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Author(s): Rosemary-Claire Collard, Jessica Dempsey and Juanita Sundberg

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A Manifesto for Abundant Futures

Rosemary-Claire Collard,* Jessica Dempsey,[†] and Juanita Sundberg[‡]

*Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

[†]School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada

[‡]Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

The concept of the Anthropocene is creating new openings around the question of how humans ought to intervene in the environment. In this article, we address one arena in which the Anthropocene is prompting a sea change: conservation. The path emerging in mainstream conservation is, we argue, neoliberal and postnatural. We propose an alternative path for multispecies abundance. By *abundance* we mean more diverse and autonomous forms of life and ways of living together. In considering how to enact multispecies worlds, we take inspiration from Indigenous and peasant movements across the globe as well as decolonial and postcolonial scholars. With decolonization as our principal political sensibility, we offer a manifesto for abundance and outline political strategies to reckon with colonial-capitalist ruins, enact pluriversality rather than universality, and recognize animal autonomy. We advance these strategies to support abundant socioecological futures. *Key Words:* *abundance, Anthropocene, biodiversity, conservation, decolonization.*

人类世的概念，对于人类如何介入自然的问题，创造了崭新的契机。我们于本文中，处理人类世正在推进剧烈变革的一个领域：环境保育。我们主张，主流的环境保育中逐渐浮现的路径，便是新自由主义及后自然。我们则对多物种的丰富性，提出一条另类路径。我们所谓的丰富性，意味着更多差异及自主的生命形式，以及共生的方式。在考量如何展现多物种的世界时，我们受到全球各地的原住民运动和农民运动，以及去殖民和后殖民学者的启发。去殖民作为我们的主要政治敏感度，我们以此提出丰富性的宣言，并概述政治策略，以清算殖民—资本主义的毁坏，并展现多重世界性，而非单一世界性，以及承认动物的自主性。我们推动这些策略以支持丰富的社会生态之未来。关键词：丰富，人类世，生物多样性，保育，去殖民。

El concepto del Antropoceno está creando aperturas nuevas alrededor del interrogante sobre el modo como los humanos deben intervenir en el medio ambiente. En este artículo abocamos un campo en el que el Antropoceno está incitando a un cambio marino: la conservación. La ruta que emerge en la corriente principal de la conservación es, sostenemos, neoliberal y posnatural. Proponemos una ruta alternativa para la abundancia en diversidad de especies. Por abundancia significamos formas de vida y maneras de vivir juntos más diversas y autónomas. Al considerar cómo representar mundos diversos en especies, nos inspiramos en movimientos de indígenas y campesinos a través del globo, lo mismo que en eruditos versados en descolonización y lo poscolonial. Con la descolonización como nuestra principal sensibilidad política, ofrecemos un manifiesto en pro de la abundancia y del esquema de estrategias políticas para lidiar con las ruinas colono-capitalistas, representar la pluriversalidad más que la universalidad, y reconocer la autonomía animal. Promovemos estas estrategias en apoyo de futuros socioecológicos abundantes. *Palabras clave:* *abundancia, Antropoceno, biodiversidad, conservación, descolonización.*

The Anthropocene, says Erle Ellis, “is a new geological era characterized by humans as a force shaping nature” (*The Economist* 2011). In an interview with *The Economist*—available on YouTube—Ellis lists indicators of the Anthropocene as he sits in a London park: cropland, domesticated species, climate change, and so on. The idea of a “pristine” baseline from which to measure disturbance and degradation is a fallacy, says the professor of geography and environmental systems. When asked whether if the Anthropocene is a source of despair or hope, Ellis responds: the Anthropocene is “great from a scientific point of view.” Now that we “recognize that humans

are this great causal agent . . . we’re putting ourselves back in the picture *intentionally*. Now we can decide—rather than just kind of assume we’re not having this big impact—*how* we’re going to have this impact.” We agree with Ellis on this point: The Anthropocene as a concept prompts the question of how humans ought to intervene in the environment; how to live in a multispecies world.

In this article, we address one arena in which the Anthropocene is prompting a sea change: conservation. Some conservationists are beginning to speak in what would have been shocking terms a mere decade ago. As Ellis (2009) writes, if “Nature is gone” and we

are “living on a used planet,” then it’s time for a “postnatural environmentalism” where the most important “wildlife refuges” are farms, backyards, and cities. This postnatural bent is taking root in several mainstream conservation organizations like The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Conservation International, as well as The Breakthrough Institute (TBI). Brainchild of “Death of Environmentalism” authors Shellenberger and Nordhaus (2004), TBI is an increasingly influential think tank at the forefront of cultivating and disseminating what is fast becoming a new common sense in conservation. Past and present TBI Senior Fellows include Ellis, political ecologist Paul Robbins, Bruno Latour, and TNC Vice President Peter Kareiva; its Director of Research is mainstream conservationist Linus Blomqvist. TBI’s project to “modernize environmentalism” is consistent with what Buscher et al. (2012) describe as “neoliberal conservation” guided by economic rationality and human-centered managerialism (see also Sullivan 2010). Although throwing off the shackles of Nature¹ might sound the death knell for the “Edenic sciences” like conservation biology (Robbins and Moore 2013), the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity is alive and on the neoliberal postnatural conservation path (MacDonald and Corson 2012; Dempsey forthcoming).

We respond to this path with an alternative expressed in the form of a manifesto. We choose the manifesto as a declarative format that makes a path-changing proposal “to stop going further in the same way as before toward the future” (Latour 2010, 473). In his own “Compositionist Manifesto,” Latour (2010, 486; see also Latour 2013) argues that such a break requires us to “turn our back, finally, to our past, and to explore new prospects, what lies ahead, the fate of things to come.” Postnatural conservation’s scornful take on nostalgia for Nature and its reorientation around building futures resonate with Latour. In contrast, our manifesto urges a temporal orientation to reckon with the past. Looking back directs attention to what Stoler (2008) calls *ruination*, the discursive material processes of annihilation, displacement, and replacement driven by imperialism. Indeed, MacKinnon (2013) drew on early colonial records to suggest we inhabit a planet with only 10 percent of the biological variety and abundance it had before the mass culls and extractions that have marked imperial capitalism to present.² Looking back also shows us what we should strive for: a world literally filled to the brim with different creatures.

In the face of ruination, we offer a manifesto for abundant futures, by which we mean futures with more diverse and autonomous forms of life and ways of living together. In the spirit of creativity and solidarity, we leave the definition of abundance open while taking inspiration from decolonizing frameworks, politics, and ethics as articulated in contemporary settler societies such as Canada, Australia, the United States, and Latin America. Decolonizing frameworks entail recognizing how knowledge production and everyday relations (including those between humans and other sentient beings) are informed by European colonial modalities of power and propped up by imperial geopolitical and economic arrangements (Maldonado-Torres 2007). We draw from decolonial and postcolonial scholars while recognizing the diversity within and between decolonizing movements and scholarship. Our decolonizing sensibility keeps an eye on the past to reckon with how we got to this place of ruination and ecological impoverishment, acknowledging that creating conditions for abundance necessitates enacting alternatives to imperial capitalism.

We begin the article by tracing the emergence and key characteristics of neoliberal postnatural conservation. We also indicate points of convergence and divergence with decades of scholarship in political ecology, science studies, and elsewhere that has questioned conservation’s traditional orientation around Nature (i.e., Haraway 1991; Cronon 1995; Latour 2004), which has led to enclosure and dispossession (i.e., Neumann 1998; Chapin 2004; West, Igoe, and Brockington 2006). Many of the same logics, we suggest, persist in neoliberal postnatural conservation. Next, we present a brief critique of postnatural conservation. We then outline our response in the form of a manifesto for abundance. The political strategies we advance are shaped by the understanding that our many privileges as members of Canada’s settler society stem from the theft of Indigenous people’s lands and the state’s ongoing policies of assimilation and appropriation. Our profound desire to transform these conditions and to build respectful and accountable relationships with multispecies others drive this manifesto.

The Path Being Taken: Neoliberal Postnatural Conservation

In 2009, one of us sat at a peanut bar with Peter Kareiva, the Vice President and Chief Scientist of

TNC. Kareiva spoke in blasphemous terms. No one cares about biodiversity, he said, except white suburbanites; it's a dead-end concept (see Kareiva n.d.). He favors ecosystem services, which, he argued, resonates across class divides and cultures. Responding, Jessica Dempsey noted that Kareiva should probably look for a new job, given how central biodiversity is to TNC programming. He laughed. "Yeah," he said, "I might not last much longer at TNC."

Only a few years later, not only is Kareiva still in his position at TNC, he also is a key "bomb thrower" (Voosen 2012) in a heated debate about the future of biodiversity conservation. The debate has those like Kareiva advocating human-centered, ecosystem-service-focused conservation, what we call *neoliberal postnatural conservation*, pitted against those holding on to traditional biodiversity-focused conservation (e.g., Soulé 2013). All is not divided, of course, as there also are calls for diverse approaches to a *Rambunctious Garden* (e.g., Marris 2011). Even so, we argue, neoliberal postnatural conservation is poised to be the path taken to guide conservation in the so-called Anthropocene. In what follows, we briefly outline three characteristics of this particular path for socioecological futures, drawing mostly from the essay "Conservation in the Anthropocene," penned by Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012). For us, that essay is the exemplar of an emerging regime of truth. Our assessment of this new regime also builds on our reading of debates in journals like *Animal Conservation*, critiques of neoliberal conservation (Sullivan 2010; Buscher et al. 2012; MacDonald and Corson 2012), and other prescient work on this turn (Robbins and Moore 2013; Robbins 2014).

Hopeful, Future-Oriented Postnaturalism

For those of us schooled in Cronon's (1995) "The Trouble with Wilderness," parts of Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz's (2012) essay are familiar. The authors write, "The wilderness so beloved by conservationists—places 'untrammelled by man'—never existed" (Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz 2012). Further echoing Cronon (and social nature geographers; e.g., Braun and Castree 2001), they call this Nature inaccurate and reflective of bourgeois desires. Thus, write Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012), retaining "conservation's intense nostalgia for wilderness and a past of pristine nature . . . [and its] focus upon preserving islands of Holocene ecosystems in the age of the Anthropocene

is both anachronistic and counterproductive." It is impossible to go back to a past that never existed, they say, and this is especially the case given dramatic shifts like invasive species and climate change.

Although these shifts might be cause for despair for some environmental movements, Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012) optimistically point to the possibilities: "nature could be a garden—not a carefully manicured and rigid one, but a tangle of species and wildness amidst lands used for food production, mineral extraction, and urban life." The massive marks humans have made on the planet offer a kind of liberation for those who have been so obsessed with saving. Thus, Ellis (2013) argues, "The only limits to creating a planet that future generations will be proud of are our imaginations and our social systems. In moving toward a better Anthropocene, the environment will be what we make it."

Resilient Natures for Economic Development

Postnatural conservationists ask us to "see through the illusion" that Nature exists in a "delicate state of harmony constantly at risk of collapse from too much human interference" (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2011). From this perspective, species and ecosystems, like humans, are usually *resilient*. Even after "major disturbances such as deforestation, mining, oil spills, and other types of pollution," Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012) contend species abundance and "other measures of ecosystem function recover, at least partially" in most cases. At the Chernobyl nuclear facility, they say, "wildlife is thriving, despite the high levels of radiation." They also claim that Amazonian rainforests "have grown back over abandoned agricultural land," although the regrown forest only hosts "40 to 70 percent of the species of the original forests."

This perspective on resilient natures articulates with a specific view of development. Sounding positively Kuznets-curve-like (in terms of linear advancement of human societies from environmental destroyers to environmentalists), Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012) suggest "forest cover . . . is rising in the Northern Hemisphere, where 'nature' is returning to former agricultural lands. Something similar is likely to occur in the Southern Hemisphere, after poor countries achieve a similar level of economic development." Although "affluent, white, upper-middle class Americans" see conservation as inherently valuable, people in poor countries will only protect the environment if "it links

to their own needs,” Kareiva (n.d.) says. As such, post-natural conservationists appear to accept Rostowian visions of modernist development, which are no longer viewed as the path to destruction or the fall from purity but rather as a teleological necessity (see Ellis et al. 2013). The kind of development needed is *green* development that cultivates the natures that support “thriving economies” (Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz 2012). Corporate partnerships are key to this vision (MacDonald 2010). “Instead of scolding capitalism,” Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012) state, “conservationists should partner with corporations in a science-based effort to integrate the value of nature’s benefits into their operations and cultures.”

Optimizing Enterprising Natures

The new conservation is deeply humanist and utilitarian. “Instead of pursuing the protection of biodiversity for biodiversity’s sake,” write Kareiva, Marvier, and Lalasz (2012), “a new conservation should seek to enhance those natural systems that benefit the widest number of people, especially the poor.” Central to the new conservation is a focus on trade-offs between competing ecosystem services, between, say, the services of water purification, carbon sequestration, pollination, and timber provided by the same patch of forested land. These trade-offs must be calculated and economically valued so that ecosystem services can be rationalized and optimized. For example, the InVEST tool, created by a collaboration between TNC (with Kareiva at the helm), WWF-US, Stanford University, and the University of Minnesota, is a computer program that calculates changes in ecosystem services based on alternative future land and marine uses (e.g., increased urban development, or more restored areas). These calculations reveal the sites most important for delivering ecosystem services, often attached to economic valuations. On this path, ethical questions about how to intervene are oriented by optimizing ecosystems for the greatest number of people, maximizing utility across these trade-offs.

Responding to Postnatural Conservation

Earlier, we traced a neoliberal postnatural conservation at the forefront of guiding interventions in the Anthropocene. As neoliberal conservation has already been critiqued (i.e., Sullivan 2010; Buscher et al. 2012), we turn our attention to its *postnatural*

dimensions. Although we share excitement about political opportunities offered by the end of Nature and increasing interest in entanglement and “rambunctious gardens” (Marris 2011; Robbins and Moore 2013), we worry about what makes postnature amenable to neoliberal approaches to conservation. This is not to conflate postnatural with neoliberal natures; they are not the same. Nonetheless, we believe that the postnatural is premised on ontological claims about how the world is composed that merit additional analysis. As Braun (2009, 31) cautions, “There is no hard and fast rule that a particular ontology leads necessarily to a particular politics, but neither can any ontology be said to be neutral.” Hence, the notion of postnature as composed of heterogeneous assemblages of living and inert entities is not inherently more or less life-giving in its political implications. To negotiate this slipperiness, postnatural scholars surveyed by Braun (2009, 31) direct our attention to the *processes for composing*, to the development of “institutional spaces and procedures that allow us to work through, in an agonistic matter, how this composition of common worlds should proceed.” Compositionism, suggests Latour (2010, 474), “takes up the task of building a common world . . . built from utterly heterogeneous parts that will never make a whole, but at best a fragile, revisable, and diverse composite material.” Compositionism directs us away from the question of whether or not things are constructed—they always are—and “toward the crucial difference between what is *well* or *badly* constructed” (Latour 2010, 474).

We agree. But we are struck by the ease with which both postnatural conservation and Latour abandon Nature and move on to composing. From our perspective, Nature was an imperial imposition, not a bad phase or an inadequate ontoepistemology that may be forgotten. Nature might be dead for Kareiva and Latour, but its ruins remain. Reckoning with ruination means contending with the durability and strength of conservation assemblages, which derive from associations with imperial geopolitical institutions (Chapin 2004; Robbins 2014). Conservation organizations cannot be separated from imperial formations. This is the case even if conservation no longer relies on Nature. To face this head on, compositionism needs more political signposts or it risks becoming another future-oriented invocation of *terra nullius*, a blank slate—this time an anthropogenic or “used” slate (Ellis et al. 2013).

By signposts we do not mean a new modern constitution with universal aspirations or composing a

common world (Latour 2004, 2010, 2013). Although Latour claims that we have never been modern, his invocation of a common world presupposes a “we” with sufficient ontological commonality to afford communication across communities. The modern constitution Latour describes was never universal, although imperial regimes of power certainly attempted to make it so (Blaser 2013; Sundberg 2013). As such, Latour risks treating Western thought as a universal frame of reference, which in turn negates the existence of radically different ontologies (Blaser 2009). In the face of colonial efforts to eliminate difference, we find it necessary to pursue strategies for composing that foster modes of living together with radical difference (Martin, McGuire, and Sullivan 2013). How differences are to be adjudicated and by whom remain crucial questions.

Finally, we are concerned about the easy call for entanglements and even intimacy. For Latour (2012), compositionism “describes our ever-increasing degree of intimacy with the new natures we are constantly creating.” The sin, he says, “is not to wish to have dominion over Nature, but to believe that this dominion means emancipation and not attachment.” As Latour is suggesting, intimacy is not free of mastery. We are with him: Domination occurs through attachment. But for us, domination should be resisted. The domination of nature and other-than-humans by particular human groups is ruinous. Acknowledging entanglement is not enough to shift us away from further animal death and exploitation.

In sum, we worry about the postnatural orientation toward a future, entangled common world, as this might be, in part, what makes the approach amenable to alliances with neoliberalism. We see such alliances as fundamental impediments to abundant futures. Our manifesto, to which we now turn, takes us in a different direction.

Another Path Is Possible! Abundant Futures Manifesto

If anything, the Anthropocene is a spark that will light a fire in our imaginaries. This is a time to think big, to dream. We dream about abundant futures. In what follows, we offer this dream in the form of a manifesto, a declaration of strategies to create the conditions for supporting diverse forms of life and ways of living.

Decolonizing frameworks, politics, and ethics guide our thinking about the conditions needed to generate abundance. Although “the desired outcomes of decolonization are diverse and located at multiple sites in multiple forms” (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012, 2), our decolonizing sensibility builds from scholarship and movements in settler societies that are premised on Indigenous self-determination. In this context, we draw particular attention to the ways Nature is steeped in colonial patterns of power and knowledge. Nature, we argue, must be confronted as an artifact of empire, although not “as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime” that can be ignored (Stoler 2008, 196). Rather, as Stoler (2008, 195) notes, imperial ruins have a political life; they “impinge on the allocation of space, resources, and on the contours of material life” in the present. Discerning how the residues of Nature are reactivated in contemporary conservation politics in ways that continue to dispossess is crucial to the practice of decolonizing.

The violence of settler colonialism is ongoing (Wolfe 2006) as “land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property” (Tuck and Yang 2012, 5). Anishinaabeg scholar and activist Leanne Simpson beautifully articulates this transformation of land and bodies (cited in Klein 2013):

Extraction and assimilation go together. Colonialism and capitalism are based on extracting and assimilating. My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource and my children are a resource because they are the potential to grow, maintain, and uphold the extraction–assimilation system. The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning. Extracting is taking. Actually, extracting is stealing—it is taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on the other living things in that environment. That’s always been a part of colonialism and conquest. Colonialism has always extracted the indigenous.

As Simpson suggests, colonial extraction also implies attempts to erase distinct ways of bringing worlds into being. Transforming these conditions requires political struggle grounded in decolonizing. Inspired by Simpson and others, we now turn to three concrete political strategies necessary to create conditions for generating abundance rather than postnatural

conservation. These strategies are informed by transformative efforts already occurring around the globe.

Strategy 1: Reckoning with Colonial-Capitalist Ruination

Like postnatural conservationists, we do not support a conservation oriented around the colonial myth of a pristine past. Yet the tendency to relentlessly focus on the future is not the answer. When considering how to intervene responsibly and ethically, an ongoing and active reckoning with the past is crucial. We can look to the past not to provide an Edenic benchmark but to understand the discursive material infrastructure we have inherited: How did we arrive where we are today, to a world of social asymmetries and ecological impoverishment? Galeano (1973) and Davis (2002) contend that we arrived at contemporary “underdevelopment” through colonialism and imperial capitalist development. Violence was central to these processes. “Millions died,” Davis (2002, 11) writes, “not outside the ‘modern world system,’ but in the very process of being forcibly incorporated into its economic and political structures.” The Capitalocene, Haraway’s (2014) counterconcept to the Anthropocene, specifically foregrounds capitalist modes of political economy (and their attachment to fossil fuels) as drivers of impoverished ecologies. To recall this violence is neither nostalgic nor anachronistic but central to understanding that any intervention today is unavoidably linked to processes of imperial ruination.

Equally, we need to pay attention to histories of nonhuman abundance and the violences that led to their diminishment. MacKinnon (2013) sees the past as a measure of possibility for what “may be again.” For MacKinnon, this is not a call for “some romantic return to a pre-human Eden.” Rather, he posits, “A story of loss is not always and only a lament; it can also be a measure of possibility. What once was may be again.” For MacKinnon, this means taking past abundance as a marker for what might be; looking back shows us what rich socioecological worlds looked like (as in Denevan 2001; Raffles 2002; Mann 2005).

“Our systems are designed to promote more life,” says Leanne Simpson about her Anishinaabeg community (cited in Klein 2013). Working with the Anishinaabeg concept of *mino bimaadiziwin*, variously translated as “the good life” and “continuous rebirth,” Simpson identifies an alternative to worlds that are enacted through utilitarianism and extraction. “The

purpose of life,” she says, “is this continuous rebirth, it’s to promote more life. In Anishinaabeg society, our economic systems, our education systems, our systems of governance, and our political systems were designed with that basic tenet at their core.” The concept of promoting life differs considerably from a core aspect of sustainability and earth systems science, which focuses on figuring out the limits to development or the extent to which ecosystems may be degraded before ecological function is impaired or beyond repair. As Simpson says, her community considers “how much you can give up to promote more life” (cited in Klein 2013; also Simpson 2011).

We ally ourselves with such strategies to produce abundance. For Tewolde Egziabher (2002), the tireless Ethiopian advocate for farmers’ rights and agricultural diversity, supporting conditions to create and sustain biological diversity involves refusing capitalist processes of enclosure over land, waters, and living things, including patents on life. We ally with Via Campesina (2008) and its more than 200,000 members throughout the globe in defending the “collective rights of peasant farmers to access land” from those who appropriate land “for profit.” Peasant farmers affiliated with Via Campesina fight relentlessly against the status quo, against the World Trade Organization and other trade agreements that privilege corporate actors, against the governments who facilitate land grabs, and against corporate enclosures. In so doing, they are creating institutions and alliances that go far beyond national borders, including the World Social Forum, farmer–farmer exchanges, and seed-saving networks.

Strategy 2: Acting Pluriversally

Recognizing entanglement is not enough to undo colonial formations such as Nature. Hence, we ally with others fostering the capacity to act in *pluriversal* instead of universal ways (Blaser, de la Cadena, and Escobar 2014). The universe is enacted through the ontological assumption of reality or nature as singular, with different cultures offering distinct conceptions of this reality (Blaser 2013). This approach equates ontology with mental maps or culture and leaves intact the assumption that differing perspectives on the world can be understood through and reduced to Eurocentric categories. Building on Indigenous thought as well as some science studies scholarship, Blaser (2009, 2013) frames ontology in terms of

practices and performances of *worlding*—of being, doing, and knowing; reality “is *done* and *enacted* rather than observed” (Mol 1999, 77). Worlding practices bring worlds into being; different stories enact different worlds that may be coemergent, partially connected, or in conflict. Blaser (2013, 552) proposes the *pluriverse* as a “heuristic proposition,” a commitment to enacting ontological multiplicity, to shift us away from continuously performing the universe. If different stories perform different yet interconnected worlds, then worlding practices can be evaluated in terms of their effects; some worldings might be wrong in the sense that “they enact worlds (edifices) in which or with which we do not want to live, or that do not let us live—or lets some live and not others” (Blaser, de la Cadena, and Escobar 2014).

Creating abundant futures, we believe, means supporting already existing worlding practices that enact worlds different from those produced by European imperialism and settler colonialism. We ally ourselves with Idle No More, a Canada-wide Indigenous movement sparked by federal efforts in 2012 to enact legislative changes that weaken Indigenous sovereignty and environmental regulations. Started by four women, the movement spread like wildfire, drawing national attention to ongoing Indigenous struggles, sparking, revitalizing, and supporting decolonizing efforts in a multitude of communities. Activists and authors Simpson (cited in Klein 2013) and Glen Coulthard (2013) articulate the movement’s role in supporting a “resurgence of Indigenous political thought” in relation to governance models and “Indigenous political-economic alternatives.”

We respond to Idle No More’s invitation “to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water” (Idle No More n.d.). Enacting abundance means different ways of building relationships across vast differences, best described as solidarity or collective movement in support of conditions that enable differently situated people and other-than-humans to realize abundance, to build a world of many worlds. In thinking about how to move collectively, we take inspiration from the concept of *walking with* put forth in the Zapatista movement’s Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona (Zapatista Army of National Liberation 2005). In this framing of solidarity, walking with implies engaging in activism wherever one lives in support of a common struggle against neoliberalism and for democracy, liberty, and justice. As such, solidarity supports autonomous forms of worlding.

Strategy 3: Recognizing Animal Autonomy

Recognizing multispecies entanglement is not a license to intensify human control over other-than-human life. Abundant futures include nonhuman animals, not as resources or banks of natural capital that service humans but as beings with their own familial, social, and ecological networks, their own lookouts, agendas, and needs. An abundant future is one in which other-than-humans have wild lives and live as “uncolonized others” (Plumwood 1993). We follow Cronon, likely the most widely cited troubler of wilderness, who actually argues for retaining the idea of wildness. As Cronon (1995, 89) writes, “Honoring the wild” is a matter of “learning to remember and acknowledge the autonomy of the other.” Whereas wilderness refers to an impossible pure Nature, *wildness* refers to the autonomy, otherness, and sentience of animals (Plumwood 1993; Collard 2014). By *autonomy* we mean the fullest expression of animal life, including capacity for movement, for social and familial association, and for work and play. These capacities have been profoundly diminished with the confinement, control, and managerialism that have come to characterize humans’ relationships with the wider world in humanist colonial and capitalist regimes. In particular, animals’ spatial and bodily enclosure (in public zoos and aquariums, laboratories, and factory farms) impedes their autonomy and abundance.

Of course, an autonomous life is never a discrete life. Whether enclosed or not, animals are always inescapably part of socionatural networks (as are we). So what is the difference between these networks? The wild one offers—within limits—openness, possibility, a degree of choice, and self-determination. The enclosed one is controlled, cramped, contained, and enclosed. But neither do wildness or animal autonomy mean no human intervention; in a world that has always been far too entangled to permit “stepping outside,” wildness and autonomy are relational. We are not advocating a return to conservation’s old misanthropy but an orientation in which wildness is understood relationally, not as the absence of humans but as interrelations within which animals have autonomy. The degree to which an animal is wild thus has little to do with its proximities to humans and everything to do with the conditions of living, such as spatial (can the animal come and go), subjective (can the animal express itself), energetic (can the animal work for itself), and social (can the animal form social networks). These are conditions of possibility, of potential, not forced states of being.

We ally ourselves with the few conservationists who make the well-being of individual animals a priority (Paquet and Darimont 2010) and with efforts such as the recent campaign by Zoocheck and other Toronto and international organizations that led to the transfer of three elephants from the Toronto Zoo to a wildlife sanctuary in California. Part of a wider movement to end elephant captivity, the release of these three elephants is a sign of growing recognition of the effects of captivity on such social creatures.

Orienting toward abundant futures requires walking with multiple forms of resistance to colonial and capitalist logics and practices of extraction and assimilation. Decolonization is our guide in this process. A profoundly unsettling process, decolonization “sets out to change the order of the world,” as Fanon (1963, 36) suggested fifty years ago. As the organizations, movements, and people discussed here show, unsettling is already taking place, pluriversally. Although never perfect, they are our best chance for abundant socio-ecological futures.

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Notes

1. We capitalize the word *Nature* to indicate the concept of pristine and untouched.
2. MacKinnon’s figure is metaphorical, not verified by scientific methods or empirical evidence. For an overview of scientific estimates of biodiversity loss, see Butchart et al. (2010).

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Correspondence: Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Concordia University, 1455 Ave de Maisonneuve, Montreal, QC H3G 1M8, Canada, e-mail: rosemary.collard@concordia.ca (Collard); School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700 STN CSC, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2, Canada, e-mail: jdempsey@uvic.ca (Dempsey); Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, 1984 West Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2, Canada, e-mail: juanita.sundberg@ubc.ca (Sundberg).