A Time for Recollection:

Exploring the Temporality of Victoria's Sea-To-Sea Green Blue Belt Campaign

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Abstract

The rapid growth of our Earth's population has increased the demand for development and urban sprawl, consequently endangering the protection of the natural world. To ensure the future of functioning ecosystems, recreational spaces, and agricultural land, many have turned to green belts as planning strategies. Specific to Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada, the collaboration between different organizations, community members, and levels of government successfully protected the lands connecting Tod Inlet, Sooke Basin and Sooke River. This Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is the subject of this research, and semi-structured interviews, modified photovoice activities, and secondary data were used to understand the timeline and temporal experiences of nine participants who were actively involved from 1988 to the early 2000s. The article explains that the campaign was catalyzed by an algae bloom in the drinking water which led to a court case against the Greater Victoria Water District's (GVWD) illegal logging activities in 1994, and the eventual creation of the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park in 1997. This was followed by a 2000 Regional Park Acquisition Fund used to secure private lands for the green belt, which has resulted in the acquisition of over 4,900 hectares of parkland as of 2024. In addition, the anthropological theoretical frameworks of future orientation and social ecology revealed that participants' identity influenced how their expectations, anticipation, and hope propelled the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign towards success, but that they now rely on speculation to envision the future of global environmental protection. This research contributes to current green belt academic literature by providing a deeper look into the human experience of advocating for this green infrastructure.

Key Terms Green Belt, Temporality, Future Orientation, Social Ecology, Qualitative Research

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Territorial acknowledgment

I acknowledge that my research occurred on the Lekwungen and W̱ SÁNEĆ territories. It is important to remember that the research specifically focused on events that occurred from 1988 to the early 2000s mentioned by settler participants. Thus, the absence of Indigenous voices should be noted as a limitation.

1. Introduction

Human stressors like climate change, resource extraction, and population growth impose uncertainties towards the future of the environment. However, the actualization of these potential futures, good or bad, relies on the present actions of both the individual and the collective. As a result, research has increasingly emphasized the importance of understanding local communities' temporal and spatial relationships with their familiar landscapes (Brace & Geoghegan, 2010; Nuttall, 2010). This is because their passive or active responses to the changes in their daily practices inform how inhabiting an environment shapes cultural identity and corresponding future orientations (Nuttall, 2010). In addition, it has been argued that individuals who practice pro-environmental behaviors do so because they are concerned for the well-being of future generations, thereby having temporal cognition (Carmi, 2013; Corral-Verdugo et al., 2006; Wittmann & Sircova, 2018). On the other hand, those with a weaker understanding of time are less willing to sacrifice short-term interests and comforts for the sake of the long-term health of the environment because they do not perceive any personal benefits (Carmi, 2013; Corral-Verdugo et al., 2006; Wittmann & Sircova, 2018). However, this lack of motivation caused by the temporal lag of environmental activism does not apply as strongly with more drastic and sudden environmental policies of green belts.

Similar to green wedges and greenways, green belts are connected pieces of undeveloped lands surrounding urban areas that have the assignment goal of protecting green spaces and restricting urbanization (Meneguetti & de Oliveira, 2021). These green infrastructures offer relatively immediate ecosystem services where the health of diverse organisms and habitats through sustained clean water and air quality compliments the human desire for recreational spaces, preserved historic sites, and aesthetic landscapes (Meneguetti & de Oliveira, 2021). Interestingly, similar descriptions of green planning have been noted in written accounts from ancient India (Clapp, 1971 cited in Sturzaker & Mell, 2017) and Greece, as well as by Romans and even in the Old Testament's Book of Numbers (Osborn, 1946 cited in Sturzaker & Mell, 2017). However, the first "modern" green belt proposal is commonly associated with James Silk Buckingham, a writer and member of the British Parliament who worked to address London's rapid urbanization in 1849 (Sturzaker & Mell, 2017). Within the same concept, Ebenezer Howard's 1898 book *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* described the idea of a Garden City, where the 'marriage' between town and country would solve "the grotesque overcrowding of the inner city and the simultaneous depopulation of rural Britain" (Howard et al., 2003, p.18). Howard's vision for the entanglement of gardens and infrastructure greatly influenced twentieth-century British greenbelt policies (Sturzaker & Mell, 2017), especially in its dual function of allowing the enjoyment of fresh air and recreation alongside the economic and social opportunities of cities (Howard et al., 2003). This planning approach has since then spread internationally, with the political, economic, geographical and cultural contexts of regions having an undeniable impact on the functions and characteristics of green belts.

Until now, all published research on Canadian case studies has focused on the Ontario Greenbelt (Chellew et al., 2022). This is due to the fact that when the Ontario government passed

the Greenbelt Act in 2005, it permanently protected 2 million acres of land, simultaneously creating one of the largest green belts in the world (Han & Go, 2019). Since then, the Greenbelt's beneficial role for the economy, agriculture, recreation, urban settlement, and the environment has been emphasized by the non-profit organization known as the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation (Han & Go, 2019). Unfortunately, this case study does not accurately represent how green belts are used in different provinces for urban containment and wildlife protection. Because of this, there is a lack of knowledge on how Canada's diverse environments, urban and natural, impact the motives for green belt activisms. Pressures for development and resources will increase in the following years, thus it is important to understand how those with close relationships with nature foresee the future survival of their landscape. Their hope, or lack of, could inform future local policy decisions depending on the perceived urgency of the matter. To recognize successful green belt implementation on the west coast of the country, this article will be the first to academically detail (1.) the timeline of Victoria's Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign from 1988 to the early 2000s and (2.) the temporal experiences of nine campaigners. As such, the objectives of this paper will be to understand (1) how individuals from different governments and organizations involved in the campaign remember the pressing problems, supporting and opposing social actors, and successful strategies they encountered and (2) how they respond and use the future orientations of expectation, anticipation, hope, and speculation during the present day in comparison with their past during the campaign.

This paper will proceed as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant literature on green belts, showing that most have analyzed the merits and pitfalls of policies depending on the urban realities of the area of concern. Section 3 describes how previous contacts and snowball sampling were used for the recruitment process, how semi-structured interviews, modified-photovoice activities,

and secondary sources were used for the data collection, and how the theoretical frameworks of future orientation and social ecology were applied. Section 4 presents the results separated by research questions, followed by a discussion in Section 5 that compares the Sea-to-Sea Green Bleu Belt with the Ontario Greenbelt, and evaluates how anthropological research on futures applies to the participants' temporality. Finally, Section 6 outlines the research strengths and limitations, and Section 7 concludes.

2. Literature Review

The vast majority of academic papers evaluate the economic and environmental cost-benefits of green belts in urban areas to determine future priorities. After conducting a cross-national comparison of the history of green belt policies in the UK, Canada, Australia, the U.S. and Korea, Han & Go (2019) argue that shifting political economic climates dictate the priorities given to decreasing urban sprawl and ensuring land preservation. Using the Ontario Greenbelt for their Canadian case study, the authors argue its hybrid adoption of the UK's "state-controlled growth restriction regime" and the US's "decentralized privatization regime", as the Greenbelt policies implemented top-down by the provincial government are enforced at the local level (Han & Go, 2019, p.644). In addition, they found that while the national discourse and social values given to green belts impact the longevity of policies, divisive views between land preservationists and developers will worsen with the inevitable increased demand for affordable housing and roads, coinciding with population growth in metropolitan cities (Han & Go, 2019). Critique towards preserving greenspace near urban settlements is exemplified by Mace (2018), who blames the chronic housing problems in England on the Metropolitan Green Belt policy as it limits land supply. He argues that the Green Belt must be understood as an institution and that successful

changes to its structure will have to compromise with ‘rationalists’ and ‘normatives’, being those who can be persuaded for green belt deregulation and those who will never accept policy changes (Mace, 2018). Similarly, the consequences of rising housing and commuting costs, and leapfrog development brought on by green belts are discussed by Morrison (2010) who researched the changing national priorities and population growth that incited the proposed urban extensions in Cambridge, England. In fact, apart from a few oppositions, the green belt boundary revision for the long-term need of the University of Cambridge was seen by many as an appropriate change to address contemporary needs (Morrison, 2010). Looking into the failed green belt implementation in Hermosillo, Mexico, Zuniga-Teran et al. (2022) explore how local demand for water, recreational space, and infrastructure was given priority over greenspace. Thus, the authors conclude that gentrification and environmental justice must be addressed with strong green belt policies that utilize bottom-up consultation with the community along with appropriate top-down approaches that prevent urban sprawl (Zuniga-Teran et al., 2022). An ethnographic study of Romani people living in the non-residential zones of Green Belts in English cities complements this discussion on the conflict between environmental protection and one’s right to place (Kabachnik, 2014). Kabachnik (2014) views the Green Belts as contested landscapes that demonstrate the travelers’ agency in “creating new spatialities of resistance” in response to constraining policies that enforce hierarchical power dynamics (p.282).

Despite these criticisms, the environmental and social benefits of green belts are also highlighted in the literature to encourage continued policies. For example, Han et al. (2022) evaluated the land cover and estimated carbon sink capacity between six US green belt counties and 19 adjacent non-green belt counties, and concluded that the green infrastructures enabled greater growth control and carbon storage, thereby mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and

climate change. In addition, a study by Islam et al. (2012) found that roadside air and noise pollution in Bangladesh was greatly reduced by adjacent green belts, with a greater canopy density corresponding positively with human health. Going a step further, Patil et al. (2023) evaluated the environmental, medicinal, and economic efficacy of roadside native plants in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, India. This was done to recommend the species of Alphonso mango and jackfruit for an upcoming green belt development at Ratnagiri City, as the plants' wood and fruit would generate income for local governments while purifying the air (Patil et al., 2023). The tangible and intangible benefits of green belts were also evaluated in the City of Peshawar, Pakistan, by Basit et al. (2021) who found that, despite being fragmented, the greenspaces revealed stress and anxiety for the community, decreased pollution, and increased property value for nearby business. Finally, the Green Belt Movement in Kenya led by Wangari Maathai exemplifies how green belt campaigns can address environmental and political oppression through community empowerment (Hunt, 2014).

These articles place in perspective the academic support and critique of green belt policies on a global scale. However, aside from Kabachnik's (2014) ethnography, anthropological research on green belts and futures is severely lacking. As a result, this research will provide the chance to understand the reality of accomplishing a successful green belt directly from those involved from start to finish, bringing to attention diverse social actors, beyond politicians and city planners, that have been ignored in the majority of the literature.

3. Methodology

3.1 Recruitment

I was first introduced to five of my research participants while volunteering for the Sea-to-Sea Society in Spring 2023. As part of the University of Victoria course *Social Sciences 300:*

Working in the Community, I was tasked to begin the process of recording a 'People's History' of the campaigners. With a partner, I conducted nine informal interviews, skimmed relevant documents and maps given to me, visited a section of the green belt as a group, and organized a potluck. This is to say that I was familiar with half of my participants before this research, but because the course only allowed 40 hours of volunteering total, I had barely scratched the surface of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign. Thus, this research came about because of my curiosity to learn more about this history from an anthropological perspective.

Upon receiving ethics approval in January 2024, I contacted the participants I had met during my volunteering through their emails given to me the semester before and recruited four more participants through snowball sampling. These four participants were recommended by the others who believed they had a significant role in telling the story of the campaign. Three of them were first contacted by one of the five original participants asking if they were interested, with my contact information included in the email, and the fourth I called directly. Depending on the participants' preference, I explained my research intentions and methods by email or phone call, and provided a downloadable consent form before the interview date. I also reviewed the consent form (paper or electronic) during the individual interviews and was permitted by all to analyze the informal interviews and secondary data collected during the volunteering, to identify them by first name and association, to disseminate their data, and to retain a copy of the interview transcripts after the research. A copy of the signed consent forms was kept by each participant, that clearly stated that they could revisit the form to change their answers or leave the research project, however, no one did. In addition, there were no identified risks to participating, interviewees were compensated with refreshments during the meetings, and the data was stored in a password-protected computer file. Participants were also given a copy of their own interview transcripts to

review, but none requested changes or omissions to the data. Overall, written and verbal consent was received throughout the research.

3.2 Data Collection

Nine individual semi-structured interviews and modified photovoice activities were conducted to understand who and what was involved in Victoria's Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt campaign from 1988 to the early 2000s. More specifically, I interviewed Jim and Ray from the Sea-to-Sea Society, Mehdi from the Sierra Club, Misty from the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC), Bill from The Land Conservancy (TLC), Alison from the WCWC and TLC, Jeff and Lloyd from the Parks Department of the Capital Regional District (CRD), and Andrew, a former Member of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia. The meetings lasted between 1 to 2 hours and were either held on Zoom, via phone call, or in person depending on the participant's preference and location. In addition, the interviews were knowingly recorded to facilitate later transcription using the University-recommended Whisper Transcription software.

The first half of the interviews consisted of asking open-ended questions to understand the participants' roles, timelines, and experiences of the green belt. The discussion was facilitated by a page of notes I had compiled before each interview that outlined important dates and events mentioned during my volunteering, by previous participants, or in relevant secondary sources. Once participants were satisfied with the memories and information they shared about the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt campaign, the second half of the interview transitioned into a modified photovoice activity for broader conversations on green belts. Rather than asking participants to take and bring pictures (Sutton-Brown, 2014), I compiled photographs of Canadian and international green belts (or greenspaces) in a slideshow to enable them to draw on experiential

knowledge for a comparative reflection. More specifically, the Ontario Greenbelt, the North Korean Demilitarized Zone, the European Green Belt, the Frankfurt Green Belt in Germany, and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya were used as case studies. Along with the slides, common themes and facts from gray and academic literature were shared to ignite a critical dialogue on the relationship between green belts with land ownership, nature's resilience, tourism, art, community, healing, and futures. As for secondary data, seven informal interviews with Mehdi, Jim, Ray, Alison, and Misty that had been recorded during my volunteering were analyzed after receiving consent. Finally, relevant newspapers, websites, reports, maps, letters, and pictures shared or mentioned by participants were also reviewed. The final results were disseminated via a podium presentation, an academic conference poster, and this research paper.

3.3 Analysis

To answer the first research question looking at the timeline of Victoria's Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign, a descriptive thematic analysis was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means that important dates, events, and personal stories shared during the interviews were compiled and rewritten into one flowing historical account. It is important to note that the smaller, more personal anecdotes shared by participants were given less priority than the 'tide-turning' problems and achievements of the campaign. The significant events were determined based on the level of data saturation in the transcripts and secondary sources, however, my bias as a researcher needs to be recognized as well. I wanted to capture the overarching timeline rather than separate individual detailed anecdotes, and thus, the questions asked, the analysis, and the final discussion of the research reflect my interests as a researcher. In addition, while all my participants played a part in the realization of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt vision, each of them came and went at

different times, had varied roles and responsibilities, showed ranging levels of passion and intensity, and left with different satisfactions towards the activism. Keeping this in mind, the most repeated feelings and stories were taken as the majority and applied as such to answer the first research question.

In addition, the participants' temporal experiences acquired (?) in the second research question were deductively analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks of future orientations and social ecology. Drawing from Bryant and Knight's (2019) book *The Anthropology of the Future,* the former is defined by how individuals and groups understand and plan for the future, which consequently affects their actions in their present and their understanding of the past. By exploring the participants' temporal cognition, this research applied their argument that our every day is shaped by the triangular relationship between perception (present), memory (past), and anticipation (future) (Gell, 1992 in Bryant and Knight, 2019). The authors also note that we simultaneously engage with varying temporalities, known as spaces of time with a perceived ending, and with each, we adopt an orientation that impacts our collective and personal trajectory into the future (Bryant and Knight, 2019). Within the context of this research, the campaign from 1988 to 2004 is taken as one temporality, while acknowledging that the cumulative actions of activism discussed by participants still represent their own layered and entangled temporalities. In addition, the future orientations of anticipation, expectation, speculation, and hope explored by Bryant and Knight (2019) were used as coding themes in the final analysis of the transcriptions. It is important to note that these orientations have different levels of impact on the "thickening and thinning of temporal horizons" (Bryant and Knight, 2019, p.14), meaning how well we can exercise foresight in the future. Thus, how the "future resides in" the present will be tied to the sense of urgency and agency felt during the campaign (Bryant and Knight, 2019, p.14). On the

other hand, the second theoretical framework of social ecology examines the human agency in wanting to change the spatial and temporal dynamics of environments (Scoones, 1999). This framework will be used to connect the participants' future orientations with the dynamic and shifting temporalities of the natural world, by viewing the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt "as both the product of and the setting for human interactions" (Scoones, 1999, p.479).

4. Results

4.1 The Timeline of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt Campaign

The Protection of the Greater Victoria Watershed Surplus Lands (1988 to 1997)

The Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign was catalyzed in June 1988 when the Greater Victoria drinking water ran oily, fishy, and turbid. It was described by Jim as having a swamp smell, and Ray remembered the water tasting "like a meal of lousy spaghetti". With his background in soil science and conservation, Mehdi knew that these were signs of an algae bloom, and he decided to call the city's Engineering Department to confirm his suspicion and understand who was responsible. However, the woman who answered the phone refused to answer his simple questions, and Mehdi recalls her saying:

> "I know you. I know your type". She said, "*I know your type*" and my jaw dropped. You know, I was on the other side. I said, "What type am I?". "You are one of these damn foreigners coming to our country, and you want to make trouble for our water to be able to sell your water filter."

Being a self-described "political animal", Mehdi kept pushing and finally discovered that the Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD) was responsible. However, upon inquiry, they evaded his questions on the source of phosphorus and stated that the algae bloom was a natural phenomenon. In fact, despite receiving countless calls from the public about increasing stomach aches and diarrhea, the GVWD continuously reassured people that it was safe to drink the water

as they were chlorinating it in response to the blue-green algae contamination (Hunter, 1988). It was later announced in the *Times Colonist* that the algae had plagued the drinking water supply when the GVWD diverted water from Leach River to Sooke Lake via Deception Reservoir back in February as a preventative measure for water shortage (Lavoie, 1988). Suspecting that soil erosion from logging in the watershed had played a role in the bad drinking water, Mehdi volunteered for the Sierra Club, a non-profit environmental organization, and became their representative on the issue from 1989 to 1991. To gather information, he attended GVWD board meetings and realized how their private logging interests were placed in direct opposition with their mandate stating that:

> The preservation and enhancement of water quality and quantity shall have priority over all management policies and programs. No human activities shall occur or be allowed to occur within the Greater Victoria water supply area which may endanger or prevent the collection, storage and perpetual supply of water which meets the highest possible standards required for domestic consumption. (GVWD, 1990 cited in Travers, 1991).

Soon after, Mehdi decided to meet the Commissioner of the board to encourage him to change their actions but the response was dismissive.

> I said, "[...] Instead of me writing a report on behalf of the Sierra Club, why don't you take the leadership, change the management? We become cheerleaders for you instead of being critics". He looked at me with a grin on his face. And with his eyes, he looked at me and to the door. He's telling me to get out.

True to his warning, two reports were written about the forest policy and logging activity occurring in the Greater Victoria water supply area. It was found that over the years, the GVWD logging operations had increased their cut-block size while decreasing the rotation age, altogether neglecting to maintain a green buffer strip of old-growth forest that would have filtered the water flowing in the nearby lakes and rivers (Travers, 1991). Climate change, soil erosion, eutrophication, and wind damage caused by logging were ignored, and instead, the GVWD assured the public that sustainable selective logging of mature and decaying timber would allow for natural

regeneration (Najari et al., 1991). The reports also described how inadequate management and safety protocols during the construction of the tunnel from Leach River resulted in diesel oil, septic tank overflows, and chemicals such as fertilizers and herbicides being washed into Deception Reservoir, contributing to the algae bloom (Najari et al., 1991). Within two weeks of publishing the reports, the commissioner of the Water Board was fired due to 'monetary wrong doings'.

> You take one person out but the structure is trained to be serving the corporate interests instead of the public interest. So somebody else comes in the top and it's going to be the same. (Mehdi)

In an attempt to retaliate, the GVWD board hired a professor from Oregon State University in 1992 to criticize Mehdi's report calling him a "man with no integrity", and someone who was "defaming their staff". Refusing to succumb to the harassment, the Sierra Club and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC), a non-profit environmental education organization, continued their fight by attending GVWD board meetings, writing reports to inform the public, and hiring environmental lawyers to provide legal advice on the Water District Act. Then, in April 1993, Mehdi recalls that a water board member laughed at their worries and said "If you don't like it, take us to court. Pursue us.". Luckily Ray was friends with a criminal lawyer who agreed to represent them in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, along with the Sierra Legal Defence Fund. The legal battle sought to answer if "the Defendant, The Greater Victoria Water District, have the authority to carry on commercial logging on its lands" (Hogarth, 1994). Mehdi remembers how the GVWD's fancy lawyer, dressed in an "Armani suit", was criticized by the judge for "beating around the bush" within just 25 minutes of his defense.

> He talked for another 10, 15 minutes. Suddenly, the judge hit the gravel on the desk and said "I have enough of this nonsense. I know what's going on. I will make my decision in a few months."

In April 1994, the Supreme Court found the GVWD guilty of "illegally" logging the Sooke and Goldstream watersheds from 1949 to 1992. Unfortunately, the GVWD were not fined for their "flaunting of the rule of law", nor did they apologize for their harassment or their blatant disregard for the water quality. They did, however, announce on October 28, 1994, that their watershed's forested non-catchment lands, where the water does not drain into the drinking reservoir, would become surplus to the water supply. This gave rise to the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign that fought to turn these 4,500 hectares into Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park, the "critical link in the belt" (Alison) that would connect the existing parks of Goldstream, Gowlland Range, Sooke Mountain, and East Sooke. Following the principle of conservation biology, the WCWC and Sea-to-Sea Society knew that the envisioned 11,500-hectare green belt would protect the dwindling Coastal Douglas fir and Garry Oak forests while providing an unfragmented wildlife corridor for large mammals (WCWC, 1996). Understanding the tangible and intangible value of the proposed park, the WCWC and Sea-to-Sea Society were supported by the Victoria and Saanich Municipal Councils, Tourism Victoria, environmental and recreational groups, community associations, and even the University of Victoria Students Society[1] (WCWC, 1996). They worked together to raise public support through letter writing, educational publications, public meetings, conferences, art exhibitions, media coverage, and even a Sooke Hills musical. In opposition, the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters (ABCPF) South Vancouver Island Chapter began its

[1] The complete list includes the Fairfield Community Association, Fernwood Community Association, James Bay Neighbourhood Environmental Association, Cordova Bay Rate Payers Association, Association for the Protection of Rural Saanich, Greater Victoria Fish and Game Association, Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition, Greater Victoria Ecological Network, Garry Oak Meadows Preservation Society, Friends of Ecological Reserves, Victoria Natural History Society, Citizens Association to Save the Environment, Sea to Sea Greenbelt Society, Sierra Club of British Columbia, Sierra Club of Victoria, University of Victoria Students Society, Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group, and Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

push to acquire the surplus lands for a forestry educational program known as a Community Demonstration Forest,

> A unique setting where the citizens in this area, particularly the school children, can see and experience first-hand a variety of forest values, integrated resource management and the ecosystem approach to forestry; truly an outdoor classroom for all. (ABCPF Southern Vancouver Island Chapter, 1994 cited in Koops, 1997)

Thus, the revenue from old-growth logging would continue under the guise of a public show-and-tell. However, a professional forester who was supporting this proposal was simultaneously employed as a GVWD Watershed Manager and was called out in the media by the WCWC and Sea-to-Sea Society for his conflict of interest. As the situation continued to escalate with the campaigners and foresters "going gangbusters" (Alison), the lawyer David Perry was appointed Special Commissioner during the Spring of 1996 by the B.C. Minister of the Environment to consult the parties involved. In fact, the WCWC submitted a report reviewing the ecological profile of Southern Vancouver Island, the economic, ecological, and recreational benefits of the non-catchment lands, the Sooke Hills media coverage, as well as letters of public support towards the purchase of the GVWD surplus lands (1996). After holding several public meetings to discuss the quality of GVWD's management of the watershed and non-catchment lands, the Commission recommended the disbandment of the GVWD after their disregard for the public's interest, and the transfer of water supply responsibility to the Capital Regional District (CRD), a local government administrative district representing Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. In terms of the Community Demonstration Forest, it was stated that because,

> Approximately 88 percent of Vancouver Island's land base is already dedicated to high-impact activities such as agriculture, urban settlement, mining and logging, there is no pressing need to introduce these activities into an extremely sensitive area. (Perry, 1996)

Upon reviewing the Commission's report, Andrew secured cabinet support for the recommendations, and the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park was established on November 19, 1997, doubling the parkland in the Capital Region (Koops, 1997).

The Acquisition of Private Land (1997 to 2004)

After winning the battle for the Water District lands, 13 local conservation groups[2] turned to purchasing private property to complete the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt vision, all the while racing against time in terms of price, population growth, and corresponding development. In fact, the CDR was estimating a 25 percent population increase from 1999 to 2010 that would result in 400,000 people crowding the city (WCWC, 1999). Thankfully, this challenge of raising the money was gladly taken up by The Land Conservancy (TLC), a not-for-profit, charitable land trust established by Bill in 1996. Knowing they would have to raise at least 30 million dollars within a very tight timeframe, the TLC and WCWC proposed a Regional Park Acquisition Fund to the CRD. This special levy would have required the community to pay 10$ in extra taxes per year per average household, with the money reserved specifically for expanding the park system. To ensure fair play, access to the funds would be contingent on a unanimous agreement between the Capital Region Municipalities[3]. To raise public support, the TLC and WCWC organized a postcard mailer

[2] The Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt Alliance Member Organizations involved the Assoc. for the Protection of Rural Metchosin, Cowichan Community Land Trust Society, Garry Oak Meadow Protection Society, Habitat Acquisition Trust, Hagan Creek Restoration Project, Rural Association of East Sooke, Saanich Inlet Protection Society, Salt Spring Island Conservancy, Sea-to-Sea Greenbelt Society, Sierra Club of B.C., Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek, The Land Conservancy of BC., and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

[3]District of Sooke, Town of Saanich, District of Oak Bay, City of Victoria, Town of Sydney, District of North Saanich, District of Central Saanich, District of Highlands, Town of View Royal, City of Langford, City of Colwood, Township of Esquimalt, and District of Metchosin.

campaign and education report that noted the social, environmental and economic benefits of the Fund. For example, they explained that because of the green scenery, B.C.'s tourism industry "employs about 250,000 people and currently generates $8.5 billion a year", with the numbers continuously growing, and that "properties adjacent to protected greenways sell for 5 to 3 percent more than those without access to greenways" (WCWC, 1999). They also highlighted that only "3.6 percent of Greater Victoria" was protected as regional parkland, limiting the recreational opportunity for residents and endangering nearby ecosystems such as Garry Oak Woodlands (WCWC, 1999). In addition, the local news, radio, and paper played a significant role in supporting the campaign, with the *Times Colonist* encouraging public donations by arguing that "if we want to live in the Emerald Kingdom, we're going to have to buy the jewels" (1999).

The TLC and WCWC made sure to articulate these tangible and intangible benefits prior to the November 20th, 1999 municipal elections, as voters were asked to participate in an unbinding "opinion poll" concerning whether or not they agreed to the levy, which would inform the city and regional elected officials on the level public support. At first, Alison recalls that "none of the politicians were cheering, they hated raising taxes and they dragged their feet", but once they saw the survey results, they were racing to enforce it in 2000. This meant that the CRD could partner with the TLC, who were the ones to buy the lands from the owner and sell the parcels over time to the CRD, who could then pay back using the Fund reserves. As put by Bill, "It just took a lot of negotiation and figuring out and sorting out and doing, but it worked". Jeff's CRD Master Plan followed in 2001 to outline key park areas within and around the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, and to suggest acquiring strategies depending on the required funding. More specifically, the Master Plan explained that the purpose of the regional parks system is to "protect a network of regional parks in perpetuity that represent and help maintain the diverse range of natural

environments in the Capital Regional District" (2001). Specific land acquisitions mentioned by participants include a 3,400-acre Sooke Hills property purchased by the TLC for $5.3 million in 2001, with the support of $3 million from the CRD and $2 million from the Canadian Wildlife Service of the federal government. The TLC also raised half a million dollars in public support in a tight eight-month period before receiving political funds, with Alison explaining that,

> I never go to a politician asking for money before it would be political suicide for them to say no. That was always my strategy, build huge public support for it.

The Sooke Hills property completed the critical link between Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Sooke Mountain Provincial Park. Another high-profile acquisition occurred with Sooke Potholes in 2004, a 156-acre property running alongside the east side of the Sooke River for five km. The property had gone into receivership, a court-ordered sale, but because of development interest, the Sooke municipality initially blocked the Regional Park Acquisition Fund for the purchase. Alison explained that they argued that the protection "would be a blow to Sooke's tax revenue" and that they were receiving pressure from 4-wheel drivers in their community who would be restricted from protected parks. However, when the Sooke municipality was finally won over, the TLC had only 72 hours to raise $1.375 million before the purchase deadline. It happened to be the day before Earth Day, and the Times Colonists agreed to include a last-minute story in the paper asking 11 donors to lend the TLC $100,000 each as a green mortgage. Showing up the following morning at the parade, Alison's phone started ringing with people offering their money, and

> So as soon as I had a live bite, I would take their information. I'd phone Bill and say okay phone so and so at this number, and Bill did all the financial details and my phone would ring again. By the end of the day or the 72 hours, we had our list of donors and we were able to put together the deal and close a purchase subject to the CRD partnering with us.

Bill explained that the perpetuity of the regional parks comprising the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is ensured because of the conservation covenants registered on the land titles initially purchased by the TLC. As the covenant holder, the TLC has the right to tell the property owner, being the CRD or the province, what they can and can't do on the property. In addition, the rules can only be changed if they are approved by the covenant holders. As of 2023, the Regional Park Acquisition Fund has helped the CRD acquire around 4,900 hectares of parkland, and because of this success, the tax has been renewed for another 10 years and is set to increase to 25$ per household in 2029. A change in public green enthusiasm is very unlikely, as noted by Bill,

> The community may be mad at the Capital Regional District over sewage and garbage pickup or anything else, but they're never mad at the multiple parks. They're always behind to support them.

But while the CRD is still focused on conservation, Jeff explained that "there's more emphasis now on demand for getting people out and recreating on these parcels", which unfortunately places stressors on important ecosystems within the green belt. As a result, some participants are now working to encourage the purchase of buffer zones around parks to accommodate the increasing tourism.

4.2 The Temporalities of Participants

Identity

When asked if they've always been environmental activists, all participants described a childhood close to nature, with Jeff explaining that his time growing up outside "became who I was". The forest was also described as their friend, church, or therapist, showing that the landscape is ingrained into their everyday life. This kinship was even mentioned by Jim who critiqued capitalism in that "they want you to think of [the natural world] as resources because you won't

go in and clear cut a forest if you see them as your kin", showing that the tangible value of land was in direct opposition with their collective value of protecting the wild. This was further exemplified by Misty's statement that "if you're somebody who [...] recognizes that the nonhuman species may have an inherent right to use and be present on those habitats, that is not going to get captured in a dollar value", with Mehdi adding that "the more stable the environment gets, the more stable our society gets, and that is our responsibility to make sure that all species are important and protected". This feeling of responsibility was acted upon by all participants in their careers, volunteering, and everyday life beyond the temporality of the campaign. When discussing the importance of the ecosystem, Misty described it as a scale, in that "some people don't think about this at all and other people are consumed by thinking about it", and based on the passion they shared in the interviews, I would place the participants on the later end of this spectrum. This was further exemplified by Alison's statement that "the protection of nature is the protection of ourselves", and Mehdi's comment that "if you don't have roots, you can't love the place, so you go along with destruction of it". Finally, the campaign was successful because the collaborating groups, governmental and non-profits, had a shared identity, with Ray stressing that "if I should ever give you the impression that I did something, it's only because people were involved, you know, and everybody was engaged with other people". His claim was supported by Jim who noted that his colleagues did not have to articulate their values as "it's done through their actions and where they devote their time", and that he saw the campaign "in the spirit of civil disobedience to change something that was unjust". Thus, their worldview consequently affected how they acted upon future orientations while realizing the green belt.

Expectation and Anticipation

The future orientations of expectation and anticipation go hand-in-hand as one does not make sense without the other. While the former looks at the reliable past to imagine what lies ahead, the latter must rely on an abnormal present to understand the future. Because the participants relied on the natural environment to perform their identities, they experienced constant shifts between positive expectation and negative anticipation based on the changing levels of protection or threats towards the forest, respectively.

More specifically, prior to the algae bloom, there was an expectation that the Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD) was following their mandate of protecting the quality and quantity of the drinking water, thus being unthreatening to the participants' identity. But as explained by Jim, the bad drinking water "kind of woke the public for those people who wanted to wake up", which sparked the temporal experience of anticipation in regards to uncertain environmental management. Due to the increased human stress they observed towards the forest, either through logging or development, the feeling of urgency always followed. For example, Bill explained that the race to acquire private property was "like you're standing on the edge of a river and you've got to get across it. If you don't, the wolf is going to eat you". But rather than being frozen by the challenge, campaigners showed agency in their urgency, by pulling the future into their present in proactively planning for it. In Mehdi's opinion, the key to success was to always be present, "You don't let off, you just go at it. Like a leech sucking there". Another essential part of the campaign was bringing people to the forest to manually shatter the false expectation that it would remain untouched without activism. Misty explained that "there's no other way for people to understand the value of nature than to be in it", and to realize that the green belt vision was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. But this forced anticipation was not permanent for the new recruits because the success of the campaign, like the court case and the Perry Commission, acted as the

new historical anchor needed for positive expectation. Despite the constant need for agency and urgency, participants told me that it was the best time of their lives, with Alison stating that,

> It still feels alive because every time you look out there, it's there. And every time you walk in it, it's there. And so much is lost all the time. So much is changing all the time. It's rare to be able to go back to something that's still the same.

The desire for stability comes back to the comfortability of expecting the expected as opposed to the emotional drainage of anticipation, especially when "you only lose [protected areas] once, but you have to defend it over and over and over again" (Misty). Thus, the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign memorialized a demanding but prideful temporality for the participants because they had control over how their identity, and that of those that come after, would look in the future.

Hope and Speculation

Hope provides guidance in individual and collective agency, and while it is contagious, this future orientation can also lead to disappointment and become hard to grasp after continuous defeat. During the campaign, participants engaged with hope to raise public support and maintain momentum in addressing the constant lineup of challenges always "right around the corner" (Bill). This was exemplified by Ray's statement that,

> Many of the people that were engaged in it, were in it to see it happen. And it was, I know, speaking personally, I never ever thought it wouldn't happen. It's just a matter of how it would happen. And while you don't even think about the effort, it's something that needed to be done and you did it.

Because expectation fuels hope, participants recognized the resilience of nature against catastrophe by looking at global examples. While discussing the North Korean Demilitarized Zone case during the photovoice activity, Lloyd argued that "if we do back off, if we do leave things alone, in many cases, they will return to something that bears a close resemblance to what it should be." That

being said, when asked if he was worried about a decrease in society's appreciation for nature, Lloyd responded,

> I think it's something that we need to constantly think about [...] I think it's the reason that some of these important emphasis is placed on children getting out into nature [...] Having access to small green spaces leads to an interest you would hope [grows]. Those are the people that are going to play an important role in protecting and fighting for more protection.

Thus, someone's hope depends on the identities, and corresponding temporality, of past, present, and future generations. The participants recognized that the perpetuity of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is ensured because the locals and tourists who engage with it daily, either visually or physically, expect it to remain and would respond actively to the disruption of anticipation if it does not. However, when I asked about the *global* environmental future, participants were visually discouraged and had less to contribute to the conversation, with Ray explaining,

> The way I look at it is: I'm alive, we're alive, we're living now. [..] Part of our being here and appreciation of being in this wonderful world is to be actively engaged, and that active engagement gives you a sense of optimism. But I always have trouble with people who want to talk about abstract concepts [...] because if you want to change a broad concept that's nearly impossible, you know. It's when you become engaged in specific issues that you can see yourself to a resolution of a problem.

His opinion was shared by others such as Jim who assured me that he "will go down to my last breath fighting for this, but we certainly don't seem to be going in the right direction", and Alison who noted that "I don't feel optimistic but I feel like it's possible". This conflict between hope and negative expectation was also explained by Mehdi who told me that,

> You have to have some hope always, but also you have to be realistic. The part that you have some hope makes you go do as much as you can. The part that is realism is to look at the result in the last four years.

Because human behavior was taken as predictably greedy by some of the participants, they turned to the far future to project their identities on uncanny beings. The future orientation of speculation

allows this subjective prediction as it lies between expectation and anticipation, where any known or imagined temporalities of the past, present, or future are completely unreliable. For example, assuming that aliens have yet to contact Earth, Alison speculated the importance of environmental protection in the future beyond human existence,

> It's the ecosystems, if we don't protect those what difference will an old castle be to future visitors from space looking down on the planet [...] they'll be wondering what we did to our rivers and our ecology, not why we let our castles tumble.

Because speculation provides an escape into a potential future utopia, participants feel as if their identities will be performed by others even after the death of their temporality. As a result, because participants feel as if others ignore that "Gaia keeps dropping dead canaries in front of us" (Jim), they turn to their local context and community to maintain realistic hope in change and speculate their ideal future.

5. Discussion

To aid with comprehension, the timeline of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign was separated into two sections in the above text. Beginning with the 1988 algae bloom in the Greater Victoria Watershed, the first sections described how the campaigners successfully won a court case against the GVWD in 1994 and created the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park in 1997 to begin the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt vision. The second section then continues with the TLC's and CRD's Regional Park Acquisition Fund in 2000, and a brief description of the purchase of a 3,400-acre Sooke Hills property in 2001 and Sooke Potholes in 2004. In addition, the second research question was addressed by showing that the participants' close relationship with nature caused them to experience urgency and agency during times of anticipation, but that their progressive success in the campaign fueled their positive expectations. In addition, participants

hoped that the young generations would continue their work in caring for the environment, but relied on speculation when asked about the global environmental future. The following sections will discuss the results by comparing the potential futures of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt with the Ontario Greenbelt's, and by supporting the participants' current future orientations with anthropological literature.

Comparing the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt with the Ontario Greenbelt

As mentioned in the introduction, the Ontario Greenbelt is globally recognized as Canada's biggest land-use planning system, as it protects 2 million acres from non-agricultural development (Li et al., 2016). However, its purpose and system of protection differ greatly from the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, giving insight into the future life of each. Whereas the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt is composed of regional parks with covenants, ensuring that the natural landscapes cannot be sold or developed even by elected officials, the Ontario Greenbelt is primarily composed of privately owned farmland regulated by the provincial government (Pond, 2009). While the latter contains the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment nature conservation areas, the encouraged agricultural activities place progressive stress on the protected ecosystems (Macdonald et al., 2021). In comparison, the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt experiences the double-edged sword of being a loved recreational space, in that locals and visitors come to care for the environment while simultaneously damaging it. This conflict was reflected by participants, with some even regretting bringing people to the forest during their campaign. In addition, while indirectly contributing to the local economy through tourism, the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt vision was mainly based on conservation. Thus, the number of protected areas in the green belt has a negative correlation with population growth and development demand, something that cannot be said with

the Ontario Greenbelt as its purpose revolves around human use. The 2005 Ontario Greenbelt Act and Greenbelt Plan established a legal protection framework for effective policy implementation, putting in place a Greenbelt Council that advises the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the governmentally subsidized educational non-for-profit Greenbelt Foundation (Chellew et al., 2022). But despite these strategies for political advising and public engagement, this green infrastructure is not insured in perpetuity. In fact, on November 4th, 2022, a scandal broke when Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced that 7,400 acres of land from several sections of the Greenbelt would be sold for housing (Winfield, 2023). However, the decision was overturned in September 2023 after countless months of public outcry and internal investigations on Ford's close relationship with the profiting developers (Winfield, 2023). Still, this has put into question the integrity of the policy and the role of government in realizing the environmental interest of the public. While some of my research participants expressed their concern about the effect of noise pollution and other human disturbances on the wildlife living in the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, they did not have to worry about future shifts in the political agenda. As a result, the Ontario Greenbelt and the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt differ in the ways in which the corresponding population experiences short-term and long-term changes in their future orientations.

Future Orientations in Literature

This research has shown how someone's identity, which is dependent on the static and dynamic environments they occupy throughout time, impacts the ways in which they plan for the future. But of course, the interconnectedness of place and self is not a new concept in anthropology. For example, the participants' kinship with the natural world and emphasis on the intangible value of the forest relates to Tsing's (2015) argument that we are living in a time of precarity, the state

of being vulnerable, where collective survival is dependent on the "divergent, layered, and conjoined" assemblages of human and non-human lifeways (p. 22). Being close to nature since childhood has shown participants how they affect and are affected by their environments. This is why, like Tsing (2015), the campaigners stressed to the public, and myself, the importance of acknowledging multiple dynamic temporalities, as "ways of beings are emergent effects of encounters" between all species (Tsing, 2015, p.23). The forest acts as a second home for them, providing refuge for mental, physical, and spiritual reflection which consequently affects how they behave and feel in 'human spaces'. In fact, the participants criticized the individualistic "me-world" they are observing in the present day, as they understand that their ability to perform their identities in the forest is tied to the temporal actions of the collective. But this is not the first time the participants experienced struggle in having contrasting future orientations from profit-minded individuals, such as with the GVWD members and the Community Demonstration Forest supporters. In fact, their feelings were echoed in Nuttall's (2010) study on climate change responses in Greenland who found that while Greenland sheep farmers, politicians, and business leaders cherished the economic benefits brought by warmer climates, hunters in northern Greenland were slowly losing their ability to perform their traditional hunting practices (Nuttall, 2010). Thus, participants viewed old-growth logging as an attack on the natural history of the landscape, and of themselves.

In addition, Bryant and Knight (2019) explain that hope is a form of positive futural momentum that grasps the unrealized potential of the future to bring it into the present, inviting people to imagine "what might be, what is not yet" (p. 135). Located between the actual and the as-yet-potential, hope perpetuates momentum often starting as something insignificant and turning into an "unstoppable force" (Bryant and Knight 2019:136, 138). During the campaign, participants

used hope to direct their positive expectations and address their negative anticipation. But just as the increase in public support gained throughout the campaign exemplifies how hope breeds new hope by "virtually pushing potentiality into actuality" and directing personal agency (Bryant and Knight 2019:134), this research also showed that this future orientation is "unconditionally disappointable" (Cassegård, 2023, p.2). In fact, the participants' emphasis on the need to be realistic in their present hope can be tied to Cassegård's (2023) research on Swedish 'postapocalyptic' environmentalists who view "catastrophe as ongoing or unavoidable" (p.1). The author explains that environmental postapocalyptic scenarios are often criticized as inviting "hopelessness and fatalism" to aid with "processing loss" of futures and eventual acceptance (Cassegård, 2023, p.2). However, just as Cassegård (2023) argues with postapocalyptic activists, my participants only reject 'false hope' that encourages passivity towards the future, and 'big hopes' that are non-representational or applicable to local contexts. In addition, because they feel powerless in addressing their anticipation of global environmental ruin, participants turn to speculation to justify their hope. As explained by Bryant and Knight (2019), the future orientation of speculation exists in the "gap, interval, pause, delay" between moments that *can* rely on the past or nearing future (79). The participants' speculation of the 'forking paths' of future environmental possibilities relates to Salazar's (2017) ethnography on the anthropogenic landscapes of the Antarctic. He argues that because futures invite "worlds that are nevertheless immanent to the present as they uphold real and material weight in the here and now", speculation is necessary to evaluate societal dilemmas, like environmental destruction, from an 'extraterrestrial perspective' as is engages with alternative temporal narratives (Salazar, 2017, p.152). The participants gain comfort in imagining their ideal worldview on uncanny beings because the reality of their identity doesn't depend on collective agreement. In addition, the positive potential of the "strange stranger"

that is the far future (Bryant and Knight 2019:85) can be speculated by anyone despite their age, strength, and health, all factors mentioned by participants as slowing down their ability to actively participate in activism. Thus, speculation is the only future orientation that is theirs alone, always. As a result, the far future's unreliability, while unnerving, provides the potential that the legacy of someone's work, representing their identity, will not end with their temporality after death.

6. Research Strengths and Limitations

It is to my knowledge, based on the current academic articles described in the literature review, that this research is the first of its kind to use the anthropological theoretical frameworks of future orientation and social ecology to reflect on the experiences of those most closely involved in the creation of green belts. Rather than critiquing the strengths and weaknesses of green infrastructure for urban containment and environmental protection, the humans behind the green belt policies were centered in the discussion, where their past, present, and future are given value. In addition, no other green belt specific research had utilized a modified photo-voice activity with unstructured discussion, which allowed a deeper dive into the identities and values of the campaigners. Another notable strength of this research is member checking (Birt et al., 2016), as all participants were given their interview transcripts to verify the information. Thus, allowing them to ensure the accuracy and validity of what they chose to tell me reduced my bias as the data collector and analyst.

As with any research, this paper contains biases that must be acknowledged. Due to time, I was only able to listen to the stories of 9 people, all of whom strongly support the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt and want to see it exist in perpetuity. To remove this selection bias, future research should interview social actors who were in conflict with the green belt, such as the GVWD board

members, Demonstration Community Forest supporters, Sooke municipality representatives, and four-wheel drivers. In addition, because I was not there to observe the campaign unfolding in real time, interviewing more participants would aid with recall bias. Thus, future research could contact Special Commissioner David Perry, the court case lawyers, the media outlets who covered the campaign, the community donors, the property owners who engaged with the TLC, the other organizations who contributed to the green belt vision, and Indigenous communities and activists who are the stewards of the territory.

7. Conclusion

This research has explored the timeline of Victoria's Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt campaign from 1988 to the early 2000s, as well as the temporal experiences of nine of those most closely involved. To fight against the logging interests of the GVWD, the Demonstration Community Forest supporters, and developers, different levels of government, groups, and community members came together to protect the lands connecting Tod Inlet, Sooke Basin and Sooke River. Their activism, involving countless legal battles, educational reports, media coverages, fundraisers, and public engagement, has ensured that the wildlife and ecosystems on Vancouver Island will be looked after by future generations. In addition, the temporal experiences of the campaigners involved times of stress from negative anticipation, times of relief from positive expectation, and times of motivation from hope. This can be taken as the 'secret recipe' for green belt activism as the agency and urgency created by these future orientations were essential for the success of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt vision. That being said, the participants' identity is the most important ingredient, as someone's relationship with the natural world from childhood remains in their values as adults. Thus, the participants' collective struggle to maintain a positive

view of the global environmental future, despite their first-hand experience with successful activism, speaks to the dire need for a societal reconnection to the importance of human and non-human kinship.

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