

Sarah Sandler

I Want To Smell The Smoke Of Your Burnt Grass

Let's start by trying to describe what may be emerging, rather than what's established. Starting here provides a suitable derangement of the senses, a giddy hint that all that was solid can dissipate into air. Consider we have four brains, four fields comprising the entirety of human experience flowing from our limbic system to form a union with animal and territorial ancestors via organic matter and machine information, encompassing self and community.

Four brains and four fields of experiences through which to orbit refers to a remote North Western Australian Aboriginal community who corroborates their fragile symbiotic relationship with their surroundings this way. This community cultivates native sweet potato and sandalwood on their land, but who can say for how much longer. *I Want To Smell The Smoke Of Your Burnt Grass* attempts to describe what may be emerging here—a sticky engagement between non-human ancestors, organic matter, and capital's power of invention. Navigating the tensions that lie between Australian Aboriginal People's land-based self-determination, their aspirations for food sovereignty, and the corporate control of their plant species knowledge for the creation of capital, this video installation is the first stage of a larger speculative film work that's informed by the pre-colonial agricultural history of Australia.

Value production is all about the leaky and indeterminate way in which social knowledge gets turned into product (Tsing). Knowledge is the fuel that brings these universals and particulars together, a kind of abundant credit that can be captured and subsequently processed (Boutang). This striving makes possible commodity chains that operate with the hyper-efficiency of theft, and whilst developing new agricultural bio-resources, Australian research agencies were found guilty of biopiracy because of their appropriation of native plant knowledges from Aboriginal Australian People (Boutang). *Marsilea drummondii* (edible tuber) is one such pirated native plant species; both a mute witness and an instrumentalised agent that has taken part in commercial planting trials during the last decade, as interest in its economic potentiality rises.

This undesired attention directed towards the *Marsilea drummondii*, *Panicum decompositum* (millet), and *Microseris lanceolata* (yam daisy) has spawned a vanguard of resistance. Aboriginal Australian People are assembling against the paternalistic and patriarchal values that marginalise their communities, collaborating with academics and research institutions to propagate support for food sovereignty, an act of legislation that although not acknowledged by the (conservative) national government, works against the mistakes of today's capitalism, and its economic ideologies.

How can we own something of which we are supposedly composed, of which some peoples share a symbiotic relationship? At the heart of biopiracy is the question of ownership. Owning a constantly evolving organic organism such as a seed doesn't make sense, nor does assigning ownership to one person instead of a community of users. Rather than threaten the land-based self-determination of Aboriginal Australian People, there needs to be a change in the green revolution paradigm. Fortunately, what's slowly emerging is a louder collective voice, germinating in receptive soils as distinct horticulture and fire-stick farming trials take place nationwide, and native seed biodiversity again, shows signs of growth.

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Moulier-Boutang, Yann, 2012, *Cognitive Capitalism*

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, 2005, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*