

TRAIL SIX

Undergraduate Journal of Geography



VOLUME 17 | 2022-2023

Trail Six

Undergraduate Journal of Geography

Volume 17: 2022-2023

Geography Student's Association

Department of Geography

The University of British Columbia

TRAIL SIX VOLUME 17: 2022-2023

Editor-in-chief: Mark Daudlin

Editors:

Devyani Anand, Kiri Basher, Amelia Creemer, Katelyn Croy, Alina Debyser, Jacob Ereshefsky, Lisa Fylypchuk, Regina Hipolito, Madeline Laurendeau, Rebecca Lyon, Dominic Malana, Marco Meyer, Isabella Montecalvo, Xavier Montessori, Noah Murdoch, Tatum Narode, Maia Rankine-Griffith, Thiago Ribeiro, Zainab Sayedain, Ellen Wu

Layout and Design:

Devyani Anand, Amelia Creemer, Alina Debyser, Regina Hipolito, Maia Rankine-Griffith

Cover and interior image contributors:

Ciaran Beggs, Quinlan Cyr, Yuyang Ding, Nikol Ensor, Alhena Jaffer, Sarah Kelly, Ella Li, Kyle Vinson, Tessa Wiehr

Faculty Acknowledgements:

Dr. Geraldine Pratt (Department Head), Dr. Michael Fabris, Dr. Nina Hewitt, Dr. Priti Narayan, Dr. Desirée Valadares, Dr. Elvin Wyly, Simen Hennum, Nico Jimenez, Emi Kingan, Nicola Love

Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the x^wməθk^wəyəm community, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Special Thanks to:

UBC Department of Geography & Geography Students' Association

All correspondence should be addressed to:

Trail Six: Undergraduate Journal of Geography
Department of Geography
University of British Columbia
1984 West Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6T 1Z2
Website: trailsix.geog.ubc.ca
Email: trailsix@ubcgsc.ca

Printed by Bond Reproductions Inc.
1450 Adanac Street, Vancouver, BC V5L 2C3
Website: bondrepro.com
Telephone: 604-683-1251

© UBC Geography Students' Association, March 2023

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the individual authors.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| FOREWORD | iv |
| LETTER FROM THE EDITOR | vi |
| “Third Places” and the Politics of Geographic Scale: LGBTQ+ Culture in Vancouver’s Davie Village <i>Santosh Muralidaran</i> | 2 |
| Caribou Decline: Are Predators to blame? An evaluation of wolf-caribou dynamics, linear feature restoration and grey wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>) control as methods for caribou (<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>) recovery. <i>Benedikt Rohr</i> | 13 |
| <i>La Banlieue Parisienne</i>: Victim of French Epistemic Violence <i>Renée Rochefort</i> | 31 |
| From Latin America to Palestine: On the Importance of Transnational Solidarity in the Fight Against Settler-Colonial and Imperial Allies <i>Mariam Abdelaziz</i> | 40 |
| Beyond the Crazy and Rich: A Post-Modernist Interpretation of Urbanism in Singapore <i>Ryan Ng</i> | 51 |
| Sand as Shifting Territory: Sand Extraction and Land Reclamation in Singapore <i>Alina Debyser</i> | 61 |
| <i>Netto-Uyoku</i>’s Own Virtual Nation: Computational Propaganda and Algorithms on Social Media <i>Sayano Izu</i> | 74 |
| The Creation of Distance: Examining the Role of National Identity Binaries In Contracted Boundary Policy Using the Tampa Crisis of 2001 <i>Jacob Ereshefsky</i> | 84 |
| From Anarchism to Marxism and Back Again: Critical Geography and Decolonizing the University <i>Liam Jagoe</i> | 94 |
| EDITOR AND AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES | 104 |

FOREWORD

This is my fourth year writing the foreword to *Trail Six*, and I find myself compelled to say some of what I have said in past years. Mainly, I feel such gratitude to be a part of a discipline that encompasses such an expansive range of topics. It feels natural and obvious to me that a paper on wolf-caribou dynamics in British Columbia (Rohr) should sit within the same journal as a paper on LGBTQ+ culture in Davie Street Village in Vancouver (Muralidaran), and another on Singapore as a space of flows (Ng). These are just a few of the many facets of geography.

I learned a lot from these papers. I learned that Singapore is the top importer of sand globally and has the highest per capita consumption of sand. Singapore has increased its territory by 65 square miles since 1965 through legal and illegal imports of sand from the neighbouring countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia (Debyser). Collectively, these papers say much about the workings of state power and nationalism, and how different geographies at varying scales are intertwined with processes of political and social consolidation and marginalisation. Renee Rochefort's study of the Paris *banlieue* (suburbs) traces how the stigmatisation of territory and residents are intertwined. Jacob Erefshefsky documents how Australia literally shrunk its national borders in 2001 to evade the claims of asylum seekers arriving in international waters, and how a bordered discourse of 'us' and 'them' legitimated such an action. Sayano Izu traces how the computational propaganda of *netto-uyoku* in Japan targets marginalised communities, perpetuates claims of Japanese superiority as nation state and culture, and supports a peculiar type of neonationalism. Ryan Ng traces the extent to which the image of Singapore as a 'smart city' of strong government and broad citizen consent depends on silencing the experiences of migrant workers who build much of the urban infrastructure (e.g., public housing) on which citizen consent depends.

I enjoyed the commitments that authors brought to their papers, and clearly bring to their studies at UBC. Mariam Abdelaziz's social justice organising work outside the classroom informs her examination of the connections between anti-colonial struggles in Palestine and Latin America. She roots her own organising in histories of alliances by settler-colonial states, focusing in particular on US and Israel as settler colonial states deploying similar notions of terra nullius, military connections between Guatemala and Israel, and a history of transnational solidarity between Cuba and Palestine. Liam Jagoe's examination of a tradition of anarchist scholarship in Geography emerges from his frustration with the limits of his education at UBC. Notably, the flexibility of our program (and faculty) has allowed him to explore this anarchist thought as he aspires to his ideal of a decolonial anarchist university.

At this moment of deep suspicion about AI-assisted plagiarism, which has led to suggestions that instructors move away from essay assignments, these papers affirm the essay as a key site of learning and teaching. The essays that I was sent to prepare this foreword had the marginal comments of the faculty and graduate students who reviewed

them. These marginalia were fascinating. Reviewers asked authors to refine their claims, chided them for presenting strawman arguments, and provided additional readings to substantiate and enrich their papers. They also cheered the authors on from the margins: "really exciting piece. It's been exciting seeing it evolve. I am looking forward to seeing where it goes from here." In other words, reviewers treated the authors seriously as scholars and their comments reveal that any piece of academic writing involves a community of effort and care. This of course includes the editorial work involved in creating *Trail Six*. My deep gratitude to the editors of this issue: Mark Daudlin, Editor-in-chief and the 20 other students who formed the editorial board.

Geraldine Pratt

Head of Department, UBC Department of Geography



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The namesake of this journal is Trail 6, the pathway of about 500 stairs that connects UBC's Point Grey Campus to Wreck Beach. The name was chosen by founding Editors-in-chief Danny Oleksiuk and Christopher Chan because "in its limited space the trail reveals a spectrum of geographical issues" – the journal is meant to do the same.

I was a frequent visitor to both Trail 6 and Wreck Beach during my first year at UBC in 2017-2018. Running the stairs was an excellent way to get some quick exercise in, and watching the sun set over the ocean never got old. After not going for several years, I've returned to these locations twice in the past school year as of writing this letter: on December 7, for the first and final Polar Bear Swim of my undergraduate career, and again on March 2, a few days before bringing this final manuscript to print.

As a bright-eyed first-year I was blind Trail 6's innumerable layers of significance, but on the most recent visit, my eyes were open it. The land's millennia of history under the stewardship of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people must first be considered, acknowledged and respected. Students from around the world are hosted by the campus that now occupies it. Though the pathway is more sparsely populated at this time of year, UBC Students are still a consistent presence, out of breath on their way up from the exertion, a chilly swim in the ocean, or both. It remains a place of recreation for people of all ages and backgrounds, and even a place of contention between the various groups who seek its use. Reflecting on this visit, my years of geographical education, and now my own tenure as the Editor-in-chief for Volume 17, I can affirm firsthand that the words of Danny and Christopher still ring true for both the journal and its namesake.

This volume exists because of the unwavering effort and commitment of the editors, authors, faculty, layout designers, and artists involved. I would also like to offer sincere gratitude to the Geography Student's Association, the Department of Geography, and UBC for their continued support of Trail Six over 17 years. Furthermore, a special thank-you goes out to my fellow GSA Executives, who have done so much for this journal from behind the scenes and foster the community that it is made by and for.

In the limited space of this volume, we were able to capture a snapshot of exemplary scholarship that goes around the globe to show a vast array of geographical issues. The articles are deliberately ordered to start in Vancouver's downtown, travel eastward across the country, oceans, and continents, and return UBC once again. Even though they only make up a tiny sample of the work produced by undergraduates in the Department, these compositions demonstrate the superb academic prowess, deep thought, and worldliness that UBC Geography Students possess. I hope you enjoy, as I did, exploring the rich geographies of Trail Six.

Mark Daudlin

Editor-in-chief, Trail Six Volume 17



“Third Places” and the Politics of Geographic Scale: Queer Representations in Vancouver’s Davie Village

by: Santosh Muralidaran

The city of Vancouver is often praised for the integration of its third places into the city. “Third places” is a concept developed by sociologist Ray Oldenburg describing urban spaces that are not the private home or workplace, such as cafés, bars, public parks, and restaurants. In particular, the third places of Vancouver’s gay neighbourhood, Davie Village, stand out for how they advance queer representation and, more notably, allow the 2SLGBTQ+ community to reclaim and shape their experience on the urban scale. First introduced by geographer Neil Smith, geographic scale refers to the division of space on three levels: the global, the national, and the urban. Geographer Peter Taylor and feminist and Indigenous studies scholar Julie Tomiak further developed this concept to argue how the global and national scales, products of colonialism and capitalism, are the dominant scales, and have resulted in the exclusion and marginalization of certain populations in the urban scale. This paper looks at a case study of four restaurants in Davie Village, demonstrating how the integration of Davie Village’s third places into the neighbourhood challenges the scalar dynamics that have worked against the 2SLGBTQ+ community and offering insight to geographers and city planners on how third places can be used to serve marginalized minority populations.

Introduction

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg first developed the concept of a “place” in cities, a concept that relies on the notion that in their daily lives people spend their time between three distinct places: their home (the first place), work (the second place), and the third place, where they engage with their community by sharing ideas, meeting people, and socializing (Butler & Diaz, 2016). Naturally, third places differ from the first and second places as they are open to the public. Often, however, they are also commercialized, taking the form of cafés, coffee shops, bars, or public outdoor commercial areas.

When assessed using renowned geographer Neil Smith’s concept of geographic scale, third places are on the urban scale. Smith first introduced his concept of geographic scale in a 1982

article titled “Gentrification and Uneven Development” (Smith, 1982). He argued that uneven development can be seen on three “scales”, with the lowest being the urban scale in the city, followed by the national and global scales (Jones et al., 2016, p. 140). However, while Smith did not attribute social processes to geographic scales, geographer Peter Taylor did. Taylor claimed that the global scale represents the scale of “reality”, where different growth cycles determine the spatial division of labour and distribution of goods around the world; the national scale represents the scale of “ideology”, which denotes the ideologies of nationalism that result from the global scale; and the urban scale represents the scale of “experience”, where individuals experience, in cities, the particular effects that result from the global and national scales (Marston, 2000, p. 228). The global and national scales are the

dominant scales that make and shape the urban experience.

This results in uneven development between cities because different cities develop in various ways while being subject to the patterns of global capitalism. However, within cities, it also results in the marginalization of specific groups over others. In her work *Unsettling Ottawa*, Tomiak (2016) discusses the marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada through the concepts of geographic scales. She argues how the dominant national scale in Canada has, through a system that was created and solidified through the process of settler colonialism on the global scale, led to the past and ongoing displacement, control, and surveillance of Indigenous peoples in Canadian cities (p. 11). When Indigenous peoples protest, then, it challenges these scalar dynamics. Similar to Indigenous peoples in Canada, 2SLGBTQ+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) Canadians have been subject to systemic oppression and discrimination resulting in their marginalization on the urban scale. Although granted many rights such as same-sex marriage and legal protection from discrimination, 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians today still face systemic issues related to mental health, harassment, and safety. For example, according to a Canadian government 2020 report, one-third of 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians today consider their mental health poor (three times higher than in heterosexual Canadians), and are more likely to have health-risk behaviors related to substances such as binge drinking or non-prescribed drug use (Statistics Canada, 2020). Canadian police have

also reported a consistent increase in hate crimes against 2SLGBTQ+ people since 2009 (with one of the highest being from 2018 to 2019, when the percentage of hate crimes increased by 41%), mostly against gay and lesbian populations targeting their homosexuality (Statistics Canada, 2021).

The 2SLGBTQ+ rainbow pride flag was originally designed as a symbol to help increase the visibility of the 2SLGBTQ+ community around the world, recognizing the unique discriminations that they face as a result of their sexual minority statuses. It first originated in San Francisco, California, with openly gay man and drag queen Gilbert Baker. He chose a flag specifically because, in his words, it was a way of “proclaiming [the community’s] visibility or saying, ‘This is who I am!’” (Gonzalez, n.d.).

Vancouver’s Davie Village in the West End stands out for its use of pride flags in its third places. While the pride flag has since been waved in numerous pride parades across the world or displayed in various places in the month of June (2SLGBTQ+ pride month), such representations are temporary, while the pride flags in Davie Village are permanent (such as some permanent rainbow-colored crosswalks) as they mark the culture of the neighbourhood. More than that, however, Davie Village even differs from other permanently “gay neighbourhoods” in Canada in that it began as a protest against anti-2SLGBTQ+ sentiments and government actions. 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, predominantly gay men, began moving into the West End in the 1950s. Once homosexuality was decriminalized in

1969 in Canada, 2SLGBTQ+ residents began to open gay bars in the area, but any representation of 2SLGBTQ+ culture was a source of social controversy. The West End Business Improvement Area (BIA)—BIAs were chapters of the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce that was present in all neighborhoods at the time—even tried to take down rainbow banners that 2SLGBTQ+ residents had put up (Murray, 2016, p. 85). As a result, a separate BIA was created for Davie Village specifically, only a small portion of the West End. This was a step forward, yet although its establishment was understood to be to advance queer representation in the neighbourhood (since it was in retaliation to the West End BIA which was against queer representation), in 2006 its stated interests still only emphasised economic revitalization of the neighbourhood and not its growing queer character. By contrast, at the time the stated interests of the BIA of Toronto's gay neighbourhood, Church-Wellesley Village, openly included its commitment to sexual liberation, social justice, and equality (Borbridge, 2007, p. 131).

Today, the Davie Village BIA is a vocal supporter of the 2SLGBTQ+ culture of Davie Village and Vancouver as a whole is one of the only two cities in Canada that has a 2SLGBTQ+ advisory committee to advocate for queer issues in municipal government, yet this history of the emergence of Davie Village highlights how the road to becoming a gay neighbourhood was far from smooth, and the separation of Davie Village from the West End to exist as a gay neighbourhood was a form of protest in and of itself. Pride flags in Davie Village's

third places, then, represent the continual domination of 2SLGBTQ+ residents in their neighbourhood and the resilience of a marginalized community on the urban scale.

In this paper, I will use photos that I took displaying 2SLGBTQ+ culture in Davie Village as a case study to critically analyze Vancouver's "third places" as they relate to the geographic concept of scale. I will first discuss the integration of third places within Davie Village, then show how they advance 2SLGBTQ+ representation, and finally use the concept of scale to argue how it allows the 2SLGBTQ+ community to establish agency in the city and shape their urban experience themselves.

The Integration of Third Places in Davie Village

Integrating third places in city planning is not as simple as opening a café along a main street. Several scholars have conducted empirical research to suggest specific ways that the integration of third places within cities can foster community or a higher quality of life for city residents. Notable examples include Daneshpajouh and Xi's (2021) study of Iran's Tehran district and Cabras and Mount's (2017) study of towns in rural Ireland.

That being said, such studies often rely on different interpretations of third places' integration within the city. Mehta and Bosson (2010) discuss this gap in the literature and, after a study of three Main Streets in Massachusetts, propose four possible physical characteristics of third places that allow for the best integration into the city (p. 779). I summarize these

characteristics below and will use them to analyze the third places in Davie Village in this paper:

- Permeability: the literal elimination of barriers between the third place and the street, allowing for ease of access and a sense of connectedness between the two
- Seating: dynamic seating options provided by the third place
- Shelter: places that provide shade and/or protection from certain weather (such as rain or sunlight)
- Personalization: an act of a third place “claiming its territory” through specific symbols and visuals to add character to the area

In his book *Vancouverism*, renowned Canadian urban planner Larry Beasley (2019) discusses how a key strategy to planning Vancouver as a city was the inclusion of well-integrated third places, citing methods similar to the aforementioned criteria such as the closeness of third places to streets (p. 121). The third places in Davie Village stand out in particular because of how they follow Mehta and Bosson’s (2010) four criteria in a way that provides visibility specifically to the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Figure 1

Bonta



Note. Bonta, an Italian restaurant, in the southern part of Davie Village. Own work.

Figure 1 shows the front of the restaurant “Bonta,” displaying an example of a third place integrated within Davie Village according to Mehta and Bosson’s (2010) four criteria. First, the entirety of the wall is replaced by a garage-style door that is fully open. This is significant because it is not a normal feature of most restaurants as they tend to be closed and more exclusive spaces that, if anything, will merely open their front door or a window that is only partially covering the wall. Therefore, Bonta enables a sense of permeability between the third place and the street by eliminating the barrier between the two. Second, there is seating both inside and adjacent to the opening, allowing the

person in the picture to exist close to the street. Third, Bonta keeps the chairs near the opening as well as inside the room to offer partial shade (like in the man's position) or full shade (fully inside). Finally, in the sign in the bottom left of the picture, the word "OPEN" is on top of an 2SLGBTQ+ pride flag, allowing Bonta to personalize itself. This is especially significant because its service—serving Italian food—is not inherently connected to the 2SLGBTQ+ community, but Bonta nonetheless "claims its territory" as a

third place in Davie Village by including an 2SLGBTQ+ flag to foster a welcoming and safe environment for all, as the restaurant is literally "open" to the marginalized group.

While Bonta may have provided a seemingly minimal (although no less significant) example with just a small flag on the sign, other third places within Davie Village have integrated using more prominent representations of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Figure 2

Dosa & Curry Entrance



Note. Entrance to Dosa & Curry, a South Indian restaurant in the heart of Davie Village. Own work.

Figure 3

Dosa & Curry Street View



Note. View of Dosa & Curry taken from the edge of the sidewalk. Own work.

Moving north along Davie Village, Figure 2 shows a picture of the entrance to “Dosa & Curry” and Figure 3 shows its street view. Just like Bonta, the windows are garage-style doors (to the right) that are fully open, allowing for permeability between the restaurant and the street. Figure 3 visualizes the closeness of the restaurant to the street, showing how it is only separated by the sidewalk. Thus, by replacing the wall with openings, Dosa & Curry allows for the permeability of their third place to the street just like Bonta does. Also similar to Bonta, Dosa & Curry has seating both near the opening and further away. Moreover, the restaurant

includes shelter, though in this case not only inside, but also outside when entering the restaurant, as the restaurant sign itself is on an awning that provides shelter to customers as they walk in. There are 10 pride flags hanging from it, and from the right to the left there is a mini mural of the pride flag, modified with additional colours that represent BIPOC and transgender communities. Dosa & Curry personalizes their third place to be consistent with the character of Davie Village and “claims its territory” in the neighbourhood through its use of these visual additions to the front of their store.

Figure 4

Bean Around the World



Note. Side view of Bean Around the World. Own work.

Close by to Dosa & Curry, “Bean Around the World” as seen in Figure 4 exhibits a similar means of integrating within Davie Village with a fully open section of wall to allow for permeability. Additionally, there is strategic seating with a few sets of chairs and tables that directly face the street, covered by adequate shelter. The large, modified 2SLGBTQ+ flag hangs freely in the open section, visible to people on the street and sidewalk as well as everyone inside. Unlike Dosa & Curry and Bonta, Bean Around the World is a chain coffee shop with many locations across the province, many of which do not have similar layouts or the same flag; this demonstrates how significant it is for the Bean Around the World store to be so individually integrated within Davie Village.

Applying the Concept of Scale

The existence of the Bean Around the World chain store in Davie Village in particular highlights how these third places are located in the neighbourhood ultimately for capital gains. After all, the “urban scale” as an “experience” merely functions as a product of the capitalist global scale, which percolates into the governance of the city, as per Taylor's theory. In this process, the 2gSLGBTQ+ community has faced systemic oppression in Canada (and in the world), which has left them marginalized within said capitalist system.

While Tomiak (2016) does not rely on Taylor's specific framework of geographic scales when discussing the politics of scale in relation to Indigenous resistance in Ottawa, it does greatly help in understanding her conclusions. Tomiak (2016) discusses how dominant

scales pass down ways of knowing which exclude minority groups such as Indigenous communities. She analyzes the many ways in which Indigenous communities have resisted in Ottawa—such as a hunger strike (p. 15)—and concludes that the key to “advancing decolonial spatial imaginations” involves

engaging minority communities, ontologies, and politics such that their voices are heard and demands are met (p. 17). In this way, they shift the urban scale “experience” to their own experience—not one that the systems of oppression from the global and national scales have subjected them to.

Figure 5

Moxie’s



Note. Photo of the entrance to Moxie’s, taken from across the street. Own work.

In figure 5, “Moxie’s,” another chain restaurant, is shown. Moxie’s permeability to the street stands out because not only does it have a huge open space at its entrance, but it also has seating directly on the street, protected by a fence, offering both sheltered seating and outdoor seating depending on customers’ preferences. Moreover, its personification is embodied through the fence, which has been painted in its entirety with the pride flag. This

representation of the community is even more prominent than that of Dosa & Curry and Bean Around the World.

In this case, it is impossible to eat at the restaurant without encountering the flag, as it is prominent and also visible from the inside. This helps to advance the 2SLGBTQ+ community’s presence because it reminds people of their existence. Even with simple activities such as eating out for a meal,

people are reminded of and prompted to reflect on the community that has been historically silenced and stripped of their voices. Since the urban scale of “experience” was built to benefit certain communities and not others, the representation of the latter communities is of utmost importance. Third places’ integration into the city by advancing 2SLGBTQ+ representation—whether more subtly as in Bonta’s case or more overtly as in Moxie’s case—allows for the 2SLGBTQ+ community to claim their own experience on the urban scale within the capitalist and colonial framework that was designed to oppress them, just as Indigenous communities did in Ottawa.

Conclusion

This paper used photographic examples of the third places of Bonta, Dosa & Curry, Bean Around the World, and Moxie to make the case that they serve as a way for 2SLGBTQ+ communities to claim their own urban “experience” by establishing their presence in the city. In my analysis, I employed Mehta and Bosson’s (2010) four criteria for third places’ integration into the city to show how each of the third places “personalized” themselves (as per the fourth criteria) to advance 2SLGBTQ+ representation and create a welcoming and safe environment for all. I then used Tomiak’s (2016) theory to apply these concepts on a geographic scale, demonstrating how my case study provides an example of how a minority group can use third places to establish agency in the city, and shape their own urban experiences, when they have been barred from doing so due to systemic

oppression from dominant geographic scales.

Many would question the necessity of the 2SLGBTQ+ representation in Davie Village. After all, as previously noted, Davie Village was born out of protest against anti-2SLGBTQ+ discrimination and efforts to take down visual symbols of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in the streets. However, this serves as an example of how Mehta and Bosson’s (2010) criteria for the integration of third places in the city can be used to serve marginalized communities, and not merely the elite or those who have always benefited from the political and social organization of society. Although Davie Village in Vancouver does not automatically confer the “decolonial spatial imaginations” that Tomiak (2016) discusses (p. 17), the visibility of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Davie Village as a result of its third places’ integration into the city is certainly a step forward in reaching that reality. In city planning, third places such as cafés, restaurants, bars, parks, and more should be seen, then, as ways in which historically oppressed minority communities can shape their own experiences on the urban scale.

References

- Beasley, L. (2019). *Vancouverism*. UBC Press and On Point Press.
- Borbridge, R. (2007). *Sexuality and the City: Exploring gaybourhoods and the urban village in Vancouver, BC* (thesis). Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.
- Butler, S. M., & Diaz, C. (2016, September 14). "Third places" as community builders. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/09/14/third-places-as-community-builders/#:text=Third%20places%20is%20a%20term,good%20time%2C%0and%20build%20relationships>
- Cabras, I., & Mount, M. P. (2017). How third places Foster and shape community cohesion, economic development and social capital: The case of pubs in rural Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 55, 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.07.013>
- Daneshpajouh, H., & Boo Xi, W. (2021). Explanation the role of third places in the socialization of urban districts. *Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability*, 3(1), 108-115. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?id=920336>
- Gonzalez, N. (n.d.). How did the rainbow flag become a symbol of LGBTQ pride? Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/story/how-did-the-rainbow-flag-become-a-symbol-of-lgbt-pride>
- Jones, J. P., Leitner, H., Marston, S. A., & Sheppard, E. (2016). Neil Smith's scale. *Antipode: A Radical Journal in Geography*, 49, 138–152. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12254>
- Marston, S. A. (2000). The social construction of scale. *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(2), 219–242. <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200674086272>
- Mehta, V., & Bosson, J. K. (2010). Third places and the social life of Streets. *Environment and Behavior*, 42(6), 779–805. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916509344677>
- Murray, C. (2016). Queering Vancouver: Where LGBTQism meets Vancouverism in the Creative City. *BC Studies*, (118), 71–96.
- Smith, N. (1982). Gentrification and uneven development. *Economic Geography*, 58(2), 139-155. <https://doi.org/10.2307/143793>
- Statistics Canada. (2020). *Sexual minority people almost three times more likely to experience violent victimization than heterosexual people*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada website <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200909/dq200909a-eng.htm>

- Statistics Canada. (2021). *A statistical portrait of Canada's diverse LGBTQ2+ communities*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada website
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210615/dq210615a-eng.htm>
- Tomiak, J. (2016). Unsettling Ottawa: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Resistance, and the Politics of Scale. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 25(1), 8–21.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26195303>

Caribou decline: Are Predators to blame? An evaluation of wolf-caribou dynamics, linear feature restoration, and grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) control as methods for caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) recovery.

by: Benedikt Rohr

*In the past decade, woodland caribou have declined by more than 50% in British Columbia. In response, the B.C. government has identified wolf culling as an effective mitigation strategy for this issue. This paper explores the current literature on the interactions between woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) and grey wolves (*Canis lupus*) in Western Canada. Specifically, this article focuses on predator-prey dynamics and caribou recovery measures, including linear feature restoration and wolf reduction programs. Studies suggest that linear features (LFs), created to aid industrial activity, indirectly facilitate caribou decline by enhancing wolf predation. While structural and functional LF restoration, e.g., by facilitating vegetation growth and creating barriers to movement, would be beneficial for caribou populations, these measures are very time and cost-intensive. The research indicates that wolf reduction programs might be necessary to prevent the extinction of at-risk caribou populations. Therefore, I suggest that a combination of management strategies, including wolf control for some critically declining caribou populations, would be most effective for caribou stabilization. To illustrate this, three caribou populations in B.C. are evaluated. On the basis of their individual pressures and rates of decline, a combination of recovery strategies is recommended.*

Keywords: caribou recovery, wolf-caribou dynamics, linear features, wolf control

Caribou decline: Are Predators to blame?

Around 12% of all species on Earth and more than 8% of species in Canada are threatened with extinction, which is primarily attributable to the anthropogenic degradation of habitats (CESCC, 2020; IPBES, 2019). Caribou are among the species that have experienced drastic population declines over the past decades. Native to North America and once abundantly found across the northern regions of all Canadian provinces, every subspecies of caribou is currently threatened in Canada (Government of Canada, 2021). One of the subspecies, the woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus* sp. *caribou*),

has declined more than 50% over the past decade in British Columbia (Government of BC, 2022a). Commonly found in mature and mountainous forests across B.C., woodland caribou have tremendous ecological and cultural value. Not only are woodland caribou critical to ecosystem health and biodiversity, but they are also particularly important for First Nations in Canada. Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have hunted woodland caribou for subsistence and relied on them for cultural and spiritual practices (Natcher, 2009). Despite the species' significance, much of its habitat experiences degradation by extensive industrial operations for potential

economic gain (Allan et al., 2020). However, companies at times overstate the economic and employment benefits of proposed industrial projects, as there is no binding obligation to deliver on their financial predictions (Allan et al., 2020). As such, ecological and social costs of caribou habitat degradation may outweigh the short-term economic gain of certain industrial projects, especially if project approvals are based on exaggerated claims of benefit (Allan et al., 2020). Notably, the B.C. government is using public funds to subsidize energy sector developments within caribou ranges (Disilvestro et al., 2021). Recent evidence suggests that resource extractive activity in caribou habitats is the primary distal driver for woodland caribou decline by negatively impacting the dynamics between caribou and their predators. Specifically, wolf (*Canis lupus*) predation has been suggested as one of the main proximate drivers of caribou mortality (Latham et al., 2011).

In response to this finding, the B.C. government has focused on wolf culling as a mitigation effort for woodland caribou decline. Since 2015, several hundred wolves have been culled via aerial shootings, and in early 2022, the B.C. government approved wolf culling for another 5 years (Weisgarber, 2022). This decision has been controversial. A government survey with more than 15,000 participants found that 59% of respondents opposed “predator reduction to help with caribou recovery” (Government of BC, 2022b). This controversy has prompted the present investigation into wolf-caribou dynamics and the effectiveness of

caribou recovery strategies, such as habitat restoration and wolf control.

Linear Features & Predator-Prey Dynamics

A large body of literature suggests that wolf predation is one of the proximate drivers of woodland caribou decline (Bergerud & Elliot, 1986; DeMars et al., 2018; Festa-Bianchet et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2015; Latham et al., 2011; McLoughlin et al., 2003; Serrouya et al., 2020; Wittmer et al., 2005). Caribou and wolves have been co-evolving for more than 50,000 years (Chowns, 2004). Over time, they appear to have evolved a relationship in which they reached an “approximate equilibrium in catch-escape encounters,” as suggested by Thomas (1995). This stable predator-prey relationship has changed significantly, as we have observed increasing declines in woodland caribou from wolf predation over the past decades (Dickie et al., 2020). Therefore, we must examine what led to the alteration in the predator-prey dynamic that contributes to woodland caribou mortality.

Studies suggest that industrial activity, causing habitat changes and degradation, is primarily responsible for the altered wolf-caribou relationship (DeMars et al., 2018; McKenzie et al., 2012). Specifically, industrial developments that involve the large-scale construction of linear features (LFs), which are landscape disturbances that aid in resource extractive purposes, including roads, pipelines, and seismic lines, enhance wolf movement into and within caribou habitats and facilitate wolf hunting efficiency (DeMars et al.,

2018; Dickie et al., 2020; McKay et al., 2021; Mumma et al., 2017; Newton et al., 2017). This is because LFs, characterized by little to no tree cover, provide wolves with corridors of low resistance.

Further, logging disturbances and LFs transform sections of mature forest into early seral forest with generous understory vegetation, which is a primary food source of moose. The increase in plant productivity has led to an influx of moose populations into caribou refugia and has increased the overall moose abundance (Serrouya et al., 2021). This increase in moose abundance sustains wolf populations beyond what could be supported by declining caribou herds. Therefore, moose indirectly increase caribou predation by wolves (apparent competition) (Serrouya et al., 2021).

This suggests that the energy, mining, and forestry sectors indirectly facilitate caribou decline from wolf predation (Latham et al., 2011).

The following three studies exemplify the influence of LFs on predator-prey relationships in more detail.

Over a period of four years, DeMars and colleagues used GPS data to examine how LFs in northern B.C. impact the dynamics between wolves and woodland caribou during caribou calving season (DeMars et al., 2018). They found that the movement of wolves into caribou refugia was significantly enhanced by LFs, which increased the likelihood of wolf-caribou encounters.

These findings are substantiated by a study conducted in Alberta, where

researchers recorded wolf movement in regions with extensive energy developments (McKenzie et al., 2012). Their data showed that wolves moved significantly faster on seismic lines, deforested corridors that aid in energy exploration. Using simulations based on real landscapes of the studied region, the authors found that wolf-prey encounter rates increased with higher seismic line density.

These studies indicate that LFs increase the caribou-wolf encounter rate and allow wolves to move faster. However, the findings do not directly demonstrate that faster wolf movement results in higher prey mortality.

Vander-Vennen and colleagues collected GPS data to monitor the movement of wolves (the predators) and moose (the prey) in northern Ontario (Vander-Vennen et al., 2016). The researchers used their data to estimate the prey-kill rate, depending on the movement speed of predators. Their findings suggest that higher predator movement speed increases the prey-kill rate, supporting the notion that LFs are linked to greater wolf hunting efficiency.

Overall, the scientific literature supports the notion that LFs cause an increase in wolf predation (DeMars et al., 2018; McKenzie et al., 2012; Vander-Vennen et al., 2016). This has important implications for caribou recovery strategies.

Mitigation Strategies

Habitat protection, which would prohibit further resource extraction operations, and consequently reduce the number of LFs in caribou habitat, would

likely be effective for caribou recovery (DeMars et al., 2018; Dickie et al., 2021; McCutchen, 2007). However, due to the current dominance of fossil fuels over Canada's energy mix, large-scale reductions in energy resource extraction are unlikely to occur in the immediate future (Disilvestro et al., 2021). As woodland caribou continue to decline, conservation measures that can be rapidly implemented alongside long-term habitat protection need to be considered. One such strategy is to restore LFs in caribou habitats, structurally and functionally (Keim et al., 2021; McKay, 2021; Pyper et al., 2014). Structural restoration involves the use of silvicultural treatments, such as seed planting, to promote vegetation growth and restore the environment to an undisturbed state (Pyper et al., 2014). On the other hand, functional restoration focuses on hindering predator movement on LFs. This also involves silvicultural treatments but, additionally, includes the placement of obstacles, e.g., wood constructions, on LFs (Pyper et al., 2014).

Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of structural and functional LF restoration programs. (Serrouya et al., 2020). Using GPS collars on wolves in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Dickie et al. (2017) examined how vegetation recovery on LFs impacts wolf activity. Their results indicate that wolves primarily selected LFs with low and sparse vegetation. This suggests that restoration should be focused on LFs with low vegetation to reduce wolf movement efficiency. In a previous study, the same researchers found that wolves are more likely to avoid traveling

on LFs that are narrower than seven meters, likely attributable to poorer visibility of the landscapes (Dickie et al., 2016).

These findings indicate that vegetation recovery and narrowing of LFs would be effective LF restoration strategies. However, these strategies can take many decades to present demonstrable effects (Dickie et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to find alternative, less time-intensive recovery measures.

Keim et al. conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of placing obstacles, such as mounded soil and felled trees, on LFs to disrupt wolf movement and reduce caribou-wolf encounters (Keim et al., 2021). Their analysis suggested that such obstacles reduced encounters by 85%. Notably, this reduction in the encounter rate remained the same over time, presenting evidence for an effective long-term caribou recovery method that does not involve wolf culling. However, the authors did not measure a positive population-level effect for caribou, which is likely a result of the small-scale implementation of the LF restoration measure. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent functional LF restoration must occur to present population-level benefits.

How much LF restoration is needed to realize caribou recovery?

Serrouya et al. (2020) evaluated how caribou density would be affected by partial and full restoration of LFs that exist in the boreal rainforest of Western

Canada. They employed theoretical models of predator-prey dynamics and found that the spatial overlap between wolves and caribou impacted caribou predation rates much more than the traveling speed of wolves. The authors concluded that a full and partial restoration of LFs would induce a 2.5- and 1.6-fold increase in caribou density, respectively (Serrouya et al., 2020). These findings suggest that full LF restoration could, theoretically, have significant population-level benefits for caribou. Additionally, as the spatial overlap between wolves and caribou had a greater effect on wolf hunting efficiency than movement speed, an emphasis on restoring LFs leading into caribou habitat may be most beneficial. It is important to note that partial restoration alone would involve restoring around 350,000 km of LFs in boreal forests of western Canada, which would be extremely costly (Serrouya et al., 2020). A recent simulation on the cost-effectiveness of caribou conservation strategies anticipated costs of around \$532,000 per caribou for aggressive LF restoration, and around \$26,000 per caribou for predator control approaches (Johnson et al., 2019). Therefore, while intensive LF restoration could successfully stabilize caribou populations, it is associated with exceedingly high financial costs over long time periods (50+ years) (Johnson et al., 2019). Notably, simulated predator control data indicates that wolf reductions could increase caribou density 3.9-fold, which is almost two times greater than the effect of full LF restoration (Serrouya et al., 2020). Thus, while LF restoration in caribou habitats takes place, predator control methods

should be considered to allow for short-term caribou recovery.

Are wolf reduction programs an effective method for woodland caribou recovery?

Hervieux and colleagues monitored the survival of caribou and their calves via radio collars during a government-delivered wolf reduction program in Alberta (Hervieux et al., 2014). Their analysis suggests that the mean growth rate of the woodland caribou herd following wolf control measures increased by 4.6%. Conversely, the caribou population in the control area showed a 4.7% decline, presenting evidence for the effectiveness of wolf culling in preventing further, short-term caribou decline. While the authors recommended that wolf control measures should be considered for caribou recovery, they emphasized that these constitute a short-term method that would only be effective in the long term if habitat protection occurs simultaneously (Hervieux et al., 2014; Hervieux et al., 2015).

These findings were apparently supported by Serrouya et al., 2019, who conducted a study evaluating the effects of different management strategies on caribou populations in North America in an area spanning over 90,000 km². Their results demonstrated that caribou populations only stabilized in regions where wolf-culling occurred (Serrouya et al., 2019). Consequently, the authors emphasize that in order to increase caribou abundance, a combination of adaptive management strategies, including wolf reductions, should be implemented.

However, Harding and colleagues criticized the conclusions by Serrouya et al., 2019, highlighting several statistical flaws in their analysis, such as the exclusion of potential confounding variables, the omission of a null model, and a small sample size (Harding et al., 2020). After reanalysis of their data, Harding et al., 2020, found no statistical support for the claim that wolf reductions increase caribou populations.

Nonetheless, other studies further support that wolf reductions can effectively stabilize caribou populations in the short term. For example, in their examination of a wolf reduction program in the Yukon, Hayes and colleagues found that wolf culling significantly improved caribou recruitment (Hayes et al., 2003). Additionally, a B.C. government report has documented significant caribou population increases following the implementation of a wolf reduction program, also noting that its positive effects have increased with time (Bridger, 2019). It is important to note that wolf reductions must potentially be continued until caribou herds have reached self-sustaining levels (e.g. 1000 individuals) (Bridger, 2019). While the intensity of cullings could be reduced over time, depending on the wolf recovery rate and the success of LF recovery, wolf control would likely have to be implemented for several decades.

To summarize, previous research indicates that wolf reductions would be beneficial for caribou recovery as an emergency, short-term option for critically declining caribou populations (Bridger, 2019; Hayes et al., 2003;

Hervieux et al., 2014). A medium-term strategy to reduce wolf-related caribou mortality is large-scale LF restoration, e.g., via vegetation recovery and narrowing of LFs (Dickie et al., 2017). However, due to the vast extent of LFs across caribou habitat, this is very costly and time-intensive (Johnson et al., 2019; Serrouya et al., 2020). A novel measure involves the placement of obstacles on LFs to reduce wolf foraging efficiency; this might be a more cost-effective solution for caribou recovery that does not involve wolf reductions (Keim et al., 2021). Generally, the literature indicates that habitat protection in combination with several management strategies, tailored specifically to distinct caribou populations, is most effective for caribou recovery (DeMars et al., 2018; Serrouya et al., 2019).

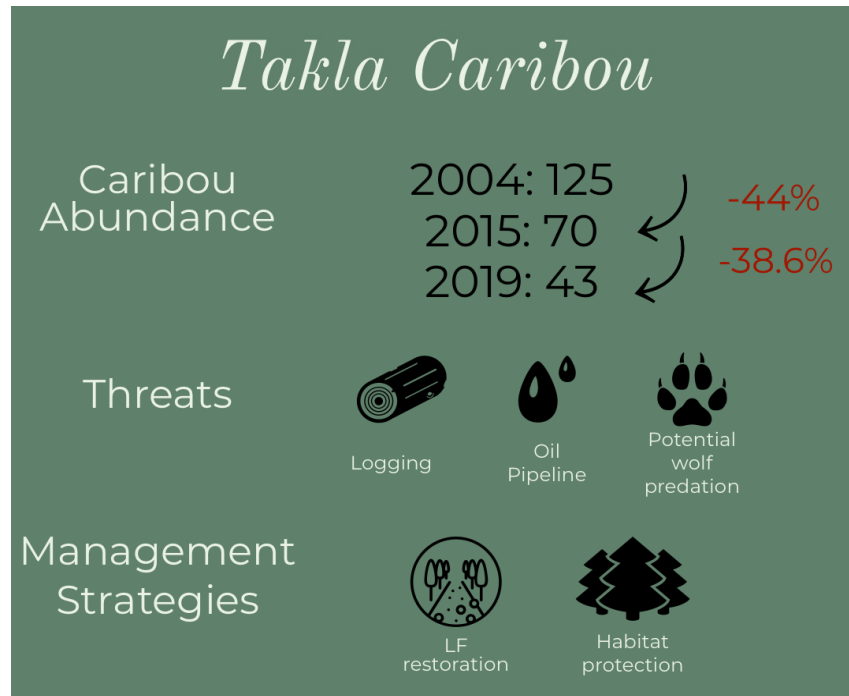
Recommendations

To exemplify specific management scenarios, I present the status of three woodland caribou herds in B.C. Based on their population levels, their primary threats, and the discussed scientific evidence, I recommend management strategies that could effectively stabilize the caribou populations.

Takla Caribou

Figure 1

Takla Caribou – Abundance, Threats, and Management Strategies



Note. The figure was created by the author [B.Rohr] with data from the B.C. Government (Government of BC, 2020a).

The Takla caribou subpopulation is a herd that roams the sub-boreal montane ecosystems surrounding Takla Lake (Government of BC, 2020a). Their population size was estimated at 125 caribou in 2004 and declined to 43 caribou in 2020. Calf recruitment was above the 15% rate during the last two available censuses (2012 and 2015), suggesting a stable caribou population. However, uncertain factors cause continuous Takla population declines (Government of BC, 2020a).

What is threatening the Takla?

While wolf activity has not been directly measured, First Nations observations suggest that wolf abundance has increased in the Takla habitat (Government of BC, 2020a). Logging has significantly disturbed around 13% of their total range, and oil pipelines run through the Takla habitat (Government of BC, 2020a). The abundance of LFs, including forestry-related resource roads, oil pipelines, and abandoned railways, in the northern areas likely facilitate wolf predation (Government of BC, 2020a).

What are potential mitigation strategies?

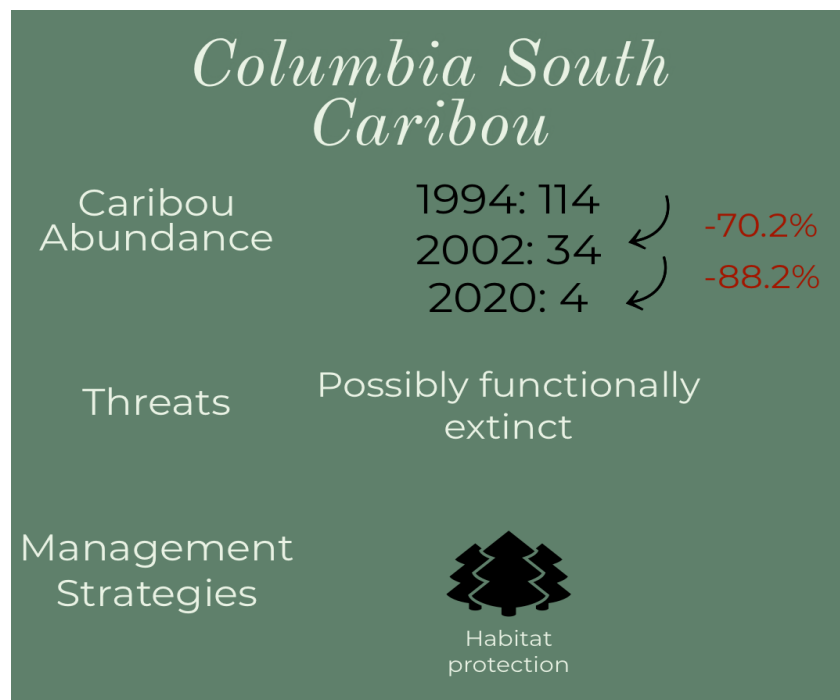
Habitat protection is critical for stabilizing the Takla population. While Mount Blanchet Provincial Park, situated within the Takla range, has been established as a caribou refuge, it constitutes only a small area of caribou habitat and must be enlarged for better herd protection (Government of BC, 2020a). Furthermore, reducing logging activity within the caribou range would likely benefit their population. Due to the stable calf recruitment, it is unclear

whether wolves are the proximate driver for their decline. Before investing in large-scale mitigation measures, such as wolf reduction programs, thorough observation of wolf-caribou dynamics should occur. As the Takla First Nations have an excellent understanding of the caribou on their traditional territories, they might be exceptionally equipped to observe the causes of the Takla population decline. Therefore, the government of B.C. could support and finance this caribou observation by the Takla First Nation to inform caribou recovery measures.

Columbia South Caribou

Figure 2

Columbia South Caribou – Abundance, Threats, and Management Strategies



Note. The figure was created by the author [B.Rohr] with data from the B.C. Government (Government of BC, 2020b).

The Columbia South caribou live in the North Columbia Mountains (Government of BC, 2020b). Its

population decreased from 115 in 1994 to four in 2020 (Government of BC, 2020b). Therefore, the Columbia South

population is at immediate risk of extinction and may be functionally extinct, depending on the remaining number of male and female caribou (Government of BC, 2020b).

What is threatening the Columbia South Caribou?

Predation, particularly by cougars and wolves, is one of the proximate drivers for the population decline (Government of BC, 2020b). Mining and logging activity, resulting in habitat alterations and LFs across the Columbia South habitat, caused the alterations in predator-prey dynamics and ultimately led to increased predation (Government of BC, 2020b).

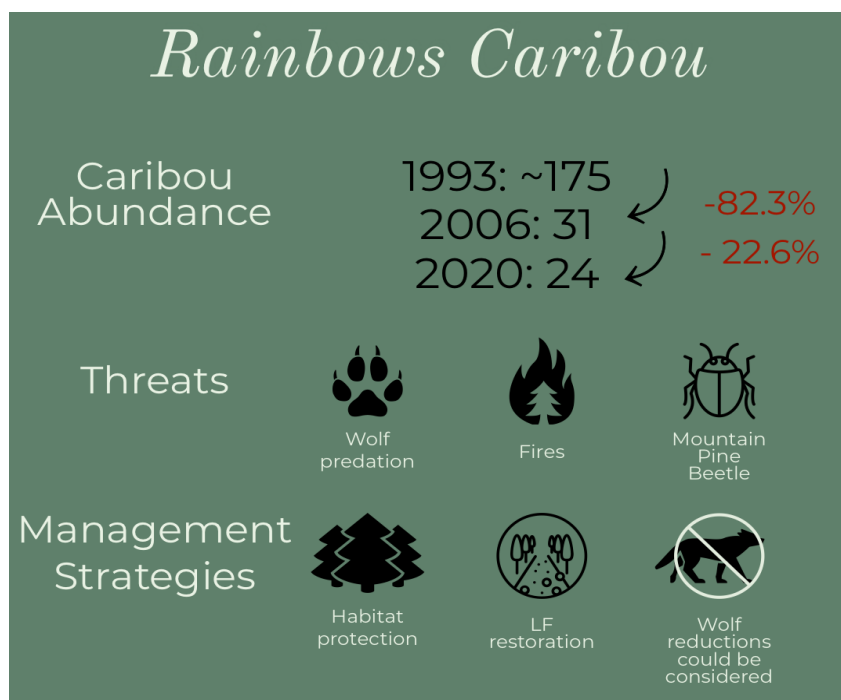
What are potential mitigation strategies?

With a remaining population of four caribou, the Columbia South herd is unlikely to stabilize. As such, resource intensive recovery methods, e.g., wolf control and restoration, should not be implemented unless it can be verified that the caribou herd is not functionally extinct. While it is not our intention to withdraw support for any species facing extinction, there are serious doubts that the Columbia South population will be able to recover. However, habitat protection should occur at the edges of the Columbia South region as it lies between the ranges of four other caribou herds.

Rainbows Caribou

Figure 3

Rainbows Caribou – Abundance, Threats, and Management Strategies



Note. The figure was created by the author [B.Rohr] with data from the B.C. Government (Government of BC, 2020c).

The Rainbows caribou reside in the Rainbows mountains (Government of BC, 2020c). The herd declined from a population of approximately 175 in 1993 to 24 in 2020 (Government of BC, 2020c). Due to their very low abundance, Rainbow caribou could be considered at risk of extinction. Notably, their calf recruitment rate has been below the 15% threshold for more than a decade, indicative of a declining population (Government of BC, 2020c).

What is threatening the Rainbows caribou?

The decline in population is primarily attributed to wolf predation (Seip & Cichowsly, 1996; Young et al., 2001). While forestry activity has affected around 4% of their range, there are no active mining or energy operations in their habitat (Government of BC, 2020c). Meanwhile, wildfires have impacted approximately 14% of Rainbows caribou's range. Additionally, the entire Rainbows habitat has been affected by invasive Mountain Pine Beetles (MPB) (Government of BC, 2020c). Lastly, LFs, including forestry-related roads and one major highway, have been identified (Government of BC, 2020c).

What are potential mitigation strategies?

I recommend a three-fold approach to stabilizing the Rainbows population. Firstly, wolf reduction programs should be implemented as an emergency short-term measure, because wolf predation has been suggested as a main driver for the population decline

(Seip & Cichowsly, 1996; Young et al., 2001).

Secondly, LF restoration should occur to reduce wolf hunting efficiency. However, its successful implementation would take time (Keim et al., 2021). As LF restoration does not involve wolf culling, this is the preferred method for reducing wolf predation. Therefore, once the Rainbows caribou population is stabilized, the intensity of wolf control programs should be reduced, and LF restoration should be prioritized.

Lastly, habitat protection is essential to ensure the continued survival of the Rainbow herd. While logging plays a limited role in the degradation of their habitats, forestry-related activity should be reduced. The management strategies for MPBs, such as timber harvesting, can have negative impacts on caribou. Of the effective beetle control strategies, the cut-and-burn method has been found to have the lowest impact on caribou populations (Nobert et al., 2020). Therefore, if MPB control is necessary, only the cut-and-burn method should be implemented.

These recommendations aim to demonstrate that a combination of specific mitigation strategies, including predator control for some critically declining caribou herds, will likely be most effective for caribou recovery. A recent example supporting this notion is the Klinse-Za Mountain caribou herd in Northern B.C. which was successfully saved from extinction by a combination of wolf culling, habitat restoration and maternal penning implemented by the Saulteau First Nation, West Moberly First Nation, and the University of

British Columbia (Lamb et al., 2022). The implementation of these measures caused the population to increase from 38 caribou in 2013 to 114 by 2022 (Lamb et al., 2022).

Limitations

Dynamics between wild animals that are altered by natural processes and human activity are difficult to study and depend on observations and simulation models rather than well-controlled experiments. There are many interacting factors that contribute to caribou population declines to varying degrees, such as the impacts of human activity, climate change, and disease, which can be difficult to differentiate. Therefore, the scientific literature is limited, and conclusions should be considered with care. Furthermore, recommendations made in this paper foremost consider the potential efficacy of measures in stabilizing caribou populations. However, competing values and interests may affect decision-making around approaches to caribou recovery (i.e., the value of caribou vs. wolves; interest of First Nations and the general public; political and economic concerns). Notably, this study focused on caribou recovery measures related to wolf predation and disregarded population reinforcement methods, such as maternal penning, translocation of caribou and captive breeding.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Nina Hewitt for her continuous support and insightful input during the production of this manuscript. I also thank Nicola Love and my editorial team, Kiri Basher, Maia Rankine-Griffith, and Ellen Wu for reviewing this paper.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author has no known conflicts of interest to disclose.

References

- Allan, R., Bode, P., Collard, R., & Dempsey J. (2020). Who Benefits from Caribou Decline? *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*. Retrieved from: <https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2020/12/ccpa-bc-Who-Benefits-From-Caribou-Decline-2020.pdf>
- Bergerud, A. T., & Elliot, J. P. (1986). Dynamics of caribou and wolves in northern British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 64(7), 1515-1529. <https://doi.org/10.1139/z86-226>
- Bridger, M. (2019). South Peace Caribou Recovery following Five Years of Experimental Wolf Reduction. *BC Forestry, Lands and Natural Resource Operations*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/caribou/south_peace_caribou_recovery_following_five_years_of_experimental_wolf_reduction.pdf
- Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council (CESCC). (2020). Wild Species 2020: General Status of Species In Canada. *Government of Canada*. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/general-status/wild-species-2020.html>
- Chowns, T. (2004). Ecological interactions among caribou, moose, and wolves: Literature Review. *NCASI*. <https://www.ncasi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/tb893.pdf>
- DeMars, C. A., Boutin, S., & Börger, L. (2018). Nowhere to hide: Effects of linear features on predator–prey dynamics in a large mammal system. *The Journal of Animal Ecology*, 87(1), 274-284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2656.12760>
- Dickie, M., McNay, S. R., Sutherland, G. D., Cody, M., Avgar, T., & Loison, A. (2020). Corridors or risk? movement along, and use of, linear features varies predictably among large mammal predator and prey species. *The Journal of Animal Ecology*, 89(2), 623-634. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2656.13130>
- Dickie, M., McNay, R. S., Sutherland, G. D., Sherman, G. G., & Cody, M. (2021). Multiple lines of evidence for predator and prey responses to caribou habitat restoration. *Biological Conservation*, 256, 109032. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2021.109032>
- Dickie, M., Serrouya, R., DeMars, C., Cranston, J., & Boutin, S. (2017). Evaluating functional recovery of habitat for threatened woodland caribou. *Ecosphere* (Washington, D.C), 8(9), e01936-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.1936>

- Dickie, M., Serrouya, R., McNay, R. S., Boutin, S., & Toit, J. (2016). Faster and farther: Wolf movement on linear features and implications for hunting behaviour. *The Journal of Applied Ecology*, 54(1), 253-263. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.12732>
- DiSilvestro, A., Irvine-Broque, A., Amron, Y. (2021). Fossil Fuel Subsidies: big Problem for BC's Woodland Caribou. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ofod7dd828cc4b35973e5e188b733023>
- Festa-Bianchet, M., Ray, J. C., Boutin, S., Cote, S. D., & Gunn, A. (2011). Conservation of caribou in Canada: An uncertain future. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 89(5), 419. <https://doi.org/10.1139/Z11-025>
- Government of BC. (2022a). *Caribou in British Columbia*. <https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=60eef687ed3a44a1881b1b79e47c7f41>
- Government of BC. (2022b). *Caribou Recovery and Predator Reduction Engagement-Results*. https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/impact/caribou_recovery_and_predator_reductionengagement_results/
- Government of BC. (2020b). *Woodland Caribou Plan – Columbia South Subpopulation*. https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/HTH/external/!publish/Caribou%20Recovery%20Program/Herd%20Plans/FTP_upload_herd_plans/southern_mountain_south/ColumbiaSouth_Draft_v1_disclaimer.pdf
- Government of BC (2020c). *Woodland Caribou Plan – Rainbows Subpopulation*. https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/HTH/external/!publish/Caribou%20Recovery%20Program/Herd%20Plans/FTP_upload_herd_plans/southern_mountain_north/Caribou%20Herd%20Plan%20Rainbows_EN_disclaimer.pdf
- Government of BC. (2020a). *Woodland Caribou Plan – Takla Subpopulation*. https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/HTH/external/!publish/Caribou%20Recovery%20Program/Herd%20Plans/FTP_upload_herd_plans/southern_mountain_north/Caribou%20Herd%20Plan%20Takla_EN_disclaimer.pdf
- Government of Canada. (2021). *Caribou in Canada*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-education-centre/caribou.html>
- Harding, L. E., Bourbonnais, M., Cook, A. T., Spribille, T., Wagner, V., & Darimont, C. (2020). No statistical support for wolf control and maternal penning as conservation measures for endangered mountain caribou. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 29(9-10), 3051-3060. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-020-02008-3>

- Hayes, R. D., Farnell, R., Ward, R. M., Carey, J., Dehn, M., Kuzyk, G. W., Baer, A. M., Gardner, C. L., & O'Donoghue, M. (2003). Experimental reduction of wolves in the Yukon: Ungulate responses and management implications. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 67(3), SS1-SS35.
- Hervieux, D., Hebblewhite, M., Stepnisky, D., Bacon, M., & Boutin, S. (2015). Addendum to “Managing wolves (*canis lupus*) to recover threatened woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Alberta”. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 93(3), 245-247. <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjz-2015-0012>
- Hervieux, D., Hebblewhite, M., Stepnisky, D., Bacon, M., & Boutin, S. (2014). Managing wolves (*Canis lupus*) to recover threatened woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, 92(12), 1029-1037. <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjz-2014-0142>
- IPBES. (2019). Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (Version 1). *Zenodo*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6417333>
- Johnson, C. J., Ehlers, L. P. W., & Seip, D. R. (2015). Witnessing extinction – cumulative impacts across landscapes and the future loss of an evolutionarily significant unit of woodland caribou in Canada. *Biological Conservation*, 186, 176-186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2015.03.012>
- Johnson, C. J., Mumma, M. A., & St-Laurent, M. (2019). Modeling multispecies predator–prey dynamics: Predicting the outcomes of conservation actions for woodland caribou. *Ecosphere* (Washington, D.C), 10(3), e02622-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.2622>
- Keim, J. L., DeWitt, P. D., Wilson, S. F., Fitzpatrick, J. J., Jenni, N. S., & Lele, S. R. (2021). Managing animal movement conserves predator–prey dynamics. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 19(7), 379-385. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.2358>
- Lamb, C. T., Willson, R., Richter, C., Owens-Beek, N., Napoleon, J., Muir, B., McNay, R. S., Lavis, E., Hebblewhite, M., Giguere, L., Dokkie, T., Boutin, S., & Ford, A. T. (2022). Indigenous-led conservation: Pathways to recovery for the nearly extirpated Klinse-Za mountain caribou. *Ecological Applications*, 32(5), e2581-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2581>
- Latham, A. D. M., Latham, M. C., Boyce, M. S., & Boutin, S. (2011). Movement responses by wolves to industrial linear features and their effect on woodland caribou in northeastern Alberta. *Ecological Applications*, 21(8), 2854-2865. <https://doi.org/10.1890/11-0666.1>
- McCutchen, N. (2007). Factors affecting caribou survival in northern Alberta: the role of wolves, moose, and linear features. *UAlberta*. http://www.carnivoreconservation.org/files/thesis/mccutchen_2006_phd.pdf

- McKay, T. L., Pigeon, K. E., Larsen, T. A., & Finnegan, L. A. (2021). Close encounters of the fatal kind: Landscape features associated with central mountain caribou mortalities. *Ecology and Evolution*, 11(5), 2234-2248.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.7190>
- McKenzie, H. W., Merrill, E. H., Spiteri, R. J., & Lewis, M. A. (2012). How linear features alter predator movement and the functional response. *Interface Focus*, 2(2), 205-216. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsfs.2011.0086>
- McLoughlin, P. D., Dzus, E., Wynes, B. & Boutin, S. (2003). Declines in populations of woodland caribou. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 67(4), 755-761.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3802682>
- Mumma, M. A., Gillingham, M. P., Johnson, C. J., & Parker, K. L. (2017). Understanding predation risk and individual variation in risk avoidance for threatened boreal caribou. *Ecology and Evolution*, 7(23), 10266-10277.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.3563>
- Natcher, D. C. (2009). Subsistence and the social economy of Canada's aboriginal north. *Northern Review (Whitehorse)*, (30), 83.
<https://thenorthernreview.ca/index.php/nr/article/view/6>
- Newton, E. J., Patterson, B. R., Anderson, M. L., Rodgers, A. R., Vander Vennen, L. M., & Fryxell, J. M. (2017). Compensatory selection for roads over natural linear features by wolves in northern Ontario: Implications for caribou conservation. *PloS One*, 12(11), e0186525-e0186525.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186525>
- Nobert, B. R., Larsen, T. A., Pigeon, K. E., & Finnegan, L. (2020). Caribou in the cross-fire? Considering terrestrial lichen forage in the face of mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) expansion. *PloS One*, 15(4), e0232248.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232248>
- Pyper, M., Nishi, J., McNeil, L. (2014). Linear Feature Restoration in Caribou Habitat: A summary of current practices and a roadmap for future programs. *COSIA*.
https://cosia.ca/uploads/documents/id24/COSIA_Linear_Feature_Restoration_Caribou_Habitat.pdf
- Seip, D. R., & Cichowski, D. B. (1996). Population ecology of caribou in British Columbia. *Rangifer*, 16(4), 73. <https://doi.org/10.7557/2.16.4.1223>
- Serrouya, R., Dickie, M., DeMars, C., Wittmann, M. J., & Boutin, S. (2020). Predicting the effects of restoring linear features on woodland caribou populations. *Ecological Modelling*, 416, 108891.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolmodel.2019.108891>

- Serrouya, R., Dickie, M., Lamb, C., van Oort, H., Kelly, A. P., DeMars, C., McLoughlin, P. D., Larter, N. C., Hervieux, D., Ford, A. T., & Boutin, S. (2021). Trophic consequences of terrestrial eutrophication for a threatened ungulate. *Proceedings of the Royal Society. B, Biological Sciences*, 288(1943), 20202811.
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.2811>
- Serrouya, R., Seip, D. R., Hervieux, D., McLellan, B. N., McNay, R. S., Steenweg, R., Heard, D. C., Hebblewhite, M., Gillingham, M., & Boutin, S. (2019). Saving endangered species using adaptive management. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS*, 116(13), 6181-6186.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1816923116>
- Thomas, P. (1995). Radionuclide analyses of Saskatchewan caribou. *U.S. Department of Energy Office of Scientific and Technical Information*.
<https://www.osti.gov/biblio/650007-radionuclide-analyses-saskatchewan-caribou-final-report>
- Vander-Vennen, L. M., Patterson, B. R., Rodgers, A. R., Moffatt, S., Anderson, M. L., Fryxell, J. M., & Van Damme, R. (2016). Diel movement patterns influence daily variation in wolf kill rates on moose. *Functional Ecology*, 30(9), 1568-1573.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.12642>
- Weisgarber, M. (2022). Controversial B.C. wolf cull approved for another 5 years. *CTV News*. <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/controversial-b-c-wolf-cull-approved-for-another-5-years-1.5762380>
- Wittmer, H. U., Sinclair, A. R. E., & McLellan, B. N. (2005). The role of predation in the decline and extirpation of woodland caribou. *Oecologia*, 144(2), 257-267.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00442-005-0055-y>
- Young, J., Youds, J., & Freeman, N. (2001). Status of the Charlotte Alplands Caribou Herd. *BC Wildlife Inventory*.
https://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cariboo/env_stewardship/wildlife/inventory/caribou/north_car/charalp/charalp01.pdf



La Banlieue Parisienne: Victim of French Epistemic Violence

by: Renée Rochefort

Situated on the outskirts of Paris, the banlieue corresponds to the marginalised and racialised area just outside of the city of love. Representing the hidden consequence of French universalism, the banlieue suffers from disproportionate social issues. This paper traces the relationship between Paris and its banlieue to understand how the continued subordination of the 21st century banlieusard occurs. It argues that the relationship is a form of epistemic violence and explores how this epistemic violence is maintained by legal frameworks, by the media, and by the strict adherence to a universal French national identity. The paper proposes that the territorial stigmatisation of the banlieue creates a two-tiered society. It demonstrates that the banlieue situation is a symptom of a greater crisis in French national identity.

Introduction

A typical trip to Paris includes a stroll along the *Seine*, a walk down the *Champs-Élysées*, and a picture with the Eiffel Tower. Rarely do visitors venture beyond the confines of the city, perhaps a day trip to *Versailles*, but certainly never to the northeast of Paris, to the *banlieue*. While *banlieue* will translate to the word suburb in the English dictionary, the term has a highly local significance in the Parisian context. The *banlieue* is not just any suburb of Paris, but rather particular areas that lay to the northeast of Paris with large racialised and minority populations, disproportionate poverty, and pervasive social issues. An asymmetric relationship exists due to “social and spatial inequities” (Angélil and Siress, 2012, p. 58) rooted in ethnic and class-based territorial stigmatisation. This city-*banlieue* relationship is rife with political, cultural, and social tensions. This paper argues that the dynamic between the city and the *banlieue* constitutes a form of epistemic violence. It examines the city-*banlieue* relationship using a historical and a postcolonial lens by questioning the channels that uphold the unequal

flow of knowledge and how these tools contribute to the 21st-century subordination of the inhabitants of the *banlieues*, the *banlieusards*. To grasp the power plays at work in the relationship, we first contextualise the situation by examining the historical context of the *banlieue* that shapes the contemporary Parisian *banlieue*. Then, we look at the creation of epistemic violence through legal frameworks, media reporting, and the self-identified pillars of French identity. Finally, we analyse the impacts on the *banlieusards*, namely the perpetuation of territorial stigmatisation and the creation of an identity void.

The history of the *Banlieue*

Many contemporary realities of Paris are rooted in the events of 1853. In that year, Pinkley (1958) explains that Baron Georges-Eugene Haussmann began an ambitious project designed to revitalise and modernise the capital city under orders from Napoleon III. Haussmann revamped the urban landscape by tearing down thousands of existing buildings to bring his new vision of Paris to life. The renovations created the displacement of the poorest residents

of the city. Per the wishes of Napoleon III, modern Paris was destined to be a space for clean air; therefore, removing the unceremoniously dubbed “unclean” groups was a requirement. As a result, there was “the rapid suburbanization of family and child poverty” (Harvey, 2006, p. 207). However, this segregation was not a new phenomenon but rather an expansion of the existing dynamic of a city with a “predominantly bourgeois west, working-class east; progressive Right Bank, the traditionalist though student-ridden Left Bank” (Harvey, 2006, p. 239). The Parisian suburb has been tied to people in subordinate societal positions since its birth.

Birth of the *banlieue*

By the latter half of the 20th century, the northeastern suburbs of Paris became known as the *banlieues*. After the tumultuous period of the Second World War, immigrant labour was seen as an effective way to stimulate economic growth during *Les Trentes Glorieuses* [*The Glorious Thirties*] (Haddad & Balz, 2006; Soljour, 2019). As a result of links forged by France’s colonial endeavours, the post-war immigrant wave was overwhelmingly from formerly colonised territories. Hence, Africa represents the home continent of 47.5% of all French immigrants today (INSES, 2021). The young male immigrant workers provided quick and accessible labour necessary for large-scale infrastructure-building projects. Despite the desired assimilation, the dominant hegemony dictated that these new arrivals were subordinates to the local people due to perceived differences in values. Migrant workers settle in the *cités* of the *banlieue*,

housing blocks spatially distant enough from real French society for the local French to tolerate their non-French existence. The *cités* are low-income housing projects that “epitomise exclusion in French society” (Haddad & Balz, 2006, p. 27). They are often overcrowded, neglected, and dilapidated. Haddad and Balz (2006) explain that the *cités* isolate and exclude new immigrants spatially and socially as they remain unconnected to surrounding areas. The *cités* rarely contain any development beyond housing units, forcing the *banlieuesards* to seek economic opportunity elsewhere. Their neighbourhoods are equipped with poorer infrastructure. Consequently, Vidal (2005) highlights that residents struggle with unemployment, crime, and poor education rates. The desired assimilation and integration are unreachable due to poor connection to Paris, the cultural and economic heartbeat of the nation. The spatial configuration between the outside and the *banlieue* is created by governmental officials who cement their dominance over the *banlieuesards* by inhibiting their movement to the city.

In the 21st century, the *banlieue* is known as a site of unrest and unease. It is portrayed as a site of perpetual aggression by journalism and is commonly associated with “drug trafficking, delinquency, poverty, unemployment, and intercultural tensions” (Doran, 2007, p. 498). This label stems from the rebellious stance of some young men who resist the dominant hegemonic French culture and universalism. Angélil and Siress (2012) explain that cyclical poverty due to

marginalisation, discrimination, and mistreatment builds community resentment. Minorities with African heritage demonstrate higher feelings of rejection in France than people of other ethnic heritage (Simon, 2012). Simon explains how vicious cycles of tit-for-tat violence occur between the youth and the authorities and sometimes escalate into high-profile violence. During the 2005 riots, youth took to the streets to protest their disenfranchisement from society through destruction and violence. While unsettling to the French people outside the *banlieue*, the riots by young *banlieusards* were a pushback against the systemic violence inflicted upon the *banlieue* and its people. The colonial-style relationship never engages in dialogue with the communities. Instead, violence and force are chosen by the police forces to deal with petty crimes.

Epistemic Violence in the *Banlieue*

The concept of epistemic violence can be traced to Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and refers to a form of violence done by "the refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange" (Dotson, 2011, p. 238). In other words, it is an unwillingness to reciprocate between groups. In this case, it renders the subaltern group invisible and silent. It is a mechanism that must be maintained by tools wielded by the dominant group. The continued marginalisation of the Parisian *banlieue* is unnatural, as the outsiders must work to uphold it. The following section explores the mechanisms that contribute to the maintenance of this epistemic violence.

Legislation of subordination

The nation motto, *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, highlights a political approach that regards the entire French population as a homogenous equal entity. The nation conforms to a strict colour-blind approach which leaves topics such as race, religion, and ethnicity under the umbrella of taboo topics. The January 6, 1978, Law n° 78-17 stems from Enlightenment-era thinking and illegalises collecting statistics about race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and political views. This law attempts to promote the idea that liberty, equality, and fraternity can be applied equally to everyone in France. This approach indicates that removing differences is a precondition to forming the ideal French society. However, even if not legally recognised, differing religious, social, and political realities between people create a mosaic of individual experiences. Notably, the *banlieusards'* African roots differentiate their experiences from the majority European population. Yet, the law effectively removes any legal recognition of these unique experiences by recognising a universal French experience. As statistics are often used as an empirical tool to justify a societal change, political actors fail to address this group's particular needs. To acknowledge the link between their different experiences and their race would threaten the firm bond between France and universalism. Universalism, which views human nature as "impervious to cultural and historical differences" (Schor, 2001, p. 46), is put in danger by these individuals who are distinctive in their "not Frenchness"

despite owning French citizenship. The attempt to create equality without equity leads to the continued subordination of the *banlieue* residents. Since 1981, the government has dedicated special attention to priority education zones to bridge the gap between underperforming schools and the national average. Many of these schools are located in the *banlieue*. However, the current REP and REP+ programs fail to address the ethnic trends in scholarly performance. As such, this law contributes to the maintenance of epistemic violence by eliminating the possibility of policies targeting inequity, as positive discrimination (affirmative action) is not widespread. The unique challenges of the *banlieusards* remain invisible to protect French universalism. In this sense, France can only truly guarantee liberty, equality, and fraternity to those who conform to the universal image of France, which demands the shedding of a core part of the *banlieusard* heritage and identity.

Othering in action: *Banlieue* media coverage in France after the 2015 terrorist attacks

In 2015, a wave of Islamic terrorist attacks in Paris brought heightened scrutiny to the *banlieue* due to the January *Île-de-France* attacks and the November Paris attack. Naturally, subsequent attention turned to the perpetrators of the attacks. Investigations concluded that radicalised young men born and raised in Europe with African heritage carried out the three attacks. These individuals were born into poor socio-economic backgrounds and spent their days in the streets of the *banlieue*. The stories of the terrorists contribute to a powerful

narrative that continues to subordinate all *banlieue* residents to this day. While criticism of extremism is valid, media outlets fail to explore the social trends in the *banlieue* that create the pre-conditions for extremism. They focus on the fundamental divide between “civilised” Europe and the “uncivilised” *banlieues*. Within this framework, Europe, a beacon of modernity, cannot tolerate the supposed backwardness of the Islamic religion. For example, *Le Figaro*, a French newspaper, proclaims “Saint-Denis, cité des rois et désormais de l’islam [Saint-Denis, city of kings and now of Islam]” (Rioufol, 2015). To make this claim, Rioufol crafts a narrative that groups all Islamic practitioners into a monolithic radical group despite the varying practices that exist. Islam thus becomes synonymous with terrorism. They then set the religion against the concept of modernity, which both Quijano (2000) and Mamdani (2020) contest as a Eurocentric perspective to demonstrate its inferior position. The *banlieue*, with its large Muslim and non-white population, is perceived as a threat to the nation and forcefully subordinated through intrusive surveillance and searches. While French in citizenship, the residents of the *banlieue* are stripped of standard French rights and placed squarely in the category of the “other.” Their identity is not immigrant but also not French as the author argues a civil war is ongoing in France as “une partie de la population française ne se reconnaît plus dans les valeurs démocratiques et républicaines de la France [a portion of the French population no longer recognises itself in the democratic and republican values of France]” (Rioufol, 2015). The justification for the othering

of the *banlieue* starts with the establishment of the positions of the settler (the Arab-Muslim immigrant) and the native (the “autochtone [indigenous]”). In this divide, the native local fights off the *banlieue* resident, who represents a venomous poison to respectable society. The latter is dehumanised, homogenised, and cast as a dangerous other. The *banlieusards* have their voices taken away, and with no voice available, outsiders can craft the narrative of their choice. The media becomes a crucial tool for epistemic violence as it perpetuates the process of othering. They strip the *banlieue* residents of their voice and force them into subordinate positions.

A battle for the French identity through language

Castilian-era ideas of “one country, one religion, one empire” dominate the conceptualisation of French identity, yet they are put at odds by France's increasingly diverse population. As summarised by historian Fernand Braudel (1985), French identity is based on centralised unity and heavily linked to the French language. Thus, language purity becomes of great concern as fathoming France without French is nearly impossible. Historically, linguistic purity has been a preoccupation for centuries. Established in 1635, l'Académie Française is the world's highest authority on the French language. Its principal purpose is to regulate the rules of the language. The rigid rules could become menaced by the *banlieusards* usage of *banlieue* slang, also called *Verlan*. Goudailler (2002) notes that this slang is an interethnic vernacular language with influences

from Arabic, Creoles, African languages, and English. It also represents a resistance to the French language, the language of the authorities. *Verlan* is an effort against assimilation as it imprints their unique identities upon the language. Mohamed (2021) explains that second- and third-generation *banlieue* residents in the late 1980s popularised the language to conceptualise the experience accurately. As Fanon (1967) argues, a language is a powerful tool to instil symbolic violence as “[the colonised] will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.” Language becomes a tool to justify the subordination of the *banlieusards*. Under the guise of protecting the French language and identity, the speakers are regulated to a lesser position. They are classified as unworthy of airspace in conventional spaces such as newspapers and political debates. Their argot is too dissident and impure to be used in the noble goals of the French language set up in 1635. Consequently, tolerance is only given to *banlieusards*, who can be defined as a “bounty” in *banlieue* slang - a black person who behaves white - by taking up the rules and manners set up by those outside the *banlieue*. In contrast to the other tools of epistemic violence, language purity presents a unique case of *banlieue* residents engaging in visible “counter-violence” using *Verlan*. The double marginalisation created by their differing ethnicity and way of speaking fosters a rebellious movement among the *banlieue* residents. Due to social stigma and spatial segregation in the *banlieue*, they reject the pressures of assimilation to carve out spaces (i.e., in music) where it can be spoken freely and communicate

their personal experiences. There is the purposeful rejection of the French standard used by those above them in the social hierarchy. Despite this, they remain presented negatively in the media. In a 2018 interview with *Le Quotidien*, Sofiane, a French rapper from the *banlieue*, is subject to intrusive questioning about his mischief. Instead of discussing the upcoming album, the host promotes the idea that the *banlieue* rapper promotes unruly actions with their music and language.

Manifestations of inequality: rejection, removal, and radicalisation

Outside of the glitz and glamour of Paris, the *banlieue* acts as the dark underbelly of French society and contains entire generations devastated by epistemic violence. The consequences of epistemic violence can be seen through the territorial stigmatisation of the *banlieue*. Territorial stigmatisation entails the acceptance of the problems of a geographical region as natural for the area. It forms a negative perception surrounding a particular area and its inhabitants. Urban sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2007) explains it eloquently as “the prejudicial belief that [those living in the negatively perceived area] are suffices to set off socially noxious consequences.” The hardships faced by the *banlieue* residents exist because of this unequal relationship. One such difficulty faced by the *banlieusard* is an ethnic penalty when applying for jobs. Ware (2015) highlights the harsh reality of “minority citizens being routinely denied jobs, apartments, and access to recreational facilities because of their brown complexions or Middle Eastern

names.” The continuous subordination of the *banlieue* residents is a natural consequence of a ruthless and inescapable cycle of epistemic violence.

The *banlieusard*, often French in citizenship, is stigmatised and unable to join their French compatriots in society. Consequently, today’s *banlieusards* often face an identity crisis due to their classification as foreign by French society, even if many have never known another home. The lack of acknowledgment of hybrid identities in France due to its firm adherence to universalism builds resentment. Poor educational and economic outcomes limit the prospects of the *banlieue* resident, leading many young people to be trapped in a cycle filled with destitution. They are subject to both heavy marginalisation and intense surveillance. The spatial geography of the *banlieue* is a racialized geography even if the country does not collect racial statistics. However, the lack of empirical evidence does not stop the accusatory fingers pointed toward the group.

Poverty and petty crime become increasingly common as spatial and social segregation inhibit the opportunities for the *banlieusard*. The French justice system sends many young men to prisons. Often overcrowded and racialised prisons can serve as arenas for religious radicalisation. Christian-centric prison facilities create the demand for “private group prayers, which are conducted during exercise time in prison courtyards” (Jones & Narag, 2019, p. 92). Even if it is difficult to effectively quantify and analyse emphatically, prison radicalisation is pushed into the spotlight during high-profile cases like the Charlie

Hebdo attackers. The radicalisation of young *banlieue* residents is becoming an increasing concern for France, as demonstrated by their decision to allocate increased funding to combat the phenomenon. The government's actions illustrate the recognition of the *banlieue* problem yet do little to address the unequal relationship creating generational cycles of poverty and frustration. The limits of French universalism are revealed as its core ideas of unity and equality cannot coexist with an assimilation approach that negates tangible differences in daily life. This unequal relationship forms a two-tiered society where the *banlieuesards* do not enjoy the same privileges as other members of French society due to spatial segregation. The current realities of the French postcolonial era indicate that perhaps a new approach is needed as this relationship of subordination ultimately harms the entire nation.

Conclusion

The relationship between Paris and its *banlieue* is one of continuous subordination as the *banlieue* socially, economically, and politically yields to the city's dominance. The contemporary situation reflects the legacy of Huxmann's Paris, which pushed poverty to the city's outskirts. Historically, the *banlieue* has regrouped the urban poor for decades before large immigration waves from former members of the French colonial empire. However, the modern unequal exchange takes form with additional implications of ethnicity and race. 21st-century epistemic violence manifests through a law that renders racialized experience incomprehensible, a media that highlight the stark

differences between racialised and non-racialized citizens of France, and notions of "Frenchness," which place linguistic purity at the core of France. Even with some pushback against linguistic purity, the silencing of the *banlieue* is very effective. The consequences of this approach create a disjointed country and a two-tier society. The city-*banlieue* situation evokes tension in the question, "what is French national identity?" As France grapples with an increasingly heterogeneous and discontent population, the current approach of upholding universalism and secularism has proven controversial and divisive. New players from historically underrepresented backgrounds have begun altering the future of French domestic politics.

References

- Académie Française. (1635). *ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE STATUTS ET RÈGLEMENTS*.
https://www.academie-francaise.fr/sites/academie-francaise.fr/files/statuts_af_o.pdf
- Angelil, M., & Siress, C. (2012). The Paris “banlieue”: Peripheries of inequity. *Journal of International Affairs (New York)*, 65(2), 57–67.
- Braudel, F. (2007, March 16). L'identité française selon Fernand Braudel. *Le Monde.fr*.
https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2007/03/16/l-identite-francaise-selon-fernand-braudel_883988_3224.html
- Doran, M. (2007). Alternative French, Alternative Identities: Situating Language in la Banlieue. *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, 11(4), 497–508.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17409290701661934>
- Dotson, K. (2011). Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing. *Hypatia*, 26(2), 236–257. <https://www.jstor.org//23016544>
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press.
- Goudailler, J. (2002). De l'argot traditionnel au français contemporain des cités. *La linguistique*, 38, 5-24. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ling.381.0005>
- Haddad, Y. Y., & Balz, M. J. (2006). The October Riots in France: A Failed Immigration Policy or the Empire Strikes Back? *International Migration*, 44(2), 23–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2006.00362.x>
- Harvey, D. (2006). *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. Routledge.
- Jinadu, L. A. (1976). Language and Politics: On the Cultural Basis of Colonialism. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 16(63), 603–614. <https://doi.org/10.3406/cea.1976.2517>
- Jones, C., & Narag, R. (2020). *Inmate Radicalisation and Recruitment in Prisons*. Routledge.
- Mamdani, M. (2020). *Neither settler nor native*. Harvard University Press.
- Messili, Z., & Ben Aziza, H. (2004). Langage et exclusion. La langue des cités en France. *Cahiers de La Méditerranée*, 69, 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.729>
- Ministère de l'éducation et de la jeunesse. (2022, November). *L'éducation prioritaire*. Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de La Jeunesse et Des Sports.
<https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-education-prioritaire-3140>
- Mohamed, R. (2021). Negotiating Alternative Linguistic Practices: The Struggle between Verlan Usage and the Académie Française. *Makings*, 2(1).

- Neilson, D. (2020). Epistemic violence in the time of coronavirus: From the legacy of the western limits of Spivak's "can the subaltern speak" to an alternative to the "neoliberal model of development." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(8), 760–765. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1750092>
- Pinkney, D. H. (1958). *Napoleon III and the rebuilding of Paris*. Princeton University Press.
- Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." *International Sociology* 15 (2), 215-232
- Quotidien. (2018, February 2). *Sofiane, le rappeur qui affole les streams et la justice - Quotidien du 01 février 2018* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5pQlI58dfM&feature=youtu.be>
- République Française. (2022). *Loi n° 78-17 du 6 janvier 1978 relative à l'informatique, aux fichiers et aux libertés*. Gouv.fr. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGIARTI000037090048/2018-05-25/>
- Rioufol, I. (2015, November 18). *Saint-Denis, cité des rois et désormais de l'islam*. LEFIGARO. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/blogs/rioufol/2015/11/cest-a-deux-pas-de.html>
- Schor, N. (2001). The Crisis of French Universalism. *Yale French Studies*, 100, 43–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090581>
- Simon, P. (2012). *French national identity and integration: Who Belongs to the National Community?* Migration Policy Institute.
- Spivak, G. C. (2003). Can the Subaltern Speak? *Die Philosophin*, 14(27), 42–58.
- Wacquant, L. (2007). Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality. *Thesis Eleven*, 91(1), 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513607082003>
- Ware, L. (2015). Color-blind Racism in France: Bias Against Ethnic Minority Immigrants. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 46(1), 185–244.

From Latin America to Palestine: On the Importance of Transnational Solidarity in the Fight Against Settler-Colonial and Imperial Allies

by: Mariam Abdelaziz

Transnational solidarity work has been a cornerstone of my activism. In this paper, I examine the importance of transnational solidarity work as a response to the alliances forged by settler-colonial states across time and space. I first focus on the USA, Israel, and Guatemala, arguing that settler-colonial powers are connected through technologies of violence and racist imaginative geographies deployed against Indigenous Peoples. I then examine how solidarity between Latin Americans and Palestinians developed in response to these technologies of violence. Specifically, I focus on relations between Cuba and Palestine, demonstrating how connective networks of solidarity between seemingly distant geographies emerge from an awareness of common enemies: imperialism and colonialism.

Introduction

As an activist and organizer who was born in Egypt but lived in various countries growing up, I have mulled over the question of how to inspire people in Vancouver to care for causes that may seem distant and unrelated. My goal is to engage in activism that recognizes that systems of oppression, such as capitalism and settler-colonialism, do not operate in isolation, but rather work to subjugate marginalized peoples across time and space. As an organizer with Solidarity For Palestinians Human Rights UBC, Chair of UBC's Social Justice Centre (SJC) and coordinator of its International Solidarity working group for three years, educating people on Palestinian liberation and illuminating its connections to anti-colonial and anti-imperial fights is key to my organizing work. This has not always been easy. When I began engaging in activism work at UBC, I found that some North American activists did not always share my enthusiasm for expanding their activist lens beyond the confines of this

city. The importance of transnational solidarity work was not clear to many.

In this paper, I illustrate the vitality of transnational solidarity work as a response to the alliances forged by settler-colonial states across time and space. I first focus on the USA, Israel, and Guatemala, arguing that settler-colonial powers are connected through technologies of violence and racist imaginative geographies that construct Indigenous Peoples as inferior. I then examine how solidarity between Latin Americans and Palestinians developed in response to these technologies of violence. Specifically, I focus on relations between Cuba and Palestine, demonstrating how connective networks of solidarity between distant geographies emerge from an awareness of common enemies: imperialism and colonialism.

The Founding of the USA and Israel

Both Israel and the USA are settler-colonial states founded on violence against Indigenous Peoples and the construction of racist imaginative

geographies that view ‘Western’ civilization as superior and racialized peoples as inferior. Indigenous scholar Sarah Hunt (2014) explains that the Western geographic imaginary played a key role in the realization of colonialism. As Europeans colonized the Americas and committed genocide against the Indigenous Peoples, they rationalized their violent endeavors by dehumanizing those they exploited as being inferior to them (Hunt, 2004). Through the lens of Western law, the constructed discourse of Native savagery — which framed Indigenous Peoples as “lacking the rational capacity to exercise equal rights”— was employed to deny Indigenous Peoples’ legal status (Hunt, 2014, p. 67). As Hunt (2014) explains, in order to imagine the Americas as available for settlement, the land “needed to first be cleared of any ‘legal owners’” through the doctrine of *Terra Nullius*, meaning “empty lands” (p. 67).

Similarly, white European Zionists also created racialized constructions of Palestinians as a “semi-savage people, who have extremely primitive concepts,” to quote the prominent Zionist Moshe Smilansky (as cited in Morris, 2000, p. 43). The aforementioned concept of *Terra Nullius* was reproduced in the popular Zionist slogan that Palestine was a “land without a people, for a people without a land” (Said, 1979, p. 9). Edward Said (1979), a renowned Palestinian scholar, explains that “Zionism essentially saw Palestine as the European imperialist did, as an empty territory paradoxically ‘filled’ with ignoble or perhaps even dispensable natives” (p. 81). In both Palestine and the Americas, the construction of these racist

discourses denied Indigenous Peoples their humanity and was used to justify the legal colonization of land through Western legal doctrine. In Palestine, the creation of Israel entailed the forcible expulsion of approximately 800,000 of the 1 million Native Palestinians from their homelands, the destruction of 531 villages, and numerous massacres (Pappe, 2007). In the Americas, colonizers committed various atrocities, leading to the direct or premature death of 100 million Indigenous Peoples (Stannard, 1993).

In a poem read at the 2014 Saskatoon rally in support of Gaza, Stó:lō activist and poet Lee Maracle speaks to this shared history of dispossession:

“We both live in occupied territories
But what can I know about you
Half a world away from me

You and me, we know violence
The pain of our mothers
The memories of this land

We share a history of being moved
Removed
moved again
taken from our homes

and wondering if we’ll ever go
back.” (as cited in Salaita, 2016, p. 108).

Maracle is thus explicating shared histories of Native dispossession from

Turtle Island to Palestine, illustrating the devastating impacts of European ideologies of Native inferiority across various geographies. Maracle is amongst many First Nations scholars who have identified the inception of the US, Canada, and Israel as rooted in similar histories of settler-colonialism and violence against Indigenous Peoples.

In addition to shared ideologies about Native inferiority, the USA and other imperialist countries like Britain have played an active role in Israel's inception and its terrorization of Palestinians. Early Zionists understood that the key to the success of their campaign was seeking support from other settler-colonial and imperial states. Accordingly, Zionists legitimized their claim to Palestine on the grounds that they were colonists and superior to the Natives; it was precisely on these grounds that they sought support from other colonial states. For instance, Theodore Herzl, a Russian Jew and the founding father of modern Zionism, wrote to the British colonialist Cecil Rhodes in an attempt to get support for the Zionist project, telling him: "You are being invited to help make history...it doesn't involve Africa, but a piece of Asia Minor, not Englishmen but Jews... How, then, do I happen to turn to you, since this is an out-of-the-way matter for you? How indeed? Because it is something colonial" (as cited in Saldivar, 2010, p. 829). Here, Herzl is pitching the notion of colonizing Palestine to British imperial powers, therefore conveying the articulation of alliances between imperial and colonial states and the clear understanding that Zionists were involved in colonization.

Educating people about the similarities between the USA and Israel's founding as settler-colonies has been crucial to my activist work. I find that people are often influenced by mainstream media portrayals that frame the Palestinian issue as a 'two-sided' conflict, hence erasing the power-dynamics involved in the oppression of Palestinians. As Kanji (2020) explains, settler states engage in a colonial inversion of history whereby the "cycle of violence" is seen as starting with "the resistance to invasion and dispossession, not the acts of invasion and dispossession themselves" (para. 13). This paradigm is harmful because it reworks settler-colonialism into an interpersonal misunderstanding between Israelis and Palestinians. From this viewpoint, I have observed that people find it hard to 'choose' a side, derailing their likeliness to speak up against the oppression of Palestinians. Hence, my activism attempts to cut through the attempted obfuscation of Palestinian oppression by explicitly identifying the condition in Palestine as one of settler-colonialism and apartheid and demonstrating the linkages between Israeli and US settler colonialism. In doing so, I express how Palestine demands the attention of revolutionaries worldwide because it lies at the heart of multiple, intersecting axes of oppression. As the Palestinian Marxist writer Ghassan Kanafani puts it, "the Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, wherever he is, as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era" (as cited in Englert, 2021, para. 7).

Israel and Latin America's Military Connections

Having explained that both Israel and the USA are founded on violence against Indigenous Peoples based on the construction of racialized hierarchies depicting Indigenous Peoples as inferior, it is important to explain that the USA and Israel's crimes against Indigenous and racialized peoples transcend geographic boundaries. Not only are the USA and Israel involved in crimes against the Indigenous inhabitants of their territories, but also against Indigenous Peoples abroad. Both Israel and the USA have provided ample military assistance to military dictatorships in Latin America, which have been deployed in egregious crimes against Indigenous Peoples. The USA's involvement in coups and invasions in Latin America is infamous (Blum, 1995; Gill, 2004; Totten, 2018). Less known is Israel's relationship with military-dominated Latin American governments.

In his pioneering work on Israeli-Latin American military connections, Bahbah (1986) explains that Latin America is one of Israel's primary markets for arms exportation. Latin American militaries not only have a professional admiration of Israel's military forces, but they are also fervently anti-communist and tend "to perceive Israel as the guardian of Western civilization in the face of leftist terrorists and Soviet-backed Arab regimes" (Bahbah, 1986, p. 90). Indeed, Latin American military establishments make analogies between Latin American revolutionaries and the leftist elements of the Middle East, which Israel is determined to eradicate (Bahbah, 1986;

Black, 1983). Since the 1960s, Israel has been cultivating its relationship with military establishments in Latin America (Bahbah, 1986). Alarmed at Fidel Castro's victory in Cuba and the rising popularity of Leftism in the region, Latin American militaries turned to Israel for help (Bahbah, 1986). In 1964, Israel promoted visits by Latin Americans to Israeli military bases and defense industries, with 160 recorded visits between 1964 and 1971, representing 18 countries from the region (Bahbah, 1986). Bahbah (1986) notes that a considerable percentage of Israel's arms exports to Latin America have been counterinsurgency equipment for dealing with internal security problems. For Latin American dictatorships, Israel's reputation for dealing with counter-insurgency and internal "terrorist" threats makes its equipment highly reliable and trustworthy (Bahbah, 1986). For instance, Adolfo Calero, leader of the Contras rebel group against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, advocated for the use of Israeli military assistance, stating, "we think the Israelis would be best because they have the technical experience" (as cited in Bahbah, 1986, p. 101). That this 'security' and 'technical experience' was built on the backs of Palestinians is of no concern to Latin American dictatorships that themselves show little regard for the Indigenous Peoples in their territories. Similarly, at the US School of the Americas, established in 1946, the US taught thousands of Latin American soldiers a national security doctrine that emphasized internal security threats (Gill, 2004). Latin American leaders were trained in how to neutralize (which often meant kill) 'subversive' activities

(Gill, 2004; McSherry, 2005; Totten, 2018). Therefore, there is a long history between the US, Israeli, and Latin American governments, based on similar desires to suppress people deemed to be 'security' threats in their territories.

Guatemala, Israel, and the Genocide of Maya communities

The brutal massacres of Indigenous Maya communities in Guatemala can be seen as the culmination of Israel and Guatemala's military ties. Israel was Guatemala's main military supplier between 1977 and 1981 (Pieterse, 1984). Between 1977 and 1984, while the US limited aid to Guatemala because of well-known human rights abuses by the Guatemalan state against its citizens, Israel provided Guatemala with military supplies and Israeli military advisors (Bahbah, 1986; Hunter, 1987; Black, 1983). These Israeli military advisors often worked in close coordination with Guatemala's secret police and military, offering the latter advice and instructions on interrogation and counter-insurgency techniques (Hunter, 1987). Israel also helped Guatemala build a munitions plant to manufacture bullets suitable for Israeli Galil rifles (Bahbah, 1986; Hunter, 1987). Soon after, the Galil became Guatemala's standard assault rifle (Hunter, 1987).

Most insidiously, Israel played a crucial role in helping Guatemala contain the guerrilla movement in rural areas through strategies of containment tried and tested on Palestinians (Bahbah, 1986; Hunter, 1987). As Hunter (1987) explains, Israel's strategies at home provided "a prototype for solving Guatemala's problems" (p. 44).

Techniques such as "land clearing and road building in previously impenetrable areas, the destruction of hamlets thought to be guerrilla strongholds, and the forcible concentration of the native Indian populations traditionally scattered over large areas in villages into easily guarded and controlled communities" were utilized (Bahbah, 1986, pp. 163-164). This led to the creation of "model villages," based on the Israeli kibbutz model, whereby civilian populations in former rebel areas were pacified through the destruction of their homes, and civilians were relocated and regrouped elsewhere under "army protection" (Bahbah, 1986). Guatemalan officials were far from shy about Israel's role in helping them pacify dissidents, with Colonel Eduardo Wohlers, head of the Plan of Assistance to Conflict Areas, stating in March 1983: "many of our technicians are Israeli-trained. The model of the kibbutz and the moshav is planted firmly in our minds" (as cited in Bahbah, 1986, p. 164). Notably, many Guatemalan military men spoke of the "Palestinization" of the Indigenous populations of Guatemala (Bahbah, 1986, p.164; Black, 1983). This evidence demonstrates the damning extent to which the Israeli settler-colonial state aided in colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala. Israel provided Guatemala with the technology, expertise, weaponry, and training needed for its reign of terror. Based on techniques developed by the USA and Israel and practiced on Native Palestinians, the Guatemalan military suppressed and massacred Maya communities.

The results of the Guatemalan

state's operations during the 1960s-1980s were devastating. Samuel Totten (2018) explains that evidence collected by the United Nations-sponsored *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* (Commission For Historical Clarification) reveals that between 1981-1983, 626 villages were attacked by government troops and/or paramilitary units and 440 villages were completely destroyed. Between 1960-1966, over 200,000 Guatemalans were killed or disappeared and at least 83% of the victims were Indigenous Maya people (Totten, 2018). According to Victor Perera, the Israeli Galil and Uzi machine guns are responsible for more than half of the 45,000 Indigenous Peoples killed in Guatemala since 1978 (as cited in Hunter, 1987, p. 36). The United Nations commission report found that the Guatemalan government committed acts of genocide against the Maya people (Totten, 2018). This makes Israel and the USA not just complicit in the genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala but rather active perpetrators. Hence, across space and time, settler-colonial and imperial states prop one another up and are connected through technologies of violence.

Explicating such connections has been fundamental to my activism. At the SJC International Solidarity working group that I lead, I ground my work in the understanding that opposing settler-colonialism necessitates opposing it in all of its forms, whether here in Turtle Island or in Palestine. This is because I have often encountered individuals who engage in selective activism whereby they condemn and oppose some forms of settler-colonialism, such as the

colonization of the Americas, while remaining silent and impartial to settler-colonialism in Palestine and other geographic contexts. In fighting against this phenomenon, I point out the short-sightedness of such a narrow approach by arguing that just as settler-colonial states are allied in their fight against Indigenous peoples — as indicated by the USA and Israel's active role in the massacres of Indigenous peoples in Guatemala — activists need to ally in fights against interconnected oppressions. Our enemies are united, so we need to be. Fighting settler-colonialism entails illuminating global connections that identify the US and Israel as imperialist allies oppressing Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

The Rise of Transnational Solidarity in the 70s and 80s rooted in Anti-Imperialism

Thus far, I have demonstrated that the violence exerted on Indigenous Peoples globally by imperialist and settler-colonial states transcends geographic boundaries (although this is not to ignore the nuanced histories and differentiated manifestations of oppression in each context). Given that the US and Israeli states are allies in the fight against marginalized people globally, it is crucial that resistance by marginalized peoples articulates these connections and integrates transnational solidarity as a cornerstone of resistance to imperialism. Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s, a type of 'Third World Internationalism' developed across the Global South that expressed these relations. Leftists in Latin America were a key part of this transnational solidarity. Latin American leftists often view

systems of domination, like imperialism and capitalism, as universalizing (Mor, 2014). It is through this lens that many Latin American leftists understand Israel in the context of a longer imperialist capitalist project connected to the USA (Henry, 2019; Mor, 2014). In particular, there has been a long and interesting history of solidarity between Cuba and Palestine.

Scholar Robert Austin Henry (2019) explores Cuba's long-standing solidarity with Palestine through the lens of race, class, and colonialism. Cuba was the only Latin American country to vote against the UN resolution to partition Palestine in 1947. This vote arose out of Cuba's confrontation with Zionism as a European settler-colonial movement and the realization that "at the heart of the question of Palestine is the vastly asymmetrical conflict between an eliminationist European settler-colonialist movement, backed by major Western powers (first Britain and now the US), and the indigenous people of Palestine" (Masalha as cited in Henry, 2019, p. 245). Cuba's partition vote, therefore, was rooted in an anti-colonial, anti-racist stance that positioned the Palestinian cause not as a regional conflict, but as part of a global struggle against colonialism, one of which Cuba was a key part of (Henry, 2019). Cuba solidified its relationship with Palestine through a variety of means, including holding conferences in solidarity with Palestine and providing scholarships to thousands of Palestinian students (Henry, 2019). In addition, there is an interesting history of mutual support for armed struggle between Cubans and Palestinians. Throughout the 1970s, the

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) provided military training and assistance to revolutionary forces across the Global South, including Latin Americans (Mor, 2014; Tabar, 2017). Similarly, PLO fighters were being trained in Cuba as early as 1969 (Mor, 2014). After the defeat of Palestinians and Arabs in the 1967 Six Day War, Cuban guerrilla warfare specialists trained Palestinians in Jordanian camps (Henry, 2019). Following the 1967 war, the Cuban government also declared that the "Arab peoples are today one more victim of the global strategy of imperialist policy across the world... the same criminal and hypocritical policy that yesterday led to the military intervention in Santo Domingo" and which works "to stop the advance of the liberation movement in our continent" (Gobierno de Cuba as cited in Henry, 2019, p. 247). In this way, Cuba was engaging in transnational solidarity, rooted in an understanding that both Cuba and Palestine were fighting against imperialism. This type of activism embodies what Alfred J. López, the founding editor of *The Global South* journal, describes as the "mutual recognition among the world's subalterns of their shared conditions at the margins of the brave new neoliberal world" (as cited in Mahler, 2018, p. 221). Across seemingly distant geographies, activists are united in their fight against oppressive forces, emanating from their shared experiences with systems of domination.

Conclusion

In this paper, I explored how seemingly distant geographies are tied by networks of solidarity. First, I analyzed the ways in which settler-colonial states

like the USA and Israel commit Indigenous human rights abuses both locally and globally. I explored Israel's funding of military dictatorships in Latin America, particularly Guatemala, to make the case that settler-colonial and imperial states are connected through technologies of violence and racist imaginative geographies. Looking at Cuba and Palestine's history of solidarity, I analyzed how marginalized peoples subvert systems of oppression by recognizing nodes of connection between imperialist states and forming networks of solidarity as resistance. This history of solidarity is one that provides me with hope and optimism as an organizer and activist. It reminds me that we are not alone in the solidarity work we do and that all over "distant" geographies, activists are fighting against oppressive forces of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism. Instead of understanding our tragedies merely in relation to ourselves and our countries, recognizing the intrinsic connections between our respective visions for liberation is powerful and transformative.

References

- Bahbah, B. (1986). *Israel and Latin America: The military connection; foreword by Stanley Hoffmann*.
- Black, G. (1983). Israeli Connection Not Just Guns for Guatemala. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 17(3), 43-45.
- Blum, W. (1995). *Killing hope: U.S. military and CIA interventions since world war II*. Common Courage Press.
- Englert, S. (2021, April 16). *Palestine: A socialist introduction to the liberation struggle*. Middle East Eye. Retrieved December 15, 2022, from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/socialist-introduction-palestinian-struggle>.
- Gill, L. (2004). *The school of the americas: Military training and political violence in the americas*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822386001>
- Henry, R. A. (2019). Global Palestine: International Solidarity and the Cuban Connection. *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, 18(2), 239-262.
- Hunt, S. E. (2014). *Witnessing the colonialscape: Lighting the intimate fires of Indigenous legal pluralism* (Doctoral dissertation, Environment: Department of Geography).
- Hunter, J. (1987). The Israeli Role in Guatemala. *Race & Class*, 29(1), 35-54.
- Kanji, A. (2020, August 05). *A how-to guide for the settler colonial present: From Canada to Palestine to Kashmir*. Yellowhead Institute. Retrieved December 15, 2022, from <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2020/08/05/marking-the-settler-colonial-present-from-canada-to-palestine-to-kashmir/>.
- Mahler, A. G. (2018). *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- McSherry, J. P. (2005). *Predatory states: Operation condor and covert war in latin america*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Mor, J. S. (2014). The question of Palestine in the Argentine political imaginary: Anti-imperialist thought from cold war to neoliberal order. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 20(2), 183-197.
- Morris, B. (2000). *Righteous victims: A history of the zionist-arab conflict, 1881-1999*. J. Murray.
- Pappe, I. (2007). *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. Simon and Schuster.
- Pieterse, J. (1984). State Terrorism on a Global Scale: The Role of Israel. *Crime and Social Justice*, (21/22), 58-80.

- Said, E. W. (1979). *The question of palestine*. Times Books.
- Salaita, S. (2016). *Inter/nationalism: decolonizing native America and Palestine*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Saldívar, M. V. (2010). From Mexico to Palestine: An occupation of knowledge, a Mestizaje of methods. *American Quarterly*, 62(4), 821-833.
- Stannard, D. E. (1993). *American holocaust: The conquest of the new world*. Oxford University Press.
- Tabar, L. (2017). From third world internationalism to 'the internationals': The transformation of solidarity with palestine. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(2), 414-435.
- Totten, S. (Ed.). (2018). *Dirty Hands and Vicious Deeds: The US Government s Complicity in Crimes against Humanity and Genocide*. University of Toronto Press.



Beyond the *Crazy* and *Rich*: A Post-modernist Interpretation of Urbanism in Singapore

by: Ryan Ng

Cities shape the boundaries in which we shape our lives. They are human constructs, yet we seem to understand so little about the ways they might grow, decay or interact with one another. How do we know what we know about cities? How might we view a city beyond its representation as a physical place, but as a portal across space and time? In an attempt to answer these questions, I revisit a city I was born and raised in, but portrayed to much of the world as a place of strict rule, unparalleled growth, or simply the stage of Kevin Kwan's infamous 'Crazy Rich Asians'. By borrowing the ideas of Manuel Castells' "Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in an Informational Age", I propose three seemingly disparate, yet highly interconnected perspectives and case studies for understanding urbanism in Singapore. In doing so, I hope to expose the multi-faceted, complex, and unique urban processes that have shaped, and will shape Singapore in the 21st century, and offer just one of the many ways that urbanism can be understood in a city.

Introduction

Singapore is a city that was never meant to succeed. As a former British colony from 1819, the city gained the right to self-governance in 1957, before joining the Federation of Malaya in 1963. Due to economic and political differences, Singapore left the federation less than two years later to become an independent, sovereign state in 1965. With a land area roughly a quarter of metropolitan Vancouver and a severe lack of natural resources, Singapore failed to abide by the trajectory of Rostow's (1960) Modernization Theory, which describes how modernization is a linear process of growth from a traditional, agrarian society to industrialization, diversification and mass consumption. Yet, Kwan's (2013) reputedly 'insider' account of contemporary Singapore is a world of glitz, glamour, and *crazy rich* people – which may not be a surprise when we consider how the nation consistently

performs on positivist rankings of per-capita GDP and standards of living. At the same time, the experience of urban life for many people living in Singapore varies greatly, and rightfully so, due to the unique 'routes' of strangers that make up the cosmopolitan city-state. It is therefore necessary to question how urbanism has shaped the development of Singapore, and how its development might change in the future.

This paper seeks to better understand the complex, ongoing process of urbanism in Singapore through the lens of Manuel Castells' (2005) "Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Informational Age". Castells (2005) posits that the ways cities spatially transform can be related to their positionality in the space of flows and space of place. While the space of place refers to the physical locality of urban activities and urban life, the space of flows breaks down the physical and geographical barriers between cities by

linking them in an interactive network connected by telecommunication and digital technologies. Both processes are interconnected and interdependent on each other, and the space of flows often overlaps itself into the space of place (Castells, 2005). Considering Singapore as a nexus between these two spaces, this paper argues that (1) the economic survivorship of Singapore has always been, and will continue to be inextricably linked to its position in the space of flows, (2) the undisputed autonomy of urban governance in Singapore is crucial in upholding the balance between transnationality and the management of urban life, and (3) the inevitable manifestation of the space of flows, in the space of place, has widened inequalities between people in the city-state. Post-modern urbanism characterizes urban life as indeterminate and unpredictable, and so urbanism may be considered from a multitude of perspectives depending on how we choose to see it (Dear, 1996). By using specific case studies, and mixing analysis with empirical descriptions, this paper seeks to adopt a post-modernist approach of appreciating the broader urban dynamics that shaped, and will shape the face of Singapore in the 21st century.

Repositioning Singapore in the Space of Flows: From Global City to Smart Nation

Singapore's economic and political survivorship has always been dependent on its ability to strategically situate itself within the entangling web of transnational connections that drive the world economy (Olds & Yeung, 2011). Cities are portals across space and time, so an understanding of the current

realities of Singapore necessitates an understanding of the nation's long history of connection to the space of flows. Even as a small fishing village prior to colonisation, archaeological evidence revealed the presence of Singapore's trade with China and the Riau archipelago since the fourteenth century (Heng, 1999). Under colonial rule, Singapore was transformed into a free-trade port for goods travelling between Southeast Asia and the British Empire (Wong, 2011). Post-independence, the newly-elected government relied on 'smokestack chasing' – by establishing a pro-business environment to attract investments by multinational corporations, thereby generating capital flows into the city (Hoon, 2021).

However, while trade has served Singapore as an agent of growth, its transnational approach towards development simultaneously exposes its vulnerability to shocks in the global economy. This was made apparent when Singapore was found to be the worst performing Asian economy during the Global Financial Crisis in 2009 (Rolf, 2009). To build a more resilient economy, while still being deeply rooted in the global circuitry of flows, Singapore announced the implementation of its Smart Nation Initiative in 2014. This initiative sought to transition Singapore from its survivalist ideology of a global city that focused on 'importing' talent and flows, to a Smart Nation that builds on its own capabilities to 'export' urban and technological solutions to the world (Joo, 2021).

But what makes a city smart? While there is no universal definition of a

smart city (GoI, 2015), it broadly refers to a reconfiguration of the ways which stakeholders in the urban community interact with each other through the extensive incorporation of digital technologies across the urban landscape (Ho, 2017). In the case of Singapore, the digital economy was identified as a key pillar in its Smart Nation Initiative (IMDA, 2018). The digital economy aims to alter the city's economics of doing business by lowering barriers of entry, thereby enabling the virtual and instant trading of digital goods and services (Anttiroiko, 2013). With the blurring of sectoral and national boundaries boosting Singapore's international competitiveness, the Smart Nation can be seen as a continuation of Singapore's developmental strategy amidst growing global uncertainties (Ho, 2017).

Still, Singapore's repositioning in the space of flows does not lie solely in the promise of technology alone. Smart cities must be examined in relation to both global discourse and local contexts (Joo, 2021), as cities try to reorder physical spaces to engage in global flows. A deeper analysis of Singapore's Smart Nation Initiative reveals a reconfiguration of urban life through a blending of its local and global space of flows. Kong and Woods (2018) view this as the establishment of a 'Fourthspace', where conventional binaries like digital and analogue, public and private are dissolved, and replaced by a mutual dependence within the space we inhabit. Indeed, the Smart Nation Initiative can be interpreted as a change from Singapore's typical paternalistic, developmentalist way of urban governance, to one characterised by a

hybridisation of developmentalism and neoliberalism (Park et al., 2012). In this new way of urban life, smart citizens and businesses work collaboratively towards a global agenda, with the government playing a largely capitalistic role by promoting economic growth in a modern-day variation of David Harvey's (1989) urban entrepreneurialism. Consequently, the emphasis on smart 'nation' from a global 'city' reflects this new collectivist vision in securing Singapore's future within the ever-evolving space of flows.

The Singapore Machine: Branding Pragmatism into Everyday Spatiality

What are the engines that drive Singapore's vision of a Smart Nation? How might an understanding of Singapore's political economy relate to the current system of planning in the city-state? To answer these questions, one must first recognise Singapore's status as both a city and nation. This means that Singapore does not conform to Peterson's (1981) paradox of local governance, which highlights the juxtaposition of local authorities having greater contact and trust of its people, yet possessing limited political power compared to 'higher' forms of government. Consequently, with *urban* governance being the highest form of governance in Singapore, and state health intertwined with city health, city politics in Singapore cannot be considered 'limited politics'.

The uniqueness of urban governance in Singapore may be cautiously viewed in relation to city machine politics in the United States

(Phillips, 2010). The Singapore machine can be characterised by the dominance of the People's Action Party (PAP) since independence in 1965. The PAP has long propagated the importance of a vulnerable country like Singapore to have a pragmatic and economically-oriented government as a means of ensuring its survival in a globalised world (Tan, 2012). This enabled the establishment of a cyclic relationship of trust, where the PAP provides Singaporeans with growth and material well-being, while securing its political legitimacy and longevity in return (Tan, 2012). The product of this relationship is a politically stable environment which is essential in safeguarding Singapore's position in the space of flows. Castells et al. (1990) describe this as the 'Shek Kip Mei Syndrome', where the state takes an active role in the production and management of urban life to achieve economic growth and social stability. Therefore, urban governance in Singapore takes on a largely positivist approach, where "necessary" and "realistic" solutions are imposed and accepted as a means of growth (Chua, 1997, p. 59). With its dual caretaker and entrepreneurial responsibilities, the delicate marriage of state and corporate imperatives (Shatkin, 2014) enable the PAP to reshape everyday spatiality in the space of place to promote economic development in the space of flows.

An example of the re-ordering of public space in accordance to economic efficiency is Singapore's public housing system (Ho, 2017). Unlike much of the western world, most Singaporeans would not be surprised by Ananya Roy's (2013) revelation of living in public housing, as

over 80% of the city's residents live in one. With the state being the single largest landlord in the city, the need for a robust public housing program goes beyond Singapore's land constraints. Firstly, Singapore's public housing system drives the city's growth. A high savings ratio in the form of the Central Provident Fund (CPF) allows for the accumulation of capital by the Singapore government (Castells et al., 1990). Singapore's public housing system can also be viewed as a form of social welfare system based on the premise of hard work, thereby reinforcing the state ideology of pragmatism, and an incentive for residents to remain employed (Shatkin, 2014). More importantly, state control of the housing market is used as a form of political control. With high-quality, (relatively) affordable and safe homes, Singaporeans now have an economic interest in a stable political order to maintain housing prices, which in turn legitimises and strengthens civic adherence to the state (Castells et al., 1990). By exploiting the complementarity between a successful public housing program and economic growth, the PAP is able to socialise Singaporeans into disciplined, efficient and docile worker-consumer subjects for a capitalist economy and authoritarian polity (Tan, 2012). Instead of the city machine competing for the votes and loyalty of its people, the Singapore machine has evolved to one based on the co-dependence between its government and citizens.

Paradox of the Smart City: Who is it Planned for?

As Singapore continues to shift its gears in the global space of flows, the

Singapore Machine simultaneously re-engineers the space of place to support insatiable growth. Nonetheless, a discussion of urbanism in the city-state goes beyond its objective vision as a growth machine (Molotch, 1976); it mandates a critical analysis of the silences within state rhetoric and reality (Yeoh, 2004). This begs the question: *who is the city planned for?*

One approach to this question is a consideration of labour flows in the city. Singapore is heavily reliant on migrant labour, who mostly constitute transient workers from developing economies like India, Bangladesh, and Thailand (Dutta, 2021). These workers accept low-wage and low-skilled jobs that Singaporeans are unwilling to do, and work mostly in the nation's construction industry which receive the largest proportion (73.8%) of foreign labour out of all economic sectors (Hamid & Tutt, 2019). Unfortunately, numerous studies have revealed the pervasive discrimination that this vulnerable community faces, through a 'precarity at work' (Hamid and Tutt, 2019), and a 'precarity of place' (Banki, 2013; Sibley, 1995). Precarious employment for transient workers is defined by a constant uncertainty of repatriation (Branch & Hanley, 2011). Transient workers are employed under the lowest spectrum of foreign employment eligibility schemes (known as the work permit), subjecting them to a range of surveillance measures which ensure they do not gain permanent foothold in the country (Yeoh, 2004). With the recognition of their dispensable, and therefore *transient* status in the city, alongside an

outstanding debt they owe to employers for financing their trip to Singapore (Yeoh, 2004), transient workers have no choice but to undertake unsafe activities, accept low wages, and comply with policies that do not benefit them. Hamid and Tutt (2019) view this as an unspoken reality of Dutta's (2020) version of 'extreme neoliberalism' – a free market ideology pushed beyond its capacity, with a state that silences transient worker collectivisation while promoting flexibility within the labour market to enable capital flows.

To better understand the urban experience of transient workers, it is worth considering their 'insider' perspectives through a subjective, 'acquaintance-with' approach (Phillips 2010). The following quote is from a Tamil transient worker who was employed in Singapore for one year before being injured at work (Hamid & Tutt, 2019, p. 525). In a radical form of state pragmatism, it illuminates the disregard that the city has towards transient workers, and how they are objectified as mere units of employment.

"Singapore and the employers throw us away like how we throw away our banana leaf after we are done eating."

The following photograph depicts the interior of a transient worker dormitory. The photograph not only captures the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions of transient workers in Singapore, but also how their experience of space is fundamentally threatening to their health, well-being, and dignity (Dutta, 2021).

Figure 1.

Interior of a transient worker dormitory in Singapore



Note. This ‘home’ was shared by 28 other men who have since been repatriated to Bangladesh after their employers repeatedly failed to make levy payments for foreign workers to the Singapore government, causing their work permits to be cancelled. In their 10 months of living in Singapore, these men were unable to pay off their debts amassed from opting to move to the city-state. (O’Brien, 2012).

Transient workers drive the ebbs and flows of Singapore’s transnationalism yet lie subversively under its shadows. With many Singaporeans viewing transient workers as “noisy” and “dirty” (Hamid & Tutt, 2019, p. 526), it is apparent that their marginalisation on all scales of society have perpetuated both spatial and moral boundaries. By projecting the spaces of invisibility that transient workers live in, to the visible spaces of the public sphere (Dutta, 2021), we can observe how the city continues to gain power through the benefits of transnationalism, while

transient workers themselves continue to fuel the city’s incessant desire for growth. Herein lies the paradox of the smart city: to be smart, Singapore must carefully and strategically erase the very exploitative processes that are precursors to its ‘smartness’ (Dutta, 2021). In other words, the Singapore Machine projects an image of strong governance and a successful nation based on intelligent decision making, while simultaneously silencing the voices of those who built them. It is therefore necessary to contrast the hegemonic state narrative with ‘insider’ experiences of the silenced to

understand the hidden costs of urbanism in the city-state.

Conclusion

Singapore is a city that was never meant to succeed, but it does so through a careful blend of state-controlled urban entrepreneurialism, civic obedience, and at the cost of a largely silenced migrant community. With the 'nation-state' model gaining much unpopularity in the 21st century due to intergovernmental antagonism and political anxiety, the unique processes that had, and will continue to shape urbanism in Singapore may be useful in considering whether city-states have the power to thrive independently in the highly connected space of flows, and if the development of city-states ought to be the new urban future. By moving beyond the positivist rankings to consider how social and political factors influence the ways that urban life is created in the city, Singapore is presented as a complex, multi-faceted system of continuous change, and not merely a place for the *crazy rich* that much of the world perceives it to be.

References

- Anttiroiko, A. (2013). U-cities Reshaping our Future: Reflections on Ubiquitous Infrastructure as an Enabler of Smart Urban Development. *AI & Society*, 28(4), pp. 491-507.
- Banki, S. (2013). Precarity of Place: A Complement to the Growing Precariat Literature. *Growing Discourse*, 3(3-4), pp. 450-463.
- Branch, E. H., & Hanley, C. (2011). Regional Convergence in Low-wage Work and Earnings 1970–2000. *Sociological Perspectives*, 54(4), pp. 569-592.
- Castells, M. (2005). Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age. In B. Sanyal (Eds.), *Comparative Planning Cultures* (pp. 45-63). New York: Routledge.
- Castells, M., Goh, L., & Kwok, R. Y. (1990). *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore*. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers.
- Chua, B. H. (1997). *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*. London: Routledge.
- Dear, M. J. (1996). *The Postmodern Urban Condition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dutta, M. J. (2020). COVID-19, Authoritarian Neoliberalism, and Precarious Migrant Work in Singapore: Structural Violence and Communicative Inequality. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5(58).
- Dutta, M. J. (2021). Singapore's Extreme Neoliberalism and the COVID Outbreak: Culturally Centering Voices of Low-Wage Migrant Workers. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(10), pp. 1302-1322.
- Government of India. (2015). *Smart Cities Mission Statement and Guidelines*.
- Hamid, T., & Tutt, D. (2019). "Thrown Away Like a Banana Leaf": Precarity of Labour and Precarity of Place for Tamil Migrant Construction Workers in Singapore. *Construction Management and Economics*, 37(9), pp. 513-536.
- Harvey, D. (1989). From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 71(1), pp. 3-17.
- Heng, T. S. D. (1999). Temasik as an International and Regional Trading Port in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: A Reconstruction Based on Recent Archaeological Data. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 72(1), pp. 113-123.
- Ho, E. (2017). Smart Subjects for a Smart Nation? Governing (Smart)mentalities in Singapore. *Urban Studies*, 54(13), pp. 3101-3118.

- Hoon, H. T. (2021). *The Singapore Economy: Dynamism and Inclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Infocomm Media Development Authority. (2018). *Digital Economy Framework for Action*.
- Joo, Y. (2021). Developmentalist Smart Cities? The Cases of Singapore and Seoul. *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, pp. 1-19.
- Kong, L. & Woods, O. (2018). The Ideological Alignment of Smart Urbanism in Singapore: Critical Reflections on a Political Paradox. *Urban Studies*, 55(4), pp. 679-701.
- Kwan, K. (2013). *Crazy Rich Asians*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Molotch, H. (1976). The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(2), pp. 309-332.
- Olds, K. & Yeung, H. (2011). Pathways to Global City Formation: A View from the Developmental City-state of Singapore. *Review of International Political Economy*, 11(3), pp. 489-521.
- Park, B., Hill, R. C., & Saito, A. (2012). *Locating Neoliberalism in East Asia: Neoliberalizing Spaces in Developmental States*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Peterson, P. E. (1981). *City Limits*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Phillips, B. (2010). *The City Reader (Sixth Edition)*. London: Routledge.
- Rolf, J. (2009). Singapore in Its Worst Recession for Years. The Effects of the Current Economic Crisis on the City-State's Economy. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 28(4), pp. 95-110.
- Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The Stages of Economic Growth, a non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge University Press.
- Roy, A. (2013). *Unknowing Poverty*. Public lecture at TEDx Berkeley. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley.
- Shatkin, G. (2014). Reinterpreting the Meaning of the 'Singapore Model': State Capitalism and Urban Planning. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(1), pp. 116-137.
- Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of Exclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Tan, K. P. (2012). The Ideology of Pragmatism: Neo-liberal Globalisation and Political Authoritarianism in Singapore. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 42(1), pp. 67-92.
- Wong, L. K. (2011). Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819-1941. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 9(1), pp. 50-84.

Yeoh, B. S. A. (2004). Cosmopolitanism and its Exclusions in Singapore. *Urban Studies*, 41(12), pp. 2431-2445.

Sand as Shifting Territory: Sand Extraction and Land Reclamation in Singapore

by: Alina Debyser

Amid growing concerns of the world “running out of sand,” Singapore has been extracting and importing large amounts of coastal sand from other nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia. It uses this sand to extend volumetrically upwards through construction, and outwards through land reclamation which first began in Singapore in 1822. Situated in a study of Southeast Asia, this paper explores how Singapore’s transnational sand extraction affects its own territory and that of Indonesia and Malaysia in unequal ways. I aim to provide a new perspective by bridging the geophysical and geopolitical and integrating artistic analysis into the study of this geographical issue. The sand trade often occurs in a way that is gradual and undetected. By framing sand as fluid and volatile and viewing art as a means of making visible what is typically obscured, this paper ultimately seeks to expand on and question the violence, dispossession, and geopolitical tensions implicated by Singapore’s sand consumption.

Introduction

Sand mining impinges on sovereign borders by taking territory from one country and adding it to another to extend newly created lands outward into the seas. Transnational sand extraction is particularly interesting due to its implications on geopolitics and national identity. Due to challenges associated with its small size, rapidly growing population, and increased urbanization, Singapore has resorted to importing large amounts of coastal sand from other nations for land reclamation and construction. The highly intensive extent of sand extraction is rarely discussed in the media, making this an important and overlooked area of study. It operates in a “climate of secrecy” (Lamb et al., 2019, p. 1512) that gives rise to corruption, violence, and illegality. This paper seeks to examine the question: how does transnational sand extraction affect territory in both importing and exporting countries?

I argue that sand itself can be seen as a fluid and liminal form of territory, capable of both adding to and erasing land in ways that stem from and perpetuate inequalities. Through the extraction and trade of sand, geopolitics affect geophysical changes to territory (and vice versa). I will specifically focus on: Singapore's extraction of sea sand from neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, the impact of this on both the exporting and importing countries, and what this means for territory and the people who relate to it. The art of Charles Lim Yi Yong and Sim Chi Yin will be analyzed as ways of exposing and reframing the hidden operations and implications of sand mining on territory in Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Sand as Fluid

Sand is the essential element of Singapore’s land reclamation yet is becoming increasingly scarce. Not all sand is suitable for construction and industrial purposes. Desert sand does not

bind well due to how it has been eroded by wind (Peduzzi, 2014). This places disproportionate demand on sea and river sand that is rougher and irregularly shaped, leading to mined, dredged, and depleted sand stocks.

In “Terrain, Politics, history,” Stuart Elden (2020) questions our understanding of terrain and territory, pushing us to view it as a fluid process that is being actively shaped. This is especially relevant to how sand is viewed as a shifting and mobile resource, not only physically, but in how it is traded, sold, and stolen from countries like Indonesia and Malaysia and brought into Singapore. Sand has a particular dynamic materiality of both solid and liquid, that can be shaped by land, water and human activity (Jamieson, 2020). This granular fluidity makes its movement difficult to trace and quantify, and challenges efforts to regulate sand mining and the illegal trade. Despite consisting of individual grains, sand can act as a larger conglomerate capable of being moved “by the boatload or by the handful” (Comaroff, 2014) and compacted to form solid ground. It undergoes granular phase transitions from geophysical resource to sovereign territory, enabling it to “make and unmake territories” (Jamieson, 2020, p. 285). These transitory properties of sand

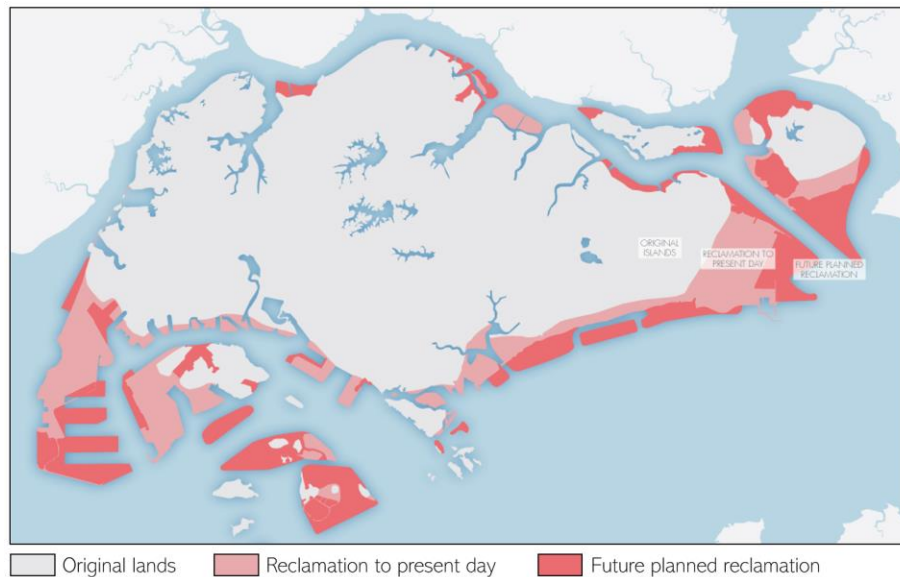
subvert typical conceptions of territory as fixed, bounded, and finite (Chua, 2018) and how states accumulate territory through ‘traditional’ means of war, militarization, and colonization (Comaroff, 2014). Materially, sand offers Singapore a flexible, inexpensive, and vast constituent with which it can artificially shape its coastline. The fluidity intrinsic to sand is reflected in the larger process of land reclamation, making Singapore’s coastal territory malleable and ever-changing.

Singapore’s Land Reclamation

Singapore is the top sand importer globally and the highest per capita consumer of sand, comprising 13 percent of the world’s total sand imports (Pilkey et al., 2022) and consuming 5.4 tonnes of sand per inhabitant (Peduzzi, 2014). The “Little Red Dot” has increased its territory by sixty-five square miles since 1965 (Pilkey et al., 2022) and is targeting a thirty percent increase of its original land area by 2030 (Comaroff, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates the extent of Singapore’s present day and future planned land reclamation. Most of this expansion is a result of tremendous sand importation from other countries after exhausting its own supply (Pilkey et al., 2022).

Figure 1

Land Reclamation in Singapore



Note. Adapted from “Mapping Singapore” by Michael Rafferty, 2013 (<http://mr-architecture.com/mapping-singapore/>). Copyright 2013 Michael Rafferty.

These sand imports have visibly altered the urban form and fabric of Singapore’s territory. The aptly named Beach Road used to run directly along the shoreline, but since the 1940s has steadily lost its sea frontage due to reclamation (Savage and Yeoh, 2003). Other coastline areas have seen similar changes in morphology where the sea is filled in and molded as the State sees fit. Singapore uses imported sand to expand twofold: horizontally outwards through land reclamation, and vertically upwards through high-rise construction. The nation’s growth of space is thus volumetric—expanding into both sea and sky (Steinberg & Peters, 2015; Elden, 2013). This expansion has enabled the country to grow its “spectacle of sovereignty” (Chua, 2018) in creating and refiguring territory for advanced logistics and military operations, burgeoning technological developments,

government buildings, trading ports, luxury resorts, skyscrapers, and tourist attractions. These spectacles showcase its international appeal, territorial jurisdiction, and sovereign power.

Economically, the majority of high-earning companies and industries sit on reclaimed land. This includes shipping and trade at the Port of Singapore; aviation at Changi Airport; financial, commercial, and entertainment activity at Marina Bay; and manufacturing operations at Jurong Island (Topalović, 2014). The scale, speed, and versatility of Singapore’s reclaimed land is ideal for expansion and transforms the “very malleability of its coastline into the highest economic potential” (Topalović, 2014, p. 56). Sand is so crucial to Singapore’s development that a national reserve of sand was created in the form of three large stockpiles—Seletar stockpile, Tampines

Avenue 10 stockpile, and Pulau Punggol Timor—the latter being a reclaimed island itself (Pilkey et al., 2022, p. 48). These backup reserves and Singapore's diversification of its sand sources are responses to fluctuations and shortages, which are becoming more common as sea sand is overexploited and countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia tighten their sand exports.

Furthermore, Singapore considers the specifics of its sand trade “a matter of national security” (Comaroff, 2014). The country “[employs] various layers of contractors,” enabling it to subtly “obfuscate its own responsibility and role in the corruption and destruction of the environment of other Asian countries” (Pilkey et al., 2022, p. 46). Singapore additionally manages to cover up its damaging sand imports by projecting its image of “the garden city” (Topalović, 2014, p. 55) that connotes environmental and ecological consciousness. The country has justified raising the seabed level for some reclamation projects as an adaptation to sea level rise (Chua, 2018). Ironically, it is this very sand dredging used for land reclamation that damages aquatic ecosystems and exacerbates the impacts of higher sea levels as the effects of climate change become increasingly severe. Singapore's Foreshores Act of 1920, revised in 2020, outlines how sand becomes State territory through land reclamation:

“The President may ... declare any lands formed by the reclamation of any part of the foreshore of Singapore, or any areas of land reclaimed from the sea to be State land, and thereupon that land

shall immediately vest in the State freed and discharged from all public and private rights which may have existed or been claimed over the foreshore or the seabed before the same were so reclaimed” (“Foreshores Act 1920,” 2021).

As a liminal element part of both ground and sea, sand physically rejects delineations between land and water. Yet, politically and legally speaking, sand is deemed as one or the other through the Foreshores Act. The transition from sand to sovereign land, in which Singapore establishes ownership and rights to it as territory, depends on a proclamation. ‘Reclaimed land’ and the resulting territory is not so much reclaimed as it is proclaimed through presidential directives.

Reclaimed land additionally impacts territorial understandings by creating a sense of detachment from coastal identity. The “territorial engineering” and “terraforming” conducted by Singapore is very much a kind of technical expansion consisting of national security establishments, logistics, and industries (Chua, 2018). The coastline becomes an “off-limits space” where the “experience of the island is contradictory” and public contact with the sea is reduced (Topalović, 2014, p. 51). Territory becomes increasingly engineered, artificial, and controlled. The many state-led foreshore and offshore operations promote a dislocated relationship between Singaporeans and their own coastal territory, in which the country “does not feel like an island” (Topalović, 2014, p. 51) and there is essentially “no

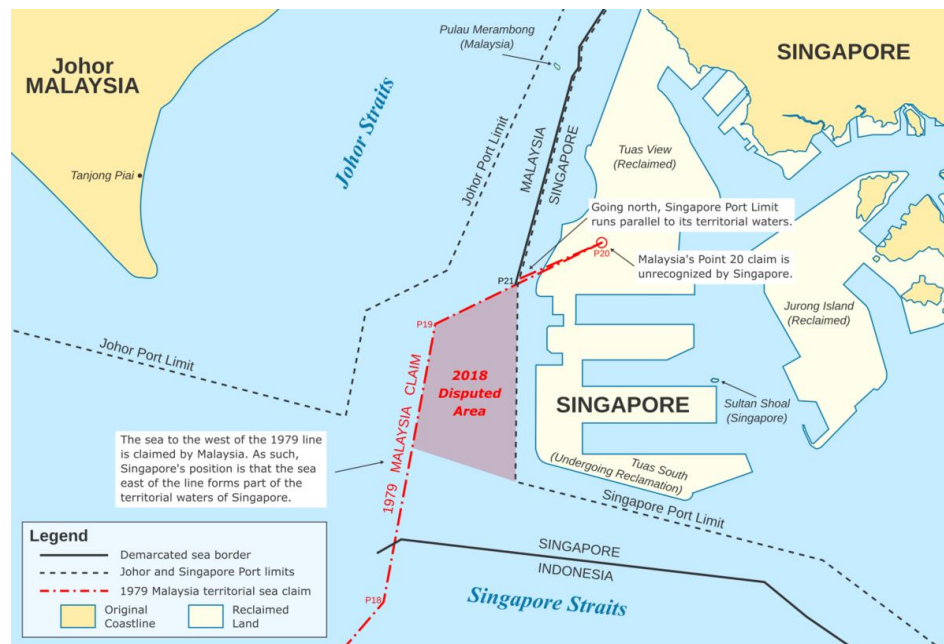
sense of the coast” for residents (Lim, 2022, 1:59).

Through its fluid and incremental properties, sand can complicate geopolitical grey areas and ambiguous notions of territory. The ability to imagine and extend new land into the sea where it did not exist before can create political issues in shared waterways. In 2003, a legal controversy arose in the Johor Straits (between Malaysia and Singapore) when Malaysia accused Singapore’s land reclamation of encroaching on Malaysia’s territorial sovereignty under the UN Convention on

the Law of the Sea (“Such Quantities of Sand,” 2015). Singapore’s Tuas View Extension reclamation project was said to infringe on Malaysia’s waters at “Point 20” (Figure 2), a disputed area claimed by Malaysia yet unrecognized as such by Singapore. The case was resolved, but nonetheless emphasizes the conflict that the movement of sand brings to territory and how it challenges imagined concepts of borders and sovereignty. The possibility of using sand to produce land becomes entangled with existing geopolitical disputes and oceanic in-

Figure 2

Tuas maritime dispute off the coast of Johor and Singapore.



Note. From “Tuas maritime dispute” by Seloloving, 2020 (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tuas_maritime_dispute.png). Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic License

Disappearing Sand and Islands

Singapore's extensive sand extraction has gradually led to severe environmental and violent impacts in countries where the sand is sourced. Over 24 Indonesian islands have disappeared since 2005 due to erosion from illegal sand mining ("Indonesia's Islands Are Buried Treasure," 2010). In 1997, Malaysia banned exports of sea sand to Singapore, followed by Indonesia in 2007, Cambodia and Vietnam in 2009; Myanmar is also currently being pressed to do the same ("Such Quantities of Sand," 2015). These bans are symptomatic of the geopolitical hostility caused by transnational sand mining and despite their implications, sand continues to move into Singapore through smuggling and illegal means. In 2010, thirty-four Malaysian officials were charged for a 'Sex for Sand' scandal in which they exchanged sand exportation permits for bribes and sexual favors (Pilkey et al., 2022). Multi-level government corruption is prominent, often undetected, and intentional due to demand for suitable sand from neighboring countries.

The violence of sand mining is further experienced physically and overtly through the dangerous "sand mafia." Lumajang, Indonesia, is one such locus. In September 2015, environmental activists protested sand extraction in Watu Pecak Beach, delaying sand quarrying activities and obstructing trucks (EJAtlas, 2017). Several days later, a group of over thirty men killed activist Salim Kancil with a blow to the head with a hoe (EJAtlas, 2017). Another activist, Tosan, was critically injured after being assaulted at his home and run over with

a motorcycle (EJAtlas, 2017). These are just two recorded cases illustrating the violence and lack of regulation rife in transnational sand mining, which often manifests dangerously in local situations. Those who speak out against it put themselves at risk, making the illegal trade even more inscrutable and difficult to track. Sand thus becomes a volatile form of territory subject to crime, corruption, and insecurity.

The negative impacts of the sand trade are not only experienced by those protesting at its source, but also by those implicated further along. Indonesian, Cambodian, Burmese, and Bangladeshi foreign workers are relied upon for land reclamation and construction, meaning that the labor Singapore imports is likely from the same origin countries as the sand (Chua, 2018; Lamb, 2019). Ironically, their communities in their home countries are the ones forced away from their residences and at risk of losing their local fishing livelihoods due to sand mining (Chua, 2018). Singapore's sand extraction thus becomes exploitative in more than just the geophysical sense: it abuses inequalities and exploits human laborers into difficult and dangerous work conditions, low-wages, and short-term contracts that in turn perpetuates a system of extractivism and ongoing dispossession. This creates an uneven dynamic of "sustaining prosperity in Singapore, while producing new articulations of poverty in the sites of extraction" (Lamb et al., 2019), thereby affecting the territory and people of these two places in divergent ways.

Adverse impacts also particularly affect the Orang Laut Indigenous peoples, who inhabit the Riau Islands

south of Singapore, part of modern-day Indonesia. Known as “sea nomads,” they traditionally live on the water in floating *kampong* villages and sustain fishing livelihoods (Chou, 2009). For Indonesian archipelagic cultures like the Orang Laut, *tanah air* (water land) means homeland, and renders a sense of continuity between land and sea (Roberts, 2021). Much like sand, the Orang Laut occupy a liminal space between land and sea. They are marginalized by the government as “in-between” peoples with no connection to the spaces they inhabit or concept of territory, and lacking permanent tenure (Chou, 2009). Territory is associated with permanence and fixed attachment to a place, which both the Orang Laut and sand negate. Sand quarrying for export to Singapore has eroded parts of the Orang Laut environment and inevitably much of their culture and livelihoods, posing “a serious challenge to the basic fabric of their survival” (Chou, 2009, p. 131). This has made areas of both land and sea occupied by the Orang Laut inaccessible, where “the re-shaped landscape no longer leaves any room for them” (Chou, 2009, p. 131). Transnational sand mining thus erases territory for some, to add territory for those in power while reshaping land and water relations for Asian Indigenous populations.

(In)visibility and Imaginaries

Art, photography, and film serve as methods for exposing and interrogating the links between sand mining and territory. Through visual representation, they make perceptible what is obscured by governments and industry actors, share this under-discussed issue with a wider public, and

raise provocative questions. Charles Lim Yi Yong, a Singaporean artist and former Olympic sailor, has extensively researched and incorporated Singapore’s geography, oceanic history, and contemporary politics in his work. Lim’s process of “staggered observations” (Mercado, 2022) reflects the gradual way that land is built up from sand and the incremental sand extraction operations that materialize, grain by grain, into large-scale environmental degradation and territorial shifts. His multimedia project *SEASTATE* that began in 2005 examines Singapore’s man-made, invisible structures and systems at sea (e-flux, 2016).

Lim manipulates a binary of erasure and addition in *SEASTATE 2*, featuring a five-meter-tall buoy and a graphical representational study. The buoy represents the disappeared island of Pulau Sajahat, which once existed until assimilated by Singapore’s Pulau Tekong for land reclamation (e-flux, 2016). Lim reveals Singapore’s “uneasy maritime unconscious” (e-flux, 2016) and renders visible what was lost to sand extraction. Lim’s physical reconstruction of the disappeared buoy, and by extension the disappeared island it used to mark, inverts the subtractive process of sand extraction and highlights the magnitude of its disappearance (Lim, 2022). This can be likened to Singapore’s constructed land becoming a “‘sculpture’ by the hand of the state” (Topalović, 2014, p. 52). Since 2002, Pulau Sajahat has not existed on Singapore’s nautical charts, along with the adjacent islet of Pulau Sajahat Kechil since 2008 (Lim, 2021), causing a re-negotiation of state borders and territory. Mapping is never a neutral

act, particularly when a state uses it to “classify, alter, regulate and eliminate areas, individuals and resources from within its territorial boundaries” (Chou, 2009, p. 156). Singapore’s political choices to include and exclude elements on its maps reflect its realized power to declare reclaimed land part of the State under the Foreshores Act.

Figure 3

Charles Lim Yi Yong, *SEASTATE 2: Sejaht Buoy and graphical representational study of Pulau Sajahat Kechil*



Note. From “SEASTATE 2” by Charles Lim Yi Yong, n.d. (<https://www.seastate.sg/2>). Courtesy of artist Charles Lim Yi Yong.

Lim’s artwork “*the grid, whatever whenever wherever*” in *SEASTATE 8* contains fragmented pieces of nautical maps on magnetic sheets, spread out

across the gallery walls (Mercado, 2022). One piece is symbolic of ‘the nation state,’ while the surrounding fragments constitute the extended territories of the ‘sea state.’ This raises questions about what territory and national identity truly mean, particularly when they appear capable of rearrangement at any given moment through the repositioning of gridded pieces, or the shifting of sands.

Figure 4

SEA STATE 8: the grid, whatever whenever wherever wherever (2021).



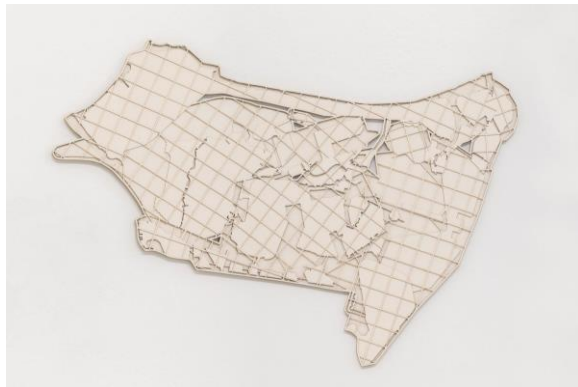
Note. Charles Lim Yi Yong, *SEASTATE 8: the grid, whatever whenever wherever wherever* (detail), 2014–2021, Screenprint on paper, magnetic rubber sheets, Dimensions variable, Edition of 2. © Charles Lim Yi Yong / STPI. Photo courtesy of the artist and STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore.

Lim jabs at Singapore’s subsumption of other countries’ territory through works like “*Pulau Satuasviewdamartekongma rinajurongcovebranibaratchangilautek ongsajahatsenanghantupunggolsebara okeastsamalunbukomsento*” in *SEASTATE 9*, using an excessively long name to satirize how these territories have been assimilated into one through land reclamation (Mercado, 2022). The individual islands of layered paper are all the same color, blending in and being

absorbed by the visual monolith that is Singapore. Does territory truly ever become ‘part of’ a country if it has been smuggled and assimilated from others, particularly through the medium of sand?

Figure 5

SEASTATE 9: Pulau
Satuasviewdamartekongmarinajurongcovebra
nibaratchangilautekongsajahatsenanghantupu
nggolsebaraokeastsamalunbukomsento (2021).



Note. Charles Lim Yi Yong, **SEASTATE 9: Pulau**

Satuasviewdamartekongmarinajurongcovebranibaratchangilautekongsajahatsenanghantupunggolsebaraokeastsamalunbukomsento, 2021, Laser cut STPI handmade paper, 45.2 x 64.8 x 0.95, Edition of 2. © Charles Lim Yi Yong / STPI. Photo courtesy of the artist and STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore.

Singaporean artist and photographer Sim Chi Yin has similarly covered Southeast Asian sand extraction and land reclamation, but through photography shot aerially, on foot, and by boat for her *Shifting Sands* series. She focuses on areas in Singapore, Malaysia, and China where rapid shoreline and offshore change is taking place, such as Tuas in the Straits of Johor. Sim’s photographs carry a certain surreal quality reflective of the stilted and artificial way that land reclamation is

carried out, and how it results in a *terra firma* that “you can walk on, drive on, build on” and “most importantly... sell” (Sim, 2019).

Figure 6

Malaysia, 2017



Note. A family takes a walk and goes fishing in an area in southern Malaysia now covered with giant sand dunes. From “Shifting Sands” by Sim Chi Yin, 2017 (<http://chiyinsim.com/shifting-sands/>). Copyright Sim Chi Yin, 2017. Reprinted with permission.

There is something undeniably new and foreign about the photographs and more broadly Singapore’s land reclamation. Land that was not there before is being gradually created in the sea, until assimilated at once into Singapore’s land territory and national identity through proclamation. The country is growing through a kind of materialization of land that was once sand and sea in response to the State’s political imagination, being able to simply “buy up land from their poorer neighbours and move it to where they want it” (Sim, n.d.). Sim manages to convey this mystical quality surrounding Singapore’s expansion through her photographs, which transcend a sense of place and time as if in a dreamlike state of limbo. She reveals the rarely seen and unfinished construction process that

happens during this transformation. Her photographs ultimately raise and address questions of where Singapore's sand comes from, and who it is for (Sim, 2019).

Conclusion

Sea sand suitable for construction and land reclamation purposes is becoming progressively more scarce. Singapore, which depends on sand for its outwards and upwards volumetric growth, now relies on both legal and illegal sand imports from neighboring countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Transnational sand extraction affects territory by contributing to it in some places while

removing it from other areas, in a way that intensifies inequalities. It creates geopolitical tensions surrounding borders and sovereignty, and is ridden with corruption and violence because of bans and secrecy. Sand further shapes peoples' understandings and experiences of land, sea, and territory—whether that be Singaporeans and their coastal identity, exploited migrant workers who witness sand dredging back home, or the Orang Laut Indigenous people whose communities and livelihoods are at risk. Through extraction and land reclamation, sand acts as a fluid, liminal, and material resource that ultimately reshapes new territory and geographies in Asia.

Acknowledgements

This piece was originally written for GEOG446B: Oceanic Geographies: Migration, Mobility and Diaspora in Term 1, 2022. Thank you to Sim Chi Yin, Charles Lim Yi Yong, and STPI Creative Workshop and Gallery for permission to use their images.

References

- Charles Lim Yi Yong: *SEA STATE*. (2016, April 8). e-flux. <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/3223/charles-lim-yi-yongsea-state/>
- Chou, C. (2009). *The Orang Suku Laut of Riau, Indonesia: The inalienable gift of territory*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203644232>
- Chua, C. (2018, May 3). “Sunny island set in the sea”: Singapore’s land reclamation as a colonial project. *The Funambulist Magazine*. <https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/17-weaponized-infrastructure/37341-2>
- Comaroff, J. (2014). *Built on sand: Singapore and the new state of risk*. Harvard Design Magazine. <https://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/39/built-on-sand-singapore-and-the-new-state-of-risk>
- EJAtlas. (2019, August 18). *Iron sand mining in Watu Pecak Beach, Indonesia*. <https://www.ejAtlas.org/print/deaths-in-iron-sand-mining-west-java-indonesia>
- Elden, S. (2013). Secure the volume: Vertical geopolitics and the depth of power. *Political Geography*, 34, 35-51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2012.12.009>
- Elden, S. (2020). Terrain, politics, history. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 11(2), 170-189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620951353>
- Foreshores Act 1920*. (2021, December 1). Singapore Statutes Online. <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/FA1920>
- Indonesia’s islands are buried treasure for gravel pirates*. (2010, March 27). The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/weekinreview/28grist.html>
- ITLOS. (2003). *Malaysia v. Singapore: Response of Singapore*. International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. https://www.itlos.org/fileadmin/itlos/documents/cases/case_no_12/C12_Response_Singapore.pdf
- Jamieson, W. (2020). For granular geography. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 11(2), 275-293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620950053>
- Lamb, V., Marschke, M., & Rigg, J. (2019). Trading sand, undermining lives: Omitted livelihoods in the global trade in sand. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109(5), 1511-1528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1541401>
- Lim Yi Yong, C. (2022, May 19). *SEASTATE 2: as evil disappears*. seastate.sg. <https://www.seastate.sg/2>
- Lim Yi Yong, C., & STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery. (2022, February 20). *Charles Lim Yi Yong: Staggered observations of a coast* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eG_bjfp8QSA

- Mercado, A. (2022, January 19). *Charles Lim Yi Yong maps Singapore's reclaimed lands*. Ocula Magazine. <https://ocula.com/magazine/insights/charles-lim/>
- Peduzzi, P. (2014). Sand, rarer than one thinks. *Environmental Development*, 11, 208-218. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2014.04.001>
- Pilkey, O. H., Longo, N. J., Neal, W. J., Rangel-Buitrago, N. G., Pilkey, K. C., & Hayes, H. L. (2022). *Vanishing sands: Losing beaches to mining*. Duke University Press.
- Rafferty, M. (2013). *Land reclamation* [Map]. Michael Rafferty Architecture. <http://mr-architecture.com/mapping-singapore/>
- Roberts, B. R. (2021). Borderwaters and Geometries of Being Amid. In *Borderwaters: Amid the archipelagic states of America*. Duke University Press.
- Savage, V. R., & Yeoh, B. S. (2003). *Singapore street names: A study of toponymics*. Marshall Cavendish Academic.
- Seloloving. (2020). *Tuas maritime dispute off the coast of Johor and Singapore* [Map]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tuas_maritime_dispute.png
- Sim, C. Y. (2019, March 1). *A mirage of luxury built on sand*. Magnum Photos. <https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/environment/sim-chi-yin-a-mirage-of-luxury-built-on-sand/>
- Sim, C. Y. (n.d.). *Shifting sands*. Sim Chi Yin. <https://chiyinsim.com/shifting-sands/>
- Steinberg, P., & Peters, K. (2015). Wet Ontologies, fluid spaces: Giving depth to volume through oceanic thinking. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(2), 247-264. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d14148p>
- Such quantities of sand*. (2015, February 26). The Economist. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2015/02/26/such-quantities-of-sand>
- Topalović, M. (2014). Constructed land: Singapore in the century of flattening. *Constructed Land: Singapore 1924–2012*, 51-63. <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-a-010824840>



Netto-Uyoku's Own Virtual Nation:

Computational Propaganda and Algorithms on Social Media

by: Sayano Izu

In Japan, Twitter and 2channel have become popular platforms for the rise of online right-wing political discourse known as “netto-uyoku,” distinguished by the fact that users are able to engage with others anonymously using these platforms. Computational propaganda and algorithms on social media platforms continue to shape the adaptive selectivity of information flows, and content supporting the conservative Liberal Democratic Party has been favoured over content originating from other political clusters. Over time, users with more conservative views have more limited exposure to diverse or mainstream political opinions – and become more tightly connected with other right-wing users immersed in the overwhelming, repetitive exposure to conservative content. In the context of one of the world’s most highly urbanized societies, computational propaganda and social media algorithms perpetuate what Steve Graham and Simon Marvin diagnosed as “splintering urbanism,” creating a dangerous half of what Manuel Castells theorized as “networks of outrage and hope.” Netto-uyoku represents an evolving ‘virtual nation,’ a mutation of Marshall McLuhan’s extensions of consciousness into ever more complex cybernetic urban systems that are parallel to – and yet selectively autonomous from – the physical world of material urbanism.

Keywords: netto-uyoku, computational propaganda, algorithms, virtual nations, social media.

Introduction

Around the world, social media has become a primary platform for political discourse. The strategic significance of social media was highlighted by the role of Cambridge Analytica (CA) in manipulating the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as revealed by the whistleblower Christopher Wylie. The enormous database CA built by harvesting Facebook personal data was exploited by conservative political operatives, raising serious policy issues on the relations among politics, privacy, and disinformation. Similar online campaigns designed to hijack social media ecosystems for political advantage have been documented in a number of countries (Schäfer, 2022).

In Japan, Twitter and 2channel (*ni-chan'neru*) host countless conversations related to politics. Platform anonymity allows individuals to share unfiltered, extreme opinions, and to find other users who share their views to pursue ever more extreme political discussions. The much-celebrated nature of the Internet as a ‘free’ democratic space seemingly allows anyone to reach out to any single individual or collective community. Yet corporate platform algorithms – combined with computational propaganda tools and practices devised by political operatives – structure the information flows experienced by users. In this essay, I will analyze the effects of this phenomenon in enabling the unity of those with conservative political and

cultural ideologies, or *netto-uyo[ku]*, through algorithms which create an increasingly segmented “virtual nation” in the political landscape of contemporary Japan.

Literature Review

I. Netto-uyoku and Shinzo Abe.

Extreme jingoism, xenophobia, and extreme right-wing grassroots movements are pervasive in Japan’s cyberspaces (Sakamoto, 2011). *Netto-uyoku* or *netto-uyo* – “online right-wingers” – became well known around 2002-2004, when Japan and South Korea hosted the FIFA World Cup (Schäfer et al., 2017). *Netto-uyoku* users began sharing content related to the Nanjing Massacre, the disputed territory of Dokdo/Takeshima, xenophobia towards Korean and Chinese immigrants, revisionist histories, and the glorification of Japan’s imperial military might (Schäfer et al., 2017; Sakamoto, 2011). While Internet optimists argue that cyberspace without borders promotes rational and democratic discourse (Sakamoto, 2011), Japan’s *netto-uyoku* have targeted marginalized communities and claimed the superiority of Japan – both as a nation-state and as a supreme Japanese ethnicity. *Netto-uyoku* activities have also evolved in the cultural politics of gender and sexuality (Yamaguchi, 2019; Hall, 2021); female politicians who challenge conservative views on gender roles are repeatedly subjected to misogynistic, sexist, nativist, and racist verbal abuse and hate speech (Schäfer, 2022).

Shinzo Abe, the former president of the conservative Liberal Democratic

Party (LDP), served as prime minister from 2012 to 2020, and was known for his neoliberal economic policy, *Abenomics* (Schäfer et al., 2017). His views and language gained popularity among conservative voters, while also appealing to more moderate voters (Schäfer et al., 2017). Evidence suggests that hateful online activities and attacks on female politicians are orchestrated by pro-Abe *netto-uyoku* individuals, in turn inspired by a neoconservative coalition of hardliners associated with Abe (Schäfer, 2022).

Netto-uyoku activities are most active on platforms like Twitter and 2channel (*ni-chan’neru*), which allow online participation with pseudonyms (Schäfer, 2022). This anonymity precludes identification of those behind these *netto-uyoku* accounts, and the number of people responsible (Hall, 2021). These new rightists – *netto-uyoku* – are also harder to identify due to the absence of physical activities common amongst traditional right-wingers (Schäfer, 2022). Traditional right-wing movements occupied urban spaces with clear signifiers of their ideologies, for instance marching down major streets with trucks showing banners with imperial and militaristic messages, and playing patriotic speeches and music (Schäfer, 2022; Schäfer et al., 2017). *Netto-uyoku* are more individualistic, do not form physical communities, and do not necessarily belong to formal right-wing organizations like *Zaitokukai* (Sakamoto, 2011). Nagayoshi (2019, as cited in Hall, 2021) estimates about 3% of online users would be categorized as right-wing based on their xenophobic

views. Other research with more restricted criteria of *netto-uyoku* show 50,000 to 100,000 active *netto-uyoku* users and 1.2 million more passive, spectator *netto-uyoku* readers – comprising approximately 1 to 1.5% of all Internet users in Japan (Schäfer, 2022). Japan’s aging population suggests that the majority of these users are young to middle-aged adults: out of 45 million Twitter users in Japan (Nussey & Ingram, 2018, as cited in Mintal, & Vancel, 2019), 30.2% are in the 20-29 age cohort, 22.1% to the 13-19 cohort, and only 3.6% age 60 and over (MIC 2016, as cited in Mintal, & Vancel, 2019).

II. Computational Propaganda and Pro-Abe Movements.

According to Schäfer (2022, p. 7), computational propaganda is “the orchestrated attempt to manipulate public opinion or the outcome of elections via fake news and verbal attacks on prominent politicians, often with the help of networks of trolls and bots.” Bots and troll armies circulate radical opinions, alternative truths, and conservative, misogynistic, and racist ideas (Schäfer, 2022). These are often used to expand what political analysts call the “Overton Window” of acceptable public discourse, to promote public acceptance of increasingly extreme, right-wing interpretations of current events (Schäfer, 2022). Computational propaganda is not a sincere engagement in political debate, but rather an attempt to manipulate public opinion by overwhelming platforms with strategic hashtags and hijacking existing discussions on unrelated topics (Schäfer, 2022). Investigative journalists document that computational

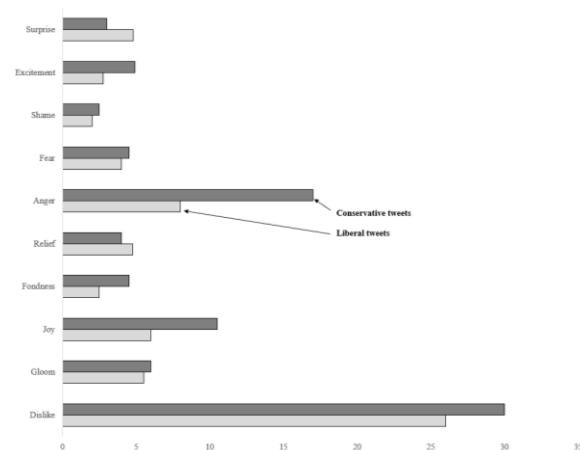
propaganda on Japanese social media – especially Twitter – is far more pervasive in conservative and far-right content as compared with left-wing or progressive content (Schäfer, 2022). A 2017 investigative report by IT Media Business revealed that CrowdWorks, one of Japan’s largest crowdsourcing services, had suspended a political blog known as *Japanese Politics* for posting a job listing to recruit blog writers; despite the apparently neutral name of the blog, the job post included explicit criteria limiting potential applicants to those advocating right-wing ideologies (Schäfer, 2022). The incident suggested an attempt to create a “troll army” to influence the 2017 general election.

Computational linguistics research indicates that in Japan, conservative content tends to reach a wider audience on social media compared with centrist and progressive political stances (Schäfer, 2022). For instance, partisan posts created by conservative clusters have a higher likelihood of reaching moderate users than posts made by liberal users (Yoshida et al., 2021, as cited in Schäfer, 2022). A network analysis of nearly 130 million tweets including the word “Abe” (expressed either as Chinese or Japanese Katakana characters) gathered between February 2019 and October of 2020 showed contents originating from the conservative cluster achieved a higher rate of positive reactions from moderate users than those from the liberal cluster (Yoshida et al., 2021, as cited in Schäfer, 2022). Another analysis revealed that LDP-related contents have double the chance of being prioritized on the home timeline by algorithms compared to the

Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) related contents (Huszár et al., 2021, as cited in Schäfer, 2022). Additionally, these tweets used emotional language more frequently, reaching wider audiences through filter algorithms that prioritize expressive posts (see Figure 1, and Yoshida et al., 2021, as cited in Schäfer, 2022; Schäfer, 2022). Conservative and moderate tweets also tend to share higher linguistic similarities, especially with certain adjectives, which may have resulted in a wider reach from conservative communities (Schäfer, 2022).

Figure 1

Feelings Expressed in Liberal and Conservative Tweets



Note. Horizontal axis reports percentage of tweets including specified emotion terms, based on analysis of approximately 130 million tweets. *Source:* figure drawn by the author, using data reported in Yoshida et al. (2021).

Though Abe himself did not use terms such as *han'ichi* (anti-Japanese), his nationalist messages have echoed among *netto-uyoku* (Murai and Suzuki 2014, as cited in Schäfer, 2022). Abe publicly stated that he believed online video broadcasts and posts on social media are the fairest and most interactive

platforms for active discussions about politics due to the lack of arbitrary editing by mass media outlets (Murai and Suzuki 2014, as cited in Schäfer, 2022). His negative stance on left-leaning media outlets and his openly nationalist, yet populist, views helped him gain supporters: *netto-uyoku* voters tend to vote more often for the LDP over other parties, including newer and more radical conservative parties (Nagayoshi, 2021, as cited in Schäfer, 2022). There is no indication that the LDP itself has been utilizing computational propaganda, yet Schäfer (2022) identifies circumstantial evidence that factions of the LDP commission third parties through online support groups like *Jiminto* (LDP) and Net Supporters Club (JNSC) to employ computational propaganda to spread pro-Abe and nationalistic views anonymously.

III. *Netto-uyoku* and Neo-Nationalism.

Sakamoto (2011, p. 13) argues that some characteristics of *netto-uyoku* create a uniquely “postmodern and subcultural nationalism aided by digital media and global accessibility to information.” In this interpretation, borderless Internet technologies allow platforms like Twitter and 2channel to support the formation of an inward looking and xenophobic nationalism with limited awareness of physical-world implications. Sakamoto (2011) argues that *netto-uyoku* is not the sole factor in the creation of neo-nationalism in Japan. However, Internet-specific elements such as “anonymity, speedy information exchange, [and] easy monitoring of global news” (p. 13) have played a part in this particular type of online neo-nationalism. Moreover, neo-nationalism

supported by *netto-uyoku* does not take the same form as traditional nation-state ideologies. Today's digitally networked right-wing populism questions conventional nationalist conservatism, pushing nationalist ideologies in more extreme and sometimes contradictory directions. While the current *netto-uyoku* nationalism exists exclusively in virtual space, the possibilities of further movements like politicization and mobilization of citizens and forces in physical spaces should not be ignored; such issues merit strict scrutiny (Sakamoto, 2011).

Theorizing *Netto-Uyoku*

Nine out of ten people in Japan live in cities, making this one of the world's most highly urbanized societies. As the world crossed the majority-urban threshold in the first decade of this century, cross-national data indicated that urbanization rates correlate highly with social media "market penetration" (Zip et al., 2013). The acceleration of right-wing mobilization in the online spaces of *netto-uyoku*, therefore, has major implications for the present and future of urban political conflict. Three streams of inquiry in critical urban theory help us understand some of these trends.

First, Steve Graham and Simon Marvin's (2001) landmark *Splintering Urbanism* reveals the powerful yet dangerous consequences of Internet connectivity in the modern city. While techno-utopians portray the Internet as an egalitarian, democratic public realm, Graham and Marvin (2001, p. 251) show how it has quickly been transformed into "a corporately dominated

communications medium." Internet architectures are constantly reconstructed for corporations' priorities and profits through commercial entertainment, communication, advertising, and surveillance. These trends have only become more pronounced in the two decades since Graham and Marvin's book. In contemporary postmodern urban life, most individuals maintain multiple social media accounts as means of communication, consumption, and identity formation. Corporations controlling these platforms are forced by the laws of capitalist competition to innovate in a digital environment in which capital flows accelerate along with "an increase in the rate at which individuals assume and shed identities" in online worlds (Peretti, 1996, p. 1). Profits coalesce with data gathered from user information and activities in an emerging regime of 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff, 2019). Graham and Marvin (2001) foresaw how informational enterprises were building virtual forms of segmentation that parallel the socio-spatial segregation of material urban spaces. Circuits of profit in the Internet are thus intertwined with the control of information. Software code that structures routes of information actively discriminates among different users, mirroring the material segregation accomplished by urban structures. Just as some physical urban spaces are only accessible among upper-class residents, for example, access to the latest innovations in hardware and software creates a new axis of socio-spatial segmentation.

After the Second World War, Japan's urban infrastructure facilitated *democratic* opinion exchanges, as the nation was de-militarized and democratized by the Allies. Such democratic opinion exchanges facilitated political pluralism, including more right-wing views expressed via protests against foreigners based on xenophobia. While these urban spaces were accessible for all, the range of communication was limited so long as social movements could only begin in physical spaces. The spatial diffusion of movements expanded with the widespread availability of televisions in the 1960s and 1970s, yet mass-media information flows remain unilateral. In contrast, the Internet creates what Castells (2010, 2015) calls "mass self-communication," allowing individuals to both receive and disseminate information with a great deal of autonomy. Nevertheless, freedom remains limited and subject to manipulation. Algorithms and computational propaganda can influence the exposure of users to varied perspectives, allowing those controlling the systems of "communications power" (Castells, 2010, 2015) to achieve some degree of behavioral conditioning of users, consumers, and voters.

A second set of prescient warnings comes from the legendary Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan (1964) famously suggested that any form of technology – any kind of media, from roads and weapons to language, photographs, and cinema – is an extension of the self as human bodies and human minds. Over millennia and centuries, humans have developed countless types of media, using each to

increase collective human capacity. The twentieth-century introduction of electronic technologies, however, significantly alters our world through the accelerated extension of human consciousness: increasingly, humans are being translated into computer signals. Our consciousness, and our interpersonal experiences, are rendered into computing languages as social media collects ever more digital manifestations of our intentions and preferences – enhancing the profitability and political power of corporations, as McLuhan foresaw more than half a century ago.

McLuhan (1964) further argues that war – and the fear of war – are the most powerful factors incentivizing the technological extension of human bodies and minds. While Japan has not been directly affected by active wars since the Second World War, fear has incited a desire among many Japanese for consciousness extension in recent years – particularly on social media. As discussed earlier, *netto-uyoku* emerged amidst rising tensions in Japan's diplomatic relations with South Korea and other neighbouring nation-states. Despite the 'friendly' diplomacy of collaborative sporting events, there was growing online militancy on the subjects of disputed territories and painful historical memories. Individuals who feared these trends began *extending their consciousness* by sharing political fears online.

A third critical synthesis emerges from the work of Manuel Castells, situated within the distinctive context of resurgent Japanese nationalism. For Castells (2015, p. 11), contemporary

social movements combine “Internet social networks and the occupied urban space” of embodied solidarity. This new kind of space – a hybrid of Internet and physical environments – becomes a political arena for deliberation, where actors gain sovereignty by assembling collectives. “[S]elf-representation of a real person connecting real persons” (Castells, 2015, p. 260) is key to movement success, but digital networks allow participants a choice in which kind of ‘self’ they wish to present. Individuals crave connections, and build networks with “people they already know or those they would like to know” (Castells, 2010, cited in Castells, 2015, p. 260). The McLuhanesque ‘extension of bodies’ enabled by today’s social media allows for dramatically expanded possibilities for dynamic, rapid networking.

As human consciousness is translated into codes through evolving network architectures, ideas, intentions, and affinities expressed in social media can – theoretically – reach much wider audiences through the seemingly borderless nature of the Internet. This allows users to quickly locate like-minded peers to engage in community-building. Graham and Marvin’s (2001) insight on the parallel architectures of Internet and material urban spaces suggests that the social media ‘extension of ourselves’ creates virtual worlds where ‘parts of us’ live. While information shared online seems at first freely available to all kinds of individuals, in practice computational propaganda algorithms create new kinds of virtual-world borders. This therefore implies the creation of virtual nations, the “product of nationalism [...] treated by nationalists

as the naturalized geohistorical foundation for national community” (Sparke, 2009, pp. 486-487). The nation can be defined as individuals sharing a “nationalist” sense of community, in a “collective of individuals” who become “a collective individual” (Dumont, 1964, cited in Eriskin, 2007) in a shared territory (Sparke, 2009). A virtual nation is built through connections among individuals sharing particular views – constituting a collective individual – within borders created by algorithms and computational propaganda. While Sakamoto (2011, p. 13) argues that understanding *netto-uyoku* as a homogenous group would be a mistake, she also describes it as being “aggressive and shrill, but fragmentary,” highlighting the unique cultural essence of their virtual nation.

In the virtual spaces of Japan’s modern political landscape, the Internet is now widely used as a platform of division and segmentation. It is not always clear who maintains control over these systems, but many researchers argue that most computational propaganda can be traced to third parties associated with the LDP, Japan’s dominant conservative party. Neo-nationalist sentiment in the *netto-uyoku* virtual nation is reinforced by repetitive exposure to algorithmically optimized flows of politicized information. Twitter, 2channel, and other platforms become refuges for those who seek belonging, offering anonymity for those with views too radical to be expressed in public space. “Freedom of speech” flourishes in a rapidly-evolving virtual nation, where prosecution for radical forms of hate speech remains unlikely – since laws

regulating online language have lagged far behind the pace of change in practice.

Conclusions

From Marshall McLuhan to Manuel Castells, Steve Graham, and Simon Marvin, critical urban theory helps us diagnose Japan's *netto-uyoku* neo-nationalism. Principles of community and nation are destabilized through evolutionary, algorithmic social media dynamics. Traditional views of our existence as physical and cognitive beings require reconsideration as humans adapt to new technological practices. With social media, our existences are quantified as targets for political-economic purposes that favor conservative, neoliberal ideologies (Zip et al., 2013; Graham and Marvin, 2001). While individuals enjoy freedom of expression online, their individual anonymity allows algorithmic re-assembly into powerful, dangerous entities. The volatility of algorithmically magnified rage cannot be underestimated: it is a bitter irony that Abe's July 2022 assassination produced new online conspiracies in Japan and beyond – from false assertions that Japan's Zainichi Korean residents were involved, to a fabricated tweet implying that Abe was killed before he could disclose incriminating information on Hillary Clinton.

Netto-uyoku communities are not diasporic or oppressed like racial and sexual minorities who are systemically marginalized in Japan, and they do not seek to create a new transnational identity on a territorial basis (Sakamoto, 2011). Due to unique features of Japan's neo-nationalism (see Eriksen, 2007), a

number of further research questions remain: would a leftist group be able to create a virtual nation even without the *netto-uyoku*'s nationalist orientation? Has the dramatic transition towards life online affected *netto-uyoku* activities and the process of creating a virtual nation? How would laws regulating speech, especially hate speech, affect future *netto-uyoku* activities and individuals? Is a virtual nation a 'true' nation? Lastly, does the emergence of the virtual nation mean the replacement or evolution of the traditional, physical urban realm? As corporate information empires continue building a metaverse of seemingly infinite virtual-space realms, addressing these urgent questions is essential for understanding the future of governance, policy, and political conflict.

References

- Castells, M. (2010). *Social Networks in the Internet: What Research Knows About It*. Lecture delivered at the Symposium: *Web Science, a New Frontier*, on the Occasion of the 350th Anniversary of the Royal Society, London, September 28.
- Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Bristol: Polity Press.
- Eriksen, T. H. (2007). Nationalism and the Internet. *Nations and Nationalism*, 13(1), 1-17.
- Graham, S., & Marvin, S. (2001). *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. London: Routledge.
- Hall, J. J. (2021). *Japan's Nationalist Right in the Internet Age: Online Media and Grassroots Conservative Activism*. Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis.
- Huszár, F., Ktena, S. I., O'Brien, C., Belli, L., Schlaikjer, A., & Hardt, M. (2022). Algorithmic Amplification of Politics on Twitter. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119(1), 1.
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Scarborough: New American Library of Canada.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). (2016). Jōhō tsūshin media no riyō jikan to jōhō kōdō ni kansuru chōsa hōkoku-sho. (Survey on utilization time and information behavior of information and communication media). Research institute, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
- Mintal, J. M., & Vancel, R. (2019). (Un)trendy Japan: Twitter Bots and the 2017 Japanese General Election. *Politics in Central Europe* 15(3), 497-514.
- Murai, S., & Suzuki, T. (2014). How the Japanese Social Media Users Discussed the Senkaku Controversy. In *The Dispute Over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: How Media Narratives Shape Public Opinion and Challenge the Global Order*, edited by T. A. Hollihan (pp. 169-199). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nagayoshi, K. (2019). ネット右翼とは誰かーネット右翼の規定要因 [Who Are the Net Right? – Factors Among the Net Right]. In ネット右翼とは何か [What Is the Net Right?] (pp. 13-43). Seikyusha.
- Nagayoshi, K. (2021). The Political Orientation of Japanese Online Right-Wingers. *Pacific Affairs* 94(1), 5-32.
- Nussey, S., & Ingram, D. (n.d.). *In Japan, Twitter sees a surge of users—and revenue*. Reuters.
- Peretti, Jonah (1996). Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Contemporary Visual Culture and the Acceleration of Identity Formation/Dissolution. *Negations* 1(1), 1-13

- Sakamoto, R. (2011). Koreans, Go Home! Internet Nationalism in Contemporary Japan as a Digitally Mediated Subculture. *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 9(10), 1-20.
- Schäfer, F., Evert, S., & Heinrich, P. (2017). Japan's 2014 General Election: Political Bots, Right-wing Internet Activism, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Hidden Nationalist Agenda. *Big Data* 5(4), 294-309.
- Schäfer, F. (2022). Japan's Shift to the Right: Computational Propaganda, Abe Shinzō's LDP, and Internet Right-Wingers (Netto Uyo). *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 20(2), 1-18.
- Sparke, M. (2009). Nation. In *The Dictionary of Human Geography, Fifth Edition*, edited by D. Gregory, R. Johnston, G. Pratt, M.J. Watts, and S. Whatmore. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 486-487.
- Yamaguchi, T. (2019). ネット右翼とフェミニズム” [The Net Right and Feminism]. In ネット右翼とは何か [What Is the Net Right?] (pp. 164–195). Seikyusha.
- Yoshida, M., Sakaki, T., Kobayashi, T., & Toriumi, F. (2021). Japanese Conservative Messages Propagate to Moderate Users Better Than Their Liberal Counterparts on Twitter. *Scientific Reports* 11(1), 1-9.
- Zip, L., Parker, R., & Wyly, E. (2013). Facebook as a Way of Life: Louis Wirth in the Social Network. *The Geographical Bulletin* 54(2), 77-98.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Public Affairs.

The Creation of Distance: Examining the Role of National Identity Binaries in Contracted Boundary Policy Using the *Tampa* Crisis of 2001

by: Jacob Ereshefsky

The experience of contemporary border-crossing asylum seekers is entangled with national identity discourse and racialized histories. In this article, I examine the Australian government's legal response to the arrival of asylum seekers on the Tampa in 2001. In particular, I argue that the policy of border contraction as a response to the Tampa incident was justified by - and further perpetuated - a historically-based, racialized 'us'/'them' national identity binary. To build this argument, I first give an overview of the Tampa incident and resulting contracted border policy. In Part One, I then turn to the historical establishment of an 'us'/'them' binary in both Christmas Island and mainland Australia, arguing that it served as a historical foundation for the Tampa incident's contracted border policy. Finally, in Part Two, I survey the geographical outcomes of such contracted boundary policy, and its continued perpetuation of the same 'us'/'them' national identity binary.

Introduction

The term 'asylum seeker' is rarely neutral. At its core, an asylum seeker is a migrant, fleeing persecution or human rights violations, who is waiting for a decision on their claim for asylum (Amnesty International, n.d.). Yet, as migration scholar Matthew Gibney (2005) notes, "asylum seekers are widely characterised as ... security threats [and] abusers of host state generosity" (p. 3). This overtly negative perception is entangled with the border of national identity—a conceptual border, challenged by inflowing migration, that is geographically aligned with the political border of a nation-state.

As Dan Hiebert (2003) argues in his defence against removing barriers to immigration, political borders enable a "national 'community' [to] set its own policies and practices" (pp. 189-190), which is key to national identity. However, it also defines individuals as either 'us,' the national subject, or 'them,'

those outside of the nation who can be excluded from entrance. Negative views of asylum seekers can thus stem from this binary, as 'they' (or 'others') try to cross into the geographical boundary of a welcome 'us' through asylum claims.

How does this conceptual binary, then, play out in governmental policy and affect real asylum seekers? To answer this question, this paper examines Australia's response to the *Tampa* incident of 2001. In particular, I focus on the Australian government's resulting policy of border contraction to exclude asylum seekers aboard the freighter ship *Tampa* from certain national legal responsibilities. In doing so, I argue that the *Tampa* incident of 2001 demonstrates that the contraction of boundaries should be understood as an act of national self-identification. Specifically, this paper argues that the *Tampa* incident demonstrates that contracting state borders as a tactic of migration control is both justified by—

and further perpetuates—the national identity binary of asylum seekers as the ‘other’ to a national ‘us.’

This paper begins with a brief background on the *Tampa* incident of 2001. I then explore how the method of contracting boundaries defining the *Tampa* incident was justified by an ‘us’/‘them’ binary developed through historical rhetoric on both Christmas Island and mainland Australia. Finally, I turn to the geographical outcome of the resulting contracted boundary policy, showing how this geography further entrenches the foundational ‘othering’ of asylum seekers.

Background

On August 26th, 2001, Coastwatch Australia detected a stalled fishing boat carrying 433 Afghani and Iraqi passengers 145 kilometres away from Christmas Island (Betts, 2001; Torre, 2003). Christmas Island is situated approximately 1500 kilometres northwest of mainland Australia; the British government transferred colonial rule over the island from Singapore to the Australian government in the mid-20th century (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010).

Arnie Rinnan, the captain of a Norwegian freighter in the area, responded to the fishing boat’s rescue broadcast and brought the passengers on board (Torre, 2003). The Afghani asylum seekers boarding the *Tampa* were primarily fleeing from civil war (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010). The Iraqis joining Rinnan’s crew were part of a larger emigration of Shia Muslim and Kurdish Iraqis fleeing religious violence, the politically oppressive Saddam Hussein

government, and foreign economic sanctions (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010; Esmaeili & Wells, 2000). Some Afghani and Iraqi passengers had even “been forcibly returned [...] on a previous attempt to find asylum in Pakistan or Iran” (Human Rights Watch, 2002, para. 4). At the request of the passengers, who initially aimed to seek asylum in Australia before their vessel stalled, Rinnan guided the *Tampa* towards Christmas Island (Torre, 2003).

The following day (August 27th, 2001), the Australian government—at the time headed by Liberal Party Prime Minister John Howard—announced that the *Tampa* would “not be given permission to land in ... Australian Territory” (Betts, 2001, p. 39). Waiting for assistance, the *Tampa* stayed at the edge of Australian territorial water for two days. Having received no response to its distress signal sent out on August 28th, it crossed into Australian waters near Christmas Island on August 29th (Torre, 2003). The *Tampa* was immediately intercepted, boarded, and taken control of by the Australian military (Betts, 2001). After “a standoff of some days” (Betts 2001, p. 39), Australian authorities brought asylum seekers to temporary housing in New Zealand and Nauru while they waited for their applications for refugee status to be processed (Gibney 2005; Torre, 2003).

Two weeks later, the Australian Parliament passed an amendment to their *Migration Act of 1958*. This act originally followed in accordance with the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which entrenched, in international law, that refugees fleeing threats to life or freedom cannot be

rejected from entrance nor returned to their country of origin (unless they clearly pose a security risk). As Emilia Torre (2003) explains, “in order to be issued with a protection visa under the *Migration Act*, a person must be ‘in Australia’” (p. 130). Before the 2001 amendment, the *Migration Act* defaulted to the *Acts Interpretation of 1901*, which included Christmas Island within ‘Australia’ (Torre, 2003). The 2001 amendment to the *Migration Act*, however, created a ‘Migration Zone’ within which its non-refoulement policy applied; crucially, Christmas Island and the nearby Ashmore Islands were not a part of this zone. Referred to as the ‘Pacific Solution,’ this amendment also established offshore claimant processing facilities in Nauru and Papua New Guinea (PNG) for the *Tampa* asylum seekers and all subsequent arrivals to Australia outside of the newly established Migration Zone (Phillips & Spinks, 2012; Torre, 2003). Stricter requirements for these specific asylum seekers going through Nauru and PNG were established, including “whether there [was] any suitable [host] country available other than Australia” and “the capacity of the Australian community to provide for [the claimant’s] temporary stay” (*Migration Amendment Act*, 2001, as cited in Torre, 2003, p. 132).

Gibney (2005) argues that this amendment was “the most radical” example of excluding asylum seekers through “contracted” (p. 8) boundaries yet. By contracted boundaries, he refers to the shrinking of state borders to “evade asylum claims” and create areas “in which officials are not obliged to provide asylum seekers ... protections

available to those officially on state territory” (Gibney, 2005, p. 8).

The resulting ‘Pacific Solution’ from the *Tampa* incident, thus, is a clear case study for the practice of contracted borders. As of 2001, Christmas Island is no longer considered ‘Australia’ for migrants, and refugee applications are processed entirely outside of Australian territory in Nauru and PNG. The following sections will use this case to demonstrate how contracted border policies both stem from—and further perpetuate—the ‘us’/‘them’ binary of national identity.

Part One: ‘Us’/‘Them’ as a Justification for Contracted Boundaries

This section argues that Australia's contracted boundary policy stems from Hiebert’s (2003) notion of a geographical national identity border (p. 181). Specifically, I attempt to demonstrate that the 2001 amendment to the *Migration Act* post-*Tampa* was built upon a foundation of a distinct us (‘Australians’ or ‘Christmas Islanders’) / them (asylum seekers) binary created by this conceptual identity border. Here, the *Tampa* incident is thought of as a single moment where this binary comes to the forefront of policy, justifying the contraction of the Australian political border.

As Katharine Betts (2001) identifies, the Australian government’s reaction to the *Tampa* asylum seekers was not a “sudden desire to close the door” (p. 45). The practice of ‘othering’ those outside of Australia’s Anglo-majority is rooted in Australia’s settler

colonial history. Australia's first people and the Torres Strait Islander peoples are indigenous to what is now known as Australia; yet, during the violent British settlement of these lands beginning in the late 17th century, they were distinctly othered from the colonial vision of an Anglo Australia. For example, in the context of language and culture, Joy Damousi (2010) notes that there is a colonial view of a "dichotomous relationship between [Indigenous peoples as] 'oral and primitive,' as opposed to the 'literate and civilised' [English]" (p. 7).

This 'us'/'them' binary has been applied to asylum seekers throughout modern Australia's history too. Following the work of Suvendrini Perera (2002), there are "historical documents" whose rhetoric can help us understand "the ... representations of the *Tampa* refugees over 100 years later" (p. 28). These are representations which encouraged the 'us'/'them' binary conception of asylum seekers/Australians that both justified and popularised the government's policy of exclusion. In particular, Perera points to the "storehouse of images, narratives, and representations" (p. 26) found in the writing of Joseph Conrad. "More than any novelist of the British empire," Perera (2002) argues, "Conrad retains a currency in the contemporary West's cultural frames of reference" (p. 25), noting in particular *Heart of Darkness*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Lord Jim*. While not the entire "cultural frame of reference" (Perera, 2002, p. 25), Conrad still serves as a potent glimpse into a larger colonial and racialized rhetorical history.

Conrad's book *Lord Jim*, for example, describes British ships carrying pilgrims to Mecca from India and present-day Indonesia. Conrad (1900/1968) describes these passengers as "urged by faith and the hope of paradise, ... stream[ing] in with a ... shuffle of bare feet, without a word, ... overflow[ing] down the yawning hatchways ... like water filling a cistern" (pp. 9-10). As Perera (2002) notes, this "racial otherness" of "Conrad's Muslims" sees them as "a relentless, rising, swell of bodies, undistinguished by any trait of humanity, personhood, [or] individuality" (p. 27). One edition of *Lord Jim* includes documents mentioning the *Jeddah*—a real ship abandoned on its way to Mecca in the 1870s—which was used by Conrad as source material for the original 1900 publication of *Lord Jim* (Perera, 2002). As Perera (2002) writes, this source material talks about the *Jeddah*'s Muslim passengers as "violent, deranged ... rapists of the captain's wife" (p. 27).

The rhetoric of the early 21st century "Anglo majority" Australia during the *Tampa* incident is strikingly similar (Perera, 2002, p. 30). On the first day of reporting *Tampa*'s arrival to the edge of Christmas Island, the national newspaper *The Australian* ran a front page headline reading "New Wave of 1000 Illegals," which claimed these asylum seekers were about to "swamp Christmas Island" (Dore & Carson, 2001, p. 1). Meanwhile, Prime Minister Howard continued to push that "Australia will not be held hostage to our own decency" (Howard, 2002, as cited in Perera, 2002, p. 38), even threatening Captain Rinnan with "prosecution as a

people smuggler” (Howard, 2002, as cited in Dimasi & Briskman, 2010, p. 200). This *Tampa* rhetoric posed the asylum seekers as a criminal wave about to overwhelm Australia, setting up the refugee claimants as a distinct ‘other’ about to overwhelm the nation’s ‘self’ and establishing a distinct ‘us’/‘them’ binary.

There are clear parallels between *The Australian* article and Howard’s rhetoric to that of Conrad, *Lord Jim* and the *Jeddah* crew, each evoking a clear national identity binary. Asylum seekers are criminalised and seen as the ‘other’, portrayed as violent rapists on the *Jeddah* and called ‘illegals’ in *The Australian*. Asylum seekers are also seen as coming in uncontrollable masses, inundating the Australian ‘us’: *Lord Jim*’s Muslim pilgrims are described as overflowing the British shipping lines, and *The Australian* and Prime Minister Howard call them a ‘wave’ that will ultimately negatively affect ‘our’ Australia.

This binary rhetoric comes to the forefront on Christmas Island itself, too. While some (e.g., Dimasi & Briskman, 2010) point to Christmas Island as more welcoming of *Tampa* than mainland Australia was (stemming from its own colonial migration history),¹ Simone Dennis’ (2009) anthropological work suggests otherwise. In particular, Dennis looks at how the story of red crabs and

yellow ants was used by Christmas Islanders to frame anti-immigrant sentiment during the *Tampa* crisis. In short, red crabs hold strong comparisons to blood in Christmas Island imaginaries, “circulating throughout [its] neighbourhoods as ... blood cells” (Dennis, 2009, p. 219). Yet, the arrival of yellow ants—described in pamphlets widely distributed on the island as arriving “by boat”—at its 2001 height killed almost a third of these crabs (Dennis, 2009, p. 223). This negatively affected the “rhythmic continuity of the red crab blood” (Dennis, 2009, p. 222). Such an occurrence served as a rhetorical framework during the *Tampa* incident. One resident said that the “island did not need any more ‘pests,’ of either human or insect form,” while another said that the island was “in for it, just like the bloody crabs. Jesus, they’ll wipe us all out one day” (Anonymous, 2001, as cited in Dennis, 2009, p. 223). This rhetoric shows that the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ binary was a part of the identity of Christmas Island itself, presented as the extinguishment of the island’s ‘blood’ by invading, illness-bearing ‘pests’ from the sea.

In both instances, the exclusive ‘us’ finds itself in a colonial, Australian identity that juxtaposes a criminal ‘other’ in rhetoric spanning from Conrad to Howard. It is also situated in terms of

¹ When Christmas Island was incorporated into the British colony of Singapore in the late 19th century, indentured Malay and Chinese mine workers were brought to extract its phosphate deposits. Much of the island’s current population are descendants of these communities. See Dimasi and Briskman (2010) for more.

Christmas Island ‘blood’ as a distinctly nationalist islander group threatened by the infestation of pests of any ‘form,’ insect or human. As Perera (2002) effectively summarises, “Not-Australia consumes Australia’s self-identity” (p. 38). It comes as no surprise, then, that concurrent with the movement of asylum seekers to Nauru and PNG, 77% of Australians supported the decision to refuse entry to the *Tampa*, and 74% of Australians approved of “John Howard’s overall handling of the situation” (Betts, 2001, p. 41). Howard’s response was so popular that even the official opposition Labour Party supported the Pacific Solution (Betts, 2001). Betts (2001), an Australian herself, concludes that Australian opinion on the refusal of the *Tampa* was a consequence of “threats to a sense of common identity” that “endanger[s] a broad range of other goals that *we* [emphasis added] care about” (p. 46). *Tampa* was the sparking incident based on a larger history of national identity rhetoric that justified the Howard government’s policy of, as Gibney (2005) categorises it, ‘contracting’ its borders to keep asylum seekers out of the mainland by placing claimant processing outside of Australia entirely.

Part Two: Contracted Boundaries Entrenching the ‘Us’/‘Them’ Binary

The 2001 amendment to Australia’s *Migration Act* was not only born out of exclusion and identity binaries. As this section demonstrates, this policy further entrenched the

formational ‘us’/‘them’ divide in distinctly geographical and embodied ways.

In excluding Christmas Island from the new Migration Zone and establishing processing centres in Nauru and PNG, Australia created what Jenna Loyd and Alison Mountz (2014) call an “enforcement archipelago” (p. 26). This limbo space between a country’s ‘actual’ territory and where its immigrants find themselves hides migrants from Australian imaginaries “through dispersal and isolation” (Mountz, 2015, p. 187). This affects mainland Australia and Christmas Island in unique ways.

For Christmas Island, Michelle Dimasi and Linda Briskman (2010) write about the “ethical experience of the face-to-face encounter” between nationals and migrants that evokes a feeling of “shared humanity” and a “responsibility to welcome asylum seekers” (p. 203). They note a “shame” in “ignoring the face of the other” (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010, p. 203)—a shame easily dispersed by dodging face-to-face interaction entirely. Post-*Tampa*, many Christmas Islanders became distanced from the influx of migrants that they used to interact with (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010).² While this pre-2001 interaction did not supersede the feeling of ‘invasion’ many residents held (as outlined in *Part One*), it fostered, at the very least, day-to-day interactions between asylum seekers and Australian nationals (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010).

² Other migrant ships had reached the shores of Christmas Island before the *Tampa* incident. See Betts (2001) for more information.

The island was turned into a “war zone” by the Australian guard for years following the *Tampa* incident (Dimasi & Briskman, 2010, p. 211), where asylum seekers were sent to Nauru and PNG the moment they entered Australian waters (Phillips & Spinks, 2012). Over 1600 people between September 2001 and February 2008 were detained in Nauru and PNG facilities (Phillips & Spinks, 2012), a trend “accompanied by discourses about migration and asylum policies riddled with metaphors of exclusion” (Mountz, 2015, p. 187). Popular rhetoric portrayed detainees as “illegal alien[s]” and “bogus refugee[s]” (Mountz, 2015, p. 187). Just as metaphors of blood red crabs (the islander ‘us’) and invasive yellow ants (the asylum-seeking ‘them’) played a role in the creation of contracted borders, that very policy re-invoked the same belief in identity binaries.

For Australia, the Howard government’s excising of Christmas Island in 2001 further dehumanised asylum seekers. Any asylum-seeking interaction related to Christmas Island was pushed away from mainland Australia due to the contraction of the Migration Zone’s boundaries. As Mountz (2015) writes, contracting borders in this way “protect[ed] and secur[ed] an imagined nation at home from dangerous threats elsewhere” (p. 185). Perera (2002) notes that a post-*Tampa* “Fortress Australia” came into being as a rhetoric-fueled “contracting, defensive, shouting creature” that “diminishes [as] not-Australia expands” (p. 38). Contraction not only furthers mainland Australia from the ‘face’ of asylum seekers, but also defines that in-between

space as a defence against the simultaneously distant and expanding space (now including Christmas Island) of ‘other.’

Meanwhile, on Nauru and PNG, the ‘other’ distanced from both Christmas Island and mainland Australia embodied a non-Australian, non-member subjecthood. Seemingly far from Australia, one detention facility in PNG caused such “physical and psychological” injuries to the claimants that a class-action lawsuit was settled for \$70 million AUD (Neil, 2017, para. 1). Behrouz Boochani, a filmmaker and claimant in that same camp, highlighted detainees “los[ing] the meaning of time” (Lang, 2017, para. 12). Faced with this, detainees fought with riots, hunger strikes, and protests such as “sewing their lips shut” (Lang, 2017, para. 9). Loyd and Mountz (2014) call this “geopolitical subjecthood”, where in the face of “administrative violence” (p. 34) individuals become, in and of themselves, violent out of pure necessity. Consequently, violent asylum seekers are further ‘othered’ in the eyes of Australians in the very same “historical groove of colonial[ism]” (Loyd & Mountz, 2013, p. 34) that Perera (2002) identified in Conrad’s (1900/1968) *Lord Jim*. The offshore processing facilities’ conditions create the ‘violent’ asylum-seeking subject that solidifies detainees’ identity as ‘them.’

Conclusion

This paper has explored how contracting borders in the *Tampa* crisis both stemmed from, and further perpetuated, the identity binary of the national ‘us’ and the asylum-seeking

‘them.’ The Australian example used here ties together notions of national identification from Hiebert (2003) to further Gibney’s (2005) exploration of contracted boundaries.

However, there are facets to this story not explored that could also enhance this understanding of defensive policy, such as Indigenous notions of land identity,³ the rhetorical effect of the 9/11 attacks on the *Tampa* response, and the merits of analysing the cyclical cause-effect-cause relationship between the ‘us’/‘them’ binary and policy. Nevertheless, as this paper has attempted to show, national identity and charged rhetoric have tangible effects on government policy regarding asylum seekers and their place in larger social imaginaries.

³ See Perera (2002), pp. 33-34 for more details.

References

- Amnesty International. (n.d.). *Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants*.
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>
- Betts, K. (2001). Boat people and public opinion in Australia. *People and Place*, 9(4), 34-48.
- Conrad, J. (1968). *Lord Jim: An authoritative text* (T. C. Moser, Ed.). W. W. Norton & Co. (Original work published 1900)
- Damousi, J. (2010). *Colonial voices: A cultural history of English in Australia, 1840-1940*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dennis, S. (2009). Of crustacean blood and ant infection: Life in the migration exclusion zone, Christmas Island, Australia. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 20(2), 213-228. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1757-6547.2009.00027.x>
- Dimasi, M., & Briskman, L. (2010). Let them land: Christmas Islander responses to Tampa. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(2), 199-218.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq015>
- Dore, C., & Carson, V. (2001, August 27). New wave of 100 illegals. *The Australian*, 1.
- Esmaeili, H., & Wells, B. (2000). The 'temporary' refugees: Australia's legal response to the arrival of Iraqi and Afghan boat-people. *UNSW Law Journal*, 23(3), 224-245.
<https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/article/the-temporary-refugees-australias-legal-response-to-the-arrival-of-iraqi-and-afghan-boat-people>
- Gibney, M. J. (2005). Beyond the bounds of responsibility: Western states and measures to prevent the arrival of refugees. *Global Migration Perspectives*, 22, 1-23. <https://www.iom.int/global-commission-international-migration>
- Hiebert, D. (2003). A borderless world: Dream or nightmare? *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2(2), 188-193.
<https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/695>
- Human Rights Watch. (2002, September 26). *Australian refugee policy is "not for export"*. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2002/09/26/australian-refugee-policy-not-export>
- Lang, O. (2017, April 21). The asylum detainee who shot a film in secret. *BBC*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-39601578>

- Loyd, J. M., & Mountz, A. (2014). Managing migration, scaling sovereignty on islands. *Island Studies Journal*, 9(1), 23-42.
<https://islandstudiesjournal.org/v9n1/>
- Marx, K. (1887). *Capital: A critical analysis of capitalist production* (S. Moore & E. B. Aveling, Trans.). Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey, & Co.
- Mountz, A. (2015). In/visibility and the securitization of migration: Shaping publics through border enforcement on islands. *Cultural Politics*, 11(2), 184-200. <https://doi.org/10.1215/17432197-2895747>
- Neil, M. (2017, June 14). *Manus class action settled for \$70 million*. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/manus-class-action-settled-for-70-million/>.
- Perera, S. (2002). A line in the sea. *Race & Class*, 44(2), 23-39.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396802044002973>
- Phillips, J., & Spinks, H. (2012). *Boat arrivals in Australia since 1976* [Research Paper]. Social Policy Section, Parliament of Australia.
https://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/rp/rp1314/boatarrivals
- Salter, M. B. (2006). The global visa regime and the political technologies of the international self: Borders, bodies, biopolitics. *Alternatives*, 31(2), 167-189.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540603100203>
- Torre, E. D. (2003). A discussion of the recent excision of Christmas Island from Australia's migration zone in the light of Australia's international refugee obligation of non-refoulement. *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 9(2), 123-138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2003.11911109>

From Anarchism to Marxism and Back Again: Critical Geography and Decolonizing the University

by: Liam Jagoe

An exploration of the intersections of anarchist theory and critical geography through my undergraduate experience in the UBC Geography department. I begin by tracing a short history of the discipline to contrast anarchism's foundational role in critical geography with the field's current preoccupation with Marxist theory and widespread omission of anarchist theory. This dynamic is highlighted through a brief discussion of a 2014 debate between David Harvey and Simon Springer. Then, key ideas/approaches which I encountered throughout my degree are considered in the context of how anarchist theory could contribute to how they are conceptualized. Specifically, I argue for the importance of expanding analysis beyond economic considerations and incremental politics, the consonance between feminism and anarchism's intersectional approaches, and that decolonization can only be achieved through prefigurative politics and direct action. In short, this paper calls for a more critical and radical approach to geography than I encountered at UBC and argues that anarchist theory has much to offer in this pursuit.

Anarchism and UBC Geography

I did not come to UBC for the Geography Department. I had planned to major in English, but in my second year I took an introductory geography class as an elective. It was all the critical theory I loved about English, but applied to tangible, real world issues. Instead of squeezing political analysis into *The Odyssey*, I could discuss and debate inequality and conflict openly and deeply with people explicitly concerned with these issues. It was a place where radical thinkers were destabilizing knowledge and nothing was immune to criticism or questioning—or so it seemed.

In the three years since, Geography has provided me with many ways to understand the workings of capitalism, neoliberalism, and power. However, I am left with the feeling that there are some worldviews and concepts that remain unquestioned. The radical criticism I had thought was the foundation of geography is notably absent in certain discussions and assumptions.

This frustration emerged in my third year upon encountering Emma Goldman's

Anarchism and Other Essays (1911). In searching for some elusive quote, I stumbled upon her work, and became engrossed in her passionate writing on anarchist theory. Compared to readings I had done before then, it was radically honest, assertive, and generous, and I was eager for more. I found texts through *The Anarchist Library* and other online forums, ranging from anonymous manifestos by activists to seminal works by Murray Bookchin (2005) and David Graeber (2004). The more I read, the stronger my feeling got that anarchism was a uniquely geographical theory due to its situated nature, focus on the spatialities of power, and intersectional understanding of domination. I began to expect it to show up in my classes, imagining a sort of Baader-Meinhof phenomenon in which I realized everyone had been talking about it but I'd just never had a name for it. But it never showed up: no Goldman or Graeber, no decentralization or direct action. It was as if I was on two parallel trains of thought, never to meet.

So, I started to present and write on anarchist approaches in my Geography classes. If we weren't reading anarchism, I

would read the assigned texts through anarchism. After a censorious rant in a third-year class, my professor Dr. Priti Narayan recommended that I read Simon Springer's 2016 *The Anarchist Roots of Geography*. From it, I learned that anarchism was in fact foundational to geography, but fell out of favor fifty-odd years ago. I found the reality of anarchism's absence in my UBC Geography classes echoed in Springer's assertion that anarchist theory has been largely omitted from the discipline as a whole (Springer, 2016).

In what follows, I will look at the intersections between geography and anarchism. Through a brief history of critical geography, I will demonstrate how constitutive anarchist thought has been to it, and how much could be gained by renewing our interest and kindling a commitment to anarchist principles. Following this I will focus on a few key ideas in the study of geography—namely, incremental politics, feminism, and decolonization, and show how an anarchist approach can animate their movement towards a revitalized future. I will conclude by asking what we can hope for in the 21st century university and its students.

Frameworks of Geography

Anarchist theory is predicated on a rejection of all forms of hierarchy and authority, and advocates instead for societies based around decentralization, mutual aid, and horizontality (Guérin, 1970). Anarchism calls for the abolition of *all* forms of domination, and, though this is often understood primarily through the locuses of capitalism, the state, patriarchy, and imperialism, anarchism recognizes the intersectionality and mutually reinforcing nature of all networks of domination (Clark, 1984; Brown, 1996).

Springer argues that anarchist theory has always been rooted in critical analysis of spatial organization, through outlining the

geographic impulses of early anarchists. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon argued in his 1840 book *What Is Property?* (1994/1840) that private property is theft legitimized by the state. He called for abolition of the state and decentralization of power to local communities, and control of the means of production by the workers. This dual criticism of capital and the state set the tone for anarchist geographies to come: Mikhail Bakunin called for spatial reorganization of society throughout the 19th century (Bakunin 1842; 1873), arguing that humans were naturally social and egalitarian, and should be able to govern themselves through voluntary organization and mutual aid without the artificial imposition of centralized governance. Although neither of these writers considered themselves geographers, their work was predicated on the interconnection of economic, social, and spatial issues and approaches, and their influence can be seen throughout critical and radical geography.

Geography was more explicitly addressed by two anarchists that followed: Élisée Reclus and Peter Kropotkin. Reclus's influence on geography cannot be overstated: not only did he give "social geography" its name (Dunbar, 1978), but he brought under its umbrella issues that we continue to study today: "economic class, race, gender, power, and organizational forms and scale, urbanization, technology, and ecology" (Clark, 2009). Reclus was an internationally renowned geographer and an unabashed anarchist (Dunbar, 1978).

Kropotkin was another early social geographer who wrote "What geography ought to be" (1885). His was a normative vision: he believed geographers had an obligation not just to write about how the world was, but to write about how it should be. Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid was that human evolution was more influenced by cooperation and support than by the more

mainstream Darwinian theory of competition; therefore, human organization should be based around solidarity and mutual aid, and should reject unnecessary and oppressive authority.

For all these foundational connections between anarchism and social geography, discussion of anarchism in the discipline over the last fifty years is few and far between. Instead, the field (and my microcosmic experience of it, UBC Geography) has seen a sharp rise in Marxist theory (Springer, 2016, p.79). In the classes I've taken, critical geography has relied on predominantly Marxist frameworks. When capital is criticized, it is through a Marxist lens. When socialism is discussed, it is Marxist socialism. When the state is discussed, no alternatives are given. The leftest leftist an undergraduate student is likely to encounter is David Harvey.

The limitations to this occupation of theoretical space by Marxism is made clear in a debate about radical geography between Harvey and Springer. In his 2014 "Why a radical geography must be anarchist," Springer outlined the roots of geography in anarchist thought and the more recent history of geography's turn towards Marxism. He argued that the predominance of Marxism in radical geography forecloses anarchist perspectives, and that Marxism is useful, but fundamentally limited and outdated, "given the fragmented identity politics that exist in our contemporary world, where the notion of a universal proletariat is pure delusion" (Springer, 2014b). He calls for radical geographers to embrace the anarchist roots of the discipline, and criticizes the staid parochialisms and "crudest stereotypes" through which Harvey (and many Marxist geographers like him) misconstrue anarchist thought.

Harvey responded with "Listen, Anarchist!" (2014), in which he argues that anarchist theory can be occasionally

generative for radical geographers, but that it is inevitably too simplistic compared with the nuance of Marxism. Harvey's paper is, at times, quite persuasive. He calls for pluralized approaches to social change, and highlights some of the most insightful and powerful contributions of Marxism to geography. Read as a whole, however, 'Listen, Anarchist!' comes off as a narrow-minded caricaturization of anarchism from someone who seems not to have taken the time to engage with anarchist thinkers, nor to question his own preconceptions about human nature and the necessity of the state.

An undergraduate geography student may find that Harvey's work is pervasive, even ubiquitous. But, if we as geographers wish to build a world that is democratic, participatory, and radically egalitarian, Harvey's work is problematic because of his entrenched beliefs that the state is a scalar necessity, that decentralization is an insidious boon to capitalism, and that horizontal organizing is an "excellent objective," but can never achieve what only hierarchy can (Harvey, 2014). Springer summarizes these issues in his final response to Harvey, when he writes "The limits to Marxism are to be found in the stunted idea that there should be parameters to radical possibility, a character that defines the ongoing politics of waiting, the hidden vanguardism, and the continuing state-centric appeal to authority that Harvey demonstrates so clearly" (Springer, 2017). In what follows, I will explore some concrete examples of how geographical analysis can be sharpened and enriched through engagement with anarchist ideas.

Intersecting networks of domination

What is UBC Geography's theory of change? The classes I've taken have been very proud of being realistic and pragmatic. In analyzing the way change happens, we typically look first to our political systems,

where elected officials make the decisions. Geography classes are usually quite critical of this system: they may call for a more direct form of democracy in which specific issues are voted on, or for a “politically active” electorate that maintains pressure on officials, and they may point to problems in how electoral democracy is practiced. Nevertheless, “successful” moments in history are those in which laws are amended/enacted/struck down.

Though not all professors and classes limit themselves to electoralism, it is emblematic of what I see as a preoccupation with appearing pragmatic. As an example: in four separate classes, I have been taught about the Overton window (Mackinac Center). Though it was never touted as a definitive rule, professors nonetheless have invoked it as a reasonable way to understand how social change works. The Overton window is a model of policy implementation which argues that there is a spectrum into which all political ideas fall. On both ends are opposite but equally unthinkable ideas, and in the middle are publicly acceptable or even common sense ideas. The idea is that politicians can only endorse widely popular policies, and so if your goal falls outside of the Overton window, your efforts would be better spent on a less intense version. As public sentiment changes, the Overton window shifts. This is a belief in incrementalism, the idea that change must be gradual and limited.

It is a neat and tidy conceptual device, but what it encourages is the maintenance of practices and conditions that are causing widespread death and suffering along uneven lines. The “realism” of the Overton window relies on a kind of narcissism, in which those less affected by systemic brutality imagine we have lots of time to wait/waste. It is a realism which considers a certain amount of death and suffering acceptable from the privileged

position of life and comfort.

Though I am not equating the Overton window with Marxism, both frameworks pride themselves on pragmatism. Marxism likes to be thought of as radical, sure, but it also accepts the hard truths: the state is necessary, decentralization is dangerous, and horizontality is impractical (claims proliferate in Harvey, 2012, 2014, 2017; Dean, 2012; Mann, 2014).

Marxists have constructed powerful analysis and critiques of capitalism, but are under-equipped to discuss hierarchies of identity beyond class. Critical geography is based around universal emancipation and a holistic critique of power and domination (Rogers et al., 2013). I believe a geography department that wishes to properly equip young geographers must go beyond economic analysis and apolitical incrementalism. Geography remains vital through expanding what is considered acceptable terrain for analysis, not contracting it.

In particular, I think that Marxism is an ill-suited counterpart to feminist geographies, since one of feminism’s tenets is intersectional emancipation, which posits that it is more than solely capitalism or patriarchy that oppresses women. Marxism has been critiqued by feminists for its “economic monism” (de Beauvoir, p.144), and “recognized as inadequate” (Hartsock, p.1) for analyzing intersectional domination.

Conversely, Anarchism is well-suited to feminism because it broadens its fields of criticism beyond merely capitalism (Ehrlich, 1977). It is inherently anti-patriarchal and recognizes the network of oppressive regimes in which patriarchy is embedded (Brown, 1996). In short, anarchist theory is intersectional. Whereas Marxism is rooted in analysis of class and economic exploitation, anarchism has as its core a rejection of

hierarchy and domination *per se*, making it better suited to the intersectional and situated approach of both feminism and geography. As John Clark says,

“sophisticated and developed anarchist theory does not stop with a criticism of political organization, but goes on to investigate the authoritarian nature of economic inequality and private property, hierarchical economic structures, traditional education, the patriarchal family, class and racial discrimination, and rigid sex and age-roles, to mention just a few of the more important topics” (1984).

The consonance here with intersectional feminism cannot be overstated. Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), has become a cornerstone of feminist theory. Feminists widely criticize narrow perspectives on justice which emphasize the emancipation of any one group of women over another, and call instead for dismantling the intersecting networks of oppression which go beyond gender (Grillo, 1995; Eric-Udorie, 2018). Gill Valentine outlines “the limitations of privileging one system of oppression—patriarchy, racism, or capitalism, for example—over another” (2007) in “Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography,” a paper which raises a call for feminist geographers to take seriously the spatialities of intersectionality.

When feminism was discussed in classes I have taken, I have found that it often presupposes the necessity of the state, in particular to enforce civil liberties for feminized subjects or to incarcerate perpetrators of domestic violence and sex crime. Some call explicitly for widening state power under female leaders (MacKinnon, 1991). But anarchafeminists have argued that “there cannot be a feminist state...

because feminism means liberation of all women and the state is the tool whereby a minority of people rules over the vast majority of them” (The Ongoing Collective, 2020). Over a century ago, Emma Goldman argued against women’s suffrage on the basis that “to assume that she [Woman] would succeed in purifying something which is not susceptible of purification, is to credit her with supernatural powers” (Goldman, 1911). Anarchist theory has worked to show that not only is decentralized horizontal organization without capitalism possible, but it offers the best hope for feminism to reduce violence to and beyond women.

I believe that anarchism is inborn. Its principles of absolute freedom, collective organizing, mutual aid, horizontality, and voluntary organization around affinity, are all natural characteristics of both human and more-than-human life. As a field and discipline, however, anarchism has been predominantly colonial. Anarchist theory is rooted in European and US-American thought, and anarchist praxis is rooted in white settler activism. The field’s progenitors were radical thinkers, many of them consciously anti-imperialist, but anarchists can still fall into settler moves to innocence, especially through *conscientization*, or a “focus on decolonizing the mind, or the cultivation of critical consciousness, as if it were the sole activity of decolonization” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 19).

Anarchism figures in the work of some of the most influential Indigenous scholars I read at UBC. Glen Coulthard writes about the anarchist principle of prefigurative politics, which means to build one’s desired world in the here and now, as opposed to reform or revolution. Prefiguration is pertinent to decolonization through two of its core features: “First, it privileges ‘direct action’ over... a ‘politics of demand’” (Coulthard, 2009, p. 187), described as a logic of social action revolving

around reform and redistributive justice, in which the state is pleaded with to change how it wields its power to be kinder to those subordinated beneath it. Direct action offers a welcome alternative to the reification of state power inherent in demand politics, and the waiting and time-based change it requires. “Second,” Coulthard continues, “... the means adopted to achieve one’s objectives ought to be consistent with the ends or objectives of struggle itself” (Ibid.) because, as Taiaiake Alfred writes, “how you fight determines who you become when the battle is over, and there is always means-ends consistency at the end of the game” (Alfred, 2005, p. 23). This stands in contrast to the “transition” at the heart of most social movements, a temporal marker which puts off active change to another day, and legitimizes domination through “temporary” acceptance.

Anarchist principles devolve decision-making to those who are most equipped and most affected. Therefore, any anarchist who takes action on Indigenous land must recognize the importance of deferring to the peoples of those lands. Indigenous activist Aragorn! writes “we will have to establish a way to live that is both indigenous, which is to say of the land that we are actually on, and anarchist, which is to say without authoritarian constraint” (Aragorn!, 2005). Any anarchism that does not appropriately integrate decolonial critique and engage in solidarity building with colonized peoples cannot be said to be anarchism at all. Rather than impose anarchist ideas onto decolonial movements, we should humbly listen and learn. Taking Indigenous critiques seriously is enormously generative for those of us mired in the colonial epistemologies of the university.

Decolonizing the university

In the face of the imperative to decolonize the university, many activists, scholars, and students have urged us to

imagine new modes of knowledge transmission. This is not a new idea, despite the fact that it has become more widespread since the TRC report. In 1978, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* exposed the colonial perspectives that distorted and marginalized non-Western subjects as objects of study. Said argued that to decolonize the university necessitates an interrogation of the cultural imperialism upon which the institution is founded. Ten years later, in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak critiqued the ways in which the voices and experiences of colonized peoples have been silenced and marginalized within the dominant narratives of Western modernity. She argued that the decolonization of the university is necessary in order to challenge and dismantle these power structures and create a more equitable and inclusive intellectual environment. These two thinkers are foundational to my university education. They seem to underpin the more recent work that has profoundly shaped the calls for decolonization that I have read in other classes. In particular, I am thinking of Peruvian scholar Aníbal Quijano’s “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” (2000), in which he writes about the concept of coloniality and insisted that decolonization is necessary in order to challenge Eurocentric assumptions and power structures within the academy. In the Canadian context, Eve Tuck, in “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities” (2009), has argued that the university must recognize and take responsibility for its role in perpetuating harm and violence against Indigenous communities, and must work to decolonize its practices and policies in order to create more equitable and respectful relationships.

Many students like myself are also trying to engage with people outside of the university, and to integrate the thinking and activism that goes on in radical non-hierarchical spaces external to the university

within our own critical learning. While I am grateful to have been introduced to attempts to pluralize the university through recognition of Indigenous and non-Western intellectual traditions, I am not sure I know what the future of the university is. Can the university be decolonized, or is its very basis as a Western, hierarchical, and increasingly bureaucratic institution anathema to the challenge? Is an anarchic university possible, or oxymoronic? Could what we do in university be radically reimagined so that it becomes less about individual expertise and individual forms of assessment, and more about interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to scholarship that focuses on addressing urgent social and environmental challenges?

This, I think, returns us to Said's characterization of the choice that lies before us: "I think the major choice faced by the intellectual is whether to be allied with the stability of the victors and rulers or—the more difficult path—to consider that stability as a state of emergency threatening the less fortunate with the danger of complete extinction, and take into account the experience of subordination itself, as well as the memory of forgotten voices and persons" (Said, 1994). My hope is only that UBC Geography equips us to make this decision. This need not be by making us Marxists *or* anarchists, but walking the more difficult path requires us to be more critical and more radical geographers than me, with my shiny new degree.

References

- Alfred, Taiaiake. (2005). *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom*. Broadview Press.
<https://go.exlibris.link/4JLkDrmL>
- Bookchin, M. (2005). *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. AK Press.
- Brown, S. (1996). Beyond Feminism: Anarchism and Human Freedom. In H. J. Ehrlich (Ed.), *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*.
- Clark, J. P. (1984). *The Anarchist Moment: Reflections on Culture, Nature, and Power*. Black Rose Books.
- Coulthard, G. S. (2009). *Subjects of Empire?: Indigenous peoples and the “Politics of recognition” in Canada*. <https://go.exlibris.link/9D9wRlbH>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. In *Feminist Legal Theory*. Routledge.
- Davis, A. Y. (1983). *Women, Race & Class*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Dean, J. (2012). *The Communist Horizon* (p. 256). Verso Books.
- Dunbar, G. (1978). Élisée Reclus, Geographer and Anarchist. *Antipode*, 11(1), 16–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1978.tb00112.x>
- Eric-Udorie, J. (2018). *Can We All be Feminists?: Seventeen Writers on Intersectionality, Identity and Finding the Right Way Forward for Feminism*. Virago.
- Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch*. Autonomedia.
- Goldman, E. (1911). *Anarchism and Other Essays*. Mother Earth Publishing Association.
- Graeber, D. (2004). *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Grillo, T. (Ed.). (1995). Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master’s House. *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice*. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38MC6W>
- Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso Books.
- Harvey, D. (2017). ‘Listen, Anarchist!’ A personal response to Simon Springer’s ‘Why a radical geography must be anarchist.’ *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 7(3), 233–250.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820617732876>
- Kropotkin, P. (1885). “What Geography Ought to Be.” *The Nineteenth Century*. V.18
- Mann, G. (2014). It’s just not true. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 4(3), 271–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820614541026>
- Pickerrill, J. (2019). Radical Geography. In *International Encyclopedia of Geography* (pp. 1–14). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg0506.pub2>
- Proudhon, P.-J., & Pierre, J. (1994). *Proudhon: What is Property?* Cambridge University Press.

- Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 15(2), 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580900015002005>
- Rancière, J. (1991). *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford University Press.
- Rogers, A., Castree, N., & Kitchin, R. (2013). Critical (human) geography. In *A Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-315>
- Said, E. (1994). *Representations of the Intellectual*. Pantheon Books.
- Said, E. W. (2014). *Orientalism*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Sing, M., & Younes, M. (2013). The Specters of Marx in Edward Said's "Orientalism." *Die Welt Des Islams*, 53(2), 149–191.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philosophin200314275>
- Springer, S. (2014a). For anarcho-geography! Or, bare-knuckle boxing as the world burns. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 4(3), 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820614540858>
- Springer, S. (2014b). Why a radical geography must be anarchist. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 4(3), 249–270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820614540851>
- Springer, S. (2016). *The Anarchist Roots of Geography: Toward Spatial Emancipation*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Springer, S. (2017). The limits to Marx: David Harvey and the condition of postfraternity. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 7(3), 280–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820617732918>
- The Overton Window*. (n.d.). Mackinac Center. Retrieved December 30, 2022, from <https://www.mackinac.org/OvertonWindow>
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409–428. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>
- Valentine, G. (2007). Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography. *The Professional Geographer*, 59(1), 10–21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9272.2007.00587.x>
- Waterstone, M. (2014). Dumpster diving in the trash bin of history. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 4(3), 288–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820614540855>



Trail Six Volume 17 Editorial Board

Mark Daudlin

Mark (he/him/his) is currently in his sixth-year victory lap majoring in Environment and Sustainability. Born and raised in Vancouver, he can often be found stand-up paddleboarding, road biking, or skiing while outside of school. His interests cover a wide variety of contemporary fields in global sustainability, but from this love of local outdoor recreation, he is particularly drawn to environmental issues seen and felt in British Columbia. Mark's other hobbies include choral singing, reading, yoga, baking pies, and trying ramen shops throughout the city. After graduation, he hopes to pursue further education and get involved in environmental work locally. This year Mark is thrilled and honoured to be the Editor-in-chief of Trail Six.

Devyani Anand

Devyani Anand (she/her) is a second-year student majoring in Environment and Sustainability and minoring in Law and Society. Growing up in New Delhi, India she has always taken an interest in environmental issues and social justice which led her to organise community work to help underprivileged children in rural India. Post her undergraduate degree, she hopes to pursue Environmental Law. Outside of academics, she partakes in Art, plays the piano and basketball and enjoys reading.

Kiri Basher

Kiri is a third-year student studying Environment and Sustainability with a certificate in Climate Studies and Action. She is interested in political ecology, cartography, population dynamics, and how to apply these concepts to climate change solutions.

Amelia Creemer

Amelia (she/her) is a third-year student studying English Language and Literature with a minor in Environment and Sustainability at UBC. She comes from California and also works as an Assistant Producer for the UBC for the Women Empowerment Club's podcast. In her free time, Amelia likes to make art or spend time in nature.

Katelyn Croy

Katelyn is a second-year student planning to major in Geography and Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies. Raised in Hong Kong and Tsawwassen, she is deeply invested in how the urban and natural environments shape peoples' lives, and she is very excited to showcase her peers' hard work in this year's edition of Trail Six.

Lisa Fylypchuk

Lisa is a second-year student pursuing a major in Environment and Sustainability. What she loves most about this discipline is the freedom that it provides in exploring real-world topics through a multiplicity of perspectives. She is interested most in biodiversity, politics and the environmental impacts of consumerism. She joined Trail Six to become

more involved in her community and to be introduced to a wider array of geographical topics. In her free time, she enjoys exploring the city, reading horror novels and thrifting with her friends.

Regina Hipolito

Regina is a fourth-year student majoring in Geography Honours and minoring in Urban Studies. She was born in the Philippines, but spent most of her formative years in Qatar and in Regina, Saskatchewan, and now resides in Burnaby, British Columbia. Her upbringing and cultural background has shaped her greatly and has defined her academic research interests, which are the politics of belonging, identity, and place-making in deconstructing the definition of home.

Madeline Laurendeau

Madeline Laurendeau (she/her) is a first-time editor at trail 6, currently working on her 3rd year of her Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in human geography and Indigenous studies. She is Red River Métis from Winnipeg, Manitoba. With time spent living in both Winnipeg and Vancouver, she is interested in studying urban Indigenous experiences and hopes to focus her research on topics in Indigenous geographies as well as climate justice.

Rebecca Lyon

Rebecca is a third-year student studying Human Geography with a minor in Economics. As a member of the UBC-Sciences Po Dual Degree, she spent the first two years of her undergraduate in Reims, France where she studied Political Humanities with a focus on International Relations. Today, Rebecca works and volunteers for the Burrard Inlet Marine Enhancement Society. Both her time in France and experience volunteering have shaped her interests in social and economic development and municipal environmental policy.

Dominic Malana

Dominic (he/him/his) is a third-year student studying Human Geography with a minor in Urban Studies. His passion for urbanism can be attributed to having spent his whole life in Vancouver, but he wishes to continue his studies abroad to further explore the geopolitical effects of urbanization in the developing world. In his free time, Dominic enjoys producing music and venturing into nature.

Marco Meyer

Marco is a fourth-year student majoring in Human Geography with a minor in Urban Studies. His experience travelling has inspired his various academic interests such as urbanism, conservation, and development in the Global South. He looks forward to continuing to research these topics in the future. In his spare time, Marco enjoys playing tennis, listening to music, and trying new restaurants.

Isabella Montecalvo

Isabella (she/her) is a fifth-year student majoring in (Honours) Human Geography with a minor in Geographic Information Systems (GIS)! She is one of those “Third Culture Kids,” with a mixed background and has grown up all over the world (US, India, Thailand, Turkey, Switzerland). Her family currently resides in Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Isabella's upbringing has informed much of who she is and what she is interested in - maps, geopolitics, identity, decolonization, transport, environmental justice, urbanism, sustainable development and climate change mitigation (among many other things, clearly). Isabella is excited to be an Editor with Trail Six again this year and engage with her fellow editors and authors to showcase the stellar academic work of her peers in the field of geography!

Xavier Montessori

Xavier is a 3rd year student majoring in Human Geography, with a minor in Political Science. Born in Vancouver, he has moved and lived in many countries around the world his entire life due to his father's profession, including Thailand, India, Italy, France, Dubai, Qatar, Australia, and more. The rest of Xavier's large family (2 sisters, and 2 brothers) live in Australia on their cattle farm in a small rural town called Romsey, in the southern state of Victoria. Xavier's passions include geopolitics, polemology, as well as colonial, post-colonial and settler theories. After graduating, his goals are to further his studies by completing his Masters in International Relations. Xavier is very much looking forward to developing his editorial skills, and to meet like-minded individuals in his field of study to share ideas with and work collaboratively towards helping people become more informed of the world and systems around them.

Noah Murdoch

Noah is a first-year student planning to major in Human Geography. Born and raised in the small city of Winchester in the UK, he is particularly interested in issues of global connections and geopolitics within the context of post-colonialism. Outside the class he enjoys canoeing, mountain biking and hiking within nature.

Tatum Narode

Tatum (she/they) is a second-year geography student specializing in geomorphology and GIS. She is excited to be an editor for Trail 6 as a way to get more involved in the geography department as well as to elevate fellow undergraduates' academic achievements and creativity. Before moving to Vancouver, they grew up in Seattle where they enjoy playing music (especially trumpet) and being outdoors (especially to learn about cool mosses and bugs). Some of their other involvements at UBC thus far include working for Dr. Claire Kremen's lab as both a field and lab assistant studying local pollinators. Additionally, before starting at UBC she worked for the Edmonds College Green Team in Washington state where she served her college community as an apiarist, water quality monitor, and social media manager.

Maia Rankine-Griffith

Maia Rankine-Griffith (she/her) is a second-year student pursuing a major in Environment and Sustainability with a minor in Biology. Having grown up in Thailand and the Caribbean, she has witnessed the beauty and resilience of our natural world, which has cultivated her interest in physical geography. Going forward, she hopes to engage further with sustainability with a critical focus on stakeholder engagement, extend her research experience in the field, and foster youth engagement in designing innovative climate solutions.

Thiago Ribeiro

Thiago (he/him/his) is a third-year student with a major in Human Geography and a minor in Food and Resource Economics. Originally from Brazil, but born in the UK, Thiago's interests in globalization and migration stem from his upbringing. Areas where his major and minor intersect are of most interest, and he enjoys being able to apply concepts from geography in economics and vice-versa! Outside of academics Thiago's many hobbies are running, going to the beach, and hip-hop. He looks forward to participating in the Trail Six editing process to aid the publication of the journal, hopefully learning some things about scholarly writing along the way.

Zainab Sayedain

Zainab Sayedain (she/her) is a third-year student in the dual degree programme between Sciences Po and UBC, and is majoring in Human Geography after spending two years studying in Menton, France. Born and raised in Vancouver as a second-generation Pakistani immigrant, Zainab has always been interested in justice, but is currently exploring global decolonial geographies and hopes to focus her studies towards that interest. She is incredibly excited to work with such passionate students and to read some of the incredible work that has been done in the Geography Department.

Ellen Wu

Ellen is now a second-degree student major in Environment and Sustainability with a Certificate in Climate Studies and Action. Her first degree was granted by University of Alberta, Bachelor of Commerce major in Business Law, with a minor in History. After finishing her degree in UBC, her goal is to continue her Master studies in UBC Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability.

Authors

Mariam Abdelaziz

Mariam is a fourth-year Human Geography and Political Science student, with interests in shedding light on overlooked narratives and subjectivities from the Middle East, global intersectional movements for social justice, and the spatial dimensions of oppression.

Outside of her studies, she is an activist and organizer. She enjoys reading, frequenting cafes, and is an avid hot chocolate fan.

Alina Debyser

Alina is a second-year Human Geography major with interests in climate justice, migration, and urban design. She takes joy in beautiful data visualizations, book cover designs, key lime pie, and snowboarding. Despite living in Vancouver for over a year and a half now, she still experiences a renewed state of awe every morning when seeing the mountains.

Jacob Ereshefsky

Jacob is a third-year Human Geography major and Urban Studies minor, with an interest in migration and settlement, green city planning, and social geographies. Having recently moved from Calgary to Vancouver, Jacob enjoys exploring the coastal mountains and new hidden gems within the city.

Sayano Izu

Sayano graduated from a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on urban studies and human geography in 2022. Her interests include decolonization, just city planning, migrant rights, climate action, public health, information justice, and many more. Sayano now works for a non-profit organization to help youth get involved more in local politics and climate action.

Liam Jagoe

Liam will hopefully graduate in May with an Honours in Human Geography degree, provided they did their math right. Their academic interests include environmental justice, informal housing, agriculture, and shoehorning anarchism in wherever they can. This summer, they are looking forward to participating in the UBC Practicum in Sustainable Agriculture. In their extracurricular time they play drums in the band *Nonarchy* and compost unsuccessfully.

Santosh Muralidaran

Santosh is a fourth-year student studying Political Science and Economics through the dual degree program between Sciences Po and UBC. He is interested in postcolonial geographies, climate justice, theories of urban and transportation planning, and development economics. In his free time, he likes to go running, take pictures of sunsets, or track random flights on Flightradar24.

Ryan Ng

Ryan is a first-year student in the Faculty of Science, with an interest in urban ecology, conservation and geographic information systems. In his free time, Ryan enjoys hiking, kayaking, running, and exploring the many natural wonders of the city.

Renée Rochefort

Renée is a third-year student studying French and Human Geography. She is interested in the francophone world, diaspora issues, and cities. Outside of her coursework, Renée enjoys playing football, watching sunsets, and reading the news.

Benedikt Rohr

Benedikt is a Psychology and Geography student with a particular interest in biodiversity conservation efforts, nuclear energy and the relationship between green spaces and human health. He is currently working as a Ski patroller on Cypress Mountain & in his free time he enjoys surfing, playing hockey and hiking with his dogs.

Cover image contributors

Ciaran Beggs

Quinlan Cyr

Yuyang Ding

Alhena Jaffer

Sarah Kelly

Ella Li

Tessa Wiehr

Interior image contributors

Nikol Ensor

Kyle Vinson

Faculty Acknowledgements

Dr. Geraldine Pratt (Department Head)

Dr. Michael Fabris

Dr. Nina Hewitt

Dr. Priti Narayan

Dr. Desirée Valadares

Dr. Elvin Wyly

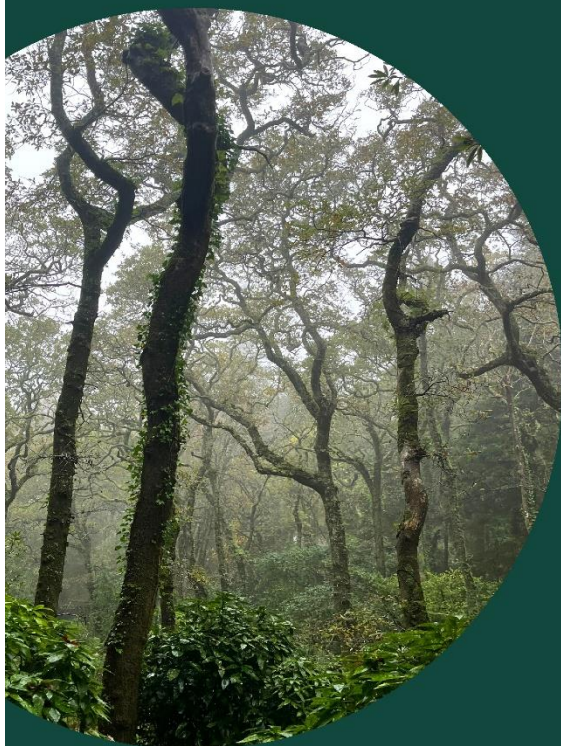
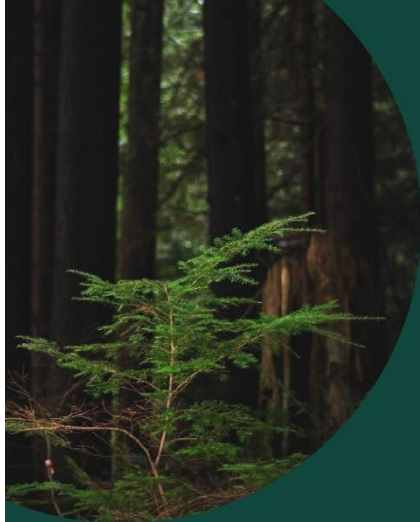
Simen Hennum

Nico Jimenez

Emi Kingan

Nicola Love





Trail Six: Undergraduate Journal of Geography
Volume 17: 2022-2023
© UBC Geography Students' Association, March 2023