

# I am a Geographer ...



## Giselle Diego

Management consultant and workshop facilitator, co-founder of *either / oar*

In my job I work with organisations on strategy and planning, organisational culture and innovation. I work with medium-sized organisations in the not-for-profit, government, community and not-for-profit superannuation sectors.

I co-founded *either / oar* with two urban planners. *either / oar* is an urban activation project about place. It's about what makes a space a place and how a community can flourish around it. What some see as an abandoned lot or areas no longer made for people, *either / oar* sees as an opportunity for re-imagination. Housed in a beautiful wooden sailing boat that has been retrofitted to operate as a mobile bar that stays on land, *either / oar* creates an experience that invites people to think about what it means to transform a space. We look for underutilised urban spaces and use the boat as the device to command the space and activate it for a brief period. At each site, we research history to peel back the layers of what was there and how it has transitioned. For non-geographers, the changes to the urban landscape seems unconscious;

what would it mean if we could excite the public about the transition of place and encourage them to contemplate what is happening today, and what that means for tomorrow?

To this day Geography has had the most profound effect on the way that I think and critically engage with the world around me. I weave it into my work where possible, particularly in the organisational culture change work I do. I use theoretical frameworks such as the social construction of space (Henri Lefevre's *The Production of Space* which was core to my honours thesis) when working with organisations who have recently moved or are about to move offices. These organisations are often looking to improve their ability to adapt to change and create environments that align with their needs and values.

Some of my consulting work relates specifically to urban and regional planning. The work I do with *either / oar* is rooted in urban Geography. It provides me with an avenue to pursue questions that have long fascinated me – how do we construct and deconstruct space? How can we use space as an agent for equity?

I attended Monash University and completed an LLB/BA (Hons) Geography and received the J.S. Duncan Award for best honours thesis in Geography. When I enrolled in university, I was interested in studying development studies. At the time there was no specific stream for development studies in the undergraduate years. Instead, I opted to take a major in Geography and specialise in human Geography.

In my first year I had to take a number of physical and human Geography units. This completely opened up my mind in a way I never could have expected. I fell in love with Geography. It completely changed the way that I understood the world around me. I completed a major in Geography and then started Masters level units, engaging with critical Geography and political ecology. I also completed Honours in Geography and relished the opportunity to dedicate myself entirely to the subject for an entire academic year. I wrote my thesis on *The geographies of asylum seeker control: the Australian Community Detention program*; it was rooted in carceral (related to prison) Geography, political Geography and critical Geography. I haven't entirely ruled out further post graduate study in Geography at some point in the future. For me, the study of Geography will be a lifelong pursuit.

Although my work is eclectic, I have found that I have a greater impact whenever I introduce elements of Geography into what I do. I believe that we need more geographers in every field, bringing a spatial lens to all the questions of our lived experiences.