Unsettling the Land

Indigeneity, Ontology, and Hybridity in Settler Colonialism

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This article examines different ontologies of land in settler colonialism and Indigenous movements for decolonization and environmental justice. Settler ontologies of land operate by occluding other modes of perceiving, representing, and experiencing land. Indigenous ontologies of land are commonly oriented around relationality and reciprocal obligations among humans and the other-than-human. Drawing together scholarship from literatures in political economy, political ecology, Indigenous studies, and post-humanism, we synthesize an approach to thinking with land to understand structures of dispossession and the possibilities for Indigenous revitalization through ontological hybridity. Using two different case studies—plantation development in Indonesia and land revitalization in the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation—we further develop how settler and Indigenous ontologies operate on the ground, illuminating the coexistence of multiple ontologies of land. Given the centrality of land in settler colonialism, hybrid ontologies are important to Indigenous movements seeking to simultaneously strengthen sovereignty over territory and revitalize land-based practices.

■ **KEYWORDS:** indigeneity, land, ontology, perspectivism, political ecology, post-humanism, settler colonialism

What are the stakes of different ontologies of land in settler colonialism and Indigenous movements for decolonization and environmental justice? Settler colonialism describes a structure of exogenous domination in which Indigenous inhabitants of a territory are displaced by an outside population from an imperial center (Veracini 2010). Patrick Wolfe, in his classic formulation of the settler colonial situation, described it as an "inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies" (2006: 393). Land is the ultimate object of settlers' desire. Settler states seek to extirpate Indigenous societies through a "logic of elimination," which facilitates the taking of territory (387). This article explores ontologies of land as they are constituted across the contested political boundaries of settler states where settler ontologies work to dispossess, commodify, and extract economic value from land. We contrast this with Indigenous ontologies of land that seek to revitalize and maintain relationships of mutual obligation among humans and the other-than-human (Coulthard 2014; Wildcat et al. 2014).[1]

Indigenous efforts to contest and unsettle modes of conceiving of and relating to land, through their own practices and those created by settlers and settler-state institutions, are central to this

analysis. Examples of these efforts include revitalization of land-based practices such as caring for and collecting culturally important plants, and the use of settler legal institutions to seek redress for dispossession and expand the landholdings of Indigenous polities. We term these kinds of practices "unsettling the land," given their propensity to cultivate ontological hybridity and contribute toward decolonial futures. The importance of relationality and hybridity are key points made by scholars of Indigenous political ecology (Carroll 2015; Middleton 2010, 2015). Clint Carroll notes that "reconciling the resource- and relationship-based approaches [in Indigenous communities] has meant coming to terms with the development of an indigenous state" (2015: 10). The work of decolonization, the dismantling of the ideological and institutional structures of settler colonialism, is often expressed through hybrid modalities of land that work on multiple registers to advance Indigenous sovereignty over territory and revitalize land-based practices. Thinking through the different ways in which land is perceived and experienced helps to illuminate the role of ontology in movements for social and environmental justice for Indigenous peoples.

We argue for an approach that examines the coexistence, contradictions, and consequences of different ontologies of land. As argued by Tania Li, land is an assemblage that can be viewed for its ontologies—"the nature of its thing-ness"—and its affordances—"what it's good for—its values" (2014b: 589). Settler colonialism operates through ontological foreclosures that obfuscate Indigenous ontologies of land. Viewing land through the lens of ontology (what kind of thing it is), and how different people see land, helps to unwrap the diverse ways land is constituted. This is central to examining histories of Indigenous dispossession and contemporary struggles for revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization in settler colonial contexts. We highlight the work of scholars that complicate taken-for-granted and monolithic ontologies of land to problematize the very categories of land produced by colonial practice. This review explores four literatures: political economy, political ecology, post-humanism, and Indigenous studies. We also provide two case studies: oil palm as a settler plant in Indonesia and land revitalization as a practice of ontological hybridity in the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation of North America's Intermountain West. Finally, we outline an agenda for scholars in anthropology, geography, Indigenous studies, and critical environmental studies to take up culturally constituted ontologies of land long highlighted by scholars of Indigenous studies, anthropology, and other fields (Deloria 1999, 2001; Hunt 2014). This article starts with an examination of the role of land, dispossession, and subsistence production in Marxian political-economic theory, which forms an important foundation for political ecology, albeit with certain limitations.

Land, Capitalism, and Dispossession

Much of the literature on the political economy of land traces its genealogy to Karl Marx's analysis of capitalism and the "secret of primitive accumulation" (1993: 873). The "original sin" of capitalism, what Marx calls "primitive accumulation" and what we refer to hereafter as "primary accumulation," is the process through which the worker is divorced of their means of production and is thus alienated from their own labor.[2] This is achieved through the transformation of subsistence production into capital and producers into wage laborers (874). Before capitalist accumulation can begin, this primary mode of dispossession—the separation of workers from their means of subsistence—must take place. Marx suggests that this is a "historical process" relegated to the "pre-history of capital" (875). This processual understanding of primary accumulation is valuable but needs modification for application to settler colonial contexts. In these contexts, the dispossession of land is at the heart of domination. Marx acknowledges the varied

means used to separate workers from the means of production, highlighting how "the law itself . . . becomes the instrument by which people's land is stolen" (885). These juridical forms, not relegated to the past, are still central to the control of land in settler state contexts today.

The story of primary accumulation entails not only land being taken away but also its commodification (Polanyi 1944). Indeed, the juridical structures of dispossession (land's commodification and transformation into property) are fundamental to settler colonial dispossession. Recent scholarship on global land grabbing links large-scale transformations of land to transnational processes involving private capital and state-managed land tenure regimes (Deininger 2011; Hall 2013; Peluso and Lund 2011). The dispossession of land is frequently obscured by the absence of a set of clear actors, instead operating through diffuse structural processes. Often, the focus is on sites outside the Anglophone settler world and involves processes affecting smallholders (Fairhead et al. 2012; Hall et al. 2011; Li 2011). The political valence of these "land grabs" is less suited to describing settler colonial contexts that operate differently than to large-scale land investment by multinational private actors and nation-states.[3] Therefore, using the land grab as an analytic necessitates paying attention to the ontological basis of state and private-led dispossession as much the political-economic mechanisms of accumulation itself. For Indigenous peoples, as well as peasants and other agriculturalists, the loss of land is experienced as more than just alienation from a means of subsistence production. Enclosure of common lands and their transformation into private property is a double negation: the loss of land, and the devastation of the sets of relationships that constitute land in Indigenous ontologies. Capitalism is fundamental to the structural conditions of settler colonialism.

Settler Colonialism and Capitalism

Recent scholarship in Indigenous studies offers insight into the imbrication of these forms. Glen Coulthard (2014) uses Marx's notion of "primary accumulation" to analyze settler colonialism, but he suggests three important modifications: a temporal reframing that sees primary accumulation as ongoing rather than something relegated to a "stage" before capitalist accumulation (Harvey 2003; Sanyal 2014); a release from the developmentalism and economic reductionism of orthodox Marxism; and a shift of framing from capitalist to colonial relations. This last move enables Coulthard to critique the liberal settler state's emphasis on recognition as the basis for negotiation over land claims and self-governance. Coulthard shows that primary accumulation accomplished through violence is largely replaced in contemporary times with discursive regimes and other ostensibly benign structures, which are in reality imbued with relations of power and domination that further entrench settler colonialism and the extraction of capital from Indigenous lands.

Claims to land are often established through the doctrine of terra nullius, or empty land, a concept that is still deployed in extant struggles for environmental justice (Kosek 2006; Moreton-Robinson 2004; Voyles 2015; Whyte 2013). Labor is largely ancillary to this endeavor, in which land is remade into property amenable to extracting economic value (Coulthard 2014; Wolfe 2009). Law plays an important role in these transformations, reinforcing a racialized and gendered white settler sovereignty over property that enables Indigenous dispossession, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) explicates in her examination of settler claims in Australia and other Anglophone settler states. Under these regimes, human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship between owner and property.[4] Coulthard argues that political recognition of Indigenous peoples in Canada obscures the ongoing settler colonial project of primary accumulation—the drive toward dispossession of Indigenous lands while extracting further sur-

plus value through resource exploitation—and that any attempt to transcend these structures of domination requires the resuscitation of relationships of mutual obligation between land and people as opposed to deeper engagement with settler-state institutions. Carroll, writing about the Cherokee Nation, also remarks that Indigenous environmental governance represents a different, "relationships-based approach" that allows for "agency of nonhuman beings and the maintenance of relationships with them" (2015: 8).

It is important to rethink the ontology of land in any context of decolonization. Canadian First Nations' land claims negotiations are oriented around maintaining access to land and resources for capitalist development. But this may run counter to reliance on that same land for spiritual and material sustenance of varied kinds, including those in opposition to the forces of extractive capital. Shifting subjectivities in relation to land are also addressed by Coulthard's discussion of the land claims process in Canada. Land is not just a material object but a "way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others" (2014: 61). Conceptions of land configure how one relates, not just to land, but to many other actors—human and non-human—in the broader community (Nadasdy 2003, 2007). In accepting colonial recognition of their rights to land, Indigenous nations can end up undermining their reciprocal relationships to that land.[5]

Although land is central to understanding settler colonialism, it is not the only register of domination (Simpson and Smith 2014). Taiaiake Alfred (1999) calls on Indigenous leaders to turn toward traditional modes of governance and not emulate settler state regimes of recognition that reinscribe settler modes of domination. Indigenous studies scholars also highlight the genealogy of racial categorizations that serve to obscure the territoriality of conquest by creating a homogenous Indigenous space and population (Byrd 2011). The exclusion of nonpropertied and racialized labor in settler states also works to reproduce inequalities, often under the guise of environmental stewardship (Cattelino 2015). Relatively little of anthropological literature attends deeply to both the ontologies of land and the politics of those ontologies, despite work in Native American and Indigenous studies that examine ontologies of land within a political context of settler colonialism and dispossession. Vine Deloria (1999, 2001) contrasts settler aesthetic connections to land with ones that are set in a history of "prolonged occupation" in which situated experience is essential to an understanding of sacredness, noting that a sense of respect for land is not the result of an intellectual process, but rather something cultivated through experience. Deloria looks at ceremony and sacrifice as forms of reciprocity, which challenge settler society to move beyond modes of conservation focused on human use to one that looks at all forms of life and existence.[6] In contrast to the unexamined presupposition of much postcolonial theory, settler colonialism is not relegated to the past but instead represents an ongoing structure of dispossession and violence (Wolfe 1999). It challenges the narratives liberal democratic states tell about themselves as inclusive, democratic, and multicultural (Simpson 2014).

This conventional narrative occludes the fact that many Anglophone states of the Global North were built on a foundation of violence and dispossession. Indigenous inhabitants of these states were removed from the land through genocidal policies that sought forcible assimilation or outright elimination of Indigenous peoples. Wolfe (2011) argues for a genealogy of "post-frontier" strategies for enveloping Indigenous nations into settler states—not just a historicized story of dispossession. These "techniques of settlement" are an important part of how structures of settler colonialism are sedimented into the state, as exemplified by the General Allotment Act of 1887. Wolfe points out that Indigenous peoples are at first violently subjugated—a suppression of Nativeness in all its forms—to the liberal settler state mode of governmentality, which facilitates subsequent assimilationist policies. For example, the undermining of tribal patrimony through allotment of lands into individually owned plots made property easier

to circulate into the hands of white settlers. Wolfe challenges the idea that removal and assimilation are opposing approaches to governing Native Americans, but sees it as dispossession by other means. Allotment is notable for how it disembeds people from their land and removes aboriginal title. There is a double move here in which freed land is acquired by the state, and then the cheap labor of the newly dispossessed is requisitioned in emergent capitalist relations. The diminution of Indigenous homelands forced many into wage labor as subsistence practices became untenable. Political ecology, especially Indigenous political ecology, can illuminate how subjectivity is linked to the control and dispossession of land.

Indigenous Political Ecology and Environmental Subjectivities

Early work in political ecology examined the issue of land degradation, calling attention to the political-economic forces that work to discursively produce land according to socially constructed schema of quality rather than reflecting an "objective" ecological condition outside of society (Blaikie 1985; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). In recent years, this literature has challenged scholars to show that how we see "nature" and how power moves in relation to its management are inextricably linked (Robbins 2012). Tim Ingold (2000) outlines two opposing ways of seeing land as, on one hand, a spherical, embedded, localized perception and, on the other, a global view in which the human transcends nature and the world is seen as property or resources to be managed for the public good. The view from above that a global perspective engenders is one that writers such as James Scott (1998) and Bruno Latour (1987) have similarly seen as enabling abstraction, measurement, calculation, and accumulation of knowledge by experts at centers of calculation and power. These authors focus on the role of simplification in enabling power to expand, including the simplification of landscapes. These simplifications make things legible (Scott 1998) or immutable, accumulatable, and combinable (Latour 1987). When the simplifications ultimately fail, this failure is not acknowledged as such, but rather understood as something in need of a technoscientific fix (Mitchell 2002; Scott 1998). Technoscientific claims of understanding—and thus power over—landscapes are thus strengthened.

Through this process, the way in which landscapes are seen shifts. As Donald Moore observes in his analysis of struggles for territory in Kaerezi, Zimbabwe, "abstract, empty, and exchangeable space is a historical product, not an essence" (2005: 20). In his examination of the impacts of colonization in Egypt, Timothy Mitchell describes how the process facilitated "the spread of a political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the experience of the real" (1991: ix). Thus, another key insight from the political ecology literature is that, while ways of understanding land can change how power over land operates, these concepts can also change actors' subjectivities, changing how they manage their own conduct in relation to land.

Looking at colonialism, development, and other projects of land management, several authors, often influenced by Michel Foucault's work on governmentality, explore how subjects come to participate in projects of their own rule (Agrawal 2005; Li 2014a; Moore 2005) and how, in Moore's words, "different political technologies produce territory, including its presumed 'natural' features'" (2005: 7). Jeremy Campbell (2015) explores how settlers on the frontier can work to conjure private property in the absence of a strong state presence, demonstrating the limits of state-centric approaches that fail to account for the political and economic power of settlers to realize their own visions of a transformed landscape. Bruce Braun (2000) examines how the evolution of a geological vision impacted conceptualizations of Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands) in Canada. Braun argues that when governing is done to manage

the relationship between populations and territory, the qualities of territory (land) are as a result not static but rather continuously reconstituted. Governing must be continuously reordered to structure conduct in response to shifting constructions of nature. The adoption of a geological understanding of land in Haida Gwaii, for example, gave rise to new forms of calculation and governance in relation to it. As land came to be understood as vertical, human subjectivities changed to better manage it. Arun Agrawal (2005) touches on similar ideas in his discussion of community forestry programs in Kumaon, India. He conceives of environmentality as a framework for understanding how environmental subjects are created, through participation in the "intimate government" of local forests. Timothy Luke (2009) similarly shows how subjectivities of expert management are recast when nature is conceived in terms of coupled socioecological systems. Seeing nature as a complex system under threat invites expert managerial control. By examining the work of three technical scientific bodies, Luke demonstrate how Earth system science has given rise to a global green governmentality exercised by ecological "expertarchy" to map, monitor, measure, and, ultimately, manage nature and population for the public good.

For these authors, self-interest comes to be realized through participation in different forms of practice. For Li (2014b), ways of understanding land outline what, and especially who, is excluded from that land. Every regime of exclusion must be legitimated and can therefore be contested. Li notes the prominence of moral arguments and references to the social value of investment in driving contemporary land grabs. This is the extension of Ingold's idea of the need to optimize land use for the public good: not only can we manage land according to global understanding, but we must do so for the public good, even if some publics' interests must be sacrificed to do so.

This literature has sometimes been critiqued for its implicit biases. Thus, the emergence of an Indigenous political ecology seeks to address the elisions of political-economic approaches that are "limited by a reliance on Euro-derived concepts of power, political economy and human–environmental relations . . . [that] may reproduce colonial relations of power, while eliding Indigenous peoples' own solutions to problems" (Middleton 2015: 561). The unique position of Indigenous peoples, given their status as both authorities on their homelands and subjects of a settler state that lays claim to this homeland, contrasts with many cases in political ecology in which "singular states comprise the operational governmental authority to which their subjects must react" (Carroll 2014: 37). Beth Rose Middleton outlines the key tenets of an Indigenous political ecology as:

> (1) attention to "coloniality" or ongoing practices of colonialism (e.g. displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands; no recognition of indigenous self-determination); (2) culturally specific approaches reframing analyses in keeping with indigenous knowledge systems; (3) recognition and prioritization of indigenous self-determination, as expressed through indigenous governance; and (4) attention to decolonizing processes that explicitly dismantle systems of internalized and externalized colonial praxis. (2015: 562)

Recent critiques of the cultural underpinnings of sovereignty that are inherent to Indigenous nation building have suggested that sovereignty itself can have problematic instrumental effects (Alfred 1999; Nadasdy 2017). But the necessity of engaging its forms still stands. One hybrid approach is the use of land-as-property in creative ways that inflect its forms to promote the creation of Indigenous space. As Carroll notes, "the need to maintain land-based practices as critical components of tribal identities continues to make the topic of land reacquisition and consolidation central to the study Indigenous environmental issues, and, despite its conceptual flaws, Indigenous sovereignty is a critical tool in this process" (2014: 38). The way in which different ontologies of land management operate can be illustrated by cases we discuss in the

next two sections: oil palm as a settler plant in Indonesia, and land revitalization practices in the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation in North America.

Settler Ontology: Oil Palm

Ontological studies have been critiqued for a focus on the primitive and exotic (Bessire and Bond 2014; Kockelman 2016), for emphasis on abstract discussion (Willerslev 2004), and for turning away from problem-oriented ethnography, especially that which deals with power and politics (Feinberg et al. 2013; Ramos 2012). In one of the most influential works in post-humanism, or the ontological turn, Eduardo Kohn (2013: 94) states that his concern is not with how Native peoples think about forests—the focus of work by several generations of environmental anthropologists—but rather on how forests themselves think. But the issue in settler colonialism is neither how the forest thinks nor how Native people think about the forest, but rather how settlers un-think both Native and forest ontologies.

Settler colonialism operates through a reworking of not just the physical landscape but also the ontological landscape. This reworking is all about difference: settler systems of land management are rarely the same as Native systems. For one thing, they are often based on cultivation not of native plants but rather of introduced exotics. This principle is well illustrated by the case of oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.) cultivation in the Indo-Malay region (Byerlee et al. 2016; Carlson et al. 2012). The plantation system in which most oil palm is cultivated is a quintessential example of settler agriculture. One of the most important characteristics of the plant at the center of the oil palm industry is its nonnative origin (cf. Ives 2014): oil palm is an exotic from West Africa, first introduced to the East Indies in the second half of the nineteenth century, and its cultivation in the region exploded in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The parastatal sector has developed oil palm in Indonesia and Malaysia strictly as an estate crop. Smallholder cultivation of oil palm has been supported only when attached to estates: a succession of government projects over the past half-century, called nucleus estates, credit cooperatives, and partnerships, have organized smallholdings around an inner estate core, on which they are dependent for credit and processing of their oil (Potter 2016: 321–324). Oil palm estates have routinely appropriated independent smallholdings, resulting in widespread disruption of and conflict with rural communities (Cramb and McCarthy 2016; McCarthy et al. 2012; Potter 2016). Repeating a pattern that prevailed during the colonial era, the state and its elites have, in effect, used the exotic oil palm as a tool to bring about resettlement of rural landscapes by outsiders, either displacing local peoples or transforming them from a landed peasantry into a landless labor force. This was not an inevitable but rather a historically contingent development. This promotion of an estate model of development ignores the robust history of smallholder commodity production in the region (Dove 2011); it ignores the fact that smallholders account for 80 percent of production in Thailand, the region's third-largest producer; and it ignores the extensive involvement in oil palm cultivation by smallholders, both within and independent of government schemes, across Malaysian and Indonesian Borneo: independent smallholdings in particular are undercounted in government statistics, if they are counted at all, reflecting the fact that they have no place in official worldviews (Byerlee 2014; Cramb and Sujang 2013; Potter 2016).

Derek Byerlee (2014: 591) regards the dominance of the estate model as an aberration (cf. Potter 2016), which he attributes to the same factors that favored the estate model during the colonial era: high commodity prices, a convergence of state and investor interests, and a high modern belief in the virtues of agribusiness. In practical terms, in order to develop the estates, the smallholdings that otherwise consume land and labor must be displaced and ruled out as

alternatives. This has been described as "land grabbing" or "accumulation by dispossession," which suggests a process of forceful assault on the traditional rights of local peoples (Gellert 2015; cf. Harvey 2004; White et al. 2012). Before the physical landscape can be grabbed, however, the conceptual landscape must first be secured; before local people can be dispossessed, work must be done so that it does not look like dispossession (Bissonnette 2013; West 2016).

The primary conceptual work of land grabbing and dispossession is to rule out any possible alternative model. This was historically accomplished in the Indo-Malay region through the colonial doctrine of dualism (Boeke 1953), a belief that Native smallholders cannot produce commodities for market, which must be left entirely to the European estate sector—a doctrine that to some extent survives today (Cramb 2011). This intellectual doctrine was physically sustained by the estate model of cultivation itself. Recent work on estates and similar "concessions" suggests that there is an epistemic imperialism to all such development schemes (Bonneuil 2001; Hardin 2002). These schemes construct bounded spaces in which exotic plants and knowledges can flourish and in which native plants and knowledges cannot. The forceful exclusion of local elements from such sites represents a modern act of purification (Latour 1993: 10–11). As with the alien and exotic oil palm, a tabula rasa is constructed that privileges the crops and technologies of powerful outsiders and deprivileges the crop- and place-specific knowledge of local smallholders. The tabula rasa permits the exercise of the imagination, to imagine something that is not yet there, which will not resemble anything that is there. The existence of alternatives is inimical to this act of the settler imagination. This ontological displacement of Native vision by settler vision makes possible the physical displacement; it underpins the assault on land rights of the aforementioned doctrine of terra nullius. It helps to rationalize the international community's demand for "free, prior, and informed consent" for local communities affected by oil palm schemes, with its assumption that the role of such communities is at best to surrender their land, not to compete for the oil palm market.[7]

The many Native smallholders who have adopted oil palm have engaged in their own ontological work. Smallholders are often ambivalent about adopting commodity production for markets, as exemplified by the rash of felling of rubber trees in Borneo during the 1930s due to a belief that the exotic rubber was eating the soul of the native rice (Dove 2011). Such mythmaking reflects the challenge of constructing a hybrid ontology of traditional subsistence-oriented agriculture and market-oriented commodity production. The challenge of hybridity is reflected today in the "rumor panics" that periodically sweep across Borneo's new oil palm landscapes, warning of strangers who are kidnapping Dayak people to traffic their organs, leading in some instances to the murder of strangers found in Dayak territories (Semedi 2014). This is ontological work, done to distinguish the Dayak and their lifestyle and values from those of the wider world that drives the oil palm expansion.

Post-humanism and Indigenous Ontologies

The recent ontological turn has implications for questions of how ideas of land are constituted and what that means for Indigenous struggles for land and decolonization. To return to Kohn's (2013: 94) comments on studying Indigenous environmental knowledge, he writes, "If we limit our thinking to thinking through how other people think we will always end up circumscribing ontology by epistemology." Several scholars have argued that by turning away from Indigenous ontologies, post-humanism misses critical insights that might be gained from Indigenous perspectives. Kim TallBear argues that "indigenous standpoints accord greater animacy to nonhumans, including nonorganisms, such as stones and places, which help form (Indigenous) peoples as

humans constituted in much more complex ways than in simple biological terms" (2017: 187). According to scholars like TallBear, Indigenous peoples have sets of relations with the animate/inanimate agents bound up in land that are more intimate and complex than much of what post-humanist scholarship can capture. What is seen as "alive" in much post-humanist discourse is more limited than in much Indigenous thinking. Zoe Todd (2015) makes a case for the need to decolonize post-humanist scholarship, and questions the locus of agency ascribed in Euro-centric thinking. Juanita Sundberg similarly argues that "Anglo-European scholarship is the only tradition truly alive in posthumanist theorizing" (2014: 38)—that all other scholarship or epistemologies are treated as truly dead through their exclusion.

Understanding that the human/nature divide is far from universal is key for decolonizing and expanding post-humanist scholarship for these scholars. Many offer Indigenous ontologies, asserting that they capture perspectives that are more nuanced than what a simple erasure of a nature/culture schism can capture. Vanessa Watts, for example, offers Place-Thought as a way of framing an understanding that land is alive and thinking and "that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts" (Watts 2013: 21). She frames the world in this view as a space "where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated" (2013: 21). This framing helps to overcome what she sees as the problem of subjugated agency for nonhumans in post-humanist scholarship where "the controversial element of agency is often redesigned when applied to non-humans, thereby keeping this episte-mological-ontological divide intact" (29). Sundberg (2014), drawing from both the Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen and the Zapatistas' framing of the pluriverse, highlights the importance of "multiepistemic literacy" in an expansive post-humanism that doesn't subordinate particular ontologies and forms of agency. For these scholars, land, as a relationship consisting of complex and nonsubjugated agencies, is key to overcoming the ontological hurdles of Eurocentric imag-inings of post-humanism that these authors critique.

Perspectivism

Many of today's studies of nonhuman others cite the canonical work of Jakob von Uexküll (2010 [1934]) on the concept of the *umwelt,* the unique perceptual world in which each organism exists, which is different from that of every other organism. One of the more interesting examples of an effort to transcend one's own *umwelt* is represented in the ethnographic studies of "perspectivism." Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998: 470), whose scholarship has roots in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966, 1969), synthesized a great deal of literature on the Native peoples of the Amazon, common to which was the belief that animals and spirits "see their food as human food (jaguars see blood as manioc beer, vultures see the maggots in rotting meat as grilled fish, etc.), they see their bodily attributes (fur, feathers, claws, beaks etc.) as body dec-orations or cultural instruments, they see their social system as organized in the same way as human institutions are (with chiefs, shamans, ceremonies, exogamous moieties, etc.)." Kohn's (2013) work in Ecuador is one of the more intensive explorations of these beliefs, which suggest that cross-species recognition of very different, perceived worlds—the *umwelt* of the other—is possible.

Rebecca Feinberg and colleagues (2013: 2) write that "one of the greatest strengths of multi-species ethnography is the 'speculative wonder' captured in its ontological revisions, a wonder rife with potential to generate alternative ethical possibilities for living in the world." Perspectiv-ist beliefs are all about recognition of alternate worldviews (Tsing 2015). As Alf Hornborg (2001: 135) writes, "What is remarkable about these cosmologies, from a modern vantage-point, is the extent to which Amazonians have acknowledged the limitations of their own, human powers of

perception, and the empathy with which they have imagined other species' ways of viewing the world." Alternatives are inherently political. Awareness of alternative worldviews can help us to survive, as Kohn (2013: 2) writes, "so as not to become meat we must return the jaguar's gaze." Unawareness of alternative worldviews is dangerous for the weak, but not for the strong. Forest spirits and jaguars see humans as game, but they are not concerned with how humans see them. There is an asymmetry to vision; there is a "hierarchy of perspective" (149).

Shifting from the forest to the plantation, from the animal *umwelt* to settler ontology, a similar asymmetry holds: perspectivism is a Native, subaltern facility. To survive, Indigenous peoples develop a keen sense of how settlers and ruling elites see them, which can actually crystallize the development of so-called Indigenous identity (Li 2000), but the reverse rarely holds true. In the Euro-American worldview that drives much settler colonialism, there is a single uniform nature (Kohn 2013: 155–156), not multiple natures or multiple *umwelt*. Settler ontologies tend to be universalistic: they are undercut by any recognition—much less comparative evaluation of the merits—of alternative worldviews. The alternative of smallholder production of oil palm has not, therefore, been part of the discourse of oil palm development in Southeast Asia. When beings recognize the reality of another's worldview, they are able to see the other as a subject, a person, a human being (Kohn 2013: 93; Viveiros de Castro 1998: 477). In the ontological displacement that accompanies settler projects like oil palm estates, not only is the fact that Native people are able to produce oil palm or other market crops denied, but even their humanity (e.g., as modern citizens versus backward primitives) may be denied (Tsing 2005). The traditional beliefs of the Dayak resemble those reported by Viveiros de Castro (1998) from the Amazon: the Dayak believe that the spirits see them as pigs, ripe for hunting. The contemporary "rumor panics" described earlier are a modern example of this perspectivism; the panics speak to how the Dayak think the wider world, with its oil palm markets, sees them: as bodies and organs. This is the biopolitics of the oil palm boom (Foucault 1997). The Dayak effort to confront the purported organ traffickers is, in effect, their effort to "return the jaguar's gaze" and so survive it.

Indigenous Ontology: Hybridity and Revitalizing Relationships with Land

A case study of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of the Flathead Indian Reservation, located in the northwestern United States, can illustrate how hybrid ontologies of land offer ways to consolidate a tribal land base in the service of revitalizing relationships with the other-than-human world. Much of the CSKT's work is oriented toward reversing the dispossession of Indigenous lands by Euro-American settlers who claimed title to newly created homesteads in the early twentieth century (Bigart and Woodcock 1996). This was made possible by the transformation of land into property, which took place through US government–led land surveys and subsequent allotment (Latta 1989). Despite the territorial-bounded reservation of land stipulated in the 1855 Treaty of Hellgate, more than half of the unceded land within the territory of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation was sold as property to white settlers (Smith 1979). It was not until 1934 that the US federal allotment policy ended, but that did nothing to reverse the prior loss of land. Only in the wake of the civil rights and Red Power movements did governance policies begin to change in the 1970s (Ruppel 2008). This marked the beginning of the era of revitalization. Today, the officials at the CSKT Tribal Lands Department have a clear sense of their objective: to return land to tribal control, but not strictly as a form of property. This land base also provides for the expansion of land-based practices such as caring for culturally important relations with the nonhuman world, the protection of landscapes imbued with collective memories, and the provision of material benefits to the Native community, such as housing.

The CSKT Tribal Lands Department was established in 1982. It emerged from the Tribal Realty Office that was created in the 1960s, with Bureau of Indian Affairs realty staff tasked with overseeing the titling and transfer of common and individual trust lands on the reservation. The new Tribal Lands Department grew to take on additional activities, including permitting surveys, land use planning, and, most importantly, land acquisition. The 2000s saw the increasing size and role of tribal governance in land acquisition. This came with the emergence of new technologies, like geographic information systems (GIS), as tools to track, manage, and prioritize its landholdings starting in the 1990s.[8] Lands were purchased at the market rate and then put through a process to have the land transferred to trust status, meaning it became tribal land again (though still as property). Still, the consolidation of tribal landholdings facilitates the creation of spaces for practices that recognize and instantiate relationships among the human and other-than-human.

The emergence of the Tribal Lands Department marks a shift in which bureaucratic institutions of land management, many of them prescribed by federal rules, came to dominate how land was *used* and therefore *perceived*. As discussed earlier, these bureaucratized modes of managing land carry their own subjectivities, which embed their own ontologies of land. Settler state institutions of private property cannot be entirely circumvented given the extant relationship between tribal nations and the US government, but relationships can be revitalized even within these institutions. In this context, it is also hard to imagine revitalization without attention to alternate modalities like the relationality described by many scholars (Blaser 2016; Carroll 2015; Coulthard 2014; TallBear 2017; Todd 2015). If land is constituted in the ways it is governed, then it is also tied up with different practices, from the spatial subjectivities of GIS to manage land and target its reacquisition, to the subjectivities of land as constituted in the reciprocal obligations of tribal land use practices. These different subjectivities are oriented toward different affordances of land. Spatial technologies are amenable to registering the value of "resources" such as timber but not to the more phenomenological idea of an experience relating to other-than-human persons—or stories that represent and reproduce collective memories constitutive of Indigenous belonging to place.

Land and the environment are always bound up in the historical discursive apparatuses of the state—not just settler states, but also Indigenous states—at the same time as Indigenous peoples are successfully contesting these logics and practices, a central point made by Carroll (2015). But working to reacquire land solely on the register of settler state regimes of land ownership and capitalist relations is limiting, so land-based practices are essential to reworking the very notion of land underpinning settler colonial domination. Settler modes of thinking about the land are being appropriated to take the land back while other modes of thinking are being practiced. This story is not limited to bureaucratic processes of land acquisition and management: it also involves land-based practices that focus on reciprocal obligations and the other-than-human to revitalize alternate ontologies. Land-based practices, in many cases, occur outside the purview of tribal government departments. But they are connected, as funding to support cultural activities frequently comes from the tribal government, although cultural leadership largely emanates from a council of elders. This highlights a tension that exists in Indigenous governance in which formal state institutions contend with practices that are underwritten by very different ontological categories. Sometimes this emerges as conflict over the disposition of land. The work of decolonization operates at this nexus where different modalities of land coexist, often uneasily or in conflict with each other. Therefore, decolonization cannot simply be the rejection of one modality of land for the other, but rather follows an uneasy path to maintain a hybrid assemblage of ontologies, with all their attendant affordances and limitations.

Conclusion

Settler colonialism entrenches itself by obfuscating Indigenous ontologies. The "original sin" that precedes the extraction of economic value is more than the alienation of workers from the means of production: it is the alienation of Indigenous ontologies by settler modes of thinking and controlling land. In confronting this legacy, decolonial praxis is premised on the ability to revitalize Indigenous ontologies through grounded practices. But those practices require a land base that is often reacquired only through strategic engagements premised on settler ontologies of land-as-property. Recent scholarship is beginning to open up our understanding of different ontologies of land. Drawing on work in Indigenous studies, post-humanism, and political ecology that highlights the importance of relationality and reciprocation across the human and other-than-human, this article suggests that we are poised to better address the politics at stake in ontologies of land by attending to the possibilities of hybridity. Structures of dispossession are defined not only by their economic or political valence to settler society, but also through the notions, practices, and representations that they obfuscate.

Indigenous movements for social and environmental justice are deeply tied to issues of land rights. By operating on multiple ontological registers rather than the occlusion of one mode by another, some Indigenous states are successfully reacquiring lands and revitalizing land-based practices. Our case studies highlight practices that undermine or inflect settler ontologies and affordances of land. Decolonization, as an emergent set of practices, does not simply reflect a swing of the pendulum back to what existed before allotment and white settlement through mirrored, reversed processes of repossession, but is something creatively formed through contemporary struggles around what it means to be Indigenous amid enduring—but not immutable—structures of capitalism and settler colonial domination. Decolonization is constitutive of a resistant and ameliorative politics that unravels land's singularity. This kind of politics is both anti-capitalist and anticolonial, as it challenges the flattening of land that is fundamental to such relations. Decolonization is often invoked as a metaphor without a clear sense of praxis (Tuck and Yang 2012). Future scholarship should attend carefully to land-based practices in theorizing power and domination alongside revitalization and resurgence.

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▪ **NOTES**

1. Although we set up a contrast between settler and Indigenous ontologies, and speak about them in categorical terms, this is not meant to suggest that they are monolithic across space and time. Indigenous states can operate on a similar ontological footing when seeking to extract economic value from natural resources. But unlike settler states, Indigenous states commonly use these tools to empower Indigenous sovereignty. Similarly, settler ontologies are not the same everywhere, though they generally facilitate ongoing processes of dispossession (even in cases where they are imagined as "recognizing" Indigenous title).
2. We use the term "primary accumulation" to highlight the elemental and ongoing role of this process in settler colonies—and to avoid the developmentalist framing implied in the term "primitive."
3. This is not to suggest that it plays no role, however, as private actors such as timber and mineral resource corporations have significant landholdings in Indigenous homelands.
4. This traces back to G. W. F. Hegel's master-slave dialectic, reformulated by Franz Fanon in his post-colonial critique of recognition. Glen Coulthard argues that Fanon's insights about how the master controls the act of recognition is central to the reproduction of colonial relations. According to Coulthard, rejection of recognition is a necessary strategy to subvert these dynamics (Coulthard 2014). Audra Simpson (2014) offers a nuanced depiction of how individuals or collectives operationalize these kinds of strategies in settler states through the notion of "refusal" (Simpson 2014).
5. In some cases, we refer to Indigenous nations to foreground institutional actors, and in others we refer to Indigenous peoples to capture other forms of affinity and commonality. The two are not always synonymous, as the boundaries between nation and community are constituted in complex ways.
6. Arguably, ecological science has done a better job of foregrounding other-than-human relationality, though often at the expense of the human. Also problematic is the mechanistic model of functionalism that ecological science reifies at the exclusion of other forms of knowledge that understand relationships in different ways besides cause and effect (e.g., as morally contingent relations that rely on reciprocity).
7. Free, prior, and informed consent is also impacted by a politics of recognition among state and international actors that can be critiqued for reproducing asymmetrical power relations between Indigenous smallholders, the state, and capital.

8. There is much more to these processes of changing geospatial subjectivities than we can cover here. For more on the emergence of geospatial forms of knowledge and the way that mapping can create new publics, see Rankin (2016) and Hébert and Brock (2017).

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