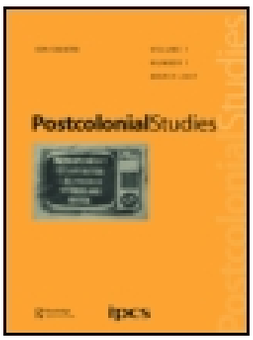

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Unsettling truths: modernity, (de-)coloniality and Indigenous futures

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ABSTRACT

In our world of fractured truths, unparalleled disparities and technological wizardry, it is vital that we interrogate the largely unquestioned political axioms that have brought us to the brink of extinction. In this article, I explore the broader landscape in which settler-coloniality is ensconced through an examination of global modernity. I briefly outline some well-known, but largely subsumed, and mostly unremarked, realities of the contemporary world. I then argue that debt, property, institutions and nation states are the constituent devastations of modernity that we must simultaneously aver and avert. I suggest that the path towards decoloniality entails radical land-based re-localisation, revitalised communalism and embodied kinship with all life. This will necessitate an Indigenisation in which we, collectively across difference and distance, embrace fundamentally transformed relationships of mutuality so as to bring about flourishing egalitarian societies.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous; modernity; colonialism; futurity; climate change

The truth of modernity

For Indigenous nations[1] *to live, colonial mentalities must die*[2]

In CANZUS[3] settler-colonial societies, interest in colonisation is often focused on relatively distant colonial pasts where Indigenous[4] peoples were 'displaced' (and other euphemisms for slavery, rape, torture, murder and genocide), with relatively scant attention paid to ongoing colonial presence/presents in which systemic, structural, physical, epistemic and ontological violence continue to oppress, assimilate and eradicate Indigenous peoples. This has resulted in vast over-representation of Indigenous peoples among, for example, the impoverished, unhealthy, imprisoned and homeless,[5] as well as even greater under-representation among politicians, administrators, the wealthy, influential and famous. For Indigenous peoples from around the world, the 'slow violence'[6] of colonisation exists alongside violent assaults and fatal neglect. There is also a growing realisation of the impossibility of justice through the law,[7] of reconciliation,[8] or of any answers at all from within settler-colonial states.[9]

Even in scholarship focused on contemporary manifestations of settler colonialism, the broader conditions of modernity[10] are often neglected. These include the fact that 60% of

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people globally live on less than $5 a day, eight people have more wealth than half the world's population,[11] 1.6 billion people are without adequate housing,[12] one in four children worldwide are stunted from malnutrition, real Gross Domestic Product has tripled since 1980 while a billion more people now live in poverty,[13] devastating wars and brutal dictatorships continue unchecked,[14] an epidemic of loneliness is sweeping the Western world,[15] and the United States is experiencing the longest consecutive decline in life expectancy for a century,[16] with similar trends in the United Kingdom.[17]

Today, modern nation states, especially in the 'West', have become hyper-individualist, atomised, securitised societies existing within a deepening crisis of climate change and the sixth mass extinction.[18] This includes toxic chemicals in everything from Antarctic ice[19] to human breast milk;[20] microplastics throughout our bodies and environments; rising sea levels; extreme wildfires; super-typhoons; global pandemics; a 60% decline in vertebrate numbers since 1970;[21] grave concern for insect populations;[22] indiscriminate deforestation; extensive soil erosion; acidic oceans; toxic air; fresh-water shortages; and catastrophic global warming that will likely reach 4 degrees Celsius by century's end.[23] This is a consumptive world of rapidly dwindling fossil-fuel resources in which many human societies are dependent on highly vulnerable just-in-time global supply chains.[24] Despite this, there exists scant political will to steer away from civilisational collapse, an outcome now more certain than any alternative.[25]

In such a world, truth telling means telling the unsettling[26] truth about the dangers of modernity for global life, including its deeply atrophied capacity to provide people with a collective existential purpose.[27] If 'truth is about the future as much as it is about the past',[28] then it is also equally about the present. Like most Indigenous political activists, I will consider the past, present and future as nested and folded together, encircling linear goal-centred dissected 'clock' time[29] through rhythmic, cyclical, spiral sensing[30] that necessitates 'a careful remembering of the future'.[31] An understanding of modernity's wrongs means not only knowledge of its past impacts but also apprehending how it continues to destroy our present/futures, and then acting to prevent this in ways that are more than merely metaphorical.[32]

Only 500 years ago, almost half the world's land remained unclaimed by nation states.[33] Since then, modernity has grown near-ubiquitous through the creation of national(ised) territory. This was achieved through the creation of property by the violent enclosure of peasants' land in Europe (i.e. the commons) as well as colonial usurping of Indigenous land throughout the world. It also involved concentration of the means of production into the hands of a small minority and the extraction of resources from the majority via industrialisation and wage labour. This process was also characterised by the development of, for example, fossil capitalism, bureaucracy,[34] monogamy and the nuclear family, unrealistic beauty[35] and success ideals,[36] and further enclosure of many individuals within hermeneutically sealed buildings, often to undertake 'bullshit jobs'.[37] Over longer timescales, the origins of modernity can be traced back to the formation of sovereign states (e.g. chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires) and the invention of institutions (e.g. religious, legal, military), patriarchy,[38] slavery and debt. These events, which I take as the birth of modernity, occurred in what is now the Middle East predominantly around 5000 years ago,[39] with the earliest trends evident up to 10,000 years ago.[40]

While Eduardo Bonilla-Silva claims a 'race-class-gender foundation' to the 'contemporary house of inequality',[41] Sara Motta refers to 'patriarchal capitalist-coloniality'[42] and

Vanessa Andreotti et al. discuss the threads of 'global capital, nation-states, and Enlightenment humanism',[43] I suggest that modernity is constructed from four key building blocks: debt, property, institutions and nation states. I refer to these, in an ironic biblical fashion, as the four horsemen of the apocalypse; that is, the harbingers of modernity's end, fashioned from its own essential elements. At a smaller scale, the 'house modernity built'[44] is furnished with cartesian and other oppositional dualisms, rational universalism, separability, certainty, control, progress, entitlement, moral authority, duty and sacrifice (e.g. the tropes of heroes, martyrs, leaders, saviours, the righteous and the chosen).[45]

These four materials of modernity are closely intertwined and interdependent. Debt, money, interest and currency co-occur with slavery, poverty, war and nation states.[46] Institutions are implicated in the rise of nation states and are necessary for their continuance. Here, I define an institution as a type of centralised organisation (i.e. 'a specific group of individuals pursuing a mix of common and individual goals through partially coordinated behaviour')[47] that is self-perpetuating and hierarchical in both its formation and operations, and which endeavours to apply specific rules and norms through regulation and/or sanction. This definition includes various non-state entities (e.g. organised crime), but excludes both egalitarian de-centralised non-hierarchical organisations and social conventions, customs, shared beliefs or practices, which are common to all human societies (e.g. I agree with Peter Rogers[48] that the family is not an institution). While some social institutions, such as the 'institution of marriage', developed in the context of capital, debt and patriarchy, and are unlikely to outlive modernity, I do not consider here which specific aspects of human cultures, customs or conventions should persist beyond modernity.

Through the action of some specific institutions as I define them, sovereign nation states are fundamentally maintained through property, debt, labour coercion and tax collection, from which stem various 'rights' enforced by legal violence.[49] The modern concept of property is often attributed to Hobbesian individualism and Lockean privatisation of nature.[50] However, these world views have older lineages; for example, Plato's discussion of private property[51] and claims by the first Chinese emperor about the benefits of his rule in relation to protecting private homes, both date to about 2500 years ago.[52] Importantly, the creation and maintenance of property is deeply colonial[53] and underpinned by violence,[54] either within states (i.e. to protect the 'rights' of those who have against those who have not) or via state aggression against stateless societies (i.e. extracting resources as property, including exploitation of human resources).[55] Similarly, the very definition of a sovereign state is a body whose use of force is legitimate and sanctioned.[56]

Modern societies are best described as parasitic,[57] not simply neglecting but actively exploiting the labour of the many (who would fare better in stateless societies) for the benefit of the few (who would not).[58] Additionally, there is evidence that states were key drivers in rapid population growth from previously stable smaller populations. Given that there is scant, if not contrary, evidence for increased lifespans following the advent of states,[59] the current human population explosion is due primarily to differential fertility norms within state and non-state societies. Such population growth continues to be a resource burden (especially among affluent nation states) that will soon overwhelm the global ecosystem.

The claim that only nation states can protect us from each other through law and order is nothing more than a justification for disadvantage and inequality.[60] In fact, even amid

catastrophe, people often spontaneously, even joyfully, form local communities of care and solidarity without, or in spite of, existing authorities,[61] including during the COVID-19 pandemic.[62] As such, I contend that the nation-state experiment is both a failure for human flourishing and, increasingly, failing as a form of social organisation, with countries classified as 'fragile' rising in number from 18 in 2005 to 58 in 2018.[63]

It has been suggested that institutions have an impact on the human psyche akin to being in a sensory-deprivation tank.[64] This speaks to the strangulating effect on our capacity for creativity and self-expression that many people experience in their schooling, in workplaces, from law enforcement, from the media and so forth. Put another way, institutions engage in symbolic[65] and physical violence that constrains our modes of being.[66] Institutions (e.g. financial institutions) also have a key role in supporting universalising economic development and colonial expansion.[67]

Despite the four rupturing wounds to human narcissism – the Copernican (i.e. displacing the Earth from the centre of the universe), Darwinian (i.e. showing that we are animals), Freudian (i.e. the unconscious overshadowing of the conscious mind) and Machinic (i.e. computers that outperform people)[68] – modernity's advocates seem oblivious to these traumas.[69] Certainly, there is no evidence of attenuating hubris or growing humility among twenty-first-century societies. Charles Melman claims that modern societies have transitioned from desire regulated by scarcity and prohibition to *jouissance* – an unrestricted need for immediate satisfaction through constant abundance.[70] This has made both techno-culture and 'nature'[71] into what Martin Heidegger[72] called 'standing-reserves' that decentre our moral selves and threaten our subjectivity through a perceived 'right to alienate and dispose of the world'.[73] Both impending civilisational and ecological collapse are due to specific views of reality and the 'good life' that result in radical alienation from ourselves, other living beings and the environment.

I am arguing that we must relinquish the four horsemen of the apocalypse (debt, property, institutions and nation states) before it is too late, or as the most ethical action even if it is too late. This will require many of us to set aside deeply embodied, though generally unsensed, 'feelings, sentiments and attachments',[74] including *jouissance*, certainty, control, progress and entitlement, as well as the pernicious fantasy that we exist as individuals separated and divorced from our social and physical contexts. If freedom is the tension between human creativity and the rules such creativity generates,[75] then it would seem, as I detail below, that applying indigenuity[76] to the exceedingly ossified rules of modernity is long overdue.

Decoloniality as truthful futures

Indigenous futurity … does not foreclose the inhabitation of Indigenous land by non-Indigenous peoples, but does foreclose settler colonialism and settler epistemologies[77]

Decoloniality/decolonisation is about deep awareness of colonial pasts, cognisance of present colonial conditions and striving for 'a future … free from the colonial past'.[78] While acknowledging that Indigenous struggles should not be defined by colonisation,[79] it is nonetheless necessary to name colonisation to critique and dismantle it as well as to recognise its continuing impacts on Indigenous lives, even though such lives exceed the shadow of colonisation. While decoloniality requires 'a profound dedication to the

dismantling of the settler state',[80] the 'hard work of decolonising Settler self and society is not an Indigenous responsibility'.[81]

Modernity can be conceptualised as a set of self-serving and fictional narratives that hide and disguise coloniality, such that 'the end of modernity would imply the end of coloniality'.[82] As such, my call to end modernity is a form of decolonial action. More generally, decoloniality is related to, but not synonymous with, indigenisation. To remove the oppressive influence of colonialism from the world is to become open to a broad range of potential futures, some of which are continuous, to varying degrees, with past and existing Indigenous cultures, but others of which are not. Importantly, we must recognise and respect the vast diversity of both contemporary and historical Indigenous peoples,[83] many of whom do not, and never have, included all, or even any, of the characteristics I discuss below, and all of whom have complex 'patterns of weaving within, outside and in response to global modernity'.[84] Although we have much to learn from Indigenous peoples and lifeways, it is important to note the inappositeness of writing[85] as a way of sharing Indigenous learnings, given that translating oral traditions to written form can lead to their abstraction, annexation and alienation.[86]

While decolonisation is a necessary journey for many who are colonised, as it is for colonisers, both ancestral and newly (re-)invented (non-)Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing can contribute to utopias that supplant identitarian essentialisms.[87] We need to focus on ways of living that are possible for all while letting go of an obsession with who is (authentically) Indigenous or not. Outside of modern identity categories (e.g. Indigenous versus non-Indigenous), decoloniality is a 'praxis of living' 'open to whoever wants to do it'.[88] As such, it does not preclude the possibility of settlers 'becoming' Indigenous[89] or Indigenous people becoming settlers. Rather, I aim to rupture the meaning of these terms in a proposed ex-modern[90] future that moves beyond both a questioning of nation states[91] and an elusive[92] 'tangible unknown'[93] decoloniality.

This is not a romanticised exhortation for us to become 'noble savages', nor is it an endorsement of an anarcho-primitivist perspective that rejects technology as inherently problematic. Much of my argument does, however, resonate with anarcha-Indigenism, including a distrust of institutions, governments and centralised hierarchies, combined with a privileging of Indigenous traditions.[94] I also suggest an accelerationist approach to the retention and communal repurposing of technological infrastructure as of potential benefit in enhancing communal capacity and capability.[95]

My proposal does not constitute a demand for Indigenous sovereignty, which I consider to be an oxymoron, given the colonial meaning of sovereignty (i.e. lord, ruler, master, highest, supreme or chief). It is commendable when settler private-property holders,[96] institutions[97] or governments[98] give back land to Indigenous peoples. However, rather than a call to return all land to Indigenous peoples, I am asking that all people return to the land, in the understanding that the best way to make amends for colonial pasts is for everyone to mend and make decolonial futures in the present. Due to the ravages of colonisation, there are now too few Indigenous peoples to care for what has often become sick Country.[99] Even if there were enough Indigenous custodians of land, it is important that all of us attend to neglected Country, led by those with the most experience in doing so (often, but not always, Indigenous people). With the understanding that non-Indigenous people 'are always already in relationship with Indigenous peoples',[100] caring for Country must take precedence over pursuing

Indigenous 'extant rights of prior occupancy'[101] per se or efforts to return 'stolen' land. Given that ownership is a modern sensibility, land was never owned by Indigenous people and so could not be stolen.[102] To be clear, I am suggesting that ongoing destruction and neglect of Country are of more importance and concern than which humans claim possession.

Due to rapid acceleration towards hard resource limits, beyond which we will exceed the global ecosystem's carrying capacity, the near-certain demise of global civilisation is an opportunity for decolonial seeds to grow in, form and widen cracks and fissures in modernity.[103] The approaching cataclysm will almost inevitably lead to radical re-localisation[104] as large-scale systems fail. This could occur in various configurations, such as authoritarian militarism, anarchist collectives, nomadic bands or (neo-)peasants. To avoid the mistakes of modernity, one of the best outcomes would be a society formed of self-organising networks of small-scale[105] independent communities of 100–250 people.[106] These communities would ideally be based on non-hierarchical egalitarian anarchist political structures together with an ethos of down-shifted collective sufficiency and frugality where people seek meaningful mutuality of being and becoming with close-by (non-)human life. This would include a focus on resource and skill sharing, cooperation and limited accumulation or status seeking,[107] in contrast to our existing 'specialized, regimented and commercialized existences'.[108]

Although participatory democratic organisation at relatively high population densities is not only possible, but likely pre-dated institutions and cities,[109] cities of today are not environmentally sustainable in their current forms. Furthermore, the importance of intimate interdependent connections to land in the Indigenous futures that I propose cannot be overstated. There exists very limited capacity for this in high-density urban areas. However, there is considerable potential to apply the principles of degrowth and transition in lower-density suburbs.[110] As such, I am by no means advocating for immediate widespread mass urban exodus to rural and remote areas. Rather, a repurposing of existing infrastructure combined with gradual attenuation of population density is preferable.

As they were for the vast majority of our history as a species, these communities would epitomise a 'grounded normativity'[111] of loving, intimate, respectful, affirmative, complex and (re)generative place-based attachments[112] that require embodied 'morality through the land',[113] rather than working against the land.[114] Mutual need, responsibility, communication, creativity and care would be valued and, depending on bioregional and cultural fit, such communities could be partially or wholly unsettled – (semi)-nomadic. They would exist in mycelia-like networks[115] that co-situate human habitats and bio-corridors, bringing flora and fauna around, up against, atop and within human dwellings. Subsistence self-sufficiency could be achieved on a small scale,[116] involving scant waste.[117]

Despite the dominance of multinational agribusiness, small farms (up to 2.5 hectares) still occupy more than 40% of global agricultural land[118] and retain the vast majority of the agrobiodiversity that is vital for food-system resiliency in the face of accelerating climate change.[119] There is compelling historical evidence that small-scale communities can achieve low levels of violence, rape, homicide, depression, loneliness, self-doubt and suicide, combined with very high levels of social, economic and political freedom and equality; poverty, homelessness, famine, genocide and similar consequences of structural violence are virtually, or entirely, absent in such communities. This is something that has yet to be achieved by a single sovereign state in history.[120] While it is important to

acknowledge that life in small-scale societies can be very difficult, living in modern states is worse for a significant proportion of their populace,[121] including a much higher proportion of racial minorities and Indigenous peoples.

Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus[122] suggest that we may be able to incrementally return society to equality within emergent small-scale, relatively simple, communities where everyone can participate equally in politics. In fact, widespread participation is required to produce meaningful politics outside the anonymity that characterises state societies. Such anonymity precludes the transparency and personal relationships required to avoid abuses of authority,[123] and, for Rousseau, produces the death of liberty through the dangers of representation.[124] If an ex-modern future were to be anything like premodern communities, there would be limited organised violence; some gender-[125] and age-based differentiation and discrimination; locally based ethnocentrism, but without either racialised systems of power or assimilationist nation-building based on moral judgements about other ways of life; flexible sexualities and diverse genders; adulthood at puberty; support for abortion; acceptance of ritual drug use; less distinct boundaries between science and spirituality[126] while respecting the utility of technology; strong social norms of sharing; hospitality for, but a need to develop trust of, strangers; and no long-term imprisonment. As money, barter and fungible/reciprocal[127] exchange arise out of impersonal interactions between strangers (including state agents)[128] in which there is the potential for violence,[129] these communities would exist without such phenomena, at least internally,[130] with limited non-quantified exchange (but no debt) in – as well as gift giving[131] within and between – communities.

The redundancy of institutions within these small-scale communities would mean the end of workplaces,[132] schools,[133] universities,[134] hospitals, churches, courts of law etc. as hierarchical institutionalised centralised forms of organisation. Of course, work, education, caring for health, religion/spirituality, judgements of wrongdoing etc. would continue, but without their associated institutional mantles. Continued maintenance of paredback techno-infrastructure considered valuable (e.g. physical and digital[135] transport systems) could be undertaken locally, while collaborative endeavours across communities would arise organically and may involve temporary organisations with transparent consensual hierarchies. Small-scale diverse communities brimming with self-expression, skills, abilities and talent could use their surplus resources to nourish cooperatives and commons that specialise in essential and desired skills, equipment and technologies,[136] such as medical way stations, techno-wilds, mining grottos,[137] music yurts, sports weirds, engineering coves, philosophy dens or wisdom walks. Advanced education and training could occur via apprenticeships, novice–master relationships or similar approaches, within a diversified de-centralised reputational non-standardised skills economy. For example, academies or guilds may form in which entry occurs via endorsement by existing member(s).

Given the trend, which could be made more broadly available beyond affluent nations, toward 3D printing, micro-fabrication, automation[138] and block-chain technologies, a decentralised ex-modern technological subsistence model[139] could be utilised, repurposed for collaborative peer-to-peer anarchist modes of localised production, distribution and consumption.[140]

In relation to property, as noted by Hannah Arendt,[141] its abolition does not mean dispensing with privacy (i.e. private time/space) or forgoing assured access to the resources

required for both sustenance and meaningful participation in public life. Neither does it foreclose the possibility, or desirability, of meaningful entanglement with 'things',[142] whether created by or for specific persons, experienced as kin, or otherwise imbued with social, cultural and/or spiritual significance. In the broadest sense, it is difficult to conceive of a society where the use of any object/material by anyone at any time would be consistently socially acceptable. Nonetheless, many societies have existed, and could exist, without the need for specifically formulated property rights per se. Instead, these societies foster subjectivities in relation to material objects that are radically different from predominant modern approaches to property, possession and ownership. For example, pre-modern humans would not have denied others access to resources that they needed to survive. Yet, in contemporary societies, many people at various points in, or throughout, their lives can only legally meet their basic needs by taking orders (e.g. in the education, work or prison system) from a minority who control access to the resources required for both survival and a dignified existence.[143]

Through radically local living within interconnected networks of communities, we can easily improve on our so-called Western 'democracies' characterised by untrustworthy politicians, rampant corruption, limited political-party choice, media jingoism and declining civic participation. There is evidence that societies of 10,000 to 40,000 years ago regularly alternated (e.g. with the seasons) between markedly hierarchical and egalitarian political configurations.[144] In other words, these societies, and many into late antiquity, were heterarchical and anarchist,[145] giving them much greater flexibility in socio-political arrangements than is displayed by sovereign states. It is also now clear that early humans had considerable variability in their group sizes over time and place, based on expansive multigenerational networks that extended far beyond their immediate community.[146]

This is not to claim that human societies can exist without social differentiation (e.g. markers of prestige or indicators of rank and authority based on age, ability etc.) but to say that societies can be configured without institutionalised non-consensus-based exploitative hierarchies that control the means of production and/or access to opportunities and resources that are not the result of one's own labour.[147] Far from enforcing a stagnant conformity, many ancient societies valued self-realisation and freedom. As such, it is now clear that these societies were not a primitive evolutionary stage that we had to pass through but rather a deliberate rejection of authoritarianism by our early ancestors, who were at least our philosophical and intellectual equals.[148]

To take but one example, Indigenous peoples on Sahul curated abundant, convenient, predictable and sustainable landscapes with as little as four hours a day of effort.[149] In various places, this included sowing, irrigating, tilling, weeding, cropping, storing grain, baking bread, altering rivers with dams, channels and weirs, as well as living in permanent grass and stone houses.[150] Across our very diverse tribal groups, we enjoyed a life expectancy of about 60 years[151] and a largely peaceful and prosperous pan-continental system of social interaction and exchange, although with some collective conflict.[152] This was achieved over tens of thousands of years through embodied autonomous constitutive interdependent relationships. This was a life that, despite the ravages of colonisation, continues to this day for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is a life in which the impossibility of not sharing is widely and deeply felt.

My argument draws from Indigenous refusal,[153] resurgence[154] and separatist[155] movements, not as 'extraordinary resources' for re-inscribing state futures[156] but applied to

rupturing an insistent and incessant modernity. What Leanne Simpson calls 'living with the purpose of generating more life'[157] is not just the continuation of any life, and certainly not 'bare life'.[158] Rather, it is a vibrant interconnected living that recognises that 'interiority is no place … to build and spend our lives'.[159] Such living is that in which the distinction between ourselves and others can fade away, and is consonant with the fundamentally cooperative foundation of human thinking, being and doing,[160] where the 'goal is balance, equilibrium and plenitude'.[161] This is a life of striving to cultivate flourishing, and eschew diminishing, by knowing, doing and being with kindness and humility, recognising that the sheer actuality of existence is a balancing of discord and harmony while limping, walking, dancing, skipping or hopping with 'respectful wonder'[162] along one's path, which can only ever be sensed rather than known, measured or controlled.

Radical (re-)localisation – like decolonisation, with which it shares much – is an option, not a mission,[163] and is clearly not something that should, or ever would be, planned centrally by a state or in a state-like manner. Rather, it is a kind of 'metaphysical metamorphosis' towards an Indigenous 'ontological presence'[164] through which we can explore what humans could become outside modernity's captive domestication.[165] Calling for the end of modernity is not a request or demand for recognition by it. Neither am I proposing a directly oppositional politics. Instead, I urge an 'aggressive non-violent'[166] withdrawal, refusal and rejection of modern ways of knowing, being and doing through pursued alternatives.[167] To overwhelm the 'West' with large-scale organised violence[168] or revolution[169] would require resources, weapons and ruthless force that would inevitably coalesce into the very same modernity it opposes.[170] Rather, I call for an insurgent seeding of new worlds that will rapidly outgrow a withering late-stage modernity through 'militant pluralist assemblages'[171] grounded in Indigenous life-ways (e.g. Buen Vivir, the Zapatistas), as well as movements such as degrowth,[172] transition, re-wilding, permaculture, frugality, voluntary simplicity/sufficiency and intentional communities. This is a prefigurative political approach[173] seeking to make space for initially small-scale 'nowtopian'[174] alternatives to modernity, in the understanding that the future arises from what we already do[175] as well as a (re-)turn to what we have always done.[176]

Now that the Rubicon of global civilisational and ecological collapse[177] has been crossed, any hope for the survival of humanity, and much of current life on Earth,[178] will depend on our renouncing debt, property, institutions and nation states to instead adopt radically re-localised self-sufficient (re)vitalised mingled resonant relationships and situated entangled response-abilities of co-becoming[179] in, with and to all life (including sentient land, air and seascapes). Such relationships emerge when people nurture generous, plural, attentive ways of doing, being and knowing. I acknowledge that we all have different capacities to divest from modernity (i.e. radical withdrawal), and many of us are very much trapped within it. In fact, within both 'rich' and 'poor' nation states, most people in the world are oppressed victims and targets of modernity rather than its recipients and beneficiaries. As such, dis-investing via seeding alternatives that 'crowd out'[180] modernity is often the best option.[181]

From an Indigenous perspective, inhabiting the varied and diverse life-worlds that sustain us is a journey of re-enacting a 'deep sacred connection'[182] and palpable mutuality of being with all that is around, with, as and in us. The crucible of radical re-localisation and dissolution of modern selfhoods will require transformative pathways that carefully and respectfully unravel and then re-braid epistemologies, ontologies, axiologies and

temporalities into new storied realities that foster survivance,[183] kinship, attunement and accord with the rhythms of the living cosmos.

Conclusion

A human community that lives in a mutually beneficial relation with the surrounding earth is a community … that lives in truth.[184]

I have attempted to show that colonialism is inextricably intertwined with modernity, which is itself built upon debt, property, institutions and nation states as social configurations that have grown from non-existence to overwhelming ubiquity over the last 10,000 years. In the 200,000 years that humanity has existed, modernity represents a brief experimental sojourn in the history of our species. It is a trial that I contend will end soon as a result of its inherent social and physical unsustainability.

There is no evidence that modernity is better for those living within it than other potential forms of social organisation, and there is ample evidence that modernity has created and sustained oppression, destitution and destruction on an unprecedented scale. While recognition as a political theory begins with the presumption that cultures have equal worth,[185] it doesn't end there or, if it does, we need to move beyond recognition. While all people (but not all life-ways) within modernity are 'worthy' (i.e. they are capable of achieving balance with global life forms), the culture of modernity itself (i.e. debt, property, institutions and nation states) is not the equal of other actual or imagined modes of (co-)existence. In my view, modernity is not worthy of continuance, even if this were possible by further frontiers of expansion (e.g. colonisation of space).[186] Beyond vague gestures towards decoloniality and glibly utopic visions, I invite all of us to relinquish modernity, and instead engage in grounded re-localised socially and ecologically regenerative communities and profoundly reconfigured vulnerable relational subjectivities that open us to viable and vivacious ex-modern futures in which we decolonise to both survive and thrive.

Notes

1. For the difference between Indigenous nations and nation states, see Leanne Simpson, 'Indigenous Resurgence and Co-resistance', *Critical Ethnic Studies* 2(2), 2016, pp 19–34.
2. Taiaiake Alfred, *For Indigenous Nations to Live, Colonial Mentalities Must Die*, 2017. Available at: https://policyoptions.irpp.org/fr/magazines/october-2017/for-indigenous-nations-to-live-colonial-mentalities-must-die/.
3. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, where most scholarship on Indigenous peoples is focused, despite only a fraction of the world's Indigenous populations living in these countries.
4. Although woefully inadequate, I use this term in the absence of any better way to narrate the vast array of peoples who pre-date, continue to be distinguished from and/or resist modernity.
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sociality. Rather, it is the repudiation of both institutional force (e.g. police and military) and intimate privatised domestic abuse as a means of (re-)producing coercion, intimidation or subjugation. 'Every organism in existence does violence' while 'the damage of violence is minimised when it is distributed throughout a system rather than centralised into the hands of a few powerful people and their minions': Yunkaporta, *Sand Talk*. Derrida makes a similar point about the intrinsic connection between life, violence and change: Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass (trans), London: Routledge, 1978.

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173. Which aims to manifest the future goals being sought in the present. See, for example, Theresa Petray and Janine Gertz, 'Building an Economy and Building a Nation: Gugu Badhun Self-determination as Prefigurative Resistance', *Global Media Journal: Australian Edition* 12(1), 2018.
174. Federico Demaria, Giorgos Kallis and Karen Bakker, 'Geographies of Degrowth: Nowtopias, Resurgences and the Decolonization of Imaginaries and Places', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2(3), 2019, pp 431–450.
175. Rebecca Bryant and Daniel Knight, *The Anthropology of the Future*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
176. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.
177. While the current apocalypse is singular in its global scope, apocalyptic endings have come before, and continue to occur, for Indigenous peoples – see Indigenous Action, *Rethinking the Apocalypse: An Indigenous Anti-futurist Manifesto*, 2020 – and, more generally, paraphrasing William Gibson, 'the apocalypse is already here – it's just not evenly distributed': Bronislaw Szerszynski, 'Epilogue: Indigenous Worlds and Planetary Futures', in Rosalyn Bold (ed), *Indigenous Perceptions of the End of the World*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp 203–209.
178. It is important to be clear that this is not about 'saving the Earth'. In deep time, the living planet will survive and thrive without (modern) humans.
179. Bawaka Country et al, 'Goŋ Gurtha: Enacting Response-abilities as Situated Co-becoming', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37(4), 2019, pp 682–702.
180. Anna M Agathangelou, Dana M Olwan, Tamara Lea Spira and Heather M Turcotte, 'Sexual Divestments from Empire: Women's Studies, Institutional Feelings, and the "Odious" Machine', *Feminist Formations* 27(3), 2015, pp 139–167.
181. Beyond pondering the arrival of an ex-modern 'magical future', while decrying, as pointless, requests to 'give up' its affordances: Tess Lea, *Wild Policy: Indigeneity and the Unruly Logics of Intervention*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020.
182. Makere Stewart-Harawira, 'Indigenous Resilience and Pedagogies of Resistance: Responding to the Crisis of our Age', in Makere Stewart-Harawira and Jordan Kinder (eds), *Resilient Systems, Resilient Communities*, Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta, 2018.
183. Jacques Derrida, 'Lyotard and Us', *Parallax* 6(4), 2000, pp 28–48.
184. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997, p 264.
185. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
186. This is not to suggest that humans living in space or on other planets, asteroids, constructed habitats etc. is inherently problematic. Indeed, the introduction of living ecosystems on islands newly risen from the sea (including through action by human seafarers) has occurred

throughout history. As such, 'life in space', approached with humility, wisdom and respect, could well be consistent with continued flourishing and diversification of the living cosmos.

187. Also known as Healesville: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-10/the-aboriginal-names-for-ten-melbourne-suburbs/9960092.

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