



ANTHROPOLOGICAL CULTURAL MAPPING

A Data Gathering Mechanism for Strategic Cultural Heritage Management

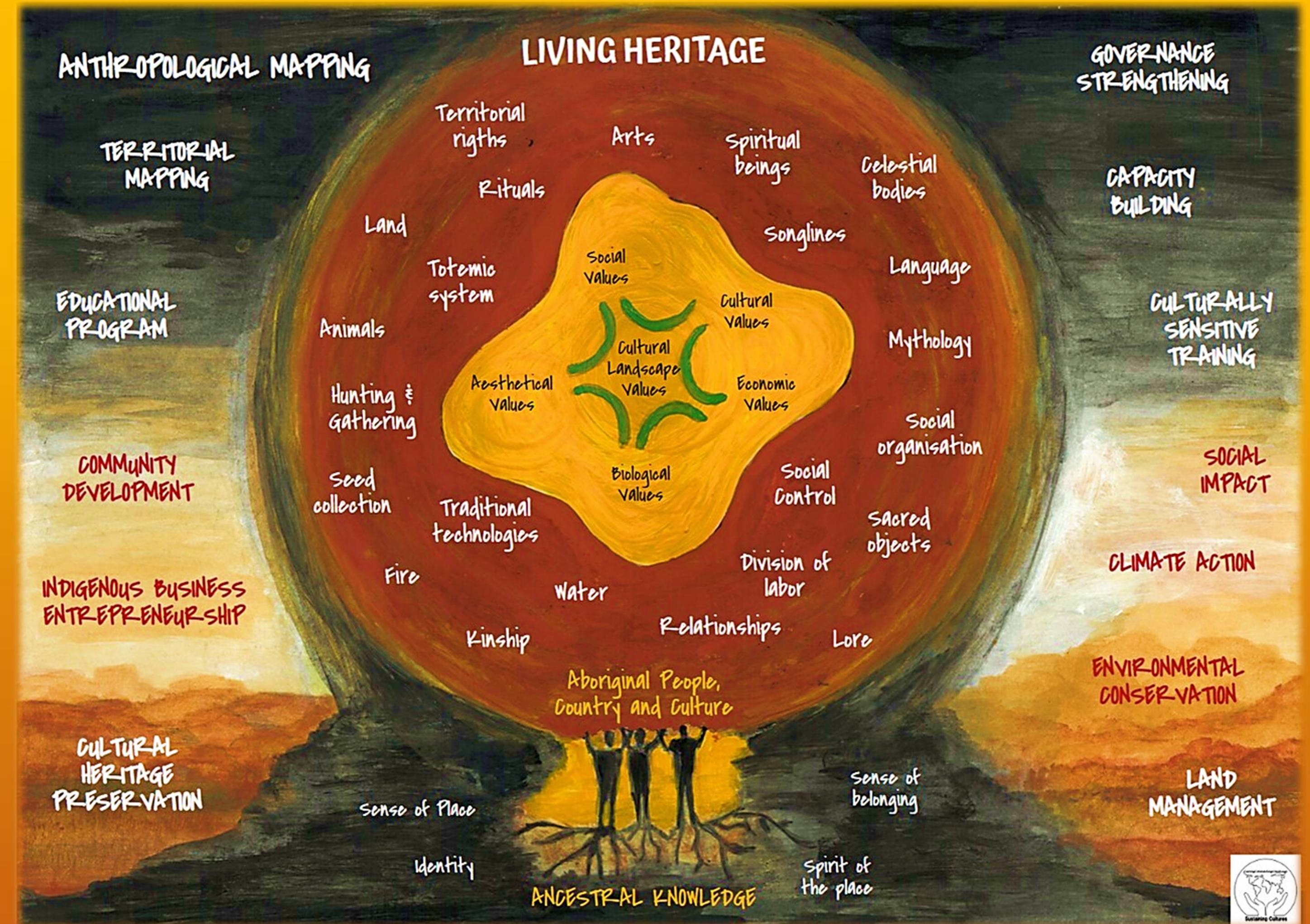
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Over the past three years, the authors have engaged with Aboriginal People in the Pilbara region of Western Australia (WA). During this experience, they listened to people's testimonials about how the conventional format of cultural mapping, currently conducted by the mining industry, does not adequately show the complex and multidimensional knowledge systems of their cultures.

Seeking a different approach to better meet the expectations of Aboriginal Peoples, the authors propose a new way of mapping values - the Anthropological Cultural Mapping or **Mapping Cultures** - a community-led participatory practice [1] based on naturalistic inquiry [2]. It maps people's culture in all its dimensions - instead of just heritage sites and their significance. In this way, heritage and archaeological sites are part of a larger, holistic system comprised by spiritual Indigenous relationship with their lands, cultural landscape values, knowledge systems, and a variety of sociocultural aspects of local living heritage not usually mapped by archaeological, ethnographic, and social surroundings surveys. The Mapping Cultures data gathering methods include prolonged engagement [2], yarning and active listening [3], and the UNESCO's methodology of story circles [4].

Preliminary findings of this study have demonstrated that:

- (1) The community-led approach encourages communities' self-governance by leading the co-designing and data gathering, owning the knowledge-sharing process and resulting narratives. It is Aboriginal Data Sovereignty [5].
- (2) Data gathered portrays a holistic picture of Aboriginal people, culture, and country, including living heritage and systemic social and cultural relations not clearly perceived by conventional surveys.
- (3) This approach integrates local knowledge from apical families and fills voids left by historical episodes such as the Stolen Generation period.
- (4) Mapping Cultures provides more comprehensive baseline knowledge to inform projects, plans, and related strategies to manage cultural heritage.
- (5) Outcomes of this mapping provide material for educational programs for Aboriginal transmission of knowledge to future generations, and to design culturally sensitive training for different audiences, including Indigenous youth and industry workers.



MAPPING CULTURES

Living heritage and knowledge systems' mapping
 Aboriginal Data Sovereignty
 Holistic portrait of the studied culture
 Community-led, Culture-based and People-centred [6]
 Approach aligned with UNDRIP principles [7]
 Dialogical Reconstruction of Memory and Identity
 Storytelling, Critical Reflection and Sensemaking [4]

"Community mapping is both the recovery and discovery of the connections and common ground that all communities share, and a vital part for participatory learning, community empowerment and sustainable planning." [8]

"It is an honor to participate in this type of work because our old people are them and with them all knowledge" [10]

"Culture is about who we are, how we define ourselves and how we make meaning of the world around us. It informs everything we do." [9]

References:

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