Islands and Oceans

REIMAGINING SOVEREIGNTY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

SASHA DAVIS

Visions of Sovereignty

Dreams of Control versus the Limits of State Power

In the first summer of Donald Trump's presidency, two major news stories simultaneously saturated media reports in the United States. One of these was the rally of white supremacist groups in Charlottesville, Virginia, that caused the death of one counterprotester and two police officers. During the rally, right-wing participants called for a strengthening of U.S. sovereignty while criticizing globalists and chanting infamous Nazi slogans such as "blood and soil!" that claim a link between racial purity and the control of territory.

The other major news story of the summer was the exchange of fiery rhetoric between Trump and the government of North Korea. This war of words provoked North Korea into threatening to launch missiles toward the island of Guam in the western Pacific (known locally as Guåhan). In the media frenzy that followed, residents of Guåhan strongly—and repeatedly—emphasized that one of the main reasons they were being targeted was because of their nonsovereign political status as a military colony of the United States. With no effective political representation in either U.S. or global institutions, the 160,000 people living on Guåhan were essentially caught between two nuclear-armed powers. In response, residents of Guåhan held rallies emphasizing their desires for the establishment of local sovereignty and self-determination (Aguon 2017; Leon Guerrero 2017; Raymundo 2017).

These two examples demonstrate both how prominent, but also how malleable and different, calls for sovereignty have become in contemporary politics. While to many people sovereignty may appear to be a relatively straightforward concept that specifies how a nation-state controls its formally recognized territory, in practice the concept is rather ambiguous and flexible. For instance, in these two cases the calls for sovereignty are similar in that people in both places are aspiring for more control over a specific territory. In particular, they appear to be calling for the kind of power usually associated with a state. There

is an appeal for the creation, or strengthening, of an apparatus of power capable of managing other social processes, such as immigration flows, economic circulations, cultural mores, and external political powers (variously defined as imperialist, globalist, etc.).

Despite those similarities, however, these calls for sovereignty obviously have substantially different political bents. In the case of Guåhan, a group of people that has endured close to five hundred years of imperial and discriminatory formal political relationships has deployed the term to advocate for political representation (Guåhan has been occupied by the Spanish and Japanese as well as the United States). In Charlottesville, long-dominant groups have used the concept as a tool of exclusion to maintain superiority over perceived threats from both foreign influences and an increasingly diverse domestic population.

Sovereignty, then, is a term deployed by both stateless people seeking decolonization and by members of traditionally dominant social groups in the centers of global power struggling to reassert their socially privileged positions in the face of global processes and shifting ethnic mosaics. On the left side of the political spectrum, Indigenous groups, anti-imperialist social movements, and progressive anticapitalists have looked to enhancing sovereignty as a way to resist the exploitation of transnational capitalism or to break free from occupying imperial powers (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2011; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Hussey, and Wright 2014; Lutz 2009; Na'puti and Bevacqua 2015; Shigematsu and Camacho 2010; White 2016). Meanwhile, for political conservatives—from supporters of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union (Brexit) to Donald Trump devotees in the United States calling for immigration restrictions and border walls—protecting national sovereignty has become an increasing source of political anxiety (Patrick 2017). Donald Trump himself used the word *sovereignty* ten times in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 2017 to assert that nation-states should have greater power than global institutions such as the one he was speaking to. In September 2019, Trump unequivocally doubled down on his position when he said at the United Nations, "Wise leaders always put the good of their own people and their own country first. The future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots. The future belongs to sovereign and independent nations who protect their citizens, respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique" (Trump 2019).

Many political actors, it seems, are interested in sovereignty. What is less clear, however, is just what the term means and whether calls for sovereignty promote a politically progressive or conservative agenda. In short, increasing

sovereignty is a widely advocated political aim, but one that needs to be interrogated more closely. In this book, my aim is to pick apart how sovereignty functions in order to better understand the dangers, promise, and limitations of relying on it as a political strategy. Since sovereignty is, at its core, not just about political control but also about political control *over a space*, I examine the concept through an explicitly geographical perspective that looks at how power functions both in places and across space. To do this, I embed my theoretical discussions in grounded examples of contemporary political contests occurring today, especially in East Asia and the island Pacific region. As I describe in more detail throughout the book, when we pick apart just how sovereignty is constructed and how it functions in real-world environments and political contests, then traditional conceptualizations that define political sovereignty and state power as autonomous processes that stand above—and manage and order—other social practices begin to unravel. I will also question whether calls to strengthen sovereignty are the most ethical or effective political strategies in a fundamentally interconnected world.

As an alternative to focusing on sovereignty to solve social problems, I emphasize how states and other political actors are embedded in wider contexts that both construct and constrain their ability to act and govern. Using the metaphorical device of "islands and oceans," I emphasize how sovereignty is produced at both the local scale of everyday life (islands) and in the larger milieus of globally circulating ethics and material practices (oceans). By shifting the focus to these sites that are usually considered to be outside, below, or above the apparatus of the state—or even outside what we might usually categorize as the realm of the political—I aim to highlight alternative approaches to addressing social and environmental issues that can move us beyond merely advocating for more sovereignty. To tell this story, I will largely challenge traditional conceptualizations of sovereignty. However, since these traditional views still inform a great deal of political action and scholarly debate, I will first consider them in order to better understand critiques of them.

Conceptualizing Sovereignty

One reason invoking the term *sovereignty* can serve so many purposes across the political spectrum is it is as ambiguous in the academic realm as it is in popular politics. As Jens Bartelson has noted, the term is so central to discussions and debates in political science, international relations, international law, and political geography—and it is invoked so frequently in different con-

texts—that just what is meant by the term is a "a perennial source of theoretical confusion" (1995, 12). He adds, "In political discourse, centrality and ambiguity usually condition each other over time. A concept becomes central to the extent that other concepts are defined by it, or depend on it for their coherent meaning and use within a discourse. These linkages—whether inferential or rhetorical—saturate the concept in question with multiple meanings that derive from these linkages, which make it ambiguous; an ambiguity that is open to further logical and rhetorical exploitation" (Bartelson 1995, 13). The ambiguity of *sovereignty*, therefore, does not so much deter its use in political discourse as much as it enables it. In essence, sovereignty is what Leigh Star refers to as a "boundary object" (2010)—something over which there is much discussion, collaboration, and debate but little actual precise consensus.

That said, there is still widespread agreement about what characteristics can be used to define a traditional view of sovereignty. As Wendy Brown contends,

> A composite figure of sovereignty drawn from classical theorists of modern sovereignty, including Thomas Hobbes, Jean Bodin, and Carl Schmitt, suggests that sovereignty's indispensable features include supremacy (no higher power), perpetuity over time (no term limits), decisionism (no boundedness by or submission to law), absoluteness and completeness (sovereignty cannot be probable or partial), nontransferability (sovereignty cannot be conferred without cancelling itself), and specified jurisdiction (territoriality). If nation-state sovereignty has always been something of a fiction in its aspiration and claim to these qualities, the fiction is a potent one and has suffused the internal and external relations of nation-states since its consecration by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. (2010, 22).

While traditional approaches to sovereignty may accept many of those assumptions, there are of course still arguments about the finer points of how sovereignty functions. For instance, some theorists who still hold to these traditional notions of sovereignty note that there are different aspects of sovereignty, which must be examined separately. According to Stewart Patrick (2017) for instance, sovereignty can be disassembled into several facets, such as sovereignty-as-authority (the unfettered supremacy of state power vis-à-vis other actors), sovereignty-as-autonomy (the ability of state power to have independent freedom of action without external interference), and sovereignty-as-influence (the ability of a state to shape its own destiny within the international arena). Importantly, these different forms of sovereignty are sometimes in conflict or at least at cross-purposes. For instance, entering into

alliances or international agreements decreases autonomy but will likely increase influence.

Additionally, there are prominent debates within traditional approaches to sovereignty regarding the source from which the authority of a sovereign power derives. Does sovereign authority come from a popular mandate of the governed in which a given people enact self-rule? If so, what happens when immigration or colonial population transfer changes who the people in a given area are? Does sovereignty come from the ability of a sovereign to claim an exception and suspend normal law? Or does it arise from a theologically defined divine source? Perhaps it comes from an agreement among other sovereigns to not interfere with another sovereign's territory?

While these debates are important to consider, in this book my goal is not so much to engage in debates that accept the traditional presumptions that sovereignty is characterized by supremacy, decisionism, absoluteness, completeness, and formally bounded jurisdiction. Instead, I aim to tell a story that supports Brown's position that these characteristics of sovereignty "*are indeed fictions*" (2010, 22). Through a geographic exploration of how power and sovereignty function across the Asia-Pacific region, I hope to demonstrate that traditional assumptions about sovereignty are incorrect for the purposes of political analysis, and that holding on to these assumptions is ethically problematic and constrains effective political action. My critique of traditional forms of sovereignty therefore is threefold. I question that sovereignty works the way some scholars and political actors assume it does. I also question the political efficacy of relying on calls for a change or enhancement of formal political sovereignty. Furthermore, I question the morality of relying on conceptualizations of sovereignty that accept that governance over a place is an either/or dichotomy where the only question is *which* state reigns supreme.

A short vignette about an event that took place where I used to work can help further illustrate the traditional view of sovereignty that I am aiming to critique. As on most college campuses, at the front entrance to the University of Hawai'i at Hilo there is a flagpole. On most days the flagpole serves as a rather banal marker of the political order of the site (Anderson 1991). At the top of the pole flies the flag of the United States, while below it—in the subordinate position—sits the flag of the state of Hawai'i (which is also the flag of the previously independent kingdom of Hawai'i). One day in December 2014 a group of residents of Hawai'i Island (a.k.a. the Big Island) came to the flagpole to contest this symbol and the political arrangement that it represents. One activist blew a long note on a pū (conch shell), and the others lowered

the flags, removed the U.S. flag, and then raised the Hawaiian flag alone. The group stated that their rationale for this action was that Hawai'i had been illegally annexed to the United States and that the sovereignty of the Hawaiian Kingdom over the islands had never officially been ceded.[1] U.S. control over the island chain was therefore best characterized as an unjust occupation.

Even if the group of activists participating in this particular event was rather small—less than a dozen people—this kind of ceremonial protest is not uncommon in Hawai'i. There are many people in in this state who question U.S. sovereignty over the islands. There are several reasons for this, both historical and contemporary. There are many ways in which U.S. control of the island chain is a contested project, from the manner in which the United States came to claim sovereignty over the islands (through an overthrow of the independent government in 1893 and its annexation by the United States against majority public opinion in 1898) to the ways in which the government in Washington, DC, treats the islands today (Akaka et al. 2018).

On the surface, the taking down and replacing of a flag demonstrates a binary debate: either the United States has complete sovereignty over the islands *or* a Hawaiian entity does. While there appears to be a contest over *who* should have sovereignty, there does not appear to be much of a debate over the *way* that sovereignty operates. However, as I will discuss in more detail, there is much more going on here (and in the actions of sovereignty movements across the region) than just contesting *who* has sovereignty. Some of that nuance is not always immediately apparent. It also may be lacking entirely from political debates in other contexts where sovereignty can commonly be portrayed as a totalizing form of power over a particular territory. Frequently, if a governing apparatus (usually a state) is seen as having sovereignty, it carries the connotation that the state has complete control over what goes on in a given space. In fact, dictionary definitions, such as the one in *Merriam-Webster*, define *sovereignty* as "*supreme* power especially over a body politic" and "freedom from external control: *autonomy*" (emphasis added).

Using the term *sovereignty* therefore frequently assumes that in any given place there is some unitary apparatus of power that has political control to the exclusion of other actors. As noted above, events on Guåhan and in Charlottesville demonstrate that the traditional view of sovereignty still saturates the imagination of political movements across the political spectrum—within imperial states as well as within Indigenous movements. Blocking the sovereignty of a foreign power, bolstering the sovereignty of one's own nation against transnational economic flows and processes, or replacing an occupying sovereignty with a local one—these are all common aims of political

movements that share this basic conceptualization that political sovereignty involves the exercise of a supreme and autonomous power that is capable of managing and purifying the complex social field. In other words, some believe that sovereignty *stands above* the messy tangle of economic and cultural relations. Calls for sovereignty that accept this view of power tend to follow two scripts. One calls for more state power because the mess of complex social relations seems out of control and dangerous (this would be, for example, a staple of recent right-wing arguments in North America and Europe). The other views current state power as the problem and calls for resistance via a form of autonomous sovereignty that will carve out a space, stand above current social relations, and order things differently.

What if, however, the traditional assumptions about sovereignty are not accurate? What if the governance of a space by any state is anything but unitary, autonomous, and mutually exclusive? What if control in a place is actually much more fragmented, contested, partial, hybridized, and woven from threads that emanate from different places and actors? What if there are other ways to imagine sovereignty? What might the implications be for the strategies and tactics of political action and social change?

Islands and Sovereignties

As the quote by Wendy Brown explicitly contends, the traditional view of sovereignty may be popular, but it is also a fiction. My goal in this book is to use grounded examples of politics and social activism in the Asia-Pacific region not only to demonstrate how traditional views of sovereignty are fictions but also to explore how different conceptualizations of sovereignty could inform movements for the creation of more just political processes. To do this I use a geographical approach that combines theoretical considerations of social processes with research experiences in specific locations across Asia and the Pacific. My research approach is geographical in two senses. First, I insist on taking academic concepts of how sovereignty supposedly operates and examining whether these theories accurately portray what is going on in particular places. Second, I focus particular attention on the spatial components of sovereignty. Sovereignty, of course, is not just about power: it is also about the way that power flows across space and covers particular territories. Therefore, focusing on the spatiality of sovereignty—and drawing on other spatial concepts, such as territory, enclosure, jurisdiction, property, and imperialism—offers a useful perspective that can show some of the flaws in traditional views

of sovereignty, as well as clarify the strengths and limitations of invoking sovereignty as a remedy to processes of colonialism, exploitation, and domination in world affairs.

The particular study sites that I discuss in this book are ones in which I have done research over the past seventeen years. These research sites are on islands in the Pacific and on the rim of Asia, but I completed the book in the United States during the Trump administration's ascension to state power. The resulting analysis comes from established research methods such as semistructured interviews and participant observation,[2] but it is also formed from an urgency to develop an effective political response to the continued colonialism and militarization of the Asia-Pacific region as well as the rise of a xenophobic regime in the United States that frequently invokes the strengthening of state sovereignty as a means for creating a more nationalistic and racially exclusionary corporatocracy.

As for the Asia-Pacific focus, this book will specifically build on my research endeavors between 2002 and 2019. During that time I completed my doctoral studies in the Marshall Islands and then conducted research on militarization, environmental issues, contemporary colonialism, geopolitics, tourism development, and social movements during multiple visits to Guåhan, the Federated States of Micronesia (specifically Wa'ab, or Yap Island), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (Saipan and Tinian), Palau (Koror/Babeldaob), Okinawa, Korea (Jeju Island and Demilitarized Zone), Japan (Fukushima prefecture and Hiroshima), China (Sichuan Provence), Tibet (Lhasa), and the Philippines (Subic Bay / Olongapo; see maps 1 and 2). I also had two stints living, teaching, and doing research in Hawai'i (on O'ahu and Hawai'i Island). For the sake of grounding the theoretical narratives, each chapter focuses on a particular island or group of islands. In this introduction I use Hawai'i Island and Bikini Atoll (in the Marshall Islands) as examples, while I primarily reference events in Okinawa for chapter 1. In chapters 2 and 3, the islands of the Micronesia region are the primary sites of discussion. In chapter 4, islands in South Korea (Jeju Island), Okinawa, Hawai'i, and Puerto Rico are the anchoring locations for discussion. Chapter 5 then aims to integrate the discussions from the previous chapters and serves as more of an exploration—or a how-to perspective—on the way a more nuanced view of sovereignty can inform alternative political practices in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

There are many reasons why I focus my discussion of sovereignty on the often-overlooked islands of the Pacific and Asian littoral. First, this is a criti-

MAP 1. Island groups of the northern Pacific. Map by the author.
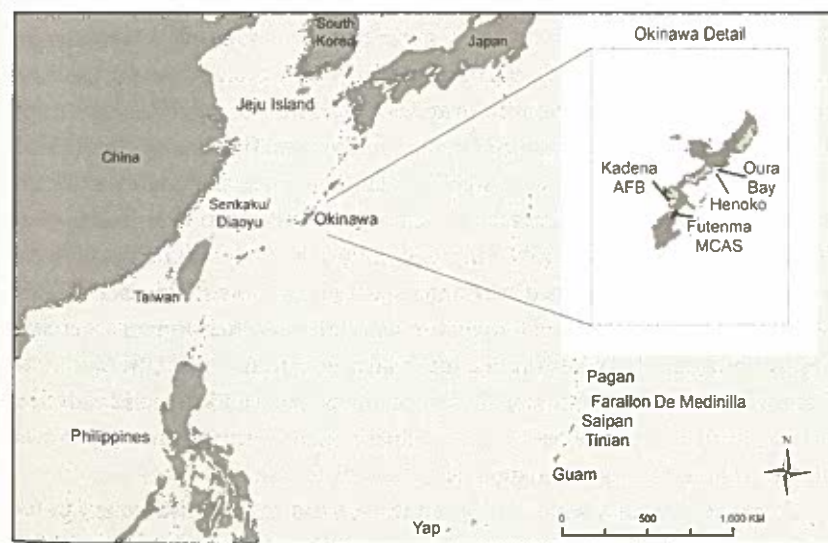
MAP 2. Key locations in the western Pacific discussed in the book. Lighter gray areas of Okinawa inset map are U.S. military installations. Map by the author.

cal strategic region where several geopolitical rivalries have been brewing. The United States–China rivalry may be the most obvious political contest, and one that frames much of the geopolitical maneuvering in the region, but there are other tensions over sovereignty in the area, such as that between Japan and China (and Taiwan) over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands; between China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, and Malaysia in the South China Sea; between Taiwan and China over the status of Taiwan; between South Korea and Japan over Dokdo/Takeshima Island; and between North Korea and South Korea. Second, even outside the specific flashpoints or contested islands, these are places where global military and economic giants (particularly China and the United States, but also Australia, Japan, Taiwan, and others) are currently jockeying for influence and where colonialism and occupation are present realities. This is also a region where local political allegiances between island locales and external great powers are in flux.

A second reason for grounding my discussion of sovereignty with examples from this region is that these are also places where formal sovereignty is anything but straightforward, and where colonialism is a contemporary reality. There are disputes not only between great powers in the region but also between these outside powers and local movements for more self-determination. These are places where local independence movements are important political actors and where formal political statuses are still unsettled. This region still has UN-designated colonies (Guåhan), commonwealths (the Northern Mariana Islands), freely associated states (Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands), places claimed by larger powers but that are functionally independent (Taiwan), and culturally distinct (and formerly independent) entities absorbed into larger states (Hawai'i and Okinawa).[3] These places have also experienced frequent reorientations of their formal sovereignties by being handed off from one imperial power to the next (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Palau, for instance, have been ruled by Spain, then Germany, then Japan, and then the United States in a span of less than 125 years).

Third, as chapter 3 will detail, even though many of the Micronesian territories are today politically linked to the United States, many of the growing economic influences come from Asia (particularly from China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea). The fact that the locus of formal political power in this region has been Washington, DC, but that economic influences come from very different places helps demonstrate just what role economic processes have in weaving webs of influence in place. In other words, an examination of how different kinds of social processes entwine in place shows us how local-scale

contests over political sovereignty are entangled with grander-scale political and economic processes. In turn, we will also see how these supposedly local contests reverberate back across the region and affect emerging patterns of global politics and international relations. This analysis will therefore demonstrate the ways in which processes we might perceive as happening at local *or* global scales are actually more fluid multiscale processes in which the local and global are quite entwined.

A fourth reason for the Pacific focus in this book is that for decades social movements and scholars in the Pacific region have been at the forefront of pointing out the flaws in traditional views of sovereignty. While the above vignette about lowering a flag in Hilo may appear to characterize Hawaiian movements as taking a traditional view of sovereignty, that is far from the case. What Indigenous sovereignty movements such as those in Hawai'i have done is demonstrate different and innovative ways of thinking beyond simplified traditional Western versions of sovereignty. By examining how landscapes can be thought of as actors in their own right (rather than merely canvases for human action), how power can operate differently, and how interconnection is woven into place, scholars in the Pacific region have demonstrated how sovereignty is *anything but* an autonomous process that floats above and manages the economy, the land, the water, and culture (Aguon 2005, 2006; Akaka et al. 2018; Alexander 2016; Diaz 2011; Frain 2017; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Hussey, and Wright 2014; Kajihiro 2013; Louis 2017; Natividad and Kirk 2010; Oliveira 2014; Perez 2014; Trask 1999). As Hawaiian concepts of sovereignty such as *ea* extol, there is no sovereignty separated out from larger hybridized environmental and cultural processes (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Hussey, and Wright 2014). This critique is one that scholars and activists—Indigenous and nonindigenous—can apply to understanding sovereignty in broader contexts.

These Pacific examples, therefore, are apropos for examining sovereignty not because of their unique qualities but because the tensions and acute debates over sovereignty in the region more easily lay bare how sovereignty works as a process on these islands and elsewhere. The flexible, contested, colonized, graduated, hybridized, and debated forms of sovereignty in the region bring to the visible surface what is happening in more subtle ways in other places, too. The point of view I take in this book, therefore, is to stand on these islands, look outward, and examine how threads of power coming from various directions and centers of global power are weaving together in these places. My goal here is not to speak for Indigenous persons or native movements on these islands but rather to listen to them and combine their insights with other critiques of the universality of traditional views of sov-

ereignty. By doing so I hope to examine how sovereignty has functioned in places within and outside the region. While I will detail the way foreign powers—especially the United States and China—view these islands on their contested imperial margins, the majority of the sections in this book flip this perspective around and attempt to explore what the imperial powers mean to the islands. I conclude the book by clarifying what the experiences of these places can tell us about how sovereignty functions in the centers of power. While it may be more common to take mainland (European, Asian, or North American) examples of political processes and then apply them to realms deemed to be peripheral, I take the opposite tack here.

Geographies of Power, Part One: Sovereignty contra Flows?

Although in this study I use geographic methods to untangle the operation of sovereignty, geographical representations of power have in fact strengthened the myth that sovereignty is unitary, autonomous, and mutually exclusive (Flint 2016; Ó Tuathail and Dalby 1998). As most common world maps demonstrate, the world is typically represented as a mosaic of solid-colored countries where one government rules one space, and the government of a neighbor rules another. A viewer of a typical world map may easily assume that inside the monochromatic shapes everything is ordered by a unitary power that controls all that occurs inside the country and whose influence stops at the border. Map after map reconfirms in our perceptions, as well as in the world, the territorial outlines of modern countries. We see where red country A ends and blue country B begins.

More recently, however, geographers have demonstrated that this is far from an accurate picture of how governance over space functions. As John Agnew has convincingly shown, to view countries in this simplistic way is to fall into a "territorial trap" (Agnew 2005). A government's control is hardly total within a country's internal territory and it frequently does not end at its official borders. This is particularly true for countries that have been the perpetrators or targets of colonialism. Take, for example, the United States. Where does its sovereignty end? The continental margins? In the fifty states (including Alaska and Hawai'i)? What about Puerto Rico, Guåhan, and American Samoa? What about the U.S. military bases in Okinawa, Germany, Diego Garcia, Guantanamo, and elsewhere? Furthermore, there are holes in the U.S. government's control even within its official territory. From officially recognized dis-

tinct political zones such as Native American reservations to unofficial areas where it is difficult to make pronouncements in Washington, DC, effective—the rangelands of the American West, urban neighborhoods with strong animosity toward the dominant society, and a university in Hawai'i where people lower the U.S. flag and raise the Hawaiian one—a quick look at U.S. sovereignty shows that it does not end at the formal borders, and varies from place to place within it.

This spatial ambiguity and unevenness of power demonstrates a key distinction in discussions of sovereignty. Namely, that it can be characterized as either "formal sovereignty" (the space over which a state has official, internationally recognized rights to rule) or "effective sovereignty," which denotes where a state (or other entity) has an *actual ability* to direct what is happening on the ground (Agnew 2005, 2009; Pasternak 2017). The form and spatiality of this latter conceptualization of sovereignty is quite different from the former. Formal sovereignty may be relatively easy to map, but effective sovereignty is a much more slippery entity. Just where a state has actual control (and to what degree that control is resisted), what things a state has control over and what things it does not in a particular space, and where subnational or transnational actors hold political sway over territory instead: mapping these more nuanced aspects of power is a more complex and ambiguous endeavor.[4] Agnew (2005, 445) does, however, construct a typology of "sovereignty regimes" to categorize the different effective sovereignties of states. He categorizes states as either classic (a strong central state authority and consolidated territorial control), integrative (a weaker state authority but still with a consolidated control over territory), globalist (a strong central authority but with ill-defined boundaries of sovereignty—typified by the United States, with its propensity to project power far outside its formal borders), or imperialist (a weak state with low ability to control its territory, such as islands that are on the *receiving end* of imperialism and transnational processes).

This typology shows that while the formal sovereignties of all countries may be *officially* equal in terms of international relations, their actual abilities to project power over their territories (and beyond them) are quite different. As Stephen Krasner (1999) asserts, sovereignty can be framed as "organized hypocrisy" where stronger states regularly violate the sovereignty of weaker ones while portraying their own sovereignty as sacrosanct. Stronger states *may* respect the sovereignty of other countries, but only so far as it suits their own nationalist desires. Former U.S. secretary of defense James Mattis provided a telling example of this point of view when resigning over a spat with Donald Trump. Mattis protested Trump's denigration of U.S. allies not

because the allies deserved respect in general (or to further a universal order of peace, human rights, or even unfettered trade and capital accumulation) but because collecting allies allows the United States to further its own self-centered security agenda. Mattis stated, "While the US remains the indispensable nation in the free world, we cannot protect our interests or serve that role effectively without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies. . . . We must do everything possible to advance an international order that is most conducive to *our* security, prosperity and values" (2018; emphasis added).

Military strategists and scholars are not the only ones, of course, who have noticed that effective control over space is more complex than formal sovereignty would suggest. Many political actors, commentators, and citizens have noted that states do not always control everything they want in the international realm, or even within their borders. The spatial disjuncture between formal and effective sovereignties can be portrayed as evidence that something is wrong with the functioning of a political apparatus (usually a state). A state unable to control its official territory is frequently viewed as a problem or, at worst, as a failed state in need of intervention. A state unable to manage actors within its borders, or the effects of flows across its borders (whether it be flows of people, information, capital, or trade), is portrayed as a political problem in need of remedy (O'Tuathail 2000; Sparke 2007; Patrick 2017).

Because this is not an unusual circumstance, there is no shortage of scholarship, or political rhetoric, addressing how transnational processes undermine the ability of states to control their borders or the markets within their borders.[5] It has become somewhat cliché in studies of global society to note that there is a battle of sorts between territorial-based state powers supposedly fixed in space and the power of economic (and other) flows that challenge or overwhelm state power (Arrighi 2005; Harvey 2007). In these narratives the sovereignty of a state is undermined as it struggles to capture or block these mobile flows of footloose capital, human migration, and instantaneous communication. Meanwhile discussions of network geopolitics focus on the tensions between sovereign control over a place and the need for a society to participate in transnational circulations for economic (and political) survival (Flint 2016; Foucault 2007). While the problem of maintaining sovereignty in the face of mobilities and circulations is a centuries-old dynamic conundrum, it also comes up as a source of intense political anxiety over globalization today.

This emphasis on the logic of economic flows versus territorial-based political control is an important perspective that helps undermine the idea that sovereignty is unitary, autonomous, and mutually exclusive. Since this perspective shows that there are multiple influences in a given country's space that do not originate from within it, it undermines the idea that social processes are ruled from a unitary domestic source. In other words, states are clearly not the only political actors. Instead, a host of corporations, international institutions, religious organizations, crime syndicates, unions, social movements, paramilitaries, and other actors also take part in deciding what happens. It also shows that transnational economic processes can overwhelm a state's ability to govern its territory. For instance, when in the 1980s and 1990s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced Jamaica, Thailand, Indonesia, and many other countries to accept harsh "structural adjustment policies" in order to receive loans to stay financially solvent, these were clear cases of the diminishment of state sovereignty, as governments were forced to cut spending on domestic programs—a political decision many government leaders would rather have not made (Harvey 2007). Thus the authority of nation-states, even within their formal borders, can be limited and circumscribed by transnational processes. This diminishment of power does not represent an entire "hollowing out" of the state or complete *negation* of its power but rather demonstrates that there are other actors who wield effective sovereignty within the territory of a given state. And it seems to have increased as a result of greater transnational connection in the past decades. As Jens Bartelson notes, "So while the sovereign state certainly has not withered away, much of its former authority has been dispersed to other levels of governance, above as well as below the institutions of central government" (2006, 466).

One aspect of these analyses of globalization is that they tend to represent territorially based political power and economic flows as not just oppositional *sources* of power but as entities that have different ways of functioning within and across space: economic processes that flow and circulate, versus state power that barricades, limits, and blocks. This view has definitely affected political views on both the political left and right. Leftist activists have long railed against the negative effects (economic, environmental, and social) of an unbridled neoliberal globalization and have called for the sovereignty of states to be strengthened to block free trade agreements, maintain government spending on social programs, and rein in and tightly regulate the movements of transnational capital (Klein 2007; Sparke 2013). In this way activists have portrayed the exercise of more sovereign power by states (which have—in some places—at least ostensibly democratic institutions that must follow the will of at least part of a populace) as a way to check the rapacious and clearly undemocratic processes of global capital accumulation. In the 2010s, however, it was the political right in the United States and United Kingdom that was able

to elect governments committed to increasing their nations' sovereignty in order to manage transnational flows. While the right deployed a similar critique of the negative effects of transnational economic processes (namely that global flows hurt local economies), this was mixed with strong elements of xenophobia, racism, and religious intolerance that fed anxieties that foreign influences and immigrants were threatening a supposed national or racial unity within the countries. It was also not just elections in 2016 in the United Kingdom and United States in which sovereignty became a heightened issue. Many European countries witnessed nationalist resurgences while immigrants were increasingly blocked from coming into Europe across the Mediterranean (Jones 2016). In Asia and the Pacific, Australia continued to block and detain would-be immigrants, while tensions increased between Japan, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and others over long-standing disagreements on control of maritime spaces in the East and South China Seas, which serve as conduits for global trade (Baldacchino 2016; Mountz 2013; Loyd, Mitchell-Eaton, and Mountz 2016).

In the face of the challenges posed by these flows, political actors tend not to think about sovereignty differently but rather to dig in and *reassert* the primacy of political sovereignty precisely because it is imagined to be a supreme and *autonomous* power that is capable of managing the threats of these mobilities. These appeals to nation-state sovereignty as if it were *the* remedy to the ills of global flows are based on assumptions that state power can be brought to bear to effectively manage flows in a decisionist manner. Many believe that there is a sovereign (as traditionally defined) who has supreme power and that whatever the sovereign decides will become the reality of the land. Donald Trump and his supporters, for instance, may imagine that they can build a wall on the southwest border of the United States and that flows between the United States and Latin America will cease simply because the state said so. This is clearly not the case. Walls are ineffective at stopping many of the flows they claim to be able to stop, and they also tend to be evidence of a diminishing and beleaguered state sovereignty (Brown 2010; Jones 2016, 2019).

This drive for the reassertion of state sovereignty, however, is applied not only to land spaces but increasingly to other kinds of spaces as well. As geographers have been noticing, the logics of enclosure and territorialization are being applied to all sorts of nonland spaces (Peters, Steinberg, and Stratford 2018). In this book I will look at the ocean as frontier and the way that territorializing logics and sovereignty claims are being applied to the seas—such as competing claims in the South China Sea and logics of resource capture in the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) around islands (Steinberg 2018). This

drive to assert sovereign power over traditionally open spaces also applies to ice caps, seafloors, and even outer space (as exemplified by Trump's plans, announced in 2018, for an armed U.S. "space force"). These assertions of state sovereignty over traditionally nonstate spaces such as oceans and outer space (even when these claims risk provoking conflict) appear to be attempts to alleviate states' anxieties about their perceived lack of control in global common spaces. Like border walls, these territorial grabs do not indicate political strength but rather make visible a diminishing and anxious state sovereignty.

When these crises of sovereignty are seen across a wide array of circumstances—from the United States to Europe, and from Palestine to the western Pacific—it is not just the sovereign power of a particular government that ought to be brought into question. While that does occur, what also erodes is *the general idea* that sovereign political power operates the way some assume it should. When a supposed total, supreme, exclusive power over territory is shown to be anything but, it demonstrates not just the failings of a particular political machine but the failings of the whole ontological basis of the concept of sovereignty itself.

Geographies of Power, Part Two: Colonized Places and the Limits to Sovereignty

While the examples of threatened sovereignty in strong states in North America, Europe, and the Middle East are important for an analysis of sovereignty, we would miss some critical points if we focused only on states such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, China, and Russia. This is why a discussion of islands in the Pacific can be helpful for getting a broader picture of the limits of sovereignty—both as a supposed attribute of states, and as a blueprint for decolonization. As mentioned above, sovereignties in the Pacific (especially Micronesia) tend to be partial, hybridized, and still deeply entwined with U.S. colonial projects. Also—using Agnew's ideas of "sovereignty regimes"—clearly the islands of the Pacific fall into the "imperial sovereignty" regime in which they have been subordinated to other powers (2005). A view from this other end of the sovereignty spectrum can shed light on how sovereignty functions more generally.

While I will delve into other examples more fully throughout this book, it is useful to briefly examine one case here to demonstrate what I mean about the limits to sovereignty in this Pacific context. In my previous research on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands I examined how this former nuclear weapons

test site was turned into a tourism attraction (J. S. Davis 2005a, 2005b, 2007; S. Davis 2015). Tourism activities went on for a number of years in the 1990s and early 2000s and consisted of visitors—largely from the United States, Japan, Europe, and Australia—scuba diving among old warships sunk during the initial two atomic tests that took place on the atoll in 1946. The atoll was (and still is) contaminated with radioactivity from the twenty-three nuclear tests the United States conducted there between 1946 and 1958, and while there is still debate over the safety of the atoll for long-term habitation, most see short tourist visits as safe (J. S. Davis 2005b).

The atoll itself is under the direct political control of the Bikinian government based on Majuro Atoll in the Marshall Islands, and land use (and nearby sea use) decisions are largely up to the Bikinian government council. The council operated the dive tourism enterprise itself and decided to distribute the profits of the operation relatively evenly throughout the community (unlike what most private tourism companies would have done). Between formal political control and the direct ownership of the primary economic activity, it might seem the sovereignty of the local government over life on the atoll was essentially total. On closer examination, however, one sees that this was not the case. There were many external factors and flows that influenced and constrained the council's decisions. For one, there were the radioactive particles and how they migrated through the ecology of the atoll. As "actants" in their own right, these particles—and their complex movements within ocean and terrestrial ecologies—had tremendous effects on whether people could live there, where they could go, and so on (Latour 1993; Steinberg and Peters 2015). Also, even though the government itself ran the tourism operation and had control over land use decisions, it could not simply do whatever it wanted if it hoped to run a *successful* tourism operation. Tourists would come and spend money there only if the experience matched their expectations. This exerted pressure to make sure the island looked like the tropical tourism paradise of Western cultural imaginations. This even extended to discussions about whether a repatriated Bikinian community would harm the tourist aesthetic of the deserted island that many tourists said they craved (J. S. Davis 2007). Eventually, the tourism operation ceased most of its operations—even though the local government wished to continue it—due to a slew of things outside the government's control. As stated on the Bikinians website, "In 2008 the Council had to close their operation due to local airline reliability issues, soaring energy costs and U.S. stock market conditions that impacted the local government budget."[6]

In this brief example we can see just how circumscribed control is for the Bikinian people and its government (even over an uninhabited island supposedly under its complete sovereign control when it comes to land use and economic activities). In this case, many of the important social and environmental factors affecting the atoll would still escape control even if territorial sovereignty were stronger or more forcefully asserted. Too many of the flows that matter escape the government's control. An island government such as the Bikinian's finds itself in a position in which it may have formal sovereignty and managerial oversight of its own (tourism) resources but not have "sovereignty over the financial-technical-logistical *means of producing and selling* those resources within the context of a competitive world market" (Emel, Huber, and Makene 2011, 73; emphasis added). If we add in environmental factors such as the movement and decay of radioactive particles and the dangers presented by anthropogenic climate change and sea level rise, this lack of control becomes even more apparent. All that the government here could do was make decisions that attempted to manage the place and its people *in response to* these flows of international tourist desire, the migrations of radioactive particles, and rising tides. They could do very little directly about the nature of the flows themselves.

The lessons that can be learned from this modern Pacific example are not all that different from those that Michel Foucault (2007) described in the walled cities in medieval Europe. Namely, Foucault posited that an apparatus of sovereignty, if it is to succeed at governance at all, cannot just make whatever decisions its leaders want. Instead, it must make decisions that are attuned to the larger milieu of economic and environmental flows (the "reality," as Foucault puts it) in which it sits. Yes, all entities can affect these larger milieus *to some degree* in that the larger milieu is constructed from a massive aggregation of prior decisions—such as explained in Anthony Gidden's (1984) theories on structuration—but these changes are incremental and occur within the larger existing processes that construct the milieu. The point here is that no state, strong or weak, has the decisionist, autonomous, and supreme power that traditional theorists such as Hobbes and Schmitt may attribute to it.

If this is true, what does this say about pursuing a strategy of strengthening sovereignty as a solution to the perceived perils of globalization, imperialism, or the influence of mobile subjects (whether agents of empire, migrants, or refugees)? What if an incomplete sovereignty challenged by global flows is not a mistake or a malfunction of governance that needs fixing? What if total

state sovereignty, as traditionally defined, is just a dream of state power that has been strived for but has never actually been realized by any state actor in any era? If that is the case, should we who want to challenge imperialism, occupation, transnational capitalism, hierarchy, or domination dream the same dream? Perhaps what we need to question is not just whether we should be using existing state apparatuses for change (creating change from within existing governments). Maybe we need to question using the state *form* that insists that power must be exercised as a unitary, supreme, territorially exclusive, hierarchical form of governance. Is there something to the point made by Adam Grydehøj and Zuon Ou that "to fight on the grounds of territory are to accept the state's rules of engagement, to acquiesce to coloniality" (2017, 70)? Or, as Grydehøj and Ou add using Audre Lorde's well-known quote, are those invoking sovereignty forgetting the dictum that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house?" (quoted in Grydehøj and Ou 2017, 70).

While sovereignty is an important concept to grapple with in colonial situations, perhaps we should not limit debates on decolonization and self-determination to questions of how to reassert the primacy of some different sovereign power that is still assumed to be autonomous, mutually exclusive, and supreme. To do so may be falling into a "state trap." Instead, perhaps we ought to recognize that this is not how power works. This would require that we strategize more about how to deal with and influence sovereignties (plural) that are fundamentally hybridized. What if we *accept* that control in any given space is profoundly plural, partial, contested, and shot through with influences emanating from across the world? Furthermore, what if we recognize that territorial state power is not just some kind of fixed bulwark that opposes transnational economic, political, or cultural flows within a containerized national space but something that *itself flows*?

In many ways, academic analyses of political sovereignty that portray it as operating in *opposition* to economic flows reinforces an inaccurate view of sovereign power. While these analyses do recognize that political control is contested by nonstate actors and by processes that flow across borders, they also tend to incorrectly reify sovereignty as something spatially fixed and mutually exclusive within the formal borders of a country. Increasingly, however, many geographers, social scientists, political activists, and philosophers have performed more nuanced analyses of how political control functions in space. As Brown emphasizes, "Sovereignty is never simply held and wielded, but from the beginning *circulates*" (2010, 57; emphasis in original). Other theorists take this one step further and note that sovereignty is not an already made thing that fills a determined territory or even a mobile thing that arises in one place

and is then projected into other spaces. Instead, it is more accurately viewed as an active and continual process—a *performance*—that not only reaches across space but rearranges space itself (Allen 2011; Anderson et al. 2012; Dewsbury 2011; Featherstone 2011). Following these theorists, I aim to show examples of how sovereignty is not as geographically solid or as fixed as it appears. Instead sovereignty flows just as much as the mobile processes it is said to rein in and contest.

Everything Flows:
Objects, Persons, Places, and Power as Assemblages

Unlike traditional views of sovereignty, many of the recent theories regarding how power works across space take as a given that the world—in terms of human and environmental processes—is an intensely interconnected and shifting place (Agnew 2009; Deleuze 1998; Steinberg and Peters 2015). This point, while at one level fairly obvious, cannot be emphasized enough. The following chapters go into great detail about the myriad ways in which entities of all sorts are *assemblages*: things created and reproduced in webs of interactions with other people, ideas, and places (Deleuze 1998). In this section, however, I want to introduce some of the key points of these perspectives in order to discuss their implications for understanding how sovereignty operates in space. The key point of these theoretical perspectives—sometimes labeled under the banner of "assemblage theory" that stems from perspectives of relational ontology—is the insistence that everything is quite literally constructed out of relationships with other things. This viewpoint creates serious problems for views of sovereignty that emphasize that states, or any other political actor, can be autonomous.

This questioning of the autonomy of political power has disquieting implications for those of us (myself included) who have long advocated for decolonization, greater local political autonomy, sustainability, and self-determination. While the perspectives I present in this section critique the political strategies of the political right in the imperial centers that have been clamoring to build walls and maintain cultural stasis in the face of globalizing influences, it will also appear at first glance to pull the ontological rug out from under decolonization struggles and the efforts of those striving to create spaces autonomous from global capitalism. While reimagining how sovereignty functions can destabilize many kinds of political endeavors, my aim is not to condemn those that are trying to get more control over their lives or to criticize those building

a more equitable and peaceful world. Instead, my goal is to explore new possible avenues for realizing those goals given that disconnection, air-tight borders, and unfettered political autonomy are impossible dreams born of theories that do not adequately address just how power actually functions in place and across space.

I contend that we ought to think of sovereignty as a relationally constructed assemblage. What, however, does that mean? To answer that question, we have to examine some of the theoretical positions of relational ontology.[7] While some readers will already be familiar with this perspective, I realize that some may not. It seems then that a brief digression can clarify some of the central points I am trying to make.

Simply put, relational ontology posits that all things—places, people, objects, states, ideas, and so on—are literally constructed though their interactions with other things. Without interaction, these things do not exist. Before I move on to examine more abstract concepts such as how state sovereignty is constructed relationally, examples of some everyday objects can be useful here. Take, for example, an ordinary palm tree. What is this tree? More traditional philosophical approaches, sometimes referred to as "object ontology," would posit that the tree has some kind of essence. Its genetic code is perhaps its essence, and the effects of climate, topography, soil nutrients, pests, and so on might affect it and alter the tree's basic essence. Relational ontology, however, would say that the tree has no essence. It would suggest that the palm tree is an amalgamation of other elements *related* to each other in a particular way. From this perspective the tree is the combination of its genetic code, the soil nutrients it incorporated into its structure, the sun's energy it absorbed into its sugars, the insects that have gnawed on it, the winds that have ravaged it, and even the different meanings people attribute to the tree and the way those meanings affect the tree's cultivation. The tree would literally be all these non-tree elements related together in a particular way.

This perspective can also be applied to individual people. Who am I as a person? An object ontology perspective might propose there is some kernel of pure me, or a soul, that is my essence. From a relational ontology perspective, however, I would be a constellation of materials, energies, and more that are related in a particular way. I am a machine of sorts organized by an inherited genetic code, *and* my cells are literally made partially of the sandwiches I ate last week, *and* my psyche is constructed through a collection of experiences over my life course that range from the pleasant to the traumatic, *and* my mind is constructed by my experiences and the things I have read. In other words, from a relational ontology perspective I have no essence. I am con-

structed—body, mind, and soul—from a certain way of relating all sorts of things that are not me: from sandwiches and loving encounters to childhood conflicts and ice cream cones, from Deleuze's books to research trips. From this perspective it does not make any sense to ask whether I have been created by nature or nurture, or if I am deep-down one kind of person or another (introvert/extravert, good/evil, masculine/feminine, etc.). What if a person is not *either* this *or* that but rather is constructed from multiple elements that are themselves constructed out of arrangements of still other elements? This is the main point of Deleuze and Guattari's contention that when we speak of any entity it is best not to describe its construction as "either/or" but rather as "and, and, and . . ."—an additive amalgam of a vast assortment of disparate elements (1988, 25).

While this may seem a fine point that is far from the discussion of geography and realms of sovereignties, let us now take this idea, change the scale a bit, and see how this relational approach applies to place. After all, any examination of sovereignty—with all the connotations of it being about power being *exercised in place*—deserves as nuanced an analysis of place as it does of power. So, what is a place? Since the idea of place is quite foundational in geographic studies, it should be no surprise that there is quite a lot of geographic research and theorizing on this question. One of the more popular approaches is to represent places as a combination of a location, locale, and sense of place (Agnew 1997). In this schema a particular place—a spot on the earth—can be described from three major perspectives. As a *location* a place is described in terms of its spatial relationship to other places. Hawai'i Island, for example, as a *location*, is at roughly 19 degrees north latitude and 155 degrees west longitude. Its location can also be described as a five-hour flight from Los Angeles or a strategic spot a third of the way across the Pacific from North America toward Asia. *Locale*, on the other hand, is what is actually at a particular site. What buildings are there? What is the physical environment like? What is the stage like on which social activities occur? Hawai'i Island as locale is mountainous, volcanic, relatively rural, and prone to natural hazards of almost every type. It also has fertile agricultural soils (where the geology is old enough), an ethnic mix affected by waves of plantation-oriented immigration, and is formally politically administered by the United States. The third approach—*sense of place*—emphasizes the "subjective and emotional attachment people have to place" (Cresswell 2015, 14). It is the varied meanings people have accumulated based on their history within that landscape. In Hawai'i, sense of place would vary substantially from person to person and also from one part of the island to another. To a visiting tourist the island may link to a sense of adventure and

an old Western narrative of experiencing paradise, while to residents it means quite different things that have to do with spiritual attachment, memories, and the routines of daily life. Of course, these different regimes of sense of place have important political ramifications. Different people are going to have disparate opinions on how a locale ought to be managed, governed, or changed. A tourist (or hotel investor) may think a golf course on the side of Hawai'i's Kilauea volcano is a splendid and appropriate idea. Many residents, however, would see it as out of place and a socially inappropriate act of destruction.

Other approaches to understanding place center on the ways in which a person approaches or experiences a given site. One common basic categorization counterposes *place* to the term *space*. Here *place* denotes a more lived-in and experienced site, while *space* is a term reserved for when someone is thinking about a site in a more detached and abstract manner. This distinction is taken a step further in the highly popular tripartite schema of Henri Lefebvre (1991) in which places are categorized according to how people experience and conceptualize a place (Soja 1996). In this view the emphasis is on a person's approach to a site. Is it being abstractly considered in the way a planner, government agent, or other entity might view it from a map or from on high? Or is it being imagined based on prior experiences in places deemed to be like it? Or is the place directly experienced by being lived in and moved through? Lefebvre's views on space and place are quite popular and have been used to analyze relationships to place from Colombia to Papua New Guinea (Oslender 2016; West 2006). It is, however, also slightly misleading. As I have argued elsewhere in more detail, these different ways of experiencing space/place are actually all underpinned by similar *processes* of conceptualizing and representing places (J. S. Davis 2005a; S. Davis 2015).

This brings me to my next point, which signals a return to how the idea of relational ontology is useful for understanding the way places are constructed and governed. While there is analytical value to different categorizations of what a place is and what produces a place, I want to explode these categories a bit by drawing on more contemporary research that characterizes places as assemblages (Cresswell 2015; Featherstone 2011; Massey 1994). The assemblage view is steeped in the tradition of relational ontology and insists that places are created from innumerable physical and social elements brought together and related in a particular way. From a relational perspective, places are hybrids constructed by physical and social processes that emanate from within a local site and from far away. From this perspective Hawai'i Island is a conglomeration of hot spot basaltic lava, the shaping waves of the Pacific, the mo'olelo[8] (stories) of Pele and her siblings, the heiau and fishpond walls of Indigenous

Kanaka Maoli, the immigrant communities who have arrived over generations (from Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, China, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Micronesia, and the United States), the activities of Christian missionaries, the millions of tourists who have trod upon it, the tsunamis of 1946 and 1960, the telescopes on Mauna Kea, the U.S. flag flying over buildings, and the American flag being taken down and replaced. Here again we see the perspective of "and, and, and . . ." in operation. While some of these influences are stronger than others—and we can, of course, debate which attributes the island *should* have and which ones it should not, and what influences we should promote and what we should discourage—the relational perspective would recognize that these are the disparate elements that have constructed the place as it is. This perspective would also hold that different people (or administering entities) viewing the island from different abstract, imagined, or lived perspectives would emphasize, valorize, or vilify some of these elements more than others. Still, viewing the island as an assemblage constructed out of all these disparate elements acknowledges that all of these threads—for better or for worse—are woven into the tapestry of the place.

This example of Hawai'i Island demonstrates that even geographic islands far from continents are not islands in the Western metaphorical sense of being disconnected, isolated, or unaffected by larger global processes. They are much more connected to global circuits of materials, peoples, process, and ideas than Western romantic notions would suggest (Diaz 2011; Hau'ofa 1994; Nadarajah and Grydehøj 2016; Pugh 2013, 2016; Stratford et al. 2011). As the coming chapters explore further, the fact that I am using islands as examples is not just due to my previous experiences in these places. Instead, I use islands to illustrate these concepts in part because realms of sovereignty have long been portrayed in a way similar to the (mistaken) Western view of islands as disconnected and autonomous spaces.

Reimagining Sovereignty as a Relational Assemblage: The Example of *Ea*

What happens, then, when we apply this relational perspective to considerations of sovereignty? What does it mean to speak of sovereignty as being "assemblage-like" and what does it mean to view power over territory as following the model of "and, and, and . . ." as opposed to either/or? A particularly potent example of this more nuanced view of sovereignty is embedded within the Hawaiian concept of ea. Ea is frequently translated into English as *sover-*

eignty, but, like relational approaches that draw from Deleuzean assemblage theory, it too challenges many of the Western assumptions of how power and territory are constructed. For one, ea emphasizes that the legitimacy of power does not come from a divine source, or the ability to dominate others, or from the ability to call for an exception and suspend normal social rules. It also does not necessarily come from a popular mandate either. Legitimacy does not even derive exclusively from the social realm. Instead, ea is conceptualized as deriving from the land ('āina) itself (Osorio 2014). Here we see a flip of how sovereignty functions. Rather than sovereignty being about a human system of governance (aupuni) exercised *over* an expanse land, the land exerts governance over humans and their political systems (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2014). In other words, a human authority is legitimate only if it is able to follow the dictates that the land demands. Contrary to Western views in which a human authority controls, establishes, and orders territory (Elden 2009), ea is about organizing the right *relations* (pono) between people (kanaka), land ('āina), and other elements so that they work optimally in concert. Ea, then, is not necessarily territorializing and ordering—but rather functions through a recognition of relational actions. Here 'āina serves a similar function as economy in Foucault's (2007) work on the limits of sovereign power in medieval Europe. 'Āina is the truth to which governance must bend and adapt, not vice versa. It demands a management that seeks relational righteousness rather than a production of territory in the Westphalian sense.

As Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua explains, "After a rogue British captain claimed the islands for Great Britain in 1843, Hawaiian emissaries secured the restoration of sovereign government. King Kamehameha III famously proclaimed 'Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono.' Roughly translated: 'The sovereignty of the land continues through justice and proper acts'" (2014, 4). Goodyear-Ka'ōpua emphasizes that it is not the sovereignty of the government that was reaffirmed but rather the sovereignty of the land itself ('āina). The preservation of the land's sovereignty was upheld not because an Indigenous government was maintained but because a government was maintained that understood that real human *authority* comes from the ability to successfully bring the land, elements, and people into proper productive relations.

With ea, rather than governance ordering the landscape, the landscape is the agent that orders human systems of sovereignty. Human political decisions that are out of step with the sources of real power (the land, elements, and the needs of the people) sow their own consequences. Governance here cannot be seen as autonomous from other social and environmental processes, and cer-

tainly not as something that orders these other elements. Instead, it is a practice relationally embedded within them. Ea is therefore a constant process, never an accomplished fact (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2014). It is a process of ordering human life in *relation* to flows, movements, and natural processes, like steering a ship in an ever-moving ocean.

While the concept of ea is tightly connected to both the Hawaiian archipelago and Kanaka Maoli, there are also lessons in this discussion of ea for people in other contexts who are aiming to change systems of government or who are striving for self-determination, equality, and justice. First, it is important to appreciate the lessons inherent in Hawaiian conceptualizations of sovereignty because they show the possibility for creating proactive and *productive* alternative apparatuses of governance. Ea is more than a philosophy of political *resistance*. It is a philosophy of what *should be*. It is based on a recognition that saying no is not enough. Second, an appreciation of ea demonstrates that formal political independence does not, in itself, make one autonomous or able to do whatever one wants. As Goodyear-Ka'ōpua puts it, "Political autonomy may be a baseline minimum for the restoration of functional ea, but it is also only one piece of the puzzle" (2014, 30). Because governance must follow the dictates of the relational socioenvironmental context that one finds oneself in, formal political sovereignty means that one can *begin* to deal productively with the larger enveloping milieu, but it does not divorce anyone from it. To put it in more concrete terms, if Hawai'i achieved political independence we would still have to take into consideration the larger assemblage of environmental, economic, political, and social relations in which it sits in order to understand what connections, threats, and potentialities exist.

While ea is a promising perspective for motivating social movements seeking sovereignty, there are still some questions about the context in which an ea-inspired governance can be constructed. Ea is, I believe, a vastly more useful concept of sovereignty for an interconnected world than traditional Western conceptualizations that assume political sovereignty equals a supreme, autonomous, ordering power. The emphasis in ea on interconnections between the human and natural world, and between materiality and spirituality, are incredibly valuable, but the focus is more on those relationships *within* place than on relationships across vast global spaces. Also, there is the practical question of how ea is made real in the context of unequal global power politics and foreign occupations. How does one promote and produce a more decolonized sovereignty in a world of such intense interconnectivity and unequal power relations?

Toward Better Assemblages of Sovereignty:
A Look at the Coming Chapters

This book not only analyzes how sovereignty functions but also seeks to in-
form and inspire political activism that aims to produce more egalitarian and
representative systems of governance in the spaces of our everyday lives. I ar-
gue that to do so, one must appreciate the practical limits of sovereignty and
state power. Rather than advocating for strengthening state power, making ap-
peals to state power, or constructing new states, I argue that we need to think
about how state power is produced and limited by the assemblages in which
it is embedded and how those larger more-than-state assemblages can be al-
tered and shifted. In practical terms, this means I want to examine how po-
litical action can be deployed at sites outside the state (and even in realms we
may not necessarily consider to be political). I argue that there are two foci on
which individuals and social movements must work simultaneously. The first
focus is the localized metaphorical "islands" of everyday living where struggles
over ethics of governance take place and where assemblages of sovereignty
are territorialized and produced from the ground up. The second focus is the
larger context—or what I metaphorically refer to as the "ocean"—in which
state power is shaped and in which local struggles are embedded. These two
foci are of course intertwined in many ways, but I think it is tactically valu-
able to discursively tease them out. I do this in the remainder of this book by
first examining in chapter 1 just how effective sovereignty is produced within
local places. I then broaden the view in chapters 2 and 3 to examine more re-
gional assemblages of human and environmental activity in which sovereignty
is constructed and in which local struggles occur. Then in chapters 4 and 5 I
combine these approaches to show how new political possibilities being pro-
duced by social movements can inspire broader political struggles for equal-
ity, environmental protection, and social inclusion.

More specifically, in chapter 1 I delve deeper into conceptualizations of sov-
ereignty as a performed assemblage in order to elaborate on just why this is a
useful approach to sovereignty—both analytically and strategically. By com-
bining discussion of Deleuzean philosophies on assemblages with Foucault's
views on apparatuses (*dispositif*) of governance, chapter 1 engages in a more
theoretical examination of the translocal way apparatuses of sovereignty are
constructed and deployed across space as well as how that power becomes ter-
ritorialized in place. To ground this discussion, I combine this theoretical con-
versation with examples of transnational social movements, especially those

of antimilitarization groups in Okinawa. I examine how these groups contest
power in place—and how they organize across space—before then turning to
analyzing what these examples can tell us about the functioning of the regimes
of state power that they contest. It may seem somewhat unusual to examine
how sovereignty operates by first starting with a discussion of how state sov-
ereignty is resisted and *then* moving on to how it operates, but I think this ap-
proach better highlights just how assemblages of sovereignty are produced and
deployed.

In chapter 1, I also examine the ethics that order competing assemblages
of sovereignty. If, as discussed in the example of ea, structures of governance
are about constructing the "right relations" between things, it is important
to examine just what contemporary states and social movements imagine
these right relations to be. Drawing on the concepts of "regulative principles"
(Foucault 2007; Lemke 2001), "molar agency" (Deleuze 1998), and "regimes
of living" (Collier and Lakoff 2005), I analyze the values that coordinate as-
semblages of sovereignty and enable them to hold together across space in
archipelago-like constellations.

The second section of the book consists of chapters 2 and 3 and takes a
more regional view that examines the context in which local contests over sov-
ereignty take place. In this section I represent the contemporary context of the
Asia-Pacific region as one of hegemonic competition between multiple pow-
ers, in particular the United States and China, but also including other states
such as Australia, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Russia, New Zea-
land, and the Philippines. This competition for influence in the region exerts
particular pressures on the communities within it, but it produces opportu-
nities as well. The discussions in the second part of the book are centered on
the details of contemporary political, economic, and cultural practices in the
Pacific realm. While the empirical focus is on the Pacific, this discussion is
meant to demonstrate how the threads that come together to produce and sus-
tain assemblages of sovereignty in *any* particular place circulate and flow into
places from elsewhere. In other words, it emphasizes that sovereignty over any
place—whether on an island or in a continental environment—is not some-
thing that sits over a given place but rather is a relational construction of mo-
bile elements.

To show this, chapters 2 and 3 get into more empirical detail and examine
the structure of assemblages of sovereignty as they are constructed across the
islands of the Pacific, particularly in Micronesia. In these chapters I tease apart
the webs that construct sovereignty by analyzing two categories of influence
over governance in a place. Chapter 2 focuses on the geopolitical imaginings

of this region; both the more traditional views of so-called realist geopolitics and views informed by the alternative outlooks of critical and feminist geopolitics. In chapter 2 I explore the history of how major outside powers (mostly the United States and China) have considered the military and national security value of the islands that sit between them and the ways these outside powers attempt to shape the space for their own ends. While the chapter looks backward in time to World War II, I predominantly focus on more contemporary contests in the region over how the area is influenced by competing projects for building and maintaining global hegemony.

Also in chapter 2, I examine the U.S. military base network in the region as an assemblage. I look at the way in which the United States has viewed the region for purposes of national security and how it has attempted to topologically fold the space of the Pacific in ways that serve its desires (Allen 2011, 2016; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012). The idea of topological space is a revealing one for looking at contemporary political processes in general, and it is particularly relevant for looking at the way in which histories of military colonialism have shaped the western Pacific. The idea of topological space comes from mathematical formulations of how space can be folded and twisted in ways that make geographic distance less important than the way in which places are connected together with infrastructure. In contrast to topo*graphical* representations of space that more or less faithfully represent geographic distances between sites, topo*logical* renderings show how technologies, infrastructures, and geosocial connections make some places functionally more connected than others through processes of "presencing and absencing" (Bickerstaff and Simmons 2009). As John Allen puts it, "The gap between 'here' and 'there' is measured less by miles or kilometres and more by the social relationships, exchanges and interactions involved" (2011, 3).

This topological perspective has great explanatory power across the Pacific region, where places are functionally near and far in many ways that have little to do with actual location. As anyone who has attempted to travel in the region can appreciate, whether a given island is accessible has much more to do with transportation infrastructure (Is there an airstrip or functioning airline that goes there?) and colonial histories than with straight-line distances (for instance, most airline and shipping routes are still aligned from colonial powers to former—or current—possessions rather than to other nearby island groups). What is made present or absent, or closer or further, in this region is more an effect of power than of geographical distance. This is critical to appreciate because, as chapter 2 and the following chapters detail, the proximity of a place to other places is not necessarily an effective predictor of the in-

teraction between them, or a determinant of where allegiances in a place may be directed. Also, it emphasizes that sovereignty and control in a given space may not originate within a place, or even close by. Instead, power can be exerted from afar through the very process of folding space by actively creating (or maintaining) infrastructures of connectivity or separation. As Allen puts it, "The so-called far-reaching powers of transnational corporations or actors like the state and global social movements are often best understood less as something extended across borders and networks and rather more as an arrangement which enables distant actors to make their presence felt, more or less directly, *by dissolving, not traversing* the gap between 'here and there'" (2011, 15; emphasis added).

In chapter 2 I use this topological lens to also look at the common conceptualization that the power of the United States in the region is waning as China's increases. The point is not so much to understand the ramifications for the United States or for China as much as to examine how the process of constructing hegemony on the global scale is affected by how islanders in these supposed out-of-the-way places adopt or resist the influences of competing larger powers. In other words, I look at geopolitics in this strategic region more from the islands looking out than from the Pacific margins looking in. By doing so I argue that we can see better how influence over territory is constructed in a translocal process of assemblage-building rather than just being projected from an imperial center based on military superiority.

In chapter 3 I look at influences in the Pacific that may not necessarily be traditionally thought of as political but that have important political effects. I examine how transnational environmental processes, patterns of human mobility, and economic influences draw the territories of Micronesian states toward different parts of the region, regardless of their close political affiliations with the United States. By doing so, I aim to demonstrate how formal political sovereignty is but one aspect of influence or control in any given space. Of course, the idea that economic processes threaten, or even supersede, political sovereignty is a widely appreciated point by both Marxist and neoliberal theorists (Arrighi 2005; Foucault 2007; Hardt and Negri 2000; Harvey 2007).[9] However, I merge this discussion with the preceding chapter on geopolitics to examine more specifically how—in the Pacific context—economic processes undo some forms of political control, open some avenues for local governance, but also present new dangers of informal imperial control. In particular, I focus in this chapter on the recent surge of Chinese investment, diplomacy, and tourism spending in this region and examine how these new flows and connections alter the topological space of the region. While some may see tourism

as a frivolous economic activity for the participants, the economic, cultural, environmental, and political ramifications of tourism development—especially in a realm of tropical islands with few other major income-earning industries—cannot be underestimated (S. Davis 2015; Fregonese and Ramadan 2015; Gonzalez 2013; Teaiwa 2000). As Chinese out-bound tourism becomes far and away the largest potential tourism market for American-affiliated island nations in the Pacific, the lure of Chinese investment and spending is causing countries to reconsider their political allegiances as well as their positions on greater political autonomy, cultural preservation, and environmental protection.

In chapter 3 I also focus on geosocial connections in the Pacific. The term *geosocial* comes from more recent research that theorizes how social processes—including those that have serious implications for geopolitical and geoeconomic circulations—are enacted across space through intimate person-to-person connections (Mitchell and Kallio 2017). In chapter 3 I examine how life in many of these Pacific places is constructed through interactions between people in these places and people outside of them. Through circuits of migration, communication, and family/social networks, the assemblages of sovereignty within these spaces are constructed from various elements that are connected topologically across vast stretches of ocean. These connections are always shifting and changing and can have great effects on political allegiances and desires. For instance, in chapter 3 I examine how Micronesian social connections to the United States through migration, educational opportunities, and enlistment in the U.S. armed forces strengthen the region's geopolitical and geosocial ties to the United States and counterbalance some of the increased economic pull of China. These relationships, however, are shifting, and as they shift, so do other geopolitical and geoeconomic influences. For instance, China is extensively ramping up programs to entice islanders to take advantage of cultural and educational experiences in China rather than in the United States (Jaynes 2017). Meanwhile, new anti-immigration policies being implemented by the Trump administration, along with overall cuts to education and the drying up of U.S. aid to the area, all serve to diminish the influence of the United States in the region.

In chapter 4 I take a closer look at how political assemblages cohere across space. Using examples of antimilitarization social movements from South Korea, Hawai'i, Okinawa, Guåhan, and other island locales, this chapter will explore how the regulative principles discussed in chapter 1 are constructed and travel as they animate geosocial assemblages in the region. Drawing heavily from scholarship in the field of feminist geopolitics—as well as social move-

ment activities and declarations—this chapter highlights the emotional, affective, and physical aspects of assemblages. The chapter also shows the way in which body-centric ethics of care order assemblages of sovereignty that compete over territory against more traditional state-centric sovereignties ordered by ethics of nationalism, capital accumulation, racism, patriarchy, and militarized national security. At the chapter's conclusion these discussions of activism in the Pacific are then tied to their impacts on geoeconomic and geopolitical relationships to show how activist assemblages of sovereignty are not resistances to colonialism as such but rather are *productive* performances that create alternative governances.

The final chapter takes the concepts developed in the rest of the book (assemblages of sovereignty, their topological spatialities, the regulative principles that cohere assemblages, and the analyses of environmental, geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geosocial processes within the Pacific realm) and demonstrates how they can be applied in practical ways by both researchers and political movements in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere. In this chapter I discuss four major points that I believe can inform political struggles that aim to destabilize hierarchical and colonial forms of governance. I argue that recognizing the porous and assemblage-like nature of political sovereignties creates potentially novel and effective forms of social action that can advance the principles of justice, equality, and political freedom in an interconnected world. Instead of a fixation on state power, I argue for the need to focus social action on realms outside of state apparatuses: namely the islands of everyday life where effective sovereignty is actually constructed as well as the oceans (contexts) in which state apparatuses are embedded. I contend that struggles for decolonized, healthier, and more inclusive communities can be advanced through the *production of certain kinds of interconnection* rather than depending on traditional Western conceptualizations of sovereignty and autonomy that are not only defined by connotations of domination, disconnection, and exclusion but that are, to a large degree, illusions.