections, the world's oldest photographic archive (*Fondazione Alinari per la Fotografia*, n.d.), and the Historical Luce Archive (*Archivio Luce Homepage*, n.d.) part of UNESCO Memory of the World. Born as an institution to support Fascist political propaganda in 1924, it is today

¹² Document from the General Catalogue of Italian Cultural Heritage.
<https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/PhotographicHeritage/2000219441>
Image attributed to Carlo Maxia, housed at the Sardinian Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Monserrato, Italy). Code of National Catalogue 2000219441 English translation: IMPORTANT On the route of Stanley Chasm, 29-IV-67 Aboriginal (written in pen) / Italian text: *IMPORTANTE Sulla strada di Standley Chasm 29-IV-67 Aborigeno - a penna -*

one of the most important world cinematographic archives. One example is the video *The Boomerang of Aboriginal Australians* (Ricotti, 1934) showing an unnamed person of Aboriginal heritage performing the making and throwing a boomerang in natural settings.



Figure 4.3. Boomerang of Aboriginal Australia¹³

I am also aware that reproductions of the original records exist in journals, like the *Italian Paleontological Bulletin* [Buletino of Paleontologia Italiana] and that maps, books, and diaries passed from hand to hand. Some have been published but in limited copies; others have remained unpublished. There are also an unquantifiable number of records in private hands. Through an investigation of the *Catalogo dei Diari* [Catalogue of Diaries], I identified a private letter that an Italian missionary wrote to his family containing information about his mission of evangelisation of Aboriginal peoples in Australia ([...] *Mia cara Fedelina*, n.d.). Or the diaries that Anna D'Albertis, the descendant of Luigi Maria and Enrico D'Albertis, have found in their private collection, translated and shared to be utilised for future studies.

¹³ [*Il boomerang degli aborigeni australiani*] 09 September 1934. Artistic Director Ricotti, Arnaldo. Film code B055505 Istituto Luce Archive. <https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000015099/2/boomerang-degli-aborigeni-australiani.html&jsonVal=>

My investigation has highlighted four recurring themes within this variegated body of knowledge. First, the presence of single records spread in miscellaneous collections such as, the records of Aboriginal activist Maria Fernando (Paisley, 2012) in the State Archive, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs archive and the Historical Diplomatic Archive of MAECI. Second, photographic material that documents what was considered in a Darwinian view to be a range of human types, such as the correspondence of Paolo Mantegazza at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of the University of Florence. Third, the frequent occurrence of images taken by the photographer J W Lindt across multiple institutions (for instance, the MUCIV and the D'Albertis museum share material from this author). Fourth, a shared history of exchanges across the Italian cultural network (as in the web of records and objects that were in possession by Luigi Maria D'Albertis and that have been sold to both the MUCIV and the Museo di Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence to gain money after his precarious financial state in return from his travels around the world).

The poor conditions of the Italian state and the political interest in setting relationships with Australia pushed Italians to migrate through many periods (Baldassar & Pesman, 2005; Baldassar & Pyke, 2014; Mascitelli, 2015; Mascitelli & Riccardo, 2017). The first surge of Italian migrants began around 1876 and continued until the exodus post-Second World War (Church, 2006). Wrecked by the war and searching for a better life, Italians actively built Australia, mainly through labour in the construction and agriculture industries (Dewhirst, 2016). But migration from Italy to Australia brought more than contact and relationships among people. Despite the extensive trading history of Venezia, Genova and Naples, Italy was slow to enter the imperial global game because of its late formation as a nation-state through unification. However, after the unification of Italy in 1861, Australia was seen as a new market for products and labour (Cresciani, 2012, p. 40; Dewhirst, 2016). Catherine Dewhirst (2016) sees Italian imperialism stretching in Australia through agricultural projects designed to assist migrants in finding work abroad. As I mentioned in this thesis Introduction, the pioneering work of academic Joseph Pugliese (2002a, 2015, 2019) paved the way for adopting decolonising approaches to analyse Italian migration to Australia and its impact on the occupation of lands and enslavement of Aboriginal peoples.

The result of the intertwined histories and relations between the First peoples of Australia and Italian migrants is that records and living archives of families of Aboriginal and Italian

descent are spread across the two nations. It is the case, for example, of dispersed birth and death certificates that can have gaps and repercussions on family history research (Personal Communication, 2018 and 2023). These relationships have produced records at the edges of official historiography that have the potential to be read as testimonies of these relationships in the future. My holistic experience as a new migrant and the relationships forged through this doctoral project become part of this reading when considering these records through an archival continuum perspective.

4.3. The Aboriginal records in Italy are always becoming

For much of the last half of the 20th century, the archival life cycle models have provided the dominant archetypal in information management and systems activities (Upward, 2000). In this view, the record moves through predictable stages, from high use to passively becoming inactive. This conceptual model has been widely adopted and customised in Western countries up to the present time. During the 1990s, the worldview of some Australian practitioners began to be influenced by the records continuum model as a response to the life cycle models' inadequacy in the digital domain's plurality and dimensionality. Its creator, Frank Upward (2000), describes the continuum concept as an entire and perduring worldview persisting through constant renewal, a complete paradigm shift within all information management and systems practice, a tool for perceiving complexities. The continuum encompasses movements across space and time, recognising that archival records and their metadata continually shift, transform, and gain new meanings rather than remain fixed, static objects (Mckemmish, 2001, p. 354, citing Terry Cook). The four dimensions of the continuum (create, capture, organise, and pluralise) can happen simultaneously because records are constantly in the state of becoming (Upward, 2000).

Because the continuum is considered a worldview and a new archival paradigm, it cannot provide detailed application instructions. Still, it can offer ways of explaining complex realities about what used to be regarded as the separate dimensions of space and time (Upward, 2000). For this reason, it can be aligned with other archival worldviews and be improved as time passes. In summary, adopting continuum thinking in this study creates opportunities for building a bridge between Italian and First Nations perspectives on Aboriginal records in Italy by reflecting on their entangled relations and rewriting their history and trajectories. I agree with Upwards (2000, pp. 122–123) that no worldview can

resolve the number of complexities in the spacetime dimensionality for recorded information. Still, the continuum provides best practices in identifying, describing, and analysing them. It gives a different overview of the problem within which our detailed knowledge can be arranged. Despite its flexibility and adaptation, records continuum thinking has faced criticism and misunderstandings among archival scholars and practitioners. For instance, Michael Piggot (2012) warned that the record continuum as a worldview that could work in any era and across cultures had never been tested. Viviane Frings-Hessami (2020) has reflected that the lifecycle model, the most diffused archival model across North America and Europe, hasn't had rigorous testing in various cultural contexts either. Still, it has been utilised differently in several countries and cultural contexts.

Matured for practitioners to make sense of their practice, the records continuum model provided me with a framework for interpreting records and archives thinking and practising (McKemmish, 2001, p. 350). Critically for my study, scholars have reflected on the application of the records continuum when applied to languages other than English (Frings-Hessami, 2021; Frings-Hessami & Oliver, 2022; Ketelaar & Frings-Hessami, 2021). The continuum has also helped me to ground the role of professionals as active participants in record and archive-creating processes in the remembering and forgetting of nations (see Chapters 5 and 6). Through the lens of the archival continuum, I could see connections that were hidden before.

The records in Italy have been created, altered, co-created, moved, translated, and duplicated. Many points of view have participated in their multidimensional trajectories, and countless others have made decisions (and will continue to) over their existence. Nevertheless, the records have agency and assume different meanings for people according to their trajectories. Abby Whiting's (2022) work on *Records in Motion* utilised in the context of displaced Iraqi archives is pertinent to clarify some of these relations. Whiting (2022, p. 178) suggests that "Understanding that records-in-motion have different agential potentials depending on where they are activated draws attention to the fact that the displacement of records leads to different interactions and interpretations and that these also impact all possible future uses".

The trajectories of the documents held by the Italian Geographical Society are telling examples. Born in 1867 to promote the advancement of geographical knowledge as the

new unified Italian state took shape, the Society was also a space where aristocracy and scientific and cultural elites met and shared knowledge before voyages. That meant some of the diaries, travel notes, photos, books, and maps drawn and scribbled on during travels became part of the Society's set of resources and shaped the minds of future explorers and scientists. There are several people involved in these journeys. The Aboriginal person or community from which the knowledge was recorded or taken, with or without informed consent. There is the explorer, who took the notes or the photographs, adding ideas or notes along the way, often stockpiling and mixing messages and images of different Aboriginal communities, underestimating internal migrations and forced relocation imposed during colonisation. There are friends, colleagues, photographers, dealers, and informants encountered on the journey who added to the initial knowledge recorded or acquired. Once sent home, this documentation becomes part of the Geographical Society and available to its members of the Italian and international scientific and cultural elite. When the texts and the maps get published, they can influence the entire public and get validated as scientific knowledge by the publisher. Other explorers then studied and took these resources to represent Aboriginal Australia. Many copies start this travel repeatedly as they are studied as travel guides. Today, some of these images have been digitised and pluralised, probably saved in servers and the cloud. Possibly shared, re-shared and commented on through social media, linking more and more people in their trajectories.

The concept of records in motion can also be applied to Church records, especially those now held at the Propaganda Fide Archive. The Congregation de Propaganda Fide is the office of the Pontifical Curia, which exercises spiritual jurisdiction over missions worldwide directed at non-Catholic contexts (Pizzorusso, 2023). It was, and still is, the archive that holds most of the world's Catholic Missions records. Documentation was produced in Australia to be transmitted to the Vatican, becoming part of the Vatican recordkeeping system. The information written and sent by missionaries to the Pope constituted a way of telling stories about the colonies, asking for help or funding, and discussing surveillance. Their agency mutates along the way. They could have been instruments of power and control of Aboriginal peoples when they were written (utilising racist descriptions, reporting secret or sacred knowledge or languages), becoming political statements along their journeys (as a tool to request funding for personal projects or to support the Church's political activities). In many cases, they would have turned out to be witnesses with limited power when the record finally arrived at Propaganda Fide.

For instance, Father Vittorio Riccio, whom I will reference later in this chapter, was sent a reply from the Vatican a decade after his request to establish a catholic mission in Oceania. At that time, Father Riccio was already deceased. Today, the records of Propaganda Fide change value again during their trajectories whilst being studied and contextualised by researchers and brought back to the Aboriginal public. Internationally, they are less known than the cultural objects held at the Vatican Museum but have lasting power.

While searching the Italian archives, I perceived the Aboriginal cultural heritage as a multifaceted and patchy web of stories. As Belmonte and Cecchini (2022, p. 329) categorised it in their study of the visual and material culture of Italian colonialism, these interconnections can be interpreted as a constellation. One example is the prolific production of Italian zoologist and anthropologist Enrico Giglioli. The collector wrote two publications and several notes, letters and scientific publications disseminated in the photographic and historical archive of the MUCIV and other collecting institutions (such as the Natural History Museum La Specola in Florence). Giglioli was meticulous. His annotations at the border of the photograph cartons provide information about the people, the place, and the collector from whom the material was bought, gifted, or exchanged. Agnese Ghezzi (2021b, p. 17) explains, Giglioli's case is remarkable because he gathered material as a traveller (collecting photographs and notes), theorist (writing *Instruction Books* for other travellers), as a member of a scientific organisation and, lastly, as a museum collector. Through analysing a photograph donated by Italian anthropologist Odoardo Beccari to Giglioli, Jane Lydon provided evidence that a group of Aboriginal peoples formed a Southeast Asian community before the British settlement of northern Australia (and some even date back to the 1600s). The images, taken in the Indonesian city of Makassar in the 1870s, show young Aboriginal men and children from northern Australia. It was possible to recognise they were Yolngu thanks to the cicatrise on their arms. Indeed, these records are critical for rebuilding missing links in family connections. As already discussed in Chapter 2, there is also visual evidence that challenges the view of Aboriginal people as inactively occupying Australia before European settlement (Lydon, 2020; Parke, 2023). The image is stored with dozens of other photographs related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which I digitised last year at MUCIV. One might only guess how many other stories and historical counternarratives are hidden in those boxes.

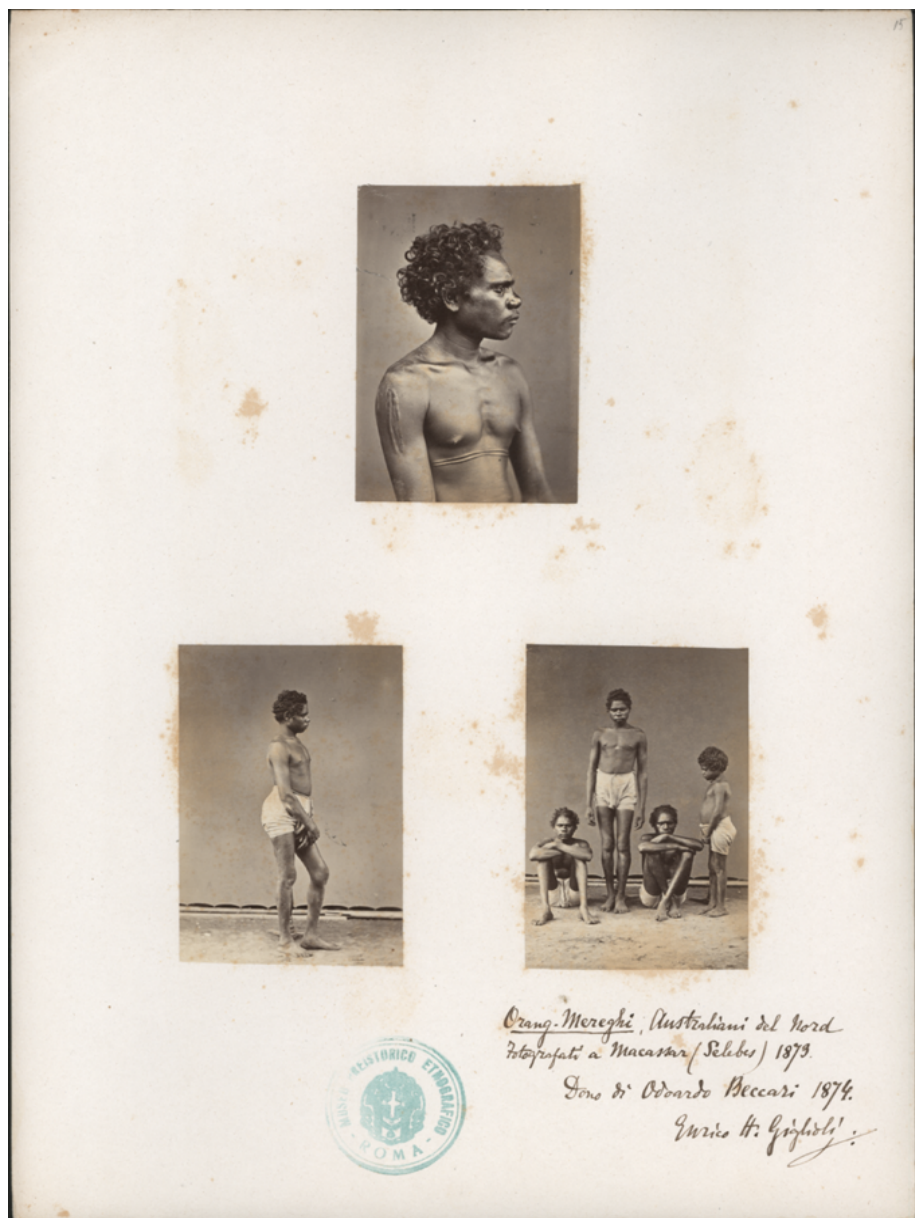


Figure 4.4. Unidentified Aboriginal men and children (possibly Yolngu)¹⁴

¹⁴ Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box CopAustralia4173a4218, Photo Number 4191. **English translation:** Orang-Mereghi, Australians of the north photographed in Macassar (Selebes) 1873. Gift of Odoardo Beccari. 1874. Enrico H. Giglioli / **Italian text:** Orang-Mereghi, Australiani del Nord fotografati a Macassar (Selebes) 1873. Dono di Odoardo Beccari 1874. Enrico H. Giglioli. **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/unidentified-aboriginal-men-and-children-northern-australia-possibly-yolngu>

4.4. Knowledge translation starts with transculturation

All these connected records are telling illustrations of transculturation, where uneven encounters and relationships far in time and space enabled the creation of a third new perspective. Theorised first by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940) and conceptualised by several scholars since then, transculturation is helpful because it allows me to reconsider how Aboriginal peoples and perspectives influenced Italian people in their accounts. As touched upon in this thesis research design (see Chapter 3), Ortiz reflected on the histories of cross-cultural encounters between European and African peoples in Cuba, challenging the previous idea of acculturation (meaning a one-way acquisition of culture). Instead, Ortiz sees these exchanges as transcultural processes transforming both cultures through imbalanced power relationships, creating new reciprocal entanglements. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Mary Louise Pratt (1991) elaborated on Ortiz's work, creating the influential notion of the contact zone. Pratt describes it as the "Space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt, 2007, p. 8). Despite its initial introduction to literacy and literary theories, the term has been widely adopted and applied in social sciences and humanities. My interest in transculturation is circumscribed to the colonial archive and its double relation with the movements of the physical records across time and space and the translation of meanings and concepts.

I draw here from Ilaria Vanni's (Vanni, 2016b, p. 2) work on the 'edge' (understood as an interface between two mediums) contextualised as a starting point to consider ecologies of transcultural cultural processes to reflect that transculturation is not a matter that depends exclusively on humans. Instead, the scholar argues that the edges of colonisation, migration and globalisation are transition zones and interfaces where new meanings are produced. Things, records, and languages all travel across spaces and disciplines. Vanni refers to the work of Silvia Spitta (2009) about misplaced objects, to reflect on the transculturation of material culture. Colonial archives are also haunted spaces of blood memory, as Natalie Harkin (2019b) describes them: spaces where humans and non-humans interact, creating new meanings. I combine these interrelated concepts in Chapters 5 and 6 to demonstrate how the Italian records have impacted the institutions where they are stored through their misplacement.

The edge concept linked to Ortiz's work has had ramifications in translation studies. Walter D. Mignolo and Freya Schiwy (2003), address the subject of translation/transculturation through contacts of missionaries and anthropologists in Africa, Asia and Mesoamerica. Framed by the modern/colonial world system, translation is theorised in Mignolo's work as one element in a more extensive process of transculturation that is structured by the colonial power and that became one pillar for the foundation and reproduction of the colonial differences. The translation was mainly univocal (from the centre to the periphery) and, when unable to replicate incommensurable differences in worldviews, used European points of reference, metaphors and dichotomies. However, translation played a significant role among Indigenous communities, particularly in their interactions with missionaries. It served as a form of resistance against efforts to standardise and control Aboriginal languages into codes familiar to the colonisers (Rademaker, 2021).

In this thesis's context, accounts of early Italian-speaking migrants, explorers and visitors are examples of transculturation, as they produce a third version of what they experienced in Australia. One of their recurring patterns is that these early Italian-speaking migrants "Understood, however imperfectly, that this country was already the traditional home of others" (R. Pascoe et al., 2022). In her investigation of Italian and Australian travel writing between 1770 and 1889, Laura Olcelli (2018) adopts the mentioned concept of the contact zone to interrogate how Italian explorers, missionaries, ethnographers, and gold diggers fabricated the Australian experience in their writings. Building on Ross Pesman's argument, Olcelli deduces that Italians first appropriated and reproduced British views. However, as time passed, and British and Aboriginal contacts had certainly impacted one other, some Italians started to question British interpretations and values, implicitly or explicitly challenging British authority but also losing their influence in British colonial supremacy (Olcelli, 2018, p. 18).

Through the lens of transculturation, Giovanni Podenzana's writing provides significant details on his view of the Australian continent and its inhabitants. The original text he wrote to present at the Popular Fascist University conference on 11 May 1927 is conserved at the Podenzana Museum in La Spezia. In this passionate account of his travels across the country, Podenzana reflected that "It was said that the southern Australians learned from the Europeans the use of oysters as a food, which they

previously ignored. This assertion seems highly dubious [...]”.¹⁵ He then emphasises, "One of the most important [vegetable used by Aboriginal peoples] is a kind of barley that Australian women grind into powder like flour by grinding it with two stones and then making a kind of dough".¹⁶ This account is significant for two reasons. Firstly, Podenzana directly challenges British supremacy in knowledge production about the colony, despite Italy and Britain being closely associated during the Fascist period. Secondly, it contributes to the public debate carried by Yuin writer Bruce Pascoe (2014) in his book *Dark Emu*, where he "draws on colonial archives and actively and creatively offers a different interpretation to colonial bias to tell the story of Aboriginal peoples' farming and associated practices" (Norman, 2021). In the same pages, from Podenzana's crossed text in his writing, one can foresee a critique of the British way of administrating the colonies. He writes, "The decrease of the Aboriginal must also be sought in alcohol, ~~which came from the English settlers~~" (Podenzana, n.d., p. 38). Indeed, it is interesting that Podenzana refers to Aboriginal peoples as Australians. In collaboration with the Podenzana Museum, I am transcribing and translating this critical documentation to be included in the digital archive prototype.

¹⁵ “[...] Fu detto però che gli Australiani del mezzogiorno impararono dagli Europei l’uso delle ostriche come alimento, che prima ignoravano. Questa asserzione mi sembra assai dubbia, e a proposito vi dirò che nella mia visita in Tasmania, alcuni anni fa, trovai immensi giacimenti di gusci d’ostriche calcinate frammiste con raschiatoi e coltelli di pietra. Ciò viene a provare che questi giacimenti non erano altro che resti di pasto lasciati dai Tasmaniani, e che fino da tempi remoti si nutrivano d’ostriche. Ora a me pare che se l’ostrica era conosciuta come alimento dalla razza tasmaniana, lo doveva pure essere per quella Australiana, non solo perché questi ultimi vivono in luoghi dove l’ostrica è comunissima, ma anche perché in fatto d’intelligenza non sono certamente inferiori alla razza estinta dei Tasmaniani” (p. 46).

¹⁶ “[...] Una delle più importanti è una specie d’orzo che le donne australiane riducono in polvere come la farina macinandola con due pietre facendo poi una specie di pasta” (p. 44).



Figure 4.5. Photograph of Giovanni Podenzana notebook¹⁷

I employ another illustration of the power of transculturation by analysing the text *Gilburnia*, which tells the encounter between the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples (north-central Victoria) and Raffaello Carboni in 1853–1854.¹⁸ Twenty years later, Carboni published an account of the encounter for the Italian audience in Rome, writing about their host's welcoming efforts. Carboni's story has many fascinating sides, but three layers are significant for my argument. The first is that Carboni's work details First Nations people and cultural life in a modern-day way, for instance, by describing their use of agricultural activities. As in Podenzana's example, this evidence is innovative because it challenges the historical and anthropological view of Aboriginal peoples as nomadic and hunter-gatherers. Thanks to his experience with the upcoming Italian unification and the risk it

¹⁷ *Diary of my Journey to Australia* and his handwritten conference presentation draft. The brown diary is likely to be the same of the one kept in his shirt pocket in figure 6.1. Photo taken at the Podenzana Museum, November 2022. My image.

Digital archive <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/269> and <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/conference-presentation-draft>

¹⁸ Raffaello Carboni (1820-1875) was an Italian writer and composer who participated and wrote an eye-witness account of the Eureka Stockade incident.

imposed on the poorest and marginalised groups in society, Carboni also understood that the "British legal system could not accommodate [Aboriginal] customary law" (R. Pascoe et al., 2022). Carboni's view of Australia is influenced not only by his experiences in the country but also by his individualistic Mazzinianism, shaped by the events of the Italian Risorgimento (Rando, 2008). The second remarkable aspect of this work is that Carboni wrote about his experience of observing Corroboree ceremonies in an operatic pantomime, a 16th-century Italian entertainment playful style in the 'Commedia dell'Arte', reshaping what he saw in what he knew. Through this style, which initially seems like fiction, he could operate drama, gestures, and music to transmit the richness of the Corroboree experience (R. Pascoe et al., 2022). I argue that Carboni's work might be seen as a tactic of knowledge translation utilised between Aboriginal Australian and Italian cultures. This notion will be helpful in Chapter 5 where I collaborate with three Italian institutions to translate language, knowledge and meanings in the Aboriginal documentation held in Italy. Lastly, *Gilburnia* is a significant example of how records are always becoming through a record continuum perspective and how they can be located at the margins of official historiography. Firstly published in Rome in 1872 and then lost despite Carboni's fame from the Eureka Stockade, *Gilburnia* remained unnoticed until researcher Tony Pagliaro studied and translated it in the 1990s (R. Pascoe et al., 2022). This story has mutated and been re-shaped across space, language, and time since its creation – shifting identities and meanings by negotiating the different human and non-human activities involved.

To put it briefly, the example of *Gilburnia*, along with Podenzana's writing and numerous other cases found in Italian cultural institutions, offers substantial insights into how the relationships with Aboriginal people, the British Empire and other European collectors have influenced Italian viewpoints. The process of knowledge translation that occurred in the background of these interpretations is critical to reflect on because knowledge translation is not a straightforward process as it is linked to a transcultural understanding of social and cultural traditions that might be diverse (González y González & Lincoln, 2006; Harding & Cortés, 2018). In essence, the process involves a conversion, not only of the language but also of the culture (González y González & Lincoln, 2006). According to Nakata (2007), as I previously argued in Chapter 3, Indigenous and Western knowledge systems embed incommensurable dissimilarities at epistemological and ontological levels. However, the scholar argues that these worldviews connect in many ways and cannot be separated entirely. Referring to the work of Arun Agrawal, Nakata

(2007, pp. 187–188) makes the point that theoretically separating the two knowledge systems cannot be sustained because they have similarities across categories and substantial differences. Both knowledge systems are not fixed in time and space and imply contacts and exchanges, learning and transformation: the Western knowledge system is as socially embedded as the Indigenous one. Another way to put it is that these two paradigms are deeply diverse but meet at distinctive points in the same trajectories.

4.5. Bridging Italian and Indigenous knowledge practices

Reading the Italian records through the records continuum model has brought to light trajectories and relationships and demonstrated how these testimonies are valuable examples of transculturation between Italy and Aboriginal Australia. Nevertheless, my research aims to take another step, initiating a process of knowledge translation that will unfold in the forthcoming chapters. In this section, I extend the current mapping, transitioning from a location-centric methodology to one rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, elucidating its significance within the context of archival practice. This approach has three key benefits. First, it unpacks which elements are important in Indigenous worldviews that are commonly ignored by Euro-Western approaches of the archive. Second, this reading enriches the records understanding, generating prospects to analyse features that have been previously undervalued. Lastly, approaching the records housed in Italy through a conceptual model that centres Indigenous knowledge systems reveal crucial aspects on how they have been categorised and managed until present.

This need has been reiterated in the yarning sessions. Matt Poll (South Sea and Torres Strait Islander), one of the participants of this study, provided a compelling example:

I worked with a collection at Macleay Museum. There were probably around 60 photos taken in the 1920s or so of Tiwi culture, and they were a complete jumble. But when the community member came in, he sort of arranged the photos in the order that they were taken through his knowledge of the performance that they were documenting. And that was like a real light bulb moment of my own saying: Oh my God, look, you know, the way that they had been jumbled and registered in the museum archive system of, you know, this number after this number...And that was random. It probably wasn't, you know, the original person who took those photos could tell you that was the order that was taken, too. But, you know, after 80, 90 years of sitting in a museum archive, that gets lost. But the way that a contemporary community member with knowledge of the performance that was being documented was able to replace them in order and make sense of them in a way that is just lost to me as a curator. It was just working with a selection of an envelope, literally a lot of photos that had been sitting there. And so, I mean

what I'm trying to say is that the way that those little bits of information or knowledge are assembled needs to be done by those who have the most authority to do that. And then it becomes a useful object in the archive. Sometimes, an archive scrambles just through the nature of collecting and storing and logistically putting these collections together. So there's a lot of work to be done unpacking that, you know. And that's the whole point of why consultation is so important (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

The story shared by Poll is powerful. In these two examples, the cataloguing of the person who took the photos, the archivist who arranged them, and the cultural order of the community members narrate distinct stories. I argue that these two accounts can and must coexist in the Italian context and any other contexts of archival displacement. These are crucial narratives that have influenced our world and our collective worldviews. Importantly, the categorisation created by the collector and how the institution maintains them through cataloguing and taxonomies reveal crucial insights into their worldviews, what they consider necessary, and how the events occurred. The analysis in this chapter foregrounds the creation of a new categorisation for the Aboriginal records in Italy in Chapter 6.

However, this concomitance must be accompanied by a deliberate effort to recognise the repercussions of the historical prioritisation of Western views of the archive for First Nations peoples. The framework *Centring Relationality* (Littletree et al., 2020) has provided a pathway for mapping Aboriginal knowledge in Italy by recognising these power disparities. The scholars ask: what are frequently used definitions for the knowledge created by Indigenous peoples? How do these definitions relate to the knowledge organisation and the emerging Indigenous knowledge organisation (IKO) field? What does a conceptual model of Indigenous systems of knowledge reveal about KO practices and principles? (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 411).

The circular conceptual model developed by Littletree was created considering the dynamics of belonging inherent to relationality and how cultural expressions are the outcomes of those dynamics. The authors built upon the seminal work of Torres Strait Islander scholars Archibald (J.-A. Archibald, 2008), Nakata (2002, 2007) and Doyle (2013) to create a dialogue between knowledge systems from the “Principles of controlled vocabulary, specificity, literary warrant, coherence and standardisation, and moving from the general to the specific in the subject categorisation” to the “Principles of Indigenous librarianship grounded in a more community-based approach, namely, a

relational approach” (Littletree et al., 2020). Littletree’s model is composed of five cyclical and interlaced components, layered in the concepts of (1) relationality/holism, (2) peoplehood, (3) Indigenous ways of knowing, (4) expressions of Indigenous knowledge, and (5) institutions. At the bottom of the diagram is a shape containing the words (6) responsibility, respect, and reciprocity (the 3 R’s). The 3 R’s are contained in a crateboard, which the author describes as a traditional object used to protect babies physically, emotionally, and spiritually in her community.

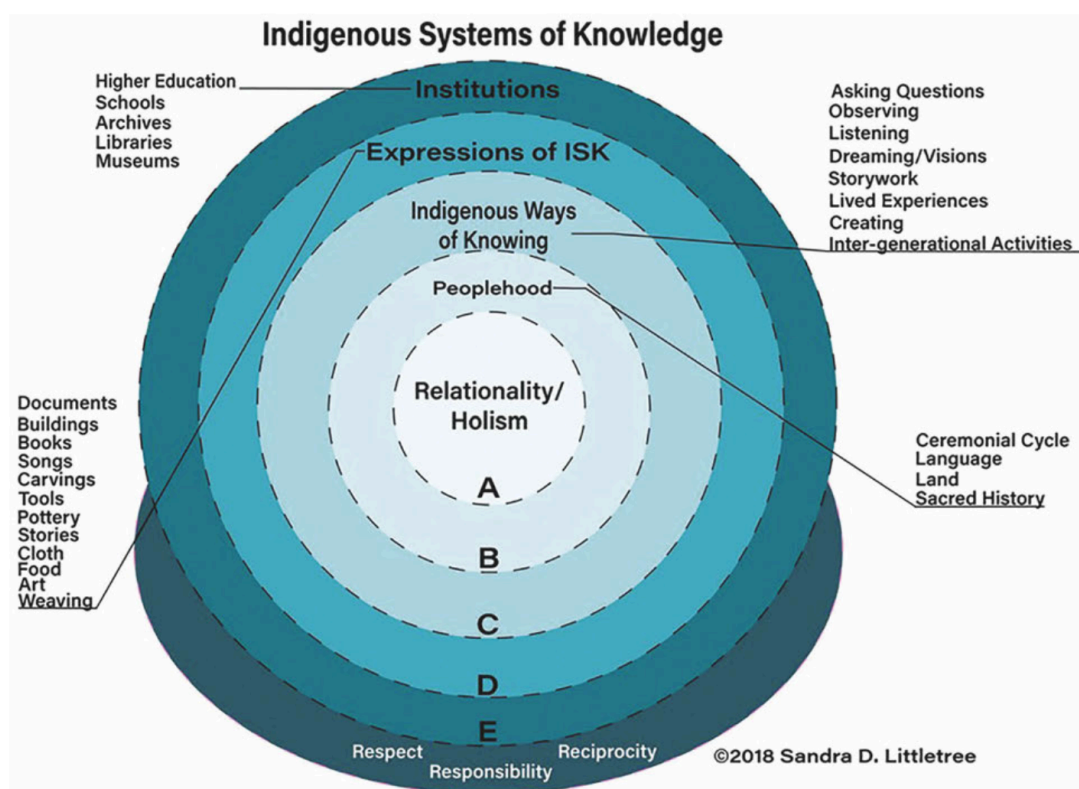


Figure 4.6. Indigenous systems of knowledge – conceptual model with examples¹⁹

Despite this model not being universal and acknowledging the differences across First Nations peoples worldwide, it does recognise relationality as the critical worldview shared across Indigenous Countries. However, the authors warn that the relational approach adopted in the framework must be distinct from the knowledge organisation practice of finding linkages or relationships among concepts utilised to build semantic

¹⁹ (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 423).

networks across institutions and collections (which I explored in the first section of this chapter). On the contrary, in Indigenous librarianship, “The relational approach is at once both ontological and axiological, meaning it is oriented toward a way of making sense of the world as well as the definition of a right way to live a good life, according to Indigenous ways” (Littletree et al., 2020). Critically, relationality distinguishes Indigenous ways of knowing from Western knowledge in a fundamental way (Littletree et al., 2020). Centring relationality is seen by the author as a decolonising technique because:

To understand Indigenous Knowledge Organizations (IKO) — that is, the methodologies and means by which Native and Indigenous peoples create protocols to cohere, name, articulate, collate, and make accessible objects that indicate Indigenous knowledge — requires that practitioners of KO appreciate the colonial history of KO. Furthermore, it requires that KO practitioners recognize that the work of IKO is fundamentally a practice of liberation and, therefore, is far less about attempting to reform or revise existing tools and methods, and far more about finding ways to discern and advance Indigenous systems of knowledge (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 413).

Littletree emphasises a crucial point here: the need to consolidate spaces for Indigenous knowledge systems within existing collecting institutions rather than simply attempting to reform Western tools to carve out a niche within them. Several Aboriginal participants shared this necessity in the yarning sessions for this thesis, as surveyed in Chapter 7. This implies “Thinking deeply about how colonialism has shaped informatic practices and professions” (Littletree et al., 2020). I will explore this concept in greater detail in Chapter 5, where I will apply the methodology of imagining (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015) to the work of knowledge translation between Aboriginal Australian and Italian institutions.

Circle A - Centring relationality, holism and the 3 R's

The first layer of Littletree's conceptual model (Circle A) centres on relationality and holism when working with, utilising, and mapping Indigenous collections. This is the most critical layer, the heart of the framework. Its fundamental aim is to focus on the importance of contemplating the relationships that created what we see in collecting institutions today and to value the principles that should inform them (respect, responsibility, reciprocity).

Everything we see, read, and touch in the archive through an Indigenous lens has been, and will be, shaped through relationships. Interconnections of such intricacy and

complexity defy characterisation through the binary lens of coloniser and colonised (McGrath & Russell, 2021). Borrowing from Queer Archival Theories, the work of Jamie Lee (2020), *Archival Bodies*, is a lens that allowed me to reflect on the associations between archives and bodies and how they influence and impact each other. Lee interrogates the power of the archives, arguing for a shifting paradigm that recognises records as alive and constantly in motion:

I argue that archives and bodies are intricately connected and often not recognized and studied in that way. The archives as bodies of knowledge hold power over human bodies, but the bodies shape the archives in the records produced, how the records are organized, and how and why the records are accessed. The archives change shape with every new accession. Archives and bodies mutually produce and are produced by the other (Lee, 2020, p. 15).

Human and non-human bodies in the archival records held in Italy touch each other constantly. Everywhere. Bodies of Aboriginal men, women and children are exposed in photographs (such as in the image below, 4.7.) and registers listing the Ancestral Remains held in museums' storage areas. Bodies of Country that leave their marks in the official documentation (for example, the description of a Tasmanian necklace made in natural fibres in the museum accession register, in image 4.8). Bodies of explorers and travellers, and migrants and scientists that have written letters and left their emotional fingerprints on the records (as I shall see in the next chapter with the postcard that Giovanni Podenzana mailed to his mother). Bodies of Aboriginal individuals who perform old cultural ways acting in an imaginary culture steady in time and space (such as in the dances in the Historical Luce Archive). Bodies of archivists, researchers, interns, and volunteers who have touched, boxed, described the records and expressed their opinions about them (such as the staff of the museums or me undertaking this study). Bodies of politicians who have either promoted or hindered their visibility (as I will discuss in the following sections).



Figure 4.7. Group of people at the train station in WA²⁰

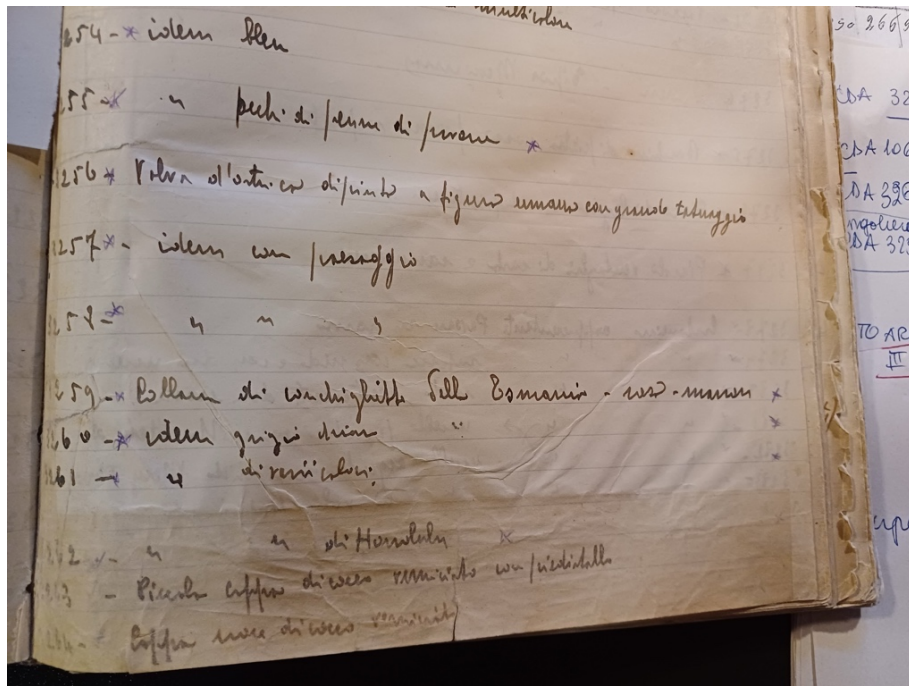


Figure 4.8. Register of D'albertis Museum²¹

²⁰ Photograph taken by Captain Enrico D'Alberty during his third voyage around the world in 1910. D'Alberty Museum photographic collection. Photo number W. Australia 111. **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/101>

²¹ Page describing a necklace made of natural fibres from palawa Country (Tasmania).

Jamie Lee's work is a powerful reminder that the often invisible portrayed in the archives are bodies. They are a mix of blood, pain and possibility, as elegantly expressed by Natalie Harkin (2014) and explored in Chapter 5. Therefore, centring relationships and holism in the analysis of the records in Italy is crucial because by "Acknowledging and paying attention to individual embodiment as well as our bodies in relation to others [...] we can more easily acknowledge that pluralist understandings of archives require the move from singular dominant histories toward multiple histories and ways of knowing" (Lee, 2020). Hidden by the versions of the ethnographers or explorers who wrote down the knowledge, often incomplete or wrong, Indigenous knowledge and the people who shared the information are usually hidden and are relegated to the back of official histories. Emphasising relationality and holism in archival practices underscores a critical aspect previously overlooked in the cultural heritage domain: the ICIP rights within First Nations knowledge stored in these institutions. This absence can be grasped clearly in the Italian space.

Recognition of ICIP rights is a complex matter, especially in the case of archival displacement, as they add to the different regulations of the country where the records are held. These intricacies have led to a gap in the existing literature. Indeed, following the ground-breaking work *Our Culture, Our Future* (1998) of Terri Janke (Wuthathi/Meriam), a worldwide recognised leading expert on ICIP, few works have focused their attention on the protection of cultural rights in the recordkeeping context. One aspect about ICIP rights that requires translation across knowledge systems is that, in addition to personal rights, First Nations cultures hold collective rights and interests in their knowledge (Nakata, 2007, p. 185). In a recent article, Lauren Booker (Garigal) and Kirsten Thorpe (Worimi) (2022, p. 450), referring to the work of Wiradjuri academic Robynne Quiggin, note that because the application of ICIP rights is not recognised by law, "The sector operates in the paradigm of good faith rather than within appropriate Australian legislative and policy frameworks". The authors also warn about a significant gap in the literature on ICIP rights and library practice (Thorpe & Booker, 2022, p. 441). As I shall see in Chapter 7, the invisibility of dialogue around ICIP rights is a point that needs to be better addressed in future dialogue between Italian institutions and Aboriginal communities.

In conclusion, the fundamental elements of Littletree's framework, relationality and holism, enrich the current interpretation of Italian records. These two values underscore the significance of the relationships between humans and non-humans that influence the knowledge housed in cultural institutions, shaping users' experiences in the process. The core principles of relationality, responsibility, and respect call for acknowledgment and responsibility toward Indigenous ways of knowing by, for example, shifting the attention from physical and legal ownership of the records to recognising respect for people and ICIP rights in the cultural heritage space.

Circle B - Peoplehood

The second circle of Littletree's framework concerns First Nations people's activities, defining the peoplehood of specific communities, such as language or ceremonies. These are crucial cultural aspects as "A person is Indigenous because of their relationships within the sphere of activities determined by their people" [...] within a particular place or territory" (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 419). In the Italian records, these practices include videos of boomerang making and war dancing in the audio-visual collections of the Luce Historical Archive, men and women participating in Corroborree and other ceremonies scattered in drawings and photographic reproductions, or the language words annotated by Podenzana in his notebook (n.d.) .



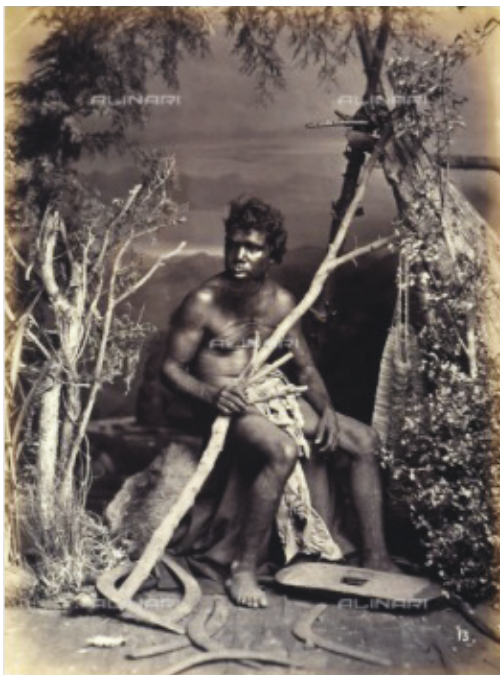
Figure 4.9. Page from Giovanni Podenzana's notebook²²

Since these undertakings are deeply connected to specific areas, this layer of Littletree's conceptual model has implications for provenance research. Linking them to the appropriate Traditional Owners becomes critical for repatriation requests regarding colonial records related to First Nations peoples and for starting a dialogue on informed consent, copyright, and Indigenous intellectual property on collections. However, dialogue regarding the records' territorial provenance must be accompanied in the Italian sector by profoundly listening to what this means for communities beyond the Western frame of catalogues and metadata (Ghaddar, 2022). For example, considering the conceptualisation of social provenance by leading academic Janette Bastian (2007, p.

²² Document from the Podenzana Museum archive (La Spezia). Photo number 002. Aboriginal and English text: Bangal "Banggal" () Calà calla Uanal wungal Boomerang nala nulla vumerà woomera Australian ethnology objects [Oggetti etnologici australiani]. The following words in Italian refers to Podenzana's shopping list: *Un ago [...] Acido cloridrico Piccole [...] Tabacco da pipa [...] Spago grosso e filo*. Transcription of Giacomo Paolicchi. **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/269>

283) to "Read the record as part of and contributing to that context and offer descriptions and notes that accommodate all voices and all records".

Therefore, focusing on peoplehood debunks the myth of linear, objective, and neutral provenance given to archives. The holistic view provided by this study provides opportunities to question these assumptions in the Italian context, where there are very few examples of acknowledgment of peoplehood in the records. Thus, the most common scenario is that what has been recorded comes from the Italian person annotation, which, as previously stated, could be incorrect or misleading. For instance, using the search 'Aborigeni' [Aboriginal] in the online Archivio Alinari catalogue, the two images below have been catalogued as belonging to the Solomon Islands. On the contrary, these images have been studied and linked to the area near Grafton in NSW. The 'Lindt Research Group,' composed of Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung and Yaegl Elders, in partnership with other researchers, have published the outcome of this investigation in the book *Photographs Are Never Still: The J.W. Lindt Collection* (Gahan et al., 2017).



AVQ-A-000777-0053

Ritratto di un'aborigeno dell'Isola
Salomone in Oceania



AVQ-A-000777-0054

Ritratto di un aborigeno dell'Isola
Salomone in Oceania

Figures 4.10 and 4.11. Photos from Archivio Alinari.

Recognising peoplehood becomes an even more crucial concern in the digital domain. When cultural narratives and descriptions are born digitally and disseminated through the web without proper protocols or guidelines for informed consent, they challenge sovereignty over Indigenous data. The Indigenous Archives Collective, a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and practitioners who advocate for Indigenous rights in archives, and of which I am part, has challenged this loss of control, as seen in members of the Collective intervening in content in Wikipedia and Wikimedia related to First Nations knowledges and cultures that are widely circulated with poor checking mechanisms (Thorpe et al., 2023).

Circles C and D - Indigenous ways of knowing and their expressions

Indigenous ways of knowing in Littletree's framework represent the layer of the activities defining peoplehood. These actions inform Indigenous ways of knowing by including developing, creating, organising, sharing and disseminating knowledge.

Wiradjuri poet, filmmaker, and digital producer Jazz Money's (2020) work *We Have Stories for All the Dark Spaces in Between*, inspired by Aboriginal astronomy, reflects on the interrelation of data networks and Indigenous ways of knowing land and relation. It invites us all to "consider networks of care and how all things, not just the visible, need to be known and maintained to sustain us all" (Money, 2020). As Money reflected elsewhere (Money, 2020). Indigenous data sovereignty is a concept that can benefit the arts, a sector where questions around Indigenous rights are "Still evolving and [are] largely unresolved". She recalls the ceremony she saw at the 2019 National Digital Forum at Te Papa in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), where Māori colleagues undertook a ceremony around their recent server migration, recounting that:

The Archives recognise that the sacredness of taonga (treasures) and the tūpuna (ancestors) linked to them is not diminished by being digitised. It was therefore understood that these server racks, as the places that house the digital taonga, need to be treated with the same care as the physical taonga (Money, 2020).

In this example, Māori views of the digital platform as a taonga exemplify the importance of respecting and understanding the value that different Indigenous knowledge systems give to the knowledges held in collecting organisations. Without this multilateral understanding, mapping Aboriginal records in Italy would not be helpful for people outside that knowledge system and familiar with Italian archival practices.

Supplementing the Italian organisation and cataloguing the records along with ways to respect and acknowledge the importance of their knowledge systems is a more helpful approach. One example that emerged in the work with the digital archive was about utilising tools that respect and acknowledge Indigenous worldviews in descriptions and metadata, such as the AIATSIS Thesaurus (n.d.) (in addition to Euro-Western categorisations such as the Library of Congress metadata scheme). The use of a thesaurus that is culturally appropriate gives the opportunity to make the records discoverable without compromising what Aboriginal users are interested in. For example, in an image of an Ancestor on a boat, it has been noted that keywords such as rivers systems and cultural practices would be helpful and culturally appropriate.

Circle D represents the expressions of Indigenous knowledge as the manifestation of Indigenous cultures through tangible and intangible materials contained in cultural and collecting institutions (Littletree et al., 2020). The author observes how this is where most attention is given in collecting institutions (for example, by handling and describing cultural objects or archival material). However, Littletree warns that “Without understanding those objects as expressions of Indigenous systems of knowledge, we risk mislabelling objects, reducing them to a mere characteristic description, separating them from other expressions needed for their use and interpretation, and if equating them of their meaning” (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 420).

As explained in Chapter 2, expressions of Indigenous knowledges in Italy have been created through numerous formats and held in diverse institutions. However, expressions of Indigenous knowledges are often constrained by the rigidity and simplifications of archival descriptions. It is true that by their very nature, conceptual models, metadata schema and standards, and archival descriptive systems are an exercise in reductionism that can never fully represent the richness, intricacies, and multiplicities of the contexts in which the records are created, managed and used (McKemmish, 2001). In contrast, from a record continuum perspective, archival records description is a rich, multilayered recordkeeping and archival function, defined as a series of processes that capture and link metadata to documents from the time of their creation and throughout their life span (McKemmish, 2001). Despite consistency and interactions in metadata and implementation of international standards are essential to allow discoverability and access, Anne Gilliland (2016, pp. 39–40) argues that when they are read from a pluralised view outside of those out of which they historical emerged,

these standards become problematic. Referring to the work of While Yeo, the scholar provides two examples that can be taken as illustrative of the Italian context. First is the need to challenge the archival construct of singular agency in records, recognising the different people and transnational relationships involved in the creation and following transactions (principles that, as I have seen, have shaped and challenged recent ideas of records provenance). Second, collections collective description fails to bring to light the traces of individuals that exist only at an item level (p.40). One example is in the Italian (and international) context. Named after the photographer J.W. Lindt, these celebrated portraits of Aboriginal peoples have been called and described in numerous institutions as the 'Lindt Collection', hiding the identity of the several people portrayed until recently.

Circle E – Information institutions: libraries, archives and museums

Circle E focuses on the institutions holding Indigenous knowledge expression systems to acknowledge their role in the collection, cataloguing and preservation of the expression of Indigenous systems of knowledge. Littletree argues that often, these institutions address only a limited part of this conceptual model. For the author, this approach is “Symptomatic of the settler's epistemic narrow-mindedness, resulting in a perpetuation of ignorance about the essence of the objects the communal in familiar relationality and complex ways of knowing that resulted in their making” (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 420). Examining this aspect in interpreting Aboriginal records in Italy is crucial for understanding the influence of cultural and political sectors on managing Aboriginal knowledge within collecting institutions. As observed in the first section of this chapter, Australia and Italy have had enduring political connections. However, this association is not reflected in collaborations across cultural sectors. Conversely, disagreements around repatriation requests of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains have created tensions and closure. Despite the conversation about museums' physical repatriation being outside this thesis's scope, the evidence reviewed here provides excellent insights into the view of the mainstream Italian cultural and scientific community of the last twenty years.

An analysis of grey literature shows a heated public debate caused by the request to repatriate Ancestral Remains from the MUCIV in Rome and the Museum of Natural History in Florence (Fantauzzi, 2010; Ferracuti & Lattanzi, 2012; Pennacini, 2021; Pinna, 2018; Prayer, 2008; Totaro, 2009). This dispute, sharply summarised by Serino (2014, pp. 209–226) has many layers that must be put into context, such as the Italian laws that

define the Italian cultural patrimony as inalienable, the role of the Australian government and the relationships with Aboriginal communities and the ongoing political relationships between the two countries. In summary the request, that was initially taken seriously by the Italian scientific community, got buried and exacerbated by legal, bureaucratic and political motivations. In the concrete, following the repatriation request to the Museum of Florence, the President of the Museum of Natural History, with the deliberation of the Scientific Council of the Museum, nominated a national committee of advisors responsible for dealing with the request. The appeal was considered unacceptable and outside of Italian responsibilities. I report here some transitions that can be useful for this analysis:

[...] The request to Italy for the restitution of Australian human remains opens a different scenario since these remains were not acquired illegally (as at the time of collection, there were no laws in the specimens' countries of origin that forbade the acquisition and removal of such materials) nor on account of colonial campaigns, wars, plundering or genocide, but through 'commercial' exchanges directly with the owners during scientific missions or explorations. Therefore, the material housed in Italian museums is essentially the fruit of scientific interest or thirst for knowledge of poorly known places and peoples and not of an essentially aesthetical collecting or the collection of objects to be sold for economic purposes. Hence, Italy does not have a historical responsibility that justifies a duty of reconciliation with the specimens' communities of origin in Australia. [...] The case of Italy is different. If there were restitution, objects now part of the national patrimony would leave Italy, resulting in marked impoverishment of the cultural heritage of the entire country (Commissione congiunta / Joint Committee Associazione Nazionale Musei Scientifici Museo di Storia Naturale dell'Università di Firenze, 2011).

As a result, the repatriation of Ancestral Remains and cultural objects from Italy to Australia has never occurred. Further, as a domino effect, this closure impacted the development of further studies and transnational conversations on the archival material that could have potentially been associated with these museums' Remains and cultural objects. There are two ideas that arise in this series of events that I have been questioning in this study related to the archive. The initial concept pertains to the paradigm used to evaluate Ancestral remains, along with other cultural objects that are the subject of repatriation requests. For instance, how is the assessment of territorial provenance, a legal prerequisite for restitution, conducted? What advantages can be gained by incorporating Indigenous paradigms into this concept? This involves considering the written documentation of the museum and the collector as equally authoritative alongside the perspectives of Aboriginal Elders today. The second concept

concerns historical responsibilities. How do you read historical accountabilities outside a Euro-Western legal paradigm? How do you reframe the role of Italians (and all other states that have not been legally invested in the settlement of Australia) within a transnational history of colonisation as a global process? How do you recognise the Italian role in global collecting focusing on relationships among real people who have been impacted by these legacies? Is it accurate to explore the notion of the 'colonial archive' in relation to countries that have not experienced direct governance by the Italian authorities?

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has fostered an enhanced understanding of the archival documentation housed in Italy, containing insights into the histories and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. My analysis informs the following chapters by validating the presence of a dispersed and disconnected corpus of Indigenous knowledge in Italy. Certainly, it has highlighted opportunities for subsequent studies to deepen the comprehension of the documentation.

I demonstrated that convergent attention on the relations and patterns among documentation instead of single records produces new understanding and generates new relationships in a virtuous circle. This shift could not have been possible without adopting the record continuum model, which challenges the fixity and rigidity of archives. This analysis set the ground for reflecting on how the process of transculturation can be read from a continuum perspective. It originated from the intricate interplay of interpersonal relationships and nuanced perceptions of diverse lands, countries, languages, and political contexts, all influenced by individual and collective experiences. The knowledge translation process continues by proposing the co-existence of different mapping systems of the records, which bridges Euro-Western archival practice with Indigenous records' readings. This understanding should be flexible and adaptable to decode the different worldviews and requirements of diverse First Nations cultures represented in the records. As I will explore more in-depth in Chapter 5, one size does not fit all in records displacement. However, this chapter found that centring Indigenous knowledge systems in mapping Italian collections benefits Aboriginal rights in records, by considering ICIP and sovereignty over data. This finding will be helpful in the next

chapter, where I transform the ways in which this documentation has been traditionally managed.

CHAPTER 5. TRANSFORM
**Constructing a Decolonial Praxis for Displaced
Records at the Cultural Interface**



Open to Collaborate

The institutions involved in this project are committed to the development of new modes of collaboration, engagement, and partnership with Indigenous peoples for the care and stewardship of past and future heritage collections.



Attribution Incomplete

Collections and items in the institutions involved in this project have incomplete, inaccurate, and/or missing attribution. We are using this Notice to clearly identify this material so that it can be updated, or corrected by communities of origin. Our institutions are committed to collaboration and partnerships to address this problem of incorrect or missing attribution.

Aboriginal Archives in Italy Project ID (87c981e7-88ee-4fa8-bb87-4a12713e702b)

Researcher page <https://localcontextshub.org/researchers/view/208/>

~~Homo Erectus.~~

People.

~~Cannibals.~~

Warriors.

~~Babeens.~~

Survivors.

~~A real Live Golliwog.~~

Old Song Woman.

~~Poor Miserable Half-starved~~

Mob.

~~Bottlenosed Caricatures of Humanity.~~

~~Brute Man.~~

Dad.

~~Gins.~~

Mother.

~~Waitresses.~~

Children.

~~Domestics.~~

Elders.

~~Aberigines.~~

Ancestors.

Extract of Chelsea Bond (Munanjahli), 2020, Dear Ancestor. In *Fire Front. First Nations Poetry and Power Today* p. 3.



Figure 5.1. Woman smiling at the photographer²³

23 Document from the D'Albertis Museum photographic archive (Genova) 'W Australia' collection. Photo number W. Australia 116.

Digital archive <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/103>

5.1. Introduction - What happens during transcultural understandings?

The ways First Nations people have been objectified and humiliated in colonial archives, as exemplified by the powerful words of Chelsea Bond (Munanjahli and South Sea Islander), are in sharp contrast with the humanity who are still captive (Fourmile, 1989) of the records. D'Albertis photographed this smiling woman in an unidentified location in Western Australia. We do not know who this woman was, the relationship between the portrayed and the photographer, or the reason for taking the image. However, we know today that the tension between these two lenses well encapsulates the complexities embedded in the colonial archive. Over the last decades, First Nations archivists, academics and allies have advocated for new decolonial archival praxis to challenge how physical and digital colonial archival records have been managed, controlled, and shared (Christen & Anderson, 2019; Iacovino, 2010; Thorpe et al., 2021). One example is the proposal of the transformative agenda of South African '*Archives for Justice*' in *Deconstruction* by Verne Harris (2011, p. 119) calls for a new vision and new vigour in archival practices and activism while opening to a future of enduring strength of 'the Indigenous' at the same time as engaging 'the global'. These new approaches have tackled the archive differently to remedy a core transnational issue: the centrality of Western dominance in archives.

Because of these discrepancies and the rise of First Nations librarians, archivists and curators in the GLAM space, scholars and practitioners have been referring to a third, shared space of dialogue and action. This idea has been conceptualised in literature from different areas of study as a practice and/or a location, as a space of shared understanding and meaning-making (Clifford, 1997; Licona, 2005). Within this scholarship, the concept of the cultural interface by Martin Nakata (Torres Strait Islander) (2002, 2007) has paved the way in the information sector and beyond. This notion has been widely adopted as an interconnection between knowledge systems in diverse academic contexts such as health, education and information science fields (Delbridge et al., 2022; Ann Mary Doyle, 2013; Martin et al., 2017; E. McKinley, 2020; Thorpe, 2022). However, when I tried to apply the idea of the third space to facilitate relationships between Australia and Italy in this study, I could only rely on a few pieces of literature that considered the complexities of different knowledge systems, languages, and historical and cultural backgrounds (McChesney, 2014; E. McKinley, 2020; L. Smith et

al., 2019). Scholars have mainly analysed difficulties of translation of archival principles and terms among languages (Duranti, 2017; Foscarini et al., 2021; Frings-Hessami & Oliver, 2022; Roberto et al., 2021; Soum-Paris, 2021), paying less attention to how these interactions practically take place in these shared spaces. For example, how do people keep with them these learning, filter them, share them with the public? What Maria Montenegro (2023) defines as intercultural archiving is still an unexplored study area. especially in the digital domain. Despite projects of digital return of archival records worldwide being increasingly common, there is a pronounced gap in the literature on how platforms for virtual reunification can act as a space of negotiation and knowledge translation.

In this chapter, I aim to transform the approach to Aboriginal records, challenging and reshaping existing practices. Its importance and originality lie in creating an innovative archival praxis for working with displaced records in the Italian context. Here, the overarching focus is on the importance of knowledge translation as a transformative practice that, as evidenced in this research, has catalysed notable structural changes within Italian institutions regarding the appreciation and care for the records. Locating these transnational exchanges at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, 2007), this chapter addresses an overlooked gap in the literature by illustrating hands-on examples of how transnational exchanges materialise in archival displacement. By empirically applying two elements of my research, the prototype digital archive to support the right to know and the exhibition at the D'Albertis Castle with Marika Duczynski (Gamilaraay), this chapter establishes innovative ways to translate knowledge across the cultural interface. I solidly ingrain these processes in the notions of praxis to create a circular approach to transformation as informed by Kaupapa Māori principles (G. H. Smith, 2004), a constant dialogue between theory and practice (Thorpe, 2019), and that is focused on doing and learning from Country (Steffensen, 2020). These approaches have one thing in common: they emphasise sharing, learning, and disrupting existing activities and systems. Indeed, this chapter contributes to the academic discourse on colonial archival displacement. As my thesis illustrates, challenging traditional record administration practices and regulations while fostering a collaborative dialogue on displaced archives is essential. This approach ensures that communities represented in the documentation cease to be mere spectators on the periphery of archival theories.

I start this chapter by exploring and exposing the value of translating knowledge in contexts of archival displacement, turning expressly to reflect on Nakata's (2002, 2007, 2012) cultural interface. In this section, I underscore the significance of tailoring the approach based on the characteristics of the community and institution engaged in the process. I then explore the four fundamental principles that emerged from the engagement for the digital archive and the exhibition. First, the importance of sharing knowledge and information beyond academic and institutional boundaries (L. Smith et al., 2019). Second, the impact of recognising historical responsibilities beyond the limitations imposed by institutional and national legal frameworks. Third, the weight of taking a personal and professional stance. Fourth and lastly, the value of creating spaces for Indigenous worldviews and intents in the Italian information sector (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015). This analysis serves as the primary pathway for developing a methodology for further action with these records as an outcome of this work in Chapter 8.

5.2. Translate knowledge at the cultural interface

At the commencement of my doctoral research, one of my hypotheses, drawn from prior research and interactions with European collecting institutions, posited that initiating dialogue was a potent strategy to disrupt the inertia about Aboriginal records. In my view, these discussions aimed to articulate the contemporary significance of this heritage for communities and highlight the untapped potential it holds for the Italian cultural sector. Nevertheless, as I embarked on this journey, I swiftly recognised the inadequacy of relying on established frameworks to initiate these conversations. It became apparent that the concept of a shared third dialogue space, previously explored by numerous scholars, particularly within the museum sector, presented a valuable pathway forward. However, the main issue was that most examples were based on a shared experience of the colonial past that, despite crossing geographical boundaries, could rely on shared cultural backgrounds (such as the relationship between British organisations and Australia). What instead emerged in this study, was that before being able to engage in any dialogue about changes needed in the way the archive was administered, I had to find a way to decode the context I was referring to. Of course, this process was more complex than language translation. Another gap that was noted was the insufficiency of guidelines for non-anglophone organisations outside large state and government networks'. European organisations, despite having a common recordkeeping framework,

have archival traditions, histories and cultural backgrounds that are deeply diverse and must be situated within their respective contexts (A. J. Gilliland, 2016; Ketelaar, 1997). In Italy, as discussed, the scenario is complex as the Aboriginal records are disseminated across small and large organisations that belong to different jurisdictions.

This conversion related to the institutions I was collaborating with and the public we have been trying to engage with. Within the cultural organisations, varying levels of comprehension of the Australian context existed among employees, executive members, and other collaborators. Each institution had to prioritise the diverse communities within their collections, considering different criteria, such as the presence of migrant populations from specific communities in the city where the institution is situated. Each institution was subject to different legislation and executive interests. Therefore, in this translation exercise, I started by decoding the cultural background I was referring to (responding to questions like why archival records are important for Aboriginal people today? What do they represent? What are cultural protocols?) and historical circumstances (How the effects of the colonisation of Australia are felt today? What are the approaches undertaken by Australian collecting institutions?). I then focused on what this project wanted to achieve by decoding and aligning its principles (for example, by showing in practice what relationality, responsibility, and respect mean in an Indigenous context). The challenge became even more evident when trying to communicate with the Italian public, who was mostly not aware of the richness and vitality of Aboriginal cultures and the violence that the British invasion brought to those lands. Most people had known Aboriginal people exclusively through the eyes of those colonial records that I was attempting to challenge.

The tables below are examples of the kind of knowledge translation I prepared at the beginning of this research project and that have been shared and discussed during initial meetings that I organised with the three institutions in 2021. Debating and agreeing on these points was a crucial step for developing this PhD research and created a baseline of understanding that allowed for further interpretation work in the digital archive and during the elaboration of the exhibition. Table 6.8. summarises some of these conversations about the differences in meanings and perspectives between Indigenous and Western paradigms as two separate systems of thinking. The first table (Figure 1) expresses these exchanges in the language that took shape (Italian), and the second (Figure 2) is its English translation.

Paradigms Occidentale	Paradigma Aborigeno
Gli archivi coloniali contengono informazioni del passato	Le persone oggi sono ancora influenzate dalle storie e dagli stereotipi perpetuati negli archivi coloniali
Gli archivi sono una fonte di conoscenza del passato	Archivi come fonte di sapere, ma al contempo come posti 'pericolosi' e che raccontano una sola narrazione
La narrazione del creatore italiano è al centro della storia	Le persone Aborigene che non sono menzionate hanno la stessa importanza / il sapere rappresentato nella documentazione appartiene alle comunità di origine e non all'istituzione.
I modi in cui queste collezioni vengono descritte sono universali	I metodi con cui vengono descritte queste collezioni sono radicati in un sistema coloniale di produzione della conoscenza che si concentra sull'esperienza della persona italiana e non considera i modi in cui le persone aborigene accedono oggi alla documentazione. Spesso la terminologia utilizzata è errata e razzista.
Le informazioni sul passato sono conservate nelle istituzioni e nelle esperienze delle persone attraverso le storie orali	Solo alcune informazioni sul passato sono conservate nelle istituzioni culturali: la maggior parte è tramandata oralmente tra persone, letta nella terra e nella natura (Country) e conservata dagli antenati
Persone rappresentate negli archivi sono in un passato lontano	Persone rappresentate negli archivi fanno parte della vita e mitologia quotidiana
Queste collezioni sono conosciute	La maggior parte di persone non sa che questi archivi esistono
Tutto deve essere aperto a tutti	Non tutto il sapere deve essere alla portata immediata di tutti/importanza delle relazioni e dei protocolli culturali
Uniformità dell'esperienza coloniale in Australia	Profonde differenze tra persone, gruppi culturali e impatto del colonialismo

Table 5. 1. Detail of differences in meanings and perspectives between Indigenous and Western paradigms. Original version in Italian²⁴

²⁴ Utilised in presentations with the three partner museums. Text by Monica Galassi. Original version in Italian.

Western Paradigm	Aboriginal Paradigm
Colonial archives hold information about the past	People today are still impacted by the stories and the stereotypes perpetuated in colonial archives
Archives are a source of knowledge about the past	Archives are a source of knowledge, but at the same time are 'dangerous' places that tell only one side of the story
The narration of the Italian teller is at the core of the story	The Aboriginal peoples that are not named, called, or mentioned are of equal importance / The knowledge included in the documentation belongs to the communities of origin, not to the institutions
The ways in which these collections are described are universal	The methods in which these collections are described are ingrained in a colonial system of knowledge production that centers on the experience of the Italian person and doesn't consider the ways in which Aboriginal people look for the records. Often terminology is incorrect and racist
Information about the past is held in collecting institutions and in people's experiences through oral histories	Only some information about the past is held in collecting institutions: most part is told by people, by Country, by Ancestors and through the passing of oral knowledge
The people represented in the archives belong to an old and far away past	The people represented in archives belong to everyday life and cultural practices
Everyone knows these collections exist	Most people do not know these collections exist
Everything must open to everyone	Not everyone needs to know everything straight away / importance of relationships and cultural protocols
Colonial experience in Australia is pretty much the same everywhere	The colonial experience impacted people and communities in profoundly different ways

Table 5.2. Detail of differences in meanings and perspectives between Indigenous and Western paradigms. English translation.

However, Nakata's (2007) proposition is not simply to create another perspective. The author argues about the importance of expanding assumptions underpinning theory based on a reading on how Torres Strait Islanders have been inscribed in Western systems or thoughts over the past century, drawing into theory principles that give pre-

eminence to the Islander life worlds as a complex train of political and social contexts (p.197). This complex space, usually visually represented as the intersections between two cultures, is better exemplified as a broader interface:

The Cultural Interface is constituted by points of intersecting trajectories. It is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of dynamic relations constituted by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thoughts, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social, economic and political organisations. It is a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people with different histories, experiences, languages, agendas, aspirations and responses. As much as it is currently overlaid by various theories, narratives and arguments that work to produce cohesive, consensual and cooperative social practices, it is also a space that abounds with contradictions, ambiguities, conflict and contestation of meanings that emerge from these various shifting intersections. All these elements cohere together at the interface in the everyday to inform, constrain or enable what can be seen or not seen, what can be brought to the surface or sutured over, what can be said or not said, heard or not heard, understood or misunderstood, what knowledge can be accepted, rejected, legitimised or marginalise, or what actions can be taken or not taken on both individual and collective levels (Nakata, 2007, p. 199).

Further, Nakata (2007, pp. 182–185) argues that another core problem is that Indigenous knowledge gets filtered through Western conceptualisation, becoming detached from culture and people and transforming into a commodity and another resource for potential profit to capitalist interests. The same detachment that the public had learned and internalised about First Nations peoples' cultures through Western depictions (for example, by anthropological writing) is now perpetuated through learning about and adopting Indigenous knowledge systems in academic contexts and through Western lenses. This power imbalance is visible through what is recognised in the archive as important, valuable, and practical to use (p.190). I will discuss this disparity more in-depth in Chapter 6, demonstrating that the Aboriginal records in Italy have been made visible and invisible according to Italian interests. On the other side, as Nakata notes, the renewed interest in Indigenous knowledges is a positive step, as it decentres the supremacy of Western knowledge production about the world (p.190).

The initial tables I created have been valuable tools to start the conversation and motivate this work while aligning priorities and values. However, as more as time passed and the research deepened, I realised they could not mirror the complexities and potentialities raised during the project. Expressed like this – in two different tables – they

replicate the brick wall (Blair, 2015, 2019), a metaphorical structure where Western knowledges, philosophies, and disciplines stay separated. A wall where “The bricks are laid in lines, existing as separate units, compartments, disciplines of knowledge” (Blair, 2019) and therefore live as separate entities. Instead, by re-adapting these conversations through the cultural interface, these different views of the world have been interacting, fighting, changing, and sometimes co-existing. This process aligns with Graham Smith’s (2004) argument, in which the phases of conscientisation, resistance, and transformative action must happen circularly and can occur simultaneously to produce change. Individuals who participate in this process can be at entirely different circle points and bring diverse knowledges and skills.

Another point that emerged forcefully in this research was the need to expose the profoundly diverse and countless standpoints of the communities represented in the archives. In this phase, Steffensen’s concept of praction (learning from Country by doing) has informed this thesis profoundly. This PhD research will never be able to bring light to the history of all the records held in the three partner institutions. However, it has the critical potential to increase understanding of the distinct stories, interpretations, and conflicts each family or community would bring with them in this process. There is not one singular explanation of the concept of Country: as explained in Chapter 3, the land we now call Australia has been called home by hundreds of diverse communities in dissimilar landscapes for millions of square kilometres and thousands of generations. Similarly, in the European context, each institution is deeply rooted in diverse historical, linguistical and cultural backgrounds. These circumstances influence strongly understanding in these shared spaces. For obtaining an effective knowledge translation, these differences cannot be ignored. In other words, in a decolonial archival praxis for displaced records, both in the Italian context and elsewhere, the knowledge translation process through the cultural interface must change according to the specificities of the communities and countries involved. The setting for making these interactions happen can only be created by relationships.

In Chapter 2, I mentioned the example of the Barka River in Barkandji Country (NSW) as an example of the exploitation of capitalist practices on the land and explained how archival heritage spread overseas could contribute to rebuild these histories. The photo below of Barkandji Country Barka River mud in 2010 (Fig 5.2), following the precedent example, is a speculation that uses this snapshot of Barkandji Country as a visual

interface where these different archive readings interact. In the future, if any archival records from this location are found, considering the local specificities of where the records originate can be a respectful way to start relationships. Considering an interface as a “Situation, way, or place where two things come together and affect each other” (‘Cambridge Dictionary Online’, n.d.), visualisations of the Country where the documentation originates can provide one way to visualise the cultural interface. One interpretation of this segment of Country as a representation of the cultural interface is that the cracks in the land could embody the different trajectories that knowledge can take. Some are very deep and would possibly never be filled. Others have just started to appear and have the potential to obstruct their growth. The little stones in the middle of the cracks are the ideas people and institutions have internalised about the archive. These stones are placed in the middle of different ideas and worldviews. They can fall or stay still according to how the cracks move. If the cracks move apart, the ideas disappear and are buried underneath, signifying the conversations that never happened.



Figure 5.2. Detail of Barkandji Country Barka River mud (2010)²⁵

This speculation could continue by reflecting on the specificities of the records that have been collected, how they have been taken overseas, and learning about the historical and cultural background of the place where the records are held. In this thesis, I effectively analysed the Italian context in Chapters 2 and 4.

²⁵ Photo by Alex Byrne.

5.3. Principle one – Share beyond institutional boundaries

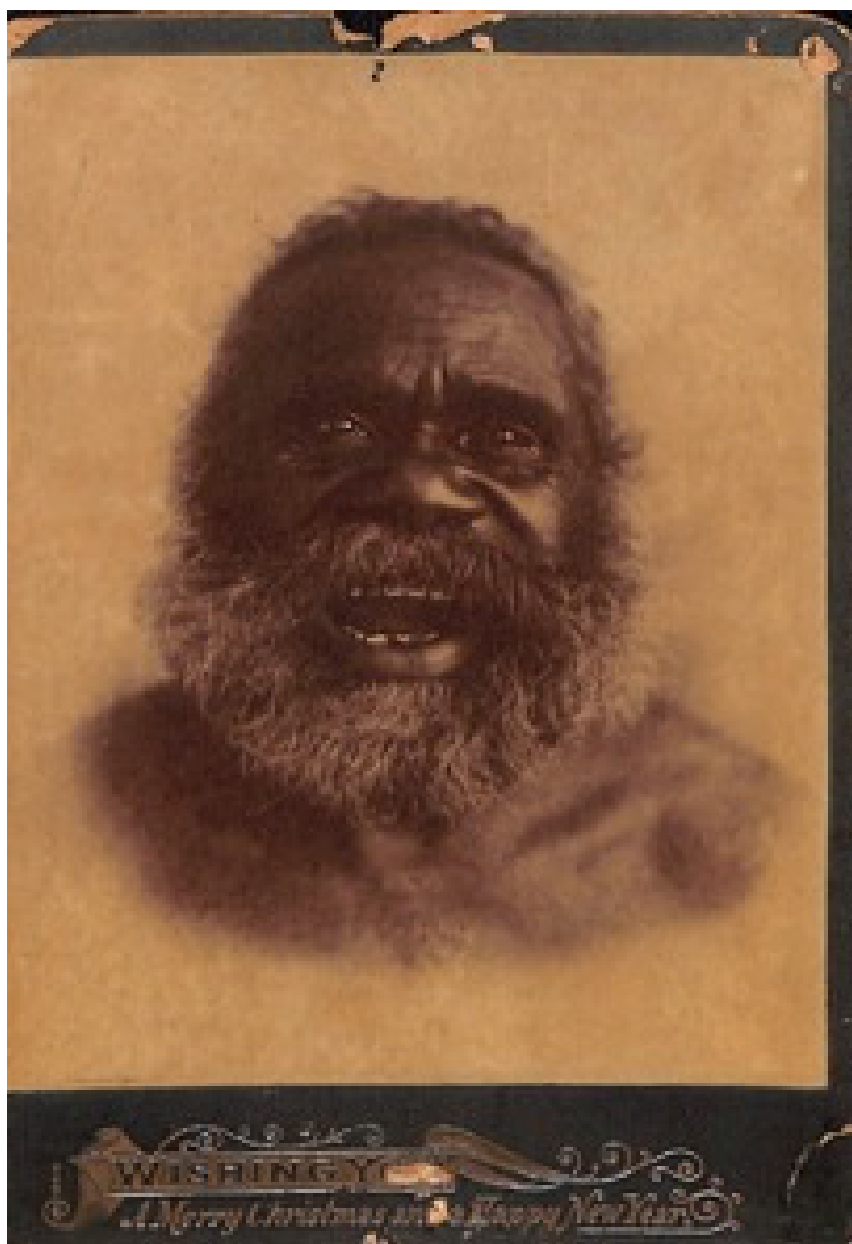


Figure 5.3. Portrait of Tewitt, Chief of Jervis Bay in Christmas Postcard²⁶

²⁶ Document from the Podenzana Museum photographic archive (La Spezia). Photo number 5368/184.

Digital archive <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/portrait-tewitt-chief-jervis-bay-christmas-postcard-ritratto-di-tewitt-capo-di>

The first principle that emerged from the knowledge translation process enacted by this study is the crucial importance of sharing information beyond this thesis and the institutional contexts in which we have operated. What surfaced is that sharing knowledge is crucial to support data sovereignty in the archival context.

The confronting postcard that introduces this section perfectly encapsulates the significance of sharing. Despite the Conservator of the Podenzana's Museum Giacomo Paolicchi's attempted online research on this photograph, this man's name had remained undetected for over a century. The only thing that was known about this postcard was that it could have been purchased between 1891 (the year Giovanni Podenzana left for his trip to Australia) and 1905 (the year the postcard became part of the museum collections). In May 2023, during a yarning session organised for this doctoral studies, ABC Archives Indigenous Collections Researcher Kerry-Ann Tape recognised the man's expression: his smile had an unmistakable resemblance with other images of Tewitt, Chief of Jervis Bay that she encountered when working at the SLNSW (Australia). Throughout this PhD research, it became evident at various stages of data collection that sharing knowledge beyond the collecting institutions and academic settings had opened a fruitful dialogue between Italy and Australia.

In the context of my doctoral work in Australia, a first-world settler English-speaking country, sharing findings in ways that align with Indigenous worldviews is a crucial step to challenging the power dynamics that academia has imposed on First Nations peoples for centuries (E. A. McKinley & Smith, 2019; L. T. Smith, 2012). Linda Tuwihai Smith (2019) considers knowledge sharing in Indigenous contexts essential for three reasons. First, an unequivocal purpose of Indigenous methodologies is connecting with and sharing research with the people who helped create it to serve individual and collective well-being and accountability. Second, sharing knowledge allows people to distribute, translate, and use the information to better serve Indigenous interests. Lastly, disseminating information is essential to overcome historical injustice caused by colonialism, which has erased Indigenous voices for a long time. The practice of sharing aligns with Indigenous methodologies because, as the author has argued:

Knowledge sharing has become a way to cut across relations of power, not by 'talking up to power' but by talking across power to each other, enhancing connections and relationships. Sharing knowledge is a strategy for decolonizing the ways in which knowledge institutions create rules and norms around such things as research translation or research impact (L. Smith et al., 2019, p. 2).

Making available the documentation held in Italy and its related research through the digital archive and the exhibition at the D'Albertis Castle has followed this approach by spreading information online and across the Italian public, creating a bridge between academia and institutions, and insisting on maintaining a dialogue between theory and practice all along (Thorpe, 2019). It has in fact become widely acceptable to add creative processes such as exhibitions, digital storytelling, and documentaries to academic outputs. These knowledge translation processes and productions follow decolonising intent because they prioritise Indigenous communities instead of academia, state governments, and their agencies (L. Smith et al., 2019). The idea of creating the digital archive came from my professional experience with supporting Aboriginal organisations and communities to return copies from collecting organisations and to care for their records on Country. It was also influenced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2019; 2012) writing about the need to use creativity to progress the translation of research outside the academic context and her list of 25 projects that set out aims pursued by Indigenous communities. Moreover, the pressing issue of digital access to Italian collections required immediate attention, given the absence of an institutional online catalogue.

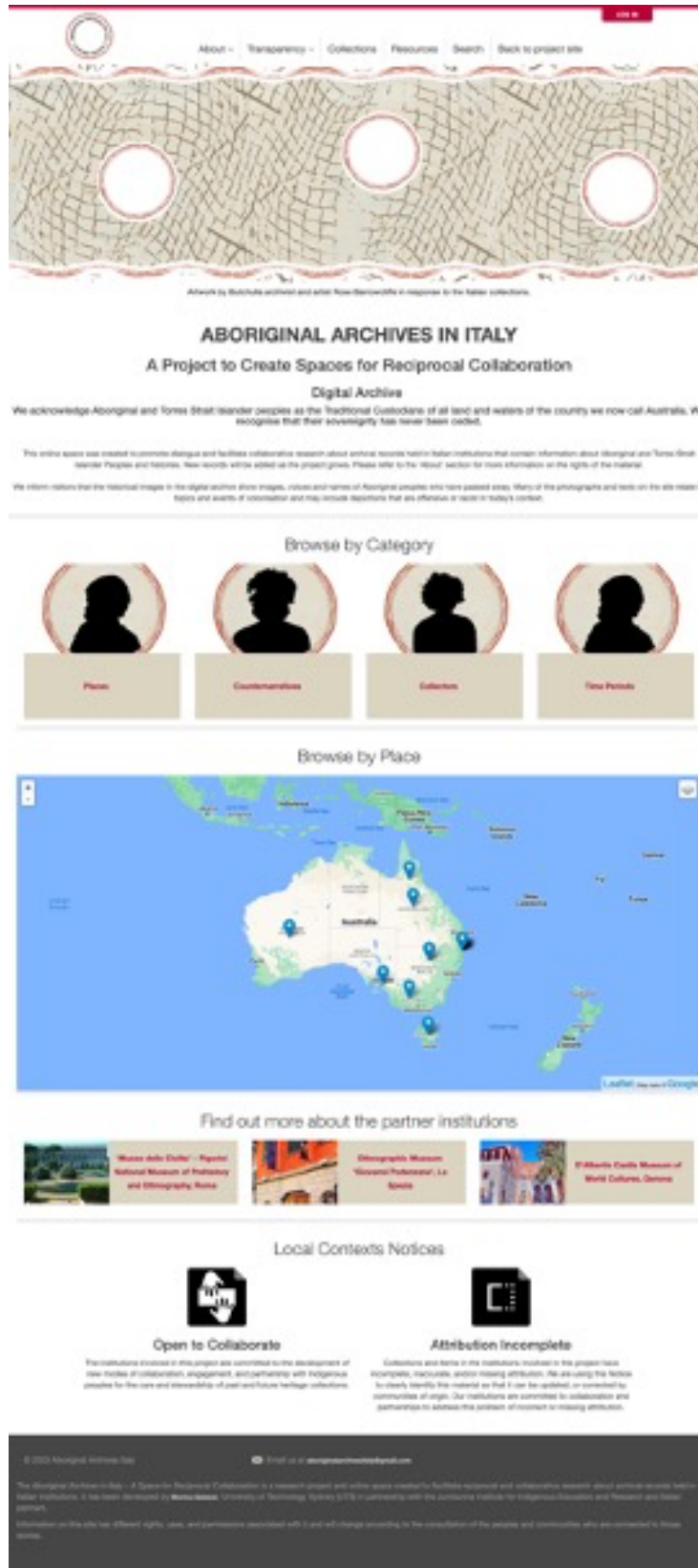


Figure 5.4. Digital archive Homepage

The digital archive's transnational positioning and multiple audiences were the most significant complexities in designing and constructing this platform. I researched and observed dozens of grassroots and institutional platforms and systems adopted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities worldwide to look after their cultural heritage to learn how they addressed transcultural understanding in archives. Some examples grabbed my attention. In Australia, the Mukurtu platform *Wupujinta Anyul Mappu: A Gathering Place*, created and curated by Aboriginal peoples in the Barkly region (mostly Warumungu people and Countries), has been an example for Aboriginal-led use of the Mukurtu platform with the help of cultural protocols and different access levels.²⁷ In the Canadian context, the site *As I Remember It*, created by qa?axstales (Elsie Paul), brings together the memories and the teaching of his grandmother, who lost her daughter in a residential school for Indigenous children.²⁸ I was inspired by the site's storytelling experience and the inclusion of the *Protocols for Being a Respectful Guest* at the site entrance. Indeed, storytelling is at the heart of the *Nana Project*, a digital platform that congregates stories of Ghanaian Elders to gain knowledge about the country past, as told by Ghanaian people.²⁹ These poignant examples show how digital archives can provide space for learning and understanding transnational history by applying cultural protocols that can be learned, appreciated, and respected from everywhere despite being ingrained in local values.

This journey through transcultural understanding in digital archives was likewise valuable to learn from other grassroots movements how to navigate power imbalances. The platform *Decolonising the Archive*, created to build a Pan-African archive of “Black Memory” and “African Future” challenged everything I knew about “Sharing collective memory; and stimulating personal and collective transformations”.³⁰ Further, the Syrian Archive (from the same team that commenced the Sudanese, Yemeni and, since 2022, the Ukrainian Archives) along with *A People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland*, are two powerful instances of grassroots digital repositories to preserve and use human

²⁷ <https://wumpurrarni-kari.libraries.wsu.edu/>

²⁸ <https://publications.ravenspacepublishing.org/as-i-remember-it/index>

²⁸ <https://publications.ravenspacepublishing.org/as-i-remember-it/index>

²⁹ <https://www.thenanaproject.org/>

²⁹ <https://www.thenanaproject.org/>

³⁰ <https://www.decolonisingthearchive.com/>

³⁰ <https://www.decolonisingthearchive.com/>

³¹ <https://syrianarchive.org/>; <https://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/>

rights violations for use in advocacy, justice, and accountability.³¹ Indeed, the *RomArchive* is another formidable illustration of how, as Romani feminist activist and researcher Nicoleta Bitu argues, “You cannot fight racism without referring to history and arts” (RomArchive, 2019).³² In this digital archive, recurrent stereotypes and entrenched prejudices about persons identifying as Gypsies (called Roma to encompass the vast diversity of these groups) are fought against with narratives told by Roma themselves and by illustrating their contribution to European cultural history. The *Digital Benin* repository, to cite another example, was an inspiration for learning best practices around respectful language and educational intent within a contested heritage space. It combines objects and documentation from collections worldwide to provide a long-requested overview of the royal artefacts from the Benin Kingdom looted in the late nineteenth century.³³ All these examples include informative and instructive resources for the public to learn about digital content and become active agents in this shuffle of perspectives. They all kept reminding me how archival translation and educational work are an asset for social justice and archival liberation.

The digital archive has been one interface where these exchanges have occurred throughout this PhD study. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is nothing neutral in how archival digital infrastructures are built. Making visible the choices made for including the records online challenges impartiality and creates opportunities for exchange. I argue that creating the digital archive as a constantly evolving prototype can be classified as a decolonial move that challenges the rigidity of archival practice and standards. The platform's evolution in this study did not end with including the content to be virtually disseminated. Nor did it focus exclusively on a space for reciprocal collaborations with communities and across organisations. Instead, this study took the platform's mission further by employing it as a space for knowledge translation and negotiation. It became a space for learning about different worldviews embedded in the archive and discussing the colonial structures we were replicating in the platform. Through the lens of praction

³¹ <https://syrianarchive.org/>; <https://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/>

³² <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/>

³² <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/>

³³ <https://digitalbenin.org/>

³³ <https://digitalbenin.org/>

(Steffensen, 2019, p. 229) the digital archive is a tool that “Encourages living praction to happen”.

The adoption of the platform as a cultural interface for knowledge translation commenced with a critical examination of how archival records pertaining to Aboriginal Australia had been catalogued and described in museums until the present. The small community of practice we created (the three partner institutions and me) started to meet periodically to brainstorm decisions about the structure of the platform and the content included. Some examples of these exchanges regarded the categories selected for making content discoverable and how we organised access to the records (layering them by institution, curated collections, shared themes, and map). We agreed this was a good way of remaining accountable for these choices by promoting transparency. This action also had the valuable outcome of establishing and reinforcing relationships among people working in these institutions and informing best practices in managing Aboriginal records in Italy. On the other hand, during this PhD thesis, I gathered numerous feedback and ideas on the digital archive from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander GLAM professionals and community members. For example, inclusion of ICIP, language groups and advice on how to make findable distressing representations of Ancestral remains and anthropometric photography. Subsequently, I conveyed these insights to the working group for discussion and implementation. Over the last three years, I kept making changes and moving content, replicating these conversations, and creating culturally safe ways for people accessing the platform to find content and engage with it. Each feedback received has been implemented in the digital archive, still in constant evolution. The criteria utilised are listed in the section ‘Transparency’ and ‘Open to collaborate’ of the platform.³⁴

The digital archive prototype can potentially support Aboriginal data sovereignty in transnational contexts in three main ways. First, by making attributions visible. Second, by translating content from English into Italian. Third, by building relations among people,

³⁴ Criteria: <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/340>

Open to Collaborate: <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/9>

³⁵ (A) (Original title: Head and shoulders portrait of a laughing man, Australia, ca. 1900 [transparency] /Henry King). National Library of Australia. Bib. ID 4312904 <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/4312904>

records, and collections. But let's take a step back to the photo of Tewitt, shown at the beginning of this section, to understand how data sovereignty works in the archive in two moves.

The initial move to support Aboriginal people's data sovereignty rights in the Italian context in this study is to work on attribution. I practically enacted this step by trying, as much as possible, to include in the digital archive not only information provided by the institution but also to search for information across Italian and Australian networks. As discussed in Chapter 2, Indigenous data sovereignty is one component of a broader social justice movement asserting the indivisibility of control of cultural heritage for authentic social justice and Indigenous self-determination. Data sovereignty is, therefore, against the unethical appropriation and current misuse of First Nations peoples' information, stories, and knowledges. In this context, attribution functions as a critical mechanism to maintain hierarchies of knowledge production by reducing First Nations subjectivity and legitimating non-Indigenous authors' ongoing appropriation of Indigenous cultural material (J. Anderson & Christen, 2019). Therefore, correcting metadata is a crucial area that needs attention to avoid perpetuating unethical data misuse (Douglas et al., 2018). Systems interoperability, defined as the potential of digital systems to communicate with each other, is essential in this process (Rolan, 2015). I enacted this principle through the work on the digital archive and changed how the records in the partner institutions are now described and attributed. In the example of the photo of Tewitt, shown at the beginning of this section, supporting data sovereignty challenges invisibility, gives respect, creates opportunities for digging for further information and enriches institutional catalogues.

The second move to advocate for Aboriginal people's data sovereignty rights in the Italian context in this study is translation. I did so by translating from Italian to English most of the content available. This act facilitates access and understanding and is a tactic to enable sovereignty in the archival space. As explained in Chapter 4, one of the most remarkable aspects of the Italian record is that they can reveal anecdotes and perspectives that can add to or, in some cases, challenge the British views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the process of settlement in First Nations lands. At other times, these points of view were filtered from the Australian collectors and translated in ways that made sense to the Italian scientific and cultural elites. Therefore, translating the photographs' captions, diaries, reflections, correspondence, and

published and unpublished research about the Italian records can become highly significant. Of course, most of these testimonies are handwritten and expressed in Italian, posing a challenge for community members, researchers, and anyone wanting to learn about these stories. Therefore, language translation becomes critical for ensuring proper access to this heritage because building capacity at a community level to control and manage data is essential to set the conditions for ongoing Indigenous data sovereignty. In settler countries, this can include building digital literacy skills to develop instruments built on Indigenous lifeworlds (Walter & Suina, 2019), promoting archival stewardship (Thorpe et al., 2021), investing in internet infrastructures in remote areas (Marisa Elena Duarte, 2017; Marshall et al., 2023) and local repositories and data storage, such as Indigenous-owned cloud systems (Caballar, n.d.). In the case of the Aboriginal records that have been taken far from Australia, creating tools for allowing independent research contributes to this broader rights agenda. This process is not without bias. With translation, I bring with me my worldviews and assumptions. In the decolonial archival praxis of the future, the ideal scenario would entail Aboriginal community members working collaboratively with Italian collaborators. This need was expressed eloquently by all participants in this study (see Chapter 7).

The third way digital access impacted Aboriginal rights in data is by building networks, forging relationships, and creating interest. Sharing the photo of Tewitt and the information gathered on it has started a cycle of engagement with other collections in Australia, bringing to light trails that collectors have created worldwide. The example that exemplifies this connection relates to Robert Wilhelm Prenzel (1866-1941). He was a prolific German woodcarver and cabinetmaker who became famous in Australia for his wood panels (*Pix Every Week*, 1940). He was well-established in collectors circles, which included the photographer J. W. Lindt and the botanist J. H. Maiden (Lane, 1988). The different photographs from various archives, brought together, tell a story that was impossible to craft without making the material widely available. We can now imagine Tewitt's smile at his younger age; we can glimpse his relationships with Prenzel and look for other images where he was represented. In other words, sharing the material has contributed to building relationships and making available information that could lay the ground for further studies and Tewitt's presence in official historiography.



Figure 5.5. Tewitt, Chief of Jervis Bay (A)³⁵



Figure 5.6. Tewitt, Chief of Jervis Bay (B)

³⁵ (A) (Original title: Head and shoulders portrait of a laughing man, Australia, ca. 1900 [transparency] /Henry King). National Library of Australia. Bib. ID 4312904 <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/4312904>
(B) (Collection: Australian Aboriginals / photographed by Kerry & Co.). State Library of NSW. Copy identifier FL3221063 <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/9WZMropY/6Nm8JkxPJEzVo>

Sharing archival records online sets the scene for looking for linkages and relationships across collections and institutions. This tactic is not new in the Australian context and has proven an effective way to forge spaces for counternarratives in the archives and for “cut across power” of historical interpretations (R. Taylor, 2017). This rounded and relational view of knowledge overcomes the limitations created by the format within archives. Australian academic Mike Jones’ (2021) work on the relational museum (elaborated within the records continuum in mind) criticises the limitations of adopting separations based on formats still adopted by many collecting institutions worldwide. Jones (2021, p. 63) argues that “Social contribution of museums will be more meaningful and multifaceted if we focus less on describing discrete objects and more on relationality”. As one example, Jones describes the importance of First Nations Ancestral Remains, cultural objects, and the related archival records to be connected to find out provenance and information and can, therefore, gain benefit for the institutions themselves. These linkages can also be established temporally, as illustrated by the image below featuring cultural artifacts that were included in the London Colonial Exhibition of 1886. This relational approach informs how I built the digital archive as a container of knowledge where all the elements (photographs, videos, archival materials and studies on the records) interconnect independently from their formats. In this circular approach to sharing knowledge, theory and practice remain constantly in dialogue in a fluid space where the records change constantly. They are always becoming (McKemmish, 1994) in time and space. They get enriched and change how they have been historically analysed, described, and valued.

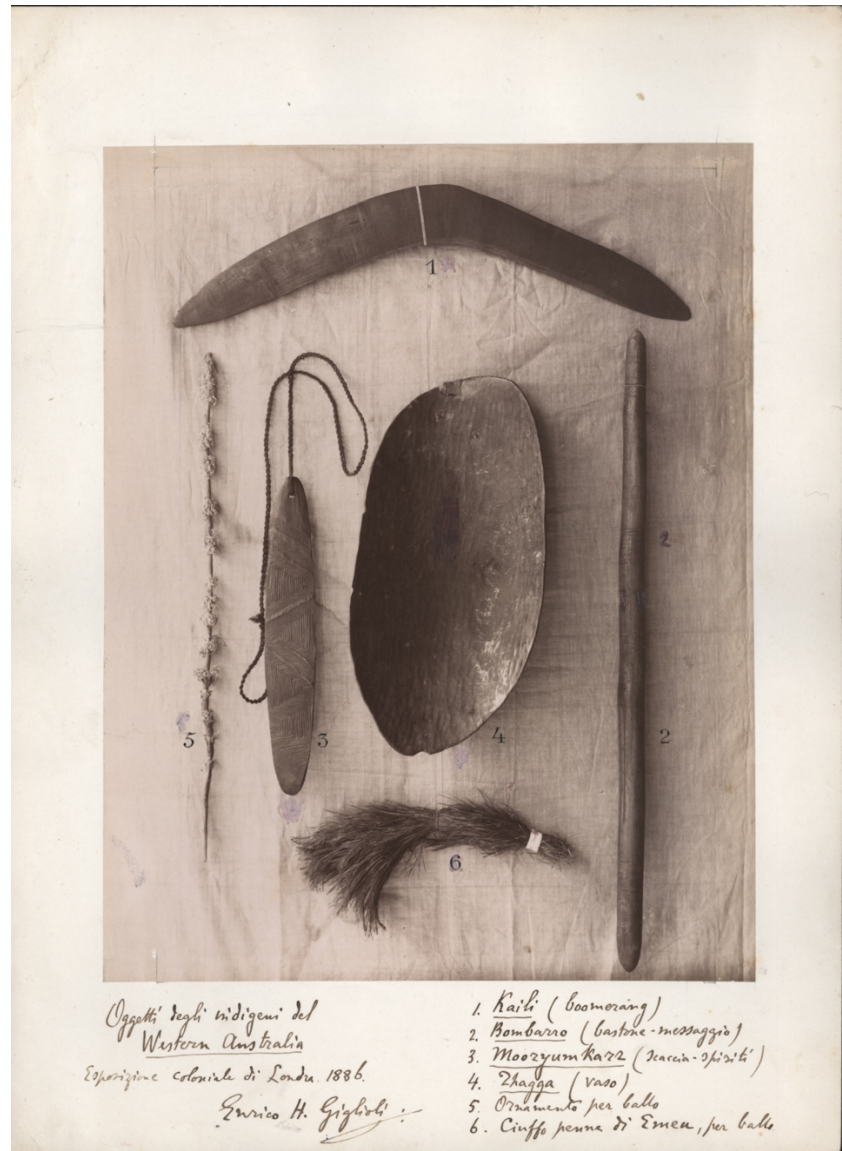


Figure 5.7. Photo of Aboriginal cultural objects (possibly from Western Australia)³⁶

³⁶ Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box Asia_Australia4127a4172. Photo number 4152. **English translation:** objects of Indigenous from Western Australia. London Colonial Exhibition. 1886. Enrico H. Giglioli. 1. Kaibi (boomerang) 2. Bombarro (message stick) 3. Mooryumkarr (amulet – my translation of literally ‘chases away spirits’) 4. Zhagga (vase) 5. Ornament for dancing 6. Emu quill feathers, for dancing. **Italian text:** oggetti degli indigeni del Western Australia. Esposizione coloniale di Londra. 1886. Enrico H. Giglioli. 1. Kaibi (boomerang) 2. Bombarro (bastone-messaggio) 3. Mooryumkarr (scaccia-spiriti) 4. Zhagga (vaso) 5. Ornamento per ballo 6. Ciuffo penna di Emeu, per ballo. **Digital archive:** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/photo-aboriginal-cultural-objects-possibly-western-australia>

5.4. Principle two – Reflect on historical responsibilities

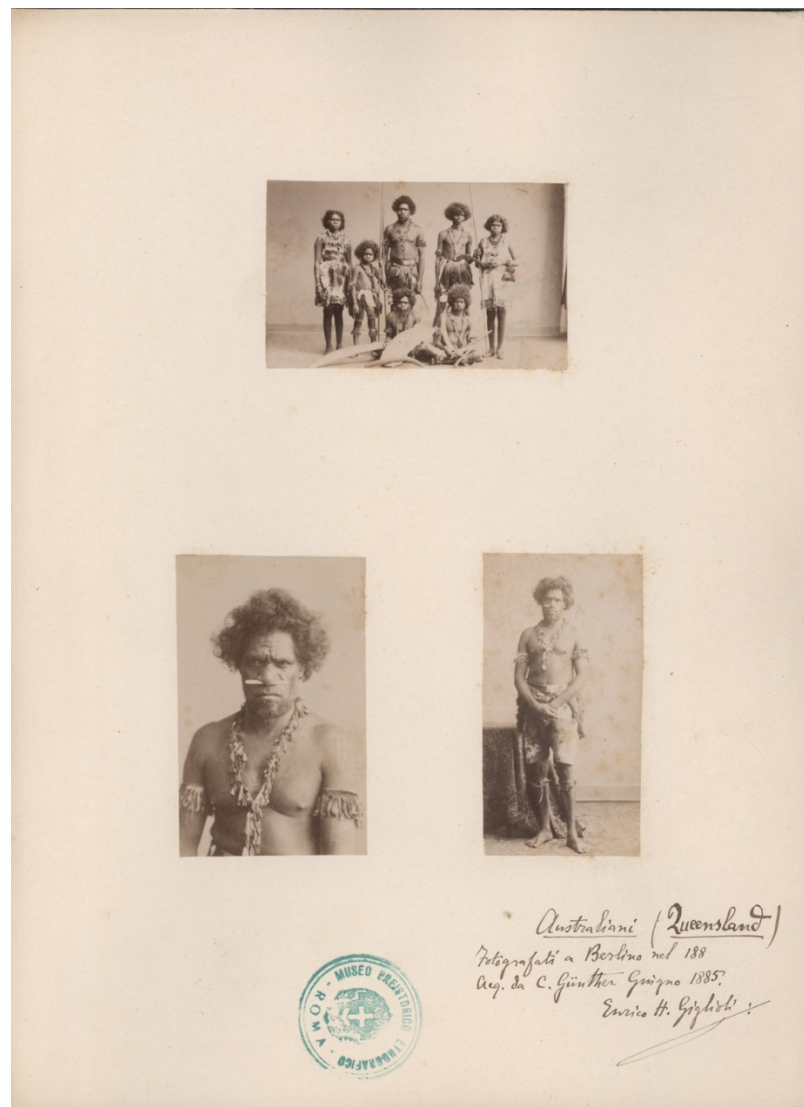


Figure 5.8. Tambo [image 2 and 3] and his family [image 1])³⁷

³⁷ Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box Australia Oceania 4219a4266. Photo number 4257. **English translation:** Australiani (Queensland). Photographed in Berlin in 1888. Purchased from G. Gutter. June 1885. Enrico H. Giglioli. Italian text: *Australiani (Queensland). Fotografati a Berlino nel 1888. Acq da G. Gutter Giugno 1885.*

Digital archive <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/tambo-and-his-family> ³⁸
Photograph by D'Albertis Museum.

The second principle that emerged prominently in the exchanges at the cultural interface is the imperative to comprehend and acknowledge the historical responsibilities of organisations and the country where they are based regarding the archival records they store. The conclusion drawn from these exchanges was that, in contrast to England's straightforward role in the occupation of the Australian continent, understanding the more nuanced roles of external players, such as Italy, was in some ways more complex but equally crucial.

In 1883, Robert A. Cunningham, a recruiter for Barnum and Bailey's circus, travelled to Palm and Hinchinbrook Island in Northern Queensland (Australia) to locate subjects to tour with the 'Ethnological Congress of Strange and Savage Tribes', one example of human zoos (Blanchard et al., 2008, 2012). Tambo (the name attributed to the man in the photo by Cunningham) was one of the 17 men and women who toured North America and Europe with other First Nations peoples from Africa, India, the Philippines and the United States to entertain the public as human curiosities. He died of illness one year after leaving Australia, and his mummified body was found in a funeral home in Cleveland (Ohio, United States) only in 1993. Only three group members survived: Jenny, her son Toby, and Billy. Tambo's Ancestral Remains brought some closure to his family when his body was taken back and buried in Palm Island. As anthropologist Roslyn Poignant (2014) showed, the archival material that has made it possible to retell the story of Tambo and his family is distributed across European and American archives. My research at the MUCIV has detected additional photos of the group, some of which are copies held in other countries. Further studies will be needed to determine if some of these images are original, if Giglioli (who authored the caption in the image) provide additional information to existing research and if the MUCIV holds further related documentation in its official registers. It will also take time to contact the families in Queensland and inform them about this documentation they probably did not know reached Italy. But these invaluable testimonies raise critical questions beyond the historical importance of their content and the empathy people would feel in front of this dehumanising historical fact: they interrogate historical responsibilities.

The legacy of Italian collectors towards disseminating Aboriginal knowledge is one of the emerging principles arising from this knowledge translation exercise. This acknowledgment made evident the responsibility of Italian collecting institutions towards the material beyond the limitations imposed by institutional and national legal

frameworks. As seen in Chapter 4, the conversations regarding the repatriation of cultural objects and Ancestral Remains in Italy have been contextualised within a Western legal framework, making little progress in how communities in Australia have access to this heritage. Following the same logic, in the example of Tambo's photos, the captions indicate that these images were purchased by Giglioli and, therefore, legally kept in the museum's collections. But what historical responsibilities do institutions hold when preserving testimonies of such horrific histories in their collections, despite not being directly involved in the exploitation of the people represented? What if these images, like in other cases of archival displacement worldwide, were demanded back?

Studying the institutions and collectors' lives can disclose intricate nets of exchange and power, especially in countries that did not participate directly in the colonisation efforts of the communities represented in the images. Returning to the concept of the identity containers (Caruso & Späth, 2020) explored in Chapter 4, the transnational nature of the collectors' relationships remarks that colonialism is not a "Monolithic structure with roots exclusively in historical bad action, rather [than as] a set of contemporary and evolving land relations that can be maintained by good intentions and even good deeds" (Liboiron, 2021). As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the archival records related to Aboriginal peoples in Italy and the Vatican have been collected and created by Italian migrants, scientists and missionaries. They are inextricably interconnected to the exploitation of Aboriginal Land and the threats to Aboriginal self-determination and sovereignty. The vicissitude of Tambo and his family is one among many other stories of exploitive, human trafficking and slavery of Aboriginal peoples that are hidden in archives (Foley, 2011; K. Johnson, 2021).

However, from the literature analysis in Chapter 4, what has become evident in the study of disparate archival displacement cases is that not all records are created equal and that reasons for return requests can vary. Some archives have been pinpointed by the people impacted by the events as vital for the most basic human rights: the example of the First Nations Canadian communities advocating for the return of residential schools' records to the Vatican (Chapter 2) is a tangible illustration. In other settings, such as in the example of the Grafton Elders Group searching for the identity of the people portrayed by J. W. Lindt (Chapter 3), successful collaborations have been established among communities, researchers, and institutions by focusing on multiple physical copies and pluralised access.

These considerations remark that there is not one solution that can be applied to the countless records related to First Nations peoples and histories that have been disseminated worldwide. Creating spaces for reflecting on historical responsibilities is crucial to enacting a decolonial archival praxis that does not repeat the same colonial model ingrained in past and present institutional practices. This approach is based on a decolonial viewpoint, which perceives ethics as grounded in transnational and transcultural communication between diverse individuals and agents rather than being restricted by national political and legal barriers. It is also guided by critical analysis by Indigenous thinkers and best practices for fostering cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations (Shell-Weiss, 2019). As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, this methodological step can benefit the slow process of archival return about displaced archives that have historically been treated legally, with just a few disputes solved over the last thirty years (Lowry, 2019a).

One example of how these principles have been enacted concretely in this doctoral project is the time taken to reflect on how to translate and why it is important to include an Acknowledgment of Country in the Italian context online (in the digital archive Prototype) and onsite (in the exhibition in Genova). Translating this concept in a way that made sense to a European general audience meant first deconstructing its roots, explaining that the British claim of Australia as *terra nullius* [land without people] influenced how Aboriginal peoples have been excluded from the national narrative (Moreton-Robinson, 2014; Watson, 2014). This was succeeded by an explanation of the significance behind acknowledging Country, a fundamental Aboriginal tradition spanning thousands of generations. The elucidation also delved into the reasons why its inclusion in an Italian exhibition can be perceived as an act of respect. The display provided examples for the public to grasp these concepts by showing images of D'Albertis and Lindt and reflecting on the legacies of colonial staged photography. In the same way that it was essential to explain to the Italian public why Aboriginal peoples have never ceded sovereignty over their Countries, we found it critical to rationalise why utilising 'Warnings' when images of deceased peoples are present. We wanted to show how to engage respectfully with Aboriginal peoples when speaking about the history of British colonialism outside Australia. These reflections have been echoed in the digital archive.

These histories are also the ones that make the Italian archival heritage valuable. Holding information about so many communities worldwide puts Italian institutions in the spotlight to contribute to truth-telling and social justice processes nationally and globally. As discussed in Chapter 2, analysing and debating the legacies of Italian collection practices has encouraged a reflection on its own colonial past in a process of nation-building that, with no doubt, will increase in years to come because *Everything Passes Except the Past* (Gerould, 2021).

5.5. Principle three – Reflecting on professional and personal responsibilities



Figure 5.9. Acknowledgment of Country in the Exhibition space³⁸

The third principle revealed by translating knowledge at the cultural interface is the importance of contemplating professional and personal accountabilities. What emerged was that once positioned in the cultural interface, the self-reflection of the professionals working in the institutions is essential to enact a critical decolonial praxis.

The crucial role of GLAM professionals in these processes is well known, as well as the importance of taking a stand in allyship in these professional spaces to underscore social change (Kluttz et al., 2020; Land, 2015). In this study, this acknowledgment starts with me, since my personal and professional viewpoints play a significant role in these knowledge translation processes. In this PhD, my role as a researcher and a facilitator is situated somewhere in the depth of the cultural interface, as these translations of

³⁸ Photograph by D'Albertis Museum.

languages and meanings all pass through my knowledge, experiences, and life story, coming together as a lens of understanding. Taking time for self-reflection emphasises the importance of the processes and objectives of all parties involved in taking care of these archives while considering the broader relationships and responsibilities they may have towards each other in the present and future. The multiple layers of translation that this PhD journey is carving in this interface create spaces for the owners of the histories represented in the Italian institutions so they can own their own voices. In these information-sharing processes, the shared concepts are essential. But what is most crucial is the relationship that went into informing them. I don't own the knowledge created in this process, but thanks to these connections, I now have a new relationship with this knowledge. The responsibility towards these relationships becomes my axiology as I make the connection and continue working to progress Aboriginal priorities within the information space (Wilson, 2008).

The relationships and responsibilities created with the records are protected by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Despite not being legally binding, the signature of an MOU between UTS and the three partner institutions was a practical step to endorse the values of the project (which are included in the document) and to confirm intents. I also conceptualised it as a showcase, albeit to a limited extent, of the pivotal importance of transcultural agreements that are initiated by, but go beyond, mere good intentions when working with displaced archives. UTS agreed to support the digital archive through my PhD study and beyond, while the three museums agreed to share their digital archival collections related to Aboriginal peoples and to undertake research to support knowledge sharing. Despite an agreement between two Western institutions, it has community benefits. For example, by including the requirement of an exit strategy to respect the involvement of Aboriginal peoples or communities engaging with the digital archive. Or by including details about respecting ICIP and cultural protocols as the baseline for sharing content. The writing of the document has been an exciting experiment of mixing languages (as the MOU was created in Italian and English), institutional practices (as the document was written upon specific templates in use in the three jurisdictions where the museums are located, but also had to obey to UTS and Australian Government requirements) and negotiation across multiple stakeholders.

5.6. Principle 4 – The need for creating spaces for Indigenous views of the archive

The fourth and last principle that emerged at the cultural interface is creating spaces for Indigenous worldviews and intents in the Italian information sector.

The engagement with knowledge translation practices in this PhD research has created the settings for further action. The technique of imagining by Marisa Elena Duarte and Miranda Belarde-Lewis (2015) is a valuable roadmap for this work. Aligned with Kirsten Thorpe's (2019) vision of praxis, imagining calls for action and transformation in institutional contexts for non-Indigenous readers. Therefore, it aligns with my primary audiences for this research: institutions and the public. Duarte and Belarde-Lewis (2015) request:

In sharing this concept of imagining, what we are asking non-Indigenous readers to do is step outside of the normative expectations about how the documents written for, by, and about Indigenous peoples ought to be organized, and instead acknowledge the reasons why Indigenous peoples might prefer to develop their own approaches.

Imagining is based on two decolonising methodologies: envisioning and realising the beauty of First Nations knowledge. Both approaches involve sharing because, for “Indigenous peoples, what we know, understanding how we know, and how our knowing shapes our relationships within our environments and through the categories we create” (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015). Imagining implies five steps, of which four can be addressed to non-Indigenous thinkers. First, it is about increasing understanding of how colonisation works in the information sector. Second, it implies identifying and conceptualising the tools, techniques, values, institutions, and processes that shape decolonisation. Third, it stresses to build partnerships to increase awareness about the value of Indigenous knowledge. Fourth, it encourages identifying First Nations partners essential to designing functional Indigenous ontologies. In this section, I reflect on four examples of how we enacted these concepts in the collaboration for my PhD research.

First, Duarte and Belarde-Lewis remind readers that, before creating spaces for Indigenous ontologies, we must understand why and how colonisation works in collecting institutions. This is done through naming, describing, collocating, classifying, and standardising techniques, and it has been the most critical step in this research project,

as “Colonialism is subtle, insidious, and nearly invisible to privileged citizens of a Settler state” (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015). The D’Albertis Museum initiated this problematisation many years prior the beginning of this project (De Palma, 2022) and did not end with the creation of the exhibition. The process we followed to create a flyer that visitors can find in the exhibition space at the D’Albertis Museum spoke about these challenges when applied to archival description. During the process, with the museum staff and other external collaborators, we discussed and problematised how we would usually describe a record (such as through the name of the explorer who took or bought the photograph). Recognising this internalised process, the group’s point of view completely shifted. As shown in the English version of the brochure below, Aboriginal peoples, usually ignored in archival description, become the story’s centre. The historical background wants to provide Italian and international tourists with a clear idea of the longevity and richness of Aboriginal cultures and the ferocity of the settlement project.



Figure 5.10. Detail of Exhibition flyer of the D'Albertis Museum

Secondly, the practice of imagining urges us to identify and conceptualise the tools, techniques, values, institutions and processes that shape decolonisation. This step is

about formally acknowledging the value of Indigenous epistemologies to have the tool to justify Indigenous knowledge work in institutions. One of the ways how we reflected on this concept was the acknowledgment of unattributed ICIP rights on the collections, as they are not formally recognised by Intellectual Property (IP) laws (J. Anderson & Christen, 2019; J. Anderson & Geismar, 2017; Janke, 2003; Janke & Others, 2019). This concern adds to the distinctive rulings of the country where the records are held, as we have seen in the Italian context. As noted in the opening of this thesis, one of the strategies we have worked on is to include Local Context notices (J. Anderson & Christen, n.d.) in the digital archive. These tools assist in shifting the conversation from property to Indigenous cultural authority. In our process, it was essential to recognise that metadata description was, and never will be, neutral or 'one fits all solution' (Carbajal, 2021; Duff & Harris, 2002) and that the only way to approach it was to set standards of transparency on the criteria we have adopted (Long et al., 2017).

Thirdly, Duarte and Belarde-Lewis's method of imagining implies the need to spread awareness of Indigenous epistemologies. From the ongoing conversations had during the process of conceiving the display, three essential layers emerged when attempting to translate the context of the exhibition for the Italian public. The first layer relates to explaining the context of the colonisation of Australia and the conditions in which the exhibited photographs were taken. The second translation level focuses on informing the public why these records are important for people today. The third layer leverages an emotional and empathic response to the stories.



Figure 5.11. Harry Neville (Gumbaynggirr) (1825-1920ca.)³⁹

This image of Harry Neville was created in a staged environment where the man sits along weapons, objects and plants from disparate locations. The biggest challenge was translating concepts about why staged photography must be contextualised within

³⁹ He is also known to Europeans as 'King Harry'. Document from the D'Albertis Museum photographic archive (Genova). Photo number LM_f77.

Digital archive <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/176>

colonial power relationships. Italian public visiting the museum may or may not have had any knowledge about staged photography or familiarity with concepts related to the colonisation of Aboriginal sovereignty. Providing a vibrant representation of Aboriginal Australia was one of the ways we confronted this issue, for example, by utilising the colours of the Aboriginal flag as the room leitmotiv (red, black, and yellow). The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia highlights the richness and diversity of Aboriginal languages and cultures across the Australian continent (Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2023b).



Figure 5.12. Photograph of part of the display curated for the D’Albertis Museum⁴⁰

⁴⁰ In the display: book *Dispossession. Black Australians and White Invaders* (Henry Reynolds, 1989). *Map of Indigenous Australia* from David R Horton (creator), © Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), 1996. Bag White Australia has a black history. Both items from personal collection. Photograph by D’Albertis Museum.

Filming the videos in the exhibition on Country and reflecting on Aboriginal sovereignty over these lands has never been ceded was another strategy to disrupt the passive representation of Aboriginal peoples in Italian archives.



Figure 5.13. Part of my video⁴¹

The Exhibition brought to the attention of the media and the public crucial themes for the acknowledgment and respect of First Nations ontologies, such as the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and languages (Bruzzone, 2022; Orlando, 2021).⁴²

⁴¹ Video now on permanent display in the D'Albertis. Museum Minute 1.41. Film and drone footage by Chris Duczynski. Director/Producer, Malibu Media.
https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/en_au/watch-the-videos/

⁴² *"In mostra ci sono, oltre agli straordinari "trofei coloniali" di D'Albertis anche una serie di fotografie scattate dal capitano stesso molti anni dopo, nel 1910, nell'interno del continente, vicino alle stazioni del treno. I soggetti sono ancora gli aborigeni, ma questa volta non vestono i costumi della loro tradizione, ma indumenti malandati di forgia occidentale. Segno del cambio di un'epoca nella "terra chiamata Australia" come dicono oggi gli aborigeni, per i quali il loro continente in realtà si chiama in diversi altri modi, almeno trecento, tante sono le lingue delle popolazioni autoctone".* ["On display are, [...] also a series of photographs taken by the captain himself many years later, in 1910, in the interior of the continent, near the train stations. The subjects are still Aboriginal peoples, but this time, they do not wear the costumes of their tradition but battered Western style garments. Sign of the change of an era in the "land called Australia" as Aboriginal

The exhibition's second level of information focused on why this material is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. The photograph in the opening of this section can be traced in the book *Photographs Are Never Still: The JW Lindt Collection* (Gahan et al., 2017), which tells the story of the search for the identity of the Aboriginal peoples in Lindt's photographs held in the Grafton Regional Gallery (NSW). It is a significant example of a community-led approach to possible ways forward to reconnect these photographs to their descendants. This project challenged how these records have been seen in the Italian imagination as testimonies of a far-away world fixed in space and time.

The third layer of understanding that emerged from the exhibition was the emotional connection with the content. What are visitors really attracted by when walking through a museums? (De Palma, 2019). Making people empathise with the stories illustrated in the display was a way to stimulate reflection on the long-term legacies of colonial collecting. This strategy aligns with theories of radical empathy in the archives (M. L. Caswell, 2021), which I refer to in Chapter 3 and have been indicated as one way to break out international stalemates in the displaced archives field (Lowry, 2019a). However, our approach aligns with Davis Jade (2023) refusal of empathy as an effective or critical tool, as it can obscure racism and power and dominance relationships. Instead,

peoples say today, for which their continent is actually called in various other ways, at least three hundred, there are many languages of the Indigenous peoples”] (Orlando, 2021).

“Del suo intervento mi ha colpito, fra le altre cose, il fatto che non parli di Australia, ma del paese che oggi chiamiamo così, sottolineando quindi come i luoghi esistessero prima della ‘scoperta’ da parte degli europei e avessero già loro nomi nelle lingue locali, poi sostituiti da altri scelti dai colonizzatori perché nominare è un’azione che implica possesso”. [Among other things, I was struck by the fact that [Monica] does not speak of ‘Australia’, but of the country we now call that, thus underlining how places existed before the “discovery” by Europeans and already had their names in local languages. Names that were then replaced by others chosen by the colonisers because naming is an action that implies possession] (Bruzzzone, 2022).

⁴³ **English translation:** How would you feel inside such a photographic set? If you were in such a constructed photograph, how do you think you would be exoticized/stereotyped? **Italian text:** *Come ti sentiresti all'interno di un simile set fotografico? Se ci fossi tu in una simile fotografia costruita, come credi verresti esotizzato/stereotipato?*

the focus is on being truthful about biases even if they are excluded from the experience of “the other”:

I understand decolonization to be a project of undoing. Letting go of empathy and facing its other side is a decolonial project. Understanding decolonization as an orientation toward the future complicates empathy, as empathy creates a false engagement with the past. Empathy erases the present and denies those who are not part of the existing power structures, those who are only real through empathy, the ability to be part of the future. This is an enforced affective incompleteness for those who exist outside of the dominant power structures (J. E. Davis, 2023).

In this light, Harry King’s photograph at the beginning of this section was utilised as a first stop of emotional connection before being contextualised in its historical context. It asks: “How would you feel inside a similar photographic setting? What about if you were in a similarly constructed photo? How would you be exoticised/stereotyped?”.



Figure 5.14. Example from the main room of the exhibition 'Antipodes'⁴³

With the same sentiment, Marika Duczynski writes:

“How would you feel if... You discovered there were photographs of your mother, father, grandmother or grandfather held in an institutional archive far from home? What if the photographs had been acquired by the institution a long time ago – possibly over the last century – and had been publicly displayed in exhibitions and online? What if the name of your ancestors and the contextual information about the photographs was missing, incorrect or racist?” (M. Duczynski, 2021)

Further, the research for the development of the display at the D'Albertis Castle was the realisation that the dialogue ignited by the work on the records not only generated new knowledge and offered an impetus to rethink the practice of the Museum but also shaped its current epistemologies. The work undertaken for the exhibition has impacted the museum's physical space, which has built a small permanent display dedicated to its Australian Aboriginal collections. Acknowledgment of Country and warnings for the deceased in English and Italian have been incorporated into the space. This manoeuvre establishes a culturally appropriate environment for hosting community-led content in the future and continuously informing the Italian public.

⁴³ **English translation:** How would you feel inside such a photographic set? If you were in such a constructed photograph, how do you think you would be exoticized/stereotyped? **Italian text:** *Come ti sentiresti all'interno di un simile set fotografico? Se ci fossi tu in una simile fotografia costruita, come credi verresti esotizzato/stereotipato?*





Figures 5.15, 5.16, 5.17. Photos of the new permanent space dedicated to Aboriginal Australia at the D'Albertis Museum⁴⁴

Lastly, imagining requires building a deep knowledge domain through the direct participation of First Nations peoples or, where this is not possible, through Indigenous storywork. As discussed in Chapter 3, Archibald's (2008) seminal work brought at the forefront of academic spaces the authoritative and deep importance of Indigenous stories to the world. Indigenous storywork differs from the research application of story and research for its "Emotional resonance to Country, [which] evokes creation and survival in each breath" (Steffensen, 2019, p. 171). It represents a profound form of resistance that dismantles imperialistic boundaries and envisions collective will through strategies inspired by Indigenous perspectives on transformation. Consequently, its focus extends beyond merely narrating stories from Indigenous standpoints: Indigenous storytelling stands at the core of global self-determination movements (J.-A. Archibald,

⁴⁴ My photographs. November 2022. **Figure 5.15:** Acknowledgment of Country in Italian and English that accompany the Aboriginal cultural objects housed at the museum. **Figures 5.16 and 5.17:** videos of Marika Duczynski and myself speaking about this research and the importance of the digital archive from our own different standpoints. Each area has also an informative panel and a QR code inviting visitors to connect to the digital archive to access the exhibition content and the museums archival records.

2008; J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019; Kerr & Adamov Ferguson, 2021; Steffensen, 2019).

In the D'Albertis Museum space, the direct participation of Marika Duczynski's has given the public the opportunity of learning about the depth of those records and the impact they have on people's lives today. It is through her video that visitors connect with the cultural objects and archival material related to Aboriginal Australia. In the original display we curated, her relationship with the record was the main narrative visitors encountered; this can be seen through the story of her Auntie Julie Binge, portrayed as a seven-month-old baby on the cover of the *Dawn* magazine in 1953. The *Dawn* and the *New Dawn* were magazines the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board issued between 1915 and 1969. They contained photographs and information related to life in missions and reserves, areas under church and government control where large numbers of Aboriginal people were forced to live. They were propaganda magazines created to convince the government the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board was a government agency and the broader white Australian population of their success in the 'protection' of Aboriginal communities. Despite this assimilationist intent, the *Dawn* and the *New Dawn* are not just historical records but significant assets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to find out information about family members.

5.7. Conclusion

Through a critical analysis of the efforts invested in developing the digital archive prototype and curating the display at the D'Albertis Castle, this chapter presents an innovative investigation into the knowledge translation process within the cultural interface. This practice involves perspectives from diverse knowledge systems, languages, cultures, and historical backgrounds. The methods I employed to leverage the cultural interface as a bridge between these two contexts are flexible and do not seek a universal solution for all. Instead, they challenge people and organisations to customise the interface according to local specificities. I do so by encouraging participants to be present in mind, body and spirit. This is important and urgent work that must start immediately (J. O'Neal, 2019).

This new praxis has had striking effects. It effectively challenged how the records have been considered and administered until the present. It has contested existing

taxonomies. Reshaped the museum's physical space. Forged dialogue. Built relationships nationally and internationally. Most importantly, it has created the settings to inform data sovereignty principles in the archival space by disseminating the records, questioning attributions and intermediate languages. The central argument that pulls through this chapter is that conflict and learning must be central to any work with colonial records to make structural changes locally and globally. Without critiquing how the records have been collected and produced, conserved, described, catalogued, and appreciated – while problematising how we are all part of these histories - any praxis with displaced archive replicates the same power model that tries to challenge. Indigenous decolonial methodologies offer potent approaches for Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations to change the current ways.

CHAPTER 6. DEFINE

A New Concept: Eclipse Archive

All this living is a constant cycle of fire.
Imagine what seeds have been laid here.

Winhanganha trailer (in Wiradjuri language: Remember, know, think)
Movie made of archival footage from the National Film and Sound Archive
(NFSA) on the legacies of collecting for First Nations peoples.
Jazz Money (Wiradjuri), 2023

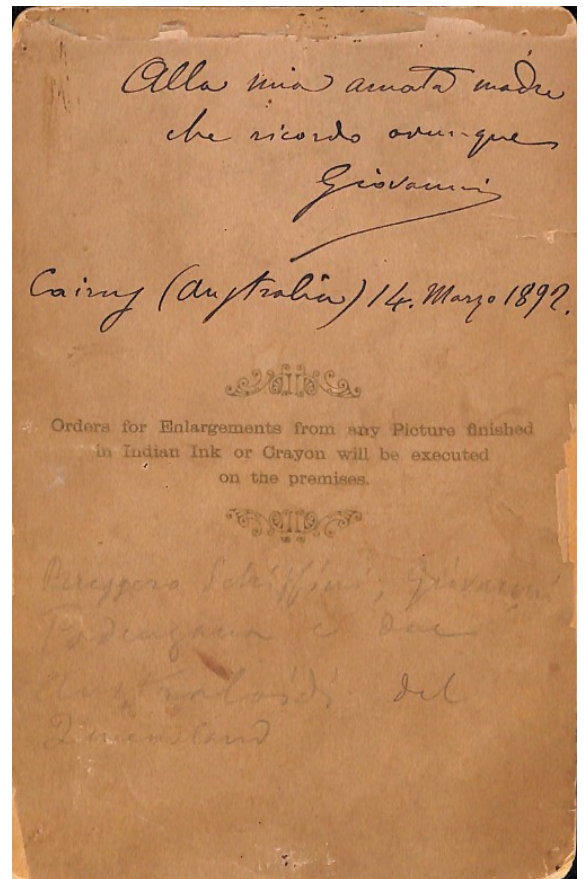


Figure 6.1. Photograph of two Aboriginal men, with Giovanni Podenzana and Ruggero Schiffini reproduced in a postcard⁴⁵

"I was born on the 14th of March 1892, far away from where I live now, in a country called Queensland. At that time, Australia attracted many explorers curious to investigate the Aboriginal people living there. Along with these adventurers, there was Giovanni Podenzana, a scientist from La Spezia, from the recently unified nation of Italy. He travelled around Aboriginal lands with his dear friend Ruggero Schiffini, the town pharmacist.

⁴⁵ Document from the Podenzana Museum archive (La Spezia). Photo number 7966. **English translation** front (left image): Handley & Atkinson. Photo Artists, Cairns. Text back (right side): To my beloved mother who I remember anywhere. Giovanni. Cairns (Australia) 14 March 1892. **Italian text** (back): *Alla mia amata madre che ricordo ovunque. Giovanni Cairns (australia) 14. Marzo 1892.* **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/node/303>

I carry one only instant packed with thick meanings and new relationships. I am frozen in time despite living in a museum in Italy called Museo Civico. I live in a black photographic album on the underground level of the building, but I do not receive visitors very often. I share the space with twenty-eight other photographs of different peoples and other countries.

However, I am unique.

I am the only picture portraying Giovanni and Ruggero with two people who have inhabited the land we now call Australia from time immemorial.

I also hold more stories than I can tell. Take a closer look at Giovanni, the taller man on the right. In his jacket pocket, you can see the profile of a notebook. A slim black notepad. A journal where he incessantly recorded his feelings and what he was learning during his travels. This is one of the five journals he wrote during his ten years living in Australia. Only one of these notebooks has survived to the present day, and it lives with me in that dark room in the Museum underground.

I have been travelling extensively, you know? I am not only an object, a photograph, and a source of information filled like a Russian doll. One of those intriguing dolls was also a gift from Giovanni to his mother. On my back, you can read that I became a postcard responsible for conveying Giovanni's feelings. It took me a long time to arrive at La Spezia from the photographic study in Cairns, where I was born.

For so many years, I have lived latent in the archive. I was published in a book in 1999, but no one came to reclaim me. The two Aboriginal men I carry with me are not in this world anymore; their stories are in me, but they are not what they look like. So much happened that day when I was taken. I am here. Here and travelling online for many to be seen".

6.1. Introduction – Is there a conceptualisation for the Italian records?

This speculative vignette helps me to read and contextualise the photograph that opens this chapter. Now held at the Podenzana's Museum, it was taken at the Hendley and Atkinson photographic studio in Cairns (Queensland, Australia) on 14 March 1892 and is now part of the Podenzana Museum archive in La Spezia. Here I utilise creative writing in two ways. The first is to unpack the multiple layers of meaning and sets of historical routes embedded in this image questioning who are the people represented? Why are they connected? Which journeys have this photograph followed across the world? The second is an attempt to reclaim its life and agency across different temporal and analytical paradigms. In Indigenous worldviews, the people and places represented in the image and their digital copies:

1. Have agency.
2. Have stories.
3. Speak about Ancestors.
4. Deserve respect.

The book *Te Motunui Epa* by Taranaki Te Ātiawa academic and storyteller Rachel Buchanan (2022) inspired me to look at the records' trajectories through wording that academic writing could not express. As described in Chapter 3, Buchanan tells the story of five wooden panels carved in the late 1700s by Ancestors in Taranaki and dispersed worldwide by placing their taonga/tūpuna (their voice, their value) at the story's core. The Epa crafted by Ancestors possesses souls, as do the two unnamed men captured in the photograph. By giving this photo held in Italy a voice, I attempt to reclaim its agency.

One way to demonstrate respect for this image is by caring for it in a manner that aligns with its unique characteristics. Upon careful re-examination of this photograph and the circumstances surrounding its creation, relocation, and preservation, a sense of uncertainty arose regarding its appropriate categorisation. The Hendley photographic studio produced and sold plentiful images now found in collecting institutions and private collections worldwide. However, I continued to think that this image was different from the others I had seen many times working in Australian collecting institutions. What category of archival displacement is being addressed in this photograph? What impact has the presence of this image had in Italy? How would its role in Italian society differ

from other Hendley studio images preserved in Australia or Britain? Where does this image belong? What does it represent? These unanticipated queries became an opportunity to establishing a suitable definition for the Aboriginal documentation explored in the previous chapter.

My analysis in this chapter shows a missing link in the extensive academic classifications of displaced archives. I argue there is an absence of an appropriate categorisation for the Italian scenario. This gap poses a substantial challenge and a critical missed opportunity. It raises concerns about which other crucial documentation Italian institutions can contain unknown to Aboriginal peoples and the public. Further, the lack of categorisation for the Aboriginal records in Italy impedes their understanding: it is only through the act of naming a body of knowledge that the discursive arena, critical analysis, and political discourse surrounding it are activated and magnified.

By utilising the methodology of archival-poetics (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a), supplemented by a reading along the grain (Stoler, 2010) I dig into these questions (both methodologies are described in Chapter 3). In summary, what emerged from this analysis is that the subject and the formal style of the nineteenth-century Aboriginal records in Italy can be read as a discourse dedicated to celebrating the supremacy of Italian institutions in collecting *the Indigenous other*. Their acquisition and ongoing management were grounded in the need to support the colonial ideologies of the time, both within Italy and towards more extensive European powers such as England and France. However, their reading reveals that their acquisition and retention served specific political, social, and educational aims for the newly formed Italian, benefited from collecting Aboriginal heritage for three main reasons. Firstly, to integrate the new state into the collecting networks of larger European empires; secondly, to locate Italy and Italians with northern Europeans at the summit of social hierarchies; and thirdly, and subsequently, to support the ideologies of the fascist regime and the role of Italy as a coloniser.

To fill this gap, in this chapter I make a methodological intervention proposing the new categorisation of the *eclipse archive*. I utilise the metaphor of the eclipse to define records kept in unexpected places, referring to archives that distinguish themselves from the ones held in Australia or Great Britain for their political and social function. This allegory signifies that they have been positioned in either light or darkness according to

the scope they served or ceased to perform for the collectors and the Italian state. I utilise the idea of the eclipse also to symbolise the importance and agency of the physical and digital records and the crucial role of the knowledge translation process in the cultural interface. The interest and curiosity these records provoke has brought these two layers together in this study. This innovative theoretical take is significant because it enriches the academic discourse on archival displacement and provides a baseline for further studies. It offers a unique positioning for archives in other countries with similar characteristics.

In this chapter I first analyse the records in Italy against the background of the categories offered by the literature on archival displacement. Then, I adopt Natalie Harkin's (Baker et al., 2020; Harkin, 2014, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a) archival poetics work as a methodology to interrogate three layers of the Italian records: the power in the colonial archive, the ghosts who live within, and the blood memory that flows throughout. In this analysis, the work of Ann Laura Stoler's (2002, 2010) framework of along the grain has served me to supplement this methodology. It does so by considering what was collected and kept by the Italian state, the poorly documented events, the analysis of where the records were stored, and which function records performed in different moments of the Italian political agenda. In the last part of this chapter, I propose the new concept of eclipsed archives and discuss its implications.

6.2. Alignment of Aboriginal records in Italy to established classifications

Records displacement is often the effect of historical power imbalances. This is the reason why the distribution of this documentation on a global scale sits along what James Lowry and Riley Linebaug (2021, p. 285) call *the colour line*. Archives, museums, and other collecting institutions perpetuate these power imbalances through maintaining their authority in organising, describing, and providing access to the records. These uneven practices mean that displaced archives are constantly entangled in complex and contested issues of power and ownership. The decision of which records to return in response to repatriation requests signifies the pinnacle of this apparatus of dominance (Hiribarren, 2017; Lovering, 2017; Lowry, 2017). Indeed, requesting archival repatriation often becomes a way to fight over historical events (Cox, 2011, 2014). The institutions' control mechanisms, acting as gatekeepers for the records, are typically veiled by legal,

political, religious, and professional arguments. In the Foreword section of the book *Disputed Archival Heritage* (Lowry, 2022), leading archivist and academic Janette Bastian remarks that despite the differences, archival displacement presents many common threads:

“The tension between custody and access runs throughout, as do the critical relationships between records and communities; the exertion of control and power of one entity over another suggests that the forces of Colonialism can still assume many forms today; the intransigency of current custodians offers little hope of resolutions despite decades of efforts by the International Council of Archives and UNESCO; successes are few and far between, depending more on personal intervention than any internationally agreed on the protocol” (p. xiii).

This fight against historical injustice echoes within the archival displacement realm, particularly in countries that underwent a process of decolonisation from European powers. This tendency is evident in the many active archival repatriation requests (Lowry et al., 2020). The most analysed theme in the literature concerns clashes between nation-states and their former colonies after the Second World War. I learned from Anderson (2011) that one of the most striking examples of this sort is the case of the African State of Kenya, once an English colony that obtained independence in 1963. The records related to atrocities committed against Kenyan citizens were secretly brought to England during the progress towards independence. They were discovered only in 2011 when a group of Kenyan torture survivors demanded compensation from the British Government. Despite a formal legal process starting in 2009, this secret migrated archive remains in England, understudied and incomplete. As Linebaugh (2022) argues, this scandal symbolises colonial fragility, meaning the tendency to hide and sidestep the evidence of racialised violence and exploitation inherent in colonial domination due to the embarrassment it could bring to the British government. The urgency of this case is brought to public attention in the digital exhibition *Lost Unities: An Exhibition for Archival Repatriation*, curated by Forget Chaterera-Zambuko and James Lowry (2023). This ongoing initiative wants to give visibility to the indifference of the British Government towards the persistent request to repatriate African archives.

There are only a few instances documented in the literature and media where archival records have been physically repatriated. Jos van Beurden (2022, p. 277) observes that negotiations about cultural objects and archives are usually separated and treated in different ways, even though historically, “Where the two have met, it has not been to the

disadvantage of either". One instance is the return of a collection of significant 16th-century manuscripts illegally taken from Mexico's National Archive, repatriated thanks to a joint operation by the Mexican government, Manhattan District Attorney's Office, and Homeland Security Investigations (Packard, n.d.). Another well-known case is the repatriation of the Suriname archives from the Netherlands, driven by archivist and Director of the National Archives Suriname Rita Tjien Fooh. This process is among the few successful return instances under a collaborative heritage framework. It is an act of repatriation that has evolved into a cooperative endeavour, fostering the development of skills and knowledge among South American archivists responsible for the long-term care of these records (Van Dijk & Fooh, 2022).

Within this broad context, the full extent of this issue for First Nations people from settlers and colonial countries remains unsolvable (Chapter 2). The number of records taken across borders during colonisation is incalculable, as is their long-term impact. Loss of control of information, disregard for ICIP rights and moral and financial damages caused by control of Indigenous data are just some of the consequences of this dispersal. Overall, the vast literature on archival displacement clearly remarks that global power dynamics still regulate the possession and control of archives. These multi-layered complexities can be read in the literature through the difficulties in adopting consistent terminology to conceptualise the contexts of records displacement. Over the last fifty years, archivists have crafted various terms to define archival displacement. Some examples include the repatriated archives (Boyer, 1982), captured records (Auer, 2017; Grimsted, 2010) and migrated archives (Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM), 2017; Banton, 2012; Livsey, 2022; Mnjama, 2015; Piccini, 2023). Various other definitions exist that characterise this heritage as a collectively owned resource. For example, ICA has re-adopted the definition Shared Archival Heritage and Archival Claims, building upon Leopold Auer's classification (1998), as has done UNESCO. However, several authors such as Banton (2020) have recently challenged the use of 'shared archival heritage' as it does not correctly acknowledge the power structures and the tension that generally motivates repatriation requests.

This list is not comprehensive, acknowledging the prolonged history of the academic discourse on displaced archives. Eric Ketelaar (2017) traces the use of the term displaced archive to American archivist Ernst Posner, who in 1960 promoted programs to protect archives in countries affected by war, establishing collection centres for

records to be returned to their original owners. Among the extensive texts written on the subject, the two primary texts that have compelled my research are the books *Displaced Archives*, published by Routledge in 2017 and *Disputed Archival Heritage*, distributed in 2023. Besides being the first systematic studies of archival displacement, these works clearly show the theoretical direction of this field of study. If the first title, *Displaced Archives*, focuses on the subject's history, the second book highlights the notion of contested heritage, emphasising the significance of revealing power dynamics within the relationships between the parties. However, both volumes share the importance of grasping the general terminology as important because definitions (such as 'displaced') are the prerequisite for how archives are treated under the law.

6.3. Locating the specific aspects of Aboriginal records in Italy

In this expansive context of archival displacement, how can the classification of Aboriginal records in Italy be outlined? In this section I explore the context and power structures in which the Aboriginal records in Italy are ingrained through a Narungga lens. The methodology of archival-poetics (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a) shapes a pathway for a profound understanding of the context. The reading along the grain (Stoler, 2010) complement this approach by offering a comparative case with another context of archival displacement, as illustrated in Chapter 3. Harkin and Stoler, each from a unique perspective, explore the colonial order by examining archival production. In the next section, I follow the same structure of the work *Archival Poetics* to bring to light the features of the Aboriginal records held in Italian collecting and cultural institutions by analysing the structures of the colonial archive (Harkin, 2019b), the ghosts that represent unfinished business (Harkin, 2019c), and the blood memories that flow within (Harkin, 2019a).

Colonial Archive (Archival-Poetics 1)

The initial volume of *Archival Poetics* by Natalie Harkin focuses on the state, emphasising its institutions, systems, and processes. Harkins remarks the fantasy discourse that permeates colonial archival production that silences voices, excludes histories, and controls agencies. The state felt empowered to describe people who did not know, such as Harkin's Nanna (Harkin, 2019b, p. 11): "She is rarely named. Simply "the girl" (Harkin, 2019b, p. 16). Colonial photography depicts individuals who can barely be perceived as humans (Harkin, 2019b, p. 28). Archivists, anthropologists and all the

other people involved in the colonial enterprise were entitled to define the “problem of dealing with the aboriginal population” (Harkin, 2019b, p. 12), perpetuating a deficit model that can be observed in today’s Australian society. The extent of this entitlement was reflected in the offensive and racist language these actors used to describe people, enriching their power (Harkin, 2019b, p. 16). Words and ideas were added and deleted at will, leaving evidence of what was essential to keep for posterity (Harkin, 2019b, p. 19), in a never-ending cycle (Harkin, 2019, pp. 32–33) that recalls the continuum lives of the records.

Highlighting Harkin’s insights within the Italian context reveals the primary motive behind the Italian state’s acquisition and utilisation of Aboriginal records: the elite’s aspiration to integrate into the collecting networks of long-established European empires. In the study of the Dutch Indian Archives, Ann Laura Stoler (2009) considers evaluating what was collected as critical to tracing the prevailing reasons for the archive itself. Collecting reflects the ability to give something value, share it with others and maintain it despite external “Counter charges of valuelessness or alternative values” (Cresswell, 2012, p. 166). This aspiration aligned with the foreign policy goal identified by the ruling elites since the Unification: the formal recognition of Italy’s role as a great European power (Varsori, 2020).

The range of what was chosen for posterity in the Italian circumstance followed the global trends resulting from the transnational travels of people and objects (Fromont, 2013). The reasons that animate Italian institutions’ desire to collect are in colonial epistemologies and scaffold some of the theories supporting colonial expansion. A thirst for the exotic and exploring faraway worlds, support of evolutionary theories and justification for colonial empires were values shared by most European empires and collectors (Baldi, 2016; Spitta, 2009). Clifford’s (1989, p. 228) ‘salvage paradigm’ criticises and evaluates other cultures according to criteria or authenticity forced by the West and then sentences them to the past “By removing objects from their current historical situation”. The act of collecting peoples and cultures that were considered ‘salvaged’ and ‘vanishing’ placed them outside the flux of history, which is a well-known colonial strategy. Examples of *captives’ narratives* were the ‘human zoos’ that enslaved an unidentified number of people from European colonies and treated them as exotic curiosities (Blanchard et al., 2008). They were moments of scientific racism, of showcasing imperial power and a ‘taste of exotic’. However, within some of these

instances, there were moments of resistance and talking back (Vanni, 2016a, p. 317). These records were not silent testimonies of an aggressive past but had the power of speaking back and in turn reshuffle the order of things of the receptor institution and culture. Clifford's 'salvage paradigm' is relevant in this context because, as we shall see in the next section, whiteness has shaped the Italian Nation from unification to the Republic (Patriarca & Deplano, 2018), producing social hierarchies and narratives across the nation-state.

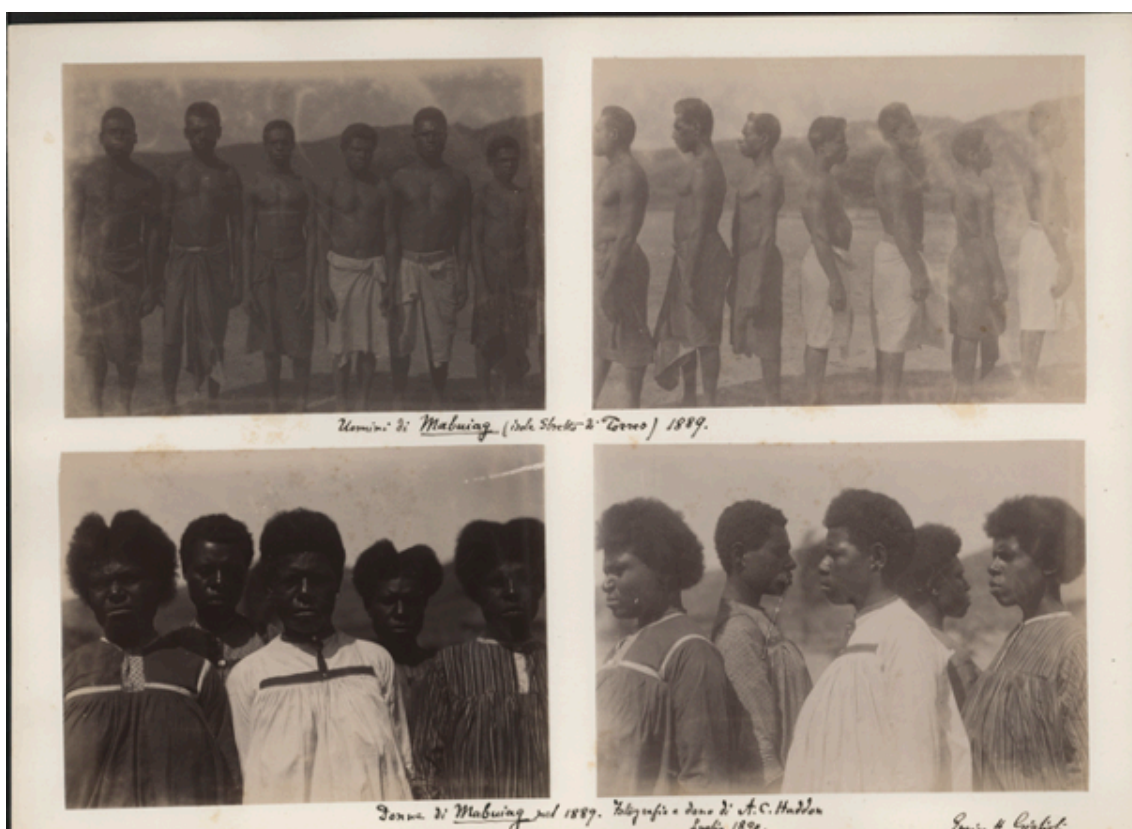


Figure 6.2. Photo of men and women from Mabuiag Island (Torres Strait Island, traditionally known as Gumu)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box SezOceania4586a4615. Ref. 04603. **English translation:** Men of Mabuiag, Torres Strait Island, 1889. Women of Mabuiag, Torres Strait Islands, 1889. Photographs gift of A.C. Haddon July 1890. **Italian text:** Uomini di Mabuiag, isole di Torres 1889. Donne di Mabuiag nel 1889. Fotografie dono di A. C. Hadon luglio 1890. **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/photo-men-and-women-mabuiag-island-torres-strait-island-traditionally-known-gumu>

Understanding the key players and dynamics within the Italian elite who aspired to participate in the collecting networks of long-established European empires is beneficial for the study of Aboriginal records. It helps unpack not only how the documentation moved across institutions but also the ways in which has been categorised. As discussed, the photographic collection assembled by Enrico Hillyer Giglioli, now held at the photographic archive at the MUCIV is an excellent example of this entangled network of collectors that communicated through epistolary ethnography (Ghezzi, 2021a). Giglioli became interested in collecting images of different “types” of First Nations peoples from suggestions from colleagues and friends during his travels around the world commissioned by the Italian Government in 1865. Agnese Ghezzi (2021a, p. 29) examined how Giglioli's collecting practice reveals an intricate network among photographers, institutions, scientists, and the movements of images in the anthropological markets. The detailed captions written by Giglioli at the edges of the photographs reveal precious details about the trajectory of the image and the people represented. Further, they create a traceable path of the movements of the photographs in and out of institutions in Italy and overseas as objects of knowledge and privileged social tools for establishing connections between travellers, experts, and high society (Ghezzi, 2021a, p. 22).

Examining the Aboriginal records in Italy through this lens shifts the focus from Euro-Western criteria emphasising the original copy to an Indigenous perspective where each copy is significant as it represents Ancestors and Country. As an active member of international scientific and political elites, Giglioli exchanged and received much information during his travels, such as several photographs of the Coranderrk Mission in Victoria, of which Jane Lydon (2006) has written extensively. The research undertaken for this doctoral study has demonstrated that a number of these images are copies of a collection held at the Museum of Victoria. From an archival and historiographical standpoint, these captions and related documentation constitute a valuable addition of information to the existing originals. Further, what it is crucial for this study is that in Indigenous worldviews their importance of these images does not diminish because they are copies. Indeed, they hold agency and humanity. Undeniably, they are also a physical testimony of asymmetric power relationships and a history of colonial collecting that has shaped all collecting institutions of the western world.



Figure 6.3. Portraits of four little girls.⁴⁷

Italian collectors also had a voice and agency in how the ideas of Aboriginal peoples were represented and still circulate today. Again, the annotations of Enrico Giglioli on

⁴⁷ Their names are annotated by Enrico Giglioli as Agnes, Deborah, Margaret T. and Emily Webster. Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box CopAustralia4173a4218. Photo number 4209. **English translation:** Australiane of Victoria (Yarra-yarra). Living in the reserve of Coranderk in 1869. Gift by Ferd. Von Mueller 1869. Enrico H. Giglioli. **Italian text:** Australiane di Victoria (Yarra-yarra). Viventi sulla riserva a Coranderk nel 1869. Dono di Ferd. Von Mueller 1869. Enrico H. Giglioli. **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/portraits-four-little-girls>

the edges of the photographic records provide evidence of how the images circulated outside the museum's walls. One of the photographs is an image of one carved tree from NSW, today recognised as a sacred site for Aboriginal peoples and which should be accessible only by selected individuals in the community. The annotation on the back, typed by someone else years after the acquisition of the image in the museum, was included in one of the most authoritative and circulated Italian encyclopedias. The source of the information written on the back of the image is unknown, but it is plausible that these details are the outcome of a knowledge translation process that transpired between Italian and Australian scientific elites. Once again, processes of knowledge translations have had the power to filter Italian understanding of Aboriginal cultures as dissemination of this information has consequences today. As described in Chapter 2, in Indigenous cultures, the power of digital data does not diminish by being digitised, and digital reproductions hold the same power structures as actual knowledge (Money, 2020).

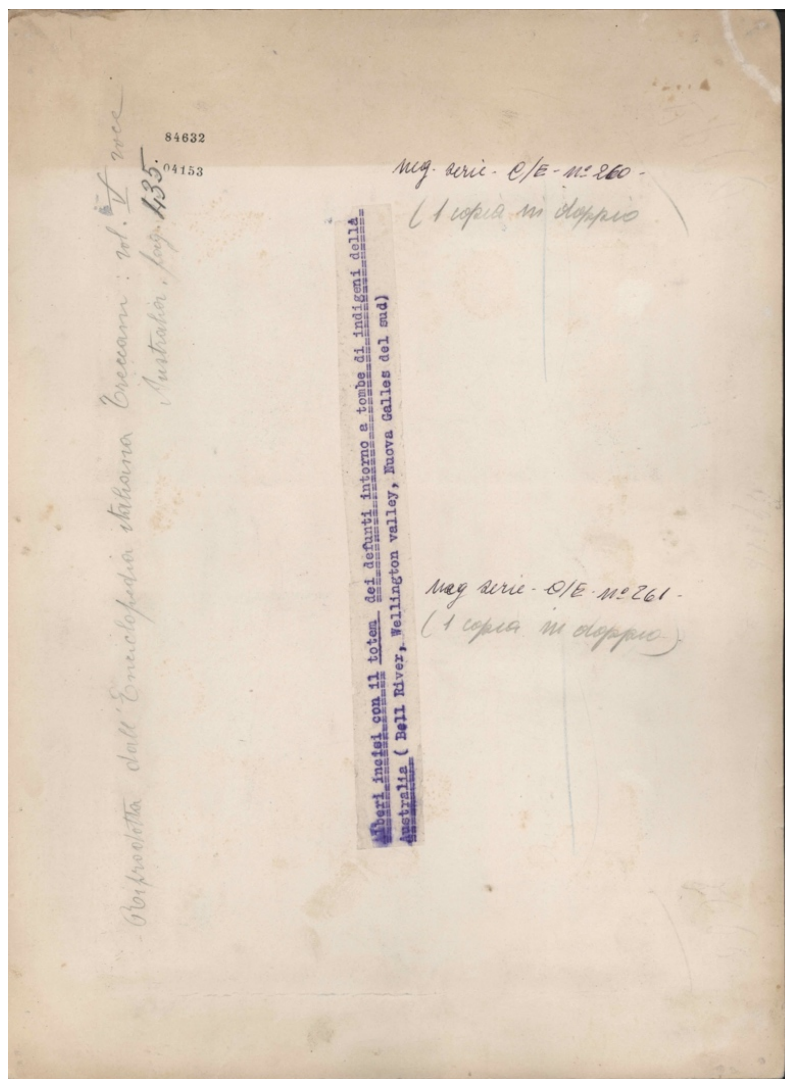


Figure 6.4. Back cover of photograph showing a carved tree from NSW (possibly Wiradjuri Country).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Document from the MUCIV photographic archive (Rome). Giglioli Photographic Collection. Box Asia_Australia4127a4172. Photo number 4153. **English translation of front image:** Trees engraved with the totem of the deceased, around the graves of Indigenous people of Australia. Bell river, Wellington valley, New South Wales. From E.P. Ramsay, Sydney, December 1884. Enrico H. Giglioli. **Italian text of front image:** *Alberi incisi col totem dei defunti, intorno a tombe di indigeni dell'Australia. fiume Bell, Wellington valley, New South Wales. Da E.P. Ramsay, Sydney, dicembre 1884. Enrico H. Giglioli.* **English translation of addition in back image:** Reproduced by the Italian Encyclopedia Treccani: vol. V, voce Australia, page 435. **Italian text of addition in back image:** *Riprodotta dall'Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani: vol. V voce Australia. Pag. 435.*

Digital archive <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/back-cover-photograph-showing-carved-tree-nsw-possibly-wiradjuri-country>

In 1865, Giglioli received a letter from Paolo Mantegazza, considered the father of Italian anthropology, titled *The Man and the Men. Ethnological Letter of Professor Paolo Mantegazza to Professor Enrico Giglioli* (1876). Mantegazza and Giglioli were close friends and colleagues and often shared ethnographic collections and ideas about the evolution of humankind. In the letter, Mantegazza included the *Morphological Tree of the Human Races* (see figure below), which shows how the image of the tree was put at the disposal of racial (and racist) scientists. Anne McClintock (McClintock, 1995, pp. 37–38) lists three principles that emerge in Mantegazza's reading of global histories: (1) for the Italian anthropologist, the world's discontinuous cultures appear rationalised within a single European narrative; (2) for Mantegazza, human history could be imaged as naturally teleological, an organic process of upward growth, with Europeans at the culmination of progress; and (3) he argues that historical discontinuities can be ranked and subordinated into a hierarchical structure of progress of the races mapped against the tree's self-evident boughs. The 'Australian race' is positioned by Mantegazza at the bottom of this scale, following anthropological theories pursued by other European empires. These are the agents that Harkin's poetry defines as *Archive Fantasy*:

The 'superior magistrate' gatekeepers of no-democracy; the commanders and legislators who assure/ensure physical security of documents and materials, who accord themselves the right and power to gather/unify/ [...]. [...] Enter and confront an imperial archive fantasy (Harkin, 2019b, p. 11).

As demonstrated in the next section, this supposed knowledge of Aboriginal Australians motivated and supported more racist depictions and knowledge production.

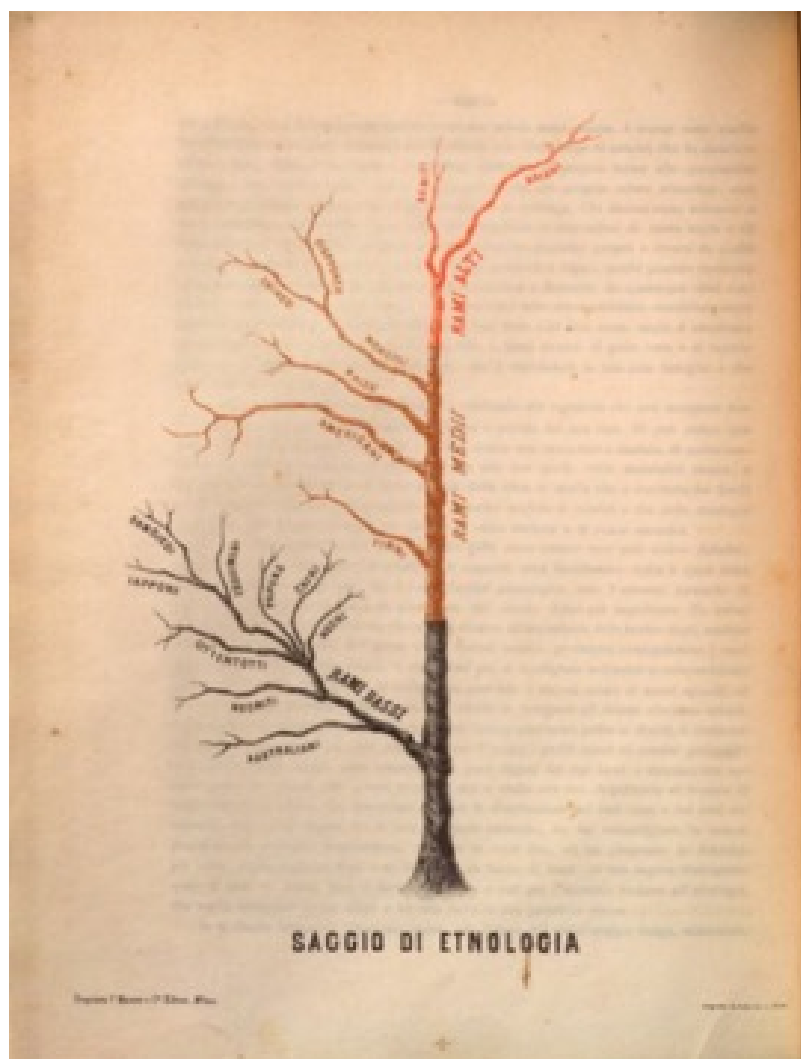


Figure 6.5. Paolo Mantegazza. *Morphological Tree of the Human Races* p. 30

Mantegazza's name resurfaces in the correspondence between Luigi Maria D'Albertis and JW Lindt (1889) in archival documentation held at the D'Albertis Museum.⁴⁹ This example indicates that the Italian scientific community was involved in a highly competitive transnational network of collectors who ruled strategies of European cultural organisations. Following Stoler's (2010, p. 58) example, I analysed their ideas, sentiments, and allusions as a vital source of information, revealing what was needed and feared. In this letter, the photographer jokes with Luigi Maria D'Albertis, the first European man to chart the Fly River in Papua New Guinea, about the jealousy his

⁴⁹ **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/letter-jw-lindt-luigi-maria-dalbertis-23-february-1889>

mission ignited among other explorers (1889). He then speaks about the adversarial feelings of General Scratchley, a well-known special commissioner for Great Britain in New Guinea: “He loved nothing but himself and his advancement and only looked upon New Guinea as the stepping stone to the Governorship of Tasmania. He was afraid of the natives, afraid of fever and strange to say he was the only one who died. The man is dead, and it would be bad grace to say anything against him” (Lindt, 1889, n.d.). Lindt also intended to strengthen connections to the Italian scientific world as he complained about the missed response of Paolo Mantegazza.

In actual fact, Luigi Maria D’Albertis and Paolo Mantegazza knew each other. At his return to Genova, D’Albertis sold his collection of New Guinea photographs, artefacts, and Ancestral Remains to the Italian Government. The Government in turn shared this heritage among the National Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence (funded by Mantegazza in 1869) and Rome’s National Prehistoric Ethnographic Museum funded in 1875 by Luigi Pigorini (today named MUCIV) (Gnecchi-Ruscione, 2011, p. 175). Italian academic Elisabetta Gnecchi-Ruscione (Gnecchi-Ruscione, 2011, p. 166), who curated the permanent exhibition at the D’Albertis Museum in Genova, describes Luigi Maria as a violent explorer with a desire for adventure to the service of science who forced his way into the impenetrable interior of New Guinea through the recently established colonial society of Australia. However, at the end of his travels, D’Albertis gained a bad reputation among an international network of collectors for the exorbitant prices he charged for selling the cultural objects and Ancestral Remains collected in Papua New Guinea. The Trustees of the Australian Museum missed the sale twice, complaining about the conditions. The Government of NSW realised that it did not gain any benefit in the expedition, even after having handed the ship *Neva* to the Italian explorer (Gnecchi-Ruscione, 2011, p. 173).

As I delved into the archival research for this thesis, numerous connections among Italian, European, and Australian cultural elites started to emerge. For example, the letter that Enrico D’Albertis (1878) wrote to Giacomo Doria describing his travels to New Guinea passing through the Torres Strait. Here he gives details about the 15 tons of pearl shells he bought in the Torres Strait and mocks the Italian missionaries trying to

convert Aboriginal peoples in Cooktown.⁵⁰ Many more connections are still awaiting exploration.

The relationships between Lindt and D'Albertis and other influential collectors described in their correspondence encompassed the boundaries of states. The concept of “identity containers” (Caruso & Späth, 2020) well expresses the transnational and hybrid nature of these relationships that were not exclusive to a specific nation but overlapped between national and non-national identities in nineteenth-century Europe (Caruso & Späth, 2020, pp. 363–364). For example, Lindt and D'Albertis were not part of the political forces that colonised Papua New Guinea or Australia. Still, they were active agents in collecting and, as Irene Watson (2007, p. 17) sees it, propagated a “Way of knowing the world, a way which continues to underpin the continuing displacement of aboriginal peoples”. The thirst for stockpiling First Nations’ knowledges and objects driven by the quest for financial gain, the fulfilment of exotic curiosity and the accumulation of scientific knowledge was the glue that kept them together.

⁵⁰ **English translation** [...] Try to convince some wealthy shipowner to set up a mother-of-pearl fishing expedition in the Torres Strait; money is made by the bucket load, there is room for everyone; we took on board 15 tons and they cost £118 per ton; a captain earned 75,000 Italian lire in eight months. What do you think? / Today we went down for a couple of hours to Cook Town near Cape Tribulation, a town no more than four years old. We found two Italian missionaries there; who, in the six months they were here to evangelize the natives, only baptized two!! They have a damned fear and among them they more often hold the revolver in their hands than the breviary [...]. **Italian text** [...] Cerca di convincere qualche armatore intraprendente e danaroso a mettere su una spedizione per la pesca di madreperla in Torres Strait; si fanno danari a sacca, c'e' posto per tutti; noi ne imbarcammo 15 tonnellate e costano L. st, 118 alla tonnellata; un capitano guadagno' 75,000 lire italiane in otto mesi. Che te ne pare? / Quest'oggi scendemmo per un paio d'ore a Cook-Town vicino al capo Tribulation, citta' non piu antica di quattro anni. Vi trovammo due missionary italiani; i quali, in sei mesi, che sono qui per evangelizzare gl'indigeni, non ne battezzarono che due!! Hanno una paura maledetta e fra mezzo a loro tengono piu spesso le mani il revolver che il breviario [...].

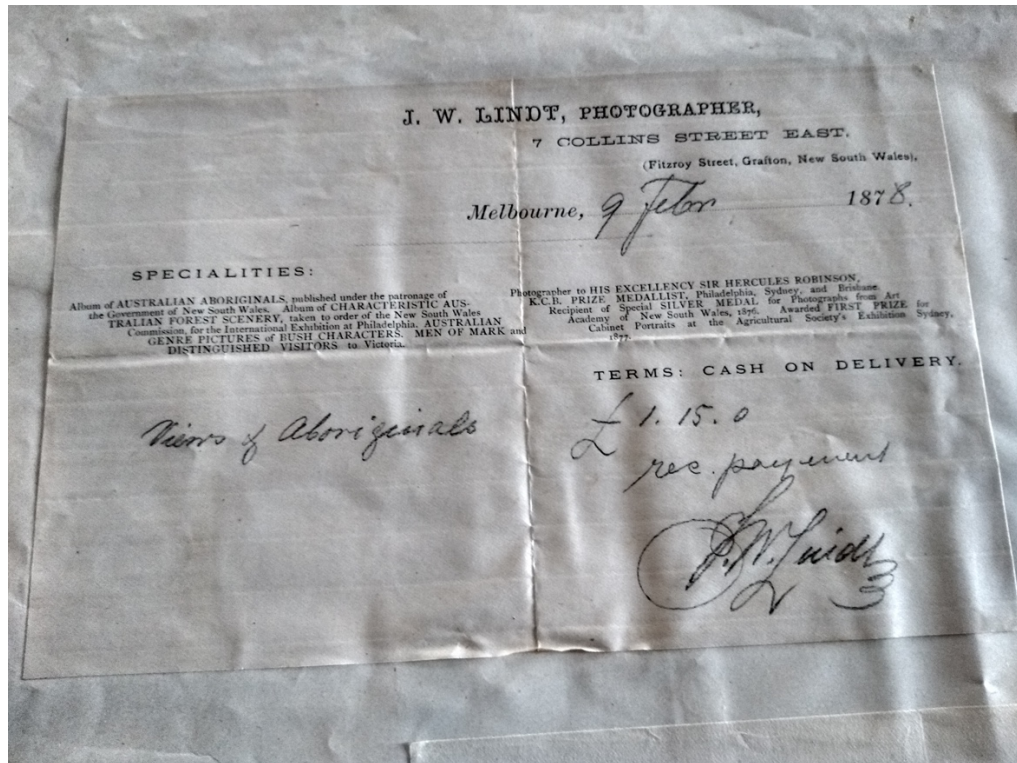


Figure 6.6. Receipt for D'Albertis purchase of photographs from JW Lindt⁵¹

The Italian state derived a second benefit from collecting Aboriginal archival materials, as these records not only demonstrated a readiness to participate in European networks but also played a role in the nation-building process by generating and affirming social hierarchies within the recently established state.

Italian unification began in the early 1860s with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy. The idea of a united Italy had circulated among elites for some time but was a complex process to finalise practically. Different leaders ruled Italian regions and possessed diverse constitutional traditions, languages, and cultural practices. The formal unification in 1861 saw the novel Italian state attempting to unify the country by establishing a common language, law, military, education system and a shared national history (Caruso & Späth, 2020; Ghezzi, 2022; Olcelli, 2018). Italian philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) sought linguistic unity because of the benefits of the resultant

⁵¹ Document digitised by the D'Albertis Museum in their archive during this project. **Digital archive** <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/digital-heritage/purchase-receipt-images-photographer-j-w-lindt>

cohesive cultural exchange among regions and between national languages and dialects. Antonio Gramsci wrote extensively on language and linguistics during his imprisonment from 1929 to 1935. In this context, he appears as a language policy architect for the unification of Italy:

Every time the question of language surfaces, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are arising: the formation and expansion of the ruling class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between ruling groups and the popular-national mass, that is, to reorganize cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1975, p. 2346).⁵²

As Gramsci powerful reflections illustrate, the question of a shared language could not be resolved without creating cultural unity (Carrannante, 1973). Photography and ethnography were vital tools to achieve this aim, by establishing racial types who formed the newly born nation. These visual representations established centres and peripheries and created geographical and social hierarchies (Ghezzi, 2022). During this period the nature of these archives, especially photographic archives, became powerful tools for making one national identity (Caraffa & Serena, 2014; Ghezzi, 2021a).

The construction of the national identity was founded on the notion of whiteness, shaping the Italian Nation from unification and giving rise to social hierarchies and narratives across the nation-state (Burgio, 1999). The same 'salvage paradigm' (Clifford, 1989) used to portray non-Western populations was utilised to depict Italians with educational and identity purposes. Leading Italian-Australian academic Joseph Pugliese (2002b) has explored the elements of continuity in the constructions of race and whiteness in modern and contemporary Italy. His work demonstrates that racial hierarchies were fundamentally articulated in the nineteenth century during the process of Italian unification through the assignation of a specific colour (from less white to black) within the Italian peninsula. In other words, "The history of whiteness in Italy is perfectly encapsulated by the racist aphorism *Africa begins south of Rome*" (Pugliese, 2008). This

⁵² [Ogni volta che affiora, in un modo o nell'altro, la quistione della lingua, significa che si sta imponendo una serie di altri problemi: la formazione e l'allargamento della classe dirigente, la necessità di stabilire rapporti più intimi e sicuri tra i gruppi dirigenti e la massa popolare-nazionale, cioè di riorganizzare l'egemonia culturale].

history of whiteness in Italy is marked by the flexibility of these categorisations to serve the nation's political drives. Pugliese (2008) explains that in the context of the imperial drive for colonial expansion in Africa, the Fascist regime worked diligently to position the entire peninsula under the banner of whiteness/Europeanness to legitimate its colonial occupation of African states. This classification continued to play a role within other European nations denigrating Italians in travel accounts and political statements. Overseas, countries like Australia utilised this racial categorisation to justify their immigration policies. Pugliese (2002b, p. 154) argues that during the White Australia Policy starting in 1901, Australian academics and politicians saw Northern Italians as being at the top of the evolutionary ladder and Southern Italians, and especially Calabrians at the bottom.

Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) became well-known across Europe for the work *The Criminal Man [L'uomo Delinquente]* (1876/1911), where he argued that criminal behaviours depended on inherited characteristics (Knepper & Ystehede, 2012). Photographs such as the one below (Figure 6.6.) were widely circulated in geographic textbooks that described the 'human races', disseminating differences in characters, intelligence and civilisation among Italians. Pugliese (2002b, p. 156) was one of the first scholars to argue that Lombroso's work not only focused on anthropometric aspects but emphasises race functions as a category that scientifically explains questions concerned with criminal behaviour. Pugliese argues that these categorisations did not spare Aboriginal Australians, who were shown to be like Southern Italians. Citing Lombroso (1871), Pugliese (2002b, p. 157) writes that "Certain yellow types in Australia are then, probably, [examples of] the progressive transformation of two black types which are preserved in circumstances which have remained unchanged, as in primitive and miasmatic lands and in remote valleys and islands. Another example of the preservation of the melanic type in insalubrious and isolated regions is offered by our own provinces of Calabria and Sardinia". These records continue to shape public perspectives and have become a contentious "conflict zone," particularly when integrated into the Lombroso Museum's installation in 2009. A group of citizens mobilised, demanding the repatriation of certain testimonies and accusing the museum of "Intentional racist offense towards the Southern Italian peoples and a violation of the dignity of the Two Sicily's martyrs' remains" displayed in the building (Milicia, 2019, p. 42). This debate also involved international researchers (Arford & Madfis, 2022).

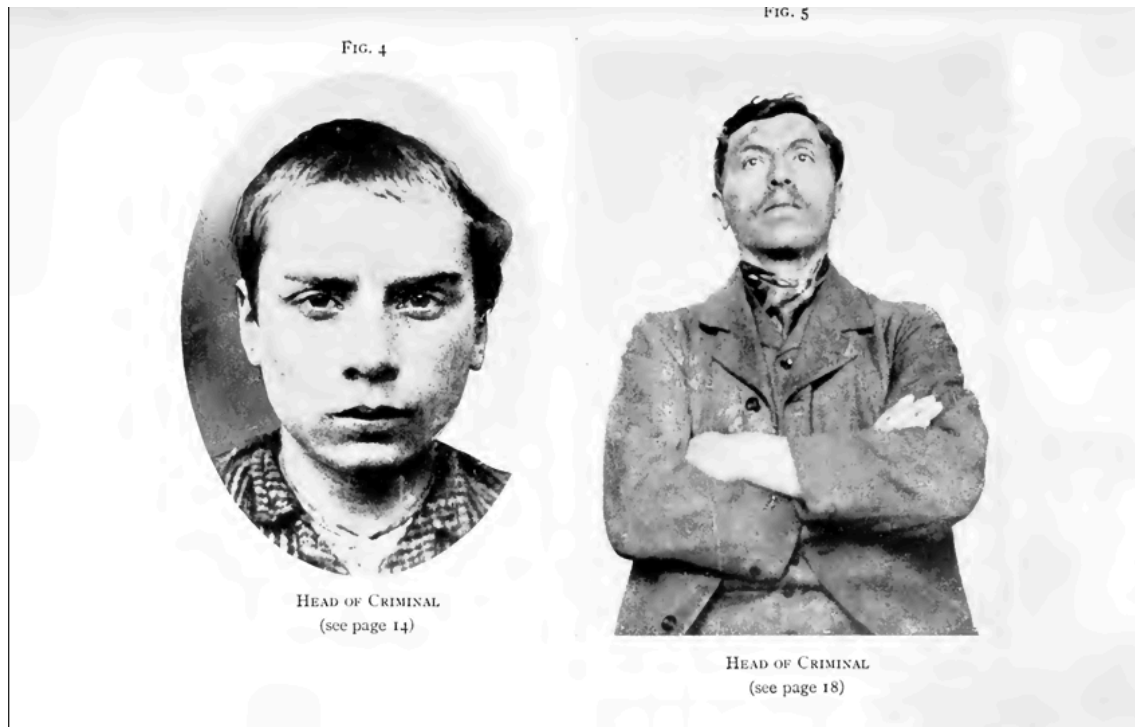


Figure 6.7. The born criminal type by Cesare Lombroso⁵³

An instance within the Aboriginal records held in Italy that recalls this racialisation system is the album of staged photographs of Aboriginal peoples donated by J.W. Lindt to the Italian Department of Education. The images (1873/1874) show Aboriginal peoples represented in staged photographic poses and were then sent to the MUCIV, where they are still housed. The educational intent of disseminating images where Aboriginal peoples were nearly naked and in staged 'primitive' sets recalls the 'Racial Charts' ['Tavole delle Razze'] utilised in Italian schools until the mid-Twenty century (Gabrielli, 2014, p. 82) and the *Tree of Men* (fig 6.5) created by Mantegazza. The dissemination of these tables went hand in hand with the development of the Italian colonial expansion that culminated with the occupation of Ethiopia during the Fascist regime in 1935 (Gabrielli, 2014, p. 82). However, racist descriptions of Aboriginal peoples in Italian textbooks continued until the 1960s (Gabrielli, 2014, p. 102).

⁵³ (Lombroso, 1876/1911, p. 17).

These charts used anthropometric narratives to rate different populations against the European one. First Nations peoples and African citizens subject to Italian colonial expansion were situated at the lowest step. Lucia Piccioli (2022) shows how objects exposed in museums (such as the facial casts made by the anthropologist Lidio Cipriani) and images disseminated through magazines and other forms of popular culture (such as the covers of the magazine *In defence of Race* [*La difesa della Razza*]), played a vital role in shaping Italian scientific and public mindset about race.

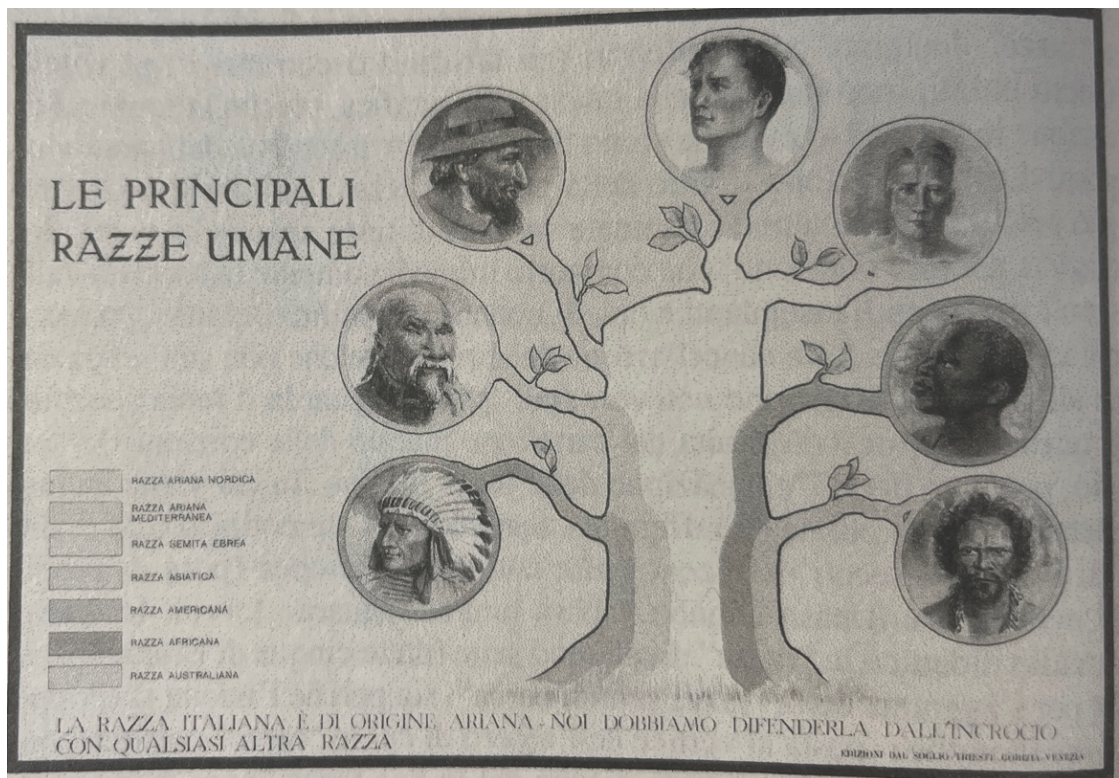


Figure 6.8. 'The principal human races'⁵⁴

Haunting (Archival-Poetics 2)

In the volume *Haunting*, Harkin spotlights on the necessity for transparency on the horrors of colonialism and its representation in archives through an embodied literary intervention. The colonial archive is an unfinished business, where the spectre of colonialism is still acutely felt. This portion of Harkin's work investigates archival gaps,

⁵⁴ Reproduction from Gabrielli (2014, p. 100). Original text: *Le principali razze umane*, cartellone murale, edizioni Dal Soglio, Trieste, Gorizia, Venezia.

silences, absences and active erasures through blood memory and mourning (Harkin, 2019c, p. 5). The author describes a different way of knowing and being in the world, a way “Beyond intuition that collides with memory, imagination and history [...]” (Harkin, 2019c, p. 9). But this way of knowing is not about superstition. It is about missing narratives, “To interrogate what is remembered, recover the forgotten, reveal the act of forgetting [...]” (Harkin, 2019c, p. 31).

Building upon the findings presented in the initial sections (firstly, the willingness of the Italian elite to conform with European collectors, and secondly, the need for producing social hierarchies of the novel Italian nations), Harkin's concept of the *Haunted Archive* brings me to a further conclusion. Following the haunted paper trails described by the activist poet, I see that the political anxieties of the Italian state increased during the Fascist era. In other words, the third reason the Italian state benefited from collecting Australian Indigenous archival materials is to support the ideologies of the fascist regime and the role of Italy as a coloniser.

I notice this idea through poorly documented historical evidence that Stoler calls non-eventful. One instance is the story of Aboriginal activist A.M. Fernando, who travelled the world to expose the failure of British rule and the genocide of First Nations peoples in Australia. The flyer he wrote in Italian as a protest at the Vatican in 1925 was confiscated and arrived to us only thanks to the interest of one of the guards, who donated it to the Italian National Archive (Paisley, 2012, pp. 78–81). This remarkable event tells a unique story of transnational Aboriginal resistance and agency. Fernando's activism had repercussions across borders. Celebrated Gambanyi leader and activist Pearl Mary Gibbs (1901-1983), for instance, may have been encouraged to call upon the international community through reading about Fernando's livelihood in Europe (Paisley, 2012, p. 166). Despite the importance of these papers, it was only in 2012 that historian Fiona Paisley (2012, p. 90) inspected multiple archives to rebuild Fernando's compelling story. Paisley deduces that his arrest in Rome could have been motivated by the fear that Fernando could become a threat to the Fascist regime by spreading ideas of social justice across the colonies. Only a few metres away from the National Archive, in the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, Mussolini proclaimed his intent to colonise Ethiopia: Italy was emerging as a colonial power and a British ally. Pursuing the notion of “ghosts and paper trails,” as proposed by Harkin, remnants of this colonial history haunt Rome, akin

to numerous other Italian cities. The project *Postcolonial Italy* (Wurzer & Budasz, n.d.) maps streets, squares and monuments that conserve these traces.

Not far from the National Archive and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, paper trails lead to the MUCIV. Stoler (2010, p. 2), writing about the Dutch Indian Archives, deduces that “Kilometres of administrative archives called up massive buildings to house them. [...]” and that “Accumulations of paper and edifice of stone were both monuments to the asserted know-how of rule, artefacts of bureaucracy bureaucratic lab or duly performed, artifices of a colonial state declared to be inefficient operation”. The MUCIV in Rome is a building that can be read as a living archive of its fascist and colonial mentality. With its imposing marble walls, the Museum is a fascinating example of fascist architecture standing in the Eur, the Roman suburb built by Benito Mussolini (Cosmo, 2017a, 2017b). The photographs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples that I digitised for this PhD project sit in this building, in the same construction as the ex-Museum of Colonialism, containing thousands of artefacts and archival records related to the African colonies (Gravano & Grechi, 2020).

The discussed political, social, and educational aims for collecting Aboriginal archival materials can also be recognised through the reading of Giovanni Podenzana’s photograph that opened this chapter. This image can be comprehended as a site where the political and social aspirations of the Italian unification agenda were enacted by showcasing the strength of European powers toward the West and promoting the Italian identification with whiteness.

Here, Giovanni Podenzana and Ruggero Schiffini stand proudly armed at the back of two almost undressed Aboriginal men. One can interpret this as the triumph of colonial strength and enlightenment over the perceived 'primitiveness' that Europeans ascribed to First Nations peoples. However, the image could have also functioned as a performance of staged power. Despite wearing military clothes, the two European men had no formal military role. They were in Australia for exploring and documenting plants, animals, lands, and people. Indeed, Podenzana was an ethnographer, naturalist, and musician (Piccioli & Mazz, 1990), while Schiffini was the pharmacist of La Spezia (G. Paolicchi, personal communication, November 15, 2022). The two Aboriginal men with scars along their chests were initiated, and so were warriors. Under this light, the power structures of the image can be flipped. Davide Carazzi, the Museum Director from 1884,

confirms this hypothesis. Podenzana mailed him the image to inform them about his travels. Carazzi, enthusiastic about receiving it, commented, “I received his photograph and made all of Spezia admire the two terrible White warriors. Schiffini's grim air, in particular, caused a furor!...” (Piccioli & Mazz, 1990).⁵⁵

Podenzana's photo and Carazzi's witty comment could also be read as a celebration and assertion of whiteness in opposition to the 'blackness' of the Aboriginal men. This claim of whiteness could have been functioning both internally and externally. Internally, to claim a space in the elites of the new Italian Nation, in contraposition to people from low social and economic status, especially from the South. As Joseph Pugliese (2008, p. 3) asserts, “Up until, and immediately after, the moment of unification, Northern Italians viewed the South as a type of *terra incognita*” (p.3). Northern Italians utilised Africa as the metaphor for the South. As discussed, Italy was already, from its unification, “Racialised by a geopolitical fault line that split the peninsula and its islands along a black/white axis” (Pugliese, 2008, p. 3). Externally, Italians were considered 'blacks', dangerous and uneducated across Europe (Heller, 2003), the United States (J. Guglielmo & Salerno, 2003; T. A. Guglielmo & Guglielmo, 2003; Luconi, 2011) (are Italians white?/ and Australia (Andreoni, 2003; Balint & Simic, 2018; Ricatti, 2018; Tirabassi, 1999).

Blood Memory (Archival-Poetics 3)

In the last part of her work, Harkin reflects on the individual and collective intergenerational transmission of knowledge through the colonial archive. This is called “Memory in the Blood”, a problematic legacy that “Does not always flow easily” (Harkin, 2019a, p. 5). Harkin sees the concept of the blood as the coloniser's obsession (Harkin, 2019a, p. 17): generations of Aboriginal peoples have been defined by abstract percentages of Aboriginality in their veins. But blood is also what flows through generations and creates life and connections. Aboriginal people affected by the violence of the state reclaim and respond to the collective loss caused by colonialism with a “Genealogy-narrative through time/place/land [...] (Harkin, 2019a, p. 5). For Harkin and other members of the Unbound Collective (the group of Aboriginal artists she is part of), it is time to repatriate love to Ancestors in the archive (Baker et al., 2020).

⁵⁵ The original text is: “Ho ricevuto la sua fotografia e ho fatto ammirare a tutta Spezia i due terribili guerrieri Bianchi. Specialmente l'aria truce di Schiffini ha fatto furore!...”.

Within the Italian colonial archive, the "blood memory" of First Nations and African people impacted by the Italian colonial project courses through. In a recent article, Angelica Pesarini (2022) reflects on the boarding schools for Black "mixed race" Italian children in fascist East Africa by reading archival colonial sources against the grain (Stoler, 2010). Through this analysis, Pesarini establishes a dialogue between archival sources held in Eritrea on life in boarding schools and the oral histories of women who, much like her grandmother, were raised in those same boarding schools in Somalia and Eritrea. Here I can decipher a similar reading of Harkin's two visions of "blood memory". The first one is related, in the Italian context, with the coloniser obsession with blood and how it reflected on the author life in contemporary Italy. The second link to Harkin's work is her family experience of "blood memory" that has been passed from her grandmother's generation in the colonial archive but have been kept silent in official accounts. Pesarini's work aims to give back to the people represented in the colonial archive visibility and humanity.

Despite the crucial importance of these resources for families and truth-telling of the horrendous structural violence of Italian colonialism, which evokes unsettling parallels with the abuses in Canadian boarding schools for First Nations children, their visibility or invisibility has been dictated by the state's requirements. As discussed in earlier chapters, the loss of the Second World War and the forced loss of African colonies perpetuated colonial amnesia about the Italian colonial past. The archives related to African colonialism became less known to the public. In a parallel manner, the Aboriginal records in Italy, post-Italian Unity and the Fascist era (during which they were showcased as curiosities, circulated as postcards, incorporated into school textbooks to reinforce racial hierarchies, and exploited for propaganda), received scant mentions and attracted limited attention or scholarly inquiry until the 1980s. This lateness mirrors the historical amnesia prevalent in Italian society.

Despite the commonalities in the ways, they have been managed the Aboriginal and African records held in Italy had different functions. The archives related to the colonisation of Africa fit in the categorisation of 'displaced archives' caused by Italian Colonialism. As discussed in Chapter 2, they are dispersed in Italy, Somalia, Eritrea, and Libya in national repositories, collecting institutions, private organisations, and churches. They are with people and with families' stories. At the time of writing, their extent is

undetermined. The knowledges, representations and information about Aboriginal people thought, have been moved to and produced in Italy for different scientific, personal and politic reasons. The photograph of the two Aboriginal warriors, featured at the beginning of this chapter alongside Giovanna Podenzana and Ruggero Schiffini, prompted questions about their political and social significance. This analysis is unpacking that, despite being disseminated in a similar manner to others created at the Hendley photographic studio, they served distinct political purposes. Unlike records held in Australia and Great Britain, where Government records served the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples with the establishment of the assimilation policies (as seen in Chapter 2), the ones in Italy were left as an exotic curiosity in ethnographic museums and other cultural institutions, becoming unnoticed.

Following this silence, public debates on Aboriginal collections intensified after the request for Aboriginal Ancestral Remains from the Australian Government (see Chapter 4). Aboriginal bodies, and the records that could have survived with them, became noticed again for their potential to threaten Italian collecting institutions from having to give back what is considered Italian cultural patrimony. I argue that these records have been purposefully kept invisible, perpetuating a colonial mentality to keep the order of things immutable. Beatrice Falcucci (2022) notes that Italy has always been considered a country “traditionally stripped” of its cultural inheritance (such as during the Napoleonic campaign and the Nazi looting). Therefore, shifting its role as a holder of someone else’s heritage requires a critical transformation of the scientific and political world. Other scholars such as Giulia Grechi (2021), Rachele Borghi (2020), and Maria Pia Guermandi (2021) are pushing for decolonising agendas in Italian collecting institutions and their power structures. At a political level, 2021 saw the creation of the “Committee for the Recovery and Return of Cultural Heritage of the Working Group for the Study of Issues Relating to the Colonial Collections” (*le Attività culturali e per il Turismo*, 2021). The creation of this group was a potent sign of a newly opened international dialogue on the matter.

In May 2023, with the escalation of the Italian right-wing parties to power, laws and intents changed abruptly. A new decree of the Minister of Culture aims to charge scientific editorial publications in government institutions (*le Attività culturali e per il Turismo*, 2023), creating concerns about limitation imposed on the free circulation of digital heritage materials (Bertini, 2023; Italia, 2023). For First Nations archives, this

political statement raises crucial questions on matters related to Indigenous Intellectual Property and the process of archival decolonisation worldwide. However, an interpretation along the grain of the decree also confirms the significance and agency of Italian cultural patrimony. Does this political agenda replicate geographic hierarchies today by limiting access to information and silencing the records again? What are the prospects for First Nations' control of this heritage if it does not align with the Italian political agenda? This political turn is so new that it will not be analysed in my PhD timeframe. However, it again demonstrates the transcultural entanglements of First Nations archives with national politics.

6.4. *Eclipsed* archives: a new categorisation for Aboriginal records in Italy

The analysis of the Aboriginal records in Italy has exposed their key features. They share similarities with other colonial archives worldwide in their collection and management. However, they distinguish themselves from Aboriginal records held in Australia or Great Britain for their political and social function. They have been used in Italy to create social hierarchies accompanying specific Italian political agendas, such as the unification of Italy and the Fascist regime. The Aboriginal records have been exposed and managed similarly to those accumulated during Italian colonisation in Africa. As with the African one, First Nations records have been made visible and invisible according to the scope they served or ceased to perform. Like other cases of archival displacement, these tensions impact First Nations peoples today.

The existing categories within the archival displacement discourse must, therefore, be revised to describe all the facets of the Italian model because:

- The documents in Italy are not *colonial archives* in the broader sense, as they are held by a country that never formally colonised Australia (and differentiates them, for example, from the Aboriginal records maintained in British institutions)
- The Aboriginal documents in Italy were not intentionally *displaced* because of political tensions, such as in the case of recently decolonised countries (the Rhodesian archives are an instance of this).
- The displacement of these records cannot be relegated to geographical boundaries (María Montenegro, 2019b), as they often cross states and social

groups (such as in the example of the records of the Vatican Archive of Propaganda Fide).

- The records have yet to be *migrated*: Italians collected, purchased, and stored them for the Italian and European markets.
- They have yet to be *disputed*, as most Aboriginal community members, archivists, and Italian professionals must fully know they exist.
- They cannot fit within a *shared archival heritage* paradigm as they served exclusively Italian interests, including nation-building processes and ideas of racial superiority. Indeed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have not benefited from this *shared* heritage.
- Exposed and explored, they are found to have transformative agency for communities and institutions.

As a result of this analysis, I propose to refer to discursive archival displacement, categorising the records held in Italian institutions related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as *eclipsed* archives. This denomination was inspired by Natalie Harkin (2019c, p. 34) *Archival-Poetics Manifesto*, where she vigorously directs action on dismantling power in colonial archives. Midway through the text, the following sentence caught my eye: “It will come to you in uncanny moments and unanticipated places where blood-memory, haunting and the potency of place collide” (Harkin, 2019c, p. 34). As I demonstrate in this thesis, the Italian archive is one of those unexpected places that has received limited study and has remained unknown until recently. Like many other countries not politically engaged in colonising the Australian continent, it went unnoticed, but the stories they contain might include blood memory and unfinished business (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a), still unknown for communities.

In this study, I interpret this moment of *collision* [my emphasis] through the eclipse metaphor - the alignment of celestial bodies so that one is obscured, either partially or totally, by the other (NASA, n.d.). The allegory of the eclipse establishes the framework for defining the specific Italian context, yet it is also expansive enough to encompass the process shared by cases with similar characteristics. I utilise the eclipse to symbolise two layers of this study: the importance and agency of the physical and digital records and the crucial role of the knowledge translation process in the cultural interface. The interest and curiosity these records provoke bring these two layers together. Like the

universal fascination with an eclipse, this study, when mentioned, sparks inquisitiveness and a desire to explore the uncharted heritage shared by all.

The natural phenomenon of the eclipse first serves as an illustration for the physical and digital Aboriginal records stored in Italy. This documentation has been positioned in either light or darkness based on its convenience for the collectors and the Italian state. By emphasising trajectories and synergies, much like the intentional focus on ecliptical movements, this study underscores the agency and power wielded by Aboriginal records in Italy over time. This definition avoids perpetuating the deficit model that solely portrays institutions as the power source capable of obscuring and rendering the records invisible. Indeed, its foundation lies in recognising the richness and vitality of Indigenous knowledge systems and the stewardship of the land, enabling the existence of life as we know it today. In the idea of the eclipse, the spotlight is on the power of this documentation to reshape the institutional order of things, as explored in Chapter 5. The records assume the same agency that Silvia Spitta (2009) uses to describe the impact that cultural objects from South America have had on European museums, able to reshuffle the institutions' epistemologies.

The records also strategically influence relationships at the right time and within the appropriate context, like the dynamics of an eclipse that impacts everything in the world, including land and sea, animals, and humans. Comparably to the *epa* described by Rachel Buchanan (2022), the Aboriginal records in Italian institutions have intervened in their surrounding relationships. They first established contacts between Italian travellers, scientists and migrants, local agents and Aboriginal people. Once they arrived in the Italian context, they served the interests of the Italian state and the fascist regime's political agenda. They provided information that started a heated dialogue in the Italian cultural sector on repatriation requests of Ancestral Remains from the Australian government. This stage marked the influence of these records on my future work with the colonial archive, highlighting their significance and the unknown aspects tied to their acquisition, provenance, and administration. Through this study, they initiated a relationship that has expanded to a net of relationships between Italy and Australia. The period in which these connections unfolded perfectly mirrors the evolving world since the beginning of this PhD research. In this landscape transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital domain has gained strength and acceptance. Events like the Black Lives Matter protests and the toppling of colonial statues have forcefully highlighted

global calls for equity and the decentring of predominant Euro-Western perspectives in collecting institutions. These chain reactions remind me of what Buchanan (2022, p. 55) claims about the moments where the *epa* were simultaneously found in different swamps. The author argues, “All these old people were waking up at the same time”. Reporting the words of Toumairangi Marsh, of Ngāti Rāhiri, Buchanan argues “When they are ready [the *epa*], they definitely show themselves and they are not shy about it”. In this process, the Aboriginal records in Italy forged pathways in a relational world, traversing from one knowledge system to another, from one culture to another and from one language to another.

Hence, the term eclipsed archive emphasises the space where the cyclical process occurs between the planet's Earth, the sun, and the moon, rather than solely focusing on the darkness and light these movements provoke. The eclipse was both a source of fear and curiosity for numerous Aboriginal groups, yet a considerable number among them had a grasp of the intricate relationship between the sun and moon and their role in the phenomenon of eclipses (Hamacher & Norris, 2011a, 2011b). In the same way, this research demonstrates that this analysis was possible because of the reading in the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007, 2012), where these relationships collide and align. The specific features of the Italian records would have remained veiled without prompting a space of encounter and discussion, one that would have aligned two distant locations and incommensurable knowledge systems. This study has forged the alignment necessary for these two realities, each existing within its own ecosystems yet revolving around each other, disconnected until intersecting paths. When these two spaces come together, there can be darkness: anger, blame, distrust, shame of the colonial past, fear of losing property, insecurities about acting in the right way and misunderstanding. But there can also be light: dialogue, deep listening and learning, knowledge and language sharing, amazement and relationship building. Yet, it is only through these connections that complex synergies and interactions can reach and, on occasion, yield positive outcomes for the communities involved. This process is cyclical, long-term, and perpetual, much like the legacies of colonial collecting and the dominance of Euro-Western paradigms in the archive.

Many variables unfold these processes, like the alignment of celestial bodies during an eclipse. The pivotal times for truth-telling (symbolised by the moon) and enlightening conversations (represented by the sun) that cross paths in the cultural interface (in the

moment where they overlap) would not coincide if planet Earth (representing Country) occupied the central position. As Country and Indigenous knowledge systems are inseparable, it is essential to ground this process in collecting institutions through a transnational understanding of the global and the local. Just as communities worldwide interpret the natural phenomenon of an eclipse in various ways, the emergence of these meanings is only achievable through relationships. Within this metaphorical context, emphasising the centrality of Country highlights the pressing need to place Indigenous knowledge systems at the core of the process. This mirrors the metaphor, where the occurrence of an eclipse hinges on the alignment of all these essential components.

During an eclipse, these components converge for reasons Western science has not entirely grasped (Locke, 2017). In the archive, there is a straightforward motive that eclipsed archives should be valued and taken seriously. Behrendt (2016, p. 178) eloquently elucidates a fundamental reason, harking back to the singular motivation behind humans and non-humans sharing planet Earth: the assertion that Aboriginal people, akin to all individuals, are entitled to equal rights.

Any short-term gains made by people's sympathy for the noble savage will be countered when the stereotype is shown to be a fiction. It is far better to say that Aboriginal people, like all people, are entitled to equal rights – to adequate health services, to protection of language, heritage and culture, to an education, to protection of their interests in land – not because they are noble, primitive or authentic, but because human rights are inherent and are held by Aboriginal people as much as they are by everyone else.

This study brings to the table the following classification of eclipsed archives. Deciding not to craft a rigid definition but rather a flexible statement is a deliberate methodological choice. As outlined in Chapter 4 and pondered in Chapter 7, the institutions safeguarding Aboriginal records in Italy exhibit variations in shape, size, and typology. Similarly, the eclipsed records held in other countries may share numerous characteristics while potentially revealing distinct ones yet to be uncovered. My long-term vision is to create spaces for customising this definition of eclipsed records according to local communities' specificities and different European translations.

The eclipsed archival records are those found in unanticipated places.

They become visible to the human eye only when incommensurable knowledge systems sharing the same planet meet and align. Until then, they are misremembered, misunderstood, misdescribed, misrepresented, mislocated.

Fuori posto [misplaced].

Their presence in times of old did not render them dusty and forgotten. Instead, they assumed silent roles, performing tricks and tactics amidst the interplay of these myriad interconnected worlds.

When these uncanny spaces of truth-telling and dialogue collide – when these worlds meet in the exact moment, in the same place and with the matching aim – the records thrive.

The only category of archival displacement that could have potentially be useful for the Italian case study is the notion of the “Shadow Continuum” created by Michael Karabinos (2018). The author created this concept as an addition to the record continuum model, to identify the moments where the records are kept invisible by the British Government (focusing on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office “Migrated Archives” made known to Kenyan people only in 2011, as explored earlier). Scholar Viviane Frings-Hessami (2020) critiqued Karabino's notion, arguing that it stems from a misunderstanding of the dimensions of the records continuum. She contends that adding a "shadow continuum" is unnecessary since the model can be applied even to records that have not been made public. I share the comments and concern of Frings-Hessami, but still found the idea of the ‘visibility/light’ and ‘invisibility/dark’ by Karabinos helpful to visualise the silences in the Italian archives. However, the model of the eclipsed archive grew in a completely different epistemological ground. It does not focus on the records as immobile entities moved exclusively by institutional manoeuvres, but on the relationships between people, knowledge systems and records. These spaces create shared areas of understanding, knowledge sharing and translation and conflicts – all moments that can become stories of light and darkness, sound and silence, visibility and invisibility, life and death. Under this light, the records continuum model provides a way to read the archive that aligns with Indigenous worldviews and that is therefore more accurate than the “shadow continuum” concept for the Italian records, as it shifts the paradigm from which these relationships align making it flexible for diverse contexts. In the eclipsed archive, different dimension of the records continuum model lives at the same time, drawing a net of fluid

connections and meanings that are multilateral and multidimensional. The spaces opened by the eclipse can live at the same time, for example, in the archive, on Country, in the ceremonies of Elders for repatriation of Old Peoples' Bodies, in the conversations between researchers and in many other ways. In this world of synergies and different paradigms that overlap, all dimensions coexist while assuming powerful new meanings according to the relationships that govern them.

6.6. A new concept that brings opportunities for critical theories and practice

Adopting the concept of eclipsed archives can bring several benefits and opportunities both in the academic debate and in the work of Aboriginal and Italian archival professionals.

Categorising the Aboriginal records in Italy is the first crucial step to allow people to locate them so that Aboriginal GLAM researchers and practitioners can learn the full extent of this patrimony and Italian collecting institutions can appreciate their full magnitude. Moreover, naming this patrimony is a crucial step to allow this documentation to be considered as a future study area, creating new fields of scholarship that can contribute to their analysis and strengthen their understanding. Institutions, researchers and community members who want to interrogate the records can count on shared vocabulary to pursue common aims. Finally, recognising the specific features of the Italian case provides opportunities for re-adapting the concept of eclipsed archives in similar circumstances. For example, it could be utilised as a strategy for interrogating other European countries that hold First Nations records as an effect of the global project of colonialism.

Remarkably, increasing how these records can be located, studied, and reused can lead to a long-term virtuous cycle. With a precise categorisation, community members, researchers, and the public will request institutions to learn more. Collecting organisations will then have a benchmark on the importance of these collections and their responsibility in increasing their discoverability. Importantly, Italian institutions could also gain a different scale to measure the extent of Italian cultural patrimony. This awareness can create the conditions for finding new documentation and information and building relationships with other organisations in Italy and overseas. Spreading

information can build new relationships among communities, institutions, and researchers. In turn, this could inspire further research and raise awareness of Italian patrimony's complexities and potential. Over time, this new consciousness can increase the need for new protocols and principles for their use and management inspired by community needs and critical praxis.

6.4. Conclusion

I began this chapter by giving a voice to what looks like a triumphant photograph of Podenzana and Schiffini over two Aboriginal men. Reorienting the analysis of this single image raises inquiries about the concealed intentions concerning Aboriginal subjects within the Italian imagination. Who was subjugating whom in the image? What was Podenzana trying to achieve by sending the image back home? Does this image belong to Italy or to the place where it comes from? Why has this photo not been part of the transnational debate about archival displacement? What can we learn from its specific features?

This chapter has proposed a conceptualisation of the Aboriginal records held in Italian collecting institutions as part of this study. I first exposed a gap in the literature related to archival displacement that could adequately describe the Aboriginal archives in Italy. I then proposed the new categorisation of eclipsed archives. Reading these records along the grain has provided an effective tactic to demark the Italian documents' specificities compared with other cases of archival displacement. Following Harkin's trial, I analysed the power structures embedded in the Aboriginal documents in Italy and revealed some of the principles and practices of their governance. The analysis calls for new ways of conceptualising this heritage and new lenses to approach its future. As discussed, the implications of the novel categorisation of eclipsed archives are far-reaching. This concept offers a new way to critically engage, find and study the records in academia and collecting institutions. It also unlocks exciting opportunities for similar contexts that do not fit under existing categorisations.

With the commencement of the unveiling, mapping, and active engagement with these records, the question arises: What lies ahead for their future? The next chapter delves into these considerations, presenting the yarning sessions involving both Aboriginal and Italian participants in this study.

CHAPTER 7. LISTEN
Which Future for the Aboriginal Records in Italy?



This chapter includes cultural knowledge and stories from 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants from different Nations across the land we now call Australia (in alphabetical order: Butchulla, Garigal, Ngiyampaa, South Sea and Torres Strait Islander, Wiradjuri, Worimi, and Yuin). I acknowledge their ICIP rights and responsibilities associated with this chapter's personal and collective stories.

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I greeted Marika as she connected to Zoom on a sunny afternoon in August. I organised this meeting a couple of weeks earlier to discuss my exhibition proposal. As I interacted through the screen, I could sense a hint of hesitation. Some serious conversations lay ahead, despite our trusted relationship. I knew that the beauty of the space we were entering would be found in the messiness of it all.

“I liked the idea of utilising the True Tracks (Janke, 2021) principles”, Marika said. “They provide a wonderful framework, and they are also practical. I endorsed their use for your curation of this room”. However, I wanted to make clear that I am not here to speak as a descendant of the people depicted in the photos. Where will I have the space to talk more about my standpoint?”. I told her that with Maria Camilla, we spoke about creating a couple of videos with our phones about our experiences in this area. I said, “Well, there’s no budget for calling a professional, but we could record our experience on camera”. Marika reflected that she could ask her father Chris, a professional filmmaker, to contribute to the project.

We then spoke lengthily about how we could have organised the video on Country and linked it to the AIATSIS map of Aboriginal Australia. Marika exclaimed: “Do you remember how we spoke many times about influencing Italian perspectives by showing contemporary Aboriginal voices? Well, maybe that is it?”

(M. Duczynski, personal communication, 28 October 2021)



Figure 7.1. Marika Duczynski filming in Dharawal Country⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Thirroul, NSW. 31 October 2021. My photograph.

7.1. Introduction – Reading of the Aboriginal records in Italy against the grain

On a cold and sunny day in Dharawal Country, Marika Duczynski, her father, Chris Duczynski, and my partner Nicko de Cseuz met to film the two videos that have become part of the Australian section of the D'Albertis Museum (C. Duczynski, 2021). Duczynski's photograph at the opening of this chapter is a memory of that day when her father filmed us rehearsing our speeches amidst the kookaburra laughs and rustling of the eucalyptus trees. Duczynski's reflections filmed that day are among the few existing testimonies on the Italian records from an Aboriginal perspective. Chapter 4 discusses the literature analysis confirming this lack of interest and production. Apart from a handful of notable examples, including essays from prominent Aboriginal thinkers such as Bruce Pascoe and Patrick Dodson (Aigner, 2018), the silence of Aboriginal voices in the Italian archival sector is staggering. Pascoe and Dodson reflect on the importance of the Vatican Museum collections as cultural community assets and the critical role that institutions outside Australia play in Aboriginal self-determination and cultural practices. This stillness is an urgent gap because it has consequences across the Italian borders. Are Aboriginal GLAM professionals and community members aware of the existence of this documentation in Italy? How the stories in these archives would change their personal lives? What do they wish for the records' future? Without asking these vital questions and creating opportunities for deep listening to what communities want, the Aboriginal records in Italy will stay physically safe but culturally neglected. They will likely remain invisible to community members outside the limited international collaborations for studying a single record or partnership for an isolated event. Eventually, they will be forgotten.

This final chapter makes a noteworthy contribution to archival displacement and critical archiving by analysing the Aboriginal records in Italy and the practices associated with them against the grain for the first time (Whatley & Brown, 2009). This approach (which involves scrutinising archival materials and historical records questioning the dominant interpretations) is a rare subject in the literature of archival displacement. One of the few examples recently published is the analysis of James Lowry and Forget Chaterera-Zambuko (Lowry & Chaterera-Zambuko, 2023), who use images from the Museum of British Colonialism's *Lost Unities* virtual exhibition to elaborate on the material aspects of the displacement of archives to London from 37 former British colonies. Adding to the

previous analysis of the Aboriginal records along the grain (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a; Stoler, 2002, 2010) undertaken in Chapter 5, this thesis provides a multifaceted background of this heritage. It has expanded possibilities to comprehend the power structures embedded within the records and opened pathways for their future care from grassroots perspectives. However, this chapter takes these readings (along and against the grain) further by analysing them at the cultural interface for opening transnational dialogue and action on archival displacement.

This chapter compiles the first set of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander goals as a blueprint aimed at the Italian and Australian cultural sectors for preserving and managing records held in Italian institutions. It is integrated with the reflections of the Italian professionals directly working with the records. The yarning sessions were instrumental to this aim and have created culturally appropriate settings for increasing transnational networks and building trust. The innovative idea at the core of this chapter lies in analysing the outcomes of these conversations through the cultural interface. This methodological choice has benefited the research by highlighting obstacles and shared goals between the two groups of contributors. The themes, standards and principles in this chapter will serve me in the thesis conclusion to integrate an innovative methodology for eclipsed archives. I first describe how I gathered data through the yarning sessions, introducing the research participants. I then examine how the methodology of storywork introduced in Chapter 3 equipped me with ways to deepen the topic's analysis and grow the relationship with the participants. The following two sections are dedicated to exploring the views of Aboriginal GLAM professionals and related insights from Italian workers. I conclude this chapter by summarising principles that both groups of participants have indicated as fundamental for starting a transnational dialogue on the records.

7.2. How storywork expanded possibilities

In this chapter, I examine the Aboriginal and Italian participants' views on the future of the records held in Italian institutions.⁵⁷ This part of the research aims to get insights into my overarching research question, which interrogates which principles and strategies

⁵⁷ Themes from the yarning are included in this Thesis in Appendix 3.

are needed to care for eclipsed records. The reflections that emerged during the yarning sessions with Aboriginal scholars and professionals do not consider only the three partner museums but also other Italian and Vatican organisations possibly holding records related to Aboriginal experiences and histories. The conversations centred around the archive and touched upon the connections between cultural objects, Ancestral Remains, and knowledge embedded on Country. These reflections reinforced the holistic perspective of knowledge in First Nations cultures. The yarning sessions have also provided data about an exciting aspect of this research: how Italian participants have transformed during this journey. I included these stories in vignettes at the end of the chapter. This outcome was only made possible by the synergies created by applying Indigenous praxis throughout this work, as argued in Chapter 5.

As explained in Chapter 3, I first organised a series of social yarning gatherings to discuss the project and share personal reflections with 17 people who, over the years, have been interested in this study. Second, in my last year of research, I planned 13 sessions of research yarning with some of these contributors to dig deeper into the different aspects of the project. The participants of the research yarning sessions are (listed in alphabetic order): Claudio Mancuso (working in Rome, Italy); Giacomo Paolicchi (working in La Spezia, Italy); Ilaria Boeddu (working in Genova, Italy); Kerry-Ann Tape (Ngiyampaa, Australia); Kirsten Thorpe (Worimi, Australia); Lauren Booker (Garigal, Australia); Maria Camilla De Palma (working in Genova, Italy); Matt Poll (South Sea and Torres Strait Islander, Australia); Narissa Timbery (Yuin Nation, Australia); Nathan “mudyi” Sentence (Wiradjuri, Australia); Rose Barrowcliffe (Butchulla, Australia); Ryan Stoker (Wiradjuri, Australia); Valentina Scazzola (used to take an internship at the D’Albertis Museum, Genova, Italy). These two groups of contributors (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Italian) are researchers and professionals currently employed in the cultural sector in Australia and Italy and work directly with colonial archival records. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants have engaged with archives not only in their professional roles but in their personal lives as well. The Italian members are all employed or have collaborated with the three institutions that are partners in this study.

In conceptualising, organising, undertaking, and analysing the yarning sessions, I embraced the methodology of storywork (J.-A. Archibald, 2008) and good practices outlined by other prominent scholars (J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019; P. Atkinson et al., 2021; Bobongie-Harris Francis et al., 2021; Kovach, 2021; Marshall et al., 2023), as

I outlined in Chapter 3. These recommendations emphasise respecting the people involved (by applying relational accountability and personal involvement) and the process (being transparent about the procedure and the outcome). This methodology was invaluable to deepen the topic's understanding and expand the relationship with the contributors.

Storywork also equipped me with an approach to listening deeply to the participants' experiences and decoding how Aboriginal and Italian perspectives could converge in this PhD study. Extending the yarning to Italian experts is a strategic methodological choice that has expanded the dialogue established in the cultural interface throughout this doctoral study. There are five reasons underlying this tactic. The first of these five motivations is that, when read together, the outcome of these conversations provides a foundation for future research and professional standards for continuing academic and professional action in Italian archives. Secondly, centring Aboriginal voices destabilises the current status quo by proposing alternative ways of interpreting and valuing this heritage that decentres the institutions (for example, by emphasising the importance of making the records digitally available). Thirdly, Italian professionals' reflections on engaging with records have helped identify barriers and shared priorities with Aboriginal GLAM professionals. Critically, they have provided precious insights into translating knowledge in ways that make sense to the Italian public (namely, the lessons learned from the exhibition at D'Albertis Castle). The fourth reason is that incorporating Aboriginal research methods into my methodology has created opportunities for learning and awareness in the Italian context (for instance, by translating the value of the 'yarning' method in research into Italian). Fifth and finally, these yarning sessions have built new relationships and reinforced existing connections. This process has shortened distances, forming networks across countries, validating the importance of centring relationality (Wilson, 2008), accountability (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) and deep listening in the study of archival displacement.

These findings align with my methodology because, in Indigenous approaches, storywork is positioned as a method for collective learning, where stories are adopted as change agents (J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019). In this thesis, multiple narratives are connected by the archival records I have investigated. These include personal experiences, institutional sagas, and voices hidden in the archive. These stories have briefly touched each other over the last four years, as in during the visit of Lauren Booker

and Rose Barrowcliffe at the MUCIV, or the multiple connections with people in Australia to connect about the archival records. They all culminated in the digital archive prototype. Built on the CMS Mukurtu, which in the English language can be translated into ‘dilly bag’, the platform has become a space where all these narratives intertwine.⁵⁸ These interconnections reminded me of how the natural fibres of a dilly bag are interwoven, creating a digital space for these relationships. The cultural practice of weaving natural fibres in Aboriginal cultures has been utilised for thousands of years. More recently, it has been utilised as a metaphor for the act of interlacing Indigenous and Western knowledge systems (L. R. Johnson et al., 2023; Ryder et al., 2020).

All the people involved in this research project, in one way or another, have shared stories that converged in the digital archive. Some people contributed information about the records. Others offered feedback on how to improve it. The Italian working group created for this research continue to meet purposefully to reflect on its components. Everyone shared their thoughts and experiences on transforming it into a dynamic and living archive that can be sustained over time. In this thesis, storywork has made collective understanding possible because, as Margaret Kovach eloquently explains: “Story nurtures relationships. Story kindles reciprocity. Story compels responsibility. Story thrives where there is respect. Story is a gift. And in research, this changes everything” (Kovach, 2021).

⁵⁸ Kimberly Christen (Christen, 2012) explains that: “In Warumungu, ‘Mukurtu’ translates to “dilly bag,” but was adapted by elders in the community to mean “a safe keeping place.” Wumpurrarnikari means “belonging to the Warumungu people.” Elders gave permission in 2009 for the word Mukurtu to be used for the software platform” (p. 2873).

⁵⁹ Photo courtesy of Ilaria Vanni Accarigi.



Figure.7.2. Detail of dilly bag⁵⁹

7.3. Perspectives of Aboriginal participants

In this section, I elaborate on the six themes that have emerged from the yarning interviews with Aboriginal participants, drawing extensively from their direct voices.

Theme 1 - The global treasure hunt

This theme refers to the ongoing search for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander records dispersed worldwide. In short, the Aboriginal participants who have contributed to this study all acknowledge the importance of the records held in Italy. Despite being employed in the GLAM sector in Australia, most knew little about Aboriginal cultural heritage in Italian institutions and wanted to learn more. All participants agreed that institutions, including in Italy, are responsible for supporting communities by providing the tools and resources to make the search achievable.

⁵⁹ Photo courtesy of Ilaria Vanni Accarigi.

Most contributors felt that the Italian case is significant not only for the valuable information held by the institutions but also because it is part of a more significant issue that affects First Nations communities worldwide. The participants' reflections in this section focus on the movements of Aboriginal cultural heritage from Australia to European countries and the United States. However, most participants hinted that other First Nations communities worldwide have also been the subject of unequal power dynamics. Therefore, their cultural heritage has been collected, moved, and exchanged nationally and transnationally. I utilise the term 'global' exchanges to contextualise the Aboriginal experience within a more significant issue of access to cultural heritage. Several participants have acknowledged that the scattering and loss of Aboriginal records, Cultural Artefacts, and Ancestral Remains is akin to a 'puzzle' whose pieces have been spread worldwide. Rose Barrowcliffe defined it as a global treasure hunt, where settler states, and other nations had, and still have, more access rights than communities.

It kind of feels like a bit of a treasure hunt, really. Global treasure hunt. That you just keep going and going, and it just feels so undiscovered (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

The collection is a consultation tool because there's a huge interest in Australia. To just know what's out there. It's like one step in a very long puzzle. It's like putting together all these pieces of fragments of Indigenous collections that ended up all around the world. But I mean, that's why I'm interested in these Italian collections as well. They have really interesting backgrounds. It's really important for community members to know (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Reflecting on her visit to the MUCIV in 2022 (with Rose Barrowcliffe, Claudio Mancuso, and myself), Booker reflects on the visit and her feeling of being an important but "familiar experience". She also commented on the importance of the photographic collection, even in the eventuality that some of these could be copies.

A familiar experience – that's how I could describe it. This situation, that there are collections that people don't know exist, is so common. Learning that through the work that we do, but also through my own experiences, things repeat themselves consistently. [...] I think, a shared, repeated and ongoing experience for many people (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

It doesn't mean that these copies aren't important. It's still the same. It's still a photograph of Ancestors. But if there's a process that's already happened for other copies of the same photographs, looking to that process for guidance, seeing what has happened already and what the community decision was [...]. It always comes back to community. They should be deciding (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

All Aboriginal contributors agreed that collecting institutions in Australia and overseas must support Aboriginal peoples' and communities' right to know. Without fully embedding this principle and taking responsibility for widely sharing their records in culturally appropriate ways, Aboriginal communities will continue to be excluded from these global conversations and unable to engage fully. Making available hints or resources to know that the records exist is of valuable importance for people starting their journey in archives nationally and internationally. For example, reflecting on his family research of his grandfather, a Wiradjuri policeman and tracker, Ryan Stoker discussed the importance of knowing where to search for his records. With the same sentiment, Narissa Timbery argued the difficulty of undertaking professional research if you do not know that the records exist.

You don't know what's in there unless you know what's in there. If you've got family members who have visited a particular archive or have that sort of clue...if you've got that clue of where to go (S. Ryan, personal communication, 16 June 2023).

From my own experience, a lot of that has been through someone knowing someone. But you got to know the record exists, you know (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

Many participants consider the digital archive prototype a valuable tool to fill this gap and support this *treasure hunt* by creating pathways among Italian and European records. Barrowcliffe suggests that there could be value in linking the platform to catalogues of Australian states and national repositories as an entry point for communities that might not be aware of this project. In this way, my Prototype could provide more metadata to the existing record in Australia while being “More of a living archive, more dynamic and iterative than a state library can be” (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

Most Aboriginal participants indicated that documentation in the Italian archives might positively impact future Aboriginal efforts of cultural and language revival movements and family history research.

But I think one of the most important things is that, you know, we all just want to know where and when our families were. Just trying to be able to locate family in a time and place is sort of grounding and gives you some sort of context (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

It's so special for anyone to find photographs of your family member or your Ancestor (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

These records, especially where they contain traces of Aboriginal language words, need to be contextualised as tools that were never planned to be used by communities. Keeping these considerations in mind will reflect on this project work with the records and inclusion in the digital archive prototype.

I mean, it's not perfect [...], but it can be used as a starting point by community members because the spoken vernacular usage of that language is very different from how it's recorded to someone who doesn't speak the language. You know, he's hearing it in Italian or something (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Like the state library Rediscovering Indigenous Languages project, some of that language material being open may be useful to the community of origin, but the collection wasn't compiled in the first place to be useful. I think I'd be making sure your archive is useful. And I guess that's where engagement [with communities] comes in (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023).

Theme 2 – Relinquish your privilege

It was agreed that in a future where Aboriginal GLAM workers, community members and Italian professionals engage directly, there must be honest conversations about power in archives. In this way, archives can be a place of encounter and healing rather than continuing to contribute to alienation.

All participants reflected on the impenetrability of the archive as a global concern. This *broken system* (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023) is a constant reminder of how the inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia are reproduced when accessing information in other countries. Ryan Stoker used the

expression *take the white gloves off* (S. Ryan, personal communication, 16 June 2023) to stress the need for professionals working in cultural institutions to let go of that privilege by increasing access to the archives. Matt Poll exposes the difficulties of accessing archives internationally and how this system perpetuates privilege in accessing the information.

Sometimes, years after doing things, you find the missing pieces broken up because of 4 or 5 different archives, photos in the library or there'll be old journals that have the missing pieces of the story of who is the collector. Whether you know, was it a natural history collector out there collecting platypuses and as a by-product has picked up all these amazing boomerangs and shields. You know, that's not easy for a lot of community members who have had stark experiences in the education system, for example. So, in some ways, those archives really privilege people who have the tools to use them better than a lot of the community members. [...] But how the story of an object is broken up across, you know, 4 or 5 different locations, each with their own protocols of accessing that information, this distances community from those collections (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Respecting cultural protocols and sensitivities is described by all participants as another critical act of respect, especially in the digital domain. This awareness creates invaluable opportunities for further engagement accompanied by understanding and education. However, respecting cultural protocols and sensitivities shouldn't stop the process of making the material available, such as keeping the record offline if it is sensitive, but providing prompts so community members know it exists. Critically, making the records available culturally appropriately implies building cultural competence and understanding of the basic principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures among staff. Kirsten Thorpe called for an understanding of a minimum standard that comes back as a responsibility in the cultural sector and that could open channels for transnational dialogue and hope.

[...] If people are going to take jobs in these institutions, then certain values get instilled in them through, for example, the values of their profession or workforce. How do these roles benchmark the progress of their work nationally and internationally? GLAM institutions must have a dialogue about what minimum standard is required for engagement and participation with Indigenous people and communities. I see a lot of hope in that work. I think that if you do that and have that dialogue in a way that might be much more productive (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023).

Further, it was evident that Aboriginal participants found it critical for Italian professionals to deeply comprehend the impact that these systems of colonial power over knowledge

still impose on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Two examples cited by Matt Poll included the tensions and harm that misappropriation or wrong attribution can cause in communities and the influence that Italian records still have today on views of Aboriginal cultures (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023). Therefore, taking the 'white gloves off' also includes acknowledging that First Nations cultures, such as all other cultures in the world, are alive and constantly changing: work with First Nations records should follow the same flexibility.

You know, from this inauthentic idea of a pristine Aboriginal past that never really existed, that was constructed by non-Indigenous authors. Because knowledge is transformable and changes too (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

I guess that's one thing about ICIP, which is not just including intellectual cultural property, because it's continuous, never runs out, and is multigenerational. I think there have to be ways that the next generation could change their mind (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023).

Promoting understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures has been raised as decisive because it can influence how information is communicated to the public. It can operate as a butterfly affect, influencing how Aboriginal knowledge is known and appreciated (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023). Italian professionals are also seen as potential agents of change (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023). A first step towards this understanding is for institutions to acknowledge the role that Italy and the Vatican had in transnational collecting and commencing sincere conversations on the inaccessibility of archival records until the present.

The European archives are very closed about what they have in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. But I think it needs to be first and foremost that truth-telling side of things around the role of European archives in that movement of culture (S. Ryan, personal communication, 16 June 2023).

Like, you know, a lot of the places where I worked in Australia have a closed catalogue, which means that only staff can view that information. [...] I think there's a big problem with that because we are gatekeeping a lot of important information that people have the right to have because it's about them. It's not about us (K.-A. Tape, personal communication, 29 May 2023).

Theme 3 - It's all about making connections

Altogether, participants concur that to ensure the archive's usefulness, it is imperative to establish connections with Aboriginal communities and to let them drive the conversation

while investing in long-term relationships. Further, research outcomes should be disseminated for the benefit of communities.

All participants have clearly expressed that research in archives, in Australia and overseas, is only possible by learning from other people and establishing networks and connections. It is a complex space to navigate often. Records are found by chance or because of personal relationships. Narissa Timbery explains this concept by asserting it's about "Making connections and networks across the globe for all these dispersed collections".

In my dream world, those images you uncovered in Italy could be linked to other collections. And communities in Australia...that is also a dream I had working at The Archives and even in AIATSIS. I would have loved to be able to say: these organisations have these collections. We've aligned it in our institutions. Now, let's get it to the community, and then the community can decide what they want with that collection. You know, because we don't know what people might say..."No, leave it there! We like the record to be in Italy because there's evidence of our people. But if through your work, people could speak back to those documents, that would be amazing, and then if the Italian authorities updated their records to reflect that...that's a dream! You know, it's about making connections and networks across the globe for all these dispersed collections. And so people know they exist. And because they may tell a little part of the story (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

To be able to find, contextualise, and locate where the records come from, the histories of the Italian collectors and the relationships with other buyers across nations have been mentioned by different participants as crucial. Also, even when all the historical information has been assigned, it remains imperative to look for community narratives. All participants overwhelmingly asserted that community guidance becomes vital when working with archives. Only when connected to people, countries, and other dispersed information, does the archive become a *useful object* [personal emphasis].

The way that those little bits of information or knowledge are assembled needs to be done by those who have the most authority to do that (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Your methodology being relational, I think that's the important thing. Archives should be relational...connected to people, places, and communities. And that relationship is continuous and cyclical – the community helping archives to know what else is in there (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023).

Lauren Booker powerfully describes the importance of making the Italian material available for communities:

It is not ethical to be publishing and publicly using photos of Ancestors, someone's family, without consent for that photograph to be used in that way. Ancestors are not museum objects for reproduction, and that includes their image, so it is important that they are re-connected to family and community (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

However, to be meaningful and to avoid perpetuating inequalities towards communities, findings and research outcomes must be shared outside the institutions and academic realm. Matt Poll eloquently explains the opportunities this democratisation would bring, whether in Italy or Europe:

I think that's a huge opportunity to tell the story of why...I mean, if you include stone tools, there's more than 200,000 objects held in international museums from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, which is staggering. And it's 200,000 conversations that need to take place, probably not for the next century. And, you know, it's a great opportunity to build the confidence and skills of Aboriginal people to keep doing projects like this too. But it needs to be an internationally coordinated effort, you know, between museum networks to make it happen in a way that sort of can be used as a template for all First nations cultures around the world to better engage with museums. Because I think we've done a lot of work that we could draw from now, but it's obscured behind academic publishing paywalls and in museum databases. You have to do a lot of legwork to find the info that people are looking for (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Theme 4 – A safety training exercise

In summary, all participants have described reflections on knowledge translation as critical for promoting transcultural understanding but also very difficult to achieve in practice. Everybody shared strategies to work towards transnational understanding. The title of this section is inspired by Matt Poll and Lauren Booker's view of this complex topic. Matt Poll used the metaphor of a cultural safety training exercise for both parties entering the conversation:

I think that's like a cultural safety training exercise that both parties need to do even approach the work. It's building that relationship and a shared agreement for anything successful (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Booker describes knowledge translation as a wicked problem that might possibly never be solved entirely. However, she remarks the importance of providing context for the public to provoke change in the ways people understand the material (for example, by

describing what doing an 'Acknowledgment of Country means in the Australian context). Booker emphasises that acknowledging and respecting diverse worldviews is indicative of respect within transcultural relationships, even when a comprehensive understanding of these worldviews remains elusive (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

Self-determination, I think is a huge concept for museums to engage with because it's so deeply connected to respect - respecting that everyone deserves to determine what the future is of their knowledges and their representation, their culture and their Ancestors. Museums, particularly anthropological institutions and colonial institutions have been structured to transfer agency and decision-making to the museum. But if you respect someone, you want them to have agency and self-determination, and you will fight for them to have that (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

Kerry-Ann Tape sharply remarks that knowledge translation is not limited to people speaking different languages but can also be needed by English speakers because "The way we discuss things is different". She also warns about losing cultural meaning if communities are not involved.

To ensure the sentiment remains the same in both languages. It would be good to have someone involved to redescribe things so that connection to culture and cultural understanding isn't lost. In that way, there's still that black lens and perspective that's currently not being represented or articulated. In any case translating is going to be very difficult...like trying to explain our culture and our history in another language. It's a big job (K.-A. Tape, personal communication, 29 May 2023).

Moreover, Nathan Sentance reflected on the difficulties of translating concepts between Australia and Italy by comparing the same process of decoding Aboriginal worldviews into English as many "don't translate well". He argued that these two language translation processes would be similar because the voices of Italians are still outsiders' views (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023). Lauren Booker remarks that they are both "colonisers with a colonial mentality" (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023). However according to Nathan, what can be different from the British vision was the intent for which these materials were collected:

I think it won't affect it too much. It's still like an outsider's view. [...] I think there might even be, as you're saying, many commonalities. The other thing I guess is good is that Italy didn't try colonising Australia. I have noticed that with some European countries, that can be much more horrible to the First Nations people of the countries they're trying to colonise than the countries that they have no vested interest in. You know, I'm sure it's the same with the French...[...] or like Americans, who seem to be very interested in Aboriginal history, but don't seem

to know much about like Native American history and so forth (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023).

Beyond the linguistic challenge, another complication Nathan found in translating Aboriginal concepts into Italian is the physical distance that makes it challenging to contextualise thoughts ingrained in understanding a particular Country.

I think there would be the issue of taking the translations far away from the source because the language is connected to Country, and I guess that the geographical distance from Italy to here could be an issue. Language and knowledge are so connected to particular places. It's like how to get that context from a distance, I guess (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023).

A good example is one that emerged in the exhibition. When I asked about opinions on how to contextualise the need for an Acknowledgment of Country in Genova, Matt Poll provided an illuminating explanation:

I think that, in the Australian context, that's been more than 250 years of attempts to obliterate Aboriginal spirituality and religion. And if people want to practise them as part of their contemporary identity...obliterate them further is not a good outcome is the only way I can describe that. And sometimes people preserving knowledge is within those spiritual and religious First Nations traditions. Little pieces of knowledge are embedded in the way that they understand those things. So, to not respect the spiritual and philosophical ways that Indigenous peoples remarkably preserved their culture after this onslaught of obscuring the language and knowledge and philosophies and everything...in the Australian context...I mean, I take it for granted that we need to do more always. In an international context...people are a bit challenged by that. And normally that's a sign for me that I don't want to work for them again, to be blunt. Because I don't think they could understand the extent of attempts to obliterate (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Nathan Sentance raises another interesting question that emerged during the development of the digital archive: How do we translate the notion of Aboriginal cultural protocols among different knowledge systems?

[speaking about creating different layers of access] It's kind of interesting what you need to do. You need to create a two-way channel, but also you need Italy to understand the importance of that channel because they might not be aware of that... yeah, some of this stuff could be culturally sensitive because they don't have the concept around secret and sacred. It would be tricky to explain, I guess. But the cool thing about it is that if you could bring more Mob over, they could do those things...like have those executions and then I guess that can lead to a dialogue. And maybe do some cultural sharing (N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023).

Ryan Stoker suggested a two-step approach to overcoming these difficulties: firstly, to educate and provide a historical background. Secondly, to put an Italian spin on the concept that needs to be translated into these two different contexts, meaning finding an equivalent that could work in Italian culture. He also found it of vital importance to make people aware of how recent Australian colonisation is.

I think it's putting in that context that all these things have happened quite recently [...]. Your uncle, who could come here in the archive, could be a direct descendant of the Stolen Generations. People have that personal connection [with the records] (S. Ryan, personal communication, 16 June 2023).

Theme 6 – Goodwill must come with action

This section calls for going beyond goodwill in displaced archives, aiming for a severe intervention that reshuffles power structures and centres Aboriginal ways of knowing. It takes its name from a comment by Kirsten Thorpe during the yarning session, when she called for the importance of going beyond goodwill in displaced archives, aiming for a severe intervention (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023). Rose Barrowcliffe also called for a remedy, a way forward that does not end with conversations and goodwill and that should follow community reactions (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

For Thorpe, it is about ultimately shifting the power structures in place to not replicate this power imbalance and practically commit to the principle of Indigenous self-determination, mutual benefits, and reciprocity. It is about realising that the process of collecting implies privilege. This shift would mean institutions committing to the principle of 'return'.

If we are serious about this work, the GLAM institutions have to work on a principle of return, and that means returning assets to communities, returning ownership. It can't just be performative. "We'd like to engage with you because we have these things that interest you, but we are actually committing to a complete and total return". If we get more serious about those negotiations, then there can be mutual benefit. However, that would be on the terms of communities saying to the institution, "we want to continue to work with you, and it will be in this particular format." Then you build from there, and in this way the landscape might bring more creativity, engagement, and knowledge because there's a different power balance in play. We might even see more investment in these spaces if the ownership model was changed. Currently, there are so many assumptions about people having particular roles in engaging with the collection. At the end of the day, it's the collecting institution, in Italy or Australia, the nation-

state profiting 100% from that process. It is critical that we talk about the return of IP and return of a holding of IP and ICIP.⁶⁰ Any view of the return of collections must be supported by Indigenous community self-determination, otherwise we will see the power imbalances being replicated (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023).

In this scenario of unlearning, Kirsten Thorpe and Narissa Timbery argued about the importance of “being comfortable with that uncomfortableness” (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023) to decentre Western paradigms in archives. Timbery persuasively remarked that Indigenous knowledge systems have been successful for thousands of years and do not need approval from other disciplines to be seen as valid in archival practice.

We've had structures that have lasted thousands and thousands of years of how things are recorded and how that information is passed along the line. So you don't have to, you know, put it next to Western archival standards to make it valid or to show the community of non-Indigenous people how amazing our ways of archiving and capturing knowledge are (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

Some participants raised that international associations can fill some gaps by acting as bridges across countries (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023). One example is the UNDIPR, which should be adopted more practically by countries that endorsed it (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023). However, the more significant gap is the lack of legislative reforms that protect First Nations colonial records (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023).

The idea of public good. There's an idea of treasuring the things that need to be treasured and looking after history and culture. So that goodwill...Often people say “there are good people in the profession”, and that's absolutely right. However, if we don't review the legislation that exists, then we won't ever have that regulatory space that is required for this work. Tandanya and the ATSI LIRN Protocols [...] we use them as levers or opportunities to change professional practice. They still have significant gaps as advocacy tools. The movement to recognise ICIP, driven by Dr Terri Janke, is to say: “This is an agenda; this is a gap”. So we have to reform the business of the law (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023).

⁶⁰ Intellectual Property (IP) and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).

Part of this direction change could profoundly impact the health and well-being of Aboriginal people and communities and contribute to unresolved trauma caused by colonisation (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023; N. Sentance, personal communication, 3 June 2023; K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023). There was, in fact, total agreement among Aboriginal participants that the records held in Italy and across Europe, despite being the property of the institutions under a legal Western framework, belong to communities.

Theme 7 – This research isn't a small thing

In this section, I encapsulate the thoughts of participants who have contemplated the enduring effects that this research project could yield. This project is already impacting everyone and must progress into the future by progressing relationships with Italian professionals and institutions.

All those involved have expressed the importance of relationships with Italian collecting institutions to mature further because this project “Isn't a small thing and could change that person's life” (K.-A. Tape, personal communication, 29 May 2023). Italian GLAM professionals and authorities who value this heritage are crucial to these relationships.

I think when people think of cultural institutions and libraries and archives and librarians and archivists, they think of us as small people doing small jobs. But working in the First Nations space, we're giving people back their culture, and that could change their lives. Like that isn't a small thing. So even giving those collections back to those families could mean everything to them. And you shouldn't undersell your work because you're giving something back to those people that they've never had and that maybe they've always wanted. It's really important and could change that person's life (K.-A. Tape, personal communication, 29 May 2023).

These things are more valuable than some people might think. For a community to know that that record exists is magic, you know, and for the Italian authorities to recognise and see this in importance there. You know, it's really like this is really important stuff and it means something. It's not just a record, it's, you know, it's a whole lot more, it's a whole lot on a deeper level (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

Narissa Timbery, one of the people with whom I liaised to learn more about a set of photographs held in Genova, reflects on the importance of the Italian material even when

establishing a direct provenance is unlikely. The photograph Timbery refers to portrays a man rowing on a boat in the area we now call La Perouse.⁶¹

That particular image, even though we couldn't put a person to their image, it shows other things. When I talked to Jeff about it, we were discussing, ' Oh, what was he doing? Was he fishing? Was he transporting people back from one side of the bay to the other? There's a lot of information there, even though we were unable to work out who the person in the photo was (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

As discussed earlier, the importance of this study is about the information held in Italy and the flow of connections across Europe that this project can commence. Further, it goes back to the importance of influencing how Australian authorities and the public appreciate what Narissa Timbery describes as *treasures*.

Those treasures are also in the archives: Italian authorities are looking after those little treasures in those records. I don't know how they are managed... because obviously that would be managed in the way that happens in Italy. But I wonder, like for your research, that by bringing them out, for people seeing the value of these records to the people back in Australia, like that's just as valuable (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

Thank you, Monica, for doing this work. It's really important work. It's really, really important work that needs to be done, you know, to build the goodwill between the different countries in relation to accessing archival collections (N. Timbery, personal communication, 28 August 2023).

Despite the limitation given by funding, establishing relationships with Italian institutions is seen by most participants as an exciting opportunity to provide prospects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in GLAM. Many have indicated that direct involvement through fellowships and research residencies is a necessary way forward beyond this thesis.

I could see that as a fellowship opportunity at the Italian Institution - to work on this collection and with the community. That doesn't necessarily need to be done by an Aboriginal person. In an ideal world, it would be. But if that meant that it was also an ally doing that work. That would also be a good solution where

⁶¹ digital archive: <https://aboriginalarchivesitaly.com/collection/peoples-and-places-botany-bay-1910>

people know about the collection, know it exists, and know it will be culturally maintained in the best way possible (S. Ryan, personal communication, 16 June 2023).

In essence, Matt Poll's description below exemplifies the benefits that a constant engagement with Italian and European archives would bring:

I think there's a great two-way opportunity. I don't think everything should be repatriated to Australia, for example, because there should be pathways for people from young people from communities all around Australia to visit these connections in Italy and places like the British Museum. Visit and revisit them and create opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. I think we need a lot more for a better-coordinated approach towards creating a dialogue between First Nations representatives in Australia and international museums overseas. And that involves residencies - not just an artist in residence, but, you know, a linguist in residence or a filmmaker in residence and different people like that too. Use the opportunity of these collections existing overseas as a learning opportunity and a school-building opportunity (M. Poll, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

Kirsten Thorpe identified the potential of continuing this research into the future as beneficial for the Australian GLAM context to identify similarities between professional practices. What she found interesting and made it different from other projects was the prospect of establishing a dialogue on the records and, more interestingly, focusing on people's transformation.

The potential impact of your research is really interesting. [...] It would be great to hear other people's reflections from an Italian perspective of what that change has been like for them. Perhaps that kind of feedback could loop into an Australian context. It would be interesting to see some parallels of particularly non-Indigenous people working as change agents in those positions. What did it feel like to be part of it?" [...] I am interested in questions about the well-being of communities and what it means for them to access collections? I think these are critical questions. Did it change them? What are the impacts on people when they come in and experience the archives? If it's the case in Italy, they experience that exhibition, what is the impact or effect of that on others? To me, that will be an interesting outcome. The points of difference with what you're doing compared to other projects that are merely talking about the transfer of stuff to and from places (K. Thorpe, personal communication, 1 September 2023).

Recognising that Italy is just one of the many countries that hold testimonies of Aboriginal histories and experiences, this research project is a case study that could benefit other countries. However, one of the significant complexities of being able to work with eclipsed archives in multiple locations has been identified as the complex set of skills required to undertake this work.

It's a great test case. But it's also a really great example and, and will be potentially a really great case study because this is, you know, one of the millions of collections that are held without people knowing that they're there or with people knowing that they're up there but without having access to them (L. Booker, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

I think the reason why your research was made possible is because it took the right person at the right time to be in the right place, to understand all those things. Not only are you able to cross the language barrier, but you also have an understanding of Aboriginal culture and collecting institutions. So that's a really rare collection of skills in one person. So I think part of the difficulty in being able to do this work - like sort of replicating this work in a lot of different places - is finding the right person who has that collection of skills to be able to understand cultural protocols, to understand archival practice, to be able to speak both languages fluently enough to be able to build relationships, and that sort of thing. It's a bit of a tricky one (R. Barrowcliffe, personal communication, 2 June 2023).

7.4. Insights from Italian contributors

In this section, I delve into the three themes among the Italian participants, incorporating their perspectives and insights.

Theme 1 – Recovery of historical memory and responsibility

In this part, participants reflect on the importance of analysing institutional and professional standpoints as a starting point to establish relationships with communities.

In the yarning sessions with Italian professionals, the theme of Italian historical responsibilities towards the Aboriginal records was raised repeatedly. Giacomo Paolicchi exposed the slowness of the Italian process of decolonisation and its effects on the sense of responsibility of the Italian cultural sector. Similarly to what Ryan Stoker commented earlier, Giacomo affirms that what is missing is a critical reflection on the role that Italians have had, firstly in the colonisation of Africa and secondly in transnational colonialism, including the genocide of Aboriginal peoples.

But we must somehow try to create a critical awareness of ourselves towards the outside, which certainly involves Africa first and foremost, where we have done a lot of harm. But it's a generalised discussion. You experience it firsthand as an Italian, but you also have to experience it as a Westerner. And therefore, in some way, you too collaborated to genocides of First Nations peoples. Because that was the mentality. So these projects, in my opinion, must also be aimed at participating in this type of recovery of historical memory and one's own sense of

responsibility. And this is certainly missing, at least as far as we are concerned, in Italy (G. Paolicchi, personal communication, 12 June 2023).

For Paolicchi, this aspect is crucial because it is only by attaining that consciousness that professionals can share that kind of critical thinking with the public. Hence, although not directly responsible for past events, individuals working in institutions have a pivotal role in changing the public mindset. For Claudio Mancuso, sharing the records is one decisive way to inform the public about this critical process, but that must be done democratically and sincerely:

It must not be just an elite affair, nor be exclusively a way to clear one's conscience saying: I remove from the showcase all the photos that may be sensitive in some way, just as is often done with objects. Hiding them, remains no trace of these dynamics, of these processes that were decisive both for the West but also for all those societies and communities that have undergone this process in some way. So it is, in my opinion, an unmissable opportunity linked precisely to the historical situation in which we live, and which we absolutely must use in the best possible way (C. Mancuso, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

With a similar reflection to those made by Kirsten Thorpe and Narissa Timbery earlier, Maria Camilla De Palma echoed the need for institutions to give up power to make visible the imbalances that have shaped the creation of collections held in collecting institutions. De Palma asserts, "It's necessary to unveil these imbalances in which our institutions are rooted [...] "And no one should keep their collections hidden because otherwise they must return everything. Because that's where the problem lies" (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023). For De Palma, the only way forward for collecting institutions is to create a third space of sharing with communities to decentre points of view, insisting on the impossible neutrality of the Italian perspective. Reposition perspectives also include creating spaces in collecting institutions for Aboriginal ways of sharing knowledge (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023). However, for a future where dialogue and knowledge exchange are possible, Government-level agreements between countries must be created. She cites the example of NAGPRA in the United States, which not only imposed practical actions but also created the settings for cultural change.⁶² In summary, institutions need to "Extensively disseminate, multiply

⁶² Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

point of view, starting from decentralised and renewed foundations" (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023).

One idea that was repeated by Italian participants, echoing what Kerry-Ann Tape remarked, is that Italian institutions look after the records. They do not own them. All Italian participants have expressed the importance of open pathways for communities and researchers to finally access their archives as a community right and to gain information on the records. For example, Ilaria Boeddu speaks about the collaboration between the Museum and Ken Orchard and Marika Duczinski as an incredible opportunity to find information about photographs that the museum knew little about. In a similar reflection of Lauren Booker's, Ilaria remarks that those images, if not widely shared, would have otherwise been kept physically safe in the museum but culturally lifeless (I. Boeddu, personal communication, 31 May 2023).

Theme 2 - Layers in knowledge translations

In this segment, Italian professionals discuss different layers of knowledge translations that can benefit the diffusion and culturally responsive care of displaced archives. When discussing knowledge translation between communities and Italian professionals, all participants acknowledge the inherent challenges in this process. The yarning has reflected on two remarkable aspects that arose in this study. The initial dimension involves the knowledge translation required for professionals to comprehend and contextualise Aboriginal records. The subsequent aspect pertains to the collaboration needed for Italian institutions to adapt and contextualise this documentation for the Italian public.

In the first place, Italian professionals need to learn and decode the cultural context of the records to effectively engage with them and ensure their care. Interestingly, Claudio Mancuso raised the point that Italy often receives repatriation requests from Italian communities: also, in these national cases, a knowledge translation process is required (C. Mancuso, personal communication, 25 May 2023). However, for Giacomo Paolicchi, the most problematic complexity for future dialogue with Aboriginal communities is the physical distance. He calls for opportunities to work directly with Aboriginal GLAM professionals to avoid learning only from published sources (G. Paolicchi, personal communication, 12 June 2023). Maria Camilla De Palma sees the direct connection with Aboriginal GLAM workers as another way to decentralise power (M. C. De Palma,

personal communication, 22 May 2023). Reflecting on different aspects of knowledge translation undertaken for the digital archive, Ilaria Boeddu finds the collaboration for the working group vital as a space for brainstorming. Boeddu also warns about the risk of exaggerating by adopting too many warnings and caution when sharing the records. To try to respect everyone's sensibility and cultural protocols, there is the risk of obscuring access to the material and never arriving at that needed dialogue that provides contexts for the public to learn (I. Boeddu, personal communication, 31 May 2023).

Furthermore, when implementing this learning, Italian professionals must focus on converting it for the diverse Italian (and international) public. Ilaria Boeddu contemplated the importance of sharing these images with the public to learn about Australia's colonial chronicles, acknowledging it as a rare opportunity for many people to approach these histories (I. Boeddu, personal communication, 31 May 2023). Reflecting on the exhibition's development, Maria Camilla De Palma contemplated the importance of making visitors comprehend that respect in archives is not limited to the distant experience of Aboriginal communities; it is instead a universal issue.

So, I always feel like taking a step back, thinking about how the distance from Australia, it's as if it justifies people not knowing, or feeling so distant, like this...I remember that was the objection that always when you went directly into a theme on display, I said wait a minute. Think that they almost don't know where Australia is, they don't know that there are Aboriginal populations. So perhaps the first principle, the first criterion, should be to make sure that we can contextualise it better and make it clear that these problems are not on the other side of the world. To make people understand the centrality of this problem, perhaps by comparing it to closer and more local situations, which makes it clear that it is a problem of a universal nature and that if you try to tackle, it is not for that small minority that does not affect us (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023).

After capturing their attention, the public should be informed about the Australian context, which is unknown to most. Crucial to this aspect is to bring awareness about the fact that "Australia has always had an exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people [...] and is therefore important to communicate that most of what we have learned and is in the archive was told by a white perspective and it's incomplete" (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023). Contemplating the efforts invested in the digital archive, Valentina Scazzola underscores the significance of promoting public awareness that records within Italian organisations are fundamental elements, contributing not solely to Italian collective memories:

The archives [in Italy] don't speak of only past heritage, but emphasise a relationality, a bond that emerges with those who are today linked to the records. And [this link needs to be contextualised to] how this heritage of the past needs to be treated in view of a collective, individual memory of the people who exist today and who therefore...don't necessarily think that they are part of their background, but maybe they just want to know more. And this is also very beautiful, that there is a panorama, a landscape of very diversified voices. In my opinion this also emerges precisely from the structure of the site itself, and then from the contents (V. Scazzola, personal communication, 31 July 2023).

Theme 3 – Are guidelines needed?

This final theme focuses on the need to formalise Italian work with eclipsed archives into the future. Participants agree that support is needed, but they provide interesting insights on why decision-making should not be relegated to fixed structures.

All participants shared the need for *ad hoc* guidance for the Italian context that could support this work in the future. What is primarily missing for Giacomo Paolicchi is an Italian network for these records: the first step is to census the material because, otherwise, all initiatives will be fragmentary. He found the working group organised for this project to be the first important step, but that needs to grow because “We are three of so many” (G. Paolicchi, personal communication, 12 June 2023). Claudio Mancuso (personal communication, 25 May 2023) said the Italian Ministry had created a working group to guide the work with colonial cultural heritage by surveying the millions of items on Italian territory and creating professional guidelines. He found this initiative a slow but essential starting point that hopefully increases continuity in these processes and “Subtract from an arbitrary criterion, a sensitivity which can vary from place to place, from museum to museum and which in fact depends on the individual person”. Valentina Scazzola observed that reference points would encourage professionals to continually question their practices (V. Scazzola, personal communication, 31 July 2023).

However, everyone agreed these guidelines shouldn't be too prescriptive but general enough to be used by the many collecting institutions holding Aboriginal records in the Italian context. Case studies have been indicated as the most helpful resource to support institutions: by learning from the experiences of others, each organisation could create more meaningful guidelines for their own context.

The first guideline should be to create a third space where the different people could meet and interact [...] because it is from that encounter that you understand how to do it. It should be raised from your own learning instead of rules you need

to apply. [...] Guidelines pigeonhole into specific frameworks and do not account for the unexpected. Because that's precisely what didn't come to your mind, the most important part. [...] And also, the work you are doing...keep yourself open to see what will happen from these ten interviews because they will be generative. Each one can take you where you didn't think of going. And perhaps you will put together things that will be the foundation... more than guidelines... they will be the core (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023).

As with the remarks from Aboriginal participants, everyone emphasised the importance of drawing insights from existing resources and comparable international studies to avoid duplicating efforts.

7.5. Viewpoints at the cultural interface

The yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Italian participants served as engaging exercises for collecting data, which will contribute to the methodology outlined in this thesis (Chapter 8) and pinpoint areas for intensified efforts in future stages of this work. Analysing the conversations at the cultural interface enhances this analysis by highlighting areas of consensus and dissent, silent themes, and patterns that elucidate areas necessitating thorough discussions for future engagements.

There were several integrated perspectives in the two groups of participants. The support for the right to know and the need for connecting with communities was overwhelmingly agreed upon. Additionally, both groups concurred that Italian professionals are hired to care for the material; they do not own it. However, these conversations haven't discussed the Italian government's and national legislation's role in controlling the records and require future investigations. The two groups have considered other similar aspects. For instance, funding is required to back projects and enable Aboriginal members to physically engage with the archive. The necessity for legislation and agreements to oversee these activities.

Additionally, there is a need for more pragmatic timeframes to facilitate meaningful dialogue. There was a sense among all participants that this work cannot be done in isolation: everyone has highlighted the need to connect with other institutions that hold related collections or are working on the same projects. The efforts undertaken in the past initiatives could become an opportunity for today. Other areas that have overlapped and reinforced each other in the two groups of contributors relate to the need to

acknowledge and act about the historical responsibilities of the Italian nation in collecting and keeping this heritage. The role of Italian professionals has been raised as critical because it can influence the public.

The yarning sessions have not raised any area of disagreement or opposing ideas. However, the data prompted areas that the Italian participants have not yet examined. One of those areas is the application of ICIP rights, a subject not commonly discussed by Italian scholars and practitioners. Also, the need to discuss cultural protocols within the records was considered during the creation of the MOU and work for the collections. However, it has not been applied practically and needs more discussion. Another point that has been pinpointed but not touched upon is the Italian legislation on digital return and repatriation, and how these settings can influence future conversations with communities.

7.6. Standards for working with the records

In this chapter, I analysed the themes from the yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Italian scholars and professionals and how their views overlap and differentiate in the cultural interface. I now transition to exploring what participants have pinpointed as the essential criteria for a future dialogue between Australia and Italy, which constitutes the primary aim of this doctoral study.

I asked all participants: “What are three values or principles you feel should be the starting points for institutions to care about First Nations information in archives respectfully?”. I summarised the criteria expressed by participants below, outlining standards that will inform this thesis's conclusions. The principles expressed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants can be summarised as:

1) Endorse self-determination as an act of respect

Everyone deserves to determine the future of their knowledges and representation of their culture and Ancestors in both physical and digital records. Giving respect to the people who are represented in the archive includes respecting their communities' right to know and being aware of who can access the material and under what conditions. The institution must reflect on ways to navigate internal policies and practices to allow

self-determination in principles and practical terms. Recognising self-determination in archives means respecting the people involved: if you respect someone, you want them to have agency as much as you do.

2) Rethink ownership as a duty of care

Institutions do not own the archival material and information embedded in them. communities do. However, because institutions preserve the records, they have a duty of care to treat them with the utmost respect. This care extends to the digital domain. It is crucial to remain accountable and recognise the wrongdoings (for example, the problematic ways in which some material has been collected and its lack of accessibility) and address the changes that can be made today.

3) Invest in relationships and commit to deep listening

This principle insists on investing in genuine and long-term relationships instead of extractive short-term connections, listening deeply to each other, and not assuming the best way to care for the records. Acknowledge and be patient when dealing with diverse understandings of time and priorities. Share optimism: there are amazing things that can grow from these relationships. Honest relationships also imply that communities will feel seen, heard, and empowered to make informed decisions in matters that impact the collecting institution's practices with cultural material.

4) Commit to reciprocity beyond mutual benefits

Create opportunities for community members to continuously engage digitally and personally with the archive. However, this value requires an honest conversation about who is gaining from the relationship. In some cases, benefits can result in additional advantages for communities, even though they are meant to be mutually beneficial. Given the longstanding history of exploitation of First Nations people's knowledge, this aspect can be considered a valid criterion. A clear and mutual agreement can be reached by setting expectations at the outset.

5) Gain a baseline of cultural awareness

Get informed on the fundamental cultural protocols to respectfully engage with the material. No one must be an expert (especially considering the many communities institutions engage with) but gaining this baseline to ensure cultural responsiveness in the physical and digital domain is helpful. This self-reliance will help overcome the fear of offending or doing wrong towards communities.

6) Intervene on current power structures

After the relationship between institutions and communities is established, there must be a conclusion or the start of another kind of affiliation, according to what the community wants. This can be requesting the records back from the institution or continuing the relationship for their future care in Italy. However, an intervention to disrupt existing power structures must be at the core of this journey, where institutions must commit to a complete total return of assets and ownership. Even when legislation does not admit this power imbalance, it must be recognised to avoid performative acts that only perpetuate the same power structures.

7) Unlearn western frameworks

This principle is about defocusing Western ways of seeing the Italian archive. It implies an active commitment to unlearning to make space for different ways of knowing, such as around Indigenous ownership and concept transfer.

The principles expressed by Italian contributors can be summarised as:

1) Be proactive and transparent

Act and be honest about the records' existence because this heritage does not belong there. Recognise historical responsibilities at institutional and professional levels.

2) Treat the records with respect

Archival records must be treated with the greatest respect. This care includes having proper professional expertise, creating the openness to learn from outside initiatives and people, and recognising the importance of setting enough time when establishing a dialogue with communities.

7.7. Stories of transformation



Figure 7.3. (from left) Lauren Booker, Rose Barrowcliffe and Claudio Mancuso in a visit to the archive of the MUCIV⁶³

Now I can tell you that after starting the project with you, we also started a project with some Japanese institutions, again on the construction of the image of the Japanese in the West, in this case in Italy. Your project was certainly a pioneer, in the sense that it awakened, or in any case made the museum understand the importance of participating in these research projects which then, as you said, allow for the creation of that sharing of knowledge and documents which is fundamental for this type of work and approach. So it was much more important than you might have thought at the beginning of this collaboration (C. Mancuso, personal communication, 25 May 2023).

The collaboration certainly brought positive aspects, that is, it led to a revision of the materials that we have. [...] Therefore, having taken the various materials back into our hands, first it allowed us to make a review and possibly make the appropriate corrections also from a proper point of view... cataloguing, inventory;

⁶³ 20 September 2022. My photo.

if documentation was missing it was researched and then it was a little more in-depth, and it will certainly be even more so in the future. Then knowledge, perhaps looking for good comparisons with other archives, other institutions which therefore allowed us to see and perhaps even trace the names of the people who had created this type of document which for the most part, as we know, are photographic documents that Podenzana had purchased in Australia [...]. This is a positive side that allows us, not only to collaborate with you, with other museums, but also to think about future enhancement and promotions beyond your research, but also here at the museum (G. Paolicchi, personal communication, 12 June 2023).



Figure 7.4. (from left) Raffaella Caterino, Valentina Scazzola and Giacomo Paolicchi⁶⁴

You created a network that, in short, on the basis of interest, that is, was fundamental in my opinion. You managed to bring it to life... to pull the right threads (I. Boeddu, personal communication, 31 May 2023).

⁶⁴ First meeting of the working group. November 2022. Genova, Italy. Photo by Monica Galassi.

[...] You gave me the desire to investigate. [...] And the exhibition was unexpected. My desire to include Aboriginal Australia in the permanent exhibition (which began many years ago) found satisfaction only with your project, so wow, how many things you have allowed! Your research plays a crucial role in this significant initiative of the museum (M. C. De Palma, personal communication, 22 May 2023).

Working from within this project, even if in a small capacity, seeing how it functions in its creation, development, and problematisation—a project that truly adheres to the paradigms I am studying—is wonderful. Because, in the end, when working on these types of projects, you usually see what doesn't work (V. Scazzola, personal communication, 31 July 2023).



Figure 7.5. (from left) Maria Camilla De Palma and Ilaria Boeddu in the D'Albertis Museum archive⁶⁵

⁶⁵ October 2022. My photo.

7.8. Conclusion – Towards new care for eclipsed records

This chapter has significantly enriched the discussion on archival displacement, outlining novel understandings of the Italian context. By presenting themes from yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Italian scholars and professionals, these empirical findings bring new nuance and understanding to eclipsed records in Italy.

The themes and principles expressed by the two groups of participants reveal a complex picture. The strands that run through the yarning with Aboriginal participants are the importance of Aboriginal self-determination in archives, data sovereignty, and the crucial importance of shifting power structures and questioning the centrality of Western frameworks in recordkeeping. Italian participants have found it essential to reflect on some of these themes and have shared stimulating insights on the Italian cultural context and strategies for knowledge translation. This analysis has revealed a set of standards that a group of participants found fundamental to engaging in a transnational dialogue in the future.

Learning from these experiences, how can we scale up this approach to become a set of principles informing future efforts in this space? And how can they be re-adapted to tell a broader methodology that can be repurposed in diverse countries? I will reflect on these questions in the conclusions section of this thesis.

CHAPTER 8. DISRUPT

A Methodology for Eclipsed Records

8.1. Research findings

This thesis has illustrated the significant value of Aboriginal records within Italian institutions, both for Indigenous communities and global historical understanding. It highlighted the inadequacies in the current methods of managing this documentation, with many potential users of the documentation unaware it exists. However, this research has also demonstrated that the Aboriginal records in Italy are not lost. Still, they cannot be found and utilised because they have been misplaced in the bowels of Italian institutions. This is because colonialism is an insidious process that, in this research, is unfolded and analysed from a dual perspective: as a transnational historical process and as an ongoing practice. This doctoral research has demonstrated that these records possess agency, as evidenced by their ability to reshape the institutions' epistemologies and ways of thinking. They had the ability to reshuffle the order of things (Foucault, 1966) and establish the groundwork for a forthcoming dialogue between Aboriginal GLAM professionals, community members, and Italian institutions. In this exploration, I delved into the necessity for a praxis in working with displaced records to integrate foundational approaches rooted in the value of benefiting the communities involved. This is not merely because it is advantageous for collecting institutions; rather, it aligns with their mission, offering an opportunity for sustained relevance in shaping their future for communities and the public. Ultimately, the innovative approaches to knowledge translation at the cultural interface that this study has adopted on-site and in digital collaborations have formed a blueprint that has proven effective in challenging existing norms. This reorganisation and transfer of knowledge and authority reached its peak in the last thesis chapter, where the perspectives of Aboriginal GLAM researchers and professionals are spotlighted, asserting their vision for the future of the records.

This thesis has effectively challenged and changed this prevailing disregard and disinterest, showcasing a new way “to do the archive” [*di fare archivio*] in a transnational context.

Furthermore, this study has underscored that the records in Italy are not isolated occurrences. Instead, they serve as a powerful example of the unquantifiable number of First Nations testimonies dispersed across institutions worldwide, representing a colonial legacy that has never ended. Indeed, this research has significantly contributed to comprehending and delineating colonialism as a transnational continuum. It represents

an ongoing process that commences with the invasion and dispossession of First Nations territories and extends to countries not traditionally identified as specific colonial powers. This cultural removal and displacement is driven by historical factors unique to each nation-state and are deeply rooted in diverse historical, political, and social contexts. They all share an implication in ongoing colonial processes, deriving benefits from it. Therefore, this thesis underscores the need for novel strategies to understand, conceptualise and preserve this heritage. This doctoral work has presented evidence that the most effective approach to achieving this goal is creating a transnational dialogue space where Aboriginal worldviews and rights take centre stage. During this journey, what took me by surprise was the necessity to conceptualise a new category for these records, which I did not anticipate. The novel concept of an eclipsed archive became the heart of my research because naming something means giving it academic dignity and the right to be enquired about. In this way, this doctoral research has effectively opened a new area of scholarship in critical archival studies.

At the essence of this research is the central challenge: how can one conceptualise, interpret, navigate and sustainably manage displaced records into the future by not only centring Indigenous knowledge systems but also making structural changes in collecting institutions? In these chapters, a cohesive narrative has emerged as five consistent threads interconnecting and shaping the foundation of this thesis. The first string explores how these records play a crucial role in advancing self-determination and sovereignty rights for Aboriginal peoples. The second strand delves into the intricacies of colonialism as a transnational historical process and a persisting practice that upholds uneven power dynamics within archival contexts. The third thread underscores the significance of knowledge translation, asserting that instigating structural change hinges upon fostering a transcultural understanding of diverse knowledge systems. The fourth recurring motif accentuates the notable absence of Aboriginal voices within archives beyond national borders. Finally, the fifth and concluding narrative suggests that employing Indigenous methodologies proves most efficacious in comprehending the intricacies of these records. This framework has established the context for addressing these core queries and answering the research questions posed in this doctoral work.

Response to RQ 1 - The Aboriginal records in Italy deserve a new categorisation

The primary question raised in this thesis focused on investigating whether the records held in Italy could have been analysed by repurposing existing categorisations within the context of archival displacement.

Drawing on scholarship about archival displacement and critical archival practice, I have contended that there is a gap in terminology and frameworks to comprehend records that share similar characteristics with those found in Italy. An increasing number of researchers and practitioners have comprehended the critical role that access to institutional archives brings to First Nations peoples. In Australia, the records can be an asset for Aboriginal self-determination and the recovery of family genealogies and cultural practices that were taken away by colonialism. For this reason, First Nations' GLAM scholars worldwide have stressed the importance of centring Indigenous perspectives in archival studies (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; S. Faulkhead et al., 2007; Shannon Faulkhead, 2008; Littletree et al., 2020; Nakata, 2002, 2007; Nakata & Langton, 2005; J. R. O'Neal, 2015; Russell, 2005; Thorpe, 2019; Thorpe et al., 2021) and international mandates (International Council on Archives Expert Matters Indigenous Group, 2019; United Nations General Assembly, 2007). However, limited studies analyse specifically Aboriginal intangible heritage that has moved outside Australia (Lydon, 2006, 2014b), and this gap is even more pronounced when focusing on the Italian case and similar circumstances (Aigner, 2015, 2018; Cipollone & Orlandi, 2011a; Olcelli, 2018; Pizzini, 2010). This void is mirrored in the long-term academic debate related to archival displacement. A fundamental problem of much of this literature is that it does not adequately address the specific circumstances of First Nations records, especially when focusing on non-English speaking countries, an urge prompted by various scholars (J. A. Gilliland et al., 2016; Ketelaar & Frings-Hessami, 2021; Lowry, 2019b, 2022; Roberto et al., 2021).

In response, I have adopted a novel perspective to examine the Italian records within the context of this academic debate. In Chapter 2, the examination centred on the acquisition and distribution of Aboriginal heritage during the British settlement in Australia, specifically focusing on interactions with diverse communities. The discussion then targeted the records' arrival in Italy. It highlighted that similar processes occur worldwide in other First Nations contexts, emphasising the need to reform the study of archival displacement. Chapter 3 built on this point, presenting a new way of analysing the

records held in Italy. By grounding the research design within an Indigenous paradigm, I adopted a decolonial lens to bring to light and disrupt how this documentation has been managed over time. Chapter 4 extended the idea that new approaches are needed by showcasing the value of the Aboriginal holdings held in Italy. The analysis of the records as a continuum highlighted numerous transnational relationships that have shaped these histories. This chapter also examined the pivotal role of knowledge translation practices that have unfolded within these archival encounters. Chapter 6 consolidated these aspects to illustrate that the Italian records defy existing categorisations in archival displacement and records with similar characteristics.

Consequently, I formulated the innovative conceptualisation of eclipsed archives and elucidated why establishing a new category is paramount for their study and future connection with communities. The symbolism of an eclipse serves as a metaphorical framework, encapsulating two distinct layers. Firstly, it represents the significance and agency of physical and digital records. Secondly, it underscores the pivotal role played by the knowledge translation process at the cultural interface. The convergence of these layers is accentuated by the interest and curiosity aroused by the records in question. Defining these records proved to be a challenging endeavour, necessitating multiple attempts and iterations. Throughout this process, I realised that I was inadvertently adopting a deficit model, consistently focusing on examining the actions imposed on the records by the colonial process and the institution. I was failing to acknowledge the inherent power and strength residing within these documents. A force capable of instigating transformative impacts. The confines of my Western perspective occasionally surfaced, underscoring once again the depth and advantages inherent in centring Indigenous knowledge systems when examining archival displacement.

Response to RQ 2 - Indigenous methodologies are effective in the analysis of archival displacement

The second question in this thesis explored whether the emphasis on Indigenous paradigms could have played a role in fostering a more comprehensive understanding of archival displacement. Thus, the necessity for a new categorisation implied the requirement for a novel lens to unravel the records and their trajectories.

My contribution here was applying an Indigenous lens to the Italian archival context for the first time. Each chapter in this study delved into and expanded upon this terrain of

inquiry. This thread binds this work together, moving between two conceptual levels: the importance of centring Indigenous knowledge systems in archival theories and practices as a fundamental right and the benefits of this shift in reading archival displacement. This study emphasises how colonial records have historically been managed and regarded exclusively under a Euro-Western paradigm. This outlook grips broader issues of lack of control and access to archives to achieve justice and self-determination for First Nations peoples. This observation underscores a deficiency in understanding and appreciation for Indigenous knowledge systems, often marginalised and considered only in specific circumstances, such as definite projects or exhibitions (Janke, 1998; Mc Kimmish et al., n.d.; J. O'Neal, 2019; Russell, 2005; Thorpe, 2019). The significance of bringing these two readings together in this research was compelling. It revealed six benefits in the analysis of archival displacement.

First, this thesis indicated that centring Indigenous worldviews in archival theory and practice supports Aboriginal self-determination transnationally. The account of the ongoing advocacy by First Nations families from Canada and Australia, emphasising the need to access archival records related to the deaths of children in residential schools, serves as a poignant reminder of the significance of archives. This shared transnational history of violence and human rights violations remains largely unexplored in the Vatican, as well as in Australian and Canadian institutions. The vast dissemination of information beyond the borders of settler states is immeasurable. The crucial necessity for individuals to access such records becomes apparent only when attention shifts from institutional priorities to the needs of the communities they represent.

Second, viewing the records through a First Nations lens has created opportunities for gaining precious data that can contribute to the ongoing truth-telling processes in Australian society. The resources held in Italy, as well as others dispersed beyond the Australian borders, are written from external perspectives. Sometimes, they support the exploitative British intent; other times, they challenge it. In any case, overseas records bring viewpoints and resources that cannot be ignored for a comprehensive reading of colonial relations. How do the photographs housed at the MUCIV, accompanied by the meticulously annotated captions by Enrico Hillyer Giglioli, narrate the complex network of relationships intricately woven among Australian and European collectors? What information does Giovanni Podenzana's annotations bring to the table to the ongoing debate on Aboriginal land management raised by Bruce Pascoe (2014)? What can we

learn from the professional relationships and friendships between D'Albertis and JW Lindt? These findings once again remark that transnational relations, synergies and connections have always animated the world we share.

Third, an Indigenous lens in this study was a powerful approach to analysing power structures in archives. This finding emphasises a key concept in this thesis. Inspired by numerous First Nations scholars, this study endeavours to redirect the conversation from worldwide debates and institutional ambitions for *decolonising the archive* [emphasis added] to deeply contemplating how colonisation manifests within collecting institutions as a first step. What has emerged strongly in this research is that without reflecting on the transcultural social impact of archival praxis in a transnational context and taking historical responsibilities seriously, each attempt to decolonise the archive will repeat the same power structures that tries to overcome.

In this way, this thesis draws a thread examining colonialism as an ongoing practice perpetuating asymmetric power dynamics in archives. Therefore, the conceptual models I employ to analyse these archives throughout the entire thesis are all ingrained in Indigenous paradigms and all geared towards structural change (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a; Littletree et al., 2020; Stoler, 2010). They aim to reveal these asymmetries through First Nations perspectives, highlighting the non-neutrality of the knowledge systems within which institutions operate. This process reveals how colonial practices persist in Euro-Western archival traditions, contributing to maintaining the order of things (Foucault, 1966) in an immutable state. This intricate analysis encompasses the organisation's historical obligations and the tools and technology it employs. Significantly, the study emphasises the crucial role of personal and professional responsibility and an awareness of one's own perspectives and standpoints.

This scrutiny begins in Chapter 2, where I adopted Kirsten Thorpe's (2022) archival reforms to ensure the research design of this thesis was developed to support Indigenous archival sovereignty informed by Indigenous ways of knowing. Chapter 3 illuminates how Indigenous decolonial methodologies aided me in realising that disrupting existing power structures necessitates an interrogation of the systems currently in place. Yet, this thread bloomed in Chapter 4 by mapping the Italian records through a relational model (Littletree et al., 2020) that showcased the potential of

consolidating spaces for Indigenous knowledge systems within the Italian context. This analysis underscores the oversight of various layers of understanding within traditional archival practices. The adoption of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007, 2012) in Chapter 5 has revealed unimaginable opportunities for knowledge translation between Aboriginal and Italian knowledge systems. Embedding these processes in praxis rooted in First Nations principles (G. H. Smith, 2004; Steffensen, 2020; Thorpe, 2019) ensured that these exchanges were grounded in the significance of Country and an appreciation of their transformative effects. Within these knowledge translation practices, the technique of imagining (Marisa Elena Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015) was a valuable roadmap for understanding why First Nations people would develop their own approaches. Lastly, in Chapter 6, the methodology of the archival-poetics (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a) proved invaluable in deciphering the specific aspects of Aboriginal records in Italy within the context of the literature on archival displacement.

Fourth, this study found that ingraining the reading of archival displacement in Indigenous paradigms has contributed to the growing disciplinary area of data sovereignty rights in recordkeeping. My contribution here was to move away from extractive approaches, wherein Aboriginal individuals are consulted for their insights and contribute knowledge to benefit the institution. Instead, the focus shifted towards analysing how this process could actively uphold Indigenous data sovereignty rights. However, this thesis has exposed that in similar circumstances to the Italian context, it is incorrect and still unachievable to comply with the definition provided by the Maianayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective (see Chapter 3).

As established, knowledge translation is the first practical step to open channels of dialogue to support structural change, but this must prompt international agreements that set standards for this work. The research participants have referred multiple times to the value of international organisations such as ICA, IFLA and UNESCO as catalyst for change. The process of digital engagement, initiated by the digital archive, marks a crucial initial step. However, the overarching aspects of its maintenance—ownership and utilisation of records, platform hosting, and the requisite funding for progress—do not guarantee the independence of communities from institutions. Instead, this study unveils an imperceptible constraint that persists without substantial intervention from the Australian government. Without significant investments in Aboriginal digital inclusion, improved internet coverage in regional areas, funding to support on-Country archiving

and employment and prioritisation of overseas travel for cultural work as a national imperative, each effort in a transnational context falls short of fully realising Aboriginal data sovereignty. In essence, this thesis contends that the transnational and transcultural impact of Indigenous data sovereignty in recordkeeping remains unattainable without adopting a holistic perspective that centres on Aboriginal rights and resources over cultural heritage within a broader context.

This thread is woven throughout the entire thesis, with a notable emphasis in Chapter 5, where the hands-on work with the records disrupts their historical management approaches. The analysis yielded principles that highlight the crucial importance of sharing knowledge and information about the records. It also emphasises the need to deepen understanding regarding Aboriginal attributions and ICIP rights, actively addressing barriers to access and comprehension, including language translation. These points are small but crucial first steps towards a broader picture of communities' self-determination that does not end with controlling digital data in collecting institutions but extends to questioning the replication of colonial and capitalist constructs in tech industries. Exploring the cultural interface in Chapters 5 and 6 has facilitated the integration of educational objectives alongside practical steps. This process involves translating diverse understandings of digital archival records between Indigenous and Euro-Western paradigms. For example, this reading has disclosed that the significance of Aboriginal Ancestors depicted in photographs or writing does not diminish simply because they are copies rather than originals. This view challenges the mindset of ownership and underscores the enduring importance of these representations. In another instance, the publication of a carved tree photograph copied from an Italian encyclopedia highlighted that in Indigenous worldviews, the potency of records remains undiminished even when presented in digital surrogates. Therefore, it must be treated with utmost respect. In other words, the scrutiny of archives outside Australian and British jurisdictions must be understood not simply regarding Aboriginal peoples having the right to access and respond to these records but also to control their future. I reiterate this concept in Chapter 7, where I amplify Aboriginal voices to unsettle the records' future.

Fifth, in this thesis, Indigenous methodologies were effective lenses to deepen the understanding of the records and their effects on the institutions where they have been housed.

I have argued that the archival records representing or containing information about Aboriginal peoples have power and agency. Despite the archival records analysed having the same influence and effects as the misplaced objects examined by Spitta (2009), they show further peculiarity when analysed under an Indigenous paradigm. Inspired by the viewpoint taken by Rachel Buchanan (2022) in the analysis of the five wooden panels carved by relatives in Taranaki, this study has focused on the written and visual formats of the records in Italy. They recurrently contain blood memory and unfinished business (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a). They are spaces for narratives that have been denied and kept inaccessible. Their voices were further muted when the records were situated in non-English-speaking countries, concealed within a web of diverse languages and influenced by complex historical and political circumstances.

However, through this work, they become a living testimony of the relationships they have created and the ones they will forge. I commenced this dissertation by interweaving a snapshot of my story. In my personal life, the memories of my family records have travelled with me through time and space, in part determining my path forward. In my professional trajectory working with colonial archives in Australia and Italy, the records had the power to connect me with the stories of others. They have fostered many relationships and contributed to my understanding of the legacies of contemporary Australia. Certainly, they have served as a mirror for examining my own colonial past. Throughout this doctoral journey, the Aboriginal documentation held in Italian institutions has significantly impacted and transformed how these organisations appreciate and utilise them. In a virtuous circle, this influence has also positively shaped the approaches these institutions now take towards other First Nations heritage they hold as custodians. As the image of the two unidentified Aboriginal men and the Italian Giovanni Podenzana and Ruggero Schiffini evokes, the narratives within the colonial archive are often more complex than they appear (see Chapter 5). These physical records are pulsating and thriving testimonies of actual people and Ancestors entangled in a myriad of social and political circumstances that this research has commenced to unveil in the Italian context. Examining the records through this perspective has laid the groundwork for developing a methodology that acknowledges and respects these unique characteristics.

Sixth and lastly, engaging with the records through an Indigenous paradigm, and therefore centring relationality, has built relationships, synergies and trust. For instance, centring relationality (Kovach, 2021; Wilson, 2008) has benefited the establishment of

relationships between participants from different knowledge systems and interests. Placing Indigenous Storywork (J.-A. Archibald, 2008; J.-A. Q. X. Archibald et al., 2019) at the heart of the analysis has obscured the univocal narratives of the European contributors to the records. Utilising yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) as a culturally safe method of enquiry for *all* participants has asserted Indigenous methodologies as authoritative and structured approaches in transcultural settings [emphasis added].

In summary, this thesis provides evidence that analysing archival displacement through an Indigenous lens has laid the groundwork for future approaches to this work that prioritise and centre the authority and interests of First Nations peoples. It has also nurtured a transnational space for dialogue between communities and institutions, a prospect that appeared unrealistic during my first fieldwork a decade ago. In essence, all participants in this doctoral project, me included, have derived advantages from this innovative interpretation.

Response to RQ 3 – Knowledge translation is key to structural change

The third research question pertains to the importance of knowledge translation in archival practice.

This thesis underscores that a transcultural understanding of diverse knowledge systems is crucial for fostering structural change and challenging the established order of things in archival displacement. This thread intertwines the entire thesis and lies on two levels of conceptual understanding: Aboriginal peoples' rights on the Italian records and the incommensurable differences between Indigenous and Euro-Western knowledge systems. These two considerations are significant. Without a candid discussion on historical responsibilities, rights on records, and a genuine understanding of their connotation in other knowledge systems, any dialogue will fail to bring about structural changes in how the records are cared for. Marika Duczynski's story of collaboration with the museum D'Albertis successfully shows how knowledge translation practices foster relationships and create honest change when shared with mind, heart and spirit. Duczynski has generously shared her family's story, enabling the public to gain insight into the context of the colonisation of the Australian continent and understand the significance of these records for Aboriginal peoples today. This sharing has created an emotional and empathetic response from the public and set the stage for the display.

In Chapter 2 I set the scene for this research by readapting well-known theories of transculturation in the reading of Italian views of Aboriginal people and the Italian continent (Mignolo & Schiwy, 2003; Olcelli, 2018) and their move to Europe. In Chapter 4 I took a step further and investigated which elements of the colonial records are valuable in Indigenous knowledge systems by utilising a relational mapping model (Littletree et al., 2020). This frame was helpful in initiating understanding between diverse knowledge systems, highlighting facets in the Italian archives that have been overlooked until the present. As discussed, I have grounded Chapter 5 in unveiling what practically occurs at the depth of those third shared spaces of encounter within communities and organisations. They are beating and animated space buzzing with ideas, questions, misconstructions, intricacies, and fears. Spaces of light and dark. Ultimately, with bodies and souls willing to advocate for change. This drift of understandings and misunderstandings flows in Chapter 6, which I employed as a platform to explore the facets, meanings and effects of the colonial archives through a Narungga perspective (Harkin, 2019b, 2019c, 2019a). The integration with Stoler (2010) analysis along the grain proved to be advantageous to indicate differences and similarities with other cases of archival displacement. This knowledge translation application at the cultural interface was the catalyst for the new conceptualisation of the eclipsed archive. Lastly, Chapter 7 reached the climax of the knowledge translation practices explored in this thesis by exposing similarities, differences and areas for future attention from the point of views of Aboriginal and Italian participants.

This thesis shaped innovative, fluid and holistic practices of knowledge translation for displaced records. What I wanted to emphasise is that knowledge translation is not only an institutional imperative to ensure Indigenous worldviews, regularly ignored by Euro-Western approaches, are appreciated. It is also an ongoing process that shaped the records, and influenced how they have been catalogued and described and the ways in which they have been silenced over time. Persisting on knowledge translation as a crucial and fundamental requirement in the analysis of eclipsed archives requires a firm positioning that Euro-Western archival paradigms constitute just a fraction of the diverse array that exists. For this reason, I also intended to underscore that incorporating *inclusion and diversity agendas* [emphasis added] in the cultural sector does not necessarily bring tangible changes - neither in Italy, nor in Australia, nor in any other location. Certainly, these perspectives operate as a discourse that perpetuates the centralisation of Western paradigms as the norm. The pivotal distinction lies in the

recognition that the concept of "right" extends to every individual's entitlement to their cultural heritage. Returning to foundational principles and anchoring this discourse in a customisable interface that varies across each community, organisation and state acknowledges differences and historical inequalities, while fostering inclusive engagement around a shared table. With the lack of international regulations and agreements on displaced archives, advocating through personal and professional standpoints can make a tangible difference and contribute to advancing this agenda nationally and internationally. A relationships infrastructure based on the principle of social justice that, as Kimberly Christen, Josiah Blackeagle Pinkham (Nez Perce/Nimíipuu), Cordelia Hooee (Zuni) and Amelia Wilson (Tlingit) (2021, p. 38) argue, should overcome the insufficient principle of cultural humility (Tai, 2022) in the GLAM profession. Instead, they describe a relationship infrastructure as a long-term commitment to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination and that cannot be diluted by successive administrations in any given institution.

Response to RQ 4 - New radical approaches for eclipsed archives are needed

The concluding research question of this thesis sought to explore which essential principles and strategies are necessary for facilitating culturally appropriate access to displaced records and information for First Nations peoples.

This question was provoked by a gap in the literature and international mandates that could be applied to the Italian context. Under this light the Italian case became an example of many other countries outside settler states that hold countless First Nations knowledges and histories but have been eagerly overlooked by historical research and international organisations.

To appropriately respond to this question, this thesis had to take a step back and ask: what are the reasons for these gaps? As exemplified in the description of the Italian case in Chapters 2 and 4, considering colonialism as a transnational historical process is a crucial strategy that questions existing archival displacement categorisations in this work. It highlights how the act of collecting information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples expresses colonial power asymmetry that extends beyond the state. In this study, insisting on archival records as fluid and multidimensional entities always in the process of becoming (McKemmish, 1994) prompted a broader critical evaluation of the roles played by countries outside Britain in the invasion of the Australian continent.

A reflection that can be extended to other settler states. The narrative of Tambo and his family, who were taken from Queensland to Europe to participate in human zoos, serves as a reminder that the colonial mentality is a phenomenon and a process that extends beyond borders (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, the recent discovery of the testimonies of these tales held by the MUCIV and other organisations worldwide is a vivid prompt that colonialism, as a transnational historical process, undergoes changes in its shape and form but persists in other ways.

At the same time, examining colonialism as a transnational historical process is a helpful strategy to analyse the state's internal administration. For example, in the Aboriginal-Italian circumstances, why have the relationships between Aboriginal people and migrant communities been overlooked until recent times? What factors led to a substantial gap in studies of Aboriginal resources held overseas? The examination of the Italian circumstance is valuable because it illustrates a scenario where a country, despite lacking direct political involvement in the settlement of the Australian continent, has left a substantial impact through factors such as immigration, land management, and political relationships. These aspects have had repercussions for Aboriginal sovereignty.

Once more, the Italian case proves to be a valuable perspective for analysing broader questions concerning the need for a new categorisation and methodology to handle these archives. This is evident through the parallels it shares with the cultural heritage of Italy's own colonial past. In Chapter 5, the Italian case demonstrates that the theories and practices utilised to preserve and manage the records have created little change in how communities access them. How Italian institutions maintain the status quo with African records mirrors colonialism as an ongoing practice, reflecting its influence on both society and politics. The new conceptualisation of eclipsed records demonstrates that not all displaced records are the same, and therefore, novel strategies are necessary to disrupt the status quo. The smile of Tewitt, Chief of Jervis Bay, the man who remained unnamed for centuries, captured (Fourmile, 1989) in a Christmas postcard held at the Podenzana Museum, hints at these ongoing practices that have impeded archival work and its potential benefits for communities.

8.2. Methodology for working with eclipsed records

This research has underscored the absence of guidelines for GLAM professionals handling eclipsed archives in linguistically and culturally diverse regions from Australia and Britain. Italian professionals can count on limited literature and tools to support them in this work. At the same time, Aboriginal GLAM professionals and community members approaching this area must do much more background research to find the documentation and relate to such a diverse historical, social, and cultural setting. The key outcome of this doctoral work is a methodology for practitioners in Italy and other countries working with eclipsed archives that can be adopted as a tool to initiate a dialogue with Aboriginal peoples in Australia. This model has the potential to be broadly customisable, applicable and transferable, suitable for use by a diverse range of stakeholders in various contexts, especially with other First Nations communities represented in the archive. As such, it can be tested in the academic arena of archival displacement, where the new concept of eclipsed archives may play a significant role.

This methodology was designed not as an endpoint but as a launching pad to shift the conversation according to local specificities. Although the settings of the cultural interface and the actual content of the case studies will need to differ between communities, groups, local organisations and collecting institutions, this thesis demonstrates that this methodology is flexible. It introduces a comprehensive conceptual and practical model as a malleable framework for crafting locally relevant relationships and professional collaborations to a broad spectrum of collecting institutions that hold archival records. I envisage this model used by institutions and community members as a framework for transcultural relationships with collecting institutions and beyond.

With this innovative methodology, this study provides a theoretical and concrete move to respond to a gap in archival science, as archivists have been urged not merely to engage in research but to focus on developing a transformative praxis in the information sector. For example, by calling for a *Decolonial Archival Praxis* (Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019, p. 72) that, citing the work of Paulo Freire, “Centres the oppressed, those wretched of the earth, in the transformation of society, the articulation of new cultural forms, new ways of being, and new ways of ordering the world and its people”.

The choice of creating flexible principles and case studies instead of rigid guidelines comes from the participants. It is constituted by three components: (a) the steps that can assist professionals in starting a journey with the eclipsed archival records; (b) the principles to adopt when started collaborating with external communities and people directly impacted by the records; (c) the cultural interface where these relations take place. This methodology also includes two preliminary case studies (d).

(a) STEPS

As discussed in this thesis introduction, each chapter of this thesis has a strategic function for working in culturally responsive ways with the Aboriginal records in Italy. These steps have proven effective for responding to the research questions and approaching this work. Each chapter title represents a decolonial act in studying First Nations colonial archives by shifting worldviews and perspectives, honestly and profoundly listening to community needs and bringing standpoints and historical responsibilities to the table. These seven interrelated steps are not prescriptive and must be customised according to local settings. This journey might not occur for each community professional engaged with it, but this methodology provides a tool to learn what should be considered for a successful collaboration. The seven steps are:

Step 1. Reflect – Consider the background of the archival records you are working with.

Step 2. Shift – Change the lens through which this work has been undertaken and learn about the First Nations worldview of the archive.

Step 3. Learn – Learn or re-learn the histories and characteristics of the records through the methodological shift undertaken.

Step 4. Transform – Move in the cultural interface by reflecting on knowledge translation practices that can be actively applied in your circumstances.

Step 5. Define – Look for existing categorisation of the records in the academic space to see if there are already studies, projects, or activities that can be re-adapted for your context.

Step 6. Listen – Pay close attention to people's aspirations for the future and clarify expectations.

Step 7. Disrupt – Create your own guidelines with your community of references based on the principles outlined below.

(b) PRINCIPLES

The principles outlined below are the results of this thesis's data-gathering strategies and methods. This body of work now establishes a robust foundation for concluding a conceptual model shaped by a set of principles and case studies that effectively elucidate and can support critical work with eclipsed records. The principles outlined below are the outcome of the reading of Aboriginal and Italian participants explored in Chapter 7.

1. Endorse **self-determination** as an act of respect
2. Rethink **ownership** as a duty of care
3. Invest in **relationships** and deep listening
4. Commit to **reciprocity** beyond mutual benefits
5. Gain a baseline of **cultural awareness**
6. Identify and intervene on current **power structures**
7. **Unlearn** Western frameworks
8. Be **proactive** and **transparent**
9. Treat the records with **respect**

(c) THE CULTURAL INTERFACE

In this methodology, the cultural interface upholds the steps to undertake and the principles to respect when initiating a dialogue between communities and institutions in transcultural settings. These nine principles have been created to be utilised on a shared interface of dialogue that changes according to the communities and their local specificities and the country where the records are conserved. The interface is a shared area of transnational dialogue, conflict and knowledge translations. An adaptable setting that must consider the community of reference (their language group, their Country) and of the state where the records are held (for example, Italy or Germany would have very different approaches to records which are ingrained in their dissimilar colonial past, archival practices and languages). To cite an instance, the cultural interface dedicated to discussions about a photograph of a Koori Ancestor would keep the Koori knowledge systems and Koori principles at the core. However, the cultural interface would be different if the records were held in a museum in Italy or an archive in Spain. These two places have diverse historical backgrounds and actors who participated in collecting and

managing the records. This flexibility allows this framework to be a valuable roadmap for any First Nation community or state that fits under the definition of eclipsed records.

(d) CASE STUDIES

To best progress this agenda, Italian participants have raised the need for case studies instead of prescriptive guidelines (Chapter 7). Case studies have been indicated as valuable opportunities for learning about common questions and situations related to different contexts and institutional settings. I include below two preliminary case study that emerged during this doctoral study as a baseline for a broader development.⁶⁶

Description	The partnership for the digital archive needed to be officially contextualised to establish roles and responsibilities and understand expectations. The challenge in the creation of this document was the different cultural models that this document needed to consider: the legal regulations of Italy and Australia, the cultural considerations to be applied to the Aboriginal records, and the cultural safety of the people who will engage with the platform.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A document that sets intentions. - A dialogue that created opportunities for learning about the complexities of Aboriginal recordkeeping (such as cultural protocols and sensitivities) and current best practices (for example, the application of ICIP rights in an international context). - Assumptions of responsibilities (by agreeing to include the collections online, and creating an exit strategy if the institutional conditions will change in the future). - Engaging in advocacy efforts within other sectors of the institution or relevant political entities responsible for institutional

⁶⁶ For the format of the case studies below I took inspiration from my previous work and reflections with libraries in Australia (Galassi, 2022; Indigenous Services Team, 2017). They provide a starting point that has the potential to be further expanded.

	oversight. This involves emphasising the project's importance and advocating for further advancements.
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Table 8.1. Case Study 1: Creation of an MOU for Aboriginal records in Italian institutions.

Description	The development of the digital archive has become a collaborative effort. The institutions involved started to meet periodically online after a first in-person visit in 2022. This work has created a small community of practice that discusses matters related to the creation of the platform and shares lessons learned and information about the collections.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed at length the importance of accessibility and criteria used in the platform from different cultural perspectives. The group has investigated, for example, matters related to which categories could facilitate access to the material for communities and how Italian researchers could have contributed. - Reflected on the importance of establishing transparency on the standards applied to the site to create the settings for a constantly changing prototype that is evolving according to feedback. - Explored similarities with other cases and communities focused on increasing digital access in Italian and European institutions, such as the experience of the Egyptian Museum in Turin. - Delved into extensive reflections on knowledge translation and how to decode language and cultural contexts between Italy and Australia.

Table 8.2 Case Study 2: Establishment of a community of practice for the collaborative development of the digital archive prototype.

8.3. Future lines of inquiry

Last night, sitting down on a couch in Wangal land I watched an Instagram video of the Italian rapper Ghali singing at the most important Italian song festival.⁶⁷ The singer, hailing from a Tunisian family background but born and raised in the outskirts of Milan, caused a sensation by beginning with an interpretation in Arabic and concluding with the traditional Italian song "*Sono un Italiano vero*" [I am a true Italian]. The message was loud and clear: Italy, similarly to what Australia started decades ago, needs an honest conversation on what be a "true Italian" means. As I reflect on Ghali performance, I ponder the continuous evolution of this project and how the academic sector in which I operate has so much potential to contribute to these social debates. I contemplate the three parallel worlds in which it has unfolded: Aboriginal lands, the Australian settler state and Italy. Writing this thesis among these three physical and metaphorical worlds, and everything that lies in between, questioned my understandings but also gave me a potent lens to navigate them. Thinking about future lines of inquiries for these three different political contexts, languages and knowledge systems I must consider both their specificities and the needs that bind them together.

During this journey, I received a diverse range of intriguing inquiries and proposals for collaboration from Aboriginal community members and European researchers and allies. These included, for example, requests for assistance with Aboriginal birth certificates stored in Italian archives, guidance on the digital dissemination of Vlach language documentation from Eastern-European Romania, inquiries about institutions in Europe holding Aboriginal records, questions about other First Nations archives located in Italy and application of Indigenous data sovereignty principles to records of ex-Italian colonies in Africa. All these applications resonated with this study, sometimes directly and at other times less explicitly, as they all sought to actively engage and assert control with the mysteries that archives hold around the globe. This is what brings all these realities together and what gives power to this work. In Italy, there is an imperative need to rethink the colonial archive, starting from those ones related to the Italian colonial past to the ones concerning the many other communities represented in it. This problematisation is pressing not only in the physical and in the digital sphere but at the decision-making and

⁶⁷ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C3JJe1ZNxGh/>

employment level. Prioritising this work would send a strong message that could influence public discourse on nation-building and immigration policies. It could reinforce what Ghali and many other activists are bringing to international attention.

This study also sets the stage for a series of interconnected research questions and potential lines of inquiry that are interesting for the analysis of the ongoing relationships between the two countries. For instance, it contributed to the burgeoning interest in Italian/Aboriginal relationships and decolonising approaches to immigration initiated by Joseph Pugliese (2002a) and progressed in the last decade (Olcelli, 2018; R. Pascoe et al., 2022; Ricatti & Dutto, 2023). The conversations I had about this research over the years often pinpointed interest towards finding out more about the relationships between Aboriginal people and Italian migrants. Hopefully, this research could be extended with further studies dedicated to Italian immigration to Australia.

But the most important future line of enquiry I am interested in relates to those that will be potentially raised in community contexts after the release of this study. What communities, Aboriginal GLAM professionals, and activists are interested in expanding this investigation? Is there a future for the digital archive? Which aspects of this study are most interesting? Can this work support Indigenous data sovereignty movements rising globally? How this labour of knowledge translation at the cultural interface can be repurposed in community contexts? Another noteworthy but understudied aspect to explore would be the impact on communities when records are returned and how they circulate on Country (Gibson, 2023; Marsh, 2023).

This research also has implications for archival practices that should be embraced by the ICA and other international and national bodies. The findings of Chapter 7 have clearly indicated a tangible need for funding that could support Aboriginal engagement with the Italian archives and further dialogue at the cultural interface (for example, through the creation of more case studies that could be utilised by other institutions in Italy and other states holding eclipsed records).

The concept of the eclipsed archive, as discussed, holds the potential to open new avenues in archival studies and beyond, by focusing on innovative transformative praxis instead that merely in research. Different layers of this study can be expanded by other scholars who will benefit from this work to progress this global agenda. The concept of

the eclipsed archive itself could be applied more broadly to other areas related to Aboriginal self-determination rights and data sovereignty to demonstrate the holistic nature of this work. The eclipsed archive does rely on the wellbeing, self-determination and agency of communities and Aboriginal workers. For example, it can be utilised as a case study for 'Close the Gaps' projects, advocating for the need of more just and equitable funding in Aboriginal cultural centre that could connect directly with overseas institutions without needed intermediaries in Australian academic and government organisations. In the same way, the use of the cultural interface could be deployed in other settler colonial contexts and effect change in the ways in which relationships are established and projects are carried in academia, collecting institutions, government departments and private organisations. The methodology for working with eclipsed records born with this study, as a flexible and effective baseline that can be customised, could also be adopted by other scholars as a catalyst to analyse its state colonial past and the outcome of collecting practices (such as in the case of Italy and records captured in ex-African colonies). My use of Indigenous framings and methods (such as Archival Poetics, yarning as a research method, the Aboriginal Archival Reform) have contributed to progress decolonising agendas of the academy and its western bias. Other areas of archival studies that might benefit from applying such framings and methods include translation studies, digital archiving, data sovereignty and recordkeeping, AI technologies and metadata development. Hence, the digital archive prototype is a model that can be repurposed for any relationship between community and institutional archives. Scholars looking for expanding the notion of knowledge translation in archival practice would benefit from this model tested locally and internationally.

My final consideration is that I have initiated additional projects to complement my doctoral work. This thesis allowed to exercise the potential of my transnational and transcultural standpoint and how it can assist Aboriginal self-determination and priorities. Recognising the significance of both the broader context and the specific details of records, I have begun compiling my multiyear archival research in Italian collecting institutions, aiming to create the first comprehensive mapping of its kind. Another focus of mine is to further advance the knowledge translation agenda initiated by this work and explore its potential impact on data sovereignty within the recordkeeping domain. Lastly, I am keen on expanding the concept of the eclipse archive to other European contexts, beginning with the states that occupied the Italian peninsula prior to Italian unification.

With the channels of dialogue now open, now is the time to act.

Appendix

Project page and digital archive

(English version) https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/en_au/

(Italian version) <https://aboriginalprojectitaly.com/it/>

This site, built in WordPress, provides a shared interface for both English and Italian native speakers to gain information on the overall aims of the project whilst providing a space for additional content to be added (such as content related to the exhibition, or other initiatives developed with and by Italian organisations).

The project's values, methodologies and intent are clearly expressed through a pop-up that users must click before engaging with the interface and its content.

This project interface also allows users to access the digital archive built in Mukurtu CMS. Most of the archival records shared with me from the Italian partner institutions have been uploaded, curated into collections and made searchable through keywords and categories to increase accessibility and future critique of these categorisations. Some content is included under a close protocol for consultation.

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