First Nation Real Estate Development and the Evolution of Settler-Colonial Capitalism in Vancouver

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Abstract

What today is the City of Vancouver sits on land that the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations consider their traditional, unceded territory. However, they were largely displaced and erased from their territory through the colonial process and the expansion of the city. Since then, the city has experienced real estate booms that have tremendously increased land and housing prices. In that context, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh have also begun to develop large-scale, highly profit-oriented real estate on some of their remaining reserve parcels or land that they were able to buy (back) from the Canadian provincial and federal governments.

In this dissertation, I develop a better understanding of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations' real estate developments at Heather, Jericho, and Seńáḵw. I investigate their role in Vancouver's political economy of real estate, and in what ways they embody specific intricacies of the relationship between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity. In three papers, each focusing on different aspects of First Nation real estate development and its entanglements with the region's real estate capitalism, I contribute to enhancing knowledge about the evolution of settler-colonial capitalism in the Vancouver region.

Broad scholarship exists on both capitalist urbanization and on settler-colonial processes (past and present). However, research in either field is rarely concerned with Indigenous peoples' active engagement with capitalism. Similarly, little scholarship connects research on contemporary Vancouver urbanism with research on the city's settler-colonial past and present, and only marginal engagement exists with the region's First Nations' economic development programs.

To address these research gaps, I here employ concepts used to understand the urbanization of capital and seek to repurpose them for this settler-colonial context. By further developing such theoretical concepts, I contribute to scholarship on the political economy of settler colonialism in urban contexts. I not only highlight the manifold empirical connections between capitalist urbanization and settler colonialism, but also underscore how settler capitalist processes can be better understood by using concepts that explain broader processes of capitalist urbanization.

In the dissertation, I am thus interested in the complexities of the political economy of land and real estate as a product of contemporary urban settler-colonial capitalism. I observe some of the ways in which the unresolvable impasse between Indigenous claims pre-dating colonization and the colonial private property system is "fixed" as First Nations become powerful actors in real estate capitalism. First Nation governments create structures through which land is claimed as Indigenous territory as much as it can function as an alienable asset from which rent can be extracted. As First Nation governments operate within the realities created through the colonial process, observing Indigenous real estate development signifies observing complex notions of how the settler-colonial economy and value extraction unfold beyond false dichotomies between Indigeneity and capitalist urbanization.

Such complex processes and the resolution of seeming contradictions is by no means unique to this context, but ubiquitous in settler-colonial geographies, where lands are continuously integrated into the Western property system and capital accumulation. In the observed case, First Nation governments might obtain substantial amounts of political power to leverage within the dominant political economy. However, that leverage is also restricted to the ultimate frame of reference of the political economy of settler-colonial capitalism. To the extent that such developments might further Indigenous agendas, they also advance settler-colonial logics of land control and value extraction on Indigenous lands. As development projects are implemented and economic profit materializes, it will thus be important to pay attention to the role that real estate development will actually afford First Nations within the political economy of settler colonialism.

Zusammenfassung

Das Land, auf welchem sich die Stadt Vancouver heute befindet, wird von den xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), und səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations als Ihr traditionelles Territorium beansprucht. Die First Nations wurden jedoch durch die Kolonisierung und die Expansion der Stadt weitgehend von ihrem Territorium vertrieben. Inzwischen sind Land -und Wohnungspreise in der Stadt stark angestiegen. In diesem Kontext haben die Musqueam, Squamish, und Tsleil-Waututh nun ebenfalls mit dem Bau von großen und hochgradig profitorientierten Immobilienprojekten auf übriggebliebenem Reservatsland, oder auf rückgekauften Parzellen begonnen.

Das Ziel dieser Dissertation ist die Immobilienprojekte Heather, Jericho, und Seȟáḵw der Musqueam, Squamish, und Tsleil-Waututh besser zu verstehen. Die Dissertation untersucht die Rolle solcher Immobilienprojekte in der Politischen Ökonomie in Vancouver, und beschreibt wie diese Verstrickungen zwischen Kapitalismus, Kolonialismus, und Indigener Identität verkörpern. Durch drei Artikel mit unterschiedlichen Foki auf verschiedene Aspekte dieser Immobilienprojekte und deren Verstrickungen mit dem Immobilienkapitalismus trägt die Dissertation zum verbesserten Verständnis der Weiterentwicklung des Siedlerkolonialismus in der Region bei.

Wissenschaftliche Arbeit hat sich sowohl ausgiebig mit der Urbanisierung, als auch mit anhaltenden kolonialen Prozessen auseinandergesetzt. Jedoch setzt sich weder Forschung zu Prozessen der Urbanisierung, noch Forschung zum Siedlerkolonialismus oft mit der Rolle Indigener Akteure als aktive Teilnehmer am Kapitalismus auseinander. Auch existiert wenig Forschung, welche kontemporäre Urbanisierungsprozesse in Vancouver mit Fragen des Kolonialismus verbindet. Des Weiteren hat sich die Wissenschaft kaum mit den ökonomischen Aktivitäten der First Nations in der Region von Vancouver auseinandergesetzt.

Um solche Forschungslücken zu füllen, wendet diese Dissertation vor allem Konzepte an, die zum besseren Verständnis kapitalistischer Urbanisierung verwendet werden und funktioniert diese für den, hier untersuchten, siedlerkolonialen Kontext um. Dadurch trägt die Dissertation zu Forschung zur Politischen Ökonomie des Siedlerkolonialismus in urbanen Kontexten bei. Die Dissertation beschreibt dadurch nicht nur vielfältige Verbindungen zwischen kapitalistischer Urbanisierung und Siedlerkolonialismus. Vielmehr weist sie auch darauf hin, dass siedlerkoloniale Prozesse besser verstanden werden können, wenn Konzepte, die zum Verständnis von kapitalistischer Urbanisierung benutzt werden, angewendet werden.

Auf dieser Basis ist diese Dissertation fundamental an den Komplexitäten der Politischen Ökonomie von Land und Immobilien als Produkt des kontemporären, urbanen Siedlerkolonialismus interessiert. Die Dissertation beobachtet, wie ein unauflösbarer Widerspruch zwischen präkolonialer Indigener Landansprüche und dem, durch die Kolonisierung eingeführten, System von Privatbesitz „gefixt“ wird, indem First Nations mächtige Akteure im Immobilienkapitalismus werden. Es werden Strukturen kreiert, durch welche Land sowohl als Indigenes Territorium, als auch als veräußerbare Anlage funktionieren kann. Diese Beobachtungen stellen falsche Gegenüberstellung von Indigener Identität und kapitalistischer Urbanisierung in Frage.

Solche Komplexitäten und Widersprüche sind keinesfalls einzigartig, stellen sie doch eine universelle Dimension des siedlerkolonialen Prozesses dar, durch welchen Land als Privatbesitz in das System der Kapitalakkumulation eingegliedert wird. Durch solche Prozesse der Eingliederung können Indigene Akteure politische Macht in der vorherrschenden politischen Ökonomie erhalten. Jedoch ist diese Macht ebenso auf den Rahmen dieser politischen Ökonomie limitiert. In diesem Sinne fördern beobachtete Immobilienprojekte Indigene Interessen, sie führen jedoch ebenso siedlerkoloniale Logiken auf Indigenem Land ein. Deshalb wird es in Zukunft wichtig sein, zu beobachten, welche Positionen sich First Nations in der Politischen Ökonomie des Siedlerkolonialismus durch Immobilienentwicklung tatsächlich ermöglichen können.

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1. Introduction

Before initial colonization, what is today the Vancouver region was inhabited by Coast Salish peoples who lived in variegated societal structures of relatively independent communities connected through a complex kinship network. Through the colonial process, they were administered into "Indian bands" by the colonial administration (Thom, 2009, 2014) and some communities later amalgamated into larger groups that form the contemporary category of First Nations in Canada. Today's categories are thus inadequate representations of Indigenous identities' diversity and fluidity. Yet, they also represent a new reality and ways in which Indigenous peoples assert themselves politically, finding identities within colonial structures. In a similar vein, the conceptualization of land as alienable private property that has come to dominate contemporary understandings as a result of colonization does not represent pre-colonial Indigenous conceptualizations of space. However, Indigenous peoples have also come to navigate that reality in many different ways. In this dissertation, I study three large-scale real estate developments that the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations are undertaking in what is today called the City of Vancouver, Canada. These developments also signify a way in which First Nations operate within contemporary categories stemming from colonial realities forced onto them to advance their own agendas. Both, today's categories of First Nations and the emergence of large-scale First Nation real estate developments in Vancouver thus essentially indicate the existence of contemporary Indigeneity that has emerged from "deeply historical, institutionalized and power-inflected ontologies" (Radcliffe, 2017: 223), inextricably intertwined with settler-colonial capitalism.

In this dissertation, I explore some of the complex and contradictory dynamics in-between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity in the context of First Nation real estate development in the City of Vancouver. Most broadly, I ask:

In what ways do intersections between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity manifest themselves in the political economy of contemporary First Nation real estate developments in the City of Vancouver?

This question is approached through three papers that each focus on different aspects of real estate development. Taken together, these papers offer a contribution to enhancing knowledge about the role played by First Nations and their modus of real estate development as part of Vancouver urbanism and real estate capitalism. Likewise, the papers offer a perspective on the evolution of settler-colonial capitalism in the region. While still fundamentally driven by the creation of land-based assets and accumulation from them, the region's real estate capitalism has moved from directly displacing and eliminating Indigenous peoples and their societal structures to First Nations as important actors in the predominant system of accumulation.

The first paper, The Vancouver Socioecological Fix: Indigenous Real-Estate Development as the City's Imagination of Sustainability, Affordability, and Reconciliation (van der Haegen, 2024) is concerned

with the research question: *what are the City of Vancouver's geographical imaginations of its successful future, and in what ways do these materialize in First Nation real estate development?* The paper explores the City of Vancouver's urban planning and development context, and how it generates demand for specific kinds of urban development that is now also pursued by First Nations.

The second paper, Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b) investigates the research question: *What are some of the political-economic structures that enable real estate development on Indigenous land, and in what ways are such structures expressions of Indigenous agency?* This question is answered by observing First Nation real estate development on the project scale. The paper more closely investigates the political economy of the Squamish Nation's Seȟáḵw development, which is both defined by settler-colonial structures and actively shaped by the Squamish Nation in pursuit of its own agenda.

In contrast, the third paper, Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025) observes First Nation real estate development on a regional scale in light of historical ruptures and continuities of settler colonialism. In the paper, my co-author Heather Whiteside and I ask the research question: *In what ways does First Nation real estate development signify continuities and ruptures to settler-colonial capitalism, and how can that changing political economy be characterized?* Answers to this question are pursued by observing contemporary First Nation real estate development with an eye on the historical drivers of settler colonialism and their current reconfiguration under Indigenous real estate capitalism.

Fundamentally, I seek to contribute to a better understanding of the evolution of settler-colonial capitalism in the Vancouver region as observed through First Nation real estate development. To that end, I not only seek improved insights into how Vancouver real estate capitalism integrates First Nations into its circuits of accumulation, but also into how observed novel configurations of space are a product of First Nation agency. As I will detail below, I have encountered limitations in describing First Nation agency. Still, I describe Vancouver urbanism as shaped by the structural forces of colonial capitalism, and as actively navigated by First Nation governments. In so doing, I aim to contribute to descriptions of contemporary capitalist urbanization that reject false dichotomies between Indigeneity and modernity or capitalist urbanization that continuously other Indigenous peoples.

Before giving a brief overview of the context of this dissertation, I want to recognize that what is today the City of Vancouver sits on land that the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations consider their traditional, unceded territory. Since initial colonization and the foundation of the city as the terminus station of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886, the city has grown to be an urban center and major hub for connecting the Canadian resource economy to the markets of the Pacific Rim (Barnes et al., 2011). Initial colonization of the Vancouver area was driven by the Hudson's Bay company's fur trade. However, trade-based colonization was soon supplemented and replaced by settlement-oriented colonization with an inherent interest in land assetization and the extraction of rent (Cowen, 2020;

Harris, 1992, 1997). Similar desires for rent extraction have driven a real estate boom and an influx of large amounts of capital into the city in the recent decades (Ley, 2021; Olds, 1998). The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, who were largely displaced and erased from the cityscape through the colonial process (Barman, 2007), have since begun to develop real estate on remaining reserve parcels and on land that they were able to buy (back) from the provincial and federal governments. Such First Nation real estate development is currently undergoing a substantial increase in scale due to a series of developments that the Nations are undertaking or planning on different parcels.

I have investigated three of the largest First Nation real estate developments in the City of Vancouver. While these developments represent a significant amount of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh's profit-oriented real estate, there are also other developments under different configurations of land ownership that are not investigated in this dissertation. Furthermore, more First Nation real estate development is likely to materialize in the future. One of the three investigated developments is called Sen̓áḵw, which takes place on 4.25 ha of reserve land that the Squamish Nation reclaimed after decades-long court battles in 2001. Reserve land is held in trust by the federal government for a First Nation and thus cannot be used as collateral to obtain credit, but it is thus also not subject to municipal legislation. This now enables the Squamish Nation to develop real estate on Sen̓áḵw to a much higher density than would usually be feasible. The high-rises on Sen̓áḵw should once contain 6'000 apartments for 9'000 inhabitants. In contrast, the two other investigated developments, called Heather Lands and Jericho Lands, are occurring on land parcels that MST Development Corporation (MST), a development company founded between the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, has bought back from the provincial and federal governments. This means that the land in question is not First Nation reserve land, but fee simple private property. The intricacies and significance of such different forms of land tenure for the respective real estate developments can be found in the paper Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). The Heather and Jericho parcels are currently co-owned by MST and the Canada Lands Company (CLC), a federal agency responsible for the disposal of "surplus" governmental land holdings (Whiteside, 2020). Under the plans that MST is co-developing with CLC, the Heather Lands development should once comprise 2'600 apartments, whereas the Jericho Lands development will involve construction of 13'000 apartments. Further details about these developments are available in the three papers.

My empirical observations of these First Nation real estate developments clearly show that they are highly profit-oriented and that their goal is to enable the efficient creation of land-based assets and the extraction of rent. They are either establishing logics of settler-colonial capitalism and land control on Indigenous lands or the intensification of such logics was the precondition for reclaiming land in the first place. All of this happens as a product of the histories and pressures of colonial capitalism and the fundamental drive for profit that underlies Vancouver urbanism. However, development has also become possible as First Nation governments are looking to enable real estate and accumulation for their

own benefit on remnant or reclaimed pieces of land. This is expected to create massive amounts of revenue for the First Nations involved. This could facilitate achievement of their own goals, such as economic independence from the Canadian government and revenue redistribution. Such redistribution through the provision of infrastructure and services may have a fundamental impact on the Nations' communities and might substantially reduce socioeconomic disparity between the Nations' communities and the rest of Canadian society.

To understand how First Nation real estate development emerges as part of settler-colonial capitalism in Vancouver, I consult a wide variety of literatures. This ranges from literatures on settler colonialism to literatures on capitalist urbanization. However, I found relatively little on the "productive" intersection between Indigenous peoples and capitalism I observe in the sense that First Nations actively pursue highly profit-oriented real estate development on a massive scale. Most research describes the structural forces of colonial capitalism and the damage that they cause. In that literature, Indigenous actors usually display agency as fighters and activists resisting the colonial capitalist system, its logics of accumulation, and the creation of difference (Coulthard, 2014; Estes, 2013; Simpson, 2011, 2016b; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018). Without diminishing the importance of that resistance and the scholarship that highlights it, I realized that this somewhat stands in contrast to what I observe empirically. First Nation governments engage in highly capitalist forms of real estate development based on their own self-determination within a system imposed on them. Surely, comprehensive knowledge of the contemporary reproduction of the colonial-capitalist system needs to be based on understanding exactly how reproduction happens in instances in which First Nations productively engage with capitalism and are incorporated (or incorporate themselves) into the capitalist system? And is this apparent gap not reinforcing stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as the antithesis to the modern capitalist world and as being fundamentally out of place in that modern world?

Fortunately, a number of scholars explicitly engage with such empirical realities in which Indigenous peoples productively and proactively engage with capitalism (Atleo, 2015; Cattelino, 2008; Curley, 2018, 2023; Pasternak, 2015; Tomiak, 2017). This research underlines both how normal it is for people inhabiting a capitalist world to engage capitalist structures, as much as it describes the complex political negotiations behind such engagements. Scholars are thus able to outline complex negotiations pertaining to questions about the relationship between Indigenous ontologies and the Western settler-colonial world. From that relationship, highly contested and contradictory spaces and arrangements emerge that might follow colonial logics, while also enabling expressions of Indigeneity and sovereignty as part of capitalist modernity. This dissertation contributes to such insights through an observation of the engagement of First Nations with Vancouver real estate capitalism.

In pursuit of such insights, I also encountered limitations and obstacles. Many of them stem from my own positionality as a White European researcher undertaking research on First Nation real estate development with limited insight into First Nation perspectives. This research thus predominantly

focuses on the political economy of real estate development and largely refrains from representing Indigenous worldviews or observing real estate development resorting to Indigenous methodologies. In chapter 3, I will detail how I handle the predicaments of my positionality and the perspective I take in this dissertation. First, however, I explain what literatures I rely on for this research and the research gap I have identified within these literatures.

2. Research Context

To investigate emerging large-scale First Nation real estate development in Vancouver, I draw from two broad strands of literature. On the one hand, I rely on broader theories of capitalist urbanization from which I deduce many of my theoretical concepts. On the other hand, I rely on literature on settler-colonial and Indigenous geographies. To understand the context relevant to this dissertation, I here combine these two strands of literature. I thereby build on broader and multiple conceptualizations of settler colonialism instead of relying only on canonical settler-colonial studies. This canon predominantly draws on the works of Patrick Wolfe (Englert, 2020; Hugill and Simpson, 2023; Wolfe, 2006) and has been criticized for sidelining Indigenous scholarship and agency, and for creating an unnecessarily narrow conceptualization of settler colonialism that limits its applicability (Bernauer, 2024; Carey and Silverstein, 2020; Schayegh, 2024). This dissertation draws on a diverse set of scholars who explore the geographies and structures of settler colonialism from different angles and with different foci, not least from an Indigenous perspective. This not only allows me to obtain a more thorough understanding of the complexity of settler-colonial processes, but it also allows me to reflect on my own problematic role in the production of knowledge about Indigenous contexts. Further, both strands of literature, on capitalist urbanization and on settler colonialism, already cover the regional context of Vancouver to different extents. Where relevant, I use that regional expertise as a basis for my research, while aiming to build and intensify links between research on Vancouver urbanism and Vancouver settler colonialism (Sax et al., 2022; Simpson, 2022). Following on, I briefly discuss these different literature strands and in what ways I have drawn from them. I start with discussing scholarship on capitalist urbanization, followed by scholarship on settler colonialism. This allows me to then subsequently discuss the research gap I have identified.

2.1 Theories of Capitalist Urbanization

In this dissertation, I draw from literature that is concerned with the larger questions of urban studies and urban geography that relate to the creation of urban space and the role of capital therein (Christophers, 2011; Harvey, 1985). I add to these questions by employing concepts that relate to the production of urban space in a specific context profoundly shaped by settler-colonial capitalism. To

improve comprehension of "the urbanization of capital" (Harvey, 1985) in this context, I am inspired, both implicitly and explicitly, by the works of Karl Marx and the scholars who mobilize his thinking and bring it up to date for the 20th and the 21st centuries and the contexts relevant to this dissertation. Scholars, for example, highlight that capital is not the only structural force in our societies (Soja, 1980). David Harvey influences me heavily with his general thinking on urban capitalism (1985, 2023). More specifically, his theorization of Marxian dialectics (1996, 2004a) is the basis for my second paper Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b). Further, his theorization of accumulation by dispossession (2003, 2004b) is foundational for the development of ideas around accumulation by repossession in my third paper (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). I am also inspired by Mike Ekers and Scott Prudham and their work on the socioecological fix, which synthesizes much of the neo-Marxist thinking about the production of nature and space (2015, 2017, 2018). I explicitly mobilize the concept in my first paper on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024). In this context, I must also mention Glen Coulthard, who explicitly mobilizes Marxist concepts to theorize settler colonialism from an Indigenous perspective. His work (2007, 2014) is the basis for my deeper understanding of the intertwined nature of colonial and capitalist forces and the role of Indigenous peoples in the contemporary capitalist world. It is featured throughout the dissertation, but I most explicitly engage with it in the paper on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024). Brett Christophers' work (Castree and Christophers, 2015; Christophers, 2011, 2014) accompanies me throughout and appears in every paper, even though I most specifically engage with his work in a separate paper that is not part of this dissertation (van der Haegen, 2025a). Finally, the work of many different scholars working on Urban Political Ecology (Gandy, 2002; Kaika and Swyngedouw, 2012; Keil, 2003; Swyngedouw, 1996), although less explicitly featured in the dissertation, is instrumental in my thinking.

2.2 Theories of Settler Colonialism

I work at the intersection between above-mentioned scholarship on the capitalist production of (urban) space and scholarship on settler colonialism. The reason for a combination of these different literatures is that the here-observed questions around the creation of private property and land-based assets (Birch and Ward, 2022), be that through enclosure (De Angelis, 2004), or the desire to close a "rent gap" (Ward and Aalbers, 2016) are not only essential to contemporary urbanization processes, but they are also fundamental drivers of settler colonialism (Bhandar, 2018). Indigenous real estate development is therefore both part of the longue durée (Ekers, 2023) of the colonial process, as well as it is an incremental aspect of contemporary capitalist urbanization and real estate capitalism. Indigenous real estate development is a product of complex interactions between historical processes of colonial accumulation and contemporary capitalist urbanism navigated by Indigenous peoples.

To make sense of that empirical context, I therefore heavily rely on literature that is concerned with the processes, structures, and geographies of settler colonialism from various perspectives. To avoid unnecessary generalizations, I particularly focus on literatures on Canadian and North American settler-colonial contexts. This literature is not only historical in nature, but very much focused on describing contemporary settler-colonial structures, their ongoing effects, and ways of resisting them (Braun, 2002a; Daigle, 2019; Ekers et al., 2021; Estes, 2013; Fabris, 2023; Thom, 2009; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Van Sant et al., 2021; Wagner, 2008). Scholarship increasingly centers Indigenous perspectives and describes the fundamentally different experiences of Indigenous peoples in the settler-colonial present (Daigle, 2024). Indigenous scholars theorize settler colonialism and how to resist it, pointing to the intrinsically intertwined nature of colonialism and capitalism (Alfred, 2005; Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Coulthard and Simpson, 2016; Daigle and Ramírez, 2019; Dorries, 2017; Simpson, 2011, 2016a; Whyte, 2018b, 2018a). Audra Simpson therefore characterizes settler colonialism as a structure that "mask[s] seizure while attending to capital accumulation under another name" (2016b: 440). Due to the intertwined nature of colonialism and capitalism, scholars also often postulate that combatting settler-colonial structures requires renouncing capitalist modes of production, as their reproduction will inevitably lead to colonial power relations. In the words of Glen Coulthard: "for Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die" (2014: 173).

More recently, scholarship explicitly focuses on cities as places of contemporary settler-colonial colonialism and of Indigenous peoples' lives. Indeed, many Indigenous peoples live in urban areas and cities have been and continue to be central arenas of the settler-colonial economy (Blatman and Mays, 2023; Dorries et al., 2022; Hugill, 2017; Hugill and Simpson, 2023; Mays, 2022; McClintock and Guimont Marceau, 2023; Parish, 2020; Simpson, 2022; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018; Simpson and Hugill, 2022; Sylvestre and Castleden, 2022; Tomiak, 2017, 2023; Van Lier, 2023). This scholarship on settler-colonial urbanisms highlights the heterogeneity of the urban, cities as Indigenous spaces, and the historic and contemporary colonial processes that shape urban space.

Central to settler colonialism, especially in the urban realm, is the role of property. I therefore widely rely on scholarship that provides a more in-depth understanding of the role that the creation of private property plays for Indigenous displacement and value extraction in settler-colonial contexts. That is, Indigenous ways of relating to and managing land were and often still are disregarded in favor of accumulation based on the private property regime (Bhandar, 2011, 2018; Blatman-Thomas and Porter, 2019; Blomley, 2014, 2016; Dorries, 2017, 2022; Ekers, 2023; Nichols, 2020; Palmer, 2020; Pasternak, 2015; Porter, 2014; Whiteside, 2019). Research in relation to British Columbia and Vancouver shows that, as displacement and genocide through colonization have been incomplete (Blomley, 2004, 2015; Egan, 2013; Hamilton, 2006; Harris, 2009, 2012), the Canadian private property regime faces an unresolvable impasse with now-recognized Indigenous claims to land (Blomley, 2015). Thus, Indigenous real estate development sits at the heart of this fundamental tension in settler-colonial

societies, because it apparently resolves the contradictions between private property and Indigenous claims based on a different ontology. As legal scholar Douglas Harris describes reserve land: "Indian reserves in British Columbia are state delegations of sovereignty in a context where the claims of Indigenous sovereignty present an unresolved challenge to the sovereignty of the state" (2017: 391). In this dissertation, I observe how such contradictions are fixed to enable real estate development on Indigenous land and to ensure the "circuitry of capital" (Pasternak and Dafnos, 2018); how land can be claimed both as ancestral land pre-dating the Canadian state and alienable private property within the state's private property regime.

To explore these inherent contradictions, I am especially inspired by research on the political economy of settler colonialism (Curley, 2021; Pasternak, 2015, 2020, 2023; Simpson, 2022; Sommerville, 2019, 2021; Stanley, 2016). This literature engages with questions about how Indigenous lands are integrated into settler-colonial economies. Some scholars ask tough questions regarding the positionality of Indigenous peoples in the process of creating economic assets (Curley, 2018, 2023). Indigenous peoples are often in socioeconomically inferior positions in the settler-colonial economy. Mining, hydroelectric power, forestry, farming, or, in more urban contexts casinos or real estate provide much-needed revenue and economic activity. This, however might also irreversibly change landscapes and reconceptualize lands into private property along the logics of profit maximization and value extraction. Thus, while economic development on Indigenous lands might support "First Nations agendas of economic autonomy", these lands might also be "conceptualized primarily in relation to economic ventures, marginalizing alternative arrangements […] that would re-territorialize a more inclusive notion of community, sustainability, and Indigenous urbanity" (Tomiak, 2017: 938). In that sense, First Nation economic development projects stand for difficult choices from an often-marginalized positionality within the settler-colonial system. Additionally, such projects also question prevailing juxtapositions of Indigenous peoples as the primordial Other to modernity and to exchange value (Cattelino, 2008: 102). Indigenous economic development projects thus speak to expressions of Indigeneity within capitalist structures. However, there is little scholarship on such Indigenous capitalisms in North America. I consider this to be the most evident theoretical research gap in this field. The research gap will be further discussed below, in section 2.4.

My dissertation and my personal perspective thus centrally build on scholarship working on the political economy of settler colonialism, the role Indigenous peoples take therein, and the importance of the private property system in the creation of alienable assets from Indigenous lands. Shiri Pasternak's and Julie Tomiak's scholarship (Pasternak, 2015, 2020, 2023; Pasternak and Dafnos, 2018; Paulson and Tomiak, 2022; Tomiak, 2016, 2017) is hereby of special importance. Their work is central for my improved understanding of the political economy of settler colonialism in Canada. Likewise, the works of Brenna Bhandar, Robert Nichols, and Nick Blomley (Bhandar, 2011, 2018; Blomley, 2004, 2014, 2016; Nichols, 2015, 2020) who have worked on the role of property in creating and sustaining settler-

colonial arrangements is foundational to my thinking in this dissertation. The scholarship of Jessica Cattelino (2005, 2008a) has provided me with tools that are central to understanding relationships between Indigeneity and capitalism with her cultural perspective on casinos in Seminole country. Lastly, I also need to mention Andrew Curley, whose scholarship (2018, 2021, 2023) discusses the intricacies, complexities, and contradictions of capitalist development on Navajo land in incredible, non-essentializing ways.

Lastly, literature also provides a critical perspective on the ethics of doing research in Indigenous contexts and raises questions around what kind of knowledge production is pursued by whom (Barker and Pickerill, 2020; Clement, 2019; Datta, 2018; Gani and Khan, 2024; Hunt and Stevenson, 2017; McGregor, 2018; Smith, 1999; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Such scholarship has been foundational for reflecting on my positionality and for finding an adequate perspective from which I can speak about Indigenous real estate development. Such literature thus not only helps me to better understand settler colonialism, but it also supports me in situating myself and in recognizing the limits of my own perspective. However, I will not go into a detailed discussion of the ethical issues surrounding this research here. Rather, I will continue with the literature review, outline the research gap in section 2.4, and return to ethical issues in section 3.

Summing up the review of theories of settler colonialism, I have sought to employ a broad scope of literatures. This hopefully expands explanatory potential beyond Patrick Wolfe's canonical theorization of settler colonialism as a distinct form of colonialism (2006). Wolfe describes franchise colonialism as only interested in the extraction of resources, and distinguishes settler colonialism as inherently interested in land (Englert, 2020). Settler colonialism, he argues, therefore functions after a "logic of elimination" that has often led to the almost complete erasure and replacement of the Indigenous population (Hugill, 2017; Hugill and Simpson, 2023; Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). The analytical value of such a narrow theorization of settler colonialism has been questioned, however. There is simply no reason to distinguish between elimination (settler colonialism) and exploitation (franchise colonialism) as Wolfe's model suggests (Englert, 2020). Also, because such a theorization downplays commonalities with other, non-British, colonial contexts (Schayegh, 2024; Thornton, 2024), this has arguably created an insular discourse on settler colonialism that is predominantly focused on the former British colonies of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, Israel/Palestine, or Southern Africa. Lastly, a concept presupposing "elimination" also tends to disregard Indigenous agency and resistance, and it has historically sidelined other, Indigenous, theories of settler colonialism (Bernauer, 2024; Carey and Silverstein, 2020; Daigle, 2024; Englert, 2020). Land, the creation of revenue-generating assets from that land, and Indigenous agency are central for an understanding of historical and contemporary settler colonialism in Vancouver. I therefore think that relying on a broad range of perspectives improves the explanatory potential of this dissertation.

2.3 Theories of Vancouver Settler Colonialism and Vancouver's Urbanization

Due to the inherent importance of historicizing and provincializing research (Chakrabarty, 2000), I also refer to literature that covers the history of settler colonialism in Canada more generally (Baldwin et al., 2011; Carlos and Lewis, 2011; Cronon, 1991; Dickason, 2006; Edmonds, 2010; Farish and Lackenbauer, 2009; Gregory, 1994; Hore, 2022). I also consult literature on the Vancouver region's settler colonialism. In addition to covering the history of colonization in the Vancouver region, this scholarship also critically reflects on that historiography and the depictions of and ideas about Indigenous peoples that are still forming contemporary discourses. Central to historical research on the processes of colonization in British Columbia are the works of Cole Harris (1991, 1992, 2004), which unmask how colonialism has functioned in the region. Harris details that settler colonialism in British Columbia was inherently driven by the desire to capitalize on the enclosure and creation of land-based assets, but that it was also actively navigated by Indigenous groups in pursuit of their own agendas (see also: Marshall, 1993). This is accompanied by critical research that describes how Indigeneity has been erased and systematically constructed as the Other in the region (Baloy, 2016; Barman, 2005, 2007; Edmonds, 2010; Roy, 2007). Following Harris' analysis, the literature specifically stresses the incremental role that the creation of private property and the possibilities for revenue extraction therefrom has and continues to play in colonial processes in Vancouver (Blomley, 2004; Cowen, 2020; Harris, 1997; Paulson and Tomiak, 2022).

Sites like Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho are also case studies through which one can trace the colonial process, and indeed the intricacies, injustices, and absurdities of the unresolved relationship between the Canadian private property regime and recognized Indigenous claims (Blomley, 2015). For that, I build on fine-grained analyses of processes of land appropriation in Vancouver (Harris, 2012; Leonard, 2010). Douglas Harris (2017) undertakes this work in great detail for the Sen̓áḵw parcel. Without that work, it would be impossible to draw conclusions on the continuity of historical dynamics and structures of colonial accumulation in present real estate development, as is done in the paper on accumulation by repossession (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). In relation to the Jericho parcel, I draw on Alexine Sanchez' master's thesis (2020). Likewise, Heather Whiteside's (2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024) rich scholarship on processes of privatization and valuation through real estate development on Jericho is central to my dissertation. This overlap of research areas has led to co-authorship of the paper on accumulation by repossession (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025).

Because large-scale real estate development that is taking place on the Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho parcels is also an incremental part of Vancouver's urbanization, I also draw on literature that covers that. As I discuss in the paper on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024), the dissertation forms part of research on Vancouver's urbanization on a broader scale, because the observed real estate developments take place within the frame of Vancouver real estate capitalism. However, the projects also more narrowly reflect "Vancouveresque" notions of housing (un)affordability, sustainability, and

reconciliation. One aspect of that is that they take place in the context of the highly unaffordable Vancouver housing market. Broad scholarship discusses Vancouver's inherently supply- and growth-oriented urbanism (Gurstein and Yan, 2019; Peck et al., 2014; Siemiatycki et al., 2020). The city's development model essentially works by capturing a portion of private development profits for reinvestment into public goods (Hyde, 2021, 2022). Since the purposeful opening of its real estate market to investment, the city has witnessed a massive influx of capital in lock-step with the escalation of housing prices (Grigoryeva and Ley, 2019; Harris, 2011; Hutton, 2019; Jones and Ley, 2016; Ley, 2017, 2021; Ley and Dobson, 2008; Moos and Skaburskis, 2010; Olds, 1998). This has created a housing market in crisis that is largely disconnected from local incomes (Barnes et al., 2011; Thompson, 2023; Wyly and Wilson, 2023). Congruently, an understanding of sustainability underlies Vancouver's urbanization that sees artificially greened, retail-focused, and high-density urban landscapes as sustainable (Kear, 2007; McCann et al., 2022; Quastel, 2009; Quastel et al., 2012; Sax et al., 2022; Wachsmuth and Angelo, 2018). Some scholars characterize this as the greenwashing of concrete and glass towers of a profit-oriented growth machine through performative greening practices that offer "sustainable" lifestyles to the affluent (Ley, 2017, 2021; McCallum et al., 2005; Molotch, 1976; While et al., 2004). This is the context in which the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh are emerging as large-scale actors in real estate, and against this background, I now turn to discussing the research gap I have identified.

2.4 Research Gap

Considering the above-presented extent of the literature, I identify the following research gap. Broad research exists on the "urbanization of capital" (Harvey, 1985) and its manifold expressions and effects on real estate markets, housing, and sustainability. At the same time, structures of settler colonialism, its histories and presents, and the role of capital as a driver of past and present colonial difference are increasingly well-understood. However, neither research on urbanization processes nor research on settler colonialism often describes Indigenous peoples as active, capitalist actors. A fundamental gap in these two literatures therefore is that there is only relatively little and fragmented scholarship on the intersection between Indigeneity and capitalism in a productive sense, meaning the active, financially beneficial engagement of Indigenous peoples with capitalism. Notable scholarship in the context of Canada and the United States is often limited to remote contexts, and covers tourism (Bunten, 2010), or natural resource extraction (Bernauer, 2019; Curley, 2018, 2021, 2023; Keeling and Sandlos, 2015; Kuokkanen, 2019; Levitan and Cameron, 2015; Sandlos, 2015). Such research already highlights the complicated relationship between Indigeneity, colonialism, and capitalism in relation to natural resources. Natural resource development is often understood as extractive due to the outflow of capital and the destruction of landscapes, as much as it is also seen as beneficial for the provision of economic activity and livelihoods.

In more urban contexts, the complicated relationship between Indigeneity and capitalism is studied in research on Indigenous art (Roth, 2019), gambling (Cattelino, 2005, 2008; Manitowabi and Nicoll, 2021), and economic development on reserves (Pasternak, 2015; Tomiak, 2017; Wuttunee, 2023). Scholars (Atleo, 2015; Champagne, 2007; Newhouse, 2000; Rata, 1999; Wuttunee, 2004), recognize that the lived reality of Indigenous peoples in a capitalist world means that Indigeneity and capitalism are intertwined to some extent, but they also raise questions around the compatibility of capitalist practices with Indigenous worldviews.

These, however, are relatively fringe discussions in scholarship on settler colonialism in North America. This scholarship is often more focused on describing the continuous violence of settler-colonial capitalism. In it, Indigenous agency takes the form of resistance in most cases and capital accumulation is often understood as a fundamental problem and at odds with Indigenous worldviews (Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2014; Coulthard and Simpson, 2016; Dorries, 2022; Estes, 2013; Simpson, 2011, 2016b; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018). Given my positionality (that I will explain in more detail in section 3: Research Ethics), I cannot account for Indigenous worldviews. However, assertions of capitalism as a fundamental problem still seem to somewhat stand in contrast to the observed empirical context in which First Nations actively engage in highly capitalist practices. I, by no means, question the fundamental violence of settler colonialism or the extractive nature of capitalist structures. However, I hope to add nuance to scholarly discussions by exactly describing an empirical context in which First Nations are joining the capitalist system of accumulation through the construction of tens of thousands of apartments for the purpose of rent extraction. Meanwhile, critics rightfully point to scholarship too often omitting Indigenous agency in resistance to settler-colonial projects (Carey and Silverstein, 2020; Daigle, 2024). I argue that research also gives insufficient attention to vernacular forms of Indigenous agency within the settler-capitalist economy. This agency can take both the form of resistance and of participation. By studying First Nation economic relations from a perspective that remains more analytical and less activist, I hope to complicate discussions around the relationship between colonialism, capitalism, and Indigeneity beyond the ahistorical construction of Indigeneity as the antithesis to colonial-capitalist structures. In the words of Sarah Radcliffe, studying such "economic relations – structured as they are through colonial modern distributions, epistemologies and power – offer highly ambivalent spaces for the expression of – and systematic gains from – Indigenous agency" (2020: 377).

The research gap I identify in the literatures on capitalist urbanization and on settler colonialism is therefore that Indigenous actors are rarely described as participants in the predominant political economy, even though this is central to understand the structural violence of settler colonialism. This research gap is especially pronounced in the urban realm and it also exists in the particular context of Vancouver. The city's urbanization, its performative sustainability, and its structurally unaffordable housing market are well-researched (Barnes et al., 2011; Ley, 2017; McCann et al., 2022; Moos and

Skaburskis, 2010; Olds, 1998; Peck et al., 2014; Quastel et al., 2012). Likewise, substantial scholarship covers the colonial process in the Vancouver region. Some researchers have also started to outline contemporary structures and processes of Vancouver's settler-colonial urbanism (Baloy, 2016; Barman, 2005, 2007; Harris, 1997, 2004; McCreary and Milligan, 2021; Roy, 2007). This means that Vancouver's urbanization, as well as the colonial dynamics – past and present – that shape contemporary urban space are increasingly well understood. In the context of Vancouver, however, the strands of literature on urbanization and on settler colonialism are seldomly combined (exceptions are: Simpson, 2022; Simpson and Le Billon, 2021) or are historical in their perspective (Cowen, 2020), and they only discuss Indigenous actors' as in absolute resistance to capitalist structures. Therefore, First Nation real estate development also poses an empirical gap in the literatures on Vancouver's urbanization and settler colonialism. There is very little research on the region's First Nations and their economic development programs. Heather Whiteside has extensively studied privatization processes on Jericho (2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024) and Elvin Wyly mentions First Nation real estate development anecdotally (2024; Wyly and Wilson, 2023), but there has been no deeper scholarly engagement with First Nation real estate in the Vancouver region. This is particularly striking, as First Nation real estate development is no inherently new phenomenon in the region, having taken place since at least the early 1990s. That alone demands for attention, but the recent changes in scale, from townhouses to skyscrapers, place Indigenous real estate development at the heart of Vancouver's contemporary urbanization and settler colonialism. And yet, until now, it has not received substantial scholarly attention.

Therefore, the research gap addressed by this dissertation is partly empirical and partly theoretical. It is an empirical gap, because these particular real estate developments, any First Nation real estate development projects, or any First Nation-led economic development projects of this size have not been covered by the literature. However, this also signifies a theoretical gap, because neither scholarship on settler colonialism nor scholarship focusing on the production of urban space have profoundly researched the dynamics of Indigenous peoples as active participants in the political economy and the pressures and incentives surrounding that. In (sub)urban contexts, scholarship is almost exclusively limited to research on gambling. I respond to this research gap by answering the following research question in this dissertation: *In what ways do intersections between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity manifest themselves in the political economy of contemporary First Nation real estate developments in the City of Vancouver?*

I reiterate that by identifying such a research gap, I do not mean to diminish the violence of the colonial process or to denounce Indigenous actors' profit-seeking behavior. Rather, I point to an empirical and theoretical gap in knowledge about what is actually banal: engagement with capitalist structures in a capitalist world. With research covering this gap, we might improve our understanding of how settler colonialism functions and reproduces itself. Increased understanding of these processes might then, in

turn, improve our understanding of how to resist and eventually inhibit the reproduction of colonial structures.

Based on this research gap, I pursue a research project on several large-scale First Nation real estate developments. In that, I am inherently interested in the complexities of the political economy of land and real estate as a product of contemporary urban settler-colonial capitalism. I approach my research as an extension of scholarship on settler-colonial urbanism. I combine insights and relatively classic neo-Marxist concepts from research on the capitalist production of space with insights from research on settler colonialism. I am aware of critiques towards research on settler colonialism that too often sidelines Indigenous perspectives and methodologies. Still, I do not employ Indigenous methodologies, and I only cover First Nation agency to some extent. This means that this dissertation cannot fully do justice to the criticisms that scholarship raises. From my m positionality, I still deem it most appropriate to pursue this research mainly via the articulation of Western concepts of capitalism in this settler-colonial context. I detail the thought process behind choosing this particular perspective in the following.

3. Research Ethics

I embarked on this research from a positionality as a White European middle-class PhD student. I had once lived in the City of Vancouver for 6 months and I had a long-lasting interest in North American colonialism. The interest in North American colonialism had led me to write different term papers about European trading companies as incidental actors of colonialism and a master's thesis on mining in the Canadian Arctic. During my master's, I had also developed an interest in the power of capital in shaping urban space. I had the opportunity to come up with my own research topic for my dissertation and therefore sought to pursue a topic that combined my personal interest in North American colonialism, urban capitalism, and the City of Vancouver. I became aware of the fact that First Nations are undertaking huge real estate developments in the city and therefore decided to put the focus of my dissertation on these developments. In the following, I describe some of the ethical predicaments of this research and of my positionality. However, these following discussions need to be understood with my personal interest as the fundamental motive behind this dissertation in mind. The only reason why I had to grapple with the pitfalls of my positionality is because I chose to engage in this research based on my personal interest. I can argue that there exists a research gap and that this research is of broader relevance. Still, my personal interest is the ultima ratio for the existence of this dissertation.

During my master's thesis, I had become more and more aware of the neglect of Indigenous perspectives in scholarship and the caution necessary when pursuing research in contexts relevant to Indigenous peoples. Therefore, I was looking for scholarship that could advise me on how to navigate my research. A number of recommendations consistently recurs across the literature on conducting research in Indigenous contexts. Scholars stress the importance of doing research "with" instead of "on" Indigenous

communities, and of establishing in-depth relations with communities. They recommend to involve Indigenous communities throughout the research process, and to let research be driven by the needs and desires of communities. Scholars also advocate for "prioritizing" Indigenous epistemologies, for "giving back" to the community, and for adapting a "relational" attitude towards Indigenous communities (Barker and Pickerill, 2020; Bennett et al., 2022; Daigle and Ramírez, 2019; Datta, 2018; Francett-Hermes and Pennanen, 2019; Hunt and Stevenson, 2017; McGregor, 2018; Robertson et al., 2020; Smith, 1999; Thompson and Ban, 2021; Wilson, 2001). This is essential, as, in many ways, Western science and ways of knowing are incapable of understanding Indigenous worldviews (Clement, 2019). Research has and continues to be complicit in advancing the colonial project, including in the region where the City of Vancouver is located today (Bocking, 2011; McGregor, 2018; Roy, 2007).

Based on such literature, I hoped that I could engage First Nation real estate development from a reflexive position in a way through which I could establish relationships with First Nation communities, learn, and "give back" to them. However, I encountered many "unexpected dilemmas" (Bennett et al., 2022: 630) in the course of my research that – in hindsight – should not have been so unexpected. This meant that the research that I conducted turned out different from what I had imagined in the beginning. Reasons for this were my own shortcomings in approaching field work, limitations inherent to the field, and my naiveté and skewed assumptions about Indigeneity. I initially assumed that Indigenous peoples are in inherently less powerful positions than the researcher and need the researcher's resources. These implicit assumptions (which can often also be found in the literature) did not turn out to be true at all. Instead, I met people that were forcefully asserting themselves in the political economy of real estate in Vancouver who were giving me insights on their terms.

Throughout the research process, I therefore realized that while a "decolonial" research approach is desirable, that this is not a metaphor to be used by researchers wanting to be on the "right" side (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Researchers can and should only employ Indigenous epistemologies and engage with communities in-depth in cases where they have adequate local knowledge and relations. Otherwise, this risks "categorizing and thus marginalizing Indigenous geographies" according to Western ideas (Clement, 2019: 279). Nevertheless, I believe that research should also be possible in other cases if treading carefully. Otherwise, this runs the countervailing risk of "ghettoizing" (Hunt, 2014: 31, in Clement, 2019: 279) research in Indigenous contexts, as much as it would continuously reproduce Indigenous people as the Other to the Western world.

In the following, I more thoroughly reflect on the research conveyed in this dissertation. These following sections have evolved from the research process and the mistakes I made. Reflexivity is a constant process (Samms Hurley and Jackson, 2020), and I am only able to reflect on some of the mistakes I made, because I was conducting research from a less informed perspective first. I describe how I tried to find an adequate perspective my scholarship could take based on my personal positionality as an outsider to the communities of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh with limited insights into

the multitude of their worldviews. I sought a perspective that does not misrepresent Indigenous worldviews and does not categorize Indigenous actors according to Western ideas. Congruently, I also did not want to omit Indigenous agency because this happens too often in research on settler colonialism (Carey and Silverstein, 2020; Daigle, 2024). Some degree of categorization is unavoidable and I needed categories through which I could describe First Nations as actors in Vancouver real estate. To refrain from additional categorizations, I focused my attention on the already-existing categories of First Nation governments (which, in turn, emerged from colonial categorization of Indigenous peoples) and their economic development companies. I refer to these First Nation entities throughout the dissertation and refer to them when discussing Indigenous agency. I acknowledge the existence of much more diversity and difference beyond these categories. However, as will be explained below, I cannot account for that diversity in more detail.

3.1 Relationality

My fieldwork involved two research stays in the City of Vancouver. On each occasion, I wanted to contact many different actors involved with First Nation real estate development and record interviews that could complement the many reports, strategy documents, websites, and newspaper articles I was collecting. It was relatively easy to establish contact with the municipal government. This experience gave me the wrong presumption that the same would be true for Indigenous governments and their subsidiary companies, the Indigenous actors I was looking to engage with. I imagined that doors would open, and that Indigenous actors would also be interested in sharing their perspectives with me. I even imagined that my research might take on a slight ethnographic touch. Based on my initial naïve ideas, I strived for relationality and was eager to build relationships or to give back. I also expected, without knowing anything about the particular context, that I would be able to engage with people, be received, build relationships, and find inroads for a comprehensive perspective on Indigenous views on real estate development. However, beyond attending some events, visiting the projects' construction sites (from the outside), and conducting a total of six interviews with Squamish Nation representatives, this did not happen. This left me wondering how I could do justice to the topic at hand, equipped with limited first-hand insights only. I built some relationships, but I also had to learn that there existed an asymmetry between my interest in wanting to learn about First Nation real estate development and the interest of First Nation actors in engaging with me. This made me particularly aware of my positionality as an outsider to these communities and as a PhD student from an institution abroad.

Confronted with my own limited insights into First Nation perspectives, I wondered if doing research from my positionality was even justified. Deep relationships, relationality, and reciprocity did not eventuate. Was that because of my positionality, my mistakes in approaching the field, limited time, or because the research field does not offer such relations? The research process gave me a newfound

appreciation for the difficulties of implementing relationality and of working with Indigenous forms of knowledge. My limited access to First Nation perspectives made me realize that striving for relationality is one part, but that claims to that end should not be made lightly. While obvious epistemic injustices prevail in academia and scholarship is advocating for the centering of Indigenous epistemologies and perspectives, improperly implementing them undermines such emancipatory efforts.

However, I also experienced a situation that differed from how the literature often described the distribution of power between researcher and Indigenous subjects. My interview partners representing Indigenous organizations did not necessarily want or need anything from me in return for their time or their perspective. Neither did I experience an inherent power balance to be skewed towards me. I did not meet Indigenous peoples in dire need for resources or in inherently powerless positions, but people that were actively asserting themselves and their Nation in powerful ways in the political economy of real estate in Vancouver. My interview partners were giving to me, without necessarily wanting anything from me in return. I realized that it would be arrogant to think that my interview partners necessarily needed anything from me. In other words, assuming that I would necessarily have resources that are of use to my interview partners would again assume that Indigenous peoples are inherently less powerful. This does not mean that I did not engage in acts of reciprocity where possible, but the least I could do, without disregarding colonial structures, was to treat Indigenous actors as active, and powerful actors. By assuming inherent imbalances of power between researcher and research subjects that might not actually exist (Gani and Khan, 2024: 2), I would otherwise continuously other and victimize them, and assume their subalternity (Spivak, 1994: 80)

Also, much of the scholarship that discusses positionality was inherently focused on ethnographic research that seemed to be very heavily involved with Indigenous communities. Such research concepts were completely different from my own. I could not account for the multiplicity of perspectives within Indigenous communities, but sought to understand strategic thinking on the level of the Nation's leadership and its economic development companies. In addition, such ethnographic research typically took place in remote locations where fieldwork somewhat automatically involved some form of interaction with Indigenous communities. There also existed research that engaged with Indigenous contexts less ethnographically. That research often acknowledged colonial structures and sometimes discussed problematic positionalities (e.g. Simpson and Le Billon, 2021). However, such scholarship often did not center questions around research ethics or focused its attention on settler-colonial infrastructures and actors, and on Indigenous actors in fundamental opposition and resistance to settler-colonial capitalism (Braun, 2002b; Cowen, 2020; Porter and Kelly, 2023; Simpson, 2022; Whiteside, 2020).

Based on my fieldwork experiences, I thus asked myself if there could also be other ethically justifiable ways of researching that were not as close to communities, but also, if ethnographic research was the only valid approach for research in an urban context. This context raised land values and thus increased

prospects for economic development. However, this also meant that the real estate developments I observed, even though massive in scale and deeply interlocked with the settler-capitalist system and its economic reproduction, were a less prominent part of urban space. I decided that I, indeed, must not treat Indigenous actors as fundamentally exceptional in real estate development, fundamentally other to the urban sphere, modernity, and exchange value (Cattelino, 2008: 99; Hore, 2022). Instead, I needed to treat them, without disregard of colonial structures, as actors in the urban sphere with a specific history and positionality that navigate settler-colonial capitalism and its contradictions in specific ways (Dorries, 2023).

Over the course of the research process, I also realized that my own interest in the topic at hand had been driven by some problematic assumptions about Canada and Indigenous peoples. I had always been fascinated by depictions of Canada as the Great White North (Baldwin et al., 2011), as an untouched wilderness and a frontier. Where I did realize that this was a colonial imagination that completely obliterated Indigenous peoples and their role in inhabiting and forming the so-called wilderness (Braun, 2002b), I still had not imagined cities to be an Indigenous place. After all, I had once spent 6 months in Vancouver, and apart from the totem poles in Stanley Park that seemed to tell stories of a place far away and a time long gone, I never even realized that the city indeed is very much an Indigenous place. As I learned, this was not only due to my ignorance, but also the result of the systematic – yet incomplete – erasure of Indigeneity from the cityscape (Baloy, 2016; Barman, 2005).

This research thus helped me to become aware of some of the problematic assumptions underpinning my own motivation and perspective. However, I still did not always find good ways to grapple with them. The othering of Indigenous peoples should be overcome, and the urban sphere is inherently Indigenous. However, not only did I inherently assume Indigenous difference, but difference was also often stressed by scholars, settlers, and First Nation actors themselves. Empirically, the observed real estate developments certainly seemed to question complete ontological separation between Indigeneity and settler-colonial capitalism, but I was also pointed to ontological foundations that were based on worldviews far-predating colonization. In that sense, the task at hand seemed to be to overcome the othering of Indigenous peoples without brushing over difference. I needed to find a non-essentializing approach to talk about Indigenous actors and their agency in a way that was doing justice to their positionality in the settler-colonial system.

3.2 Agency

To that end, I found merit in Marxian dialectical thinking (Marx, 1973) and, specifically David Harvey's perspectives on urban capitalism (1996, 2004a, 2023). Obviously, neo-Marxist perspectives are not necessarily known for their ability to account for individual agency, minor perspectives or geographies of difference. However, I believe that observing settler-colonial capitalism through such a dialectical

perspective can actually be helpful for understanding agency in a complex system. When understanding settler-colonial capitalism as a larger system that is mutually constituted of its individual parts, each individual actor has agency in the creation and reproduction of a system, but their actions are also constrained by their relative positionality as one of many mutually constitutive individual parts of that system. I thought that applying such a perspective could be an adequate way to account for Indigenous governments' and development companies' agency in developing real estate within colonial-capitalist structures and urban space. After all, this allowed me to understand them as powerful actors within the urban sphere that are caught up in some of the dialectical contradictions of capitalist urbanization as everyone else is, too.

I did not want to other Indigenous peoples and thus looked to account for Indigenous agency through such a dialectical perspective. However, I also realized, thanks to the exposing questions of some anonymous reviewers of my papers, that accounting for that agency without relying on Indigenous perspectives to some extent was impossible. I could not assess or describe Indigenous worldviews and therefore could not resolve this problem. However, I realized that the observed real estate developments and their political-economic structures were themselves an inherent expression of Indigenous agency in the broader context of settler-colonial urbanism. Describing these political-economic structures would allow me to relate to Indigenous agency in some capacity without overly relying on Indigenous worldviews. Thus, in order not to misrepresent Indigenous perspectives or misjudge Indigenous agency, while also not omitting Indigenous actors, I decided to describe the structures of Indigenous real estate development as proxies for Indigenous agency and think about what the role of First Nation real estate development in broader settler-colonial capitalism is.

Nevertheless, I was still limited in avoiding the categorization and homogenization of Indigenous actors. I used political-economic structures of First Nation real estate developments to account for First Nation agency, but whose agency was I accounting for? I was accounting for the agency of First Nation governments and their subsidiary development companies in creating political-economic structures for real estate development. However, I could not account for difference beyond these entities, or for marginalized or dissenting voices within First Nation communities. In addition, the emphasis on accounting for agency through political-economic structures of real estate development further limited the explanatory potential of my research. In my first paper, on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024), I had mobilized the concept of the socioecological fix explicitly to combine political-economic insights with cultural perspectives. In that paper, I had investigated the city government's geographical imaginations of sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation as cultural perspectives. Even though I believe that cultural perspectives can be accounted for within a dialectical framework, I could impossibly account for Indigenous peoples' cultural perspectives. This made a focus on the political economy even more warranted.

When I speak of First Nation agency, I therefore only speak of First Nation governments and their development companies. I account for Indigenous agency from a political-economic perspective in the context of Vancouver real estate capitalism. This focus means observing Indigenous real estate development "on Western terms" (Kovach, 2009: 37, in Mcgregor, 2018: 820), restricted to observing phenomena that are understandable within Western terms of reference. The story that I tell in this dissertation therefore exhibits many obvious gaps. There is much more heterogeneity beyond my political-economic perspective and many more angles and methodologies (Wilson, 2001) are needed to explain the intricacies between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity as they manifest themselves in large-scale First Nation real estate development. However, I cannot account for that from my positionality.

I depict Indigenous agency through projects that are central to the settler-colonial economy. This also means that I depict Indigenous peoples as entangled with the extractive nature and the contradictions of that economy. I realized, however, that this is also part of not presupposing subalternity, and part of a nuanced understanding of Indigenous peoples as particular actors with a particular, historically contingent positionality in the contemporary system. In this system, juxtapositions between "Indigeneity" and capitalism or urbanization do not make sense. Indigenous peoples also, yet by no means exclusively, articulate power, self-determination, and visions of the future in "Western" ways. This is not to dispute ontological differences between Indigenous worldviews and Western perspectives. However, warranted by the existence of large-scale, profit-oriented First Nation real estate developments, there must be some common ontological ground.

3.3 This Dissertation's Perspective

I thus looked for a perspective that could find explanations for the reproduction of Vancouver real estate capitalism on Indigenous lands. However, I also needed to describe First Nation agency within that dynamic in a nuanced way without misrepresentation. I observed that First Nation real estate development functions on the same extractive premises as any form of rentier capitalism does (Christophers, 2010, 2021) and looked to take a perspective that allowed to account for the complexities and contradictions of this observation. I wanted to make sure that I did not depict First Nations as inherently capitalist actors, nor did I want to relegate them to a primordial state of nature. I wanted to account for the historical and contemporary structures of settler colonialism, without, however, describing inevitable Indigenous assimilation into the settler-capitalist system. Based on my positionality and my limited access to Indigenous worldviews, I looked to take a perspective that allowed for a nuanced description of the settler-capitalist process beyond simple dichotomies that other Indigenous peoples as agents outside of capitalist urbanization. I wanted to observe the evolution of an everchanging settler-colonial capitalism dialectically constituted of its individual parts that we are all

somehow entangled with. In the words of Jasmine Gani and Rabea Khan, I looked to pursue research mindful of particular colonial structures and particular positions therein, without, however, taking "as a given that the colonial encounter is the starting point" (2024: 6).

I therefore do not consider myself an "Indigenous ally". This is not Indigenous research, this is not research with Indigenous communities, this is not research that applies Indigenous methodologies, and this is also not research that claims to be de- or anticolonial. I am in no position to assess what that means. I have tried to pursue a respectful research strategy, but claiming to be an "Indigenous ally" or to be pursuing de- or anti-coloniality would be about wanting to be on the "right" side rather than about actual benefits for Indigenous communities.

To sum up, embarking on this research, I had to find an appropriate perspective from which I could discuss Indigenous real estate development, but I have not found a satisfactory answer to all ethical questions that pertain to my positionality. In this quest, I was inspired by literature that discusses how to appropriately conduct research in Indigenous contexts. However, I realized that much of that literature did not fully resonate with the specific research I was doing, or the relationship I had with the research field and its subjects. Most scholarship discussed in-depth relationships as a precondition for conducting research in an appropriate manner. I thus wondered if I should be doing my research at all. I came to the conclusion (certainly also influenced by the fact that I had already spent a considerable amount of time of my 3-year PhD contract on this research) that it would be ethically justifiable to continue when being careful how and about what aspects of Indigenous real estate development I was speaking. This meant that I focused on First Nation real estate development as part of the broader political economy of settler-colonial capitalism. In that, I used the political-economic structures of First Nation real estate developments as a proxy for Indigenous agency. This perspective runs the risk of reproducing already dominant Western voices in scholarship relating to Indigenous peoples (Carey and Silverstein, 2020). However, I think that not pursuing research from such perspectives would also contribute to the marginalization of such scholarship itself.

The empirical context I observe in this dissertation very much demonstrates that treating Indigenous and "Western" ideas about land use as ontologically separate is not constructive if aiming for an improved understanding of settler-colonial capitalism in its contemporary forms. Instead, Indigeneity needs to be understood as "relational with deeply historical, institutionalized and power-inflected ontologies" (Radcliffe, 2017: 220). To overcome "the denial of Indigenous co-presence with modernity" (Radcliffe, 2017: 223), researchers should study such articulations of Indigeneity as co-produced with settler colonialism. I have gotten a glimpse beyond dichotomies between "Western" and "Indigenous" and into the history of peoples that have been subjected to the horrors of colonization, but still have managed to make this history one of resistance, survival, and resurgence. I only have the utmost respect for what the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh have achieved and continue to form, even for my limited insights. Nevertheless, I am also concerned about the continuing pressures within the settler-colonial

system through which lands are put to ever more "productive" use. This is reproduced in the observed developments, as much as it is the world we all live in.

4. Methodology

As detailed in the Research Ethics section just above, I changed the analytical focal point of this dissertation from a focus on cultural and political-economic factors to a sterner focus on the political economy. In that, I was inspired by abductive analysis as an analytical approach (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014; Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, 2022). Abductive analysis encourages researchers to find compromises between the indispensable openness of empirical research with the rigidity necessary for theory-building. Applying such an approach allowed me to be flexible in responding to the unpredictable circumstances of my fieldwork. Nevertheless, it also provided me with a framework that was rigorous enough to allow me to connect my empirical insights with the theoretical ideas around capitalist urbanization and settler colonialism that guided the research process. In the following, I want to briefly outline how I undertook my research, and how the research process changed over time. I first outline the guiding principles of abductive analysis, followed by a description of my approaches to data collection. This allows me to delineate my data corpus and to provide an overview over the different steps of data analysis.

4.1 Abductive Analysis

Conceptualized by Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmernmans, abductive analysis signifies an approach to research based on the insight of "scientific work as an ongoing act in which discovery and justification are inseparable and intertwined moments" (2014: 42). Abductive analysis is no analytical approach that provides strict rules for data collection or analysis, but it is an underlying philosophical attitude that recognizes the inherent openness of the research process. Abductive analysis is thought of as an approach that entails both inductive and deductive elements. It conceives of research as needing to be open to theory building (which induction is arguably not as much), while not being inhibited by a rigid theoretical corset that predefines research results, as can be the case for deductive approaches. Similar to other approaches applied for urban research, abductive analysis is thus a pragmatic approach that recognizes the "indeterminacy" of a case. This "encourages and rewards a methodological openness and flexibility which accommodates the tension between the need to carefully design research projects, on the one hand, and the reality of unexpected connections, mutations, and research sites emerging during the projects, on the other (McCann and Ward, 2012: 43).

Tavory and Timmermans describe their approach as "the form of reasoning through which we perceive the [empirical] phenomenon as related to other observations either in the sense that there is a cause and

effect hidden from view, in the sense that the phenomenon is seen as similar to other phenomena already experienced and explained in other situations, or in the sense of creating new general descriptions" (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012: 171). Methodologically, abductive analysis thus tries to find proof for assumptions made based on observations in the field and for assumptions made based on theory or literature, simultaneously, dialectically. Analysis starts on the basis of preconceived notions of theory and data and functions through "utterances": steps of coding, of interpreting or adjusting codes, or of combining codes to a specific claim. "Each utterance is taken as the grounds for the next, closing some possible interpretations and opening others" (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014: 28) based on a theoretical idea in one instance, or on an empirical one in the next. By allowing alternation between theory and data, between induction and deduction, the approach thus aims at allowing for the necessary flexibility to react to unforeseen and in the end foundational dynamics for new insights. Abductive analysis is a research process "on all fronts" (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014: 139). Data analysis, literature consultation, theory building, and adjustment of empirical research foci happen in congruence.

Abduction thus aims at building mutually constitutive relationships between data and generalization (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012: 167), and has theorization between already established, generalizing theory and the specificity of the field as one of its specific goals (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014: 140). It is therefore explicitly suitable for the creation of theoretical insights from undertheorized fields. I realized that this would be advantageous for this thesis. There exists a robust theoretical arsenal for the investigation of capitalist urbanization and a robust literature on settler-colonial/Indigenous geographies. However, there exist few theoretical tools to analyze Indigenous capitalisms in the urban realm and the context of the political economy of First Nation real estate development is entirely undertheorized.

I perceived that there was no established vocabulary to talk about Indigenous real estate capitalisms that remains critical, non-essentializing, and attentive to agency without disregarding structural dynamics. I thus use abductive analysis to build bridges between broader theoretical concepts I draw from neo-Marxist perspectives on capitalist urbanization, the literature on settler colonialism, and the field. In that way, I come up with specific analytical tools and concepts suitable for my purposes. These theoretical concepts will be discussed more thoroughly in section 5, Contributions. However, I want to briefly mention the use of a dialectical perspective on settler colonialism in my second paper Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b) and the development of the concept accumulation by repossession in my third paper Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025).

4.2 Data Collection

In this dissertation, I analyze several large-scale real estate developments undertaken by First Nation governments and their development companies across the City of Vancouver based on the research question: *In what ways do intersections between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity manifest themselves in the political economy of contemporary First Nation real estate developments in the City of Vancouver?* I am thus interested in the political economy of these real estate developments and how they function. Initially, I was also interested in how they embody geographical imaginations of sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation.

Due to the complexity of understanding the intricacies of First Nation real estate development, I deemed it appropriate to pursue my research question based on different data sources that could speak to this complexity. I therefore conducted semi-structured interviews and collected a number of documents as a secondary data source (Gläser and Laudel, 2009). The dissertation's initial focus on cultural perspectives (in the form of geographical imaginations) and the political economy of real estate guided the interviews conducted during my first stay in Vancouver in fall 2022. These interviews constitute the foundation for my first paper The Vancouver Socioecological Fix: Indigenous Real-Estate Development as the City's Imagination of Sustainability, Affordability, and Reconciliation (van der Haegen, 2024). This paper seeks to answer the research question *what are the City of Vancouver's geographical imaginations of its successful future, and in what ways do these materialize in First Nation real estate development?* As detailed in the Research Ethics section, this initial focus was ontologically interested in the interface between culture and materiality. This means that I operated with questions that aimed at learning more about cultural elements, i.e. geographical imaginations, and how they manifest themselves materially in First Nation real estate development. I also used questions that aimed at learning more about how such developments shape or are shaped by the political economy of real estate. When I realized that accounting for cultural perspectives of First Nation actors would be impossible, this focus on both cultural elements and political-economic aspects increasingly shifted towards the political economy and with that towards materiality.

This, however, did not mean a fundamental shift in data collection, but rather an adjustment of questionnaires and an additional impetus on document analysis. The papers Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b) and Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025) accordingly reflect this shift towards the political economy. This is also reflected in the research questions that guide them. In the dialectics paper, I look to answer the research question: *what are some of the political-economic structures that enable real estate development on Indigenous land, and in what ways are such structures expressions of Indigenous agency?* In the accumulation by repossession paper, I pursue the research question: *in what ways does First Nation real estate development signify continuities and ruptures to settler-colonial capitalism, and how can that changing political economy*

be characterized? For my second round of interviews during my second stay in Vancouver in summer 2023, interviews more heavily focused on trying to understand company structures, hurdles for real estate development on Indigenous land, and how these hurdles are removed. Questions on geographical imaginations, however, continuously disappeared. This change in interview questions and research foci was, in the spirit of abduction, thus driven by what I learned from the empirical field and how I needed to adjust my research focus, as much as it was driven by a shifting theoretical interest. I narrowed my research focus abductively towards describing First Nation real estate development as in a complex and at times contradictory relationship with settler-capitalist urbanization.

Initially, I aimed at supporting my semi-structured interviews by using images during the interview process: photo-elicitation (Harper, 2002; Oldrup and Carstensen, 2012; Pohl and Helbrecht, 2022; van Auken et al., 2010). I also wanted to conduct go-along interviews (Anderson, 2004; Bergeron et al., 2014; Evans and Jones, 2011; Hein et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Kusenbach, 2003; Sheller and Urry, 2006). I included these methods because they promised to provide me with insights into the interface between culture and materiality that I initially pursued. These insights found their way into my first paper on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024). I also sought to employ such methods because they are commonly used to create more intimate interview settings, to give power to interviewees, and to more directly refer to the immediate environment that the research takes place in. I was also interested in these methods because I felt pressured to be innovative. In other words, I felt like I would need to justify should I only use standard methods such as semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I used photo-elicitation and go-along methods supportively during some interviews in the beginning of the research process. However, these techniques did not form a substantial part of my methodological approach because they did not correspond well with my field access.

Regarding go-along interviews, I simply did not find opportunities to implement the method more thoroughly. I conducted one interview with a city planner in which we walked from their office towards the Seṅáḵw development. Even though this was certainly not my best interview because it was my second interview in total and I was incredibly nervous, the method actually worked well. Not only was the conversation while walking more informal and relaxed, but the surrounding cityscape, which was the subject of the interview, actually influenced the conversation because we shifted topics in accordance with what we passed. I would have liked to conduct more interviews in that manner and had imagined that I would walk across current or future construction sites with my interview partners. However, I felt like I was lucky if people agreed to be interviewed at all and therefore did not push for site visits. This might have been a missed opportunity because I believe that conducting more go-along interviews would have added value to my empirical insights. However, I was not confident enough to force the matter.

Likewise, when conducting interviews, I initially often brought images from development plans and city strategies with me. I planned to support some of my questions with them, and specifically aimed at using them to better understand how geographical imaginations manifest themselves in real estate. I

incorporated such images or plans into the interview process in some cases, but predominantly used them as a passive resource. Some interviewees were referring to specific images or plans to illustrate their points. Otherwise, however, I was unable and unwilling to connect specific images to specific questions. That is, because I did not want the interview to appear too abstract or patronizing.

In parallel with interviewing, I also gathered different forms of written data. These were many of the City's broader strategies, bylaws, and planning documents, but also planning and rezoning documents that directly referred to the observed First Nation real estate developments or specific green or "reconciliatory" infrastructures. I also included documents provided by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh or their subsidiaries that directly referred to the development of Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho, and gathered more general strategy and information documents published by the Nations. I complemented this data by collecting documents published by other governmental actors involved in the real estate developments, such as the Canada Lands Company the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

I continued collecting different documents in parallel with analyzing this first set and the first round of conducted interviews. This analytical step focused on the City of Vancouver as an actor and remained relatively broad. This is why I sought to extend specific knowledge about the three developments, how they function, and how they are connected to the broader political economy of real estate in Vancouver. As outlined in the Research Ethics section, I also wanted to discuss Indigenous agency in some capacity. However, I realized that I would have insufficient data through interviews for that purpose during my second round of interviews in summer 2023. I thus extended my data corpus by collecting additional planning documents on Heather, Jericho, and Sen̓áḵw. I included documents from some of the developments' co-owners, such as the Ontario Pension Trust, or the real estate developers Westbank and Aquilini Development. Where freely available, I downloaded data from business registries. I also started to transcribe videos from interviews and events and collected and downloaded the Nations' and their subsidiary companies' web -and social media pages. Further, I assembled a large number of interviews with Nation representatives, newspaper articles they had written themselves, and articles that traced the progress, structures, and conflicts around Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho. I thus compiled a data corpus consisting of a multitude of different written sources, ranging from city bylaws to twitter posts, and a total of 19 semi-structured interviews. The process of data analysis was inherently open and adjusted throughout. Nevertheless, the analysis can be roughly divided into two phases.

4.3 Data Analysis

I undertook a first round of in-depth analysis after my first round of interviews in fall 2022. I had mainly led interviews with City of Vancouver planners and I had focused on both geographical imaginations and political-economic aspects. These interviews, in combination with many of the City of Vancouver's

strategy documents, bylaws, and planning documents, built the empirical foundation of my paper on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024) in which I pursued answers to the research question: *what are the City of Vancouver's geographical imaginations of its successful future, and in what ways do these materialize in First Nation real estate development?* I analyzed this empirical foundation based on an approach inspired by qualitative content analysis (Gläser and Laudel, 2009), discourse analysis (Jørgensen and Philips, 2002) and Derek Gregory's work on geographical imaginations (1994, 1995, 2004). I separately coded for the city government's geographical imaginations and the political-economic aspects around sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation (the paper's foci). The codes underlying this analytical step were deducted from my interview questions. I then combined these two strands of codes into one narrative. With that, I explain how both cultural, as well as material elements form the Vancouver socioecological fix, through which large-scale First Nation real estate development stands for sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation with colonialism.

After I had handed in this paper, consultation of additional literature and novel empirical insights sparked an increasing emphasis on the political economy and the reformulation of research foci and interview questions. In other words, the abductive process really came to bear on the dissertation. I realized that I needed to change the questions I was asking my data. However, I also realized that this did not need to signify an inherent break with my initial plans, but rather that such changes were necessary iterations in the research process driven both inductively and deductively. I still looked to explore the real estate developments at Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho. However, confronted with limited access to interview data from Indigenous actors, the specific focus of the research shifted more heavily towards understanding the political economy of these real estate developments. This also signified a change to the composition of the data corpus, as I not only more heavily focused on financial documents, but also incorporated a lot of newspaper articles.

After my second round of interviews, I undertook a second round of coding in fall 2023. In that, I was inspired by propositions made for abductive coding. I sought to understand the political-economic structures of Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho and how the land they are on relates to settler-colonial capitalism in Vancouver. To gain new insights in that regard, I started with codes that were deducted from the literature and my theoretical interests. These codes were inspired by insights I had gained during my first round of fieldwork and analysis. These insights, in turn had also driven me to center my research on the intersections between capitalism, colonialism and Indigeneity and how such intersections manifest itself in First Nation real estate development. Based on these codes, I engaged in an "open coding" process, in which I allowed new categories beyond predefined ones to emerge from the empirical material during transcription and coding (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022: 72). I also allowed categories that did not prove to be useful to disappear. I followed up on this coding step by a round of "focused coding" (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022: 92), in which codes are challenged and

"closed" and a specific argument is worked out. I gained analytical insights on two scales. On a project scale, I had gained many empirical insights into how real estate development technically functioned and how it was made possible on Indigenous lands. These insights were eventually processed into the paper Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b), in which I pursue the research question: *what are some of the political-economic structures that enable real estate development on Indigenous land, and in what ways are such structures expressions of Indigenous agency?* On a regional scale, I had found a perspective on the role of First Nation real estate development within the broader dynamic of settler-colonial capitalism. In combination with insights provided by my co-author Heather Whiteside, this broader perspective eventually formed the paper Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025) in which we seek answers to the research question: *in what ways does First Nation real estate development signify continuities and ruptures to settler-colonial capitalism, and how can that changing political economy be characterized?*

I have now outlined my data corpus, data analysis and how this differed between the three papers that constitute this dissertation. This now allows for a closer look at the content of the three papers themselves and at what I contribute to scholarly debate with this dissertation.

5. Contributions

In the following, I sketch out the contributions this dissertation makes. These contributions are of variegated nature: some are empirical and others theoretical, some relate to the dissertation as a whole, while others relate to individual papers only. I therefore approach the discussion of contributions through a number of steps. First, I briefly summarize broader empirical contributions this dissertation has made, and go into some detail regarding theoretical contributions. This is followed by a more detailed overview over the three individual papers, what they individually contribute, and how they relate to each other. Subsequently, I reflect on what has been left out and what future avenues for research could be. Finally, via the conclusion of this framework paper, I once again reflect on the fundamental questions and tensions this dissertation grapples with and consider what the insights gained in this dissertation contribute to discussions around the notion of Indigenous sovereignty within settler-colonial structures (Cattelino, 2008; Curley, 2023).

5.1 Broader Empirical and Theoretical Contributions

Fundamentally, the dissertation seeks answers to the question: *In what ways do intersections between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity manifest themselves in the political economy of contemporary First Nation real estate developments in the City of Vancouver?*

I observe these intersections in the context of the real estate developments Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho. The dissertation demonstrates that such real estate developments are vehicles for capital accumulation that arise from strategic decisions made by First Nation governments and their development companies. However, they are also the product of the settler-colonial system in which different pressures incentivize and force First Nations to become actors in the City of Vancouver's growth coalition that is interested in protracted growth in the real estate sector. These broader accumulation dynamics manifest themselves across all three observed developments. Even though the developments differ regarding specific land titles and whether most apartments are to be built as leasehold or rental apartments, they nevertheless fulfill similar functions. They are fundamentally conceptualized as revenue-generating assets for the Nations and their development partners and they are to harmonize development under First Nation auspices and on First Nation lands with "regular" development practices. First Nation real estate developments are advanced as "highest-and-best use" developments, meaning that their purpose is to maximize profits from rent extraction. To that end, they are accommodated by different levels of the Canadian government.

Based on these empirical insights, the dissertation describes the evolution and reconfiguration of settler colonialism in what is now the Vancouver region. Settler colonialism is apparently shifting from First Nation displacement, dispossession, and elimination towards the inclusion of First Nations into its system of accumulation. In that, I outline some of the ways in which the complex system of settler-colonial real estate capitalism in Vancouver is reproduced and reconfigured. I emphasize the continuity of historical drivers of dispossession in repossession, but also accentuate how Indigenous real estate development is the product of First Nation governments' long-term plans, and furthers Indigenous agendas and Indigenous territoriality. I therefore argue that First Nation real estate development creates notions of Indigenous sovereignty within settler-capitalist structures, a thought that I want to return to in the conclusion.

These insights are fundamental for scholarship on settler colonialism and for scholarship on capitalist urbanization. Scholars of Indigenous and settler-colonial geographies are fundamentally interested in more thoroughly comprehending the role that First Nations take, are forced to take, or are incentivized to take in the contemporary political economy of settler colonialism. Likewise, issues around Indigenous land, its ownership, and its assetization are relevant to scholars of settler colonialism and to scholars that study capitalist urbanization processes. Further, scholarship on settler-colonial urbanisms explicitly calls for a theorization of the urban as Indigenous space. I contribute to such calls by describing Indigenous real estate as part of capitalist urbanization. Finally, I also advance scholarship on Vancouver's urbanization and on Vancouver region's settler colonialism by pointing to the manifold intersections between Vancouver's historic and contemporary urbanization and settler colonialism.

I contribute to theoretically advancing scholarship in these fields in several ways. I mostly employ concepts used to understand the relationship between capitalism, nature and urbanization (Ekers and

Prudham, 2015, 2017, 2018; Harvey, 1996, 2004a, 2004b). As a major theoretical contribution, I repurpose such concepts for the here-observed urbanization of capital in a settler-colonial context.

In the paper on the Vancouver socioecological fix (van der Haegen, 2024), I explicitly employ the concept of the socioecological fix (Ekers and Prudham, 2015, 2017, 2018) to underline the importance of both material features and cultural aspects (such as geographical imaginations) in fixing space. The paper thus furthers scholarship on fixes and on geographical imaginations (Gregory, 1994, 1995, 2004) by providing a better understanding of how intersections between culture and materiality (Ekers and Loftus, 2008; Springer, 2012) can be fruitfully explored. I demonstrate that this can be achieved by extending neo-Marxist concepts to entail cultural elements, or vice versa, by tracing cultural elements, such as geographical imaginations, in materiality.

In the paper Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b), I mobilize Marxist dialectical thinking to grasp how First Nation real estate development is shaped by the dialectical relationship between agency in individual moments and the broader structures within which said agency is exercised (Chatterjee and Ahmed, 2019; Christophers, 2014; Harvey, 1996, 2004a; Sheppard, 2008; Swyngedouw, 1999). I expand classical dialectical thinking beyond understandings of capital as the only structural force (Soja, 1980), and underscore the structuring power of colonialism. I therefore propose an approach to account for Indigenous agency within settler-colonial structures from a political-economic perspective. Additionally, I also contribute an approach for the political-economic analysis of Indigenous economic development projects.

I make the dissertation's largest individual theoretical contribution in the paper Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025) together with my co-author Heather Whiteside. We look to mobilize David Harvey's articulation of Marx' primitive accumulation (Marx, 1973) as accumulation by dispossession (Glassman, 2006; Harvey, 2004b) to describe the accumulation dynamics currently taking place through large-scale real estate development on different First Nation-held land parcels. By introducing the concept accumulation by repossession, we look to apply accumulation by dispossession to a settler-colonial context in which dispossession and repossession are inherently intertwined phenomena. We observe that repossession is driven by the settler-colonial desire for accumulation and the integration of Indigenous lands into circulation. However, it is also driven by Indigenous peoples subjecting reclaimed land parcels to accumulation based on their own agency.

I therefore contribute to theoretical discussions by proposing that settler capitalist processes can be better understood by using concepts that theorize the relationship between capitalism, nature and urbanization. However, I also caution that these concepts only cover a specific perspective and leave out Indigenous methodologies and worldviews. I now discuss what empirical insights I gained through this theoretical approach in the individual papers that form this dissertation. I also explain how these individual papers relate to each other.

5.2 Empirical Contributions of Individual Papers

The overarching purpose of the three papers that form this dissertation is to examine Indigenous real estate development at sites like Heather, Jericho, and Seṉáḵw and to investigate some of the overlaps between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity as they manifest themselves in such real estate developments. Across the three papers, I describe different forces at work in Vancouver and beyond that have led to the emergence of First Nation real estate development to the scale and specific form in which it is now observable.

In the first paper, The Vancouver Socioecological Fix: Indigenous Real Estate Development as the City's Imagination of Sustainability, Affordability, and Reconciliation (van der Haegen, 2024), I look to answer the research question: *what are the City of Vancouver's geographical imaginations of its successful future, and in what ways do these materialize in First Nation real estate development?* I focus on the role the city administration imagines for Indigenous peoples in real estate development. For both logistical reasons and in terms of content, I deemed a focus on the city government in the first stages of the research practical. Not only was the city administration most easily accessible for me, but this focus was ideal for obtaining an overview over the research landscape. Nevertheless, the city administration is also one of the most important actors in Vancouver real estate because it has far-reaching competences for legislating urban space. I focus on the city's geographical imaginations of sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation with colonialism, and their material consequences for urban planning and real estate. I thus describe how such geographical imaginations and resulting planning policies are essentially socioecologically fixing Heather, Jericho, and Seṉáḵw in their current form. In other words, geographical imaginations that shape city policies are First Nation real estate's enabling conditions. I demonstrate how the city conceptualizes sustainability either as a low-density green suburbia or a high-density CO2-efficient center. The city thus favors high-rise construction for sustainability purposes, because this arguably retains greenspace elsewhere, and because CO2 budgets do not account for embodied emissions. Likewise, the city conceptualizes housing affordability to be achievable through the construction of maximum supply. To that end, the city envisions that almost all housing will be built by the private sector in a profit-oriented way. This enables continuous accumulation from the real estate sector. Lastly, the city conceptualizes reconciliation with colonialism as Indigenous peoples becoming part of the predominant mode of accumulation through real estate. Therefore, city policies favor the construction of profit-oriented, high-density real estate by First Nations. Such real estate seemingly embodies sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation, but also reproduces accumulation in the real estate sector. Constructing real estate, however, also offers First Nations a tangible avenue to economic success and a more central role in the region's political economy. The city wants First Nations to take an active and profitable role in its extractive real estate system and First Nation real estate developments embody a specific materiality that very much corresponds to that desire.

As detailed in the Research Ethics section, I slightly changed the direction of my research towards exploring the political-economic structures of contemporary settler-colonial capitalism. This means that the two following papers are more sternly focused on the political economy. The paper Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development (van der Haegen, 2025b) has an empirical focus, while the paper Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025) contributes a theoretical synthesis of some of the insights I gained throughout this dissertation.

In the paper Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development paper (van der Haegen, 2025b), I discuss the research question: *what are some of the political-economic structures that enable real estate development on Indigenous land, and in what ways are such structures expressions of Indigenous agency?* I engage with the complex and contradictory shape that Indigenous real estate development takes by example of the Squamish Nation's Seȟáḵw development. I use Seȟáḵw's political-economic structures as a proxy to account for Indigenous agency within the broader political economy of settler colonialism, because I found it impossible to directly account for Indigenous agency from my positionality. The Seȟáḵw development enables the Squamish Nation to assert itself and to become financially independent by creating large amounts of revenue-generating assets on its lands. However, it also reproduces an extractive real estate capitalism and expands settler-capitalist relations on Indigenous lands. To make sense of such seeming contradictions, I propose to observe the political-economic structures of the Seȟáḵw development through a dialectical lens. This means observing settler-colonial capitalism as a system mutually constituted of individual parts that dialectically relate to each other. This helps to understand real estate development at Seȟáḵw as an individual moment in which the Squamish Nation looks to secure funds for its membership, and as an aspect of a larger settler-colonial capitalism, whose drive for land and value extraction therefrom is reinforced through such development. To make this argument, I outline some of the ways in which the Squamish Nation has for decades worked to overcome constraining legislation inhibiting the profitable development of its lands. Together with its development partners and different levels of the Canadian government, it has now created the conditions for successful, large-scale real estate development. This potentially enables huge financial benefits for the Nation in the future. However, it also aligns Indigenous land with the agenda of the state, which is interested in settling Indigenous land claims and enabling economic development. It also echoes conservative calls for Indigenous assimilation, because Indigenous land is reconceptualized as quasi-private property. Therefore, I argue that First Nation real estate development both furthers Indigenous agendas as much as it establishes settler-colonial modes of land control and evaluation on Indigenous lands.

I pick up such insights in the paper Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory together with my co-author Heather Whiteside (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). In the paper, we engage with the research question: *in what ways does First Nation real estate*

development signify continuities and ruptures to settler-colonial capitalism, and how can that changing political economy be characterized? We theorize and historicize the processes of Indigenous real estate development in the context of settler colonialism in the Vancouver region, seeking to understand the novel forms of settler-colonial capitalism that are observable here. We first take a historical perspective based on secondary literature and trace how colonial-capitalist logics of land control and private property have shaped and continue to shape the colonial process in the Vancouver region. The desire to create private property and land-based assets were inherent drivers of colonization, and, by introducing the concept accumulation by repossession, we underscore that such drivers of the colonial process are now also inherently driving Indigenous real estate development. While the desire for accumulation has historically led to Indigenous dispossession, displacement, and elimination, contemporarily, this now also furthers Indigenous possessory power and follows Indigenous agendas. Therefore, a new mode of capitalism in Coast Salish territory is emerging that stands for both continuities and ruptures of the structures of settler-colonial capitalism. With that, we situate currently emerging large-scale First Nation real estate activity in the historical dynamics of colonization in the area. First Nation real estate development establishes both settler-colonial and Indigenous territoriality.

In sum, I believe that I successfully approach the goals of this dissertation in investigating intersections between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity emerging through real estate development at Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho throughout the three papers. However, the issues at hand remain underexplored in several realms.

5.3 Avenues for Future Research

I contribute to scholarly debate on the contrariness and heterogeneity of settler colonialism by describing contemporary First Nation real estate development. However, as detailed in the Research Ethics section, I have been limited in including Indigenous perspectives into my research. I think that there is merit to the perspective that I take in this dissertation, but further research would need to represent Indigenous perspectives more thoroughly. It would be beneficial to highlight perspectives on developing real estate and reclaiming land that might pertain from Indigenous worldviews that go beyond the political-economic dimensions described here. I do not inhabit the right positionality to convey this kind of research, nor do I have access to First Nation communities in a way that would warrant that. Nevertheless, I hope that research on the topics covered in this dissertation will be undertaken from different angles in the future. This would certainly enrich insights about the realities and structures of contemporary settler colonialism.

Furthermore, conducting research from different positionalities would open the door for a more cultural geographical perspective beyond efforts I undertake in the socioecological fix paper and its focus on the city government (van der Haegen, 2024). Many complex questions await researchers, for example

pertaining understandings of nature and sustainability that are negotiated within First Nation real estate development. Indigenous peoples often characterize themselves as inherently connected to land and other species, and Indigeneity has been used to "green" investments (Sommerville, 2021). Exploring, as I had originally intended, but for which I had found myself ill-positioned, what this might mean for how First Nations take part in the capitalist economy (through real estate) would be highly instructive. This is especially relevant in the context of Vancouver's performative "green" urbanism.

In addition, it would be highly instructive to better understand subjectivities that arise in the context of a First Nation business elite and the increasing professionalization of First Nation development companies. Not only are a number of established industry professionals working for First Nation development companies, but these development companies are also producing a First Nation real estate elite. Getting a better understanding of these people's worldviews would certainly create innovative insights for scholars studying the political economy of settler colonialism. However, such research can only be conducted from an adequate positionality intimately familiar with the respective subjects' worldviews.

Also, many dimensions around actual housing prices at Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho, actual financial benefits for the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, or what will happen with revenue that the Nations will likely accrue are as of yet unclear. None of the three developments is operational yet. At the time of writing, Sen̓áḵw is under construction and some apartments might be ready for move-in soon. Demolitions of previous structures have started at Heather, and Jericho has as of yet to move through the rezoning process. Researchers have the task to keep an eye on the effects of the capitalist dynamics of accumulation by repossession as they unfold over the coming years and decades. This is especially relevant, because Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho are potentially only the beginning of First Nation real estate development to this scale. The Squamish Nation already plans to develop further land parcels and MST has many projects in planning. The Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations also develop real estate on their lands, so is the Tsawwassen First Nation, and so are many other First Nations in the Vancouver region on a smaller scale. Even though other land parcels might be less central to capitalist urbanization and less productive in terms of real asset creation, it will be important to observe the extent to which a First Nation real estate development model might establish itself across the Vancouver region and beyond.

It would also be highly beneficial to cover a broader array of actors that are involved in First Nation real estate development. This would allow for a fuller picture of how such real estate development functions. However, these actors are not necessarily interested in talking to researchers. The sheer amount of capital realized in large-scale real estate developments signifies that real estate is a secretive business. This makes it notoriously difficult to obtain insights. Nevertheless, it would be highly instructive to learn more about the specific role of development companies, consultancies and pension funds in First Nation real estate development.

Lastly, Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho are incredibly large, highly visible, and highly profit-oriented Indigenous economic development projects. However, there are also countless smaller Indigenous economic development projects that look to capitalize on land values or access to resources. Indigenous peoples all operate in a capitalist system to some extent but might nonetheless draw on traditional worldviews that might be at odds with capitalist logics. To obtain more nuanced understandings of the relationship between Indigeneity and capitalism and how this relationship is negotiated in different economic ventures and communities beyond classic research areas such as mining or forestry, it would be helpful to study different Indigenous economic development projects in more detail.

6. Conclusion

In this dissertation, I seek to obtain a better understanding of the Musqueam's, the Squamish's, and the Tsleil-Waututh's real estate developments at Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho. I examine the developments' role in Vancouver's political economy of real estate, and what intricacies of the relationship between capitalism, colonialism, and Indigeneity they embody. With my focus on the political economy, I do not cover "ways of reconnecting with land, culture, and community" (Corntassel, 2012: 92) that might concurrently be enabled through First Nation real estate development. I do not cover this part of the story, not because I think that it does not exist, but because I cannot do it justice from my positionality. Real estate developments like Sen̓áḵw, Heather, or Jericho signify the reclamation of land in some ways. This is seen as central to resurgence by many Indigenous theorists (Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011) and it is also actively celebrated by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. However, land is also simultaneously quasi-privatized and subjected to capitalist modes of valuation. In these concluding paragraphs, I want to once again reflect on some of the fundamental contradictions that emanate from First Nation real estate development. I relate these contradictions to research on Indigenous capitalisms and in that way reflect on how the insights that I convey in this dissertation speak to questions of Indigenous sovereignty.

The fundamental tension that this dissertation observes eventually relates back to the fact that contemporary Vancouver, Canada, and North America are the product of a violent process of colonization. This puts contemporary structures of land ownership in an unresolvable impasse with Indigenous claims to land (Blomley, 2015). Indigenous peoples might therefore articulate their sovereignty pre-dating colonization while simultaneously being embedded in contemporary colonial structures. In Vancouver, this means that the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh are now becoming large players in the region's real estate capitalism. By creating structures and notions of sovereignty through which land can both function as ancestral territory and as an alienable asset (Harris, 2017: 391), this fundamental impasse between Indigenous claims pre-dating colonization and the private property system is "fixed". This results in quasi-privatized landownership structures from which

massive amounts of rent can be extracted. In that sense, developments like Sen̓áḵw, Heather, or Jericho are expressions of how settler-colonial capitalism resolves fundamental contradictions, but how this also leads to inevitable changes in its structures. As Shiri Pasternak writes: "economic rights of Indigenous peoples can be seen as both an obstacle and a new access point to capital" (2020: 301). In this case, the "assimilation of Indigenous lands [… might…] enable Indigenous resurgence in manifold ways, and […that] signifies a blatant defiance of a definition of Indigenous peoples' relationship to capital accumulation (Pasternak, 2020: 312).

The complexities and contradictions of capital accumulation unfolding across the territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh are by no means unique to this context (Anderson, 1997; Wuttunee, 2023). These dynamics are as old as the colonial process itself, and they have been taking place across lands that are to be (more) productively integrated into the Western property system and capital accumulation ever since. Andrew Curley, who has studied the Navajo and their relationship to coal mining in detail outlines many predicaments similar to the ones I observe here. He describes the nature of such predicaments in the language of sovereignty. Curley highlights that energy resources (such as coal) have provided the Navajo with "carbon sovereignty", sovereignty that can be exercised within the constraints of colonial capitalism. "Coal. It was a livelihood upon which sovereignty, self-determination, and even the continuation of culture rested" (2023: 11). Likewise, in her work on tribal casinos and the Seminoles of today's Florida, Jessica Cattelino explains that "gaming has enabled Seminoles to reproduce valued forms of cultural and political distinctiveness, and in turn to reinforce Indigenous sovereignty" by transforming "casino revenue into other forms of value" (2008: 2). I possess limited insights into perspectives on sovereignty within the Musqueam, Squamish, or Tsleil-Waututh Nations. However, Indigenous leaders continuously stress that real estate development will offer their Nations sovereignty. Thus, in a similar vein as "Diné people […] redefined fossil fuels in the language of sovereignty, self-determination, and sustainability — carbon sovereignty" (Curley, 2023: 61), one might call notions of sovereignty observed in this dissertation real estate sovereignty.

The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh choose real estate development as the path forward. This is bound to provide them with funds that might signify socio-economic and cultural resurgence, and it might also offer them ways towards vernacular expressions of sovereignty. This means that, as much as Indigenous sovereignty is performed in resistance to the settler-colonial system, so is it performed through leases on coal (Curley, 2023: 98), casino concessions (Cattelino, 2008), or business terms enabling real estate development on Indigenous lands. Observing Indigenous economic development projects thus signifies observing complex notions of how the settler-colonial economy unfolds, how value extraction unfolds, but also how this happens beyond dichotomies of Indigenous stewardship and settler-colonial capitalism. The colonial society's interest in resources, in the case of the Navajo Diné "created the opportunities for sovereignty and self-determination [...] but also contained the exploitative framework for political and resource concessions (Curley, 2023: 101). In the case of the Musqueam,

Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, too, the desire for value extraction from land-based assets drove and drives dispossession as much as it drives repossession now. Across colonized areas, Indigenous peoples engage with the predominant political economy under different kinds of pressures and incentives in pursuit of their own benefit within the constraints of that political economy.

In terms of sovereignty, Indigenous peoples might obtain substantial amounts of political power to leverage within the dominant political economy. However, that leverage is also restricted to its frame of reference. In Canada, Indigenous land claims are established through the courts in some form, and a cultural drive towards reconciliation affords First Nations increasing political power. Real estate developments like Sen̓áḵw, Heather, and Jericho will provide the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh with substantial influence in the real estate business, political power, economic might, and in the end sovereignty. Nevertheless, much of that depends on the successful reproduction of Vancouver real estate capitalism and the possibilities that this affords. First Nations might wield more power, but that power is exercised within the frame of reference of settler-colonial capitalism and in that sense lies with the settler state (Tomiak, 2017: 937). This is what Glen Coulthard means when he speaks of the contemporary politics of reconciliation as "white liberty and white justice". They offer Indigenous peoples forms of recognition that are, however, restricted to the settler-colonial frame of reference and therefore do not change "the structure of domination" (2014: 39). Settler society has become much more open and accepting towards First Nation sovereignty compared to the past (at least in the observed context of Canada, British Columbia, and Vancouver). Nevertheless, the ultimate frame of reference for Indigenous sovereignty remains the political economy of settler-colonial capitalism, and as observed here, its private property regime and the modi of land evaluation it perpetuates.

Still, First Nation real estate development holds the potential for fundamental change, because "if indigenous non-ownership of property was the founding myth of settler colonialism, then indigenous poverty and its imaginings may be one of neocolonialism's most potent contemporary forms" (Cattelino, 2005: 195). Therefore, it will be important to pay attention to the benefits that the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh will actually be able to secure by developing real estate. This might then also point to the ways in which sovereignty through real estate revenue and dependency on the real estate market are co-articulated and what position this will afford the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh in the political economy of settler colonialism.

7. Literature

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8. Appendix

8.1 Explanations on Individual Contributions for Co-authored Papers

8.1.1 Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory

Explanations on Individual Contributions for Co-authored Papers

We hereby declare that the co-authored paper:

van der Haegen, T., & Whiteside, H. (2025). Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory. Environment and Planning A: Economy & Space. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X241312890.

has been produced under the following division of labor between Heather Whiteside and Thilo van der Haegen, according to CRediT (Contributor Role Taxonomy, https://credit.niso.org).

Heather Whiteside: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing.

Thilo van der Haegen: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing.

Heather Whiteside, University of Waterloo

January 6, 2025 H. Whiteside

(date, signature)

Thilo van der Haegen

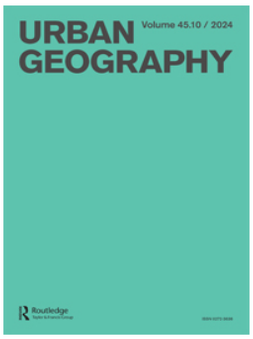
January 7, 2025 T. van der Haegen

(date, signature)

8.2 Individual Papers

8.2.1 The Vancouver Socioecological Fix: Indigenous Real-Estate Development as the City's Imagination of Sustainability, Affordability, and Reconciliation

van der Haegen T (2024) The Vancouver socioecological fix: indigenous real-estate development as the city's imagination of sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation. *Urban Geography*, 45(10), 1843–1864. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2024.2343578.



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The Vancouver socioecological fix: indigenous real-estate development as the city's imagination of sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation

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ABSTRACT

In Vancouver, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations are constructing several large real-estate developments that will deeply impact the Nations and the city itself. Developments such as Seṉáḵw, Heather Lands, and Jericho Lands envision the construction of thousands of new apartments that will yield billions of Canadian dollars in profits from the Vancouver housing market. This paper is concerned with the enabling conditions for such developments found within the city of Vancouver's planning policies and underlying geographical imaginations. Through the application of the "socioecological fix", the paper describes how Vancouver's planning policies aim at fixing problems of sustainability, housing affordability, and reconciliation based on specific geographical imaginations. This results in the conceptualization of reconciliation as the profit-oriented construction of green and affordable real-estate. In light of scholarship that highlights the intertwined nature of colonialism and capitalism, the paper raises the predicament that the reconciliatory approach conceptualized in city strategies and actively pursued by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh is envisioning reconciliation as the reproduction of Vancouver real-estate capitalism. How should scholarship contend with reconciliatory approaches that are both reproductive of settler-colonial capitalism, while also offering reconciliation in a concrete form?

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Introduction

In Vancouver, the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations are constructing massive real-estate developments that will have a deep impact on the Nations and the city of Vancouver. While real-estate development by the three Nations on whose unceded traditional territory the city of Vancouver is located is not inherently new, but going on since the early 1990s (Tsleil-Waututh First Nation, 2023), recent developments such as Seṉáḵw, Heather Lands, or

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Jericho Lands signify a massive change of scale. Seȟáḵw is currently constructed by the Squamish Nation through cooperation with major developer Westbank. The development is located on the Squamish Nation's Kitsilano Indian Reserve #6, a small 10.5-acre site close to downtown that the Squamish Nation reclaimed through a Supreme Court decision in 2001 as part of an original 80-acre reserve given to families now part of the Squamish Nation (Harris, 2017). Over the next 5–10 years, 6077 rental apartments, 20% of which should be affordable, will be constructed in 11 towers up to 59 storeys high, and the Squamish Nation is expecting about $10 billion in revenues over the lifetime of the development (Nch'kaẏ West, 2023). The first two out of four construction phases are funded through a $1.4 billion loan from the federal Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Rental Construction Financing Initiative, the biggest loan in the corporation's history (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022, p. 33).

The Heather Lands and Jericho Lands developments are happening off-reserve on land that Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh have collectively bought back from the provincial and federal governments through a partnership and subsequently founded development corporation MST Development Corporation (MSTDC). Former federal lands, the 21-acre Heather Lands site and 38 acres of the 90-acre Jericho Lands site, are currently held together with Canada Lands Company (CLC), but CLC and MSTDC are planning the redevelopment of all landholdings together, with ownership fully going to MSTDC after rezoning approval from the city of Vancouver. After rezoning, which was recently approved for Heather Lands, the development will happen in partnership with Aquilini Development, another large Vancouver developer. The Heather Lands development comprises 2610 apartments, of which 540 units are social housing, 400 units are rental housing, and 1670 units are leasehold strata in towers up to 28 storeys (City of Vancouver, 2022c). The Jericho lands development is still in the planning phase and will only be built out over the next 20–30 years, but it will likely comprise 13 000 units in towers up to 49 storeys, 30% of which should be offered as affordable units (City of Vancouver, 2023a).

It is impossible to do justice to the many reasons for the Nations to pursue development and the cultural significance thereof from an outsider's perspective and this is also not the focus of this paper. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that the Nations' leadership understands these developments not only as "land back" (Onishi, 2022), but importantly as major tools toward economic independence and self-sufficiency as they offer "a unique opportunity to financially support the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh communities and enhance our quality of life through essential social programs" (Sparrow & Khelsilem, 2023). The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh have been fighting for control over their traditional ever since they had been displaced from the largest part of them (Harris, 2017; Pasternak, 2015; Roy, 2007). Developments like Seȟáḵw, Heather, or Jericho are also an expression of that continuing political fight and its success.

Instead of focusing on the Nations' perspective, this paper focuses on the city of Vancouver's perspective and explores some of the preconditions that enable these developments to be imagined as fixing the city's problems in terms of sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation. I read the city of Vancouver's overarching imaginations of how to create a sustainable city, an affordable city, and a reconciliatory city as part of a socioecological fix (Ekers & Prudham, 2015, 2017, 2018) based on an analysis of Vancouver's

major strategy and urban planning documents, with supporting evidence gathered through semi-structured interviews. The central goal is to demonstrate how the intertwined ecological, material, and cultural natures of the spatial fix taking place here propagate a specific socioecological configuration of space. Geographical imaginations (Gregory, 1994, 1995, 2004) of how to become a green city, an affordable city, and a reconciliatory city are highlighted as specific cultural elements that are entailed in the city's policies and in that way become "congealed" (Ekers & Prudham, 2018, p. 20) in the built environment. The city of Vancouver's policies exhibit specific geographical imaginations of what green means, what housing affordability means, and what reconciliation means, and these imaginations are socioecologically fixed in developments such as Seȟáḵw, Heather, or Jericho.

This means that this paper is informed by Seȟáḵw, Heather, or Jericho, but it is focused on the perspective of the city and it predominantly works with city data. It finds that the "green" city continues to be imagined either as green suburbia, or as "eco-density" residential towers (Hutton, 2019, p. 47), which are now to be constructed in new parts of the city. The imagination of the affordable city propagates the construction of maximum supply, which equally encourages profit-oriented market-rate housing construction in the form of high-rise apartment buildings. Congruently, this sustainability fix (Castree & Christophers, 2015; McCann et al., 2022; While et al., 2004) and housing affordability fix enable continuous accumulation in the city's real-estate sector, a trend that started with the first settlers arriving in the region (Cowen, 2020; Gurstein & Yan, 2019, p. 219) and thus with the dispossession of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. Simultaneously, city policies imagine reconciliation with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh to function through offering what Baldwin et al. call an "entry into the dominant social order" (2011, p. 8), the participation in real-estate development. This permits the Heather, Jericho, and Seȟáḵw developments to materialize as the imagination of the green, affordable, and reconciliatory Vancouver.

While empirically highlighting the specific conceptualization of reconciliation as the for-profit real-estate development of a green and affordable city and with that the narrow confines, in which settler-colonial capitalism offers forms of reconciliation, is a valid contribution, the analytical insights of this paper are limited without broader engagement with the perspective of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. The paper points to some of the enabling conditions for Indigenous real-estate development, and highlights dominant discursive structures within city policies, but the paper does not more deeply engage with the variegated meanings of the developments for Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, and the Nations' agency in making these real-estate developments a reality. This paper engages but an aspect of how meaning, matter, and capital is fixed in developments like Seȟáḵw, Jericho, or Heather, and the following public statements are supposed to highlight that there is much more to this socioecological fix than the perspective of the city of Vancouver.

For the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh the developments seem to be perceived to hold the potential for a substantial increase in Indigenous power as the three Nations are bound to become "the most powerful developer in North America" (David Negrin, CEO of MSTDC, as quoted in: Fumano & Culbert, 2022), and the developments might create the revenue needed to fund infrastructure and services, and offer

the Nations a possibility to become financially independent. Programmatically, Khelsilem, Chairperson of the Squamish Nation council highlights:

> "Seȟákw is […] largely viewed through an economic development lens, which is, it's intended to achieve highest and best use of the land. To create long-term economic value for the nation to be able to support our economic and social goals for our community" (Khelsilem, 2021)

Thus, while this paper delivers evidence of how settler-colonial capitalism offers a "reconciliation fix" without changing its order of operations, it also suggests that the participation in real-estate development in the extremely expensive Vancouver housing market, which is actively pursued by Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh is bound to offer the Nations substantial, tangible resources and political power. But, broader research that can contextualize Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh perspectives is pivotal should scholars wish to more thoroughly explore some of the predicaments of the intersection between capitalism and colonialism hinted at here.

Structurally, the paper first references literature on Vancouver as a "green" and unaffordable city (Jones & Ley, 2016; Kear, 2007; Peck et al., 2014; Quastel et al., 2012), before turning to literature on contemporary forms of settler-colonial capitalism and attempts at reconciliation within it (Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Pasternak, 2020; Sommerville, 2021; Tomiak, 2017). The subsequent chapter discusses methodology, followed by an empirical analysis of three socioecological fixes embodied in Vancouver planning strategies: the green city, the affordable city, and the reconciliatory city. This empirical evidence enables the ensuing discussion regarding how such a conceptualization promotes reconciliation in a narrow frame of for-profit real-estate development. This, in turn, allows for a contribution to broader discussions about the (in)adequacy of capitalist approaches to reconciliation.

Vancouver: sustainable living in the green city

The conditions for socioecologically fixing capital in Indigenous real-estate are laid out by specific imaginations of what sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation signify in Vancouver. Vancouver's identity as a "green" but also unaffordable city has been widely covered by critical literature, and a better understanding thereof will subsequently enable the discussion of the here-identified approach for reconciling with First Nations: socioecologically fixing issues of colonialism through real-estate development.

Vancouver urbanism is widely known for high-rise condominium towers and features such as density, livability, and sustainability (Peck et al., 2014). The literature highlights a specific understanding of sustainability in Vancouver, the city as a site where "cultural capital accrues […] through personal enactment of sustainable urban lifestyles" (Quastel et al., 2012, p. 1068). Such lifestyles are promoted by a specific understanding of the role of nature in a "green" city (Kear, 2007, p. 324; McCallum et al., 2005; Peck et al., 2014, p. 390; Wachsmuth & Angelo, 2018) that enables secure living in a "naturesque", ideal cityscape (Lees & Demeritt, 1998; as quoted in: Quastel, 2009, p. 712). Vancouver is understood as being embedded in culture but also close to "real" nature, the "wilderness" (Barnes et al., 2011, p. 307; Vanzella-Yang, 2019), profiting from its positive aspects, while keeping negative ones outside (Pohl & Helbrecht, 2022). In

Vancouver, an imagination of sustainability has come to signify living in a dense, artificially-greened high-rise cityscape, while also being close to and protective of "real" nature. This ahistorical categorization of wilderness (Baloy, 2016; Barman, 2005, 2007; McCallum et al., 2005) erases the role of Indigenous people in creating the region's landscapes and depicts them as prehistoric peoples, separate from culture (Baldwin, 2009; Baldwin & Erickson, 2020; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018).

The "green city" idea has become the symbolic capital of a real-estate industry that is central to the region's economy (Ley, 2021). The success of what Molotch (1976) has called a city's "growth machine" (Hutton, 2019, p. 48; Ley, 2021; McCallum et al., 2005; Quastel, 2009, p. 703; Surborg et al., 2008) paired with the great influx of foreign capital (Barnes et al., 2011, p. 310; Hutton, 2019, p. 54; Ley, 2017, 2021; Olds, 1998) and the absence of provincial or federal government support for affordable housing provision (Gurstein & Yan, 2019, p. 219; Ley, 2021, p. 301) has led to a housing affordability crisis. Even though both levels of government have now re-enacted "historic" policies (Government of British Columbia, 2018, 2022, p. 3; Government of Canada, 2017, p. 3), Vancouver routinely features as one of the most unaffordable cities on the planet (UBS, 2022, p. 10), and the construction of condominium towers has often become the only financially viable form of urban development (Grisdale & Walks, 2022; Gurstein & Hutton, 2019, p. 15; Gurstein & Yan, 2019, p. 226; Harris, 2011, p. 718). Vancouver has become a "dual city" whose "sustainability" is only affordable to one segment of the population (Barnes et al., 2011, p. 297) and past city policies inspired by prevalent imaginations of sustainability such as the "sustainability-as-density" paradigm (Quastel et al., 2012) or the promotion of density along major transit lines are inherently linked to gentrification (Jones & Ley, 2016).

While the promotion of "sustainability-as-density" has precipitated tremendous change, density, and gentrification in the city, it has also narrowly focused that change (Quastel et al., 2012, p. 1056). Vancouver also exhibits continued suburbanization as the city "has neither transcended nor succumbed to its suburbs: rather, it has inventively recombined urban and suburban modes of development" (Peck et al., 2014, p. 389). The high-density downtown area with its condominium towers is made possible by the fact that large swaths of the city are zoned for single-family use (Harris, 2011, p. 718). Vancouver's suburbia, another means of "green" city living with broad streets and large green spaces, has profited tremendously from the increase in land prices in the region. The suburbs have profoundly influenced urban development strategies through their resistance (Interview Journalist, 11/10/22; Crawford, 2022; Gold, 2022) to proposed changes in density or to their "green" character, thereby pushing magnitudes of change elsewhere.

Settler-colonial capitalism

To discuss the city of Vancouver's particular approach to socioecologically fixing colonialism, and how this opens up a confined window for reconciliation, this paper draws from literature that explicitly engages with questions of redress in contemporary settler-colonial societies, and especially in the settler-colonial city (Hugill, 2017; McClintock & Guimont Marceau, 2023; Simpson & Hugill, 2022; Sylvestre & Castleden, 2022). It adds to debates around the intertwined and contradictory nature of capitalism and ongoing colonialism (Pasternak & Dafnos, 2018). Capitalist offerings for reconciliation

are met with skepticism, as such reconciliatory approaches are often based on the integration of First Nations into market relationships (Pasternak, 2015, 2020; Tomiak, 2017), which have been used for "greening" and "socializing" investment (Sommerville, 2021). Also, they are framed by planning practices and ownership relations that reinforce the colonial system of private property (Blomley, 2004; Dorries, 2022). But as Cattelino (2005, 2008) highlights in her seminal work on Seminole gaming, Indigenous capitalism can also be seen as a "vehicle[s] toward tribal economic power" that enables independence, self-governance and sovereignty (2008, p. 137).

Specifically, I engage with the argument that capitalism and colonialism are intrinsically intertwined (Pasternak, 2020, 2023; Sommerville, 2021; Tomiak, 2017; Whyte, 2017, 2018), and Glen Coulthard's (2007, 2014) resulting deduction that the contemporary politics of recognition[1] embedded into the framework of settler-colonial capitalism are inadequate, as it reproduces colonial power relationships. Coulthard (2014) argues that, in a relationship of settler-colonial domination (67), contemporary forms of recognition are a form of settler-colonial territoriality (Sack, 1983; as quoted in: Coulthard, 2014, p. 7). While they offer Indigenous groups some form of access to power, they also enable the reproduction of the dominant capitalist settler-colonial system (Coulthard, 2014, p. 25) and the incorporation of Indigenous lands into it. As long as that system of domination is in place, "the structure of domination [… can be] modified, but the subject position of the colonized remains unchanged", and recognition will come to be seen as what Frantz Fanon called "white liberty and white justice" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 39). The following description of the Vancouver socioecological fix highlights exactly what Coulthard means: A form of recognition, here called "reconciliation" takes place, seemingly naturally, as part of the predominant form of accumulation in Vancouver real-estate capitalism. Indigenous people are offered "an entry into the dominant social order" (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 8).

Congruently, the here-described all-encompassing nature of colonial capitalism makes finding tangible reconciliatory approaches difficult, and it risks describing Indigenous peoples as passive and victimized without agency to navigate that contemporary system. If Indigenous values and economics are fundamentally anti-capitalist, and incompatible with market economies (Corntassel, 2012, p. 95) and Indigenous people who pursue capitalist reconciliation are "psycho-affectively" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 26) corrupted by the colonial system to pursue "white liberty and white justice" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 39), there can be no true recognition within capitalism. If "the delegation of land, capital and political power from the state to Indigenous communities" used for capitalist development is set to "reproduce the very configurations of colonial power" (Coulthard, 2007, p. 438/39), by "assuming that any subaltern group that is granted [recognition] will thereby acquire a subordinate articulation with a capitalist state" (Day, 2001, p. 189; as quoted in: Coulthard, 2014, p. 446), it is hard to see solutions within a capitalist system. What are we to make of a socioecological fix that addresses reconciliation by enabling continuous accumulation, while, at the same time, offering tangible power through the massive potential payout from large-scale real-estate development? While the predominant system of settler-colonial capitalism is in place without the consent of First Nations, these same groups now see the possibility to join, albeit only "on the right terms" (Pasternak, 2020, p. 313), by endorsing the "broader political project of neoliberalism" (Yeh & Bryan, 2015, p. 537).

The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh have been deeply impacted by the intertwined powers of capitalism and colonialism (Simpson, 2022). There is no Sen̓áḵw, or Jericho site outside of the city and its capitalist urbanism, and the Nations have fought and continue to fight for access to their traditional territory. The framework, and this is Coulthard's point, is already colonial. This, however, does not point to tangible improvements outside of the settler-capitalist system that substantially alters power relations at a larger scale (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018; Tomiak, 2023). As Shiri Pasternak highlights, "Indigenous peoples can, of course, both be grounded in their culture, and participants in a modern market society" (Pasternak, 2020, p. 313). While real-estate in Vancouver is deeply rooted in and enforcing the settler-colonial system, and the current politics of recognition are thus limited to the pursuit of reconciliation on plots of land that can bring value to the city's real-estate market, it is also a space navigated by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh.

Methodological approach

To explore how the city of Vancouver approaches fixing its issues of sustainability, affordability, and how this opens up space for fixing reconciliation via Indigenous market-based real-estate development, the concept of the socioecological fix (Ekers & Prudham, 2015, 2017, 2018) is combined with Gregory's geographical imaginations (Gregory, 1994, 1995, 2004). Geographical imaginations are here understood to be "articulations between space and place" (Gregory, 1995, p. 464), cultural elements that embody the social performance of (unconscious) and multiple understandings of space (Gregory, 1995, p. 475). It is assumed that societal geographical imaginations find their way into city policies, which, in turn, decidedly shape the Vancouver socioecological fix. I thus read these geographical imaginations as one of many particular cultural aspects of a socioecological fix to explicitly highlight the importance of cultural understanding in how fixing problems and fixing capital is approached.

Michael Ekers and Scott Prudham remind us that not only capital is fixed in the (built) environment but that social and cultural elements are changing in response to capitalist crises of accumulation (Ekers & Prudham, 2015). A socioecological fix is not only a reaction to a crisis of accumulation, but also to a crisis of legitimacy, offering ways of fixing capital to fix problems. Geographical imaginations are one aspect that shape the way in which problems are diagnosed, and subsequently, how fixing them is being approached. In other words:

> capital sunk into the landscape is also subject to social struggles that shape matter and meaning, including in socioecological registers, and […] these struggles in turn comprise part of the ideological terrain of legitimacy and hegemony in a complex society. (Ekers & Prudham, 2017, p. 1371,72)

It is necessary to consider the political and cultural dimensions around spatial fixes (Ekers & Prudham, 2017, p. 1377), as these dimensions might help to explain the relationship between resistance and hegemonic circumstances; how for example a broad coalition of actors coalesces around the idea of pursuing real-estate development on Indigenous lands. As Launius and Kear (2019) show, financialization and a resulting spatial fix are heavily informed by cultural values and their negotiation, which makes a

purely economic perspective on a fix insufficient, as "the milieu of accumulation" (Ekers & Prudham, 2017, p. 1382) might change, but not necessarily its regime. This idea has been used to explore the ways in which capital is fixed in nominally "green" investments (Hazelett, 2023; While et al., 2004), thereby successfully blurring "the line between environmental stewardship and economic growth" (McCann et al., 2022, p. 5). Such ecological dimensions are also partly covered in this paper as part of the analysis of how geographical imaginations of sustainability or "reconciliation" shape the socioecological fix.

This paper thus explores one particular aspect of the Vancouver socioecological fix: how geographical imaginations found in the city of Vancouver strategies blur the line between issues of sustainability, housing affordability, reconciliation, and economic growth, and in that way present a way in which fixing capital in Indigenous real-estate simultaneously fixes the city's problems. This is expressed in specific materiality, as "processes, materials, ideologies, and forms of knowledge […] become congealed in actual landscapes and processes" (Ekers & Prudham, 2018, p. 20). From the perspective of the city of Vancouver, developments such as Seȟáḵw, Heather, or Jericho manifest as the material result of socioecologically fixing capital in Vancouver real-estate in a green, affordable, and reconciliatory manner, a configuration of space that is both material and cultural.

Describing geographical imaginations as one particular aspect of the Vancouver socioecological fix is an attempt to explicitly operationalize the cultural concept of geographical imaginations within the political-economic lens of a fix. This approach thus requires a methodology that is attentive to both cultural as well as political-economic elements. The core assumption is that the analysis of city documents and strategies, complemented by interviews with city officials allows for an understanding of the imaginations on which these strategies are based, and how imaginations shape city policies. These, in turn, propagate a specific fix, and that fix results in a specific materiality. This allows for an understanding of how culture materializes in city policies, and how it is eventually fixed in the cityscape.

The empirical analysis in this paper is largely based on material evidence provided by the City of Vancouver in a variety of strategy documents, building codes, and bylaws regarding sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation. Pivotal among these are the recently published Vancouver Plan and Broadway Plan (City of Vancouver, 2022a, 2022c), which provide an integrated perspective on the city's planning for the first time. As part of an ongoing research project, semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders were conducted. For this paper, 11 semi-structured interviews, mainly with city planners, were used as complementary data. It is helpful to not only seek imaginations within strategy documents that signify a more static reflection, but also to trace how the individuals that make up the city apparatus reflect on the city's approach to sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation. By relying on two different data sources, the approach aims at a better understanding of geographical imaginations while also being receptive to political-economic data that comprise the socioecological fix.

The narrative presented below was constructed through interviews conducted in November 2022, followed by an in-depth qualitative content analysis (Gläser & Laudel, 2009) of the interviews and available documents. This approach allowed for coding within both types of data to follow a logic that combined deductive assumptions

with the necessary inductive flexibility. Geographical imaginations and political-economic elements were both coded separately, before being woven together into one narrative, which is presented in the following sections, each addressing one of the three investigated elements: the green, the affordable, and the reconciliatory city.

The green city

Imaginations of the green city in Vancouver express themselves in two different fixed urban forms: a dense, artificially greened CO2-efficient environment, and a low-density, green suburbia. In their congruence, both understandings form a cultural-ecological dimension of the Vancouver socioecological fix. They enable Indigenous real-estate developments to be imagined as a part of the green Vancouver, as they promote high-density development as green, an imagination that is now extended in places outside of downtown.

As highlighted by the literature, Vancouver understands itself as having a green identity, as being "a leader in municipal environmental sustainability" (City of Vancouver, 2022b, p. 14; see also: City of Vancouver, 2019a, p. 10; 2022, 2; City of Vancouver & Vancouver Park Board, 2018, p. 2), and environmental stewardship as an intrinsic part of the city's identity (City of Vancouver & Vancouver Park Board, 2018, p. 44). This is reflected in the importance of green spaces for the city, for example the "many green and leafy residential areas" (City of Vancouver, 2022a, p. 31, 345), but also the "wilderness" outside of "a city surrounded by forests, rivers, lakes and oceans" (City of Vancouver, 2022c, p. 14; see also: City of Vancouver & Vancouver Park Board, 2018, p. 5). This imagination of being in a privileged relationship with nature results in the propagation of specific "green" strategies.

The widespread desire to live in the natural environment of green suburbia (Siemiatycki et al., 2020) is a constant and powerful (Peck, 2011) factor in policy-making. Prevalent NIMBYism (Interview Journalist, 11/10/22; Crawford, 2022; Gold, 2022), the resistance to change, derives from an imagination critical of density and the associated loss of greenery. The Vancouver and Broadway Plans continuously reassure readers that the green character of the city and its neighborhoods will be preserved (City of Vancouver, 2022c, p. 31, 345) and people will be able to continue to enjoy living in "streets and parks accented with big trees and lush vegetation" (City of Vancouver & Vancouver Park Board, 2018, p. 5, see also: City of Vancouver, 2021a,p. 2,3). The fear of the loss of green space is also shared by some planners:

> The city is getting really dense and that is not always a good thing. […] we are really reducing any kind of green space you can have in a lot because you are trying to fit as much square footage as possible (Interview City Planner, 11/07/22)

If suburbia is resisting densification, this makes densifying places where this is possible more pressing: "It's one of the reasons why heights are quite extreme because on the bits that you, parcels that you can develop, yeah, you've got to go to greater heights" (Interview City Planner, 11/22/22). To that end, a key concern of the Vancouver Plan is the construction of "complete neighbourhoods that provide safe and convenient opportunities to walk, bike and take transit for daily needs" (p. 102). Their efficient urban form, in terms of CO2, is understood to be an important factor constituting a green

city. The propagation of high-rises is enabled by the city not yet accounting for embodied carbon emissions (in buildings) in its carbon budget (Interview City Planner, 11/16/22). Instead, the city focuses its emissions reduction efforts on the two main emission sources: heating (57%) and transport (37%) (City of Vancouver, 2021a,p. 4). This enables high-emissions investments in high-density residential towers to be imagined as green (City of Vancouver, 2021a, p. 39). "At the moment, I guess the argument is: if you add up more people near transit getting out of their cars […], less and less operational emissions in the buildings. Those things outweigh the initial investment in embodied carbon and in concrete" (Interview City Planner, 11/22/22).

To secure the green character of these dense neighborhoods, policies seek to bring "nature back to the city" (City of Vancouver, 2019b, p.10) through green infrastructures (City of Vancouver, 2016, 2019a) that now feature prominently in the Broadway Plan and the Vancouver Plan. They are imagined to create "purposeful landscapes" (Interview City Planner, 11/07/22) that provide the population with the positive aspects of nature – ecosystem services (City of Vancouver, 2018a, p. 40, 2021c, p. 2) – while leaving out the negatives (City of Vancouver, 2016, p. 2.35). In this understanding, which intrinsically understands green to be "good" (Angelo, 2021; Wachsmuth & Angelo, 2018) even dense urban space can be "greened" through "the right managerial engagement with nature" (City of Vancouver, 2019a, p. 22). This allows for the selective integration of nature into the city while equally protecting "real" nature from the impacts of city life. Not all planners, however, agree on the potential for greening dense neighborhoods: "I mean, it's my personal opinion. Yeah, but if you push the density too high and if you're not doing something really extraordinary in some other way to counterbalance that, then if you're doing business-as-usual development to a really high scale, there's just a limit to what you can do from a sustainability perspective" (Interview City Planner, 11/16/22).

Thus, strategies exhibit a compromise between two factors that are understood to constitute a green city: the prevalence of "green" space and the idea of sustainability-as-density (Quastel et al., 2012). These two notions also result in two different green urban forms: low-density suburbia and high-density apartment buildings, with the continued existence of suburbia making the existence of high-rises necessary. The Vancouver and Broadway Plans approach this compromise by introducing more density into neighborhoods, but also by concentrating that density around transit hubs, leaving larger areas of the city untouched or subject to gentler densification. Together, the two modes of living form the imagination of a green Vancouver, of a city close to "real" nature, CO2 efficient, all the while boasting a green character.

Even though sustainability-as-density is being employed in new places, imaginations of sustainability in the form of green esthetics or "eco-density" continue to shape the Vancouver socioecological fix. Whereas the green character of the city is, as will be argued below, extended by the incorporation of the imagination of green Indigeneity, which also makes Heather, Jericho, and Seṅáḵw appear greener, they more generally materialize the green city imagination. They are extremely high-density and built close to public transport options. Seṅáḵw close to downtown only offers very limited parking space and will contribute to public transport infrastructure (Nch'kaẏ̓ West, 2023). The planning for Jericho includes a subway station for a not-yet-funded subway extension (City of Vancouver, 2023a). All developments boast managed "natural"

spaces, such as the award-winning design of Heather (Canada Lands Company, 2023, p. 27), and they take pressure off densifying "green" suburbia (Interview City Planner, 11/22/22, Interview Federal Planner 11/15/22; Nch'kaẏ West, 2023). Their sustainability, however, remains questionable because of their CO2 balance. Without this imagination, no high-rise construction using large amounts of concrete could be imagined as "green". This is not to say that the calculus is wrong, but it enables the "green" Vancouver to look as it currently does, and it enables Jericho, Heather, and Seṅáḵw to be imagined as part of the green city fix, a precondition for reconciliation via real-estate development.

The affordable city

Unaffordable housing is a structural feature of living in Vancouver. Whereas political-economic aspects dominate the "housing affordability fix", measures taken still rely on imaginations of how the housing market functions. Taken together, these aspects enable a fix that entails continuous accumulation in the real-estate sector, as city policies and income are entirely dependent on successful private development. Fundamentally oriented around supply and maximum density, the imagination of the affordable city enables the Vancouverist high-rise urban form at Heather, Jericho, or Seṅáḵw to be understood as contributing to the provision of affordable housing.

The ongoing housing affordability crisis stressed in the literature is a dominant factor in shaping city policy (City of Vancouver, 2017b, 2022a, 2022c, 2023b: B-75). Its root cause is imagined to be "demand outstripping supply" (Interview City Planner, 11/22/22), and solutions envision providing more and the "right kind" of supply (City of Vancouver, 2017b, p. 5). However, the high-price market environment, which is dominated by private developers who build "almost all of the housing in the region" (Interview City Planner, 11/14/22), makes it unviable for developers to build affordable housing (City of Vancouver, 2017b, p. 39), and prohibitively expensive for the city itself (City of Vancouver, 2017a, p. 12). The city resorts to a limited set of tools that are all dependent on the continuous reproduction of the real-estate sector. The "empty homes tax", for example, capitalizes on speculative housing investments in order to provide affordable housing (City of Vancouver, 2022b, p. 6). However, most of the affordable housing supply and city infrastructure is provided through Development Cost Levies (DCLs), which is "a charge on new development" (City of Vancouver, 2004, p. 9) and Community Amenity Contributions (CACs), through which developers finance the infrastructure necessary for new developments (City of Vancouver, 2004, p. 1). Another major tool, Inclusionary Zoning, requires "a certain percentage of the new development to be social housing […] in exchange for additional density" (City of Vancouver, 2017a, p. 23). For larger developments, the inclusionary target is 30% of the residential floor area consisting of a "20% social housing target and minimum 10% moderate-income housing target" (City of Vancouver, 2021c, p. 11).

These tools all share a dependence on continuously high property prices: The higher property prices, development costs, and development profitability, the more money, infrastructure, and affordable housing the city receives. As one planner put it: "When we increase the value of the land, the city gets that back […] So, I think it's messy" (Interview City Planner, 11/16/22). The scope of this dependence becomes apparent in the city budget. Whereas the 2023–2026 Capital Plan allocates $617 million for affordable

housing, city investment is only $84.3 million, with $520 million provided by private developers (City of Vancouver, 2023b, B-76,77). Similarly, the city's 2019–2022 Capital Plan (City of Vancouver, 2018b) calculated $540 million for affordable housing, where $537 million was contributed by private developers and only $3 million by the city (17). Out of the $455 million budgeted for affordable housing in the Broadway Plan, $326 million will be provided by developers, $129 million through partnerships with other levels of government, and no funding comes from the city (City of Vancouver, 2022a, p. 475,492). Even though the city can point to large investments in affordable housing, most actual provision happens through private developers and continuous accumulation (Hyde, 2022). For 2023, the budget sees city expenditures of about $7.2 million for housing out of a total budget of $1.9 billion. And as is typical for Canadian municipalities, property taxes account for 58% of the city's revenues (City of Vancouver, 2023b, B-30,42,43).

As Tom Hutton summarizes: "Cities have an institutional interest in redevelopment owing to the mix of economic, revenue, and taxation benefits accruing from projects" (2019, p. 66). The entire provision of affordable housing, infrastructure, and services is socioecologically fixed on the premise of a private market and continuous capital accumulation therein. This means that even though the city speaks of a housing affordability crisis (City of Vancouver, 2017a, 2022b), high housing prices are a structural feature of the provision of city operations, services, and affordable housing. This dependence and the failure of other levels of government to provide affordable housing makes the city follow strategies that cannot structurally alter how housing is provided or how much it costs. As one city planner put it: "we're caught" (Interview City Planner, 11/08/22). In the absence of other levels of government, this leaves affordable housing construction in the schizophrenic situation where affordable housing in large projects will only ever be built as a 30% afterthought of 70% "unaffordable housing". This obviously also leads to the propagation of high levels of density. Putting as much housing as possible on a parcel, often "near current and future transit hubs" (City of Vancouver, 2017b, p. 32), appears to be one of the only imaginable strategies for increasing affordable housing supply. In this sense, the affordable city implies the construction of profit-oriented high-density real estate in certain parts of the city. Heather, Jericho, and Seńáḵw embody this. They are high-density, will supply a large number of apartments, and will contribute to the city's affordable housing provisions through amenity contributions and by fulfilling the 20-30% benchmarks for social and below-market housing (Interview City Planner, 11/22/22, Interview Federal Planner 11/15/22). Seńáḵw is planned to provide 20% of apartments at an affordable rate (Nch'kaẏ̓ West, 2023), calculated at 30% of the gross median income of the surrounding neighborhood according to CMHC standards (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2023), Heather's rezoning application was approved with offering 22.83% of floor space at some sort of discount (City of Vancouver, 2022c), and Jericho is currently planned with at least 30% of floor area being affordable housing (City of Vancouver, 2023a, p. 156). The developments operate within Vancouver's housing provision framework and their success in providing affordable housing is as limited as the framework is, but they are imagined to fix affordability problems. This represents an additional aspect in enabling the Vancouver real-estate-as-reconciliation fix.

The reconciliatory city

> Reconciliation has not been [near the top of the agenda] until the last few years when the city declared itself a city of reconciliation. So, in all of our projects, it's now a consideration. (Interview City Planner, 11/22/22)

While the above discussions on imaginations of the green and affordable city only partially describe new aspects of the Vancouver fix, the consideration of reconciliation has emerged as a major factor since Vancouver declared itself a "city of reconciliation" in 2021 (City of Vancouver, 2021b, p. 3). Every city document starts with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh land acknowledgements, city staff are trained to act in a reconciliatory manner (Interview City Planner, 11/14/22), and the importance of working with the Nations and urban Indigenous communities is continuously pronounced as an important aspect of the "process" of reconciliation (Interview City Planner, 11/07/22). However, it is also understood that reconciliation needs to take more concrete forms, what a Nation member also called "reconcili-action" (Interview First Nation representative, 11/23/22). City strategies, especially the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) Strategy (City of Vancouver and Vancouver UNDRIP Task Force, 2022), developed by the city's predominantly Indigenous UNDRIP Task Force, imagine a material expression of reconciliation, a central idea being that First Nations have a right to "a slice of the pie":

> Over time, the City of Vancouver has generated enormous wealth from unceded lands and has expropriated lands, and has not compensated the rights and title holders. Recognizing Vancouver as unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh lands means addressing the inequities and loss created by land and resource dispossession. (City of Vancouver and Vancouver UNDRIP Task Force, 2022, p. 21)

The city thus promises to look into "ways to amplify and solidify meaningful Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh participation in building and sharing Vancouver's economic prosperity" (City of Vancouver and Vancouver UNDRIP Task Force, 2022, p. 16). Real-estate developments are understood as a way of empowering First Nations while also helping to solve the city's problems: "Currently, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh are working to address housing supply and affordability through their own developments (e.g. Seȟáḵw, Heather Lands, Jericho Lands)" (City of Vancouver and Vancouver UNDRIP Task Force, 2022, p. 18). The developments are understood to be a manifestation of reconciliation in material and financial terms that is also in the public's interest. Often rather implicitly, I have felt as if First Nation profit-oriented real-estate development is understood to be a social enterprise, as profits go to the Nations, who have largely been excluded from wealth accumulation in the city. Participation of the Nations in the region's economy, and especially in profit-oriented real-estate development emerges as THE sign for reconciliation in Vancouver.

Imaginations of reconciliation also overlap with imaginations of the green city, especially in regard to water management: "The City recognizes that the Host Nations have responsibly stewarded the region's lands and waterways to ensure prosperity for future generations since time out of mind. Since the arrival of settlers, our approach to water management has relied on tools that disrupted the water cycle, degraded natural systems, and caused the loss of important natural assets" (City of Vancouver,

2022a, p. 462). Relying on the Nations' expertise for water management, also a specific feature of Jericho's design (City of Vancouver, 2023a), "represents a unique opportunity to explore Indigenous reconciliation in the urban context through water" (City of Vancouver, 2019a, p. 100). The will to include First Nation perspectives on water management comes back to the imagination of Vancouver's relationship with nature. Because First Nations are Indigenous peoples, they are understood to have a special relationship with "real" nature, where "connection to land is inherent to culture" (City of Vancouver & Vancouver Park Board, 2018, p. 7). Therefore, the implementation of sound water management practices is imagined to be especially green not only on account of its environmental benefits, but also because it enables a more direct connection to real nature through the implementation of "Indigenous ideas". One city planner states: "we can indigenize our policies. So it's not just removing bias and prejudice, it's actually indigenizing. And so how we treat nature, the ecology, the environment, the world can certainly be influenced by Indigenous values" (Interview City Planner, 11/08/22). The idea that First Nation involvement in the development and city planning makes these processes greener reflects the idea of the "green Indian" (Sommerville, 2021, p. 653) and hints at the notion that the construction of market-oriented real-estate developments must automatically be greener if Indigenous peoples are involved, a stereotype also heavily catered to by the Seȟáḵw website (Nch'kaẏ̓ West, 2023).

By offering First Nations an entry into the "dominant social order" (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 8) of real-estate capitalism, and in the process also greening it, the Vancouver socioecological fix entails the idea of a reconciliatory capital switch, after Noel Castree and Brett Christophers' "green capital switch" (2015), which channels real-estate capital into the more social and sustainable circuits of Indigenous capitalism. By imagining reconciliation specifically in economic terms, and in terms of real-estate development, the idea is intrinsically linked to Vancouver's imagination of the green and affordable city. In their congruence, sustainability, affordability, and reconciliation form the Vancouver fix, the material expression of which are developments such as Heather Lands, Jericho Lands, and Seȟáḵw.

Reconciliation through real-estate development?

Through the Vancouver socioecological fix, the city manifests as green, affordable, and reconciliatory. This enables the continuous reproduction of the city's real-estate sector, and reconciliation is now understood to be an intrinsic part of that.

Strategies that implement measures for the city to become green or affordable both propagate the urban form of high-density residential buildings. Their development is functioning as a sustainability (Angelo, 2021) and affordability fix, whose expansion into areas outside of downtown continues to feed the growth machine (Molotch, 1976) of real-estate. Simultaneously, the consideration of reconciliation emerges as part of the Vancouver fix, enabling the profit-oriented development of the green and affordable city in the form of high-rises at Heather, Jericho, and Seȟáḵw. The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh have come into (re)possession of various plots of land across the city on which the imagination of the sustainable, affordable, and reconciliatory urban form is materializing. The Nations can become part of the capital accumulation process of Vancouver real-estate by contributing the needed high-density developments

on their lands, maximizing their profits as economic reconciliation. The developments, in their material form, signify a socioecological fix to the city's problems as they stand for sustainability (-as-density (Quastel et al., 2012)), affordability, and reconciliation.

From the city's perspective, The Vancouver socioecological fix signifies a fix in its most classical sense of "capitalism trying to negotiate its inherent crisis tendencies to reproduce itself in perennially iniquitous forms" (Castree & Christophers, 2015, p. 379). The crisis of legitimacy in which the Vancouver model of city building finds itself in is socioecologically fixed as the set of imaginations that underlie it is extended, with the need for and will to achieve "reconciliation". Nothing is inherently changing about the system or its reproduction, but its socioecological configuration, meaning its cultural legitimization, is. The consequence is that new actors, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh are bound to profit from the system. The Nations are to become powerful land developers wielding influence and reaping profits. Building a green city, providing affordable housing, and assuring reconciliation are, in Vancouver, not framed as questions of whether to accumulate capital, but of how to accumulate capital, and by whom. From the city's perspective, an intertwined sustainability fix (Castree & Christophers, 2015; McCann et al., 2022; While et al., 2004), a housing affordability fix, and a reconciliation fix can be achieved through the envisioned developments. This is not a normative statement to say that this is (or is not) effectively fixing these problems, but the intertwined and socioecological nature of these fixes creates a specific configuration of meaning and capital that allows the green, affordable, reconciliatory city to seemingly come into being in the material form of Heather, Jericho, and Seńáḵw.

Is real-estate capitalism effortlessly integrating questions of recognition of Indigenous people into its circuits, thereby merely enabling its continued reproduction, or does the emergence of such developments signify a possibility for tangible forms of reconciliation? Settler-colonial capitalism seemingly relinquishes control over (small plots of) land (Sylvestre & Castleden, 2022), gives land back, while said land will become ever more deeply engrained into its circuits (Erickson, 2020, p. 113). Real-estate capitalism is receiving recognition as a social and green enterprise without solving any of its own contradictions, "producing a socio-ecological fix to make sure nothing really changes" (Swyngedouw, 2010, p. 222; as quoted in: Castree & Christophers, 2015, p. 379). In this way, the Vancouver socioecological fix "offer[s] specific forms of recognition that are inscribed from the outset, narrowly defining the field of regulatory interventions in ways that leave intact the broader relations underlying environmental disparity" (McCreary & Milligan, 2021, p. 726). The framing of reconciliation as part of the Vancouver socioecological fix naturalizes the use of small plots of repossessed land for real-estate development, and the question of alternatives remains unanswered. Following Coulthard (Coulthard, 2007, 2014) and the broader literature on settler-colonial capitalism, the ways in which Vancouver offers recognition to Indigenous groups become apparent. It offers reconciliation that simultaneously serves the reproduction of real-estate capitalism that was founded on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Cowen, 2020; Leonard, 2010). Only through a form of colonial amnesia (Gregory, 2004, p. 9ff), by not seeing the sheer complexity of ongoing colonialism, can reconciliation be framed within the confines of capitalism, and it excludes the incremental role that capitalism and accumulation by dispossession have played and continue to play in colonialism. Colonialism is placed in the past, and Indigenous peoples can become part of the

"dominant social order" (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 8) through the patriarchal guidance of green (real-estate) capitalism.

However, this paper has largely focused on one particular side to this story, on the city of Vancouver, and the Nations' story of reclaiming lands and working the settler-colonial system is only touched upon here. Engagement with reconciliation through the Vancouver socioecological fix also opens up space in a debate that is mostly relatively critical of capitalist approaches to reconciliation. The congruence of capitalism and colonialism (Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Pasternak, 2015; Whyte, 2017) suggests that true decoloniality has to be anti-capitalist (Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). While I agree with this analysis, it does not offer tangible solutions. Reconciliation as conceptualized here is deeply embedded in the circuits of capital accumulation, but it is also actively pursued by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh and developing real-estate might enable them to provide meaningful services in their communities and become influential actors in the region's real-estate business. From my external perspective, I am in no position to offer an assessment of what a decolonial praxis means in this context, but Indigenous culture should be "understood as unfolding in the present, with Indigenous people modifying and interpreting traditions in response to current circumstance and desires for the future" (McCreary & Milligan, 2021, p. 739), circumstances that are thoroughly embedded in the capitalist economy. Who but the Nations can decide what recognition means for them, or how their current political-economic situation should be navigated?

This paper cannot speak to the perspective of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, nor assess the strategic choices that their leadership makes, but the paper highlights the narrow conceptualization of reconciliation in Vancouver. This conceptualization arguably supports the reproduction of the very system that is at the root of colonial problems, and one that is arguably not necessarily making Vancouver a green, or affordable city. At the same time, it also opens up space for increasing Indigenous financial capabilities and power. What are we to make of capitalist reconciliation that is likely allowing for an increase in Indigenous power? How can we judge approaches that enable recognition on narrow terms, yet equally enable a traditional spatial fix, without employing an essentialist perspective or by relegating reconciliation to a performative spectacle (Daigle, 2019)?

Conclusion

The Vancouver socioecological fix is adjusting to continuously enable accumulation in the city's real-estate sector. The green city is imagined in the forms of green suburbia or "eco-density" high-rises, the affordable city in the form of maximum supply, and the reconciliatory city as one in which the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh benefit from the wealth accumulated through real-estate development. By relying on the concept of the socioecological fix, the paper has highlighted how geographical imaginations inform the city of Vancouver's policies for building a green, affordable, and reconciliatory city, and that the structures of real-estate capitalism guide the search for fixing these issues. Reconciliation is understood as an act of building the green and affordable city through profit-oriented real-estate development carried out by First Nations. Drawing on literature concerned with ongoing settler-colonial

capitalism, the paper gives nuance to approaches of reconciling with First Nations as they present themselves in Vancouver. While the way in which reconciliation is conceptualized enables the reproduction of a colonial-capitalist system, it also holds the potentiality of power and resources that are actively pursued by the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh as they will likely profit tremendously financially and are bound to become influential real-estate developers. By highlighting this contradiction, the paper seeks to engage with the question of how to contend with settler-capitalist approaches to reconciliation in a scholarly way that goes beyond simple rejection or simplification. However, this quest is limited by this papers' focus on the perspective of the city of Vancouver. While it contends that questions of reconciliation are seemingly effortlessly incorporated into capital reproduction, further research with a focus on Indigenous agency and subjectivity might substantiate how Indigenous peoples are navigating that system, and how they are using it to pursue their agendas. But in order to draw further conclusions, research needs to take seriously and cover the agency of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh.

Note

1. I understand contemporary politics of reconciling with First Nations in Vancouver to be part of what Glen Coulthard calls the "politics of recognition".

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8.2.2 Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development

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Urban Futures in the Dialectic of Indigenous Real Estate Development

Introduction

The City of Vancouver, Canada is located on land that the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations claim as their traditional, unceded territory. Since the city's foundation in 1886, the three Nations have largely been displaced from their territory and Vancouver has grown to be a major regional center of a metropolitan area of over 3 million inhabitants. Population growth and the influx of rent-seeking capital have made the region well-known for its high real estate activity and housing unaffordability (Ley, 2021). This means that the land that the three Nations claim as their traditional territory is increasingly urbanized and that their membership (in the 2016 census, the Musqueam had 1660, the Squamish 4060, and the Tsleil-Waututh 1855 members) is increasingly living in (sub)urban contexts (Government of Canada, 2024). Often based on complex histories of dispossession and repossession (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025), the Nations control different land parcels and some of them are located very centrally in the city of Vancouver. On these central parcels, the three Nations are now engaging in what will amount to some of the largest real estate developments Canada has ever seen.

Real estate development has been actively pursued by the Nations for some time, for example through the Musqueam's leləm̓ or the Tsleil-Waututh's Raven Woods developments with around 1,000 housing units each. However, the scale of operations is changing. Through their MST partnership, the three Nations currently collectively develop the Heather Lands project with around 2,600 units. Beyond that, even bigger developments, such as the Squamish Nation's Seṅáḵw development with around 6,000 units and MST's Jericho Lands development, envisioning 13,000 units are under construction or in planning. With their plans to construct tens of thousands of

apartments over the next decades, the three Nations are thus on track to becoming some of the largest real estate developers in the region. They are therefore actors that profoundly shape the urban futures of the city of Vancouver and its political economy of real estate.

To obtain a more thorough understanding of such First Nation real estate development, I hereafter observe the political-economic structures of the Seȟáḵw development, some of the efforts that have enabled it, and the futures it might create. Seȟáḵw takes place on a small 4.25 ha land parcel that the Squamish Nation reclaimed through decades-long legal proceedings against the Canadian government. The parcel is centrally located next to downtown Vancouver and the beaches of the Kitsilano neighborhood. It therefore offers the possibility for highly lucrative real estate development. On Seȟáḵw, the Squamish Nation pursues 'highest and best use' development (Blomley, 2004), which signifies maximizing revenue streams from rent extraction. The Nation does this by constructing over 6000 housing units in 11 towers, some of which will be over 50 storeys high. Most units will be rented out at Vancouver housing market rates. This will potentially enable massive financial profits for the Nation, but also for real estate development companies and institutional capital involved in the development.

In this contribution, I observe the emergence of such large-scale First Nation real estate activity through a dialectical lens (Harvey, 1996; Marx, 1973). This allows me to describe the urban futures that are made through Indigenous real estate development as the product of mutually constitutive (i.e. dialectical) relationships between historically-grown structures of settler colonialism and agency in reshaping such structures in the present. Real estate developments like Seȟáḵw arise from the broader structures of the political economy of the settler-colonial city (Dorries et al.,

2022), meaning the complex history of land dispossession and repossession under the drive to create revenue-generating assets from that land (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). However, these broader structures are also currently reconfigured by First Nation agency, here observed through the actions taken by First Nation leadership to create political-economic structures that enable real estate development to their own ends.

I therefore describe the role of First Nations as urban future-makers and the futures they envision. With that, I contribute to broader discussions around urban future-making and agency (Grubbauer et al., 2024). I highlight how urban futures emerge from the dialectical tensions between historically-grown structures and agency in renegotiating these structures in the present. I use this dialectical perspective to follow this book's theme in describing urban futures as contingent (i.e. indeterminate). In this specific context, this means recognizing the settler-colonial structures that confine what kinds of urban futures are possible in Vancouver and acknowledging the decades-long work through which Indigenous actors have created current conditions and shape emerging futures. Describing these urban futures as contingent means acknowledging that they are neither completely predetermined nor entirely open. Rather, the deciding factor for what kind of futures arise is how a system's internal relations come together and are negotiated in the present.

Observed real estate development has the potential to fundamentally change First Nation communities, because it promises the Nations desperately needed revenue to fund infrastructure and services and because it positions the Nations as powerful actors in the region's political economy. The very groups that have been displaced from their lands by the colonial process that is fueled by hunger for land and revenue extraction now find themselves in powerful positions in that system and use it to pursue their own agenda.

Indigenous Agency in the Settler-Colonial City

To embed First Nation real estate development in scholarly debate, I refer to literature on the political economy of settler colonialism and of the settler-colonial city in this section. Based on that literature, I discuss the contradictory ways in which First Nations are becoming large-scale capitalist actors in 'settler-colonial regimes [that] are co-produced in relation to the global political economy of capitalism' (Pasternak and Dafnos, 2018: 740).

Research has clearly established settler colonialism as a process that seeks to open Indigenous lands to capitalist circulation (Coulthard, 2014). Scholarship highlights that settler colonialism is by no means a phenomenon of the past, but that Indigenous dispossession, structural injustices, and resistance against that continue to occur in the present (Coulthard and Simpson, 2016; Simpson, 2011). Indigenous 'rights and relationships to land are [still] rendered unintelligible' (Sylvestre and Castleden, 2022: 423) by the settler-colonial maxim of appropriating land and enabling accumulation. Scholars are thus deeply skeptical of capitalist development as a means for Indigenous resurgence (Pasternak, 2015; Sommerville, 2021), because through such means 'struggles against dispossession too easily become struggles for possession' (Porter, 2014: 401).

This is not to say that capitalist development cannot hold the potential for 'decolonization and transformative place-making' (Tomiak, 2017: 940), but that emerging spaces might be highly contradictory. Indigenous groups might actively shape the future of their lands and reap monetary benefits that might hold transformative potential (Cattelino, 2008), while lands are first and foremost evaluated for their economic potential. Engagements with capitalist structures, while an inherent experience of life under settler colonialism, are thus controversially discussed amongst

Indigenous scholars (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2016, for an overview, see: Atleo, 2015). Opinions range from voices for culturally-specific engagements with capitalism to outright rejection. It is not my place to contribute a standpoint to such discussions. Rather, I aim at substantiating the contentious nature of Indigenous economic development for scholarly debate. I describe the emergence of large-scale, highly profit-oriented real estate development as driven by Indigenous agency and that agency as circumscribed by settler-colonial structures. This underlines that part of a nuanced depiction of settler-colonial space needs to allow for descriptions of Indigenous capitalisms therein. Otherwise, this would 'other' Indigeneity as the antithesis to exchange value and with that to modernity (Cattelino, 2008: 102).

Settler-colonial cities thus emerge as highly contradictory (Hugill, 2017; Simpson and Hugill, 2022) because they are both embedded in transnational capitalist dynamics, and heterogenous spaces navigated by Indigenous actors (Dorries et al., 2022; Mays, 2022). This is especially valid in relation to questions of land ownership, because many Indigenous peoples raise claims to the land from which they have been dispossessed. In Canada, the Supreme Court has recognized Aboriginal claims to land as 'some form of un-ceded indigenous interest to the land' (Blomley, 2015: 171). However, what this exactly means remains unclear. Until today, no land treaty settlements exist with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, who claim Vancouver as their traditional, unceded territory. Therefore, the colonial property system stands in an unclear relationship with their land claims.

The creation of private property and the possibility for rent extraction therefrom have been and continue to be inherent drivers of the settler-colonial process (Bhandar, 2018; Blomley, 2004). In Vancouver, the resolution of unclear property relations is therefore key to enabling continuous accumulation from the city's globalized and

financialized housing market (Ley, 2021). Developments like Sen̓áq̓w are thus part of a dynamic of 'settling' the city (Blomley, 2004), because to enable accumulation, First Nations overcome unclear property relations and create secure notions of private property on their lands (Whiteside, 2020). Below, I will detail some of the dynamics through 'which state-Indigenous-private interests converge in dynamic, local processes' (Pasternak, 2015: 187) that now enable the reproduction of the Vancouver model of real estate development on Indigenous land (van der Haegen, 2024). However, this might simultaneously offer the possibility to create a more 'contested' notion of urban space (Dorries, 2023), as First Nations are looking to make their own urban futures.

Understanding Urban Futures Through Dialectics

In this contribution, I seek to understand First Nation real estate developments as urban futures that come into being in the contradictory spaces of settler colonialism. To that end, I hereafter apply a dialectical lens, as brought forth by Karl Marx (1973: 33; Harvey, 2023: 29) and subsequently more explicitly worked out by David Harvey (1996). Such an approach allows me to account for the ways in which the political-economic structures of the settler-colonial city shape Indigenous real estate development, and for how such real estate development is shaped by First Nation agency. In other words, a dialectical perspective allows for an understanding of urban futures as defined by historically-grown structures and as opened through their active, contemporary reconfiguration. As I will explain, this also signifies that urban futures are contingent.

Marx described the contradictory nature of capitalism as a system that employs individual pieces to form a larger, ever-changing dynamic so that capital can become capital, as it continuously circulates (1973: 371). Dialectical analysis entails accounting for the mutually constitutive relations between a broader dynamic (the totality) and the

elements (moments) that compound it (Harvey, 2023: 73, 127). The totality 'appear[s] as an objective interrelation, which arises spontaneously from nature' but it is made up 'from the mutual influence of conscious individuals on one another, but neither located in their consciousness, nor subsumed under them as a whole' (Marx, 1973: 126). Therefore, a dialectical perspective perceives of interrelated moments that create a totality that is heterogeneous, contradictory, and in constant motion (Swyngedouw, 1999: 94).

Dialectics are thus no tool for subsuming findings to totalizing theory, but a tool for open and partial description of complex relations with an insistence on a system's indeterminacy (Sheppard, 2008: 2606). This means that a dialectical perspective perceives of urban futures as contingent in the sense that they are neither totally predetermined nor entirely open. Instead, urban futures come into being in 'a constellation of contradictions between internally related parts of [that] society as a totality' (Castree, 1996: 345). From an analytical middle ground that accounts for an active component in the formation of space but also takes seriously the structural forces around it (Christophers, 2014), we can observe First Nation real estate as a materialization of the dialectical relationship between broader structures of settler-colonial capitalism and agency in 'individual moments' based on the relationality and circuitry of causality in the totality (Chatterjee and Ahmed, 2019: 376).

Urban futures, in the form of First Nation real estate, are therefore contingent because First Nation actors actively create these urban futures and they could do it differently, too. This is remarkable, because First Nation governments, who are actors that have historically been disenfranchised, now have substantial influence in creating urban futures for the city of Vancouver. Through a dialectical perspective, however, such contingency, or the power to do otherwise, is also limited by prevailing structural

forces. In this case, First Nations also reproduce the predominant modus of accumulation in the real estate sector through their future-making. The emergence of First Nation real estate inevitably changes the structures of settler-colonial capitalism in that First Nation governments become powerful actors. However, these structures are also reproduced, and the 'circuitry of capital' (Pasternak and Dafnos, 2018) that has been a driver of Indigenous dispossession (Dorries et al., 2022) is ensured. In the following, I will discuss the political economy of First Nation real estate development. Before that, however, I want to address the perspective I take for this research, and the ethical questions that arise from that.

Ethical Questions and Methodological Approach

Relationships between Indigenous peoples and science often have been and continue to be extractive, and scientists often neglect or misrepresent Indigenous perspectives. Scholars therefore advise caution, proper representation of Indigenous worldviews, and reciprocal research practices for research with Indigenous communities (Datta, 2018; McGregor, 2018; Smith, 1999). I, too, am a researcher that observes First Nation real estate development from the outside with limited insights into First Nation worldviews and am therefore prone to misrepresent Indigenous perspectives. I nevertheless believe that observing First Nation real estate development from this perspective is warranted if proceeding carefully and if clearly stating the limited explanatory power and the shortcomings of one's perspective. Studying contexts relevant to Indigenous peoples from a distant perspective needs to be possible. Otherwise, this runs the risk of 'ghettoizing' (Hunt, 2014: 31, in Clement, 2019: 279) research, as much as it would reproduce categories of difference between an Indigenous Other and modernity, and in this case, urbanism (Mays, 2022). Where scholars need to be mindful of historical and contemporary colonial structures, research should not be based on assumptions of

Indigenous powerlessness and subalternity (Spivak, 1994). This is, because assuming inherent power imbalances reinforces 'unequal, hierarchical power dynamics between researchers hegemonically racialized as "White" and research subjects […] racialized as "people of color"' (Gani and Khan, 2024: 2) that might not exist.

Without assuming subalternity, an ethically sound perspective should then account for Indigenous agency, because Indigenous agency is too often disregarded by scholarship (Carey and Silverstein, 2020). However, this needs to take place without misrepresenting Indigenous worldviews. To find a balance between accounting for Indigenous agency and not risking misrepresentation, I here resort to a dialectical perspective and a focus on the political economy of real estate development. My perspective is that the political economy surrounding the Sen̓áḵw development, meaning enacted by-laws, specific building properties and densities, financing, publicly presented narratives, and contracts with private sector actors are themselves expressions of Squamish leadership agency. However, that political economy also stands witness to the settler-colonial structures that circumscribe the ways in which First Nation agency can be exercised. I therefore argue that I can account for Indigenous agency without misrepresenting Indigenous worldviews by using the political economy surrounding the Sen̓áḵw development as a proxy for Squamish leadership agency within the broader political economy of settler colonialism. In that, however, the explanatory power of my perspective is also limited to the political economy and it cannot account for a multiplicity of perspectives beyond that.

To understand Sen̓áḵw's political economy, I compiled data from a broad range of sources. I collected strategy -and urban planning documents from the Squamish Nation government, its subsidiary development company Nch'kay, and from involved Canadian governmental bodies. I also assembled a large number of webpages,

newspaper articles, social media posts, or records of events that track the evolution of Seȟáx̱w, conflicts around it, and attitudes towards real estate development. Lastly, I also conducted a total of 19 interviews with different stakeholders to First Nation real estate development. 6 of these interviews were conducted with 5 Squamish Nation or subsidiary company representatives. I resort to these interviews in my analysis and therefore do not fully resolve the tension between neither wanting to misrepresent Indigenous perspectives, nor wanting to omit Indigenous agency. I therefore reiterate that I do not seek to display First Nation worldviews in this paper. Rather, I account for First Nation agency as witnessed through the political economy surrounding the Seȟáx̱w development.

The Political Economy of Seȟáx̱w

> We are getting there. To a place of comfort, a place of control, a place that we are in the driver's seat or we are in front of the canoe paddling (Wilson Williams, Squamish Nation spokesperson, in (Squamish Nation, 2023b)

The Seȟáx̱w development takes place on a tiny 4.25 ha piece of reserve land that is now located around the end of the Burrard Bridge that connects Vancouver's downtown with the affluent Kitsilano neighborhood. Seȟáx̱w is thus close to some of the most expensive real estate in the whole country. Without being able to do justice to its intricacies, I want to briefly describe the much more complicated colonial history of the Seȟáx̱w parcel (Harris, 2017; Squamish Nation, 2024; van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). This should thereby not omit the fact that the whole area was and continues to be inhabited by various Indigenous peoples to various degrees (Harris, 1997; Squamish Nation, 2024: 196).

The existence of a village in the vicinity of where Seȟáx̱w 'the place inside the head of False Creek' is constructed today was the reason for the demarcation of a small

reserve in the 1860s. At its largest extent, the reserve measured a little more than 32 ha (see: Figure 1). This parcel, however, was chipped away at by railway and other development interests, until the last Indigenous residents were displaced from the area in 1913. Legal proceedings for the return of the reserve land started in the 1970s and lasted for decades. They resulted in a settlement for the unlawful expropriation of reserve land in 2000, and the return of 4.25 ha of the original reserve in 2001 (Harris, 2017). According to the Squamish Nation's recently published introduction to its history, Nation representatives already established in 1969 that 'Indian Lands had to be used to the best possible advantage so that the band could obtain money to finance its economic development program' (Squamish Nation, 2024: 233). Real estate emerging today thus needs to be understood in the context of more than a century of tireless resistance against the colonial land grab (Squamish Nation, 2024: 199ff) and as part of long-standing efforts in creating revenue for the Nation.

Today, Squamish Nation representatives stress both the desire for independence and the need for revenue for the Nation's infrastructure and services as the main drivers behind real estate development. A senior Nation representative describes how developing real estate 'it's really giving us the ability to be self-determined, to be able to create the wealth needed to support our community and our ambitions' (Interview_B3). According to Khelsilem, Squamish Nation Council Chair, this means 'not waiting for the government to do things for us' (Penner, 2020). Through real estate development, the Nation is 'taking control of their future' (Nch'kay, 2023a), and 'control over what happens on our lands' (Khelsilem, in Nch'kay, 2023b).

The Squamish Nation estimates that it needs 'billions' to fund infrastructure and services such as schools, care homes, family and youth support programs, postsecondary education and affordable housing (Squamish Nation, 2022: 10). A senior

representative underscores that ‘we can't fund the programs and services and the education and create those affordable rent levels without having somebody be able to pay for it. And so the economic development side is really driving a lot of the Nation’s social ambitions’ (Interview_B3). According to the Nation’s leadership, this means working with a system to create value ‘from the tiny parcels of reserve lands we were left with after past racist governments seized nearly everything’ (Khelsilem and Wight, 2022). Real estate is the obvious choice as a ‘means of the Nation looking after itself economically. […] the market in Vancouver really drives real estate to the forefront of a good economic opportunity’ (Interview_B4). Thus, while land assetization and real estate development have been drivers of Indigenous dispossession, succinctly summarized by a journalist, in a city ‘built on real estate’ (Interview_A4), real estate development now materializes as a tool to create a different future for the ancestors of the once dispossessed.

[INSERT FIGURE 1]

Location of the Seṅál̲w development in Vancouver: The contemporary Seṅál̲w parcel (red) within the largest extent of the original reserve (dashed line). This map is an inaccurate representation based on contemporary geographical realities that serves as an orientation for the reader. It does not depict Indigenous relationships to land, historical land reclamations, or the complex ownership changes over the history of the parcel. Moreover, the focus on a specific land parcel should not imply support for the reduction of Indigenous land claims to individual sites.
Sources: (Government of Canada, 2025; Harris, 2017; Vancouver Archives, 2025).

To that end, the Squamish Nation currently constructs 6077 housing units in 11 towers that are up to 56 storeys tall on Seṅál̲w. The first towers are to be completed at the end of 2025 and all construction is to be concluded in 2030. The land used for

development is reserve land. Land that is – per the federal legislation of the Indian Act – held by the federal government on behalf of a First Nation. Therefore, municipal legislation does not apply. This makes it possible to develop to a much higher density, and with that profitability, than under city jurisdiction. Even for its lack of jurisdiction, the city supports the development and has negotiated an agreement with the Squamish Nation that clarifies municipal services for it (Squamish Nation and City of Vancouver, 2022).

Because reserve land is nominally held by the federal government, First Nations cannot sell it or use it as collateral to obtain credit. However, as per the Indian Act 38(2), a band may designate land 'for the purpose of its being leased'. On January 28, 2021, the Squamish Nation enacted a bylaw that leased the Seṅál̲kw parcel for the purpose of commercial development to a partially Nation-owned entity for nominal rent for 120 years (Squamish Nation, 2021). This was foregone by 87% of the Nation's membership voting in favor of the terms of the lease and the proposed development in a mandatory referendum (Fumano and Culbert, 2022). For the development of Seṅál̲kw, a diverse actor constellation now creates the political-economic structures that make real estate development on and financial profit from Indigenous lands possible.

The partially Nation-owned entity that is now leasing the Seṅál̲kw land is called Nch'kayWest. 50% of Nch'kayWest is owned by Nch'kay, the Nation's development arm. Nch'kay was founded in 2018 'to develop, manage and own the commercial entities of the Nation' (Squamish Nation, 2023a: 2), and explicitly 'to (1) limit liability risk to the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw [Squamish Nation] and (2) separate politics from the business or administrative work they are responsible for' (Squamish Nation, 2022: 16). The other 50% of Nch'kayWest is owned by Westbank, a Vancouver development company known for its high-end condominium developments. The company has offices

in major Pacific Rim cities and has been criticized for marketing its developments directly abroad and with that enabling speculative investment (Cheung, 2018; Gerszak, 2018). Meanwhile, Westbank has sold 20% of total shares to the pension fund Ontario Pension Trust (OPTrust). OPTrust manages Ontario public sector pensions and advertises Seȟáḵw as a 'sustainable' investment that will generate significant amounts of affordable housing. At the same time, OPTrust boasts that its real estate portfolio has made 15% returns in 2022 (OPTrust, 2022: 31–33).

Arrangements between the Squamish Nation and Westbank entail that Westbank is responsible for financing and guarantees, while the Squamish Nation, through Nch'kay, provides land at nominal cost; both parties reap 50% of the profits. The development of Seȟáḵw proceeds in four phases. For each phase, Nch'kayWest subleases a part of the Seȟáḵw parcel to another subsidiary partnership that Nch'kay and Westbank found. Each sublease from Nch'kayWest to these subsidiary partnerships can subsequently be used as collateral to obtain financing for the respective development phase (Squamish Nation, 2023a: 2). In that way, the Nation is protected from financial risk, which lies with Westbank, and it can overcome First Nation lending difficulties stemming from the land's reserve status. Instead of using land as collateral to obtain financing, the Nation uses leases as collateral.

Consequently, the Nation does not have any money invested into Seȟáḵw and its consolidated financial statements only display nominal investments into the Seȟáḵw head lease and into the limited partnerships for the first buildings currently being constructed (Squamish Nation, 2023a: 10). On the contrary, the Nation's balance sheet is enlarged by Nation Amenity Contributions. These are a cash contribution at CA\$60/ft^2 of floor area that Westbank pays the Squamish Nation at the start of each development phase. For a floor area of 4 million ft^2, this amounts to CA\$240 million.

However, the payments are subject to reductions in case of affordable housing construction, (Khelsilem, 2021). In turn, the individual partnerships that sublease land for each development phase from Nch'kayWest pay Westbank for project management.

The first two phases of the development are financed by a CA$ 1.4 billion loan provided by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) through its Rental Construction Financing Initiative (now called Apartment Construction Loan Program). CMHC is the federal housing agency and the loan program is CMHC's main housing financing tool. The loans, CA$668 million and CA$745 million respectively, with 10-year fixed interest rates and 50-year amortizations provide better conditions than any market loan would (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022: 33). The loans are the biggest in CMHC's history, and indeed, as one interviewee remarks, 'I don't think they [CMHC] meet that size of a loan without the Nations' involvement because it comes back to reconciliation' (Interview_A5). The federal government looks to bolster private rental housing construction with the provision of attractive loans. These loans are concurrently also vehicles through which the Canadian state looks to reconcile with colonialism and they simplify the Squamish Nation's entry into the region's real estate capitalism.

Currently, Seȼ̓ákw is marketed as building 100% rental housing. However, the development partners will actually decide separately whether to build rental or leasehold housing for each of the four development phases based on the financial prospects of each option. According to Khelsilem 'that was really a risk mitigation choice if the market was to change around purposeful rental and we felt that the condo market was a more prudent or financially beneficial place to go' (Khelsilem, 2021).

Likewise, Sen̓áḵw's density has increased substantially over the planning process (Little, 2019). Khelsilem comments that the highest density possible is the ideal choice, as that's how the Nation will maximize its revenue (St. Denis, 2019).

Sen̓áḵw's political-economic structures underscore its fundamental function as a tool to maximize potential revenue streams from real estate assets for the Squamish Nation. Spatially fixing capital (Harvey, 2001) on Squamish land in that way has the potential to tremendously benefit Squamish Nation membership. However, in light of the Nation's position within the totality of colonial capitalism as 'land rich, cash poor' (Interview_A2), Sen̓áḵw is also going to benefit the Nation's development partners Westbank and OPTrust. As a Nation representative highlights: 'the Nation also is a little bit risk averse' (Interview_B3). It therefore outsources risk to developers and investors in exchange for the opportunity for rent extraction on a massive scale. Another Nation representative explains that 'Westbank is a developer. Fundamentally what it wants to do is: design, build, exit, done. And OPTrust needs to look after pension contributions. So it would be the kind of person who would allow Westbank to exit' (Interview_B7). Therefore, Westbank is likely to profit in the short term, whereas OPTrust is bound to profit in the long term.

In that, Sen̓áḵw and other emerging First Nation real estate developments are relatively similar to 'standard' large-scale Vancouver developments. In Vancouver, high land prices make high density developments desirable. Such projects in turn are capital intensive and therefore only function with the involvement of large financial actors. How Squamish leadership navigates Vancouver's political economy of real estate (i.e. the dialectical relationship between Squamish agency and settler-colonial structures) results in an urban future in which corporate actors are to handsomely profit from the reproduction of an extractive real estate model on Indigenous lands.

Making Space for Private Property

That real estate is offering the best economic opportunities for First Nations to accrue revenue is also owed to several competitive advantages that First Nations have in the current political economy of real estate in the Vancouver region. Leaving aside First Nation development on private land that is also manifesting on a large scale across the region, on reserve land like Sen̓áq̲w, the Nation 'can densify so much more' (Interview_B4). Not constrained by municipal legislation, it can also develop at higher speeds (Nch'kay, 2023d: 2). Additionally, revenue that First Nations or their subsidiaries accrue on-reserve is tax-free, because the Nation is the tax authority on its reserve lands (Campbell, 2015: 40). One Nation representative describes this as 'Nations [are] realizing that [in] the Indian Act and the way the reserves are governed, there's a loophole' (Interview_B4), or what another Nation representative refers to as 'legislative gaps' (Interview_B3).

The First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act (FNCIDA), legislation meant 'to establish a First Nations land title system that can support private investment' (Gauthier and Simeone, 2010: 1) is one tool the Squamish Nation uses to fill such legislative gaps. It uses the legislation to create legally certain property relations that enable smooth roll-out of investment. The legislation works by allowing the federal cabinet to make specific provincial laws applicable on tracts of reserve land on request. This has for example created the possibility for on-reserve leasehold ownership (Interview_B3). Likewise, the British Columbia Residential Tenancy Act has been enacted on Sen̓áq̲w through FNCIDA (Nch'kay, 2023c: 16). Legislation like FNCIDA looks to align development on-reserve with practices off-reserve 'by essentially reproducing the provincial rules and regulations that apply to similar large-scale commercial or industrial projects' to enable 'highest and best use' (Gauthier and

Simeone, 2010: 2). The Squamish Nation sought to enable economic development on its lands within the constraints of the colonial property system for years by lobbying for FNCIDA since before it came into force in 2006 (Gauthier and Simeone, 2010: 2). The legislation enables First Nations to establish desired features of the private property regime on their lands. The creation of clear property relations is inherently in the state's interest (Blomley, 2015), and in this case, it has also been actively lobbied for by First Nations to enable real estate development. While critical scholars point to the fundamental role that the creation of private property has and continues to play for Indigenous dispossession (Bhandar, 2018), here it is a precondition for the creation of this particular urban future.

In that, First Nation real estate development is enticing for conservative thinkers, because they see the root cause for Indigenous poverty precisely in the lack of private property relations. Creating private property is understood to be a necessary first step in creating the possibilities for capitalist enterprise. This, in turn, is seen as the solution to overcoming poverty (Pasternak, 2015). Tom Flanagan, a nationally-known neoconservative and advocate for the introduction of private property rights on reserves (Flanagan, 2008: 198) has worked as a consultant for the Squamish Nation. His work further highlights the convergence of contradictory interests around making an urban future a reality, in which First Nations maximize revenue from real estate development on their lands.

In 2009, Flanagan presented a report to the Squamish Nation Council based on 'a vision of harmonizing Squamish developments with those in neighboring municipalities' (Flanagan, 2009: 25). In the report, he advises the Nation to lobby for an extension of FNCIDA that would allow it to collect a property transfer tax. This now enables the Nation to collect a tax if ownership of real estate on its lands changes. At

the same time, Flanagan has called European civilization ‘several thousand years more advanced than the aboriginal cultures of North America’ and colonization ‘inevitable’ and ‘justifiable’ (ibid.: 6). Asked about Flanagan’s views, Squamish hereditary chief Gibby Jacob stated that they were ‘obviously troubling, but nevertheless, we have to look at the big picture for our people’ (Ferreras, 2009).

The big picture signifies an unlikely actor coalition as the interests of the Canadian state, of corporate capital, of First Nations, and of neoconservatives converge around developing Indigenous land in a highly profit-oriented way. As one interviewee points out: ‘the conservatives […] have actually in a lot of ways been trending towards kind of the liberal position on reconciliation’ (Interview_B7). This is not entirely surprising, because reconciling with colonialism is here conceptualized as a functioning business case that establishes private property relations on Indigenous lands.

Making Indigenous Urban Futures

However, the financial benefit of developing Seȟáḵw will not materialize in the near future. Fighting for the return of land, lobbying for FNCIDA, and the structures of Seȟáḵw today are all part of a long-term dynamic whose economic potential will only be realized in an urban future ‘seven generations down the road’ (Wilson Williams in: Fumano and Culbert 2022). Construction costs for Seȟáḵw are estimated at CA$ 3 billion (St. Denis, 2019), and Seȟáḵw operates under a deficit significant to the Nation’s finances (Squamish Nation, 2023a: 7,10). Substantial revenue will only materialize once loans have been repaid (Khelsilem, 2021). An exception are above-mentioned Nation Amenity Contributions that Westbank pays the Nation for each development phase. In 2023, these increased the Nation’s budget by CA$ 57 million to CA$ 215 million (Squamish Nation, 2023a).

Seṅáḵw is also not the end of this story. The above-mentioned MST partnership between the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations is the biggest 'private' landowner in the region (Interview_B5), and it was explicitly founded for real estate development purposes. However, the Squamish Nation is also individually planning for future large-scale development. In spring 2023, Squamish and Nch'kay leadership announced a 'landmark' planning process to clarify the use of about 140 ha of Squamish lands. Among them are 'some of the most important real estate opportunities in the Lower Mainland, if not in the entire country': 'oceanfront' properties on the Nation's Capilano Reserve in North Vancouver (Nch'kay, 2023b). The development of these lands was apprehended at least since the lobbying efforts for FNCIDA when a study to assess their economic potential was conducted by a real estate company from Dubai (Campbell, 2015: 27–29). Seṅáḵw might be the foundation for the development of these lands, because 'the Squamish Nation relies heavily on leasing revenue. Many leases are due to expire in the next 25 years, developing reserve lands now will ensure financial security in the future' (Nch'kaẏ̓ West, 2023). If the Nation wants to redevelop land where leases that it currently depends on run out, it needs other established revenue sources. Khelsilem hypothetically asks: 'If we can unlock $10+ billion on just 10 acres [4 ha] of land, what can we unlock on 250 acres [100 ha] of land' (Khelsilem, 2023)?

Developing real estate has been a long-term plan for the Squamish Nation and the Nation creates political economic structures today for a financially-independent and prosperous urban future tomorrow. This, however, is based on the assumption that the political economy of real estate in Vancouver, that, as a city planner describes, 'relies on a rising housing market and the profits from that being invested into social goods' (Interview_B1), continues to function on that premise. Where real estate development

holds the promise of financial prosperity and economic independence, it is also risky. Much can change over the timespan of Seȟáḵw's 120-year lease.

With that, Seȟáḵw forms part of what might be one of the biggest real estate development schemes in Canadian history (van der Haegen and Whiteside, 2025). The Vancouver region's First Nations are bound to become central actors in the system of accumulation through real estate that was initiated through colonization, bolstered by competitive advantages and governmental accommodation in the spirit of reconciliation. This is based on First Nations' own long-term ambitions in pursuit of their own urban futures (Mays, 2022). However, these ambitions are also exercised within the predominant political economy, and this signifies that sought after urban futures are increasingly intertwined with the reproduction of the region's extractive real estate system (for details, see: van der Haegen, 2025).

Conclusion: The Dialectics of Indigenous Real Estate Development

> I think there's something fundamental to this story, which is the Squamish Nation, which is a government and a community who has historically been disadvantaged, is actually going to benefit from this (Khelsilem, 2021)

In her seminal work on the gaming-operating Seminole tribe of today's Florida, Jessica Cattelino writes that for Seminoles 'poverty and wealth are closely tied to their analyses of colonial oppression' (2008: 98). By entering the casino business, Seminoles could multiply their annual budget 100 times over a time span of 20 years, from US$ 2 million to US$ 200 million (Cattelino, 2005: 190). Likewise, Squamish representatives have repeatedly stated publicly that central purposes of real-estate development are economic independence and the creation of revenue. Real estate is the most important business in the region and, as Wilson Williams, Squamish Nation spokesperson, subsumes: 'in the past, we were looking in windows just to be a part of things — we're now at the table'

(Onishi, 2022).

In a highly unaffordable housing market built on stolen Indigenous lands, fixing capital in real estate is the obvious choice when pursuing revenue, but the high-price environment that makes developments like Seȼáḵw attractive financial investments also reinforces an extractive real estate system and structural unaffordability. That system is reproduced by all levels of government as they welcome the incorporation of Indigenous lands into circulation. Development is based on streamlining Indigenous lands with 'regular' investment environments thereby replacing First Nations' dependence on the government with dependence on an expanding housing market. This not only creates business opportunities for large private sector actors, but it also resounds with conservative calls for Indigenous assimilation. An 'activist capitalist state' (Whiteside, 2020: 2), 'neoliberals and advocates for Indigenous self-determination do share some common ground' (MacDonald, 2011: 261) as First Nation real estate development comes to signify 'inclusion into the exclusionary structures of capital accumulation' (Wyly and Wilson, 2023: 5). In its current reconfiguration, the political-economic structures of the settler-colonial city allow for First Nations to be powerful future-makers, but that power is also exercised within that political economy and it is circumscribed by a broad actor coalition interested in ensuring 'the circuitry of capital' (Pasternak and Dafnos, 2018).

This means that emerging urban futures are neither predetermined nor completely open. Rather, their contingent nature arises from the dialectical relationship between historically-grown settler-colonial structures and agency exercised in the present. To manifest these futures, the private property regime is expanded onto Indigenous lands in ways that closely mirror private ownership arrangements to enable accumulation through land-based assets. Nevertheless, this is no linear roll-out of the

settler-colonial private property regime on Indigenous lands (Pasternak, 2015). First Nations are using land after their own analysis of how to navigate the structures of settler-colonial capitalism in pursuit of their own ideas about how to make the future. From a strictly political-economic perspective, this will afford them the prospect of an increasingly central position in the region's real estate business and substantial amounts of revenue that they might invest into their communities.

The dynamics analyzed here escape easy categorization and underline the heterogeneous and contradictory nature of the settler-colonial city, in whose everchanging totality large-scale Indigenous real estate developments emerge as new configurations of space. They signify the expression of broader capitalist dynamics in a unique, evolving context (Christophers, 2014) that creates culturally specific engagements with capitalism defiant of 'a paradox of culture and economy' that has seemingly defined Indigenous identity (Cattelino, 2008: 205). This paper shows that the emergence of First Nation real estate development is driven by First Nation agency from a positionality that is not of their own choosing, as much as that agency is circumscribed by the structural forces of settler colonialism. With that I do not wish to make a statement about what First Nations should or should not do, but I want to highlight that Indigenous agency and settler-colonial structures need to be accounted for in their mutually constitutive nature beyond 'the denial of Indigenous co-presence with modernity' (Radcliffe, 2017: 223) for an improved understanding of settler-colonial urbanisms.

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8.2.3 Accumulation by Repossession: Capitalist Settler Colonialism in Coast Salish Territory

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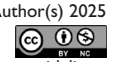

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Accumulation by repossession: Capitalist settler colonialism in Coast Salish territory

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Abstract

Several Coast Salish First Nations are actively involved in land reclamation and redevelopment in the greater Vancouver region (Canada). Through their for-profit development corporations, entities like Nch'k̲a̓y̓ Development Corporation (Squamish Nation) and the joint-venture Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Development Corporation have become key players in the lucrative Vancouver property market in partnership with other public and private land developers. Situating multibillion-dollar holdings like the Jericho and Seńák̲w projects that further highest-and-best-use appraisal within the context of the area's settler colonial history, we argue that land repossession and its associated development was made possible through settler colonial forms like corporate decisions, legal judgements and political frameworks that rendered land ready for disposal. Repossession thus created options for new types of reintegration into capitalist spheres, primarily as residential real estate projects, independent from specific configurations of land tenure as fee simple or reserve land. Advancing the concept of 'accumulation by repossession,' a recursive moment associated with dispossession, we describe how First Nations peoples are regaining land title and political-economic control at the same time as their development corporations are promoting urban capital accumulation through privatized profit-making. Land 'improvement', speculation, and the creation of private real property have driven Indigenous dispossession in Coast Salish territory just as they now shape repossession.

Keywords

Capitalism, dispossession, land, repossession, settler colonialism

First making its appearance on an 1869 surveyor's map, a 37-acre parcel restricted a locus of First Nations' territory to a forested lot at the mouth of English Bay on the southern shore of False Creek. Within two decades, Kitsilano Reserve No. 6 was encroached on by the City of Vancouver (incorporated

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in 1886) and Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR, building its track in 1886). Under mounting pressure from government and corporate forces alike, in 1913 the False Creek Indian Band was further displaced from the small reserve to which the community had been shunted. Through a combination of expropriation and lease, Kitsilano Reserve No. 6 was chipped away at by the city, industrial interests, and military; eventually, after decades of resistance, the Squamish Nation, into which the False Creek Indian Band had amalgamated, surrendered No. 6 in 1947 (see: Harris, 2017; Leonard, 2010). Variously animated by public and private sector interests ranging from rail, lumber and cement, to parks, tourism and hosting a world exposition, the capitalist freehold, leasehold and Crown land surrounding False Creek developed apace. Rezoned from industrial to comprehensive in 1974, land values rose, and rail lost its lustre. Shifting from profiting off the circulation of commodities to the development of real estate, in 1989 Canadian Pacific Ltd. (formerly CPR) put up for sale 10.5 acres previously appropriated as the railway's rights of way, sparking a series of court cases that would ultimately see this sliver of the original reserve parcel reacquired as Squamish reserve land in 2001.

Reserve land in Canada is owned by the Crown, held in trust for First Nations peoples as outlined in the *Indian Act* dating to 1876. More recently, Canadian courts have come to recognize the *sui generis* collective ownership rights of Aboriginal Title, creating a patchwork of overlapping and sometimes contradictory land rights associated with the development of settler colonial capitalism. Renamed Seṅáḵw ('the place inside the head of False Creek'), the reserve's oddly shaped borders straddling the Burrard Bridge follow the Y-shaped rights of way enjoyed by CPR since the 1880s. In 2022, the Chairperson of the Squamish Nation broke ground at the site managed by the Nation's corporate entity Nch'ḵaẏ̓, launching the construction of eleven towers with an anticipated 6000 apartments. Apart from 250 units reserved for Squamish Nation members, many of whom are experiencing housing insecurity (Hiẏám̓ Housing, 2024), revenue will be generated through rent, profiting from Vancouver's famously tight housing market. In other words, over the past century, an Indigenous peoples' village has morphed from rail to residential through various iterations of ownership (Harris, 2012, 2017; Leonard, 2010, see also: Hamilton, 2006; Harris, 2009; Schuurman, 2000). For all its intricacies, the Seṅáḵw saga is not a one-off but instead part of a larger dynamic of capital accumulation in Coast Salish territory (focusing here on large projects in Vancouver and environs[1]) that features a complicated property rights regime connecting dispossession and repossession centred on property disposal, sale and transfer.

Like Seṅáḵw, Jericho Lands, another land parcel slated for significant real estate development, faced its share of twists and turns. With ocean-flowing streams and beach access, this 90-acre site was once a rich fishing and hunting ground for First Nations prior to the 19th century. Musqueam and Squamish peoples' cultural activities centred on the village of ʔəẏ̓alməxw/Iẏ́álmexw ('good camping ground') and forested hills were harvested and used as outposts (Matthews, 1954; Squamish Nation, 2024). Settler logging began to encroach on this territory by the mid-19th century, as did the estates and leisure activities of wealthy Vancouverites. Seized as government reserve land by the province (without treaty or military conquest), the outbreak of World War II saw much of the land leased to the federal government for military purposes, supporting the airforce, Jericho Garrison, and Department of National Defence barracks. Various structures and purposes have been put to the land by government over the past 100 years, some buildings surviving, others demolished, and several activities relocated (Whiteside, 2021).

Despite having declared its land at Jericho as surplus in 1995, the Canadian federal government maintains a 50% equity stake held by its Crown corporation Canada Lands Company (CLC). In 2014, CLC and the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Development Corporation (MST) created a joint-venture partnership to purchase the 52 acres of federal land in fee simple known as the Jericho Lands East property, followed by a similar 2016 deal between MST and the provincial government for 38 additional acres. The City of Vancouver was authorized to conduct the planning and

consultation work required for development, and the site is likely to see the development of 13,000 new homes together with new commercial and light industrial uses over the coming decade.

The political-economic academic literature often interprets capitalist settler development as a form of original accumulation or accumulation by dispossession (Hall, 2013; Harvey, 2003), shaping nineteenth to 21st century dynamics in what is now British Columbia (Coulthard, 2014; Cowen, 2020; Harris, 1997, 2004; Paulson and Tomiak, 2022; Whiteside, 2019). Land is primary to settler colonialism, as Brenna Bhandar (2018) reminds us, the dispossession of which is largely enabled by the Lockean notion of improvement. Land improvement through 'highest-and-best-use' (Blomley, 2004), and the urge for accumulation through land, drives inherently racialized dispossession of Indigenous land led by a diverse group of interests such as the state, capitalists and individual settlers (Harris, 2004), though not without Indigenous agency in resisting, adapting to and working within the settler capitalist political economy (Lutz, 1992).

For scholarship on the political economy of settler capitalism, colonization initially resulted in the dispossession of First Nations' lands, creating the enabling conditions for historic and contemporary accumulation dynamics. We seek to contribute to this scholarship by advancing the concept of 'accumulation by repossession,' evidenced through the dynamics and use logics of property development in Coast Salish territory over the longue durée (Ekers, 2023) of settler colonialism where contemporary economic development forms a 'recursive element' within larger settler capitalist accumulation dynamics (Nichols, 2020). Whereas 'dispossession' is apt for analyses of property rights transformed through privatization (shifting from the state to the market), 'repossession' helps to characterize the shift in property rights through disposal, sale or transfer (from the market to state and collective ownership). In Whiteside (2012), repossession is examined as asset nationalization to assist capital accumulation in the wake of corporate bankruptcies and economic crisis. Here we investigate the shifting ownership dynamics and complex property arrangements wrought through mixed private ownership as freehold and leasehold land, state ownership as Crown land and collective ownership as Aboriginal Title (Whiteside, 2024).

The explicit aim of this paper is to situate such property arrangements within settler capitalist contingencies. While we are able to tackle some key aspects of corporate real estate development, a thorough accounting of multi-dimensional settler colonialism is neither possible here nor the purpose of this paper (see: Snelgrove et al., 2014: 2). Companion pieces on real estate that apply an 'Indigenous research paradigm' (Wilson, 2001: 175) centering Indigenous epistemologies and worldviews would be especially welcome. Given that false appropriation and misrepresentation of Indigenous worldviews must be strenuously avoided (Bocking, 2011; Carey and Silverstein, 2020; Mcgregor, 2018), the argument here offers accumulation by repossession as an analytical political-economic description of the systemic and contradictory nature of the contemporary settler capitalist process, it is not meant to capture the manifold dimensions or Indigenous perspectives to land reclamation. To put it plainly, this paper in no way seeks to assess or advise on the actions and economics of Indigenous peoples.

Accumulation by repossession within Coast Salish territory includes the following prominent First Nations Development Corporations: Tsawwassen Economic Development Corporation, Musqueam Capital Corporation, Nch'k̲aẏ̓ Development Corporation (Squamish Nation), Takaya Developments (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) and the co-owned Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Development Corporation (MST) that hold title to lucrative real estate valued in the billions of Canadian dollars.[2] First Nations Development Corporations are legally incorporated as private entities that employ a range of actors drawn from the wider community (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), including executive officers, project managers, accountants, taxation specialists and legal counsel.

The analysis focuses on two real estate projects: Seȟák̲w (Nch'k̲aẏ̓) and Jericho Lands (MST-CLC). We find that the repossession of land parcels at Jericho and Seȟák̲w was activated through corporate decisions, legal judgements and political frameworks that created opportunities for new

types of land (re)integration into the settler economy, namely as residential real estate and light commercial properties. The projects at Jericho and Seṅáḵw, described in detail elsewhere (van der Haegen, 2024, 2025; Whiteside, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023b, 2025), are profit-oriented undertakings that scrutinize land through capitalist highest-and-best-use accounting logic (Christophers and Whiteside, 2021). The Nch'ḵaẏ and MST Development Corporations, together with partners from the private sector and different levels of government, are building high-density leasehold (rental) apartments as assets aimed to extract revenue from the lucrative Vancouver housing market. Often described in policy documents as economic reconciliation (Whiteside, 2021), these projects advance capitalism while simultaneously positioning First Nations Development Corporations as influential actors in urban real estate, with funds generated for the provision of Indigenous services and infrastructure. Repossession by First Nations Development Corporations subjects reclaimed land to expanded reproduction, thereby connecting it to capital accumulation in a settler colonial city (Dorries et al., 2022; Hugill and Simpson, 2023), once more reminding of intertwined capitalism and colonialism (Bhambra, 2020; Coulthard, 2014; Dorries et al., 2022; Pasternak, 2020; Paulson and Tomiak, 2022) and the settler colonial goal of integrating Indigenous lands into capitalist economies (Coulthard, 2014: 7; Dorries, 2017; Tuck and Yang, 2012: 5).

Putting into conversation several foundational literatures in critical geographical political economy on dispossession, land and settler colonialism, this paper unfolds in a series of steps. The first section examines the property rights regimes of Canadian (English) common law, narrowing to the activities of First Nations Development Corporations, and processes of accumulation by dispossession and repossession. Next, by way of historical background and conjunctural context, we summarize colonial dispossession and capitalist real estate speculation in Vancouver, followed by an elaboration of repossession and accumulation through Seṅáḵw and Jericho real estate. The case study evidence indicates that contemporary repossession, however unique its forms may be, cannot be understood as independent from the recursive dynamic of dispossession (Nichols, 2020). The notion of improvement, together with a push for land control and accumulation, drives dynamics of dispossession, just as this is foundational to dynamics of repossession.

Property rights regimes and economic development

A ‘property regime’ (Safransky, 2023: 12) is formed by ideas of rights and relations that enable ownership and specify relationships. Before turning to the specific regime in Coast Salish territory, it is useful to first explain the principal types of property rights at issue (as conceived of through Canadian common law). Canadian private property rights are most commonly held in fee simple (freehold) or leasehold. Crown land enjoys what is called ‘allodial title,’ held without hindrance or superior authority, a concept in English common law dating to the very origins of the feudal system (Bhandar, 2018). Aboriginal Title, land rights held collectively by First Nations peoples, dates to the 1763 Royal Proclamation affecting British North America west of the Allegheny mountains, meaning that both Indigenous Title and private property rights were based on the allodial claim of the Crown. More recently, in 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized Aboriginal Title as a type of *sui generis* collective ownership, and in that sense it now ‘burdens’ Crown rights (Blomley, 2015). Constructed as a collective right of First Nations, the Aboriginal Title property rights of individuals are restricted to use and enjoyment rights and do not extend to possession or disposal. There has been no fee simple reserve land ownership in British Columbia historically, given its status as Crown land held in trust for Indigenous peoples, but this is changing as of late through efforts to introduce ‘collective’ fee simple title for First Nations (Blomley, 2014; BC, 2024).

The consequences of a multi-faceted property rights regime are myriad. For one, Aboriginal title often exists in parallel with other forms of landownership. Where Indigenous ownership is recognized based on the Crown’s allodial title (i.e. reserve land), the collective ownership structure of Aboriginal

title is often undervalued even within a geographical area of otherwise appreciating market values, which makes economic development difficult (Campbell, 2015). Manny Jules, Chief Commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission puts it this way: 'without property rights certainty [as permitted by fee simple ownership] we cannot compete for the type of business and investment that we need to be part of the economy. Our lack of property rights has meant that our lands have lower market values and we have to spend a great deal of time and money establishing investor certainty' (First Nations Tax Comission, 2010).

Some changes of note include the 1999 *First Nations Land Management Act* and associated Framework Agreement that allow First Nations peoples to opt out of part of the constraining national legislation (*Indian Act*) and establish private property rights on reserve land, thus replacing aspects of collective title with individual title. According to the Land Advisory Board (First Nations Land Management Resource Centre, 2019), the framework agreement replaces the paternalism of the *Indian Act* with the self-empowerment of First Nations-determined land provisions for those bands who so choose. According to the Yellowhead Institute (Jobin and Riddle, 2019), the framework agreement discourages communal land tenure, encourages capitalism, and dampens the fight for stolen lands. Similar accounts are offered by Indigenous studies scholars like Pasternak (2015) and Hall (2015) on the privatization of Indigenous land. Nevertheless, there are currently 165 First Nations signatories to the Framework Agreement, including the Tsawwassen, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The Squamish Nation voted against changing their land code in 2011, meaning the *Indian Act* still applies on Squamish reserve land. Contemplating the heterogeneity of property relations on Coast Salish territory, privatization-related assessments of collective title are one side of the issue; greater complexity is added when we consider how Coast Salish Nations are increasingly holding fee simple title and developing leasehold through their for-profit development corporations in the wake of the *First Nations Land Management Act* and related jurisprudence, resulting in an array of different configurations of land ownership held by First Nations Development Corporations.

With the adoption of the *Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement Act* (2007), 724 hectares of reserve land were transferred in fee simple to the Tsawwassen Nation. The Tsawwassen Economic Development Corporation was duly incorporated in 2009 and is now engaged in selling $800,000 single family homes, condos, townhomes and duplexes with Aquilini Development Group (Aquilini) as leasehold property, advertising opportunities for families to gain access to land previously unavailable to the public. For retail, the First Nation owns Tsawwassen Commons and Tsawwassen Mills, involving a 99-year lease for a 1.2 million square foot mall. It also owns a 100-acre industrial logistics centre.

Under the auspices of the Tsleil-Waututh Land Code (2007), Takaya Developments (Tsleil-Waututh Nation, TWN) is developing several parcels of TWN reserve land in North Vancouver up the Burrard Inlet. Examples include Raven Woods with its 91 leasehold condos and 48 luxury townhomes, and Seymour Village with over 500 residential units. Like Tsawwassen Economic Development Corporation, Takaya partners with Aquilini.

Following a 2008 land transfer in fee simple from the province to the Musqueam First Nation, and guided by the Musqueam Indian Band Land Code (2012), the Musqueam Capital Corporation (MCC) is currently developing mixed rental and leasehold units at leləm̓, a 22-acre site near the University of British Columbia's main campus. It is mixed use retail and residential, featuring an 18-storey condo with townhouses, community centre and daycare. The properties are marketed by Polygon Homes. Complicating matters, the *University Endowment Land Act* antedates this project by over a century, fettering certain MCC land development choices at this site. Land already commercialized near Vancouver International Airport was also part of the 2008 fee simple transfer.

Nch'k̲ay̓ Development Corporation (Squamish Nation) is developing its real estate project Seṅák̲w on reserve land, and it has announced plans to create a land use strategy to assess the development potential for an additional 350 acres of reserve land.

As a joint venture, the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Development Corporation (MST) holds 160 acres of fee simple land worth over $2 billion, all centrally located in high value areas: Marine Drive in West Vancouver, Jericho Lands and Heather Street Lands in Vancouver (co-owned by the federal Crown corporation Canada Lands Company, CLC), and a former Liquor Distribution Branch in east Vancouver (co-owned by Aquilini). Lastly, the Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh hold the fee simple property Willingdon Lands in Burnaby (also with Aquilini).

In sum, throughout the Lower Mainland and across a range of economic development projects, there are different configurations of 'repossessed' land. As detailed above, repossession is not inherently one-to-one with Land Back or the extinction of Indigenous land claims; instead, it captures the expansion of accumulation through high value real estate led by First Nations Development Corporations and their private sector partners. Land redevelopment often proceeds as 99-year leasehold property, not outright sales to the public at large. As property scholars have highlighted (e.g. Bhandar, 2018; Blomley, 2004), the contemporary property regime emerges from 'processes of abstraction and simplification that get to work manufacturing the very reality they are supposed to represent' (Sylvestre and Castleden, 2022: 416). The large-scale real estate projects of First Nations Development Corporations emerge from a historically contingent process of accumulation within Coast Salish territory that features both dispossession and repossession. After more thoroughly discussing our theoretical approach, the final section will examine how repossession unfolds through the Seṅáḵw (Nch'ḵaẏ) and Jericho Lands (MST-CLC) properties, as rendered by the corporate decisions, legal judgements and political frameworks that structure the broader settler economy.

Accumulation by repossession

Land acquisition and its development by First Nations Development Corporations is a recursive moment (Nichols, 2020) within the long-run dynamics of what David Harvey (2003) calls accumulation by dispossession. Harvey used the concept to more fully understand the reproduction of capitalist social relations and integration of areas previously outside of capitalist circuits of accumulation (Hall, 2013: 1585). With capitalism routinely experiencing crises of overaccumulation that stymie systemic imperatives for growth (Harvey, 2003: 87ff), problems of overaccumulation can either be (temporarily) 'fixed' through the reorganization of capitalist space (as expanded reproduction), or through the enhanced commodification of previously non-capitalist realms (accumulation by dispossession). Scholars have often described settler colonialism in British Columbia/Coast Salish territory as a process of accumulation by dispossession where new areas of exploitation and settlement were created, and market-making was driven by imperial ambition and capital interests (Cowen, 2020; Harris, 2004; Paulson and Tomiak, 2022).

In political-economic terms, 'repossession' refers to when an entity reclaims or takes back an object that was used as collateral. Kloppenburg (2010: 368) offers a more elaborate view, with repossession as a dialectical process, or double movement, from commodification to decommodification, 'the actual recovery or reacquisition of what has been lost, and even the proactive creation of new, commons-like spaces in which more just and sustainable forms of social production might be established and elaborated.' Recovering that which was lost or stolen would seem to squarely apply to First Nations reclaiming land that was dispossessed through colonization and thus to the activities of First Nations Development Corporations. However, the situation is complicated by the fact that land is either being purchased fee simple through market sale and/or existing reserve land is being developed as leasehold properties; and these redeveloped parcels are then put back to the market to capture revenue through profitable investment in lucrative real estate projects.

Whiteside (2012: 67) suggests understanding the root word 'possession' in terms of its four different yet interrelated components: assets (property rights), power (social relations), authority (decision-making or influence) and control (the ability to purposefully direct operations). While each project is

unique, for First Nations Development Corporation projects, property rights often feature hybrid ownership (Crown, Aboriginal Title, fee simple, leasehold), whereas power, authority, and control are all enhanced for these First Nations. Of course, many elements of control are also retained by the state and shared with investors, making this a highly commodified version of repossession. Limiting our analysis to a political-economic perspective (not the cultural or identity-related aspects of land reclamation), repossession appears as a dialectic between the increase of power, authority and control claimed by First Nations Development Corporations and the expansion of settler capitalist territoriality as property control (Coulthard, 2014; Sack, 1993). Accumulation by repossession signifies both the expansion of settler colonial territoriality (dispossession), as well as expanded reproduction led by First Nations Development Corporations.

In light of the tangled relationship between *sui generis* Indigenous land rights and the colonial property system (Blomley, 2015), the process of accumulation by repossession emerges from the 'knotty question of how these rights are to be articulated by, and managed within, a common-law legal system' (Blomley, 2014: 1293). Reconciliation-oriented land claims are translated into different forms of land tenure that can, through different accommodations, be a functioning part of the accumulation process. Repossession indicates a property regime that is 'entrenched' in settler colonial power relations whereby the expansion of private property is depicted as a form of redress (Blatman-Thomas and Porter, 2019).

Settler colonial forms are both historically continuous (Estes, 2013) and contemporary (Sylvestre and Castleden, 2022). As Nichols highlights, individual instances of conquest, treaty-making or, as we argue, repossession, can only be understood by observing dispossession as a structural 'macrohistorical process' (2020: 89). Given that dispossession is itself seen as recursive, or a feedback loop in which 'each iteration is not only different from the last but builds upon or augments its original postulate' (9), repossession is equally part of the structure or the longue durée (Ekers, 2023) of settler-capitalist accumulation.

How 'colonialism makes its world' (Pasternak, 2023) is a nuanced process that needs to be analysed beyond simplistic binaries without diminishing the violence of the process of colonization, its inherent power relations and logics, or the legitimacy of Indigenous land claims. Viewing colonization not as a simple process of elimination, but rather as a process of entanglements (Curley, 2021), we can more fully grasp the variegated yet continuous nature of dispossession that continues to work towards the transformation of land 'into private, accumulable "resources"' (Paulson and Tomiak, 2022: 155) based on the private property system and its logics of accumulation.

Often construed as antithesis to capitalism (Cattelino, 2008; Paulson and Tomiak, 2022), First Nations nevertheless engage with settler colonialism through adaptation or resistance, out of necessity, or for their own benefit (Edmonds, 2010: 241; Harris, 1992, 2017; Lutz, 1992; Squamish Nation, 2024). 'The spatial energy of capitalism works to deterritorialize people [. . .] and to reterritorialize them in relation to the requirements of capital' (Harris, 2004: 171) and First Nations' corporate development initiatives are part of that process. The settler colonial frame (Simpson, 2016a) may drive the goal of acquiring Indigenous lands (Coulthard, 2014: 7; Dorries, 2017; Tuck and Yang, 2012: 5), while Indigenous peoples might experience contradictory transformative moments (Cattelino, 2008; Champagne, 2007; Harris, 2004; Tomiak, 2017). Repossession is recursively linked to dispossession, accumulation and the devaluation of land within capitalist circulation, as well as to Indigenous resistance and activism with its own visions (Barry and Thompson-Fawcett, 2020; Squamish Nation, 2024), politics (Coulthard, 2014; Daigle, 2019; Simpson and Le Billon, 2021) and strategies (Harris, 2017; Pasternak, 2015).

The concept of accumulation by repossession should not be understood as an anachronistic backwards projection of dispossession-enabling English common law property ownership (Hall, 2013: 1583). Private property arose in the process of colonization (Nichols, 2020), and repossession is a contemporary formulation happening within the frame of the Western private property regime and its

logic of accumulation. Equally, repossession should not invoke a simplistic image of *imposition* on passive First Nations communities, as if repeating colonial narratives of a disappearing people (Hore, 2022), or be misunderstood as an assessment of how First Nations peoples *should* navigate contemporary settler capitalism. Rather, the concept is meant to highlight how repossession is part of a larger 'circuitry of capital' (Pasternak and Dafnos, 2018), the dynamics of which we now examine in Coast Salish territory centred on Vancouver.

Accumulation dynamics in Coast Salish territory

Prior to Spanish, Russian, English, American and Canadian forays and colonial incursion into Coast Salish territory of the Lower Mainland, it was inhabited by several Indigenous groups, amongst them peoples that today form the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Tsawwassen First Nations. Land uses and land occupation were flexible and seasonal, and identity not as static as the creation of reserves by the colonial administration would have it (Edmonds, 2010; Harris, 1997; Matthews, 1954; Squamish Nation, 2024; Thom, 2009). Instead, Indigenous peoples were connected to a 'larger geographical, cultural and spiritual space' (Roy, 2007: 6). Conceptualizations of space varied and the local population frequented the wider region; interrelated groups had rights and access to the same resources and territory (Harris, 1992: 41). In other words, the whole region was a 'Native place' (Francis, 2021: 27).

Notwithstanding the devastation wrought by epidemics that may have killed as much as 90% of the Indigenous population (Edmonds, 2010; Harris, 1997, 2004), or the Hudson's Bay Company-monopolized fur trade and settler colonies (Whiteside, 2023a, 2025), First Nations peoples self-governed until at least 1858, when the Fraser River gold rush saw a surge of settler activity, prompting the formation of Crown colonies at Vancouver Island and the coastal mainland (Harris, 1992, 1997). The two colonies were united in 1866, with its capital at Victoria, and its political-economic development centering on mainland railway and land speculation. British Columbia entered Canadian confederation in 1871 having negotiated the surrender of very little Aboriginal Title land.

From the early days of settler colonialism forward, the telos of highest-and-best-use appraisal, land speculation and real estate development have been instrumental in legitimizing dispossession for the purpose of capital accumulation (Blomley, 2004: 115; Edmonds, 2010: 60; Harris, 2004). Vancouver was historically surveyed by the Royal Navy, and the colonial administration set aside land for government reserves, the military, and some First Nations reserves as early as the 1860s. The area of where the Jericho development is today was part of a military reserve and the area where Seṅáḵw is today was designated an Indigenous reserve (Harris, 1992; Macdonald, 1977; Sanchez, 2020; Squamish Nation, 2024). The rest of the land was considered 'wasteland' that could be claimed by settlers for 'improvement' (Bhandar, 2018: 36), but 'most early land acquisition was speculation that the land would rise in value' (Macdonald, 1977: 4). Dispossession intensified once the decision was made to locate the CPR terminus station between Coal Harbour and English Bay in Vancouver instead of at New Westminster.

As is already well-established in the extant literature, the first settler land acquisitions, the relocation of the CPR terminus station, the specific placement of CPR facilities, and the ensuing land boom in the region were all decidedly shaped by railway interests and officials looking to capture potential profits from increasing land values in what was characterized as 'empty' space (Harris, 1992, 1997; Leonard, 2010; Wynn, 1992). The first real estate firms marketing and selling land established themselves in Vancouver at the end of the 1890s, after the city had officially been founded in 1886 (Macdonald, 1977). As Francis sums up: 'Vancouver has always been about real estate' (2021: 12). The creation of Vancouver and ensuing accumulation by dispossession were channelled and fuelled by capitalist interests seeking to profit from the expansion of empire and land speculation (Cowen, 2020).

With this longer history in mind, we now turn to how contemporary repossession, or real property development by corporations owned by First Nations, the Crown, and private interests, fits into the scheme of the long-standing processes of settler colonial accumulation (Paulson and Tomiak, 2022; Simpson and Le Billon, 2021). As indicated earlier, a direct connection exists between land speculation, colonial infrastructures and the displacement of Coast Salish peoples from the sites on which First Nations Development Corporations own real estate today.

The broader area around today's Jericho and Seṅáḵw sites had been used for cultural, harvesting and residential purposes by the Indigenous population to various degrees and intensities for a long time. Even with the creation of Kitsilano Indian Reserve No. 6, increasing expropriation and development pressures eventually led to complete displacement of Indigenous peoples. Almost a century later, Supreme Courts of British Columbia (2000) and Canada (2001) returned a 10.5-acre parcel (previously expropriated as CPR rights of way) to the Squamish Nation as reserve land (Barman, 2007; Harris, 2017; Squamish Nation, 2024). It is on this site that Nch'ḵaẏ is now overseeing the construction of the 6000-unit Seṅáḵw development.

The 90-acre site called Jericho Lands, developed by MST-CLC, with an anticipated 13,000 residential units, was previously dispossessed through a variety of settler colonial uses, such as logging, military, golfing and educational facilities (Francis, 2021: 31; Sanchez, 2020: 36). A portion of the military property was 'returned' to the public to form Jericho Beach Park in the 1960s (Sanchez, 2020: 40). Similarly, the areas now being redeveloped were sold to the MST Nations by the federal and provincial governments because they were deemed surplus through government real property protocols (Whiteside, 2019), enabling expanded reproduction.

The settler history of both Jericho and Seṅáḵw is a story of public- and private sector-enabled dispossession, of making lands productive for the settler colonial economy based on a variety of uses and jurisdictions, eliminating what were once fundamentally different uses and conceptualizations of land. As military bases and railway infrastructure, these land use patterns formed an integral part of the settler colonial project and its infrastructures (Cowen, 2020), but their declining importance opened up the possibility for reconceptualizing land as residential real estate. Capitalist settler colonial interests shaped specific ownership arrangements in the past, and such logics continue to shape the possibilities and limits for Indigenous land repossession, that, in these specific cases, was not only enabled by the tireless work and resistance of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh (Squamish Nation, 2024), but also by the capitalist compulsion of subjecting lands to more productive, or at least more lucrative, use.

At both Seṅáḵw and Jericho, First Nations Development Corporations are developing high-density, profit-oriented real estate for the purpose of extracting revenue for their own operations (Whiteside, 2019, 2020), situated within a broader territory of Coast Salish land reclamation motivated by diverse Indigenous interests (Thom, 2014). While Seṅáḵw involves more rental housing, Jericho will see more leasehold ownership (City of Vancouver, 2024; Nch'kaẏ West, 2023). For both developments, First Nations Development Corporations have sought to harmonize development with standard capitalist business practices and legal structures (van der Haegen, 2025).

To develop the 6000 housing units at Seṅáḵw, Nch'ḵaẏ has partnered with real estate developer Westbank Corporation, a Vancouver-based residential and mixed-use property developer, who has agreed to carry all the financial risk associated with development, while the Squamish Nation is providing the land. Westbank has sold parts of its stakes to pension fund OPTrust so that the Squamish Nation now owns 50%, Westbank 30% and OPTrust the balance at 20%. As the development is taking place on reserve land, the Squamish Nation has leased the land to Nch'ḵay West, a partnership between Nch'kay and Westbank. The lease, rather than the land, has been used to secure financing since reserve land (which is held in trust by the Crown) cannot legally be forfeited by a First Nation collective. To ensure security for investors and tenants, the Squamish Nation has harmonized legal structures with those of the province, such as through the *First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act* of 2005.

As for Jericho Lands, development takes place on fee-simple private property that the federal and provincial governments have sought to privatize through highest-and-best-use appraisal (Whiteside, 2020, 2023b). The state-owned enterprise CLC retained a 50% ownership stake and the federal and provincial governments sold this land at a discount (through an accommodation agreement) in exchange for the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh relinquishing their traditional claims to the site. As Musqueam chief Wayne Sparrow commented: 'We still believe those Crown-held lands were taken from us. But we have to move forward as a community' (Bula, 2016). After the rezoning application for Jericho is approved by the city of Vancouver, CLC intends to sell their ownership stake to MST, and the land will be developed with Aquilini who will equally carry the financial risk of redevelopment.

In sum, First Nations Development Corporations, in partnership with state and private sector actors, are entangled in novel and distinct forms of dispossession and repossession reliant upon accumulation in Coast Salish territory. Michael Simpson and David Hugill write that 'the initial process of dispossessing Indigenous people [. . .] does not complete the colonial process, but merely inaugurates it. 'Original' rounds of accumulation beget future rounds of accumulation, and thus further rounds of dispossession' (2022: 1313). Through the elaboration of accumulation by repossession, the discussion here has added nuance to depictions of continuous colonialism.

Concluding remarks on capitalism in Coast Salish territory

Several Coast Salish Nations fought vehemently against the Trans Mountain Pipeline as an expression of settler colonial encroachment (Simpson, 2022; Simpson and Le Billon, 2021); some equally thwarted the privatization of public real property in downtown Vancouver on the basis of unceded land claims (Whiteside, 2020). On the other hand, for real estate projects like Jericho Lands and Seṅáḵw, First Nations Development Corporations are involved in the repossession-enabled intensification of capitalist relations that integrate reserve/Crown land into private markets through expanded reproduction. In the current conjuncture, as in the past, it is not surprising that 'capitalist social relations permeate most Indigenous communities' (Paulson and Tomiak, 2022: 162, see also: Atleo, 2015; Coulthard, 2014; Estes, 2013; Simpson, 2011, 2016a). As accumulation by dispossession is incomplete and ongoing, so too are place-specific engagements with the structural forces of settler capitalism.

Audra Simpson argues that settler colonialism is a concept that 'mask[s] seizure while attending to capital accumulation under another name' (2016b: 440). The integration of Indigenous lands into capitalist circulation is not done through dispossession alone, forms of repossession can also link land to capitalist markets, and it does not appear as though different ownership configurations fundamentally upend this dynamic (e.g. fee simple, leasehold, Crown, reserves). Reconciliation-oriented policies and legislation now enable land revenue to be generated by the activities of First Nations Development Corporations, Crown corporations, private real estate developers and investors. In the longue durée of the colonial process (Ekers, 2023), land repossession, as recursive dispossession, becomes more firmly embedded within capitalist markets.

We observe four interrelated developments associated with dynamics of accumulation by repossession in Coast Salish territory:

First, while Indigenous engagements with settler capitalism and economic development through various forms of land tenure are by no means new (Anderson, 1997; Levitan and Cameron, 2015; Sommerville, 2021; Tomiak, 2017; Wuttunee, 2023), the scale of First Nations Development Corporations' real estate activities (amounting to tens of billions of dollars) is unprecedented.

Second, we may be witnessing an 'Indigenous capital switch' (after Castree and Christophers, 2015) through the significant future anticipated revenue flows for Indigenous communities. However, with these projects being variously co-owned, financed and/or developed by other public and private corporations, and with residential units sold as leasehold ownership or rental properties, there remains

a functional similarity with standard rentier capitalism in Vancouver, in which property owners and developers profit off rising property values sustained by the influx of capital from economic growth elsewhere (Christophers, 2010). Even if a large degree of control is retained by First Nations, the exact implications of an Indigenous capital switch remain to be determined. Binaries of collective and private, or of Indigenous economics apart from capitalism, are troubled by processes of accumulation by repossession should revenue 'switch' into Indigenous communities with the potential for significantly positive social impacts (Cattelino, 2005, 2008).

Third, land repossession by First Nations Development Corporations is currently managed at arm's length from the First Nations' political leadership (Campbell, 2015). These for-profit companies offer employment to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike, create other downstream contracting opportunities for Indigenous peoples, and bring much-needed revenue to First Nations communities in their struggle with settler colonial economic exclusion and socioeconomic disparities on and off reserve.

Lastly, a substantial amount of capital is likely to leave the circuits of expanded reproduction as investment into social goods and collective infrastructure on reserve. An interviewee (van der Haegen Interview 08/18/2023) sketched out three main uses for capital accrued through real estate development. While part will be reinvested into future First Nation economic development, most of which will likely be real estate, and another part will likely be invested productively elsewhere, a third part will be invested into the Nations' programmes, services, and infrastructures. Following Marx's understanding of capital as 'essentially circulating capital' (Harvey, 2023: 283; Marx, 1973: 639) – or value in motion – substantial revenue streams may cease to be capital if invested in non-commodified forms of social reproduction.

Given that these are ongoing processes at the time of writing, future researchers will be better positioned to make more concrete assessments; however, it will be important to remain attuned to forms of collective capitalism (Champagne, 2007: 57), hybrid property rights including collectively held Aboriginal Title (Whiteside, 2024), collective ownership (Atleo, 2015; Pasternak, 2015), and revenue redistribution amongst First Nations as collectives.

Nick Blomley reminds us that 'Native claims are [. . .] illegible if they fail to adopt the geographies of the ownership model' (2004: 9). As much as 'the ideology of improvement has long rendered indigenous people (and others) as lacking in the required degree of fixity and immobility to be legally legible as owners of their lands' (Bhandar, 2018: 182), current and longstanding land configurations demand that Indigenous claims be made legible within capitalist property regimes. Accumulation by repossession establishes settler colonial territoriality (Nichols, 2020: 88; Sack, 1983) through the integration of Indigenous lands into circulation as freehold or leasehold land, and yet First Nations' ownership is simultaneously confirmed. Accumulation by repossession thus highlights tensions around hybrid and contradictory ownership relations (Harris, 2017).

Evidence provided through the Jericho and Seȟáḵw case studies, real estate projects owned by Nch'ḵaẏ Development Corporation and the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Development Corporation, reveals how accumulation by repossession is both a long run dynamic connected to land dispossession and a contemporary form of settler capitalist adjustment to the legal rights and efforts of First Nations peoples in the face of unceded land disputes. Repossession thus sits at the interface of capitalism and reconciliation, just as it might signify a 'colonial beachhead' (Curley, 2021) that enables ever closer integration of Indigenous lands into systems of private property and accumulation in which 'non-capitalist economies and Indigenous title and sovereignty are further undermined' (Tomiak, 2017: 934). Capitalism in Coast Salish territory proceeds apace.

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Notes

1. Coast Salish Peoples' territory extends beyond the context observed in this paper and is one of fluid and differing conceptualizations of land (Thom, 2009).
2. Many First Nations communities seek financial self-sufficiency and economic wellbeing through corporate economic development (Anderson, 1997; Levitan and Cameron, 2015; Sommerville, 2021; Tomiak, 2017; Wuttunee, 2023).

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