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# The substantive landscape as a framework of interpretation

## *A personal view*

### FRAMEWORK

There is something immediately captivating about experiences of the changing landscape. What are the changes about? Why do they occur? Who authorizes these changes? Who benefits or suffers from what is accomplished? This captivation began for me with experiencing the conversion of wild landscapes into arable and the removal of ancient farmland for urban expansion—material transformations of a concrete environment, unfolding before my eyes. But that was another place and another time. In landscape research, sharper acuity is called for. There is more to the landscape than meets the eye as it comes in your path. While our senses may register the landscape, it exceeds whatever we encounter when we leave our homes or walk around. In my own research, I have found that appearances of simple transformations need to be rephrased as the ideological effacing of cultural history to reify places, for example, as wilderness; as the deeply contested removal of wetlands to make way for accumulative society and modern agriculture; or as the devastating impact of resource exploitation on the use value of communal land.[1]

Central to my fascination for these landscapes—the national parks in Sweden, the mires of Gotland, the forests and mountains in Sápmi—is that they are not just planned and shaped after the requirements of capitalist modernity, but that they also rouse resentment. In this day and age, as in the past, they are contentious landscapes, contested by those engaged in other environmental and social practices and voicing diverse claims to justice. These struggles over landscape and justice tend to be at once material and representational: they encompass fields, forests, buildings and working

1 Mels 1999; 2014; 2023.

the land, but also interpretation, claims to reality, graphical and textual renderings, narrated accounts, and ways of seeing and evaluating the scenery. Some of those representational practices, such as particular claims to belonging in or having rights to a landscape, are ignored, or fated to leave at best only paper traces. Others forcefully and instantaneously accomplish a dramatic reworking of the land and take centre stage in social life. Rather than necessarily implying stasis or permanence (important as these are), this offers testimony that landscape is implicated in the ongoing reconstitution of social life, serving equally as "a disciplinary mechanism and a potentially liberating medium for social change".[2] Time and again this instantiates "everyday concerns of justice, equity, and equality as worked through the land and landscape".[3]

It may be tempting to look for a "*model*, universally transportable and applicable" to capture the ongoing material and representational reconstitution of landscape and social life, with its ramifications of justice.[4] Conversely, as Richard Schein's "framework of interpretation" advises, it is vital to recognize the manifold ways in which landscape unfolds as "discourse materialized" or "materialized discourse".[5] Drawing on that insight, "the task of landscape interpretation is to recognize the interpreter's (often unconscious) ordering of those discourses in terms of their centrality to any interpretation".[6] In my view, such self-reflection may speak to the individual researcher as much as to the field of landscape studies at large, entangled as they typically are in an ongoing conversation. On the level of the field, it would arguably reveal the consolidation of certain discourses at the expense of others, thereby (unwittingly) becoming a *model* of sorts, interrupted yet again by interventions that confront hegemonic orderings.

On both counts—as an individual *oeuvre* and an intervention in the field—I have found the (re)ordering of landscape discourse as proposed in work on the "substantive landscape" compelling.[7] In Kenneth Olwig's framework of interpretation, the distinction between the place-oriented "substantive landscape" and the spatial "scenic landscape" is pivotal and requires different ways of knowing:

> The use of geometry to construct the scenic landscape is relatively easy to explain in abstract theoretical terms, whereas the substantive landscape is difficult to understand in this way because it is a product of a long history,

2 Schein 1997, p. 664.
3 Schein 2009, p. 812.
4 Schein 1997, p. 675.
5 Schein 1997; 2009, p. 819.
6 Schein 1997, p. 675.
7 Olwig 1996; 2002; 2019.

> and it reflects a notion of historically evolved customary law, which is best understood in the context of its development over time.[8]

While I do not regard it a model (allowing for cloning purposes only), it reverberated markedly with what I learnt from studying landscapes in Sweden. These landscapes—mires, national parks, Sápmi—continue to invite an examination of claims to justice concerning community, customary practice, nature, and place attachment. Following a more historical materialist line of interpretation via the French Marxist Henri Lefebvre, I recognize these claims as contested moments in the encroaching abstract spaces of capitalist modernity. The substantive landscape is in that view both representationally and materially remade for accumulation.[9] The 19th-century draining of the Gotland mires, the 20th-century planning of Swedish national parks, and the ongoing corporate pressures on Sámi lands in northern Sweden—all yielded different conditions and notions of (in)justice in capitalist modernity. In terms of capitalist space, these landscapes involved all sorts of normative, interpretive practices, with graphic and textual imagery luring the public into believing that the powers of capitalist modernity concoct the best of possible worlds. On the ground, these forces confront communities with claims to the landscape that fundamentally alter their lifeways, inspiring contradictory claims about entitlement, property and appropriation, indigenous rights, customary practice and uneven power relations.

This is not the place to detail these cases and the theories of justice they elucidate, or to lay out a rapprochement between Olwig's critical humanist take on substantive landscapes and a historical materialist perspective. Instead, the question I want to address is a more fundamental one: What kind of "framework of interpretation" is implied by the substantive landscape? I argue that this concerns more than a particular discursive ordering in empirical work. As a "framework of interpretation", it asks for a revision of the discursive focus itself. A recent intimation to intellectually re-cover (entomb) the framework as a species of conservative nostalgia and naïve realism arguably confirms the need to (again) recover the substantive landscape.[10] I begin by contextualizing the substantive landscape as a proposition and a polemic in scholarly debate. In doing so, I present its central features as a "moral landscape" and roughly outline the framing assumptions this involves. The chapter proceeds with a brief reflection on one of its central and simultaneously also more contentious focal points: that

8 Olwig 2019, p. 20.

9 Lefebvre 1991.

10 Here I condense charges levelled against Olwig's recovering of the substantive landscape by Trevor Barnes (2021), who seems to prefer to re-cover it.

of place-oriented practices of custom and community. At first glance, these may seem antiquated terms, dangerously burdened by questionable moral claims that were dead and buried long ago. As part of the substantive landscape intervention, however, they demand a historicization that defies anachronistic interpretation. They are important assets for critical thought, informing landscape justice, not least in the current age of intensified natural resource exploitation. This is why I conclude that, as a framework of interpretation, "the substantive landscape" is as relevant today as it was when it entered the field of landscape studies in the 1990s.

## PROPOSITION

In its original formulation, the substantive landscape intervention was as much a polemic against reductionist notions of landscape as a form of spatial (visual) power, as it was a proposition to recover ideals and practical realities of community justice, customary practice and place attachment.

As a *proposition*, the substantive landscape drew attention to landscape as a place and polity. In its most rudimentary form, the "substantive landscape" has been defined as "a place of human habitation and environmental interaction".[11] This may appear as purely descriptive of a particular ontology, defining what the landscape is, indeed its substance. It may sound quite compatible with changing field structures, land reforms, the diffusion of technological innovations in agriculture or other traditional historical landscape studies. But this is not all. To be more specific about the place of landscape, Olwig adds that it constitutes "a nexus of community, justice, nature and environmental equity".[12] Thus, each of the terms that constitute the substance—notably community, justice, environmental equity—invoke what others have called "moral landscapes":

> The concept of moral landscapes addresses the interrelationship between landscapes and moral values and judgments; it concerns how particular symbolic and material landscapes both shape and reflect notions of "right/wrong," "good/bad," "appropriate/inappropriate," and "natural/unnatural" in relation to particular people, practices, and things. It also concerns the ways in which certain moral boundaries are naturalized in, and through, landscapes, in the interplay of their material and representational forms and related significations.[13]

11 Olwig 1996, pp. 630.
12 Olwig 1996, pp. 630–631.
13 Setten & Brown 2009, p. 191.

More specifically, the substantive landscape asked researchers to shift perspective from discourses of "aesthetics" and "the power of scenic space"—familiar themes in moral landscape work—to discourses of "law and polity". It fitted into a wider programme aiming to "show how closely the discourses of law and polity, on the one hand, and aesthetics, on the other, have been linked throughout history, though they have often run in different channels".[14] Importantly, this centred attention on the often-problematic relation between the existential conditions of communities and the spatial vision of planning and planners preoccupied with various top-down projects of improvement, nature conservation or exploitation of natural resources. While the fundamentals of this problematic relationship were hardly unfamiliar, it did reveal a long and somewhat neglected history of contrasting ontological positions at the heart of what "we" call landscape: universal space versus practised place; centralized power versus community practice; statutory law versus customary law, etc. Translating these "different channels" in more prescriptive terms, the substantive landscape asked planners and architects to contribute in their practical work to the materialization of a different moral order in the landscape, that is, "environments that foster the desire to maintain the continuities that maintain a collective sense of commonwealth, rooted in custom but open to change—a sense of place".[15] For Olwig, this is essential from a justice and moral landscape point of view, because by "ignoring the exigencies of community and place", planners and architects "run the risk of producing landscapes of social inequality".[16]

The proposition contributed to the wider multi-disciplinary field of research on landscape as working through "everyday concerns of justice, equity, and equality".[17] Amongst others, it is not far removed from Schein's intricate, critical humanist project of grounding justice issues of belonging in the landscape, to ultimately inspire "an oppositional politics of belonging in which land and landscape figure as the practical stage upon and through which citizenship and community can be practiced".[18] There were also important overlaps with concerns voiced in the European Landscape Convention, with its areal meaning of landscape and insistence on the importance of human perception, prompting policymakers to reach beyond the notion of landscape as a given piece of earth or land.[19] At least in theory, it encouraged consideration of the

14 Olwig 2002, p. 226.
15 Olwig 2002, pp. 226–227.
16 Olwig 2002, p. 226.
17 Schein 2009, p. 812.
18 Schein 2009, p. 811.
19 Council of Europe 2000.

role of a variety of knowledges and longstanding customary practices in shaping and protecting rural landscapes.

## POLEMIC

When we remember Schein's observation that the ordering of discourse is not a neutral affair, the proposition must also be considered in the field of landscape studies at large. Here, the substantive landscape can be seen as a *polemic*, directed at specific scholarly developments (approaching the status of a *model* perhaps), notably in British cultural geography. Lamenting widespread and somewhat one-sided (postmodern) fascination with deconstructing representations of landscape, grasped through vision or textual interpretation, Olwig insisted on landscape as a practised geographical (socio-environmental) reality.

This questioning of postmodernity's more extreme philosophical idealist consequences was arguably not the most groundbreaking message. In geography more broadly, the ontological, epistemological and political fallacies of radical postmodern approaches had already encountered strong opposition from, perhaps most vigorously, Marxian quarters and soon interest in this dispute began to wane.[20] More mildly poststructuralist forms of landscape interpretation, or critical humanist readings, such as suggested by Schein's interpretive framework, were arguably more common.

For most landscape researchers in the Nordic geography context, consideration was given primarily to a more materialist-oriented notion of discourse as acting out underlying historical realities. Postmodern approaches that enjoyed relatively widespread popularity in Anglophone, particularly British, geography have never gained general appeal in Nordic geography. Going against the grain of the landscape tradition in Nordic geography, they were perceived as contributing to the narrowing of landscape studies to an analysis of texts and images generating their own logic with reference to other texts and images, but not to the material realities of fields, forests and the built environment. The substantive version could in that respect more readily accommodate existing landscape studies of changing physical arrangements, property relations, or planning and their attendant ideological subterfuges.[21]

For all of its resourcefulness, Olwig's 1996 article, 'Recovering the substantive nature of landscape', was also a piece with many intricacies that warranted careful reading beyond polemic. The minutiae have given rise to occasional confusion and, no doubt, misreading. The most recent expression of this, and probably also the most confronta-

20 E.g. Mitchell 1996, pp. 4–5, 27.
21 Mels 1999.

tional, was penned by Trevor Barnes, who reads in it a "conservative, anti-modernist, and maybe a bit anti-urban" nostalgia, relying on "black and white" notions of how an authentic landscape—the "*real* real"—was corrupted by modernist space. He claims that the substantive landscape argument furnishes a largely positivist outlook, which takes its object matter as a naïve given, to subsequently assert the authenticity of a prelapsarian place-world. From this "moral architecture of good and evil [...] that earlier ideal landscape from which we have fallen [...] becomes a bench-mark of comparison for other subsequently morally dubious landscapes".[22]

In my view, such a reading is deeply flawed, in particular when detecting a mistaken faith in *authenticity* (the notion of a once real and harmonious, now corrupted landscape that can be uncovered by positivist knowledge), and a *conservative* outlook (the idea that things were better then) in the argument. Textual evidence supporting this accusation is simply lacking. Moreover, there is a failure to recognize the context in which the substantive version appeared originally *and* to see what kind of work the substantive landscape intervention has further inspired.[23]

To recapitulate, the original context was one of worries about a certain type of postmodern work on landscape (including Barnes' own) that seemed to retreat into a world of deconstructing texts, discourse and vision.[24] In the trend to understand everything as discourse, studied with the help of visual and literary theory, with scholars finding themselves in a crisis of representation, much was lost. What was lost was not just a sense of material practice. Returning to landscape as "a blend of land and life, of physical and social morphologies" and not just settling for the ambition to "describe extended, pictorial views" or an "idea" seems, in hindsight, a quite undramatic call.[25] In doing so, the substantive landscape argument did not break new philosophical ground on the crisis of representation (interrogating our ability to really grasp the world as it is). Recovering the substantive landscape was, more innovatively I think, an effort to face the historical and contemporary realities of landscape as polity and place (political representation and the political landscape) rather than limiting the scope of research to aesthetic vision or textuality (the politics of representation).[26]

22 Barnes 2021, p. 407; see Olwig's 2021 response. Barnes targets Olwig's collection of essays in *The Meanings of Landscape*, which opens with a slightly revised version of the original article on the substantive landscape and provides key distinctions that resound thematically throughout the book (Olwig 2019, p. 20).

23 As presented in Jones 2006; Mels 2006; Olwig & Mitchell 2008.

24 E.g. Daniels & Cosgrove 1988; Daniels 1989; Barnes & Duncan 1992a; 1992b.

25 Cosgrove 2006, p. 50.

26 Mels 2016.

## HISTORICIZATION

My conclusion is that the central dispatch for which *substantive* was a useful vehicle was to reconstitute scholarly interest for the history and contemporaneity of landscape as deeply implicated in normative (moral, political) questions of law and justice. The substantive landscape questioned postmodern approaches, and particularly the thinned-out interest for landscape beyond texts and imagery, not only on philosophical grounds, but also based on the *historical* existence of landscape as lived and practised place and polity. At any rate, one looks in vain for any dramatic new intervention on a theory of truth or epistemology in the substantive landscape argument, let alone a positivist defence of the *real* real. Instead, I argue that the substantive intervention was largely a historicized reading of the political landscape grounded in discourses and practised experiences of justice and law.

More precisely, it referred to a pedigree of conceptions of lawfulness rooted in place-oriented customary law and social and bodily practices. This substantive landscape provided a counterpoint (with significant contemporary equivalents) to statutory conceptions of lawfulness that came to dominate since Renaissance times (that is, with the rise of capitalism). Attached to both of these conceptions of lawfulness were further moral or "ideological landscapes" of aesthetic and symbolic practices.[27] To study substantive landscapes, such actions of representation cannot be privileged over what the planner, civil engineer or farmer does with the landscape. Certainly, nothing in this effort should be confused with (romanticization of) a long-gone past.[28]

This historicization also redefined the "politics of landscape" as involving more than questioning forms of textual and graphic representation, and rekindled engagement with social and environmental *justice*, co-ordinating evidence and claim-making about landscape exploitation with normativity and moral positioning.[29] Developing critical knowledge of conservative moral agendas that sustain modern capitalism is clearly part of this.[30] In that sense I would contend that the essence of the substantive landscape version is not about unearthing a *real* real, but rather to unveil a *forgotten* real; forgotten, that is, particularly by scholars privileging landscape as a problem of aesthetic and symbolic representation.

27 Olwig 1984.
28 Mels & Setten 2007.
29 Przybylinski 2022.
30 Mels & Mitchell 2012.

## CUSTOM

It may be reasonable to say that the substantive landscape's real interest was not so much to solve the old crisis of representation, but to ameliorate conceptual confusion by recovering meanings and realities that had largely been lost to view. This is also why Olwig uses the word substantive, to allude to concrete histories of justice, lawfulness and practice, and not to express some naïve realism as Barnes seems to believe. In a similar misreading, Barnes finds the substantive landscape as denoting an "organic solidity" of sorts, forcing the substantive landscape into a tacit acceptance of the morally conservative conclusion that things were better then.[31] Such organic solidity may certainly afford different interpretations, but as a species of conservative thinking it arguably depends on accepting a flawed understanding of custom and community as *tradition* and, in a further manoeuvre, as *anachronisms*, lost to history.[32]

Contrary to this, Olwig's vantage point on customary practice and law builds on Marxist historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and Edward P. Thompson.[33] It insists on differences between the dynamic, constantly renegotiated, place-oriented practice of custom and the more rigid and spatially universalizing (reifying) tendencies of tradition. Granted, it is not at all easy to draw firm boundaries around the logic and practice of place-based custom on the one hand, and tradition and spatial power on the other hand. This would reify both sides. In Olwig's *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic*, the significance of this shifting relationship and their contradictions has been studied with impressive thoroughness.[34] In discussing legal history, however, Olwig seems to accept that these adversative forces mark more than an analytical distinction alone, useful for critical scrutiny. He argues that they inspired a divergence between modern common law, rooted in customary practice, and natural law, which he claims has all the while been deeply suspicious of custom. Hence, Olwig regards custom "as an enormous legal power that made it the foundation of common law and representative government".[35]

I am not entirely sure that "foundation" (not to be confused with Barnes' "organic solidity") is a suitable term in this context, because it suggests a grounding of sorts that may be hard to detect historically. Legal historians submit that the division between common law rooted in custom and natural (statutory) law is historically not

31 Barnes 2021, p. 407.
32 Barnes 2021, p. 406, refers to a "fallen landscape".
33 Hobsbawm 1983; Thompson 1993.
34 Olwig 2002.
35 Olwig 2021, p. 411.

readily tenable.[36] The constant throwing together of custom and tradition/invention, vividly teased out by Olwig, instead haunts the history of both common law and natural law. Certainly, "the theme of custom, along with that of nature, cuts across the *entirety* of the Western legal tradition from the Greeks to the aftermath of the French Revolution".[37] Given the considerable legal gravity of usage as a form of law, it seems more suitable to recognize that "custom as a social practice allowed for a strategic ambiguity", which was also selectively and tactically "fixed in statute or precedent".[38] This recognition has recently drawn scholarly attention to the protean discourse and practice of what David Bederman called "bad custom", revealing an authoritative sifting process sanctioned by royal government and church power.[39] I have in my work drawn attention to developments in the early modern Low Countries, where landscape unfolded in an intimate relationship between places of customary practice and their pictorial representation. The argument was that the pictorial and customary authority of *landschap* was mobilized as a strategic legal-political force to resist Spanish imperialism. But the Low Countries simultaneously, via Hugo Grotius, initiated the development of international law, a spinoff of natural law theory, instrumental to the naturalization of capitalist imperialism.[40] Under such circumstances, the tenuous ideological function of "good custom" seems too important to ignore. Perhaps it is more accurate, therefore, to think of custom as only *partly* living a life of its own in the interstices of a developing litigation (common law) and codification (natural law) supporting uneven spatial power relations. In terms of legal development, they seem historically to be thrown together, with a comprehensive ideological process as its foundation.

This notwithstanding, it may be argued that custom, not as an original, authentic, idealized place-bound practice, but as a social practice allowing for a "strategic ambiguity", can offer normative inspiration for more sustainable resource use and as a source of community justice. On that interpretation, within Olwig's vision of the substantive landscape "as a nexus of community, justice, nature and environmental equity", customary practice has a continuing significance resonating also with place-oriented work on environmental justice, just sustainability, public space, and the commons.[41]

In line with this non-anachronistic understanding of custom, the substantive version also highlighted landscape as a "contested territory": the subject of antiquarian curiosity no doubt, but one that also is as "pertinent today as it was when the term received

36 Perreau-Saussine & Murphy 2007.
37 Perron 2021, p. 1, emphasis added.
38 Perron 2021, p. 2.
39 Bederman 2010, p. 175.
40 Mels 2006.
41 Olwig 1996, pp. 630–631.

its modern scenic meaning at the end of the sixteenth century".[42] It is thus not primarily offering a lost "bench-mark of comparison for other subsequently morally dubious landscapes", as Barnes thinks.[43] It is offering an agenda that reaches beyond narrow debates about the *real* real, or the back-and-forth between territory and scenery, to enable the study of hard politicized struggles over community, environment and justice. It is therefore not accidental that, approaching the end of his article, Olwig warns against persisting "romantic ideas concerning the relation of culture to nature as expressed in the physical landscape", to instead accentuate the importance of class, community, culture, custom and law in developing a more substantive understanding of landscape and environmental justice.[44] Like "bad custom", it will be clear that any of these terms are potentially liable to completely incompatible ideological appropriations.

## COMMUNITY

How the substantive version has been accommodated in geographical research offers further contrast to reading it anachronistically. The late Denis Cosgrove, to give but one authoritative example, acknowledged the significance of substantive landscape as an important addition to his own influential interpretation of landscape as a distanced way of seeing. In an intriguing article on 'Modernity, community and the landscape idea', Cosgrove describes landscape as "a characteristically modern way of encountering and representing the external world". This modern idea of landscape—"the original synthesis of the territorial and the pictorial"—played a central role in "the characteristically modern question of 'community' in its spatial expression".[45] Historically, the graphic and pictorial were "layered over the affective, quotidian relationship of land and social life".[46] This did not erase landscape as a (pre-pictorial) place of fellowship and collective relationships with the physical land, although it did play a key part in the (often conservative) ideological assimilation of landscape into the scale of modern nationhood. It is perhaps tempting to immediately associate this with picturesque or sublime landscapes rather than modern urban environments.[47] However, moving to developments in 20th-century California, Cosgrove identifies some "noteworthy parallels" between exurban residential suburbs and the premodern substantive landscapes:

42 Olwig 1996, p. 631.
43 Barnes 2021, p. 407.
44 Olwig 1996, p. 645.
45 Cosgrove 2006, p. 52.
46 Cosgrove 2006, p. 55.
47 Mels 2020; Fälton & Mels 2024.

> These are self-regulating communities, quasi-independent politically from the major cities to which they are functionally attached, raising revenues and purchasing such public services as police, waste disposal, education, health and welfare, and developing customary local laws to regulate land uses and appearance. Land is a dominating concern in their community life, although it produces capital value and amenity rather than subsistence.[48]

For Cosgrove, the duplicity of landscape in places like this is largely in the way they, as community and scenery, obscure "a scale and rapacity of material consumption that threatens the sustainability of physical and bio-geographies and thus of dwelling".[49] While pinpointing and historicizing the substantive landscape in the modern suburb, Cosgrove thus casts a dark environmental shadow over community. One could add to such a fundamental concern, revealing "bad community" if you like, that masking the *production* of these landscapes is no less problematic than existing patterns of consumption.[50] But to say that the task of landscape scholars is "to exploit the ambiguities embedded in landscape, as dwelling and picture, to discover ways of understanding and engaging with its varied and always rich meanings" surely keeps things too equivocal.[51]

From a substantive landscape perspective, taking a closer look at such meanings and understandings is likely to raise questions of justice. After all, to speak of community, custom, and expressing worries about sustainability, as Cosgrove does, is to invoke claims to justice as an ingrained part of how the landscape is owned as property, treated as commodity, worked, planned and contested. Contrary to conservative nostalgia, it more properly unfolds the acute presence of crisis: a characteristic mark of *capitalist* modernity with its extractivist and expropriative exploitation of the landscape.

## EXTRACTIVISM

Seen as a landscape of capitalist modernity, Cosgrove's suburb with its duplicitous blend of community and imminent ecological disaster aligns to a pattern of crisis that has deepened over recent decades. In response to multiple crises facing the capitalist world today, attention to justice and the notion of a just transition has been signalled more frequently on the international sustainability agenda. The Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention can be regarded part of this, as more recently the

48 Cosgrove 2006, pp. 63–64.
49 Cogrove 2006, p. 64.
50 Duncan & Duncan 2004.
51 Cosgrove 2006, p. 64.

Global Goals and the European Green Deal.[52] Parts of these schemes seem to constitute a bulwark against exploitation of resources, including ambitions to safeguard landscape protection, develop green infrastructure and promote ecofriendly lifestyles. Meanwhile, other parts push for a rapid remaking of landscapes, also presented as responses to crises, further deepening environmental injustices of capitalist modernity. Thus, one of the ways out of what was narrowly dubbed "the subprime mortgage crisis" of 2007–2008, carrying with it a world food crisis, was by deepening an already ongoing crisis far from the epicentres of financial power: ploughing the landscape with extractivist vigour. This "solution"—promoting mining, monoculture plantations, geo-engineering, carbon offset projects and large-scale bioenergy as measures against the global climate crisis—was to inaugurate intensified commercial land development, often state supported, jeopardizing land rights, food and tenure security for millions in the Global South.[53]

Unsurprisingly, the Earth summit 2012, with 'The future we want' issuing forth from its deliberations, found that extractivism was at the heart of conflicts over indigenous rights and expressed deep concerns about a future unasked for by the many.[54] In terms of community and customary rights, they signal an ongoing development that increasingly leads to "the alienation and loss of common and indigenous rights in the landscape".[55] Meanwhile, in the Global North, the current rush to critical raw materials, energy solutions and forest resources in Sweden continues to accelerate the emergence of what Julian Agyeman has called an "equity deficit".[56] All parts of the green transition, these developments put additional pressure on already deeply compromised Sámi land rights, reindeer herding livelihoods and forest ecologies. It produces a moral landscape in which indigenous rights (including customary tenure) and claims to community justice remain profoundly marginalized. In the environmental production of mainstream sustainability, the landscape again displays duplicity, with the mystifying effects of greenwashing and the continuing intrusion of capitalist relations in everyday life.[57]

52 Council of Europe 2000; United Nations 2015; European Commission 2019.
53 Allan 2012.
54 Bartelmus 2013.
55 Olwig 2021, p. 410.
56 Agyeman 2013, p. 4; Cambou 2020.
57 Mels 2023.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have argued that the substantive landscape, as a framework of interpretation, was proposed neither to defend an uncritical celebration of traditional community values, nor to hark back on a geography that forgets about problems of representation and takes its object matter to be a naïvely given portion of reality. My view is that the notion of substantive landscape can rather be described as a heuristic for capturing the material, politically and socially lived qualities of landscape as implicated in contested expressions of justice, and its myriad ramifications for, inter alia, customary practice, community, nature and polity. Against anachronistic readings, this is always concerned with historicization, offering avenues to explore the many machinations of capitalist modernity, remaking the landscape as commodity, and to interrogate urgent contemporary issues such as the violation of use rights. Finally, against one-dimensional readings, it may be edifying to bear in mind that this allows for multiple versions of the substantive—all of which may continue to add layers to the politics of landscape in extractivist times.

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