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Title of paper: An atlas of Indigenous country in central Australia ?

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The publication of a good atlas and gazetteer for the country of an Indigenous people could only assist to 'further the political recognition of Indigenous place names', and can assist in the generational transmission of toponymy (and related knowledge), but to do so needs to be reliable, detailed and readily available. However we can also foresee unintended consequences from easy availability of cultural site locations (and other attributes). The paper explores the tension between recording (to assist memory and transmission) and the implications of wider revelation, illustrated from central Australia.

There are concerns that a hypothetical atlas could be used in ways inimical to the landowners. Accurate location information exposes a site to unauthorized visits and damage (albeit contrary to Australian law). Another possibility is that placename information is interpreted in some partisan fashion, or that a 'blank area' is revealed, then targetted for an alternate land use (eg mining, tourism) overriding landowner interests.

In recent decades large amounts of placename information have been recorded, at the close of the period when Indigenous people in central Australia experienced the far-reaching changes from a foraging hunter-gatherer economy to village residence in the modern

Australian nation state. Historical dispossession has been widely countered by the restitutions of the recent land claim era, and each of the dozens of land claim hearings has required the production of a good map of Indigenous places — but those maps are generally unavailable even to the traditional owners, or were published at a scale which blurred locations. For large tracts of now uninhabited country virtually no further placename information is recalled, given the recent passing of the generation of key memory people, the ones who could recall the territory from previous residence in it. The younger generation now look to written information to bolster oral transmission of knowledge. An atlas could help this process, as a reference work for the landowners, and their collaborators. The more detailed an atlas the more value it carries in the knowledge economy, and the more widely it is available the more the knowledge is free for all. At a practical level, wider publication provides more utility, and opportunity for refinement in later editions; but it may also codify a partisan viewpoint or assist an intrusion. The dilemma for Indigenous landowners (and holders of Indigenous knowledge generally) is that knowledge preservation through dissemination entails a risk of devaluation.