Primitive Accumulation and the Northern Territory Intervention

By

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This thesis is my own work containing, to the best of my knowledge and belief, no material published or written by another person except as referred to in the text.

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ABSTRACT

As Glen Coulthard notes in the widely read Red Skin, White Masks (2014, p. 8) further research on the intersections between settler colonialism and primitive accumulation in conversation with the critical thought and practice of Indigenous peoples is urgently needed. Reviewing the existing literature on primitive accumulation, this thesis identifies a 'dispossession camp' - a tendency characterised by arguments in favour of disaggregating dispossession and proletarianisation as constituent elements of primitive accumulation in settler colonies. Using a case study analysis of the Northern Territory Intervention, this thesis will examine this claim, and in doing so assess the suitability of primitive accumulation as a framework for understanding contemporary settler colonial dispossession. This thesis contributes to existing literature on the Northern Territory Intervention and the scholarly frameworks of settler colonial studies and primitive accumulation. It undertakes original analysis, drawing together the above literature with recent scholarship on proletarianisation and the global labour market to provide new insights on primitive accumulation in contemporary settler colonies.

Introduction

This thesis is premised upon an understanding of settler-colonialism as "a structure not an event" (Wolfe 2006, p. 388), in which the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal land is a fundamental feature. In this thesis I analyse a case that many theorists and activists agree to be the most prominent, and infamous, example of the dispossession of Aboriginal land in the 21st Century—The Northern Territory Intervention.[1] Commonly referred to as 'the Intervention,' this series of policies was launched by the Howard government in 2007 and has continued until the present under different forms, deeply affecting the lives of Indigenous people living on Aboriginal Land across the Northern Territory ('NT') in Australia.[2] Though the effects of the Intervention have been broad, this thesis will focus on theoretical frameworks used in the scholarly literature to understand the ways that the

[1] The Northern Territory Emergency Response ('NTER') was a set of five policies launched in July 2007 by the Commonwealth Government of Australia, then led by the Liberal Party (The Northern Territory Emergency Response Act 2007). Five years later, the Labour Government launched the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act (2012) ('Stronger Futures'), which continued many of the same policies that had been launched in the NTER for a further ten years until 2022. I will refer to these policies collectively as 'the Intervention,' following the widely held understanding in the critical literature that these policies are continuous (Amnesty International 2011; Gibson 2012; Gray 2015; Jumbunna 2012). The details of these policies will be outlined in the case study.

[2] Throughout this thesis I use the terms Aboriginal, Indigenous and First Nations interchangeably, while recognising the problems inherent in each of these terms, and the preference of some for other terms (Coulthard 2014, p. 181).

Intervention has caused the dispossession of Aboriginal people living in 'homelands,' and the consequent shifts in relation to country and the state.

The Intervention has been broadly criticised as a form of dispossession or a 'land grab' by Indigenous people targeted by it, activists and academics—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Gibson 2012; Shaw 2010, p. 60). The conceptual framework of settler colonialism has been central to the critiques of the Intervention as a land grab, or as dispossession of land, among the scholarly literature (Anthony 2018; Watson 2009). Some theorists have attempted to integrate the framework of settler colonialism with a critique of capitalism, in order to understand the material and economic aspects of land dispossession in the Intervention (Grewcock 2018; Howlett & Lawrence 2019; Lloyd & Wolfe 2015). Most theorists agree that the most relevant Marxist conceptual framework is primitive accumulation, which is "where Marx most thoroughly links the totalizing power of capital with that of colonialism" (Coulthard 2014, p. 7). While there has been significant confusion in regard to the meaning of primitive accumulation (Bin 2018; Ince 2014; Nichols 2015), I initially define it as the process that separates people from direct access to the means of subsistence (dispossession) and makes them dependent on selling their labour power to survive (proletarianisation) (Coulthard 2014, pp. 7-8; Marx 1976, pp. 873-940), however this definition will be the subject of revision based on the findings of the case study. My overall aim in this thesis is to extend upon this area of knowledge, and assess whether the conceptual framework of primitive accumulation is relevant for the analysis of settler-colonial dispossession in the NT Intervention.

FRAMEWORKS

There is a vast critical literature on primitive accumulation which often discusses the process in relation to colonialism, yet there is no clear consensus on the precise nature of the relation between primitive accumulation and settler colonialism (Coulthard 2014, pp 7-15; Ince 2014; Nichols 2015). A growing amount of literature on primitive accumulation regards it as a fundamental and ongoing process within capitalism (summarised by Bin 2018) and similarly, most definitions of settler colonialism highlight the fundamental and ongoing nature of the dispossession of Indigenous land (Veracini 2010; Wolfe 2006). However, only recently have there been efforts to develop a detailed analysis of the specific relationship between these two frameworks (see Brown 2014; Coulthard 2014; Nichols 2015; Piterberg & Veracini 2015; See 2016).

Further, the character of primitive accumulation itself remains contested, particularly in settler colonial contexts (Bin 2018; Ince, 2014; Hall 2013; Nichols 2015). In *Capital*, Marx uses the concept of 'so called primitive accumulation' to describe the two necessary conditions for capitalism to exist: capital and labour. The majority of the literature thus addresses the two component processes of dispossession and proletarianisation. While orthodox Marxists have focused on proletarianisation, theorists from within the settler colonial studies tradition emphasise that proletarianisation is a secondary consideration when primitive accumulation takes place in settler colonies, as the colony primarily imports its labour force via migration (e.g. Wolfe 2001; see also Coulthard 2014, pp. 10-11). I

group several relevant theorists as the ‘dispossession camp’ as they prioritise the analysis of dispossession, arguing that the two component processes of dispossession and proletarianisation must be separated or ‘disaggregated’ (Ciccariello-Maher 2016, p. 65; Nichols 2016, p. 25). While these proposed revisions are important, there is a lack of detail on how this separation would be carried out, and there are no empirical assessments of this revised framework of primitive accumulation in contemporary case studies.

Given these gaps in the current debate, this thesis will undertake a case study analysis to investigate the role of dispossession and proletarianisation in the NT Intervention. Responding to the dispossession camp, the overall thesis asks: is the separation of dispossession and proletarianisation necessary to make primitive accumulation relevant for understanding contemporary Indigenous land dispossession by the state in the NT Intervention? The answer will contribute to the much needed revision of primitive accumulation based on an empirical test of the conceptual framework against a contemporary case study, assessing whether primitive accumulation is occurring, and if so, the nature of dispossession and proletarianisation in the case study. This aims to both verify that primitive accumulation is a useful framework, and to identify revision in the framework where necessary, in order to produce a more suitable framework of primitive accumulation that adequately links dispossession to the relation of capital accumulation, while giving the framework additional capacity to describe how the processes of dispossession affect the colonial relation. This will contribute to the wider literature on primitive accumulation and settler colonial studies, as part of the

broader project of reworking Marxist frameworks for the settler colonial context (Coulthard 2014, pp. 6-15). This thesis understands the state and capital as mutually interdependent systems, rather than as separate and distinct actors (Copley & Moraitis 2020). Both Coulthard (2014, p. 13) and Ciccariello-Maher (2016, p. 65) define the colonial relation as the relation between Indigenous people and the state, which is the definition I use in this thesis – however I will come back to this important relation in the conclusion.

METHODS

As Toshkov (2016, p. 291) comments, single case studies are particularly well suited to investigate an "imagined explanatory logic or the analytical story that theoretically is supposed to connect" relevant variables. The case study will identify key themes and overall tendencies in the actions of the Commonwealth government during the Intervention. This analysis will serve as "an instrumental case study", in the sense of being used to test and refine theory (Sarandakos 2012, p. 222). Unlike "intrinsic" case study analysis, which takes the case study itself as the main interest, going "beyond the case" (Stake 2006, p. 26) in the proposed way provides the rationale of the thesis - to shine a light on certain points without addressing the entire scope of the Intervention. This selection of key themes within the Intervention allows the analysis to "concentrate on relationships identified in our research question" (Stake 1995, p. 77). Consequently, in my analysis of the Intervention I focus only on actions by the state that are relevant to *the separation of Indigenous people from direct access to the means of subsistence*. I use an

"explanation-building" approach (Sarantakos 2016, p. 225) to the analysis of the case study in Chapter Three, where I compare the patterns and logics of the state that I identify in the case study with the conceptual framework that I develop in Chapter One. This method links the tendencies identified in the case study to a revised understanding of proletarianisation. As I am not Aboriginal my focus of this study is on the state's actions, rather than representing Indigenous people's experience. I also do not take Indigenous people themselves as an object of research, which replicates settler-colonial ways of knowing (Smith 2013). My intention is to improve the capacity of the conceptual framework of primitive accumulation, so that it can be used more effectively in future research.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One presents a critical overview of the concept of primitive accumulation with a view to clarifying the precise gap in the literature and the demands upon the case study analysis. It identifies the issues for theoretical analysis and the criteria for assessing whether it is necessary to separate the concepts of dispossession and proletarianisation for primitive accumulation to be relevant to contemporary settler colonial critiques.

In Chapter Two I present a brief overview of the history and political economy of the homelands in the NT. I then introduce the Intervention, and present the empirical research on the state's actions organised by central themes, which fall under two larger, interconnected areas: actions that have affected the economy of the homelands, and actions that have affected individual homelanders. I then

identify two overall tendencies in the state's action: separating dispossession from the means of subsistence; and increased dependency on the state. This is supported by consideration of the long term shifts in the state-homeland relation through comparison with the earlier "self-determination period" (Kerins 2009 p. 2). Finally, discussion of whether these two tendencies and broader shifts during the Intervention may be described as dispossession and/or proletarianisation leads the two major theoretical findings: the tendency towards separation of homelanders from direct access to the means of production; and an increase in the mediation of the state.

Based on the case study, in Chapter Three I return to the framework of primitive accumulation explained in Chapter One, to argue, contrary to the disaggregation thesis proposed by the dispossession camp and in favour of a reconceptualisation of proletarianisation within primitive accumulation. The conclusion of the thesis is that a revised understanding of primitive accumulation through redefinition of the operative concept of proletarianisation better serves the criteria motivating the dispossession camp's position.

Chapter One: Existing Literature

Primitive accumulation is a term now widely used to describe various forms of dispossession, yet the term remains largely misunderstood (Bin 2018; Ince 2014; Nichols 2015). In this chapter I begin with a deeper exploration of the concept and its place within Marx's broader critique of political economy. Following this explanation of Marx's use of the concept, I undertake a literature review of the term's subsequent development, focusing on theorists who use it in relation to land dispossession and settler colonialism. I then narrow in on several theorists whose debates on primitive accumulation focus on the role of dispossession and proletarianisation within settler colonial contexts. I group these theorists as the 'dispossession camp', as they argue that unlike the focus on proletarianisation in orthodox Marxism, analyses of colonialism that use the concept of primitive accumulation must focus on dispossession. This discussion clarifies questions for further analysis of primitive accumulation in the contemporary context of the NT homelands.

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION IN MARX

Throughout *Capital* (Volume One, hereafter 'Capital'), Marx (1976) focused on understanding how the basic elements of the capitalist system function (Heinrich 2004, p. 31). At the heart of the capitalist production process workers, who Marx

also refers to as 'labour,' generate surplus value: some of which is returned to the workers in the form of wages, while the rest is taken by capitalists as profit, some of which is then reinvested back into the core production process (Heinrich 2004, pp. 99-131). This cycle is the basic process of capital accumulation (Marx 1976, pp. 711-724). For this core cycle to be possible there must be two essential conditions: the existence of capital on the one hand, ready to be invested in the production process, and 'free' proletarians on the other hand who are in a situation where they must try to exchange their labour for a wage (Marx 1976, p. 874). Without both capital and labour pre-existing as such and able to come together in the production process, the core process of capital accumulation cannot take place: these are the conditions of possibility for capital accumulation (Marx 1976, pp. 874-876; 933).

In the final part of *Capital* Marx (1976, pp. 873-941) outlined how capital and labour had come to exist as such, providing a historical account of 'so-called primitive accumulation.'[3] Primitive accumulation is one of the terms used in classical political economy to describe the process in which these conditions of possibility for capital accumulation are produced—the creation of proletarians and capital (Marx 1976, pp. 873-875). Classical political economists had portrayed this

[3] The word 'primitive' clearly has many drawbacks as pointed out by Coulthard (2004, p. 186) however since it has now become so widespread and recognisable I will continue to use the term throughout this thesis, with my revision focusing on the *conceptual* meaning of the process described by the term in chapter three, rather than a revision of the terminology.

historical process as natural and benign, whereas Marx described a process of violent separation of peasants from their land, thus being put into a situation where they were forced to offer their labour in return for a wage in order to survive. Marx's account of primitive accumulation was largely a critique of the contemporary accounts of the origins of capitalism, rather than developing a general 'theory' of primitive accumulation that would be applicable to the transition to capitalism in other contexts—indeed, Marx is explicit that his treatment of primitive accumulation is not intended to apply to anywhere outside Britain.[4]

However, the final chapter of *Capital* does discuss primitive accumulation in Australia (pp. 931-940).[5] This chapter describes Edward Wakefield's theory of systematic colonisation, which Marx describes as an intentional project of primitive accumulation with the explicit aim of separating people from the land to create a class of waged labourers. Although we might anticipate this providing a useful framework for developing an account of settler colonial dispossession, Marx's analysis focuses exclusively on the dispossession of settlers by the state, rather than any form of dispossession of Indigenous people. The central point of the chapter is

[4] See *Capital* (p. 876). Marx emphasises this in later letters—as Coulthard (2014, p. 186) summarises: "the chapter on primitive accumulation" should not be read as a "historico-philosophical theory of the general course imposed on all peoples" but rather as a historical examination of the "path by which, in Western Europe, the capitalist economic order emerged from the womb of the feudal economic order" .

[5] When Marx refers to "true colonies, i.e. virgin soil colonized by free immigrants" (1967, p. 931) he means settler colonies—especially anglophone ones like the US and Australia—using the common term for these in the 19th Century (Piterberg & Veracini & 2015).

that “capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things” (p. 932). While this chapter is about *events* in the Swan River settler colony, its *purpose* is to understand the capital-labour relation in Europe. Marx is explicit about this in a well-known quote:

> However, we are not concerned here with the condition of the colonies. The only thing that interests us is the secret discovered in the New World by the political economy of the Old World, and loudly proclaimed by it: that the capitalist mode of production and accumulation, and therefore capitalist private property as well, have for their fundamental condition the annihilation of that private property which rests on the labour of the individual himself; in other words, the expropriation of the worker (1967, p. 940).

The emphasis here is unambiguously on the dispossession of direct producers as the fundamental condition for capitalism to exist. Although Marx does criticise the violence of colonialism throughout his discussion of primitive accumulation, the analysis focuses only on the capital relation rather than the colonial relation, and there is no deep engagement with settler colonialism as a specific form of colonialism. Despite these limitations of its usage in Marx’s work, the concept of primitive accumulation has inspired extensive scholarly engagement among theorists of settler colonialism. The following section will review subsequent developments in the term’s history.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the sustained interest in primitive accumulation, the concept is notoriously hard to define, and several scholars have noted how complex the terrain has become (Bin, 2018; Ince, 2014; Hall, 2012; Nichols, 2015). At the broadest level there are two tendencies in the interpretation of primitive accumulation: those who follow Vladimir Lenin's interpretation in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899) which understands primitive accumulation as a process which takes place only during the development of capitalism; and those that follow Rosa Luxembourg's interpretation in *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913), who see it as a continuous process (e.g. Bonefeld, 2011; De Angelis, 2004; Nichols, 2015; Veracini 2015). De Angelis (2000, p. 5) has clarified these tendencies as the "historical" and the "inherent-continuous" positions, respectively. While the mainstream of Marxist analysis had traditionally followed Lenin, throughout the last two decades a growing number of theorists have viewed primitive accumulation as a process that is either always present in capitalism, or that continuously reappears during crises (Bin 2018; Nichols 2015), and the inherent-continuous position is now dominant in Anglophone debates (Bin 2018).

While some early research has discussed 'settler capitalism' in the Australian context (Denoon 1983; McMichael 1984), this analysis was limited to the conditions giving rise to the development of capitalism in Australia and does not address the contemporary period. There are no detailed applications of the framework of primitive accumulation to cases of land dispossession or to analyses

of settler colonialism in Australia, despite the fact that two of the most prominent scholars in settler colonial studies—Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini—have been based in Australia. The contemporary analyses of primitive accumulation that have been undertaken by these scholars (Lloyd & Wolfe 2015; Piterberg & Veracini 2015; Veracini 2019) have focused on settler colonialism in general, rather than on Australia specifically. Piterberg and Veracini (2015) elaborate upon the historical connection between settler colonialism and primitive accumulation found in Wakefield and Marx, which was influenced by events in Western Australia—however this analysis does not discuss the nature of the relationship between primitive accumulation and settler colonialism in the contemporary era.

Attempts to apply accounts of primitive accumulation and settler colonialism to contemporary case studies have so far been limited to North America (Brown, 2014; Coulthard, 2014). Nicholas Brown (2014) raises the question of whether these terms describe the same process, and introduces the idea of 'settler accumulation,' but does not elaborate on the explanatory power of the concept in articulating the intersections of primitive accumulation and settler colonialism. Coulthard (2014, pp 6-15) offers some initial revisions to the concept to bring it into conversation with the settler colonial framework, yet while he gestures towards the applicability of his critique to other liberal settler colonies, his own treatment of primitive accumulation is, like Brown's, limited to North America.

There is a lack of detailed and applied research on the nature of primitive accumulation in contemporary Australia, and on the specific relationship between

the Intervention, primitive accumulation, and settler colonialism in the Australian context. Despite frequent references to Coulthard, discussions of primitive accumulation in relation to contemporary land dispossessions in Australia, particularly in connection to the Intervention, generally use primitive accumulation in a cursory way (Anthony, 2018; Grewcock, 2018; Howlett & Lawrence 2019). The use of the term is presented as synonymous with standard conceptions of dispossession, and it is not related to the functioning of capitalism—a common elision that is critiqued by multiple scholars, who maintain that primitive accumulation is different from both standard dispossession and capitalist accumulation proper (Bin 2018; Coulthard 2014; Ince 2014; Zarembka 2002). Despite their lack of focus on Australia, the dispossession camp offer the most insightful critiques of primitive accumulation in the settler colonial context.

COULTHARD AND DISPOSSESSION CAMP

Coulthard (2014, pp. 6-15) emphasises that a materialist analysis of colonialism will have to significantly rework the theory of primitive accumulation if it is to be useful for understanding dispossession experienced by Indigenous people. Although primitive accumulation consists of the relation between dispossession and proletarianisation, Coulthard (p. 10) emphasises that "the weight given to these constituent elements, however, is by no means equal in Marx." In Coulthard's view Marx focuses mostly on the latter since that has been the dominant experience of the European worker, which "was obviously Marx's primary concern, and it has subsequently remained the dominant concern of the Marxist tradition as a whole"

(2014, p. 11). In response to this Coulthard (p. 10) advocates for "contextually shifting our investigation from an emphasis on the capital relation to the colonial relation" to address the Eurocentrism of Marx's theory of primitive accumulation at its source. Key to this contextual shift is an increased focus on dispossession rather than proletarianisation when analysing primitive accumulation in settler colonial contexts:

> The contextual shift advocated here, by contrast, takes as its analytical frame the subject position of the colonized vis-a-vis the effects of colonial dispossession, rather than from the primary position of "the waged male proletariat [in] the process of commodity production" (2014, p. 11).

This shift in focus towards a critique of *colonial* dispossession, continues Coulthard, is the necessary overall shift that enables multiple problems with primitive accumulation to be corrected (2014, p. 11). In this thesis I assess the problem that is yet to receive widespread attention following Coulthard's call for further analysis in this area – the overemphasis of Marx and most Marxists on proletarianisation, at the expense of dispossession. George Ciccariello-Maher and Robert Nichols have directly responded to Coulthard's discussion of this problem, offering further detail on how this shift to dispossession might be carried out.

Ciccariello-Maher responds to *Red Skin, White Masks* by clarifying a distinction that is only implicit within Coulthard's argument: "Marx both implicitly universalises the European experience by binding the constituent elements of primitive accumulation together into a single unit, and explicitly locates this process

as a necessary and even beneficial stage in a broader dialectical progression" (2016, p. 65). Ciccariello-Maher emphasises that the central problem with primitive accumulation is Marx's failure to distinguish dispossession from the process that he "binds too tightly to it: proletarianisation, or the forcible creation of a new labouring class" (p. 64). The essential contribution of Coulthard's revision of primitive accumulation, for Ciccariello-Maher, is "cleaving it in two and liberating dispossession as an analytic process independent of proletarianisation" (p. 65). This makes explicit the complete separation of the two component processes – which is ambiguous in Coulthard (2014, pp. 6-15). Ciccariello-Maher also highlights the lineage of proletarianisation in the workers movement: "Marx's binding of dispossession to proletarianisation was part and parcel of the political project – by Marx but especially by those later working under his name – of centring wage-labour as a process and wage-workers as a revolutionary subject" (p. 65). Yet as with Coulthard, Ciccariello-Maher responds to this by rejecting the role of proletarianisation outright, without consideration of possible revisions to the concept.

In a similar manner, Nichols (2016, p. 25) agrees with Coulthard that Marx assumed a causal, necessary relationship between dispossession and proletarianisation, and that understanding the former, even in Britain, was instrumental to the more important task of understanding the latter, arguing that the 'aggregation' of these component elements within the concept of primitive accumulation has made them appear natural and inseparable. Marxists have generally retained this original theoretical aggregation of these elements, according to Nichols, which is the

ultimate source of the persistent theoretical difficulties outlined in much of the literature (2016, p. 22). He suggests 'disaggregating' dispossession and proletarianisation, and presents a complex revision of dispossession through a theoretical linkage of land and labour, which was originally a core part of Marx's discussion of primitive accumulation, to help to resolve these conceptual difficulties at the source.[6] Despite this useful revision of dispossession, as with the above theorists Nichols does not consider revisions to the concept of proletarianisation, despite his reworking of the concept of labour in Marx's work.

Coulthard, Ciccariello-Maher and Nichols represent a position on primitive accumulation which I call the 'dispossession camp'. Though differing on some details, their shared position insists that primitive accumulation can be a useful framework for understanding settler colonialism if the analytic focus shifts from waged labour towards the *dispossession of land*, separating this out as a process to be theorised independently from proletarianisation. They understand proletarianisation to be the creation of a waged labour force, which they acknowledge stems from the analysis of the organised workers' movement in particular, though with at least some grounding in *Capital*. Coulthard and Nichols engage in revisions of dispossession, reworking the concept in order to make

[6] As part of this proposal Nichols revises the concept of dispossession throughout the same article in order to rework primitive accumulation into a more appropriate conceptual tool for the analysis of colonialism. This is another reason why I have chosen to focus on the revision of proletarianisation specifically, as there is a lack of revisionist critique of this concept as part of primitive accumulation when analysing colonial contexts.

primitive accumulation more suitable for understanding the colonial relation within contemporary settler colonies – yet none consider a possible revision of the nature of the concept of proletarianisation itself. These tendencies reflect similar tendencies throughout the broader literature on primitive accumulation and settler colonialism, with a focus on dispossession and a distinctive lack consideration of the possibility of revisions of proletarianisation *as a component process of primitive accumulation in the settler colonial context.*

The above mentioned critique that Bin and Ince make of uses of primitive accumulation may also apply to the dispossession camp. When we take contemporary cases of dispossession that are similar to the historical example of primitive accumulation, but which do not produce both proletarians and capital, it follows that it may not be appropriate to describe these as primitive accumulation, since this does not expand both essential parts of the capital relation. The separation of dispossession and proletarianisation suggested by the dispossession camp is at risk of disconnecting the concept of primitive accumulation from Marx's intended usage, which leaves open the question of why use this specific term rather than another, for example dispossession in a more generic sense (Bin 2018; Ince 2014). The concept of primitive accumulation would not be useful if it were merely reduced to a synonym for dispossession. If people are separated from the means of production by a colonial state, then this also implies some form of shift in the colonial relation itself. The problem with emphasizing dispossession *at the expense of* an analysis of the capital relation, is that this does not inform us about the nature of the conditions to which Indigenous communities are subsequently exposed *as a*

consequence of that dispossession. Rather than a framework limited to properly naming the state's dispossession of Indigenous people, we need conceptual tools capable of analyzing the transformations in the colonial relation which result from dispossession, and which have the capacity to link the forms of dispossession specific to primitive accumulation with the shifts in how the Indigenous people who are dispossessed of their land then access what they need to survive, including consequent shifts in their relation to the state.

Given this extensive discussion of the existing literature, the case study will therefore assess whether dispossession in the form suitable for primitive accumulation is occurring in the Intervention, in order to answer the main part of the research question—however a key second part will be to assess changes in how those who are the object of dispossession access what they need to survive – whether this is through waged labour, or through other means – and the consequent changes in the colonial relation. An adequately detailed framework for the materialist understanding of the latter is, after all, the central reason why Coulthard suggests the shift of focus to dispossession.

Throughout this chapter I have outlined the development of the concept of primitive accumulation and its application to processes of land dispossession in settler colonies. The understanding of primitive accumulation in *Capital* is as the process which creates the two fundamental preconditions necessary for capitalism—capital and labour—which most theorists in the contemporary literature identify with the processes of dispossession and proletarianisation. While theorists have focused on

primitive accumulation at length, there remains a lack in applications of the framework in a way that distinguishes it from simple dispossession, and link it to the functioning of capitalism. There is also a gap in the empirical testing of this framework against contemporary case studies in settler colonies. The dispossession camp, as I have grouped them, provide a critical appraisal of primitive accumulation with the intention of repurposing the concept for contemporary critique of settler colonialism. Their most relevant revisions argue for the separation of the two component processes of primitive accumulation and the analytical focus to move to dispossession. Coulthard, Nichols and Bin offer revisions for the concept of dispossession, however there are no revisions considered for the nature of proletarianisation – rather they continue with the understanding of proletarianisation derived from the workers movement without questioning whether other understandings may be possible or more appropriate. These revisions lack detail on the nature and role of proletarianisation within primitive accumulation, how they will resolve the conceptual tensions outlined by Bin and Ince and distinguish primitive accumulation as a conceptual framework different to other forms of dispossession, and are yet to be tested against an empirical case study in contemporary Australian context. If primitive accumulation is to be useful for settler colonial theory, then these questions and tensions at the cutting edge of the literature must be empirically tested against a contemporary case study. This thesis provides an initial contribution to how this might be carried out.

Chapter Two: Case Study

Turning to the NT Intervention, this chapter looks in-depth at the concrete changes by the Commonwealth Government that led to a shift in the colonial relation throughout the Intervention period, winding back the gains won during the previous self-determination period. Part One introduces the situation of the homelands and the Northern Territory more broadly.[7] The first section gives a brief introduction to the self-determination era - the period in which land rights and homelands were somewhat supported by the settler state and gained traction across Northern Australia, roughly from 1976 to 2006. I then situate this within the political economy of the homelands and the 'hybrid economy.' Part Two consists of a concise presentation of the key themes focusing on the material techniques the state enacted during the Intervention that relate to whether dispossession has occurred. I first look at Commonwealth policies during the Intervention that relate to homelands and the redirection of funding and services to 'hub towns.' I argue when coupled with extra-economic techniques that make it more difficult to live on homelands, these policies create conditions that separate homelanders from direct access to the means of subsistence—the land. I identify two central strategies: undercutting the economic viability of homelands as a whole; and the coercive

[7] The terms 'homelands' and 'outstations' can be used interchangeably to define 'small decentralised communities of close kin, established by the movement of Aboriginal Peoples to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them'(Amnesty International 2011, p. 11; Blanchard Report 1987, p. xvi).

centralisation of individual homelanders through both economic and extra-economic measures that make more difficult conditions for living on homelands and access the means of subsistence. In Part Three I briefly identify overall shifts in how homelanders gain access to what they need to survive. I focus on the conditions in which people are made reliant on the state for their means of subsistence, focusing on changes over the last two decades in rates of employment, income, and welfare for Indigenous people living in remote parts of the Northern Territory. I finish with an analysis that summarises the effects of the material techniques and strategies that have been identified, and relates them back to the concepts of dispossession, proletarianisation, and the relation between the two concepts.

Part One – The Self-Determination Period and the Political Economy of Homelands

THE LAND RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOMELANDS

Prior to the 1960s the vast majority of pastoral stations in the NT were reliant on Aboriginal people's labour to manage cattle and for domestic labour (Anthony 2018, p. 256; Wolfe 1994, p. 111). This changed in the 1960s when the struggle of First Nations pastoral workers, culminating in the Gurindji strike and the Wave Hill

walk off, forced the pastoralism industry to pay Aboriginal pastoral labourers equal wages to white workers (Amnesty International 2011, p. 12, 42; Balint, Evans and McMillan 2014, p. 207). In response, the pastoral industry laid off tens of thousands of Aboriginal people throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, many of whom had no choice but to migrate to larger communities and towns to look for work (Amnesty 2011, p. 12). The homelands movement began during the 1960s as a response to the problems encountered in this migration to urban centres, as well as a rejection of assimilationist missions supported by the federal government since the 1930s (Altman 2017, p. 31; Amnesty 2011, p. 42).

These beginnings of the homelands movement coincided with the more national and well known lands rights movement (Foley & Anderson 2017). While First Nations people have always resisted colonisation, the militant struggle for land rights across the country in Australia was most powerful in the 1960s and 70s (Foley & Anderson 2017). This activism contributed to the Australian federal government passing the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (Cwlth*) *1976* ('ALRA'). All ALRA land is held under inalienable communal title, meaning that it cannot be sold or divided into individual lots (Marks 2014). The legislation also includes an important provision, in which resource extraction companies and the state must gain consent from the Traditional Owners to explore for minerals (ALRA, s. 19; also see Terril and Boutelier 2019, pp. 40-41). These measures afford First Nations people a basis of self-determination, and the highest degree of control over land under the existing Australian legal system (Altman, Linkhorn & Clarke

2005, p. 1). Today, almost 50% of all land in the Northern Territory is held by Aboriginal people under the ALRA (Altman et al., 2007, p. 6; Marks 2014, p. 1).

Once ALRA had been won in 1967, the homelands movement then became a larger force (Amnesty 2011, p. 12; Kerins 2009, p. 3). While the dominant pattern of occupation of ALRA land is firstly larger communities such as Maningrida or Yuendumu, which are themselves often former missions from the 1930s-60s (Marks 2014, pp. 46-49). Homelands represent a significant form of occupation of land in the NT as a whole, and are the main form of occupation of the vast majority of ALRA land in terms of area. By 2006, just prior to the Intervention, there were 547 homelands in the Northern Territory, with an estimated total population of 10,342, at an average of 19 people per community, almost all in very remote areas (Altman 2006, p. 3). For a visual representation, see figure 1, below.

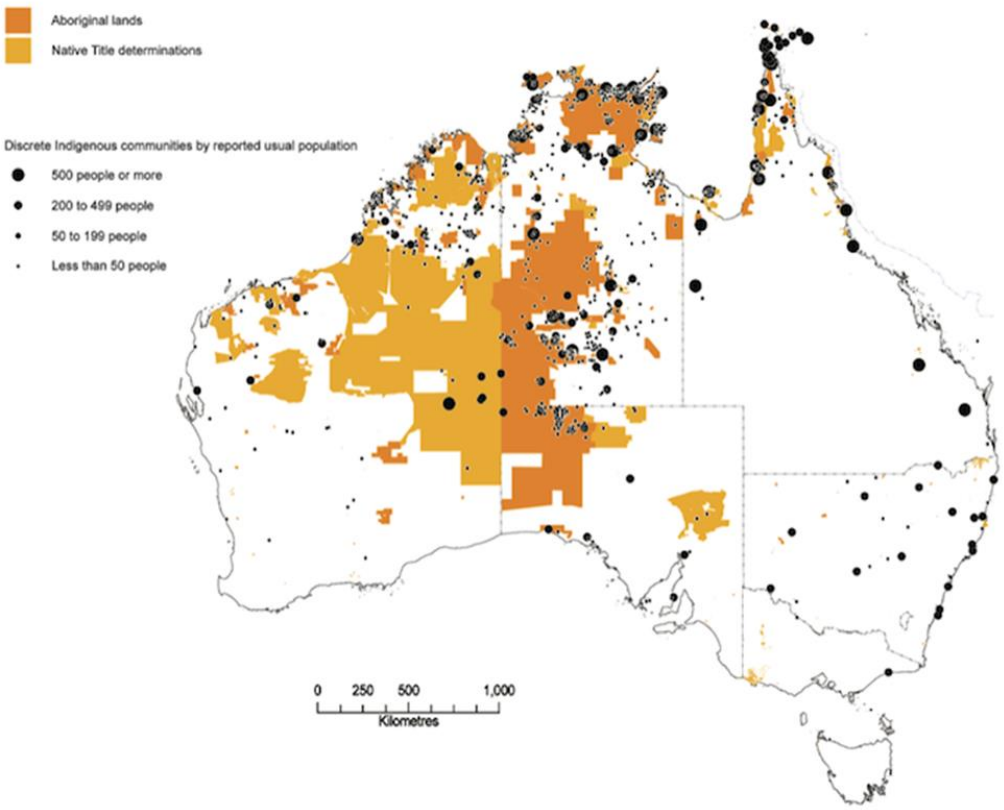

Figure 1 – Map of Aboriginal lands and Native Title determinations. Source: Creative Spirits 2020.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HOMELANDS

ALRA and the homelands movement enabled many Aboriginal people in the NT to retain high levels of connection to country, including the knowledge systems that would allow them to continue to access food and medicine from the land (Altman 2017, p. 31; Senior et al. 2018). The 'hybrid economy' is a model developed by Jon Altman (2001, pp. 4-6) which expands on the traditional economic model that focuses on the state and the market: the model includes three spheres: the state, the market, and the customary economy. This model was developed to describe the

significant role that non-market and non-state sources of subsistence – which comprise the customary economy – play in remote Indigenous homelands in the Northern Territory (Altman 2001). The customary economy describes the fact that most homelanders gain at least some means of subsistence from outside the wage – most commonly meat, medicine, building materials, other foods, in addition to spiritual and social connection and dreaming (Altman 2001). This model emphasises that all three aspects are mutually interdependent, and often support the others to grow. Given that there are few private options for economic development in remote areas of Australia, both the state and the customary economy play a larger role than in mainstream Australian regions (Altman 2017a). The role of the state has increased steadily since the 1960s, especially with the introduction of the Community Development Employment Projects ('CDEP') and Community Housing and Infrastructure Program ('CHIP') programs by the Commonwealth government in the 1980s (Altman 2017, p. 32; Amnesty 2011, p. 43).

The hybrid economy model emphasises that during the "self-determination era" state-derived resources such as CDEP were largely managed by Indigenous organisations, and allowed a relatively high degree of autonomy for CDEP participants and providers (Altman 2001). CDEP has been argued to have functioned in many ways as a universal basic income, that is, a means of divorcing access to a wage from a requirement for formal waged employment (Altman 2016). CDEP and CHIP were the most significant Commonwealth policies that enabled homelands communities to live on their country and maintain the ability to engage in the customary economy, therefore having some access to food without relying

on the market (Jordan 2016). The recent collection *Experiments in Self-Determination* (2018) describes the many ways in which homelanders retained self-determination over the nature of their relationship to country, using state-derived resources to build the economic structure of homelands with the aim of further material and social autonomy. State resources during the self-determination period constituted a *partial mediation* between homelanders and the means of subsistence, which primarily functioned as a source of material empowerment that enabled homelands communities to focus on doing what they wanted to do, and building forms of life and modes of production that were not mediated by the wage, and were not separated from the land (Altman 2017a, p. 31; Senior et al. 2018). This context is important to understand the overall changes that have taken place during the neo-assimilation period.

Part Two – The Intervention

In what follows I draw selectively from the vast academic literature on the Intervention which covers Australian Bureau of Statistics ('ABS') surveys, analysis of government publications and ethnological and anecdotal data, to identify key themes which are organised into two sections – the first section focuses on the economic viability of the homelands in a broad sense, outlining the major cuts to funding and services for homelands, and the rearrangement of fiscal and service responsibilities that have taken place in the Intervention period – I outline the key changes affecting employment and welfare, housing, and education. The second section focuses on disciplinary techniques used by the state that affect individual

homelanders, focusing on the new Community Development Programme ('CDP') program, Compulsory Income Management, increased levels of policing., incarceration, child removals, and forced evictions of homelanders. The key themes are interdependent, and must be understood within the wider context of the shift from the self-determination period to the Intervention period, a shift characterised by hostility of the state to homelanders and a paternalistic approach to Indigenous people in general. In the third section I outline the major effects of these changes on how homelanders access what they need to survive, focusing on changes to income, employment, and welfare, which demonstrate a shift in the colonial relation.

OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVENTION

During the past three decades, the position of the Federal government to homelands and land rights has fundamentally shifted, from one formally supportive of self-determination towards one of assimilation and dispossession (Gibson 2012, p. 66, 98 – see interviews throughout for similar sentiments). This can be seen historically as a conservative reaction to the gains of the Native Title decision (e.g. Anderson 2016; Dodson & McCarthy 2006), as well as the larger neoliberal turn during the 1980s and 1990s (Lloyd & Wolfe 2015). The Howard Administration, in Commonwealth office from 1996 – 2007, was hostile to the project of land rights and Aboriginal self-determination from the outset (Gibson 2012; Anderson 2016,

pp. 35-36). This reflected the growing momentum of a broader conservative turn against remote Aboriginal communities (Jumbunna 2012).

In 2007 the Little Children Are Sacred report was released, commissioned by the NT government. Prime Minister John Howard and the minister for Indigenous affairs Mal Brough used the authority of this report to falsely assert the existence of widespread child abuse and organised paedophile rings throughout remote NT Indigenous communities (Gibson 2012, p. 61).[8] The Howard government responded to the Little Children Are Sacred report and associated media attention with the NT Intervention (Marks 2014; Gray 2015; Jumbunna 2012).[9] With the expiry of the original NTER policies in 2012 the majority of the Intervention policies were continued under Labour through the Stronger Futures Act for a further ten years until 2022 (Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2013). Leading up to the launch of Stronger Futures there were detailed reports from the government that outlined widespread criticisms and major problems with the NTER policies - yet despite this Stronger Futures retained all of the key policies of the NTER in essence, and is almost universally described as a continuation of the Intervention (for some perspectives on this from Indigenous people targeted by Stronger Futures see Gibson 2012, pp. 105-106). The Closing the Gap policy

[8] Chris Graham has demonstrated at length the fabrication of these claims (e.g. 2015 'Bad aunty: seven years on, how ABC lateline sparked the racist NT intervention.').

[9] For detailed critiques of the initial NTER legislation see Jumbunna (2012).

framework introduced by the Rudd government in 2009 replaced the Intervention as the primary national policy framework for Indigenous affairs, and remained the main policy framework governing the relation between the state and Indigenous people from 2009 until the expiry of most of the Closing the Gap targets in 2018 (Marks 2014, p. 44; Council of Australian Governments' ('COAG') 2009 *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* ('NIRA').

FUNDING FOR HOMELANDS

This section focuses on the redirection of key Commonwealth funding from homelands to 'hub towns' through various government mechanisms throughout the Intervention. Although the Intervention's most high profile policies focused on larger towns and Indigenous people across the NT as a whole. (Baehr and Schmidt-Haberkamp 2017, pp. 13-87; Gray 2015), a number of policies affected homelands in the NT specifically (for an overview see Marks 2014, pp. 48-55; various others). Chief amongst these were the abolition of CDEP, the introduction of Compulsory Income Management, and the redirection of funding for housing to hub towns, which form the three key themes I focus on in this section (Marks 2014, pp. 48-55).

The key themes occurred within the wider context of government focus on the perceived economic viability of Indigenous communities—based on government assessments. The government made it explicit that homelands would no longer be funded, unless they happened to be among the few that are involved with a major industry, particularly with mining (Brough 2007, 'Blueprint for Action'). In its review of the Intervention in 2012 the NTER Task Force "strongly recommends"

the Government continues limiting funding for the following only to "viable" communities (Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce 2008, p. 15). Funding for new housing has been removed from Commonwealth policy for homelands since the 2007 NIRA (Marks 2014). This was continued under Labour in the 2009 NIRA, which is clear that service and resources are not to go to small, isolated communities, and that 'voluntary mobility' from homelands to larger settlements is to be aided wherever possible (COAG 2009). According to Altman (2017b, p. 33) the NIRA "states quite explicitly that major investments in service provision are to be avoided where there are few mainstream economic and educational opportunities, which basically means almost all homelands" (Altman 2017 p. 33). The complete lack of funding for new housing from either the Commonwealth or Territory Governments for most homelands has significant impacts on their ability to continue to exist in the future (Altman 2017a; Marks 2014; Senior et al. 2018).

Three months after the launch of the NTER the Howard government announced that CDEP would be abolished. The program was gradually wound down between 2008 and 2015 and eventually replaced by CDP, which from 2015 is the current program. In 2020 between 80-90% of CDP recipients are Indigenous (ACTU 2018, p. 2) and it has been referred to as a "work for the dole program" (ACTU 2018, 2; Altman 2017b, p. 33). The introduction of CDP entailed new requirements to keep payments – going to meetings, looking for jobs, reporting pay on the computer – which are more onerous than CDEP, and the punishments for failing to do any of these are severe (Altman 2017b, pp. 13-15; Fowkes 2019). It is hard to meet the

CDP mutual obligation requirements when living on homelands, as these are located only in hub towns, which is very difficult and expensive for homelanders living in remote regions (Gibson 2012). Kerins (2010, p. 4) notes that "the requirement to attend monthly meetings in towns … has greatly increased the movement of people off their land." In direct contrast to the previous CDEP program, Altman (2017a, p. 33) outlines the crucial shift under CDP where "self-provisioning in the bush is not regarded as legitimate work or training, so homelanders' work effort is forcibly diverted from productive self-provisioning to unproductive make-work. Failure to comply is penalised by loss of income support." Given the significant barriers for homelanders to access and remain on CDP, there has been a significant increase in the number of people getting 'cut off' (Fowkes 2019). CDP has been subject to widespread criticism for its application of penalties and negative social outcomes (Fowkes 2019), with the government's own 2018 review indicating the increase in penalties actively hampered Indigenous employment rates (Allam 2019).

In a similar manner, the Compulsory Income Management regime creates further dependence on hub towns. All Aboriginal people on Centrelink payments of all forms were targeted for compulsory income management in the NT (Gibson 2012, p. 1; see whole article for a complete account of this with interviews). Infamously, this measure of the Intervention required the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act – this was later extended to some low-income non-Aboriginal people under the Labour government (Gibson 2012). There are no stores in many communities that are authorised for the basics card, leaving people no choice but to

travel several hours (Baehr and Schmidt-Haberkamp 2017; Fowkes 2019; Gibson 2012, p. 77). As with the new CDP programme, Income Management creates increasingly difficult conditions for homelanders to remain on country permanently while accessing welfare payments. One of the key reasons that homelanders are cut off Centrelink payments is failure to meet the requirement that their children attend school (Brough 2007, 'National Emergency Response to Protect the Children in the NT'). However, as there are few secondary schools in homelands generally, in addition to the cuts to teaching positions and funding for new schools for the vast majority of "unviable" communities, the conditions are created for homelanders to be denied state welfare payments if they want to remain living in homelands.[10] Even if these communities were able to meet their direct needs independently, there is nothing they can do to have their children in school, short of hiring a new teacher for the community. As I show in the next section, in addition to the redirection of funding for basic services in homelands, there are also direct, extra-economic pressure to move to 'hub towns.'

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES AGAINST INDIVIDUALS

In addition to redirecting funding away from homelands, the Intervention introduced policies that directly affected individual homelanders through non-economic, punitive methods, as well as the wider Indigenous population living in

[10] For an overview of effects of the Intervention on education see Baehr and Schmidt-Haberkamp (2017, pp. 54-57).

remote areas. The increase in policing was a direct result of the Intervention (Anthony 2018; Gibson 2012), and has remained at increased levels since then (Fowkes 2019). Over $33 million was budgeted for police and police logistics and housing in the initial 'stabilisation' phase of the Intervention alone for the 2007-08 financial year (Baehr & Schmidt-Haberkamp 2017, p. 22). This increased police presence results in a dramatic escalation in the amount of Indigenous people receiving fines for minor incidents (see Fowkes 2019). The result of the increased policing from the Intervention includes losing one's car, license, and guns: all of which are key, expensive items necessary for the customary economy which revolves around hunting and fishing (Senior et al. 2018). This leads to increased difficulty in directly gaining access to the means of subsistence from the land, as "access to the hunting 'means of production' has declined rapidly" (Altman 2017a, p. 33).

The rise in rates of imprisonment of Indigenous people in the NT directly impacts the ability of homelanders to remain on country (Baehr & Schmidt-Haberkamp 2017, p. 63; Altman 2017a).The years after the Intervention saw "nearly a doubling in the rate of imprisonment to a rate 16 times higher than for non-Indigenous people in the NT" (Baehr & Schmidt-Haberkamp 2017, p. 66-67; for an overall summary of shifts in policing and incarceration under the Intervention see pp. 57-67). Taylor, Payer and Barnes (2018) describe the effects of the huge rise in incarceration rates on the mobility in homelands communities. Often families must move to where the prison is, usually to Berrimah in Darwin, to be able to see and support their imprisoned family member or loved one. This also directly prevents people from

being able to access homelands, and the larger web of incarceration often means that people who are not directly imprisoned still must remain in hub towns or larger settlements to see their parole officer, do work for the dole, or earn income to cover the costs of imprisonment. The rise in rates of imprisonment of Indigenous people in the NT directly impacts the ability of homelanders to remain on country (Baehr & Schmidt-Haberkamp 2017, p. 63; Altman 2017a). As Anthony says in her evocative discussion of child detention in the NT, "settler-colonial structures penetrate beyond the walls of prisons, child protection institutions and foster homes, impacting all facets of Indigenous livelihoods, especially connection to Country and self-governance of societies and lives" (2018, p. 271). This extra-economic force is seen most vividly in the forced eviction of the homelands community of Oombulgurri in 2011, which was part of that government's attempts to close a large number homelands communities across the northern parts of the state (for an overview—and how this relates to the discourse on the "viability" of homelands in the NT—see overview in Solonec & Seery 2012).

INCOME, EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE

The Intervention has had marked effects on the incomes of remote living Indigenous people in the NT. Between 2011-2016 the overall levels of Indigenous income have dropped in remote areas of the NT (Markham & Biddle 2018, p. iii), with "falls in median income mostly occurred in parts of remote and very remote Northern Territory and Queensland" (Markham & Biddle 2018, p. 13). During the same time period the entire remote portion of the Northern Territory (i.e. outside Darwin and

Alice Springs), along with north Queensland and the Kimberly, had the lowest levels nationally of median disposable weekly equivalised household income, at $336–450. “Poverty rates increased dramatically in several remote regions, especially in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley…” (p. 18). These rates were well above 50% in remote regions in 2016 (Markham & Biddle 2018, p. 33). These findings make it clear that the situation in remote and very remote Australia is worsening. This reduction in the median income of the Indigenous population in very remote Australia is “particularly concerning given that the median Indigenous income in this area was only $400 per week in 2011. That is, income is falling from a very low base” (Markham & Biddle 2018, p. 32). “Several commentators have identified that the transition from the CDEP to CDP in remote areas may have reduced the incomes of those reliant on the social security system in remote parts of the country” (Jordan & Altman 2016, p. 14). Between the 2011 and 2016 censuses, Indigenous employment rates in the remote areas of Australia have fallen both absolutely, as well as in comparison to non-Indigenous employment rates in the same areas (Markham & Biddle 2018, p. 14). In the NT, these constitute the lowest rates of employment in Australia (Venn & Biddle 2018). Meanwhile, Indigenous employment rates in non-remote areas rose during the same period, outpacing non-Indigenous employment rates. These are longer term trends, but have gathered pace since 2011 (Venn & Biddle 2018).

Altman (2019) notes that where there has been limited growth in non-CDEP remote Indigenous employment, this growth tends to be in casual, minimum wage, and service sector jobs. There are very few economically viable industries that could

create mass employment of Indigenous people while enabling them to remain on country in 'remote' and small homelands. Successful industries in the remote NT that do hire Indigenous people include "rangers, in the arts, in tourism, in pastoralism, in carbon farming and in community service delivery." "However," Altman continues, "having a waged job is the exception" (Altman 2017c, p. 19). These industries are often either state industries or require state support, and prospects for mass employment in remote Australia are limited, and the reliance on CDP is likely to be indefinite for most people - a fact recently acknowledged by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion (Jordan & Altman 2016, p. 6).

While CDEP was designed to aid the transition from unemployment into work, in the absence of viable labour market opportunities the results of its withdrawal were unsurprising: "[h]alf of those who were on CDEP did not gain employment by the time it was finished" (Productivity Commission: Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2016, p. 9.35). Rather than employment, let alone high-wage, full-time industrial employment, the majority of former CDEP participants, who made up the vast majority of the workforce of the NT homelands, find themselves structurally excluded from the labour market (Dinku & Hunt, 2019). Nationally, only 37.5% of the Indigenous population aged between 15 – 64 years old are in the labour force, leaving 62.5% - almost two thirds – long-term unemployed (Dinku & Hunt, 2019). According to the NT Government's analysis of ABS Census data, the participation rate of Aboriginal people in the NT labour market is the lowest in the country, and has also declined the most between 2011 and 2016, while the non-Aboriginal participation rate rose (see Figure 2).

Table 5: Participation rates (%)

	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	June 2011	June 2016	June 2011	June 2016
New South Wales	68.8	54.4	62.6	62.8
Victoria	53.4	56.0	64.0	64.0
Queensland	54.8	54.7	66.2	65.4
Western Australia	46.3	46.6	68.2	67.6
South Australia	46.6	47.7	62.2	61.4
Tasmania	57.3	56.6	59.8	58.8
Australian Capital Territory	66.8	68.3	72.5	70.3
Northern Territory	40.9	37.3	78.9	79.0
Australia	50.7	51.9	64.4	64.2

Figure 2 – Labour Force Participation Rates, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal. Source: NT Economy Department.

In sum, Intervention measures relating to incomes have correlated strongly with an increase in dependence on the state primarily through welfare, as well as income sharing through family and precarious or informal employment.

Part Three – Analysis and Findings

SEPARATING DISPOSSESSION

> The Royal Commission heard that the Northern Territory Intervention placed profound pressure on Indigenous people to leave their "rich culture, land, language and traditions behind" (Bamblett 2016: 199). They were pressured into towns and larger settlements due to the government defunding of homelands and smaller communities (Howard-Wagner and Kelly 2011: 103) (Anthony 2018, p. 263).

The events described in Part Two create conditions which pressure homelanders to move to hub towns, prevent them from engaging in the customary economy, and forcibly separate them from the land. Overall, this demonstrates a dynamic which I call *separating* dispossession – the separation of people from direct access to the means of subsistence. Within this dynamic, I identify two key tendencies. The first is a tendency for state policy to undermine the economic viability of life on the homelands. The second is a tendency for state policy to enact a coercive centralisation of Aboriginal populations in hub towns and larger urban centres.

The first of these tendencies, that of state policy to undermine the economic viability of life on the homelands, has been carried out primarily through Commonwealth policies of freezing, withholding or redirecting money and resources, primarily through CDEP and housing funding. The economic results of these policies were a reduction in cash income and service provision in homelands, and a consequent reduction in the state component of the homeland hybrid economy.

In the self-determination period homelanders were partially dependent on state resources for the economic structure of the homelands. Within the colonial relation there was an important degree of self-determination over the level that homelanders wished to engage in the customary economy, which enabled Indigenous people in the NT to have a direct relation to their country, and to decide for themselves, to a significant degree, on how much their access to the means of subsistence would be mediated through the market or the state. This had partial support from the

Commonwealth government during the self-determination period, exemplified by the landmark policies of ALRA and CDEP. Given the already low incomes, which have reduced during the Intervention period, the economic pressure on homelanders to seek employment, housing, or to be able to access CDP is increasing. Over time, the combined effects of economic isolation from state funding, and increased dependence on hub towns leads to conditions increasingly hostile to direct access to the land and the forms of life in homelands which make this possible.

The second tendency has revolved around the state implementing laws and policies that disciplined ways of life on the homelands, making everyday life on homelands more difficult. As Anthony (2018) summarises, "[T]he Intervention has not simply represented the insipid state control of Indigenous affairs through benign bureaucrats, it has been imposed through the heavy hand of law enforcement." The 'means of production' for the customary economy were also indirectly affected – examples of this included the increase in policing and fines due to the Intervention, that had the effect of reducing access to or ability to maintain possession of vehicles, guns, and drivers licences. This hinders capacity to hunt, gather food and medicine, and gain many other aspects of life directly from the land – directly preventing access to the customary economy, in addition to the effects of the removal of the state component of the hybrid economy.

Homelanders are also brought into the carceral web and forcibly centralised – whether through direct imprisonment, dealing with fines, or through the threat of their children being taken from them (Anthony 2018). In contrast to the indirect,

economic effects of the first tendency, this literally moves people from their land with direct force: “Locking up children, removing children from family and segregating them in institutions has been a consistent practice since the inception of colonisation and a critical aspect of the takeover of Indigenous land” (Anthony 2018, p. 272). The final threat of forcible closure of the entire homelands remains on the consciousness of many (Solonec & Seery 2012.)

Both of these tendencies together lead to increased pressure on Aboriginal people to move to or spend more time in hub towns or larger settlements, and less time on homelands. In these changed conditions, the options of homelanders over the long term are increasingly limited to one of two options: either homelands become fully autonomous, or else the majority of individuals must move in order to survive. These are the primary policies that have caused separating dispossession. Many do not function through a direct forced removal of Indigenous people from their land, though some do, and no single policy or action can itself be regarded as causing the separation of people from their land – rather, these tendencies over time create conditions that are hostile to the homeland hybrid economy and way of life. They function on the levels of individual people, individual homelands, and of homelands across the NT as a whole.

The strategies enacted by the state have not necessarily been successful in moving Indigenous people off homelands and concentrating them into hub towns due to the resistance of homelanders. While the demographic research is limited and inconclusive (for a recent overview see Taylor & Dyrting 2019), there is no clearly

identifiable pattern of movement of homelanders to hub towns or larger towns and cities during the neo-assimilation period, although case study research and ethnographic evidence does suggest many outstations are struggling (Senior et al. 2018, p. 7). This finding thus suggests that there has been successful resistance to this project in the short term. Homelanders still try to maintain their form of life and hybrid economy, but the state is making this harder, both through coordinated withdrawal of support, and through active, coercive measures. However, as Marks (2014, p. 54; 59-60) says, this is an intergenerational project, and one that the state seems structurally committed to in general, despite changes in detail. Resistance may not be able to continue through multiple generations (Senior et al. 2018, p. 7), particularly when other shifts in the colonial relation, such as the persistent and troubling rise in incarceration, suicide, and child removal rates, which have all been linked to the Intervention. Senior et al. (2018, p. 7) summarise the overall sentiment on homelands in the Intervention era:

> It is very unlikely, that the outstations will be able to regain the strength that they had during the period of self-determination in the 1970s. Currently policy is largely unsympathetic to the outstations movement and positions them as a lifestyle choice and not something for which services (such as schools and clinics) should be provided. But they retain a very important role in people's lives. They provide, to echo Charles Perkins, (Cited in Blanchard 1987) a 'breathing space' and a place to gather strength within the often senseless world of community life and they are a place where people (in Anderson's words) can become and be hopeful (2006:733).

INCREASED DEPENDENCE ON THE STATE

Though the self-determination era did involve some dependence on the state, as an important part of the hybrid economy, I have argued that there was a significant degree of self-determination over the degree to which homelanders chose to engage in the state aspect of the hybrid economy. Additionally, the role of the state did not extend deeply into the lives of homelanders – rather, it was primarily through funding such as CDEP and CHIP, which were mediated by Aboriginal corporations. With the Intervention the qualitative nature of this relation has fundamentally changed. As direct access to the means of subsistence decreases, homelanders are increasingly reliant on cash incomes to purchase the means of subsistence. Yet the research on income, employment and welfare in Part Two shows that there was no identifiable tendency for those who lost or had reduced direct access to the means of production to then move into the formal labour market. Rather, they are statistically much more likely to end up in low wage casual employment, unemployed, or excluded from the job market altogether, instead forced into a long-term reliance on welfare or the income of family and friends. More than half of remote Indigenous people in the NT are unemployed. More than half of those who were on CDEP are now unemployed. Those who are employed generally have minimum waged service work jobs at best. The discussion of employment options in remote areas and the rise in people who are 'not in the labour force' indicate that these shifts are long term and structural, rather than a temporary effect.

The case study identified a tendency in Commonwealth policies during the Intervention towards causing or creating conditions that pushed for separation of homelanders from the means of subsistence – the land – and a corresponding increase in dependence on the state to get what they need to survive. The research findings on unemployment and income demonstrated there was no increase in the waged labour force as a result of separating dispossession – rather, there was an increase in dependence on the state primarily through welfare, as well as income sharing through family and precarious or informal employment. This presents a challenge to the orthodox understanding of primitive accumulation discussed in Chapter One, where there is emphasis on the condition of waged, formal employment as the means of subsistence that the proletariat relies upon, after being dispossessed from non-capitalist means of subsistence. The dispossession camp argues against proletarianisation being part of primitive accumulation in settler colonies on this basis. These findings seem to provide further empirical evidence for the argument of the dispossession camp that we should focus mostly on dispossession and reduce or remove the role of proletarianisation. The next chapter will compare these findings to the most pressing question of Chapter One – and the most direct contribution of this thesis to the literature – whether dispossession and proletarianisation must be disaggregated for primitive accumulation to be useful in understanding land dispossession in contemporary settler colonialism.

Chapter Three: Revision

In this chapter I return to the theoretical level, in order to assess the conceptual framework of primitive accumulation against the findings of the case study. First, I assess whether the findings should be understood as dispossession and proletarianisation, and whether this fits the overall conceptual framework of primitive accumulation. I engage specifically with the dispossession camp's suggested revisions to primitive accumulation, and focus specifically on proletarianisation. I identify their understanding as coming from the workers movement as the workerist understanding – however, rather than remove or de-emphasise this proletarianisation, I argue for a revision of the concept, while retaining it in relation to dispossession. I suggest two major, inter-related revisions to the concept of proletarianisation. The first revision is that the process must be defined/understood in general as producing a population who are defined as labour-dependent, including dependence on the social wage, which includes state welfare and income sharing amongst family – an understanding which is, as I will show, significantly different from 'producing a waged labour force'; and secondly, that for the purposes of the case study, this produces populations who are relatively surplus to the needs of capital, but who are nevertheless dependent on the wage to survive – this is a large and significant subset of all those who are wage-dependent, and a subset that is particularly prominent amongst Indigenous people in settler colonial contexts. These revisions result in an understanding of proletarianisation that it significantly different from the understanding found in the dispossession

camp. These revisions help resolve the theoretical tensions in the dispossession camp, provide more detailed analytical tools to describe the shifts in the nature of the colonial relation that results from the separating dispossession identified in the case study, while also providing the capacity to relate these processes to the capitalist accumulation proper.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE CASE STUDY

From this brief analysis of land dispossession in the case study we can conclude that the federal government's land tenure reform and outstations policy during the intervention have the effect of increasing the separation of homelanders from the means of production—I have described this as separating dispossession. This is the form of dispossession that is essential for any process of primitive accumulation, and fits the pattern described by Marx and later literature on primitive accumulation. Direct producers lose their ownership of and capacity to use the means of subsistence, their means of subsistence is then commodified and becomes capital, and the producers are then forced to enter into capitalist social relations to access what they need to survive. In this sense we can conclude that primitive accumulation is taking place in the Intervention.

However, this alone does not wholly cover the concept of primitive accumulation. I argued in Chapter One that the concept should also explain how the dispossessed gain access their means of subsistence, if not through the land. In *Capital*, peasants were forced off their land and into towns and cities, and where they had to survive by selling their labour power in return for a wage. This latter element distinguished

primitive accumulation from other forms of separating dispossession - proletarians are not slaves, serfs or peasants who have moved to new land. For this case study to qualify as primitive accumulation, we need to also look at what happens to the dispossessed after separation.

The effects of dispossession did lead to an increased dependence on the wage for access to the means of subsistence. However, this did not lead to an increase in the formal waged labour force – rather, they lead to an increase in dependency on and mediation of welfare – which I will describe below as the *social wage* – or to precarious and low waged employment at best. Incomes and other quality of life measures dropped since the Intervention. This is contrary to what we would expect according to the orthodox narrative of primitive accumulation – there has been separation from means of subsistence, but rather than leading to an increase in the waged labour force, this led to a clearly identifiable increase in *unemployment*. There was also growth in the category of 'not in the labour force' – demonstrating long term structural exclusion from the workforce for a significant portion of remote Indigenous people. This would seem to reinforce the dispossession camp's claim that we must focus on dispossession, and disaggregate it as a distinct frame of analysis from proletarianisation. The definition of proletarianisation in their debate, however, is not considered as one of multiple possible understandings – rather, they do not consider alternative meanings, and instead eject the term that they rightly criticise, rather than reworking the term in light of those criticisms. This leads to both theoretical contradictions and weaknesses in the capability of the framework to link empirical case studies to the broader dynamics of capitalism. As this chapter

will go on to demonstrate, the concept of proletarianisation has a long and contested history, and features definitions at odds with that provided by the dispossession camp.

PROLETARIAT AS WORKER

The workers movement grew from soon after Marx's death in the late nineteenth century up until the 1970s to become the most powerful revolutionary force in Europe and the industrialised world. The political hegemony of the workers movement in the industrialised countries led to its theorists gaining authority over the interpretation of orthodox Marxist theory: its theorists dominated the critique of capitalism, the idea of an overcoming of capitalism would look like, and – most importantly for this argument - the agent of that overcoming, which they believed could only be the semi-skilled industrial proletariat (Endnotes 2015, pp. 73-80). This political vision saw the waged industrial worker as the fraction of the wider class that had enough power vis-a-vis capitalism to be the revolutionary agent (2015, pp. 97-98; p. 124). The factory system forced the industrial proletariat to be able to gain enough power, and to be capable of the required discipline and organisation, to become the agent of revolutionary change as the "collective worker" (Endnotes 2015, p. 93; 97-98). This was in direct contrast to other fractions of the class, or other classes – often the 'lumpenproletariat' was seen as inherently anti-revolutionary, and the revolutionary potential of the industrial working class was seen to be threatened by the lumpenproletariat (Endnotes 2015, pp. 103-105). Luxembourg posed the "counterrevolutionary lumpenproletariat" to the "struggling

proletariat" (2008, p. 114). It was expected the industrial proletariat would inevitably, through the development of capitalism across the world, become a significant portion of humanity, "the achievement of which would make it possible to abolish class society, and thus to bring man's prehistory to a close" (Endnotes 2015, p. 98). This wider political analysis led to the workers movement focusing on the experience of the semi-skilled industrial worker as centre of history, and this class fragment came to be all that was meant by the term 'proletarian.' Fundamentally, the term no longer served as a category of analysis – rather, it became the name of an *affirmable identity*, that was attached to the primary role given to the industrial semi-skilled worker (Endnotes 2015, pp. 119-123). Consequently, the process of proletarianisation came to be understood as producing the group of people who fit this identity (Endnotes 2015, p. 128). However, this understanding of 'proletariat' only lasted as long as the workers movement did, and thus, as long as the conditions in which the workers movement made sense prevailed: "it was only insofar as those industries were expanding that the workers' movement could see the semi-skilled worker as its future being realised in the present. Once those industries went into decline, the glorious future declined as well" (Endnotes 2015, p. 108).

PROLETARIAT AS LABOUR-DEPENDENT

The workerist understanding of the what the proletariat is, and consequently of what the process of proletarianisation produces, is no longer useful. Indeed, the basic premises of the workers movement, and the understanding of the proletariat that

came from it, have come under sustained criticism. Labour historian Aaron Benanav represents one influential alternative tendency in the interpretation of the category. In his thesis 'A Global History of Unemployment'[11] Benanav (2015) outlines three categories describing the means by which people gain what they need to survive: market dependency; labour dependency; and market involved—the two relevant categories for the purpose of this thesis are market dependency and labour dependency. Market dependency includes all who are dependent on markets to access what they need to survive – hence, market dependency includes people who are very rich, since they still purchase goods with money through markets. Proletarians are labour dependent, which is a subset of all those who are market dependent. The distinction is crucial: those who are labour-dependent are distinguished from the minority of those who own enough capital to be able to move from line to line, seeking the highest rate of return on profits—this basically means capitalists, to use a less rigorous but more common and identifiable term: "Being market dependent but lacking capital is what defines the condition of labor-dependence" (Benanav 2015, p. 29).

Labour dependency refers to the condition of being market dependent without the ability to live from the returns of invested capital, for example through profits, interest or dividends. Labour dependent proletarians consequently depend on their

[11] This will be published under the same title with Verso in 2020.

ability to access a wage, either through their own waged employment, wages shared among family members, or access to the 'social wage.'. The social wage refers to the money taxed from employed workers by the state and redistributed to unemployed workers to maintain the reproduction of the class as a whole (Mattick Jr. 1992, p. 4). This understanding does not simply focus on people needing to buy what they need with a wage, rather than growing it themselves, but it also emphasises that capitalist social relations are a *specific social form* that *mediates* people's access to what they need: "this process transforms the ways in which people access resources. What changes, in other words, are forms of social mediation: distinct forms, specific to local or regional contexts, are giving way to one: market mediation." (Benanav 2015, p. 66). This definition helps us in the general understanding of proletarianisation that I am outlining in this chapter – however in the case study, market mediation is observed primarily in the *form of the social wage*, via the state welfare system – which is why my understanding of the capital-state relation, as outlined in the Introduction, is integral to my use of this definition.

According to this perspective, the production of this condition of labour dependency among the proletariat is essential for the successful reproduction of capitalist society. Benanav and co-author John Clegg write in an earlier study that:

> Despite the complexity of its results, capital has only one essential precondition: people must lack direct access to the goods they deem necessary for life, finding that access instead only through the mediation of the market. Hence the very term "proletariat" (Benanav & Clegg 2014, p. 586).

Consequently it is this necessity that compels the forcible divorce of self-provisioning populations from their land: “Thus the need for “primitive accumulation”: separating people from land, their most basic means of reproduction, and generating an all-round dependence on commodity exchange” (Benanav & Clegg 2014, p. 586). This emphasis on proletarianisation itself as a particular form of dispossession not only has implications for the dispossession camp’s challenge to the concept of primitive accumulation, but also provides a bridge between the dynamics of contemporary primitive accumulation and an important wider structural dynamic in capitalist societies: “the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation,” which Marx (1976, pp. 762-870) outlines in Chapter 25 of *Capital*, which states that capitalism has the tendency over time to produce populations who are dependent on the market, yet relatively surplus to the needs of capital .

MARX’S ‘ABSOLUTE GENERAL LAW’ AND SURPLUS POPULATIONS

Benanav and Clegg (2014, p. 593) trace their interpretation of ‘proletarian’ back to Marx’s “absolute general law of capital accumulation” in Chapter 25 of the first volume of *Capital* (1976, p. 798)—the chapter immediately preceding the chapters on primitive accumulation:

> Marx writes, somewhat simply: “Accumulation of capital is therefore multiplication of the proletariat.” Marxists of an earlier period took this thesis to mean that the expansion of capital necessitates an expansion of the industrial

> working class. But the proletariat is not identical to the industrial working class. According to what Marx sets out in the conclusion to this chapter, the proletariat is rather a working class in transition, a working class tending to become a class excluded from work.

In this sense, the moment a worker is thrown "onto the street" (Marx 1976, p. 764) does not designate the end of the proletarian condition, but rather a defining characteristic of it. Marx's general law outlined the process whereby capitalist development comes to replace living workers with machinery in the production process, tending towards the production of a "relative surplus population" (1976, pp. 781-794). As machines displace workers, most dramatically in agriculture, proletarians are thrown out of employment and depend on finding new ways to access a wage (Benanav & Clegg 2014). If alternative employment isn't available, these proletarians find themselves relatively surplus to the needs of the formal labour market. Benanav and Clegg (2014, p. 606) powerfully summarise the lived reality of this position: "[T]his surplus population need not find itself completely "outside" capitalist social relations. Capital may not need these workers, but they still need to work. They are thus forced to offer themselves up for the most abject forms of wage slavery in the form of petty-production and services."

Benanav develops this discussion of surplus populations to describe the historical shifts in the global labour market since the 1950s, when the majority of the world population were still employed in agriculture:

> "The bulk of the world's population was rendered labor dependent only in the past few decades. Their proletarianisation—that is, the process by which they were rendered labor dependent—was a key element in the history of an expanding superfluity in the late twentieth century. Before then, most of the earth's inhabitants were not even market-dependent, let alone labor-dependent. The world of the 1950s was largely a world of peasants, living and working on the land" (2015, p. 29).

The major turning point though was around the 1980s, when the large proportion of the world's population became proletarianized, especially across the low income countries, and this continued rapidly through the 1990s and 2000s with the insertion into capitalist social-property relations of huge numbers of people in the former USSR and China. The prediction made by Marx that the 'absolute general law' of capitalist accumulation would lead to the long-term increase of surplus populations as a share of the total population did not occur as he saw it. However, Endnotes (2015) argue that this tendency was not incorrect in identifying this tendency or 'absolute general law' – rather, the historical unfolding of this tendency was postponed by the new waves of industrial growth, and the general tendency remains – and since the 1970s has returned unabated. The form in which most of the world's population gain what they need to survive in the twenty first century is thus radically different from the mid nineteenth century. Capital has expanded across the globe, and there is a massive surplus population of over a billion people (Benanav 2015; Davis 2005). The majority of the world's population are now dependent on capitalism in some way. Since the 1980s, most national capitalist systems do not need to actively separate more peasants from the land in order to expand their waged

labour force. They can either use labour that is already ‘free’ in their countries, or import migrant labour from a country with a large surplus population. The newly proletarianised, late entrants to the now slackest labour market in human history, are hard pressed to find decent employment. The period between the 1880s and the 1970s saw a real expansion of the industrial proletariat. These are the material conditions in which the workers movement arose and became the horizon of communism, and is the context to which most accounts of ‘primitive accumulation’ and ‘proletarianisation’ are still attuned. However, the arguments made in this chapter demonstrate the fundamental shift in the global situation that has occurred since the 1970s. The conceptual frameworks developed during the workers movement must be revised to reflect to this.

THE REVISED FRAMEWORK OF PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

With this alternative definition in hand, I will now return to the challenge of the dispossession camp. The findings of the case study validate the dispossession camp’s claim that a transition into formal waged employment does not constitute a general trend for dispossessed, formerly self-provisioning Indigenous communities. Their criticism of a narrow focus on the experience of waged employment and its inadequacy in accounting for the subject position of the colonised has been demonstrated to be justified in the case of the Intervention. It is on this basis that the dispossession camp advocates the disaggregation of proletarianisation and dispossession, arguing that the exclusion of dispossessed Indigenous populations from employment necessitates turning attention from the capital relation to the

colonial relation within primitive accumulation. As the case study demonstrated, the process of separating dispossession in the Intervention resulted primarily in obstacles to directly accessing the means of subsistence and a higher degree of dependence on state welfare. Rather than formal, full waged employment, the findings demonstrated increased dependence on state welfare, income sharing among family, or informal service sector-employment. The dispossession camp would agree that primitive accumulation has occurred here, but would state that proletarianisation has not, and that consequently an analysis of the capital relation can offer limited insight.

If proletarianisation is understood, however, as itself an expression of land dispossession, and the capital relation understood not as the relation between employers and the employed, but the relation between capitalist social relations and the proletarianised dispossessed, then sustaining the connection between proletarianisation and dispossession may still offer insight into the historical development of the colonial relation. I argue that the definition of proletarianisation derived from Marx's general law, developed by Benanav and Clegg above, is well positioned to do exactly that. This definition not only directly encompasses the condition of dispossessed Aboriginal communities, it also directly connects that condition to a broader theoretical account of a tendency to long-term exclusion from the workforce. Consequently, I argue this analysis of the capital relation offers tools for theorising the colonial relation, rather than marginalising it. Utilising this alternative understanding of proletarianisation, we can present an inclusive account of the effects of colonial dispossession as a manifestation of the capital relation:

dependence on the wage, and superfluity from the perspective of capital, now taking an integral expression of the colonial relation.

Beyond this additional explanatory scope of retaining the unity of proletarianisation and dispossession, an additional objection can be raised to the disaggregation approach. As Benanav and Clegg (2014, p. 606) emphasise, “capital has only one essential precondition: people must lack direct access to the goods they deem necessary for life, finding that access instead only through the mediation of the market.” The production of this essential precondition is what definitively distinguishes primitive accumulation in Marxist analysis from any other form of dispossession. If a directly self-provisioning community are displaced, and then again resume direct self-provisioning with no recourse to the market, they have not been proletarianised. As discussed above, a proletarian is specifically someone who has nothing to sell but their labour power, and is dependent on selling this to get what they need to survive. This expands the conditions of possibility for the meeting of capital and labour – hence for capitalist accumulation proper.

This chapter has outlined contested definitions of the term proletariat, in order to assess their utility for the concept of primitive accumulation and evaluate the challenge of the dispossession camp. The contrast between the two definitions turned on whether a worker thrown "onto the street" (Marx 1976, p. 764) is still a proletarian. By the account offered by the workers’ movement they are not, and a proletarian is defined as an employed worker who receives a wage. By the alternative account, they are, and a proletarian is defined as someone who depends

on wages to live, but is not always necessarily receiving them. If the premises of the workerist definition were accepted, I found that the critiques of the dispossession camp were justified, and the term proletarian bore little correspondence to the lives of remote FN communities, before or after displacement. I argued however that these premises should be rejected, and put forward a revised account of proletarianisation. In the contemporary settler colonial context, proletarianisation should be understood as producing a population who are dependent on the selling their labour for a wage, including those who are structurally excluded from the waged labour force, and must rely on other forms of gaining access to what they need to survive - which in this case study was particularly through the social wage. I argued that retaining the analytical unity of the colonial and capital relations is justified by its capacity to better account for the social forces propelling settler colonial dispossession and the activity of the settler state.

Conclusion

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF RESEARCH

The Intervention can be understood as a significant event within the wider structure of contemporary settler colonialism in Australia, having been widely referred to as a 'land grab'. Given that theorists have called for further intersections between Indigenous theory and Marxist theory in the analysis of contemporary settler colonial dispossession of Aboriginal land, specific case studies such as the Intervention, notwithstanding their horrific real-life impacts, provide the opportunity to expand this area of research and critical analysis. In previous analyses, theorists have often turned to the framework of primitive accumulation to help explain the material aspects of settler colonialism, and how capitalism shapes the contemporary forms of land dispossession. Consequently, In this thesis I set out to analyse whether this framework is useful in understanding the material aspects of dispossession in the Intervention, and whether revisions are needed to the framework to update it for the contemporary period and for the specific conditions of settler colonial contexts. The concept of primitive accumulation is at a high level of abstraction, so testing it against a contemporary case study is important to make clear what empirical uses this term may provide, which addressed the main gap in the literature. I have outlined some of the limits to the concept's applicability, and some possible revisions to make it more useful in analyzing the effects of land dispossession. This revised framework describes the findings of the case study more accurately, and enables us to link the findings of

land dispossession back to the wider movement of capital accumulation in Australia, including effects on the colonial relation.

In Chapter One I explored the deeper meaning of primitive accumulation in Marx's work, and outlined the key applications, understandings and critiques of primitive accumulation in analyzing contemporary settler colonialism in the contemporary literature. The main problems with the literature where that primitive accumulation is often used in a cursory way that functions as a synonym for dispossession and does not have the capacity to relate land dispossession to the real-life dynamics of capitalist accumulation in Australia. Furthermore, I also identified a research gap: the existing literature lacks empirical case studies evaluating the validity of primitive accumulation as a concept in contemporary settler colonies. I identified the most relevant theorists in the literature, who I grouped as the 'dispossession camp'. The shared position of this body of literature was that proletarianisation, or the creation of a waged labour force, should be separated out from dispossession, since the latter is the primary experience of the dispossessed in settler colonies. However, these suggested revisions did not initially appear to resolve the problems outlined in the rest of the literature, nor had they been empirically tested in any detail in a contemporary case study. Consequently, I established that an empirical case study was necessary to test whether primitive accumulation was occurring in the sense understood by the dispossession camp, and to use the findings of the case study to inform any revisions that may modify the framework to make it more relevant to understanding contemporary dispossession in settler colonial contexts.

In Chapter Two I attempted to address this gap by undertaking an instrumental case study of the Intervention. This served to clarify and test the argument of the dispossession camp. In Part One I outlined the situation of the homelands in the Northern Territory, where during the self-determination period Indigenous people had partial direct access to the means of subsistence through the 'hybrid economy,' which had some support from the Commonwealth government. I then identified key themes in the Intervention that impacted this direct access to the means of subsistence, and homelanders relation to country more generally, and the consequent changes in their relation to the state. I then analyzed these changes to identify broad patterns in the state's actions throughout the Intervention. This analysis led to two key findings on the overall trends in the actions of the state throughout the Intervention period. The first finding was that there has been an identifiable trend towards separating dispossession. The changes to the economy of homelands in general, plus the measures effecting individual homelanders, have the effect of separating dispossession, where they have less ability to engage in the customary economy, and less choice or sovereignty over the degree to which they wish to engage in the customary economy. This is separation from the means of subsistence – the form of dispossession that is suitable for primitive accumulation. The second finding is that there is an identifiable trend towards increased dependence on the state for the means of subsistence.

In Chapter Three, drawing on outcomes from the case study analysis, I critiqued the premises of the 'dispossession camp.' Based on my own analysis, I found that the dispossession camp premise their critique on an interpretation of the proletariat

drawn from the tradition of the workers' movement. I argued that if that premise was accepted, the dispossession camp's repudiation of proletarianisation as a primary factor in settler colonial dispossession was legitimate. However, I argued that a better understanding of proletarianisation, based on a rereading of Marx's 'general law' in the first volume of *Capital* provides a more effective framework for theorising primitive accumulation in the settler colony. This understanding rests on two key elements. First, it should be understood as producing generalised labour-dependency, which means that people must try to sell their labour in order to gain access to what they need to survive. This includes people who are reliant on social welfare or income sharing among family, which I describe as the 'social wage', which is particularly relevant for high income countries with a developed welfare state. Secondly, proletarianisation increasingly produces populations who are relatively surplus to the needs of capital, yet still dependent on selling their labour to survive. This is a crucial shift in the global labour market, particularly since the 1970s, which creates a fundamentally different context to the global context in which the workerist understanding of proletarianisation was developed.

The thesis has argued that the revised conceptual framework has a deeper capacity for understanding the results of separating dispossession and the consequent shifts in the colonial relation that results from it, as well as relating these processes to capitalist accumulation proper. These revisions also contribute to a more detailed and empirically accurate understanding of proletarianisation more broadly, both in its relation to the effects of the dispossession of Indigenous people in settler colonies, and the changed nature of proletarianisation more generally since the mid

twentieth century. This then allows the colonial relation to be related to the capital relation, as they are intertwined, based on the analysis of the case study.

These revisions to the framework of primitive accumulation provide it with the capacity to situate land dispossession within the wider economic context, specifically in relation to contemporary changes in the demand for land and labour in contemporary Australia. One of the most famous statements of Patrick Wolfe (2006, p. 388) is that "territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element." This is a useful general principle, but without having the conceptual tools to demonstrate the empirical and contemporary reasons why this is the case, our analyses are not useful for the real world. While many theorists have tried to link settler colonial frameworks with Marxist frameworks, the revised framework of primitive accumulation can help link the important core principals of settler colonial studies to contemporary shifts in capital.

LIMITS

For reasons of space I have not been able to develop several other critiques and revisions that would also be necessary for this concept to be even more relevant to settler colonialism. Most importantly, this concept would need to have the capacity to distinguish between the dispossession of Indigenous land and the dispossession of settlers who have property rights to Indigenous land. This would need to include a critique of race, largely derived from the fields of Indigenous studies and critical race and whiteness studies. The current concept with the revisions I have suggested does not do this. There is also the problems inherent in non-Indigenous academics

studying the colonial relations, and using data on Aboriginal people collected by the state, which is an inherently colonial situation (Kukutai & Taylor 2016). Data sovereignty and positionality would be necessary to consider in any proposed future study. Due to limited space, this thesis has focused on testing and revising the framework of primitive accumulation to create empirically grounded conceptual foundations for further studies to undertake more expansive research. Further research is required to concretely link the material driving forces of contemporary primitive accumulation with the Australian state's need to expand access to territory. Further research could also link this framework to the experiences of the colonised, especially in their *resistance* to primitive accumulation—contributing to the wider project of bridging Marxist frameworks with the critique of colonialism.

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