

Between Then and Now: A Genealogy of Community-Based Tenures in Relation to the Self-Determination of First Nations in BC

context

The historical legacy and ongoing reality of settler colonialism has created a complex system of forest tenure in British Columbia (BC)—one that is entrenched in a heavily industrialized, capitalist model of forest management and governed by a centralized bureaucracy on largely un-ceded First Nations traditional territories and lands.

introduction

In recent years, **Community Forest Agreements (CFAs)** and **First Nations Woodland Licenses (FNWLs)** have come to offer alternative opportunities for First Nations in BC to increase their participation in the forest sector, and to gain control of local resources in order to manage them for a wide range of locally-identified values.

Yet, despite the laudability of these tenures to advance First Nations' decision-making authority, **significant practical and structural barriers and challenges** call into question the ideational purport of their institution as well as their overall place and function within the broader contexts of the forest tenure system, and federal-provincial and Aboriginal relations. Are these tenures indeed suitable to producing spaces and practices that are amendable to indigenous worldviews and visions of self-determination?

research strategy

A Foucauldian genealogical strategy is adopted to construct a critical "history of the present"¹ through which the conception, development, and overall performance of CFAs and FNWLs could be(re)viewed.

❖ Genealogy ≠ traditional historiography

Genealogy moves beyond description, *working against historical and contemporary metanarratives*^a and *discourses* by problematizing that which is "given" or "taken for granted"². It reconstructs a history of the present by identifying diverse and contingent conditions of power and knowledge under which institutions, practices, and discourses have been shaped.

An extensive investigation and reading of a wide variety of historical resources, academic and grey literatures, official documents, and other discursive objects and speech acts is being undertaken to construct the genealogy.

objectives

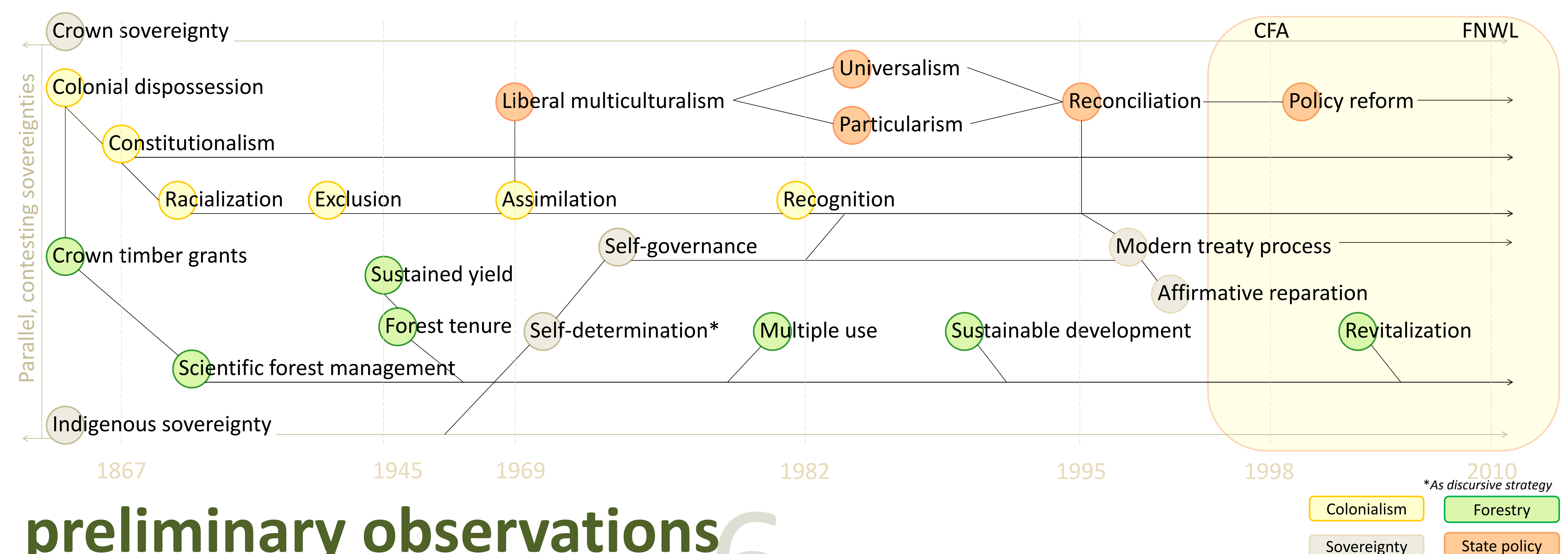
- to **construct** a genealogy of CFAs and FNWLs by tracing discursive and institutional (dis)continuities in their lineages;
- to **produce** an in-depth critique and unveiling of the wider implications and functions of CFAs and FNWLs, with the view that such a critique is both *relevant* and *timely*; and,
- to **contribute** to critical, decolonizing scholarly research that seeks to advance transformative strategies of change within the forest sector.

research questions

1. What lines of descent—i.e. discursive and institutional strategies, practices, and elements—can be traced to the emergence of these tenures?
2. How has colonialism shaped the management of BC's forestlands, and how is it manifested today through the regulation of these tenures?
3. How might CFAs and FNWLs conflict or converge with First Nations' self-determining capacity?

preliminary analysis

The figure below depicts a simplified visual representation of the genealogical analysis in its current form^b. Each circle signifies a particular institutional or discursive strategy or practice that is problematized, within which relevant discourses or discursive objects are subsumed (not identified below); lines represent the relationships and linkages between strategies and practices^c. In addition to the genealogical analysis, the overall development and function of the regulatory frameworks of CFAs and FNWLs is also considered.



preliminary observations

CFAs and FNWLs may be conducive to increased First Nations' self-governance and decision-making authority over local forest resources within the broader scopes of the provincial forest tenure system and scientific forest management. However, structural and governmentalizing limitations on self-determining capacity and notions of self-determination are maintained through ongoing reproduction and naturalization of colonially-embedded institutional and discursive strategies and practices.

References: 1. Foucault, Michel. "Critical Theory/Intellectual History." In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, 17-48 (1988); 2. Kearns, Kate, and Keith Hooper. "Genealogical method and analysis." *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 15, no. 5, 733-757 (2002).

Footnotes: a. In the context of this thesis, a *metanarrative* refers to any narrative that is commonly accepted as being "universal" or "true"—e.g. scientific rationality, modernity, sovereignty, etc.—through its self-legitimizing production and organization of knowledge; b. Figure adapted from Anderson, Niels Åkerstrøm, *Discursive Analytical Strategies*, 21 (2003); c) for a relationship to exist, a minimum of one element must be reproduced or carried forward into the next strategy or practice.

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