

On Intra-Becoming: Beyond Egoic Individualism

A Decolonizing and Phenomenological Exploration of Youth Climate
Justice Activists' Lessons for Transformative Eco-Social Change on
Turtle Island

by

Rebecca Nelems

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We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the
university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose
historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Rebecca Nelems

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh, Supervisor
Department of Sociology

Dr. William Carroll, Departmental Member
Department of Sociology

Dr. James Tully, Outside Member
Department of Political Science

Abstract

At the heart of the intertwining eco-social crises we are currently facing on Turtle Island is a crisis of disconnect. Enacted by individualist and ego-centric lifeways, anthropocentric, capitalist and colonial institutions animate the dominant economic, cultural, political and social sphere in ways that systemically distort and structurally thwart the inherent relationality of existence. (Up)rooted in an us/them ontology of disconnect, these individualist institutions generate hierarchies and structures of violence that dominate, extract from, and exploit peoples and earth.

This notwithstanding, a potent ontology of inter-connectedness remains in our midst. For millennia, Indigenous nations and communities on Turtle Island have enacted eco-centric and relational lifeways rooted in Indigenous knowledges. Additionally, a growing turn towards the “relational” is observable across a diversity of social, economic, political and climate justice movements. Everyday acts of Indigenous resurgence and pluralistic expressions of citizenship challenge the settledness, naturalization, legitimacy and adequacy of hegemonic institutions: if they perpetuate the same ontology of disconnect responsible for the eco-social crises we face, how can they generate the solutions?

Standing at the threshold of the wildly divergent futures that the above lifeways promise, youth climate justice activists are non-consenting heirs who refuse ego-centric lifeways and their logic of individualist disconnect. This dissertation analytically considers the critical lessons and insights that young Indigenous and non-Indigenous climate justice activists across Turtle Island (Canada, Mexico, US) offer to decolonizing lifeways and institutions. Specifically, it examines the wisdom and demands of 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, adults and Elders articulated through a regional consultation on the rights of children and youth to a healthy environment – the Phoenix Consultation – held in 2021 – to inform the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment.

These youth climate activists articulate relational ontologies in ways that chart pathways for decolonizing hegemonic institutions, leveraging the institutions themselves to do so. Specifically, they utilize children’s rights to advance counter-hegemonic lexicons of Indigenous sovereignty, eco-social justice and deep diversity. Children’s rights, when transformed by these youth climate activists, become the inherent rights of all beings to enact and live in relationship. Drawing on the teachings of Indigenous theorists and scholars, “connection” emerges as the experience of enacting ourselves as nature and relationships (not as humans or individuals) in ways that render visible individualist lifeways and systems. Within an eco-social intra-subjective lifeworld that entails both ontological dimensions of connection and disconnect, youth climate activists affirm that the shift from ego-centric to eco-centric is not a process across time, but a possibility always already available to all. However, they show that this relationality must be enacted in ways that structurally disrupt individualist orders to be transformative of self, relationality and world. Connection thus offers a basis through which the interpellative power of individualism is defused and hegemonic consent might be withdrawn or refused.

Transdisciplinary in scope, this dissertation humbly draws on the wisdom of Indigenous theorists and scholars on Turtle Island, youth climate activists engaged in the Phoenix Consultation, decolonizing and Southern epistemologists, phenomenologists, deep ecologists, political sociologists, eco-socialist and political theorists, (com)post-humanists, and nature. It proposes a theoretical framework of intra-becoming to explore the relationships between eco-centric and ego-centric lifeways on relational grounds. This dissertation also examines the role that decolonizing, relational modes of engagement play in eco-social transformative change.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Diagrams and Art	vii
Dedication.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter One. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Theoretical and sociological context	1
1.2 Research focus and questions.....	8
1.3 Dissertation structure.....	10
1.4 Summary of chapters.....	11
1.5 Limitations.....	18
1.6 My theoretical orientation	22
1.7 My positionality as researcher.....	33
Chapter Two. Decolonizing the Grounds of Connection: An eco-social, relational theoretical framework for the study of connection.....	41
2.1 Setting the Theoretical Stage: Formulating the ‘Strong’ Question.....	41
2.2 Towards a Relational Theoretical Framework.....	46
2.2.1 Individualist Lifeways.....	48
2.2.2 Relational Lifeways.....	54
2.3 The Phenomenological and Interpellative Structures of Experience.....	57
2.4 Worldviews as Creation stories.....	68
2.5 An Eco-Social Relational Tree Canopies Framework.....	73
2.6 Experiential Hegemony: Shape-Shifting Experiences and Transformative Change.....	94
2.7 A Relational understanding of connection.....	101
Chapter Three. The Means are the Ends: The role of decolonizing, participatory and phenomenological methodologies in enacting relational ontologies.....	105
3.1 Overview of chapter.....	105
3.2 A Tale of Two Stories.....	110
3.2.1 Story One: The ‘First’ International Scientific Expedition.....	110
3.2.2 Story Two: Shuar / Achuar Gift-Reciprocity Research.....	114
3.3 Decolonizing an Individualist Knowledge Production System.....	120
3.4 Methodological Braiding.....	129
3.4.1 A ‘Two-Eyed Seeing’ Methodological Framework.....	129
3.4.2 Decolonizing and Indigenous Methodologies.....	134
3.4.3 Phenomenological Methodologies.....	140
3.4.4 Braiding Decolonizing and Phenomenological Methodologies.....	145
3.5 Decolonizing, Participatory and Relational Research Methods and the Phoenix Consultation.....	153
3.6 Implications.....	
Chapter Four. The North America Consultation on the Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment: Overview, process and context of the Phoenix Consultation and <i>Manifesto</i>	168
4.1 Introduction	168

4.2	Social, Political and Institutional Context.....	170
4.2.1	The Children’s Rights Sector and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	172
4.2.2	Children’s Rights and the Environment.....	186
4.3	The Phoenix Consultation Overview.....	193
4.3.1	Purpose of the Regional Consultations	193
4.3.2	Organizational Bodies, Actors and Structure	195
4.3.3	Expected and Actual Outputs and Outcomes of the Phoenix Consultation.....	199
4.3.4	My Role in the Consultation.....	201
4.4	The Phases of the Phoenix Consultation.....	202
4.4.1	Phase 1: Child and Youth Grassroots Engagement, Planning and Digital Collaboration.....	202
4.4.1.1	Early pre-consultation engagements.....	202
4.4.1.2	Planning the Consultation	204
4.4.2	Phase 2: Intergenerational Consultation Virtual 4-day Event	206
4.4.3	Phase 3: Advocacy and Coalition Building.....	208
4.5	Conclusions.....	209
Chapter 5. The Throughlines of <i>The Phoenix Manifesto</i> : A decolonizing, phenomenological reading.....		210
5.1	Introduction.....	210
5.2	The <i>Manifesto</i>	213
5.2.1	Throughlines of the <i>Manifesto</i>	214
5.2.1.1	The Collective requires the ecocentric language of justice.....	216
5.2.1.2	‘The Collective’ is Intersectional.....	218
5.2.1.3	The new economy = health and well-being of all beings.	222
5.2.1.4	The well-being of the Collective requires systems transformation.....	223
5.2.1.5	Legal and education systems are tools to transform systems of oppression.....	225
5.2.1.6	The new systems must be founded upon an ethic of empathy and care.....	228
5.2.1.7	Indigenous peoples and knowledge should guide the collective.....	230
5.2.1.8	The revolution is emotional.....	232
5.2.1.9	The right for ecocentric justice	234
5.3	Conclusion.....	235
Chapter Six. The Peculiar Case of Children’s Rights: A “weak-strong answer” to the strong question of hegemonic human rights?		237
6.1	Introduction.....	237
6.2	What is a Weak-Strong Answer to the problem of Hegemonic Human Rights?...	240
6.3	The Peculiarity of Children’s Rights	247
6.3.1	The peculiar conception of children’s rights.....	247
6.3.2	The peculiar content of children’s rights.....	253

6.3.3	The Peculiar Enactment of Children’s Rights.....	259
6.4	The evolving hegemonic human rights context	264
6.5	Hegemonic influence and counter-hegemonic struggles.....	266
6.6	Conclusion	276
Chapter Seven. Conclusions, Implications and Pathways: Beyond hegemonic individualism through relational, compost-humanist intra-becoming		
7.1	Introduction.....	279
7.2	Ontological Dimensions of the Intra-subjective Lifeworld.....	284
7.3	Connection as Presencing the Relational.....	287
7.4	The Relational must be Enacted	288
7.5	Intra-becoming necessitates a phenomenological orientation towards self as well as world.....	296
7.6	Leveraging the Master’s Tools to Transform the House.....	298
7.7	A Compost-humanist Counter-Hegemony	305
References.....		309
Appendices		
	Appendix A: <i>The Phoenix Manifesto</i>	325
	Appendix B: <i>The Story of the Phoenix Consultation: Final Report of the North American Consultation on the Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment: Building an Agenda for Justice, Equity and Empowerment</i>	333

Art and Figures

Artwork. Yen, Karen. (2021). Tent Canopy. [Watercolour on canvas]. Artwork.....	79
Yen, Karen. (2021). Tree Canopies. [Watercolour on canvas].....	80
Figure 1. Eco-cycle (McCandless & Lipanowicz, 2013).....	81
Figure 2. Ego-Cycle (Nelems, 2022).....	83
Figure 3. Two-Eyed Seeing - version 1 (Bartlett et al., 2012).....	129
Figure 4. Two-Eyed Seeing - version 2 (Bartlett et al., 2012).....	130
Figure 5. Roger Hart's (1992) Ladder of Youth Participation.....	180
Figure 6. IICRD (nd) Social Ecology of the Child Model.....	181
Figure 7. Lundy (2007) Model of Child Participation.....	184
Figure 8: Types of Policy Influence (Lindquist, 2001).....	275

Dedication

For the bookends of this project
– and my life –

my dad,
Willem & Evy

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I have dedicated this dissertation to the three of you.

1. Introduction

1.1 Theoretical and Sociological Context

Increasingly, a range of scholars, practitioners, leaders and activists across sectors are identifying a crisis of disconnect is at the heart of the intertwining eco-social crises we are facing on Turtle Island. While skyrocketing rates of depression, loneliness, addiction and mental health issues show the effects of this crisis at the personal level, the intertwining eco-social crises show that this disconnect is also located and propelled at the level of lifeways, and the systems and institutions that these enact (Mills, 2018; Tully, 2018). Economic, cultural, ecological, political and social institutions are intersecting in a nexus that hegemonically distorts and thwarts the indisputable and inherent relationality of existence. Through the “dispossession, dis-embedding and discrediting of the participatory reciprocity view of life” (Tully, 2018, p. 108), these lifeways enact the same individualist ontology of “disconnect” (Mills, 2018) that make structures such as anthropocentrism, capitalism, colonialism, whiteness/racism, cisheteropatriarchy, and ableism possible.¹

The capitalist-colonial institutions and lifeways that enact this hegemonic worldview of disconnect include “institutions, agendas, policies, discourses, and values that add up to an entire way of life” (Carroll, 2021). More than merely effecting a “delusion of consciousness” (Einstein

¹ A contextualized exploration of the role and relationship between these structures in the individualist lifeworld is provided in chapter 2. For now, I wish to merely observe the shared ontological structure of separation that these distinct, but intertwining structures enact and reflect. While recognizing that the particular expressions and enactments of these structures through political, social, economic and cultural institutions on Turtle Island are structurally reinforced by global systems (e.g., global capitalist markets), as Connell (2016) notes, it is important to be cautious about generalizations that suggest these hegemonic structures are experienced and actualized in the same way around the world. For any counter-hegemonic project to be plausible or useful, it arguably must encounter these discontinuities as inherent to the hegemonic: “hegemony is constantly under construction, renovation and contestation” (Connell, 2016, p. 318). My dissertation considers these hegemonic structures as hegemonically enacted through institutions on Turtle Island, as a critical context to the Phoenix Consultation and for the youth climate activists who participate in it.

as quoted in Briggs, 2016) at the internal psychological level of the self, this societal “story of separation” (Eisenstein, 2018) once internalized is enacted as lifeways that are imposed through these institutions, perpetuating relationships of disconnect with others and the world. These ego-centric and ecocidal lifeways thus fuel and in turn are fueled by a vicious cycle of life (Tully, 2018). Settled, naturalized and self-legitimizing across political, legal, economic, social and cultural orders alike, this individualist ontology of disconnect becomes hegemonically entrenched as ‘the way it is’, self-perpetuated through peoples’ actions, hegemonically interpellated experiences (Vahabzadeh, 2003)², and beliefs. Shawn Wilson (2008) writes: “There is an expression: ‘If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn’t have believed it.’ The opposite holds just as true: ‘If I hadn’t believed it, I wouldn’t have seen it’” (p. 6).

The above notwithstanding, a potent sense of interconnectedness and relational intra-being³ amidst deep diversity is also present on the horizon. Most evident through the resurgence of Indigenous nations and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) systems based in millennia of eco-centric lifeways on Turtle Island, a turn towards the relational is also observable across a diversity of social, economic, spiritual, legal and climate justice movements. The persistent presence of eco-centric and relational lifeways through each of these offers to transform and decolonize individualist institutions at the local, community, national and global levels. This distinct experience and societal story of relational intra-being is embodied through lifeways that

² From a phenomenological standpoint, ontologies not only shape one’s cognitive understanding of the world, but also one’s potential experience of it, a phenomenon Vahabzadeh (2003) calls “experiential hegemony” (p. 97).

³ As elaborated below, I use the term “intra-being” (and later, the terms “intra-becoming” and “intra-subjective”) throughout this dissertation. This is my own term, with which I seek to integrate Karen Barad’s (2007) concept of “intra-action” and the concept of “interbeing”, which is found in a diversity of traditions. Barad (2007) posits that whilst inter-action presumes separate actors, intra-action more accurately depicts the inseparable intertwining assemblages of being. The concept of “interbeing” is recognized as being embedded within and articulated by various traditions, including Indigenous nations and thinkers’ conception of relationality, Thich Nhat Hahn (as cited in Tully, 2016, p. 62), ecological movements and other spiritual traditions such as Shintoism, and by popular thinkers such as Eisenstein (2013).

enact gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships, generating what Tully (2016) calls a virtuous cycle of life. Diverse in pluralistic expression, the persistence and growing presence of these eco-centric lifeways surface a distinct ontology that both renders the individualist foundations of hegemonic institutions visible whilst explicitly questioning the latter's naturalization, legitimacy and adequacy: If individualist structures have co-generated the intertwining complex of eco-social crises we face, how can they be used to identify solutions or pathways forward?

Not historically generated out of deep diversity (Hamilton & Nichols, 2021), the institutions that constitute this hegemonic individualist order are not only ill equipped, but also hostile to meeting alternate logics on their own distinct ontological terms through “genuine dialogue” (Tully, 2016). By design, these institutions ontologically conceal their parochial roots (Tully, 2016) through a self-legitimizing and rational universalism that self-insulates through denying the very existence of a surplus or exterior, let alone a critique that might emanate from it. Where the ‘other’ might appear, rather than being genuinely engaged on their own terms, they are subjected to a process of what Coulthard (2014) calls “discursive translation” (p. 78) and Tully (2018) refers to as “hegemonic ventriloquism” (p. 64). In this process the other is encountered through an individualist orientation that projects, absorbs, renders non-sensical, or genocidally erases.

Critically, this brings us to the “strong”⁴ question at the heart of this dissertation: *How might societies transform from hegemonic individualist, ego-centric ways of being towards relational, eco-centric ways of intra-being?* If the means are the ends (Tully, 2018), and any counter-hegemonic response must unsettle and disrupt the very structures underpinning the hegemonic (Santos and Martins, 2021; Carroll, 2021); the grounds upon which such eco-social transformation must take place must be relational. Rooting eco-social change in the relational, however, is no

⁴ The pursuit of a “weak-strong answer” as Santos (2009) defines it, to this strong question is a central drive behind this dissertation. This framework is fully elaborated in chapter six of this dissertation.

small task given the totalizing impulse and multi-pronged structures of hegemonic individualism, as wielded through the capitalist-colonial structures of anthropocentrism, whiteness/racism, cisheteropatriarchy, and ableism.

To be transformative, the lifeways enacted by individuals and institutions must enact a relational accountability to others and the earth, as Indigenous resurgence teaches (Simpson, 2017; Simpson, 2020). The structural links between these individualist systems' enactment of the capitalist-colonial logics of violence on Turtle Island point to the importance of drawing on Indigenous knowledges and lifeways:

By linking the Anthropocene with colonization, it draws attention to the violence at its core, and calls for the consideration of Indigenous philosophies and processes of Indigenous self-governance as a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by the white supremacist, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene (Davis & Todd, 2017, p. 763).

Pérez Piñán et al. (2021) concur that “[s]uch an epistemological break calls for decolonial standpoints and Indigenous theoretical perspectives” (p. 5). For this reason, my work is deeply informed by Indigenous theorists and traditions⁵ – wherever possible, those whose ancestral lands are on Turtle Island, where both I and the youth climate activists I engage with are based. I also draw on Indigenous theory given the particular enactment of individualist lifeways on Turtle

⁵ As I engage with Indigenous traditions as a non-Indigenous, settler scholar, I humbly acknowledge the inherent potential risks of both doing so and/or *not* doing so. As Todd (2016) writes: “...there is a very real risk to Indigenous thinking being used by non-Indigenous scholars who apply it to Actor Network Theory, cosmopolitics, ontological and posthumanist threads without contending with the embodied expressions of stories, laws, and songs as bound with Indigenous-Place Thought (Watts 2013: 31) or Indigenous self-determination... However, there is a risk as well, to Indigenous thinking not being acknowledged at all.” (p. 9) My engagement with Indigenous traditions is done therefore with a view to relational accountability to these thinkers through: giving them priority in my work; supporting an approach of genuine dialogue (Tully, 2016) between Indigenous, Western and colonial traditions; and engaging in reciprocal dialogue with a range of Indigenous colleagues, friends and relations who offer guidance and feedback on how I take up Indigenous thought. My work co-teaching Indigenous content with Indigenous colleagues at both Royal Roads University (RRU) and the University of Victoria (UVic) has been a foundational practice for me in navigating how to take up Indigenous content in non-appropriating ways. As mentioned, I expand upon, clarify and contextualize my choices of theoretical literatures in section 1.6 below.

Island, which Whyte (2018a) refers to as a “capitalist-colonial partnership”, recognizing that Indigenous thought is profoundly anti-capitalist (Simpson, 2017). I expand upon and clarify my other theoretical choices in section 1.6 below.

This dissertation is grounded in the relational in three key ways:

1) I elaborate a relational theoretical framework that is deeply informed and shaped by Indigenous and Southern epistemologies, as well as ecology.

2) I focus on the lessons of a particular group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth climate activists on Turtle Island who explicitly seek to advance eco-social lifeways. This is a group whose members and process I contributed to in multiple ways (as explained in chapter 3), to model reciprocity.

3) I use a decolonizing and phenomenological methodology to engage with and analyze the youth climate justice activists’ perspectives, which they collaboratively articulated through relational, participatory and decolonizing processes and engagements.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011) notes that in Indigenous knowledge systems, each life stage is viewed as offering unique forms of wisdom and value. It is an individualist and hierarchical logic of progress and development that overlooks, minimizes or undermines the insights or contributions of young people to thought and lifeways. A decolonizing, participatory and phenomenological approach to this research shows that youth climate justice activists have a unique experience of the world that warrants close listening, especially at this moment. Standing at the threshold of the wildly divergent futures that each of the above lifeways promise, they are refusing the ecocidal lifeways and institutions into which they were born, and strive to unsettle the lifeways and systems of disconnect within which they are also embedded.

In particular, I examine the insights and demands made by 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian, Mexican and US youth, and their adult and Elder accomplices at the North American Consultation on the rights of children and youth to a healthy environment in July 2021: the Phoenix Consultation. Through a decolonizing and phenomenological analysis of delegates' demands as articulated through the *Phoenix Manifesto*, I find that these activists chart pathways that find relational routes across the 'us/them' horizon of individualism. As non-consenting heirs to ego-centric lifeways that colonize to genocidal, epistemicidal and ecocidal effects, youth climate activists express simultaneously experiencing both disconnect and relationality, at the personal, institutional (legal, economic, political, social, cultural) and ecological levels. For these young people, connection is not only an act of remembering relationships that always already precede and exceed experiences of polarizing disconnect. Connection must entail the act of re-embedding individualist systems in the principle of relational accountability, by enacting this relationality – not just in spite of individualist systems, but also through leveraging and using them to do so. Rather than engaging with the parameters of what is possible as articulated through the logic of individualism, they leverage the parameters of a relational ontology in ways that unsettle and transform the former.

By drawing out lessons based on youth's own analysis of their peers' experiences, perspectives and demands, I engage in non-extractive, decolonizing and phenomenological analysis as pertains to the questions of my study. I also document the participatory, decolonizing processes by which the data was generated, which offer methodological and theoretical insights. In order to ground the theoretical elements of this project, in addition to rooting them in the lessons of the youth climate activists, I elaborate a relational theoretical framework. Inspired by Mills' (2018) rooted constitutionalism, Tully's (2018) regenerative permaculture, and the earth's eco-

cycle as witnessed in tree canopies, I propose a grounded, eco-social theoretical framework from which to examine the contours of relational lifeways as distinct from individualist lifeways. I do this to disrupt individualist conceptions of worldviews or ontologies and to clarify the ontological differences on relational grounds. The framing of tree *canopies* is an intentional play on Berger and Luckmann's (1967) concept that lifeworlds or worldviews operate as "sheltering canopies" (p. 102) of understanding and legitimation. I utilize this to show how the structure of an individualist lifeworld is akin to a tent canopy that is disembodied or uprooted from the earth in a *terra nullius* logic of disconnect and colonial settlement that occupies, banishes and distorts by design. In contrast, relational lifeworlds are akin to tree canopies in their porous, dynamic, entangled, migrant and "grounded relationalities".⁶ Tree canopies are pluralistic whilst embodying a rootedness in the earthways and lifeways of their infinitely diversifying inhabitants and constituents. Regenerative, porous, adaptive, diverse, and resilient, ecosystems model relational accountability and gift-reciprocity (Kimmerer, 2013), or what Whyte (2016) refers to as "collective continuance" (p. 137). Through drawing on this teaching from the forests, I strive to establish the relational theoretical grounds upon which I might consider my research questions and engage the actions and insights of youth climate justice activists.

⁶ My conceptualization of "grounded relationality" intersects with that presented in Jodi A. Byrd et al., "Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities," *Social Text* 36, no. 2 (2018): 1-18. Drawing on the work of Coulthard and Simpson (Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity," *American Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2016): 249-55, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2016.0038>), Byrd et al. (2018) use the term "grounded relationalities" to refer to "a being grounded and living relationalities in which the nonhuman world and the materiality of land and other elements have agential significance in ways that exceed liberal conceptions of the human" (p. 11). They (2018) ask: "What would it be, then, to think and work for a grounded relationality, at once addressed to Black placemaking, geographies, and other racialized diasporas, as well as to proprietary violences incommensurate to yet not altogether separate from Indigenous land and sovereignty?" (p. 14).

1.2 Research Focus and Questions

Given the context and theoretical framework elaborated above, the following conveys my thesis statement: *my dissertation critically considers what might be learned from Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth climate justice activists on Turtle Island about the permaculture practices (Tully 2018) needed to foster connection to self, the Other (human and non-human) and the earth – or of nurturing gift-gratitude reciprocity relationships with All Our Relations” – amidst a hegemonically individualist order that is structured by colonial, anthropocentric, white, cisheteropatriarchal, ableist and capitalist lifeways. In so far as the demands being made by the youth climate justice movement are rooted in an experience and ontology of relational intra-becoming, the dissertation will examine them as potential sites and modes for deparochializing, decolonizing and counter-hegemonic transformation of a capitalist-colonial hegemonic order of individualism. Entailed in this is my attempt to think through counter-hegemony on relational grounds.*

The research questions that guided my research at the outset were as follows:

1. What might we learn from young people⁷ on Turtle Island⁸ about the transformation from individualist ways of being towards relational ways of intra-being?

1.1 How do young people understand and frame their experiences of eco-social connection and/or disconnection, and the factors that foster and/or challenge a sense of eco-social connection and kinship?

1.2 What priorities and recommendations do youth researchers identify as critical to governments, agencies and citizens promoting and fostering ways of eco-social intra-being?

⁷ The young people who I specifically refer to here in the research questions include all young people who choose to contribute to the July 2021 North American Regional Consultation on the Rights of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment, organized under the auspices of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment.

⁸ Turtle Island is the name many Indigenous nations give to North America. I use it intentionally in this dissertation to implicitly question, displace and unsettle the assumed colonial names. Here, I refer to it as including what is also today known as Mexico, Canada and the US.

1.3 *How do decolonizing, participatory and relational research processes empower young people to be researchers and articulate their own frame of understanding about eco-social connection?*

1.4 *What are the sociological and theoretical implications of these lessons from young people with respect to sociological transformative change towards relational ways of intra-being and hegemony?*

One inherent challenge with my initial framing of my main research question (as outlined above) is that it endorses a chronological approach to the transition from *egoic* to *ecoic* is that is commonly cited today. In other words, it assumes that this is a shift to take place over time. Whilst hopeful, the popular argument that human society is in an interregnum – a transition from an era of individualism towards an era of interdependence – is unhelpful, ultimately relying upon an individualist narrative of progress that implicitly claims society is always epistemically and ethically improving over time. Beyond enacting this stadial theory⁹ – yet another version of individualist progress – the premises of this theorizing are at best too easy, rooted in an unsubstantiated optimism.¹⁰ Further, it denies that relational, eco-centric lifeways were already well in play at least through Indigenous lifeways on Turtle Island, a form of the ongoing cognitive imperialism (Simpson, 2011) and erasure systematically enacted on Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) systems, which are rooted in millennia of grounded experience. It also suggests

⁹ Charles Taylor describes “stadial consciousness” as the sense of superiority of “our present understanding over other earlier forms of understanding,” noting that it is the “ratchet at the end of the anthropocentric shift, which makes it (near) impossible to go back on it,” in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 289. The narrative also invokes the notion that it is possible or desirable to eliminate or expel the “old” – another “tell” of an individualist, competitive logic of exclusion.

¹⁰ This trope would well benefit from Santos’ (2020) injection of fear — “Hope without fear is terrible but fear without hope is also terrible. Most people in the world today are fearful and have no hope and a few have only hope. We have to instill fear into the hopeful ones and instill hope in the fearful ones.” World events consistently attest that the move from undemocratic to democratic is not unidirectionally pre-determined especially in a context where Western representative democracies have only been at play for an infinitesimally short period of time.

eco-centric lifeways have not historically been a part of countless other traditions around the world, including the West. Moreover, this chronological argument suggests that change in favour of democratic traditions is natural or irreversible, which we know from ample experience it is not. To embrace an ontology of relational intra-becoming is to embrace existence and hegemony as a form of complexity (Scholte, 2020) far beyond the control that an individualist sensibility might purport can be held over life.

Additionally, this argument ultimately relies on the same competitive, polarizing us/them framework of individualism itself, as explained in section 2.2.1 below. Instead of being wielded to dominate or erase – when re-situated on relational grounds – polarities and diversity might be encountered as co-generative of life (Kimmerer, 2013; Umeek, 2007) and that which makes “transformative reconciliation-with” (Tully, 2018, p. 109) possible. The move to banish or cast out is inconsistent with a relational ontology that refuses the us/them premise of elimination or discard – a premise which is instrumental to the structure of colonial logic. Relational lifeways instead demand justice through processes and mechanisms of relational accountability. Amongst other aims, through the lessons and pathways charted by youth climate justice activists, I wrestle with how to encounter the two ontologically distinct lifeworlds on relational grounds. In so doing, I explore what theoretical insights their phenomenological coexistence and relational intra-play might offer to the charting of pluralistic counter-hegemonic pathways that disrupt, unsettle, transform and compost rather than obliterate, eradicate or banish.

1.3 Dissertation Structure

As introduced above, this dissertation weaves three key strands throughout: theoretical, methodological and eco-sociological. To establish each of these strands on their own terms, a chapter is dedicated to each at the beginning – Chapter 2 proposes the theoretical framework for

my analysis and dissertation; Chapter 3 outlines my methodological orientation; and Chapter 4 provides a eco-sociological orientation to the data with which I engage and the process by which it was generated. The chapters that follow then each draw on these strands to critically engage with the data, the literature and my topic as outlined in the research questions. The following is an overview of the dissertation chapters. A succinct summary of each chapter follows.

1.4 Summary of Chapters

In chapter one, I provide the transdisciplinary, theoretical and sociological context of my dissertation, an overview of its focus and guiding research questions, and a succinct summary of each dissertation chapter. I also identify limitations of the dissertation, and provide a brief account of my own positionality and orientation with respect to this topic, the theoretical traditions with which I engage, and the youth climate justice activists whose insights I engage in this dissertation.

Theoretically, this dissertation strives to be transdisciplinary¹¹ in scope, drawing on Indigenous theory, theories of Gaia democracy, political sociology, phenomenology, decolonizing methodologies, Southern epistemologies, deep ecology and to a lesser degree, the posthumanist tradition – which, I argue through the lens of the other traditions might be intra-actively re-framed as compost-humanism. I contextualize and clarify my choices with respect to which traditions I engage in section 1.6 below. In chapter two, I put forth a relational understanding of ontologies and worldviews as understood through the lenses of Indigenous theory, phenomenology and deep ecology. From here I explore hegemony and transformative change from the standpoint of structures, experience and lifeways. Inspired by Mills’ (2018) rooted constitutionalism, Tully’s (2018) regenerative permaculture, and the earth’s eco-cycle as depicted by the McCandless and

¹¹ I strive to engage in both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary analysis. Whilst interdisciplinary draws on different disciplines as distinct lenses by which to analyze a topic, transdisciplinary is understood as striving to bring these disciplines into collaborative dialogue in ways that generate new frameworks of understanding. In this way, I strive to enact the ontology of relational intra-becoming about which I theorize in this dissertation.

Lipmanowicz (2013), I then propose the ecosystem of tree canopies as a grounded, eco-social theoretical framework from which to examine the contours of relational lifeways as distinct from individualist lifeways. I expand upon my ego-cycle diagram to elaborate how individualist lifeways thwart and distort each stage of the eco-cycle, whilst opening up the relational grounds upon which the ego-cycle might be rendered visible and thwarted through relational composting. I then consider what relational grounds might open up in terms of conceptualizing eco-social empathy and connection.

As the articulated and discursive grounds through which one engages others and the world, methodology is given significant weight in this dissertation. In chapter three, I first explore what colonial and relational engagement might look like through two stories. Building on the tent and tree canopy frameworks elaborated in the theory section, I consider the linkages and mutual contributions decolonizing and phenomenological methodologies might offer to one another in the context of sociological research. In order to support this I introduce the lens of two-eyed seeing as elaborated by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012). I argue that decolonizing methodologies contribute some significant enhancements to phenomenology as a methodology that make it truer to itself. In particular, I suggest the latter's reliance on the units of the individual and the human as core units of understanding are not consistent or necessary, proposing an eco-social conception of intra-subjectivity that draws on ITK. I also consider the potential allyship role phenomenology might play with respect to decolonizing colonial knowledge systems and research processes. Finally, I situate relational, participatory engagement methods such as those used in the Phoenix Consultation within this broader methodological discussion.

Chapter four provides an overview of the particular group of youth climate justice activists with whom I engage to explore my topic. Specifically, I provide an overview of the history,

context and outcomes of the Phoenix Consultation: the North American Regional Consultation on the Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment. Whilst I explain the nature of the data that I specifically examined for my study, I first elaborate upon the institutional contexts within which it was produced, and the processes by which it was generated recognizing the role of methodology as noted above. This includes a contextualization of this particular consultation and the broader youth climate justice movement within the field of children's rights, and the historical implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Organized to inform the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, the Phoenix Consultation is one of seven regional consultations being held with young people around the world. Organized by the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), *Terres des Hommes* and the *Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México* (REDIM), the Phoenix Consultation involved a wide range of actors, stages and components best categorized in the following four phases: Early pre-consultation engagement; Preparing for the Consultation; Formal virtual synchronous consultation; and Post-Consultation engagement. Actors involved included: a Steering Committee (SC) made up of the organizations listed above and a representative from the Academic Committee (see below); an Inter-Generational Advisory Committee (IAC), consisting of three youth and one elder for each of Canada, Mexico and the US; technology partners; event sponsors; and a Children and Climate Change Academic Committee, a Turtle Island-wide network of participatory and children's rights researchers and experts representing 15 universities/networks, and youth activists who engaged in the research process. (See project stakeholder map in the Final Report of the Consultation, included in the Appendices.)

Taking place in July 2021, the formal consultation saw just under 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian, Mexican and US youth, adult and Elder delegates come together to engage in dialogue and collectively articulate and draft a series of demands in the *Phoenix Manifesto*. The intended audiences of the *Manifesto* include the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, policymakers, decisionmakers, businesses, educators, funders, non-governmental agencies, and individuals. The *Manifesto* has also been converted into a *Workbook* that seeks to support a non-prescriptively, decolonizing and participatory planning and implementation process that is designed to “activate” the *Manifesto* demands at the individual, community, policy and institutional level by these actors. The final report of the Phoenix Consultation and the *Phoenix Manifesto* are included as Appendices to my dissertation. In this chapter, I provide extensive contextual analysis to the above event, in particular the context of this event within the field of children’s rights, which includes an engagement with the formal human rights frameworks as well as the ways in which children’s rights has been enacted across a diversity of civil society organizations around the world. I also describe the process of the consultation itself, as broken down into the four phases identified above, including the processes of engagement by which the data I examine for this dissertation was generated, recognizing the influential role of methodology.

In chapter five, I engage in a decolonizing, phenomenological reading of the *Manifesto*, beginning by recognizing that it reflects the intra-subjective analysis of the consultation delegates of their own experiences, ideas and lifeworld, based on extensive dialogue and participatory engagement with one another, their Elder and adult co-delegates. I used *in vivo* coding to explore the *Manifesto*, in the context of my relational, decolonizing and phenomenological methodology, which uses the language of the delegates themselves to examine the throughlines in the *Manifesto*. Insofar as I non-extractively examined secondary data produced by these youth alongside

intergenerational collaborators, I strive to draw their eco-social intra-subjectivity as articulated by them into view, considering how they make sense of current crises, priorities and pathways forward. While the data is considered secondary, my reading of it is supported by my own personal experience and engagement in the consultation – supporting a relational, decolonizing approach that contextualizes their demands in the context of the discussions held in the formal consultation.

Chapter six discusses that whilst human rights (along with democracy) might be viewed as a set of institutions and frameworks that were historically established to answer the strong question (Santos, 2009) of human violences and abuses, it is important to reflect on how hegemonic human rights was born of, and reinforces individualist logics of disconnect that reify the individual, the human and the colonial nation state and the hierarchical structures these reference. In this chapter, I delve into the particular children’s rights mechanisms being leveraged by youth climate activists through the *Manifesto*, showing how the latter enact both structural and collective dimensions enabled by the children’s rights framework – and more specifically, Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The delegates’ demands leverage the individualist language, framework and processes of the CRC to call its signatories to relational account, whilst introducing relational lexicons of Indigenous sovereignty, eco-social justice and deep diversity. I argue that through some of the elements peculiar to children’s rights – its content and participatory enactment – young people’s leveraging of it has created a thin end of the wedge by which the hegemonically individualist structure of human rights might be brought into view, challenged and utilized to democratize and pluralize rights.¹² I posit that the reason youth climate activists are able

¹² The work of Indigenous theorists, activists and legal scholars with respect to Indigenous human rights and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) also offer significant promise with respect to the possibility of decolonizing human rights, such as is articulated by Green (2014), Borrows (2018), and Nichols (2018). An exploration of the linkages between the struggles for Indigenous rights and how youth climate

to formulate a relational, counter-hegemonic response is because their actions are defined by a sense of relational accountability rooted in a sense of eco-social connection that precedes and exceeds hegemonic human rights frameworks; however, whilst inserting lexicons of eco-social justice, Indigenous sovereignty and the collective, they leverage the logic of hegemonic human rights to do so.

I argue that is enabled by a particular permeability of the CRC's articles, which introduce relationality, as well as its particular enactment since being ratified by an activist-oriented child participation advocacy movement who has emphasized 'bottom-up' or grassroots, participatory approaches. While the centrality of participation rights in the UNCRC was historically controversial – and the reason the US did not sign on (Lundy, 2007), I show how this has created an opening for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to use the framework itself to challenge its individualist, anthropocentric and colonial elements and advance a “biocentric concept of human rights” (Santos, 2021, p. 36). Children's rights frameworks have thus created a thin end of a wedge by which the hegemonically individualist structure of human rights might be brought into view, challenged and utilized to democratize, decolonize and pluralize rights. Through this, I argue that they engage in “the urgent intercultural and post-abyssal reconstruction of human rights” (Santos, 2021:36), forwarding what might be considered a “weak-strong” answer to the question of whether a pluralistic and deeply diverse concept of hegemonic human rights might be possible. I also consider the central role that decolonizing, relational and participatory methodologies and engagement play in this transformative process.

In chapter seven, the final chapter, I weave together the previous chapters of my dissertation to consider the implications of these findings – at the theoretical, methodological and eco-

activists are utilizing children's rights to decolonize human rights is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, is the focus of my upcoming postdoctoral research.

sociological levels. Beginning with a revisiting and revising of the relational theoretical framework I outline in chapter 2, I put forth that the activists find counter-hegemonic, relational pathways across the ‘us/them’ horizon of individualist, hegemonic human rights. The seeming ease with which youth climate justice activists move between individualist and relational structures of understanding offers some critical insights. Whilst ontologically incommensurate, the proposition that these two lifeways are existentially incompatible generates a fundamental challenge at both a practical and theoretical level. On a practical level, how do we make sense of the coexistence of such divergent ways of living and being in the world, our institutions and selves? The ease with which the youth climate justice activists interchangeably reference individualist and relational lexicons suggests that perhaps the question of how to move from one order (the egocentric) to the other (the relational) is an unhelpful formulation. They suggest instead that they are always present as ontological dimensions of one’s experience and the intra-subjective lifeworld, and are always thus both available for enactment regardless of institutional context. In this way, the youth climate justice activists act practically out of the urgency of climate crisis and also creatively in ways that transform a potentially polarized/ing political orientation. A relational orientation transforms through rendering the ontological and epistemological structures of individualism visible, and seeks relational accountability, not abyssal erasure.

In this light, my original definition of connection as an act of remembering, feeling or enacting relationships that always already precede and exceed experiences of polarizing disconnect is transformed. Youth activists show that relationality is not just possible (such as remembering implies), it is actual (always already), and thus available at any moment to anyone through one of – or any combination of – Tully’s (2008) everyday practices of citizenship. However, they show that it is not enough to remember – indeed remembering alone can contribute

to experiences of disconnect. Instead, connection must be enacted through relational lifeways and relationally accountable actions in ways that thwart and render visible individualist structures. This finding corroborates the relationality which always already is available to all in any given moment: “‘...another world is actual’ builds on the mantra of the World Social Forum ‘another world is possible’” (Pérez Piñán et al., 2021, pp. 8-9). The concepts of eco-social empathy and eco-social intra-subjectivity are important, distinct formulations of each of these concepts that support the grounding of any counter-hegemonic project in the relational to ensure that any such actions are with a view to transformative¹³, rather than passive, change.

Further, these activists leverage an individualist, hegemonic human rights framework to insert and introduce counter-hegemonic lexicons of Indigenous sovereignty, eco-social justice and deep diversity in ways that model potential pathways by which hegemonic human rights might be decolonized and transformed into the pluriverse of rights that Santos (2021) seeks. The pathways do not rescue or condone, but transform and compost hegemonic individualism by using its structures and tools in relational ways that ground them in their relationality.

Finally, the rendering visible of individualist structures has the effect of transforming – or composting as in the eco-cycle – the structures whilst leveraging them, without obliterating or destroying them. This shows how relational, decolonizing ontologies invoke actions and processes that phenomenologically bring structures into view. Elements of each of the above points are identified as pathways for future research.

1.5 Limitations

Limitations are recognized as the critical work of delineating the boundaries and scope of one’s research. As decolonizing and relational practices ask of us to contextualize human

¹³ As outlined, I define transformative as that which disrupts the individualist ontological structures, vs. passive, in the spirit of Gramsci’s passive revolution (Carroll, 2021), which leaves these structures intact.

experience and knowledge in not just the mode of engagement but in relationship with the more-than-human, the first limitation to note is that the views of youth climate justice activists as reflected upon here is specific to them here on Turtle Island. This is a qualitative and ultimately, theoretical study, though it is grounded in the lived and articulated experiences of these activists. However, the findings are not representative of the perspectives of a population, but rather dive deeply into understand the lifeworld of a particular group of diverse youth climate activists who live across Canada, Mexico and the US.

A further, related limitation is the particularities of the youth who participated in the consultation. Whilst consultation organizers sought to engage young people who are not the usual suspects, and to include those who may face a range of diverse intersectional points of difference, given the low overall numbers of the group in proportion to population, they can not be expected to represent the full range of differences in a region as large as Turtle Island. For example, most of the youth were based in urban centres. However, as noted, this was a qualitative study not intended to be representative of, or generalized to, the entire population. As such, the degree of statistical representation of the general population does not affect the validity or value of the findings. Findings instead are considered in terms of their relational validity (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015), reflective of the decolonizing methodological framework of analysis used.

Finally, one possible identified limitation of this research might be that I did not engage in direct, participatory research with youth participants as a research method to produce the findings. As a participatory researcher with years of community-based research experience, I had planned to do this. However, in the end, the process was set up as a thoroughly participatory collaborative process between organizations and youth over months, and I played an integral role in this process. For me to have set up my research to have run in parallel or be an aside from this would

have taken time and effort away from a group of young people already very stretched for time. There were some young people who in fact decided not to engage in the consultation as it seemed too far removed from the sites of urgent action where they were putting their efforts. For me to have required a process to adhere to a pre-approved research ethics process would have been to short circuit the fundamentally collaborative nature of this process that involved countless institutions and actors.

The entire collaborative process by these actors and institutions reflected the elements of a participatory action research (PAR) methodology. However, it was not my project alone. Whilst I could have sought REB approval for a PAR methodology, I would have then either held up or missed the critical timeline the group was moving at, having to pivot at each turn in the face of COVID19 and other events which significantly affected the event. Additionally, it was recognized by the young people involved in the project that young people wanted to be able to conduct their own research, and be supported in that. In the end, in discussions with the various organizers and my committee members, it was deemed appropriate – and most decolonizing – that I play a full role in the process, document the process elements, and analyze the publicly available outcomes – consultation minutes, reports, and any recommendations or statements issued by the group, generated directly by young people based on their own analysis. In this way, I did not impose at any moment any elements of my own research process on the group.

Part of my role then became behind the scenes, ensuring that the young people who wanted to do so, were adequately supported in how to conduct qualitative research and analysis. From May-June 2021, I worked with a collaborative team of six researchers across Canada who delivered Youth PAR (Y-PAR) training to a group of young people. This included working with professors at Royal Roads University (RRU) and McGill University. A formal ethics application

was approved by RRU's research ethics board for us to do this work according to ethical standards. In any given training session, 12-23 youth from across the region participated. The five training sessions were two hours each and modeled a range of participatory methods of engagement as a means of teaching the content. Our team of trainers collaboratively generated asynchronously available modules for youth who could not attend but wanted to learn.¹⁴ A range of topics were addressed, including a module on Decolonizing Methodologies, which I provided, in addition to my collaboration in the training videos on Introducing YPAR alongside young researchers, and one on participatory Data Analysis. I then provided ongoing support to youth delegates leading and facilitating the consultation throughout to ensure the participatory engagement methods were genuinely interactive and as participatory as possible, and that the modes of engagement available to delegates were many in format.

The process by which a group of young people went about analyzing all of the data of the consultation in real time in order to draft the *Manifesto* was initiated and led by the youth delegates themselves. They considered many factors based in Y-PAR practices, such as the diversity of sources (not over-weighting the comments from formal speakers), and they brought their analysis and the *Manifesto* back to all delegates on the final day for their input and "member checking". They enlisted young people who could translate and read out the *Manifesto* for all in the consultation's three official languages (English, French, Spanish) on the final day, so there was maximal input that was not dependent on simultaneous interpretation.

In the end, I argue that analyzing young people's own participatory analysis of their data in the context of consultation proceedings was not a limitation but a unique vantage point from which to consider the phenomenological lenses of youth and deeply listen to their voices as they

¹⁴ The content and short training module videos are available here: <https://commons.royalroads.ca/ypar/>

understand their own intra-subjective lifeworld. After examining the data from the standpoint of young people's analysis and meaning-making process in chapter 5, I then bring it into dialogue with my own in chapters 6 and 7, making the intra-subjective meaning-making process very clear, of where my analysis and frameworks intermingle with their own.

Ultimately, limitations need not indicate only potential points of diminishment or acknowledgements of what is or was not possible, but also clarify the particular and necessary boundaries and scope that any project entails. In this sense limitations set parameters and boundaries, whilst enabling certain pathways. My choice of theoretical traditions to engage in this dissertation might be considered a further limitation in so far as each of the traditions with which I engaged has much to potentially contribute to my project. Recognizing it is a form of limitation, I elaborate more fully on my theoretical choices and orientation in the following sub-section.

1.6 My Theoretical Orientation

As a transdisciplinary theorist, I draw on multiple traditions in this dissertation, and it is important to position myself in relation to the traditions I engage, as well as to explain the choices I have made and why. It is characteristic of transdisciplinary work to not rely on a single theoretical tradition but to draw on multiple traditions in ways that enable the scholar to come at a topic in a unique way that contributes something innovative to the fields in which they work. Whilst I do not rely on any single tradition, I want to acknowledge that first and foremost, I aim to centre and acknowledge Indigenous knowledges and theorists from Turtle Island throughout my dissertation. As a non-Indigenous scholar practitioner, I strive to do this, informed by a two-eyed seeing approach as outlined by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012), which supports my thinking through of how to respectfully and responsibly engage a range of Indigenous

and Western traditions into dialogical, pluralistic engagement. I expand on this methodology in chapter three.

My choice to centre Indigenous theory from Turtle Island throughout my dissertation is one of the modes through which I strive to decolonize my work – recognizing that this in and of itself should not be mistaken as enacting allyship (Whyte, 2018b), and that decolonization is not a metaphor (Tuck and Yang, 2012). I do not intend to homogenize, essentialize or romanticize Indigenous thought but instead strive to recognize the immense heterogeneity and diversity of Indigenous traditions. I focus on Indigenous thinkers rooted in lifeways on Turtle Island, not purporting that the teachings hold for all Indigenous cultures and nations of the world, nor assuming that I can properly do each tradition or thinker justice. Wilson’s (2016) term “Indigenist” is helpful in this effort, as denoting that there are points of commonality across Indigenous lifeways and ontologies such that they can be addressed without reducing, simplifying or homogenizing the important differences within and across Indigenous nations and communities traditions, relationships, stories and experiences. Wilson (2016) clarifies the difference between Indigenization and what decolonization might mean by introducing the term Indigenist:

Here we have an opportunity to support a radical paradigm shift. It’s not so radical because we know it, it’s been around for thousands of years. But we do have an opportunity now to shift things and that would be to return to an Indigenous - or Indigenist – worldview. By Indigenist I mean, similar to feminism, a set of values, beliefs and knowledge that’s grounded in certain principles. So you don’t have to be of Indigenous heritage to follow an Indigenist worldview. And that’s different from appropriation. (np)

However, I apologize for any places where I fail to live up to my intentions. Ultimately embedded in the very same individualist, capitalist and colonial lifeworld I strive to critique, and a non-Indigenous person who is not rooted in Indigenous lifeways, I expect to fall short of my intentions. In this effort, I feel a deep relational accountability to my Indigenous teachers, mentors

and relations, and express my ongoing commitment to learning as part of my responsibilities in these relationships.

There are numerous reasons I strive to centre Indigenous knowledges and theorists in my work. One reason is that Indigenous theory is rooted in relational lifeways, knowledge and governance systems practiced for millennia on Turtle Island. As Whyte (2020) notes, this fact is often glossed over by the use of terms such as “unprecedented” and “urgent” to describe the current times of climate crisis. Whyte (2020) notes that implied in this thinking is that there are “there are few usable lessons from the past about how to cope with the problems of today generated by crises” (p. 55). Centering Indigenous thought is one way I strive to acknowledge that dystopia is not a new or unprecedented experience for Indigenous peoples (Whyte, 2018b), but an inherent condition and effect of settler colonialism. Indigenous resurgence has much to teach a project such as mine that seeks to understand how to counter-hegemonically advance relational ontologies in ways that thwart individualist, capitalist-colonial and ego-centric lifeways, institutions and structures.

Another reason I centre Indigenous theory is due to the relationality of the ontologies Indigenous lifeways generate, given that this is the central topic of my dissertation. While relational traditions are also evident within Western thought – and I strive to acknowledge this through my reference to the Marxist, deep ecology and phenomenological traditions, three of the traditions that do so – Indigenous theory is rooted in a relational ontology that emerges from a distinct tradition outside the West. Moreover, Indigenous theory is rooted in relationalities with the more-than-human, which offers a crucial standpoint from which to approach youth climate justice activists. Deep relationality with the more-than-human offers critical instruction and a phenomenological vantage point from which to consider some settled concepts within Western

theory such as hegemony, intersubjectivity, lifeworld, and even the way relationality is itself often understood and framed in non-Indigenous traditions (Starblanket and Stark, 2018).

A third reason is as a mode to intentionally combat and disrupt the ongoing epistemicide (Wilson, 2016) or cognitive imperialism (Simpson, 2011) that persists within academia. Whyte (2016) notes that Indigenous theory is often engaged as supplementary to Western science when it comes to addressing climate change, and that orientation is of concern to me as it persists in the worlds of social and political theory. While Indigenous Studies departments and degrees are growing rapidly, I witnessed in my own experience only several years ago a deep silo-ing of Indigenous theory in the Cultural, Social and Political Thought (CSPT) program at the University of Victoria (UVic). At the time of conducting my candidacy exam, only a handful of Indigenous authors were included on the multi-page core reading list from which I had to choose for at least one of my three sets of reading. It was not possible, in other words, for me to only read Indigenous theory to qualify for a CSPT designation, whilst I could have exclusively selected authors rooted in Western theoretical traditions. Indigenous knowledges reference distinct ontologies that must be engaged on their own terms, and need not be qualified, explained or validated by Western theories or approaches. Although I do not conduct a project solely on the basis of Indigenous knowledge, I have defended Indigenous students' (whom I advise at Royal Roads University) right to do so, arguing they need not reference Western frameworks with respect to theoretical or methodological traditions.

A fourth reason is due to “relational accountability” (Wilson, 2008) and the responsibilities that I understand to be embedded in the relationship my family has had with the Coast Salish peoples on whose land they have settled for six generations. This requires me to clarify and contextualize the parochiality of my own thought (Tully, 2016). I am a European settler originally

trained in Western political theory traditions, postcolonial, socialist, Marxist, feminist and liberation theory as well as Southern epistemologies. It also requires that I engage in deep listening and respect of the knowledges of the first peoples of the lands where my family has lived for six generations as uninvited guests. Thus, I prioritize Indigenous theory local to Turtle Island – where my ancestors have lived as settlers, and where the Phoenix Consultation is based – whilst recognizing that the above theoretical traditions also deeply shape my thinking and work.

Since I have intentionally headed down the path of striving to deeply listen to local Indigenous voices, I have experienced the profound wisdoms that Indigenous authors and thinkers offer to the ecological, political, economic and social justice traditions in the West. These reflections prompt a deep thinking through of what it might mean to decolonize even the justice and human rights traditions, which often continue to participate in colonial frameworks and projects. Whyte (2018b) notes the need for climate justice activists to be cautious about their motivations and intentions, whilst Tuck and Ree (2013) express concern about the coloniality of some of the blanket terminologies of justice used so widely today:

Decolonization is a (dearly) departure from social justice. Honestly, I just sometimes have trouble getting past that phrasing, “social justice.” Listing terrors is not a form of social justice, as if outing (a) provides relief for a presumed victim or (b) repairs a wholeness or (c) ushers in an improved social awareness that leads to (a) and (b). That is not what I am doing here, saying it all so that things will get better. Social justice is a term that gets thrown around like some destination, a resolution, a fixing. “No justice, no peace,” and all of that. But justice and peace don’t exactly cohabitate. The promise of social justice sometimes rings false, smells consumptive, like another manifest destiny. Like you can get there, but only if you climb over me (p. 647).

So many Indigenous resurgence thinkers and theorists on Turtle Island invite other theoretical traditions to a level of relational accountability – to not settle in or down, and to avoid hegemonic cooptation by individualist structures of thought. Tuck and Ree (2013) point to the way that the term decolonization itself has been coopted in this way:

As much as the discourse of decolonization has been embraced by the social sciences over the last decade, the decolonial project rarely gets beyond the conceptual or metaphorical level. I want to slip a note into some people's pockets, "Decolonization is not metaphor," because at some point, we're going to have to talk about returning stolen land. My guess is that people are going to be really reluctant to give up that ghost. Fanon (1963) told us that decolonizing the mind is the first step, not the only step. Decolonization necessarily involves an interruption of the settler colonial nation-state, and of settler relations to land. Decolonization must mean attending to ghosts, and arresting widespread denial of the violence done to them. Decolonization is a recognition that a "ghost is alive, so to speak. We are in relation to it and it has designs on us such that we must reckon with it graciously, attempting to offer it a hospitable memory *out of a concern for justice*" (Gordon, 1997, p. 64, emphasis original) (p. 647).

I also wish to keep listening to Indigenous resurgence thinkers from Turtle Island recognizing they are the most critical guides for me from whom to learn about relational accountability on Turtle Island, whilst developing sufficient understanding such that I am not continually placing the burden on Indigenous peoples to teach me or others like me, and take the lead on decolonizing initiatives. I respond to Kovach's (2005) call for non-Indigenous people to teach and engage in Indigenous methodologies and knowledges so as to avoid ongoing cognitive imperialism (Simpson, 2011). In this, there is a careful balance to be struck of course, in striving not to ever appropriate, nor take up space where an Indigenous person might choose to be, whilst paying due respect, and continuing to listen, not presuming to ever fully understand, and refusing to translate or story over. I stay in close conversation about the above with my Indigenous relations, colleagues and friends as I strive to walk these lines.

With respect to other traditions, there are many others that I draw on in this dissertation. I acknowledge the deep contributions that liberation theory, Marxist/socialist theory, postcolonial theory and Southern epistemologists have made to my thinking and work, before I came to read and know Indigenous theory. These traditions deeply informed my practitioner work and my Masters degree, which focused on the relevance of Frantz Fanon to colonialism in Canada. In this dissertation, I also continue to centre Southern epistemologists. As defined by Santos (2016),

Southern epistemologies are not identified by geography but “in the form of excluded, silenced and marginalised populations, such as undocumented immigrants, the unemployed, ethnic or religious minorities, and victims of sexism, homophobia, racism and islamophobia” (pp. 18-19).

Among other things, these theorists and traditions remind me to be cautious of universalizing lexicons, even those that are justice-oriented, as there is always more plurality than a universal concept can acknowledge. Santos and Martins (2021), for example, are critically important thinkers when it comes to thinking about human rights as they note the plurality of conceptions of human dignity that universal hegemonic human rights frameworks erase. This is important to hold in tension with the recognition that human rights have also been a critical vehicle by which many abuses enacted by individualist lifeways have been redressed. I strive to hold these in tension in my work, whilst focusing in more centrally on what is at stake when talking about decolonizing human rights.

It is important to also recognize that this reminder of the colonial nature of universalizing terms even in the fields of social and ecological justice is also advanced by theorists who hail from a diversity of Western traditions. Connell (2014), for example, reminds us of the risks of using universalizing and generic terms such as hegemony and patriarchy to reference systems or structures that operate in inherently diverse and shifting modalities:

The problem with the Eurocentrism of global gender discourse is that it projects into gender analysis everywhere the image that the society of the global North holds of itself. Specifically, it presumes coherence and a self-sustaining logic for any gender order. This is implicit in the concepts of “patriarchy,” “sex/gender system,” “gender norms,” “gender regime,” and “heteronormativity.” Eurocentric gender research and policy-making assume that gender has a system-like character, a logical homogeneity and, though it may change, that it does so with continuity in time. (p. 305)

This shifting nature of the capitalist-colonial system on Turtle Island has changed too.

Wilson (2016) quotes an Elder as saying “During the residential school era, our children

were taken from the land. But during the era that we are in right now, the land is being taken from the children.”” However, lifeways underpinning them across time is one of separation or disconnect, which, as the focal point of this dissertation, makes it important to draw out the shared ontological structure of these systems of colonialism, capitalism, anthropocentrism, racism/whiteness and cisheteropatriarchy.

From across the diversity of Western traditions, I want to acknowledge three traditions to which I refer to varying degrees throughout this paper: Marxism, phenomenology and deep ecology. These three traditions historically emerge amidst, within and in rebellious defiance of Western metaphysics and enlightenment projects. As such, they enact and develop intimate, immanent critiques of dominant ego-centric, individualistic lifeways and the knowledges they generate in important ways, and are to be credited for their role in important historical and social changes across history.

Each of these traditions has deeply shaped my thinking and offers value to any decolonizing project. However, every dissertation involves choices and whilst I may have come at this topic and project through any one of these traditions, I choose to focus more on the latter two. This is in part because of my above focus on centering Indigenous knowledges. On this note, I understand Indigenous thought to be deeply anti-capitalist. As Simpson (2017) writes:

Indigenous peoples have extremely rich anticapitalist practices in our own histories and current realities...Indigenous peoples in my mind have more expertise in anticapitalism and how that system works than any other group of people on the planet. We have thousands and thousands of years of experience building and living in societies outside of global capitalism. We have hundreds of years of direct experience with the absolute destruction of capitalism. We have seen its apocalyptic devastation on our lands and plant and animal relations. This in no way diminishes the contributions of other anticapitalism theorists, thinkers, and writers; rather, I think it adds the beginnings of a critical reframing of the critique, one that is centered within grounded normativity (pp. 72-73).

Whyte (2018a) refers to capitalism as is distinctly lived through settler colonialism on Turtle Island as the “capitalist-colonial partnership”. Thus, the focus on Indigenous scholarship enables me to come at individualist lifeways, which I understand to be both capitalist and colonial, through this contextualized lens. This is not to suggest that additional Marxist scholars than those I reference in my dissertation would not have added to my analysis, but to clarify the boundaries and scope I chose, and a goal of making new contributions to the literature addressing the capitalist-colonial project.

I chose to focus on phenomenology for several reasons, including my focus on experience as a locus of change from which counter-hegemonic projects might be seeded. I also chose this focus due to my significant engagement in the methodological, and in particular, due to my aim to add to the literature with respect to how Indigenous ontologies support the decolonizing of phenomenology in ways that make it even truer to itself. I engage the deep ecology literature primarily through the work of Tully and his theories of civic action, gaia citizenship and deparochialization. The ways in which Tully’s work has been drawn upon methodologically and in particular by Indigenous scholars (e.g., Napoleon & Friedland, 2014) offers important connections to the participatory elements observed in the Phoenix consultation and with respect to the field of children’s rights.

As I engage with Western theories, I also strive to disrupt the homogenizing term “Western”. The term itself reflects the core feature of individualist ontology to strive for dominance and universal singularity in ways that erase and eradicate ontological plurality and traces of relational thought within and across Western traditions. I reference Foucault’s observation that even individualism historically had relational roots. Importantly, I use the term individualist as an overarching term – fully explored in chapter 2 – as a means of examining the

ontological structure generated by capitalist-colonial lifeways, recognizing the diversity of ways in which it is enacted and experienced. Rather than doing this with the intent to generalize, I do so to add precision that avoids cultural essentialization that would either homogenize the entire “West” or homogenize and romanticize all “Indigenous” traditions across time and place. The centrality of place and context is something my Indigenous teachers have taught me well, and when referencing the specific Indigenous thinkers I do, I wish to acknowledge their knowledges are contextualized within their communities, nations, lands and specific relationships. I also strive to avoid the somewhat inevitable binary of Indigenous/Western, though the limitations of language are such that I believe this will be a striving in which I will likely engage for life.

I also engage to a limited degree – mostly in my final chapter – with the “posthumanist” or “new materialist” tradition. I do not locate this tradition as one of the Western traditions named above that emerges within Western thought, although it does, in part because of my awareness of how this tradition has also likely been influenced and shaped by Indigenous knowledges (Todd, 2016) and Southern epistemologies, though this is not heritage the tradition generally centres. My choice to not incorporate this tradition earlier in the dissertation reflects a theoretical choice and the necessary limitations of any single project. I believe this tradition offers some deep complementarity to my arguments, however, and I adopt/adapt that the term referenced by Flynn (2021) “(com)posthumanism” as I see this as a more fitting name for the tradition whilst avoiding the problematic, colonial frames of “new” and “post”. Indeed, my project might be entirely framed as one that strives to advance *compost-humanist* thinking towards Indigenist (Wilson, 2016) relationality.

Ultimately, as I strive to engage in a transdisciplinary, two-eyed seeing approach (Bartlett et al., 2012), I aim to respect the diversity of traditions by engaging each on its own ontological

terms.¹⁵ A transdisciplinary approach allows me to not just draw on traditions to supplement another, as Whyte (2016) cautions against, but enable a genuine dialogue across and between traditions, such as Tully (2016) describes. While drawing on the wisdoms offered by distinct traditions, I do not seek to collapse them into one another. This means I use a diversity of language throughout (e.g., worldview, lifeworld, ontology, gift-reciprocity, eco-cycle, hegemony, interpellation, stories) recognizing that this references deeply diverse traditions and vernaculars. I do this intentionally, not aiming to resolve or settle these tensions in ways that risk enacting discursive translation (Coulthard, 2014, p. 78) or the “hegemonic ventriloquism” (Tully, 2018, p. 64) of individualist assimilation.

I also strive to examine the youth climate activists’ words and *Phoenix Manifesto* on their own terms, rather than imposing my own frameworks of thought on them. This creates some theoretical disjuncture for me (e.g., their mobilization of individual rights terminology whilst also using lexicons of Indigenous sovereignty and eco-social justice diverges from my own theoretical framework). However, just as I resist total resolution between divergent concepts I reference (as noted above), I stay with this disjuncture in the belief that there is much to be learned in such unsettling places. Instead of trying to resolve the inherent tensions of this, I seek to see what it opens up. It is a feature of a relational, composting project to not eradicate or erase, but stay with, re-use and transform the materials and tools available. Reliance on rigid theoretical conceptions of what such terms means runs the risk of reification. The unsettled spaces enable me to consider how the youth climate justice activists enact their own theoretical framework that yields lessons that refine and shift the theoretical and methodological frameworks with which I start the project.

Akomolafe’s (2020d) words are particularly helpful to close this sub-section:

¹⁵ Please note I offer a lengthy explanation of two-eyed seeing in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Touch the tender places; that's where the wound is: Decolonization is not a return to a fixed past or the resuscitation of a pure original. Decolonization is never done; it never arrives, it can only approach. Something is always at stake; something is always haunted and troubled. The place of the decolonial is the site where we sit with the trouble, engaging it, knowing that we are embodied by our relationships with shadows. (np)

In this dissertation, I aim to unsettle myself, continue to approach, sit with the trouble, and enter into relationships with the shadows.

1.7 My positionality as researcher

As many acknowledge, PhDs are profoundly personal projects. This is certainly the case for me. I have followed theoretical and intellectual pathways of curiosity intuitively all of my academic life and my head has had to make sense of it as I go or even after the fact. I now recognize that although I did not realize it at first, the things I have focused on in this dissertation are things I have been trying to work out my whole life: my experiences, where I come from, and understanding how transformative, decolonizing social change towards eco-social justice works and happens, so that I could in some way contribute to it during my time on this earth.

I grew up with such profound feelings of both connection and disconnection. On the one hand, my family espoused and lived a profound relationality and a sharp sense of global (human) justice was bred into the fabric of me. However, on the other hand, we moved around constantly, and I had no sense of my ancestry, the lands I was growing up on, and only minimal knowledge of the Indigenous peoples on whose lands I was on. I felt the discomfort and disconnect of individualist lifeways through a sense of being a free-floating atom with no roots. I was intuitively acutely aware that the Eurocentric culture I grew up in did not enact the relational values my family strived to live, and that the liberal institutions that enacted this culture were not as pure or good as they presented themselves to be.

I quietly didn't trust or accept the "just how it is" features of the normalized, North American "good life", something which cultivated a profound sense of aloneness and meaninglessness within me as I learned to navigate the systems of school, social norms and eventually the world of career paths and dominant conceptions of worldly success – even amidst wonderful friends and family. My discomfort with the settled world took me to Latin America where I worked on and off for years, finding a deep connection with the social justice movements there. It also led me to seek out scholarship on the margins – Indigenous literatures, liberation theorists, socialist and "post-colonial" literatures. I read up whatever I could find on Indigenous issues in Canada. In the 1990s, at one of the largest national universities (UofT), I was only able to study colonialism through the lens of "post-colonialism" and only in the context of Latin America and Africa.¹⁶ There were no Indigenous professors that I could find, and no Indigenous courses that I recall seeing. Lee Maracle was the first Indigenous author I read. She made a formative impact on me and only later did I learn that it was her nation's lands, the Sto:lo Nation, my ancestors colonized six generations ago. My last name in fact was changed alongside the renaming of the Sto:lo river, a story I often recount as a means by which settler colonialism re-names not only the Indigenous peoples and their lands, but the settlers as well.

I did not understand my sometimes obsessive interest in colonialism in the Canadian context from such an early age, when the very privileged, white colonial world out of which I was born

¹⁶ It is a wonderful barometer of institutional and societal change to reflect back on this in the context of now. I was fortunate to be part of the instructor team to transform the UVIC Sociology department's first-year offering "Introduction to Canadian Society" to become "Introduction to Settler Colonialism and Canadian Society", and was supported to develop the first course on "Decolonizing Sociological Research Methodologies". However, I wish to recognize that this change does not necessarily reflect the type of counter-hegemonic structural change that decolonizing necessitates. As Simpson (2017) writes: "If the academy is concerned about not only protecting and maintaining Indigenous intelligence but also revitalizing it on Indigenous terms as a form of restitution for its historic and contemporary role as a colonizing force (of which I see no evidence), then the academy must make a conscious decision to become a decolonizing force in the intellectual lives of Indigenous peoples by joining us in dismantling settler colonialism and actively protecting the source of our knowledge: Indigenous land" (p. 172).

and raised had done an excellent job at entirely erasing the realities of colonialism. In spite of their lived relationality, my family politically espoused Canadian liberal values and were proud of stories of Canada as a global peacemaker and multicultural mosaic. Like too many of my first year sociology students today, I was never taught about Canada's residential schools. Canada was not considered by anyone I knew to be a colonial country. There were no Indigenous friends, classmates or peers in my world. Looking for information about colonialism and my own colonial roots during these formative years felt a bit like being a detective searching for clues in a lifeworld that had done all it could to erase its colonial tracks. My interest led me to become deeply engaged in anti-poverty and homelessness activism in Toronto. Politicized by engaging professors, friends and classmates at both UofT and York University, I became an anti-poverty activist. A white settler who was the daughter of a surgeon, my immersion in decolonizing and anti-capitalist movements was as confounding to my Indigenous and working class friends as it was to me.

Clues about my interests in colonialism and capitalism led me back to my father. My experience of simultaneous connection and disconnection growing up mimicked my father's, who whilst living his relationality in every way he could, fought with the institutions he lived in, and suffered from a daily recurring nightmare of free floating through space alone in a state of panic. He had grown up in South Africa and what is now Zambia, and suffered what could only be called emotional neglect from his Canadian parents. Unable to get work in Canada, his father landed a job as a copper mine manager in what is now Zambia and so my father spent the first 17 years of his life in Sub-Saharan Africa. His mother admitted later in life to not recalling ever even holding him when he was a baby and he was sent off to boarding school without warning or consent for many years where he endured various forms of abuse. His father believed in various forms of "tough love," which instilled a sense of scarcity and personal inadequacy deeply inside of him,

which were with him his entire life unmoved by the numerous accolades he went on to receive, or the high esteem he held in everyone's eyes. Though he had a sister with whom he felt a genuine connection, they were separated often through boarding schools. He regaled no stories to me of nurturing aunts, doting grandparents, present family members (other than his sister), or teacher mentors. However, when he left South Africa at 17 and was sent "home" to a country (Canada) he had never before lived in, he developed an outspoken sense of racial and social justice unmet by his social milieu or cadre of white South African friends and peers with whom he studied and played rugby. Though he had limited political analysis at the time and continued to live in an extremely privileged white society, he vowed to not set foot back in South Africa as long as Apartheid existed even despite family members and friends keeping homes there during this time. And he did not. Committed to helping the world in some way, he became a doctor. He became a world renowned surgeon, but deeply eschewed both money and fame. In spite of the glammers of being the first to conduct a lung transplant in Canada, on the side of his surgical practice, he testified on behalf of thousands of mostly manual labourers workers on a pro bono basis, who had suffered from a rare medical condition that went unrecognized by worker's compensation boards and surgeons alike. He went bankrupt in my teenage years in large part because he more often than not failed to bill for the lucrative procedures he conducted, despite them being covered by public care. He vocally opposed the lack of public health care in the US and refused countless lucrative job offers for us to move there. He hated hierarchy, did not like people to know he was a doctor, and would treat the janitors and patients as his peers more than even his colleagues or administrators at the hospital where he worked.

He was very charismatic and had a profound ability to connect with people and was deeply loved and wildly popular amongst those who knew him. However, he did not feel like he belonged

amongst the privileged circles he ran in and experienced forms of deep loneliness at different moments of his life. He was deeply connected to the outdoors, became an avid birder later in life, and condemned environmental degradation. As a child, he was the only person who told me of Indigenous peoples and although he did not know much, he modeled a profound respect, curiosity and deep listening that seared itself into my being. It was the only exposure I had to Indigenous peoples in my upbringing. He later learned alongside and with me.

When he would talk about his upbringing in Southern Africa, he recounted tales that were still alive to him and still viscerally affected him – e.g., hearing violence behind a train station wall, noticing the Black children without shoes standing on the other side of the fence watching him and his white friends play golf. And whilst equally horrified by his stories, I spent many of my early years confounded by the question of how he could grow up white in a racist society with all the trimmings of white, colonial and capitalist privilege and yet be a vehement anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist and feminist? Why had he remembered those moments of separation and violence when his peers seemed to have blocked them out? Where did his convictions about justice and equality come from? And as an internationally renowned surgeon repeatedly wined, dined and showered with awards, how had he never fallen prey to the trappings of capitalism? In short, it was pretty obvious early on where my sense of relational intra-being and justice came from. But where in the world did his come from?

An answer came one day as I awoke in the guest bedroom of my stepmother's home, in the months after he died. It was right there on the wall in front of me, in the only photograph that exists of my father as a baby. In the photo, he's being held by a Black Zulu woman named Violet. It is the only photo we have of her. I recalled my father telling me that throughout his childhood, his family always laughingly referred to him as "the little Zulu" because his first language had

been Zulu, not English. He recounted this story to me because it still cut such a searing pain inside of him every time he heard it as a child and well into adulthood. I only fully understood his pain when looking at this photograph years later. For him, even though he could barely remember her, Violet was his mother. She was the only one who held him, who talked to him, and from whom he learned how to speak his first words - and most probably how to walk. At some point, they moved away and never saw her again. The only real vestige of her that remained in the family and of their connection was the “little Zulu” story, which was shared as a joke. He had experienced one of the most significant traumas of disconnect possible – the loss of the parent to whom he was primarily bonded – in early childhood. But he had also experienced and lost the most intimate of relational gifts possible – connection, love and attachment – with, for and from a Black woman whilst living in a violent, white, racist society. Of course he had other experiences of care and love in his life. But for me, her role and gifts to him now were obvious. Even though he couldn’t remember it, I believe that his experience of connection with Violet profoundly changed not only his life, but mine. And that the intuitive wisdom born of this experience as a child never left him. For me, this became a clear realization of the role of relational experience – even when this experience is not understood rationally or consciously remembered – in enabling us to refuse our interpellation and hegemonic consent to individualism, which I believe is critical to any transformative change. I believe it was this experience that enabled him to see the trimmings of an individualist, colonial-capitalist society as but structures of violence in which he wanted no part.

With this awareness, the path of my intellectual journey gained clarity. At its heart, for me this project is about the access we always already have to enacting relational intra-becoming even within and amidst the most oppressive systems and structures. It is about my conviction about the wisdom young people can hold experientially because (not in spite) of their age, whose

experiences of the world as eco-socially and intra-subjectively co-created can be a given, not just a possibility or a hope – as in the case of youth climate justice activists. It is about my questioning of the tenets of an order that insists it is ultimately impermeable and unstoppable. It is about my belief that it is through experiencing and enacting relational lifeways that the seeds of counter-hegemonic, decolonizing change can be planted. Or in other words, it is about how the ways we relate and connect as kin can profoundly change the trajectories of our lives, individually, collectively and institutionally.

But it is not a naïve project. It is one that is rooted in a keen awareness of the fortitude of systems of violence in this world. The task of seeking to transform entrenched systems of violence is the most daunting task of our time. Violet did not (singlehandedly at least) undo Apartheid through the love she enacted. But I believe her love made it impossible for my father to experience or see that normalized and naturalized system as anything other than violent. She made it possible for him to enact otherwise in the world and refuse his consent to hegemonic individualism.

I have learned from many distinct sources, experiences, mentors and movements in my life, all of which inform my thinking in different ways: I have studied power and oppression through the lenses of gender, race, colonialism, anthropocentrism and class; I have been part of anti-poverty, feminist, climate justice, Indigenous rights and racial justice movements; I have worked extensively in the fields of international human rights, children's rights and community development, leading and teaching applied participatory, community-based engagement and research. I have had the privilege of some very wise teachers, especially during this PhD process.

As a sixth generation settler of Irish, Scottish, Welsh and British descent living as an uninvited guest who was raised on and now living as an adult on the lands of the Coast Salish peoples – and with children who are 7th generation settlers on these same lands – my project on

eco-social transformative and decolonizing change ultimately must be rooted on these lands and in the struggle for Indigenous justice, which is also a struggle for social, epistemic, cultural, economic, and climate justice. In my academic and practitioner work, I strive to deeply listen to and engage the wisdoms and knowledge traditions of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island in ways that are relationally accountable, non-extractive and non-appropriating.

As I do so, I express a deep sense of accountability to my Indigenous friends, colleagues, relations and mentors who have shared with me, shown me patience and generosity, and sometimes graciously laughed with me as I have navigated the path of unsettling myself and my world. The persistence and resurgence of their ancestors' and nations' lifeways and knowledges hold profound wisdom for all of the challenges we are facing today. And consistent with my father's experience, these traditions reinforce the inherent wisdom young ones, such as the youth climate justice activists I engage, can have - who somehow, in the face of genocidal and ecocidal systems, are able to know and be brave enough to offer the insights and actions needed for the transformative decolonizing change the earth is demanding.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Relational Grounds of Connection

2.1 Setting the Theoretical Stage: Formulating the ‘Strong’ Question

At a theoretical level, this project engages with what I believe is at the heart of the intensifying political, social, cultural and economic polarizations in the world: the inherent tension between two co-present but distinct worldviews and sets of lifeways: an individualist way of being that enacts an (up)rooted ontology of “disconnect” (Mills, 2018); and a lifeway of relational, eco-social intra-being that regeneratively enacts an ontology rooted in gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationality with ‘All Our Relations’. While both have persisted for many years in diverse and distinct forms, in the current set of intertwining, eco-social crises, we see them ‘coming to a head’ in a new constellation of ways. Whilst this polarizing articulation speaks to the incommensurate ontological orientations of these lifeways, they also share an intimacy in this era – not only as they brush up against each other as clashes on the street and mark bodies in the every day, but also in the ways they can each disrupt and thwart the other.

Tully (2018) describes the processes by which an individualist ontology of disconnect is enacted through the “dispossession, dis-embedding and discrediting of the participatory reciprocity view of life” (p. 108), which he describes as the precondition of a vicious cycle of life. (Up)rooted from the inherent relationality of life, these systems are founded in logics of separation which by their design, disembed and disconnect individuals from their relationships to self, Other and the earth. Eisenstein (2013) refers to these logics as “the story of separation” (p. 8). Referencing Polanyi, Tully (2014, 2018) documents the processes by which modern civil citizenship disembeds or separates individuals and communities from the relationships they are already inherently in with self, Other and the earth, only to be re-embedded in relationship to modern liberal institutions.

In this dissertation, I propose that each of the intersecting, hegemonic systems of anthropocentrism, whiteness/racism, colonialism, cisheteropatriarchy, and capitalism, reference a shared ontological structure of individualist disconnect, though enacted in diverse and distinct ways by institutions and lifeways at the local, national and global levels.¹⁷ As I will elaborate below, these hegemonic structures and systems disembody humans from their inherent social and ecological relationships (Tully, 2018), by re-embedding or interpellating them into re-structured relationships with self, others and earth. The uprooted terra nullius grounds of these restructured relations enact an individualist canopy of understanding that shapes humans' cognitive and experiential encounter of themselves, others and the world (Vahabzadeh, 2003). From a phenomenological standpoint, ontologies not only shape one's cognitive understanding of the world, but also one's potential experience of it, a phenomenon Vahabzadeh (2003) calls "experiential hegemony" (p. 97).

Thus, while living in the age of hyperconnectivity, the widespread human experience of feeling disconnected from self, others, and earth – well documented across interdisciplinary literatures – are but one reflection of the way that these lifeways structure the lived experience of those living within them. From this standpoint, experiences of disconnection are both key features of, and the interpellative basis that lead actors to reproduce, a vicious cycle of life (Tully, 2016) that generates socio-economic inequalities, environmental degradation, colonial domination, cultural and social divisions and political polarizations. As he notes, vicious cycles of life are self-reinforcing in this way, intensifying through inequalities and violent antagonisms (Tully, 2018, p. 108).

¹⁷ I elaborate and expand upon the role that each of these distinct structures plays in constituting individualist lifeworlds below, including an exploration of the relationship between them. This includes a consideration of recognizing the historically and contextually specific enactments of them to avoid an over-generalization of terms. For now, I am concerned here with the ontological structure that these systems share.

This notwithstanding, the persistence and resurgence of a different ontological reference point is also noted on the horizon of experience. Marked by a distinct experience and societal story of intra-being, this relational worldview is embodied through lifeways that enact gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships, generating what Tully (2016) calls a virtuous cycle of life. These lifeways enact an ontology of the interconnectedness of all of life, reflective of worldviews embedded within and articulated by traditions around the world including in the work of Thich Nhat Hahn (as cited in Tully 2016, p. 62), deep ecology movements, spiritual traditions such as Shintoism, and by popular thinkers such as Eisenstein (2013). However, important to the context of this dissertation, this relational worldview is identified by Indigenous theorists as being central to Indigenous knowledge systems on Turtle Island, as articulated through concepts of relationality, gift-reciprocity, and relational accountability. Wilson and Wilson (2016) clarify we are not in relationship, we *are* our relationships.

I use the term *intra-being* (and later, the terms *intra-becoming* and *intra-subjective*) throughout this dissertation. This is my own term, with which I seek to integrate Karen Barad's (2007) concept of "intra-action" and the concept of "interbeing", which is found in a diversity of traditions as noted in the paragraph above. Barad (2007) posits that whilst inter-action presumes separate actors, intra-action more accurately depicts the inseparable intertwining assemblages of being. This more accurately reflects Wilson and Wilson's (2016) notion that we are not individuals, but that we are relationships.

Beyond the resurgence of Indigenous nations and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) systems, a broader turn towards the relational is evident through the growing surge of environmental, social, economic, spiritual, and legal justice movements across Turtle Island. Many of these movements advance and enact eco-centric and relational lifeways. Within this

alternative orientation and engagement with the world, a radically distinct relationship with the other, a *being-with* or transformative empathetic encounter (Nelems, 2018) within which genuine dialogue (Tully, 2016) becomes possible. “Transformative empathy” is here distinguished from “passive empathy”, which I argue entails the projection of self onto the other – a “standing in their shoes” – expressed as a colonial act that necessarily erases the Other and the relationship to them (Nelems, 2018).

Thus whilst the dominant institutions and systems governing modern life have a structural, hegemonic presence in institutions and experience, Tully (2018) argues they have not succeeded in fully disconnecting humans “from social and ecological relationships of interdependency” (p. 113). A vast and diverse array of traditions, movements and cultural practices from around the globe – including both past and present in the West – interpellate and invite humans into practices of connection with self, others and the earth in ways that continue to enact, revive and intentionally activate “virtuous” or regenerative cycles of life (Tully, 2018). Tully (2018) sets forth that the re-embedding of oneself in such relationality through enacting virtuous lifeways constitutes the “regenerative permaculture of practices of transformative reconciliation-with” (p. 109) that advance a relational lifeworld.

These lifeways enact relational grounds that cause nagging tears in the individualist phenomenological canopy (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) through experiences and knowledges that lie surplus to it (Vahabzadeh, 2003) – both preceding and exceeding the latter. Not historically generated out of deep diversity (Hamilton & Nichols, 2021), the institutions that constitute the hegemonic individualist order are ill equipped to encounter or make sense of relational logics on their own terms, a necessary condition for “genuine dialogue” (Tully, 2016) across ontological differences. By design, individualist institutions conceal their parochial roots through a self-

legitimizing and rational universalism that self-insulates through denying the very existence of a surplus or exterior, let alone a critique that might emanate from it. The very presence of the relational thus enables the deparochialization (Tully, 2016) of destructive lifeways, rendering them visible. According to Vahabzadeh (2003), it is in such moments of “surplus experience” that individuals and communities can withdraw their consent from hegemonic canopies and lifeways (p. 98).

Critically, this brings us to the “strong”¹⁸ theoretical question at the heart of this dissertation: *How might individualist or ego-centric lifeways be transformed into relational ways of eco-social intra-being?* If the means are the ends (Tully, 2018), the grounds for this process must be relational, and a framing that seeks to banish or erase the other necessarily reproduces a hegemonically individualist structure of thought. This chapter strives to elaborate a relational framework through which this question might be otherwise engaged, based on the contention that establishing and clearing such theoretical grounds is essential to any pathways forward, and any ‘weak-strong’ answers that might be possible. In order to do so, I need to expand upon how I understand ontologies, worldviews or lifeworlds – and how these interact with lifeways, hegemonic structures and processes of interpellation.

In so doing I draw out how stories of separation vs. stories of relationality entail distinct ways of being, knowing and relating that enact radically distinct ontological structures, foundations and contours. Drawing on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967), Mills (2018), Tully (2016; 2018) and Vahabzadeh (2003; 2019), I forward that the ecosystem of tree canopies (in contrast to tent canopies) offers a grounded, eco-social theoretical framework from which we

¹⁸ Santos (2009). The pursuit of a “weak-strong answer” to this strong question is the central drive behind this dissertation. See chapter 6 for an elaboration of Santos’ “strong questions”, “weak-weak answers” and “weak-strong answers”.

can consider what ontological connection and disconnection is within both individualist and relational worldviews – and later on, from which we might consider the insights of youth climate justice activists on Turtle Island. From here, I consider what socially transformative, relational ways of being might unlock and open up, but which remain unencountered and unthinkable within the “lawgics” of hegemonic individualism. Within this relational framework, I propose that connection might be conceived of as the act of remembering, knowing, feeling, sensing and/or enacting intra-connectedness. Within the bounds of the individualist lifeworld, connection may constitute a radical act, defiant in its refusal of the individualist framings by simply enacting otherwise. In keeping with this, disconnect becomes synonymous with a certain type of forgetting, disembedding, erasing, invisibilizing and rendering into the abyss. In this chapter I also explore the contributions of hegemony theory to thinking through and enacting social change. The theoretical threads introduced in this chapter are woven, but more importantly, elaborated through the dissertation, as they are brought into dialogical engagement with the insights offered by youth climate justice activists.

2.2 Towards a Relational Theoretical Framework

My theoretical starting point is the moment in which the two distinct lifeways enact lifeworlds that *appear* to be wholly incommensurate, while co-existing on the same horizon of existence. The lifeways to which I refer include: an individualist, colonial and anthropocentric way of being that is (up)rooted in an ontology of “disconnect”¹⁹; and a relational, interconnected way of intra-being that is rooted in an ontology of gift-gratitude-reciprocity with ‘All Our Relations’. The two lifeways appear in polarized opposition to one another, made most manifest

¹⁹ This term is used in reference to Mills’ chapter on “Rooted Constitutionalism”, 2018, (pp. 133-174) in Eds. Michael Asch, John Borrows and James Tully, *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, Toronto: UofT Press.

through their ‘coming to a head’ through the series of eco-social crises we currently face in the world. The presence of these distinct lifeworlds on the same horizon of experience defies their incommensurability. Drawing on phenomenology, I argue instead that their co-existence rather suggests points of profound intimacy between them not just in the ways they intersect through the clashing of bodies in the streets, but in the ways they intertwine and mark each of our lives and bodies.

An ontology of relationality – or connection – demands a consideration of what it might mean if these lifeworlds are “weird cousins” – to borrow Akomolafe’s (2020b) words – or kin. Indeed, how might one justify studying connection using a logic of disconnect? An examination of the connections between them in no way means an admittance or condoning of either one by the other. A relational standpoint might instead entail bringing the two together into view in ways that reparochialize and invite relational accountability to the other. The motivation behind this project is *not* to reconcile, rescue or condone the violence of individualist ways of being. Nor is it to engage in a form of postmodern moral relativism. Rather, I strive to draw on the lessons of Indigenous resurgence on Turtle Island and other relational lifeways to show how the hegemonically individualist framing of ontological difference limits and inhibits both potentialities and imaginary of the relational by refusing the genuinely dialogical engagement of the latter on its own terms (Starblanket and Stark, 2018). Core to this is the individualist worldview’s tendency to refuse reparochialization (Tully, 2016), as outlined below. By re-situating the individualist on relational grounds, more multi-directional passages between ego-centric and eco-centric lifeways might appear, and the effects on one another might be better understood. A polarized framework of disconnect does not offer up any theories of transformation except wholesale elimination and banishment of the other. The motivation of this theoretical

elaboration resides in the intuitive, embodied and relational knowings that there is more play, movement and possibility for radical, decolonizing transformation than hegemonic individualism purports through its logics of being. Moreover, it is the mark of a passive revolution that the structures ensuring the persistence of hegemonic dominance – in this case the ontological structure – remain intact (Carroll, 2021, p 485). A genuinely counter-hegemonic response to individualism must enact relational grounds.

2.2.1 Individualist Lifeways

As I outline elsewhere,²⁰ I refer to the ontology of disconnect as first and foremost an *individualist* (as opposed to liberal, Western or colonial, etc.) worldview insofar as it is organized around the logic of the discrete individual. Although one may consider social groupings such as the nation state as a *social* or *collective* structure (vs. individualist), Tully (2018) shows how the very logic of such institutions rests on the disembedding of individuals from prior relationships as the foundational prelude to installing modern conceptions of citizenship. In this sense, individuals are stripped of their relationality and encountered as individuals rather than relationally embedded beings. Secondly, the nation is then established as an individual unit, enacted as but one actor amongst other individual nations at the global level. This “first process” (Tully, 2018, p. 108) entails:

...the ongoing dispossession and alienation of human communities from their participatory ways of being in the living earth as plain members and responsible citizens, and the discrediting of the participatory ways of knowing that go along with them. (Tully, 2018, p. 108)

²⁰ I outline this definition of individualist lifeways in my chapter *Other Wise Democracies: What the Tree Canopies Know*. In Keith Cherry, Fonna Forman, Jeanne Morefield, Joshua Nichols, Pablo Ouziel, David Owen, Oliver Schmidtko and James Tully (Eds.), *Democratic Multiplicity: Perceiving, Enacting & Integrating Democratic Diversity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (forthcoming).

Calling this the “great dis-embedding,” Tully (2018) references Polanyi to document the processes by which modern civil citizenship then re-embeds humans “...in abstract and competitive economic, political, and legal relationships that depend on yet destroy the underlying interdependent ecological and social relationships” (p. 104). Uprooted, these systems enact logics of separation, something Eisenstein (2013) refers to as the “story of separation” (p. 8). It is this moment of disconnect that establishes the preconditions by which individuals might be interpellated into hegemonically enacting and consenting to a vicious cycle of life. It is critical to note that the acts of separation that generate this dissociative orientation to the world do not just constitute forms of epistemic violence on all forms of life (Vahabzadeh, 2003), they generate and justify structures and processes that enact physical violences to human and more-than-human beings alike, as Mills (2018) notes (p. 137).

As elaborated below, the institutionalization of lifeways of separation and disconnect – though inherently “artificial” (Mills, 2018) generate the terra nullius grounds upon which these lifeways might be justified, legalized and normalized. Their logic of erasure is so thorough it even uproots these lifeways from their relational own history and ancestry, as noted below. The individualist lifeworld is thus structured by systems and their accompanying logics of exclusion (us/them), hierarchy, inequality, domination and violence.

These individualist logics, systems and grounds are notably core to the ontological structure that colonialism, capitalism, anthropocentrism, whiteness/racism, and cisheteropatriarchy enact. That these hierarchical systems of dominance are relationally intertwined and mutually implicated in one another is clear. The nature of those relationships is complex, with various formulations found in distinct literatures. Whyte (2018 b) refers to “the capitalist–colonialist partnership”, a helpful framing to see the ways in which the two systems are integrally and existentially bound

when contemplating their particular enactment through settler colonialism on Turtle Island.

Connell (2016) offers a distinct articulation of this, referring to capitalism as a “colonial economy” (p. 307). While various political, legal, cultural and social institutions might be understood as the mechanisms that enact and keep such ‘isms intact, the key role that the “capitalist-colonial” project play in the material structuring of these relationships such that they are hegemonically experienced and sustained is noted.

Todd and Davis (2016) forward that the start date of the Anthropocene must be aligned with that of colonialism: “The Anthropocene, and the uneven impacts on the global poor, can be understood not just as an unfortunate coincidence or accident, but rather as a deliberate extension of colonial logic” (Davis & Todd, 2017, p. 772). They argue that establishing the structural links between these distinct systems, and in particular the roots in colonial logics of violence, invokes and emphasizes the importance of drawing on Indigenous knowledges and lifeways:

By linking the Anthropocene with colonization, it draws attention to the violence at its core, and calls for the consideration of Indigenous philosophies and processes of Indigenous self-governance as a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by the white supremacist, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene. (p. 763)

Whyte (2018a) similarly refers to settler colonialism as “an ecological form of domination, is environmental violence.” (p. 137) The link between racism/whiteness and the capitalist-colonial project, with both its foundations and operationalization as occurring through slavery and the genocide of Indigenous populations, is clearly established by Fanon (1952), Coulthard (2013) and diverse array of thinkers and traditions. Authors such as Connell (2016) notes the integral ways that patriarchy is a core modality of the “colonial economy”:

The making of colonial societies deeply concerned gender. It required the management of reproductive bodies through relationships that organized sexuality, birth and childrearing,

domestic work, and the broad division of labor. Colonial economies required continuing workforces, and colonizing elites required family and inheritance structures. (p. 307)

The particular expressions and enactments of these hegemonic structures through political, social, economic and cultural institutions on Turtle Island are reinforced by global systems (e.g., global capitalist markets). Carroll (2021) defines hegemony as “rule with the consent of the ruled; hence, hegemonic power refers to how that consent is secured, organized and maintained, from the visceral level of everyday life up to the top tiers of state institutions” (p. 12). The multi-faceted nature of its securement, through and across institutions and domains (political, cultural, economic) attains a certain degree of “cohesiveness” (p. 12) such that consent is secured through the interpellation of citizens (Althusser, 1967). These systems are operationalized and enacted through hegemonic social, economic and political institutions, which along with norms, “agendas, policies, discourses, and values...add up to an entire way of life” (p. 12) or a lifeworld.

As Connell (2016) notes, it is important to be cautious about generalizations that suggest hegemonic structures are experienced and actualized in the same way around the world. Connell notes the inherent risk of generically referring to such ‘isms’ as hegemonic systems or structures has the effect of de-historicizing and decontextualizing them, resulting in “black-box concepts”, which are neither accurate or useful in considering how they operate in inherently diverse and shifting modalities:

The problem with the Eurocentrism of global gender discourse is that it projects into gender analysis everywhere the image that the society of the global North holds of itself. Specifically, it presumes coherence and a self-sustaining logic for any gender order. This is implicit in the concepts of “patriarchy,” “sex/gender system,” “gender norms,” “gender regime,” and “heteronormativity.” Eurocentric gender research and policy-making assume that gender has a system-like character, a logical homogeneity and, though it may change, that it does so with continuity in time.

With these assumptions in the background, the concept of hegemony tends to become ahistorical, concerned with the social reproduction of a system. Hence the prevalence, in research on hegemonic masculinity, of ideas of identity formation, socialization, habitus,

and the internalization of social norms—which are actually black-box concepts produced by assuming a mechanism of social reproduction (Connell 1983). Hence the familiar slippage between notions of hegemony and notions of domination (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), which are easily blurred when the reproduction of a hierarchical system is assumed (p. 305).

She notes that colonial conquest operates precisely through the modality of “[h]istorical discontinuity”, suggesting that for any analysis and counter-hegemonic project to be useful, it must also examine these discontinuities: “hegemony is constantly under construction, renovation and contestation” (p. 318). This is not to suggest that hegemonic systems should no longer be considered or named in these terms, rather, that they need to be understood historically and how they are divergently enacted across context and time. Connell (2016) expands on this with respect to one of these hegemonic structures, patriarchy:

Hegemony is a historical possibility, a state of gender relations being struggled for, and struggled against, by different social forces. Since the accomplishment of hegemony is never guaranteed, the most useful way to conceptualize hegemonic masculinity is to treat it as a collective project for realizing gender hierarchy. And that, in the light of the postcolonial critique outlined above, is a process we now have to understand on a world scale (p. 306).

This definition is helpful to apply to the other structures, as “collective projects” for realizing hierarchies that subjugate one group of beings to the benefit/profit/privilege of another, through the establishment, investment, management and ongoing enactment of structures and practices that ensure this subjugation becomes ongoing, as dominance. In this way, they might be all seen as structures that necessarily enact an us/them ontology, the ordering principle of an individualist order. These binary categories (e.g., nature-human, male-female, colonizer-colonized, etc.) reflect the various and intersectional ways through which individuals who have been disembedded from their inherent relationality (Tully, 2018) are organized.

If the moment of structural disconnect or disembedding is the moment in which individualist orders lay their foundations, it is also the moment of structurally and materialistically re-

embedding of individuals into systems and relationships of which Tully (2018) speaks.

Individualist orders are thus, simply put, founded on practices and processes of alienation of self from self, others, and the earth that systematically destroy relationships. If we are our relationships (Wilson and Wilson, 2016), alienation from self might be understood not just as alienation from one's labour, but from one's lifeways, culture and relationality with all that is. Settler colonialism in Canada might be described as the systematic extraction and expulsion of individuals from their cultural, physical, economic, spiritual, communal, familial and ecological relationships.

Similar to how Wilson and Wilson (2016) use the term "Indigenist" to point out the underlying points of commonality across diversely enacted Indigenous knowledges and lifeways, I introduce the ego-cycle diagram and tent canopy metaphor below to point to the shared ontological structure of disconnect that the diverse, particularized and parochial expressions of each of the above structures enact. The ego-cycle diagram also enables me to expand upon the structural role that the capitalist-colonial project plays, and the systemic and mutually reinforcing relationships between distinct structures of oppression. The particular modalities, structures, institutions, practices and processes of each will differ depending on context, as noted by Connell (2016), but their enactments depend on lifeways that generate a vicious ontology of disconnect and separation. It is this commonality of ontological structure to which I wish to draw attention. Understanding how individuals and institutions operate in diverse ways that (intentionally or unintentionally; consciously or unconsciously) uphold and reproduce this hegemonic ontology is critical to understanding what counter-hegemonic or decolonizing projects might entail. Indeed, my dissertation is centrally concerned with how institutions that are established and/or practiced by many with the intention of reducing or mitigating against the violent effects of individualist

systems – such as human rights – might be decolonized in ways such that they disrupt, rather than endorse, an ontology of separation and disconnect.

2.2.2 Relational Lifeways

Despite the clear persistence and some might argue, rise, in individualist ways of being, thinking and relating – as evidenced by persistence of right-wing populist movements, the ongoing entrenchment of colonial-capitalist systems, growing socio-economic inequities, and ecocide – the long-term persistence and ongoing resurgence of relational ways of being are also everywhere noted. Importantly, these relational lifeways always already were embedded in Indigenous traditional knowledge systems and lifeways as described by Indigenous thinkers on Turtle Island. Indigenous theorists describe the latter as practicing ways of being that enact gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships and “gift thinking” (Kimmerer, 2013), generating what Tully (2016) calls a virtuous cycle of life. These lifeways, based in a distinctive ontology of the interconnectedness of all that is, embody worldviews that are also encountered around the world hailing from a diversity of cultural traditions, including African and Eastern philosophies and spiritual traditions.

Nuu-chah-nulth Hereditary Chief Umeek (E. Richard Atleo) explains the ontological structure of this worldview through the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of *heshook-ish tsawalk*:

In a view of reality described as *tsawalk* (one), relationships are *qua* (that which is). The ancient Nuu-chah-nulth assumed an interrelationship between all life forms – humans, plants, and animals. *Relationships are*. Accordingly, social, political, economic, constitutional, environmental, and philosophical issues can be addressed under the single theme of inter-relationships, across all dimensions of reality – the material and the non-material, the visible and the invisible (2011:ix) .

The concept of Oneness within the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview is notably distinct for its porous and pluralistic dynamism versus the assimilative tendency of individualism. As in an ecosystem, this Oneness comes not as the result of assimilating difference, but through the relational existence of all beings and the relational basis of life. Wilson (2008) reflects on this as

interpreted through the lens of Opaskwayak Cree traditions: “Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of” (p. 80). As elaborated by Kimmerer (2013) of the Potawatomi Nation, relational lifeways might be understood as a process of weaving sweetgrass, an act of gift-reciprocity between weavers that reflects the reciprocal and dynamic relationships of living in relation with one another and the earth. For Mills (2018), these rooted constitutionalisms reflect orders enacted by lifeways rooted like trees – where rootedness indicates the impossibility of individualism and the inherent relationality of existence.

In contrast to individualist orientations to difference, Umeek (2011) and other Indigenous thinkers such as Kimmerer (2013) reflect on the lessons learned from the more-than-human world within their distinct Indigenous nations, wherein diversity and polarities are not competitively oriented, but rather viewed as essential for the co-generation of life. Umeek’s (2011) *Tsawalk* shows that within stories of intra-being, insofar as everything is connected, everything somehow belongs:

Nuu-chah-nulth perspective on the nature of reality [is] that all questions of existence, being and knowing, regardless of seeming contradictions are considered tsawalk - one and inseparable. They are all interrelated and interconnected (p. ix).

Whilst an individualist ontology exhibits an “aggressive refusal of non-attachment, openness, empathetic dialogue, and so of deparochialization” (Tully, 2016, p. 63), a relational ontology entails an openness to the other that refuses their erasure, rather ensuring them a stance on their own terms. Umeek (2011) and Kimmerer (2013) invite us to reflect on what might come into view when polarities are not perceived as antagonistically competitive but as essential to the co-generation of life. Mills (2018) also engages in this challenge through his articulation of the Anishinaabe conception of rooted constitutionalism in which he strives to disrupt the sometimes

binary framing of resurgence *vs.* reconciliation, arguing that the binary framing may reproduce the colonial ontology of disconnect. He writes: “If we’re always already connected in relations of deep interdependence, then the question of freedom is never about standing apart from the other and always about how to stand with it” (p. 160). What insights does an ontology of intra-being offer to conceptualizing experiences and structures of connection and disconnection such as are present on the current horizon?

While loosely translated from many distinct Indigenous languages and contextualized, land-based traditions from across Turtle Island as relationality²¹ and ‘All Our Relations’, distinct cultural and spiritual traditions around the world offer relatable, relational framings. These include the Zulu phrase *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* commonly known as *Ubuntu* (‘I am because you are’), and within the tenets of animistic, pantheistic East Asian nature religions such as Shintoism which is known in Japan as *kami-no-michi*. Hailing from Mahayana Buddhism and Vietnamese Thi ãn, Nhat Hanh (2009) states that we should not regard individual beings as having life, but of life being in them: “You shouldn’t say, life *of* the leaf, but life *in* the leaf, and life *in* the tree. My life is just Life, and you can see it in me and in the tree” (p. 23). Whilst each grounded in a distinct cultural tradition, central to all of these traditions is a form of deep ecology, or the inseparability of humans from other forms of life. Karen Barad’s (2007) use of the word “intra-action” strives to capture the dynamic, alive nature of this inseparability. Whilst *inter*-action presumes separate actors, *intra*-action more accurately depicts the non-separate, assemblage or relational nature of all life forms. My language of an ontology of *intra-being* thus draws both from Barad’s adaptation of the English word *inter-being*, as well as the concept of interconnectedness found across a range of traditions, whilst giving primacy to the notion of relationality based in Indigenous traditions from

²¹ The limitations of the English language as a “low context” language (Umeek, 2004) must be recognized, both in this definition, and in my own dissertation.

Turtle Island.

2.3 The Phenomenological and Interpellative Structures of Experience

Whilst the dominant institutions and systems governing modern life in the West have hegemonic presence in the experience of many, Tully (2018) notes they have not succeeded in disconnecting humans “from social and ecological relationships of interdependency” (p. 113). If the dominant institutions are truly hegemonic, how is this possible? Before elaborating what a relational theoretical framework might look like, it is essential to expand upon my understanding of ontology and hegemony and how they interpellate and relate to humans’ lived experience, as well as the possibilities for agency and transformative change.

Ideology and hegemony theories represent two distinct Western schools of social thought that seek to explain and understand how socially constructed worldviews become institutionalized, reproduced and hegemonically consented to within a given society. Both the concepts of ideological interpellation (Althusser, 1971) and hegemonic consent (Gramsci, 1971; Vahabzadeh, 2003) suggest that worldviews are only ultimately upheld in a society when individuals recognize themselves and their experiences within the interpellative hail of a lifeworld, worldview or lifeway. The hegemonic lifeworld is experienced as objectively true and “consent is the ‘matching’ nexus between doxic experience and epistemic truth” (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 67). Vahabzadeh (2003) refers to the individual’s experience of hegemony as the common sensical, taken for granted and familiar as “experiential hegemony” (p. 97). Hegemonic principles reconstitute the self through establishing the “cognitive grounds and experiential terrains” (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 65) upon which the individual understands themselves. Thus, while naturalized and consented to, the worldview, in so far as it is hegemonic, invokes a form of invisibilized epistemic violence, imposing boundaries on both the individual’s lived and affective

experience and their cognitive understanding of that experience. Relatedly, Wilson (2008) speaks to the ways in which ontologies shape perception, cognition and experience of the world: “There is an expression: ‘If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn’t have believed it.’ The opposite holds just as true: ‘If I hadn’t believed it, I wouldn’t have seen it’” (p. 6).

A potential reaction to concepts of ideology includes the argument that its assumed structuralism denies people agency, power, or choice.²² One of the values of phenomenological theory lies in its ability to acknowledge the facticity of socially constructed structures (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) amidst all of their material, embodied effects. Vahabzadeh’s (2003) concept of “experiential hegemony” offers us a framework through which to conceptualize agency and the withdrawal of consent to enacting these structures. Vahabzadeh integrates hegemony and radical phenomenological theory to argue that there is always the possibility of human experience and understanding that stands outside of, and as surplus to, the hegemonically-established epistemic boundaries. It is this “surplus” experience that enables the subject to “become aware of their hegemonization and withdraw consent” (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 98). In radical phenomenology, the act of “stepping back” is the critical examination of the hegemonic principles from a point of distance such that one can ultimately “liberate...herself from the blinding light of proximity” (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 101). This concept is one of phenomenology’s core contributions as a mode of immanent critique that developed whilst embedded within Western metaphysics and enlightenment thinking.²³ Stuart Hall (1979) similarly argues that we must “address ourselves ‘violently’ towards the present as it is, if we are serious about transforming it” (p. 14). Thus, it is

²² This is not a reactionary response. In fact, it is out of a deep concern that the concept of ideology had inherently structuralist implications – the critique around which Foucault (a student of ideology theorist Althusser), Hall and a range of thinkers establish their theories of discourse.

²³ It is recognized that Marxism and deep ecology represent two other traditions in the West that also developed forms of immanent critique of the dominant metaphysics and enlightenment thinking.

through critical engagement that one can seek to disrupt the hegemonic present and begin to imagine a new, future horizon of experience. Contexts more favourable to a stepping back include when “the horizon depicted hegemonically turns bleak” or “when hegemony fails to emanate possibilities” (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 97). Berger and Luckmann (1967) note that tears in the canopy appear when problems emerge from within - e.g., “deviant” (p. 115) inhabitants, an alternative is encountered in another society, generational shifts, or a rival coterie of experts raise questions about the worldview in question (e.g., environmentalists vs. economists on the issue of climate change). Finally, Purvis and Hunt (1993) argue that it is possible to refuse ideological hailing when a new discursive framework is presented to us that better resonates with our lived experience or material reality (p. 484). It is notable that all of these contexts are observable in this present moment on Turtle Island.

This concept of surplus experience is critical because it denotes realms of experience that exceed hegemonic structures of existence, suggesting that these realms have the potential of offering an interpellative sway that cannot be squashed. Akomolafe (2020a) references this stance that totalizing colonization is not possible, as a critical orientation to the decolonizing project:

Colonization isn't just theft, it is incarceration. It is the stabilization of bodies to meet the epistemic conveniences of the master's gaze. And that is why I speak of cracks and faultlines as opportunities to perform some kind of fugitive refusal of “simple atomic” locateability within liberal humanist frames. It is of the greatest importance to minoritarian bodies that we do more than seek inclusion within majoritarian paradigms. Decolonial moves are not limited to restoring what was stolen; they can include the scandalous, chuckling proposal that what was stolen was never, and has never been, fully contained.

This concept of surplus experience is thus one way of articulating that which simply enacts otherwise whether within or outside of the rules (Tully, 2008).

To the extent that relational lifeways and ontologies persist amidst a skyline of individualist lifeways, they remain as nagging tears in the phenomenological canopy (Berger & Luckmann,

1967) of individualism. As such they can be conceived of as Vahabzadeh's (2003) surplus experience, which by standing outside of the hegemonic canopy can be said to enable the reparochialization (Tully, 2016) of individualist lifeways by rendering them visible. However, one of the many wisdoms of Indigenous knowledge systems is to emphasize how these experiences – and ontologies – do not only exceed hegemonic individualism, they also precede them. This enables a deeper exploration of the concept of surplus – as enacting another ontology entirely – one that does not need to define itself against or in whilst embedded within relationship to the dominant hegemonic order of individualism. Within Tully's (2008) list of five civic actions of freedom, this surplus is thus equitable with acting otherwise or enacting another ontology altogether from the hegemonically dominant one. This is why Alfred (2005) speaks of Indigenous resurgence as the turning away from individualist, colonial lifeways. Indigenous lifeways on Turtle Island as described by the numerous Indigenous theorists referenced in this dissertation reflect knowledge traditions rooted in thousands of years of enacted practice in community and with the earth that need not define themselves by or through colonialism – though by design, colonial, individualist lifeways have systematically striven to eradicate them, so response, refusal of, and resistance to these lifeways has been essential. Whyte (2018a) describes this as “collective continuance”:

Collective continuance refers to a society's capacity to self-determine how to adapt to change in ways that avoid reasonably preventable harms. Adaptive capacity is similar to what is often meant by the concept of social resilience. In the Anishinaabe intellectual traditions I just discussed, which predate “Western” concepts of social resilience, seasonal round governance systems are highly flexible webs of relationships. The relationships are based on particular responsibilities that each party in a relationship has. Building from my more simple definition offered earlier, responsibilities refer to the reciprocal (though not necessarily equal) attitudes and patterns of behavior that are expected by and of various parties by virtue of the different roles that each may be understood to play in a relationship. Reciprocity is understood through the gift-giving and-receiving relationship in which each party has a special contribution to make. But to become a party in a relationship, one must be transformed into a relative with reciprocal obligations, and transformation often occurs

through ceremonies and other formal activities. Anishinaabe kinship relationships connected, via reciprocal responsibilities, humans with other humans, humans with nonhumans, whether spirits, plants, animals, or elements (e.g., water) and humans with particular places. The ways in which responsibilities are organized into interdependent systems facilitate the adaptive capacity of collective continuance, which I will discuss in more detail starting with the idea that responsibilities are not static or unchanging (p. 130).

From here, we note that experiences of the relational that fall surplus to hegemonic individualism, both precede and exceed colonial lifeways. Whyte (2018) notes how the erasure of the relational is a totalizing impulse that is not totalized: “Mishuana Goeman develops the concept of 'settler grammars of place' to describe 'repetitive practices of everyday life that give settler place meaning and structure' (2014: 237). Yet sedimentation and repetitiveness do not mean that there are no Indigenous ecologies living and operative in the world” (p. 138). This is not to deny the possibility that it could be totalized in the face of the structural violence of capitalist-colonialism on Turtle Island. As Whyte (2018a) notes:

Settler colonial domination can be understood as an undermining of Indigenous adaptive capacity or social resilience. A key ecological dimension of such domination is how settler colonial strategies threaten qualities of relationships that constitute Indigenous ecologies or collective continuance. Settler colonial domination does so deliberately and at a pace that is too rapid for any society to be able to reasonably adjust to without compromising its self-determination and without avoiding harms that society would historically not have been susceptible to.” (p. 137)

Non-Indigenous deep ecology traditions offer up the relational as a core interpellative structure of existence on this planet, ultimately, as Gaia citizens (Tully, 2018) and sensory beings (Abram, 1997; Berkes, 2012). In this way, one might reframe this ‘surplus’ experience as the always-already nature of physiological relationality and the physiology of intra-action (Barad, 2007) on earth. This suggests that a relational lifeworld with a relational ontological structure is accessible and present even amidst the explosive dominance of the materialized structures of individualism.

From a phenomenological standpoint, ontological structures of the lifeworld shape one's cognitive understanding of the world, but also one's potential experience within it, a phenomenon Vahabzadeh (2003) calls "experiential hegemony" (p. 97). Thus, whilst this "surplus" experience might be readily available for those communities rooted in relational ontologies and lifeways (such as ITK), to the extent that the always-already relationality of existence is a feature in every being's life, the interpellative hailing into a relational ontology is one that every being might both hear and answer. Abram (1997) argues that this might be done through engaging with one's senses beyond the rational and linguistic. One might therefore locate in this "surplus" of inherent relationality, the possibility for social change itself: hegemony's existential loophole. We might more accurately think of this surplus as the fugitive or trickster figure that is never capturable or fixable. Ironically, it is individualism's very rendering of it into the abyss – Tully's "great disembedding" – that hides relationality from the individualist lifeworld, rendering relational experience hegemonically unrecognizable and non-sensical. Because hegemonic individualism can not recognize – or represent – relationality, it can never fully colonize it – meaning every being has experiences that can never be fully colonized. Whilst individualist hegemonic orders can place invisibility cloaks over the relational, and enact both epistemic and material violence in so doing, it but it can neither destroy or banish it. It is perhaps this that Akomolafe (2020a) means when he suggests there is power in every space of oppression – not that the space of oppression grants space for that power, nor that something good can come of something bad (a la "toxic positivity"). Rather, perhaps he means that whilst individualist lifeways generate an eradicating abyss (Santos, 2016), there is always experience that can not be colonized.

Marx (1978) shows that it is not the generation of surplus itself that is a problem. Structural violence is enacted by a particular class of humans through their introduction and imposition of

systems that exploitatively generate this surplus, extract it appropriatively, and inequitably redistribute it for themselves at the direct expense of other humans and the more-than-human. Mauss (2016) shows how surplus might be used in diplomacy to achieve political harmony and balance between two distinct nations in some Indigenous communities on Turtle Island. Thus, within at least some Indigenous traditions on Turtle Island, surplus is associated with being generated through gift-reciprocity and creating abundance, such as the excess a nation might produce for a potlatch to which they invite another nation (Mauss, 2016). Within a relational frame, surplus references abundance available to all without expense to any, rather than the individualist model of scarcity, wherein it is available only to the chosen few at the expense of others.

How might we understand the phenomenological interplay between these lifeways? A re-orientation of the polarized, binary framing onto relational grounds is an essential move in this exploration if “the means sow the seeds of the end” (Tully, 2018, p. 114). A relational worldview of intra-being insists on a certain relational accountability and reparochialization (Tully, 2016) that traces and acknowledges kinship rather than making moves to eradicate or disinherit. To be clear, to consider individualist and relational lifeways as “weird cousins” (Akomolafe, 2020b) is not a move to condone or justify the processes, structures or effects of individualism. Nor is it to rationalize, reconcile or make sense of relationality on individualist terms. Rather, it is an act of calling individualism to relational account so that both lifeways can be brought into view and “genuine dialogue” (Tully, 2016, p. 53) and the move between lifeways can be better elucidated and understood. As Tully (2016) notes:

Unless there is a critical practice within a tradition or within the course of the dialogue that brings this problem to self-awareness and addresses it by bringing aspects of one’s background horizon of disclosure into the space of questions at the centre of the dialogue, genuine dialogue cannot begin (p. 53).

The process of re-parochializing individualism is a process of recontextualizing it in the socio-historical context within which it emerged, and engaging it dialogically. As colonial structures model, no dialogue takes place when entities are banished or annihilated. To proceed, a clear relational framework is needed.

There are two moves I make in order to pursue this. The first – elaborated here - is a move to re-parochialize individualist ways of being and thinking to trace their relational ancestry, drawing on the work of Tully and Foucault. The second – elaborated in the subsection below on tree canopies - is the rendering visible of how contemporary enactments of individualism draw on the same processes that relationality does (the eco-cycle or virtuous cycle), while thwarting the generative aspects of each process in distinctive ways (the ego-cycle or vicious cycle). I frame both moves within a context and understanding of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). Just as individualism thwarts eco-centric ways of being, I believe Indigenous resurgence thinkers on Turtle Island, and Tully (2016), among others, suggest that the inverse is also possible: that relational ways of being have the capacity to thwart and decompose hegemonic individualism. The strong question offered above (*How might individualist or ego-centric lifeways be transformed into relational ways of eco-social intra-being?*) must here be adapted: *Might individualist or ego-centric lifeways be transformed into relational ways of eco-social intra-being, given the former's material and structural forceful presence and totalizing impulse?* This is not a question my dissertation can purport to answer. However, it does highlight just what is at stake when we talk about decolonization.

Rooted in relational lifeways, Indigenous theory and resurgence show pathways through this terrain. While theorists such as Escobar (2015) describe these divergent worldviews as hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic processes, Indigenous theorists such as Atleo (2004) and Kimmerer (2013)

support a distinctly relational conceptualization of polarities as an essential condition for the co-generation of life. The Mi'kmaq concept of “two-eyed seeing” (Bartlett et al., 2012) and Mills’ (2018) “third way” (p. 160) beyond resurgence or reconciliation are both important entry points here as well.

The phenomenological literature²⁴ is also an accomplice in these theoretical explorations with respect to theorizing beyond binary logics (Vahabzadeh, 2019), as well as thinking through how social change within hegemonic horizons might happen as elaborated above (Vahabzadeh, 2003). As Vahabzadeh (2019) suggests, these distinctive ontological orientations to the world share a horizon within which the conditions of possibility for one are also the conditions of possibility for the other (p. 186). These two ontological orientations to the world are thus apprehended as but two potentialities emergent from an act of deworlding/reworlding of which Vahabzadeh (2019) speaks: on the one hand is the possibility of an “archic, universalizing, isomorphic violence, and on the other...an-archic...modes of nonviolent coexistence” (pp. 40-41). Vahabzadeh (2019) describes this relationship in concentric terms, which renders them not only non-binary, but makes them indeed “indivisible” (p. 186). This position suggests that a relational ontology is inherent to a phenomenological orientation, something drawn out with an explicit view to ecology by eco-phenomenologist David Abram.²⁵

In the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault (2001) plays the role of forensic historian to re-parochialize individualist ways of being and thinking, tracing their ancestry back to relational roots. He revisits an ancient Greece in which one can only ‘know thyself’ in and through

²⁴ In particular, Abram (1997), Berger & Luckmann (1967), Schürmann (1990), Schutz (1932), and Vahabzadeh (2003, 2019).

²⁵ In my methodology chapter, I engage phenomenology and Indigenous theory in conversation, proposing that the more-than-human through the concept of “All Our Relations” enhances and transforms conceptions of intersubjectivity as framed within the field of phenomenology, drawing on the work of phenomenologists such as Abram (1997).

relationship with others. Arguing that this relational thread plays a central role in the historical development of Western individualism, he shows it to be a tradition that is intra-actively woven out of multiple traditions within the West, including a “relational mode of knowledge” (p. 235). Beyond pointing to the baselessness of individualism’s grounds, Foucault points out that it is uprooted even from the traditions and roots from whence it came. The relationality that Foucault encounters in ancient Greece troubles a contemporary²⁶ individualism’s self-image. A master trickster, in one fell swoop Foucault points out that even individualism has relational ancestry.

Similarly, Tully (2018) might be read as tracing the stories of individualism and intra-being across Western and non-Western traditions. He observes relational stories of intra-being within numerous Indigenous traditions, non-Western cultural traditions, ecological and spiritual movements, and within a plurality of democratizing practices, movements and processes located in the West. These relational lifeways are characterized by Tully (2018) as enacting practices of ecological and Gaia democratic engagement and a relational ethos that nurtures gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships with self, others and earth, in the regeneration of virtuous cycles of life. These lifeways, based in a relational ontology of the interconnectedness of all of life, resonate with stories of intra-being told by Indigenous governance and legal systems as well as a diversity of ethno-cultural and spiritual traditions around the world. In this way, Tully’s work consistently points to what countless Indigenous traditions and communities have long showed – the perseverance of lifeways that, in their resilience and rootedness, even in the face of systematized structures of genocidal oppression, were never destroyed.

This suggests that the project of reparaochializing an individualist order might not be a process of unveiling some sort of ‘pure’ ontological ancestry, or of providing it a form of ethical

²⁶ As Benjamin noted: “History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 261).

rescue, but of examining how individualist and relational ontologies intra-acted through its elaboration and enactment. If we can identify the relational threads strewn through individualist institutions, they can perhaps be used to sympoetically²⁷ reconnect these systems back to the relational.

Post-abysal thinking (Santos, 2007) demands of us that we think and act beyond the ontological bounds of individualism and in terms of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). Santos (2016) defines Southern epistemologies not by geography but “in the form of excluded, silenced and marginalised populations, such as undocumented immigrants, the unemployed, ethnic or religious minorities, and victims of sexism, homophobia, racism and islamophobia” (pp. 18-19). In particular, Santos’ (2007) concept of the “abysal line” (p. 46) is a critical observation about how individualist institutions and lifeways marginalize, erase and render individuals and beings into the abyss in every moment right before one’s eyes:

What most fundamentally characterizes abysal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, non-dialectical absence (p. 45).

If “disconnection doesn’t exist except artificially” (Mills, 2018, p. 160), post-abysal thinking might be imagined as a decolonial mapping of the abyss, the processes and the lines by which relational connections were invisibilized. Tully (2018) suggests this mapping process enables us to step towards refusing our consent: transformative reconnection requires seeing the outcomes of a vicious social system so we might free “ourselves from its hold on our perception and behavior” (p. 113). As colonial histories and presents amply show, any essentializing claim

²⁷ Some systems theorists claim that an unhealthy system might be healed by connecting it more to itself, suggesting that the source of morbidity in a given system is always disconnection or its deparochializing move towards the universal. Francisco Varela, the Chilean biologist and neuroscientist who co-introduced the concept of sympoiesis to biology, states: “When a living system is suffering from ill health, the remedy is found by connecting with more of itself” (Ogden, 2016).

about any tradition or culture warrant our deepest suspicion as supremacist thinking. Tully's (2018) and Foucault's (2001) accounts both open up passageways that not only disrupt any potential meta-narratives about the "West" but also stir up an awareness of the diversity within it that colonial individualism has sought to erase. Foucault and Tully both show that whilst Western institutions may be historically embedded in individualist stories of disconnect which they have also actively reproduced, relational threads have also intra-actively shaped their becoming. Just because the majority of actors, institutions and processes within Western institutions have endorsed and continue to invoke structures of individualism to vicious effect, they have not consistently done so, and their continued allegiance to these structures is up for debate, disruption, and relational challenge.

2.4 Worldviews as Creation stories

Whilst below I put forward the notion of worldviews as distinct types of canopies, I do so by first engaging with Kimmerer's (2013) observation that worldviews are understood through the creation stories or stories of origin that we tell. Understanding the nature of these distinct creation stories helps to elucidate the contours and qualities of the lifeworlds or ontological canopies, as well as their foundations. Despite their co-existence, one can see that the creation stories underpinning an individualist vs. a relational ontology not only have radically different beginnings, plotlines and backdrops, but they generate radically different endings: Tully's (2013) vicious vs. virtuous cycles of life.

Indigenous theorists and academics on Turtle Island often share creation stories in their texts as a means of relaying the ontological, cultural, spiritual, relational and land-based contexts and lifeways within which their words are spoken and to be read, contextualized and understood. Kimmerer (2013) notes that creation stories "are a source of identity and orientation to the world"

(p. 7). As Mills (2018) states: “Creation stories set out a people’s way of being in and (if rooted) of the earth” (p. 157). When compared with many non-Indigenous theorists hailing from Western theoretical traditions, the practice is noteworthy for its distinctive academic style. However, it has another effect – that of pointing to the “absent presence” of implicit creation stories within all theory *and* practice – whether acknowledged or not. While creation stories have been historically banished from the hallways of Western and non-Indigenous theoretical traditions and academic institutions, there is no doubt that – as ontology – they haunt all pathways of thought and practice. As Kimmerer (2013) writes: “We are inevitably shaped by [cosmologies] no matter how distant they may be from our consciousness” (p. 7).

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer (2013) notes how different the Potawatomi creation story of Skywoman and Turtle Island is from the Judeo-Christian biblical story of Adam and Eve:

On one side of the world were people whose relationships with the living world was shaped by Skywoman, who created a garden for the well being of all. On the other side was another woman with a garden and a tree. But for tasting its fruit, she was banished from the garden and the gates clanged shut behind her. That mother of men was made to wander in the wilderness and earn her bread by the sweat of her brow, not by filling her mouth with the sweet juicy fruits that bend the ranches low. In order to eat, she was instructed to subdue the wilderness into which she was cast. Same species, same earth, different stories... One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banishment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven (pp. 6-7).

Whilst each Indigenous creation story is locally, culturally, ecologically and historically specific, reflective of the immense heterogeneity within and across thousands of Indigenous nations and communities across Turtle Island, Indigenous creation stories share an ontological premise of relationality that articulates a world that is collaboratively co-created by human and more-than-human beings who are all kin (“All Our Relations”). They are relational creation stories that articulate relational worldviews, ontologies and understandings of the world. In contrast,

Kimmerer (2013) reads the story of Adam and Eve as a story of the first humans being actively and intentionally disembedded from a rooted, relational world.

Kimmerer's (2013) reading of this story as one of banishment, extreme trauma and dissociation articulates an individualist story that is observably implicit in much of Western political theory texts. For example, in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, the primacy of the discrete, isolated individual is overt within a theory of human nature that is based upon an assumed disconnect from one another and the earth. Rousseau's (2004) concept of 'the general will' and social contract is designed to mitigate against this vulnerability by offering a structure through which humans might secure relationships and ensure their safety (pp. 2-3), precisely because there is no natural relationship between humans for Rousseau, let alone between humans and the "untamed" wildness of nature. The traces of a creation story in which humans are uprooted through their banishment from a babylonian paradise are not subtle here. However, like these exiled ancestral characters, Rousseau is quick to clothe this individualist underbelly through proposing a self-insulating individualist logic of the social order.

Thomas King (2003) warns of the power of stories, including stories of trauma: "...once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world..." (p. 10). Despite the impossibility of being disconnected from the relational world of the earth, individualist stories of disconnect such as this keep being told through colonial structures that enact epistemic, cultural, ecological and physical violence through enacting separation on selves, others and earth. These structures include the knowledge production systems that justify, rationalize and/or take these structures for granted as given.

Humans' separation from the earth is a paramount moment within individualist stories of disconnect insofar as it is this moment of uprootedness that enables the "artificial" grounds of

individualism to be established. Mills (2018) writes, “Rooted constitutionalism would say disconnection doesn’t exist except artificially, and I would add that it’s the first step off of the path of growth, onto the path of progress” (p. 160). Individualism’s *terra nullius* creation story is the ultimate story of separation. It is from these baseless grounds that it then cloaks and conceals not only the Other within its midst, but also the fact of its social constructedness. In this moment of individualistic delusion, earth becomes a backdrop for human existence, Indigenous peoples and histories are erased, and humans are no longer of the land, but the land becomes an *it* (Kimmerer, 2013) that is of humans through ownership structures that exert hierarchical dominance, non-consent and violence. Mills (2018) notes of Canadian settler society: “Instead of growing from the earth, they’re progressing away from it...They recognize only earth, not earth way, and as such fail to treat earth as an always already connected family of beings with whom to stand in relationship” (pp. 158-159). In this vacuum of belonging, artificial categories of belonging (e.g., citizens of nation state x, etc.) are established and enforced. To the extent that humans are interpellated into this call, it is the moment they conceive of themselves as separate from the earth’s eco-cycle and the relational world – despite the complete impossibility of doing so.

The artificial and dissociated conceptions of self, other and earth that this story generates thus become the uprooted – or baseless – grounds upon which all individualist ways of thinking and being are set forth, explained and justified. Western stories of progress, limitless economic growth and consumption, conceptions of property, and sanctioned systems of hierarchy, violence, inequality and domination as operationalized through anthropocentrism, colonialism, whiteness, cisheteropatriarchy and capitalism can only be justified and explained within this uprooted individualist sensibility.

Such *terra nullius* thinking becomes the baseless but nonetheless breeding grounds of claims to universality and dominance while simultaneously imposing always bounded, us/them lines of kinship. The “spatial-temporal parochial grounds” (Tully, 2016, p. 5) of this claim are erased through their literal baselessness or uprootedness, effecting its assertion as reality, and use of low context language. Umeeek (2004) notes “low context language” (p. 3) as a key means through which the English language actively thwarts and devalues parochial context and relationship. Referring to this moment of separation as a delusion of consciousness, Einstein notes the ways it reinscribes humans’ experience and perceptions of their relationships:

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty (Albert Einstein, as quoted in Briggs, 2016).

Terra nullius, the grounds upon which settler colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and lifeways is commonly established, are thus ultimately the result of a creation story of trauma and delusion. Within a relational ontology of intra-being such as Kimmerer (2013) and Mills (2018) describe, individualist stories are nonsensical, baseless and uprooted from reality. It is an individualist, ego-centric pattern of deluded consciousness that banishes the relational world, exhibiting an “open hostility” to interdependence (Mills, 2018, p. 159). In contrast, the kind of co-presence and sets of responsibilities that relationality demand cannot fail to render visible the falsity of individualist claims.

Insofar as Western institutions, structures and lifeways enact and tell (implicitly or explicitly) a creation story of separation, they reference an ancestral individualist creation story in which the human individual is the unit through which life is encountered and apprehended. It is

the same “us/them” story that justifies colonialism, anthropocentrism, capitalism, whiteness/racism and cisheteropatriarchy.

2.5 An Eco-Social Relational Tree Canopies Framework

Creation stories offer critical insights into the nature of the foundations on which individualist and relational ontologies are based, as well as the contours and qualities of the lifeways through which they are enacted. I propose the metaphors of tent and tree canopies²⁸ as a relational theoretical framework through which to encounter these distinctive worldviews, creation stories or ontologies. As Tully (2018) argues, seeing the outcomes of a vicious social system is an important element of freeing “ourselves from its hold on our perception and behavior” (p. 113). I use this canopies framework to more closely examine the elements and processes of both virtuous and vicious lifeways. In particular, I examine the virtuous cycle of life as represented through the eco-cycle as depicted by McCandless & Lipmanowicz (2013) and the vicious cycle of life as represented through an ego-cycle diagram.

Placing some phenomenological vigilance and caution in the foreground²⁹, I forward my canopies metaphor as a framework to explore the distinct ontologies: a *tent canopy* to reflect a dis-embedded/ing, individualist ontology of disconnect, and *tree canopies* to reflect a relational ontology of pluralistic, relational intra-being. Inspired by Mills’ (2018) “Rooted Constitutionalism,” human traditions of thought (Indigenous, Southern and Western), and the wisdoms offered by tree canopies, the metaphors are invoked to support a distinctly *relational* exploration of the relationships and pathways between seemingly disconnected lifeways. Insofar as a tent canopy is premised upon its disembeddedness and imposed, social constructedness, it is a

²⁸ I first introduced this framework, and the following ego-cycle diagram in Rebecca Nelems, “Other Wise Democracies: What the Tree Canopies Know” (forthcoming).

²⁹ See below with respect to the risks of forwarding a relational framework amidst a colonial, individualist society, in reference to the important cautionary note that Starblanket and Stark (2018) observe.

structure of containment that externally frames and hegemonically conceals other canopies. The bounds and shape of tree canopies meanwhile are porously contoured by the relationships and intra-actions between the pluralistic entities that constitute them, within which they are also rooted. They are rooted, indicating relationality, reciprocity and enacted responsibility. Here the eco-cycle is introduced as a model through which to examine the co-existence of vicious and virtuous cycles of life in tree canopies.

This canopies framework critically draws on Berger and Luckmann's (1967) conception of worldviews as phenomenological "canopies of understanding". In their theory, lifeworlds reflect the enacted structures of understanding by which a given society makes sense of the world. The canopy reflects a given society's collective sense-making as articulated and upheld through its norms, language, practices, institutions, laws and rules which collectively refer to its broader and underpinning "lawgic" of which its legal system is just one expression. Phenomena that do not fit within the bounds of its sense-making appear as literal "non-sense", rendered unintelligible or invisibilized. A key feature of this canopy is its self-presentation as the universal or sky. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that the "social stock of knowledge" of a given worldview operates like a flashlight in a forest (p. 45), which whilst presenting an integrated view of the narrow world lit by its narrow cone, "leaves the totality of the world opaque...[in] a background of darkness" (p. 44). Signifiers, concepts and institutions within this canopy of meaning are reified as "common sense" and naturalized in ways that conceal the fact of their social constructedness. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that "[t]he objectivity of the institutional world 'thickens' and 'hardens,'" generating a "firmness of consciousness" (p. 58). Phenomenologists refer to the encountering of a worldview as the air one breathes as having a 'natural attitude' towards the world, an orientation that necessarily conceals the constructed and parochial context of the canopy. Within the canopy,

social actors are both acted upon by the institutions, practices and categories that uphold the canopy, and are the actors that themselves actively reproduce its structure and architecture.

While they present their canopy of understanding as a universal sociological theory, a phenomenological examination of it from a relational vantage point re-parochializes Berger and Luckmann's conception of lifeworlds as having distinctly individualist contours. Insofar as Berger and Luckmann's anthropocentric canopy is uprooted from relationships with the earth and controls what is epistemically and relationally encountered, the establishment of a "canopy of understanding" as Berger and Luckmann describe it indeed metaphorically conveys the very process of re-embedding humans in individualist institutions such as Tully (2018) describes (p. 109). It mirrors the hegemonic process Vahabzadeh (2003) describes by which actors are "resettled" within new "cognitive grounds and experiential terrains" with reconstituted selves (p. 65). Enabling and limiting what those embedded in it encounter and apprehend in the world, it functions by mode of rigid enclosure like a tent canopy.

A key feature of the tent is thus not just its concealment or implicit erasure of the other and otherwise who are overdetermined through their simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, but its cloaking of itself from itself. Berger and Luckmann's canopy is Scharmer's (2020) system that does not see itself. It is the structure of "modern Western thinking" or "abyssal thinking" that generates Santos' (2007) abyssal line:

It [abyssal thinking] consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of "this side of the line" and the realm of "the other side of the line". The division is such that "the other side of the line" vanishes as reality becomes nonexistent, and is indeed produced as nonexistent. Nonexistent means not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being. Whatever is produced as nonexistent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other. What most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the

field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, non-dialectical absence (pp. 45-46).

As Vahabzadeh (2003) notes, hegemony not only refers to “a type of institutional organization of the polity, hegemony refers to the moment of ontological institution of the social” (p. 97) – and more specifically, to the moment of ontological institution of an individualist social order. Berger and Luckmann’s canopy is reproduced unseen to the extent to which individuals offer their hegemonic consent to it as the universal sky, and are successfully interpellated into the roles, identities and experiences on offer to them within it. To the extent that this consent is given, the canopy itself remains unseen, the air one breathes. Hall (1995) refers to “common sense” or “the regime of the ‘taken for granted’” as “a moment of extreme ideological closure” (p. 105). It reflects Vahabzadeh’s moment of epistemic violence and experiential hegemony, as the canopy establishing epistemic boundaries can never be fully referential to one’s experience (Vahabzadeh, 2003). For this reason, the tent canopy not only acts upon bodies and beings through modes of exclusion and banishment from its bounds, it acts through modes of enclosure and erasure – both epistemically and physically.

Hall’s (1979) call for us to “address ourselves ‘violently’ towards the present as it is, if we are serious about transforming it” (p. 14) is not a call to physical violence, but to an Akomolafe-style fugitive mutiny that unsettles, deparochializes and transforms the individualist tent canopy from both its epistemic and physical violences. To do so, the wisdom of another type of canopy is needed – one that is not imposed or uprooted on *terra nullius* grounds. Inspired by Mills’ (2018) rooted constitutionalism, I turn to the more-than-human ecosystem of the trees for a different form of canopy that is pluralistic, and rooted in the relational in ways that precede and exceed individualist thinking and being:

A juniper tree has its roots planted deep in the heart of the earth. As a result it is solid and strong. But some trees that appear to be quite steady, need only one raging storm to knock them down. Resilient trees can weather a violent storm because their roots are deep and firm.... To be strong a tree sends a number of roots deep into the soil. If a tree has only one root, it may be blown over by the wind (Naht Hanh, 2015, p. 36).

As elaborated above, experiences of “social and ecological relationships of interdependency” (Tully, 2018, p. 113) promise to tear holes in an individualist canopy, for it is precisely in experiences that are surplus to the hegemonic fabric that individuals might begin to withdraw their consent (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 98). However, the individualist canopy is quick to repair itself. Starblanket and Stark (2018) caution of the tendency of a colonial system to absorb and coopt any challenges to its integrity, resulting in the hegemonic canopy being patched up rather than transformed. This is why it is so essential to placing a certain amount of phenomenological vigilance and caution in the foreground when forwarding my framework. It is critical that any such relational canopy be formulated on its own terms rather than discursively translated (Coulthard, 2014) through a colonial, individualist lens. Given its relationality and interconnectedness, a canopy of relational intra-being is a radically different structure than Berger and Luckmann’s tent canopy. For one, the latter’s abstract or universal prototype fails to reflect the rootedness of an ontology of intra-being in specific, contextualized and localized relationships with actual (vs. theoretical) others and the earth. Insofar as tree canopies are the material manifestation of the particular intra-actions between the beings and their lifeways in its midst, they are defined by their rootedness in place, pluralism and relationships – meaning no two tree canopies are alike, and the number of possible canopies is infinite. The tree canopy is in fact an entire ecosystem, which is by its nature a collective, reflective of the collective continuance (Whyte, 2018a) of relational lifeways. Conceiving of a lifeworld as a collective denotes a different

structure and a distinct form of the intra-subjectivity that co-generates it.³⁰ Trees are but one form of life within a tree canopy and no more important than the countless beings including soils, minerals, mycelium, sunlight, air, bugs and creatures, waters, rocks and those connected to the weather systems that shape the life of their ecosystem. Each ‘being’ in the canopy, including trees, might not even be considered a single entity, but constituted by many beings, and part of a much larger assemblage of life.³¹ In addition to their being an infinite number of unique tree canopies in the world, tree canopies are also not discrete or closed ecosystems, but porous to the diversity of life forms in their midst, who co-create the particularities of a given tree canopy’s pathways, permacultures, landscape, lifeforms, enclosures, points of growth, maturity, destruction, rigidities and boundaries. Additionally, many of their various elements, inhabitants and citizens do not pertain or relate to one tree canopy alone. This reflects the important element of migration within collective continuance to which Whyte (2018a) refers.

In these ways, tree canopies disclose themselves in ways similar to Tully’s (2018) multiverse of “being-there (*Dasein*) and being-with (*Mitsein*)”:

...Ways of life of humans are seen perspectively, as one moves around; neither as independent, all the same, nor antagonistic; but, rather, interconnected and interdependent by infinitely complex webs of similarities and dissimilarities expressed in the languages of the world. This is the participatory experience of diversity awareness, of the lifeworld as a multiverse rather than universe, and of being-human *as* both being-there (*Dasein*) and being-with (*Mitsein*) (p. 62).

³⁰ I elaborate a theory of eco-social intra-subjectivity in chapter 3.

³¹ Thich Nhat Hanh (2009) writes: “I asked the leaf whether it was scared because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling. The leaf told me, ‘No. During this whole spring and summer I was very alive. I worked hard and helped nourish the tree, and much of me is in that tree. Please do not say I am only that form, because this leaf form is only a tiny part of me. I am the whole tree. I know that I am already inside the tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. That’s why I do not worry. As I leave the branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, ‘I will see you again very soon.’ Suddenly I saw a kind of wisdom very much like the wisdom contained in the Heart Sutra. You have to *see* life. You shouldn’t say, life *of* the leaf, but life *in* the leaf, and life *in* the tree. My life is just Life, and you can see it in me and in the tree. That day there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leave the branch and float down to the soil, dancing joyfully, because as it floated it saw itself already there in the tree. It was so happy. I bowed my head and I knew we have a lot to learn from the leaf.” (p. 23).

The following watercolour paintings were created for me by my colleague and friend, Karen Yen, to illustrate a tent vs. a tree canopy, drawing on knowledges that only artistic expressions can inspire.



© Tent Canopy, by Karen Yen (2021)

An important element of both images to point out – and to the metaphor of canopies which I forward – is that the presence of the human is in both. Indigenous critiques of the environmental movement have observed that when rooted in a colonial, individualist logic, environmentalism often imagines or proposes an imaginary of a pure, pristine wilderness in which people do not appear. Kimmerer (2013) shares a story of being surprised and saddened by the perception and perspective of a group of non-Indigenous students who could not identify any benefits or gifts that humans had made to the more-than-human. This individualist view has the effect of imposing a

universalizing, colonial view that both maintains the separation of humans from nature, and homogenizes all human beings as having engaged in the vicious lifeways that have led to ecocidal damage to the earth. Davis and Todd (2016) note the ways in which the very term Anthropocene also enacts this effect, arguing that the term must be located within the colonial.



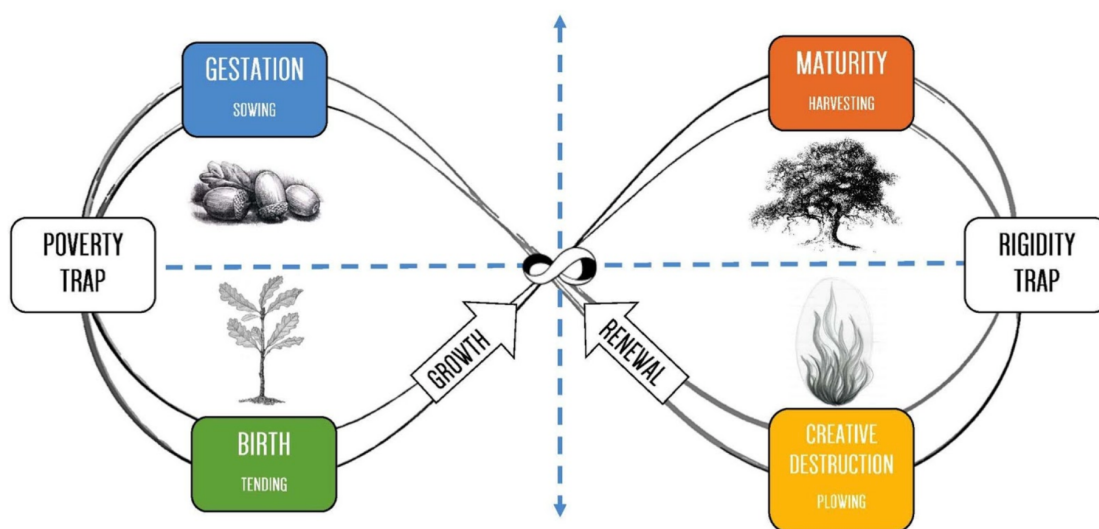
© Tree Canopies, by Karen Yen (2021)

However, the presence and participation of humans in each image is distinct. Like all ecosystems, tree canopies are dynamic, emergent, elaborate labyrinths of beings that engage in the re-generation of life as distinctly manifest in each ecosystem. Here, the pathway represents the authors' interpretation of but one way humans might participate in a given ecosystem through the

presence of a visible pathway, built of the degradable elements of the forest itself. In the image of the tent canopy, however, the tent is constructed out of materials not entirely recognizable or necessarily degradable in the forest, erected on a platform that separates canopy from earth, and enclosing a view to those inside of that which might lie outside. The image of the tent situated within or encroaching upon a given tree canopy lends itself as a metaphor for the settler colonial state, however tree canopies also invite non-binary ways of thinking that move beyond a capitalist-colonial conception of the spatial.

Within tree canopies, the eco-cycle model supports an exploration of how virtuous and vicious cycles of life might not only co-exist, but intra-act. While its roots hail from global governance theory, the *eco-cycle* as depicted by McCandless and Lipmanowicz (2013) is used in Western systems theory to explore the complexity of human systems in which apparently contradictory or incommensurate impulses are at play. Sharing the same shape of the Metis or infinity symbol, the eco-cycle depicts four distinct moments in an ecological system: Growth,

Figure 1. Eco-Cycle



Co-developed by Keith McCandless + Henri Lipanowicz (2013)
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Maturity, Creative Destruction and Gestation. While these can be conceived of as the distinct stages in a single entity's life cycle, or the four distinct seasons of Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter, within systems thinking, it is recognized that in any natural ecosystem, including human systems, each stage is at play at any given moment within the broader system.

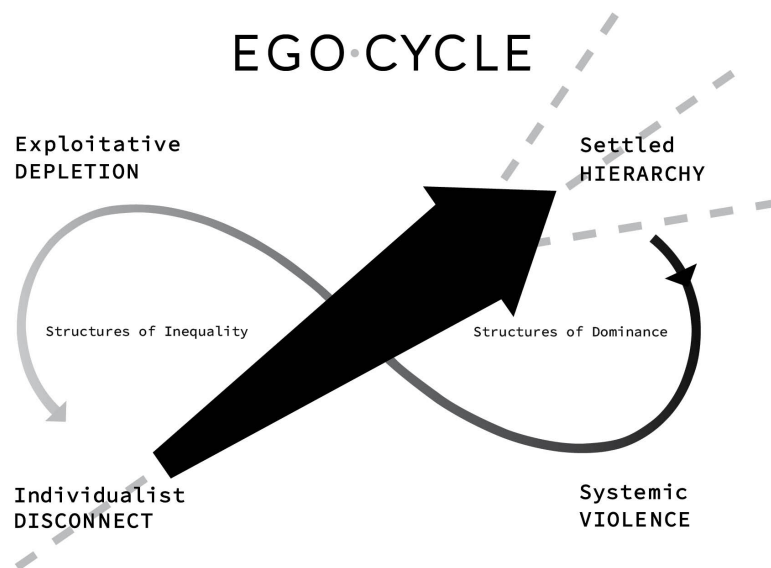
When systems theorists apply the lens of this cycle to human organizations and systems in the West, they note two traps that the latter tend to fall into: the poverty trap and the rigidity trap. The poverty trap is located between the stages of Gestation and Growth such that insufficient investment back into the permaculture needed for life (whether social, economic, political, cultural or ecological) leads to the starvation or extinguishment of needed, diverse growth for the overall health of the ecosystem. In a tree canopy, indicators of a poverty gap include the depletion, erosion, or loss of nutrients needed by the lifeforms that make it up and support the regeneration of life. In a human-dominated system, this trap entails the systemic failure to invest in and the destruction of the conditions within which distinctive lifeways can regenerate or proliferate themselves in regenerative ways, not unlike Whyte's (2018a) depiction of how settler colonialism destroys Indigenous peoples' "collective continuance" (p. 137).

The rigidity trap meanwhile falls between the stages of Maturity and Creative Destruction. In a tree canopy, one example of the Creative Destruction stage is tall trees eventually falling from canopy to forest floor where they in fact can generate more life to the eco-system than they did when standing. In human-dominated systems, indicators of this trap include the material structuring of the world according to individualist logics of ownership, hierarchy and capitalist-colonial accumulation, ownership, dispossession and legalized hierarchies. Relational structures, such as Indigenous governance and legal systems, are circumscribed, limited hegemonically

absorbed or destroyed in the service of keeping the hegemonically dominant structures and processes of capitalist-colonialism intact.

In my interpretation, these traps are ultimately the result of the individualist impulse of capitalist-colonial lifeways within which certain classes of people thwart the inherent relationality involved in each stage of the eco-cycle such that another, distinct cycle, lifeworld and canopy of being is enacted: an ego-cycle.

Figure 2. Ego-Cycle



© Rebeccah Nelems (2022); Graphic co-designed by Rebeccah Nelems & Amanda Pentland

Through my proposed diagram of the ego-cycle, I suggest that, by design, vicious lifeways thwart each of the stages and processes of the eco-cycle, rationalized through a linear individualistic logic that is delusional (noted by the dotted lines of exponential growth and expansion vs. the regenerative infinity symbol). This “us/them” logic of disconnect is necessarily abyssal (Santos, 2007) insofar as it can only justify conceptions of growth, hierarchy and abuse through a disruption of relational lines of accountability, kinship, responsibility and gift-

reciprocity. The line formulated by the words “Structures of inequality” and “Structures of dominance” is intended to reflect Santos’ (2007) abyssal line. This logic renders the material effects of its systems of domination invisible, or an inevitable by-product – which I aim to depict through the fading of the lines the further along the cycle one goes. However, by showing these lines, I intend to show how each stage of the ego-cycle represents a distortion of the eco-cycle (e.g. settled hierarchy vs. maturity).

This model of structural violence reflects how the stages of the eco-cycle are thwarted such that an individualist logic of linear, exponential and ever-expanding growth is erected and imposed. A system operating according to individualism and ego-centrism is inherently ecocidal, epistemocidal and genocidal. When structural violence appears in the tree canopy, it is an extinction-level event – in which the entangled relationships that constitute the resilience of the tree canopy are systemically disrupted in ways that decrease the biodiversity of the ecosystem on a large scale. By destroying the relationships, the lines of responsibilities and gift-reciprocity inherent in the system are also destroyed, as described by Whyte (2018a) in reference to his concept of “collective continuance” (p. 137):

In the Anishinaabe intellectual traditions...which predate “Western” concepts of social resilience, seasonal round governance systems are highly flexible webs of relationships. The relationships are based on particular responsibilities that each party in a relationship has. Building from my more simple definition offered earlier, responsibilities refer to the reciprocal (though not necessarily equal) attitudes and patterns of behavior that are expected by and of various parties by virtue of the different roles that each may be understood to play in a relationship. Reciprocity is understood through the gift-giving and-receiving relationship in which each party has a special contribution to make (p. 130).

The ego-cycle offers important clarifications on the relationships between hegemonic systems of structural violence referenced throughout this dissertation, such as capitalism, colonialism, anthropocentrism, whiteness/racism, cisheteropatriarchy. For example, when compared with the eco-cycle, it is possible to see how the individualist logic of disconnect thwarts

the eco-cycle stages with respect to the generation of surplus. Growth, the moment in which surplus is generated, is achieved through the exploitation of the majority human and more-than-human world for the extraction and appropriation of the minority few. It is then unequally re-distributed and enjoyed to the further depletion of the beings from whence it was violently extracted.

While the eco-cycle as depicted by McCandless and Lipmanowicz (2013) in its two dimensionality might suggest a certain equilibrium (except for the two traps) is desirable or even true to an ecological system, Whyte (2018a) importantly qualifies that ecology is not an equilibrium, but a “transmotion,” constant migration and the interplay between persisting and emerging relationships” (p. 134). This centering of the relational is critical in considering how the ego-cycle disrupts and re-structures relationships in ways that eschew reciprocity, responsibilities and ultimately, the resilience of peoples and the more-than-human.

McCandless and Lipmanowicz’s (2013) “rigidity trap” helpfully signals the moment in the ego-cycle at which materially violent relationships are structurally secured through the political, economic and social institutions established and legitimized by a ruling class through a capitalist-colonial system. This is the moment in which beings are organized into distinct classes of being. Relationships of humans with themselves, one another, and with the more-than human are violently destroyed and re-structured in this moment. These are the relationships into which we are re-embedded after our violent disembedding from ourselves and our relationships in the moment of “dispossession, dis-embedding and discrediting of the participatory reciprocity view of life” (p. 108) of which Tully (2018) speaks. Separation occurs from self with respect to not only one’s labour (Marx, 1978) but also in so far as we are separated from ourselves *as* relationships (Wilson and Wilson, 2016). Separation of humans from one another is established through the various

hierarchical and binary-based systems of being established: e.g., class, racism/whiteness, cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, etc. Finally, the entire system is founded on a separation with the more-than human such that dominion rather than responsibility defines the capitalist-colonial relationship to the “land” and all more-than-human beings. Meanwhile, the “poverty trap” indicates the logical and material effects of these structures of violence.

The capitalist-colonial system is thus dependent upon the individualist principle of separation or disconnect (Mills, 2018), which authors and traditions refer to in a diversity of ways, including violence (Whyte, 2018), alienation (Marx, 1978) and/or extraction (Klein, 2014) – with whiteness/racism, class, cisheteropatriarchy and anthropocentrism as the critical and intersecting modalities by which it is structured, hegemonically mobilized and operationalized. Violent disconnect is thus not only a foundational moment of enacting the ego-cycle, or vicious cycle of life, but the mode or lifeways by which it is enacted despite its distinct articulations in different contexts (Connell, 2016). Whyte (2018a) observes that individualist hierarchical structures such as patriarchy are noted for their non-relationality, or I might qualify, their disruption of relationships. They also “undermine consent” (Whyte, 2018a, p. 135) and thus not only the possibility of ethically engaging another on their own terms (Tully, 2016).

I elaborate on the destructive effects of individualism and the vicious cycle of life as related to the stages of the eco-cycle as follows:

- In the eco-cycle’s first stage, the process of regenerative **growth** of the eco-cycle is thwarted by a logic of **individualist disconnect** that enacts the moment of disembedding of which Tully (2018) speaks. It is Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden, a moment shaped of (and shaping of) trauma and dissociation of self from self, self from others and self from earth. These disconnecting lifeways trade in growth generated through gift-reciprocity for growth obtained

through the exploitation of humans and more-than-humans by a dominant group of people whose justification for imperialistic expansive, exponential growth is organized around linear thinking about the individual unit, such as a nation, a race or any other re-embedded categories (Tully, 2018) of “us”. The rich contributions of difference within the ego-cycle are thwarted, wielded instead as a cause for marginalization or privilege, and logics of scarcity and vulnerability are generated. Within this moment, ego-centric lifeways are established through alienated processes of production, exploitation of natural and human resources, over-extraction, and economic, political, social and cultural capital is accrued for the few at the expense of the many.

- The **maturity** stage of the eco-cycle is thwarted in the ego-cycle by the solidification of hierarchies generated through the logic of disconnect. These rigidified orders mark bodies through abyssal lines that fix, invisibilize and interpellate. The economic, political, social or cultural capital generated is redistributed by dominant actors along these lines, which are hegemonically and materialistically consolidated through structures and systems of being that regenerate these hierarchies. The stage of maturity is thus distorted into **settled hierarchies** – the reification of abyssal thinking that naturalizes lifeways of dominance, inequality and violence through a conglomerate economic, political, social and cultural order. These institutions and traditions secure top-down power-over, diminishing beings’ potential for engaging in collaborative, democratic process (power-with) and devaluing participatory voice (power-of).

- **Creative destruction** in the eco-cycle is the falling away of that which reached maturity through composting in order to give way for the new. In the ego-cycle, this moment is inverted, becoming ‘destructive creation’ through the generation of structures and **systems of violence** that organize and determine which bodies are destroyed. Logics of domination defy those of intra-being. The connection between settled lifeways and systems of capitalist-colonial violence

is invisibilized, through normalization of the latter by political, social, economic and cultural mechanisms, institutions (legal, governance), discourses, and lifeways interpellated by a logic of disconnect.

- Finally, **gestation** is thwarted by **exploitative depletion**. The ultimate byproduct of all other stages of the ego-cycle, there is not only insufficient replenishment and regeneration of the needed permacultures of life, but further exploitation of humans and more-than-humans is required to maintain the capitalist-colonial lifeways of exponential and unfettered growth. Further depletion is seen as the inevitable collateral damage of lifeways that are not relationally accountable, rather than the generated result of ego-centric lifeways.

Rather than suggesting these are entirely different and incommensurate ontologies and lifeways, this mapping of the ways in which the ego-centric thwarts the eco-centric suggests there is a profound intimacy between the two. This intimacy suggests the potentialities at any given moment in any given system to utilize the processes and premises of the eco-cycle to reclaim and disrupt the ego-cycle in order to re-establish its regenerative phases and relational accountability to each part and the whole. In my next sub-section, I pursue how engaging in a genuinely dialogical (Tully, 2016) process between the two lifeways offers one pathway by which the eco-centric can inspire actions to disrupt and thwart the ego-cycle.

While I strive to lay the ontological structure of individualism that is enacted by capitalist-colonial systems bare through the ego-cycle diagram, the model does not on its own optimally support an analysis of how humans might be hegemonically interpellated into such lifeways of violence, or consent to reproducing such systems of violence. As noted above, a core aspect of hegemony is not just the imposition of systems and structures of living that violently impose material realities on a population. It is the element that makes this project collective (Connell,

2016) in the first place – by interpellating subjects who will not only live by the rules, but enact and reproduce them willingly themselves. It is this aspect of the system that makes it hegemonic rather than totalitarian: its settled-ness.

For Connell (2016), hegemony is established through indoctrination of beliefs – such as missionary projects – institutions – including education, civil society, legal and governance systems – and “hegemonic mechanisms” such as “settler-colonial masculinities” (p. 307). Collectively, these institutions constitute the lifeworld or inter-subjectively co-generated canopy of meaning (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) by which a group of people live. The lifeways naturalized, supported and reproduced by individuals within a given canopy enact the lifeworld or worldview – the founding ontology – of the dominant social order. This is the domain of worldview and hegemony with which I am predominantly concerned in this dissertation: how precisely, within a particular region (Turtle Island) might individuals - or a group of individuals – not only refuse their consent to egocentric lifeways that generate the hegemonic order, but enact otherwise? It is for this reason that I focus on youth climate justice activists insofar as they vocally and diversely articulate this same preoccupation. However, more than that, they show promising pathways for how to counter-hegemonically engage institutions in ways that decolonize and transform them, as explored in chapters six and seven of this dissertation.

To explore this phenomenological aspect of hegemonic construction, I return to the tent canopy metaphor, which I earlier proposed as reflective of the individualist, capitalist-colonial lifeworld, and a discussion about how the tent canopy and ego-cycle might be brought together. In the tent canopy metaphor, the ontology of individualist disconnect is reflected through both the platform and tent that physically disconnects humans from the earth and more-than human, as well as the implication of separation between humans (there is only room for so many in the tent). The

opaque tent cover indicates the rigidity of imposed structures, but as almost all that can be seen by those inside, it also represents the hegemonic quality by which these structures and lifeways that enact them become normalized as the lifeworld, the sky, and just what is.

The tent structure supports a thinking-through of the politics of representation and the concept of what counter-hegemony or decolonization might mean. In an individualist lifeworld of capitalist-colonialism, inclusion of the previously excluded within the tent does not change its structure. Fanon's (1952) analysis of post-colonial states shows how the capitalist-colonial structure of these nations is left intact even when the colonizer leaves and the colonized are invited to step into the shoes left behind by the colonizers. Coulthard (2013) shows that no more than discursive translation occurs when Indigenous people are only enabled to negotiate within the bounds of colonial law.

While liberal, individualist tropes of plurality espouse the ideals of diversity and inclusion, the tent canopy metaphor shows how they do not admit deep or genuine diversity – that is – the admittance of that which falls beyond the bounds of its capitalist-colonial logics. Whyte (2018) describes the violence of settler colonialism as an aggressive refusal and rejection of plurality:

So the US...involves the establishment of its own ecology, at the expense of Indigenous ecologies. There is a deliberate attempt not to share ecologies. The US has had little to no interest in what Eve Tuck, Hannah Sultan, and Alison Guess (2014) have referred to as issues regarding “selfsame land,” what Simpson (2008) refers to in her interpretation of the Dish with One Spoon treaty, what Witgen (2011) refers to as Anishinaabewaki (as a place of complex/ diverse kinship). (p. 136)

For all its talk of tolerance, individualist institutions' intolerance of deep diversity manifests through its forms of abyssal erasure (Santos, 2016) or non-engagement of the other, and the material violences it enacts. It is for this reason that the ego-cycle operates in logics of disconnect, reflected in the fading lines that would show the ways in which it perpetuates violence. The example of Canada's “nation-to-nation” relationships with Indigenous nations is one such

example, which by its own representation appears to be engaging with diversity, but which denies Indigenous sovereignty, authority and consent.

However, illustrating the ontological structure of disconnect that individualist lifeways generate, the tent canopy helps put into relief how institutions and humans through their lifeways participate in reproducing it – even where these humans and institutions might hold a deeply critical orientation towards the hegemonic and violent nature of these systems. It is critical to note that the ego-cycle is not just enacted through actions which appear to assert dominance, but also by the complicity of those that do not seek to change it (e.g., consumerism), *as well as actions that seek to question and challenges this dominance*. This showcases the depth of institutional cooptation that hegemonic capitalist-colonialism entails on Turtle Island.

Efforts to resist, refuse and counter-hegemonically challenge this hegemonic capitalist-colonial hegemony at local, national and global levels are core to the fields of human rights, civil society and public governance on Turtle Island. These efforts and movements have shaped public institutions and the lifeworld on Turtle Island in critical ways, showing that these institutions are not inherently individualist even though they have often been enacted as such. This shows a porousness of these institutions to be used in decolonizing ways, something to which I return when considering the actions of the youth climate justice activists. Indeed, in so far as these systems and institutions might enable groups to promote the rights and/or pursue justice in the name of certain groups of humans or more-than-humans, to better the situation and/or mitigate the violent effects of capitalist-colonial-anthropocentric systems, they are often seen as key means of fighting to disrupt hierarchical hegemonies. However, as elaborated in chapter six with respect to hegemonic human rights, this does not mean they ultimately disrupt and enact otherwise. In this sense, they can be considered as playing a critical part in upholding the hegemonic project. I agree

with Gane (2012) that the political, economic, cultural and social institutions have historically enacted the ‘roll out’ of such individualist logic, rather than the often held critique that neoliberalism is a process of institutional roll-back.

Whyte (2018b) forwards: “One can’t claim to be an ally if one’s agenda is to prevent his or her own future dystopias through actions that also preserve today’s Indigenous dystopias” (para 12). By that logic, so long as democratic institutions and human rights instruments uphold the capitalist and colonial structures that perpetuate an ontology of separation, they ultimately “preserve today’s Indigenous dystopias” and fail to launch a counter-hegemonic project that decolonizes. Though they may enable a bettering of situations or mitigate against the damage these systems have done, they do not address the underlying problematic structures of violence.

However, whilst many social and political institutions may continue to perpetuate and endorse individualist logics, I argue that they need not do so, just as individuals’ hegemonic consent might be withdrawn or refused.³² The transformation required of them to decolonize and disrupt their prior accomplice status might render the systems unrecognizable from their current state, and certainly from themselves, such as the transformation from a human, individual rights framework to a collective eco-social justice framework as discussed in chapters five, six and seven of this dissertation. These institutions have themselves been radically shaped through democratic process, social, political, ecological and anti-oppression movements. As systems that are enacted by humans and their lifeways, it is my argument that they can be enacted otherwise to counter-hegemonic effect. As I return to a discussion in my final chapter, Tully’s (2008) categories of civic action are critical here. I argue that enacting of the otherwise as done by the Phoenix

³² I make this argument in Nelems, Rebecca. “Other Wise Democracies: What the Tree Canopies Know,” in Keith Cherry, Fonna Forman, Jeanne Morefield, Joshua Nichols, Pablo Ouziel, David Owen, Oliver Schmidtke and James Tully, Eds., *Democratic Multiplicities: Perceiving, Enacting & Integrating Democratic Diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (forthcoming)

consultation youth climate justice activists, offers critical pathways for thinking through precisely how such institutions – in this case, hegemonic human rights – might be genuinely decolonized.

This point of distinction engages in debate with Maurits de Jongh's (2020) critique of Tully for "downplaying" the "primacy of public infrastructure over civic communing" and regarding the "realm of self-chosen relationships...as free from objectionable manifestations of power and injustice" (p. 20). I argue that this is an individualist and structuralist reading of Tully, in which de Jongh mistakenly sees Tully as assuming that these institutions are structurally bound rather than enacting of structures and so capable of agential transformation. In short, Tully's concept of joining hands promotes a relational theoretical orientation that demands both public and self-chosen realms hold themselves, one another and others relationally accountable, inviting both to practice a non-violent form of civic communing that includes but goes beyond contemporary individualist lifeways currently frequently enacted by public infrastructures. Such a process as Tully outlines is inherently transformational, meaning that the parties joining hands cannot presume to remain as discrete or fixed, separate entities but as emergently transformed through dialogical, intra-active engagement.

In order to constitute a counter-hegemonic project (Santos, 2009), such initiatives must disrupt the uprooted foundational individualist logic of the system, by enacting otherwise: the relational. Drawing on Indigenous knowledges, many political and social institutions on Turtle Island fall short of such relationality by perpetuating the human-nature divide within which they are embedded, in addition to the ongoing subjugation of Indigenous nations and lifeways to the colonial lifeworld. The counter-hegemonic project inherently entails a challenge to the assumed and settled status, power and rights of colonial nation states and capitalist actors. As hegemonic institutions are defined and founded on these hegemonic logics, this means transforming the

foundations themselves. Anything less constitutes no more than a bandaid solution that aims to mitigate against the violent effects of a system without ultimately transforming the root causes.

Connell (2016) offers a specific example of how this occurs with respect to feminist movements:

...the NGO format of social action has been problematic for feminists, because of the way it is integrated into neoliberal politics (Alvarez 1999). The NGOs specifically concerned with gender-based violence overwhelmingly depend on corporate charity, international aid programs, or national states. Published research reveals few connections between masculinity reform efforts and union activism, landless people's movements, environmental activism, or other movements that offer a significant challenge to corporate or state power. They seem, so far, no threat to the corporate masculinity of the new metropole. For such a challenge to develop would require a different structure of politics.

Carroll (2021) offers another example in climate capitalism wherein "...system-friendly reforms are a formula for continuity in change, managed from above. They appeal to subjectivities already normalized within fossil-fuelled consumer capitalism and portend only minor shifts in capitalism's historical bloc" (p. 486). This exemplifies Gramsci's "passive revolution" reflective of the power of individualist structures whereby genuine transformative change is not enacted and the dominant order is maintained (Carroll, 2021, p. 485).

Since institutions are enacted by individuals and groups of individuals, how and what they enact is of central importance. Ultimately, the heart of any counter-hegemonic and decolonizing project must entail a fundamental re-structuring of institutions to structurally disrupt individualism and enact relationality.

2.6 Experiential Hegemony, Shape-Shifting and Transformative Change

Above, I explored the structures of the individualist and relational ontologies – ontologically, phenomenologically and metaphorically – drawing on diverse bodies of Indigenous, phenomenological, sociological and deep ecology theory. Having laid out the theoretical framings of how I understand these ontologies and their workings, in this sub-section, I dive more deeply

into Vahabzadeh's (2003) concept of "experiential hegemony" and how one's cognitive and experiential encounter of the world is both hegemonically structured and open to counter-hegemonic action. In particular, I argue that the dialogical process by which each ontological structure is engaged on its own terms appears to be critical to the process.

Dialogue across the two paradigms of relationalism and individualism is no small feat to achieve given that the latter not only exhibits hostility towards and/or active erasure of the former, but that it enjoys hegemonic status in political, cultural, economic, social and ecological spheres. The same caution is offered up, keeping Starblanket and Stark's (2018) warning of how relationality is often not interpreted on its own terms but resituated onto individualist ones. In particular, they note how when reinscribed within a colonial lens and context, relationality and conceptions of knowledge, gender, land and modernity are drained of their distinct meanings as when encountered within Indigenous traditions. For this reason, ITK systems offer invaluable wisdom to this endeavour.

Listening to Indigenous knowledge is not only a point of relational accountability in striving to avoid the hegemonic pitfalls Starblanket and Stark identify as noted above, it is also an obvious, wise move given that Indigenous knowledge systems are rooted in millennia of relational lifeways and practices. The resurgence and revitalization of such practices, including language, offers up an invaluable opportunity to explore what such dialogue could look like. Examining how colonial ontologies vs. Indigenous cosmologies interpret and conceptualize the world as articulated in different meanings for the same concepts is one helpful way to engage in this. This practice of dialogue renders the contours of each canopy visible, having the effect of reparochializing the colonial, individualist ontology. I turn to Indigenous practices and languages on Turtle Island

where my family has lived for six generations as settlers, as articulated through a range of Indigenous scholars.

In doing so, I note in particular that writing about these practices is done with the aim of deep listening and genuine dialogue, rather than engaging in any kind of revitalization of these traditions myself, something it is not my place as a settler to do. Nikki Sanchez Iyolo (2019) states “...the work of Indigenization, the work for linguistic revitalization, the work of ceremony, the work of land-based practice, the work of land-based defense...that is work for Indigenous people to do. That is not for anyone else to pick up and start to appropriate and call their own. However, decolonization is work that belongs to all of us.” (np)

Coulthard (2014) shows how the word “land” in the Weledeh dialect of Dogrib – *de* – is situated within a relational canopy framework, in so far as this word references not just land but all beings and their relationships within a given territory. As such, land cannot be conceived of as separate or separable from other forms of life – let alone as property – but instead is articulated “as an ontological framework for understanding relationships...[as a] field of relationships of things to each other” (pp. 60-61). In another example, Borrows (2016) elucidates distinct conceptions of freedom – an individualist version in which freedom is the autonomy from being determined by one's relations, as contrasted with the Anishinaabemowin conception of freedom as being in and occurring through relationality. In particular, he references the Anishinaabemowin word *dibenindizowin*, “which can mean a person possesses liberty within themselves and their relationships. Freedom has, sui generis, property-like connotations in the Ojibwe language. It implies a free person owns, is responsible for, and controls how they interact with others” (p. 6). Borrows (2016) shows the implications of this for how citizenship is conceived, as he notes they share the same root: “the Anishinabe term for citizen is *dibenjigaazowin*: he or she who owns or

controls their associations” (pp. 6-7). In this way, Borrows shows how citizenship within Anishinabe governance is founded in relational accountability.

Coulthard’s and Borrows’ elaboration of the above Indigenous concepts has, as one of its many effects, that of putting individualist, colonial definitions into stark, re-parochialized relief. Another means by which to render visible the contours of an individualist lifeworld is through an exploration of concepts that are taken for granted, unquestioned or settled. As words are multidimensional constructs, any taken for granted, assumed interpretations are indicative of a single ontological framework being imposed in a totalizing way. In my earlier work on empathy (Nelems, 2018), I made the case that an individualist ontology shifts one’s cognitive understanding of the concept of empathy, draining it of its potentially transformative potential. I argue that an individualist conception of empathy can only ever be passive, reduced to an individual skill, capacity, experience, or feather in one’s cap. Captured by the taken for granted concept of empathy as standing in another’s shoes, an individualist encounter of empathy renders it not only passive, but actually thwarts its transformative potential through the potential to experience it as occupation, or mobilize it to colonize the other, through the projection of the self onto them. In this moment, the other is arguably not even there for the experience (how could they, with someone standing in their shoes?). Thus, empathy becomes an inherently non-dialogical experience and non-encounter. For this reason it is passive, retaining and reinforcing the structure of an individualist orientation to the world. As Boler (1997) notes, it also imposes a culturally specific assumption onto the other that what the latter wants is empathy, as opposed to justice. In this way, it enacts a form of power-over, revoking both the possibilities of power-with or power-to

relationality.³³ Notably, Arendt did not consider power-over as a form of power, but rather as violence (Pansardi & Bindi, 2021).

Within an ontology of relational intra-being, however, empathy is encountered as a necessarily relational experience that not only needs the other, it can only ever be led by them.³⁴ In this, it asserts that empathy can only exist where there are power-with and power-to elements that enable support genuine engagement and participation by the empathizee on their own terms. In this ontological re-casting, the self cannot move towards the other unless they first look at their own shoes so they can see their *relationality* to them. Because of this, it is a process akin to Tully's (2016) "genuine dialogue", in which I argue transformative empathy becomes possible – though the transformation may be more of the empathizer than the empathizee. Thus while an individualist framing concedes of the possibility of a passive empathy that doubles down on the structures of an individualist logic of non-encounter with the other, a relational framing of empathy enables the kind of empathy that so many identify is lacking in "today's world".

Dialogical engagement that renders the contours of the individualist canopy visible is also often effectively achieved through a trickster-style reversal of concepts, such as Aamer Rahman's (2013) comedy sketch on "Reverse Racism". Kimmerer (2013) and Simpson (2016) also do this respectively in *Braiding Sweetgrass* and "How to Steal a Canoe", where they put a colonial legal system into sharp relief through challenging assumptions about who is stealing. Kimmerer (2013) observes it is the grocery store within a capitalist system that has stolen the wild strawberries, not the Strawberry Liberation Front on whose behalf she might seek to liberate them. For Simpson,

³³ While conceptions of power-over and power-with were first developed by the American social worker Mary Parker Follett in the 1930s, and the distinction between power-over and power-to was later elaborated by the American political theorist Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, the three terms were brought together into a trichotomy most notably in the 1990s by theorists in development and feminist theory – most notably by Rowlands (1997), Townsend et al. (1999), and Allen (1998). (Pansardi & Bindi, 2021)

³⁴ Edith Stein (1989) speaks of empathy as a process of being "led by the foreign."

the title of her piece itself (*How to Steal a Canoe*) points the viewer straight to the question of who is it that steals the canoe: the Indigenous visitors who reclaim it, or the canoe museum who stole it from the earth and its Indigenous kin?

The above examples not only engage the distinct traditions in dialogue, reparochializing individualist logics and inviting their relational accountability. They also show how the individualist canopy distorts, thwarts and assimilates relational concepts when resituating them on its own grounds, in the ways Starblanket and Stark (2018) note. In his explication of the different conceptions of land as outlined by Indigenous nations and the Canadian state, Coulthard (2014) renders visible how Indigenous struggles within the settler colonial state are subjected to a “discursive translation” that results in:

...a reorientation of the meaning of self-determination for many (but not all) Indigenous people in the North; a reorientation of Indigenous struggle from one that was once deeply informed by the land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations (grounded normativity), which in turn informed our critique of capitalism in the period examined above, to a struggle that is now increasingly for land, understood now as material resource to be exploited in the capital accumulation process (p. 78).

Tully (2018) refers to what Coulthard describes as “hegemonic ventriloquism” (p. 64), a process by which “[i]nterlocutors often use the same words, and so presume they understand each other, but, as we have seen, they understand the words differently because they interpret them in light of their own background form, or forms, of life” (p. 64). For this reason, Tully (2016) notes that genuine democratic dialogue requires that each party render visible – or deparochialize – the contours of their worldviews in order to engage in the practice of democratic dialogue. The conditions for “genuine dialogue”, he writes:

...include the ethical practices of openness and receptivity to the otherness of others that enable participants to understand one another in their own traditions (mutual understanding) and to appreciate the concerns of one another regarding globalization and the injustices and suffering it causes (mutual concern) (p. 52).

Striving to understand others' interpretation of the world is an ethical orientation that is foundational to the genuine dialogue and the ethical engagement of another: "...it is not possible to know (or even to imagine) how to treat another concrete human being as an ethical human being unless we come to understand their suffering and well-being as they experience and articulate them in their traditional ways – in comparison with others." (Tully, 2016, p. 62)

Reparochialization is thus both a moment of vulnerable self-disclosure and of witnessing the other as self-disclosed by them – an interdependent exchange that Tully (2016) calls "reciprocal elucidation" (p. 60). For this reason, thinkers from diverse traditions (from Borrow to Lorde to Foucault to Scharmer to Tully; etc) note that such disclosure can only take place in relationship and the presence of an "other". Tully (2016) writes: "Humans literally need dialogue with other limited traditions of political thought to see their own limitations and to see beyond them by means of the perspectives of others. Hence, it is dialogue itself that deparochializes..." (p. 56).

Scharmer (2020) states that a system cannot "see and sense itself" unless there is an other who plays the role of mirror within "a learning structure" which supports awareness, listening, openness, curiosity, compassion and courage.

Returning to Vahabzadeh's (2003) conception of experiential hegemony, genuine dialogue with another who is situated in the relational is the opening up of one's understanding and experience of the world to the relational, through a relational process of engagement. This then is the basis of experience through which one might first critically see the interpellative call of individualist structures, in order to then be able to refuse them. However, if one is "bathed in a vat of cognitive imperialism" (p. 32), as Simpson (2011) observes, how might one encounter a relational orientation from which to engage in genuine dialogue or transformative empathy? This is where Tully's (2018) attention to and observation of the relational permacultures within which

one always already is embedded becomes critical, suggesting there is always access to the relational towards which one might focus their attentions.

2.7 A Relational understanding of connection

The tree canopies framework can thus be utilized to show how different conceptions and experiential potentialities for empathy, kinship, and connection are opened upon beyond the tent canopy. However, as per “experiential hegemony”, these grounds not only afford different cognitive engagement with these multidimensional concepts, they open up distinct potential experiences of connection. From this relational ontological framework, I propose a definition of *connection as the radical and self-transformative act of remembering, knowing, feeling, sensing and enacting eco-social intra-being*. As such, it is the moment that the tent canopy of individualist logic is brought into view – and the ways it structures one’s own thoughts, actions, and the lifeways in which one participates become visible. To the extent another possibility is rendered – and indeed, enacted – through the experience, the hegemonic is no longer hegemonic. The experience of encountering individualist lifeways as ‘simply what is’ is transmuted into experiences and perceptions of violence.

Within the frameworks of Western theoretical traditions of phenomenology and hegemony theory, then, if the violent, capitalist-colonial lifeways structure institutions and experiences organized around a logic of disconnect, the experience of connection is the transformative process of withdrawing one’s consent. To experience and enact connection is to experience and initiate counter-hegemonic action. Within the frameworks of Indigenous theory and ITK, building connections is also a form of ceremony (Wilson, 2008). Both definitions offer a definition of connection as the embrace of eco-centric ways of being amidst ego-centric lifeways and institutions.

The English word connection comes from the Latin word *connexionem* (nominative *connexio*), which means “a binding or joining together”, elaborated from the root words *nectare*, “to fasten, “to tie”, to “bind” with “com/n” (<https://dictionary.university/connection>) – together – which collectively suggests the word joining. Connection can thus be seen as a joining together. By a reversal, this enables us to conceive of Tully’s (2008) political strategy of “joining hands” as a form of intentionally and mindfully choosing to honour and recognize the connection that always already is between a set of actors. Further, if we accept Mill’s (2018), Tully’s (2008) and numerous Indigenous authors’ premises that we are not only in relational connection with others, but that we are our relationships (Wilson, 2008), the experience of connection and the act of connecting or joining hands thus enacts a form of remembering who we are – a letting in of, and a being with, the embodied knowledge that one is always already bound and joined to others. For this reason, a sense of connection with an other is always also a deeper connecting with oneself as an interconnected part of existence.

In this context, disconnection is then encountered as a form of forgetting. The Old English word *forġietan* means to “un-get, lose care for, lose one’s grip on” (<https://etymology.english-academic.com/15975/forget>). This is consistent with my argument above that disconnect is a delusionary, traumatic experience of both loss and losing one’s grip on reality. The individualist *terra nullius* logic of invisibilizing, rendering into the abyss, disembedding and dispossession (in both material and epistemic terms) disconnect us from our relational selves and therein also inoculate themselves from interrogation as neutral legitimate institutions and discourses.

How it is we remember our relationality thus becomes key. Some such as David Abram (1997) suggest such remembering comes through a tapping into our sensory selves and finding our magical words that make sense not just to our rational minds but to ourselves as living, animate

beings. Ancestral, intuitive and embodied knowing become radical acts supporting us to access non-rational ways of thinking and being. Another framing of this is the quote “another world is actual”, which “builds on the mantra of the World Social Forum ‘another world is possible’” (Pérez Pinán et al., 2021, p. 9).

However, just like the feeling of love is not enough (West, 2021), neither is the act of remembering. Martin Luther King Jr.’s work on love is not a call for simply loving one another, but a stance that takes issue with every status quo in ways that today might be considered by many a form of extremism (West, 2021). In the face of structures that thwart connection and actively generate disconnection, acts of material and epistemic justice become an essential part of enacting connection.

West (2021) suggests that such King-like extremism might be found amongst “awakening youth... who choose to be extremists of love, justice, courage and freedom” (np). Youth climate activists on Turtle Island are an example of this, making moves that the system has not have foreseen or anticipated, including launching climate action lawsuits against national governments and the United Nations, boycotting school, and engaging in birthstrikes. For this reason, a study of how youth and children are understanding and promoting connection is the focus of this study. Youth insights on connection in an era of climate change, action and justice provides invaluable insight into how we might disrupt individualist or disconnected ways of being and enact connection and intra-being.

The response to structural disconnection also calls for an orientation towards a ‘joining together’ form of justice in ways that avoid repeating the very structures of individualism. One key way to do this is to render visible and point out the contours of individualist structures of disconnect and the always already present structures of connection. The active interpellation of

our interconnected selves (human and more-than-human) to join together in ways individualist structures do not dictate, foresee, allow for or comprehend arguably become important. This focus brings the how of practice – methodology – to the fore. If all research is ceremony (Wilson, 2008) in so far as it builds connections, joining hands simultaneously becomes a way of remembering and enacting epistemic justice, whilst generating the possibility of regenerating eco-centric ways of being. This is the focus of the next chapter.

3. The Means are the Ends: The role of decolonizing, participatory and phenomenological methodologies in enacting relational ontologies

..any exercise that increases connection or builds relationship is spiritual or ceremonial in nature” (Wilson, 2008, p. 91).

..the means sow the seeds of the end... (Tully, 2018, p. 114).

3.1 Overview of chapter

In my previous chapter, I elaborated on the relational theoretical framework of tree canopies with which I engage throughout my study, and on these grounds proposed a relational definition of connection. In the next chapter, I provide an overview, context and details of the participatory, decolonizing processes by which young people across Turtle Island generated the *Phoenix Manifesto*, which I review as the sociological main data for my dissertation. To set the stage for that, this chapter outlines the terrain of the methodological, exploring what it might mean to decolonize research, knowledge, and engagement – or engage in research on relational grounds.

In *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson (2008) states that research is a form of building connections – between people, beings and ideas – and thus constitutes a form of ceremony. If there is no neutral knowledge and if research is ceremony (Wilson, 2008), we must consider, attend to and encounter the ceremony itself, not just in terms of its expected or planned outcomes or results. Rather, if “...the means sow the seeds of the end...” (Tully, 2018, p. 114) then the means of engagement are as important as the knowledge that is generated. Since I sought to learn about relationality from the insights of young people engaged in a consultation, the process by which these young people were consulted, and through which they collaboratively generated their insights, are not only of significance, but are a part of the “data set”.

Drawing on the lessons of Indigenous and decolonizing methodologists, I argue that as the terrain of the practices through which the researcher relates to others and the world, the methodological is a critical site for potential epistemic transformation. I further argue that the domain of the methodological features relational, co-creative and emergent qualities that can be engaged to enact the otherwise (Akomolafe, 2020b). The methodological is a critical space for the Gandhian mode of being the change needed to bringing about the transformation from vicious to virtuous cycles of life (Tully, 2016, p. 20). Enacting relationality through one's engagement in research is thus one of the ways we might disrupt a capitalist-colonial system of knowledge production by reconnecting it to eco-centric, relational ways of being.

With respect to supporting a relational, genuine dialogue between specific methodologies, I specifically look to bring Indigenous and decolonizing methodological traditions into dialogue with the Western methodological traditions of phenomenology and participatory, action-oriented research. It is important to clarify that there are strong precedents with respect to bringing Indigenous and Western traditions together through the methodological – such as Indigenous scholars' development of a methodological approach – the “Making Connections” method – drawing on the work of Tully (Pérez Piñán et al., 2021), an adapted version of the “Tully Wheel” (Napoleon & Friedland, 2014). Additionally, I consider the relational methodological framework of “two-eyed seeing” as elaborated by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012), which might be considered as a form of methodological allyship where there is ontological alignment between approaches. I posit that this approach is particularly applicable to considering the potential allyship between decolonizing and

Indigenous methodologies with genuinely relational enactments³⁵ of both phenomenology and participatory research.

Whilst participatory research approaches are often considered an “ally” by decolonizing methodologists (Kovach, 2005, p. 23), phenomenology has been looked upon with a certain skepticism by some (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9). Drawing on the work of Vahabzadeh (2003, 2019) and Abram (1997), I show how when re-situated within a relational framework, phenomenology as a research methodology is transmuted in ways that make it even truer to itself by: expanding its methodological prioritization of the individual unit towards the “social unit” (Smith, 2012); and by re-framing intersubjectivity in eco-social terms. Moreover, I argue, that phenomenology holds particular relevance for Indigenous and decolonizing research paradigms. This is due to the former’s orientation to render visible – rather than establish or posit – the foundations and structures of a lifeways and rationalities, an orientation that authors such as Tuck and Yang (2012) view as essential. This proposed allyship between these particular methodologies is not found in the literature and I aim to contribute to the methodological literature in this respect.

The concept of eco-social intra-subjectivity is another key methodological concept that I aim to contribute to the methodological literature. In sociological terms, this concept references notions of eco-social kinship, a concept embodied in Indigenous conceptions of *All Our Relations*, within which the more-than-human is not only ascribed with personhood, but also as a holder of knowledge. It also supports an elaboration of the concept of eco-social empathy, a concept I introduce in this dissertation that indicates future directions of my work, building on

³⁵ It is critical to note the difference between theorized and enacted methodologies. Thus when I specify relational enactments of a methodology, I am referencing those methodologies that have been enacted on relational grounds, and not those that may have been “discursively translated” (Coulthard, 2014) onto individualist grounds.

my earlier work on transformative empathy (Nelems, 2018). These concepts are significant to a project such as mine engaged in exploring connection as the remembering and enacting of kinship relations with all.

Whilst I argue that the demands and articulations of climate justice movement reference both individualist and relational worldviews through their lexicons, they express an eco-social, intra-subjective relationality. This helps establish the grounds for understanding what eco-social intra-subjectivity might mean. In this way these enactments of climate justice may be seen as sites and modes of deparochialization, transformation and cultivating of a permaculture of the “relational otherwise” within a hegemonic individualist order. These lines of exploration will contribute to addressing core aspects of two of my research questions, namely: Question 2: What insights do decolonizing, participatory and relational research processes offer about eco-social connection?; and question 3: What are the sociological, methodological and theoretical implications of these lessons for transformative social change towards relational ways of Intra-being?

The prominence of methodology within the decolonizing literature is notable, where processes are prioritized over outcomes (Smith, 2012, p. 218). The methods of my own engagement for the purposes of this dissertation are non-extractive in so far as I examined secondary data produced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from across Turtle Island (Canada, Mexico, US) who participated as delegates in the July 2021 Regional Consultation on the Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment – later named by children and youth the Phoenix Consultation. In chapter 4, I detail the methods used by members of this participatory initiative. I was actively involved, playing several roles in the consultation, which I expand upon and explain in the next chapter, chapter 4 of the dissertation. However, the

Manifesto I consider as my main data is was collaboratively generated by young people based on their own analysis of their and their peers' experiences, perspectives and recommendations. By analyzing and drawing out lessons from the demands youth developed, I strive to engage in non-extractive, decolonizing research.

To intentionally begin this chapter in a decolonizing way, I start with two stories, a method promoted in the decolonizing and Indigenous methodological literature. As King (2008) and Wilson (2008) argue there is truth to every story, stories lend themselves to a deparochializing and phenomenological inquiry as a process of rendering visible the structures of thought, lifeworlds and experience. As Tully (2016) highlights, stories "...are nonviolent forms of conversation. They are 'invitations' or 'proposals' to the listeners" (p. 10). If it is true that all we are is stories (King, 2008), and that we are not in relationship (as separate entities), but *are* the relationships (Wilson, 2008, p. 80), then relationships are perhaps best captured by the stories we tell.

These particular stories elucidate core elements and distinctions of individualist and relational orientations to research, methodology and knowledge. They also open up reflections about what it might mean to 'decolonize' research, knowledge and methodologies. Following the stories is an exploration of methodology through the lens of what it might mean to decolonize research. I here acknowledge the inherent tension of using the term decolonize, arguing that the term's deficiency stems not only from its continued centering of colonization, but because it ultimately relies on decolonization as a metaphor. While useful as a concept, it is critical to keep Tuck and Yang's (2012) reminder in the forefront, that "decolonization is not a metaphor", and hence any discussion of decolonizing must also be ultimately linked to action that seeks to redress material injustices and issues related to Indigenous sovereignty. As Whyte

(2018) critiques a “romantic approach” to allyship by settlers that

...assumes that lifting up Indigenous wisdom and spirituality constitutes action. But this approach does not necessarily confront ongoing territorial dispossession and risks to health, economic vitality, lives, psychological well-being, and cultural integrity that Indigenous people experience. (np)

In this dissertation, I use this term with respect to methodologies or modes of engaging others, to reference a form of striving to unsettle, disrupt and thwart individualist epistemologies and rationalities through the recentering of relational, gift-reciprocity ways of thinking and being. While this does not disrupt legal, political and economic systems of colonial governance, it does seek to unsettle the ideological and epistemological underpinnings that play an essential role in keeping hegemony intact (Carroll, 2021), in all of its material realities. In short, a disruption of colonial knowledge systems is necessary as part of the fight for epistemic justice (Santos, 2009). This epistemic justice is not only helpful ultimately to the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty, it is essential to it, in so far as it disrupts the individualist play for epistemic dominance.

3.2 A Tale of Two Stories

3.2.1 Story 1: The “First” International Scientific Expedition

In this story, I take you back to a time nearly three hundred years ago. There are other times and other stories in this one, which precede and exceed it. They live behind, in between and in the silences of the words.

This story begins in 1735, in Europe, at the height of the Enlightenment. It is the time of King Louis XV in France, George II in England, and Philip V in Spain. Twenty French and Spanish scientists, astronomers, geographers, naturalists and mathematicians, alongside a now unknown number of crew and workers – set sail from Europe for what is now known as Ecuador, to locate the equator. Funded by the French government, they went to find the equator

so that they could test and prove which of their country's leading scientists was correct: Was the French Descartes right that the earth was elongated at the poles, like an egg, or did Newton have it right – the earth was more like a grapefruit, wider at the equator. It had been decided that the only way to determine this was by conducting a series of measurements at two very different points on the earth: the equator and the arctic – as triangulated through the centre of their world, Paris. This is the story of “the world's first international scientific expedition” (Ferreiro, 2011, p. xvi).

Of course this made for an intense nationalistic competition between the French and the British. However, I would be lying if I were to suggest this was ultimately about the science. It was not lost on the French Naval Minister – who was also the president of the French Academy of Sciences – that having this information would give what scientists believed would be an “exact figure” of the Earth, the thinking being, “The nation that could accurately locate its ships at sea could control an empire” (Ferreiro, 2011, p. xv). They took their latest technologies, built on centuries of scientific study, and set out to map the earth.

They spent seven years working on their project, and it was ten years before the first of the mission would set foot back on European soil. It is thought the reason it took so long was because of “bad planning and bad leadership” (Main, 2011). Accounts (Ferreiro, 2011) say it took them thirteen months to arrive in the Andes, with several stops along the way where various members of the mission left marks of various kinds. They in fact ran out of funds before arriving due to the captain on the ship, Louis Godin, allegedly spending the lionshare of the expedition's budget before even landing on the continent, having purchased and gifted a very large diamond to a lover he met in what is now known as Haiti. Once arrived, they climbed approximately 50 volcanoes and faced weather conditions for which they were wholly

unprepared. There was significant in-fighting within the group – and outside of it – with the expedition’s surgeon getting himself killed at a bullfight in Cuenca, Ecuador, having involved himself in a love tryst. One member of the mission died of malaria and many fell ill. But there were also some miscalculations. At one point, they had to throw out two years of data because they realized their star sighting methods had been inaccurate.

Throughout their mission, the explorers came repeatedly across the remains of an ancient Quito-Cara site, marked with a lithic disc (a circle made out of stone with an eight-meter diameter), amongst other ruins.

After seven years, they finally declared success at finding the equator. They proved that Newton was right, despite it having been a French mission – although by the time they got home, European scientists had figured through ongoing scientific advancements that enabled them to arrive at the same conclusion by other means. This notwithstanding, the mission had much more to show for their journey than this, including:

- They created the navigational maps that the European nations would go on to use to colonize the world and found their empires;
- They established what was to become the basis of the international metric system: The ten-meter-high (33 ft) gnomon that they placed at their equatorial site marked by a circular structure, is based on the metre, which was designed to equal one ten-millionth of the quadrant of the Earth's circumference - which they measured as the distance between the equator and the North Pole, going through Paris;
- They shaped how time is measured: A second in our modern clock is calculated by how long the pendulum takes to swing when at the equator;

- They claimed to discover quinine, which led to the European development of a cure for malaria;
- They also claimed to discover rubber, what would become a significant development for many industries. One of the lead explorers on the mission, Condamine, in fact, wrote the first scientific paper on rubber ever published upon his return to France; and
- One of the mission's leaders, Pierre Bouguer, wrote the first book about applying science to ship design whilst on the mission (Ferreiro, 2011).

Two hundred and fifty years later, the Ecuadorian government erected a large fair ground and museum to commemorate the French geodesic mission. The *Mitad del Mundo* is a large tourist attraction with a Science-World style museum inside its walls, along with many tourist shops, a planetarium, restaurants and playgrounds. Today's measurements show that the Europeans were only 240 metres out in their calculations of the location of the equator and the site commemorates and celebrates this achievement and the individuals who achieved it. Large busts of the members of the Geodesic mission line the entryway into the walled fair ground, and plaques tell the story of the mission. The Science-World style museum extolls and marvels at the Western scientific knowledge system that was behind – and made the mission – possible.

Today's calculations, however, also show that the Quito-Cara peoples had known, and marked, the *exact* location of the equator – *in 800 AD*, pre-Inca times. The lithic disc that the Europeans encountered throughout their exploration marks the exact location. This fact is now recognized in a small plaque outside of the walls of the *Mitad del Mundo* grounds, which reads: “The ancient Quito-Cara people habited this region for 1225 years, and thanks to their worldview they were able to determine the location of the middle of the world before the First Geodesic Mission.” (*personal observation*, 2018) Wikipedia also acknowledges it.

That notwithstanding, the story that persists in the world to this day is that it was the Europeans who found the equator – neatly wrapped into the story of the Europeans being the first ones to accurately measure the earth. Author of *Measure of the Earth*, Ferreiro (2011), acknowledges that the French explorers would not have been able to conduct the mission without local Indigenous peoples who worked for them. He references briefly in his book the former’s poor treatment and view of the latter. In particular, he documents that La Condamine saw the Indigenous workers as “barely distinguishable from beasts” (p. 154). Bouguer is quoted as saying that they were “only capable of slavish imitation, and incapable of creating anything new” (p. 154). Despite these acknowledgements, Ferreiro (2011) makes no mention of the Quito-Cara people having already found the exact equator in his book, in which he celebrates the European mission as the most accurate mapping of the world to have ever “been achieved” (p. xviii). News reports (Main, 2011) similarly refer to the mission as having achieved the “first accurate measure of the earth” (np).

Today, the key Quito-Cara site, Catequilla, that marks the exact location of the equator, is basically abandoned, and its integrity as an archaeological site is threatened by nearby mining operations. It is said to be the only pre-Inca archaeological site in Ecuador that has been commercially exploited.

3.2.2 Story 2: Shuar / Achuar Gift-Reciprocity Research

In April 2018, my son Willem and I traveled to Ecuador. We went to attend a three-day Congress to which I had been invited by the Shuar and Achuar Nations of Ecuador’s Amazonian region. Organized by the Shuar Nation Language and Knowledge Commission (la Comision de Lengua y Saberes de la Nacionalidad Shuar, IICSAE), the Yápankam Congress invited foreigner anthropologists and linguists (mainly Europeans) who study and research the

Shuar and Achuar peoples to their traditional territories for the three-day Congress. The main objectives of the Congress were so that the foreign academics could share their findings with the communities and nations, and engage in a critical and reciprocal discussion on equal footing with community members and leaders about their interpretations and perspectives on their findings. Some of the invitees have been researching and publishing about the Shuar and Achuar peoples for fifty years. Two of the French researchers that attended the Congress have solo published over 100 academic articles on the Shuar and Achuar peoples, which has been the basis of their very successful careers as international acclaim as world-renown anthropologists. The event was open to all – with advertisements specifically extending an invitation to all genders and beings, including plants.

All invited delegates were to attend at no cost to them, an expense for which IICSAE successfully secured funding from the French Embassy in Ecuador.³⁶ The event was also organized to braid together features of a conventional Western academic conference, with panel discussions and lectures, as well as those of local cultural events, including ceremonies, dance and musical performances. The event entailed a photography exhibit, a theatrical performance by local youth, and was used to launch a new magazine, *Voz de la Confeniae* by the Confederation of Amazonian Indigenous Nations in Ecuador.³⁷

My son and I drove down to Sevilla Don Bosco, Morona Santiago Province, Ecuador, from the capital city Quito in convoy with one of the organizers of the event, Santiago Utitaj Paati, his non-Indigenous wife who is an artist and was also an active participant in the event,

³⁶ I was an exception as I had funding to cover the costs of my travel. Additionally, while I was an invited delegate because of my intersecting interest with IICSAE's in decolonizing research, I was not invited in the capacity of a researcher who was doing research on or with the nations.

³⁷ *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana* (CONFENIAE): <http://confeniae.net>

and their four children. The novelty of the 11-year old boy who could speak no Spanish and his mother who could and had no qualms about driving on unknown terrains in a country she had only been in once before inspired two of the children to join us in our little rental car. And we were off. En route, we passed through stunning Amazonian river landscapes, rain forest and stopped to eat traditional fare in restaurants along the way. My son may not have been too sure about the fish eye looking up at him through the banana leaf plates we were to be served for the next few days, but I was. The mostly Spanish-influenced food in Quito is hard for a celiac but traditional Shuar and Achuar foods are not only celiac friendly, but also delicious.

The evening before the Congress, traditional ceremonies and a dance were held in community. The fires lit by Shuar women were to keep burning in community for the duration of the congress. The first morning of the congress held two ceremonies. The first was a sacred Shuar / Achuar ceremony at dawn around a fire in which gratitude was expressed to the land, to the plants, more-than-human beings and people present, and to the spirit of creation. The second was the formal ceremonial opening of the academic sessions in the community hall where the panels and sessions were to take place. Male and female elders moved to the front of the hall and formed a semi-circle. They took turns, with each inviting up one of the academic delegates to whom they presented a gift made by Santiago's wife, thanked them, and then invited them to join the circle. Personal details about each guest were shared when they were invited up, and observations and words of gratitude were offered about the specific gifts they had given to the community through their research. For example, an Italian linguist was thanked for the ways in which his research had contributed to the revitalization of the Shuar and Achuar languages. The respect, care taken, gratitude and graciousness with which each guest was personally welcomed, thanked and honoured was unlike any conference or gathering

I have ever attended. It was more akin to each delegate receiving an award than being welcomed to an event.

The children and youth, who were welcomed into every space of the congress, were quick to set up a football (North American soccer) pitch at the back of the conference hall. This was the first academic conference to which I had ever taken my son, and he suddenly found himself quite interested in all of the conferences he had missed in prior years.

Panel discussions were held across the three days, interspersed with dance, musical performances, and a theatrical performance by local youth. Panel discussions consistently included an equal number of community members with academics. A visual of the panels was striking: predominantly European academics dressed in Western business casual clothing sat alongside Shuar and Achuar community members including leaders in traditional dress with cultural items that were important to their role and identity, including large spears, jewelry and other adornments. The first panel discussion was entitled “Nakumkit. Translating Shuar/Achuar concepts: On the Epistemology and Ontology of Being.”³⁸ The session was described in the conference schedule as follows:

How might one translate or interpret notions such as “*arutam*”, “*kujaprukma*” or “*tarimiat*” in the language of Western science? Is science, philosophy, an art, or something else altogether? Can one imagine a science that is based in an epistemology of the heart (“*enentai*”)? In this first session, discussants will debate the similarities and differences between distinct domains of human knowing and non-human knowing from the Shuar and the Achuar perspectives. The role that visions, dreams and omens play for living species will also be debated with respect to how they might contribute to legitimate knowledge systems.³⁹

³⁸ My translation. The original reads: “Nakumkit. La traducción de los pensamientos shuar-achuar: sobre epistemología y ontología del saber.”

³⁹ My translation. The original reads as follows: “¿Cómo traducir/interpretar en el lenguaje de la ciencia nociones como “*arutam*”, “*kujaprukma*” o “*tarimiat*”? ¿Se pueden unificar los conocimientos tradicionales? ¿Son una ciencia, una filosofía, un arte u otra cosa? ¿Se podría pensar una ciencia con base epistemológica desde el corazón (*enentai*)? En esta primera mesa de trabajo se debaten los encuentros y desencuentros entre los diferentes dominios del conocimiento humano y no humano desde la perspectiva shuar y achuar. El papel de las visiones y del sueño así como de los augurios que ofrecen los seres vivos será también debatido como aporte a un saber legítimo.”

A diversity of panels ensued; however, this opening panel was used to frame the overall event – clarifying explicitly that there were two distinct ontological frameworks in play and present. Language was a key way in which the Shuar and Achuar peoples sought to point out the distinctiveness of their worldview from that of the foreigners, with respect to how meanings were differently interpreted. Panels were dialogical in nature, and community members stepped forward to ask questions of the academics, sharing their own cultural perspectives of the subjects. It was a congress in which relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) and genuine dialogue (Tully, 2016) were not only enacted but one of the subjects of every panel.

One specific request made by the Nations to the foreign researchers at the Congress was that all researchers cease using the term *jívaro* or *jíbaro* to refer to Shuar and Achuar peoples and instead use the term *Aénts Chicham*. The Nations explained the former was a pejorative colonial term used to refer to Shuar and Achuar Indigenous peoples as well as peoples in other locations such as Puerto Rico. It is a word affiliated with aggression and savagery (Deshoulliere and Utitaj Paati, 2019), and it inaccurately reflects the way Shuar and Achuar people understand themselves – as a collective of beings amongst other natural beings. In a declaration written at the end of the congress, Shuar and Achuar participants state: “Jivaro is a pejorative exonym born out of colonial confrontations, which we have never used to name our languages nor our collective identities” (SALSA, 2019). Alternatively, the nations requested that moving forward, researchers use the term *Chicham*, “derived from the root *chichá-*, ‘to speak’, and is translated as ‘what is spoken’, ‘word’, ‘discourse’ and also as ‘language’” as well as *aénts*, which “has a broad meaning, translated as ‘person’, ‘people’ or ‘beings’ ... [and] all beings capable of communicating or susceptible to being affected by our communication – the *maikiua* plant (*Brugmansia arborea*) is *aénts*; the bird *auju* (*Nyctibius*

grandis) is *aénts*.” As such, it is a collective term (SALSA, 2019). “The non-human is a western construction,” says Utitaj Paati.

This request was articulated as one of four formal points in a broader declaration which all conference delegates, including myself, signed. Declaration signees agreed to the following four points:

1. “Demand that the word “jíbaro” not be used to define the linguistic family, and be replaced instead by “Aénts Chicham”; also that any other commonly used terms suggesting a pejorative meaning be eliminated, such as: savage, barbarian, aboriginal, nomad, pagan, infidel and others.

2. “Support the *Juakmaru*⁴⁰, language experts and knowledge holders of the Shuar and Achuar nations, whose roles include:

a. “Documenting, researching, developing, compiling and disseminating Shuar and Achuar language and traditional knowledges;

b. “Gathering and coding research conducted by diverse groups of anthropologists, sociologists, linguists and other scientific disciplines; and

c. “Promote the creation of a virtual platform of Shuar and Achuar language and traditional knowledges that feeds into all research conducted.

3. “Foreign and national researchers promise to facilitate access to all of the information in the historical, sociological and anthropological archives to all of the legitimate knowledge holders; and

⁴⁰ Juakmaru is “a neologism for expert or connoisseur” according to Deshoulliere and Buitron (2019).

4. “Incentivize international collaboration to train Shuar and Achuar researchers and writers, to secure support and access to the latter to training and research centres with the goal of training the Shuar and Achuar *Juakmaru*, young people and students.” (*my translation*)

The Congress ended as ceremoniously as it began, with words and expressions of gratitude. Most moving to me was watching the outside researchers be embraced by the specific Nation’s community members with whom they had worked on their research. There was a different tone to that ceremony than the opening one. While the opening ceremony was marked by an offering to the guests by way of inviting them to engage in dialogue, the closing one was an expression of gratitude for the reciprocal and deep engagement with community. Proceedings went long past dark, and my son and I were exhausted as we made our way back to our hotel.

What stood out the most to me was the generosity and gifts of the Shuar and Achuar peoples: gifts of knowledge, items, spirit and financial support. In spite of being among the most researched Indigenous peoples in the world, these nations were not shutting out these researchers. Instead, the congress culminated in the Shuar and Achuar nations’ proposal of a collaborative research framework, which they brought forward to discuss and for which they sought attendees’ full support, reciprocity and engagement. All of the non-local attendees – including myself – signed the document, both as witnesses and supporters of the framework.

3.3 Decolonizing An Individualist Knowledge Production System

What is decolonization and what does it mean to decolonize knowledge? I use the term *decolonize* (i.e. to decolonize or decolonizing) to emphasize it as a practice or orientation that is ever in process rather than suggest it might reach a completed state (i.e. decolonized or decolonization), that is fully achievable. The framing of it as a verb reflects

the nature of being as depicted by the eco-cycle – as a living, regenerative and relational process that must always be renewed. The same concept is proposed for allyship: one might strive to ally or practice allyship as an orientation and way of being, without ever being able to assume one has achieved this status or end point. As Tuck and Yang (2012) suggest, “decolonization is not a metaphor” and its use as a metaphor is often a way in which it is hegemonically or performatively translated onto colonial grounds, its meaning drained of its full relationality. Alternative terms sometimes used – e.g. Indigenize – are arguably, equally problematic. I optimistically hope other terms will have emerged by the time I am defending this thesis, and my use of this term here will then reflect this moment in contemporary thought on the subject of de-centring the empire with respect to knowledge. Beyond its use as metaphor, decolonization is deficient as a term to address what is used to address insofar as it centres colonization, and fails to show what it is that is proposed to take the colonial’s place. The lessons learned from decolonizing literatures (Fanon, 2004) and Indigenous resurgence (Alfred, 2005; Simpson, 2011) clearly show and establish that any true decolonization must not only de-centre the colonial, it must enact an ontologically distinct lifeworld.

The limitations of English academic language are most evident with such terms when used in the context of knowledge, research and methodology. Umeek (2011) refers to English as a low-context language, and Kimmerer (2019, 2013) observes how English, as used in colonial contexts, has been wielded to *itify* the world, with children being socialized out of encountering nonhuman beings as people. She contrasts this with the Potawatomi language: “It is impossible in our language to speak of other living beings as inanimate” (Kimmerer, 2019, np). Children also naturally have a “grammar of animacy,” she argues (Kimmerer, 2019, np).

For the purposes of this dissertation, my definition of what it means to decolonize is the act of thwarting individualist, colonial ways of knowing by enacting relational ways of knowing. I argue that individualist ways of thinking, being and relating constitute a knowledge production system that hegemonically dominates in academic institutions in the global North through conceptions of individual ownership, expertise, extractive research practices and the privileging of rational forms of knowledge as defined by Euro-centric enlightenment thinking (Santos, 2007). Insofar as the ontological structure of colonialism is one of individualist disconnect, as argued in the preceding chapter, individualist or ego-centric ways of knowing must be not only disrupted but transmuted and transformed by the forwarding of relational and eco-centric ways of knowing. Thus in order to *decolonize*, the individualist contours of the colonial must be rendered visible through the process of re-parochialization of which Tully (2016) speaks. Meanwhile, something of that which it erases in its acts of *terra nullius* self-assertion – relational ways of knowing – must be enacted and/or expressed in some form.

Ego-centrally produced knowledge must be thwarted by eco-centric and relational ways of knowing that are generated intra-actively. As engaged through the lens of the Potawatomi Nation's understanding of knowledge, these ways of knowing must not only include, however, what we see and intellectually know, but also emotional and spiritual knowledge, for Kimmerer (2019): "In Indigenous ways of knowing, we say that we know a thing when we know it not only with our physical senses, and our intellect, but also when we engage it with our intuitive ways of knowing – our emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge." (Kimmerer, 2019, np) While this does not disrupt legal, political and economic systems of colonial governance, it does seek to unsettle the ideological and epistemological underpinnings that play an essential role in keeping hegemony intact (Carroll, 2021), in all its material realities. In short, a

disruption of colonial knowledge systems is necessary as part of the fight for epistemic justice (Santos, 2009).

The stories above are intended to tell of the individualist and relational in distinct ways as they pertain to knowledge. The first story – the First International Scientific Expedition – is a tale that re-parochializes a positivist, rationalist and “Western scientific” approach to knowledge that is hegemonically dominant in knowledge production systems in the global North. Whilst terms such as “triangulation” and “accuracy” are settled terms that are encountered as universal and rigorous scientific concepts, these stories re-situate these concepts within the specific parochial context in which they emerged – including their rootedness in the European drive for colonial expansion and a *terra nullius* mode of “discovery” in which local – and other wise – knowledge traditions and systems are unseen, presumed to not exist, blatantly disrespected and erased. The members of the geodesic mission spend almost a full decade walking the mountains where they invariably encountered the ruins of the Quito-Cara peoples which marked the exact equator, and which was even marked by round stone monuments not dissimilar to what they went on to build.

It is a story of how “discovery” is actually a process of disconnect, separation and unseeing. The Europeans’ “discovery” of knowledge is predicated on the simultaneous assumption of superiority and active erasure of the sources, relationships, knowledge traditions and beings through which it discovers. Such a stance then self-justifies and self-legitimizes a staking claim and capitalist ownership orientation to knowledge as part of empire and expansion. In other words, in addition to the laying claim of stolen artifacts for European museums, claims on knowledge are also extracted and owned such as through Condamine’s publication of the first academic article on rubber. The story points to the totalitarian capitalist-

colonial impulse of the individualist ontological order to “story over” the other and establish a single story, as noted by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009). The culmination of this is the *Mitad del Mundo* exhibit, which to this day, insists on celebrating only one story and one knowledge system, most markedly literally leaving the Indigenous story outside its walls.

The individualist system shows its hegemonic effectiveness as the tent canopy in so far as despite the fact that European science was found to be less accurate than a pre-Incan Indigenous nation’s science from nearly one thousand years earlier – as was later evidenced by Western science itself – it is the Europeans who remain glorified, celebrated and remembered through the *Mitad del Mundo* exhibit and in the news stories. The placement of the one small acknowledgement of the Quito-Cara people’s knowledge outside of the expansive grounds of the exhibit is poignantly and blatantly symbolic of a disregard, lacking the very scientific curiosity that the exhibit allegedly seeks to celebrate. How does the impressiveness of the knowledge system behind the Quito-Cara peoples who located the exact location of the equator nearly one thousand years earlier not warrant study, celebration and fascination? Despite positivist science’s insistence on the power of evidence, the facts are somehow disregarded in service of its own promotion. Additionally, the European’s “discovery” of quinine and rubber disregard and erase the relationships and other beings (human and more-than-human) from which they they learned.

The second story tells a very different tale – of bringing people together in ceremony (Wilson, 2008), with gratitude and respect, to share an abundance with them, to build and strengthen connections and learnings from one another through reciprocal elucidation (Tully, 2016) of different worldviews, and based on the principal of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). It is a story of a people wishing to connect the parts of a system more deeply back into

itself – a core practice within eco-centric, relational lifeways. Rather than disconnecting knowledge from its roots or sources or beings with whom it was co-created, it is a process of re-connecting and deepening of connections between those that relationally engaged to co-produce an understanding – even and especially where the Shuar and Achuar peoples did not support or agree with the understandings that their European researchers reached. It was an invitation for divergent ontologies and the epistemologies they generate to engage with one another in re-parochializing dialogue.

The Shuar and the Achuar Nations disrupt the individualist narrative not by asserting their ownership – though this would be well within the realm of their rights and justice within the individualist lifeworld – but through honouring the contributions of each party to what is seen as collective and collaborative knowledge and understanding. They extend generosity, gifts and hospitality to the European academics whilst also proactively securing a seat at a table to which the Shuar and the Achuar peoples had never been invited. In essence, they create a new set of tables and grounding of their dialogues in their relational practices, removing obstacles that might prevent the European researchers from attending (e.g. paying their way). It creates a new space for dialogue and conversation, placing community members on equal footing with the (largely European) Western researchers, whose practices and forms of engagement they also respect and uphold.

It is ultimately a story of two of the world's most studied Indigenous Nations asking for relational accountability from researchers past, present and future. It is a bid to re-parochialize the epistemological canopy within which these researchers had produced their “findings,” allowing for the wider community to hear the findings, and participate in a discussion about their interpretations and understandings. The entire community – women, men, children, elders,

animals and even the plants are explicitly invited to attend the Congress. And it is a story that ends by asking for partnership agreements to be established and used by all researchers who enter the nations to abide by.

Rather than maintaining an individualist ownership orientation to knowledge in which the Nations might have simply asked for their knowledge “back” by symbolically reclaiming it, or stating that the outside researchers could no longer do research in their community, they built a partnership agreement framework to transform research practices and transmute knowledge making from an individualist, extractive enterprise, to a co-owned, co-creative process. It is not an expected and inevitable epochal shift from an individualist to a relational knowledge system. It is an intentional ontological disruption that seeks to benefit from both by bringing them closer together in partnership. If we are to think about what it means to decolonize through this lens, we can see that for the Shuar and Achuar Nations, decolonizing Western research and the knowledge systems they have generated involves a redistribution of sovereignty and power – and who gets to speak for whom – whilst building relationships.

The fact that both stories are set in Ecuador highlights the co-existence and intertwining nature of individualist and relational ontologies. The two standing in relief with one another enable dialogical engagement between them, rendering the foundations of each visible. The journeys taken to Ecuador by the Europeans are radically different in the different stories – and these differences highlight the critical importance of methodology and means. The relational is here confirmed as a realm that enables dialogue, self-reflexiveness and transformation, as noted in the previous chapter. The contrast between the Congress being held on the Nations’ lands to which all were welcomed and the small single plaque afforded the Quito-Cara people *outside* of the Mitad del Mundo exhibit is stark.

Stories about stolen canoes and stolen wild strawberries, told respectively by Indigenous academics Simpson (2016) and Kimmerer (2013) – and as relayed in the previous chapter – also achieve this effect of rendering visible the contours of relational and individualist knowledge systems. These stories show how an individualist, colonial orientation towards knowledge and research reflect capitalist conceptions of ownership, rendering the concept and definition of stealing in an interesting light. By pointing out that liberating the canoe from the canoe museum, or the wild strawberries from the grocery store would be seen as stealing, Simpson and Kimmerer render visible an ownership structure that has only been able to justify itself through a breaking of relationships – respectively, with context and the Indigenous nation from whom the canoe was taken without reciprocity, and with the earth from whom the strawberries were taken without reciprocity. As Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) says, “the destructive lens...is not science itself, but the lens of the scientific worldview, the illusion of dominance and control, the separation of knowledge from responsibility” (p. 346). The cutting of relational ties in the generation of knowledge is the way in which knowledge is separated from responsibility.

In this light, the researcher’s securing of consent from a research participant where there is no ongoing and reciprocal relationship risks mimicking a settler colonial treaty agreement whereby the researcher receives permission to impose a colonial epistemology as the dominant interpretive grounds upon which the research participant’s information, “data,” or story. Whilst being named as foundational by Research Ethics Boards on Turtle Island, consent is not secured by this process, but is re-framed under the individualist terms of ownership. Beyond granting ownership of their data to the researcher, what control or say does the participant have over the interpretation made of their data and story? The process does not

plan for, secure or support such reciprocity, respect or relationship. Indeed, research ethics processes on Turtle Island also heavily rely on the researcher's objective or outside stance, insisting that prior relationship with the participant constitutes bias that can compromise the credibility and validity of the "data." Just like Kimmerer's (2019) plants, this approach sees "research participants" are transmuted into beings the researcher learns about as objects, rather than subjects they learn from and with.

In sharp contrast, Wilson (2008) argues that the basis of any Indigenous research is relational accountability, responsibility and reciprocity. In her chapter on "Land as Pedagogy," Simpson (2017) notes the lack of consent to be the basis of knowledge and learning within colonial education systems. These examples and the proposed Shuar / Achuar research agreement suggest the inherent limitations of consent, suggesting that epistemic justice requires partnership in research. Whatever else it might or might not mean, the processes referred to under the term of "decolonizing" must entail the re-embedding of knowledge in the contexts and ontologies that are relationally accountable to those with whom they were co-produced.

The questions "about whom, for whom, by whom?" become important questions for a researcher seeking to decolonize. Beyond the initial securing of consent to 'collect data', a relational process encounters the researched as co-researcher and teacher, just as Kimmerer (2013) acknowledges the wild strawberries teach her. This also reflects Freire's (1970) belief that a critical pedagogy must disrupt the hierarchical, unilateral framing that the banking model suggests between teacher and student, replacing it with a multilateral, horizontal framing of knowledge and understanding as a collaborative exchange. This makes an eco-social methodology central to any decolonizing process, as well as to any assertion of epistemic justice.

3.4 Methodological Braiding

3.4.1 A “Two-Eyed Seeing” Methodological Framework

“Two-Eyed Seeing,” the methodological framework proposed by Mi’kmaq Elder Albert Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012) as a way to reflect an “‘it’s us, together’ consciousness” (p. 335) is an approach that intentionally strives to bring Indigenous and Western worldviews together in non-assimilative and dialogical ways. However, the methodology is directly relevant to the story of the Shuar and Achuar peoples, as the end point is not respect for parallel visions that do not interfere with one another, but to relationally intertwine multiple ways of knowing for their mutual enhancement. The concept also metaphorically might represent the form of ‘being the change’ through a “way-of-being-in-communities of practice” that Tully (2016) envisions as being necessary to transform systems from ego-centric or vicious to eco-centric and virtuous:

A central feature of this way of regeneration and transition is that there is no privileged position or actor. It is a way-of-being-in-communities of practice whenever and wherever we find ourselves, in every step with take; whether one is involved in producing, consuming, lawmaking, teaching, protesting, volunteering, commuting, and so on, there is the possibility of using green fuel, technologies, and ways of working together. (p. 20)

The iterative evolution of the diagram its authors used to represent two-eyed seeing over time, itself reflects the inherent relationality of the approach, in addition to its path towards embracing multiplicity and disrupting dualities.

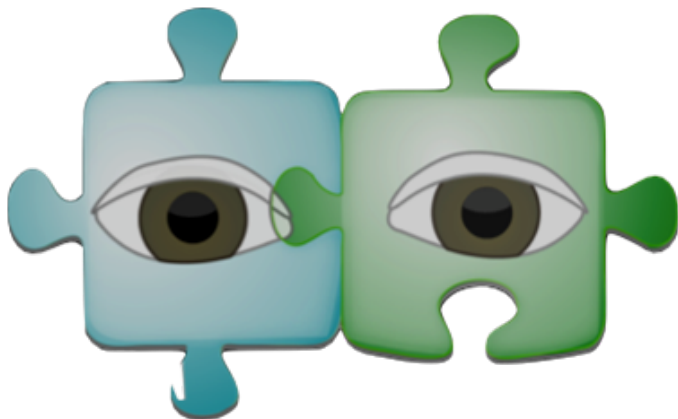
Figure 3. Two-Eyed Seeing - version 1 (Bartlett et al., 2012)



The initial diagram (Figure 3) above shows the eyes side by side and the connection between them is assumed by the reader. The second image (Figure 4) below, however, shows the elaboration of the concept such that there is intentional and explicit intra-action and difference between the two eyes. The lens of relationality and intra-being suggests that this relationship necessarily leads to the transformation and added dimensionality of each eye's sight. As Marshall (Bartlett et al., 2012) indicates: "the two jig-saw puzzle pieces help remind us that, with respect to Aboriginal Traditional Knowledges [Indigenous knowledges], no one person ever has more than one small piece of the knowledge." (p. 336) Additionally, the introduction of puzzle edges on the rims around the eyes shows that it is an approach explicitly open to multi-dimensionality rather than reserved for binary vision. The recognition of the multiplicity of Indigenous Knowledges and Nations is akin to Indigenous legal and governance traditions:

Mi'kmaw First Nations' understandings are but one view in a multitude of Aboriginal and Indigenous views ... and similarly so are the various disciplines in the Western sciences. All of the world's cultures (which we take include Western science) have understandings to contribute in addressing the local to global challenges faced in efforts to promote healthy communities. One might wish to talk about Four-Eyed Seeing, or Ten-Eyed Seeing, etc., as four perspectives or ten perspectives are brought into the collaboration. (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 336)

Figure 4. Two-Eyed Seeing - version 2 (Bartlett et al., 2012)



Decolonizing methodologists have outlined that they believe there to be a critical difference between decolonizing and Western research methodologies, arguing that as a result, decolonizing methodologies simply “do not fit” within any of the “pre-existing” Western categories of methodology, such as positivist, interpretive, and critical (Kovach, 2005, p. 29). The concept of two-eyed seeing refuses the possibility of hegemonic translation or assimilation as well as power-over relationality. There is no possibility of one eye fitting within the other. The metaphor thus suggests a different kind of fit than the hegemonic or assimilative is possible when embedded in the dialogical and relational. It shows the eyes as connecting, contributing to and receiving from one another’s vision, reflective of Tully’s (2016) model of “reciprocal learning and reciprocal interdependence” (p. 21) or of “joining hands” (Tully, 2014) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The model also affirms the intactness and legitimacy of Indigenous Knowledge as its own distinct system of knowing (Iwama et al., 2009; Bartlett et al., 2012) as argued by decolonizing methodologists – and as such, as one that cannot be subsumed under Western knowledge.

Kimmerer’s (2013) observation that the problem with the “Western knowledge system” is not its approach to science, but its claim to dominance (p. 346) suggests this occurs when the relational is destroyed and foregone, and a one-eyed or one-dimensional approach is taken (Marcuse, 1964). This reminds of the story Tully (2016) cites of Raven who plucks an eye out of the human when the latter becomes “selfish, independent rather than dependent, aggressive rather than cooperative, greedy, avaricious, and ungrateful...[taking] without reciprocating” (p. 15). Two-eyed seeing is thus a conceptual framework for not only multidimensionality but for humble, relational accountability. Lessons collated by Bartlett,

Marshall and Marshall (2012) based on using a “two-eyed seeing” approach for over two decades are articulated as follows:

1. Acknowledge that we need each other and must engage in a co-learning journey
2. Be guided by Two-Eyed Seeing
3. View “science” in an inclusive way
4. Do things (rather than “just talk”) in a creative, grow forward way
5. Become able to put our values and actions and knowledges in front of us, like an object, for examination and discussion
6. Use visuals
7. Weave back and forth between our worldviews
8. Develop an advisory council of willing, knowledgeable stakeholders, drawing upon individuals both from within the educational institution(s) and within Aboriginal communities.” (p. 334)

The framework is also applicable to my project insofar as Elder Albert (Bartlett et al., 2012) also notes it is about transdisciplinarity, which my project aims to be. Additionally, he states that the end goal is aligned with one of addressing eco-social challenges in the world today – a goal shared by Kimmerer (2013) through her braiding together of worldviews. Marshall states that two-eyed seeing is to be used with a view to motivating people – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to bring diverse knowledges together so that we might collaboratively “leave the world a better place and not compromise the opportunities for our youth (in the sense of Seven Generations) through our own inaction.” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 336) Elder Albert also notes:

Two-Eyed Seeing is hard to convey to academics as it does not fit into any particular subject area or discipline. Rather, it is about life: what you do, what kind of responsibilities you have, how you should live while on Earth ... i.e., a guiding principle that covers all aspects of our lives: social, economic, environmental, etc. The advantage of Two-Eyed Seeing is that you are always fine tuning your mind into different places at once, you are always looking for another perspective and better way of doing things. (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 336).

Marshall’s model hearkens to Kimmerer’s (2013) approach to the complementary integration of Western science and ITK, which also suggests that instead of rejecting Western

science, we might draw from the best of both knowledges. Southern epistemologists such as Santos reference similar approaches through the notion of “hybrid” methodologies or “decolonial mixing” (Santos, 2016, p. 25).

While this transformation generates new possibilities for Indigenous/Settler partnerships, they are ones that could not exist without resurgence, and should not replace the possibility of conducting Indigenous research using Indigenous methodologies and methods on their own ontological terms. The cornerstone importance of Indigenous resurgence’s assertion that Indigenous traditional knowledge systems precede, exceed and are rooted upon distinct ontological grounds from Western knowledge systems can not be overestimated, as noted in the previous chapter. This is particularly true, recognizing the established risks of discursive translation (Coulthard, 2014, p. 78), “hegemonic ventriloquism” (Tully, 2018, p. 64) and colonial assimilation (Stark and Starblanket, 2018) to not just resurgence efforts but to Indigenous peoples. Resurgence has enabled the thriving and re-generation of traditional ways of knowing and being, from which the colonial state had explicitly and systematically striven to dispossess Indigenous peoples, communities and nations. As such, resurgence is a direct disruption and refusal (Simpson, 2014) of the colonial system whose foundational strategy was to disconnect indigenous peoples from themselves, their children, their inter-generational communities, nations, land, traditional ways of knowing and being, and the spirit and natural worlds (TRC Report, 2016). It is also resurgence that is enabling for the contours of colonialism to be rendered visible, tearing holes in its individualist canopy that refuse to be mended.

As the willingness and ability to de-parochialize one’s own worldview is suggested as a condition of genuine dialogue (Tully, 2016), resurgence efforts through enacting traditional

ways of knowing, are creating spaces by which they might do that, generating grounds for the possibility of epistemic justice. This notwithstanding, the threat of “reconciliation” as merely the latest cloak worn by the same old liberal politics of recognition (Alfred, 2005) is historically founded. While the two-eyed seeing model affirms the intactness and legitimacy of Indigenous Knowledge as its own distinct and complete system of knowing (Iwama et al. 2009; Bartlett et al. 2012), it expresses an openness and relationality with non-Indigenous forms of knowing on the condition that the latter do not impose dominance or seek to erase – much in the same way as the Shuar and the Achuar peoples did. This does not represent an indifferent orientation to the other as if they might exist in parallel, side by side. Rather, this relationship acknowledges an inherent intra-being that the two might collaboratively generate together. Centering relationality requires a transformation and decolonization of power relations as structured by colonial knowledge systems.

Using the framework of two-eyed seeing, I place phenomenology in dialogue with Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies. In so doing, I argue for a decolonizing of phenomenology, a process which I assert invites the latter to become truer to itself by rendering the structures of consciousness visible. I first briefly introduce the decolonizing and Indigenous methodological traditions and then the phenomenological tradition, engaging with critiques the former holds of the latter. I then turn to the potential points of mutual enrichment and synergistic dialogue between the traditions, looking at them through a two-eyed seeing framework, whilst arguing that phenomenology is in fact phenomenologically enhanced through a dialogue with decolonizing approaches.

3.4.2 Decolonizing and Indigenous Methodologies

While methods refer to the specific techniques of data collection and analysis (Kovach, 2005, p. 29), methodologies reference the “ontological and epistemological foundation” upon which these methods rest (Strega, 2005, p. 201), clarifying that the difference between methodology and method is an ontologically, epistemologically and ethically significant distinction. As decolonizing methodologists maintain, research institutions and researchers in the Western academia have historically engaged in practices of cognitive extraction (Santos, 2016) and the colonial privileging of certain knowledges over others (Smith, 2012, p. 118), enacting an ontology of disconnect. An exploration of decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies and research is thus a critical move not only in the elaboration of a relational methodology but also in the undoing and deparochialization of an individualist methodology. While relational ontologies have arguably been making inroads in academia through the growing interest in decolonizing approaches and Southern epistemologies (Santos, 2016), the hegemonic persistence of extractivism and individualism within conventional research warrants that methodology not be viewed a side issue, but centred. Decolonizing research necessarily requires the disruption of many taken for granted concepts, tenets and principles of conventional research as practiced within Western research institutions. As the story of “the first international scientific expedition” shows, taken-for-granted research concepts and measurement frameworks reproduce objectivized and universalized concepts that need to be re-parochialized in the social, cultural and political contexts out of which they emerged.

While decolonizing methodologists offer distinctive frameworks, each rooted in a particular Indigenous knowledge traditions, Wilson (2008) of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation from northern Manitoba highlights key principles of what he names an ‘Indigenist’ approach, stating that there is an Indigenist research paradigm that captures core principles evident across

these frameworks. Drawing on Wilson (2008) and Kimmerer (2013), I summarize these core principles as follows: 1. All Our Relations have knowledge; 2. Knowledge is collaboratively, not individually, generated and held; 3. There are many forms of knowledge; 4. Research is about relationships, responsibility and reciprocity; and 5. Research is a form of ceremony.

1. All Our Relations have knowledge.

This concept is foundational in Indigenous knowledge systems, disrupting rationalist concepts prevalent in dominant knowledge systems in the global North, as currently articulated through universities on Turtle Island. Western enlightenment thinking that knowledge is the purview of learned experts reflects a linear process of human development pervades this conceptualization of knowledge. In contrast, in Indigenous traditions as articulated by Indigenous methodologists and thinkers on Turtle Island, knowledge is rooted in “grounded normativities,” or longstanding land-connected practices and experiential knowledge (Coulthard, 2013, p. 13). Additionally, Simpson (2011) proposes an alternate vision of the development of human knowledge, suggesting that each stage of life has a distinct form of knowledge to share – citing that children and young people carry the teaching of love.

Importantly, as Coulthard (2013), Simpson (2011, 2019) and Kimmerer (2013) each acknowledge, as in the case of Kimmerer’s wild strawberries who teach her, within an Indigenous ontology, knowledge is something all beings have and share – not just humans. It is important to clarify that the more-than-human not only has personhood within Indigenous knowledges, but is also viewed as holders of knowledge. Kimmerer (2013) links Western science’s denial that plants have knowledge and personhood as inherent to a colonial-capitalist move to “itify” the more-than-human world. Indeed, Indigenous scholars consistently and clearly articulate an eco-social lifeworld that is intra-subjectively co-generated with “All Our

Relations” as animate, knowing beings. There is a diversity of examples from which I might draw to exemplify this, each of which is specifically rooted in the contexts, cosmologies and lifeways of particular Nations and/or first peoples. Whyte (2018a) notes that “at least for some Anishinaabe persons historically and today, it is not necessarily true that such an identity as “the human” as a distinct or uniquely rational or knowledgeable type of being even exists” (p. 127). Moreover, Whyte (2018a) explains that some humans living in rooted relationships with the more-than-human in fact might consider themselves more dependent on the latter’s knowledges than their own, and that this intra-subjective understanding is definitive of their shared lifeworld:

The concept of interdependence includes a sense of identity associated with the environment and a sense of responsibility to care for the environment. There is also no privileging of humans as unique in having agency or intelligence, so one’s identity and caretaking responsibility as a human includes the philosophy that nonhumans have their own agency, spirituality, knowledge, and intelligence. Potawatomi people, in daily speech, often say that nonhumans have the capacity for knowledge but humans really do not (Kimmerer 2013). Thus, humans ought to take responsibility to be respectful of nonhuman ways of knowing. In my experiences, some Anishinaabe persons identify primarily through nonhuman identities, such as clan identities (e.g., crane, bear, turtle). Heidi Bohaker shows the importance of nindoodemag (clan identities) for Anishinaabe historically. Bohaker describes them as “kinship networks” where people “conceived of themselves as related to and having kin obligations toward those who shared the other-than-human progenitor being.” Nindoodemag networks were crucial for “social and political life . . . [they] shaped marriage and alliance patterns and facilitated long distance travel; access to community resources . . . [and] operated as an important component of Anishinaabe collective identities” (Bohaker 2006, 25-29). (p. 127)

Kimmerer (2013) addresses the potential critique that could arise of this stance – that this constitutes a projection onto animals, or a personification of them – head on. This is distinct from anthropomorphizing, as Kimmerer (2019) clarifies: “What I mean when I speak of the personhood of all beings, plants included, is not that I am attributing human characteristics to them. Not at all, I am attributing plant characteristics to plants” (np). Whyte (2018) acknowledges the further “complexity around what it means for nonhuman beings or systems

to be in consensual, trustworthy, diplomatic, and redundant relationships with humans” (p. 133), a focal area of his ongoing work. Whyte’s ongoing work in this area will yield some critical understandings for what it might mean to decolonize and move beyond the anthropocentrism of colonial and capitalist framings of knowledge, a subject of future work in which I hope to engage. Below, I invoke Indigenous theorists’ work in this area to suggest that anthropocentrism is not essential to the phenomenological conceptions of intersubjectivity and lifeworlds, introducing the concept of eco-social intra-subjectivity.

2. There are many forms of knowledge.

Emergent from Enlightenment thinking, the dominant knowledge production system on Turtle Island privileges the Cartesian rational in ways that discount and discredit embodied, ancestral, emotional, intuitive or other forms of knowledge. Wilson’s (2008) move to introduce concepts such as “intuitive” and “relational” coding into data analysis processes insists upon the stretching of conventional academic research practices in the global North, to include ancestral, embodied, intuitive, emotional and other non-rational forms of knowing: “In Indigenous ways of knowing, we say that we know a thing when we know it not only with our physical senses, and our intellect, but also when we engage it with our intuitive ways of knowing – our emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge” (Kimmerer, 2019, np).

3. Knowledge is collaboratively, not individually, held and owned.

Core to Umeek’s (2004, 2007) and Kimmerer’s (2013) conception of existence is that life is co-generated through diversity and intra-being. As part of this, knowledge can not be thought of as something that is generated or owned by an individual, but can only be acquired through an inherently co-creative process. It is this capitalist sense of knowledge ownership that is core to an individualist ontology that Kimmerer (2013) directly takes issue with, instead calling

herself a “gift-thinker” (p. 26) rooted in relationality and gift-reciprocity. Within a relational ontology built on respect, reciprocity and relationality, responsibility is a key element of a gift thinking approach, and Wilson’s (2008) concept of relational accountability becomes particularly important. If knowledge is acquired collaboratively, claiming it as individually generated and owned is to erase the relationships with whom it was co-created, and impose a capitalist-colonial logic of disconnect.

4. Research is about relationships.

Wilson (2008) argues that a primary goal and output of any research must be to build respectful, reciprocal and responsible relationships: “Relational accountability requires me to form reciprocal and respectful relationships within the communities where I am conducting research.” (p. 40) Distinct variations of ‘Rs’ are used by Indigenous researchers in this vein. While Wilson references three ‘Rs’: respect, reciprocity and responsibility (p. 77), Kovach (2005), quoting Kirkness and Barnhardt, identifies four Rs: respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility (p. 58).⁴¹ Other Indigenous academics articulate this in distinct ways, for instance Jesse Thistle who is Cree/Metis/Scot employs what he calls a methodology of love in his relational, historical research with Elders wherein he engages in reciprocal long-term relationships with ‘subjects’ of his research. A former carpenter, he reports regularly fixing coffee tables, fences and porches, in reciprocal exchange for the stories Elders share with him. Within a framework of relational accountability, Wilson (2008) writes: “The knowledge that

⁴¹ A relatable set of ‘Rs’ are also found emerging from the Western participatory methodological literature, such as Lahman et al. (2011) in their article, Culturally Responsive Relational Reflexive Ethics (CRRRE). However, this literature, including this particular article, is marked by its stark omission of any reference to Indigenous and decolonizing methodological traditions so is not here highlighted.

the researcher interprets must be respectful of and help to build the relationships that have been established through the process of finding out information” (p. 77).

Wilson (2008) identifies questions researchers might ask themselves to attend to the relational:

- How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between the topic that I am studying and myself as researcher (on multiple levels)?
- How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between myself and the other research participants?
- How can I relate respectfully to the other participants involved in this research so that together we can form a stronger relationship with the idea that we will share?
- What is my role as researcher in this relationship, and what are my responsibilities?
- Am I being responsible in fulfilling my role and obligations to the other participants, to the topic and to all of my relations?
- What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal? (p. 17)

5. Research is ceremony.

If the basis of research is relationship, then research is about creating connections and attending to these relationships. Since for Wilson (2008) “...any exercise that increases connection or builds relationship is spiritual or ceremonial in nature” (p. 91), research is ceremony, as the title of his book reflects. In this light, it becomes clear that the objective stance and orientation of distance between the “researcher” as expert and the “participant” as data source encouraged by research ethics processes on Turtle Island operate from a different framework. Instead, Wilson (2008) forwards the notion of the sacred in academic engagements, demanding an honouring of relationship and connection rather than the objectification, decontextualization and over-rationalization of knowledge.

3.4.3 Phenomenological Methodologies

Heidegger (1962) writes: “‘phenomenology’ signifies primarily a *methodological conception*. This expression does not characterize the what of the objects of philosophical

research as subject-matter, but rather the *how* of that research” (p. 50). As such, phenomenology might better be thought of as an orientation to knowledge. It emerges from a tradition that seeks to upturn and step beyond existing pathways of thought – not by repairing or replacing the foundations of the metaphysical traditions from which it is born, but by refusing and fleeing metaphysical thinking itself. Like other critical traditions that emerge out of Western metaphysics, such as Marxism and deep ecology, phenomenology practices an immanent critique of the relations such traditions upheld. Instead of invoking referents – whether internal or external – to erect a new theoretical framework, phenomenological thinking non-referentially strives to expose what was not seen before but which was always already there. As such it is an orientation to reconnect and relate to that which might lie in surplus to the metaphysical tent of the capitalist-colonial lifeworld. Through this act of retrieval, phenomenology strives to presence a certain unchartedness, of letting oneself be lost by de-familiarizing itself from its known coordinates. It is a way of thinking reminiscent of Solnit’s (2005) third way of getting lost, which suggests an openness to emergence, porousness and being present to relationality:

Not to find one’s way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance – nothing more,” says the twentieth-century philosopher-essayist Walter Benjamin. “But to lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest – that calls for quite a different schooling.” To lose yourself: a voluptuous surrender, lost in your arms, lost to the world, utterly immersed in what is present so that its surroundings fade away. In Benjamin’s terms, to be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery. And one does not get lost but loses oneself, with the implication that it is a conscious choice, a chosen surrender, a psychic state achievable through geography (p. 6)

Solnit continues:

...The question then is how to get lost. Never to get lost is not to live, not to know how to get lost brings you to destruction, and somewhere in the terra incognita in between lies a life of discovery. (p. 14)

Solnit's "life of discovery" as described, however, stands in stark contrast to colonial discovery, which simultaneously absences and renders different lifeways and knowledges into the abyss. She instead offers a decolonizing definition of discovery as an act of deep listening – of presencing rather than absencing, to borrow Scharmer's (2020) words. It is in this sense that I suggest phenomenology operates.

Phenomenological thinking thus distinguishes itself from Western Enlightenment reasoning by refusing the question of "the what" of phenomena as subject-matter, and instead asking and showing "how" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 50). Born of the epochal laws of metaphysical thought, phenomenological thinking takes up a fugitive orientation striving to refuse arrest by metaphysical logic. Schürmann (1982) frames the Heideggerean phenomenological project as not only "a release, through thinking, from those ultimate representations that have made metaphysics", but also a "hypothesis of withering norms" (p. 1037). While he submits that the latter "amounts to a theory of emancipation", he qualifies that "the withering of principal representations is only a possibility, a potential..." (p. 1038). A phenomenological, anti-foundational way of thinking is thus a mode, a tool, or an attunement of thought, being and relating that can enable an emancipatory withering away of oppressive norms, but can never guarantee this withering. This is because it defies the act of staking new claims, refuses the takeover of new governing principles, and promises only to continually seek to presence foundations as they emerge: "From the ontologies of the body politic to the topology of the political fields, the method is to "step back" from archai and principles to presencing; from knowing and obeying to thinking and freedom; from metaphysics to ontological anarchy" (Schürmann, 1981, p. 252).

Considered part of the interpretivist tradition, phenomenology has thus been critiqued by decolonizing methodologies for presenting itself as value-free, separating out political and social concerns from the research process, and the implicit assumption of phenomenological “bracketing” that a researcher could “step back” in order to gain some sort of enlightenment-styled objectivity (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9). In essence, this critique of phenomenology is that it resists parochialization and decontextualizes itself in search of neutral ground, such as individualist ontologies do. Strega (2005) further critiques phenomenology’s sacrificing of the “facts” in order to privilege research participants’ interpretation of their experience, stating that for phenomenologists, “‘truth’ has been found if the researcher’s description and conclusions make sense to those who are being studied (and others like them), and if it allows others to understand this reality.” (p. 206) For Strega (2005), this disavows power relations and structures, and fails to acknowledge that no value-free language exists (p. 206).

The above critiques are not without basis as there is much variability in the way phenomenology is practiced as a methodology (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 417). Indeed, some phenomenologists’ words taken at face value could be seen as providing evidence for such critiques. For example, LeVasseur (2003) states: “The phenomenologic method is grounded in the belief that truth can be found in lived experience” (p. 409). However, as both decolonized and phenomenological approaches caution, (con)textual consideration is needed to address such critiques; in this case, what do each of Strega and LeVasseur mean by “truth”?

I believe Strega’s interpretation may be based on the assumption that a phenomenologist would grant ontological status to a participant’s version of reality. In other words, if an individual did not perceive themselves to be embedded in a colonial lifeway, this would be held up as fact. While some who identify as phenomenologists may engage in such a project of

relativism, the individuals who enact phenomenology in this way must take on this responsibility rather than the tradition, for which this cannot be assumed to be characteristic. Others in the tradition are emphatic in clarifying that a phenomenological orientation is not intended to disavow the “facticity” of the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), which includes power relations. Indeed, phenomenology consistently shows itself to be concerned with “truth” in and around individual perceptions’ of it in so far as it is concerned with denaturalizing, rendering visible, or “re-parochializing” intersubjectively-held “truths” and the ontological structures by which these are both made and maintained (Vahabzadeh, 2019, p. 48). In this way, it points directly to the inherently relational nature of the world, lifeways and ontologies. It thus very specifically avoids making ‘truth claims’ in the interest of revealing the processes and structures by which such claims are made. As Vahabzadeh (2019) states, “phenomenology is not intent upon providing proof: it reveals that which has already revealed itself to remiss and attentive gazes alike” (p. 183).

In Heidegger’s footsteps, phenomenology does, however, seek to change the question from that of what is true to that of how truths are intersubjectively generated and maintained (Schutz, 1932, p. 32). In this context, bracketing can be interpreted not as the assumed standpoint of objectivity or neutrality, but as the invariably imperfect process of striving to estrange and unsettle oneself from that which is most familiar: the “natural attitude” (Schutz, 1932). By questioning the given, taken-for-granted, common sense, and assumed understandings of the world, taking a phenomenological attitude is to be vigilantly observant of the partiality of human understanding (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), including of oneself. This is not to suggest there is no facticity, but to question the capacity to lay full claim to it (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 418). Every storyteller's narrative must be “partial because it cannot be

infinite in length” (Miller and Glassner, 2011, p. 134). This approach notwithstanding, it must be noted that “bracketing” is a topic of considerable debate and disagreement within the phenomenology literature itself (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 417).

As such, phenomenological thinking does not entail a shift to a “phenomenological attitude” such as is frequently referenced – as if one could settle into a neutral, safeguarded location or standpoint: “...our treatise does not subscribe to a ‘standpoint’ or represent any special ‘direction’; for phenomenology is nothing of either sort, nor can it become so as long as it understands itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 50). Further, phenomenological thinking can never definitively step back and away from metaphysical logic and reason in so far as this economy of presence still governs and orders multiple aspects of the contemporary epoch. Schürmann (1979) quotes Heidegger in saying that this phenomenological stepping back is “thus experienced as ‘the step back from the thinking that merely represents – that is, *explains* – to the thinking that *responds* and recalls”” (pp. 165-6). While a “thinking that responds” refers inherently to relationality – responding to an “other” to whom it is responding – a “thinking that recalls” bears even stronger relevance to a project on connection defined as a form of remembering relationality and that which has been rendered into the abyss.

3.4.4 Towards Decolonizing Phenomenological Methodologies

When dialogically engaged with decolonizing methodologies such as through the two-eyed seeing framework, I argue that phenomenology has some particular gifts to offer to decolonizing projects. Phenomenology as an orientation to the world consistently shows itself to be concerned with denaturalizing or rendering visible intersubjectively-held “truths” and the ontological structures by which these are both made and maintained (Vahabzadeh, 2019, p. 48). Thus, while phenomenology is not considered a Southern epistemology, its methodological

focus on denaturalization, erasures and the extra-discursive (Foucault, 1978) enacts a “sociology of absences” (p. 21) for which Santos (2016) advocates: “...whatever does not exist in our society is often actively produced as non-existent and we have to look into that reality. Looking at this reality you can see that the sociology of absences allows us to expand the relevant experiences of the world.” (p. 21) In this way, phenomenology might be viewed as directly supporting decolonizing teachings and methodologies. As Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue, such denaturalization is central to the project of decolonization: “By exposing normative knowledge production as being not only non-Indigenous but colonial, they [Indigenous methodologies] denaturalize power within settler societies and ground knowledge production in decolonization” (p. 95). Phenomenology also avoids essentializing the categories of “Western” and “Indigenous” by categorically identifying their traditions as either epistemicidal or decolonizing – a stance which (although inadvertently) reproduces an individualist ontology of colonial, binary disconnect. Instead, phenomenology points to the conditions in which both are potentialities on the same horizon (Vahabzadeh, 2019) such that a de-colonizing methodological mixing becomes a possibility.

Conversely, a dialogical relationship between phenomenology and decolonizing methodologies holds significant transformative potential for the phenomenological tradition. Situating phenomenology in dialogue with decolonizing traditions has the effect of “deparochializing” (Tully, 2016) and rendering visible aspects of the tradition – as it has tended to be applied as a research method, which when so applied, reproduce the *terra nullius* ontological foundations of disconnect. These include the prioritization of the “individual” as the primary unit of study vs. the relational, and an anthropocentric conception of lifeworlds and intersubjectivity. This argument need not signal an incongruence between phenomenology and

decolonizing approaches, but rather as an opportunity whereby the tradition's phenomenological qualities can be decolonized and hence be even truer to itself. Within Maori worldviews, the unit of the individual is foregone for the "fundamental unit of whanau or extended family" (Smith, 2012, p. 279) as the "core social unit, rather than the individual" (Smith, 2012, p. 303). While the concept of intersubjectivity is central to a phenomenological methodology, researchers using this approach have tended to focus on individual interviews as the primary method of data collection. This common assumption that the appropriate phenomenological method is the one-on-one narrative-style interview asserts that the individual is the best assumed unit of study. However, it is critical to note that the phenomenological concepts of intersubjectivity and the lifeworld themselves are highly relational concepts. According to Berger and Luckmann's (1967) and Schutz's (2010) conceptions, intersubjectivity is the inter-relational process by which humans form shared meanings and understandings of their co-generated lifeworld. The concept itself suggests a move towards a concept of intra-being and relationality – not just two individuals interacting, but the co-creative existence that humans share and co-generate because of, and formative of, their ongoing relationships with others. Indeed, Schutz locates the possibility for any communication or indeed even the individual is rooted in the "we-relationship":

It [intersubjectivity] is the fundamental ontological category of human existence in the world and therefore of all philosophical anthropology. As long as "man is born of woman," intersubjectivity and the we-relationship will be the foundation for all other categories of human existence. The possibility of reflection on the self, discovery of the ego, capacity for performing any epoché, and the possibility of all communication and of establishing a communicative surrounding world as well, are founded on the primal experience of the we-relationship. (Schutz, 2010, p. 42)

One might wager that this methodological presumption emerged from the tradition's preoccupation with keeping an individual's story and understanding intact, acknowledging

that the individual's story, as intersubjectively held, always already invokes the presence of others: phenomenology is about trying to access "people's dialogues with the world" (Freeman, 2007, p. 926). However, a focus on one-on-one interviews clearly prioritizes individual, rational, and verbal representations of experience over embodied, intuitive, emotional, artistic, sensory or relational expressions and interactions. Smith (2012) calls for this "core social unit, rather than the individual" (p. 303) to be centered in the research process. Supplementing a narrative-style interview with intra-subjective or relational processes could only broaden the phenomenologists' access to participants' intra-subjectively generated experiences of the world.

Additionally, despite the phenomenology literature's call to be accountable to individuals' stories, the absence of discussion about mutual accountability and relationship-building outside of the interview room is glaring when held up against the decolonizing methodological literature. While phenomenology prioritizes accountability to participants' stories with a view to not colonizing or extracting stories from their context, a decolonizing methodology emphasizes first and foremost relational accountability with the participant as co-researcher – before, during and after any story is shared. For phenomenologists, extracting experience out of a person's context, framework of understanding or story is to implicitly colonize them, and impose structures of thought onto both the story and the person telling it. In a decolonizing approach, "collective responsibility and accountability" is central (Kovach, 2005, p. 31), entailing the principles of reciprocity, participation and relationship-building, such that there is no "object" of study "out there" (Smith, 2012, p. 121). Only an intra-subjective relational engagement between researchers, research participants, and their relations (to the

human and more-than-human world) can support this. There is “no research without relationships” (p. 263), says Qwul’sih’yah’maht (2005).

In the context of no relationship or reciprocal arrangement, it can be argued that even asking an individual to share a personal story runs a high risk of being extractive. Waters (2017) provides one example of how phenomenology’s approach to the researcher-participant relationship risks being extractive when not situated within a decolonized framework. In *Phenomenological Research Guidelines*, she argues that participants must be “co-researchers” and their analysis of their experiences is essential. However, she condones a paternalistic attitude towards participants that does not allow them to be full co-participants in the research process by advising phenomenological interviewers to never suggest to participants what they are actually looking for in terms of content. While this advice may be read as the naïve attempt by a researcher to reduce their imposition of their own assumptions and bias onto a participant, it belies a natural attitude reflective of an individualist ontology that assumes neutrality is possible. It also presumes that a sterile researcher-participant relationship can be considered as more objective, and render truer data, than one of a reciprocal relationship. In this advice, the research participant is not being invited in as full participant, as the real analysis will be conducted by the researcher, not the participant. Thus, while the story may not be extracted from the storyteller’s context, it is ultimately to be extracted from the storyteller. As elaborated below, my decision to engage relationally with the youth climate justice activists through the consultation as well as my decision to analyze their demands and priorities, as constituting their own analysis of the collaborative consultation discussions are made with the above in mind.

A second way in which phenomenology is challenged by the decolonizing literatures is the rendering the tradition's anthropocentrism visible. Decolonizing methodologists propose that the intra-active relationships in which humans are always already engaged with more-than-human forms of being play a role in co-creating intra-subjective horizons rather than simply being an inanimate backdrop to human activity: "In Indigenous cosmologies, land refers not just to the material aspects of places, but to its "spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects" (Styres et al., 2013, p. 37)" (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Omitting more-than-human beings from conceptions of intersubjectivity is a way in which phenomenology imposes the natural attitude of an anthropocentric individualist ontology onto the frameworks within which people understand and experience their lives: "Many Indigenous creation stories link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole" (Smith, 2012, p. 247). If a strawberry can be a teacher from which one can learn (Kimmerer, 2013), it is an active participant in an eco-social intra-subjectivity. Simpson's (2020) character of *Biidaaban* (discussed in chapter 7) also exemplifies this point. Looking at young people's stories as intra-subjectively created with the more-than-human with whom they are deeply engaged is an important lens for my study.

Anthropocentrism, however, just like the tradition's historical reliance on the individual unit, is arguably not constitutional of a phenomenological orientation. Concepts of human-only intersubjectivity necessarily rely on human rationality. The intersubjective does not just live in human language, but in shared stock of knowledge and cognitive understandings, Schutz (2010) and Berger and Luckmann (1967) clarify. However, if we make sense of the world with more than our rational minds, the concept simply does not suffice. Moreover it reifies an individualist hierarchy rooted in ultimately colonial epistemologies, as the links between

anthropomorphism and colonialism are clear (Davis & Todd, 2017). As Kimmerer (2019) states: “In Indigenous ways of knowing, we say that we know a thing when we know it not only with our physical senses, and our intellect, but also when we engage it with our intuitive ways of knowing – our emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge.” (2019, np) It is central to a phenomenological orientation to render such structures of thought visible in order to actively disrupt them.

Thus I argue that the anthropocentrism of the phenomenological conceptions of the lifeworld and intersubjectivity are unnecessary to phenomenology. Indeed, a decolonizing of phenomenology in this way radicalizes it, making it truer to itself. Granted, a human-only conception of the lifeworld as outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1967), Schutz (2010) and other phenomenologists might appear the only possible lifeworld if lifeworlds function like tent canopies – structured by an individualist ontology. However, to presume that eco-social conceptions of intra-subjectivity and a lifeworld is not possible might be considered a form of cognitive imperialism in so far as it simply does not recognize or admit Indigenous theorists’ articulation of their ontological orientation to the world. Kimmerer (2013) links Western science’s denial that plants have knowledge and personhood as inherent to a colonial-capitalist move to “itify” the more-than-human world. Indeed, Indigenous scholars from across nations on Turtle Island consistently and clearly articulate an eco-social lifeworld that is intra-subjectively co-generated with “All Our Relations”. There is a diversity of examples – each specifically rooted in the contexts, cosmologies and lifeways of particular nations and/or first peoples. I offer one such example here, highlighted by Whyte (2016):

In Chie Sakakabira’s collaboration with Iñupiat communities in the Arctic, she describes how many members discuss their knowledge of climate change and adaptive strategies through stories encoded in their languages, cosmologies, and kinship, as well as their spiritual relationships to nonhuman beings and spirits. In the case of the individuals with

whom Sakakabira worked, some of their observations of climate change and adaptation are expressed through supernatural stories about changes in the dwellings of shape-shifters and ancestral spirits. The Iñupiat communities live according to relationships of moral reciprocity with whales, an animal they depend on economically, culturally, and for health – a connection so deep Sakakabira calls it cetaceousnes (whale consciousness). (p. 64)

Whyte (2018a) notes that “at least for some Anishinaabe persons historically and today, it is not necessarily true that such an identity as 'the human' as a distinct or uniquely rational or knowledgeable type of being even exists” (p. 127). Utiaj Paati of the Shuar Nation similarly views the “non-human” as a “Western construct”. Moreover, as quoted above, Whyte (2018a) explains that some humans living in rooted relationships with the more-than-human in fact might consider themselves more dependent on the latter’s knowledges than their own, and that this intra-subjective understanding is definitive of their shared lifeworld:

The concept of interdependence includes a sense of identity associated with the environment and a sense of responsibility to care for the environment. There is also no privileging of humans as unique in having agency or intelligence, so one’s identity and caretaking responsibility as a human includes the philosophy that nonhumans have their own agency, spirituality, knowledge, and intelligence. Potawatomi people, in daily speech, often say that nonhumans have the capacity for knowledge but humans really do not (Kimmerer 2013). Thus, humans ought to take responsibility to be respectful of nonhuman ways of knowing. In my experiences, some Anishinaabe persons identify primarily through nonhuman identities, such as clan identities (e.g., crane, bear, turtle). Heidi Bohaker shows the importance of nindoodemag (clan identities) for Anishinaabe historically. Bohaker describes them as “kinship networks” where people “conceived of themselves as related to and having kin obligations toward those who shared the other-than-human progenitor being.” Nindoodemag networks were crucial for “social and political life . . . [they] shaped marriage and alliance patterns and facilitated long distance travel; access to community resources . . . [and] operated as an important component of Anishinaabe collective identities” (Bohaker 2006, 25-29) (p. 127).

I do not delve into here “what it means for nonhuman beings or systems to be in consensual, trustworthy, diplomatic, and redundant relationships with humans” (Whyte, 2018a, p. 133), an important and ongoing area of Whyte’s work. However, I invoke Indigenous theorists’ work on this area to note the anthropocentric construction of phenomenological

concepts - which I believe are unnecessary to the tradition's orientation. The individualist structures of living (e.g., nation states) and understanding (e.g., concepts of citizenship) that humans who are engaged in individualist lifeways intersubjectively co-generate together, are perceived as human only, and hence it "makes sense" (as a self-reinforcing loop) within the sensibility of the lifeworld constructed as a tent canopy that intersubjectivity is perceived as human-only. However, an intersubjectively and reciprocally enacted lifeworld need not be only elaborated through features specific to being human, such as human language – or more specifically the English language – even though Schutz (2010), Berger and Luckmann (1967) all consider language to be a core form through which the lifeworld is expressed and shared.⁴² This might instead be viewed as a reflection of their own embeddedness in an individualist lifeworld rather than structurally true of lifeworlds – or indeed, even consistent with a phenomenological orientation to the world.

The incorporation of relationality beyond humans and the granting of agency to more-than-human beings, including land, in the shaping of lifeworlds can be seen as a significant enhancement of a phenomenological approach. This is a key way that I believe phenomenology benefits from being situated in a dialogical, two-eyed seeing framework with a decolonizing methodology, insofar as a decolonizing lens pushes it to further radicalize and differentiate itself from the individualist ontological tradition out of which it was born. By engaging with the youth climate justice activists' own intra-subjectively generated analysis of their opinions and experiences in the world, the data I will be examining is fundamentally relational, intra-subjectively generated. It is also truer to their understanding of the earth and more-than-human beings as actors with whom they intra-subjectively generate their world.

⁴² I would here note that Indigenous languages enact distinct ontological concepts, such as emphasized by Coulthard (2013), Kimmerer (2013) and Utiaij Paati (2019), that are important to pay attention to here.

3.5 Decolonizing, Participatory and Relational Research Methods and the Phoenix

Consultation

Using methods that dialogically support engagement, reciprocity and relationship-building between diverse ideas and beings is key to a decolonizing approach. Non-traditional research methods (Kovach, 2005, p. 30; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 99) such as participatory approaches that disrupt the extractive and non-relational aspects of colonial research are recognized in the decolonizing literature as a critical ally in realizing some of the principles above: “Gaining control of the research process has been pivotal for Indigenous peoples in decolonization. One methodology from the margins—participatory research—has been an ally” (Kovach, 2005, p. 23). Participatory methods can be an excellent way to learn from research participants in the ways Santos talks about – not as “giving” them voice, but as “sharing” voice with them (Santos, 2016, p. 21) – and can constitute a form of deep listening. As Bergold and Thomas (2012) show, participatory methods offer a way of conducting “research with”. For Tuck and McKenzie (2015), participatory and action research methods engage “memory and history” (p. 113), making it particularly relevant for both decolonizing and phenomenological projects. One key way they do this is by accessing embodied, relational, non-rational, embodied, intuitive and experiential forms of knowing – directly counteracting the historic and discursive history of research methods that exclude, deny and reduce surplus experiences. Participatory methods also help mitigate against inherent power dynamics that can arise in the process of community-engaged research (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

While participatory research methods are sometimes thought of as one-off facilitation techniques, there is evidence-based literature on the methods in Western methodological

traditions going back at least five decades (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).⁴³ Participatory approaches elaborate a relational orientation to inquiry (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). While noted as being more engaging than traditional research methods, participatory techniques are also well documented for being “less invasive and more transparent” (O’Kane, 2008, p. 130), and better at protecting and respecting research participants’ agency in a research process. They emphasize “co-learning”, with a focus on bridging academic and popular knowledge (Santos, 2016, p. 27) in ways that honour the existing wisdom of research participants rather than prioritizing the researcher’s analysis of the data. This fundamentally adjusts the conception of knowledge production and producer, converting the “researched” into researcher (Smith, 2012, p. 298). An effect of this approach is that the researcher avoids the traditional role of being or becoming “expert” as decolonized methodologists advise (Smith, 2012, p. 156).

That said, participatory engagement methods have also been used in ways that do not elicit meaningful participation (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 256; O’Kane, 2008, p. 130). Thus it seems that the extent to which such methods are truly participatory and non-extractive depends on the extent to which they are dialogically engaged with a decolonizing and relational methodological lens. Moreover, as was noted about phenomenology, most Western participatory methods fall short of Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies in so far as they do not go beyond the human and anthropocentric world. Thus, whilst participatory methods enable the braiding together of Indigenous and Western methodological traditions, it is necessary to enact participatory methods from within a relational framework to ensure relational accountability.

⁴³ One system (the Youth Program Quality Initiative, YPQI) has developed a 63-point scale of points of good practice for participatory engagement based on extensive research, with the view to ensuring that methods are not used in one-off ways, but are systematically integrated into an organization’s – and indeed whole cities’ and US states’ – participatory practices with young people (CYPQ 2012).

Participatory approaches and methods articulated in the decolonizing methodological literature include a range of approaches such as those listed below. As relational methods, these are identified here to point to their relevance to phenomenological analysis of the youth climate justice activists' lifeworlds, as well as decolonizing approaches. They are listed to enable a contextual analysis of how the Consultation supported the participatory and relational engagement of youth climate activist delegates in both the lead up to and during the consultation – including in their own process of data analysis by which they generated the *Manifesto*, the *Final Report of the Consultation* and their demands. The following methods each highlight key elements of what it can mean to engage in relational research methods. I also specify how I strove to enact each of the methods in my research process.

For my dissertation, I employed the non-extractive approach of examining secondary data collaboratively generated by youth and intergenerational activists from across Turtle Island (Canada, Mexico, US) who were delegates at the Regional Consultation on the “Rights of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment,” re-named by youth organizers, “the Phoenix Consultation.” Organized to inform the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, the consultation was organized by a collaborative of organizations, scholars and youth activists – as detailed in the next chapter, chapter four. As noted above in section 1.5 on Limitations, I did not engage in direct, participatory research with youth participants as a research method to produce the findings studied in this dissertation.

The Phoenix Manifesto, the main document analyzed in this dissertation is the result of the real time coding and analysis process of the youth climate activist delegates themselves, based on pages of documented comments, ideas, transcripts of full group and small group conversations by delegates. I did however play an active role as one of six trainers of youth in

youth-participatory decolonizing action research methodologies and methods in the lead up to the consultation. I also supported the planning of the consultation from the vantage point of designing participatory processes to maximize the engagement of all delegates. As such, I did not impose at any moment any elements of my own research process on the group and did not present any content prior to or at the event, though I influenced the nature of participatory engagement. By critically examining the lessons of the *Manifesto* in the context of discussions at the consultation – as documented in meeting minutes and notes – I strive to engage in non-extractive, decolonizing and phenomenological analysis as pertains to the questions of my study. In doing so, I maintain that it is possible to use phenomenology to look at the unit of the social (Smith, 2012) and/or the relational (Wilson, 2008), rather than individual as a unit by which intersubjectivity can be examined.

A small group of youth delegates engaged in their own process of coding and analysis of all consultation data initially in the English language. They then engaged other youth delegates to translate this into French and Spanish and brought the articulated set of demands back to the whole group in the final day of the consultation for the full group's input and verification. They used online tools that enabled simultaneous and anonymous feedback and input to support full participation as a means of member checking and collecting additional data. Whilst I had offered training and support in how to conduct data analysis, I did not engage in the coding process of consultation documents and data. As such, I do not here engage in a secondary re-coding or analysis of the youth's data, but respect the analysis they co-generated. Instead I draw out the throughlines or recurrent themes to consider what their analysis shows and reveals (in chapter 5) about their collectively generated intra-subjective lifeworld, punctuating these themes with direct quotes from the consultation proceedings – quotes identified by the informal

research team in their coding process. This supported my goal of ethical engagement with others necessitates an understanding of the worldviews and frameworks within which they interpret the world (Tully, 2016). In so far as the *Manifesto* reflects their priorities, demands, perspectives and understanding of their being-ness in the context of broader structures of power and an eco-social lifeworld on Turtle Island, I argue that this document – their own words - supported by individuals' words captured throughout the consultation proceedings can be considered as a reflection of their shared eco-social intrasubjectivity as understood and articulated by them.

I also acknowledge that I am inevitably embedded in the intra-subjectivity that I research – from the questions I ask, to the data I choose to consider, and the analysis I offer – in addition to having participated in the consultation itself. Whilst some phenomenological researchers might argue that such insertedness in the research process compromises the discernment of the lifeworlds, such relationality with both participants and data is consistent with decolonizing and Indigenous research's insistence on relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). Thus while it is considered 'secondary' data from the formal standpoint of Research Ethics, my proximity to the data enables me both an embedded and contextualized analysis of the *Manifesto*, in contrast to if I were examining it from a distance, as a discrete, decontextualized document. In doing so, I have engaged in my own self-reflexive practice to mitigate against any analysis I might project onto the young people. This includes taking note of the elements of the *Manifesto* that seem incongruent or surprising for me, and do not fit within my theoretical framework – such as the interchangeable use of rights and justice language. This provided a rich source of analysis for me in so far as it required me to engage such findings with curiosity to see what this offered to my own theoretical formulations, resulting in the analysis that constitutes

chapters 5 through 7.

In chapter 5, I offer a close read of the *Manifesto*, trying to stay as close to delegates' language, text and their lifeworlds as articulated by them. In chapter 6, I draw out an unexpected observation of the Phoenix Consultation and *Manifesto*, which extends tendrils beyond the bounds of my research question – namely, the potentiality and limitations of children's rights as a site where a counter-hegemonic human rights framework might be formulated. I only turn to consider this data within the explicit framing of my research questions in chapter 7, drawing out the insights that the climate activists who authored this *Manifesto* have to offer to studying transformative eco-social change, from the egocentric to the ecocentric, returning to the theoretical framework I outline in chapter 2.

Methods that address Relationality with the Land: Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that a rootedness and relationship to the land is the base principle of all decolonizing approaches (p. 94). For this reason, this is an important starting point in a discussion of relational and decolonizing participatory methods. While land-based teaching is prioritized increasingly by those engaged in Indigenous scholarship (e.g. Dechinta University), not much is offered in the literature with respect to how to incorporate relationality with the land into specific participatory methods. Pérez Piñán et al. (2021) elaborate on their implementation of a participatory, action-oriented tool with Indigenous communities, "Making Connections", which builds on earlier versions of the "Tully Wheel", showing how this tool might be used also with non-Indigenous communities. They write: "The Making connections method is a contribution to PAR in that it serves as a tool to name such civic and anti-oppressive actions, validate practices of resistance, and provide a space where it is possible to envision a different future based on the articulation of participants' own episteme." (p. 17) By rooting this tool in the work

of Tully's (2008) practices of citizenship, as well as Indigenous, decolonizing approaches to knowledge, this participatory tool engages participants in intra-subjective sense-making that unsettles individualist epistemologies.

A relatable method has been used in a variety of children-centred research initiatives, including by and with Indigenous communities. In one such method used by the International Institute of Child Rights and Development (IICRD), children and youth are invited to work in small groups to draw a map of their community, elaborating on their relationships with place and community (whether nature, people, or other). They use this process to identify and discuss strengths and challenges they face. This exercise enables young people to think in relational terms as defined by them, without imposing individualist or anthropocentric structures onto them.

Phenomenologically, both of these relational methods enable participants to collectively co-generate and describe their sense of intra-subjectivity that includes relationships with land, place and the more-than-human – whilst holding the diversity of experiences. describe their sense of intra-subjectivity that includes relationships with land, place and the more-than-human. Additionally, the latter offers a way for participants to convey experiences they deem to be meaningful to them in non-verbal ways.

While the consultation did not engage delegates in either of these place-based methods, it was Turtle Island focused, and delegates reflected on their diverse experiences and relationships with the more-than-human across these diverse geographies whilst considering the structures, which shaped them, and which they enacted as beings embedded in an individualist lifeworld. Such participatory conversations fed into the shared views on priorities and demands.

Methods that Enact the Principle of Reciprocity: Understanding the research process as fundamentally relational, it is essential to ensure research participants are engaged in every aspect of the research process, including identifying the benefits for them in participating in the research process (Smith, 2012, pp. 309-310). A reciprocity approach to research relationships supports a non-extractive orientation, promoting mutual accountability and ownership, establishing what Tuck and McKenzie (2015) call “relational validity”. Consent (Simpson, 2019) is also a key principle of reciprocal research. It also contributes to relationship-building⁴⁴ and establishing “good relations” in a way that is consistent with a decolonized approach (Smith, 2012, p. 249) – hearkening to Thistle’s methodology of love noted above, whereby community members engage in gift-reciprocity relationships with the researcher in exchange for their stories and wisdom. While this is an offering some researchers might not conventionally consider, it reflects participants’ degree of participation in choosing this exchange, and also reflected, phenomenologically, the material needs in the community, and important contextual factor of people’s lives.

In the consultation, youth held many organizing roles within which they shaped the process as collaborating co-researchers, and were giving multiple choices for how to participate. Youth from each country were invited to apply to be part of an Intergenerational Advisory Committee (IAC) that oversaw all elements of the planning and implementation of the event. While many of the adults involved volunteered on the event, these youth were also recognized through a humble honorarium that the limited budget could support. Youth also had

⁴⁴ In cases where building relationships is not feasible, gaining an understanding from participants of how they perceive the research as benefitting them is still a critical ethical consideration. In these cases, extra care might also be taken to avoiding what might be experienced as a more extractive method, such as divulging of personal stories. This could be replaced with discussions about specific events or activities, so that participants may choose to still divulge personal information, but are not required to do so.

the opportunity to engage in research in the lead up to the consultation, to contribute to the background materials and content of the event – supported by a diverse tri-country network of senior children’s rights researchers who formed an Academic Network for this role. This included the possibility to participate in a five-week online training prior to the consultation in youth participatory action research (Y-PAR). If participants were not able to attend the weekly online sessions, they were still provided with resources and a website with pre-recorded modules on the key elements and stages in Y-PAR: <https://commons.royalroads.ca/ypar/>. Participants in the pre-consultation research were all invited as consultation delegates and given the opportunity to present. The majority of delegates and presenters were youth, and the final *Manifesto* was drafted collaboratively by youth delegates who systematically coded all consultation comments, placing a priority on ensuring the diversity of voices were heard (i.e., not just presenters) as captured through the many participatory modalities of the event, as outlined in the next chapter below. My own approach to my research was also used as a reciprocal approach, where I volunteered my time to chair the Academic Committee, represented the latter on the Steering Committee, co-facilitated the advance Y-PAR training, supported the development of participatory engagement approaches for the consultation and supported youth conducting their analysis of the consultation in preparation of the Manifesto and the Final Report. As someone who stood to benefit from this research, as this formed the core data analyzed in this dissertation, engaging in reciprocal ways with youth and adult participants and organizers was core to my methodological approach to enact a gift-gratitude-reciprocity model. Optimally built into the starting point of the research (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 95), within this approach both “researcher” and “participant” understand themselves to be giving and receiving something.

Arts-Based Engagement: The cognitive mapping example above is an example of a visual, sensory approach that draws on arts-based or non-verbal data collection methods. However, there are countless other arts-based and arts-informed participatory methods that can be used to access and express experiences and embodied forms of knowledge through visual or sensory means. These include photo voice, metissage, collage visioning exercises, and other simple but intentional participatory activities. An example of a highly creative method is the Canadian example of Initiative for Indigenous Futures⁴⁵, which supports youth to develop video and virtual reality games based on their articulated vision of the Indigenous future. This is an example of how visual and sensory modes of data generation, collection and analysis enable one to move beyond text-based - “oral or written” – methods, such as the decolonized literature advocates (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 99). Such activities are said to provoke different types of conversations and observations amongst participants because of accessing their visual and sensory knowledge and embodied experiences rather than an exclusively verbal-based rationality approach that is most commonly used in focus group discussions. It also can catalyze relationships amongst participants and creative engagement with a given topic that can generate related ideas and strategies.

For a phenomenological approach, these types of methods enable participants to express alternate ways of knowing and convey subjective experience in unique, non-traditional ways (Kovach, 2005, p. 31). In the example of the video games, participants’ creation of future worlds reflects their intra-subjective understanding of the world in terms of its potentialities. In the ‘interesting objects’ exercise, a whole set of understandings with respect to participants’ engagement with objects in their environment, the meanings they hold for them, brings

⁴⁵ <http://abtec.org/iif/>

intersubjective elements to life that may not get accessed through the use of exclusively verbal methods. It is also an exercise of taking an object out of its usual assumed meaning or use and exploring it from a different angle – a highly phenomenological exercise. In the consultation, delegates were invited to contribute images and art to the various participatory engagement formats used, and were trained in arts-based methods as part of the Y-PAR training.

Methods that Refuse: Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that

[r]efusal is a powerful characteristic of Indigenous methods of inquiry, pushing back against the presumed goals of knowledge production, the reach of academe, and the ethical practices that protect institutions instead of individuals and communities...refusal is more than just a no; it is a generative stance situated in a critical understanding of settler colonialism and its regimes of representation... (p. 148)

One proposed act of refusal is described by Santos (2016), who argues for the use of conversational or dialogic methods that are not documented in any way (p. 27). Wilson (2008) also recognizes this as a more consistent approach to ITK and when listening to Elders' teachings. Flying in the face of conventional research methods used in Western academia, this represents a significant refusal to mainstream extractive data collection approaches. Another identified participatory method of refusal includes ensuring strong processes of consent at every stage of the research, including engaging participants in the identification of what they want (and do not want) to share, and how they want (and do not want) to do so. This was a critical approach used at every turn in the planning and the implementation of the consultation event. For Simpson (2017), non-consent is a core aspect of colonial lifeways and knowledge systems. As Audra Simpson (2014) speaks of refusing the given categories offered within an individualist ontology, the refusal of assumed meanings is an important way that phenomenology engages in such a generative politics of refusal. Another method of refusal is the researcher's right to refuse methodological purity as is dictated within the Western research

tradition – a move I advocate by focusing on how the collective analysis generated by youth at the consultation reflects their own analysis. In so far as it reflects their priorities, demands, perspectives and understanding of their being-ness in the context of broader structures of power and an eco-social lifeworld on Turtle Island, I argue that this document – their own words - supported by individuals’ words captured throughout the consultation proceedings can be considered as a reflection of their shared eco-social intra-subjectivity as understood and articulated by them.

Deep Listening: For Santos, “[d]eep listening is in fact a key concept in the epistemologies of the South” (2016:21). It emphasizes “co-learning”, with a focus on bridging academic and popular knowledge (Santos, 2016, p. 27) in ways that honour the existing wisdom of research participants rather than prioritizing the researcher’s analysis of the “data”. This fundamentally adjusts the conception of knowledge production and producer, converting the ‘researched’ into researcher (Smith, 2012, p. 298). An effect of this approach is that the researcher avoids the traditional role of being or becoming “expert” as decolonizing methodologists advise (Smith, 2012, p. 156). Particular small group Indigenous research methods, such as Talking Circles, Storytelling and Testimony are all specific methods that lend themselves well to such deep listening. Consultation organizers prioritized youth presenters where possible and ensured multiple formats of dialogue were organized designed to support adults and Elders to listen to the young people.

Small-group and/or Peer-based Methods: Participatory methods literature points to many strong rationales for using small group exercises. Small group settings “serve to collect data

because in the open and— ideally—relaxed atmosphere, it is easier to address taboo themes... This succeeds also in the case of young research partners when the focus groups are run by peer researchers...” (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Small group settings also feature and highlight “multi-perspectivity and multivocality...” (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). The use of small group and peer-based methods also represents a refusal of the individual unit in the research process, as Smith (2012) calls for (p. 279). Peer-based activities – especially amongst youth – support the phenomenological researcher to learn from relational dynamics amongst youth, as well as generating a context in which young people may feel more comfortable sharing (CYPQ *Cooperative Learning*, 2011, p. 68). Not only could small group methods lend the researcher the opportunity to see aspects of intra-subjectivity that otherwise might not be captured in a one-on-one interview, they offer a less intrusive option to an interviewee – especially a youth interviewee.

Small group approaches support dialogue or conversation, a final oral method presented in the literature, as offering an alternative to traditional methods used within Western methodologies. For Qwul’sih’yah’maht (2005), dialogue or “dialogic interviews” can be a way of bringing stories to life (p. 246). These can be held in the form of 1:1 or group interviews. A core structure of the consultation was to organize the group into pods, small groups that delegates broke into daily to engage in ongoing dialogue about the content of the day’s session. This enabled relationship building and pod members each had a google document that they contributed to in real time to capture minutes of their discussion. These documents were one of the data sources coded and analyzed by youth participants in order to generate the *Manifesto*.

This chapter focused on the importance of methodologies and methods of engagement as being of central importance to the enactment of ontologies and the intra-subjective co-

generation of knowledge and lifeworlds. Drawing on Marshall's two-eyed seeing methodology, I argue for the alliance between phenomenology and Indigenous methodologies, highlighting the ways in which the latter transformatively decolonizes the former in ways that make it truer to its principles and orientation. I then outline how the two approaches might be braided together through participatory methods, explaining how participatory, decolonizing and relational methods were utilized and applied in the Phoenix Consultation. I also contextualize my own methodological approach and relationship to consultation, consultation delegates and the data generated, which is the data source I critically examine in this dissertation using both phenomenological and decolonizing lenses of analysis. In the next chapter, I provide context for the Consultation as well as providing details of the event planning and implementation.

4. The North America Consultation on the Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment: Overview, process and context of the Phoenix Consultation and Manifesto

4.1 Introduction

As noted in section 3.5 above, I employed the non-extractive approach of examining secondary data produced by youth and intergenerational activists from across Turtle Island (Canada, Mexico, US) who were delegates at the Regional Consultation on the ‘Rights of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment,’ re-named by youth organizers ‘the Phoenix Consultation.’ Organized to inform the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, the consultation was planned as the fifth of seven regional consultations to be held around the world on the topic. Following the same format in which these consultations have been organized in every world region, the event was organized by the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) in conjunction with regional actors (organizations) identified by CERI in the region. For Turtle Island, this included the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), *Terres des Hommes*, *Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México* (REDIM), who collaborated along with CERI to oversee all aspects of the consultation.

The ‘consultation’ involved various actors, stages and components best categorized in the following four phases: Early pre-consultation engagement; Preparing for the Consultation; Formal virtual synchronous consultation; and Post-Consultation engagement. A diverse number of actors were engaged, as outlined below. The Steering Committee established a body new to the regional consultations format: an Inter-Generational Advisory Committee (IAC) made up of young people and Elders from each of Canada, the US and Mexico. Also unique to the

consultations, the process was supported by an Academic Committee, made up of academics and researchers drawn from IICRD's network representing 15 universities and/or research institutions across the region. The IAC and the Academic group were new additions made to the regional consultation process by regional actors. As the first full consultation to take place during COVID19, the event also established the first partnership of its kind between the children's rights sector and a private technology company Cisco Systems Inc., who as an in-kind sponsor developed a virtual online platform in collaboration with event organizers in the months leading up to the event. The software was designed not just to support the event, but also to act as an ongoing legacy platform on which delegates, participants, organizations, young people and Elders from across the region hope to continue to network and collaborate long after the consultation – to keep the consultation going, as it were.

Taking place in July 2021, the formal consultation saw just under 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian, Mexican and US youth, adult and Elder delegates come together to engage in dialogue and collectively articulate and draft a series of demands in the *Phoenix Manifesto*. The intended audiences of the *Manifesto* include the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, policymakers, decisionmakers, businesses, educators, funders, non-governmental agencies, and individuals. The *Manifesto* is also being converted into a *Workbook* that seeks to support a non-prescriptively decolonized implementation of the *Manifesto* demands at the individual, community, policy and institutional level by these actors. The final report of the Phoenix Consultation and the *Phoenix Manifesto* are included as Appendices to my dissertation. A link to the youth presentation of the *Report* and *Manifesto* to the UN Special Rapporteur is also provided.

As explained in chapter one and two, I was involved in numerous aspects of the consultation, including training young people in decolonizing, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in the lead-up to the consultation, the co-facilitation of the Academic Group, serving as the Academic Group's representative on the Steering Committee, and helping to design and facilitate interactive elements of the consultation itself.

The key data I consider in this dissertation is the *Phoenix Manifesto*, a collective list of demands made by delegates, and the key knowledge product of the consultation. The process by which the *Manifesto* was collaboratively co-generated by youth is explained above in section 3.5. In this chapter I provide a comprehensive introduction an overview of the consultation, starting with its contextualization within the institutional, policy, organizational and sectoral contexts in which it took place. The broadest of the contexts in which the consultation was organized is the children's rights sector as discursively enacted by civil society, UN, government and non-governmental organizations and actors. This sector also offers significant thought leadership and practice contributing to participatory engagement methods and modalities, pertinent to the methodological elements of this dissertation. Thus, prior to elaborating on the details of the Phoenix Consultation, this chapter provides a brief overview of the children's rights sector as the stage upon which this consultation took place, contextualizing the latter within some key debates and trends within the sector.

4.2 Social, Political and Institutional Context

Children's rights are perhaps the least contested human rights framework in the world (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 156). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world, with 196 national signatories. Somalia became the last of these signatories in October 2015 leaving the United

States as the only UN Member State to not have signed the Convention – the reason for which I expand upon below.⁴⁶ Of the human rights frameworks, the CRC has also been one of the fastest to be introduced and integrated into legal reform, jurisprudence, policy, government, social services and community development programming at local, national and international levels alike, in addition to its integration into the UN Social Development Goals (SDGs) (Liefaaard & Sloth-Nielson, 2016). In addition to the wave of children’s rights organizations that emerged in the decade prior, an even larger international children’s rights sector has been established since the CRC was ratified in 1989, made up of a complex of institutions, initiatives, organizations, and communities of practice.

However, the large-scale endorsement of the CRC in no way translates into the consistent, comprehensive or effective implementation of it – and this fact concerns much of the children’s rights literature, debates and efforts (i.e., how to improve and strengthen the effective and consistent implementation of children’s rights frameworks at each of the levels of law, policy, community development, local, national, etc.). Like any international framework or convention, its implementation and enactment has been radically diverse, broad and decentralized. Whilst providing an overview that might do justice to this lies firmly beyond the borders and bounds of this dissertation, it is essential to elaborate briefly on the cultural, theoretical and historical underpinnings of the sector, its stakeholders and the CRC, in order to provide sufficient context to the Phoenix Consultation, its intended purpose and actual outcomes. The context also has strong pertinence to the decolonization of human rights as a whole, which I take up in subsequent chapters. The following sections focus on providing an overview of:

⁴⁶ Other internationally recognized sovereign states and jurisdictions yet to sign it include the Cook Islands, Niue, the State of Palestine, and the Holy See.

- the rise of the children’s rights sector in the context of the CRC;
- the children’s rights sector’s orientation towards child/youth participation; and
- the historical role of environmental rights in the CRC and the children’s rights sector.

4.2.1 The Children’s Rights Sector and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The rights granted to all humans under the age of 18 under the CRC, regardless of nationality, race or gender identity, fall into three categories of rights, commonly referred to as the “three Ps” (Cantwell, 2011) in the children’s rights world: protection, participation, and provision. Central to the CRC’s drafting was the shift to replace a commonly held view of children as “incompetent” to viewing them as “autonomous” beings able to be “co-constructors of their life world” (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 158) – though both conceptions are embedded in the convention, respectively, through protection and participation rights. The move built on decades of developments in human rights thinking, as well as emancipation movements and a re-thinking of children’s development (Lundy, 2007; Reynaert et al., 2012), in addition to former declarations such as the non-binding 1959 Declaration on the Rights of a Child. However, as Cantwell (2011) notes, the CRC marked the first real coming together of children’s issues with human rights frameworks. Prior to this, children’s issues were addressed more in terms of charity or educational issues, and children were not seen as being comprehensively included in the UN Declaration on Human Rights (Cantwell, 2011). In the decade leading up to the CRC, there was an explosion of child-focused committees amongst human rights actors, new children’s rights organizations were founded, and new partnerships and collaborations emerged such as the first ever collaboration between UNICEF and the UN Centre for Human Rights (Cantwell, 2011, p. 55).

The predominant narrative of children's rights and the CRC as presented by key actors and recognized authorities in the sector is an unabashedly positive one. For Unicef, for example, the CRC is framed as an act of emancipation, recognition, and a bestowing of autonomous personhood and self-determination on young people:

Contained in this treaty is a profound idea: that children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made, or adults in training. Rather, they are human beings and individuals with their own rights. The Convention says childhood is separate from adulthood, and lasts until 18; it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity. (Unicef, 2021)

In this ringing endorsement of children's rights, however, there has been limited critique and contestation that consider the challenges, limitations, or alternative imaginaries of children's rights frameworks. Where critique does take place, it occurs either upon the assumed grounds of its inherent positive value or its wholesale rejection (Reynaert et al., 2012).

The former of these camps tends to focus on how to actively strengthen and improve either its implementation or the framework itself (e.g. Schaber, 1996). This includes those striving to better meet the specificity of children's everyday needs, lives, cultural and community contexts – as well as those that are leading the way in terms of participatory engagement of young people, who seek to have young people's voices better reflected in the convention and its implementation at various levels. These actors reflect an undeniable urgent reality that children are still subjects of multiple harmful and intersecting abuses around the world. Among these are Cantwell (2011), who fears that the separation of children's rights from human rights – enforced through the CRC – has led to dangerous slippage in which children's basic human rights are not being adequately protected or guaranteed (p. 42).

The other camp, however, offers little in its wholesale rejection of the value of children's rights (Reynaert et al., 2012). This camp is somewhat silent and disengaged in the literature. Despite their differences, however, according to Reynaert et al. (2012), both factions are characterized by a shared lack of critique, falling neatly into polarized camps of "believers" or "opponents" (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 156). They instead call for a non-criticism approach to critique in which the sector might

...attempt to understand and interpret different social construction of children's rights, bringing into dialogue these different understandings and interpretations in order to comprehend better children's rights and how the children's rights framework can contribute to a greater respect for children (p. 156).

The authors distinguish this approach from a "criticism" approach to critique, in which the one expressing critique exempts themselves from engagement by focusing on and holding the "other" responsible for acting" (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 156). I understand this framing of "non-criticism critique" as relatable to Tully's (2016) conceptualization of "genuine dialogue," or a phenomenological engagement which renders the frames of each perspective into their parochial context and view. A "criticism critique" on the other hand, might be understood as a form of "discursive translation" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 78) or "hegemonic ventriloquism" (Tully, 2018, p. 64) via which one assesses the other's point of view only from within one's own standpoint and lens of understanding.

In chapters 4-7 of my dissertation, I strive to offer such a non-criticism critique of children's rights, bringing different perspectives on human rights and dignity into dialogue, whilst situating the Phoenix Consultation firmly within this complex terrain. In particular, I do so whilst noting the glaring lack of engagement with decolonizing scholarship and frameworks in the children's rights literature, and how Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth climate

activists are generating pathways along which these distinct frameworks might come into genuine dialogue.

With respect to the evolution of children's rights, since the CRC's adoption, numerous authors agree that of the 3 'Ps', participation has been emphasized and centered within the sector compared to the other two. Cantwell (2011) – who is critical of this emphasis – attributes this focus to the CRC Committee getting caught up in the “participation wave” (p. 56), located within a children's rights sector that promotes ‘bottom-up’ emancipatory movements and voice. Reynaert et al. (2012) also understand the move as one driven by the children's rights movement: “The claim of the children's rights movement for the elaboration of protection and provision rights to also participation rights was motivated by the endeavour to limit too paternalistic claims over children.” (p. 161) The drive to include participation in the CRC was reflective of emancipation movements at the time the CRC was drafted and ratified, which were emphasizing voice and experiences of broader collectives in the face of systemic paternalisms, whether colonial, racialized, gendered, capitalist or cisheteropatriarchal.

This context offers critical insights into understanding the US government's refusal to sign the CRC. Lundy (2007) notes it was Article 12 on participation that was the most controversial and contentious for the US, and over which they ultimately refused to sign the convention. Article 12 of the CRC reads as follows:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law. (United Nations, 1989)

Child/youth participation has since become widely recognized and accepted within the sector as perhaps the most central and important practice in implementing the CRC. In this way, the sector might be viewed as interpreting and enacting the entire CRC through the lens of Article 12. With respect to pupil voice in education, for example, Reynaert et al. (2012) write: “The meanings given by children themselves became the starting point for educational interventions, rather than external meanings and definitions given by adults or by educational institutions” (p. 158). This reading thus frames all other Articles, such as Article 3.1,⁴⁷ suggesting that even the “best interests of the child” cannot be known, understood or certainly acted on, without the child’s participatory engagement in defining it.

Some critiques do exist, however, with respect to this emphasis on participation. One such critique (Daiute, 2008, p. 414) comes not from the perspective that this emphasis is inappropriate, but that it is a naïve presumption given that participation rights are more curtailed than it might seem, ultimately kept in check and subsumed under the interests of the nation-state. Others, such as Cantwell (2011) argue that participation has been taken too far, with participation rights being extended to young people on issues well beyond those that should be considered as directly pertaining to them. Cantwell (2011) urgently notes that he believes what he calls the “inflation” of participation rights to be dangerous or “counter-productive”, stating that the interpretation of certain CRC articles (13-16) through the participation lens has led to this right taking precedence over protection – and in some cases, leading directly to the compromise of the latter. He argues that this represents a fundamental mis-reading of these articles, which were written with a view to “reaffirm existing human

⁴⁷ “In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration” United Nations (1989).

rights, by explicitly stipulating for the first time that children are to benefit from them as well” (Cantwell, 2011, p. 54).

There are also more phenomenological critiques such as Reynaert et al. (2012) who express concern that the broader frame of participation may privilege notions of individualistic responsibility whilst homogenizing and erasing the social structures that intersect to divergently affect young people’s abilities to participate. This “homogenisation tendency,” they argue, then results in the framing of “children” as a single group, creating a “rupture” between the categories of adults and children (Reynaert, 2012, p. 160). In this way, the CRC might be understood as not only reflecting, but structurally enacting, individualistic ontologies. They ponder whether the move towards autonomy and participation also offloads the responsibility of children’s rights to individual households, onto parents and children, and education systems, and dissipates the responsibility of governments as duty bearers.

However, while the focus on participation might decentralize and individualize responsibilities on new duty bearers as noted above (e.g. to parents, schools, etc.), and there may be homogenizing elements to children’s rights frameworks by merely the introduction of the term “child,” it must be noted that there are also deeply collective and context-driven waves that have shaped the field. The interpretation of the CRC has been shaped by, and reinforced the emergence of a wave of advocates, communities and organizations that practice and are oriented towards a “bottom-up” approach to children’s rights (Reynaert et al., p. 165). Many of these actors seek and promote systems change from the vantage point of children influencing decision-making. A problematic expression due to its unhelpful reification of hierarchy, the “bottom-up” approach has been renamed by many in the sector over the years as “child-led” or “child-centred” – used to mean that instead of imposing an external and universal set of ideals,

children and young people are engaged in not only informing the securement of their rights, but in leading them. This has included engaging children in the critical thinking and meaning-making processes by which their needs, contexts and rights are defined. Increasing numbers of organizations, including the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) who co-organized the Phoenix Consultation, have invested heavily in developing exemplary child/youth engagement models and methods whereby:

- relationships are built with young people over a long period of time;
- efforts are made to understand young people's experiences in their specific contexts and on their own terms; and
- space is given to facilitate participatory processes whereby young people are supported to explore, articulate and express their needs, strengths, challenges, priorities and even proposals for how to best address the challenges they face.

Reynaert et al. (2012) name this “a mestiza conception of children’s rights” referencing Mouffe’s conception of *mestiza*, distinguishing that “[i]nstead of considering children’s rights as a new norm or standard in education that requires a top-down implementation, a mestiza conception of children’s rights requires linking with daily experiences of children in their lifeworlds” (Reynaert et al. 165).

The approach is necessarily rooted in relationship-building rather than merely gathering opinions, based on the awareness that a collaborative, dialogical approach is needed in order to understand and hear young people on their own terms – as well as provide them with support to engage in critical thinking. As Lundy (2007) notes: “A rights-based approach requires that adults who seek children’s views should provide children with the information and support that they need in order to come to an informed position on these issues.” Due to children needing

support to engage in this process, this participatory engagement of young people tends to occur in inter-generational and community-based contexts: “children’s rights “from below” is about understanding and learning by experience, together with other people in these lifeworlds such as parents, teachers and other educators” (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 165). This has also entailed the use of research methods such as arts-, relational and nature-based research methods that access diverse ways of knowing that do not privilege language and the rational – with a view to providing participants with choice for how they would like to share and express their voice. These participatory approaches are strongly aligned with and informative to both decolonizing and phenomenological approaches as articulated in chapter 3.

The participatory approaches described above directly upend and disrupt linear or developmental frameworks that underpin conventional and individualist approaches to child development, which also appear in the CRC and its many enactments. Whilst child-centred adult practitioners emphasize the need for time to build relationships and support young people to identify their needs, priorities, strengths, and solutions, it is ideally, for child participation advocates, not based on a Freirean banking model of education (1970) or the idea that they will develop rationally. Rather, it is based on the thought that children have inherently valuable perspectives and insights to share and what is needed is a dialogical space in which adults and children can find shared ground so that these perspectives can be articulated and heard. There are important links here to the Indigenous principle noted in the prior chapter, that “All Our Relations” have knowledge, as well as to the value of dialogical and relational approaches.

To some extent this might be perceived as creating a rupture between the conceptualization and enactment of children’s rights. As Daiute (2008) observes:

The general model of human development embedded in the CRC— although not explicitly discussed— is one of a gradually maturing organism— expressed in terms like

“evolving capacities of the child” and “will be given weight in accordance with age and maturity.” Characteristic of the CRC discourse is its reference to “the child,” implying that “child” is a universal category. The related discourse of maturation suggests that this universality is biological. At the same time, there’s a process of socialization implied, via expressions about the prominent role of ‘State Parties’ and families to make decisions on the child’s behalf, qualifications like “taking into account the rights and duties of the child’s parents,” and exceptions such as accommodations to State Parties recruiting children into armed conflict at age 15 when necessary, although childhood is otherwise protected up to age 18 (pp. 708-710).

The enactment of children’s participatory rights also disrupts the hierarchical positioning of the child that is articulated in the CRC:

The CRC represents two primary agents on the child’s behalf: the family environment and State Parties. The child’s relationships are, thus, hierarchical— in terms of membership in a family that protects and socializes the child and membership in the State that protects and socializes the family (Daiute, 2008, p. 711).⁴⁸

Initial conceptions of the quality of child participation reflected this hierarchy, such as observed in Hart’s Ladder of Youth Participation.

Figure 5. Roger Hart’s (1992) Ladder of Youth Participation.



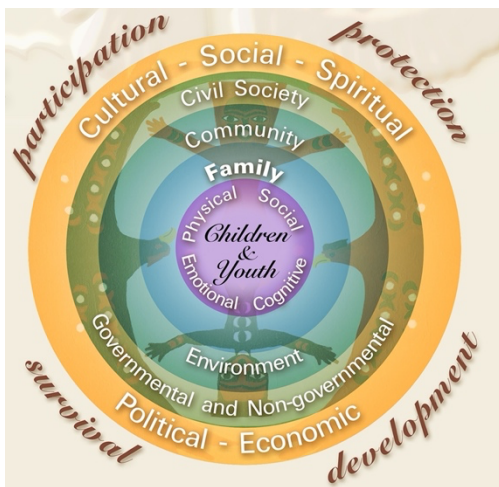
In the early days after the adoption of the CRC, child participation and rights experts focused on the extent of meaningful engagement and the degree to which young people were

⁴⁸ Importantly, family is given a broad definition in Article 5 of the CRC: “parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child” (UN, 1989).

engaged in adult decision-making processes, conceiving of participation principally in terms of the hierarchical structure of the child-adult relationship as implied or commonly read into the CRC (Hart’s Ladder of participation).

Subsequent research and frameworks in the child rights and participation sector shift over time to reflect a more circular or concentric model that most child participation agencies now use. IICRD’s social ecology of the child model places “the child” at the centre of multiple rings representing different aspects of their worlds and the realms that affect and shape their everyday lives.

Figure 6. IICRD Social Ecology of the Child Model



The IICRD model shows young people as embedded relationally in a range of structures and systems, ranging from the personal through to the political, economic and environmental. This model supports children’s rights organizations to conceive of, and plan for engagements with children in ways that strive to put them in the centre, including by centring the focus of engagements or initiatives entirely around their priorities and needs. In this way, this model elaborates how they might engage young people on the top rung of Hart’s (1992) ladder.

The relationally embedded frameworks also reflect an awareness of the distinct particularities of children's contexts, backgrounds and intersectional points of difference including with respect to structures of power in their lifeworlds. It promotes and highlights the importance of context and culture in ways that individualistic and universal human rights frameworks do not. In particular, it highlights that the cultural, economic, political, social, and spiritual contexts of young people are critical to not only their experience of their lives, but also their articulation of rights in their full diversity, contextualizing the Eurocentric universal human rights paradigm in critical ways that advance a culturally-rooted approach to human rights. Harris-Short (2003) argues that this rebuilding of human rights from the ground up is essential to disrupt the universalist human rights framework:

The particularism of the human rights paradigm must be acknowledged and the need to consider a fundamental revision of all existing human rights norms must be accepted. If the international law of human rights is to work it needs to be rebuilt from the bottom up – this time with its foundations firmly rooted in all of the world's cultures (p. 181).

This issue is elaborated on in chapter 6 from the standpoint of what it might mean to decolonize hegemonic human rights.

However, it is not clear that the individualistic framings present within the CRC – or human rights frameworks – have entirely individualistic effects. Another unique feature of the CRC noted by Reynaert et al. (2012) within the scope of human rights frameworks is its reference to the collective. The collective, they argue, is implied in the articles addressing children's rights insofar as children's well being cannot be measured without providing a barometer on well being of their overall society. In other words, addressing the lifeworlds of children means addressing the complex power relations of these lifeworlds overall: "Children's rights also have a collective dimension that transcends the individual interest of children. This collective dimension concerns the redistribution of social goods in society, not only for

children, but for all citizens of that society (Buelens and Mortier, 1989).” (Reynart et al., 2012)

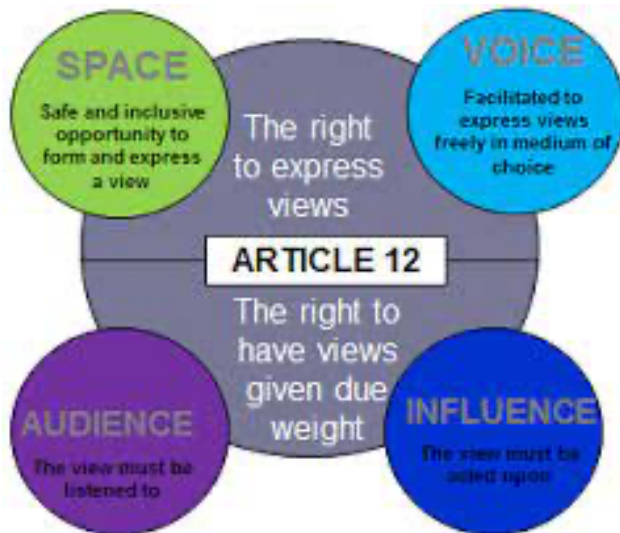
From this vantage point, they argue, it is essential to create spaces and dialogues between adults and children in which they might as fellow “co-citizens” collectively “analyse critically these power relations with the aim to change these power relation in the direction of a greater respect for the human dignity of children and adults” (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 163) as part of “both an individual and collective learning process where children’s rights are a frame for social action and for the critical analysis of power relations” (Reynaert et al., 2012, p. 163).

Similarly, Lundy and McEvoy (2012) note Bennett Woodhouse’s point that children straddle an individuality and emerging autonomy” (p. 4), which acknowledges both their “dependency and need for connection” (p. 4). This both complexifies and disrupts the binary framing of rights as either held by the individual or collective – by asserting them as simultaneously, both.

Reynaert et al. (2012) further note that to a certain degree, the participation emphasis assumes that young people know their interests and needs and are able to autonomously articulate them (p. 159). Lundy (2007), however, offers a nuanced reading of CRC Article 12 that suggests that the CRC addresses this potential assumption. She also shows how participatory and collective empowerment elements are explicit to the content of the CRC, rather than just being driven or shaped by the child rights sector’s interpretation. Lundy (2007) suggests that the structures by which young people might be supported to develop their understanding and knowledge, whilst finding ways to collectively articulate them, are actually outlined in the CRC’s Article 12. She elaborates a model that breaks down the language of the four critical components of participation within Article 12, again using a circular model to reflect the interconnectedness of the distinct elements. Lundy (2007) defines each of the four domains of Space, Voice, Audience and Influence as follows:

Space: children must be given the opportunity to express a view
Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views
Audience: The child must be listened to
Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate (p. 934)

Figure 7. Lundy Model of Child Participation



Lundy's model has been adapted and integrated into countless government policies and programs as well as by non-governmental organizations, used frequently in evaluation tools to measure, monitor and assess child participation in a given institution, as well as to build organizational capacities. When it comes to *influence*, Hart's ladder is often referenced to distinguish between tokenistic or truly consultative engagements with young people – highlighting the nature of the relationship between children being engaged, and the extent to which young people have a say in shaping the engagement and the influence it has. Lundy's contribution to this is to elaborate this further, showing that there are four distinct elements involved to identify whether they are given meaningful *space* and *voice* and genuine *influence* to a relevant *audience*. An additional layer noted by Lundy includes the degree of accountability back to children, conveying to them the impact that their influence had (Lundy, 2007, p. 939).

In unpacking what it might mean to create “space” for children, Lundy (2007) notes that the first item of import with respect to having space is for children to determine, define and identify what are the “matters” that affect them, and whether they would in fact like to express their views on them – whether such disagreement might emanate from consultation fatigue or other reasons (p. 934). Using participatory research with children, she makes her case for this by citing young people’s frustration with having the matters on which they are to be consulted pre-determined by adults. Other elements critical to space include that the space be “safe”, which she defines as being spaces “without fear of rebuke or reprisal” (p. 934) and spaces that are inclusive of diversity.

With respect to voice, Lundy (2007) focuses on the definition of capacity to form a view, and the need for dialogical, non-hierarchical spaces (p. 934) to support this capacity. Here, she references the 2002 UN Special Summit on Children’s Rights where children specified further what this meant to them. She notes that they clarified that they needed sufficient time to understand the matters, access to child-friendly materials to support that understanding, a diversity of ways made available to them by which they might express their views (including arts-based approaches), and capacity building for both child-led organizations and adults to support their ability to engage young people meaningfully (p. 934). Other ways in which voice is understood as being supported in order to express their voice is through the rights to representation, interpretation and technology, as required.

Of critical importance, Lundy (2007) draws out and observes that the aspect of Article 12 that does not have roots in other human rights covenants is the aspect of Audience, or the right to having their views be given “due weight” by these audiences. This right is distinct, above and beyond those afforded to adults in other human rights conventions including those

pertaining to freedom of expression, “except perhaps indirectly in election processes” (p. 935), she suggests.⁴⁹ This explicit inclusion gives further validation of the children’s rights sector’s emphasis on challenging adultism and listening to children.

In the above sub-section, I’ve elaborated on the rise of the child participation movement and the reciprocal relationship this has had with the development, interpretation and enactment of the CRC. It is within this context of participation, voice and child-centred children’s rights that the link to environmental rights has increasingly been made within children’s rights actors – increasingly put onto the agenda and map by young people themselves.

4.2.2 Children’s Rights and the Environment

The placing of the environment on the mainstream map of children’s rights is to some degree due to the large-scale efforts and voice of young people themselves – arguing its centrality to their ability to enjoy their lives and future livelihoods – from receiving educations, to being healthy, to not being affected by climate change-related disasters. Global climate strikes initiated by internationally renowned youth activist Greta Thunberg, encouraging children around the world to refuse to go to school in the name of climate justice, have helped to express this message to the mainstream. Prior to the global attention given to youth climate justice movements, the environment was more minimally discussed within children’s rights circles. It should be noted that before Greta Thunberg’s fame, however, there were numerous youth-driven environmental movements around the world, such as the Yasunidos in Ecuador whose movement reaches back to 2005. However, these were generally framed with respect to

⁴⁹ The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is another important exception to this. I see these two human rights instruments as the most promising pathways from within hegemonic human rights that have potential to support the decolonizing of human rights, not just for children and Indigenous peoples, but also more broadly for all human rights. An analysis of UNDRIP goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, I plan to focus on the intersections between the CRC and UNDRIP and their contributions to decolonizing human rights in my upcoming postdoctoral research.

environmental movements rather than being seen as children's rights movements, and did not gain the same level of international media coverage as once the movement gained more traction in the global North.

Increasingly in the past few years of globalized youth climate justice activism, young people have been challenging national and multinational legal systems and mechanisms enacting a different notion of governance that abides by laws of the ecosystem. The most notable of these are the groups of young people taking governments and the UN to court for failing them – using the language and framing of children's rights. So whilst challenges cannot be made on behalf of the more-than-human (except in locales such as Ecuador and New Zealand at present), existing rights of children are now being leveraged by young people to indirectly lobby for the former. This move, I argue, in the coming chapters, is of huge ontological significance whereby some young people are wielding existing frameworks to refuse them in the name of a more-than-human intra-subjectivity with which they experience and express a sense of reciprocity and relational accountability. The sense of kinship they express articulates a relational ontology that dissolves anthropocentric conceptions of rights and citizenship in favour of an eco-social, “biocentric concept of human rights” (Santos, 2021, p. 36) and citizenship, which is more aligned to conceptions of relational justice. Through this, I argue in the subsequent chapters that young people are engaging in a project of “the urgent intercultural and post-abyssal reconstruction of human rights” (Santos, 2021, p. 36).

Some children's rights scholars and thinkers have long had the environment on their radar, as have some institutions, as reflected in IICRD's social ecology of the child – the original version of which was developed in the 1990s. Overall, however, this topic or focus has only been integrated in the mainstream of children's rights organizations more recently. The

link between children's rights and environmental rights is made on the basis of several other relationships clearly established in the literature, including that between human health and the environment (Kaime, 2019, p. 569). With international attention brought to climate justice, youth-led climate action strikes gaining in momentum and the various arguments on how environmental factors have contributed to the COVID19 pandemic, actors across the children's rights sector are now taking it up. The UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment's move to focus on the rights of children and youth to a healthy environment through holding the regional consultations (of which the Phoenix Consultation was one) represents one such response.

The connection has not been difficult to make, building on the plethora of scientific and social science research available, with statistics widely available to prove the relevance of the environment to children's rights. Arguments are made in the name of peace studies (Sanson & Burke, 2020), social and economic justice (Klein, 2014), economics (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2010), and health (Sanson & Burke, 2020). Within this, children are being identified as the most vulnerable (humans) to the effects of climate change: "those most vulnerable to climate change impacts are children and youth, with the World Health Organization estimating that children will suffer more than 80% of the illnesses, injuries and deaths attributable to it (McMichael et al., 2004)" (Sanson and Burke, 2020, p. 345). Sanson and Burke distinguish between direct and indirect effects of climate change, whilst arguing that children are more susceptible (than other humans) to both. They list direct effects as including "extreme heat, drought and natural disasters (McMichael, 2014) through injuries, environmental toxins and infectious, gastrointestinal and parasitic diseases that will become more prevalent with warmer temperatures and changed rainfall patterns" (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 345). Indirect effects

include “food shortages, intergroup conflict, economic dislocation and migration” (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 345). They also qualify a third category, which is neither direct nor indirect – that of “vicarious experience and knowledge” (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 345) – citing the psychosocial effects of climate change on children. While the degree of vulnerability relates to the physiological, a dependence on adults is attributed to time and the generational. Mirroring the ongoing snowball effects of climate change on the earth moving into the future, they cite the effects as going well beyond children who are living to the generations that are yet to come, making the case for “intergenerational justice” (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 346):

...impacts on children’s and youth’s physical, psychological, social and cognitive development will carry sequelae right through their lifetimes and possibly beyond. They can have long-term developmental, educational and economic consequences which make it harder for them to reach their full potential (Clayton et al., 2017; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). This, along with likely epigenetic changes, may diminish their capacity to care for the next generation, creating a vicious intergenerational cycle of disadvantage that impedes human development. (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 346)

In particular, Sanson and Burke (2020) also make the unquestionable argument that climate change decision-making is a matter directly affecting the lives of children and young people:

Climate change decision-making now will determine the lives of children far into the future, so it is right that children are invited to contribute. Being given the opportunity to actively contribute to combating climate change can also provide important psychological protection, “helping them to feel more in control, more hopeful and more resilient” (Hart, Fisher, & Kimiagar, 2014, p.93). It is thus important to treat young people as active agents, to respect and support their capacities to take action, to work together and to support each other. Helping children develop effective ways of coping with climate change builds their resilience and well-being, while acknowledging the critical role that they, as the next generation of adults, will play in shaping global responses to climate change. (pp. 353-4)

Climate change impacts are recognized by these authors as being more extreme for those children and future children who face existing inequities, such as those based in the global South: “Perhaps more important than its impact on direct violence, climate change worsens the

root causes of violence.” (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 348). In making the case for climate change exacerbating intersectional structural violences, the grounds for considering climate change a form of structural violence are established. Nonetheless, in this article, most of the strategies and solutions proffered with respect to how to best support children are to adults and educators rather than systems-level solutions that sustain and emerge out of the lens of structural violence they introduced.

In terms of the formal ways in which the environment is taking up in the CRC, it is barely mentioned in the formal document itself. This reflects the clear anthropocentrism of the nation-state and multilateral systems of governance upon which human rights frameworks are founded. The “natural environment” is mentioned explicitly only in Articles 24 and 29 of the CRC. Article 24.2 addresses standards of health to which children have a right, including the following:

State Parties shall take appropriate measures.... (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of *environmental pollution*;... (e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and *environmental sanitation* and the prevention of accidents. (UN, 1989; *my emphasis*)

Article 29.1, meanwhile, pertains to the right of children to education, including the stipulation that “State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to... (e) The development of respect for the natural environment” among other areas of foci. This notwithstanding, some scholars have long argued that the CRC “offers numerous entry points for strengthening environmental children’s rights” (Schubert, 2012, p. 2): “many other child rights, above all social rights, have strong environmental dimensions or may be reinterpreted from an environmental perspective” (Schubert, 2012, p. 2). Schubert passionately argues the

case that many young people have also made: that children's environmental rights are inherently and implicitly foundational to all children's rights being accessed, enjoyed and available. He asserts that the link between environmental and human rights protection has long been made, citing the UN's 1972 first international conference on the environment held in Sweden (Schubert, 2012, p. 3). Nevertheless, Schubert notes the persistent lack of political commitment and will to prioritizing and implementing environmental commitments in the human rights: "the pertinent provisions must be regarded as insufficient insofar as they rarely go beyond general terms, or allow only limited scope for participation, such as the access to information. International environmental and sustainability policy still lacks a solid human rights foundation" (Schubert, 2012, p. 4).

Initiatives to include climate change explicitly in the CRC have been made over the past ten years, however. The 2013 General Comment on

...the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (CRC/C/GC/15 2013c)... recognizes the dangers and risks of local environmental pollution to children's health" is written as: "States should take measures to address the dangers and risks that local environmental pollution poses to children's health in all settings. (para. 49). (Kaime, 2019, p. 570)

Climate change is also explicitly addressed in the General Comment:

The Committee draws attention to the relevance of the environment, beyond environmental pollution, to children's health. Environmental interventions should, inter alia, address climate change, as this is one of the biggest threats to children's health and exacerbates health disparities. (para. 50) (Kaime, 2019, p. 570).

On 9 December 2019, at the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP 25) in Madrid, Spain, governments and youth activists signed an Intergovernmental *Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action*. This declaration was recognized as "the first of its kind commitment to accelerate inclusive, child and youth-centered climate policies and action at national and global levels." The declaration currently has 15 government signatories though all Member States are

invited to sign. Since this time, an environmental working group of the Committee on the Rights of the Child has also been established, and is meeting to discuss three key potential initiatives:

- “The reviews of State Parties under the Convention on the Rights of the Child”, which would require signatories to include environmental issues when documenting efforts made to implement the global framework for children’s rights in their periodic reports;
- The promotion of mainstreaming “children’s rights in climate policies under the Paris Agreement”, specifically at the COP 26 in Glasgow to be held in November 2021, where “youth topics feature prominently in government dialogues”; and
- The drafting of a General Comment on Child Rights and the Environment, which would introduce “new legal commentary to the Convention that will provide States and other actors with guidance...on the child’s right to a healthy environment” (Schubert, 2021).

In 2018, the Human Rights Council requested that the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment “continue to study” “the human rights obligations relating to the environment” as identified in the 2015 Human Rights Council Resolution 28/11⁵⁰ on Human Rights and the Environment. In order to ensure that the Rapporteur was hearing children and youth’s voices in this study, regional consultations were conceptualized and organized. The Phoenix Consultation was organized as one of these consultations.

⁵⁰ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/28/11>

4.3 The Phoenix Consultation Overview

The above provides an overview of the broader political and institutional contexts within which the “North American Consultation on the Rights of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment” – re-named “the Phoenix Consultation” by youth on the Inter-generational Advisory Committee (IAC) overseeing the consultation – took place.

4.3.1 Regional Consultations

The Phoenix Consultation was planned as the fourth in a total of seven regional consultations to be held around the world on the topic – organized to inform the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, as noted above.

2019:

- May 2-3: Regional consultation for Latin America was held in Bogotá, Colombia
- October 22-24: Regional consultation for East Asia and the Pacific was held in Bogor, Indonesia

2020:

- July: A Mini regional consultation was held for the Caribbean

2021:

- July 15-18: “Phoenix Consultation” for North America
- Quarter (Q) 3/Q4: A regional consultation for Africa is planned

2022:

- Q1/Q2: A regional consultation for Europe and West/Central Asia is planned
- Q3/Q2: A regional consultation for the Middle East and North Africa is planned
- A Global expert consultation may be held (TBC)

According to CERI’s website, the regional consultations were seen as a “systematic effort[t] to facilitate knowledge sharing and mutual learning” that could offer both “normative and practical guidance” on promoting and applying children’s rights in environmental contexts. The consultations as such are designed to address a gap in understanding, knowledge and networking on the subject. By “bringing together a diverse range of key stakeholders through a

series of unique intergenerational consultations in each of the world regions,” CERI clarifies that the regional consultations will provide:

a critical platform for exchange among child and youth activists, national and regional actors from Government, regional institutions, civil society, research institutions and academia, international organisations, regional and national human rights institutions and courts, as well as private sector actors. (CERI, nd)

The overarching goals of the regional consultations are to:

- empower children and youth – particularly those deemed to be “marginalized” – through building capacities and engaging them in inter-generational dialogue;
- support the generation of actions and commitments through findings and recommendations captured in the regional reports;
- contribute to the consolidation of networks of “experts and organisations across regions advocating on issues related to children’s rights and the environment”;
- identify “good practice laws, policies and action, to be collated in a compendium”; and
- contribute to the development of a Global Charter on Child Rights & the Environment, which CERI describes as “[a] consolidated set of key principles that will provide a blueprint for universal standard-setting in relation to the right of the child to grow up in a safe and healthy environment, based on inputs from children and experts in all world regions.” (CERI, nd)

Additionally, CERI notes that it aims for the consultations to demonstrate “a model for child-friendly consultation mechanisms” (CERI, nd).

It is clear from the objectives listed above that the consultation is firmly situated within a children’s rights sector that prioritizes child participation – striving to secure for young people the “Space”, “Voice”, “Audience” and “Influence” (Lundy, 2007, p. 934) with respect to the environment. Additionally, with the focus on demonstrating a “child-friendly” consultation

model, the consultations directly aim to improve on international consultation mechanisms, which are documented as not having optimally supported children's full or meaningful engagement. What is also noted, however, is that the approach centres and somewhat acritically presumes the social good of rights frameworks and mechanisms.

4.3.2 Phoenix Consultation Actors

Actors involved in the consultation are grouped into the following distinct categories, each elaborated on below:

- Steering Committee (SC), made up of the organizations listed below;
- Inter-Generational Advisory Committee (IAC), consisting of three youth and one elder for each of Canada, Mexico and the US;
- Sponsors and partners, including technology partners and event sponsors;
- UN Children and Climate Change Academic North America Network, a Turtle Island-wide network of participatory and children's rights researchers and experts, the 12 universities/networks they represented, and youth activists who were interested in engaging in the research process.
- Consultation Delegates: 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Child, Youth, Adult and Elder

Following the same format in which these consultations have been organized in other world regions, the event was organized by the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) in conjunction with local actors identified by CERI in the region. These actors necessarily influence the specific format, content and outcomes of the regional Consultations, and CERI intentionally identifies that each regional consultation should be distinct based on the locally identified priorities and contexts. For this reason, this sub-section on actors involved in

the Phoenix Consultation precedes the sub-section on its expected and actual outcomes, or its implementation and phases. A map or diagram of the actors involved in the consultation is included in the Consultation Report (see Appendix 2).

Steering Committee: For the Turtle Island consultation, CERI worked with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), *Terres des Hommes*, and *Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México* (REDIM), who collectively established a “Steering Committee” (SC), a group of individuals representing the organizations who met weekly or bi-weekly in the year-long lead up to the consultation. The SC has continued to meet in the post-consultation phase, as described below. However, there were multiple other actors who convened and shaped the consultation in distinct ways in each of its distinct phases.

Intergenerational Advisory Committee (IAC): In January 2021, the SC established a body new to the regional consultations – the Intergenerational Advisory Committee (IAC) – made up of 2 young people and 1 Elder from each of Canada, the US and Mexico. The IAC was selected through an application process with clear search and selection criteria as designated by the SC, with input from the Academic Committee (see below). Meeting monthly on average over the course of seven months in the lead-up to the consultation, the IAC was chaired and facilitated by the DSF. The IAC had a Terms of Reference (ToR) that outlined its role in guiding the selection of topics, speakers and very format of the consultation itself.

Academic Committee: The full arc of the process was also supported by an Academic Committee, a self-formed network of academics and researchers representing 12 distinct universities from across the region. The Academic Committee was initiated by the IICRD who, whilst a non-profit organization, has always identified as a hybrid organization with many

academic (or academically inclined) Associates. Indeed, IICRD recently worked with Royal Roads University's (RRU) School of Humanitarian Studies to establish and run a Graduate Certificate in "Transforming Child Protection to Wellbeing". The committee formed based on contacts and networks held in the region who expressed an interest at IICRD's invitation, and was facilitated and coordinated in a volunteer capacity by me as an IICRD Associate.

When the consultation was initially postponed due to COVID and then subsequently moved to a virtual environment, the Academic Committee advocated for the opportunity to engage a wider demographic of youth than might normally be included in such a consultation. The idea of the committee was that the consultation and its delegates might be informed by young people's perspectives, opinions and lived experiences rather than academic reports and preparatory documents written by adult academics. It was also understood that this would support the capacity development of young people as per Lundy's (2007) argument that young people be supported by adults to define the space via which they would participate, the matters they wished to address and the perspectives they wanted to share. In the end, early engagements were conducted by members of the Committee, though they were much fewer and less extensive than members would have liked, based on the fact that they were all conducted on a voluntary basis, on the "side of the desk", and during Covid. However, in total three Canadian, one Mexican and three Canadian research groups conducted pre-consultation engagements with youth as detailed below under a description of Phase 1. Members of the Academic Committee were also instrumental in identifying delegates and 'setting the stage' of the consultation itself with introductory panels on the regional context as learned by young people whom they engaged.

Technology Partnership: With COVID shifting the consultations to an online format, the new virtual context was also unique to the Turtle Island regional consultation, leading IICRD to approach and establish an in-kind partnership with the technology company Cisco Systems Inc. The latter ended up endorsing the consultation by working with organizers to develop and donate a virtual online platform for the ‘community’ of delegates and organizers. In the end, due to various considerations, including the need for live trilingual interpretation and accessible bandwidth requirements for delegates, the event itself was hosted on a different platform – Legislate – also provided as an in-kind donation by Cisco, bringing its affiliate E-Plus also into in-kind partnership with the consultation and organizing bodies. Cisco and E-Plus personnel became a core part of the organizing team from the technology standpoint, as they continued to adapt and develop key features of Legislate for the needs of the organizers and delegates. In the final months prior to the consultation, this meant weekly – and sometimes daily – meetings with them about the technology, which involved piloting and advancing its development. The platform was originally designed for legislative bodies such as the G7, and US government, and has been used for large events such as the Grammy awards. The platform is unique and sophisticated, enabling voting features, instant caucus rooms, speaker timers, shared agendas, simultaneous interpretation, and many online features not common to other online event software.

The IAC, the Academic group and the technology partnership were all new features to the regional consultation process, unique to the consultation on Turtle Island and not a part of the prior consultations. This reflected both the nature of the organizations engaged and the additional planning time that was required and enabled by Covid19 and the delayed consultation date (it was originally planned for Summer 2020). As a key non-profit

organization engaged in the child rights sector's "participation wave" (Cantwell, 2011, p. 56) in Canada, IICRD was insistent that youth not just be invited and engaged as delegates but had a voice in leading and shaping the process. This, combined with their Academic network, gave rise to both the creation of the IAC and the engagement of young people beforehand.

4.3.3. Expected and Actual Outputs and Outcomes of the Phoenix Consultation

Outcomes identified at the outset of the consultation planning were specified as follows, reflective of its intended goals, as well as the particular make-up of those actors engaged in its planning and implementation:

- Creation of a Global Charter on Children's Rights and the Environment
- Establishment of an Inter-generational Youth-Led Environmental Network (IYEN)
- Network connecting young people across the region
- Unique, interactive 3-day UN consultation with 100 delegates
- Several public events during consultation
- North America Regional Report to the UN
- Reports to Governments of Canada, the US, and Mexico
- Capacity building, environmental and children's rights education to youth in region
- Regional Academic Community of Practice

In the end, however, outcomes differed to some extent as follows, with unanticipated outcomes italicized:

- *Creation of a Global Charter on Children's Rights and the Environment: While delegates may still be engaged by CERI to engage in this as a bringing together of all of the regional consultations, the delegates at the Phoenix Consultation instead generated what they*

called the *Phoenix Manifesto*. This is a series of demands they co-formulated, based on real-time analysis of discussions, and is the subject/focus of chapter 5.

- Establishment of an Inter-generational Youth-Led Environmental Network

(IYEN): There was no formal nor named network established as a result of the consultation.

However, ongoing networking is planned using the unanticipated YouthEarthRights.com platform developed for the group by Cisco Systems, which is a secure platform, with no advertising, and capacity to support close captioning in more than 150 languages, synchronous meeting functions, and asynchronous planning spaces.

- Network connecting young people across the region: As above, this network is informal, but is being supported by the unanticipated outcome of the YouthEarthRights.com platform described above.

- Unique, interactive 3-day UN consultation with 100 delegates: In the end the platform supported the registration and participation of 200 delegates. The event was highly interactive and unique as described below.

- Several public events during consultation: While no public events were held during the consultation, several events were held before the consultations, including a publicly accessible webinar series organized by Royal Roads University.

- North America Regional Report to the UN: This report is being produced and will be shared specifically with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, David Boyd, in Fall 2021.

- Reports to Governments of Canada, the US, and Mexico: As of yet, these have not been drafted or discussed by delegates or members of the SC or IAC.

- Capacity Building, environmental and children's rights education to youth in region: Education initiatives were established by several members of the academic committee, including a Y-PAR training run by a collaborative of Canadian youth and researchers and an engaged, youth-led project in Quebec, wherein educational materials were produced and shared with school boards. Plans for continuing to build on these initiatives are underway.

- Regional Academic Community of Practice: This community of practice met regularly in the year leading up to the consultation, sharing plans and outcomes of pre-consultation engagements with young people through their networks. A number of unexpected outputs of this work included multi-media reports by 3 Canadian, 1 Mexican, and 3 American groups of youth, which were presented by some of the youth participants at the consultation to 'set the stage' for the consultation. These are described below.

4.3.4. My Role in the Consultation

As noted in section 3.5, I was involved in numerous aspects of the consultation in a volunteer capacity as an IICRD Associate, including: the coordination and facilitation of the Academic Group; representing the Academic Group on the Steering Committee; the co-facilitation of one of the 3 Canadian research groups' decolonizing, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) training for youth in the lead-up to the consultation; and chairing some of the virtual, interactive sessions at the consultation (though not as a speaker).

4.4 The Phases of the Phoenix Consultation

The Phoenix Consultation featured three key phases, each elaborated below.

4.4.1 Child and Youth Grassroots Engagement, Planning and Digital Collaboration

4.4.1.1 Early pre-consultation engagements

Given IICRD's academic networks and orientation, the former Executive Director convened meetings in the early days of planning the consultation with academics from across the region. The group included some of the region's leading child rights and child participation experts, including individuals such as Roger Hart (of Hart's Ladder of Participation above) and William Myers (2012), child rights experts and advocates of the view that the UNCRC can only be actualized if children are both consulted and their opinions are taken seriously. The delay of the consultation and new possibilities for engaging young people using virtual technologies prompted the Academic Committee to consider how it might engage young people in the lead up to the consultation. Whilst initially the idea of conducting coordinated, cross-regional engaged research with youth across the region was conceptualized by the group, the most significant challenge the committee faced was the lack of funds or time for any of the members of the group to take on a leadership or coordination role of this magnitude. In the end, the members of the group decided to work with existing networks of young people and to work through existing projects, volunteering the time they were able to for the purposes of the lead-up to the consultation. Many of the members of the group worked with young people who are classified as more "vulnerable" or facing certain disadvantages – whether racialized, socio-economic, disability, or other – that mean they were not the "usual suspects" of such UN-related consultations. The SC shared a commitment to reaching those young people who were more marginalized and it was agreed with the SC that a number of delegate seats would be set

aside for youth participating in the pre-consultation engagements.

The Mexican members of the committee were part of a single research group based at the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Mexico under the direction of Karla Morales and Yolanda Corona, professor and academic activist who directs a national education project on children's rights. The Mexican research group conducted the most in-depth research of the Academic group, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The American groups recognized early on that they would not be able to offer coverage of the US and selected to work with existing networks. In the end, three research teams conducted qualitative research, all based in California. These included: 1) Collecting stories of youth activists with respect to climate change; 2) Conducting interactive virtual workshops with youth activist organizations; and 3) Mapping climate crises as witnessed and experienced by youth. The Canadian research groups were three. Like the American groups, the Canadian teams provided a number of different methods of engagement, all qualitative in orientation. They also recognized an inability to offer coverage across the country, but organized themselves according to language, locale and area of focus, to provide some 'coverage' across various demographics that leveraged their existing networks: 1) English-speaking Canada, including a focus on youth with disabilities – the group conducted YPAR training with youth; 2) French-speaking Canada – the group developed educational materials for school boards and engaged youth using arts-based methods; and 3) Elder-youth collaborations – the group conducted focus groups with young people. All of the groups supported the young people with whom they engaged to attend the consultation as delegates, and prepare presentations to share at the opening of the consultation by means of 'setting the stage' of the dialogue and discussion.

The Academic Committee's emphasis on engaging young people prior to the Consultation so their experiences and insights might inform the discussions at the consultation explicitly valued a "children's rights-based approach to participation," distinct in so far as it not only supported the creation of space in which young people would be able to express their views (such as the consultation enabled), but to work with young people over the longer-term to ensure they were supported to form them (Lundy and McEvoy 2012:131).

4.4.1.2 Planning the Consultation

At the same time as the early academic engagements were taking place, the SC and IAC were meeting regularly to guide the overall planning of the consultation. This was a complex planning process due to the number of institutions and individuals who had never worked together before, the near total absence of a budget and dedicated human resources to participate in the process, the different geographies the group was navigating with colleagues based in Europe, and the many unknowns with which the group was dealing in terms of how the consultation would work online. A significant amount of time was spent building process from the ground up, discussing and deciding on guidelines for delegate participation, and how the agenda would not only be determined, but designed taking the most young people's ideas into account. The IAC came up with the name and the logo of the consultation (see appendices), choosing the phoenix as its symbol. While the IAC identified and generated key ideas at its monthly meetings, they were then passed over to the SC who met weekly to determine how it would implement and design the event to actualize these mandates and directions. The SC also received regular input and recommendations from the Academic Committee such as on the participatory design of consultation sessions and the process for inviting young people.

Additionally, members of the group worked to secure and navigate a first-time

partnership with a tech company, Cisco Systems Inc., to co-design a platform that would serve the needs of the consultation. None of the parties had ever navigated a partnership of this nature (non-profit and tech company), and the groups referenced wildly distinct professional vocabularies, priorities (e.g. action vs. process), and considerations (e.g. technological vs. engagement). Background knowledge made this exceptionally challenging, with one group having no background in designing software, and the other having no background in the types of considerations that go into planning multi-lingual, inter-generational, and interactive consultations. Together, the group set about collaboratively designing a platform, learning from each other along the way. With the SC's input, Cisco Systems Inc. set up an online platform for the consultations – YouthEarthRights.com – with the view that it would function as a meeting space (with close captioning that auto-translated into 150+ languages), a place for group planning and discussions (similar to Slack), and a 'feed' where members of the platform could share information and posts with one another (similar to Facebook with privacy and no advertising). The SC actively used the platform for planning as the Consultation approached, while the IAC and Academic Committee did not make the technological leap, continuing to meet on Zoom. However, the platform was envisioned not just to support the event, but to be used as an ongoing networking space for young people, adults and Elders across Turtle Island. The intention behind this was drawn from anecdotal stories the SC had heard from youth climate activist groups that they feel too siloed from one another, and from adults and elders.

In the end, the public-private collaboration struggled in the weeks prior to the event, and the group collectively realized that the online platform as it stood three weeks prior to the consultation was not up for the task. Namely, it could not facilitate simultaneous live interpretation and the close captioning function was poor at any non-English languages, and at

capturing accents. Additionally, the software had high bandwidth demands and Mexican colleagues repeatedly experienced problems with the platform. Cisco Systems Inc. quickly pivoted and procured in-kind access to the LegiSlate platform, software used by the G7, governments needing to meet virtually, and events such as the Grammys. The platform sustained live interpretation and had voting mechanisms among many other user-friendly innovative features not normally included in standard online meeting software.

4.4.2 Intergenerational Consultation Virtual 4-day Event

The formal Phoenix Consultation was held July 15-18, 2021 with just under 200 delegates invited, the majority of whom were young people. Elders and adult delegates from across Turtle Island were also invited. Occurring at the height of summer, with Covid restrictions just having been lifted in many locales, the timing of the event proved challenging for some invitees to attend. The 3.5 day event entailed private, interactive sessions for delegates only. Determined by the IAC and SC, with input from the Academic Committee, the agenda, focus and content of the consultation was organized into themes by day (noted in parentheses behind each day), with a range of corresponding sessions and panels as noted below.

- **Thursday (Opening):** Opening prayer by an Indigenous Elder; Welcomes; Introductions including by UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment David Boyd; Interactive ‘meet and greet’ for delegates; Tech Support
- **Friday (Scene Setting):** Youth presentations of pre-consultation engagements (Academic Committee); Oceans, Forests and Food Sovereignty; Intra-national environmental justice
- **Saturday (Empathy):** Intersectionality and the environmental movement; Air pollution and children’s rights; Threats facing young climate activists; Intra-national

environmental justice

- **Sunday (Action):** Turning Advocacy into Intergenerational Action; Future of the Intergenerational environmental movement in North America; What's Next; Introducing the YouthEarthRights platform.

The consultation was hosted by dynamic youth Emcees who engaged the group throughout, whilst the range of speakers and facilitators engaged reflected a diversity of race, gender identity, age and nationality. The event was designed to reach beyond the usual consultation or conference format to support meaningful engagement and interactions. With input from participatory researchers and child safety experts, the consultation leveraged the opportunities of the virtual platform to support various interactive strategies and structures that maximized participation and dialogue between participants. This included:

- Interactive panel sessions enabled a mix of dynamic short talks by presenters, ongoing dialogue amongst the group in the Chatbox, and spaces for breakout group discussions;
- Online safety experts were available throughout the duration of the conference for participants to report any safety concerns or seek needed support;
- A “pod” structure, proposed by the IAC, established small same-language groups of 8-15 cross-generational participants; pods met each day to discuss the day's content and facilitate the building of relationships and networks. Each pod took notes to capture their conversation in Google Documents;
- End of day anonymous reflections shared collectively using online software, via which participants contributed their responses to key questions that captured participants' ideas and experiences in real-time; and

- Online polls were used to check in with participants at various points.

As outlined above, one of the key outcomes of the event was the co-creation of a Draft Manifesto by inter-generational participants but led by youth who coded and analyzed the real-time data being captured by participants from the Pod Google Documents, padlets and session transcripts.

4.4.3 Phase 3: Advocacy and Coalition Building

Youth Earth Rights Platform: While the event represented the culmination of much effort and planning, one of the intended outcomes of the consultation was to build and support regional networks for future collaborations and knowledge sharing. The YouthEarthRights.webex.com platform has been created to support the ongoing networking of the group - such that the consultation effectively does not end. It is available for users well beyond the Consultation delegates, so that it is a space where networks can be further built. Key features of the platform include: an ad-free general feed space that allows general sharing or posts across the network; the capacity to establish and create asynchronous discussion groups; online synchronous video meeting functions; individual messaging; and more.

The *Manifesto*: Another key output of the consultation - the *Manifesto* - was created to be a Living Document that can support the ongoing dialogue, and evolve to meet new contexts, changes, and priorities. The Intergenerational Workbook (see Appendices) was designed to support that goal, and an interactive, participatory version will be shared on the YouthEarthRights platform to support ongoing dialogue amongst network members. The *Manifesto* is analyzed in Chapter 5, below.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I've offered an overview of the political, institutional, and practical landscape in which the Phoenix Consultation took place, as the context in which the Phoenix Manifesto, the secondary data I analyze in Chapter 5, was produced. By doing this, I aim to support a phenomenological analysis of the *Manifesto* and its implications in Chapter 6. I also aim to establish the grounds for an analysis of the children's rights sector as a potential site for developing counter-hegemonic human rights frameworks, or decolonizing children's rights, which I argue in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: The Phoenix *Manifesto*

Through a deeply participatory process and hundreds of pages of direct input, the diverse, intergenerational network at the Phoenix Consultation created a space for creatively imagining how we might transform and weave a more humane, just and ecocentric collective future for all.

– *Phoenix Manifesto, July 28, 2021, p. 1*

5.1 Introduction

For my dissertation, I employed the non-extractive approach of examining secondary data generated by youth and intergenerational activists from across Turtle Island (Canada, Mexico, US) who were delegates at the Regional Youth Consultation (July 2021) on ‘Children’s Right to a Healthy Environment,’ re-named by youth organizers as ‘the Phoenix Consultation.’ The context of this consultation, my role in it, and my methodological approach is addressed in the previous chapter. This chapter offers a decolonizing and phenomenological reading of the *Phoenix Manifesto* (hereafter referred to as the *Manifesto*), the collective list of demands made by delegates that was the key knowledge product of the consultation.

The *Manifesto* was collaboratively drafted by mostly youth consultation delegates, based on *their* real-time coding, review and analysis of their peers’ experiences, perspectives and recommendations shared at the consultation. Due to the virtual environment in which the consultation was held, there were multiple data sources that youth drew upon to formulate the first draft. As opposed to simply reviewing the consultation minutes, which would have privileged and weighted the voices of formal presenters or speakers at the consultation – some of whom were adults – the youth chose to examine the words of delegates as captured through various participatory engagements at the event. This included their small group pod notes and daily, whole group reflections. The former captured the notes taken by participants themselves in Google Documents in real time, to document the conversations they were having in their

'pods'. The pods were same-language inter-generational groupings of 8-15 delegates that met each day to make sense of and discuss the topics of each day of the consultation. Any members of the pods could contribute anonymously to the documents, reducing any power-over dynamics between adult and youth participants that may have affected youth voice and contributions. The daily, whole group reflections used online software to anonymously capture participants' individual, real-time reflections throughout the conference. They were anonymous and participants were invited to contribute in the language of their choice. In addition to asking about what participants felt were the greatest challenges, priorities and resources, one of the reflections explicitly asked participants what demands they wanted to include in the *Manifesto*. By using these two data sources in addition to formal transcripts and discussions captured in the virtual chatbox, the *Manifesto* reflects the pulse of the group. While participants admittedly were influenced by speakers and agenda topics, young delegates on the Intergenerational Advisory Council (IAC) had been influential in determining these as well – meaning, young people had largely shaped the content and focus of the sessions. Additionally, each pod was created to include some Elders, but the majority were young people.

Further, the young people who drafted the *Manifesto*, took it back to the full group for their input and reflections. They read it aloud on the final day – in all three languages – gathering real-time input or “member checking” as it is often called – whereby young people tweaked, reacted and for the most part, substantiated the document as a true reflection of their intra-subjective understandings of the lifeworld they share on Turtle Island, as identified and engaged with at this consultation. Finally, in the week following the event, a final online reflective engagement was circulated to gather further input and suggestions on the *Manifesto*.

In this dissertation, I examine the *Manifesto* through three lenses. First, in this chapter, I

strive to do an *in situ* reading of the *Manifesto*. I support this by contextualizing elements of the document within the conversations held at the event, as captured by the meeting minutes, the padlets and the pod documents themselves. I support this close analysis by using *in vivo* coding, which uses the language of participants to identify ‘themes’ (though I reframe these as throughlines – see below). I also use participants’ direct quotes to illustrate different points. My having been part of the event enables me to further contextualize the language and demands within the broader conversations and dialogue that took place, whilst giving primacy to the choices the youth made in the way they analyze, frame and articulate their demands. I maintain that this analysis captures the essence of a phenomenological reading, by respecting the perceptions of the participants as an analysis of their shared lifeworld. By doing my analysis this way, I look to the unit of the intra-subjective or the social that the group co-creates together, which I argue elsewhere (see chapter 3) is consistent with both a decolonizing and phenomenological approach. By examining youth’s analysis of the data as verified by their life experiences and perspectives, I strive to take a decolonizing approach whereby I minimize my story-ing over of the data, and prioritize the parameters and contours of the intra-subjective lifeworlds they see, experience and articulate.

In chapter 6, I identify children’s rights as offering some potentially generative pathways – or a potential “weak-strong answer” (Santos, 2009, para 2) to hegemonic human rights frameworks – in the interplay between the structure of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its enactment through the youth climate justice movement and the child participation movement. In this chapter, I explore the openings that these pathways might offer to decolonizing human rights and introducing genuine deep diversity into this human rights framework in ways that disrupt its individualist structure.

In chapter 7, I reflect on the *Manifesto* as it relates to my own research question and the theoretical framework I outline in Chapter 2. I do so through exploring points of curiosity and divergence between participants' phenomenological framing and my own, where these might diverge.

5.2 Reading the *Manifesto*

A copy of the original *Manifesto* as co-created on July 18, 2021, inclusive of imagery and presentation format, is included in PDF format, as Appendix 1 to my dissertation.

As articulated in chapter 3 above, I argue that the *Manifesto* reflects young people's intra-subjective agreement on the world they experience and know based on their lived experiences, their priorities and imaginary for how to achieve the world they envision. In these ways, it captures key elements of their eco-social lifeworld, endorsed by their own analysis across the diversity of their lived experiences – not by me and my analysis of their individual stories. This is why I argue it is a decolonizing approach that serves to make phenomenology even more phenomenological or true to itself – because it honours the integrity of participants' stories by affirming the primacy of their knowledge, rather than positing that I as outside researcher might offer a more expert or objective perspective. In this analysis, I don't have the individual stories to work with – though I include many individual quotes and statements, the basis of which were used to write the *Manifesto*, to share context and examples. Instead, I look through the lens of the social unit (Smith, 2012) examining what they intra-subjectively articulate.

I maintain that it is possible to use phenomenology to look at the unit of the social (Smith, 2012) and/or the relational (Wilson, 2008), rather than the individual as a unit by which intersubjectivity must be examined. I also acknowledge that I am inevitably embedded in the intra-subjectivity I research – from the questions I ask, to the data I choose to consider, and the

analysis I offer – in addition to having been a part of the shaping and implementation of this consultation itself. Such insertedness in the research process and relationality with participants and data is consistent with decolonizing and Indigenous research’s insistence on relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). I maintain that dialogical process is what enables the phenomenological ‘stepping back’ whereby we can render the phenomenological underpinnings of lifeways – including necessarily our own – visible. Thus while the *Manifesto* is considered secondary data from the formal standpoint of Research Ethics, my proximity to the data enables me a nuanced contextualized analysis of the *Manifesto* that is relationally accountable to its authors, in contrast to if I were examining it from a distance, as a discrete document without context.

5.2.1 *Manifesto* Throughlines

In *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson (2008) notes that the typical process of coding or theming data results in splitting or atomizing it, reframing it within an individualist logic:

...analysis from a western perspective breaks everything down to look at it. So you are breaking it down into the smallest pieces and then looking at those small pieces. And ...if you are breaking things down into their smallest pieces, you are destroying all of the relationships around it (p. 119).

Instead, Wilson (2008) notes a distinctive way to examine data, which

...look[s] at all those relationships as a whole instead of breaking it down, cause it just won’t work. So it has to use more of an intuitive logic, rather than linear logic, because you can’t just break everything down into small parts and use linear logic to bring them back together to a whole. You have to use an intuitive logic, where you are looking at the whole thing at once and coming up with your answers through analysis that way (p. 119).

Decolonizing research necessitates relational coding and intuitive logic, he maintains.

While there are no “how-to” guides for this, this is my attempt to engage in both whilst being relationally accountable (Wilson, 2008) to participants and the eco-social intra-subjectivity they articulate. Instead of calling them ‘themes’ or ‘codes’, I draw out the *throughlines* I observe

young people articulating in this document. Much like in a story or a life, throughlines wind through and around each other relationally – sometimes holding one another up – and cannot be so neatly parsed out or fully understood independent of one another. Whilst themes might be said to do the same, they suggest a certain kind of discreteness or finality in their category-style headings, which parses them away from their relationships to one another, and from time and place. The theming of data might be seen as a moment of flattening meaning, of pinning it down, or statically categorizing it according to particular embodiments or observed manifestations of it. In contrast, throughlines suggest a sort of movement that implies they will keep going (even before or after the data). The same throughline might show up in many different forms at different points in a life or a story, depending on its relationship with the different beings in the story, and a throughline could take on new significance depending on the context in which it is read and that of the reader. Throughlines cannot as such be definitively fixed, but instead are suggestive of pathways. They cannot be bound into neat categorical nouns, as a throughline might be present in every aspect of a story. Like weaving, throughlines are more suggestive of the process rather than the end. They are both the strands of Kimmerer's (2013) braids and the braiding process all at once.

The names I give to the distinct but related throughlines relies on *in vivo* coding, using the language of participants. I can not of course pretend to see or notice all of the throughlines, or to claim them as definitive or exhaustive. This is where my reading becomes part of the intra-subjectivity – my articulation shows how these throughlines intersect with me and my analysis in this moment in time. By making my theoretical and methodological frameworks explicit, respectively in chapters 2 and 3, I aim to provide the reader with their own ability to analyze and assess my personal orientation to the text.

Through my analysis, I identified nine key throughlines in the *Manifesto*, identified as sub-section headings below. **Quotes in green font** are taken directly from the *Manifesto*, and **italicized quotes in red font** reference direct quotes from individual consultation delegates at the consultation out of which the *Manifesto* was developed – either captured as pod notes, meeting minutes, or in the daily online padlets. Please note the demands in the *Manifesto* itself are not numbered, but I have numbered them here (in addition to providing pagination) for clarity of reference.

5.2.1.1 The Collective requires the ecocentric language of justice

“juntos como uno solo” / “together as one”

The throughline with the most tendrils in the *Manifesto* is that of ‘the collective’, which for delegates, explicitly includes nature and all people. There is no part of the *Manifesto* that is not touched by the notion of the collective. Written by a collective, the *Manifesto* is framed as the articulation of **“collective demands”** based on how this collective **“might transform and weave a more humane, just, and ecocentric collective future for all”** (*Manifesto*, p. 1).

Throughout the *Manifesto*, nature is an explicit member in this collective, a partner and **“animate agent for change”** (*Manifesto*, Demand 9.3, p. 4) in whose names demands for justice and rights are also made. The collective calls for a **“...shift the language of ‘rights’ from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective -- human and nature -- in all our diversity”** (*Manifesto*, Demand 2.3, p. 2).

Delegates frame the collective as the source, means and end of all of the demands.

During the consultation itself, ‘the collective’ was viewed and articulated as:

- a source of power ***“Together we achieve great solutions.”***
- a driving force ***“We need each other and must work together or we will get nowhere”***

- the motivation *“It is important to make the distinction that collective action not individual action played a key role in their change of attitude.”*
- the organizing principle of future action *“We need to focus our joint action to build a different future.”*
- the means forward *“we need to be clear that this is a collective action and there are no single heroes and we cannot lose sight of this”*

The collective was also understood by participants throughout the event as the means of survival – both ecologically for all, and for youth activists under threat. Participants spoke about how *‘the collective’* had enabled the successful cessation of environmentally exploitative projects: *“...the power and value in participation and the collective...this is an experience I have had...certain projects have been stopped that could have been devastating – e.g. open mining.”*

It is also noted as the embodiment of resilience within nature (and humans as nature):

Everything is connected. When we live in relationship to nature and each other, there becomes more possibility to protect from harm.

Being connected to your environment through your soul and heart can help because you are not only trying to save nature, but also a part of yourself.

We are all children of the earth

...the environment connects all of us

WE ARE EARTHLINGS!

The collective – *‘collective organizations’* and *‘collective protection’* - was also understood and named as the means by which youth activists whose environmental activism has brought them under threat of personal physical harm might be protected:

We have to look at collective protection, as fear is a new form of terrorism to make us feel alone but our collective action has an echo.

We suggest create collective organizations to support each other, as independent groups and people can be afraid but that stops the movement. We would like to emphasize accompaniment so activism may continue.

5.2.1.2 ‘The Collective’ is Intersectional

“Ground solutions across social and environmental movements in both the theory and practice of Intersectionality.” (*Manifesto*, Demand 1, p. 2)

Reflective of the centrality and importance it is given by delegates, Intersectionality is the focus of Demand 1, where it is also capitalized. By naming it as the first of their demands, delegates stated that they intended for it to frame all of the demands. Intersectionality was used throughout the consultation to refer to inter-species (nature and people), inter-racial, inter-gendered, inter-national, inter-cultural, inter-ability, inter-Indigenous/non-Indigenous, and inter-generational relations.

As their first demand, they demand that “both the theory and practice of intersectionality” ground all “solutions across social and environmental movements” (*Manifesto*, Demand 1, p. 2). The significance of it for participants is signaled by the quote with which they decided to introduce Demand 1:

Intersectionality clarifies the need for justice / La interseccionalidad nos permite tener clara la necesidad de justiciar (*Manifesto*, Demand 1.1, p. 2)

The quote is the only direct single participant quote used in the *Manifesto* and by introducing Demand 1, it introduces all of the demands. Intersectionality, as understood and defined by participants, points them to the clarity of multidimensional, systems-level justice.

The primacy given to intersectionality in the *Manifesto* reflects the emphasis it was given by participants in all sessions, across panels, even before the explicit sessions on intersectionality and ableism (which took place on day 3):

We have to be anti-racist in the space of environmental advocacy. We have to acknowledge the knowledge and culture of marginalized communities.

Delegates centered discussions and panels around exploring how intersectionality shapes differences in how climate change is experienced:

...intersectionality...stops us from looking at binaries. It pushes us to understand how our different identities impact our realities.

Disadvantage builds on disadvantage.

Intersectionality was not just articulated by participants as important. It was the organizing principle through which they understood, framed and related structural injustices and violences:

The fight for food security is such an important fight, because for self-determination land is a key part of that. That right is being attacked through land theft, and gentrification that affects BIPOC. Land privatisation in the Global South, large corporations are threatening food sovereignty across the world.

However, whilst it has been leveraged to generate inequities, intersectionality was repeatedly positioned as the greatest point of strength in the collective:

Intersectionality is a tool for understanding how some identities are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and how just like in an ecosystem, our differences are a strength and resource for climate justice and are necessary for the co-generation of life. (Manifesto, Demand 1.2, p. 2)

In this way, intersectionality was understood as not just the way in which systems of oppression and marginalization generate lines of inequity, but also as the greatest resource the collective has. It was also seen as a principle that should be generative for policy making:

“Intersectionality can enhance policy, it is an opportunity to take action at different levels.”

Delegates identified, however, that those who face greater inequality and enjoy less privilege –

whilst the most affected by climate change – have the least influence on decision- and policy-making: *“Be aware that there are contexts other than our own that climate change affects differently, so that privileges and inequalities contribute to some opinions not being taken into account.”*

At the consultation, in addition to racialized, Indigenous, economically disadvantaged, young people, female-identifying, queer, and the non-human, refugees and the disabled are explicitly named as facing greater inequities. Importantly, delegates understood and clearly articulated that these inequities occurred not only at the level of individuals, but also at the level of communities, nations and regions. It was understood that *“disproportionate effects”* are felt by *“low-income countries and post-colonial communities”* (*Manifesto*, p. 7), as well as by Indigenous communities.

From the vantage point of the institutional organizers, the consultation was originally conceptualized around the central difference between children from adults – with the argument that the former are more vulnerable to and affected by climate change. Participants instead shifted this to focus to the multitude of ways that intersectionality affects every being differently – within which the inter-generational appeared to be implicitly considered as just one point of difference. Delegates agreed that young people are not sufficiently listened to, making consultations such as this important and relevant:

Change the idea that adults get the last word and begin to listen to young people and where they wish we were at.

Being a youth activist means that some adults are not willing to listen to your opinions, giving statements like “you are just a child” but being an adult even if they have controversial opinions, they are still listened to because they are adults.

In addition, delegates noted the lack of support and remuneration as one of the disadvantages they faced:

Youth advocates need to get paid. They are putting in a lot of labor to be able to move these campaigns and often youth might get exploited by movement organizers by just being asked to participate for free. Hard when it doesn't fit in with our values.

This focus is included explicitly in Demand 13: “**Prioritize youth empowerment and meaningful sustained intergenerational partnership including fair payment of youth advocates.**”

(*Manifesto*, Demand 13, p. 5)

The above notwithstanding, by reframing the child-adult binary as a point of intersectionality, youth and adults – just like all forms of intersectionality were recognized to be – are viewed also as important resources to one another:

Intergenerational relationship-building so that collaborative networking can support one another to build relationships with people in positions of influence and power - work together like an ecosystem where everyone plays distinct features.

Youth are recognized as having critical knowledge to offer adults about strategies for addressing climate change: “*Please help your elders learn how best to help!*” They are also understood as having the valuable resource of hope for the future: “*I have wondered if adulting is giving up on what the future can be.*” In turn, adults are identified as having important experiential knowledge to share:

We understand the climate crisis, but our adults have also grown up in it. They know things too. Many elders are here in the consultation and they have had experience and sharing their failures. The more experiences we understand the better humans we become. Intergenerational dialogue allows us to set aside our anxiety and move past it together.

From this vantage point, delegates use intersectionality to re-frame failure as a resource, and difference as a source of wisdom. From this standpoint, they use the language of

intersectionality to convert age – and difference – into a point of connection, not one of separation: “*Age doesn’t separate us.*”

5.2.1.3 The new economy = health and well-being of all beings

Commit to both people and nature's rights to health and wellbeing. (*Manifesto*, Demand 2, p. 2)

Establish and protect the rights of water to health and wellbeing, recognizing that we are all sustained and interconnected through water. (*Manifesto*, Demand 3, p. 2)

Shift economic metrics of success from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to eco-psycho-social well-being of people and nature. (*Manifesto*, Demand 4, p. 3)

Rather than simply positioning themselves against systems and practices, delegates articulate what they are for in the *Manifesto*. If the first demand establishes their self-identification as an intersectional collective that includes nature, the second, third and fourth clarify that the greatest value of this collective is the health and well being of the whole collective. This value is to be at the core of all decision- and policy-making (*Manifesto*, Demand 2.1, p. 2). They articulate this value through the language of both rights and justice, which are used almost interchangeably:

environmental justice is foundational to securing the rights of youth and children; there can be no rights for children or youth – or any human – if there are no rights for nature (*Manifesto*, Demand 2.2, p. 2)

shift the language of ‘rights’ from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective -- human and nature -- in all our diversity (*Manifesto*, Demand 2.3, p. 2)

Water is named and prioritized as central to this well being for all, as explicated through their use of the Lakota words “*Mni Wiconi*” (“water is life”) (*Manifesto*, Demand 3.1, p. 2). However, importantly, delegates not only demand that water be protected for humans – though this case is also made: “...recognizing we are all sustained and interconnected through water”

(*Manifesto*, Demand 2, p. 2). They also demand that water be protected according to its own right to health and well being: “Establish and protect the rights of water to health and wellbeing...” (*Manifesto*, Demand 2, p. 2; my emphasis). Demand 4 asserts that the concept of “eco-psycho-social well-being of people and nature” (*Manifesto*, Demand 4, p. 3) becomes – literally – the new economy, to replace the “economic metrics of success from Gross Domestic Product (GDP)” (*Manifesto*, Demand 4, p. 3).

5.2.1.4 The well-being of the Collective requires systems transformation

There is clear recognition that the response to intersectional inequities is not inclusion - “Inclusion is an empty word for those marginalized” - but justice, through systems change. Delegates take aim throughout the *Manifesto* at the intertwining systems that have used intersectional differences to wield inequities and injustice, arguing for their transformation, uprooting and ultimately, re-creation. The first system they name as a perpetrator of climate crisis in the *Manifesto* is the “current capitalist economy”, in Demand 4:

Transform our current capitalist economy, which generates inequities and legitimizes unsustainable resource and human exploitation that has created and fueled the climate crisis, into a more sustainable, ecocentric model (*Manifesto*, Demand 4.1, p. 3)

They specify that the GDP is a “wartime measure that places more value on a forest when it is logged than when it is living” (*Manifesto*, Demand 4.2, p. 3), demanding that it be replaced by “circular economies, gift economies, and well-being economies as practiced by many Indigenous nations here on these lands for millennia.” (*Manifesto*, Demand 4.3, p. 3). They later add the demand to: “Limit the decision-making power of corporations and extractive industries proactively, so as to prevent future abuses of the earth.” (*Manifesto*, Demand 6.2, p. 3).

Delegates' systems focus is the direct outcome of their discussions on intersectionality. The latter concept as defined by them (intra-species, intra-racial, intra-gendered, intra-national, intra-cultural, intra-ability, intra-Indigenous/non-Indigenous, and intra-generational) pointed delegates not just to the structures and systems of marginalization that impact certain bodies more than others. **“Social justice is a HUGE part of environmental justice,”** said one delegate. Looking at intersectionality through a social justice lens elucidated the inter-relationship of these systems and the way they uphold and enforce one another: *“Focusing on just one axis of justice will not lead to anything, they build on each other to oppress us. Solutions need to be multidimensional.”*

Participants advocate that as an interconnected set of crises, strategies addressing the systems that co-generate them must be “multidimensional”:

For a long time, the primarily white mainstream climate movement has focused on climate change as a rational, scientific problem to be managed through improved reductions targets, better technology. But this narrative ignores the interconnectedness causes of the climate crisis.

Other systems explicitly named in the *Manifesto* include anthropocentrism (p. 4), hetero-patriarchy (p. 7), colonialism (p. 4, p. 7) and ableism (p. 6). While racism is not explicitly named in the *Manifesto*, it was perhaps the most consistently referenced ‘ism’ in the consultation such that “difference” implicitly related to race whenever it was said. Some examples include:

Redlining...affects communities of color, resulting in one of the highest rates of asthma

For low-income children and youth these risks are increased. Poor infrastructure is further exacerbated by racial redlining which affects BIPOC youth and children disproportionately...

We acknowledge the effects of racism, and that patriarchal culture means more violence toward women and girls.

Adultism is also not mentioned, but it was named throughout the consultation as one more system at root cause of the challenges:

Change the idea that adults get the last word and begin to listen to young people and where they wish we were at.”

Adult centism is something that can be experienced as discrimination against the capabilities of young people to advocate for themselves. Those arguing protection and care can impact young people initiated their other rights.

Violence against nature and climate change was itself recognized as yet another system, intertwining with other systems of violence that “create barriers” and cause inequities:

“Systems...cause inequity and this is interrelated with climate justice. These systems create barriers including ableism. Climate change may also cause more people to be disabled.”

Delegates also looked at how certain structural violences repeat the same kind as ecocidal violence:

....gender based violence is present in different forms, not having rights on the land, not having access to the lands, dispossessed from land. They use sexual violence and women and girls are victims of this violence we have many examples of gender based violence and this is like nature-based violence.

5.2.1.5 Legal and education systems are tools to transform systems of oppression

Legal systems are not named in the *Manifesto* as one of the systems at cause of injustice, unless the *Manifesto*'s addressing of coloniality might be interpreted as referencing colonial legal systems. Instead, legal systems are invoked three times as a resource the movement might leverage and use to establish and enforce the rights and justice they seek – with respect to the protection from harm for water, the environment more broadly, and intergenerational activists, particularly Indigenous land defenders:

Impose strict legal consequences for industries and individuals responsible for damaging the health and integrity of bodies of water, whether through intentional or unintentional and direct or indirect pollution. (*Manifesto*, Demand 3.3, p. 2)

Create systems of legal accountability at all levels of governance for ecocide and environmental health harms. (*Manifesto*, Demand 12.1, p. 5)

Create safety through comprehensive legal frameworks for intergenerational activists, particularly Indigenous land defenders and abolitionists who face ongoing threats to their safety and wellbeing. (*Manifesto*, Demand 14.1, p. 6)

Education systems are another institution that delegates identify as a critical resource to leverage for their purposes. Similar to legal systems, their role in ecocide could be interpreted as being articulated implicitly through delegates' reference to the need to decolonize knowledge and promote Indigenous Traditional Knowledges ITK (*Manifesto*, Demand 9, p. 4). However, delegates' emphasis on education is its role in transforming and dismantling the systems of oppression:

Strengthen and broaden environmental education. (*Manifesto*, Demand 5, p. 3)

Prioritize proactive environmental education for all ages, bringing the global population into a stronger understanding of our current realities in a way that fosters innovation and creativity. (*Manifesto*, Demand 5.1, p. 3)

Commit to implementing early environmental education that equips humans to transform the self, institutions, and ways of being in ways that ensure rights for all humans and nature. (*Manifesto*, Demand 5.2, p. 3)

Prioritize emotional development in K-12 schooling (*Manifesto*, Demand 5.3, p. 3)

Make respect for the environment a habit. (*Manifesto*, Demand 5.4, p. 3)

Delegates' orientation towards the nation state's role in systemic oppressions and ways forward appears somewhat neutral in the *Manifesto*, though the nation state is an assumed "given" insofar as delegates are requesting that national-level policymakers, decision-makers and institutions as duty bearers, among others, respond to their demands. In addition to this, nation states are explicitly called by delegates in the *Manifesto* to: "promote and enact eco-

social empathy” (*Manifesto*, Demand 1.3, p. 2); “center Indigenous voices” and be guided by “Indigenous-led discourse” (*Manifesto*, Demand 10.2, p. 6) on environmental policy; and to “ground national and international decision-making in local community structures and economies of scale” (*Manifesto*, Demand 11.1, p. 7). They are also called to respect the “sovereignty of Indigenous nations” (*Manifesto*, Demand 9.2, p. 4).

In the consultation, however, delegates were not neutral towards the nation state. There was recognition of the complicit nature of nation states with the named systems of oppression:

Our greatest environmental challenge as a region in the USA is more of a sociopolitical challenge I believe. We have the means to change our behaviors and energy sources etc to reduce our impacts on the environment but the political will and understanding of our shared situation is lacking as I'm sure we are all aware. The failure of the US political leadership to clearly and consistently address the effects of climate change and human impacts on the environment could potentially doom life on earth. A crazy thing to think about! I think our national state of denial about many of our problems is our biggest obstacle to making progress. Corporate power is out of balance with the rights and needs of life on earth.

The last few days have felt like a bit of a turning point and yet I know I felt a little bit overwhelmed watching all of this. Partly because of the lack of commiserate action from our government.

The governments are not very articulate. Even though they take an oath to public health and safety, they cannot protect that because of special interests.

Delegates acknowledged the violent colonial history and foundation of the three countries focused on in the consultation – Canada, US and Mexico – noting their role as complicit in ongoing ecocide:

Because the climate crisis is not a benign tragedy of human nature there are people who are criminally responsible. Our country's living here were built on the genocide of indigenous people and colonization violently imposed the myth of separation between our human societies and the environment. And this foundation of violence extraction never went away, we live in an economy that is organized around exploiting land and people globally to create massive amounts of wealth for a very small group of people in the global north.

Mexican delegates highlighted the particular threats youth climate activists face and not only the lack of state support for them, but the violence enacted by state bodies such as the police: *“In Mexico, activism can be very dangerous. Well known activists receive a lot of threats. Police are not kind to protesters. Sometimes, police open fire, as seen in recent women’s rights protests.”* Another delegate referred to nation states’ lack of accountability with respect to climate action as gaslighting, the “new climate denialism”: *“Gaslighting – our government saying that they are taking climate action that meets the level of urgency, but not in any way doing that – is being called the new climate denialism.”*

5.2.1.6 The new systems must be founded upon an ethic of empathy and care

“Revolution is also made of love.”

Structures of oppression are understood by delegates not just as being enacted by systems such as capitalism, but also by cultures of being. For example, Demand 15.2 urges that “**current ableist culture**” be addressed, as it “**limits equal participation and further threatens the rights of those with disabilities**” (*Manifesto*, Demand 15.2, p. 6). The cultures in need of transformation are defined through the systems that underpin and are sustained by them – identified in the *Manifesto* as anthropocentric, colonial, ableist, hetero-patriarchal, and consumerist.⁵¹ Ultimately, they are described as abusive in so far as they are viewed as the intertwining systems that enact “**abuses of the earth**” (*Manifesto*, Demand 6.2, p. 3). Links between violences – such as gender-based violence and nature-based violence – were clearly established in discussions:

....gender based violence is present in different forms, not having rights on the land, not having access to the lands, dispossessed from land. They use sexual violence and women

⁵¹ As noted above, in the consultation itself, racist, ageist and capitalist were equally added to the list.

and girls are victims of this violence we have many examples of gender based violence and this is like nature-based violence.

The main challenge in Mexico is security for environmental activists. Many have been killed and “disappeared”, due to corporate, economic and political interests. Being a woman activist is even more dangerous to the high rates of femicides in Mexico

There is a world trend to threaten and even murder environmental activists and advocates

It was interesting to highlight how much violence in Mexico, multiplied if women, Indigenous or marginalized. Not only being an activist. Academics are also diminished, their work and accomplishments are diminished.

Redress and accountability for harms done are demanded, and the violence of the climate crisis is historically situated by delegates. In the *Manifesto*, it is demanded that harms perpetrated by the economy are specifically acknowledged:

Acknowledge the harm that is perpetuated by using GDP, a wartime measure that places more value on a forest when it is logged than when it is living, as a measure of success. (Manifesto, p. 3).

If the eco-social well-being and health of the Collective is the new foundation and economy of the collective, then the transformation must be away from violence and harm towards an ethic of care that honours ecocentric, ecofeminist, sacred and Indigenous wisdoms. They call for an ecocentric way of being that is built on an ethic of care: “Center an ethic of care in all forms of policy and governance, shifting away from anthropocentric models and towards ecocentric ways of being” (*Manifesto*, Demand 7.1, p. 4). This ethic of care is framed in terms of the reciprocity that humans must offer back to the earth: “honoring the Earth as an animate and generative life force that cares for us and that we must care for in return” (*Manifesto*, Demand 7.2, p. 4).

5.2.1.7 Indigenous peoples and knowledge should guide the collective

In addition to one of the demands being exclusively focused on justice for Indigenous peoples (Demand 10), Indigenous peoples, communities and nations are the human sub-group of the Collective⁵² most frequently referenced throughout the *Manifesto*. The term “Indigenous” is referenced nine times, explicitly named in 5 of the *Manifesto*’s 16 demands. References pertain to:

- “the Indigenous principle of “*Mni Wiconi*” (“water is life” in Lakota)” (*Manifesto*, Demand 3.1, p.2)
- The “circular economies, gift economies, and well-being economies as practiced by many Indigenous nations here on these lands for millennia” (*Manifesto*, Demand 4.3, p. 3)
- “Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and governance systems” (*Manifesto*, Demand 9.1, p. 4)
- “respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous nations” (*Manifesto*, Demand 9.2, p. 4)
- The “self-determination of Indigenous peoples” (*Manifesto*, Demand 10, p. 4)
- The centering of “Indigenous knowledge” (*Manifesto*, Demand 10, p. 4)
- Supporting “Indigenous communities... traditional ways of being and...self-determination” (*Manifesto*, Demand 10.1, p. 4)
- Centering “Indigenous voices in systems” (*Manifesto*, Demand 10.2, p. 5)
- The call for “Indigenous-led discourse” to lead on environmental policy (*Manifesto*, Demand 10.2, p. 5); and

⁵² Water is named eight times, Nature/Natural is named nine times, and the environment, ten times.

- Providing legal frameworks to protect “Indigenous land defenders” (*Manifesto*, Demand 14.1, p. 6).

While Demand 9 focuses on the need to “decolonize policymaking, societal institutions, and...forms of knowledge,” (*Manifesto*, Demand 9, p. 4), Demand 10 explicitly focuses on the call for Indigenous knowledge to be centered, and Indigenous people’s sovereignty to be respected:

Support self-determination of Indigenous peoples and center Indigenous knowledge.

Support Indigenous communities to practice their traditional ways of being and in their pursuit of self-determination;

Center Indigenous voices in systems; Indigenous-led discourse on local, national, and international environmental policy is key to co-creating systems grounded in a reciprocal relationship with nature and long term sustainable change (*Manifesto*, Demands 10, 10.1, 10.2, pp. 4-5)

The significant emphasis on Indigenous peoples and knowledges in the *Manifesto* reflects the focus it was given by delegates throughout all sessions and days of the consultation. The consultation was opened by an Indigenous Elder, and numerous Indigenous speakers, facilitators and/or presenters spoke. Additionally, non-Indigenous delegates frequently centred Indigenous peoples and knowledges:

The answer lies in Indigenous knowledge of the peoples of this continent...upholding it and integrating in climate solutions.

...the frustration knowing that the climate science is there, the knowledge is there, indigenous teachings and ways and that there just truly being ignored at this point for political motivations, for money, and whatever else.

We need to prioritize Indigenous knowledge.

Listening to Indigenous people, centering them in policy and learning from their ways of being” must be prioritized.

Let Indigenous people live on THEIR earth and land. They are the best stewards.

Indigenous people deserve land back.

5.2.2.8 The Revolution is emotional

Emotions are an important aspect of the struggle for environmental rights as we have heard throughout the event.

Demand 8 seeks acknowledgement of the “**ecoanxiety**” that the climate crisis generates across the Collective, asking for “**adequate systems of support**” to be created to support growing mental health issues in its wake:

Acknowledge ecoanxiety as an emergent mental health crisis and create adequate systems of support (*Manifesto*, Demand 8, p. 4)

Create support networks for processing the complexity of emotions that the climate crisis produces in all generations across all identities and communities (*Manifesto*, Demand 8.1, p. 4)

Importantly, Demand 8.1 references “**the complexity of emotions that the climate crisis produces**”. A diversity of emotions was a consistent throughline of the consultation in all spaces, the role of which was considered and acknowledged in multiple ways by speakers and delegates alike. The term “**ecoanxiety**” might be considered as referencing these diverse emotions, which ranged from anxiety to love, from hope to hopelessness, from passion to fear, from overwhelm to resolve, from resignation to inspiration.

“We need to believe that emotions are very important when we talk about environmental issues.” Amidst calls for concrete actions and wholesale systems change, why do delegates want emotions to be formally acknowledged? For delegates, the detrimental and traumatic psychological effects of the climate crisis need to be centrally considered in climate change responses. As educational approaches are considered, their potentially traumatizing effects need to be taken seriously: *“Learning about climate change can be traumatizing.”* In addition to the emerging mental health crisis that delegates identify, emotions were viewed as hindering the

environmental movement in terms of burnout and paralysis: *“What is bad is to allow these emotions to paralyze us.”* Attending to these by setting up systems and ensuring adequate resources is critical to care, health and well being:

A key component of climate justice advocacy is resilience. Burnout is way too common for all of us. Vandana Shiva uses the term “compassionate courage” to describe this kind of resilient activism that is able to support us for all creatures.

Whilst the demands acknowledge the emotions *“that the climate crisis produces in all generations across all identities and communities,”* from the intersectional vantage point, emotions were identified as something that young people are taking seriously and in ways the whole movement needs to heed and note: *“Anxiety about climate change was common, but is not something that adults are taking seriously.”* Young people at the consultation emphatically conveyed the level of emotion that runs through younger generations: *“how anxious and angry and outraged we are, this can be overwhelming.”* However, they also recognized that emotions hold a tremendous amount of strength: *“Our hearts can be very loud even as our voices are quiet!”*

Engaging actors in emotionality was seen as critical to systems change. Delegates listed *“emotional development and remembering how to be part of an ecosystem”* as one effective strategy for addressing climate change. Experiencing the deep sense of connection with all beings was seen as a key way in which motivation for change is fostered: *“Acts of love offer profound respect to everyone, from the smallest to the most vast. We need each other because we are part of a universe – one-diverse.”* Feeling this sense of connection was also key to the ability to feel hope, find resilience from burnout and depression and to dream up an alternate world: *“People in power telling us that these visions are unrealistic and insurmountable but this is because we lack a public imagination about coming together to do something big.”*

However, if adults did not feel the emotion directly, engaging their empathy towards young people's feelings was identified as an effective approach: *"If we can't be the ones making the policy, at least we can make sure that those who are, are empathetically engaged with us."*

The word revolution does not appear in the *Manifesto*. However, it showed up throughout the consultation, often: *"Ideas are powerful; actions inspired by them are revolutionary."*

When the term was used, it was often used with words of emotion, suggesting that for delegates, emotion is a part of the revolution not to be ignored: *"Revolution is also made of love."* When asked 'What are your top demands for the Manifesto?', one participant said: *"A revolution of the heart! Emotional development prioritized. Listening to Indigenous people, centering them in policy and learning from their ways of being."* The levels of structural change to the economy, to laws and institutions, however, reflects a counter-hegemonic lexicon with the quality of revolution, however.

5.2.2.9 The right to ecocentric justice

Shift the language of "rights" from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective -- human and nature -- in all of our diversity (*Manifesto*, Demand 2.2, p. 2)

The entire *Manifesto* might be read as enacting and articulating what delegates understand to be "the ecocentric language of justice." While using the language of rights, they re-frame rights in very intentional and explicit ways. They are clear this language does not pertain to just a category or sub-category of the collective (e.g. children, those with disabilities, etc.) In their ecocentric language of justice, rights are to be "for the collective -- human and nature -- in all of our diversity." As such, while the consultation was conceptualized and organized firmly within the bounds of children's rights (in this case, to a healthy environment), delegates do not stay within these bounds in the *Manifesto*, nor is this how they make sense of

their rights. Indeed, they explicitly demand that the language of rights be transformed so that it is no longer used to reference individuals or humans. The following framings of the word rights appear: “Environmental rights,” “children’s human rights,” “nature’s rights,” “the rights of water,” the “rights of youth and children,” “rights for nature,” the “rights for all human and nature,” the “rights of those with disabilities” and “children’s right to a health environment”. However, the word ‘justice’ is also used throughout the *Manifesto*, seemingly interchangeably with ‘rights’ in places.

During the consultation, there was a panel focused on how children’s rights might be used to address environmental issues, and there was consensus amongst the group that human rights is a strong vehicle and tool for social change: *“Human rights can be the vehicle to bring about policy that has enough teeth to provide the environmental safeguards we are missing globally!”* The pathways identified for using rights to forward climate justice goals included extending formal rights to nature (*“Formal rights for nature!!!! Legal implications and definitions for things like ecocide”*), framing environmental issues as a human right (*“This environmental crisis is about human rights. It can be a rapid vehicle for systemic change”*), and using rights systems to prompt government action: *“young people are using human rights to keep governments accountable.”* Delegates also discussed the possibility of introducing a General Comment to the CRC that would address children’s rights to a healthy environment.

5.3 Conclusion

“Ideas are powerful; actions inspired by them are revolutionary.”

In the end, the final demand of delegates at the regional consultation on children’s right to a healthy environment – the Phoenix Consultation – was to build ongoing community and opportunities to keep working together: to keep the consultation going. The group is currently

exploring ongoing use of the YouthEarthRights platform for the purpose of this consultation and beyond. Despite the significant challenges, the ecoanxiety, and the power of the systems they seek to change, the tone of the consultation was highly optimistic, hopeful and action-oriented: *“I have learned that the revolution must be sustainable, the revolution must be accessible, and the revolution is you, and it is us.”*

Chapter 6: The Peculiar Case of Children's Rights: A Weak-strong answer to the strong question of hegemonic human rights?

6.1 Introduction

In conducting a decolonizing, phenomenological analysis of the Phoenix Manifesto, I aimed to draw out the key structures and elements not only of the eco-social intra-subjectively articulated lifeworld of the Phoenix consultation delegates as reflected in the *Manifesto*, but also of the structures core to the institutional context in which they made these demands – children's rights. This chapter emerged as I engaged in that process, out of the unanticipated observation of that *children's rights are peculiar*. The world peculiar comes from the Latin word *peculiaris*, an adjective meaning "privately owned" or "special" that is derived from the Latin word for "property," *peculium*. In this chapter, I argue that the children's rights framework is peculiar in three ways: its overall conception; particular content; and enactment. Each of these peculiar elements highlight the individualist ontological basis of hegemonic human rights frameworks. However, in this chapter I explore the extent to which the intra-active combination of these three elements opens up some generative pathways along which the framework might be leveraged to elaborate counter-hegemonic and pluralistic human rights frameworks and lexicons moving forward.

I have intentionally named this chapter the Peculiar Case *of (not for)* Children's Rights, because I am not seeking to establish that children's rights as the necessary structure by which counter-hegemonic conceptions of human dignity must be forwarded. Indeed, Santos and Martin's (2021) observation that there is a plurality of possible frameworks of human dignity requires me to note that children's rights is just one possible entry point. However, like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), children's rights is a framework that not only emerges from within, but is an integral part of, hegemonic human rights and thus

offers a unique vantage point from which to consider how hegemonic institutions might themselves be enacted in counter-hegemonic ways. In other words, I look to children's rights as a possible site where there is strong potential to decolonize human rights. While the relational enactment of children's rights by Phoenix Consultation delegates disrupts and interrupts individualist ontologies, I consider in this chapter whether this constitutes a counter-hegemonic project.

In the end, I argue that the potency of this case as a site for conceptualizing counter-hegemonic human rights frameworks lies in the extent to which it opens up an unsettling space of genuine inter-cultural dialogue within and around the civil institution of human rights. I explore both how Article 12 in the CRC leaves scope for children and youth to "civicise" or negotiate their rights (Tully, 2008), and how youth climate justice activists in the Phoenix Consultation and *Manifesto* leverage this opportunity to both "act otherwise" within the rules, and negotiate the rules (Tully, 2008, p. 280). With respect to acting otherwise, they enact a relational ontology of intra-being drawing on a range of diverse movements and traditions. With respect to negotiating the rules, they introduce their own terms and demands to shift the orientation and focus from: rights to responsibility, relationality and justice; the individual to the collective; and the human to all life forms. Important to the counter-hegemonic project, the Phoenix consultation delegates also name systems of injustice, such as colonialism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, and racism/whiteness – immediately rendering the limits of the individualist human rights tent visible. This is a critically important move as it starts to move towards a recognition of the ways that human rights have fallen short historically in addressing multiple systems of violence: "Envisaging human rights as a counter-hegemonic language implies understanding why unjust suffering and so many violations of human dignity are not

recognized as violations of human rights” (Santos & Martins, 2021, p. 2). This opens up a phenomenological and decolonizing orientation in which the peculiarities, particularities and omissions of children’s rights (and human rights more generally) come to light, disturbing both its interpellative appeal and assumed acritical stance.

Green (2014) critically notes in particular, how human rights have very problematically not recognized Indigenous rights nor taken up the violences of settler colonialism to Indigenous peoples. The introduction of UNDRIP offers another such institutional pathway by which human rights mechanisms might be used to decolonize human rights from within in important ways:

For Indigenous peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms key aspects of the right to make plans. UNDRIP’s Article 3 states that by virtue of the right to self-determination, Indigenous peoples “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). Moreover, UNDRIP’s Preamble affirms that “control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories, and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.” The Preamble also recognizes “that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.”” (Whyte, pp. 57-58)

A comparative analysis of how both UNDRIP and children’s rights frameworks offer promising pathways along which human rights might be decolonized is the subject of my planned postdoctoral work.

Ultimately, this chapter asks to what the extent does the current leveraging of children’s rights by climate justice activists such as that examined in the Phoenix *Manifesto* tender a “weak-strong answer” as defined by Santos (2009)? Questions are “strong” as per Santos’ definition insofar as they are shaped and sharpened by the intensity of the crises and contradictions of the contemporary, dominant lifeworlds in which they emerge. The “strong

question” I approach with this case of children’s rights is: *Is a pluralistic, counter-hegemonic human rights framework possible?* I suggest that a test by which one might assess whether the answers being pondered are weak-strong might be the extent to which they themselves generate new strong questions, which a weak-weak answer is unable to do. The weak-strong answer I consider is relevant to human rights, but also to hegemony theory in so far as it offers up strong questions about the latter: *Might individualistic institutions be more hegemonically porous than they profess to be? Might the assumption that dominant individualist institutions are hegemonically impenetrable be hegemonic itself?*

6.2 What is a Weak-Strong Answer to the problem of Hegemonic Human Rights?

In ‘If God were a human rights activist’, Santos (2009) argues that “our time is witnessing the final crisis of the hegemony of the socio-cultural paradigm of western modernity and, therefore, it is a time of paradigmatic transition” (para. 1). Strong questions, for Santos (2009), are characterized by addressing questions for “individual and collective life” within this paradigmatic moment such that they “...arouse a particular kind of perplexity” (para. 2). He writes: “Now, it seems more and more obvious that our time is not one of strong answers. It is rather a time of strong questions and weak answers” (para. 1). However, while there may only ultimately be weak answers to the perplexity that strong questions articulate, not all weak answers are equal for Santos: there are weak-strong and weak-weak answers. Weak-weak answers are those that operate within the dominant paradigm and lifeworld, he notes. By failing to question the horizon the paradigm provides, they may in fact embolden the perplexity of the strong question at hand rather than generating any answers. Weak-strong answers meanwhile represent the maximum possible consciousness of a given epoch:

They [weak-strong answers] are strong enough to see the coming collapse of the dominant paradigm and call for the need to go beyond it, even if they have no clear

picture of what will come after it. They transform the perplexity caused by the strong question into positive energy. They do this not by pretending that the perplexity is pointless or that it can be eliminated by a simple answer. Rather, they show the limits and the historical nature of the current horizon of possibilities, thereby opening space for social and political innovation. They transform the perplexity into an open field of contradictions in which a relatively unregulated competition among different paradigms or horizons of possibilities may unfold. They help people and movements to travel without tested maps in relatively uncharted territories where strong answers emerge in the form of an historical, cultural and political Not Yet. In other words, they emerge both as possibility and as risk. (Santos, 2009, para. 2)

Whilst human rights were “supposed to be a strong answer to the problems of the world, so strong as to be universally valid” (Santos, 2009, para. 1), conventional human rights practices and theorizing can only ever generate weak-weak answers for Santos. Thus, in order to make my case, I must establish that this case of children’s rights stretches beyond conventional human rights theorizing. If we are all “bathed in a vat of cognitive imperialism” (p. 32) as Simpson (2011) suggests, my argument also relies on the audacious claim that this is even possible. In order to engage in such theorizing, I must first clarify how Santos defines conventional human rights thinking. He describes the latter as being grounded in the following logics – namely, that human rights as currently constituted establish themselves as: 1) universally valid; 2) premised on the individual and human as the foundational unit of being; 3) sufficient in qualifying and defining human rights violations according to their institutions, declarations and cultural standards; 4) unquestionable and uncompromised by “the recurrent phenomenon of double standards in evaluating compliance with human rights” (Santos, 2009, para. 4); and 5) perceived as being more readily respected in the global North than the global South. In contrast, Santos identifies movements that enact non-conventional human rights thinking. These movements do not constitute their conceptions of human dignity based on the above definitions, nor situate themselves within Western political, cultural or social points of reference – even when formulated in protest or “resistance to western domination” (Santos,

2009, para. 6). He suggests three examples of movements (which he specifies is not intended to be an exhaustive list), that include: “indigenous movements, particularly in Latin America; the "new" rise of traditionalism in Africa; and the Islamic insurgency” (Santos, 2009, para. 6). I do not take up a discussion and consideration of these movements here, but note the importance for Santos that the movements articulate conceptions of human rights that germinate and flourish outside of the dominant hegemonic individualist framework such as those upheld by the UN.

It is important to clarify next how this case engages with each of Santos’ (2009) five criteria of conventional human rights as outlined in the above section: 1) My starting point is to problematize human rights frameworks’ claim to universal validity. The first peculiarity I examine, the overall conception of children’s rights, helps to deparochialize children’s rights (and by extension, human rights), locating it within the particularities of the cultural, social and political context in which it is conceptualized and emerges. By doing so, I seek to establish the non-critique critical orientation that Reynaert et al. (2012) call for in the children’s rights sector. This also might be conceived of as a phenomenological and decolonizing stance that deparochializes and enables genuine dialogue (Tully, 2016); 2) I observe the delegates’ starting point to be relational and overtly rejecting the universalizing lexicon of the individual human as the unit within which to consider dignity, rights and justice; 3) A starting point for my argument is that youth and intergenerational climate activists who authored the *Phoenix Manifesto* point to a large number of violences, inequities, injustices and violations of beings at the systems level (e.g. capitalism). I examine how these injustices are well beyond the scope of the hegemonic human rights canopy and its standards and declarations; 4) While I do not here engage in a study of the evaluation of human rights, I do acknowledge here that the use of these

instruments often directly or indirectly exacerbates and furthers injustices that fall outside the purview of conventional human rights frameworks (Maldonado-Torres, 2021). I also acknowledge that human rights assessment practices are often used in ways that assume an acritical orientation towards the universality and validity of the frameworks; 5) As outlined in my theory chapter, I see the multiple intertwining systems of capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, colonialism, anthropocentrism, whiteness/racism, and ableism as being enacted across and throughout the world, and in particular, leveraged by nation states in the North to the disproportionate disadvantage of those living in the South. If the abyssal line might be considered a structure by which human rights abuses are enacted, this suggests a reversal of the above stance – namely, that human rights abuses might be disproportionately attributed to Northern states and institutions rather than ascribed primarily to the global South as has historically been assumed.

In addition to the above five criteria, there are traces of three distinct, diverse citizenship movements in the case of children’s rights I put forward. The cultural, social and political references of these movements stretch beyond dominant individualist ontologies in so far as they emanate from relational ontologies and traditions, though not necessarily all outside of the West as per Santos’ (2009) criteria. They include Indigenous movements across the Americas, emancipatory struggles that promote and value voice and participation “from below” (à la Paulo Freire (1970) as observable in the child participation movement across the Americas), and eco-social movements that seek to engage in Gaia citizenship practices (à la James Tully, and also observable across diverse settings in the Americas).⁵³

⁵³ Please note I do not aim to suggest any of these movements are not observable in other world regions. Rather, I focus on its presence in the named regions due to the geographical context in which the consultations took place (e.g. the Americas), and my familiarity with the movements in this regional context.

With respect to the first of these movements, climate justice activists – many of whom are Indigenous – draw on key principles located in the resurgence and revitalization of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) – in this case from across Turtle Island and Latin America. These are the ontological grounds by which these activists not only focus on challenging the existing anthropocentric and individualistic system of rights, but clearly articulate kinship with the more-than-human (All Our Relations) and a rootedness in the intra-being of all life and knowledge. They also directly reference ITK and Indigenous governance systems as systems that must guide all policies and efforts. Demand 9.1 states: “Ensure policies are informed by Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and governance systems, which are rooted in eco-centric ways of being” (*Manifesto*, p. 4).

The second movement is located in the participatory-oriented actors, researchers and organizations have rallied within the children’s rights sector for more than four decades to promote children’s voice. This group observably references social justice emancipatory movements that promote participation “from below”, Southern epistemologies as defined by Santos⁵⁴, and the voice of the marginalized. By implicitly and sometimes explicitly framing young people as being a part of the marginalized in so far as they have not historically been given voice or influence within societal institutions, this group leverages Southern epistemologies and critical pedagogies such as Freire (1970).

Finally, a range of eco-social traditions that invoke notions of Gaia democracy find their traces in a diversity of nature-based, relational and spiritual traditions within the West and non-West, such as those outlined by Tully. The *Manifesto* throughout references conceptions of diverse citizenship that understand the broader collective to be not only intersectional but to

⁵⁴ Santos’ (2014) definition of “Southern” in “Southern epistemologies” does not refer to geographic location, but epistemologies of the marginalized – which can and does include epistemologies of those living in the North.

include the more-than-human. They do not call for rights to nature. They call for it to be given its own rights and justice – and by extension, personhood.

While teased out above as separate movements, the braiding together of these movement is also important to consider as a backdrop or reference point for the *Manifesto*. For example, the case of Ecuador having granted rights to nature in its 2008 constitution was noted by delegates, and the rights of nature shows up in the *Manifesto* in various ways – explicitly such as in the request for water to be given rights to its own “health and wellbeing” (Demand 3, p. 2), and also through the collapsing of the human-nature binary or hierarchy in their named collective: “Shift the language of ‘rights’ from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective – human and nature – in all our diversity.” (Demand 2.3, p. 2). Scholarship on this legal and constitutional development in Ecuador (Espinosa, 2019; Margil, 2010) show that this case was actually shaped by all three of the named movements. The constitution gives rights not in the name of Nature, but Pachamama, the Quichua name for *the force behind all life*, a testament to the profound ways that the move was shaped by Indigenous nations in the country and their relational conception of intra-being. Local and regional (to the Americas) environmental movements also played a significant role, including the non-governmental organizations, the Fundación Pachamama and the Pachamama Alliance (Espinosa, 2019; Margil, 2010). However, emancipation arguments and a deep understanding of structural violence also informed those making the case for the rights of nature: “we cannot protect nature so long as we continue to treat it as property, much like we could not protect slaves so long as we treated them as property” (Margil, 2010, p. 9). Margil (2010) specifically references the congruence between racial hierarchy and human-nature hierarchies in the legal system:

Slavery treated people as things to be exploited – and this was infused not only into the laws of the United States (and other slave nations) but also the culture. Slaves were considered inferior creatures, immoral and brutish. We treat nature and its creatures much the same way. Nature – through theology, philosophy, and even the use of science – is considered inferior to humankind. Much like science was used to “prove” that those of African descent were intellectually inferior to whites, we continue today to question whether non-human animals are capable of feeling, communication, and intelligence. Doing so allows us to consider and behave as though nature is inferior. (pp. 3-4)

The importance of the above three movements for my argument is that they all reference relational foundations critical for exploring the potential of a counter-hegemonic case, insofar as the mere disruption or critique of hegemonic human rights frameworks and their individualist ontology does not go far enough (Santos, 2009). Enacting otherwise – based in other wisdoms or (other wise) ontologies – is essential to the counter-hegemonic struggle. By combining social justice and ecological justice on the basis of intra-being and All Our Relations, climate change becomes perceived as a structural violence to all. This move becomes the ontological basis by which the distinction between rights and justice might be collapsed. When all that is (human and more-than-human) are thought of as having rights (regardless of nation state or human rights framework), there is no binary of the included and excluded, and rights thinking essentially becomes justice thinking. It also makes clear that the Phoenix delegates by articulating this are acting within a relational canopy and ground that precedes and well supersedes the possibilities and offerings of the individualistic tent canopy of the nation state or UN rights frameworks. Demands no longer emanate from the horizon of the human rights framework, but from experience of the world that exceeds it – the mere realization of which implies that the wholesale transformation of the hegemonic human rights framework is essential.

6.3 The Peculiarity of Children's Rights

In this section I explore the peculiarities of children's rights in order to ponder how the case of children's rights might offer us a weak-strong answer to the strong question of *is a pluralistic, counter-hegemonic human rights framework possible?* In particular, I draw out three peculiarities of the children's rights framework: its overall conception; particular content; and enactment. In doing so, I show how each peculiarity enables a deparochialization of children's rights – a move that is key to any counter-hegemonic project – and that when combined, these elements intra-actively open up some generative pathways for exploring the potential for a counter-hegemonic and pluralistic human rights frameworks moving forward.

6.3.1 The peculiar conception of children's rights

The first aspect of the peculiarity of the concept of children's rights resides in the peculiarity of human rights in general. "No nation can give us rights, we are given those by the Creator," is a common refrain heard articulated by Indigenous elders on Turtle Island. It might be argued by some that this is exactly the perspective that international human rights seeks to affirm. However, in one fell swoop, this statement renders the peculiarity of the concept of human rights visible. If our existence is enabled by the earth and its ecosystem, why do we need to a human-constructed system to grant them to us? One answer is the simple reality that there are those – including elected leaders and their governments – who would deny them to some people. While true (directly hearkening to the Holocaust context for drafting the Declaration of Human Rights), this defence is also ironic in the face of nation states (such as Canada) that systematically denied the rights of existence of Indigenous peoples through genocidal systems.

Human rights were historically established to affirm the inherent dignity of all humans, and prevent inter-cultural inequities and violences such as the Holocaust that had denied many this dignity. They also hailed from the efforts of many democratizing movements at the national level that sought to address the violences enacted by individualist lifeways as outlined in chapter 2. However, embedded within social, political and economic institutions that continue to enact individualist lifeways, human rights continue to be hegemonically bound in so far as they continue to centre the universalized conceptions of the individual, human and nation state (Santos & Martins, 2021; Vandenhole, 2020). Santos (2021) notes: “The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first major universal declaration of the last century, which was followed by several others, only contemplates two subjects in law: the individual and the state. Peoples are only recognized insofar as they are transformed into states.” (pp. 28-29) As such, hegemonic human rights “create a culture of denouncing the abuses of neoliberalism without confronting the structural conditions which make these abuses possible” (Santos & Martin, 2021, p. x), making them “incapable of confronting systemic injustices and oppression” (Santos & Martins, 2021, p. 1). Maldonado-Torres (2021) observes how human rights function in a range of “capitalist... colonialist, sexist and racist” environments (p. 79). Due to their institutional situatedness, rights mechanisms assume, legitimize and submit themselves to the sovereign authority of the nation state even where these nation states are colonial, have legacies of extreme abuses or genocide. This is done not only in terms of the decision of whether a government will decide to confer these rights on its citizens, but also in terms of their implementation, respect and ongoing monitoring of these rights. Whilst this seems institutionally inevitable, the irony persists: if one’s existence precedes all

institutions, how might it be ultimately subservient to, and doled out or denied as the case may be by the institutions themselves?

Here, we run up against the first core assumption and orientation towards citizenship by modern (or institutionalized) conceptions of citizenship (vs. diverse) as outlined by Tully (2008) – namely, that citizenship is a status not a practice (p. 269). Human rights clearly affirms a modern conception of rights as a status assigned to humans based in an understanding of human dignity declared as universally valid. This is the first of the ways in which children’s rights are peculiar. Conceived of as property bestowed only on some beings, this orientation affirms modern conceptions of citizenship thereby enacting a colonial, anthropocentric and individualist tent canopy that fails to acknowledge (and thus erases) conceptions of human dignity or citizenship that are rooted in otherwise, relational and diverse ontologies. A deparochialization of human rights necessitates a consideration of the social, political, cultural and economic contexts in which universal rights emerged. The fact that universal human rights were conceived and articulated at the time of liberation and decolonizing movements around the world is understood as having directly deflated the potential and viability of decolonizing movements and other movements rooted in relationality (Santos & Martins, 2021; Maldonado-Torres, 2021). Santos & Martins (2021) writes:

the deliberate lack of any reference in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to the self-determination of peoples at a time when half the world was under the yoke of colonialism must be considered significant, nor can we ignore the irrelevance, until later won, of the language of human rights, to the majority of anti-colonial struggles. (p. 6)

The institutions thus enact an ontology of separation, hearkening to the same logic enacted by Rousseau in his case for the social contract: humans need to universalize human rights as a contract that will secure their well being due to their assumed existential

vulnerability. From this vantage point, relational lifeways as articulated through the civic ethics of care and intra-being can then be framed as pre-modern, idealistic, and naïve (invoking a thoroughly colonial logic):

In theories of modernity, this grounded civic ethic is discredited by redescribing it as a pre-modern stage of historical and moral development and as a particular ethics of care in contrast to the allegedly higher and universal theory of morality and justice for the abstracted and independent individuals of modern citizenship (Tully, 2008, p. 294).

No response formulated using the logic of the system it aims to fix can resolve this system's paradoxes. This is why conventional human rights can only ever be a 'weak-weak' answer, as Santos & Martins (2021) note:

...even though he rejects the idea of any deep complicity or co-dependency with neoliberalism, Moyn recognizes that the discourse of human rights has been powerless to produce a systemic critique of socioeconomic relations that are increasingly defined by the unequal distribution of wealth. Instead of criticizing human rights, Moyn claims that the critics of neoliberalism should acknowledge its unsuitability, as an apolitical language, to contest economic, structural and systemic inequalities, implying that there is a need for other languages of dissent that would serve this purpose better (pp. 5-6).

Whilst there is ample past and present history to prove that violations to human dignity abound, the move to embed humans in human rights frameworks that are individualist in orientation does not ultimately shift the structural and ontological conditions that have enabled these violences. This is despite the fact that human rights have unquestionably contributed to the reduction of many violations and violences around the globe. However, they ultimately fall short by failing to take direct aim at the ego-centric lifeways and systems that generate structural violences such as cisheteropatriarchy, whiteness/racism, ableism, colonialism, anthropocentrism and capitalism. In their ultimate, required subservience to nation states, including settler colonial states such as Canada, US and Mexico, they unwittingly endorse the same systems whose violences they seek to repair and prevent. In doing so, they double down on the assumed sovereignty of a nation state system that itself enacts systemic injustices.

Moreover, *human* rights only make sense in an anthropocentric lifeworld in which (some) humans enact dominion over other beings and earth. In the move to establish the universal validity and necessity of human rights to equalize humans across differences and countries, the hierarchy of the ego-cycle is reaffirmed with respect to humans and the more-than-human. It similarly has the expected abyssal effect of erasing diverse conceptions of dignity that are centered upon the relational and the personhood of all beings.

The range of rights included in human rights frameworks directly reflect the civil, political, social, economic and cultural context of dominant institutions. This is made historically obvious through the various updates and general comments that have been made over time, to ensure the rights continue to evolve to reflect changes in the socio-political and cultural contexts themselves. What is less obvious is how these rights might differ from other cultural traditions and their distinct conceptions of human dignity (Santos, 2021) to the fact of the former's epistemicidal quality. However, an imagining of how Indigenous nations might articulate these rights begins to point this discrepancy out. First the sovereignty of the nation state and total absence of Indigenous sovereign nations – even in the drafting of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) – is written into numerous rights, such as the right to citizenship within a nation (meaning the nation state, not an Indigenous nation). So human dignity within conventional human rights frameworks is conceptualized on the premise that Indigenous sovereignty does not have the status that national sovereignty does. Whilst this is being currently re-examined and reconceptualized through the introduction and widespread ratification of UNDRIP in 2007, UNDRIP is itself beholden to nation states signing on, pointing to a certain irony and a politics of inclusion. Another hierarchy appears in the

structure of rights through the hierarchy of nations and their performance in fulfilling their obligations as duty bearers to fulfil these rights.

Human rights as articulated within conventional human rights frameworks currently do not reverse the holding up of the individual human and the colonial nation state as the key units around which the lifeworld is organized, precisely because by design, they uphold it. While the language of rights might self-present as apolitical, insofar as it is part of the nation state complex, it affirms an individualist ontological orientation and is non-neutral. A pluralistic conception of human rights (Santos, 2021) necessitates the intra-action with relational frameworks of intra-being. The question then becomes one of the extent to which there is a genuine possibility for co-presencing (Scharmer, 2021) the relational whilst engaging with hegemonic individualist human rights institutions.

I now turn to look at the particular and peculiar features of children's rights to explore this question. Children's rights are assigned to children who have citizenship status in signatory nation states⁵⁵ through the mere act of being born. These children therefore inherit these rights as outlined and specified in the international framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Like the Declaration of Human Rights, they do not pertain to a certain classification of people – such as a category of people marked by geography or life circumstance. Much as property can only function within an economic system, rights can only work within the “law-gics” of a system. The broader system of human rights is the nation state, and thus, inheritance of rights depends on one's having, as an attribute, a nation state identity. In this act of bestowal to some but not all, a new class of citizens is also generated: those who do not have the right to those rights, whether they are living in non-signatory nations or

⁵⁵ The CRC has been adopted by every UN member in the world except the US.

whether they are stateless.⁵⁶ The capacity and ability to endow and bestow rights is rooted in a colonial stake-laying orientation that is necessarily an egoic and anthropocentric ontology of disconnect. In this system, as argued through my ego-cycle diagram in chapter 2, hierarchy is inevitable. The system of measuring and monitoring children's rights become the next form of hierarchy – those signatory states who are going faster or slower, better or worse, at living up to their commitments to the CRC. The latter becomes but one more of the proxies by which the degree of democracy within nations is judged by a single, universal measuring stick.

Whilst the above structure of rights mirrors that of the Declaration of Human Rights, one of the peculiar aspects of children's rights is the fact that children age out of them. In some countries, these children do not go on to enjoy protection and promotion of their rights under other human rights instruments, however, as fewer nation states have signed the latter than have the CRC. This granting and then retracting of rights on the basis of age (under 18 years old) – and also the fact that young Americans do not have these rights bestowed upon them – point out the constructedness of rights in its arbitrariness. The fact that their content is distinct from those rights outlined in other human rights instruments serves to deparochialize or render visible social, political and cultural contexts of their elaboration – leading to an exploration of the peculiar content of children's rights.

6.3.2 The peculiar content of children's rights

The Declaration of Human Rights specifies the rights to freedom of expression (Article 19), freedom of association (Article 20), freedom to take part in the government (either directly or through representation) and free elections (Article 21). All of these Articles specify the rules of civil partnership as outlined by Tully (2008) – meaning, the freedoms citizens have *to*

⁵⁶ It is important to note however, that of course the Article 15.1 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights of course seeks to redress the challenge of statelessness: “Everyone has the right to a nationality.”

participate within the institutions of society and the nation state. Participation is only listed once, pertaining to the right to participate in culture, the arts and sciences (Article 27.1). However, the freedom *of* participation is not promoted in the sense of “civicising” or democratizing the relationship (Tully, 2008, p. 281) between rights holders and duty bearers, or cooperatively negotiating the rules by which the latter operate.⁵⁷ Tully (2008) notes how civicisation and democratization are not promoted or associated with conceptions of modern citizenship: “In contrast to the processes of civilisation and democratisation in the civil tradition, civicisation and democratisation are not identified with a set of Western institutions and processes of often coercive imposition over other practices” (p. 281). In a related point, Santos (2021) observes that the language of human rights is not one of participating subjects, but of objects of discourse: “The global hegemony of human rights as a language of human dignity coexists alongside the disturbing realization most of the world’s population is not the subject of human rights, but the object of its discourse” (p.3). Taking up the freedom *to* participate and enjoy one’s rights as given by civil institutions (Tully, 2008) thus is a mode of participation that respects and stays within the clearly demarcated tent canopy of the colonial nation state, and the civil institutions and processes that uphold it (such as electoral systems and laws). In this way this form of participation upholds, legitimizes and reproduces these

⁵⁷ Another important exception to this is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), an examination of which is well beyond the bounds of this chapter and dissertation. My planned postdoctoral research will compare the counter-hegemonic potentiality of the CRC and UNDRIP. Article 3 of UNDRIP states “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” Article 19 of UNDRIP reads: “States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.” Article 23 states: “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.”

institutions precisely during a time in which many decolonizing projects and movements were building momentum (Santos, 2021).

The above is important context for examining the peculiar content of children's rights, because the latter in contrast to other human rights frameworks does admit entry to a degree of modern and civic citizenship (Tully, 2008) namely in the inclusion of Article 12. This article can be read as introducing the "civicising" of young people's relationships with civil institutions in the sense that Tully (2008, p. 281) describes. Article 12 in the CRC, in particular Article 12.1, establishes the potential window via which children might be respected as sovereign beings who should have a say on "all matters" that may be identified as "affecting" them – and that their views be "given due weight":

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law. (United Nations, 1989)

Through this article, children and youth have the opportunity to civicise their relationships with governing institutions – a right that will be retracted from them once they age out, at 18. Tully (2008) describes civicising as when "citizens non-violently negotiat[e] and transfor[m] the governance relationships in which they find themselves into citizen/governance relationships (or citizen relationships) from the ground up" (p. 281). For Tully (2008), while this act is one of five types of civic activity (p. 280), it is at "the heart of civic citizenship" (p. 281) – meaning, Article 12 of the CRC opens civil citizenship's window up to a core practice of civic citizenship.

This unusual feature is made even more peculiar by the fact that this window is arguably not open to children alone through the CRC. Children age out of the CRC and its rights, and the civicising of relationships with institutions is not something extended to adults, so this should not be the case. However, children's rights are peculiar in the extent to which they fold a level of collectivism right into their articles of the CRC. As outlined in chapter 4, in order to be enacted, the CRC requires adults (roles for individuals beyond the nation state) to work collaboratively with them to be able to enact and enjoy their rights – whether supporting them to formulate an understanding or opinion, identify what they would like to have a say in, or communicating their perspectives to the various adult audiences, agencies or actors they aim to influence (Lundy, 2007). Reynaert et al. (2012) write:

Shared responsibility for children's rights “requires a joint engagement and dialogue for solutions for social problems in the lifeworlds of children, that should be considered as “shared spaces” where children and adults can meet...Realising children rights thus is both an individual and collective learning process where children's rights are a frame for social action and for the critical analysis of power relations (p. 163).

This reflects a view of the “Human Subject both as a Concrete Individual and as a Collective Being” such as Santos (2009) describes. In fact, this collective element is so evident that Reynaert et al. go on to note the ways in which the CRC may place burdens and responsibilities on adult actors outside of the institutions of the nation state, leading to a concern that this may abrogate the latter's responsibilities as a key duty bearer. It is widely recognized that Article 12 implies responsibilities on a range of other actors as duty-bearers to create child-friendly spaces, information and mechanisms by which they might participate (Lundy and McEvoy, 2012). This feature of the CRC reflects what Lundy and McEvoy (2012) note, namely that “children straddle an individuality and emerging autonomy” (p. 4) which simultaneously includes an element of both “dependency and need for connection” (p. 4). In

doing so, this both complexifies and disrupts the either/or binary framing of rights as either held by the individual or collective – by asserting them as simultaneously both. Article 12 thus offers an opening by which this implicit collective element might be enacted and take form. Insofar as children are invited to civicise their relationships with governing institutions and adults are encouraged to help them, the CRC is most peculiar; it technically introduces “power together as citizens” (Tully 2008, p. 291) as a feature of ‘good citizenship’, institutionalizing and extending it as a right that all have freedom to claim and demand. In essence, Article 12 opens up an invitation to democratize democracy (Tully, 2008, p. 302).

The history by which Article 12 was developed is relevant here to my argument in so far as it was shaped by a number of actors in the emerging child participation movement of the 1980s, as outlined in chapter 4. These actors have both historically drawn on, and continue to draw on, collectivist, emancipatory movements as the basis of a participatory approach that values and promotes voices “from below” to have say and influence in the decisions affecting their lives. The child participation sector reflects a number of diverse lifeways including Indigenous movements and “post-colonial civics” (Tully, 2008, p. 304) that bear traces of Southern epistemologies of justice and Freire’s (1970) conceptions of critical citizen engagement justice – “*we the people*”. The fact that the US government refused to become signatory to the entire CRC after lengthy negotiations over, and its sustained objection to, Article 12 (Lundy, 2007) is an indicator of a level of trepidation amongst at least some US decision-makers with such participatory elements.

As history will tell, this trepidation was well placed from the vantage point of an individualist, capitalist and colonial state, as the participatory elements of the CRC have been increasingly and systematically mainstreamed into institutional engagements with young

people, as well as spurred a movement by which young people are wielding this institutional “in” to seek justice for the broader collective of life. In spite of the fact that the US did not sign on to the CRC, the child participation movement that has grown through and as a result of the CRC has not been confinable to outside the US’ borders in this global age. By incorporating participation rights formally into the CRC, young people acquire the institutionalized basis upon which to negotiate the rules with respect to negotiating the particulars of exactly what those rights are under negotiation. This is the third of Tully’s (2008) forms of civic activity – negotiating the rules (p. 280). It is now commonly argued in the children’s rights sector that it is not just a matter of young people’s participating in decisions that may affect them, but that it is young people – not the state – who get to determine, identify and define what exactly these matters are, what their significance is, and how they might want to express their views and assert their influence about them – if they even want to do so (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012).

If the climate crisis is a matter young people deem to be affecting them – which they clearly do – and they view the rights of all beings as inextricably linked to the realization of their rights, the argument of rights is easily transmuted into a language of justice and responsibility vs. the human rights language of individual entitlement. This is arguably why rights and justice are used so interchangeably throughout the *Manifesto*. Similarly, the common view of climate change as a form of structural violence introduces a level of counter-hegemonic and pluralistic critique of conventional hegemonic rights frameworks in a new way. It is clear for many youth climate activists that rights and inclusion in hierarchical systems of injustice, domination, violence and inequity are more than insufficient, they are unacceptable. The direct aim taken at capitalism in the *Manifesto* demonstrates a clear sensibility amongst delegates of the intertwining structures impeding and affecting not only their lives but the lives of the entire

ecosystem. For these reasons, the peculiar content of Article 12.1 establishes the ‘thin end of the wedge’ that formally blows the cover of civil institutions’ canopies open to its own deparochialization. This has arguably created a viable policy window or a platform of institutionalized legitimacy upon which young people are bringing forth relational lifeways, questions of justice and the more-than-human to the institutional table.

6.3.3 The Peculiar Enactment of Children’s Rights

The above arguments might be considered a theoretical stretch if it were not for the fact of praxis – namely, that it is precisely on the bases above that the child participation and youth climate activists have been making inroads into challenging the anthropocentric and individualist basis of rights frameworks. This feature – the enactment of children’s rights – is the third peculiarity of children’s rights in contemplating its counter-hegemonic potentialities. It is an important peculiarity to consider because this peculiarity is not a given that flows from the properties or structure of the rights framework – but rather, reflects the intra-subjective phenomenological lifeworld that climate justice activists are enacting. Tully (2008) shows how citizens always already have an interactive relationship with the laws or rules of the institutions within which they live and by which they are governed (p. 287) in so far as these laws and rules must be enacted and this enactment is always reflective of the broader lifeworld and lived context. So examining how they interact with the laws through this case helps to render youth climate justice activists lifeworlds visible. He also shows that the civic and glocal networks – “the bases of glocal citizenship” – from which these enactments emerge are “much stronger and more resilient than we think” (Tully, 2008, p. 303). Their leveraging of formal children’s rights mechanisms to articulate their case reveals a deeply relational lifeworld within which they are deeply situated.

Looking to the *Manifesto* as an articulation of the delegates' lifeworld, the latter shows not only a certain porousness to the collective and relational, it draws on a sense of democratic voice and epistemic justice that precedes and well exceeds the individualist lifeworld enacted by electoral systems and representative governments. This might be understood as the 'surplus experience' (Vahabzadeh, 2003) to which I refer in chapter 2, as the basis from which counter-hegemonic impulses and potentialities necessarily emerge. This is also arguably only one mere reflection of a broader relational lifeworld within which many civic actors, organizations and movements across civil society are interpellated, pointing to this as not a peculiar exception but a symptom of a normalized and present relational orientation to the world within this sector (beyond the formal institutions), which is ultimately what gives this counter-hegemonic impulse its potential potency. Whilst not ratified at the level of nations and multilateral institutions, the *Phoenix Manifesto* clearly articulates a different framework, and it is one worth considering in the ways it explicitly forwards demands to shift the hegemonic language of individualist human rights to the counter-hegemonic language of rights for all, from the language of rights to that of justice, and from the language of the individual to the intersectional, non-assimilative collective – explicitly including the more-than-human in that collective. While its authors do not have decision-making clout, they have articulated these demands through leveraging formal children's rights mechanisms, which formally endorse that these perspectives should not only receive an audience, but have influence (Lundy, 2007).

An interesting effect of this peculiar case, then, is the way in which the consultation delegates are enacting two forms of citizenship at the same time, as outlined by Tully (2008) – both modern (or institutional) citizenship and diverse citizenship. While Tully (2008) clarifies the first is “a status given by the institutions of the modern constitutional state and international

law,” the latter is constituted by the “negotiated practices in which one becomes a citizen through participation” (p. 248). While Article 12 of the CRC creates the basis whereby youth climate activists might actively and collectively argue their counter-hegemonic case institutionally, relying on their status as modern citizens, they simultaneously enact diverse citizenship for themselves and by extension for all beings through their named intersectional collective of all (human and more-than-human). Their implicit critique of these institutions is made explicit (Napoleon & Friedland, 2014, p. 215) and their localized enactments of an otherwise democracy might be seen as establishing the permaculture for acts and apprehension of the world from a stance of “situated critical freedom” (Tully, 2008, p. 249) within the very walls and hallways of the hegemonic framework itself. They are also constituting themselves as citizens through enacting this critical freedom (Tully, 2008; Napoleon & Friedland, 2014).

In so far as they are speaking from the basis of rights as outlined in the CRC, they are acting as civil citizens, exercising their “freedom to participate” (Tully, 2008, p. 272) in such a forum, and in the dialogue about the CRC. However, by referencing a relational ontology that precedes and supersedes any institution, they are also acting as civic (vs. civil) citizens that are enacting their “freedom of participation”:

The civic citizen is not the citizen of an institution (a nation-state or international law) but the free citizen of the ‘free city’: that is, any kind of civic world or democratic ‘sphere’ that comes into being and is reciprocally held aloft by the civic freedom of its citizens, from the smallest deme or commune to glocal federations. (Tully, 2008, p. 272).

An important distinction needs to be made here, however, with respect to the distinct, non-homogenous actors involved in the consultation. Tully notes:

there is a Western tradition that also places a high value on civic activity but presupposes that it has to take place within a canonical institutional setting... This tradition can be seen as ‘civic’ in a narrow or circumscribed sense... [h]owever, it also can be interpreted as a democratic wing of the civil tradition, since it takes an institutional form as primary and necessary, differing only over the importance of democratic participation (tier two rights).

Consequently it shares the civil tradition's commitment to the coercive imposition of institutional preconditions and myths of founding. (Tully, 2008, p. 273)

It might be argued that the participating organizations and UN representatives that participated in the consultation were operating on the basis of this more narrow conception of civic activity, which is more in line with civil participation or modern citizenship. Indeed, insofar as children's rights organizations operate within and based on the bounds of children's rights mechanisms whilst supporting highly participatory engagement, they might be seen as the model of exactly this form of civic activity Tully describes above. That notwithstanding, the moment the delegates moved beyond the language and frameworks of rights, the human, the nation and the individual to those of justice, the inter-species, structures of violence, intersectional collective, Indigenous sovereignty and the eco-social, they enact and invoke civic practices of a relational ontology, not those of the civil realm. This argument is further bolstered by the relational nature of the consultation engagement – “Whereas civil citizenship always exists in institutions, civic citizenship always exists in relationships” (p. 274) – where delegates were in “civic being-with” relationships with one another as equals, including those representatives who were decision-makers within institutions.

This enactment of civic citizenship by youth climate justice activists had and has the ongoing inevitable effect of deparochializing the universalizing hegemonic human rights frameworks – suggesting that there is promising hope within this stance for being resilient (and resistant) to hegemonic interpellation. Tully (2008) asks:

How, then, do diverse citizens avoid being taken in by this captivating world picture, exercise their critical attitude on it, and sustain a multiplicity of alternative forms of citizenship, thereby making the actual contrapuntal global field of citizenship qualitatively different from the subordinate mirror-image of themselves that the modern mode of citizenship presents to its captivated citizens? I think the answer is a practical one. They avoid assimilation and sustain alternative worlds by acting otherwise – by

participating in other practices of citizenship (often in the same institutions) (pp. 268-269).

By enacting both civic and civil rights simultaneously, they deparochialize the ultimately, individualist, anthropocentric, colonial and ego-centric orientation of hegemonic rights frameworks. It might be then that their acting otherwise does not in and of itself dissolve the hegemonic system, but that it might seed their resilience, resistance and refusal to consent to it now or in future. By articulating “the general critical ideal that it [the governance relationship] fails to realise civic goods in some specific way or another” (Tully, 2008, p. 293), they also promise to point this out to others who may still be committed to reproducing it.

Additionally, since their acting otherwise is enacting a form of Gaia civic citizenship, the delegates are further dissolving “the modernist distinction between culture and nature that separates civics from the places in which it is enacted” (Tully, 2008, p. 293). As one delegate said: “We are all children of the earth.” This arguably sows seeds of a “biocentric concept of human rights” (Santos, 2021, p. 36) through which delegates are engaging in “the urgent intercultural and post-abysal reconstruction of human rights” (Santos, 2021, p. 36). It reflects the “kind of counter-hegemonic human rights” Santos proposes, which he states “can only be imagined as a struggle against unjust human suffering, conceived in its broadest sense, and to encompass nature as an integral part of humanity” (Santos, 2009, section 5, para. 1). They also take direct aim at the systems that generate structural violence, domination, inequality and hierarchy – another feature of counter-hegemonic human rights struggles. Santos (2009) writes: “Counter-hegemonic human rights struggles aim at changing the social structures that are accountable for systemically produced unjust human suffering” (section 5.8, para. 1). The *Manifesto* demands changes to systems of capitalism, racism, colonialism, anthropocentrism, and ableism that generate not only human suffering, but the suffering of all life forms.

6.4 The evolving hegemonic human rights context

It is not a stretch to argue that the vocal and effectively communicated efforts of the international youth climate justice movement have been influential in the very recent adoption (on October 8, 2021) by the Human Rights Council, of the Resolution 48/13 to a Healthy Environment for all. Additionally, Resolution 48/14 saw the establishment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change. These efforts were influenced by a number of other actors as well, including work by many non-profit entities, including the efforts of Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment, David Boyd, as well as the Children Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), one of the key organizers behind the regional consultations for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment within which the Phoenix Consultation took place. Indeed, the resolutions might be seen as the direct response to youth climate activists' actions and activism.

However, what becomes clear from the recently ratified resolutions is that they do not reflect a counter-hegemonic response to these movements. They frame a healthy environment in terms of *human* rights to “it”⁵⁸, affirming and reinforcing an anthropocentric and ultimately individualist human rights framework that is characteristic of hegemonic human rights. Indeed, the case for the first of the resolutions was made by presenting statistics such as the World Health Organization's (WHO) estimation that there are 13.7 million (*human*) deaths per year, or approximately 24.3% of the total (*human*) deaths every year are “due to environmental risks such as air pollution and chemical exposure.”⁵⁹ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who has called climate change the greatest threat to human rights, said the resolution “clearly

⁵⁸ Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) importantly observes the “it-ing” of the world as a clear marker of colonial lifeways.

⁵⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/clean-environment-could-become-un-human-right-not-so-fast-say-us-britain-2021-10-05/>

recognises environmental degradation and climate change as interconnected human rights crises.”⁶⁰ While she does articulate a “false separation” of the environmental and the human, she argues for the need of a human rights-based approach:

We must build on this momentum to move beyond the false separation of environmental action and protection of human rights. It is all too clear that neither goal can be achieved without the other, and to that end a balanced, human rights-based approach to sustainable development must be ensured.⁶¹

Similarly, the establishment of the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change is identified as the Human Rights Council’s way of addressing “the *human rights impacts* of climate change” (my italics).

Thus, despite the possible appearance of this as a counter-hegemonic move, these resolutions affirm a human-centric orientation within human rights thinking, risking that the present traces of relational lifeworlds and ontologies are hegemonically absorbed into individualist folds. Both resolutions offer excellent real-time⁶² examples of Santos’ (2009) weak-weak answers, upholding and staying within the bounds of hegemonic rights tent canopy. They repeat the politics of inclusion that serves to keep the same basic structures of rights, duty bearers (the nation) and citizenship intact. As Tully (2008) writes, “One thinks that one is thinking and acting critically with respect to the very essence of citizenship, yet one is predicating over and over again the modern representation of citizenship onto the field of citizenship” (p. 268). Whether consciously or not, such moves exhibit the “circular parochialism and fear of alterity” (Tully, 2008, p. 268) that erases diverse conceptions of citizenship that might question the basic framework of hegemonic rights itself.

⁶⁰ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1102582>

⁶¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27635&LangID=E>

⁶² The resolutions were passed as I was completing revisions on this chapter.

This move is thus consistent with Wall Street’s recent moves to commodify nature with the September 2021 announcement by the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) of the development of a “new asset class and accompanying listing vehicle meant ‘to preserve and restore the natural assets that ultimately underpin the ability for there to be life on Earth.’”⁶³ Rather than arguing that this is evidence of the impermeability of hegemonic systems, however, I argue that climate activists’ counter-hegemonic resilience in such a context opens the door for a space for genuine dialogue and hegemonic deparochialization. The resolutions are a response to the traces of relationality that are being presented into an individualist lifeworld and as such offer an opportunity for critical dialogue within the human rights community with respect to what it might mean to decolonize human rights in the ways the Phoenix consultation delegates promote.

6.5 Hegemonic influence and counter-hegemonic struggles

The question remains whether there is any real potency in the counter-hegemonic human rights thinking and framework that documents such as the *Phoenix Manifesto* put forward. This is especially important to consider in light of arguments by some in the children’s rights sector that the significance of participation rights being incorporated in the CRC should not be over-estimated. For example, Daiute (2008) argues: “Although included, participation rights are always qualified to be consistent with the interests of the State” (p. 414). I argue, however, that the counter-hegemonic potency of the *Manifesto* is not in the way it dismantles, but in the ways it deparochializes hegemonic human rights thinking – which dissipates the latter’s interpellative power.

⁶³ Institute for Public Accuracy, Is Wall Street Trying to Take Over Nature for \$4,000 Trillion, Risking Human Survival?, October 20, 2021.

As climate crisis goes undeniably beyond the borders of a nation state, the linking of environmental degradation to human rights points out the obvious limitations of nation states as the only or principal duty bearers. Moreover, climate crisis inevitably showcases the tremendous inequities individualist lifeways generate globally between nation states despite the collective framing of the problem. Increasing data showing how these inequities affect human lives differentially point to a need for wholesale justice across all nations, and it is not clear that individual rights systems can achieve such a thing. For example, recent reports show that in India, pollution alone reduces the average life expectancy of Indian citizens by nine years.⁶⁴ These events are only further exacerbated by obvious comparison points such as the international management of the Covid19 virus where dramatic structural changes were made by industries and governments in the West on the basis of far lower overall numbers of deaths than those generated by climate emergency. With 3 million global human deaths due to Covid 19 in 2020 (World Health Organization, 2021) vs. 13.7 million human annual deaths due to climate crisis (United Nations, 2021), the latter represents almost five times more deaths. Whilst there are features of the virus' spread that are recognized as being beyond human control, the latter can be attributed entirely to specific human lifeways and systems that enact structural violence towards all forms of life, including humans. Moreover, links have been made between the former and environmental degradation. The types of formal institutional changes in response to the former highlight the lack of institutional change to the latter, as countless climate strikers including Greta Thunberg have duly noted. Cross-national comparisons point to the obvious and simultaneous unequal distribution of the effects of

⁶⁴ Reuters, Pollution likely to cut 9 years of life expectancy of 40% of Indians, August 9, 2021.

structural violence as well as the distribution of decision-making power within the structures that generate this violence.

Such insights directly challenge corporations and corporate interests. But do they ultimately open the door to formulating and forwarding a counter-hegemonic human rights framework with any teeth or influence? The US' and UK's articulated objections to the recently passed resolutions even in the face of such scientific evidence justifying them, again point to a clear acknowledgement that this move may create more "thin edges". On the surface the larger wedge this might imply may simply be financial. Increasing numbers of courts around the world have been finding themselves facing challenges with respect to the environment, pointing out that the costs to governments are real. For example, in late 2019, with the fifth highest level of CO2 emissions per capita in the EU, the Dutch high court ordered the Dutch government to expedite the rate at which it was cutting greenhouse gasses on the basis that it was threatening the lives and well being of its citizens and young people.⁶⁵ However, for nation states, such cases also compromise the delineation between state and economy that has historically absolved the nation state from any responsibility for capitalism and its environmental destructions. Governments have enjoyed this delineation, which relies upon a story of separation. However, as Gane (2012) notes, neoliberalism has been enabled because of the ways nation states have rolled it out through their institutions. Such court cases and acknowledgments linking environmental and human well being to one another are directly asking that governments take on new accountability.

The *Phoenix Manifesto* is but one expression of many climate justice, social justice, Indigenous and decolonizing movements and activists in the world currently calling out the

⁶⁵ Reuters, Dutch court tells government to step up climate change fight, Dec. 12, 2019

types of rights and ‘justice’ upheld and enacted by dominant individualist institutions on Turtle Island – from the economic system to the nation state and its constitutional legalities. This might be understood as part of a broader societal turn towards ‘the relational’ in contemporary contestations of constitutions, federalisms and rights. Amidst the resurgence of Indigenous legal orders, Black Lives Matters, climate emergency, a global pandemic and viral social media posts, expressions of pluralism are increasingly challenging the mainstream legitimacy of dominant liberal legalities, rationalities and institutions. At the heart of these challenges is the reality that these institutions were not historically generated out of, nor designed to engage in pluralism or deep diversity (Hamilton & Nichols, 2021; Borrows, 2018). Moreover, insofar as colonial institutions, frameworks and legalities enact anthropocentric and individualist logics of “disconnect” (Mills, 2018), they generate, exacerbate and legitimize the very hierarchies of being (amongst people and species) and legitimize the intertwining structures of violence and inequity that generate the eco-social crises we face today.

This context suggests a historical moment that is theoretically porous to hegemonic challenge and change. It both signals a hegemonically “bleak” horizon that has failed “to emanate possibilities” (Vahabzadeh, 2003, p. 97) in times of deep diversity. The individualist tent canopy shows signs of tears in its fabric amidst the more prominent emergence of relational lifeways (such as Indigenous resurgence) that interpellate many civic citizens due to its resonance with lived experiences and material realities (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). These experiences precede and exceed individualist lifeworlds and are the surplus experience of which Vahabzadeh (2003) speaks. There is also an important element of this surplus experience emanating from generational positionality (i.e. the climate justice movement is an indicator of a large number of younger people readily interpellated into a relational ontology), and the

growing presence of experts presenting alternative perspectives, another context in which Berger and Luckmann (1967) note tears in the canopy may appear. Ultimately, however, as argued in chapter 2, such surplus experience emanates from the relational in which we are always inevitably embedded (Tully, 2018), which can never be fully colonized.

That said, developments such as the passing of Resolutions 48/13 and 48/14 show an entrenching of hegemonic rights thinking in ways that promise to absorb care of the earth under the firm hand of the human right to it. Because of this ever-present risk, Maldonado-Torres (2021) considers “the most serious challenge” for hegemonic human rights frameworks now to be how they might not only cease being used as a force of colonization, but in ways to advance decolonizing movements (p. 76). UNDRIP offers a clear opportunity to do so. Santos (2021) acknowledges a certain “plasticity” (p. 2) with respect to how human rights might be used and enacted for eco-social and epistemic justice, and I believe that this plasticity resides in this moment in which the tears and contours of the individualist tent are made visible – the moment of deparochialization (Tully, 2016). Butler (2004) notes that field of international human rights invites the renegotiation of the human when it encounters “the cultural limits of its working conception of the human” (p. 33). When climate justice activists contest the individualist and human basis of rights in the *Phoenix Manifesto*, they are identifying such limits. This “capitalist and colonialist concept of humanity” generates and necessitates not only the “concept of subhumanity” (Santos, 2021, p. 25), but also the very construct of the non-human itself, according to Deshoulliere & Utitiaj Paati (2019). However, Phoenix consultation delegates’ articulation of this through a formal children’s rights mechanism – their simultaneous enactment of both modern and diverse citizenship – creates an unsettling, inherent tension between the “crystallization or acritical celebration of human rights” (Santos, 2021, p. 2) and

the possibility of an “intercultural and emancipatory ecology of ideas of human dignity” (Santos, 2014, p. 2).

This moment of tension might be seen as a necessary moment of a deparochializing, decolonizing and phenomenological orientation – opening up a space in which genuine dialogue (Tully, 2016) might actually be possible. This space is one that enables the “intercultural translation between Western values and non-Western principles of human dignity” (Santos & Martins, 2021, p. 12) to come into co-presence and intra-being. For Santos, this process necessarily must involve:

...addressing different worldviews in order to resignify the human as part of biodiversity, and nature as a necessary condition for a plurality of ontologies expressed through enchanted and ancestral worldviews far removed from the modern Western visions, in which it materializes as an object. (Santos & Martins, 2021, p. 12)

This is something delegates explicitly do in the *Manifesto*, without seeking to settle the tension between this stance and a hegemonic individualist and anthropocentric human rights context within which they act. Santos (2009) argues that one of the sources of hegemonic human rights’ fragility is its inability to acknowledge the pertinence of the strong questions of our day:

The struggle for a counter-hegemonic politics of human rights must start from such acknowledgement. Once the latter takes place, new possibilities open up for a mutually enriching exchange between counter-hegemonic human rights politics and progressive political theologies. (section 4, para. 11)

This space of tension and the acknowledgement of injustices such as the Phoenix Consultation delegates engage in creates an opening for this possibility. With the Phoenix Consultation delegates’ focus on localized contexts, intersectional experience of the structural violence of climate change, and the links they make to capitalism and colonialism, they can be viewed as engaging in civic activity through the consultation, as understood and defined by

both Tully (2008) and Napoleon & Friedland (2014). As Napoleon & Friedland (2014) write: “Civic activity emerges when citizens turn away from the status quo, imperial and colonial governance relations in which they find themselves to build new diverse, civic citizen relations, ways of acting and exercising political power” (p. 209). They further notes that this turning away from the status quo necessarily “involves the recognition of how the complex of local oppressions is directly connected to the larger, imperial, colonial and capitalist systems” (p. 209). The acknowledgement throughout the consultation of the link between localized effects of climate change (whether on human or more-than-human bodies) and the capitalist and colonial systems certainly evoked this recognition.

With respect to the ways they engage in this civic activity, their demands as articulated in the *Manifesto* might be seen as engaging two of the four forms that Tully (2008) outlines in *Public Philosophy in a New Key*: acting otherwise within the rules and negotiating the rules.⁶⁶ Insofar as they are making demands that the terms of rights be changed – from operating on the basis of the individual human unit to the collective of human/nature – they seek to negotiate the terms or rules or system of human rights frameworks. Insofar as they articulate and enact a relational ontology distinct from the individualist foundation of the rights framework, they are simply acting otherwise within the rules and system. By claiming their demands in the name of a collective that includes the more-than-human, they are enacting and assuming an ontological stance akin to the Indigenous claim that the non-human is a Western construct (Deshoulliere and Utitaj Paati, 2019).

By doing so, the relational, regenerative permaculture of which Tully (2018) speaks is both fostered and enacted. Insofar as they assume a stance of speaking from this broader

⁶⁶ Outside of the consultation, however, many of these same actors may also be engaged in the other two forms – refusing the rules, and enacting otherwise (i.e. enacting other rules).

collective of beings, they enact an ontology of intra-being – an understanding of ourselves not as being *in* relation but *as* our relationships (Wilson, 2008). The rights of which they speak are no longer individual, they are relational. There are shades of two-eyed seeing (Bartlett et al., 2012) in the *Manifesto*, with the interchangeability of the language of rights and responsibility, and the language of justice and rights – a choice to enact and invoke both, not engage in an either/or stance or orientation – whilst inherently splitting open and thereby transforming the language of rights in doing so. There are also clear traces of multiple diverse collective emancipation movements in its text. Santos (2021) notes that the current horizon exhibits an openness for such epistemologies and ontologies to be presented:

The possibility emerges of a paradigm shift that will enable us to move beyond an anthropocentric vision to a biocentric concept of human rights, in the light of colonized ontologies and world views that have been disqualified for so long. Nothing could make better sense, given that we are living in a world that presents us with modern problems for which there are no modern solutions. Drawing on concepts of humanity that are as much emerging as ancestral, we can grasp some indications of the future of the urgent intercultural and post-abysal reconstruction of human rights. (p. 36)

Given all of the above, it seems that there is an opening for a counter-hegemonic human rights pathway, where rights, justice, collective and intersectional individuals, including the more-than-human kind, are presented.

But in order to be counter-hegemonic, does an approach require that policy regimes and civil institutions are formally affected and changed? Is it enough for it to merely exist and/or be articulated in the halls of power? The question that looms is whether this counter-hegemonic articulation of rights such as is evidenced in the *Manifesto* will have any influence in ways that transform hegemonic human rights mechanisms and frameworks. Do these counter-hegemonic articulations generate relationally accountable (Wilson, 2008) or tangible policy pathways

along which reconciliation and “genuine dialogue” (Tully, 2016) might radically transform and decolonize human rights?

Theory of change literature in the policymaking field identifies that it is impossible to plan for, assure or assert a causal connection between actions and policy or structural change, as there are always a large number of external and internal factors that will intra-act in unexpected and unobservable ways to effect outcomes (Earl et al., 2001). To some extent, this might be identified as the risk of which Santos (2021) speaks with counter-hegemonic projects – namely, that it is not possible to control or know outcome of change efforts, and how new actions, behaviours, knowledge, relationships will intra-act with the multiple factors and contexts within which they are enacted. However, Lindquist (2001) offers up that it is essential that efforts to effect policy change consider measuring their success in terms of three different areas: Expanding Policy Capacities, Broadening Policy Horizons, and Affecting Policy Regimes (*see typology below*). The typology shows that whilst formal structural or institutional change can be elusive due to the particular government or actors of the day, there are many other activities and actions one can engage in, which directly enhance the readiness and possibility for policy or structural change, when a policy window opens. Moreover, these are necessary elements to institutional change, as without these changes – constituted by attitude, awareness, behaviours, relationships and knowledge (Earl et al., 2001) – even formal policy change may not be enacted. Within this typology, spaces for networking (Broadening Policy Horizons) and knowledge development (Expanding Policy Capacities) such as occurred at the Phoenix Consultation are identified as critical practices to lead to systemic change. Developing and introducing new concepts to stimulate public debate and put new ideas “on the agenda” are also identified.

Figure 8: Types of Policy Influence (Lindquist, 2001)

Expanding Policy Capacities

- Improving the knowledge/data of certain actors
- Supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas
- Improving capabilities to communicate ideas
- Developing new talent for research and analysis

Broadening Policy Horizons

- Providing opportunities for networking/learning within the jurisdiction or with colleagues elsewhere
- Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate
- Educating researchers and others who take up new positions with broader understanding of issues
- Stimulating quiet dialogue among decision-makers

Affecting Policy Regimes

- Modification of existing programs or policies
- Fundamental re-design of programs or policies

The notion of introducing a new concept arguably does not go far enough in the face of hegemonic systems, as such concepts can easily be hegemonically coopted, as clearly articulated in this dissertation. The example of the Resolutions 48/13 and 48/14 is one example of how the concept of relationality is reframed and recalibrated to ensure they are included as the human right to nature, rather than nature's own rights. Instead, I would argue that the notion of introducing a new concept might be translated or understood instead to referring to the co-generation of spaces of "genuine dialogue" where concepts bring to light both hegemonic ontologies and counter-hegemonic ones. Just as Coulthard's (2014) explanation of the Dene concept of land serves to put into relief dominant colonial, capitalist conceptions of land, this can be understood as being about deparochialization and a truly other wise epistemology, rather than a "new concept" per se.

Earl et al. (2001) further identify that actions can focus on influencing change at either the individual or the environmental contexts, which speaks to Tully's (2008) localized and

glocal networks. Even if institutions are not changed, this typology might be read as tracing the multiple pathways along which diverse citizenship (Tully 2008) can enable and presence counter-hegemonic lifeways.

This typology also importantly shifts from the procedural language of governance that disappears humans (Tully, 2008, p. 286) to one that names and brings humans back into the centre of the conversation. The Outcome Mapping methodology (Earl et al., 2001) then builds on this by inviting the naming of specific actors within one's spheres of control, influence and interest – be they policymakers, citizens, media, elected representatives or teachers. If institutional change can only happen through individuals deciding on and enacting those changes, as Outcome Mapping argues, then one cannot conceptualize or strategize for institutional change unless it is elucidated in terms of the specific humans one hopes to influence (Earl et al., 2001). Speaking in the broader language of institutional change as if institutions are free standing entities in and of themselves that act and act upon us, repeats the very procedural language of governance that has separated humans from their governance in the first place.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that children's rights as they pertain to the case of the Phoenix consultation and *Manifesto* have three key peculiarities that facilitate the deparochialization of human rights in general as reproducing a universalizing, hegemonic human rights framework. These include the peculiarity of the CRC as a human rights framework in general, the peculiarity of its specific contents (in particular, Article 12), and its peculiar enactment. The Phoenix *Manifesto* and the Consultation offers a case to examine these peculiarities and see the potential they enable for formulating a counter-hegemonic human

rights framework, which I argue Phoenix Consultation delegates successfully do – both by grounding it in a relational ontology reflective of three distinct movements, and by simultaneously enacting modern and diverse forms of citizenship. They engage in both acting otherwise within the rules, and negotiating the rules (Tully, 2008, p. 280). The effect, I argue, is the co-generation of an unsettling moment in which the hegemonic framework within which children’s and human rights re situated is deparochialized.

I then explore the extent to which such civic activities have any teeth with respect to challenging or shifting hegemonic human rights frameworks. The recently passed resolutions (48/13 and 48/14) for the human right to a healthy environment might suggest that human rights will continue as ‘business as usual’, unaffected by climate activists’ demands to shift from the language of rights to justice, from the individual to the collective, from the human to all species. These resolutions reaffirm the individualist, anthropocentric, colonial and ultimately capitalist framing of rights. Insofar as the delegates effectively assert “a new conception of the human-nature relationship that interconnects ecological distortion and social injustice” (Santos & Martin, 2021, p. x), I argue that the delegates open up a critical, decolonizing space that phenomenologically deparochializes hegemonic human rights. I argue that this possibility engages the “plasticity” of human rights, of which Santos (2021, p. 2) speaks. Insofar as they continue to leverage and engage their civil human rights to advance and express their civic citizenship, they create an opening or a tear in the individualist tent canopy that cannot be undone whilst it is occurring. The moment they point to climate change as a form of structural violence, it is clear individualist, human-centric frameworks fall short as a response. As the tradition of participation when implementing the CRC is widely spread across nations and international institutions, the cat might be too far “out of the bag” now. The

practice of creating space for young people to “civicise” their relationship with their duty bearers is not a dying trend. If this continues, it is arguable that a “new relationalism” will continue to have space to grow that creates both a “bottom up” vernacular of global cognitive justice (Santos, 2009, section 4, para. 4), and a counter-hegemonic framework.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Implications and Pathways: Beyond hegemonic individualism through relational, compost-humanist intra-becoming

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I weave together the above chapters by first returning to the three questions I posed at the outset of my research:

1. What might we learn from young people on Turtle Island about eco-social connection and disconnection?
2. What insights do decolonizing, participatory and relational research processes offer about eco-social connection?
3. What are the sociological, methodological and theoretical implications of these lessons for transformative social change towards relational ways of Intra-being?

This section takes up various conclusions, implications and pathways that build from the central conclusion that through this *Manifesto*, the activists chart counter-hegemonic, relational pathways across the ‘us/them’ horizon of individualist, hegemonic human rights.

First in section 7.2, I consider the seeming ease with which the Phoenix consultation youth climate justice activists move between individualist and relational structures of understanding. I note that they do not engage in the ontological inconsistency of individualist and relational ontologies. Rather, they focus on the tension found in this ontological dimensionality *within* their integrated intra-subjective lifeworld as simply the most urgent matter at hand, for them as individuals and for the world. This insight points to the false and ultimately individualist framing of these as binary lifeworlds. It points to the profoundly relational view that the two must be phenomenologically bound within and to one another (Vahabzadeh, 2019). Whilst an individualist ontology enacts concealment (especially of the

relational), a relational ontology enacts presencing (Scharmer, 2021), which necessarily shows how the two are in intra-active relationship at any given moment. As such, the distinct ontologies might be presented as dimensionalities to a shared intra-subjective lifeworld.

In 7.3, I return to my theoretical starting point (outlined in chapter 2) and definition of connection as a form of remembering (and by default that disconnection is about forgetting). Upon immersing myself in the intra-subjective lifeworld of youth climate activists as reflected by them in the *Phoenix Manifesto* (chapter 5), it is clear that this proposed definition not only falls short but is hegemonically framed. First, the youth climate activists in question have never forgotten their relationality. This definition also points out a colonial vantage point. As Davis and Todd (2016) note, the term anthropocentrism also does this by positing that all peoples have enacted the ecocidal lifeways of individualism, effectively disregarding Indigenous peoples or others whose lifeways enact relationally accountability. Connection as remembering thus “makes sense” within an individualist and colonial ontology, but insufficiently reflects young people’s intra-subjective lifeworld. Further, my prior definition of connection as a form of remembering centres the forgetting of individualism, much as the word decolonization centres colonization. As the Indigenous resurgence literature teaches, a lexicon rooted in relational lifeways is needed.

Lastly, a definition of connection as remembering suggests that an enacted decolonizing or ontological shift is not essential to connection. If I have posited that the current dominant lifeworld on Turtle Island is individualist, it is not enough to recall a relational one, the relational must be enacted. Youth activists show that relationality is not just possible (such as remembering implies), it is actual (always already being enacted), and thus available at any moment to anyone. However, it must be enacted through one of – or any combination of –

Tully's (2008) everyday practices of citizenship. This finding corroborates the relationality which always already is, available to all in any given moment: "...another world is actual' builds on the mantra of the World Social Forum 'another world is possible'" (Pérez Piñán et al., 2021, pp. 8-9). The concepts of eco-social empathy and eco-social intra-subjectivity are important here, as distinct formulations of each of these concepts that support the grounding of any counter-hegemonic project in the relational to ensure that any such actions are with a view to transformative⁶⁷, rather than passive, change.

The insights from youth re-centre action, and experience of the relational, inviting me to refine my original definition of connection, to: The experience of relational connection is thus defined as *the presencing of relationality through the enacting of ecocentric lifeways*. The delegates' attending to emotional and Indigenous knowledges here is critical. In section 7.4, I turn to Indigenous resurgence literature to consider what a presencing of relationality through enactment might mean. I argue that the presencing of which I speak is fundamentally a form of praxis or enactment – a verb rather than a fixable state of being or noun. I explore the Anishinabek concept *Biidaaban* (Simpson, 2017) and Tully's (2008) four practices of civic freedom as engaged through the work of Napoleon and Friedland (2014). I note the resonance this definition has with a phenomenological orientation to the lifeworld, which decolonizes, deparochializes and subverts. True to the fugitive orientation of phenomenology which resists arrest or fixity, what emerges from this is the realization that in order for ecocentric lifeways to be enacted, a phenomenological orientation of ontological openness (the same orientation needed for Tully's (2016) genuine dialogue) is required.⁶⁸ I argue that such presencing (or

⁶⁷ As outlined, I define transformative as that which disrupts the individualist ontological structures, vs. passive, in the spirit of Gramsci's passive revolution (Carroll, 2021), which leaves these structures intact.

⁶⁸ I also note the connection to systems theory and Scharmer (2020), in particular, who uses the term presencing to mean "The capacity to connect to the deepest source of self and will allows the future to emerge from the whole

connection) is enacted by the Phoenix consultation activists when they act otherwise (Tully, 2008).

This expanded, more multidimensional definition of connection leads me to revise my conception of an ontology of intra-being to a conception of an ontology of *intra-becoming*. To elaborate, I draw on Indigenous conceptions of relationality (Simpson, 2017; Wilson, 2008; Kimmerer, 2013), educational concepts of sympogogy (Flynn, 2021), queering and posthumanist articulations of the decolonizing structural agency of assemblage and scyborg identities (La paperson, 2017; Bennett, 2010; Barad, 2007; Massumi, 2014), and the work of Audre Lorde (1984). Through this lens, connection might also be understood as the process of eco-social intra-becoming through the unpredictable, co-creative proliferation of difference. In this way, connection inherently and inevitably subverts individualist orders.

An important element of an ontology of intra-becoming is the openness with which one must also engage oneself, to the inevitable and unsettling process of ongoing transformation. I outline this in section 7.5. This is one of the reasons I do not revise my earlier definitional arguments made in chapter 2 about connection as remembering, and an ontology of intra-being. By including an earlier iteration of my theorizing, I show how young people's relationally articulated intra-subjective lifeworld offers new insights and dimensions to my theorizing. I also demonstrate the richness of theory that is generated directly out of lived experience, relational engagement, and intra-active engagement with everyday life as per one of Tully's (2008) overarching arguments in *Public Philosophy in a New Key*. It also speaks to the

rather than from a smaller part or special interest group." It is important to acknowledge that Scharmer also identifies the linkage between connection and presencing – both at the level of connection to self and others. For the purposes of my dissertation, however, I choose to explore this concept through the lens of Indigenous theory, Tully's theories of civic engagement and phenomenology – which I believe is consistent with Scharmer's (2020) definition of presencing as a moment of disruption and openness all at once.

necessary multidimensionality of social constructs and concepts such as connection. Additionally, the process of explicitly complexifying my original working theory of connection and intra-being within the bounds of this dissertation enacts the very process of intra-becoming or presencing about which I am theorizing. It also reveals the hegemonic frames of my own thinking, which I argue from a phenomenological orientation does not expose a failure or weakness in my argument, but rather, exposes my situatedness and embeddedness in an individualist lifeworld as well as a relational one. Instead of invoking a perfectionist orientation (which is ultimately and inevitably rooted in individualist, supremacist thinking), I expose this self-reflective practice as a necessary feature of phenomenological, decolonizing and deparochializing thinking.

In section 7.6, I explore how the youth climate activists of the Phoenix Consultation are utilizing the master's tools or rules of individualist human rights mechanisms and processes to transform – or compost – the master's house of hegemonic human rights. This suggests the hegemonic individualist lifeworld may be more porous and compostable than it purports itself to be, or that there is more structural agency (La paperson, 2017) than it lets on. Here I posit the argument that the notion that hegemony is inevitable in every worlding / re-worlding process is a hegemonic concept itself. To do so I draw on La paperson's (2017) scyborg, a theory of structural agency for assemblages within colonial institutions. I also explore Audre Lorde's (1984) argument for how the tools when used differently might be the vehicle by which such transformation of the master's house is possible.

Whilst such presencing can and does not destroy the structures, violences and material realities generated by the individualist world, the act of rendering its workings, form and construction visible deactivates its ability to invisibilize or render the eco-social other into the

abyss with impunity. It does so by destabilizing its claims to sovereignty – questioning the *terra nullius* foundations they have laid – and necessarily compromising its interpellative power.

Finally in 7.7, I explore what this composting process might entail. I metaphorically overlay the eco-cycle atop the ego-cycle diagram (as one might do with two sheets of “old-school” overhead transparencies) to explore how the four practices of civic freedom (Tully, 2008) might be enacted at any moment in ways that transform ego-centric lifeways into eco-centric ones. I argue that the process of presencing and rendering visible initiates the composting process. The relational world demands relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) not erasure. Elements of each of the above points are identified as pathways for future research.

7.2 Ontological Dimensions of an Intra-subjective Lifeworld

One striking feature of the intra-subjective lifeworld Phoenix consultation youth activists articulate as reflected in the *Manifesto*, is that despite their embeddedness in individualist institutions, they express a profound and emotional experience of being rooted in relationality. The ease with which the youth climate justice activists interchangeably reference individualist and relational lexicons is notable. Within the *Manifesto* they interchangeably shift from lexicons of individualist rights and eco-social justice. They also reflect on the experiences of both disconnect and connection, which they seemed to express feeling simultaneously. On a practical level, how do we make sense of the coexistence of such divergent ways of living and being in the world, our institutions and selves? When considered within the framework of my original questions, this suggests that perhaps the question of how to move from one order (the egocentric) to the other (the relational) is an unhelpful formulation as both may always already be a part of the horizon of one’s experience. The seeming disregard of youth climate justice

activists for the ontological difference also appears to emerge out of the practical urgency of the climate crisis: both lifeways are brought together in a common fate of ecocide. If they will die together, maybe they live together.

Existing models present the two cycles and processes as distinct, which is helpful in terms of demarcating their ontological differences. The ego-cycle and eco-cycle diagrams do this, for example, as do their corollary, Tully's vicious and virtuous cycles. Some models present their difference in epochal terms, or in terms of time. For example, Scharmer (2020) speaks of how to shift from one to the other. My own formulation of the question of shift from egocentric lifeways to ecocentric suggests a shift over time. What of the relationship and intra-active play between them however? If the two lifeworlds might in fact be part of the same shared lifeworld, as the youth climate activists' experience might suggest, what model will enable us to think through their intra-active dynamic relationship and interplay? A complex view of hegemony (Scholte, 2020) does not enable a state of fixity or linear progression from one to the other, the lifeworlds are phenomenologically encountered as part and parcel of one another. In order to imagine the relationality of the oft-conceived of as separate, distinct and indeed polarized binary lifeworlds within a single horizon, I overlay the eco-cycle atop the ego-cycle diagram as one might two sheets of old-school overhead transparencies. Doing so enables a model that shows what Tully (2008) argues, that we always already inhabit a relational world. Doing so also suggests that at each moment of the life cycle of any system, institution or being, there may be a choice to act in ways that enact the relational in ways that thwart and compost the individualist. In section 7.4, I draw on Tully's (2008) four practices of civic freedom to envisage what these choices are.

This reading shows the two orientations are in dynamic relationship with one another. This is an example of Vahabzadeh's (2019) argument that these distinctive orientations share a horizon within which the conditions of possibility for one are also the conditions of possibility for the other (p. 186). These two ontological orientations to the world are thus apprehended as but two potentialities emergent from an act of deworlding/reworlding of which Vahabzadeh (2019) speaks: on the one hand is the possibility of an "archic, universalizing, isomorphic violence, and on the other...an-archic...modes of nonviolent coexistence" (pp. 40-41). Vahabzadeh (2019) describes this relationship in concentric terms, which renders them not only non-binary, but makes them indeed "indivisible" (p. 186).

Both lifeways co-exist and can be dialogically engaged through a model that superimposes the ego-cycle and the eco-cycle on top of one another. This arguably does not hegemonically *force* the individualist impulse to become relational, though it necessarily reparochializes it. This might in fact be seen indeed to have the opposite effect of the abyssal (Santos, 2007) erasure of individualism: the deparochializing putting into relief that a phenomenological and decolonizing mode of engagement entails. Indeed, individualist lifeways come into view as enacting of many relationships; they are just disembedding, extractivist and violent modes of relating as they are structured and managed by settled hierarchies, rather than gift-reciprocity. It is akin to the moment that the town villagers intra-subjectively decide that the Emperor has no clothes. Rather than being rendered into the abyss, the Emperor of Individualism is irreversibly exposed and presenced. Whilst an individualist worldview conceals the meanings that relational lifeways articulate, a relational worldview renders the former visible. The hegemonic tent canopy of individual rights is thus not as enclosing as it presents itself to be. It is the emperor's clothes for the young authors of the *Phoenix Manifesto*.

7.3 Connection as Presencing the Relational

As introduced above in the second chapter of the dissertation, I put forward the definition of connection as a form of remembering – and by implication, that disconnection is about forgetting. Upon immersing myself in the intra-subjective lifeworld elaborated by youth climate activists as reflected in the *Phoenix Manifesto* (chapter 5), it is clear that this proposed definition not only falls short but is hegemonically framed. First, the youth climate activists in question have never forgotten their relationality. Connection for these young people as such can not be a move to remember, though a great deal of their strategies and efforts strive to *remind* primarily adult others of their relationality through their activism. Davis and Todd (2016) point to an important point here with respect to the fact that it also cannot be assumed to be a definition for all adults, as those embedded in Indigenous (and other relational) lifeways on Turtle Island also may not need to remember. Connection as remembering is thus an apt description within an individualist and colonial ontology, but insufficiently reflects youth climate justice activists' intra-subjective lifeworld. Insofar as my prior definition of connection as a form of remembering centres the abyssal forgetfulness of an individualist ontology, it reproduces or recentres the hegemonic frames of individualism. By assuming that people have 'forgotten' their relationality, the definition asserts the individualist canopy as hegemonically experienced (Vahabzadeh, 2003) universally by all, as the default position. Instead, when taking young peoples' intra-subjectively articulated lifeworld into account, connection might be conceived of as an act of presencing.

This presencing may have the effect of rendering visible that which has been invisibilized. In other words, it may have the effect of reminding or remembering for those who may have forgotten the relational. However, at its roots, it is re-defined here as the relational

process of collective world-making, which enacts an ontology of intra-becoming with eco-social kin, or All Our Relations. The experience and enactment of connection might thus be metaphorically understood as investing in Tully's (2018) relational permaculture that inevitably and unpredictably enacts the proliferation of diverse life within and through eco-centric lifeways. To the extent that enacting relationality renders ego-centric lifeways visible, and the ways in which they enact the ego-cycle, it reflects a decolonizing, re-parochializing and phenomenological stance. In order for an act to qualify for this definition of connection, then, it must thwart individualist lifeways, and be both emergent from – and generative of – relational lifeways.

7.4 The Relational must be enacted

Just as an exploration of the intra-subjective lifeworld of youth climate activists pointed to a limitation in my prior conception of connection as remembering, the conception of connection as intra-subjective presencing points to the inherent limitations of the word *intra-being*. In addition to all of the reasons listed above, connection as a form of remembering is an insufficient definition because it denotes no action and privileges the rational over the experiential. It also suggests the epistemic on its own is enough to decolonize, unsettle and disrupt hegemonic structures of individualism. Though the epistemic and the ideological is a critical site where the hegemonic is established, maintained and reproduced (Carroll, 2021), the counter-hegemonic (just like the hegemonic) must necessarily engage as part of a multi-pronged approach, including the material world. It is not enough to remember; to experience connection as I have defined it above, one must experience it through participating in it. The youth activists' emphasis on emotionality and other forms of knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge systems, is critical here. Indeed, a turn towards Indigenous resurgence literature is

helpful to consider how such presencing of the relational might be better encountered as the process of *intra-active* becoming through and with the eco-social other.

The Anishinabek concept of *Biidaaban* is particularly helpful here, as described and discussed by Simpson (2017, 2020) and McGregor & McGregor (2019). Simpson (2020) references *Biidaaban* in her stories and writings on Indigenous resurgence in several ways, explaining that it means “that first light of dawn” or “the little bit of light” that “appears on the horizon” before the sun (np). She breaks down the etymology of the word, explaining that it is made up of three parts: *Bii*, which means “the future is coming at you,” *Daa*, which means “home, the present, the right now” and *Ban*, a “suffix that evokes the past, usually given to someone who has passed” (np). As such she says, *Biidaaban* is the concept “of presencing in the centre of the past and the future” (np). It is “that moment that happens every day in most parts of the world comes up over the horizon, the present, is actually a collapsing of the future and the past...” (Simpson, 2020, np). McGregor and McGregor (2019) describe *Biidaaban* as a liminal space between day and night: “that very spiritual time when it is no longer night, but not yet day” (p. 127). However, rather than a space in between two differences or opposites, for Simpson, it is the presencing of past and future, a holding or infusion of difference in the collective moment of worlding. This has clear resonance with Scharmer’s (2021) definition of presencing as a state of emergence that draws on both past and present.

It is also critical to note that the young people’s self-articulated conception of personhood and agency extends to the whole of the more-than-human natural world. While such eco-social intra-subjective understandings have already found expression in a number of legal systems, from Indigenous legal systems to the Ecuadorian and New Zealand governments’ extension of rights to Nature, again, Indigenous traditions model this conception of intra-subjectivity.

Indigenous knowledge systems and a wide range of Indigenous thinkers, in contrast, such as Kimmerer (2013) point to the role that the more-than-human plays as teachers, kin and leaders to humans in their sense of being and knowing. Simpson's (2017) character *Biidaaban*, learns from the tree and the squirrel about maple syrup. Kimmerer learns about how strawberries flourish from the wild strawberries themselves. These thinkers and the knowledge systems they reference do not have a conception of human-only intersubjectivity as is featured in individualist orientations to sociology.

In *Indian Horse*, Wagamese (2012) tells a story of Indigenous children at a residential school who enjoy an afternoon away from the institution down by the river. Wagamese introduces this section as being about what these children had lost:

One afternoon, during some rare unsupervised time, a dozen of us escaped to the ridge that the school stood on. A small creek ran along the base of the ridge curving up out of a lake and into a larger one. The creek was narrow and maybe three feet across and shallow. It was a sucker creek. The fish swam up to spawn at the bigger water and we went down with burlap bags we'd taken out of the barn. We could see the fish pushing up that water. It was thrilling. So much life, so much desperation, so much energy. We stood for a long time and just watched. Then some of us got saplings and bent them around the inside of those sacks. We lowered the sacks into the water and pulled them up dripping and filled with fish. We watched the silvery brown flash as they flopped out onto the bank, their puckered mouths flapping like wet kisses from fat aunties. Their tails flipping and flapping against the ground. We pushed them back in the water and pulled up another sack. We did that four times. The fourth time we stood quietly each of us lost in our thoughts as the fish struggled for air, for life, for freedom. When we bent finally and took the fish back in our hands to set them back into the water, most of us were crying. We turned as a group and began the long sloping walk back up to the ridge to the school. We walked with our hands cupped up around our noses, breathing in the smell of those fish, pushing the slime of them around on our faces. We had no knives to clean them, to flay them, we had no fire to smoke them on. We had no place to store them, no way to keep them. When they lay gasping on the grass it was ourselves we saw fighting for air. We were Indian kids and all we had was the smell of those fish in our hands. We fell asleep that night with our noses pressed to our hands and as the days went by and the smell of those suckers faded, there wasn't one of us that didn't cry for the loss of the life we'd known before. When the dozen of us cried in the chapel, the nuns smiled believing it was the promise of their god that touched us but we all walked out of there with our hands to our faces. Breathing in. Breathing in. (pp. 53-54)

It was not enough for the young Indigenous characters in his story to remember. Indeed, such remembering can even further experiences and enactments of disconnect as decades of inter-generational trauma show. Wilson (2008) states “Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of.” (p. 80) If individualist hegemonic structures generate disconnect by disrupting and thwarting our relationships, including with the more-than-human world, then they disconnect us from who we are existentially. In reflecting on the above story, Wagamese (2013) states:

They lost that spiritual, mental and physical contact with who they were created to be. My teachers tell me that the most fundamental right in the universe is the right to know who you were created to be. And the corollary to that teaching is that the greatest crime in the universe is to deny somebody the right to know who they were created to be. And so what those residential schools did was they denied those native children the right to learn who they were created to be by the imposition of a whole new character and a whole new way of being. (np)

From this reading of Wagamese (2012), connection as presencing might be considered as simply being who we are, as emergent nature, in relationships unthwarted by systemic violence. And structural violence such as individualist lifeways enact might be understood here as the denial of the right to be our relational selves.

As Wagamese (2012) shows, core to this being unthwarted amidst systems of structural violence that thwart, is finding and enacting the possibilities that exist to be who we are, as nature and in relationships with All our Relations. If the “most fundamental right in the universe” (Wagamese, 2013, np) is to know who we are, and who we are is our relationships with All our Relations, then the most fundamental right in the universe is the right to connection, and the greatest crime is that which would thwart us. Climate change isn’t just a form of structural violence. All the institutions that co-generate it are forms of structural violence. Rights as re-formulated by Wagamese (2013), are not proposed just for individuals but

simultaneously for relationships with All Our Relations. He points to the pathway that youth climate justice activists at the Phoenix consultation chart to transform rights into the lexicon of eco-social justice and the justification for transformative institutional change.

Posthumanists (aptly called “(com)posthumanists” by Flynn, 2021) and new materialists (La paperson, 2017; Haraway, 2016; Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Massumi, 2014) elaborate conceptions of being intra-active assemblages with human and more-than-human kin. In *A Third University is Possible*, La paperson (2017) proposes the concept of scyborg as an adaption of Donna Haraway’s cyborg through the lens of Ferguson’s “frame of queer desiring machines” (p. 55). An “agentive element, the decolonizing ghost in the colonizing machine” (p. xxiv) and “institutional machinery” of colonialism (p. 55), La paperson notes that scyborgs have an “active sense of presence” (p. 55) with decolonizing potential in every moment precisely because of their assemblage nature that offers “agential capacity” beyond their being. Important to my argument, he distinguishes that “the scyborg springs from assemblage” (p. 60). He distinguishes the assemblage from the “collective,” arguing that the latter is individualist in nature and has the effect of homogenizing difference. I add the further qualification that the term “collective” can introduce the lens of “us/them” binaries in a way that the term “assemblage” might more effectively evade because of its porous implications. That said, I choose to use the collective throughout this dissertation as this is the term articulated by the *Phoenix Manifesto* authors – and true to La paperson’s (2017) description of scyborg identity, they clearly adapt and mutate the concept as per their understanding. He writes: “The scyborg is a being who is no way discretely individual. A scyborg is a being in assemblage. Your agential capacity extends beyond your being, into the system’s capacity. Your agency is system. This is why I put the s in front of cyborg” (p. 61).

Additionally, posthumanist and new materialist theorists have a relatable take on presencing that takes aim at individualistic rationalities and the human/non-human binary where the non-human has been a mere backdrop for human action. They nod towards the proliferation of intra-actively enacted difference, as being the only thing that “matters” – or that which is responsible for anything coming into material being. Thus, for them, separateness is not “an inherent feature of how the world is” but it is neither a “mere illusion, an artifact of human consciousness led astray. Difference cannot be taken for granted; it matters - indeed, it is what matters” (Barad, 2007, p. 136). Posthumanism in this way aims to be a theory of relationality to all that exists: There is never a moment of non-entanglement, of non-relationality, but difference is the only thing that enables relationality and matter to exist: “it is not that there are no separations or differentiations, but that they only exist within relations” (Barad, 2007, p. 77).

For these theorists, because of non-causality, it is impossible to control or determine future outcomes, and the ethical can only be in the now, in questions of accountability and responsibility within one’s relationships. However, for Bennett (2010), this does not mean acting the “right” way, but rather, means being conscious of the assemblages one is in and making decisions about whether one will continue to be in that assemblage in that way. For Barad (2007), it means more abstractly enabling the other’s response, and thereby inviting others into relationship.

Both Indigenous and compost-humanist traditions point out that intra-being is not a fixable or settleable state of being like a noun, but necessarily in a state of enactment, a state of becoming, intra-subjectively enacted in the present moment and moving into a never over-determined future. This leads me to the conclusion that relational ontologies are not ontologies

of intra-being as suggested in chapter 2, but ontologies of intra-becoming, reaching into and co-creative of the world into the future. Through this lens, connection might be even furthered broadened to be understood as eco-social intra-becoming through the unpredictable, co-creative enactment of relationship amidst deep diversity. Building on my earlier work on transformative empathy (2018), one might say that connection defined as such inherently transforms those connecting and in so doing, the world that they intra-actively co-create. In this definition, connection inherently and inevitably subverts individualist orders.

This relational approach to intra-becoming is also present in conceptions such as *sympogogy*, or learning with and through the world, as described by Flynn (2021) of the Common Worlds Research Collective: “a more-than-human intra-active participatory process... – the arts of learning (and teaching) *with the world*” (para 1). Flynn (2021) explains the etymology behind this “new postdevelopmental (Blaise, 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2011) teaching and learning praxis in which ‘learning to become with the world’” (Flynn, 2021) is a concept that is encountered through its composite parts: “Sym = with, together; as in symbiotic; -po (from *poiesis*) = making; -gogy = learning, wor(l)ding, storying” (para 1).

If ontology only exists through its enactment, lifeways are the vehicles of worlding and re-worlding. If lifeways are intra-actively generated with eco-social others as through La paperson’s assemblages, enacting eco-centric vs. ego-centric relationships are core to social change. This brings the methodological and theoretical together inseparably, pointing to the important role of praxis. The enactment of counter-hegemonic, eco-centric lifeways requires more than relational ideas, perspectives or words, even when these words are “magic” as Abram (1996) suggests; it requires the eco-centric and relational to be enacted. This argument aligns with Foucault’s (1982) that it is through discourse that Althusser’s (1969) ideological

structures might be changed and challenged, where discourse is understood as all forms in which lifeways and/or institutions are enacted. Simpson (2020) says that the story of *Biidaaban* is a form of resurgence, but her “telling you about it – not so much” (np). Drawing on Vahabzadeh’s (2003) theory of experiential hegemony, experience of the eco-centric, relational otherwise is the interpellative basis by which counter-hegemonic canopies (such as the tree canopies) are made possible and enacted. If the above is true, relational, dialogical and participatory ways of relating to others are not mere contributing factors, they are the means through which relational ontologies and knowledge systems are revitalized in the lifeworld.

It is perhaps no accident that engagement “methods” are interchangeably referred to as “tools” in the methodological literature. Ultimately, they are the means of engagement with others (usually perceived as being exclusively with human others, unless situated within Indigenous methodologies). If we consider that we are not individuals, but we are relationships (Wilson, 2008; La paperson, 2017), then the means or tools/approaches/methods of engagement are also us as assemblage scyborgs – whether we acknowledge these or not. Individualist tools would render these invisible as they suggest that non-relationship and non-intra-action with other beings is possible.

I explore the agential potential for counter-hegemonic play and decolonial scyborging within and through individualist structures through looking at the intra-play of the ego-cycle and eco-cycle. An overlay of the eco-cycle atop the ego-cycle diagram (as one might do with two sheets of overhead transparencies), reveals that at each moment of the life cycle of any system, institution or being, there may be a choice of action that composts the individualist in favour of the relational. It is useful here to draw on Tully’s (2008) four practices of civic freedom to envisage what these choices are. It is also helpful from the standpoint to showcase

where actions in fact do not enact otherwise, but uphold the individualist system even if inadvertently. For example, many diversity and inclusion initiatives operate according to a politics of representation, which ultimately seeks to extend the existing individualist rules to more beings, rather than transform the rules such as a justice or equity approach might entail. When a group petitions to extend children's rights to children living in the US, who has not signed the CRC, this is not a transformative move that revitalizes the relational, nor does it render visible the structure of hegemonic human rights. Indeed, it has the effect of doubling down on hegemonic human rights, having posited its inherent value and assumed truth. When the Phoenix delegates petition to conceive of rights in collective terms that includes eco-social kin, this renders the individualist and anthropocentric nature of rights visible, whilst strengthening a sense of ourselves as eco-social assemblage scyborgs whose very existence is predicated on relational rights. The right to connection and relationality is thus the most basic right to existence for all.

The relational might be enacted through any of Tully's (2008) everyday civic actions. Participatory processes such as the "Making Connections" tool (Pérez Piñán et al., 2021) and the types of participatory engagements enacted through relational methods such as were used at the Phoenix Consultation support actors to identify possible actions. I see this dissertation as the groundwork or future elaborations needed to explore how Tully's civic actions to this compounded model of ego-cycle and eco-cycle.

7.5 Intra-becoming necessitates a phenomenological orientation towards self as well as world

The above definitions of connection are akin to the process of deparochializing and/or decolonizing simultaneously through phenomenological inquiry and enacted intra-becoming.

As a way of thinking, connection as an act of presencing opens up conceptions of phenomenological, immanent critique as the relational process of re-parochializing (Tully, 2016).

Within this context, self-decolonizing is an ongoing active process not warranting of shame or critique, but rather a necessary process of self-reflexivity and phenomenological, scyborg exploration. I retain my earlier framing of connection as remembering to show how young people's relationally and self-articulated intra-subjective lifeworld offers new insights to theory. The process of explicitly expanding my theory within the bounds of this dissertation serves to model the process of intra-subjective presencing and the phenomenological orientation it both presumes and effects. It does so through the emergence of a definition of connection that is rooted in relational ontologies, whilst rendering the hegemonically individualist frames of my former definition – a colonial and adultist positionality visible. This expanded, multidimensional definition of connection also opens up new pathways in my prior work (Nelems, 2018), pointing me to theorize about eco-social empathy as a process of intra-becoming with and through eco-social kin. Edith Stein (1989) argues that empathy is being “led by the foreign” – implying a state of ongoing growth and learning/unlearning – and this self-reflexive process is always shaped by self as relational assemblage. Decolonizing efforts might argue that what is needed is a rendering visible of the inevitable ways in which structures of individualism persist across discourse, action and thought – such that it can be composted and re-worlded, like *Biidaaban*. *Biidaaban* is an every day recurrence necessary for life. *Biidaaban* necessitates a stance of phenomenological openness to be led by and transformed by the eco-social ‘other’.

7.6 Leveraging the Master's Tools to Transform the House

As the authors of the *Phoenix Manifesto* show, the master's tools can be used in ways that deparochialize and ontologically transform the master's house when the tools are used in ways that enact otherwise. As outlined in Chapter 6, the Phoenix consultation climate activists show that using the rules to act otherwise (Tully, 2008) itself enacts counter-hegemony through the simultaneous disruption and transformation of the hegemonic rules themselves. Drawing on Vahabzadeh's (2003) theory of experiential hegemony, experience of the ecocentric, relational otherwise is the interpellative basis by which counter-hegemonic canopies (such as the tree canopies) are made possible and enacted. If the above is true, relational, dialogical and participatory ways of relating to others are not mere contributing factors, they are necessary ones for enacting intra-becoming, its relational ontologies and knowledge systems. Relational, decolonizing and phenomenological engagement methods are thus framed as *a* way forward insofar as they enact experiences that act otherwise than the individualist canopy within the canopy. They are a mode through which the scyborg reorganizes and subverts the "institutional machinery...against the master code of its makers" (La paperson, 2017, p. 55) – a rewiring of it to different intention. They are a means of "breaking down" the machine through "irreverent" and "unexpected lines of flight" (La paperson, 2017, p. 55). To the extent that relationality both generates and is the result of this process, the hegemonic fabric is inherently transformed. The move is akin to a decolonizing or phenomenological stance, which necessarily renders both relational and individualist lifeworlds visible as being in play simultaneously.

In order to make this argument, I need to establish that the counter-hegemonic is possible insofar as it displaces and dislocates hegemonic individualism, whilst not re-establishing or repeating the same hegemonic structure or foundation. In other words, the counter-hegemonic

ceases to be counter-hegemonic if it destroys or erases the individualist structure as in the ego-cycle. A structure is not composted if it persists even if it is re-erected with different materials. Thus, to make my case, hegemony and abyssal erasure of the other cannot be presumed to be inevitable in every order. Might the possible assumption that hegemony is inevitable be itself a hegemonic individualist claim?

Some may caution that all ‘worlding’ projects effect structures of erasure and dominance, and that lifeworlds are inherently limiting, constrictive, hegemonic and violent, epistemically and existentially. I concur that this is true of all *individualist* orders, which are inherently hegemonic as a tent canopy structure. I also concur that even if deactivated temporarily by the relational, the presence of the individualist is such that its hegemonic status could always be reactivated. I argue that an alternative to hegemony is always imaginable. However, it cannot be assumed that this alternative will necessarily entail an abyssal exclusion of the other. To do so would be to share hegemonic features with individualist lifeways. Instead, relational lifeways might insist on infinite, ongoing intra-becoming *through* difference, rather than the wielding of difference as a point of exclusion or erasure, as argued by Lorde (1984), and elaborated upon below.

Indigenous traditions enacted through laws pertaining to the intra-active relationships between all human and non-human actors, as well as to the spirit world, show that the drive to hegemonic dominance and concealment may be a feature of a lifeworld that needs to be kept in check, but that it is not necessary to a lifeworld per se. Mauss (1990) speaks of how Indigenous communities on the Northwest coast of Turtle Island invite other communities to a potlatch and engage in gift-giving with a view to relationship-building (p. 108) precisely to mitigate against

hegemonic dominance by either community over the other. No dominance is possible within a space of genuine dialogue, as Tully (2016) describes it. Rather than limiting, a lifeworld re-framed within an ontology of intra-becoming might be considered as inherently enabling and inviting of the proliferation of difference. Disembedded from a linear notion of progress, and a re-orientation to all of beings as ends in and of themselves, this lifeworld is enacted only through and in relationships. While the persistence of the individualist lifeworld in material terms appears to present a very real challenge to the enactment of the relational lifeworld, it is critical here to recall Umeek's (2004) instruction that it is in fact the individualist lifeworld – not the relational one – that converts polarities into a play for dominance and competition, which enact violence through either seeking to absorb or eliminate the other. Just like the eco-cycle, a relational world contains extremities and a proliferation of difference, which when not framed as polarities might be reframed in the process of relational accountability through processes of genuine dialogue, gift reciprocity, and the regeneration of life.

But how do relational enactments introduce and restore relational accountability and relationships amidst and within the very material and destructive structural violences and systems currently enacted in the world? Akomolafe (2020c), La paperson (2017), Massumi (2014), and Lorde (1984) all suggest there is always room for play and agency within the hegemonic structures. For La paperson (2017), colonial institutions are always “in assemblage” (p. 62) precisely through the plurality of beings that enact them, and thus are a vital part of the assemblage. Beings who are “embedded in an assemblage of machines” are what he calls scyborgs, and these beings are the “sculptors” (p. 64) of the institutional assemblage. La paperson's scyborgs are “agentive element[s], the decolonizing ghost[s] in the colonizing machine” (p. xxiv). They are “quite disloyal” (p. 55) to colonialism, he notes, which when

combined with the concept of structural agency offers some hope: “The agency of the scyborg is precisely that it is a reorganizer of institutional machinery; it subverts machinery against the master code of its makers; it rewires machinery to its own intentions” (p. 55). Because they are assemblages themselves – rather than individuals – scyborgs’ “agential capacity extends beyond [their] being, into the system’s capacity. [Their] agency is system. This is why I [La paperson] put the s in front of cyborg” (p. 61).

Massumi (2014) explores the concept of play as an animalistic, interactive relationality that enables what he calls the “vitality affect”, which through the "enthusiasm of the body" (p. 28) (fear, excitement, anticipation, etc.), holds difference and undecidability in suspension. This has direct correspondence to Simpson’s (2018) *Biidaaban*, which holds both day and night. Massumi (2014) opposes this to a “categorical affect” within which “[e]very fiber of our existence is interpellated" (p. 28) such as when an individualist order is experienced as the dominant lifeworld. "In a nonplay situation, categorical affect registers the imperative to live the event in the dominant experiential key in which the situation customarily unfolds. In a nonplay situation of fear, we directly feel the imperative to fight or flee” (p. 28).

Fanon (2004), however, points to the material conditions of the colonial world, which raise the question of whether play is actually available to all, or in all situations. What opportunities are there to use the master’s tools – at least in any way other than the way the master uses them? He reminds us of Cesaire’s slave who uses the master’s knife against him, but even in this moment, is only ever recognized as the “good slave” by the master (p. 88). Yet while Fanon (2004) identifies the inherent nonplay of colonial contexts – suggesting that there are some contexts that hold no space for structural agency - Akomolafe (2020a) suggests there is always power in spaces of oppression. This is because, for Akomolafe, these overdetermined

moments enacted within the colonial lifeworld themselves introduce its own eventual mutation and undoing across time:

During the transatlantic slave trade, to the slaveholders, the ship was a vessel, an economic vessel, a means to an end. To those enslaved, it was horror, it was suffering raised to the power of infinity. But to tricksters, it was the migrancy of gods...It was the undoing of colonial power. It was a mother's womb, sailing the ocean and birthing diasporic communities. It was the birth of hip hop. It was the birth of my brother William... It was the undoing of worlds. (Akomolafe, nd)

Akomolafe (2020c) clarifies that instead of expulsion or eradication, this process of transformative change occurs through the composting that is an essential component of intra-becoming:

There is some urgency in the felt vocation to investigate the ways our bodies are being made and remade within the regime of whiteness. The point is not to defeat whiteness, to treat it as an evil, to transcend it, or to imagine it as a pathogen we can rid ourselves of in small doses of workshop attendances: the invitation is, I feel, to compost it, to trace all the ways it is still connected to the earth, to mistletoes everywhere, and then to inhabit those 'spots', and allow ourselves to be acted upon. (Akomolafe, 2020c)

In 1979, Lorde (1984) famously spoke the words: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 112). These words hold true so long as the tools are being utilized in the same way as the master. However, Lorde herself masterfully proposes how the tools can be reclaimed and used in transformative ways such that the individualist lifeworld (the master's house) itself might be transformed into a relational lifeworld (or house). Here, the master's house might be synonymous with the individualist tent canopy. Lorde (1984) argues that it is from learning how to stand outside the house, and finding others also outside the structures that one can "define and seek a world in which we can all flourish" (p. 112). But Lorde knows there are "no new ideas" (p. 39), and no real "outside" of the house, so to speak. The standing outside instead comes from generating a new world out of that which is always already present – those surplus experiences that have continued to survive, thrive and grow

“strong through that darkness” (p. 36). Lorde (1984) argues there are always “other configurations...other ways of experiencing the world...” and that these are indestructible, living in all:

For each of us as women, there is a dark place within, where hidden and growing our true spirit rises, ‘beautiful/and tough as chestnut/stanchions against (y)our nightmare of weakness/’ and of impotence...These places of possibility with ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through that darkness...Within these deep places, each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling (pp. 36-37).

They can, however, be “often difficult to name” (p. 8), she argues, because they are not part of the master’s vernacular and the given categories of the individualist tent canopy, though they are always known through embodied, relational and emotional forms of knowledge that each person has. She argues that it is the task of those engaged in anti-oppression to recover these configurations.

Far from an outside, these surplus experiences, for Lorde, are “carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives” (p. 37). These rock experiences entail the erotic, emotions, and creative forms of expression such as poetry – those that have escaped the rules of individualist logic and which reside within the inherent plurality of each person. Thus, “[it] is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths” (p. 112). For Lorde, this can only be enacted through speaking, which can entail acting, enacting, sharing, listening, giving and receiving: “it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding” (p. 43). This is because it can only be enacted through engaging with a different other: ultimately, “it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence” (p. 44). For Lorde, these differences cannot be given voice without the presence of, or relation to an Other: “I am who I am, doing what I came to do, acting upon you like a drug or a chisel to remind you of your me-ness, as I discover you in myself” (p. 11).

If individualism is erected to be the air we breathe and self-present as reality, it must hide the tools by which it erects itself. Bringing the tools to light allows their constructedness to be seen. The tools might be understood as us scyborgs, the actions, discourses and institutions we re/generate through our intra-becoming. As long as we experience ourselves as the disembodied/re-embedded, disconnected individuals the individualist lifeworld is organized around, we are interpellated into it and do not see ourselves, and go about usefully reproducing the lifeworld. The moment we experience ourselves as assemblage intra-becoming beings, we inevitably become the scyborgs of which La paperson (2017) speaks. Using the tools to deparochialize ourselves and the house reveals the structure, foundation and the process by which the house and its foundations were constructed.

In distinct ways, each of the above theorists argue that the ‘play’ of which Massumi (2014) speaks might be found precisely through connection as the presencing of relationality through intra-becoming with the eco-social other. When individualist tools are thus used to presence relationality and render visible the individualist orientation – rather than to dominate, erase or separate – the mere act of picking them up with this distinct intent may be enough to transform both tool and house. This act presences not just a different ontology, but also the tools themselves. As ends in and of themselves, they are no longer Heidegger’s (1977) tools that disappear in their “usefulness” and “equipmentality” (p. 190).

Whilst such presencing cannot and does not destroy the structures, violences and material realities generated by the individualist world, the act of rendering its workings, form and construction visible deactivates its ability to invisibilize or render the eco-social other into the abyss with impunity. It does so by destabilizing its claims to sovereignty – questioning their *terra nullius* foundations – and necessarily compromising its interpellative power. The master’s

tools might thus be used to compost and transform the master's house so long as they are phenomenologically enacted to bring its contours into view, without replacing or erecting a new foundational logic. Since the individualist structure holds its power through its politics of representation and fixity – with itself representing truth – the act of rendering its walls and foundations visible drains it of its power. It is ideologically neutralized in the moment it is shown to be unnecessary, arbitrarily constructed, and even undesirable; its interpellative appeal and totalizing epistemic enclosure are both compromised.

7.7 A (Compost)humanist Counter-Hegemony

As noted above, the presencing of the relational does not erase the individualist.⁶⁹ Connection might be conceived of as a presencing through the enactment of relational lifeways because it is enacted in an individualist lifeworld that absences these same lifeways. While an ontology of disconnect might be apprehended as the move to absence, arrest, banish and erase the other, the ontology of intra-becoming is that which continues to presence and render visible structures of lifeways, showing also the relationship between the two. True to its ontological orientation of phenomenological presencing (vs. an ontology of abyssal erasure), the presencing has the effect of rendering visible both relational and individualist dynamics, discourse and structures.

Two key lessons emerge from this: First, the relational presences the individualist in ways that compost the latter's power without using dominating or obliterating tactics; and second, a view that worlding is not inevitably hegemonic when framed within relational ontologies. By enacting a phenomenological stance, the youth activists show that the individualist and relational lifeworlds are not discrete, competing ontologies in a war of

⁶⁹ Indeed that is a reality about which many eco-social activists actively complain!

positionality with one another. In this way, what the young authors of the *Phoenix Manifesto* show is the falsity of individualist thinking that features a totalizing impulse towards combat, domination or destruction such as is depicted in the ego-cycle. By engaging with individualism through relationality, the former's ontological frames are simply presenced. Their tenets are not rendered into the abyss by this relational re-worlding, or cast out; they might instead be transformed, composted and remade. The individualist world is not destroyed by rendering it visible, but its power to invisibilize or render into the abyss is neutralized. The relational world calls for relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), not abyssal erasure of the other.

Simpson (2020) states: “*Biidaaban* makes visible what was previously invisible. Light and heat of the sun traveling.” (np) Whilst such presencing does not and cannot in itself destroy the structures, violences and material realities generated by the individualist world, the act of rendering its workings, form and construction visible deactivates its ability to invisibilize or render the eco-social other into the abyss with impunity. It does so by destabilizing its claims to sovereignty – questioning their *terra nullius* foundations – and necessarily compromising its interpellative power. It is for this reason that *Biidaaban* “propels us to rebel against the permanence of settler colonialism and not just dream alternative realities but to collectively and continually recreate them on the ground in the physical world in spite of being occupied.” (np) Because it is a moment that defies settlement, it renders visible the false (*terra nullius*) grounds of settlement and fixity. It is the moment that renders the individualist canopy visible without trying to destroy or antagonize it. As the moment of the ongoing renewal of life, presencing is shown to be the possibility to enact otherwise that is available within every moment, lifeway and institution. If this presencing might be the predominant feature of the relational lifeworld, a

claim that hegemony is inevitable might appear itself to be a hegemonic concept that presumes the necessary and inevitable persistence of individualism as dominant.

Both lifeways co-exist and can be dialogically engaged as ontological dimensions of a compounded ego-cycle and eco-cycle model. This does not hegemonically *force* the individualist impulse to become relational, though it necessarily re-parochializes it as relational. Individualist lifeways are highly relational insofar as they presume and impose disembedding relationships on all within its grasp. This might in fact be seen indeed to have the opposite effect of the abyssal (Santos, 2007) erasure of individualism: the deparochializing putting into relief that a phenomenological and decolonizing mode of engagement entails. It is akin to the moment that the town villagers intersubjectively deciding that the Emperor has no clothes. Rather than rendered into the abyss, the Emperor of Individualism is irreversibly exposed and presenced. Whilst an individualist worldview conceals the meanings relational framings articulate, a relational view instead renders the former visible. The hegemonic individualist tent canopy of rights is thus not as enclosing as it presents itself to be. Though the emperor, Individualism, might still govern and benefit from the material and other realities of that power, this moment of exposure cannot be underestimated for its role in exposing the delusion of their claims.

Whilst rooted in eco-social connection, youth climate justice activists cannot unsee the structures and systems of power that intersect to effect violence – though differentially – on and through all bodies. This stance makes it impossible for them to be fully interpellated by hegemonic individualism and its offerings, exposing the stark realities of these systems in ways that cannot be unseen. Whilst this does not in and of itself shift the material basis and effects of hegemonic individualism, it unquestionably weakens the latter's defences and justifications for

existence. Rather than attack when the defences are weak, however, these activists draw on the knowledge of themselves as resilient nature, to draw on the institutions, methods and materials at hand to transform both structure and experience.

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EST. 15-18 JULY 2021

THE PHOENIX MANIFESTO

**NORTH AMERICAN CONSULTATION:
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO A HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT**



Introduction

From July 15-18, 2021, children, young people, adults, and elders from across Turtle Island / North America (Mexico, US, and Canada) came together at *The Phoenix Consultation: The Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment: Building an Agenda for Justice, Equity, and Empowerment* to share their insights with one another and to articulate our key demands for climate justice, environmental rights, and children's human rights. Through a deeply participatory process and hundreds of pages of direct input, the diverse, intergenerational network at the Phoenix Consultation created a space for creatively imagining how we might transform and weave a more humane, just, and ecocentric collective future for all.

The Phoenix Manifesto encapsulates the most key interventions put forth by young people during the Phoenix Consultation. It is a living document, open to continuous evolution from sustained dialogue between children, young people, and intergenerational partners. This iteration of the Phoenix Manifesto was put forth on July 28, 2021.

Our Collective Demands

The Phoenix Manifesto belongs to no one, yet is owned by all. It builds on the continuous advocacy of young people for the future they want, drawing inspiration from and echoing the tangible policy interventions already put forth by youth-driven documents such as the [*Global Youth Climate Action Declaration*](#).

This manifesto seeks to emphasize the importance of shifting the consciousness and the process of policymaking to center the wellbeing of all children, communities, and ecosystems. The following demands are a call to action across sectors, generations, and institutions, at the local, national, and global levels.



- **Ground solutions across social and environmental movements in both the theory and practice of Intersectionality.**
 - Recognize that Intersectionality clarifies the need for justice: *“La Interseccionalidad nos permite tener clara la necesidad de justicia”*;
 - Understand that Intersectionality is a tool for understanding how some identities are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and how just like in an ecosystem, our differences are a strength and resource for climate justice and are necessary for the co-generation of life;
 - Promote and enact eco-social empathy across differences, identities, species, and nations;
 - Recognize that privilege can be leveraged to benefit oppressed communities;

- **Commit to both people and nature's rights to health and wellbeing.**
 - Hold the health of children and ecosystems at the core of decision-making to ensure best practice policy for all (human and nature) and harm reduction;
 - Recognize that environmental justice is foundational to securing the rights of youth and children; there can be no rights for children and youth -- or any human -- if there are no rights for nature;
 - Shift the language of “rights” from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective -- human and nature -- in all of our diversity;

- **Establish and protect the rights of water to health and wellbeing, recognizing that we are all sustained and interconnected through water.**
 - Honor the Indigenous principle of *“Mni Wiconi”* (“water is life” in Lakota);
 - Limit privatization of water and recognize water’s role as a fundamental human right;
 - Impose strict legal consequences for industries and individuals responsible for damaging the health and integrity of bodies of water, whether through intentional or unintentional and direct or indirect pollution;



- Halt the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals that runoff into waterways and have detrimental impacts on both human and environmental health;
- **Shift economic metrics of success from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to eco-psycho-social well-being of people and nature.**
 - Transform our current capitalist economy, which generates inequities and legitimizes unsustainable resource and human exploitation that has created and fueled the climate crisis, into a more sustainable, ecocentric model;
 - Acknowledge the harm that is perpetuated by using GDP, a wartime measure that places more value on a forest when it is logged than when it is living, as a measure of success;
 - Promote circular economies, gift economies, and well-being economies as practiced by many Indigenous nations here on these lands for millennia;
- **Strengthen and broaden environmental education.**
 - Prioritize proactive environmental education for all ages, bringing the global population into a stronger understanding of our current realities in a way that fosters innovation and creativity;
 - Commit to implementing early environmental education that equips humans to transform the self, institutions, and ways of being in ways that ensure rights for all humans and nature;
 - Prioritize emotional development in K-12 schooling;
 - Make respect for the environment a habit;
- **Use proactive, preventative policymaking.**
 - Mitigate future harm through clearly defined, effective policies and procedures around challenges such as electronic waste (e-waste), ecosystem loss, and natural habitat destruction;
 - Limit the decision-making power of corporations and extractive industries proactively, so as to prevent future abuses of the Earth;



- **Defend the sacred through ecocentric and ecofeminist policy.**
 - Center an ethic of care in all forms of policy and governance, shifting away from anthropocentric models and towards ecocentric ways of being;
 - Reintegrate ecocentric perspectives into societal frameworks, honoring the Earth as an animate and generative life force that cares for us and that we must care for in return;
 - Prioritize the wellbeing of mothers and children as a key intervention for sustainable policymaking;

- **Acknowledge ecoanxiety as an emergent mental health crisis and create adequate systems of support;**
 - Create support networks for processing the complexity of emotions that the climate crisis produces in all generations across all identities and communities;

- **Decolonize policymaking, societal institutions, and respected diverse forms of knowledge.**
 - Ensure policies are informed by Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and governance systems, which are rooted in ecocentric ways of being;
 - Approach modern climate issues through a decolonial perspective, including understanding and actively disrupting the legacy of historical colonialism, refusing ongoing present-day colonialism, and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous nations;
 - Move away from extractivist, exploitative, colonial methods of engaging with the earth and its resources, and partnering with the earth as an animate agent for change;

- **Support self-determination of Indigenous peoples and center Indigenous knowledge.**
 - Support Indigenous communities to practice their traditional ways of being and in their pursuit of self-determination;



- Center Indigenous voices in systems; Indigenous-led discourse on local, national, and international environmental policy is key to co-creating systems grounded in a reciprocal relationship with nature and long term sustainable change;
- **Support the flourishing and diversity of localized social and environmental ecosystems.**
 - Ground national and international decision-making in local community structures and economies of scale.
 - Prioritize local food systems, traditional agroecological practices, heirloom seeds, community care structures, accessibility and sustainability of urban planning;
- **Call for accountability for harm against both ecosystems and communities.**
 - Create systems of legal accountability at all levels of governance for ecocide and environmental health harms.
 - Hold high-income countries and multinational corporations that drive consumption and overexploitation of natural and human capital to a high standard of responsibility;
 - Protect communities forced to migrate due to climate change, including both preventative strategies and support for current climate refugees;
- **Prioritize youth empowerment and meaningful, sustained intergenerational partnership including fair payment of youth advocates.**
 - Create partnerships across generations, with non-performative, meaningful inclusion of children and youth in all decisions and actions. This includes not only empowerment of children and young people in these spaces, but also education for adults and elders on how to listen to and respect young people as equal partners in creating lasting change;



- Include and genuinely listen to young people in decision-making processes;
- Connect young people to funding streams and support young people in being fairly compensated for their mental, physical, and emotional labor in pushing forward advocacy movements;

- **Protect Activists.**

- Create safety through comprehensive legal frameworks for intergenerational activists, particularly Indigenous land defenders and abolitionists who face ongoing threats to their safety and wellbeing;
- Ensure safety for activists who are women and girls;
- Promote physical and virtual networks, platforms, and spaces where activists have access to protection, support, outreach, and amplification of their cause;

- **Ensure accessibility for all.**

- Center disabled communities in decision making, creating a just and accessible world for people who have disabilities, understanding that this creates a more just world for all;
- Address current ableist culture that limits equal participation and further threatens the rights of those with disabilities;
- Integrate the needs for disabled communities into climate emergency responses and planning;

- **Reframe reform as reimagination.**

- Dare to dream up the world we want to live in from the ground up;
- Create spaces for young people and older generations alike to reimagine our systems and societies to most adequately protect both people and the planet;



We demand these actions, to be taken at the local, national, and international level, to address the threats to the air, water, and forests and the realities of climate change, the local experiences of flooding, wildfires, heatwaves, drought, and sea-level rise that impact us all globally. We need to address the colonial, hetero-patriarchal, and consumerist cultures that fuel climate change and its disproportionate effects on low-income countries and post-colonial communities.

We remain committed to actualizing and embodying the above demands in order to co-create the just, sustainable, resilient future **we deserve**.

- Participants of the Phoenix Consultation

28 July 2021



The Story of the Phoenix Consultation

Final Report of the North American Consultation on the Right of Children & Youth to a
Healthy Environment: Building an Agenda for Justice, Equity and Empowerment
| July 15-18, 2021 |



Table of Contents

2	What is the Phoenix Consultation?
3	Grateful Acknowledgements
4	Chapter 1: Setting the Stage
8	Chapter 2: Planting the Garden
12	Chapter 3: Tending the Garden
14	Chapter 4: Ripening our Knowledge with Child-Friendly Tools
16	Chapter 5: Harvesting the Fruits of our Learning
17	Chapter 6: Key Recommendations
26	Chapter 7: What's Next?
	Appendix: Glossary of Key Terms
	Appendix: The Phoenix Manifesto
	Appendix: Our Partners



What is the Phoenix Consultation?

The Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) is partnering with organizations around the world to organize regional intergenerational consultations, to produce regional advocacy frameworks and a Global Charter on children's rights and the environment. The Global Charter, an initiative spearheaded by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, will set out an ambitious and unprecedented set of universal standards on children's environmental rights for governments and other key stakeholders.

Collaborating with the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), Terres des Hommes, and the Network on the Rights of the Child (REDIM), CERI hosted the virtual North American Consultation - the Phoenix Consultation - on July 15-18, 2021.

The consultation brought together children and youth activists, government, civil society, academics, local and international organizations, human rights institutions and private sector actors from Canada, Mexico and the United States. Delegates identified actions and demands and grew inter-generational networks. They worked to co-create the The Phoenix Manifesto and five key recommendations (see below) to inform the Global Charter on children's rights to the environment and the General Comment on Children's Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change.

This is the story of the Phoenix Consultation, its outcomes, and delegates' demands.



Grateful Acknowledgements

The Phoenix Consultation was only possible because of the hundreds of amazing young people, Elders, intergenerational partners, and organizations, who were the volunteers, organizers, technology enablers and delegates. It was a deeply collaborative effort and there are too many to name. Collectively, we would like to acknowledge and dedicate this report to the hundreds of Indigenous communities and nations from whose ancestral lands delegates joined the consultation from: for their relationships with the land, waterways and ecosystems, for time immemorial and still today, and their resilient knowledge systems about how to live in good relation with each other and the earth; consultation delegates: for their commitment, leadership, wisdom and demands, as outlined in *The Phoenix Manifesto*; the diversity of young people that live today across this beautiful region, and the seven generations to come; and All Our Relations across the ecosystems that hold us all: for the teachings they offer us about regenerative resilience, gift-reciprocity, and love.



Chapter 1: Setting the Stage

On a planet being devastated by environmental destruction, loss and human greed, things were out of balance. Too much was being lost. Not enough was being done and too much was at stake. Young people sounded the alarm. They rose up and took to the streets in the largest global protests ever held. In 2019, 4 million young people in over 150 countries took to the streets to fight for everyone's future. They launched climate action lawsuits against governments and the UN.



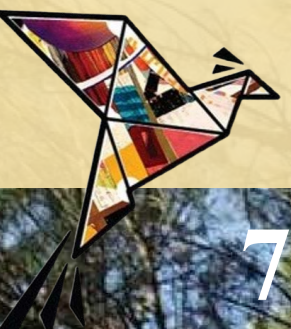
People of all ages, genders, races, cultures, nations, and abilities joined in support - including the land and water protectors who have been standing with the earth for time immemorial: Indigenous peoples. Together we are building a worldwide movement for the care of the earth - and of each other. There are poets and teachers, government workers and economists, parents and politicians, taxi drivers and lawyers, artists and scientists, architects and farmers, grandparents and researchers, business people and cooks. Everyone has important perspectives, knowledge, ideas and gifts to share and offer.

"We must work together like an ecosystem, with everyone playing distinct roles."



One of the people who joined was the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment, David Boyd, and he made an important decision: if children were the ones being most affected by its destruction, they should have a seat at the decision-making tables. His decision is backed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which gives the right to young people to have a say in all matters affecting them. 196 countries around the world, who have signed the CRC, agree.

The destruction of the environment destroys the chance for all people to enjoy their rights, especially children and youth. 1.7 million children under five (more than 1 in 4) lose their lives every year as a result of the climate crisis. Millions more suffer from environmental-related diseases and harms related to the destruction of the natural environment and unprecedented global biodiversity loss. While children are the most vulnerable, some are more vulnerable than others - especially those facing inequities due to their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or socio-economic status.



Chapter 2: Planting the Garden

From July 15-18th, 2021, approximately two hundred youth, Elders and adults from across Mexico, Canada, and the United States came together for the Phoenix Consultation. The North American regional consultation - the Phoenix Consultation - was the fourth of eight regional consultations with young people being held around the globe. It was the first ever intergenerational consultation on the right of children to a healthy environment in North America, and the first virtual consultation of its kind.

The Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), Terres des Hommes, and the Network for the Rights of Children in Mexico (REDIM) organized all aspects of the consultation in collaborative partnerships with an Intergenerational Advisory Committee (IAC) and an Academic Committee representing 12 research institutions across the region - all made possible by the formal support of Webex, Cisco Systems, e-PLUS, UNICEF-USA, and HSR Zero Waste.



Sowing the Garden with the Inter-Generational Advisory Committee (IAC)

In the months leading up to the Consultation, the IAC - made up of by 2 young people and 1 Elder from each country - met regularly to plan the agenda and ensure the process was led by young people.

Seeding Big Ideas with Youth and Senior Researchers: the Academic Committee

A network of children's rights and participatory researchers from 12 universities across Mexico, Canada and the US, shaped all aspects of the event by conducting participatory and youth-led research in the year leading up to the event. Engagements included: intergenerational focus groups, online surveys, youth participatory action research training, participatory engagements, climate change mapping, storytelling, and collaborative curriculum design. These young researchers were also delegates at the consultation.



Protecting Growth

Organizers worked with child protection safety experts who drew on the best, evidence-based practices to ensure young people were optimally supported to engage together in a safe and supportive online intergenerational environment.

Budding Partnerships with Friends in Tech

This consultation faced the unique challenge of being the first virtual consultation of its kind. With an orientation to possibility, IICRD negotiated a formal in-kind sponsorship and partnership with Cisco Systems Inc. and e-PLUS. Cisco / e-PLUS enabled us to use the latest innovative technologies being used by the G7, the Grammys and the US House of Representatives. Technology supported live trilingual interpretation in Spanish, French and English.

Growing a Community Online

Cisco also developed and worked with organizers to develop and pilot a new virtual platform - YouthEarthRights.webex.com - which will enable ongoing regional and international intergenerational networking well into the future.



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

This group lead research consultations and trainings prior to the Phoenix gathering to engage as well as gather the views of larger numbers of young people to be included in the event

Representing 15 research institutions

Youth research groups

Please see full list of institutions at end of report

CERI

TERRE DES HOMMES

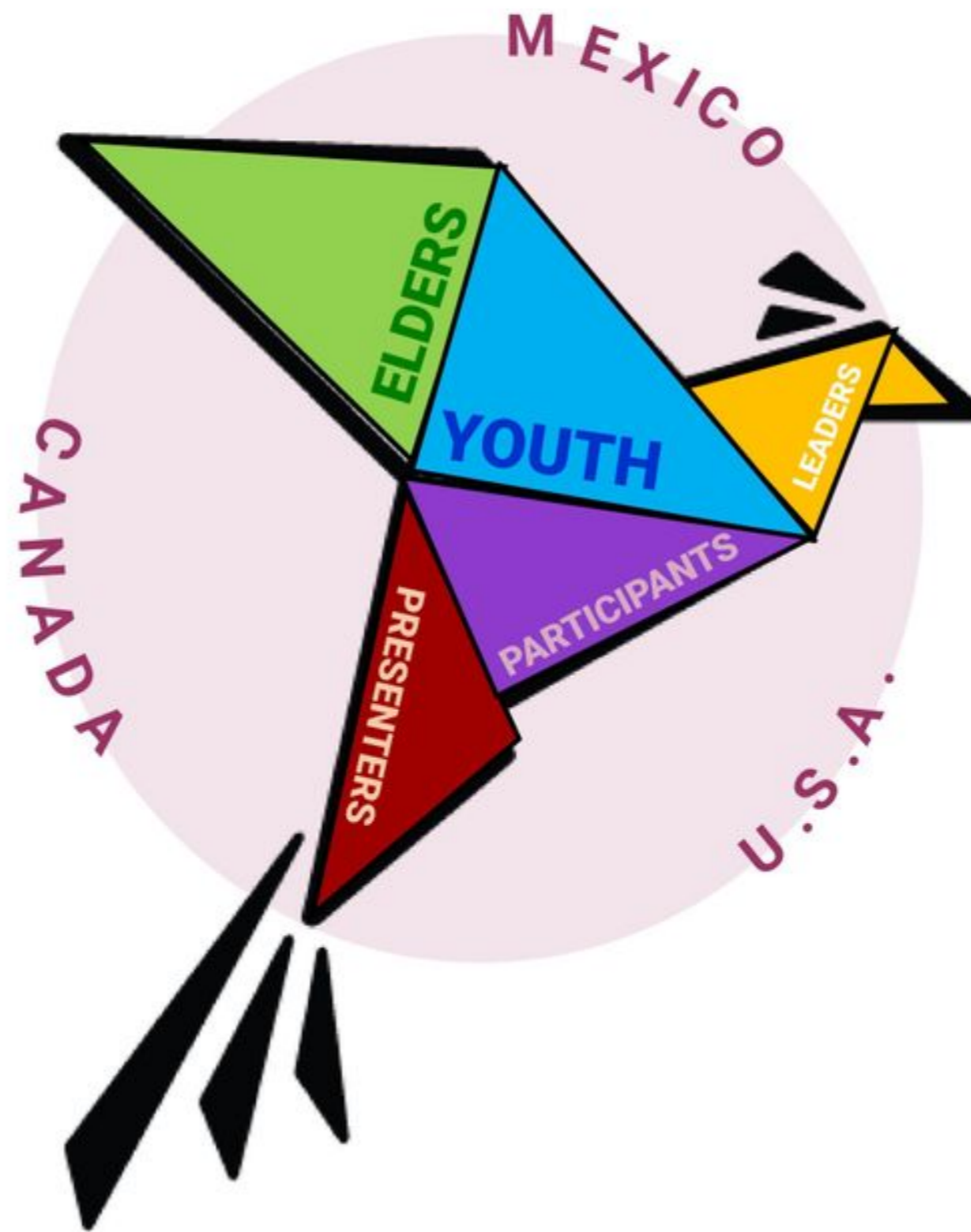
REDIM

IICRD

DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION

STEERING COMMITTEE

In partnership with several organizations, this group led the planning, coordination, and logistical actions needed to organize the consultation



ELDERS

I.A.C.

Consisting of members from Mexico, Canada, and the U.S.A., the Intergenerational Advisory Committee (IAC) ensured that children and young people's views were at the center of decisions being made both within its membership and in all parts of the Phoenix consultation

YOUTH

ADULT ALLIES

SPONSORS

ORGANIZING PARTNERS

TECH PARTNERS

COLLABORATORS

This network consisted of key organizations & sponsors that were eager to partner with the Steering Committee to support the Phoenix consultation

Chapter 3: Tending the Garden at the 4-Day Consultation

Just under 200 intergenerational delegates from across the region registered and participated in the formal trilingual (Spanish, French, English) consultation from 15-18 July 2021. Some of the delegates were young people under the age of 25, others were under the age of 18. The consultation occurred at the height of summer, when Covid restrictions were just lifted in many locales.

Thursday

We **Opened** the event with a prayer by an Indigenous Elder, a welcome by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment David Boyd, and an interactive 'meet and greet' for delegates.

Friday

We **Set the Scene**, hearing from youth engaged in climate justice research, talking about oceans, forests and food sovereignty, and considering what intra-national environmental justice might mean.

Saturday

We focused on **Empathy** within the intra-national environmental justice movement, discussing the intersectionality of race, Indigeneity, ability, gender, cultural, socio-economic and regional difference. We explored the political and environmental threats that face climate activists and children's rights.

Sunday

We turned to **Intergenerational Action and Advocacy**, the future of the climate justice movement in North America, and discussed what's next. We introduced the YouthEarthRights platform: YouthEarthRights.webex.com.



Chapter 4: Ripening our Knowledge Together Using Child-Friendly Tools

The event was a model of child-friendly consultation mechanisms, supporting meaningful engagement and interactions in many ways. With leadership from participatory researchers, child safety experts, and best practices for online engagement, the consultation organizers worked with its tech partners to embrace the opportunities the virtual platform enabled and design interactive strategies that would maximize participation, relationship-building and genuine dialogue.



- Highly interactive **panel sessions** featured a mix of dynamic short presentations, dialogue through breakout discussions, shared google documents, and amongst the wider group in the chat;
- Online safety experts offered **confidential immediate support** via a private online room and/or chat to any participants needing support or wanting to report any safety concerns;
- **Online tech support** was specifically offered to those participants living with disabilities as well as those encountering challenges;
- Dynamic **multilingual young Emceese** facilitated throughout, to create connection and play in the virtual space;

- **Online polls** enabled us to check in with participants throughout the event;
- A **“pod” structure** convened small same-language groups of cross-generational participants who met each day to reflect on the day’s content, build relationships, and capture ideas in shared Google documents;
- **End-of-day full group reflections**, using online software that captured participants' anonymous contributions in real-time;
- **Short sessions** and **frequent breaks** enabled participants to care for their whole selves; and
- Simultaneous **trilingual interpretation** meant participants could share and participate in their language of choice.



Chapter 5: Harvesting the Fruits of our Learning

The Phoenix Manifesto

The key outcome of the consultation is the *Phoenix Manifesto* (Chapter 7), a list of demands for how we might co-create a more humane, just, and ecocentric collective future for all. The Manifesto was co-generated by delegates, led by youth who engaged in real-time analysis of consultation data in shared online documents, the daily reflections and session transcripts.

The Flowering of an Intergenerational Movement

The pod structure supported deep connection and relationship-building, whilst the interactive full-group activities built a sense of wider community. Many participants shared that this budding intergenerational network the most significant feature of the consultation for them. Delegates agreed, the event was just the start of the consultation.

Key Recommendations

The key recommendations (Chapter 6) outline the key insights, lessons and points emphasized by young people across the consultation, providing critical context to Phoenix Manifesto. This, alongside the Phoenix Manifesto, ensures the voices of children across North America are represented in the Global Charter on children's rights and the environment.



Chapter 6: Key Recommendations

Following the consultation, an inter-generational research team systematically coded and analyzed all consultation data, reaching 5 Key Recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at funders, decision-makers, policymakers, private sector, educators, community development organizations and activists alike.

1. Support is urgently needed for mechanisms that facilitate collective initiatives, actions, dialogues and organizing - across differences, countries, regions and generations!
2. We need collaborative leadership approaches that enable shared, inter-generational leadership at the local, regional and global levels.
3. Decision-making must be informed by Indigenous wisdom and diverse forms of knowledge.
4. We can't address climate change if we don't also take on racism, colonialism, ableism, capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy.
5. Rights frameworks must be transformed to put nature and the collective at the centre



1: Support is urgently needed for mechanisms that facilitate collective initiatives, actions, dialogues and organizing - across differences, countries, regions and generations!

There is no shortage of ideas, capacity, will power or determination for concrete climate actions across the generations, particularly amongst young people. Even amidst the harrowing environmental statistics, the event was marked by an orientation to possibility. Delegates were deeply inspired and invigorated by the chance to find shared ground amidst diversity, on which we might collectively act. This regional consultation saw the sharing of knowledge and approaches across diverse experiences, identities, countries, generations and regions. For example, Mexican researchers and delegates highlighted the grave risks climate justice activists face, in addition to sharing relational frameworks that seek to remake existing institutions.

Young people emphasized that ongoing, concrete steps must be taken, and resources invested, to support regional intergenerational networks and online platforms such as was initiated through this Consultation and the YouthEarthRights platform. The challenges of hosting this consultation in the midst of the global pandemic led to new partnerships between children's rights, technology, and environmental sectors. This opened up new opportunities for coordination and communication that leverage existing assets and approaches. Covid 19 has shown we can unmake and remake the ways we live. Delegates want to build on these new partnerships and opportunities to collaboratively remake the world.

"Collective action not individual action plays a key role in changing attitudes."



2: We need collaborative leadership approaches that enable shared, inter-generational leadership at the local, regional and global levels.

The participation of young people in all “matters affecting them” is enshrined in the UNCRC’s Article 12, which stipulates that their views not only be heard by all UNCRC signatories, but also be “given due weight” through formal judiciary, institutional, national and intergovernmental mechanisms.

An approach by which adults hear young people’s perspectives is outdated: we need young people at all decision-making tables, and we need adults to leverage their experience and influence to collaboratively lead with them. Youth delegates were frustrated at the burden of responsibility placed on their shoulders and need more adults to join them. Youth delegates saw generational divides as but one of many points of difference facing us. Many do not identify as children: the realities of climate change make you grow up fast. Youth offer unique wisdom and perspectives that must be properly acknowledged and compensated.

We need new ways to work together that do not separate children from adults, but enable fully democratic and collaborative inter-generational leadership.

“Difference is not cause for separation, difference is necessary for the co-generation of life. It is essential that everyone is part of the conversation.”



3: Decision-making must be informed by Indigenous wisdom and diverse forms of knowledge.

Since climate emergency is linked to an intertwining set of eco-social crises such as colonialism, racism, capitalism, ableism and cisheteropatriarchy, we need to learn from the diversity of knowledges available to address these complexities. Delegates engaged in dialogue about the wisdom Indigenous communities hold for climate activism. Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) systems have modelled reciprocal, respectful and relationally accountable ways of living with the earth for millennia. Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and reconciliation with the earth go hand in hand (Tully, 2018).

Delegates also emphasized the important role of emotional intelligence and embodied knowledge. From attending to the very real physical and psychological trauma experienced every day by countless young people, to recognizing the role of love and care (for one another and for the earth) in addressing climate change, decision-making must be grounded in the emotional. This might include developing new psycho-social support programs or transforming processes to take emotional well being into account.

"Acts of love offer profound respect to everyone, from the smallest to the most vast. We need each other because we are part of a universe - one-diverse."



4: We can't address climate change if we don't also take on racism, colonialism, ableism, capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy.

The consultation supported deep listening and learning across a diversity of delegates to understand the importance of collaboration beyond building momentum. In order to transform institutions to address the climate emergency, intersectional approaches are essential. The ways in which some children are being affected differently by climate change - along racial, socio-economic, gendered and national lines tells us that the climate emergency is created by more than human exceptionalism. Racism, colonialism, ableism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy and anthropocentrism are all interconnected.

Intertwining systems require multi-pronged, systems-level responses. The Phoenix Manifesto reflects delegates' prioritization of addressing the root causes of these systems of violence. Anti-racist, feminist and Indigenous movements offer important lenses through which to look at the current set of eco-social crises and must be integrated into all decision-making.

"Intersectionality clarifies the need for justice."



5: Rights frameworks must be transformed to put nature and the collective at the centre.

Children's rights frameworks that center the 'individual' and the 'human' do not go far enough. Rights frameworks and institutions must learn from Indigenous wisdoms, communities and peoples who have always centered the natural world, in recognition that anthropocentric institutions have contributed to the climate emergency faced today. Instead, humans must remake their institutions and frameworks so that they recognize humans' place within nature. Nature must be part of the collective - a collective of which humans (and young people) are only ever a part.

Delegates observed that non-human bodies are gravely affected by climate emergency yet have no rights within most countries or rights frameworks. Delegates cited examples of Indigenous governance systems of living with the earth, and other innovations such as the Rights of Nature being introduced in countries such as Ecuador and New Zealand. While delegates believed children's and human rights to a healthy environment is an important first step in this direction, they focused on the rights of the environment. For true transformation to take place, the natural world must be honoured with its own personhood - and rights.

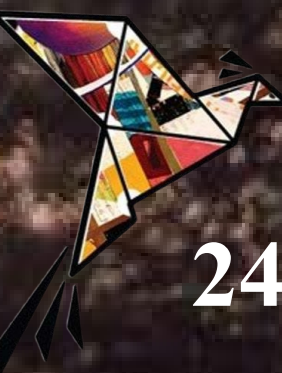
"We are all children of the earth."





On October 8, 2021, the UN Human Rights Council adopted two significant resolutions for human rights and the environment: Resolution 48/13, which establishes the right for all to a Healthy Environment; and Resolution 48/14, which creates the new position of the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change.

“I have learned that the revolution must be sustainable, the revolution must be accessible, the revolution is you, and it is us.”





This landmark was influenced by many different actors, including youth climate justice activists, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, and countless non-governmental organizations, including all of the organizers and collaborators the Children Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) and the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) who organized the Phoenix Consultation. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has called climate change "the greatest threat to human rights."

"We believe that a public that is well informed is empowered to protect the environment."



Chapter 7: What is the next chapter? It's up to all of us, together.

ACTIVATE THE MANIFESTO! Use the Intergenerational Workbook to explore, engage in, create/change policies and take action at every level - individual, organizational, societal on each of the Phoenix Manifesto Demands.

The Intergenerational Workbook is an interactive exercise ALL ACTORS can engage in with their peers, their organizations, their communities, their leadership, or on their own. It is designed for policymakers and young children alike. It is adaptable to any timeframe or process.

To engage, you identify the issues and demands that matter to you, identify who needs to be engaged, take stock of the resources you have access to or need to address it, name the specific actions you want to take, and map out steps needed to take action.

Join the movement:
www.youtheearthrights.webex.com



Glossary of Key Terms

Ableism: Bogart and Dunn (2019) define ableism as the “stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities”. Ableism also refers to the “ideas, practices, institutions and social relations that presume ablebodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalised [...] and largely invisible ‘others’” (Chouinard, 1997, p. 380).

Accessibility: Accessibility is a broad umbrella term for “all aspects which influence a person’s ability to function within an environment” (Iwarsson & Stahl, 2003). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) groups accessibility into three main types: (1) physical accessibility; (2) service accessibility; and (3) accessibility to communication and information.

Capacity-Building: We can talk about capacity-building on the level of the individual, organisation, collective, or system. At the individual level, we seek capacity-building to “build the capacity of individuals to develop personal mastery, contribute their “gifts” and find balance in their lives” (Reinelt, adapted from GEO 2009).

Decolonization: Saini and Begum (2020) say that at its heart, decolonization is the unraveling of colonial and imperial practices as they relate to race, gender, sexuality, and ability. In academic spaces, decolonization is especially important because it focuses on actively decentering “the dominance of Euro-Western structures of knowing” (Wakeham).

Food Sovereignty: “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (La Via Campesina via Food Secure Canada).

Heteronormativity: According to the Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology, “heteronormativity is the idea that heterosexual attraction and relationships are the normal form of sexuality” (Barker, 2014).

Intersectionality: Race Forward defines intersectionality as “the acknowledgement that multiple power dynamics/”isms” are operating simultaneously—often in complex and compounding ways—and must be considered together in order to have a more complete understanding of oppression and ways to transform it. There are multiple forms of privilege and oppression based on race, gender, class, sexuality, age, ability, religion, citizenship or immigration status, and so on. These social hierarchies are products of our social, cultural, political, economic, and legal environment. They drive disparities and divisions that help those in power maintain and expand their power. There’s a danger in falsely equating different dynamics (e.g. racism and sexism) or comparing different systems to each other (sometimes referred to as the “oppression Olympics”). It is important to give each dynamic distinct, specific and sufficient attention. Every person is privileged in some areas and disadvantaged in other areas” (2015).

Safeguarding: When we talk about safeguarding, we are referring to the “processes and actions we take to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm” (Child Protection Company, 2019).



EST. 15-18 JULY 2021

THE PHOENIX MANIFESTO

**NORTH AMERICAN CONSULTATION:
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO A HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT**



Introduction

From July 15-18, 2021, children, young people, adults, and elders from across Turtle Island / North America (Mexico, US, and Canada) came together at *The Phoenix Consultation: The Right of Children and Youth to a Healthy Environment: Building an Agenda for Justice, Equity, and Empowerment* to share their insights with one another and to articulate our key demands for climate justice, environmental rights, and children's human rights. Through a deeply participatory process and hundreds of pages of direct input, the diverse, intergenerational network at the Phoenix Consultation created a space for creatively imagining how we might transform and weave a more humane, just, and ecocentric collective future for all.

The Phoenix Manifesto encapsulates the most key interventions put forth by young people during the Phoenix Consultation. It is a living document, open to continuous evolution from sustained dialogue between children, young people, and intergenerational partners. This iteration of the Phoenix Manifesto was put forth on July 28, 2021.

Our Collective Demands

The Phoenix Manifesto belongs to no one, yet is owned by all. It builds on the continuous advocacy of young people for the future they want, drawing inspiration from and echoing the tangible policy interventions already put forth by youth-driven documents such as the [*Global Youth Climate Action Declaration*](#).

This manifesto seeks to emphasize the importance of shifting the consciousness and the process of policymaking to center the wellbeing of all children, communities, and ecosystems. The following demands are a call to action across sectors, generations, and institutions, at the local, national, and global levels.



- **Ground solutions across social and environmental movements in both the theory and practice of Intersectionality.**
 - Recognize that Intersectionality clarifies the need for justice: "*La Interseccionalidad nos permite tener clara la necesidad de justicia*";
 - Understand that Intersectionality is a tool for understanding how some identities are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and how just like in an ecosystem, our differences are a strength and resource for climate justice and are necessary for the co-generation of life;
 - Promote and enact eco-social empathy across differences, identities, species, and nations;
 - Recognize that privilege can be leveraged to benefit oppressed communities;
- **Commit to both people and nature's rights to health and wellbeing.**
 - Hold the health of children and ecosystems at the core of decision-making to ensure best practice policy for all (human and nature) and harm reduction;
 - Recognize that environmental justice is foundational to securing the rights of youth and children; there can be no rights for children and youth -- or any human -- if there are no rights for nature;
 - Shift the language of "rights" from being about individuals or humans to the ecocentric language of justice for the collective -- human and nature -- in all of our diversity;
- **Establish and protect the rights of water to health and wellbeing, recognizing that we are all sustained and interconnected through water.**
 - Honor the Indigenous principle of "*Mni Wiconi*" ("water is life" in Lakota);
 - Limit privatization of water and recognize water's role as a fundamental human right;
 - Impose strict legal consequences for industries and individuals responsible for damaging the health and integrity of bodies of water, whether through intentional or unintentional and direct or indirect pollution;



- Halt the use of harmful pesticides and chemicals that runoff into waterways and have detrimental impacts on both human and environmental health;
- **Shift economic metrics of success from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to eco-psycho-social well-being of people and nature.**
 - Transform our current capitalist economy, which generates inequities and legitimizes unsustainable resource and human exploitation that has created and fueled the climate crisis, into a more sustainable, ecocentric model;
 - Acknowledge the harm that is perpetuated by using GDP, a wartime measure that places more value on a forest when it is logged than when it is living, as a measure of success;
 - Promote circular economies, gift economies, and well-being economies as practiced by many Indigenous nations here on these lands for millennia;
- **Strengthen and broaden environmental education.**
 - Prioritize proactive environmental education for all ages, bringing the global population into a stronger understanding of our current realities in a way that fosters innovation and creativity;
 - Commit to implementing early environmental education that equips humans to transform the self, institutions, and ways of being in ways that ensure rights for all humans and nature;
 - Prioritize emotional development in K-12 schooling;
 - Make respect for the environment a habit;
- **Use proactive, preventative policymaking.**
 - Mitigate future harm through clearly defined, effective policies and procedures around challenges such as electronic waste (e-waste), ecosystem loss, and natural habitat destruction;
 - Limit the decision-making power of corporations and extractive industries proactively, so as to prevent future abuses of the Earth;



- **Defend the sacred through ecocentric and ecofeminist policy.**
 - Center an ethic of care in all forms of policy and governance, shifting away from anthropocentric models and towards ecocentric ways of being;
 - Reintegrate ecocentric perspectives into societal frameworks, honoring the Earth as an animate and generative life force that cares for us and that we must care for in return;
 - Prioritize the wellbeing of mothers and children as a key intervention for sustainable policymaking;
- **Acknowledge ecoanxiety as an emergent mental health crisis and create adequate systems of support;**
 - Create support networks for processing the complexity of emotions that the climate crisis produces in all generations across all identities and communities;
- **Decolonize policymaking, societal institutions, and respected diverse forms of knowledge.**
 - Ensure policies are informed by Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and governance systems, which are rooted in ecocentric ways of being;
 - Approach modern climate issues through a decolonial perspective, including understanding and actively disrupting the legacy of historical colonialism, refusing ongoing present-day colonialism, and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous nations;
 - Move away from extractivist, exploitative, colonial methods of engaging with the earth and its resources, and partnering with the earth as an animate agent for change;
- **Support self-determination of Indigenous peoples and center Indigenous knowledge.**
 - Support Indigenous communities to practice their traditional ways of being and in their pursuit of self-determination;



- Center Indigenous voices in systems; Indigenous-led discourse on local, national, and international environmental policy is key to co-creating systems grounded in a reciprocal relationship with nature and long term sustainable change;
- **Support the flourishing and diversity of localized social and environmental ecosystems.**
 - Ground national and international decision-making in local community structures and economies of scale.
 - Prioritize local food systems, traditional agroecological practices, heirloom seeds, community care structures, accessibility and sustainability of urban planning;
- **Call for accountability for harm against both ecosystems and communities.**
 - Create systems of legal accountability at all levels of governance for ecocide and environmental health harms.
 - Hold high-income countries and multinational corporations that drive consumption and overexploitation of natural and human capital to a high standard of responsibility;
 - Protect communities forced to migrate due to climate change, including both preventative strategies and support for current climate refugees;
- **Prioritize youth empowerment and meaningful, sustained intergenerational partnership including fair payment of youth advocates.**
 - Create partnerships across generations, with non-performative, meaningful inclusion of children and youth in all decisions and actions. This includes not only empowerment of children and young people in these spaces, but also education for adults and elders on how to listen to and respect young people as equal partners in creating lasting change;



- Include and genuinely listen to young people in decision-making processes;
- Connect young people to funding streams and support young people in being fairly compensated for their mental, physical, and emotional labor in pushing forward advocacy movements;

- **Protect Activists.**

- Create safety through comprehensive legal frameworks for intergenerational activists, particularly Indigenous land defenders and abolitionists who face ongoing threats to their safety and wellbeing;
- Ensure safety for activists who are women and girls;
- Promote physical and virtual networks, platforms, and spaces where activists have access to protection, support, outreach, and amplification of their cause;

- **Ensure accessibility for all.**

- Center disabled communities in decision making, creating a just and accessible world for people who have disabilities, understanding that this creates a more just world for all;
- Address current ableist culture that limits equal participation and further threatens the rights of those with disabilities;
- Integrate the needs for disabled communities into climate emergency responses and planning;

- **Reframe reform as reimagination.**

- Dare to dream up the world we want to live in from the ground up;
- Create spaces for young people and older generations alike to reimagine our systems and societies to most adequately protect both people and the planet;



We demand these actions, to be taken at the local, national, and international level, to address the threats to the air, water, and forests and the realities of climate change, the local experiences of flooding, wildfires, heatwaves, drought, and sea-level rise that impact us all globally. We need to address the colonial, hetero-patriarchal, and consumerist cultures that fuel climate change and its disproportionate effects on low-income countries and post-colonial communities.

We remain committed to actualizing and embodying the above demands in order to co-create the just, sustainable, resilient future **we deserve**.

- Participants of the Phoenix Consultation

28 July 2021



Intergenerational Advisory Committee

Two young people and 1 Elder from each of Mexico, Canada and the US formed the Intergenerational Advisory Committee, the group who was responsible for shaping and overseeing all aspects of the North American consultation.

Academic Community of Practice

An interdisciplinary coalition of leading academics and researchers representing 15 universities and institutions in the region conducted grassroots consultations with children and young people in the lead up to the Phoenix Consultation. Links to the pre-consultation reports can be found at iicrd.org.

- California State University, Monterey Bay, USA
- CEVES, Canada
- Colectivo Ecoescencias, Mexico
- Concordia University, Canada
- David Suzuki Elders, Canada
- David Suzuki Foundation, Canada
- Elders Climate Action (ECA) NorCal Chapter, US
- International Institute for Child Rights and Development, Canada
- McGill University, Canada
- Mount Allison University, Canada
- Red Universitaria de Cambio Climático, Mexico
- Royal Roads University, Canada
- Ryerson University, Canada
- Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Xochimilco, Mexico
- University of California at Davis, US
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Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)
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Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)
Tejiendo Redes Infancia
The Sandbox Project
The Young Canadians Roundtable on Health
UNICEF Canada
UNICEF USA
Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana

Sponsors:

CISCO
UNICEF USA
Zero Waste



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