

Trajectories in Green Colonial land captures: Legacies of Korean projects in Cambodia

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Climate Change politics gives rise to shifting forms of green colonialism the effects of which can be at once surprising and predictable. The following paper analyzes the life of two Korea-Cambodia partnership projects designed to increase forest cover in a rapidly deforesting Cambodia. This paper updates earlier case studies (Scheidel and Work, 2016; Work, 2017) and follows the life of these two projects. The first is a REDD+ project and the second is an afforestation/reforestation (AR) project situated respectively at the southwest and northeast boundaries of the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary (PLWS) in north-central Cambodia between the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap Lake. Both projects were conceived and justified within the logics of climate change politics and the green economy (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones, 2012; Franco and Borrás, 2021).

These entangle with traditional state-making projects of land control and the colonial capture of resource frontiers as well as the establishment of conservation areas and carbon markets that attempt to defer and obscure the damages (Clapp, Newell, and Brent, 2017; Milne, 2022; Scott, 2009; Delabre et al., 2020). Despite the similarity in terms of colonial-style resource capture and the subsequent deforestation visible in both sites, they have different trajectories. Each project demonstrates particular key elements of green coloniality and the politics of climate change, which makes them quite nice to discuss together. The AR project shows an enduring colonial logic of extreme resource extraction, local dispossession, environmental degradation, and violent state-making, lightly glossed by the twin discourses of economic growth and climate-sensitive sustainable development. The REDD+ project is firmly situated in a green economy in which invisible carbon gas is virtually extracted from a forest that has been only marginally protected and is presented as if left standing. The carbon stays in the forest, and its presence ‘neutralizes’ the carbon emitted through industrial activities in Korea. Together they reveal two aspects of green colonialism and the climate politics of ongoing state-market capture of life-giving resources: violent accumulation and spectacular obfuscation. This essay will introduce the framing concepts of climate politics and green colonialism, followed by the details of each project, and will conclude with a discussion of the various facets of green colonialism made visible by the juxtaposition.

Green Colonialism and the Logic of Climate Politics

Green Colonialism and Climate Politics are complementary terms with which to discuss the dynamics that emerge when a growth economy paradigm persists in the context of unstable environmental conditions and calls for ‘sustainable development’. The instability of contemporary environmental conditions is a direct result of colonial extraction and the post-WWII industrial ‘development’ industry (Chakrabarty, 2009; IPCC, 2019; Mignolo, 2021). Green Colonialism refers to the ways that resources in ‘less developed’ places *continue to be* captured by governments and investors from ‘more developed’ places (Blanc, 2022; Lyons and Westoby, 2014). Climate Politics refers to the collection of discourses, practices, and claims to truth that justify, normalize, and facilitate the continued capture (Borrás, Franco, and Nam, 2020; Franco and Borrás, 2021).

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The colonization of the world by European powers, what Carl Schmitt refers to as the second nomos of the earth (1950), began a particular type of resource extraction and political expansion that is giving rise to what Walter Mignolo (2021) suggests is the third nomos of the earth. In this third nomos, a “multiplicity of existing nomi” erased but not eradicated by the Euro-capture of land and knowledge-making resurge in multipolarity and pluriversality (2021: 533). Extractive development projects initiated by formerly ‘developing’ nations like Korea are part of this multipolarity, making space for many colonial nodes of extraction. The steps leading up to this colonial diffraction are many and are deeply entangled in the environmental devastation of the euro-colonial project (Mackenzie, 1990), the ways that it displaced blame for the destruction onto resource users in colonized lands (Grove, 1998), and how that victim blaming translated into conservation initiatives designed to slow the carnage (Peluso and Watts, 2001). In the contemporary moment the ‘slow violence’ of extreme extraction is being experienced by the winners as well as the losers in the imperial game (Nixon, 2011), and gives rise to calls for more conservation, energy transitions, and Green New Deals. Green colonialism is the sordid underbelly of these idealistic calls, because transition minerals must be mined (Zografos and Robbins, 2020), wind turbines must be built on land (Normann, 2021), carbon must be captured in standing natural forests that support multiple livelihoods (Phelps, Webb, and Agrawal, 2010; Svarstad and Benjaminsen, 2017), and renewable timber must be decoupled from natural forests (Lyons and Westoby, 2014; Scheidel and Work, 2016). Green colonialism is the mode of extraction and resource capture through which newly conceived green, sustainable, renewable, and otherwise ‘impact-free’ forms of ‘development’ proceed on the lands of ‘developing’ persons, both within and outside of industrialized countries.

Climate politics is the context within which green colonialism happens. It refers to the ways that the meanings of climate change, its causes and consequences, are shaped and set (Franco and Borrás, 2021:4). Climate politics shapes the ways that colonialism progresses and creates a situation in which land and water are dramatically altered not only by climate change, but also by the speculation and spectacle linked to measures addressing climate change (Borrás et al., 2020). For the purposes of this essay, policies, practices, discourses, rumors, and laws about forests and carbon are relevant, even though forests and carbon are not the only non-human actors in climate politics (Martineau and Lafontaine, 2019; Terrenas, 2020). The focus on carbon as the primary climate problem is an outcome of a climate politics that refuses to address the actual causes of the changing environment, which is the displacement of earth energy. Oil becomes vapor, forests become furniture, and water and soil produce monocrops. Excess carbon in the atmosphere is a symptom and outcome of particular land and resource uses, whose practitioners cast subsistence resource use as destructive (Fox, 2000), and rebrand the life-giving elements of water and land as dead matter while creating the existential circumstances through which most living bio-matter will die (Povinelli, 2016).

Creating carbon control as the solution to the problem of climate change is a profoundly political act that makes space for the plethora of non-solutions to the problem currently being pursued by green colonial projects. The invention of REDD+ as a possible means to capture industrial carbon in forest landscapes started in the mid-1970s, engendering a corporate experiment in the 1980s to mitigate the carbon effects of a new coal-fired power plant in Connecticut by “planting 52 million trees” (Lang, 2016). When it became obvious that the trees would not fit in the landscape surrounding the power plant, the corporation paid US\$2 million to facilitate Guatemalan farmers who planted the trees in their mountains. This was the first explicit attempt to offset carbon production in the global north with trees in the global south and it gave rise to the UNFCCC development of their Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) through which carbon emitters could purchase the carbon stored in the remaining standing forests of the world. This project, despite its poor track record (Mahanty, Milne, and Bradley, 2015) remains a vital part of green colonialism. It is explicitly not extractive, but does deploy paradigms that restrict forest use in the project area. This feature produces an economy of appearances that enables discourses of carbon neutrality and the fiction of carbon offsets (Frewer, 2021; Wong et al., 2019). Another forest-based, carbon-supported green colonial enterprise is forest plantations. These provide carbon sequestration, timber

products that keep natural forests standing, as well as all the benefits of capital accumulation and territorialization that nation states require to keep them afloat.

Part of the coming third nomos of the earth will involve a powerful political shift, in which the hubris of ‘development’ as discourse and practice is brought to heel by the geo-bio assemblage that makes it possible. Before that happens, however, there will be more violent accumulations and spectacular obfuscations in the pursuit of the comforts raising humans above their creaturely selves (Santner, 2006).

Korean Green Colonialism

Under the banner of assisting governments in developing countries to realize their commitments to reduce the effects of global climate change, the South Korean government began “securing overseas forest resources” (Limb, 2015). These climate change efforts folded neatly into previous capital investments in forests, notably in Indonesia where 190,400 hectares of forest were converted to plantation since 1993. Following efforts to secure a stable timber supply and generate wood pellets for Korea’s power plants, forest activities in Indonesia evolved to include REDD+ by 2012 (Lee, 2013). The projects in Cambodia had a different timeline due to domestic instability and Korean investments were initiated under a Memorandum of Understanding issued in 2009 in which the Forest Administration of the Kingdom of Cambodia provided over 100,000 hectares of land to the Korean government for forest plantation development and projects on climate change response. In return, the Korea Forest Service of the Republic of Korea provided funds for their activities and give Cambodian authorities access to those activities. The stated intention of these activities were to promote bilateral cooperation in forest plantation development and to promote cooperation in the field of climate change in the context of UNFCCC (KFS/FA, 2009).

The ease with which industrial forestry slides into climate change initiatives in Korea’s international investment portfolio is revealing in the context of green colonialism. Global discourses about carbon as the reported cause of climate change, carbon’s intimate relationship to forests, a stated need for market-based solutions, and global funds made available for their pursuit all contributed to the creation of the Think Biotech Co, Ltd. forest plantation and the Tumring REDD+ projects. In the following sections, these two projects will be examined from the ground as part of an ongoing critique of international investments in Cambodia’s forest resources (Work, Theilade, and Thuon, 2022).

Think Biotech Co, Ltd.

Situated on the remote western edge of the Mekong River in Kratie Province, Cambodia, the Think Biotech company began operations in 2012. After signing the MoU in 2009, the site was selected and the Korean Think Biotech Co., Ltd was put forward by the Korean Forest Service for the contract. Think Biotech was a subsidiary of the Hanwha corporation that specializes in the manufacture of explosives and military equipment. Before 2010, the Think Biotech Cambodia, co. ltd. was not listed in Hanwha’s annual report and Hanwha had no experience in forestry initiatives (PWC, 2010; Work, 2017). The original sub-decree was for an afforestation/reforestation project that would stop ‘slash-and-burn’ activities, enhance forest protection through establishing an artificial forest, and reduce emissions to become part of the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM). The only one of these outcomes that has been successfully realized is stopping ‘slash-and-burn’ activities, also known as swidden agriculture or shifting cultivation long recognized, with some conditions, for its sustainability and long vilified for its illegibility (Dove, 2015).

The plantation concession, as with most industrial agriculture concessions in Cambodia, was awarded on healthy forested land that was in use by local subsistence farmers. In this case, they were long-term Kuy

indigenous residents who used the area for shifting cultivation, hunting, and collecting forest products. The forest was dense and rich in the early 1990s when Cambodia re-entered the global market economy, and the landscape where Think Biotech operates was awarded first as a forest concession for industrial timber harvesting and only later for 'reforestation'. While missing its oldest and largest trees, the area still comprised dense forest over most of the 34,400 hectares within the concession boundaries and the company's rapacious forest clearing in the southern regions of its concession caused significant outcry from local communities and national NGOs (Scheidel and Work, 2018). Shortly after starting operations, the Korean enterprise dropped all pretense to climate change interventions. But, in 2018 they had managed to clear only about 5,000 hectares in the southern area of the concession and replant only half of that with Acacia plantation. Local reports suggest this was due to resistance from both the community and the landscape.

People refused to cede their holdings, especially areas where they held resin trees which were protected by practiced traditional livelihoods (Work, 2017). Fires, floods, and other issues also plagued the company and company activities proceeded in fits and starts, finally slowing to a halt by early 2019 (Work, 2017; Work et al., 2022). At the end of 2019 it had changed ownership to a new operation headed by Taiwanese businessman Lu, Chu-chang, and Cambodian tycoon Pov, Chea. The new ownership retained the company name and concession agreement, but embarked on a much more aggressive development trajectory that captured the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary in a syndicated logging ring (GI, 2021, 2022). In addition to the forced migration of all valuable timber, from inside the protected area to the global market, the company rapidly cleared within the concession boundaries. Community resin forests were cleared through violence, intimidation, and inputs of capital and labor. The resin were trees captured for the company's plywood industry and local activists were subdued through bribes, threats, and death (Work et al., 2022).

A recent (2023) fieldtrip through the area reveals a fully transformed landscape. The dense forest of the northern concession area at the boundary between Kratie and Steung Treng is cleared and a wide road nearly connects the two regions. This does make travel easier, and hotter, and dryer. Bridges are being built over waterways now fully exposed to the sun, our colleagues living in the region suggest that the unsustainable development practices will dry the stream and make the bridge obsolete through the next season. They have seen this happen to many streams in the region that once carried fresh water through the dry season. Landscape transformation is not just visible within the concession boundaries, but starkly visible inside the protected area. Wide, smooth roads connect the southern region of Prey Lang from Kratie to Kampong Thom. What were tiny enclaves of local gold miners and loggers living in the middle of the forest are now towns, exposed to the sun with shops and wide roads. These roads facilitate timber transport as well as the activities of multiple mining operations. Gold, marble, and limestone are experiencing forced migration into the global market. I use this language of forced migration because these "natural resources", especially the stone and the fresh water sources, but also large trees and metals, are engaged by indigenous communities in the register of kinship and are understood to be guardians, owners, and masters of the landscape. Relationships with these powerful ancestors forced people into relationships of subordination to their rules in which all use requires tribute and respect, and unsustainable use is met with illness and accident.

What were recently strong communities existing in subsistence livelihoods, attached to but not dependent on the market for their survival are now completely captured, market-dependent communities. Their children attend school in ramshackle buildings with intermittent teachers, their children are born in hospitals who charge money for their services, their livelihoods are fueled by debt, and dependent on the precarity of the price for their market crops. This is green colonialism in its classical form, in which violence and lies transform independent people into 'producers'. The green comes from the eco-tourism that will follow behind the mining companies. The roads built to transport both logs and rocks through the forest will soon

Figure 1: Left shows the community forest regions in dark green (here dark). Center shows University of Maryland deforestation map from 2016, just after the project was instigated. Right shows the project landscape in 2021.

This is the other glaring material gap, which is also a conceptual gap represented by the small proportion of the project controlled by community forest committees. The maps in Figure 1 show that the majority of remaining forest area inside the project is within the community forest landscape.² It is possible that the project is only declaring 1,449 ha of avoided deforestation in the small green (less dark) zone in the southern area of the project visible on the right in Fig. 1. Nonetheless, this claim would suggest that without the project, they would have expected the entire area to be deforested by this time. This might suggest an inflated ‘without-project’ scenario, but early conversations with the project director, from 2015-17 gave no indication that they predicted the entire landscape would be converted in just four years. The conceptual gap is associated with the government managed project and the general unwillingness of the Royal Government of Cambodia to devolve forest management to local community actors, despite their proven ability to do the job. Early in the project, its director shared with the author that they were going to try to have the entire project area managed at the community level because they could already see that the community held areas were not degrading as fast as the government managed areas (High Government Interview#13: Jan 11, 2017). That did not materialize, despite mounting evidence that community controlled and managed areas globally are consistently more effective than government controlled spaces (FAO and FILAC, 2021).

So far, the discussion has been limited to the Tumring REDD+ project. But this project helps make visible a larger collection of issues and challenges with REDD+ as a viable mechanism for drawing carbon from the atmosphere. This small case shows how forest areas that are being visibly decimated are still generating offset carbon credits for high emitters. This is of growing concern, as more companies are claiming to be offsetting carbon and data confirming the avoided deforestation is difficult to determine (Kohl et al., 2020). This is one part of the spectacular obfuscation involved in the carbon economy. Framing the fiction has many elements, three of which are illustrated in a recently published document in the peer-reviewed journal, *Scientific Reports*. The article in question, *High deforestation trajectories in Cambodia slowly transformed through economic land concession restrictions and strategic execution of REDD+ protected areas* (Pauly, Crosse, and Tosteson, 2022) confirms the findings here, that the Tumring REDD+ project is underperforming. But it also demonstrates a number of other issues that will be briefly outlined here as they are relevant to the argument.

The most obvious issue is that a peer-reviewed scientific article is published with a clear conflict of interest. The article also demonstrates the production and re-production of delicately framed semi-facts, and the uncritical reproduction of the general truths of development discourses. These truth claims, which support the logic of the offset paradigm, will be addressed first. The framing of deforestation and its drivers suggests that the problem is not the system as a whole, but its ineffective implementation. This is important in the context of Cambodia. Detailed in a recent study (Work et al., 2022), the suggestion that the Cambodian government is ‘under-funded’, ‘weak’, and singularly ‘corrupt’ as described by Pauly et al. (2022: 2), is also reproduced in every document published by institutions involved in development projects in Cambodia (Chhun, 2015; USAID, 2021; World Bank, 2017, 2021). These, however, are all questionable facts. The government does not enforce the laws created in collaboration with donors, but this cannot be interpreted as ‘weak’ when there is evidence of highly coordinated and effective acts of ‘extra-legal’ activities orchestrated by the highest government officials (GI, 2021, 2022). The suggestion that the government is ‘corrupt’ ignores the obvious collusion (corruption?) of development donors, who continued to approve over US\$16 billion in development aid since 1990. Since 2018, the year that the main opposition party was

dissolved and the years of highest forest loss in the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary, the supposedly weak and corrupt Cambodian government received US\$781 million (2018), US\$966 million (2019), and US\$1.3 billion (2020), which all mark dramatic increases compared to previous years.³ The evidence cited by Pauly et al. to support their claim of ‘chronically under-funded’ protected areas is a 2003 report published by the IUCN that surveyed forests in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam, and a report from Cambodia’s Ministry of the Environment.

It might be prudent to engage in deeper investigations of these standard total facts of weakness, corruption, and bureaucratic poverty that continue to legitimize green colonial projects of resource capture. These claims are found in Pauly et al. (2022), whose declared conflict of interest was interestingly ignored by the peer review panel at *Science Reports*. The conflict of interest is that all of the authors are employed by the Everland company, which is a broker for global REDD+ projects. Indeed, they are the president, vice president, and head of evaluation and research. Further, all three projects highlighted in the academic paper are in the Everland portfolio.⁴ The article argues that Cambodia is transforming their deforestation reputation, through economic land concession restrictions and REDD+. The evidence they put forward to substantiate that claim, is highly qualified. All three REDD+ project areas they highlight sustained increased deforestation from 2010-2021 and their claim is that the two REDD+ projects areas that were impacted less than the adjacent protected areas had international NGO support. Collaboration with international NGO is part of what grounds their business model, that ‘mobilize[s] transformative investments’ to ‘deliver conservation outcomes at scale’ ensuring that, ‘clients invest in meaningful impact ... [bringing] together forest communities and corporations in a common cause to end deforestation and protect life on earth’.⁵

This rousing rhetoric is omitted from the academic paper, as is the fact that the NGO support began when the period of increased deforestation began and that the REDD+ project areas before conservation or REDD+ consistently had lower background deforestation rates compared to the country average. The two successful REDD+ sites *always* had markedly lower deforestation rates compared to the surrounding area, so there is no way to verify if it is the project or the geography and lack of infrastructure that makes the difference. It is unclear exactly how the presence of International NGO and REDD+ are indicators in the deforestation measures, and the article cites project documents from the organizations themselves as proof of their claims and also a report on the effectiveness of Southeast Asian protected areas that did not include data from Cambodia. Visible data from the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary suggests that it is the absence of road infrastructure development more than protected area status that protects forests, since the region has received funding from multiple development donors, notably US\$50 million from USAID 2011-2023. Since its establishment as a protected area in 2016, Prey Lang has lost more forest than any earlier period.

Beyond these issues of academic integrity, carbon verification standards, and the disconnect between visible deforestation (from satellite data as well as from personal encounter) and claims of carbon sequestration, there is the question of whether ‘carbon neutral’ economies are even possible. The principal of carbon neutrality is one in which a country or company’s carbon emissions are matched by their carbon capture, absorption, or sequestration. This is only achieved by three countries currently, Bhutan, Suriname, and Panama all with small economic growth, limited ‘development’, and large forest resources. The continuing increase in global emissions reveals that country commitments to carbon neutrality are weak, exemplified here by Korea. In addition, the supporting science-technology-policy-law assemblage necessary to facilitate carbon neutrality is weak. One of the weaknesses is the focus on carbon as a problem, however, this makes

³ Amounts taken from World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.CD?locations=KH> [21 February 2023]

⁴ <https://everland.earth/projects/keo-seima/>; <https://everland.earth/projects/southern-cardamom/> [20 February 2023]
<https://everland.earth/impacts/67791-hectares-of-tropical-forest-protected-in-a-highly-threatened-landscape/>

⁵ <https://everland.earth/> [19 February 2023]

it possible to put forward graphs, hold conferences, and collect country pledges that quantify carbon, framing it as a problem that can be quantified and ‘solved’. The graphs we see that attribute quantities of carbon to different sectors, like construction, agriculture or transportation, obscure the fact that all these things are inseparable from contemporary economics.⁶ Carbon might be better understood as a symptom of the growth economy. The language of carbon neutrality suggests that a solution can come without the “far-reaching transitions in the whole society” put forward by the specialists (Huang and Zhai, 2021).

In the Context of Conservation

Conservation initiatives have, for generations, been part of the obfuscation mechanism that makes extreme extraction less visible and more palatable (Mackenzie, 1990). Having written at length about the spectacle of conservation initiatives in Prey Lang, I will not detail the project here (Work et al., 2022). Instead, I will briefly consider the context that conservation creates for development projects. Both of the Korean projects highlighted in this paper were established before the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary (PLWS) was inaugurated with the assistance of USAID in 2016. Neither project was inside the protected area, but along with the other economic land concessions in the area, both were instrumental in shaping the protected area boundary (Work and Thuon, 2017). While there are many important ‘functions’ for conservation initiatives in the contemporary era, when viewed up close, few of them seem to be about actually maintaining healthy and functioning ecosystems. In a 2022 interview, I pointed out the dramatic decline in forest resources both globally and especially within Cambodia over the past twenty years to an anonymous member of the conservation community whose organization was preparing to dedicate another US\$25 million to conservation in Cambodia. In light of this spectacular failure, I asked, what is it that you claim to be doing? She did not stop and consider, but promptly told me, “all we can do is slow it down”. I wondered at that time and continue to wonder, as eco-tourism slides into the vision of my Kuy colleagues living in the residue of once-rich forests, why? But also, why hide it? Is it to protect those of us living in the grey-zone of global capitalism, not involved in and even disturbed by the destruction, but shackled with fur-lined chains to the easy life created by the market products that come visibly and directly out of that forest? Gold, concrete, marble, cashew, rubber, cassava (used for noodles, animal feed, and biofuel), sugar... all these things are implicated in the ‘good life’ of civilized persons: Future eco-tourists to the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary. Slow it down? Why? So that exposure snapshots of conservation success can continue to convince those living in the grey zone that all is well?⁷

The conservation successes make the REDD+ carbon economy possible, they also fuel the discourse on managing the effects of climate change. But, the planet is not having it and the changes that are afoot make this clear.

Concluding thoughts on the Violent and the Spectacular

Carl Schmitt’s (1950) observation that the euro-colonial extravaganza constituted a second nomos of the earth is even more revealing in the contemporary moment of its spectacular excess. Nomos comes from the ancient Greek meaning law, and Schmitt was concerned with land appropriation, sovereign states, and those laws that made them possible in the inter-regnum between Europe’s great wars. Walter Mignolo (2021) slides into Schmitt’s timeline, maintaining Schmitt’s flattened first nomos and continuing with a proposition for a third nomos of the earth. In this third nomos, the euro-centrality of the law gains multipolarity as other nations join the industrialized ranks and the cosmo-theological foundations of the first and always multiple nomoi are liberated with emancipatory effects. I rather like Mignolo’s framing but he misses the significance of the law, which did not come from the church and the ‘first’ nomos of ancient kings. The

⁶ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions> [28 February 2023]

⁷ <https://usaidgreeningpreylang.exposure.co/>. [28 February 2023]

first nomos, according to the uneducated and humble, comes not from ‘religion’ but from the rock, a provocation to which I return at the end.

The spectacular violence of green colonial nomoi instigated from multiple centers of extreme extraction are made the more spectacular by their sleek production value. Starting and ending with the laws and policies of states, beautifully crafted to contain primitive accumulation and extraction within appropriate codes of conduct, where the state-makers hide their violence. At Think Biotech, local people were promised jobs and development. No one told them the forest that sustained them would be sacrificed, no one told them their sites of worship would be destroyed to make urban landscapes. Urban landscapes that are themselves responsible for the bulk of the displaced carbon causing palpable changes to the life-support system. The ways this is presented, disaggregated by ‘sector’ and by ‘country’ in the graphs depicting emissions obscures their urban source, toward which the productive energies of the land are all pointed. At the present moment, the codes and laws that facilitate this adventure are created by multiple urban-based actors. No longer just the kings or the heads of the European states who declared the second nomos of the earth. Not only multiple states that today engage in creating the third nomos, but also the international and regional organizations, the national, regional, and international banks, the non-governmental corporate-sponsored organizations, and the corporations. All these actors are making and interpreting laws that pertain to the ownership and use of ‘natural resources’, which are now embedded in concerns over the release and capture of carbon. This is climate politics, which obscures contemporary extraction in an opaque net of problems, solutions, and success trajectories.

All these so-called problems and solutions are little more than puffs of hubris wafting from the indigestion caused by consuming unsustainable amounts of energy. Climate scientists continue to be surprised by what is actually happening, both its speed and its trajectory (IPCC, 2022), and international parties are throwing parties disguised as conferences to solve the problems. It might be significant that COP 28 will be held in the United Arab Emirates, one of the top carbon emitting countries in the world at 20.50 metric tons in 2019 (US was 14.8 and China was 7.6 in the same year). The magical thinking involved in these projects has been remarked by anthropologists as not even good magical thinking (Rayner, 2016). When a backwards and superstitious couple invokes a magical spell to get themselves a baby, for example, they do not stop fucking. In fact, they might be likely to fuck as much as possible. The same would be true of a magical spell to slow the setting of the sun to ensure one arrives home before dark. After casting the spell, one does not dance and play along the road. One moves with as much speed as possible to get their job done and return on time, hoping for a little help from the energies of the universe. What is even more revealing of the sloppy magic at play is the spectacular industrial advertising platform, especially for the oil and gas industry, afforded by the annual COP conventions, which grow more elaborate each year (Levitan, 2022).

Underneath the COP parties for climate is another COP for biodiversity, in which the colonial land grab for the elite few (also known as humanity), will capture 30 percent of the remaining undeveloped landscapes on the planet for ‘nature’.⁸ Which means that all the people currently making a living in those places will be forced out because of the incredible livings being made by an urban-based Humanity. All of the fretting does not seem to be directed toward actual solutions, but rather toward solutions that will maintain an urban-based Humanity in the style to which it has grown accustomed. No amount of magic will make that happen. We live on a rock that has been cooking itself for an incredibly long time and whose geological forces have supported multiple re-boots to the biotic system. Whatever this new-found human hubris is that thinks it can be the master of everything, it is proving itself to be no match for the rock. According to the more-humble humans among us, this rock has for millennia been teaching the technologies and laws that made rich lives out of forest landscapes. The rock-knowledge of self-organized peoples has been systematically

⁸ <https://www.climateandcapitalmedia.com/welcome-to-the-other-cop-cop15/> [28 February 2023]

captured by the forces of kings and their markets, the global version of which is only the final spectacular gasp, which is little more than a mast-fruiting of debris some of which will remain in the landscape, dinosaurs in the making. They might be fuel for myths of the future... but the violence of green colonialism is nothing compared to the violence of the rock, which will usher in a deeply transformative nomos in which the real maker of laws calls the exception. Dinosaurs are birds and there is no telling what is to come.

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