The Banality of Arcadia
The Banality of Arcadia
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This work is substantially my own, and where any part of this work is not my own, I have indicated this by acknowledging the source of that part or those parts of the work.

Front cover photo courtesy Lord Howe Island Museum Collection.
Dedicated to Irene and Gordon Crump
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

Flags are highly valued – flown at sporting events, in war and even placed on the moon – but, nevertheless, are under-researched as symbolic devices. This thesis employs and extends Michael Billig’s Banal Nationalism theory to examine how a local flag operates within the context of Lord Howe Island, a small island 600km east of the Australian mainland. Utilising a combination of survey data and in-depth interviews, it firstly demonstrates the significance of “place” for the creation and remembrance of a unique Lord Howe Island identity as well as exploring the interaction of the Islanders between their spatial context and their civil–political relations. It secondly argues how flags can be simultaneously unifying and divisive symbolic devices within and without communities by exploring the process of encoding locally constructed mythologies onto flags, before finally examining the relationship between the social construction of meanings of flags and the citizens who themselves construct it, including the importance of origin myths in establishing the legitimacy of a flag.
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Batman’s whereabouts were unknown. Gotham City was undergoing a Jacobean revolution, isolated and under the martial law of Bane. On the streets of Gotham, two ragged and decaying American flags hung, an analogy for the city’s turmoil and destruction. Gotham, having failed to live up to its American ideals of capitalism, individualism, private property and due process, was no longer worthy of the flag; the people had rejected it and so denied themselves as Americans. Unloved and unwaved, the ignored flags represented both a better past and a longed-for restitution. Perhaps, in years to come after the city’s restoration, those flags would be preserved like the Union Flag lowered at Fort Sumter in 1861. Framed and hung in a national museum, they would be given double honour as recompense for their current ignominy.

The Research Project

In contrast to the anarchy of Gotham, Lord Howe Island (LHI) has often been described by Islanders and visitors alike as a paradise, a modern Arcadia in the Tasman Sea. For visitors, LHI is an escape from the flagrances of the everyday, and for Islanders it is the lived experience of the Elysium promise. This thesis will examine the unofficial flag of this small island 600km north-east of Sydney, which is World Heritage listed for its Outstanding Universal Value. It reveals how one collectivity, the approximately 290 Lord Howe Islanders (Islanders), engage in processes of identity construction mediated by the prime symbol of the local flag.

This thesis provides an understanding of the processes of community-driven attempts to construct identities in contrast to state-patronised symbols. It also provides an understanding of how Islanders construct self-representative views on how nationalism is shaped through imposed and locally constructed mythologies encoded onto flags. The results of this project enhance understandings of how geographically and culturally isolated communities develop narratives of identity through unofficial symbology. LHI is also an understudied locale, especially in the social sciences, that would benefit from additional thorough research.
The research utilises a mixed-methods approach and includes findings from a survey conducted amongst Islanders as well as data from a number of interviews with them.

**Project Aim and Research Objectives**

This project examines Billig’s Banal Nationalism theory by investigating how Islanders construct their identity in relation to the local flag. The overall aim of this research is to understand how remote communities construct their identity through, and in response to, official and unofficial national symbols: the Australian and Lord Howe Island Flags. Specific research questions are:

1. Has “place” been important in the development of shared notions of a Lord Howe Island identity? What is this identity and how does it differ from a general Australian identity?
2. What has been the role of the Lord Howe Island Flag in contributing to shared notions of a Lord Howe Island identity?
3. How has the Lord Howe Island Flag, and the debate about it, contributed to Lord Howe Island identity, and what are the implications for flags’ role in communities and modern nation-states?
4. Through research objectives 1–3, to expand Michael Billig’s “Banal Nationalism” theory.

**Significance and Innovation**

Despite the widespread existence of flags as prime symbols of political representation, vexillology as a field of scholarship has remained relatively understudied. As a result, the development of systemic studies of flags’ role in nations and nation-states has been limited. In addition, many vexillological studies from the humanities lack the analytical methodologies of political science. Existing studies have not developed comprehensive theoretical arguments relating to the display of flags and their relationship with those they seek to represent.

This study will respond to Michael Billig’s (1995) theory of “Banal Nationalism”. I will assess its validity in relation to identity development in an isolated regional island community. Billig posits the “everyday” exposure to symbols such as the flag entails the remembrance of nationhood and
enhances national cohesion. Such exposure also provides retention of nationalistic feeling that is brought forth in times of “hot” nationalism such as war. The study develops a methodology useful for potential future research, for example, on Australian communities such as Norfolk and the Torres Strait Islands but also international communities with contested national identities such as West Papua (Indonesia) and Kurdistan (Iraq/Turkey/Iran).

Summary of Findings

In this thesis I firstly examine the pertinent literature, including that of nationalism literature, in addition to a brief examination of extant vexillology-based research. After examining the literature, I demonstrate the significance of “place” for the creation, forgetting and remembrance of a unique Lord Howe Island identity. I explore how the civil–political social relations of the Islanders interact with their geographical setting (the spatial context) to shape this identity. Secondly, I argue the importance of flags, in particular the unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag, in the operation of civil–political social relations, showing flags can be simultaneously unifying and divisive devices. Further, I demonstrate how discourse is essential in attributing meaning to flags as socially constructed symbolic devices. Finally, I examine the relationship between the Lord Howe Island Flag and other symbolic imagery within the Islander community, demonstrating how controversies surrounding the origin of the flag may impede the adoption and legitimisation of a symbolic device. I conclude by considering the future of the Lord Howe Island Flag and suggest further vexillological research.
**Introduction**

This study investigates the Lord Howe Islander identity with particular interest in the role of the Lord Howe Island Flag, exploring Islanders’ understanding of their identity, place and culture in relation to symbols used to develop it. The theoretical underpinnings of this research rest on nationalism literature, especially in the post-Cold War context; others include literature on flags and LHI histories.

**Banal Nationalism**

Michael Billig explores, within the context of “established, democratic nations” in Banal Nationalism (1995), how much nationalism literature focuses on the ethnogenesis of nations whilst ignoring how those nations are continuously reproduced in citizens’ everyday life (p. 93). Billig highlights the significant role of national symbols in this process and makes specific reference to national flags, “waved and unwaved” that help citizens to “remember” their nationality. Citizens must remember their nationality for nationalism to be effective in times of crisis – so-called “hot” nationalism (p. 139).

Heard (2007) develops Billig’s thesis to explain how everyday engagement with national symbols allows nationalism to become embedded within the identities of citizens, in contrast to Billig’s emphasis on societal effects. Heard critiques Billig’s assumption that national flags’ meanings are static and cannot develop or adopt “hot” nationalist characteristics. Heard postulates they are dynamic, and apolitical institutions and symbols adopt a nationalistic character in the face of change and crisis.

Skey (2007) also critically engages with Banal Nationalism. Skey also critiques the theory for its failure to recognise the dynamic rather than static or staid nature of certain national symbols, that is, the relationship between “hot” and “banal” forms of nationalism. Skey’s work is intended to develop and extend Banal Nationalism rather than reject it, to ensure it is robust and its weaknesses can be rectified. Billig (2009) briefly responds to Skey’s main concerns, arguing Skey has
misunderstood parts of his thesis. He also clarifies issues such as societal heterogeneity mentioned in Skey’s critique of \textit{Banal Nationalism}, resulting in a more developed and logically sound theory.

\textbf{Nationalism}

The early 1990s saw a notable level of scholarly interest researching concepts of nationalism and national identity. Of particular interest is the work of Anderson (1991), Smith (1991) and Billig (1995), which have since been critiqued, developed and extended, reflecting an increased interest in nationalistic phenomena in the post-Cold War context. Anderson (1991) notes the “nation, nationality and nationalism - all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse” (p. 3). Two decades later this task continues to challenge and engage scholars. Previously, nationalism theory sought to explain the creation of nationalism and policies that respond to it (cf. Özkan, 1999), yet theory has only recently been written on the continued reproduction of the nation.

Although Billig’s work has been instrumental in progressing nationalism theory in this regard, there are other inadequacies in nationalism research that require attention. For example, Todosijevic (2001) criticises much existing nationalism literature for its conception of nationalism as a unidimensional phenomena within both an international and domestic sphere. He states, “it has been common practice… to portray nationalisms in [sic] stereotypical way, as internally homogenous ideologies distinctly specific for certain groups (nations)” (p. 170). Instead, he demonstrates how national attitudes are multidimensional. Todosijevic’s insight is important, for it warns against the assumption of homogeneity of participants’ attitudes and identity. If not taken sufficiently into account, this heterogeneity may affect researchers’ ability to generalise about populations.

Another important debate involves the origins of nationalism – whether it is a fundamentally Eurocentric (see Greenfield, 1992) and Modernist notion following a diffusion model, or if its development was poly-local (see Le May, 1971). Recognising these processes and their forms is important, especially in imperial fringes. For example, Louise-Pratt’s (1992) “contact zones” of
individual contexts of each “nation” contributes to understanding how the processes operate and how they differ from one another. These considerations are particularly pertinent for research on LHI. Further to this subaltern research, Lecours (2011) explores the continued appeal of nationalism to Western separatists. He suggests nationalism itself “represents the coupling of political processes linked to 1) identity, 2) interests and 3) mobilisation” (ibid., p. 3). This categorisation is useful in understanding the motives behind the processes that reconstitute nationalism in the everyday. Nevertheless, Lecours’ definition of sub-state nationalism is of limited use because of his focus on “hot” forms of nationalism, discounting its everyday forms. Likewise, Drakulic (2008) attempts to demonstrate that nationalism and protonationalisms existed in European colonies and their hinterlands. Despite his attempts, Drakulic unsuccessfully equates “ethnic consciousness” (p. 232) and “protonationalism” (p. 233) with a Modernist notion of “nationalism”. These phenomena are both semantically and functionally different from nationalism beginning in the late 19th century. Additionally, his thesis is fundamentally tautological, for if nationalism is defined as a premodern phenomenon, then his observations about premodern societies, by definition, support his claims. Furthermore, although Drakulic attempts to move beyond a Eurocentric definition of nationalism, his examples are erroneous as they demonstrate protonationalisms as a response to engagement with European and Ottoman colonists rather than as autonomous developments. This thesis pertains to Drakulic’s proposition by also similarly exploring nationalism in imperial hinterlands.

Writers from other paradigms and methodologies nevertheless affirm the importance of discourse. For example, Drakulic, amongst others (see Marx, 1982), recognises social interactions are fundamental to nationalism; for example, Mead describes nationalism as “the sum-total of the social experiences of all its individual members” (1955, p. 321). Flags, as devices whose meanings are contingent on discourse, are a physical manifestation of this process. Foucault (2002) views the creation of discreet, discursively bound ethno-polities as catalysed by the homogenisation of national language. The role of discourse is therefore essential in the creation and continued reproduction of nations, for it shapes the social interactions that are foundational to nationalism.
Although Foucault does not explicitly state it, this same process that was essential to the ethnogeneses of nations is used in the reproduction of them and other polities. Foucault highlights how one discourse can become hegemonic at the expense of other competing discourses, thus shaping identity, culture and therefore society. Anderson (1991) similarly agrees societies are determined by the social interactions of citizens. He proposes nations are developed as “imagined political communities – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (ibid., p. 6). Fundamental to these social interactions is the place and importance of language as a means of diffusing information. Through language, semiotics and political symbology, nations are created and established as meta-societal structures that bind together strangers. Anderson links the rise of nationalism to the decline of religion and monarchism, the birth of modernity and the rise of public media.

Although writing at the same time as Anderson, Smith does not share his concern with “imagined political communities”. Instead, Smith’s underlying assumption in his cornerstone work, National Identity (1991), is, “we cannot understand nations and nationalism simply as an ideology or form of politics but must treat them as cultural phenomena”. Smith nevertheless treats symbolism, language and “sentiments” as important elements understanding the creation of, and effects on, nationalism and national identity. Smith clearly delineates between pre-modern “ethnies” (p. 68) and modern (and modernist) nationalism, concurring with Gellner that it is “a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the 19th Century” (Gellner, 1964, p. 168 in Smith, 1991, p. 71).

**Previous Vexillology Research**

The discussion of nationalism literature has demonstrated national symbols’ importance as an integral part of patterns of nationalism in a wide variety of contexts. Flags, national and otherwise, are important as citizens encode cultural mythologies onto flags and thus use them as symbols and expression of themselves.
Champion (2006) explores the process by which national identity becomes transcoded onto visual symbols, and the contested space in which this occurred within the context of the Canadian flag debate from 1963–5. Champion emphasises the power of competing discourses in influencing the decision to adopt the contemporary Canadian flag, and also utilises social constructivism to demonstrate the significance of discourse in shaping outcomes, the nature of the debate, as well as the legitimation of the behaviour of competing groups’ actions.

Pål Kolstø (2007) explores a similar issue. He examines in three case studies – Bosnia; Russia; Norway – how national flags have acted as symbols of both unity and division in modern nation-states. Kolstø postulates that in modern, democratic states, national symbols have lost much of their power as unifying symbols, able to unite various ethnicities and citizens of competing political causes, an issue contested by Billig and others. Kolstø also posits the particular design of national symbols that “will in and of itself not guarantee their success” (p. 676).

Moving beyond statist vexillology, Podeh’s (2011) findings dispute this claim. Podeh utilises Banal Nationalism to explore the prevalence of an “Arab flag”. Similarities of flag design may “symbolise certain propinquity in terms of ideology, culture and history” (p. 420). Podeh demonstrates how political ideology is reflected in flag design and how symbolic frameworks alter according to their political context. Therefore, Podeh believes that national symbols are important to nations, in contrast to Kolstø’s findings. In addition, Podeh also briefly delineates the history and functions of a flag. Bratta (2009) also contests Kolstø’s hypothesis by demonstrating how the display of the US flag immediately post-9/11 in at least two media sources was successful in serving the power interests of the US Government by establishing a purported legitimate and hegemonic flag discourse.

The visual construction of a flag represents a conception of the state whose relevance is strongly linked to its political context. Ortner (1973) argues national symbols constitute “key symbols” (p. 1338) for states; these are “symbolic units which formulate meaning” (ibid.). Eriksen (2007) similarly describes flags as “symbolic containers”; hence, flags change and adapt to new
political situations as this political context changes. An example of this process is found when the South African flag moved away from its colonial, Boererepubliek and apartheid roots in 1994 with the adoption of the contemporary South African flag (Bornman, 2005; de Gruchy, 1994). Bornman and de Gruchy’s observations support Podeh’s hypothesis. They agree flags adapt to new political situations as political context changes, representative of the dominant political group’s ideology. de Gruchy’s descriptive account of the 1994 South Africa transition explores the role of emotions in political change.

Flags can be divisive symbols. Carville (2001), Jarman (2007) and Bryan (2007) explore how flags represent contested spaces where competing national discourses on the formation of the state arise as, often, subaltern groups devise their own flag(s) in opposition to dominant groups. However, not all flags organically arise from the general populace – flags are potentially products of states and politicians, the bourgeoisie. In contrast, flags are also symbols of national unity, evident in studies of Nordic countries (Löfgren, 2007; Grimnes, 2007; Jenkins, 2007) and the United Kingdom (Groom, 2007). Rarely, however, are flags uncontroversial.

Smith (1975) develops a comprehensive history of flag use. He describes and explains the development of flags from pre-dynasty China to the 1970s. Although some information is out of date, the historical information is useful to understand the development of flag use in societies and nations and the place of flags in the citizens’ everyday life. More recent flags are analysed by Elgenius (2005; 2007), who also expands upon the development of flag design in Western cultures.

**Other Works**

The power of discourse in explaining and shaping meaning is highly important. Discourse is the means by which we can understand what others believe and how they identify themselves. Discourse is the means by which nationalism is articulated by members of in-groups and also how it is reproduced – even if the discourse is internal. The analysis of such discourses and narratives is a useful approach in social inquiry on national identities and national symbolism.
Lyons (2004) explores how narratives of identity and difference contribute to attitudes towards out-group populations, similar to the Lord Howe Islander – mainlander delineation. He explores how the French Foreign Legion purposively creates a relatively homogeneous, binding in-group culture from disparate, heterogeneous cultures and identities. Lyons’ methodology is useful as it explores how discourse and semiotics act to shape identities.

Within the British context, Rhodes (2009) investigates the rise of the British National Party (BNP) in England. He utilises Billig’s Banal Nationalism theory to demonstrate that by co-opting local discourses, the BNP has been able to legitimise its party policy positions by appearing “banal”. The BNP has been able to “locate powerful tales of identity and entitlement within routine narratives” (p. 142) to legitimise their actions and party support, consequently increasing their electability and political power. Rhodes’ exploration of the power of local, routine narratives is important, for it highlights that the local has become powerful and can affect the region, the state and even the global.

Flags are not the only elements of national iconography. Penrose (2011) explores “the relationship between national iconography, banal nationalism and conceptions of the state” (p. 429) within the context of Scottish banknotes. Penrose highlights how private actors are important in determining national iconography in place of traditional common-sense perceptions of public, state institutions as determiners of national identity. Thus, Penrose calls for a “reassessment of the concept of the state” (ibid.). Penrose’s focus on private rather than public individuals and institutions is constructive as it reveals the falsity of common-sense assumptions typically employed by social scientists. However, her example is strictly limited to a particular sub-state and political context.

**Lord Howe Island**

Tracing the development of an Australian identity has been somewhat difficult, demonstrated by the title of Alomes’ (1988) attempt, *A Nation at Last?.* Nevertheless, Richard White (1981) explores how
Australia has been conceived both by Australians and by foreigners. He advances the search for a “real Australia” is a fool’s errand, for these are but the conception of those writing, bound by their socio-historical context, yet “when we look at ideas about national identity, we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve” (p. 24). White’s view is critical in establishing the context for Australian identity politics research.

Little formal academic work has been completed on LHI. Most work completed on the island has been a mixture of government reports and histories written by local residents. Of these, Daphne Nichols’ *Lord Howe Rising* (2006) is the most recent and unabridged. Nichols develops a historical narrative of LHI and its interactions with the Australian mainland in addition to Norfolk Island and New Caledonia, from the discovery of LHI in 1788, to 2005. Nichols highlights the opportunities, risks and events that have taken place on the island. As a result, she posits Islanders have earned a “privileged status” and a “unique identity” (p. 117).

Much of Nichols’ work is based on a previous history of LHI written by Max Nicholls in 1938 (revised 1953). This history is thematically rather than chronologically structured and is useful both as a source of information about the island’s activities, especially considering its historical proximity to the events described, but also in understanding how the island’s metanarrative has been understood by another in the past. Although Nicholls is not an Islander himself, he had close links to the island, being “well known, not only to the residents but to all regular visitors” (p. i).

A study completed on LHI by Hayward (2002) analysed local music traditions, finding a strong LHI music culture. These findings indicate the emergence of a Lord Howe Islander identity discreet from an orthodox mainland identity without specifically delineating how this may be applicable in a broader context. Howard Tanner and Associates (1985) completed a report on LHI for the New South Wales Government, containing useful information on the history and demography.
Methodology

The methodology used in this research project is based on social constructivism (see Kukla, 2000). Within constructivism, the role of discourse is crucial for, as Wendt (2000) argues, it is essential as a legitimating process that affects real-world outcomes. Paltrridge (2006) explains the process of discourse analysis and how it can be applied to research projects. Walter (2006) has also been informative for understanding the social research process and how to ensure that it is effectively undertaken.

Surveys are useful research tools to gain insights into populations’ attitudes. Self-completed surveys have a number of benefits including ease of cost and timing of administration, absence of interviewer effects and variability, in addition to convenience for processing, coding and operationalising responses (Bryman, 2008, p. 218). This thesis uses data from a postal survey conducted between May and July 2012. Thirty-seven responses were received from a distribution of 180, which is a similar response rate to other surveys conducted on the island by the Lord Howe Island Board.

Interviews are a critical method for gaining insights into attitudes, opinions and life narratives of populations. For example, in Talking of the Royal Family (1991), Michael Billig utilises a methodology in which the role of discourse, as articulations of common-sense understandings of ordinary citizens, is central to his work. The British public’s understandings and attitudes towards the British Royal Family are expressed through personal, self-reflective discourse, and Billig explicates from these articulations broad themes and theoretical insights. Interviews have been used similarly to Billig’s work.

This research utilises data gathered from in-depth interviews with nine Islanders from diverse backgrounds, representing various demographic groupings. Islanders were interviewed during a July 2012 research trip, with the exception of one interviewed in Sydney. These interviewees were drawn from the original survey group.
Informal observations were conducted during the July 2012 research trip in order to provide complementary data. This was especially useful given the emphasis Islanders placed on the environment of LHI. Apart from paying attention to the natural environment, observations focused on the presence of the Australian and Lord Howe Island Flag and other symbols of identity on public display.

Survey and interviewee respondents have been coded using a simple numbering system to preserve the interviewees’ anonymity – a purposeful response to the small population of Islanders. Even general statements of identity usual for this type of research (e.g. male/female) would compromise respondent anonymity.

Research into the effect of flags on identity and behaviour has not been limited to social constructivism however. Positivist, quantitative research based on behaviouralist epistemological positions has taken place within psychology. These studies (see examples below) focused on discovering “facts” about the social world from an assumed position of social objectivity. The role of the research was seen to be neutral and impartial. Ehrlinger et al. (2011) demonstrate how exposure to the Confederate Battle Flag affects levels of racial prejudice in white respondents. Butz et al. (2007) demonstrate how subliminal exposure to the United States’ flag activates an egalitarian concept and out-group hostility. These results largely correlate to established nationalism theory where nationalism is seen as conducive to positive in-group feelings while raising out-group antagonism and the creation of an “Other”. Schatz and Lavine (2007) attempt to identify the effects (behaviour) of individuals as a result of their identification with national symbols and develop a “symbolic national involvement” (p. 331) scale.

Whilst such studies are useful in understanding the effect of flags in limited contexts, and may point to broader effects of flag display within certain populations, their results are of only limited value. Their individualist focus researches the effects of flags within a social vacuum, ignoring the authentic contexts of flag use. Moreover, these studies do not address the reasons for their results. As inductive case studies, these studies have limited usefulness.
**Conclusion**

A brief survey of the relevant literature has shown how, in the post-Cold War context, nationalism has become increasingly important; the “end of history” has not occurred (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 2). As the Cold War Capitalist–Soviet ideological arguments have decreased in relevance since the collapse of “real, existing socialism”, ethnicity and the local have become central issues in nationalistic conflict. At the same time, the everyday nationalism of developed Western countries has come under scrutiny. This literature has sought to demonstrate that “nationalism” is not to be associated with an “Other”. Nationalism, whether “hot” or “banal”, makes use of flags as prime national symbols. Flags are important yet contentious elements of the national iconography of collectivities from the local to the state. LHI provides a unique case study to research the relevance of flags in contributing to an island identity, itself potentially competing with the broader Australian identity.
LORD HOWE ISLAND IDENTITY
**Introduction**

The spatial context within which social phenomena occurs is of great importance for social science research; as Therborn (2011) notes: “politics begins with place” (p. 509). Therborn describes three distinct aspects of “social being” (ibid., p. 510). Place entails 1) a fixity in space, 2) contiguity, and 3) distinctiveness, and is important as both the context in which actors are moulded and action occurs in addition to the place affected by actors. As Therborn explains, place is “an example of the dialectics of structure and agency” as the civic–political interacts closely with the geographical in which social phenomena occur (ibid.).

The Lord Howe Island community is spatially situated within a stunning World Heritage listed area. Although LHI maintains a strong link with the Australian mainland, the social interactions of LHI are predominantly intra-island. Over a period of 170 years of settlement, this interaction has led to the development of a unique Lord Howe Island identity situated within the broader Australian context. Each of Therborn’s aspects of social being is evident in the development of the Lord Howe Island identity and will inform the discussion of the various elements constituting this identity. I argue that shared notions of “place” have deeply informed its development, and in turn identity has shaped these same notions; that is, place affects actors and actors affect place. The purpose of this section is to examine the differences between Islanders and mainland Australia.

**Characteristics of the Lord Howe Island Community**

The Lord Howe Island community has been shaped through an amalgam of natural and man-made controls that have developed in response to its unique requirements and human history.

Similar to some Queensland islands, there are no freehold titles on LHI. The Crown owns all land, though pre-1913 Islanders and their descendants hold Permanent Leases, while strict residency requirements allow those who have lived on LHI for 10 years to gain a Special Lease. These requirements have led to conflict between the Lord Howe Island Board and some Islanders.
For example, it is possible to forfeit a lease if tenants have not resided on LHI for a period of time (Lord Howe Island Act 1953, Lord Howe Island Amendment Act 2004). However, many Islanders spend their working years on the mainland or otherwise off-island. At one time, this led to a situation where the Board forfeited a lease of a Lineal Descendant, which was subsequently overturned by the Supreme Court. Interviewee 07 explains:

> My aunt left us the land here and I always intended to retire and come home to Lord Howe anyway having been born here… The Lord Howe Island Board at the time saw fit to relinquish my lease… They took my aunt’s right to leave the land to whom she pleased. And she lived on it all her life and it had been in the family name for over 100 years. And the judge said that you can’t take this.

Conflicts such as these demonstrate that Lineal Descendants view themselves as intrinsically linked to the Island, and thus possess extrajudicial rights in line with ideals of fairness and justice. The struggle between Lord Howe Island residents and the New South Wales Government over successive generations has also fomented an anti-governmental attitude on the part of Islanders, extending to both Lineal Descendants and New Islanders. Interviewee 02 described it: “I think a lot of people see bureaucratic constraints as ridiculous and some of them totally are.”

As responses to Question 2 of the survey demonstrate (see Figure 2-2, p.28), the local environment of Lord Howe is particularly pertinent to people’s identification with the island, which may explain a general antipathy to development and their desire to maintain a pristine environment. Tourist beds, and thus tourist numbers, are restricted to 400 at any one time, and other forms of development are strictly controlled. Consequently, economic growth and activity is, by design and intent, relatively static.
Furthermore, the Lord Howe Island Group was designated as a World Heritage area in 1982 (UNESCO, 2012). The island governance has consequently adopted a variety of measures to comply with its designation. It has helped shape island identity by altering how the Federal and NSW governments, visitors and Islanders themselves perceive the island. As a result of the designation, both government in and governance of the Island has increased. Islanders view themselves as anti-authoritarian, and anti-government feeling runs high. Although a majority (54%) of respondents to the survey indicated that the Lord Howe Island Board’s power was “about right”, a large minority (46%) viewed it as either “too much” or “far too much” (see Figure 2-1), and no respondents indicated they supported increased governmental presence on LHI.

In addition to these characteristics, the Lord Howe Island experience diverges from the mainland’s as the result of differences in pre- and early-colonial history. Unlike the Australian mainland and the vast majority of other islands, Aboriginal, Torres Strait or Maori people did not settle LHI before European discovery and colonisation. Consequently, most of the first settlers of LHI were white, and the history of exploitation, invasion and decimation of native populations prevalent on the mainland was not repeated on the island. The Islanders, especially Lineal Descendant Islanders, therefore feel an exceptional affinity with the land since, unlike mainland Australia, it was not won by conquest of native populations but by peaceful settlement\(^1\). Interviewee 04 expounded this sentiment:

\(^1\) That is, *terra nullius*. 

![Figure 2-1 Q15 Responses](image)
Coming to Lord Howe was like an enormous weight lifted off my shoulders because the island had no pre-colonial indigenous population and I didn’t feel here that the welfare that I enjoyed had possibly been built on the exploitation and the misery of an indigenous people.

Thus, unlike other non-ATSI Australians, Lord Howe Islanders do not share the same colonial experience and so feel they have more of a “right” to feel entitled to their land, which further augments and legitimises Islanders’ connection to it.

The Background of the Lord Howe Island Identity

The unique Lord Howe Island identity has been developed through a specific set of social and spatial characteristics established from the island’s settlement in 1833–4, including physical and social isolation, a binary social structure and a unique history. These factors, which may have decreased in prominence on the island, nevertheless continue to influence Islander identity.

Islanders have faced a number of challenges in living on LHI, and in response the spatial isolation of LHI from the mainland and other Australian islands, regional and global flows of goods and services entailed the development of specific social characteristics. Although the island was intermittently linked firstly by visiting whaling ships then regular ship and aeroplane services, it has always faced a significant level of isolation from the Australian mainland (Nichols, 2006). Islanders, out of necessity, developed a relatively self-sufficient lifestyle, the effects of which continue to shape contemporary Islander attitudes towards mainlanders. Thus, physical isolation as a result of the island’s “fixity in space” (Therborn, 2011, p. 510) has contributed to shaping Islanders’ social being by limiting the Islanders’ connections with mainland Australia, both socially and economically, in comparison to mainland urban and rural areas. It has acted to create ambivalence over whether Islanders identify as fully part of mainland Australia, a “Pacific” island, or both. This ambivalence extends to a mainlander’s arms-length depiction of Lord Howe Island “inhabitants” who are “white people; their customs, way of life and social institutions… similar to those of their fellow citizens on the mainland” (Lord Howe Island Board, 1962, p. 2).
In addition, a significant division in the social structure of the island community exists between those who identify as Islanders descended from the original settlers of Lord Howe (the Lineal Descendants) and those who migrated to the island afterwards, especially those not born on the island (the New Islanders). The Lineal Descendants constitute a significant proportion of the island population and benefit from certain legal advantages over (immigrant) New Islanders. Lineal Descendants originate from three core families and have dominated island life for several generations. This divide will be discussed further in the following section.

Moreover, the 1920s and ‘30s saw a period of utopian idealism prevalent amongst the Islanders, which was embodied in the Kentia Palm Seed Co-operative. Although the palm seed industry previously existed, this stage of the island’s economic and social development brought about radical change based on economic solidarity intended to redistribute wealth to Islanders, including women and children. A perceived “golden age” of island life was consequently created, a temporal fixity to which Islanders refer to with fondness. It may have also led to the prevalent use of the word or related phrases of “paradise”, commonly used to describe the island. Additionally, the spatial boundaries of the island have acted to limit the social boundaries of the community. The island’s isolation and limited topography have reinforced the bonding capital between those living there by limiting off-island social relations. Islanders are in close contact with all other members of the approximately 290-strong community. Interviewee 03 noted a local saying that the island was “three minutes long and two minutes wide”. This intra-island preference is in part the result of the community’s conscious decisions. For example, the community requested to maintain the island free from mobile phone reception in 2002. Consequently, despite disruptive technologies such as the television and Internet access, the island maintains a high level of civic participation, such as in voluntary groups, and other informal community-based activity remains high.

Finally, there has been a historical divide between the Seventh Day Adventists and the Church of England, although low Anglican attendance has diminished the contemporary importance
of this somewhat. It does, however, remain important for older members of the island community as a social divider.

"There’s Something in the Blood"

Although other divisions exist, such as the previously mentioned religious division, island heritage is seen as the most important element in constituting Islander legitimacy. The most significant social division on LHI is the one between Lineal Descendant Islanders and New Islanders. When asked how long they had lived on Lord Howe, multiple respondents to the survey answered not in terms of their individual lives but in respect to their family history; for example, “6th Generation Islander”. Those respondents view themselves and their experience living on LHI as part of a living continuum linked strongly with the past, rather than as an individual experience delineated by generations. This past is spatially situated within and around LHI. The context in which this past has occurred has entailed the development of personal histories tied to geographical proximity to each other. Interviewee 09 explains:

\[ I \text{ think the fact that I am a 7th generation islander makes me pretty proud, it is such a unique place, I guess growing up I didn’t realise how lucky I was until I had to move away. } \]

This division is important because it creates a binary social structure, with one social “class” relating to each other significantly differently than the other. Again, Interviewee 09 said:

\[ \text{Because we are basically all related to one another, there’s something in the blood, we do have this deep, deep, deep connection, and we have a deep connection to the same place. So we just have this understanding, we understand one another better than anyone else could. } \]

Nonetheless, intra-island relations are significantly influenced by the specific context of issues as they arise, and Islander coalitions tend to form around individual issues such as rodent control, with groups and Islanders crossing over on an \textit{ad hoc} basis.
The Jewel Island, Princesses and Mariners – Local Mythology and Contemporary Identity

Local myths associated with lineal antecedents serve as the background for the contemporary Lord Howe Island identity, especially that of the Lineal Descendants. The first inhabitation of Lord Howe was relatively unremarkable; however, the arrival of Nathan Thompson and his three “associated” Kiribati women (supposedly “rescued princesses”) provided the island a founding story – the Thompson Myth – that continues to fashion contemporary island relations. A simplified version of the Myth (which in its recounting has similar elements to an Aboriginal Dreamtime tale) states that Nathan Thompson, a mariner, spotted two women in a boat in the southern Gilbert Islands fleeing from forced marriages. He took them aboard and soon after arrived on Lord Howe with them to settle. He later married the first and after her death, the second (for a full account, see Skiba, 2011).

The effect of the Myth remains evident in island relations. For example, Lineal Descendant schoolgirls may tease New Islander girls for not being “princesses”. Further, at the recent Australia’s Small Islands Forum, local Islanders heavily attended an event featuring a Kiribati attendee commenting on the Thompson Myth. These examples indicate the specific methods of a community’s “imagining” (Anderson, 1991) – those by which Islanders are bound together through the social construction of an identity (Jenkins, 2007). These myths create a distinctive difference between Islanders and non-Islanders, and thus strengthen solidarity within the Islander group. Significantly, full access to this myth is only available to those with a blood connection to the Thompson family, although all Islanders share in it despite its known historical inaccuracies (Skiba, 2011).

Myths are essential for both binding communities together through a shared understanding of the past and serving as the backdrop for shared understandings of what it is to be part of the respective collectivity. Myths contribute to the development of an official historiography, which is often put in service to the interests of the dominant social actors (Kamen, 2008; Thomas, 2010; Nelis, 2007). As a result, the Thompson Myth serves to create an Islander ideal type, the
embodiment of Islander values and identity, the person whom to imitate and establish as the standard for contemporary and future Islander generations. Thompson embodies daring, hard work and fairness. The Thompson character becomes the *de rigueur* island subjectivity (thus an objectivity) and creates an axiomatic relationship between these characteristics and Islander identity. As in Greece where “the state invites these individuals to conform their subjectivity ‘to the nature of the society that grants them citizenship’”, the Thompson Myth serves as a guide for New Islanders and visitors alike to define the unique qualities of the island population (Tzanelli, 2006, p. 31).

Intra-Islander subjectivities are developed through a mythologised past but also through everyday and banal intra-Islander communication.

**Socialised Vocabulary and In-Group/Out-Group Behaviour**

In addition to symbolic interaction, which will be described later in this paper, Lord Howe Islanders engage in acts of “remembrance” of a sub-state form of “nationhood” through discursive markers of place (Billig, 1995). As Interviewee 09 mentioned: “We have a particular way of talking to one another.” Localised vocabulary, such as “up south” and “runs” in place of “creek”, demonstrates the utilisation of local knowledge as indicative of an emergent form of a Lord Howe Island standpoint. Although intelligible to non-Islanders, the use of such terms reinforces the delineation between Islanders and visitors. In addition, the use of localised and, in some cases, antiquated place names such as “Humpty Micks” or “Rabbit” Island, rather than the contemporary “The Anchorage” and “Blackburn” respectively, promotes this delineation, although Islanders freely share their lexicon with visitors.

An additional manner in which intra-Islander vocabulary differs is through the use of nicknames, as Interviewee 06 noted: “Just about everybody has a nickname.” While nicknames are not unusual in any community, their widespread use indicates the close social connections between Islanders, as well as their informal nature. Other forms of localised vocabulary indicate how place defines and shapes local activity. For example, the Islanders use the definite article “the” when
describing a cold, rather than the usual indefinite “a”. The explanation given by an Islander for this is, “there's one cold and everybody gets it”. The spatial boundaries of the island shape island life, and subsequently, the local lexicon adapts to the situated reality. This reinforces the insider–outsider relationship with non-Islanders and reinforces in-group solidarity through familiarised discourse. Many Islanders were not conscious of their personal use of these phrases, although they are evident to non-Islanders.

New Islanders appear to be, relative to Lineal Descendants, uneasier in their newfound identity. As Billig (1995) notes, personal pronouns are important in revealing individuals’ understanding of themselves and with whom they share connections. Language plays a vital role in the operation of ideology and in the framing of ideological consciousness (ibid., p. 17). For example, a New Islander routinely switched between “us”, “them”, “we” and “they” during their interview. This participant reference switching indicates a potential uneasiness with their identities, which may feel in conflict with one another rather than in congruence to one another as in Lineal Descendants and non-immigrant New Islanders. This may also occur as the result of an attempted distancing between the interviewee and any one individual or individual family in the island community. In contrast, Lineal Descendants were more likely to use “we” and “us”, indicating a greater familiarity with LHI and its community.

These elements of a localised lexicon demonstrate how discursive markers of place operate within LHI. Discourse is used explicitly and implicitly to reinforce social boundaries between Islanders and non-Islanders.

**Single-Market External Economic Dependence**

Throughout its history, LHI has been historically dependent on a single economic activity. This form has transformed from a dependence on the whaling trade to the Kentia Palm seed industry until the contemporary Lord Howe Island economy, which is heavily dependent on the tourist industry, began in earnest in 1947 with the introduction of a regular flying boat air service (Nichols,
2006). The undiversified economy shapes Islander attitudes towards non-Islanders (Australian and others) as well as intra-Islander relations. The tourist industry has shaped Islanders’ conception of themselves, particularly in older generations, by linking them to other Pacific islands, most noticeably Hawai’i. Murray (2012) explains: “These strong associations with Pacific islands drew upon long-established intellectual connections between Islands and the ideal, the Pacific and the exotic, to represent Lord Howe as an appealing escape from the ordinary and mundane” (p. 15).

For example, leis – a typical Pacific island and Polynesian artefact – were given to tourists upon their departure from LHI from the flying boats. Whether or not this was an act put on by Islanders for tourists or if it represents a deeper emotional connection with other Pacific islands, it demonstrates how the tourist industry’s demands compelled Islanders to take on, at least superficially, a certain, expected role. Interviewee 02 explains how LHI was promoted as a Pacific island:

> I think partly it may have had to do with advertising, it may have had to do with simply locking into people’s expectations about an island holiday. People’s expectations about an island holiday had already been conditioned actually from the 18th century onwards…

The single market economy has also acted to bind Islanders together in economic solidarity. For example, the dependence on the Kentia Palm seed industry in the ‘20s and ‘30s gave rise to a “socialist” cooperative system that lasted until World War II. The single market economy enabled this system’s creation, though it was not an inevitable by-product of it, as demonstrated by intra-island competition in the late 19th century. The economy heightened the need for, and allowed for high levels of, mutual caregiving between Islanders. As a result, high levels of social capital are still maintained on the island, although this social capital appears to be predominantly bonding. Indeed, there is active resistance to non-Islanders owning, operating or developing economic activity on the island. Despite the small size of the island, and in mimicry of events on the Australian national stage, issues of foreign ownership and foreign direct investment of economic resources appear to challenge community identity and unity.
The Genii Locus of Islander Identity

The *genii locus* of LHI is determined by its “location and its local social and political relations” (Therborn, 2011, p. 526). Although it may seem needless to identify a *genii locus* on an island as small as LHI, it remains important because it defines the social and physical parameters of the island. These places of meaning can be and are created and re-created as temporal shifts mark social and political change and represent the very essence of a place. They may stand with intrinsic, given meaning, or they may be ascribed meaning by those residing in that place. For Lord Howe, this place appears to be the two mountains, Mts Gower and Lidgbird at the southern end of the island. The mountains were the most common response to survey Question 2, “What best symbolises the island to you?”, with either the mountains or a combination of the mountains and other geographic features overwhelmingly chosen (see Figure 2-2).

Eating Butter With Guns

In spite of the unique characteristics of the Lord Howe Islander identity described above, and the large distance between the islands and the Australian mainland, Islanders’ identity coexists with a broader Australian identity.

Notwithstanding a proclivity to state LHI as the most important aspect of their identity, Islanders generally describe themselves as Australian and Islanders participate in Australian rituals such as ANZAC Day and Australia Day. As shall be discussed later, the Australian flag flies as often and as much as the Lord Howe Island Flag. There is little to no discernible difference between mainlander and Islander participation in acts of national remembrance. By engaging in these acts, Islanders partake in the symbolic meaning of the Australian nation and consequently become part of it (Duara, 1993). This engagement may be heightened by repetitious visits to the mainland for
activities such as education, health or legal services as well as lengthy stays for employment. Inasmuch as an “Australian identity” exists (see White, 1981, Ch.1), Lord Howe Islanders embrace their conceptions of what it entails in a duality of identity, first with LHI and then with the mainland. One New Islander, Interviewee 04, summarised it as:

*I think ideally, I think they [Lord Howe Islanders] see themselves as both. It would be a very traumatic situation for most of us if we had to choose... I think they are very comfortable with being both.*

Despite the island’s physical isolation, delimited social boundaries, and the common view that Islanders and mainlanders are different in important ways, Islanders maintain a close link with the Australian identity, as shown by a significant majority (68%, see Figure 2-3) who believe mainlanders and Islanders have much in common. This attitude is further reflected in responses to survey Question 4, “Do you identify most strongly with? Australia, NSW, LHI or Other”, which garnered multiple responses rather than a single response as the question required. One respondent even chose three out of a possible four responses (LHI, NSW and Australia). The resistance evident over a relatively simple question asking for a superlative indicates no single identity is preponderant for Islanders. Furthermore, it indicates Islanders are able to maintain a strong regional identity without considering that it conflicts in any way with an Australian identity. This process appears similar to the colonial connection between Australia and England as outlined by Alomes (1988).
Although a strong majority of Islanders indicate they would support alteration of the contemporary laws relating to LHI (73%, see Figure 2-4), this does not signal a rejection of Australia, NSW or even the local governance structures. As American colonists waived the Union Flag to symbolise their problem was with the government and not the King, Lord Howe Islanders’ reaction to mainland activity on LHI does not signify a reaction against being Australian or “Australianness”, but a rejection of over-bureaucratisation and restrictions placed on them by (perceived) inflexible (often non-Islander) civil servants. For example, Islanders’ criticism of governance structures was generally partial, and pertained to specific issues, such as this issue described by Interviewee 03:

The bureaucracy reached ridiculous points when we were asked to get a refrigerated truck to cart up the refrigerated groceries from the boat to the shops, a good three minutes which would have added vastly to the cost… there’s certainly a sense of rejection of over-bureaucratisation… and I think a lot of people think things ran themselves very well when there wasn’t quite so much NSW Government interference.

The realities of a limited ability to maintain the functions of a modern welfare state using island-only resources are also apparent. Interviewee 07, when asked if they could choose between Australia and LHI, remarked:

Well, no. I don’t think that [we could]… I mean we worked as Australians and paid taxes as Australians and as pensioners you are paid by Australia, the Australian taxpayers. So you couldn’t very well say I’d like to be something different other than Australian.
The economic dependence on mainland government for services such as elderly care acts to bind Islanders to the mainland, in contrast to other island territories such as Norfolk Island in which economic independence plays a significant role in their identity.

**Conclusion**

It has been important to demonstrate the significance of “place” for the creation, forgetting and remembrance of a unique Lord Howe Island identity. This identity is the result of a history linked strongly with mainland Australia’s, but also drawn from local traditions, myths, events and even vocabulary. Analysing these activities has been necessary, for as Billig (1995) notes, “an identity is found in the embodied habits of social life” (p. 8).

As has been demonstrated, the civil–political has acted in conjunction with the spatial context of LHI on Islanders to shape their “social being”. On one level, this is unsurprising, and it is a banal statement that context affects identity. Sydney is not Siberia. However, it is this banality that not only is so important to LHI (as my title alludes), but the spatial context in which phenomena occur is also often overlooked in social science research. Context does not deny the ability to speak on social phenomena and develop useful research, but strengthens the very ability to do so.

Understanding the context in which the Lord Howe Island Flag is situated is pertinent to this thesis, for “the meaning of a symbolic artefact [such as a flag] can and does change according to context, even to its devotees and adherents, and such symbols may be considered as more important in some contexts and less important in others” (Jarman, 2007, p. 93). The spatial context of the flag’s creation alters not only its visual construction but also its legitimacy and, as the flag’s referent objects, Islanders’ adherence to it (Neumann, 2007, p. 171). I now turn to examine the Lord Howe Island Flag as a product of this identity.
Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated the significance of “place” for contextual political research as well as for the specific characteristics of the Lord Howe Island community. Having explored the Lord Howe Island identity, I now examine the role and significance of the unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag in the social relations of the island.

The study of flags is useful both to understand the specific role that flags, as symbolic devices, play in societies and as a gateway to examine and understand broader ways in which communities interrelate. It has been important to establish the context of the Lord Howe Island Flag for “meaning is related to, and generated from temporal and spatial context, rather than being fixed and constant or embodied in a physical status” (Jarman, 2007, p. 92). Flags are dynamic objects with their meaning established by the discourse given unto them, rather than containing intrinsic meaning. Additionally, flags are “condensed symbols” (Turner, 1967) and “symbolic containers” (Eriksen, 2007) that “bolster and confirm the sense of identification with one another” (ibid., p. 4).

Through the everyday social relations on the island, Islanders and visitors shape notions about the flag, their relationship to it and consequently themselves. Flags, whose meanings are “are socially constructed… can be deconstructed” by understanding the discourse of Islanders (Leib & Webster, 2007, p. 40), which supports Kolsto’s assertion that flags are unifying but also divisive devices for communities (Kolsto, 2006).

History of the Contemporary Unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag

The Lord Howe Island Flag (see Figure 3-1) was created in 1999 at the request of the late curator of the Lord Howe Island Museum, Jim Dorman.

Figure 3-1 LHI Flag flying at Signal Point © Edwin Crump 2012
John Vaughn, a Sydney vexillographer, was commissioned to create the flag, which was introduced on the island in early 2000. It has been subsequently modified by Margaret Murray who improved the mountains’ silhouettes in the mid-2000s.

The flag’s visual construction is purposefully reminiscent of both the St Andrew’s cross and the first Union Flag (1701–1801) flown by the island’s namesake, Admiral Howe, at a major victory in 1794 (see Figure 3-2). It is defaced by a yellow circle device in the flag’s centre, emblazoned with pictorial representations of Mts Gower and Lidgbird in addition to the endemic Kentia Palm. It was created to represent the Lord Howe Island Group, but it has come to represent solely the inhabited main island (Vaughn, 2000). Two previous unofficial Lord Howe Island flags exist, both designed by schoolchildren in a competition preceding the contemporary flag. The more recent of the two flew at the airport for a number of years and greeted those disembarking from the plane. It also flew at the school and remains in a classroom (see Figure 3-3).

A Chronology of Flag Design

Flag design is shaped by its political context. Consequently, distinct “flag families” have emerged whereby flags of similar visual construction emerge in temporal and spatial clusters (Elgenius, 2011). While these trends are only partial, and flag design remains varied, understanding these trends is useful in understanding how contemporary political activity shapes vexillography. Further,

2 “Defaced” is an official vexillological term describing the placement of one element on top of another, usually more traditional background, not a pejorative.
exploration enables us to understand the Lord Howe Island Flag and examine the significance of its visual construction.

Within the European context of flag usage, they first emerged as battlefield devices to distinguish competing troops. Often commanders would use a cross-based design to demonstrate God's support. Later, these banners became the flags of some nation-states, such as Switzerland and Denmark. Saint crosses emerged at this time and henceforth influenced flag design.

The protestant William of Orange and his Prinsenvlag played a crucial role in the development of European vexillography. His distinctive horizontal tricolour (see Figure 3-4) has served as the basis of many contemporary flags, including Russia. It was at this time that flag standardisation began. The Prinsenvlag dramatically simplified contemporary vexillography from pictorial depictions of a monarch (cf. Flag of France, 3-5) into symbolic importance.

The French Revolution inspired a shift in flag design from horizontal flag designs to vertical tricolours, continuing the divorce from representations of the disappearing absolute monarchs. As (unrepresentative) parliaments became the key loci of power replacing a divinely-anointed man, personal heraldry was replaced with true vexillology.

The process of decolonisation that began in earnest in the 1960s inspired a new vexillogographical movement, including the first use of diagonal stripes in flags. The popularity of Marcus
Garvey’s pan-Africanism was reflected in decolonising countries’ flags by their visual similarity; a similar process was evident in new Arab countries. Simultaneously, the spread of Soviet-inspired “communisms” saw the spread of Soviet-inspired flags, such as the flag of PRC China, although this trend has recently fallen out of favour.

Contemporary vexillography is inspired by the use of chevron flags, such as that of South Sudan (see Figure 3-6). However, this trend is not preponderant, and many states have adopted flags with no reference to contemporary flags’ design. Other trends in vexillography include the retention of British naval ensign-based designs as in Australia, and the imitation and adaption of the United States’ national flag, for example in Chile (1817) and Malaysia (1963). Nevertheless, flags may appear to reflect the design sensibilities of a particular era.

A flag’s construction may represent a flag’s heritage, or it may represent the future glory and hope of its respective referent objects. For example, Malawi’s flag (see Figure 3-7), with a rising sun, represents the desire for wealth and development. A recent controversy emerged when the previous Malawian government modified the flag so the sun was foregrounded and fully radiant. The government argued Malawi had now emerged, and the flag must adapt to reflect the altered political situation. However, the new government has reverted to the previous flag after a public outcry.

The Lord Howe Island Flag is part of a neo-heritage school of flag design. It is a new flag using a visual construction similar to that of pre-William flags. The construction indicates the function of the flag is linked to the island’s history, heritage and shared understandings of the past, in comparison to future-looking flags. The flag’s design is reminiscent of both the Colonial flag of
India and the Red Ulster flag of Northern Ireland (see Figure 3-8). Both flags use the governing power’s flag, the British and the English respectively, defaced by a local device. In this regard the Lord Howe Island Flag affirms a particular subjectivity and island historiography; the colonial connection to Britain and its representative Admiral Howe.

As a modern invention, the Lord Howe Island Flag’s visual construction utilises preconceived symbols of the island. As such, it risks symbolic overload, similar to the Norwegian Civil Ensign, as Grimnes (2007) describes: “So how does one create a completely new symbol, in this case the Norwegian civil ensign…? Well, you stuff into it as much existing symbolically serial and as many honourable references as you possibly can, in order to charge the new civil emotionally and to confer on a maximum authority from the very start” (p. 147). Grimnes notes the purpose of this “overstuffing” – to confer automatic legitimation of a flag, for flags and other symbolic and discursive devices play a civic role in uniting communities only when these symbols achieve a critical mass of attributed legitimacy.

Islander Knowledge of, and Acceptance of, the Lord Howe Island Flag

The Lord Howe Island Flag has flown on the island for 13 years. During this time, Islanders have become familiar with it flying from a variety of locations. Islanders not only recognise the flag but also understand that it represents Lord Howe
(see Figure 3-9). It is more surprising that after 13 years, 11% of the respondents still do not recognise the flag. Interviewee 08 was surprised to learn of it, asking, “How long has that been there?!” In the case of national flags, governments and supportive non-government organisations, such as the Australian National Flag Association, play important roles in promoting the flag and appropriate flag etiquette in their roles as guardians of the symbolic representation of the nation that includes other symbols such as the national coat of arms and national anthem. However, the Lord Howe Island Flag is not an official, government-endorsed flag, and the process of island identification and knowledge of the flag is, in contrast to the national flag’s public support, developed not from state-sponsored, top-down education programs but by the everyday interaction with the flag in its setting on the island and promotion by private individuals.

Islanders generally agree the Lord Howe Island Flag represents the island well, with a majority of respondents (54:20) stating it represents LHI “well” or “very well” (see Figure 3-10). For example, Survey Respondent 27 stated: “It represents my heritage and shows respect towards our ancestors.” A number of respondents did, however, suggest areas where the flag could be improved, such as Interviewee 06: “I don’t think it does justice as a LHI flag. As far as colour is concerned I would expect something that is more vibrant.” The flag did not appeal to other residents; the older Survey Respondent 11 drew different historical associations: “This flag reminds me of the Japanese rising sun in blue.” Another, Survey Respondent 10, said: “It is ugly and does not represent the island adequately.” Some Islanders, such as the survey respondent above, suggested flag redesign, although these cases were related to the origin myth of the flag rather than its current visual construction – an issue discussed in the following chapter. Even though some Islanders were not supportive of the contemporary unofficial Lord
Howe Island Flag, they were generally supportive of LHI being represented by a flag. Interviewee 07 thought:

*I suppose we do need a flag, because it identifies us. Like New South Wales has a flag, Sydney has a flag, Brisbane has, Queensland has the flag. So, yes I think that Lord Howe, to identify it, needs a flag.*

Additionally, Interviewee 03 mentioned:

*If there is any printed material going out or there’s a group of island people representing the island somewhere, it’s good to have something that is the official icon of the island.*

Flags are able to obtain their popularity amongst diverse populations thanks to their ability to be “symbolic containers” which adherents place multiple, potentially conflicting meanings into. This is known as a flag’s “multivocality” (Cohen, 2001, p. 37). For example, the Australian Eureka flag can contain meanings attributed to both left-wing unionism and right-wing racial supremacy – both linked to “hot” nationalist tendencies. As elsewhere, on LHI, “multivocality” has allowed Islanders with diverse interests to share in the symbolic imagery of the flag. For example, survey respondents thought the flag represented the island well for various reasons, including historic reasons, as Survey Respondent 25 who said it is “Well designed by vexillographer John Vaughn with contemporary and historic information cleverly integrated”, in addition to pictorial reasons such as Survey Respondent 16: “The images are recognisable as part of the Island”, or a combination of the two as in Survey Respondent 8’s view: “It represents the main aspects of LHI and has historical significance.”

It also indicates meanings are created through a process of learning, taught and given meaning through the discourse that is attributed to it (Kolsto, 2006, p. 676). The material of the flag does not contain intrinsic meaning, though the design may draw upon existing symbolic imagery. This may be why

![Figure 3-11 Relationship between age and attitude towards the LHI Flag](image-url)

*Figure 3-11 Relationship between age and attitude towards the LHI Flag*
younger respondents were more supportive of the flag. Younger respondents were more likely to support the flag whilst the responses of older respondents (those 40 years and over) were far more varied (see Figure 3-11). Due to their age, younger participants are less likely to have partaken in a lived experience of the flag’s creation and be embroiled in disputes over the flag’s origin myth. It consequently appears legitimisation is of lesser importance to this demographic than for older respondents. The banal exposure to the flag appears to have legitimised it, as Interviewee 09 demonstrates: “I’ve never really thought about it [whether LHI needs a flag], because they have that one that flies. But I guess they want to be their own defined group.” Thus, the Lord Howe Island Flag has become a prominent symbol of the island, although it has remained a contentious issue amongst the island community.

The Role of the Lord Howe Island Flag in the Lord Howe Island Community

The Lord Howe Island Flag plays two important roles on the island: 1) a civic and public role and 2) a commercial and private role. The civic role is the role traditionally associated with flags. The flag’s civic role represents its public role as a symbol and representation of LHI by its use on the island (see following section). Flags symbolise their respective community, state or nation, and the visual construction of a flag’s design contributes to this role.

Legitimation reflects an emotional aspect of flag use. By flying a flag, people are emotionally connected to the place the flag represents, as noted by Interviewee 02: “I think it’s quite reasonable to have a Lord Howe flag. I think flying it at the airport pleases people.” In addition to the civic role played by the flag, it also serves the commercial interests of the island community, in particular those engaged in the tourism sector (the majority of Islanders). As visual markers of place, flags play a role in the promotion of goods, services, and the place it is associated with – a process similar to the use of Dannebrog (the Danish flag) noted by Jenkins (2007). The use of the Lord Howe Island Flag in this way symbolises a “private” and unofficial use of the flag, and meanings attributed to it, distinct from its civic role. As Dannebrog is used as the ubiquitous symbol of congratulations (ibid.), the Lord
Howe Island Flag is used as a symbol of touristic commercialism. Small Lord Howe Island Flags are sold at the airport to tourists, and it is also used in tourist literature as a representation of the island as an attraction to influence tourists’ decisions to holiday on Lord Howe. Despite any controversy surrounding the flag, it is still noted as useful, as by Interviewee 04 reflecting on the flag’s functional role: “I think it’s fortunate to have something we could use at this particular point.” An outspoken proponent of the Lord Howe Island Flag described the desire for official recognition of the flag in reference to both its civic and its commercial role. An imagined official flag designation ceremony would include representatives from both NSW and local government in addition to local businesses.

The Lord Howe Island Flag serves the island’s community as well as the individuals of which it is composed. Whilst neither aspect of its use (civic and commercial) is inherently more legitimate or valuable than the other, non-civic flag use can only be beneficial as the result of previously established legitimacy and meanings attributed to the flag in its civic role, for otherwise the non-civic use would be somewhat empty.

**Observational Study – The Potentiality of Banal Nationalism on an Island**

The Lord Howe Island Flag is flown from a variety of locations on the island, ranging from private leases and quasi-public institutions (such as the airport) and sites to flags displayed on public land.

Flags act as markers of news and events on the island, for as Bratta notes, “flags are more than just a symbol for patriotism or a weapon for nationalism. The flag is a powerful cultural artefact that is commonly used for communication” (2009, p. 44). Upon the death of two Islanders on the 6th July 2012, flagpoles around the Island were lowered to half-mast. Previously, Islanders announcing new births used a “flag” at Signal Point to communicate their news: a pink nappy for a girl, blue for a boy (Nichols, 2006). In addition to being useful as a communicative tool for socialisation, flags were used functionally by Islanders during Lord Howe Island’s whaling period to guide ships, indicating whether they should moor in the lagoon or on the eastern side. In addition, a flagpole in Lord Howe Island’s “CBD” outside the community hall was adorned with the Lord
Howe Island Flag. These additional civic and communicative roles of the flag nevertheless form part of the “private” conception and attribution of meaning on the flags by the Islanders, in contrast to “public” meanings (Madriaga, 2007, p. 58).

Recent advances in communication, such as the telephone and the Internet, though reaching LHI much later than on the mainland, have decreased the need for these functional aspects of flag use. Nevertheless, Islanders have maintained the ritual of flag lowering for deaths, transforming it from a utilitarian act of communication to a social act of remembrance for the deceased. A Lord Howe Island Flag flying at half-mast for an Islander is a powerful method of encoding Islanders’ identity onto the flag. As “symbolic containers” (Eriksen, 2007) of meaning, the ritualisation of flag use by Islanders in events such as deaths helps to reaffirm a sense of community and place, signifying the social boundaries of the Islander community (ibid.) – that is, those who engage in this flag ritual are those who compose the island community. It is part of the “symbolic construction of community” that binds Islanders to place and community (Cohen, 1985).
This is reinforced by the slightly amateurish manner in which this is undertaken. The flag flies at literally half-mast as opposed to correct flag etiquette of \( \frac{3}{4} \) high\(^3\).

Although publically visible, the communication that is obvious and evident to residents may not be immediately obvious to tourists and other visitors who are on the island, which thereby acts to reinforce in-group solidarity – Putnam’s “bonding” social capital (1993) – and implicitly exclude out-groups (that is, visitors) through semi-coded communication. The display of the flag, especially in these circumstances, allows the Islander community to remember its “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991, p. 5), although in the Lord Howe Island context, not many Islanders are Anderson’s strangers. These symbolic rituals of island life help to bestow legitimacy on the flag as a true representative of the island. Ritual acts of flag worship – that is, the public use of the Lord Howe Island Flag on the island – bestows legitimation on the flag as by its use the flag becomes a taken-for-granted feature of island life.

Non-Islander viewing is important for legitimisation of the Lord Howe Island Flag. Public fora where the flag is on open display are especially important, such as at the 2012 Australia’s Small Islands Forum where the Lord Howe Island Flag was flown at prominent positions (see Figure 3-12) as a representative symbol of the island. Non-Islanders who visit the island view the flag and identify it as the Lord Howe Island Flag, whether or not the island community has previously legitimised it – a process that further bestows legitimation on it while increasing its prominence.

\[^3\] The empty space on top of the flagpole is symbolic negative space representing the deceased.
Further, flags on Lord Howe, as semiotic devices, act as visual markers of place, although this role is not limited to flags. Due to the compact geography of LHI, the topography, ecology and even geology of the island act to situate Islanders within a unique geography and set of expectations, attitudes and cultural practices. In particular, these include the lagoon, the settlement area and Mts Lidgbird and Gower (see Figure 3-13), which locate Islanders within a specific geographic and social context.

The immense respect for the local environment on Lord Howe by the Islander community engenders a special relationship with place that may or may not be representative of a more general attitude (see Farrier, 2011). For example, although the island has a world-leading waste, compost and recycling management system, waste ultimately moves onto the mainland. Actual levels of waste generation are of lesser importance than relocating waste off-island in an effort to maintain the island’s pristine ecological system and its World Heritage listing; island residents consider this situation banally appropriate. The island geography dominates the everyday actions of Islanders and shapes habits and attitudes. It acts to remind Islanders that they are not only relatively isolated from the mainland but are physically bound together and are separate from mainlanders both physically and in the everyday experience of being “Australian”.

The Lord Howe Island Flag, flown from prominent positions on the island, acts to remind Islanders and visitors of this physical and social separation. However, Australian flags flown (from sometimes the same positions) act to shorten the social gap between the island and the mainland. Interviewees spoke familiarly about the Australian National Flag, and the NSW state flag, such as Interviewee 03: “I think it represents Australia well. The historical background with the English connection plus the Southern Cross stars. It seems to fit.” Both flags engage Islanders in acts of remembrance of nation and community, both a “multifaceted concept sheltering, like an umbrella, differences and a sense of similarity simultaneously” (Madriaga, 2007, p. 53).
Flags as Markers of Identity

Flags are important as symbolic markers of identity, used in local settings to reinforce in-group identification and in foreign settings to mark distinctiveness and self-adopted “Otherness”. As Jenkins notes, “collective identification is constituted *inter alia* in and through symbols such as flags. This symbolism is ‘social imaginary’ (Taylor, 2004) and all communities collectivities – not just nations – are in important senses imagined or socially constructed” (2007, p. 116).

Flags are important devices used to represent a collectivity when its referent objects are external to its territory. These symbols help to situate its adherents to the collectivity it is representative of, whether or not they are physically located within it. For example, African and Caribbean flags are often seen in the windows of council blocks in London representing the identity of those living inside. Or, when the Union Flag flies from government buildings in Northern Ireland it signals a government’s control of that civic space (Bryan, 2007). The same process is evident in LHI, although with significant contextual differences from the Northern Ireland conflict. Flags are used in local areas to highlight an assertion of identity (assertion of control will be discussed in the following chapter). Interviewee 03 states why it is important to have a flag: “It seems like every country, community, state does have its flag as identity, so that when it travels it can have a symbol of who it is.” Additionally, survey respondents give additional reasons for the provision of a Lord Howe Island Flag: “I believe we need a flag that is official, and therefore provides a flag we can call our own” (SR 30), “Because we deserve our own flag” (SR 31), and “[The flag] gives us our own official identity” (SR 32).

In addition, flags create a subjective history linked to a particular group, person or event that becomes the legitimised narrative of a collectivity. As Leib and Webster explain, “the fights over who has the power to define the meaning of the flag are about what (and who) is legitimate in society” (2007, p. 40). This holds true both in constructing a past, understanding contemporary events, and, as a result, in determining the shape of the future. Thus, just as written histories are the dominant discourse of a victorious viewpoint, flags too represent a dominant historiography. Multiple meanings may be associated with it, yet only one may become the “official” civic meaning.
This may explain the power of flags to divide and unite communities, as Interviewee 01 noted: “Flags can be binding, but they can be very shattering.” Flags become powerful only due to the social construction of meanings associated with them. Through discourse, people can create and shape attitudes towards it without reference to its pre-existing design despite the physical materiality of a flag in contrast to, for example, a national anthem. These meanings are often associated with a specific spatial context, a “place” with referent objects adhering to it, or contrastingly, contesting its legitimacy.

**Altering a Non-Sacred Symbol**

The Lord Howe Island Flag marks the boundary between the sacred and the profane. It is a non-sacred sacred object. Although once established, flags – the sacred symbols of civic religion – are remarkably difficult to adapt, modify or to commit wholesale change (see Champion, 2006). The Lord Howe Island Flag is viewed by multiple Islanders as malleable and modifiable. Multiple survey respondents and interviewees suggested changes to the flag, such as Interviewee 06 who suggested:

> I would have it brighter with reds and other brighter shades in other colours as well so that it’s appealing to the eye. You know people would look at it and say ‘yes that’s like it is’.

Others, such as Interviewee 01, suggested a more wholesale change such as radical colour alterations, or the readoption of the previous flag:

> I’m almost of a mind that the one at the school, that was designed by one of the kids… [it] has some of the features and things that I think would be very good.

The Islanders’ apparent open attitude towards modification of the flag is in contrast to a tendency to prefer the maintenance of the status quo in flag design, an attitude that may be the result of the flag’s youth but is more likely a reflection of a desire for a greater reflection of individuals’ interests to be represented in the flag’s visual construction. Survey Respondent 03, in describing how they would modify the flag’s current design, said their changes would mean “we would ‘own’ the flag”,

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indicating that at least some Islanders feel they only partially own the flag as it was not locally designed.

In spite of a proclivity to alter or modify the Lord Howe Island Flag, Islanders in interviews appeared unlikely to support alterations to the Australian National Flag. Islanders, as the sole residents of the area the flag represents, feel able to modify the Lord Howe Island Flag and that it is a legitimate activity. In contrast, Islanders compose only a small percentage of the Australian nation and thus feel unable to speak on behalf of it. This is shown in the use of the third person plural, rather than the first person singular or plural, such as Interviewee 09 who said: “I don’t know if they would [change the flag].” Thus, Islanders acknowledge their input is deemed inadequate to alter the national flag. The very system that binds together strangers in imagined communities also means individuals’ behaviour is constrained as other voices compete for precedence.

Some Islanders, however, conceded the national flag would change once Australia became a republic. For example, Interviewee 03 mentioned: “I wouldn’t [change the Australian flag], but I could see perhaps 10–20 years down the track if Australia becomes a republic it could change.” These changes would occur as the result of external pressure from the mainland rather than the desire of the Islanders. Only Interviewee 01 mentioned they would redesign the existing flag:

I’m not in favour of the Australian flag. I think it needs the Union Jack [sic] taken out of it. And I do believe I’d prefer to have the Aboriginal flag to be honest. To me the Union Jack is no more.

Ownership of symbols relates to a preponderance to alter them. Islanders feel their views are more legitimate because as the flag’s direct referent objects, they have a right in determining the flag’s design. The small population of LHI contributes to this, however, the greater population of Australia means that Islanders are in a less direct relationship with the national flag and consequently “own” it less than the LHI one. Thus, Islanders feel their views are of lesser standing on the Australian National Flag than the flag representing their own island.
**Conclusion**

This chapter has argued the importance of flags in the operation of communities. Flags are symbolic devices that are both paradoxically binding and shattering. Flags promote unity in their ability to draw together a diverse range of interests, each with their own interpretation of the flag’s meaning. Conversely, they can divide communities through their given meaning and their origin myth (discussed in the following chapter).

Icons and symbolic devices such as flags are socially constructed devices, given prominence and significance through social interactions with it, and about it, amongst communities. Proper consideration of Islanders’ discourse allows insights into the process by which this takes place, and thus gains an understanding in how “national” symbols are conceived and affect communities. Although the context is significantly different to LHI, Jarman’s findings remain pertinent to it: “Flags are one element of the material culture through which... collective identities are asserted, defined and renewed, through which territorial claims are enforced and social and spatial boundaries are marked out” (2007, p. 90).

The next chapter will examine the relationship between the Lord Howe Island Flag and other Lord Howe symbolic imagery, giving particular attention to the controversies and issues that may impede a symbolic device’s adoption and legitimisation.
IDENTITY AND THE FLAG
Introduction

The previous chapter examined the role of the Lord Howe Island Flag in contributing to shared notions of a Lord Howe Island identity and the operation of it on LHI. I examined how the Lord Howe Island Flag acts as both a unifying and divisive symbol on the island.

The Lord Howe Island Flag and identity are not discrete entities operating independently of one another. Instead, they influence one another and seek to reflect one another in the meanings attributed to them. This chapter will examine how the Lord Howe Island Flag and the debate around it contributes to the Lord Howe Island identity and how it affects conceptions of modern nation-states. I have argued that through social interactions, meanings are transcoded onto flags and a cultural mythology becomes attributed to them. Flags become an accepted part of symbolic representation of place (despite continued contestations) and become “one element of the material culture through which… competing collective identities are asserted, defined and renewed, through which territorial claims are enforced and social and spatial boundaries are marked out” (Jarman, 2007, p. 90). Flags are not the sole community symbols; however, in particular, the spatial context of the island contributes to the Lord Howe Island identity, in some regards more than flags.

Non-Flag Community Symbols

In addition to the man-made symbolic images of LHI, its natural features contribute to Islanders’ identity in significant ways. In particular, the local topographical features and other elements of the natural environment contribute to understandings of space and social relations in addition to the community’s relationship with the land.
The mountains Gower (875m) and Lidgbird (777m) are the most significant natural features on the island. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these mountains have affected the local lexicon by subverting orthodox North/South labels. Their importance to Islanders is demonstrated in their response to survey Question 1 (see Figure 4-1). A significant proportion of the respondents described the mountains as the item that best symbolises the island to them. Survey Respondent 29 mentioned: “I believe these mountains are the most important symbol of the Island.”

Other important geographical features on the island include the lagoon and the Kentia Palm (see Figure 4-2). To older Islanders, the lagoon is significant not only for its natural beauty but also because between 1947 and 1974, flying boats landed in the lagoon and thus it symbolised a connection to the non-Islander communities. Similarly, the Kentia Palm symbolises not only endemic Lord Howe Island flora but also recalls the Kentia Palm Co-Operative (see Chapter 2) and a markedly different, non-capitalist socioeconomic structure. It is necessary to understand how these non-flag symbols operate, for “how the past and its symbols are interpreted, commemorated and represented is as much about shaping how society understands its present and future as it is about the past” (Leib & Webster, 2007, p. 40). Additionally, these symbols are represented on the Lord Howe Island Flag’s central circular device, indicating a strong relationship between landscape and iconography. Discussing whether the Lord Howe Island Flag represents the island well, survey respondents noted that it “pictures important aspect[s] of the island with link[s] to [the] Lord Howe heritage”. Also, the “colours and symbols strongly represent at least the physical attributes of the island, which Islanders identify with emotionally”.

Figure 4-2 Kentia Palm © Edwin Crump 2012

Figure 4-1 Q1 Environmental Sub-Coding
Even respondents who were not generally in favour of the flag recognised it was important to have the pre-established symbols of LHI: “[It is] dull – got the symbols but not [a] good interpretation of LHI.” The above quotes further indicate the effect and importance of place and context for understanding identity and consequently Islanders’ attitudes towards the flag. Symbols should be considered alongside landscape as:

…along with studying the meaning of iconographic symbols, the landscapes in which these symbols are situated are themselves embedded with meaning. Thus, we can learn about society not only through the study of symbols themselves such as flags, but also by examining when, where, how and by whom such symbols are placed on the landscape. (Leib & Webster, 2007, p. 45)

The relationship between flags and their local environment is perhaps unsurprising, as many flags’ colours are symbolically linked to it (see Weitman, 1973). However, the Lord Howe Island Flag’s visual construction moves beyond simply representing the local environment by its colours, and includes natural features themselves as a prominent aspect of its design. Further, the specific design is highly important to Islanders, as this discussion with the interviewer about the design of the mountains on the flag demonstrates:

Interviewer
*So it [the mountains] really do have to be specific?*

Interviewee 07
*Yes.*

Interviewer
*So that people know.*

Interviewee 07
*Yes, so that people know that you are on Lord Howe.*

The Lord Howe Island Flag is not the only symbol of the island. It competes with other symbols, specifically those of the island’s natural environment. However, the competition may be overstated, as the flag itself utilises these other pre-existing symbols, thus creating a system of mutual
reinforcement for both. However, in spite of the flag’s utilisation of these symbols, its origin myth also affects the flag’s symbolic legitimacy.

**The Importance of Origin Myths in Symbolic Legitimacy**

The Danish Army, led by Valdemar II, had invaded what is now Estonia but was losing badly. A priest, his arms raised to heaven, sought God’s blessing for the battle. God responded by sending Dannebrog, the flag symbolically and physically falling from heaven. Inspired by the white cross, the troops rallied and won a great victory (see Figure 4-3; Denmark.dk, 2012). Danes claim to have the oldest flag in continual use, and Dannebrog’s origin myth continues to play an important role in Danish identification with it, and attitude towards it, despite any veracity of the original story (ibid.). On LHI too, the origin myth of the flag plays an important role in Islanders’ conception of it and of its legitimation as a representative symbolic device. In short, the origin myth of the Lord Howe Island Flag has clouded the instrumental and emotional functions of the flag, and accordingly, Islanders’ adherence. It has retarded the process of transcoding the Lord Howe Island identity onto the flag – a process necessary for every flag as argued in the previous chapter. Instead of a positive narrative to reinforce the flag’s position, the myth has tended to undermine it. Interviewee 06 summarises: “It’s probably coloured by its birth I suppose.” As in other origin myths, the veracity of the origin myth is contestable. Interviewee 01 presents the Lord Howe Island Flag origin myth:

*I think originally he had it created because he had a little cafe-restaurant down the road called Blue Peters.*

*And he used to have a flagpole and I think he used to have a Blue Peters’ flag of the sort. And I think that’s*
where this Lord Howe Island flag, for want of a better name, that's where its roots were. I think originally, but he got it obviously totally commissioned through a what’s the word for a flag-person?

Interviewer

Vexillographer.

Interviewee 01

Oh, vexi...[laughs]. I can never remember that one, yeah. So be bad it drawn up, yeah, and according to his, I’d say, plans and I guess be sort of, and he’s justified it because it’s got all the written stuff that goes with it.

Other interviewees were comparatively less cognisant about the flag’s origins. Interviewee 07 mentioned: “I’ve asked several times, and all I was told was: ‘it was somebody on the mainland.’” Interviewee 01 attributed the Lord Howe Island Flag to a certain New Islander, and gave agency to his intentions. However, Interviewee 04 explains:

He always thought the island should always have its own flag, And he had a friend called John Vaughn who was qualified and skilled to design flags and he asked John to develop a flag design, which he did.

Similar to comparable flag origin myths, there are certain elements of truth. Just as there was a battle in Estonia at which Dannebrog first appeared, John Vaughn, a mainlander, designed the Lord Howe Island Flag; however, the agency attribution has been misplaced to the proponent of the flag rather than its initial creator. Origin myths are important as they affect the manner in which the flag’s referent objects relate to it. The origin myth of a flag may affect whether or not the flag receives support and adherence and becomes a legitimate representative community symbol. Interviewee 04 noted this conditional support: “I’m very supportive of the flag, but then I know about its origin genesis.” So did Interviewee 09: “If it had been designed by a local it probably would be embraced more greatly.” Knowledge of the myth deterred Interviewee 01. Their deterrence was confirmed despite the attraction of the visual construction of the flag. The purported facts of the myth made them feel emotionally disconnected, and even hostile, to the flag:

Well, it’s obviously been well designed professionally. And the colours and everything are supposed to have some relevance; the blue the yellow, the white of the island, whatever, but for me it doesn’t represent the island because
It's something that has been designed by somebody who is totally removed from all of the important things that the island has.

This may be a reflection of the attitudes of certain parts of the island community to outsiders. Interviewee 09 mentioned: “I think that, particularly now on Lord Howe, the outsiders are a massive threat, massive threat.”

The social construction of meaning attributed to the flag by the origin myth and its propagation is one factor of its multivocality. The “knowledge” surrounding the flag, created through social interaction, both affects adherence to the flag and decreases its legitimacy amongst certain members of the island community. The visual construction of the flag, despite its material tangibility and even despite appropriate symbolism and representation, is of lesser importance than the meanings Islanders attribute to it. It also indicates the importance of internal development for establishing the legitimacy of community symbols. Even those interviewees who did not mind that the LHI was designed off-island nevertheless preferred it to be internally developed. Thus, symbols created by the collectivity the flag seeks to represent appear to contain increased legitimacy compared to symbols created externally, as they are viewed as more representative.

Flags are able to fulfil their civic, public role when they are “capable of making them [citizens] feel similar before the flag” (original emphasis, Eriksen, 2007, p. 10). When a flag is a metaphorically empty vessel, citizens can bring various meanings and attribute them to the flag, even if these meanings conflict. Conversely, when the vessel is already full or coloured by pre-existing issues, such as an origin myth, this may serve to divide communities, not unite them. The Lord Howe Island Flag also faces a challenge in developing a legitimate origin myth in the Enlightenment/Post-Enlightenment era. Citizens are unlikely to attribute origin myths to supernatural factors such as divine providence.

Flags compel citizens of the respective community to remember their imagined community, those fellow countrymen-strangers (perhaps) unseen who constitute those they imagine they are similar to. In the case of LHI, this attribution may also result from the flag’s youth. Although
divergent narratives have already developed, Islanders can still remember the flag’s origin, and, accordingly, it is more difficult to mythologise. As Kolstø explains: “In new, insecure nations the flags and other national symbols often fail to fulfil their most important function as promoters of national unity… they often bring to the fore strong divisions within the putative nation” (2006, p. 679). Interviewee 09, who has grown up with the Lord Howe Island Flag for the majority of their life, did not mention the origin myth and was more concerned with the visual construction and symbolic representation of the flag: “It looks like Lord Howe Island. I think it’s a fine flag.”

**Display and Control in Civic Space**

Flags have emotional impacts on those they claim to represent, either negatively in rejection of a flag or positively in adherence to and admiration of them. These emotions are intensified when the flag is displayed in a public setting. When a flag is publically displayed and seeks public legitimation, the emotional intensity of issues surrounding the flag increases manifold compared to the design of a flag representing a particular place.

The public display of flags represents the control over territory and space by the nation-state that it represents. Upon European discovery of the Australian mainland, in a ritual repeated in various locations by imperial powers, a flag would be raised and left in that space to represent the claim of the reigning head of state to it; a ritual repeated even on the moon by the United States. In times of warfare, flags are used for the same purpose, though they may not represent permanent occupation. This is one of the
most ancient uses of flags. For example, the famous photograph of the raising of the USA flag on Iwo Jima (see Figure 4-4) symbolises the victory of the allied forces in defeating the Japanese and claiming the island for United States’ control. Similarly, the display of competing flags in Northern Ireland, especially in the marching season, by both the government and private citizens and their organisations, “must be seen therefore within a broader context of the historical control of public space – political, physical and symbolic” (Bryan, 2007, p. 103). Carville (2001) also explores how flags represent contested spaces where competing national discourses become embodied in competing flags.

One of the first acts of the initial Chief Magistrate of LHI, Captain Richard Armstrong, was to raise a Union Flag on the island to symbolise the introduction of comme il faut colonial governance, as his autobiography describes:

The following day after landing I called the inhabitants together and read my Commission to them as being appointed as Chief Magistrate, also explained the reasons for the steps taken by the New South Wales Government in appointing me, at which they all seemed well pleased. I then proceeded to erect a flag staff, hoisted the Union jack [sic] which received three hearty cheers, and so in my Official position I proclaimed the island a British Settlement which was again received by three cheers – and three more as a wind up for the Magistrate. (Armstrong, 2008, p. 302)

Although there is little intra-island flag competition on Lord Howe, the contest over flags continues, for as described above, the flag is illegitimate and unrepresentative for certain segments of the island population. Thus, the display of the Lord Howe Island Flag on the island threatens those who do not identify with that, as it challenges their legitimacy and legacy on LHI. Consequently, it represents an unwelcome takeover of control of civic (public) space by an immigrant non-Islander and their (commercial) interests.
As a symbol of distinctiveness, the Lord Howe Island Flag also challenges the mainland government, even though the Islanders and flag supporters do not. In order for a nation-state to maintain the ability to exert power, a factor in this is the maintenance of a homogenous population combined with central control. Regionalism, symbolised through flag use, threatens this control, in addition to central government’s conception and idealisation of the nation, as demonstrated by the use of the Scanian flag (Löfgren, 2007; see Figure 4-5). The use of the flag of Skåne in the 1960s and ‘70s was seen as a challenge to the central government; an assertion of distinctiveness and regionalism linked to the area’s unique history (ibid.). Flags represent the reterritorialisation of local social space as a consequence of the economic deterritorialisation evident in globalisation. Although the Lord Howe Island Flag does not represent vivid separatism as in the display of the Scanian or Scottish flag, its existence and prominent use on the island threatens the homogeneity (as it exists) of the overarching Australian nation as flags represent not only territorial units but the political systems that compose it (Bornman, 2005). Thus, a government may transcode a separatist vocality onto the flag where none exists amongst the Islanders themselves. As emotional objects, flags affect both insiders and outsiders, with respectively differing reactions.

**A Flag for Others**

As previously mentioned, flags serve a dual purpose – that of in-group solidarity and unification as well as markers of difference and out-group identification. A flag’s audience, therefore, is not only its referent objects, but also everybody else. Flags are for us, and for Others. Flags bifurcate communities into “us” and “them”, “we” and “Others”, creating an insider–outsider relationship between those the flag represents and those outside its remit.
A conception of an “Other” is necessary for flags to fulfil their core purpose, for there can be no referent objects to represent if there are no differences between communities. Flags’ role in serving as an outward-facing symbol can have both public and private meanings. On Lord Howe, the flag acts as an outward symbol for the benefit of tourists and the tourist trade. The flag seeks to represent not only the people of Lord Howe but also the natural beauty of the island symbolically and materially in the flag’s visual construction. As a result, the flag becomes a cultural icon for the island, and I expect, as the flag becomes a more integral aspect of the island identity in the following years, the touristic merchandise and literature to incorporate the flag directly or include elements of the flag’s design such as the asymmetrical crosses or the yellow emblazon, much as the Union Flag is used (Groom, 2007, p. 47).

“Others” are also important because they too help to define what it is to be a Lord Howe Islander. The social construction of an identity is based in part on the reactionary consequence of Others’ conception of place and people. For example, when:

…in an attempt to achieve greater national recognition, the Welsh petitioned the government in 1897, 1901, 1910, 1935 and 1945 to request that the Welsh Dragon be included in the Royal Arms each time they were refused because, in the words of the College of Arms, Wales had never been a kingdom: “There is no such thing as a Welsh national flag”. (ibid., p. 80)

This is an “Other’s” (English) conception of homeland – one devoid of a competing nationality and voice, and thus the suppression of language and nationhood. The Other sought to declare to the Welsh that “Wales” does not exist, however, perhaps ironically they have to speak to the Welsh as a Welsh nation for this to occur and thus implicitly legitimise a “Welsh” nationality and voice.

The Lord Howe Island Flag may act therefore, despite contentions about it amongst Islanders, to discursively create a community. A description of Islanders and the island community as a homogenous entity may in fact help to create that entity, at least for non-Islanders; in contrast to Islanders who view themselves as a heterogeneous population. Interviewee 03 explains: “It is a very individualist community here. People tend to identify with their family, with themselves rather than the broad
“LHI community in some ways.” Flags therefore have the power to act upon Others to shape their conceptions of the people and place associated with a flag despite the “veracity” of that conception. However, these conceptions can also be encoded in people’s identification with a flag. In addition, these two interact so that conceptions of people encoded in flags, upon viewing of flags, is remembered. For example, Interviewee 02 comments:

*After seeing how many Americans put the American flag in their yard I inquired didn’t they know where they lived? It was one of the things that put me off… this really killer sort of flaunting of patriotic sentiment… a state of aggression with other countries on earth.*

In addition to flags’ formal role as markers of distinctiveness of communities, flags are used to represent uninhabited areas.

**Flags for Nowhere Men**

The Lord Howe Island Flag was originally designed to represent not only the inhabited LHI but also for the larger Lord Howe Island Group that includes the small islets off LHI in addition to Ball’s Pyramid and two adjacent islets. As such, the Lord Howe Island Flag claims to represent uninhabited (including uninhabitable) land.

Where it has been important for states to consolidate, their power flags have been used to claim uninhabited land. For example, a Russian submersible recently planted a flag on the North Pole’s seabed, representing Russia’s interest and claim to the region and its potentially vast natural reserves (Chivers, 2007). However, the Lord Howe Island Flag does not represent a sovereign political entity and thus cannot engage in the same symbolic process of claiming land for commercial exploitation. The above problem raises the issue of whether an unofficial flag can have a sufficient level of utility and deterrence, or is restricted to intra-Islander significance. This problem is further exacerbated, for the line between demarcations of official or unofficial is often blurry as groups claim their flag as an official symbol of their group. For example, the Basque flag was created in 1894 and, thanks to its promotion by the Basque Nationalist Party, is now the official flag of the
Basque country and also the unofficial flag of the Greater Basque Lands. Similarly, the Welsh flag claims to represent standards stretching back to Henry Tudor, yet the contemporary Welsh flag is a recent invention (Groom, 2007, p. 80). The process by which flags move from unofficial status to official status, especially considering officialised unofficial flags – that is, flags agreed upon to represent unofficial entities – is not well understood.

In comments on the Lord Howe Island Flag, neither survey respondents nor interviewees mentioned the additional areas to the main island the flag claims to represent. These areas appeared to be outside the established areas of representation, especially considering the struggle for legitimisation of the flag on the main island. Further, the Lord Howe Island Flag represents not only place but also people and thus has utility. The use of the flag to represent only place, especially place not represented in the design of the flag such as Ball’s Pyramid (see Figure 4-6), does not appear to have been successful. Disconnection from these places, both physical and emotional, decreases the utility of the flag and subsequently its ability to be a legitimate representative of these spaces.

**Implications for Conceptions of State in the 21st Century**

The Western, Westphalian nation-state has been the *de facto* basis of recent vexillographical studies (see Bratta, 2009; Webster, 2011). This thesis has utilised a significant proportion of the non-statist papers available, apart from psychological studies (e.g. Ehrlinger et al., 2011). Studies of national flags have been prevalent following the existing structure of the international system. However, orthodox conceptions of the state have been challenged by contemporary forms of globalisation and
a greater understanding of the ways in which societies are composed and interrelate (Keohane & Nye, 2000). It is therefore important to undertake research that takes into account these changes.

For example, in recent decades, and particularly since the establishment of neoliberal economic policies, private actors have become important in traditionally state-attributed iconographic creation and distribution. Penrose (2011) examined how private actors have become important in creating public meanings and subsequently how public institutions in the contemporary world have a decreasingly important role creating and maintaining national iconography – even those used by public institutions, such as Scottish banknotes. Thus, Penrose calls for a “reassessment of the concept of the state” (p. 429). A similar process to the one outlined above has operated on LHI where private actors have created iconography customarily generated by government institutions, in addition to the promotion and legitimation of these – even if they originally arise from the local population, as in the creation of the Australian National Flag in 1901 (ausflag.org.au, 2012).

Despite the introduction of private actors as a potential wellspring of national iconography, flags retain their orthodox functionality. Although private meanings may be attributed to the flag, in addition to competing national narratives, the flag remains the servant of the state with a role in the promotion of a homogenous overarching state nationality – even when the population is composed of a variety of cultures and ethnicities. The lingering importance of the civic aspects of the state indicate the continued presence of the state as a valid and effective polity, both in everyday social relations as well as a unit of study.

Nevertheless, sub-national regional identities are becoming increasingly prominent in citizens’ understandings of themselves and their identity. These identities are strongly linked to place, where processes of structure and agency appear integrated. These two processes, state-centrism and regional-expansion, appear in conflict with one another, yet the very forces of globalisation and communication promote both.
In understanding flags’ interactions with citizens, it may be inappropriate to attribute causal agency to states. In contrast, I have demonstrated citizens’ interactions with flags are founded upon their “vocality” – their understanding of the flag established upon their cultural mythologies transcoded on the flag. Simply viewing a flag flying or hanging is not sufficient to engage in acts of “remembrance” of the respective collectivity. A citizen’s individual vocality will affect how they view the flag, and whether “remembrances” will occur, and in what fashion. They must have preconceived notions of the collectivity and its respective flag, having previously engaged in acts of learning. The purview of flags has only a limited relation to its civic meaning; instead, citizens engage with flags individually. For example, a Scottish man was recently seen embracing the Flag of the Spanish Second Republic at a rally, purporting it was the only flag that had significance and meaning to him, a reflection of one vocality of hope and socialism it carried (Olmedo, A., personal communication, February 9, 2012). States must therefore not take for granted the power and effects of flags as prime national symbols, for citizens only engage with them if their meanings have been socially constructed in accordance with state expectations and orthodox state narratives. It also grants opportunities for non-state institutions and collectivities to engage in similar processes of learning and thus challenge states’ primacy. For example, the Lord Howe Island Flag was, for a number of years, the only flag flown at the primary school. Students therefore may come to expect this flag to be the most appropriate flag for LHI, to the detriment of the Commonwealth and NSW governments.

Globalisation has entailed the promotion of flags, as the title of the seminal vexillographical work states: “through the ages and across the world” (Smith, 1975). Flags are prominent markers of place and people, though their meanings are not objective and intrinsic but constructed through everyday interactions with it by both citizens and governments.

**Conclusion**
This chapter has presented the complex relationship between the Lord Howe Island Flag, island residents and non-Islanders. It has argued flags are powerful semiotic devices that can challenge
existing structures and relationships, even if these are unintended consequences of flag use and creation. Despite challenges from other important island symbols, the Lord Howe Island Flag has become a principal element in the island’s iconography, aided not just by internal island promotion including its display in public arenas, but also by non-Islanders’ viewing.

As private actors increasingly encroach on areas that have traditionally been associated with the state, or even the monarch in the pre-Westphalian system – such as national iconography, combined with an increasingly cosmopolitan outlook amongst those affected by global forces of economic, social and cultural integration – nationalism and national identities have been, paradoxically, both helped and hindered. Flags seem to be throwbacks to a previous era, yet their power has not diminished and may have increased as their reach moves from the local to the global and back again. In an age of supposed deterritorialisation, flags representing a specific people in a specified place seem both out of place and yet intensely fitting. Through global forces that have brought standardised flags and flag use to each country, province and region can promote its own unique identity – or at least somebody’s conception of it.
CONCLUSION
This thesis has explored the concepts of Banal Nationalism and imagined communities within the context of an isolated regional community and demonstrated that even in small communities, flags are important semiotic devices in the interaction with, and development of, identities, including Lord Howe Island. Vexillological research is fundamentally about our self-conceptualisation, our identity and our future. It is thus not surprising that these ontological and metaphysical questions have as much bearing in Arcadia as in Hades. This thesis examined the role and operation of the Lord Howe Island Flag by examining Islanders’ relation to themselves, the island and the flag that seeks to represent them by listening to the Islanders and analysing their concerns.

I firstly demonstrated the significance of “place” for the creation, forgetting and remembrance of a unique Lord Howe Island identity; the civil–political social relations of the Islanders interact with their geographical setting (the spatial context) to shape it. Secondly, I argued the importance of flags in the operation of the civil–political social relations. I established flags are dividing and binding, also exploring how discourse attributes meaning to flags as socially constructed symbolic devices. Finally, I demonstrated the importance and operation of flags’ “multivocality” in a variety of contexts.

**Scholarly Significance**

My findings have built on and contributed to the existing vexillological scholarship; the findings are similar to, and congruent with, the findings of flags in other established Western nation-states (e.g. Kolsto, 2006; Champion, 2006; Bratta, 2009; Webster, 2011). The processes by which citizens interact with flags appear to be universal amongst this group, even though the specific context effects are unique. This thesis confirms both the findings of those who see flags as symbols of national unity and those who see them as divisive symbols (cf. Grimnes, 2007; Reksulak et al., 2007). Thus, it appears flags have complex relationships with populations and do not necessitate a specific antiphon, although a similar processual model of interaction appears to emerge in a variety of contexts.
This paper developed and built upon Billig’s (1995) theory of Banal Nationalism, testing its validity in the expanded context of sub-state nationalism and regionalism, demonstrating that despite differences, elements of the theory remain credible. Flags as banal nationalistic devices act to promote “remembrances” of the “nation” yet confirms flags must first gain legitimacy before they can operate effectively. Given the considerable conflict flags can engender, as in Canada (see Champion, 2006), legitimacy of semiotic devices takes on a central role, for if the device is rejected as unrepresentative and illegitimate they have no coercive power on their referent collectivity. Consequently, this thesis concurs with Skey (2007); greater attention must be paid to the dynamism of national symbols.

Further, this thesis engaged with Anderson’s (1991) Imagined Communities. It tested its viability in a context where almost nobody in the community is a stranger, a theoretical cornerstone. I established that Imagined Communities remained efficacious to understand the social operation of the Lord Howe Island community, indicating that even when interpersonal community relationships are pre-established, the community itself must still be imagined. Flag display and use is one method in which this is undertaken and becomes a part of community life. Nevertheless, future research could refine a model more appropriate for contexts similar to LHI.

**Scholarly and Practical Implications**

Some implications for vexillology and nationalism are observable from this research. Firstly, this research has demonstrated how flags are important regardless of the community’s size – flags operate similarly in diverse collectivities. Contextual research then does not undermine social scientific study, but improves it. Context highlights similarities and differences between communities while maintaining the ability to speak in more general terms. The individual characteristics of each research project in different contexts allow researchers to gain insights into the multifaceted nature of flag use and attitudes towards flags.
Secondly, I have shown the interaction between flags and the communities they seek to represent are complex, even in a small and generally homogenous community such as on LHI, which may indicate that emergent theories in vexillology maintain their validity in a greater range of contexts than previously thought.

Thirdly, I established legitimisation as a crucial element in understanding how flags operate. Legitimisation may be more important in areas with new flags, or places representing one version of a past. Flags can be used to define a past, a heritage that helps citizens to make sense of themselves and the world around them.

Fourthly, this research has explicitly established how elements of national iconography gain their meaning and consequent significance by social interactions through the process of discourse. It indicated flags are not composed of intrinsic meaning but are dynamic objects, able to aid the ministrations of whoever succeeds in attributing a hegemonic discourse; providing hope for those flags beholden to extremist elements such as the Netherlands’ Prinsenvlag, that this may be abjured, yet a warning for those at risk such as the Australian National Flag (Gelber, 2012, p. 165).

Finally, this research has established the place and validity of vexillology in broader theories of nationalism. It has begun to mitigate the incomprehension of the relationship between communities and their flags, and the broader insights research into them can contribute to how national identities are formulated, daily reconstituted and potentially disintegrate. It has indicated Anderson’s (1991) theory of imagined communities is useful and valid, yet potentially limited in its scope and application. I called particular attention to the nature of inter-citizen communication, exploring the consequences of a stranger-less imagined community. Despite the intimacy of a small, isolated community, community still must be imagined. Flags are an important element in this, and the everyday exposure to them assists in this imagining, thus confirming Billig’s (1995) theory in a context previously unexplored.

For practical implications, LHI, like Australia, faces significant demographic changes. Consequently, an increase in newborn Islanders means an increasingly large proportion of the island
do not have knowledge of a time without the contemporary Lord Howe Island Flag as their symbolic representative, which may entail the diminishment of the current controversy. I would then expect the flag to become more accepted and its legitimacy amongst the Islanders to increase. As its legitimacy increases, it would become more important to the Lord Howe Island identity. A major disruption to this process, such as a flag competition, the revocation of the flag by its proponents or another social or legal change, may alter this process.

**Future Research**

This paper has demonstrated the usefulness of social science research of vexillological issues. As Jenkins (2007) notes, “given the ubiquity of flags in the modern world and their multiple uses, there are surprisingly few social science studies of flags” (p. 116); vexillography is an under-represented and under-researched discipline amongst the social sciences and the humanities. As a young field, there is significant potential for future research. For instance, within the Australian context there is the potential for more rigorous comparative research, as Neumann (2007) concludes, “negotiations about flag(s) seem, in this regard, to be an ongoing business, which make for all kinds of interesting comparative usages” (p. 172). Communities in rural areas or other islands, for example, Norfolk Island, would thus be appropriate. Of special interest are these External Territories of Australia with autonomous governance arrangements. Future research could also ensue in international contexts, such as researching the use of various Catalan flags (Spain) or, alternatively, the lack of Welsh representation on the Union Flag or, pending Scotland’s independence vote, the potential removal of the St Andrew’s Cross from the Union Flag.

The research has examined everyday citizens’ creation of meaning for flags, however, future research is needed to understand the process by which official, state-endorsed flag narratives are created, maintained and propagated. Governments play a significant role in flag use, yet their agency has been significantly understudied. Future research in non-Western and non-democratic states
would be fruitful in revealing the similarities and differences between the two. How does culture affect adherence to, attitude towards, and use of flags?

Without the limited temporal scope of an undergraduate honours thesis, I would have been able to extend my research time on LHI and consequently interview more people, obtain a larger survey sample and increase the research’s internal validity. It would have also meant I became more familiar with and among the Islanders, and as a result I might have gained access to additional information that could have benefited the research.

**Conclusion**

In 1788, after discovering the “Jewel of the Pacific” as acclaimed by Hurley’s 1931 film, Lieutenant Ball declared it for the monarch and subsequently plundered its rich bounty of turtles for the new colony’s elites’ pleasure. The Union Flag flies no longer, yet its legacy lives on in the blue and white crossed Lord Howe Island Flag. The flag, its representation of heritage but also promise of the future seems fitting for this island. Although small in population, it is short in neither controversy nor conflict. By understanding the process of engagement – or lack thereof – with the flag on Lord Howe, we can perhaps gain an insight into why coloured fabric can transmute, like lead to gold, into cloth that:

As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses

Now catches the gleam of the morning’s first beam,

In full glory reflected now shines in the stream.

‘Tis the star-spangled banner, O! long may it wave

O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

— *Francis Scott Key*
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Appendices
Appendix A: Lord Howe Island Identity Survey

Questionnaire

Thank you for choosing to take part in this survey. This survey is open to residents of Lord Howe Island. This survey contains 21 questions and should take approximately half an hour to complete. Before you begin please read and have completely understood the Participant Information Statement included in the package this survey arrived with. If you need a replacement survey, please contact Edwin Crump ecru9644@uni.sydney.edu.au for an additional copy. Please only complete ONE survey. Instructions for the return of the survey are at the end of this document.

1. In your opinion, who qualifies as a Lord Howe Islander?
   □ A tourist
   □ A worker (e.g. Hotel employee)
   □ Someone who has lived on the island for a number of years (please specify):
       ______________________
   □ Someone who can trace their ancestry to the original settlers

2. Thinking about Lord Howe Island, what best symbolises the island to you?
   ....................................................................................................................

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

   "Lord Howe Island is the most important part of my identity"
   Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

   "Mainlanders and Lord Howe Islanders have much in common"
   Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

   "Lord Howe Islanders are different in important ways from Mainlanders"
   Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

   "There are some things that make Lord Howe Islanders better than Mainlanders"
   Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

4. Do you identify most strongly with?
☐ Australia

☐ New South Wales

☐ Lord Howe Island

☐ Other (please specify): ............................

5. Included in the package this survey came with is a picture of a flag. Can you recognise the flag pictured?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Can you name the location this flag represents?

☐ Yes (please specify): ............................

☐ No

7. How often do you fly this flag?

☐ Daily

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

8. The flag mentioned in Question 4 is the unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag. If you were given one of these flags free of charge, would you fly it?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Why/Why not?

............................................................................................................................................................

............................................................................................................................................................

10. How well do you think the unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag represents the island?
11. Why/Why not?
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

12. If you were able to change the flag in any way, what changes would you make?
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

13. Why would these changes improve the flag?
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

"Australia is a unique country"

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

"The Australian identity is more important than State or Regional identities"

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

"Lord Howe Island has a unique identity"

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

"Being an Australian is more important to me than being a Lord Howe Islander"

Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neither Agree nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

15. Thinking about the power that the NSW Government has over Lord Howe Island, is it?

Not nearly enough - Not enough - About right - Too much - Far too much
16. Would you support amendments to the *Lord Howe Island Act 2004* to give Lord Howe Islanders more control over their own affairs?
   
   ☐ Yes
   
   ☐ No

17. Would you support the adoption of the unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag as the official flag of Lord Howe Island?
   
   ☐ Yes
   
   ☐ No

18. Why/Why not?
   
   ..............................................................................................................................
   
   ..............................................................................................................................

19. When were you born?: .........................

20. Are you?
   
   ☐ Male
   
   ☐ Female

21. How long have you been a resident on Lord Howe Island?
   
   ......................... years.

This questionnaire is part of a larger study. Would you be interested in participating in further research by participating in an interview? If so, please email the researcher at ecru9644@uni.sydney.edu.au or complete the information on the following page.

To return this questionnaire, please place it inside the marked box at the Museum/Visitor's Centre.

*Thank you for your participation in this study.*
Appendix B: Survey Results
All $n = 37$

Q1

In your opinion, who qualifies as a Lord Howe Islander?

- Tourist
- Worker
- No. of Years
- Original

Q2

Q2 Coded Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q3

1. "Lord Howe Island is the most important part of my identity"
2. "Lord Howe Islanders are different in important ways from Mainlanders"
3. "Mainlanders and Lord Howe Islanders have much in common"
4. "There are some things that make Lord Howe Islanders better than Mainlanders"

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neither Agree nor Disagree - Agree - Strongly Agree

Q4

Do you identify most strongly with?

- LHI
- NSW
- Australia
- Other

30% 3% 67%
Survey Q5
Included in the package this survey came with is a picture of a flag. Can you recognise the flag pictured?

- Yes: 89% (n = 17)
- No: 11%

Survey Q6
Can you name the location this flag represents?

- Yes: 89% (n = 17)
- No: 11%
Q7

How often do you fly this flag?

- Daily: 70%
- Occasionally: 12%
- Rarely: 12%
- Never: 6%

Q8

The flag mentioned in Question 4 is the unofficial Lord Howe Island flag. If you were given one of these flags free of charge, would you fly it?

- Yes: 55%
- No: 45%
Q9

Why would/wouldn’t you fly the LHI flag?

Q9 Coded Response

- Not official
- Personal Preference
- Australian Flag
- Not accepted
- Personal Use
- No need
- No flagpole
- Not a community flag
- Island Pride
- Other

n = 37

Q10

Survey Q10

How well do you think the unofficial Lord Howe Island flag represents the island?

Survey Q10

- Very Poorly
- Poorly
- Neither Poorly nor Well
- Well
- Very Well

Percentage

n = 37
Q14

"Australia is a unique country"

"Lord Howe Island has a unique identity"

"The Australian identity is more important than State or Regional identities"

"Being an Australian is more important to me than being a Lord Howe Islander"

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Q16

Would you support amendments to the Lord Howe Island Act (2004) to give Lord Howe Islanders more control over their own affairs?

Yes: 77%
No: 23%
Q17

Would you support the adoption of the unofficial Lord Howe Island flag as the official flag of Lord Howe Island?

41% Yes
59% No
Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Semi-structured interviews were completed with members of the island community. The interviewees were drawn from the survey sample group and were interviewed on the island between late June and early July. Below is the interview schedule, although due to the nature of semi-structured interviews significant diversions were occasionally taken from it.

Basic Information
-----------------
Can you tell me your first clear memory of Lord Howe Island?

Could you explain what you do on LHI?

Can you tell me a bit about your background?
   How long have you lived on Lord Howe Island?
   Do you trace your ancestry back to the original settlers?
   What made you move here?/Why do you think they moved here?

Island Identity
---------------
In what ways do you identify yourself with Lord Howe Island?
   What seems uniquely “Islander” to you?
   What’s special to you about Lord Howe?

Do you think that Lord Howe Island and the Australian mainland are different?
   In what ways?
   Why?

What are some ways that you identify yourself? What is important to you?

Can you think of any specific characteristics of Islanders? What are they?

Are there any local Lord Howe sayings/words or phrases you know of?

Island Flag
------------
Do you know of the unofficial Lord Howe Island Flag?
   What do you think of it?
   Why/Why not?

Do you think the flag represents Lord Howe Island and its population well?
   In what ways?
   Could it be improved? How?
   Why?

Do you fly this flag?
   Why/Why not?
   Do you support the flying of the flag?
   Why/Why not?

Australian Identity
-------------------
What are some ways you identify with the mainland?
   Why do you think you identify with these?
What do you think of mainlanders?
    What about Sydneysiders?
    Or NSW Government officials?

Australian Flag
--------------

What do you think of the Australian flag?
    Do you think it represents Australia well?
    Why/Why not?
Would you support changing the Australian flag?
    Why?
How could it be improved?

Final Questions
--------------

Are there any issues that you think have not been covered?
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of Lord Howe Island identity. Of particular interest is the role the Lord Howe Island flag plays in this process. The researcher aims to better understand Islanders’ understanding of their identity, place and culture, especially in relation to symbols that they use to achieve this aim.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Edwin Crump (undergraduate honours student) and will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Rodney Smith.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study involves taking part in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The audio of any interview that you (the participant) partake in will be recorded and transcribed. The interview will take place on Lord Howe Island, and in exceptional circumstances in Sydney with relevant participants as appropriate. If you cannot take part in an interview in the allotted time schedule, please contact Edwin Crump (details on the following page) to arrange an alternate time. The interview will focus on issues of identity and culture within Lord Howe Island and mainland Australia. Participants will be questioned about the ways these identities are developed and maintained. There are no known risks to participating in this study.

(4) How much time will the study take?

It is expected that interviews will take between thirty minutes and one (1) hour each.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

Lord Howe Island Identity Research

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All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) **Will the study benefit me?**

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) **Can I tell other people about the study?**

You are free to discuss this study with others.

(9) **What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?**

When you have read this information, Edwin Crump will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact:

Edwin Crump  
Co-Investigator  
Undergraduate Honours Student  
0403 419 089  
ecru9644@uni.sydney.edu.au

Rodney Smith  
Chief Investigator  
Associate Professor  
+61 2 9351 6632  
rodney.smith@sydney.edu.au

(10) **What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or hr.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

*This information sheet is for you to keep.*
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) **What is the study about?**

You are invited to participate in a study of Lord Howe Island identity. Of particular interest is the role the Lord Howe Island flag plays in this process. The researcher aims to better understand Islanders’ understanding of their identity, place and culture, especially in relation to symbols that they use to achieve this aim.

(2) **Who is carrying out the study?**

The study is being conducted by Edwin Crump (undergraduate honours student) and it will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Rodney Smith.

(3) **What does the study involve?**

This study involves the completion of a brief questionnaire, either online or in person. This study will be conducted throughout Lord Howe Island (and online) during April-May 2012. The questionnaire is designed to develop and understanding of existing opinions about Lord Howe Islander identity. Questions asked will focus on this issue, as well as requesting general demographic information for coding purposes. The questionnaire forms one part of a larger study undertaken on Lord Howe Island by Edwin Crump. There are no known risks to participating in this study. If you wish to, but cannot take part in the study in the allotted time period, please contact Edwin Crump (details on the following page) to arrange an alternate time.

(4) **How much time will the study take?**

It is expected that the questionnaire will take approximately fifteen to twenty (15-20) minutes to fully complete.

(5) **Can I withdraw from the study?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you are not under any obligation to consent to complete the questionnaire/survey. Submitting a completed questionnaire/survey is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw any time prior to submitting your completed questionnaire/survey without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney. Once you have submitted your questionnaire/survey anonymously, your responses cannot be withdrawn.
(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

You are free to discuss this study with others.

(9) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Edwin Crump will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact:

Edwin Crump  
Co-Investigator  
Undergraduate Honours Student  
0403 419 089  
ecru9644@uni.sydney.edu.au

Rodney Smith  
Chief Investigator  
Associate Professor  
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This information sheet is for you to keep.
Appendix F: Interview Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ......................................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: Lord Howe Island Identity Research

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

   • Audio-recording YES □ NO □
   • Receiving Feedback YES □ NO □

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details, i.e. mailing address, email address.

**Feedback Option**

Address: _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Email: _______________________________________________________

Signature

Please PRINT name

Date
Appendix G: HREC Approval Letter

The University of Sydney

Dr Fiona Gill
Chair
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Low Risk Ethics Committee

Ref: AH00087

May 1st 2012

Associate Professor Rodney Smith
Room 286
H04 - Merewether
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia
Email: Rodney.smith@sydney.edu.au

Dear Associate Professor Smith,

Thank you for your responses to the committee’s concerns about the project titled

Lord Howe Island Identity and Locally Constructed Symbologies

We are now able to approve the project.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No: AH00087
Approval Period: May 1st 2012 – December 31st 2012
Authorised Personnel: Associate Professor Rodney Smith
Mr Edwin Crump

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Low Risk Ethics Committee operates as a delegated sub-committee of the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee, and in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007).

The approval of your project is conditional upon your continuing appliance with the National Statement. We draw your attention to the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted at the conclusion of the Honours year.

E Vanessa.holcombe@sydney.edu.au
The Chief Investigator/Supervisor is responsible to ensure that
1) all serious and adverse events should be reported to the Arts and Social Sciences Low Risk Ethics Committee as soon as possible;
2) all unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the Arts and Social Sciences Low Risk Ethics Committee as soon as possible;
3) the Arts and Social Sciences Low Risk Ethics Committee must be notified as soon as possible about any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved before continuation of the research. These include:
   —if any of the investigators change or leave the University; and
   —any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form;
4) all research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the Research project and telephone contacts for the researchers unless otherwise agreed by the Committee, and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement:

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 8627 8176 (Telephone); (02) 8627 7177 (Facsimile) or human.ethics@usyd.edu.au (Email).

5) that copies of all signed Consent Forms must be retained and made available to the H.R.E.C. on request;
6) that you provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external funding agencies if requested;
7) a report is submitted at the conclusion of the project; and
8) a copy of any published material should be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Fiona Gill
Chair,
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Low-Risk Ethics Committee

cc   Mr Edwin Crump
ecri9644@uni.sydney.edu.au

Ms Vanessa Holcombe
vanessa.holcombe@sydney.edu.au