

**Embodied Knowledge of/with the place.
Review of the book: Placemaking, A New Materialist Theory of Pedagogy
(Page, Tara, 2020)**

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Reviewing Tara Page's book, *Placemaking, A New Materialist Theory of Pedagogy* for *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, specifically its section *Affecting Affirmative Reviews*, was an affective and material placemaking journey(ing). Taking new materialist thinking and doing, Page explores how we make and learn place through the entanglements of body with the socio-materiality of place-world. Page's book is an invitation to a journey of placemaking, with the children of a particular place-world, the Australian Bush, and with Page, herself, an Australian artist scholar based in London. The reader learns and makes place with Land and Bush alongside Page and her human and more-than-human participants. Through a series of images, Page's embodied and embedded experiences of the Bush, walking with children in their everyday placemaking practices, show us how learning, knowing and becoming happen through the intra-action of bodies of humans, the Land, Bush, dirt, rain, clouds, their colour, texture, sounds, tastes and feelings.

We learn and know about Page's child participants of the Land, Bush world-place, through their bodily 'with-ness' (Whitehead, 1978) with the socio-material place-world. Page replaces the 'of the' with 'with' in thinking through bodies and place to suggest that placemaking practices are not an either/or relationship but rather a 'with' relationship as part of who we are and how we become. The 'bush kids' know and learn the 'matter of factness' of life and death through the embodied knowledge of the matter of rain, dirt, drought, climate, mud, cattle, sheep, smells and distance and time to travel to facilities and services. Reading this book in itself is a placemaking

experience that emerges through entanglements with some fundamental new materialist concepts and theories, thinking with them in practice to know and learn about the Australian Bush.

Instead of representing place as an object or an inert background Page shows us, through various voices and mediums, images, poems and films, how we know our place-worlds, making and learning place through socio-material embodied entanglements with place. Through placemaking with the children of the Bush she offers the reader the idea of being owned by the Land rather than owning the Land. However, her search for a 'sense of place', in an increasingly 'placeless' or non-place-world, does not suggest a sense of fixity in place. Instead, as a nomad migrant Australian researcher living in London and encountering the question of 'Where are you from?' in her own placemaking experiences, she embodies placeless-ness when in London, as she still carries within her the place where she grew up. Page's nomadic journey, being and becoming with Australia, London and the Land, living and researching here and there, reminds us that those places and bodies in Australia that she explains in her book are categorized as 'remote', 'the outback', places where you may not see another human for days and you only go to visit, but not to live. For Page, these places and how they are identified linguistically within the state and media have a vital role in pedagogies of national identity and nationhood discourse.

Through her series of images, films, stories, poems, paintings and journeying, we learn that what Page wishes to share with us does not describe the subject or the object; she talks, for instance, of the tractor or the trees but she is recalling their entanglements, the event and the action between them. Page's approach enables us to entangle with the Land, the Bush and the world-place of the 'bush kids' through researcher chosen media and research. In this placemaking and mattering at times we walk on dirt and follow tracks on dry land; at another we focus on land, flora, fauna, the light and climate. Through these entangled embodied knowledges of place, Page argues for moving beyond Newton's, Descartes' and Locke's progressive mathematisation of nature that dismiss the qualitative characteristics of place.

Instead, she invites us to be more attentive to colour, texture, smell, sound and other sensory qualities that can differentiate place/s.

Page's contribution is an 'onto-ethico-epistemological' (Barad, 2007) one, that not only entangles us with various vital concepts of new materialism and how it ontologically shifts our thinking about belonging, place, matter, perception, body, pedagogy, research and care, but also at an epistemological level how it can use different ways of knowing and learning other than the visual or textual. As a PhD student who draws on new materialism using walking and photo-diary making, I found this latter approach in Page's book very significant. For her, we learn and know placemaking through embodied pedagogies and their entanglements with socio-material practices of the place-world. These embodied pedagogies occur everywhere with the embodied knowledge of the matters of human and more-than-human bodies, not just in the classroom. *Body, Land and Bush* can then be understood as the intra-actions of socio-material-spiritual-embodied practices, knowledges and pedagogies.

Her book is an important example of this pivotal new materialist premise of 'thinking through theory in practice' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012), rejecting dualistic separations of mind from body and of nature from culture, questioning how matter comes to matter, the intra-actions of matter with bodies and of making with thinking. Page shows us how going beyond the usual enables sharing the unseen, the fleeting and the felt experiences. In doing this, she listens, occasionally questions, observes but always actively engages in children's everyday placemaking practices as they move through and intra-act with the socio-materiality of the place-world. She uses making rather than taking when she refers to film and photography, to reframe/remake these practices away from representations or illustrations of reality/truth to 'making'. As an artist researcher, Page herself is a maker more than a taker as she methodologically provides the capacities for other ways of knowing and learning to happen in her thinking and doing practices.

Page's book is a vital contribution to learning how placemaking practices and pedagogies matter not only in who we become and how we know the world, but also in being with the world and making the world-place 'with' care.

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