The Perry Ridge blockade of 1997: Environmental political action, place and the role of local knowledge.

by

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BA, University of Victoria, 2007

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Abstract

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This thesis is concerned with understanding how the distinct "knowledges" articulated by environmental activists address the places that activists relate to. Through an engagement with the theoretical work of Edward Casey and Doreen Massey, it is argued that humans engage with specific places through an embodied encounter that takes place on the basis of particular evolving cultural traditions. These cultural traditions are influenced by the relations that are encountered in specific places through the course of inhabitation, creating local ecological and social knowledges in the process. As Casey argues, this encounter with dynamic places is the ongoing stage, rather than the result, in relation to which cultural and political knowledge is developed. Based on this understanding, it is argued that framings of environmental politics by environmental activists in relation to culturally specific scientific understandings of nature are often unable to address the particularity of local social and ecological relations that are contested in specific places. The danger is that contesting environmental politics in terms of the language of nature will de-emphasize the importance of local political relations and the knowledges that are generated in relation to these scales of political engagement.

This theoretical argument is developed in connection to a case study of the Perry Ridge blockade, an anti-logging demonstration that took place in the Slocan Valley

during 1997. Based on research conducted into this demonstration, it will be argued that there are important aspects of the politics of environmental activists involved in the Perry Ridge blockade that are based on the knowledge generated through inhabitation of the Slocan Valley. The presence of local ecological knowledge in the Perry Ridge blockade indicates that elements of local activist traditions are subjugated when analyses of environmental politics are understood in terms of abstract cultural discourses such as nature.

This conclusion indicates that rural environmental activists are not only engaged in a politics of nature but often also in the messier political processes encountered through inhabitation in places. Given that discourses of nature that are scientifically generated are able to jump scales and impact local political processes, the danger is that the use of such discourses will restrict attempts by local activists to engage in a more thorough way with the complex politics of specific rural places.

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Initially, I would like to acknowledge the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ Nations for allowing me to stay as a visitor on their unceeded lands while I completed this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of my supervisor Warren Magnusson which has been indispensable throughout this project. Also, I have a great debt to the activists who volunteered their time to enter into conversation with me over the Perry Ridge protest and through doing so have enriched this project immensely. It is important to emphasize here that when I engage in criticism of activists' opinions that this criticism is understood as part of an attempt to stage a continued conversation over Perry Ridge and the vitality of environmental activism more generally, rather than as a personal criticism.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the Sinixt Nation whose territory I was raised on in the Slocan Valley. They are not extinct, even if the Canadian Government declares them to be so in an attempt to avoid the consequences of the founding of the Canadian state in the West Kootenays – Lakes Country.

Introduction

As an introduction to this thesis it is important to indicate why I have been drawn to this project. I am a committed social justice and environmental activist and was raised in the Slocan Valley, which was wracked by political tensions over the fallouts of environmental protest during my upbringing in the 1990s. In the winter and spring of 2008 I became involved in an attempt to stop the construction of a highway overpass that was to run through a forest near Langford, British Columbia to service the development of the Bear Mountain Resort. For a variety of reasons the Bear Mountain "tree sit" as it became called and the community of outsiders and activists that passed through the camp became very meaningful to me. An activist campaign developed around the tree sit, calling on the government and the broader public to stop the construction of the highway overpass on the grounds that it impinged on Indigenous land-use and violated a range of ecological features.

On the morning of February 14th, 2008, over 300 police officers descended in a pre-dawn sneak-attack on the six activists who happened to be in the camp. I was arrested in a platform in the crown of a second growth Douglas Fir tree, thirty-five meters above the ground, while I was listening to the sound of traffic from the nearby highway and watching the sunrise through the canopy. I was given full environmental terrorist treatment: officers tied my tree-climbing ropes, immobilizing me on the platform, and two officers from the province-wide aerial extraction unit spent three hours slowly

climbing my tree before arresting me. As I was rappelled down the tree by the officers roughly thirty police officers stood ringed around the base of the tree, some with dogs, others with shields and others further back holding guns trained on my body being slowly rappelled to the forest floor. Many activists came to protest the raid but within hours feller bunchers had decimated the small patch of forest, our camp had been taken to the dump and soon construction had begun on the overpass.

Since this experience I have reflected long and hard on the Bear Mountain tree sit and the campaign that surrounded the specific place of the tree sit. Without going into detail about the campaign, I would say that the environmental data that was publicized by the activists as justification for the tree sit was not representative of the range of reasons that brought the activists themselves to take part in the blockade. These data were utilized because they were understood to be useful in the task of convincing the media and the broader public about the campaign.[1]

However, these data cut through the place of the tree sit in very particular ways. The languages of nature that were used enabled activists to relate the place to broader environmental concerns and yet did so by framing the place in relation to a specific cultural understanding of nature. These data resolved the place where the tree sit was taking place in ways that made it sound as if we environmentalists were able to represent

[1]It should be noted that I am not attempting to criticize the organizers of the Bear Mountain campaign, who worked tirelessly and very successfully to publicize the tree sit and First Nations sovereignty. Instead, in relation to environmental politics I am attempting to open up a dialogue over the tactics used by environmental activists and the implications of these tactics for our relations with places and the land.

what the place meant for us, as if we we knew “it” and were proposing a management plan for “it.” These claims, and the extent to which they seemed to propose a body of knowledge as the basis of an understanding of the place of the tree sit made me uncomfortable.

During most of the time spent at the tree sit I was engaged in learning about the place. I studied local plants, learning how to harvest and prepare stinging nettle, devil's club and oregon grape root. I also learned a little about how to prepare wild game and how to live in the woods without causing undo harm – how and where to shit so that it would not quickly pass into the water stream, how to quickly chop wood, how to stay dry and relatively warm living outside in a rainforest in the winter, how to salvage some of the reusable waste generated by the town of Langford -- along with many other skills. We were lucky enough to meet some of the local First Nations and learn a little about their traditional uses of the land and the complex relations that exist between traditional elders and officials in band councils. We also came to learn a little of municipal politics in Langford from attending local council meetings and listening to what visitors to our camp had to say. In addition, we learned how to co-operate with the police and a little about how to detect informants.

In all of these and many other ways, I spent my time at the tree sit learning and studying the local place. Through this learning I came to understand that the place of the tree sit was something that I was committed to and it appeared that the development of the interchange was part of a troubling rise of a certain cultural approach to the place

which saw the land in terms of the money that could be made from converting it to a suburb.

However, I was uncertain whether the type of statistics that were being mobilized by activists at the tree sit were the best way to represent our attempts to challenge the Bear Mountain development. Rather than emphasizing the local knowledges and experiences of those who lived in Langford, the scientific data used by activists focused largely on communicating information about nature. Activist representatives were briefed on a wide range of scientific information about nature by central organizers to relay to the media and the broader public. While this language of nature expressed aspects of the place it did so at the cost of a vast reduction in the complexity of the relations between humans and the non-human aspects of the place.

Responding to this reduction, this thesis endeavours to demonstrate that places such as the Bear Mountain tree sit become political through many diverse cultural traditions that entail distinct ways of inhabiting places. I do this through an attempt to stage a discussion of environmental activism in terms of interactions in places between humans, culture and land (rather than nature). To demonstrate this argument, a case study of the Perry Ridge blockade will be pursued because it is a case that I understand to have many similar issues to the Bear Mountain tree sit.

In the summer of 1997, demonstrations were staged in the Slocan Valley in the interior of British Columbia over plans proposed by the Provincial government to log

forests within a series of watersheds that were used by inhabitants of the Slocan Valley for domestic consumption. This thesis will focus on demonstrations related to Perry Ridge, a 35 kilometre long loaf-shaped ridge that forms the western side of the Slocan Valley from Vallican to Slocan City.

In dominant conceptions, instances of environmental politics such as the Perry Ridge blockade are analyzed in terms of understandings of conflicts over nature or the general environment in which we live. As the story goes, since the 1970s, what is known as environmentalism has presented a series of challenges to the *status quo* of political authority in British Columbia. In the state of Canada, the authority that presides over our communities is traditionally understood to be located within our provincial, federal and municipal governments. Environmentalism is considered one of the most powerful social movements in North America and the rest of the world.[2] By utilizing this influence to forcibly articulate a number of concerns over how we relate to the places where we live, the environmental movement has been able to challenge the terms through which political authorities govern in places like the Slocan Valley in British Columbia. From the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, we can understand this political authority as the authority to preside over the sharing that takes place within communities.[3] Environmentalists have

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[2] Daniel Faber, "Building a transnational environmental justice movement: Obstacles and opportunities in the age of globalization," In Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith, Eds., *Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational protest and the Neoliberal order*, (Oxford: Roman and Littlefield, 2005) 43-70.

[3] Nancy, Jean-Luc, unknown text, quoted in Doreen Massey, *For Space*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005) 154.

engaged in disputing how communities share places with the non-human elements of places. Broadly, environmentalism is understood to be concerned with the preservation and protection of these non-human elements, which culturally are known as nature or the environment, through specific places.[4] This concern for protection comes in response to the dominant concern in industrial Western society which views nature instrumentally and is said to be unsustainable.[5]

So what exactly are the challenges posed to political authority in British Columbia by the diverse collection of movements, campaigns, beliefs and writings known as environmentalist? How do we understand the political interventions of environmentalists? We commonly understand that environmentalism came to prominence in British Columbia in the 1970s through a series of conflicts over wilderness preservation in places like South Moresby Island, the Stein Valley and the Spatsizi wilderness.[6] The environmental movement rapidly expanded and by the late 1980s included a range of local groups as well as more broadly focused NGOs such as Greenpeace International, Ecotrust, BC Wild, the World Wildlife Fund and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.[7] In the 1990s the environmental movement engaged the logging industry and the Provincial government in a series of high profile battles over

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[4]Jeremy Wilson, T*alk and Log,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998) x.

[5]Douglas, Torgerson *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) 3.

[6]Jeremy Wilson, T*alk and Log,* 129-134.

land-use policy in places like the Slocan Valley, the Walbran Valley and most famously Clayoquot Sound. The Clayoquot protests resulted in mass arrests and garnered worldwide media attention.[8]

Despite the broad influence of environmentalism as it has been sketched out above, a series of criticisms have been addressed to the practices identified as environmentalist. One challenging critique has been that environmentalists are perpetuating the extension of bio-power through the application of rational management to non-human life.[9] Bio-power is a concept developed by Michel Foucault to describe a form of power that operates directly on life, a form of power that he argues has been extensively practiced since the start of the 18th century.[10] This form of power views life and its practices as its domain. Foucault identified how, "in the space for the movement of power thus conquered, and broadening and organizing that space, methods of power and knowledge assumed responsibility for the life processes and undertook to control and modify them."[11] This passage indicates how within the operational space that is made

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[7] George Hoberg, "Policy Cycles and Policy Regimes," in Benjamin Cashore, et al, Eds, *In Search of Sustainability: BC Forest Policy in the 1990s, (*Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001) 25.

[8]Karena Shaw, "Encountering Clayoquot, Reading the Political," in *A Political Space: Reading the global through Clayoquot Sound,"* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 37-43.

[9]Timothy Luke, "On Environmentality: Geo-Power and Eco-Knowledge in the Discourses of Contemporary Environmentalism," *Cultural Critique,* no.31, 57-81, (Fall 1995).

[10] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1,* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) 143.

[11]Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1,* 142.

available by discourses of bio-power, biological and human life as it is represented in these discourses is understood as being outside of the history of its own conditions of intelligibility or historicity. Through the rise of the social and natural sciences it is said that life itself, rather than a particular conception of this life, is governed. Through bio-power, life is penetrated by power and the political technologies that allow the space of existence to be rendered calculable by these discourses.[12]

Foucault's analysis maps well onto environmentalism as dominantly practiced. As Timothy Luke and Eric Darier have argued, most environmentalist discourse can be viewed as ecogovernmental in that it constructs the environment as an object of knowledge in relation to which certain knowledge practices are enabled.[13] Through the generation of data about elements of our environment such as the oceans and the air, scientists and the environmental activists who publicize their data are viewed as being

[12]Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1,* 143. Foucault is not suggesting that existence can be rendered calculable by bio-power Instead, discourses of bio-power present themselves *as if* they are calculating life. Foucault's general criticism of these discourses can be understood as an opposition to gestures that are not open to recognizing other heterogeneously constituted discourses and which, by means of this obstruction, limit the potential for new discourses or practices to be generated and encountered by failing to recognize their own limitations.

[13]See Eric Darier, "Foucault and the Environment: An Introduction," in Eric Darier ed., *Discourses of the Environment,* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1999) 1-34; Timothy W. Luke, "Environmentality as Green Governmentality," in Eric Darier ed., *Discourses of the Environment,* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers) 121-151.

able to speak about nature and articulate how it works.[14] The management prescriptions that follow from these data engage in defining, creating, and enforcing discursive regimes of nature.[15] While these data are generalizable and are easily mobilized politically, they lead to the perception of nature as a standing reserve, an area that can be managed for disciplinary purposes. As T.W. Luke writes in relation to the discourse of environmental think tanks such as the Worldwatch Institute:

> To save the planet, it becomes necessary to environmentalize it, enveloping its system of systems in new disciplinary discourses to regulate population growth, economic development, and resource exploitation on a global scale with continual managerial intervention.[16]

In this sense, environmentalism is understood to be engaged in managing the environment with the assistance of the political technologies that allow this space to

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[14] For examples of this type of environmental discourse see especially the panarchy literature which generates information about socio-natural systems and how best to manage them. (For illustrative examples see Lance Gunderson and C. S. Holling, *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Systems of Humans and Nature*, (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2001); C.S. Holling, "From complex regions to complex worlds," *Ecology and Society* 9(1): 11(2004). http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol9/iss1/art11/; C. Folke et al, "Regime shifts, resilience and biodiversity in ecosystem management," *Annual Review of Ecology Evolution and Systematics*, 35,(2005) 557-581.).

[15] Luke, "On Environmentality," 4.

[16] Luke, "On Environmentality," 22.

become visible. Nature as represented in the scientific discourses used by environmentalists to represent nature is considered to be applicable on a global scale, as representing nature as a whole.

Viewed in this way, environmentalism in British Columbia is understood to be proposing contrasting managerial plans for the resources found in the environment in British Columbia to those presented by the provincial government and logging corporations. In this portrayal, the movement can be portrayed as engaging in a "war in the woods" with the development coalition over how to manage land that has been naturalized as sets of resources.[17]

Staging environmental politics as a discussion over an unproblematized conception of nature generates two problems. First, such a staging of environmental politics silences discussion over the colonial and political implications embedded in dominant concepts of nature. As Bruce Braun indicates, accepting the framing of environmental politics as concerned with the management of nature, "enable[s] the management or preservation of 'nature' to proceed in the ways...that permit 'authority' to be constructed and legitimated in particular ways, and that naturalize a 'post'colonial cultural and political terrain."[18] This terrain sidelines First Nations' understanding of nature while allowing the environment to be discussed as an inviolable space while

[17]This term was popular in the 1990s in British Columbia to describe a string of conflicts over land-use. See Chapter One for an extensive discussion of these conflicts.

[18]Bruce Braun (1997) offers an excellent analysis of the silences enacted in the debate between managerial environmentalism and the development coalition in BC.

certain voices, such as those of scientists and environmentalists, are given the ability to speak for it. In this imperial aspect of modern environmentalism, what is central is the figure of the manager who watches over nature, ordering and directing nature.[19] Through this managerial process, "Nature's energies, materials and sites are redefined by the eco-knowledges of resource managerialism as the sources of 'goods' for sizable numbers of people."[20] These goods that are obtained can be natural resources or aesthetic experiences but what is essential is that nature itself is viewed as the site for these goods to be obtained.

The problem is that environmentalism can fail to recognize that understandings of nature do not pre-exist their representation and as such are always the product of particular cultural processes of interaction with non-human entities.[21] Failing to recognize the cultural and historical situatedness of knowledges of nature can lead to a failure to recognize the reciprocity of relations between humans and what is understood as nature. The danger is that, in extending managerial control over what is understood as nature, environmentalist discourses will perpetuate these imperial managerial interactions. If this danger is not averted, then environmentalism will fail to challenge and thus perpetuate dominant colonial and capitalistic practices in British Columbia.

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[19]Max Oelschlaeger, "Reflections on the Wilderness Act," *Weber Studies,* Spring/Summer (1995), Volume 12.2, http://weberjournal.weber.edu/archive/archive%20B%20Vol.%2011-16.1/Vol.%2012.2/12.2Oelschlaeger.htm.

[20]Luke, "On Environmentality," 70-71.

[21]Donna Haraway cited in Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest,* 17.

Recognizing this danger, it is important to question how reflective managerial tendencies are of the range of practices undertaken by environmental activists in British Columbia. An initial response to the over-all question is offered by Ramachandra Guha, who argues that there are different strains of environmentalism. Guha notes that environmentalism as resource managerialism is distinct from the environmentalism practiced by subsistence based communities in the global South. These communities practice environmentalism in resistance to the development plans of the state and also the conservation plans of imperialist NGOs. Guha writes:

> Their main concern is about the use of the environment and who should benefit from it. They seek to wrest control of nature away from the state and the industrial sector and place it in the hands of rural communities who live within that environment but are increasingly denied access to it. These communities have far more basic needs, their demands on the environment are far less intense, and they can draw upon a reservoir of cooperative social institutions and local ecological knowledge in managing the "commons"—forests, grasslands, and the waters—on a sustainable basis.[22]

Guha refers here to the local ecological knowledges developed by rural communities in the global South. These knowledges are developed through engagement with specific

[22]Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation: a third world critique," *Environmental Ethics,* Vol. 11, No.1 (Spring 1989), 82.

ecologies that activists inhabit and are then deployed in relation to these places.[23] For Guha, there is a visible contrast between these lived understandings of the environment and the environmentalism of the north. Guha charges that, rather than utilizing lived knowledges of the environment, environmentalism of the North tends to advance abstract conceptions of a nature that is to be preserved for the purposes of aesthetic enjoyment and other amenities best understood as reflections of capitalistic practices and aesthetic cultural practices.[24] Guha's criticisms allow us to see beyond inviolate concepts of 'environment' and 'nature'[25] and to see how places are constructed by a range of practices (cultural, political, economic, gender, colonial) and technologies that produce our understandings of these places.[26] This recognition in turn leads us to see that there can be a diversity of ways of inhabiting place.

This leads to the second problem generated by approaching environmental politics in terms of a politics of nature. It is apparent that environmental activists are often

[23]The term "local ecological knowledge" will be utilized in this thesis to refer to knowledge that is developed in relation to inhabitation in specific places and is applied in relation to these places. Ecological is not understood in the narrow sense as knowledge pertaining to ecosystems but rather in the looser sense as knowledge that pertains to the non-human elements of place.

[24]Guha, "Radical American environmentalism," 78.

[25]In this thesis the terms "nature" and "environment" are used interchangeably. Both are taken to refer to the general space outside of human construction as culturally constructed in Western society.

[26]See also Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies,* (London: Sage Publications, 2002) and Karena Shaw *Indigenity and Political Theory,* (London: Routledge, 2008) among many others for alternate statements of this critique.

engaged with the unresolved political complexity of specific places rather in relation to broad cultural conceptions of nature. What are the political implications of asserting that there are strains of environmentalism in British Columbia that are rooted in the way places are inhabited, rather than in abstract ideas about the way nature should be managed? This thesis turns on the idea that there are significant sub-currents within North American environmentalism that do not match the totalizing representations that have been illustrated by Guha and Luke. It will be argued that these sub-currents depend on subjugated knowledges, and, perhaps because of that, knowledge of them is also subjugated. Environmental politics in British Columbia has always been about particular places, and different forms of knowledge about these places have been advanced as justifications for political action. These distinct knowledges are most immediately visible in the interaction between environmentalists and First Nations, who often deploy fundamentally different cultural understandings of place.

However, it is argued in this thesis that there are also subjugated perspectives of place within the European settler community. This argument is made by reference to a theoretical claim that challenges the dominant view in Western society that nature is distinct from humans. Instead, the argument made in this thesis is that conceptions of the nonhuman are always developed in relation to human understandings and visa versa. As Kerry Whiteside has written in relation to noncentered political ecology, this study approaches its task by "becoming aware of the processes linking nature and human

identity."[27] Knowledge is a material-semiotic practice that is not engaged in the representation of place but rather is a practice enacted in the course of particular ways of understanding and inhabiting place.[28] This means that knowledge enters into connections with the other practices present in place and then becomes part *of* places through the use of this knowledge and the practices that are enabled by it.[29]

Considering that environmental activism is in part concerned with changing how we inhabit places, it is important to explore how different knowledge practices are engaged in making connections with place. This is what I try to do with respect to the styles of inhabitation expressed through the knowledge utilized by the activists at the Perry Ridge blockade, the particular place that I investigate in this thesis. I argue that knowledge that is specific to local ecological and social processes is an important component of environmental activism. This knowledge is often based in the contestation of different scales or political contexts than is environmentalism that is engaged in representing places through the scientific language of nature. Because of this, local environmental knowledge is potentially able to disrupt the functioning of environmentalism as an ecogovernmental discourse.

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[27] Kerry H. Whiteside, Divided Natures, French Contributions to Political Ecology, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 2002) 3.

[28] Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies,* 7.

[29] This point is developed from Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place, (*Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009) and will be explored more fully in Chapter Two.

In gesturing towards local ecological knowledge as subjugated knowledge, the attempt is not to claim that these local knowledges represent a pure space or place that is uniquely able to challenge dominant capitalist and colonial tendencies.[30] Instead, it will be argued that these local knowledges are articulated in relation to specific social and ecological processes that are found in localized scales or arenas of social and ecological relations. This specificity means that these local knowledges can be more attentive, democratic and de-centralized than knowledges that are based on scientific understandings of nature are less attentive of. This argument will be demonstrated by analyzing the practices that support the knowledges articulated in relation to the fresh water at Perry Ridge. Knowledges that are based on engagement with specific ecosystem elements through the course of inhabitation are more specific than are more general knowledges which are developed on the basis of scientific observation or broader understandings of the water as a particular type of nature. This specificity is important as it is something that can only be gained through inhabitation and yet is subjugated when activists articulate places by using more abstract knowledges.

Here it should be noted that there has been significant research done into variations of environmental activism in North America that are explicitly related to inhabited places. Most notable is the environmental justice movement(EJM).[31] However,

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[30] For a critique of such an argument see Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest,* 24.

[31] Alison Hope Alkon, "From value to values: sustainable consumption at farmers markets," *Agriculture and Human Values*, Volume 25, Number 4, (2008), 487-498.

analysis of the EJM has tended to focus on the extent to which it has included concerns about social justice into environmentalist discourses.[32] When analysis has focused on the specific connections between knowledge and inhabited places, it has often addressed how place-based knowledge is a reflection of specific social concerns.[33] Notwithstanding this lack of scholarly attention, it is important to challenge Guha's implicit claim that environmentalism in the North does not rely on local ecological knowledge. By emphasizing that local ecological and social knowledge is generated and mobilized by some environmental activists in British Columbia, this paper will argue that there are important distinctions between types of environmental activism in British Columbia based on the different scales of political relations they are engaged with. This distinction is indicated by the terms "politics of inhabitation," which is engaged with localized political and ecological processes and "politics of representation," which is engaged with ecological and political processes on a more macro scale. Engagements with different

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[32] For analysis of the EJM that focus on its ability to incorporate social justice into environmental activism see F.H. Buttle, "Ecological modernization as social theory," *Geoforum,* Volume 31, Issue 1, (February 2000), 57-65; Robert D. Bullard and Glenn S Johnson, "Environmental Justice: Grassroots Activism and Its Impact on Public Policy Decision Making," *Journal of Social Issues,* Vol. 56, No. 3, (2000), 555–578; Torgerson, *The Promise of Green Politics,* 4.

[33] See Soren C. Larson, "Place Identity in a Resource-Dependent Area of Northern British Columbia," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 94(4), (2004), 944–960; Soren C. Larson, "Place making, grassroots organizing, and rural protest: A case study of Anahim Lake, British Columbia," *Journal of Rural Studies* 24, (2008), 172–181.

scales lead to different connections being made with the social and ecological networks that will in turn lead to the creation of different places and different realities.[34]

The outline of this thesis is as follows. As a way of approaching analytic considerations about diverse knowledge practices within the environmental movement, this thesis considers the Perry Ridge roadblock that was erected in the summer of 1997 in the Slocan Valley within the West Kootenay region of British Columbia. This roadblock was established by a coalition of local residents and environmental activists and resulted in the ultimate abandonment of plans to log Perry Ridge. Chapter One will review the details of this action and consider how the action was framed in the mainstream press and academic literature. It will be shown that this framing assumes a certain conception of the relations between activists, specific places, and the environmental politics they undertake in relation to these places. In this understanding, place is a site *within nature* bearing particular characteristics, and activists are said to be debating over the proper use and management of the nature found at Perry Ridge. The main considerations in this framing of the political are questions of resource management, conservation and the amenities that can be obtained from nature. This discussion frames the Perry Ridge blockade as part

[34]This concern is addressed in Hinchliffe and Whatmore's study of the role of environmental activism in debates and struggles over which realities to enact, noting that these struggles involve shifting relations between assemblages of human and nonhumans. (Steve Hinchliffe and Sarah Whatmore, “Living Cities: Towards a Politics of Conviviality,” *Science as Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (2006) 124).

of the war in the woods and in doing so projects an environmental politics of nature that does not challenge dominant understandings of nature.

Chapter Two challenges the conception that environmental activists are primarily concerned with understandings of nature. The chapter develops a contrasting understanding in which environmental activists are understood to be engaging with places rather than nature as it is culturally understood. I draw here on the writing of Kirkpatrick Sale, John Meyer, Edward Casey and Doreen Massey who focus on the importance of specific places in relation to political action. Each theorist offers important insights. Sale indicates that human interactions with places lead to the development of specific and politically important understandings. Meyer demonstrates how the politics of place(s) can not be understood in terms of a politics of nature but must be understood in terms of the diverse values humans develop in relation to places. Massey indicates that people and places are constructed through diverse practices and argues that analysis must take into account the diverse relations that construct places as well as the values people have of places. Casey argues that analysis of place needs to move beyond abstract understandings of social relations and engage with the interrelations that are enacted in specific places between specific human and non-human entities.

Where I depart from these theorists, it is on account of their tendency to resort to totalizing conceptions of nature, place and the social relations found there in order to generalize their own observations about place. However, taken together, these theorists develop a ground upon which to think about the political implications of the engagements

of environmental activists with the ecological and social processes of specific places. Through these considerations a conception of place as a meeting of social and ecological relations that are not limited to this place and yet are developed through particular patterns of lived inhabitation is developed.

Chapter Three reconsiders the politics of the Perry Ridge blockade from the perspective of activists involved in the blockade. The intent in this Chapter is to explore which political commitments influenced activists' participation in the blockade. This Chapter is based on interviews that I have conducted with a number of activists who were involved in the blockade. It was found that a wide range of understandings of the place of Perry Ridge were used to justify involvement in the blockade. When these knowledges are viewed in the context of the embodied practices that support and are supported by them, they reveal a range of styles of inhabitation based on engaging with the diverse human and non-human elements of place. Through this analysis, it becomes clear that much more than better management of natural resources is at stake in the Perry Ridge blockade. Instead, the place of Perry Ridge is in diverse ways a complex political space that cannot be resolved but instead must be negotiated.

Chapter Four extends analysis of the distinct knowledges that were used in the Perry Ridge blockade. Initially it is demonstrated that the blockade needs to be understood in terms of attempts to contest Perry Ridge as a complex political space, rather than in relation to a politics of nature. To articulate this complexity, this Chapter focuses on the knowledge that activists articulate in relation to the fresh water found on

the Ridge. Here it becomes apparent that certain knowledge practices used by environmental activists are addressed in relation to specific places rather than nature as a whole. This indicates that there are important subjugated traditions of local ecological knowledge that are often suppressed when activists engage in a politics of representation in relation to dominant cultural understandings of nature

Chapter One: Introduction to the Perry Ridge Blockade as part of the war in the woods.

This chapter approaches the question of the link between environmental politics and place by focusing on a specific case, the Perry Ridge blockade in the summer of 1997. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how environmental activism in British Columbia is commonly framed. It will be demonstrated that this framing encourages us to understand environmental politics in relation to places such as Perry Ridge as conflicts over how to manage particular locations within nature rather than as political interventions in relation to the diversely constituted place of Perry Ridge. This case study demonstrates how environmental politics has been understood in terms of a conflict over nature. While indicating the prevalence of this interpretation, the case study presented here indicates the complexity of the local politics over land-use in the Slocan Valley.

The first section of this chapter will review the events that occurred during the Perry Ridge blockade. This section will go into considerable detail discussing the history of disputes over land-use in the Slocan Valley to place the Perry Ridge blockade in local context. The second section will detail how the blockade was framed as a battle in the war in the woods. Section three will return to Perry Ridge and outline how the analysis of Perry Ridge frames the conflict as a managerial conflict over nature. The Perry Ridge

blockade of 1997 was one of three blockades against logging in the Slocan Valley in the summer of 1997. The others were located north of Perry Ridge at New Denver Flats and Bonanza Creek. The actions have much in common but the scope of this project dictates a focus on the Perry Ridge blockade, which was the last of the three blockades.

Section One: The Perry Ridge Blockade in historical context

The Perry Ridge blockade occurred on the slope of Perry Ridge, a ridge that forms one of the sides of the Slocan Valley, running for roughly thirty-five kilometres along the Slocan River. The Ridge is considered an unstable land-form due to steep slopes and large clay deposits.[35] The Ridge provides fresh water to hundreds of residents whose drinking water comes from the streams that run off the ridge into the Slocan River. Perry Ridge was logged and deforested by fires in the first thirty years of the twentieth century but the ridge and the east-facing area contested in the blockade have not been cut since that time, growing into tall stands of second growth forest.[36] There are eleven

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[35] In the fall of 1996, Austin Greengrass's house on the side of Perry Ridge was destabilized by a land slump caused by this instability. For more information, see the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance's March 1998 newsletter at http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/perryridge/news/98march.html. In addition, Allen Isaacson's report on Perry Ridge indicated extensive instability. (*Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter*, Fall 1997.http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall97.html.

[36] Personal Interview with Frank Nixon, July 28th, 2010.

watersheds in the Slocan Valley that provide water for area residents and it is estimated that roughly five thousand people live in the Slocan Valley.[37]

The blockade at Perry Ridge occurred in the context of twenty years of activism in the Slocan Valley that demanded local management of land-use, more sustainable forestry and watershed protection. A review of these campaigns demonstrates the local complexity of environmental activism in the region.

The first major environmental initiative launched in the Slocan Valley was the Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project (SVCFMP) which was launched in 1974. This proposal, drafted by twenty Valley residents, argued for the development of watershed-specific annual allowable cut levels and the establishment of a joint community and industry management board that would regulate the operations of local forestry.[38] Arguments for increased value-added manufacturing and local control of resource management were augmented by proposals to use profits to increase local self-sufficiency by creating small woodlots and developing small-scale farming infrastructure.[39] Although the SVCFMP proposal was rejected by the Provincial Government, the report become a touchstone for rural communities attempting to gain

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[37] Kevin Griffin, "Loggers winning the battle to cut trees in the Slocan Valley," *Vancouver Sun,* October 6th, 1997.

[38] Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project, *Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project Report,* 1974, xiii.

[39] *Ibid*, xiv.

control over management of local forests and was a demonstration of a vision of more ecologically responsible forestry in British Columbia.[40]

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a range of activist groups were created that became central to forest activism in the Slocan. In 1979, the Perry Ridge Water User's Association (PRWUA) began lobbying for protection of the Perry Ridge watersheds.[41] In 1981, the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance (SVWA) was formed to work for the protection of watersheds in the Slocan Valley. SVWA counts PRWUA as one of its members, along with ten other Slocan Valley watershed protection groups. According to the mission statement of the SVWA, "The main goal of SVWA is the protection of water quantity, quality and timing of flow in the watersheds of the Slocan Valley. Other goals are to apply ecosystem-based planning to the Valley; ensure more value is derived from each tree cut; and diversify the Valley's economy."[42] The northern Slocan Valley is also the home of the Valhalla Wilderness Society(VWS), which is based out of New Denver and focuses on wilderness preservation although it has also been active in campaigns to stop logging within area watersheds. In addition, Silva Forest Foundation, a forestry consulting company specializing in developing ecosystem based land-use plans for rural communities was heavily involved in land-use activism in the Slocan Valley in the 1990s.

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[40] Michael M'Gonigle, Cheri Burda and Fred Gale, "Ecoforestry Versus the State(us) Quo," *BC Studies,* no. 199, (1998), 61.

[41] Personal Interview with Marilyn Burgoon, July 26th, 2010.

[42] "Background Information," Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance website, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/background.html.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, these activist groups and local residents mobilized to take part in a series of government-initiated land-use reform processes and high profile conflicts over land use. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the Valhalla Wilderness Society led extensive lobbying of the Provincial government to create a Provincial Park on the Western side of Slocan Lake, in the Northern end of the Slocan Valley. This lobbying led to a two-year moratorium on logging in the area in the late 1970s. The moratorium was followed by the creation of a three year provincial government sponsored $300,000 economic development plan, the *Slocan Valley Planning Program*. This plan was designed and carried out by a planning commission made up of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) and a group of regional government officials from Provincial ministries. During these deliberations, the VWS and the SVWA demanded that the planning commission implement measures to create a diversified local economy and support the creation of a Provincial Park. These lobbying efforts of the VWS and the SVWA along with the support of local residents led to the creation of a 50,000 hectare Valhalla Provincial Park in 1982. [43]

In 1984, after two more years of study, the planning commission released the *Slocan Valley Development Guidelines*. These guidelines stated that further development of the Slocan Valley would be conducted based on attempts to maximize local tourism and agricultural potentials rather than forest industry profits. In addition, the report indicated that before resource use occurred within domestic use watersheds: "an

[43]Bardati, "A Community and Its Forests", 125-29.

integrated watershed planning process... will be followed prior to commencing logging in those water supply watersheds with high sensitivity to disturbance".[44] This integrative watershed planning process identified maintaining water quality as the top priority of land use and indicated that the involvement of water users at all planning stages was necessary.[45] At the time of the issue of the report, the SVDG were considered to be the definitive plan for the future of crown land in the Slocan Valley.[46] However, when the SVDG were released, Slocan Forest Products(SFP), a large forestry company that held the forest tenure for most of the crown land in the Slocan Valley, immediately objected. SFP launched a "Can the Plan" campaign to challenge the SVDG. Ultimately the SFP campaign was successful and although the SVDG were adopted, these guidelines were never implemented in land use policy by the Provincial government.[47]

In 1992 the CORE of British Columbia set up a Slocan Valley CORE table that was presented as an opportunity for the different stakeholders in land use in the Slocan Valley to take part in land use decision making.[48] The CORE process was described by Stephan Owen, the Commissioner of the CORE process, as one in which "...those with authority to make a decision and those who will be affected by that decision are

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[44] Environment and Land Use Committee, Government of British Columbia, *Slocan Valley Development Guidelines,* 1984, available online at http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/bib1769.pdf.

[45]*Slocan Valley Development Guidelines,* cited in Bardati, "A Community and Their Forests," 130.

[46]*Slocan Valley Development Guidelines*, cited in Bardati, "A Community and Their Forests," 131.

[47]Bardati, "A Community and Their Forests," 131.

[48]Bardati, "A Community and their Forests," 161.

empowered to jointly seek an outcome that accommodates rather than compromises the interests of all concerned."[49] On January 12th 1993, the first Slocan Valley CORE table met with representatives from six local stakeholders: wilderness protection groups, watershed users, the local forestry industry, local forestry workers, the Provincial government and the municipal government.[50] Over the following months a range of other interests were added to the table including First Nations, local business, mining and wildcrafting.[51] Negotiations continued until June of 1994 although the CORE table was not able to come to a conclusion that was satisfactory to representatives who had been demanding land-use reform.[52] In March of 1995, the Provincial government approved most of the recommendations of the CORE report and issued its own *West Kootenay-Boundary Land Use Plan* (KBLUP). This report confirmed that watershed users would be made part of the planning process for logging in domestic watersheds.[53]

Despite this consultation, the two years following this plan saw the Provincial Government begin a shift in the implementation of forest policy from the multi-stakeholder consultation undertaken during the CORE process towards an implementation model that emphasized centralized decision-making. This shift was

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[49]Bardati (2002:161) indicates that Owen quoted this passage during a meeting with the SVWA directors on June 2nd 1992 during which he convinced SVWA to join the consultation process.

[50]Bardati, "A Community and their Forests," 175.

[51]*Ibid.* Wildcrafting refers to non-timber products such as mushrooms and herbs.

[52]See Bardati, (2002) Chapter 6 for an extensive overview of the CORE process in the Slocan Valley.

[53]Bardati, "A Community and their Forests," 250.

backed by a new Forest Practices Code that governed all aspects of resource use on crown land and decided land use policy based on centralized policy.[54] This shift meant that consultations with local watershed users as proposed by the KBLUP and the CORE process were scrapped.[55] Richard Allin, a director of the SVWA, reported in the SVWA newsletter: "The CORE project ended with virtually all of the major land use issues in the valley still unresolved."[56] Allin indicated that the major unaddressed concerns included changing the annual-allowable cut; challenging the Ministry of Forest's control over land use; and ensuring the protection of domestic use watersheds.[57]

The Can the Plan campaign launched by SFP in the mid 1980s is indicative of long-running conflicts within the Slocan Valley between residents who were proponents of forestry and those who were proponents of land-use reform.[58] These conflicts continued through the CORE negotiations, when deep mistrust slowed negotiations, and into the summer of 1997 when the Perry Ridge blockade and blockades at Bonanza Creek

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[54]See Tim Thielmann and Chris Tollefson, "Tears from an onion: Layering, exhaustion and conversion in British Columbia land use planning policy." *Policy and Society* 28 (2009), 111-124, as well as Bardati (2002:251-253) for discussions of this shift in policy.

[55]Bardati, "A Community and their Forests," 255.

[56]Richard Allin "CORE project ends but work goes on," *Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter*, Fall 1994, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall94.html.

[57] Allin, "CORE project ends but work goes on," http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall94.html.

[58]See Bardati(2002) for a discussion of these conflicts. He indicates that they lasted the entire scope of his study, from the early 1970s until the late 1990s.

and New Denver Flats were met with opposition from the Slocan Valley Equal Access to Public Resources Society.[59] This society supported the timber industry and staged relatively large counter-protests against logging blockades.[60] These counter-protests indicate that within the communities of the Slocan Valley there were always complex disputes over land-use.

This overview of government initiated processes indicates the local context within which activists in the Slocan Valley approached the Perry Ridge blockade. The years between 1994 and 1997 saw the Slocan Valley officially lose any specific management status that it might have developed through the CORE process. Following this shift, the Provincial Government pushed ahead and attempted to manage logging within the Slocan Valley based on the Forest Practices Code. At this juncture, SVWA and its supporters moved from taking part in government-led processes into actively petitioning the Ministry of Forests (MoF) directly to change policies.[61] This overview indicates that in important ways, the local political context, and the power relations found in this local place, influenced the political actions of the demonstrators involved in the blockade.

Having presented a broad overview of the local historical context of the Perry Ridge blockade, this section will consider the blockade directly. In July of 1996 the Ministry of Forests announced that it would begin the planning process to build a 7.7 KM

[59]Bardati(2002:199) notes that mistrust leading to slow progress was the main cause in slowing the CORE negotiations. Marilyn Burgoon corroborated this point during a personal interview, July 26th, 2010.

[60] Gordon Hamilton, "Slocan Valley logging issue threatens forest firm," *Vancouver Sun*, August 16th 1996.

[61] Allin, "CORE project ends but work goes on," http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall94.html.

road to service a proposed woodlot and a series of cut blocks on Perry Ridge.[62] In response to these logging plans, the SVWA arranged to have an Angus Reid Poll conducted in the Slocan Valley. This poll was intended to gauge the level of concern for the local environment and interest in the implementation of ecosystem based land-use planning developed by the Silva Forest Foundation.[63] This poll found that over ninety percent of Slocan Valley residents agreed that logging plans should respect watershed stability and ecosystem health. A similar number agreed that responsible forestry meant respecting ecological limits.[64] Over seventy percent of those polled agreed that Slocan Valley residents should be involved in planning and managing forestry in the region. In Spring of 1997, the SVWA presented what it called a negotiated settlement proposal to the Ministry of Forests asking that a reformed land use plan be developed in consultation with local residents.[65] Despite this opposition, in June of 1997, the Ministry of Forests

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[62] "Year in Review 1996," Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Website, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/1996rev.html.

[63] The poll was taken by the Angus Reid firm of 400 Slocan Valley residents regarding general views in the Valley concerning environmental and forestry issues. I have been unable to locate further information regarding the Angus Reid poll. "Poll Shows Valley Residents Support Silva Plan," *Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter*, Fall 1996, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall96.html.

[64] "Poll Shows Valley Residents Support Silva Plan," *Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter*, Fall 1996, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall96.html.

[65] "Year in Review 1997," Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Website, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/1996rev.html.

ignored the demand for a negotiated settlement and awarded the road building contract on Perry Ridge.

On July 14th of 1997 one hundred and fifty demonstrators gathered to erect a blockade to stop workers who were beginning road construction to service logging cut-blocks near the north end of Perry Ridge. On July 30th, after a two week stand-off, an injunction to remove the blockade was served on behalf of the Attorney General of British Columbia. On August 6th the injunction was enforced by forty-five RCMP officers who arrived to find a crowd of over three hundred residents and activists at the blockade. Nine protesters refused to obey the injunction order and were taken away by police escort. Once the road was cleared, Ministry of Forests crews and the private contractor, Wesley Construction, began work on the road site.[66]

By the time snow fell only 4.7 KM of the proposed 7.7 KM of road had been built on Perry Ridge. Then, in late November, the injunction which had been enforced at the Perry Ridge blockade was overturned on the basis of a challenge put forward by the SVWA. In his decision the presiding judge, Justice Parrett, stated that the scientific reports which the government had used as justification for obtaining the injunction did not uniformly support the proposed logging.[67] This was a major victory for those who had supported the Perry Ridge blockade and meant that any further logging or road

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[66] "Year in Review 1997," Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Website, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/1996rev.html.

[67] "Year in Review, 1997," Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance website, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/1997rev.html.

development would have to contend with the difficulty of obtaining a new injunction and dealing with the presence of a renewed blockade. In response the MOF attempted to overturn Parrett's ruling in the winter of 1998 and launched a lawsuit against five defendants who were selected at random from among those present at the initial protests at the blockade.[68] The court case dragged into the fall of 2007 at significant cost to the defendants and their supporting community.[69] In August of 1998 the MOF attempted to resume road building on Perry Ridge and were blocked by forty demonstrators.[70] This action, combined with the MOF's caution following Judge Parrett's ruling in the fall of 1997 led to the cessation of road development and the logging that would have resulted from it.

Between 1997 and 2010 there was no further road building or logging on the north and east sides of Perry Ridge although these years saw extensive logging on the south and west slopes of the Ridge.[71] In these intervening years there was a sharp decline in levels of organizing and lobbying around land-use in the Slocan Valley, as the SVWA, PRWUA and Silva became much less active. However, during this period, efforts

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[68] Perry's Ridge Water Users Association Newsletter March 1998, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/perryridge/news/98march.html#injunction.

[69] Personal interview with Pamela Stevenson, July 29th, 2010.

[70] "Year in Review 1998," Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance website, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/1998rev.html.

[71] Personal Interview with Marilyn Burgoon, July 26th, 2010.

continued to make Perry Ridge into an ecological reserve.[72] These requests have so far been denied by the Provincial government.[73] In the fall of 2010, BC Timber Sales announced that a series of four cut blocks on the north end of Perry Ridge that totalled just over one hundred and twenty hectares had been tendered to Sunshine Logging Ltd. of Kaslo, B.C..[74] The timber sale involved building a road from the same spur road that logging was to proceed from in 1997.[75] In response, on October 27th a roadblock was initiated by the Sinixt First Nation. The Sinixt raised the blockade on the grounds that they were not consulted by BC Timber Sales about logging plans. In November logging was postponed because of a Constitutional challenge launched by the Sinixt Nation in the B.C. Supreme Court on the grounds that their indigenous rights to consultation have been violated.[76] As this thesis is being prepared, logging on the Ridge has been postponed

[72] Timothy Schafer, *Nelson Daily News,* Dec 19th, 2008, 3.

[73] For an overview of coverage on attempts to preserve Perry Ridge from logging see: Timothy Schafer, "Perry Ridge residents ponder legal action," *Nelson Daily News*,Oct 27th, 2008, p. 3; Timothy Schafer, "Residents want Perry Ridge protected" *Nelson Daily News*, Dec 19th, 2008, p. 3. For a perspective from the Lower Mainland, see Stephen Hume, "An obvious solution to a fatal threat from landslides," *Vancouver Sun,* May 10th, 2006. pg. A.1.

[74]Jan McMurray, "Perry Ridge timber sale awarded to Sunshine Logging," *The Valley Voice,* Vol 19 No 9 October 6th, 2010.

[75]*Ibid.*

[76] "Logging stopped as Sinixt win injunction in court," *Nelson Daily*, Nov 15th, 2010. http://thenelsondaily.com/news/issues/logging-stopped-sinixt-win-injunction-court.

pending the outcome of this challenge, which probably will not be known publicly until the Spring of 2011.[77]

Section Two: The Perry Ridge blockade as part of the environmental movement

This section will indicate how the Perry Ridge blockade has been perceived as a battle within the war in the woods.[78] The intent is to demonstrate that the blockade was understood in the media and academic literature as part of the environmental movement and represented as primarily concerned with the management of nature rather than as a political interaction with a specific place.

In August of 1996, when the Silva Forest Foundation released an ecosystem-based plan for land-use management within the Slocan Valley, the Vancouver Sun ran an article in the business section that stated: "Slocan Valley environmentalists predicted a new war in the woods Thursday unless the government adopts a home-grown logging plan that would see harvests in the valley drop by 90 per cent."[79] The article describes the Silva

[77]Colin Payne, "Sinixt Challenge carried over to next week," *The Slocan Valley Current,* January 18th, 2010. http://slocan.inthekoots.com/sinixt-challenge-carried-over-to-next-week/.

[78] See Roger Hayter, "War in the Woods," *Annals of the Association of American Geographer,* 93(3) (2003) and Wilson (1998) for extensive use of this term to describe conflicts between environmentalists and a loose coalition of industry and government officials that supported maintaining traditional levels of logging.

[79] Gordon Hamilton, "Slocan Valley logging issue threatens forest firm," *Vancouver Sun,* August 16th, 1996.

plan as the brainchild of local environmentalists Herb Hammond and Colleen McCrory of the VWS rather than as representative of the local communities' demands. Further, the article is framed in economic terms as an attack by groups of environmentalists on the viability of Slocan Forest Products. This angle frames disputes over land-use in terms of the contested value of natural resources and the potential profit that can be generated from these resources.

In the Summer of 1997, another headline in the Vancouver Sun ran under the title, "environmentalists and loggers gear up for another war in the woods."[80] Referring to Perry Ridge, this article stated: "for more than a decade, some B.C. forests that provide both drinking water and wood for sawmills have been the flashpoints for environmental protests."[81] This article indicates that Perry Ridge is important to environmentalists in terms of its specific natural characteristics.[82] The article indicates that the protestors at Perry Ridge are environmentalists who are concerned because of the consequences of logging to the environment in general rather than in relation to the specific community of the Slocan Valley.[83]

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[80] Glenn Bohn. *The Vancouver Sun,* August 6th, 1997. pg. B.3

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] For a similar perspective see also Glen Schaefer and Ian Austin, "Slocan Valley roads blocked," *The Province.*, Jul 15th, 1997, A.6.

[83] For a much different perspective, see Kevin Griffin, "Loggers winning the battle to cut trees in Slocan Valley," *The Vancouver Sun*, Oct 6th, 1997, A.7. In this article, Griffin writes: "Logging in the Slocan Valley has been a contentious issue since the 1970s because there are so many small water systems, serving

Here it is important to detail what is implied when it is stated that activists are involved in the "war in the woods." This term was popularized in the 1990s in relation to land-use conflicts in British Columbia that occurred between pro-logging advocates, often known as the development coalition, and groups of "environmentalists" who resisted logging.[84] In this framing, the development coalition is composed of the logging industry as well as actors within government and is supported by the labour sector of the forest industry.[85] The development coalition values the forest in terms of the jobs and money that can be generated through the forcible conversion of resources into commodities. This coalition values continued wealth generation as the dominant goal of forest policy.[86]

The land-use management planning of the development coalition has been based since the 1940s and 1950s on what is known as the sustained yield discourse. The sustained yield discourse argued at the time that the best course of action was to turn less productive old growth forests into more productive second growth stands. This discourse

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single users and small communities. There are 11 community watersheds in the Slocan Valley, providing water for groups and municipalities. Watersheds cover more than 50 per cent of the harvestable forest land base." This perspective asserts that local patterns of inhabitation are central to the demonstrations against logging.

[84] See Hayter, "War of the Woods."

[85] Wilson, *Talk and Log,* xiv.

[86]See Jeremy Rayner(2001) for an overview of the systematic prioritizing of immediate economic gains over environmental concerns in the development of the Annual Allowable Cut by the Ministry of Forests.

was based on an approach to the forests as a standing reserve of capital in the form of timber.[87] Jeremy Wilson notes that the sustained yield discourse was essentially a safety blanket used for public relations purposes while the development coalition engaged in continued increases in timber harvests.[88] Despite various challenges, the groups making up what is known as the developmental coalition exercised near monopolistic control over the policy community that existed around forestry in BC in the period up to the 1990s, attempting to generate more money from the timber resource.[89]

In the war in the woods framing, the environmental movement stands in contrast to the development coalition. As a movement, the environmental movement is understood as a series of organized activities working towards an objective.[90] Generally, it is understood that environmentalists are concerned with the fragility of nature, concerns over the limits to growth, and the belief that there is an inherent value to plants and non-human animals.[91] In relation to British Columbia, the environmental movement has been interested in protecting wilderness and preventing environmental damage from forestry

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[87]Wilson, *Talk and Log,* xiii.

[88]Wilson, *Talk and Log,* 90.

[89] Hoberg, "Policy Cycles and Policy Regimes," 28.

[90] Jeffrey Barber, "Mapping the movement to achieve sustainable production and consumption in North America," *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 15 (2007), 499-512.

[91] Riley E. Dunlap, and Kent D. Van Liere, "The New Environmental Paradigm: A Proposed Measuring Instrument and Preliminary Results," *Journal of Environmental Education* 9:(1978).

and other human activities while promoting general sustainability.[92] The emergence and strength of environmental values in British Columbia is linked to the broader emergence of the environmental movement across the Western world.[93]

This increase of environmental values is often understood in terms of the rise of post-material values.[94] Ronald Inglehart, a main proponent of this argument, argues that the prevalence of environmental values is linked to macro-scale changes in economic systems and increasing environmental changes that are found throughout the industrial world due to a shift towards post-material economies.[95] Inglehart's argument is advanced by political scientists who account for the eruption of the 'war in the woods' by reference to a variety of global trends including growing awareness of global environmental problems and a growing urban population.[96] This analysis conceptualizes environmental activism in terms of broad cultural trends.

Section Three: Perry Ridge as an environmentalized site

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[92] Hoberg, "Policy Cycles and Policy Regimes," 20. Following generally the same lines, a more nuanced review of the movement's politics is given in the introduction of Wilson (1998, xii-xxx).

[93] Frank Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia," *BC Studies,* no. 142/143 (2004). For a similar position see Wilson (1998) and Hoberg (2001).

[94] Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution,"* 1977.

[95]Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution,* 1977.

[96]Hayter, "War in the Woods", 3-5. Also Hoberg, "Policy Cycles and Policy Regimes," esp. 21-25.

It has been demonstrated that the Perry Ridge blockade is dominantly viewed as the actions of the environmental movement engaged in the war in the woods against the development coalition. This section will explore how this understanding frames the connection between the activists at the blockade and the place of Perry Ridge. Generally, a conflict such as the Perry Ridge blockade is framed as a debate over how to develop or manage the land, between between the supporters of continued logging and environmentalists.[97] As George Hoberg writes in relation to the war in the woods:

> "The forests of British Columbia have become a battleground over sustainable resource development, focused primarily on the conflict between the economic development of the timber resource and the protection of a variety of environmental amenities provided by the forests."[98]

In this framing, the forest is viewed in two distinct ways. For the development coalition, the forest is viewed as a standing reserve of capital to be managed by humans based on the economic benefits that can be obtained from it. In contrast, for the environmental movement, the forest is viewed as part of the environment that should be managed based on the amenities that can be obtained from it.

The difference between these two approaches to the forest is between contrasting values. Environmentalists are said to value the forest for the amenities that can be

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[97]Alan R. Drengson and Duncan M. Taylor, *Ecoforestry: the art and science of sustainable forest use* (Gabriola Island: New Society Press, British Columbia, 1998).

[98] Hoberg, "Policy Cycles and Policy Regimes," 3.

generated from protecting the forest. In contrast, the development coalition values the forest for the economic benefits that can be derived from it. Based on these differing values, the combatants in the war in the woods lobby for different management practices in relation to the resources present at sites like Perry Ridge.[99] Despite these distinct values, both perspectives offer managerial prescriptions that apply to natural resources or the environment in general. In both perspectives the place of Perry Ridge is understood through an uncritically accepted narrative of nature.

In this perspective nature is disconnected from the activists articulating it. While natural resources and other environmental features are present in locally-specific patterns at Perry Ridge, they are not specific to the Slocan Valley. Instead, these resources are understood as fungible in so far as they can appear interchangeably in different places without having meaningful local characteristics. Scientific investigation allows for the accumulation of knowledge that is specific to the resources found at Perry Ridge, although the knowledge found there is based on general scientific knowledge that is

[99]It should be noted that there are distinct traditions within the environmental movement that do not value the environment for the amenities that can be derived from it. Increasingly, some environmental authors argue that the values held by those attempting to preserve resources are based on material understandings of natural systems that present overarching constraints for human economies. See for example the growing literature on the material characteristics of sustainability. Elinor Ostrom. “A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability Social-Ecological Systems.” *Science* 325, 419-422 (2009), presents a series of “subsystem variables” that impact material sustainability and should be respected. See also Barber (2007).

applicable to any place. In this sense our cultural understanding of nature is understood as the basis of the war in the woods conflict, rather than as itself contested.

In this view, insofar as the activists at the Perry Ridge blockade are intelligible in the war in the woods perspective, they are environmentalists existing on the far-left of the political spectrum. The activists are understood to be presenting a radical management plan for a section of the environment.[100] As environmentalists they are associated with other environmentalists across British Columbia rather than primarily as part of a local community. By extension, the political issues that these activists are engaging with are the general politics of nature rather than local political issues.

Conclusion

This framing of the Perry Ridge blockade as part of the war in the woods prefigures the blockade in important and troubling ways. In so far as the blockade is understood as "taking place" in relation to a place that has already been environmentalized, there has been a troubling acceptance of a certain conception of nature and culture as pre-political. This analysis frames activists at Perry Ridge as environmentalists asserting a managerial perspective in competition with the development coalition over a small part of nature. In the naturalized political space that

[100] Wilson, *Talk and Log,* 143. A counter analysis of political discontent over land use in the Slocan Valley has been offered by Tim Thielmann and Chris Tollefson (2009), who argue that local opposition to the Provincial Government's policies during the CORE process was based on community-led resistance, rather than the resistance of environmentalists.

results from accepting dominant understandings of the environment, competing scientific discourses such as the sustained yield discourse and the Silva Forest Foundation's ecosystem based plan are able to operate as expert discourses. Place in this conception is viewed as nature and is understood to be external to the people who contest it politically.

This approach to the politics of place is dangerous because it accepts a Western conception of nature as the basis of discussion without taking into consideration the fact that First Nations and others such as local communities have distinct cultural understandings of place that are not reducible to generalizations such as nature. In the introduction, the practice of environmental politics on the basis of an unproblematized conception of nature was criticized because it failed to engage with the cultural implications of dominant understandings of nature. This section has indicated that dominant understandings of the Perry Ridge blockade have assumed that the politics of the blockade fit within this understanding of a politics of nature. However, it has also been indicated that such a framing might be problematic on the grounds that it fails to address the particularities of the local political relations within which activists in the Slocan Valley were engaged. This indicates that the framing of environmental politics as part of the war in the woods perpetuates these closures. It is is important to develop an understanding of the politics of ecological places that allows for a more complex account of how relations with specific places influence political action.

Chapter Two: Reconsidering the nature of place

This chapter will engage with the question of how to articulate environmental activists' engagement with places without grounding analysis in relation to an overarching understanding of nature. As noted in Chapter One, we tend to think about environmental activism in relation to an understanding of nature. Beginning an analysis of environmental politics from a conception of nature enables specific conceptions and practices and causes other practices to be subjugated. As noted by Guha, William Cronon and others, in the cultural understanding dominant in Western society nature is understood as the general area of the environment that is distinct from humans. This conception presents environmentalists as engaging in the articulation of this cultural conception of nature. Through this conception, Western culture has been prone to understand nature as providing human resources for human exploitation and has often failed to respect distinct cultural understandings of place or nature.[101]

In view of the cultural particularity and problematic implications of our conceptions of nature, it is important to explore the extent to which the ways in which we understand environmental activism revolves around nature. Rather than developing direct

[101] William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness," In William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 69-90; Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation: a third world critique," *Environmental Ethics,* Vol. 11, No.1 (Spring 1989), 82.

analysis of the problematic implications of conceptions of nature, this chapter will undertake the task of analyzing environmental politics in terms that are more nuanced than human and nature. As a way of challenging dominant assumptions about humans, place and nature, this chapter focuses on developing a richer analysis of the link between humans, place and politics.

The attempt here is not to recover a revitalized understanding or awareness of nature or the wild through focus on place but rather to explore how the human encounter with place plays a part of environmental politics. This chapter will move to see place as experienced through inhabitation and to consider how the politics of place are influenced through this inhabitation. Towards this end, this chapter will address the work of Kirkpatrick Sale, John Meyer, Edward Casey and Doreen Massey, who have all explored the interactions between humans and place. With and against these writers an understanding of place as a meeting between a particular non-human place and humans who interpret this place or land through social relations will be developed.

Section One: Dwellers in the Land

Dwellers in the Land by Kirkpatrick Sale is important as one of the most widely read texts that can be identified as associated with bioregionalism.[102] Sale's text is one of the documents that can be linked to attempts by hundreds of thousands of back-to-the-

[102] Doug Aberley, "Interpreting Bioregionalism," in Michael McGinnis Ed, *Bioregionalism, (*London: Routledge, 1999), 17.

landers in North America to foment change in attitudes towards nature by developing more intensive relationships with inhabited places. In this text, Sale places central importance on developing connections between humans and particular places or regions rather than with nature at a more general level. Sale writes, “the crucial task is to understand place, the immediate specific place where we live.”[103]

Sale argues that through developing local practices communities will begin the decentralized process of developing greater knowledge in relation to their specific bioregion.[104] This local focus will allow inhabitants to gain privileged knowledge in relation to these places.[105] This argument states that closer interactions with watersheds, animals and whole bioregions through inhabitation brings knowledge that is relevant to these specific places and cannot be obtained by those who do not inhabit the bioregion, such as scientists.

Crucial to Sale's approach is an understanding of the importance of scale in relation to the human encounter with place. Sale makes a link between the knowledge generated through inhabitation in a specific bioregional place and the places where this knowledge is generated. He emphasizes that the bioregional inhabitant will be able to develop local ecological as well as social knowledge that is more appropriate to the places than can be generated by anyone that does not have a direct encounter with a specific place. He writes: “…the final distinctions about bioregional boundaries and the

[103] Kirkpatrick Sale*, Dwellers in the Land,* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985)*,* 42.

[104] Sale, *Dwellers in the Land,*179.

[105] *Ibid,* 61.

various scales at which to create human institutions can be safely left to people who live there, providing only that they have undertaken the job of honing their bioregional sensibilities and making acute their bioregional consciousnesses."[106] At this point, it is important to ask how Sale attempts to legitimize the authority of bioregional knowledge.

Sale asserts that connections with specific bioregional places are important because at the bioregional scale humans can "look with Gaean eyes and feel a Gaean consciousness."[107] This means that at the bioregional scale, inhabitants are able to regain the insights of what he calls the Gaean worldview. The Gaean worldview is posited as a global worldview or understanding of nature that was dominant in pre-Christian times. Sale asserts that this worldview is based on three central aspects: nature is alive, endowed with the same spirit and sensibility as humans; there is no separation of the self from the world, no distinction between the human and the non-human; and the earth, nature, is the mother and provider of human life.[108] Sale then develops a series of laws that he understands can inform bioregional practice through the re-development of what he calls a Gaean consciousness, which was common among place-based societies who worshipped Gaea.[109] These laws are divided into four categories and can be presented as the tenets of a worldview or paradigm that differs from the dominant Western paradigm as illustrated in Figure 1.

[106] *Ibid,* 61.

[107] *Ibid,* 54.

[108] *Ibid,* 5-9.

[109] *Ibid,* 49.

Figure 1

	BIOREGIONAL PARADIGM	INDUSTRIO-SCIENTIFIC PARADIGM
Scale	Region	State
	Community	Nation/World
Economy	Conservation	Exploitation
	Stability	Change/Progress
	Self-sufficiency	World Economy
	Cooperation	Competition
Polity	Decentralization	Centralization
	Complementarity	Hierarchy
	Diversity	Uniformity
Society	Symbiosis	Polarization
	Evolution	Growth/Violence
	Division	Monoculture

Sale's main argument for following these laws is his claim that the bioregional worldview is based on the laws of nature, which are represented by the twelve laws listed in Fig. 1.[110] These laws are to be applied within the context of specific bioregions, which are determined by the ecological boundaries created by the presence of variations in flora and fauna. Sale then indicates that only communities that follow these twelve laws can be properly called bioregional.[111] It is not just bioregional practice itself that gives privileged

[110] *Ibid,* 50.

[111] *Ibid.*

knowledge of place but rather it is bioregional practice in accordance with Sale's understanding of the Gaean worldview that allows this understanding.

By this point it is apparent that there are two contrary elements of Sale's conception of the relations between humans and place. The first aspect is that as humans engage in political action in accordance with the laws of Gaea, they are understood to be engaged in activism that is informed by their evolving relation to their specific bioregional place. However, this activism and the knowledge it is based on is understood as bioregional only to the extent that it expresses the Gaean worldview. In this view, the activists at Perry Ridge could be anywhere else on earth and their activism would be understood through the same interpretive framework of Gaea's laws.

In so far as Sale attempts to justify his vision by recourse to universal Gaean law, he attempts to prefigure the politics that will occur in place. The only politics that Sale accepts as legitimately reflecting place are those that correspond to the understanding of nature that has been articulated in the Gaean worldview.[112] In doing so, Sale frames the political encounter in places in terms of an overarching concept of nature, even while affirming the necessity of direct interaction with place.

Section Two: Political Nature

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[112] Here Sale's text echoes bioregional texts including Duncan Taylor, Alan Drengson Eds., *Ecoforestry;* Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publishing, 2001).

The next text to consider is *Political Nature* by John Meyer. Place is central to Meyer's construction of environmental politics. As he writes, place "is the environment in the relevant sense so often contested politically," and as such presents in his view the site upon which to ground environmental politics.[113] However, contrary to Sale, Meyer is highly critical of approaches to place which propose that place has fixed or universal characteristics. Meyer's critique of using concepts of nature to justify political action is that the approach attempts to evade politics by emphasizing an 'ecological' worldview that is expected to dominate politics.[114] Instead as will be seen, Meyer argues that direct experience of place should be made the basis of environmental politics.

Meyer argues that the use of particular conceptions of nature allow subjective conceptions of nature to dominate other conceptions which are equally subjective. In the case of arguments that are based on asserting particular conceptions of place as "nature," Meyer understands that these conceptions of place as nature will, if unchallenged, be allowed to gain hegemonic status over other subjective experiences of nature.

In contrast, Meyer argues that the problem facing environmental thought is not the lack or subjugation of environmental values, as is implied in the arguments for the adoption of an ecological worldview. Instead, for Meyer, the emphasis is on the political process in which these values will be articulated and contested. As such

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[113] John Meyer, *Political Nature, (*Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) 138.

[114] Meyer, *Political Nature,* 23.

environmentalists should focus their energies on the political process.[115] Meyer is attempting to democratize the debate over nature by opening it to political discussion on the basis of subjective experience. He argues that understandings of nature are invariably political as they are constituted through political struggles and so should be debated in common.[116]

As a way of engaging with the implications of Meyer's turn to focus on the politics of nature, it is important to analyze more explicitly how Meyer understands the political and nature. Politics as Meyer understands it is the practice of giving order to human communities. This ordering takes place through the political practice of differentiating the elements of human society.[117] Meyer then argues that because human relations occur or take place in nature, human relations with nature are inherently political, the site of potentially political acts.[118] In this understanding, the lived relations that make up human society become politicized through acts of drawing or defining a boundary. This boundary drawing occurs through articulating conceptions of place that have political authority. Meyer emphasizes that this definitional practice is always contingent upon the subjective perspective of humans and so political distinctions should

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[115] *Ibid,* 51.

[116] *Ibid,* 132.

[117] *Ibid,* 126.

[118] *Ibid,* 128.

not be considered authoritative in themselves.[119] Instead, all knowledge in this conception is political.

Having stated that all knowledge is political, Meyer understands that knowledge also derives from nature. This is because all physical places that have meaning and value for us as individuals, whether we understand them as farms or sidewalks, are nature.[120] Given that nature in this understanding is the site of every political encounter, each particular interpretation of a place that is coded as 'nature' is the product of a subjective gesture: "When we speak of nature as a condition, a place, or a realm of experience...we are creating a category whose boundaries are not authoritatively defined by a conception of nature and which are necessarily subjective and political."[121] In calling a particular place or experience 'natural', we are creating the boundaries for a conceptualization of what Meyer terms political nature.[122] In this conception, each articulation of nature is an abstraction, one that is subjectively, and therefore politically, invested. In relation to this understanding of politics, Meyer argues that democratic articulation of political boundaries is essential as it allows subjective political constructions to be deliberated democratically rather than naturalized as the setting within which politics occurs.[123] The political process is the sphere in which subjective political constructions are debated by

[119] *Ibid,* 139.

[120] *Ibid,* 7.

[121] *Ibid, 7.*

[122] *Ibid,* 7.

[123] *Ibid,* 130.

individuals. This understanding of the necessity of democratic articulations of nature is based on the claim that all humans are equal in their subjectivity.[124]

In this view, no conception of nature can be authoritative in itself as such a conceptualization will always rely on a definitional, political, act. Each iteration of nature is the contingent product of a dialectic between comprehension gained from political differentiation and the experience of nature. This dialectic is known through experience, which Meyer understands as the product of the relationship between political categories and undifferentiated nature.[125] Because experience is dialectical in this sense of the word, if political categorizations are allowed to have prominence in relation to ongoing experiences of the environment, the flow of this dialectic will be halted and authority will hold sway over the democratic ability of the individual to articulate experiences of political nature.

Politics in Meyer's conception frames the relations within which humans understand and direct reflection on their activities and the realms of nature. Here Meyer argues that nature is not initially an abstract, normative ideal but rather is the lived environment. Ideally, for Meyer, alterations in this lived environment become the basis of the subjective values that are debated through democratic political articulation, rather than via the applications of totalizing articulations of nature.

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[124] *Ibid,* 130.

[125] *Ibid,* 137.

In this argument, Meyer challenges the idea that environmental activists are engaged in relation to conceptions of nature and instead presents them as intervening in specific places. Starting from the standpoint that the boundaries of all spheres of human activity are constructions subject to reinterpretation and change, Meyer offers a program for environmental action and a way to critique existing environmental discourse. As an example of how this approach can be practiced, Meyer illustrates how the environmental justice movement (EJM) in the US is practicing an environmental politics based on experience of place. This movement has attempted to engage with environmental conditions in the places in which activists live and work. This involves opposing the dumping of hazardous wastes and the existence of unsafe workplace conditions. Meyer sees the environmental justice movement as recognizing that all places are complex products of the intermingling of 'natural' processes and human construction and engaging in an environmental politics of lived places by directly addressing the political process within these lived places. As he puts it:

> Rather than being prompted primarily by a scientific understanding of nature or environmental threats, rather than being dependent upon something as abstract as the transformation of one's worldview, the leaders of this movement are galvanized by concern for the seemingly most familiar elements of daily life: children's health and the health and vitality of their neighbourhoods.[126]

[126] *Ibid,* 147.

By engaging with the environments in which we live and work, Meyer argues that the environmental justice movement demonstrates how environmental values can be articulated without recourse to an authoritative and abstract conception of nature. For Meyer, the EJM leads us to recognize the influence of political judgments both on what counts as an 'environmental situation' and how solutions are articulated, or boundaries are drawn, in relation to this situation. The movement shows how all places are environmental, including the homes in which we live and the places where we work.

As this example of the EJM indicates, Meyer understands that environmental politics should take place as the political contestation of all places. He recognizes that this contestation happens on the basis of the multiplicity of perspectives that are found in relation to nature in specific places. This emphasizes that environmentalists are not only engaging with how to understand ecological places but are also within existing communities and power structures. Complex embeddedness such as this indicates that there are different political conceptions of places, none of which can be supported by recourse to ideas of nature. As he writes "This environmental politics consists of our struggle over the creation, use, preservation, alteration, and degradation of place. This struggle is defined by our relationships to these places and our experiences in them, in all their complexity and diversity."[127]

Meyer briefly elaborates on this conception of environmental politics to indicate that such a politics needs to be accompanied by political engagement of the technologies,

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[127] *Ibid,* 138.

institutions and broader power structures that operate on different scales. However, he maintains that, regardless of the more globalized scales it operates on, environmental politics needs to recognize the centrality of the politics of lived places.[128]

The framing of environmental politics offered by Meyer is of a democratic contestation over lived places by humans who often have disparate understandings of these places. This framing is generally congruent with the work that follows. However, there needs to be more work done expanding on the understanding of the encounters that occur between humans and places in order to develop a better understanding of how politics of place occur.

While Meyer emphasizes that places are encountered through lived experiences, he does not go into detail discussing the encounter between different places and humans and the dynamic and evolving aspect of non-human place is not considered in detail. Similarly, although Meyer recognizes that human experience of places are diversely constructed, he does not elaborate extensively on the ways in which these constructions occur. In addition, Meyer does not consider in any detail how different scales influence the environmental politics of place. With this in mind, the rest of this chapter will consider texts by Edward Casey and Doreen Massey, who provide important elaborations of the analysis of the politics of place offered here by Meyer that will allow for a more insightful analysis of the Perry Ridge blockade.

[128] *Ibid.*

Section Three: Edward Casey – Getting Back Into Place

John Meyer has developed a conception of the environmental politics of place that is not centred around debating conceptions of nature. The encounter between the human and that which is non-human or outside human construction is central to this conception of environmental politics because it provides part of the basis for the development of values that are debated in the political process. However, this encounter is not developed in detail in Meyer's work. For another perspective that develops an analysis of the encounter between humans and place, Edward Casey's work on place in *Getting Back Into Place* is important. In this text, as in the seminal text *Fate of Place,* Casey engages in lengthy discussions of the importance of the bodily encounter with human and non-human elements found in place.

From abstract knowledge to bodily inhabitation

In the text *Fate of Place,* Casey argues that with the rise of the conception of space as a universal and measurable field, nature has been "mathematized down to its secondary qualities," by which he means that nature is only understood in terms of knowledge that can be formally known and generalized.[129] In this view the particularities

[129] Edward Casey, *Fate of Place, (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 201.

of place become understood as a subset in relation to the formally generated matrixes of nature. A pine tree is intelligible as a member of the pine species, a stream carries a certain measurable flow of water that has measurable qualities and so forth.

Casey's response to this conceptualization of nature and place is to argue that place does not locate in relation to formally generated matrixes but rather that it situates in a dynamic sense that is never reducible to conceptualization.[130] In this sense, place is for Casey of a different order than is “nature,” which is an abstract concept masquerading as a representation of place. As will be demonstrated in what follows, Casey emphasizes the dynamic encounter with place and views cultural “representations” in terms of this encounter.

On the basis of his focus on the dynamic aspect of place Casey critiques the use of abstractions to understand places and our encounters with them. He argues that only through the fallacy of misplaced abstraction can we posit the existence of structures, such as understandings of 'nature', ‘human’ and ‘space,’ that exist before the encounter with what he calls “the place-world.”[131] These abstract categories allow for increased expediency and yet perpetuate the fallacy of misplaced abstraction as they reduce the density of experience to categories that can only approximate experience. He writes:

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[130] Casey, *Fate of Place,* 201.

[131] Edward Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy: What does it mean to be in a place-world,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91:4, (2001), 687.

> The fallacy [of misplaced abstraction] consists in believing the plane (of experience) to be a priori and settled, the complications [presented by experience] *a posteriori* and changing. The abstractness of this plane is misplaced in that its status as prior is the reverse of what actually obtains: the plane is itself an abstraction from what is concrete, that is, from that which is supposedly only secondary and epiphenomenal and yet is in fact phenomenally given as primary.[132]

Here Casey is critiquing approaching places in terms of abstractions that are then assumed as essential in relation to understanding encounters with specific place(s).

Rather than accept abstract reductions as the basis of analysis, Casey argues that place is always becoming, and so can be understood as evolving and dynamic rather than as structurally determined.[133] On the basis of this understanding of place and extending his critique of abstractions, Casey denies any distinction between nature and culture. Instead, both are said to be different elements within the overriding sameness of place.[134] As elements of difference within the same, nature and culture are always articulated within specific, evolving places that can only be conceptually distinguished on the basis of conceptual reductions. This focus turns analysis of place away from abstractions towards the phenomenal encounter with place.

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[132] Casey, *Getting Back into Place,* 347.

[133] Casey, *Getting Back into Place,* 329.

[134] *Ibid,* 240.

Having introduced Casey's work through a discussion of his refusal of abstractions it is important to address his understanding of the encounter with place, starting with the role of the body. Casey writes that the human is a being-in-place, which means that the body's inhabitation or dwelling in specific places is a basic element that needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about the encounter with place.[135]

In Casey's understanding, perception relies on the body's "unique efficacy [that] allows it to reach out to all places from within its own implacement."[136] Here Casey states that perception is a capacity of the body as well as the mind. The human body occupies place as a diffusely located being that finds itself in relation to particular places. Places and their particular presence or depth are encountered by the body as it moves through the world, providing humans with an immersive encounter with places.[137] This depth of places reveals a range of objects, both human and non-human, that provide the basis for the experience of place and through which the human is constituted.

As a meeting zone of interrelations that is always in a state of becoming, place is encountered through an inhabiting body. In place, Casey states, "we find ourselves somewhere and somewhen in a situation that is not simply laid out in extensive space but lived out in intensive place. This place is the place of dwelling."[138] In this view, the body's perception is never entirely distinct from the forces encountered through dwelling or

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[135] *Ibid,* 179.

[136] Casey, *Fate of Place,* 214.

[137] *Ibid, ,* 231.

[138] Casey, *Getting Back into Place,* 179.

inhabitation. The orientation to the world provided by the body is considered to be the basis for being-in-the-world. For Casey, this bodily inhabitation within places is the inescapable context for encounter with nature, the development of human values and debates over the political. Casey quotes Merleau-Ponty who writes: “We must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time.... I am not in space and time; nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence.”[139] Casey writes at length about the ways in which particular aspects of bodily inhabitation influence our being in the world. He states: “The lived body...possesses its own corporeal intentionality, not to be confused with the intentionality of the mind.”[140] Casey describes this intentionality by discussing the directionality of the body and the modes of spatialization particular to the body.[141] This focus on the importance of the inhabiting body in the encounter with place helps us to recognize that the encounter with place is always more than a human encounter, involving the body and a range of other objects and entities.

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[139] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, unknown text, quoted in Casey (1998: 231).

[140] Casey, *Fate of Place,* 229.

[141] See Casey, (2009:43–105) for a detailed discussion of several aspects of the body's particular role in inhabitation.

From the body to knowledge with the influence of culture and the gathering of place

Here I will explore how Casey conceptualizes encounters between the inhabiting body and place. The encounter with places involves encounters with non-human or natural elements of the land as well as encounters with cultural traditions that shape place and the perception of place. Initially, Casey asserts that although the body presents important structural factors of being-in-the-world, inhabitation is always constituted through cultural influence. As he writes, to perceive is to be:

> constituted by cultural and social structures that sediment themselves into the deepest level of perception. The primacy of perception does not mean that human sensing and moving are precultural or presocial...unaffected by cultural practices and social institutions. On the contrary: these practices and institutions pervade every level of perception.[142]

While the body plays an important role in providing for perception, this perception is culturally constituted insofar as we are human. Casey writes: "Knowledge of place is not, then, subsequent to perception...but it is ingredient in perception itself."[143] By using the term "ingredient," Casey is indicating that knowledge should be understood as

[142] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* 322.

[143] *Ibid,* 321.

constitutive of perception of place in the same sense as flour is an ingredient in bread. Here he affirms that knowledge is not simply applied to place. In this view, knowledge allows for places to be interpreted and as such is an ingredient *in* place.[144] Much as humans are always encountering places through our bodies, we are also always encountering cultural knowledge that has become sedimented into our perception of places. Place is cultural and because humans are always in place knowledge is always articulated in relation to place.

Knowledge in this understanding always emerges out of an encounter with a specific place or relational context that provides the conditions through which it becomes knowledge. This knowledge is then applied to other places and the relational contexts found in these places. In this view, knowledge exists because knowledge and experience are constitutive of the encounter with places.[145] As Tim Ingold states, knowledge exists through "human beings'...practical engagement with the components of their surroundings."[146] In this view knowledge is always *of* a specific place and the interrelations present in that place. Key to Casey's work here is that place is not a general concept like nature or space. Instead, each place is a singularity, a unique and evolving relational context.

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[144] *Ibid,* 321.

[145] Tim Ingold, "Building, dwelling, living: how people and animals make themselves at home in the world," in M. Strathern (ed), *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge,* 57-81 (London: Routledge, 1995) 75.

[146] Ingold, " Building, dwelling, living," 77.

On the basis of the ingrediency of cultures in specific evolving places, Casey cautions against using culturally specific concepts to understand other cultures and places. Casey's argument in this regard is illustrated through his critique of anthropologist Fred R. Myers's work on sense of place among the Pintupi, an Aboriginal nation living in the desert in Australia. Myers conceptualizes the Pintupi sense of place as a cultural projection that is directed towards and imprinted on a barren space filled with objects that, through the process of place-making, becomes place.[147] Casey reads Myers's text as an example of what should not be done when analyzing distinct places: assume that particular historical cultural concepts apply to these places. Casey writes in relation to Myers's text: “'By “space' is meant a neutral, pre-given medium, a tabula rasa onto which the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed, with place as the presumed result.”[148] In contrast, Casey understands that this concept of space is the result of the specific cultural history of Western society.[149] In applying this concept of space to the particularity of Pintupi culture, Myers is inaccurately imposing this particular narrative of space and place *through* the cultural particularities of the Pintupi, who assert that the particularities of the desert places that they inhabit pre-exist human encounter. Through this imposition of the narrative of space/place both the Pintupi sense of place and the

[147] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* 318. To support this argument Casey cites Myers's text *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines, (*Los Angeles: University of Cal ifornia Press, 1991) 67.

[148] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* 318.

[149] Casey (1998) describes the development of this concept of space in great detail.

non-human aspects of the desert places they inhabit as *ngurra,* home, are de-vitalized. Simultaneously, the legitimacy of Myers's analysis of place-making as an observer is secured because he is presented as analyzing a place that can be understood in terms of a dialectic between place and space as mobilized by the anthropologist Myers.

Instead of using overarching cultural concepts to understand evolving places and the cultures that are expressed in them, Casey argues that culture arises out of the relational contexts of specific places and should be understood in relation to these contexts. In this analysis, Casey attempts to shift away from focusing on specific material and historical features as descriptions of culture to consider culture as made up of "all that it incorporates and reflects."[150] This means that the cultural aspects of a place include the descriptions of it and the events that occur there as well as the cultural histories and conditions of possibility that lead to the descriptions of these events. On this basis, Casey indicates that each place is encountered as a locus through which a range of diverse cultural histories engage with non-human elements to generate the evolving characteristics of the specific place.[151]

Casey never fully develops his analysis of culture but his sketch of Union Square in New York is an illustration of his approach. He identifies two cultural aspects that influence how he encounters the place of Union Square: the tradition of the local labour movement using the place as a meeting space for debates following World War II, and the

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[150] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* xxv.

[151] *Ibid,* xxv.

use of the Square as a place of mourning after 9/11. Beyond these specific occurrences in the square, the history of the working-class in New York and the other cultural conditions that brought the rallies to the square and bodies to attend these rallies, as well as the diverse influences that led to 9/11 mourners gathering in the square also make up part of the place of Union Square. These cultural influences mix with the triangular physical shape of the square to create the evolving event that is Union Square as Casey encounters it.[152]

In this view, the presence of mourning bodies and resolute speeches in Union Square following 9/11 etched particular forms of intelligibility into Union Square that resonate into Casey's encounter with the square. Further cultural developments, alterations in the physical structure of the square and other non-human elements in the square, as well as changes in Casey's own way of being in the world, will change the place and with it the culture that experiences itself through the place.[153] In this reading, culture is always implaced and should be understood through place(s).[154] In this

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[152] *Ibid,* xxv.

[153] See his discussion of bell hooks (2009: 301-303). For a more detailed discussion of the mutability of place see Nigel Thrift's discussion of place in "Steps to an ecology of place," in Doreen Massey, John Allen, Philip Sarre, Eds., *Human Geography Today,* (Polity Press: Cambridge 1998) 295-323.

[154] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* xxv. Having stated this, Casey does indicate that there are certain general categories such as class, gender and ethnicity through which it is possible to understand emplaced culture.(2009: xvv) This statement is an attempt by Casey to avoid stating that each place is a singularity and thus unanalyzable. However, there is an unaddressed contradiction between Casey's use of general concepts

conception of place, knowledge becomes part of the relational context of place and influences the physical encounter with place in specific yet divergent ways. Casey goes on to assert that the particular ways in which knowledge interacts materially and conceptually with place will affect the becoming of places in divergent ways through the interventions that this knowledge enacts.[155] However, while culture is understood by Casey as constitutive of specific places, it does not determine or define these places on its own; instead, culture is always in relation to the non-human elements of place. Here it is important to review Casey's understanding of the intersections between culture and the non-human elements of place.

In Casey's view the non-human elements of place are not just objects in space or nature. Instead, much like culture, the specificities of the non-human aspects in particular places influence the ways in which perception occurs and knowledge is formed.[156] Casey

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such as class and his critique of the use of the general concept space to understand place. As indicated earlier in this section, Casey's work on culture is not fully developed and is much less thorough than his work on place/space. As will be explored below, Doreen Massey offers a more cogent idea of the cultural aspects of place.

[155] This analysis runs throughout *Getting Back Into Place.* See especially (2009: 109-181).

[156] The term non-human is used in this section as loosely equivalent to the term nature. This shift in terminology
is intended to convey a less determined and more agental sense than is implied by nature. This usage is developed from Steve Hinchliffe, “Inhabiting: Landscapes and Natures,” In Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile, and Nigel Thrift, eds. *The Handbook of Cultural Geography,* 207-226, (London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998) 216. As this thesis continues, the term “land” will tend to replace the term non-human

writes that the human encounters places as particular encounters with the depth of the world. This depth of the world is the particular presence of the non-human aspects of place and is encountered as an expanse of land[157] that eludes any cultural designations and yet is composed of a diversity of things rather than space or nature. Referring to this encounter with the ground of place Casey writes:

> However massive or subtle cultural influence may be in a given instance, it can only be superimposed on such a ground in the form of a 'garb of ideas'. Although the things that rest on the ground, along with their sensuous surfaces, are liable to be swept up in myriad interpretative spheres, they certainly do not present themselves as cultural in status from the start but as particulars preceding culture in any of the more highly organized formats which human discourse provides.[158]

This reading of the material aspect of places as a particular ground or land that precedes culture presents an approach to place that does not frame place in terms of a particular

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because as a term it is able to specifically express the encounter with place.

[157] Here Casey uses the term "ground," Land as the term is utilized by anthropologist Leslie Main Johnson is a more evocative term. Land for Johnson refers to "the totality of beings existing in the place that a people live...Land in this sense cannot be measured in hectares or reduced to a value of dollars, though the land provides both livelihood and identity. Land constitutes place, rather than space.(cf Casey 2009)...Land could be envisioned more as a medium than a stage or a backdrop for human activities." (Leslie Main Johnson, *Trail of Story, Traveller's Path,* (Athabasca, Ab: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 3)

[158] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* 236.

kind of space. By extension, Casey's analysis of place disrupts the coding of non-human places as nature. If places preexist particular understandings of nature then the partiality of cultural conceptions of nature and culture become more readily apparent. Casey states that places underly "every determinate bodily action or position, every static posture of our corpus, every coagulation of living experience in thought or word, sensation or memory, image or gesture."[159] Because of this prevalence of the influence of dynamic places, Casey asserts that place is the undoing of the concepts utilized by Western metaphysics to understand, categorize and measure places because all of these concepts are responses to the dynamism of place.[160]

In this reading, places and the things in them exert complex influences on humans that differ from place to place and yet are primarily indeterminate. Rather than attempting to think in relation to categorical determinations of these multifarious places, Casey argues that what is needed is attentiveness to the gathering or depth of specific places.[161] Developing his argument, Casey argues that this gathering "holds" what is in place in a common engagement or configuration.[162] Casey writes: "the holding at issue in the gathering of a place reflects the layout of the local landscape, its continuous contour, even as the outlines and inlines of the things held in that place are respected. The result

[159] *Ibid,* 313.

[160] *Ibid,* 313.

[161] *Ibid,* 314.

[162] *Ibid,* 329.

is...a literal *con*figuration in which the form of the place – for example “mountain,” “mesa,” “gulley,” – joins up with the shapes of the things in it.”[163] In Casey's analysis the form of the place joins with the things in it to form the particular character of a place. Casey states that the character of a place is influential on human culture and allows it to share in common the particular spirit or quality of place with the non-human elements of place.[164] Through this process human culture enters into a configuration with the land.

However, much as culture never determines the non-human elements of places, so the character of the gathering that places effect on things does not determine these things and the culture that develops in relation to them.[165] Instead, places have the capacity to give a particular character to people who inhabit the place. Casey argues that this intertwined character of people and place is most intelligible at the level of the region.[166]

For Casey regions are distinguished by the particular characteristics of the things that are held within them, characteristics that are found in general throughout the region. In this view, a region possesses a generality of aspect and constitution that is shared by both the nature and the culture in a region. As an example of a region, Casey details the American Southwest as being “an entity of its own, with its history and fate” that is

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[163] *Ibid,* 328.

[164] *Ibid,* xxxi.

[165] *Ibid,* 303.

[166] *Ibid,* 304.

shared across the diversity of cultural and natural forms found within the region.[167] On the basis of his discussion of place and region, Casey argues that the people who inhabit places come to share features with the local landscape and also mark the land in complex ways.[168] Extending this point, Casey understands that humans reconfigure themselves through diverse practices of inhabitation. As anthropologist Leslie Main Johnson states, “The ways people understand and act upon land can shape cultures and ways of life, determine identity and polity, create environmental relationships, and determine economies, whether sustainable or ephemeral.”[169] In his discussion of the links between culture and the non-human in places and regions Casey emphasizes that human knowledge is always connecting to and interweaving with non-human practices in places, rather than only building self-referential networks of social practice.[170] Human and non-human networks are intertwined in complex ways in place and region.

Based on this analysis of the co-constitution of people and places, Casey states that there can be important idiolocal aspects of culture:

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[167] *Ibid, xxx*.

[168] *Ibid,* 305.

[169] Johnson, *Trail of Story, Traveller's Path,* 1.

[170] See also Hinchliffe, (1998: 216) for a clear statement of the interconnection of human and non-human through knowledge. The term network is used here as roughly equivalent to the term relations: both refer to particular socio-ecological elements or practices found in a specific place.

> Place – as an event it is unique, idiolocal. Its peculiarity calls not for assumption into the already known – that way lies site, which lends itself to predefined predictions, uses, and interpretations – but for the imaginative constitution of terms respecting its idiolocality (these range from place-names to whole discourses).[171]

In this passage, Casey emphasizes how the interleaving of particular elements of culture and the non-human in place has the potential to take on a unique or idiolocal character in specific places. This idiolocality of place can occur on account of the diverse relations that meet within place and their ability to form connections between human and non-human networks that are specific to certain contexts. This specificity can account for the presence of relatively autonomous trajectories in the form of local knowledges.[172] These autonomous trajectories in turn lead to the creation of idiolocal discourses, languages or political practices. However, culture is not the only active aspect of place: this potential idiolocality is due to the meeting between traditions of cultural relations and the meeting with diverse non-human influences. Speaking of Indigenous cultural traditions in North America Casey writes:

> An intensive knowledge of one's local places and the bioregion in which they are situated amounts to a cultural knowledge that is notable not just for its practicality

[171] Casey, *Getting Back to Place,* 329.

[172] See also Doreen Massey, "Spaces of politics," in Doreen Massey, John Allen, Philip Sarre, Eds. *Human Geography Today,* 279-295(Cambridge: Polity Press 1998), 281.

> but also for its considerable specificity, its attention to detail. On the basis of this compresence of the natural and the cultural, native peoples settle into those places and bioregions in which they acquire such "natural knowledge" and become identified with them over time. In the old ways, the parallel between cultural practices and customs on the one hand and place and region on the other runs deep – so deep that they are finally inextricable from each other.[173]

While this passage refers directly to the old ways of Indigenous cultures as examples of cultures that developed in relation to specific places, Casey states that such intertwining of specific non-human and cultural patterns exist in contemporary society. This intertwining is evidenced in regions and also in the development of agricultural commons within communities that are both cultivated and still retain part of their wilderness.[174] As Casey has Holmes Rolston III stating in his text, "every culture remains resident in some environment."[175] Indeed, based on Casey's analysis of place as a merging of culture and nature, this merging is inescapable.

In the discussion of the potential idiolocality of culture in specific places and regions given in the preceding paragraph, Casey noted that culture should strive to

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[173] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* xxxiv.

[174] *Ibid.*

[175] Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) quoted in Edward Casey *Getting Back Into Place* (2009: 263).

respect the non-human idiolocality of place, rather than impose general cultural forms. When this happens, the inevitable merging of place attains to what Casey calls a thickening. In an instance of thickening the specific presence of the non-human elements are retained within the merging of culture and nature that is effected by particular culture rather than being levelled down or dominated by the culture that has been developed in this place.[176] In contemporary culture, Casey argues that this thickening rarely happens as the specificities of non-human elements of a place are levelled down to exist as a site for culture. Alternatively, when the elements are recognized, they tend to be left entirely alone and understood as wilderness, or pure nature.[177] Both these tendencies fail in the task of developing a thickening, which is the ideal intermingling of the non-human and culture in a specific place.

In these considerations, Casey tends to argue that there are relatively inflexible characteristics of the intertwining of nature and culture in place that should be recognized and implemented in diverse places. This approach runs counter to Casey's argument that cultural understanding cannot be generalized across diverse places.[178] Casey describes his disgust at modern malls, which he understands remove the particularities of places and turn them into generic sites that express an absence in place.[179] In this analysis Casey holds onto particular cultural-aesthetic understandings of place that are then applied

[176] Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* 254.

[177] *Ibid,* 262.

[178] *Ibid,* 319.

uncritically to other places. Because he tends to hold on to a fixed idea of place, Casey does not provide the most helpful assistance in understanding the interpenetration of cultural relations in places.

A more penetrating understanding of the cultural aspects of place is provided by Doreen Massey. Massey is a critical geographer who has worked extensively on place and the social relations found in places. This analysis will focus directly on the article, "A Global Sense of Place," first published in 1991. Massey argues convincingly for a non-foundational understanding of place, one that is not rooted in the extension of cultural norms. As an example of the need for a relational concept of place, she develops an analysis of the Kilburn High Road neighbourhood in London, Massey writes:

> ...while Kilburn may have a character of its own, it is absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares. It could hardly be less so. People's routes through the place, their favourite haunts within it, the connections they make (physically, or by phone or post, or in memory and imagination) between here and the rest of the world vary enormously.[180]

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[179] See also Hinchliffe, (1998: 216) for a clear statement of the interconnection of human and non-human through knowledge. The term network is used here as roughly equivalent to the term relations: both refer to particular socio-ecological elements or practices found in a specific place.

[180] Doreen Massey, "A global sense of place," *Marxism Today,* June (1991), 243.

This inherent diversity of place indicates that any attempts to posit a seamless idea of place – as nature, homeland, etc, will always be a projection. This layered nature of place is true for all human places, even small towns. To demonstrate this, Massey states how the experiences of place, as well as the sense or understanding of place that is drawn from these experiences, had by a miner and a woman who does not mine within a mining village will also be vastly different.[181] Massey indicates that these diverse understandings of place are on account of the diverse social relations found in specific places. For Massey, places can never be understood as coherent or fixed.

Instead, Massey argues that places are the product of distinct interrelations that are reflections of broader patterns. Rather than indicating place as such, the relations in place are intelligible as "[e]conomic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination, stretched out over the planet at every different level, from the household to the local area to the international."[182] On the basis of this analysis of place, Massey argues that places are meetings of networks that "can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a larger proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a

[181] Doreen Massey, "A global sense of place," 244.

[182] *Ibid,* 244.

continent."[183] Here place is the meeting of various social networks that in order to become properly intelligible must be examined in relation to global relations.

Massey's analysis of place as the meeting of global networks does not deny the specificity of place. Instead, Massey indicates that there are diverse forms of specificity within the meetings that constitute specific places:

> "There is the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations. There is the fact that this very mixture together in one place may produce effects which would not have happened otherwise. And finally, all these relations take a further element of specificity from the accumulated history of a place, with that history itself imagined as the product of layer upon layer of different sets of linkages, both local and to the wider world."[184]

Recognizing the specificity of social relations that can develop within a particular place, Massey examines the power relations found within and across places and analyzes how particular people and social relations are enabled while certain people and social relations are constrained through global social and economic flows.[185] As can be seen, Massey offers a clear analysis of the social politics of place that does not appear to rely on

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[183] *Ibid,* 244.

[184] *Ibid,* 245.

[185] *Ibid,* 239.

positing a concept of nature, the political or human nature as the basis of politics in that place. Instead, her analysis of the power relations found within place would offer a strong critique of these attempts and point instead to a more open engagement in place in terms of the differential power relations present. In doing so, Massey presents a clearer analysis of the cultural or social encounter with place than is offered by Casey. Rather than refer to fixed standards which are to be used in interpreting place, Massey steers analysis towards exploring which power relations cause place to appear in specific fixed ways. However, unlike Meyer, who I read as tending to emphasize a particular 'sense' of how the politics of places is to take place, Massey is able to recognize that place is itself inescapably political and specific accounts of places are often incommensurable with other perspectives on account of the power relations that come to constitute our perception.

However, despite the excellent analysis of the social elements of place that Massey offers, she does not to my knowledge develop a thorough account of the relations between humans and the non-human elements found in specific places.[186] In doing, so, Massey reintroduces a series of abstract conceptions of social relations that then used to interpret the politics of specific places. Much as Meyer relied on what could become abstracted understandings of the interaction between the human and nature as the basis of his understanding of the politics of place, Massey argues that places should be understood

[186] This said, Massey does indicate that particular power relations and relations with non-human worlds in specific places create unique hybrid identities and distinct social practices in specific places(Massey 1999: 292).

in terms of analyses based on capital, gender and other social relations. If this happens, the attentiveness to place as a unique and evolving place that is enabled by Massey's analysis runs the danger of being subjugated in favour of an analysis of abstracted social relations.

Despite the inadequacies of Casey's analysis of the cultural interaction with place, he does provide the tools to develop a strong analysis of the interrelations between humans and specific places without relying exclusively on predefined abstract concepts. We understand from Casey that cultural expressions can be responses to specific eco-social places. Casey's analysis of the interaction of the human and the non-human in place provides a good supplement to Massey's analysis as he indicates that analysis of environmental activism needs to pay attention to the relations being formed at the scale of specific places as well as at the more broader cultural level of nature and other social abstractions.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed a conception of place with and against the work of John Meyer, Kirkpatrick Sale, Edward Casey and Doreen Massey. A series of arguments have encouraged us to understand human engagement with non-human elements as an encounter with place rather than nature. Kirkpatrick Sale asserted that there is an important connection between human engagement with specific non-human places that can lead to the generation of specific knowledge in relation to these places. From John

Meyer, we gathered that values expressed in relation to places cannot be viewed in terms of an overarching conception of nature. Instead, these values should be deliberated on a democratic basis. With Edward Casey it was argued that places are the product of interactions between specific human and specific non-human relations, which meet in the human body and are often irreducible to the relations that occur in other socio-ecological places. In this relational view, places should be understood as the product of particular sets of interrelations between the land, understood as an irreducible entanglement of non-human elements, and human culture. In this understanding, knowledge is an act that arises and circulates in the context of inhabitation.

This perspective challenges the exclusive framing of environmental politics as the politics of nature. Instead, an account of the politics of place as working through the social and ecological relations that are brought into interaction through engagement based on inhabitation in specific places has been developed.

Chapter Three: Perspectives on the place of the Perry Ridge blockade.

This Chapter will return to reflect on the Perry Ridge blockade in the summer of 1997. In Chapter One we saw how the blockade tended to be understood as part of the environmental movement and explored what was implied by this interpretation. In this view, the place of Perry Ridge was understood as politically important for activists in terms of values that activists held in relation to nature and that were then expressed in relation to Perry Ridge. This chapter returns to Perry Ridge and addresses how activists involved in the blockade viewed the connection between place and their political action in their own terms.

To this end, I asked activists involved with the blockade how they justified the Perry Ridge blockade as a useful political tactic. These interviews took the form of loosely structured conversations in which we discussed the activists' involvement in the blockade and their understanding of how the blockade was politically justified. I interviewed eight activists in total during 2010. Over the course of interviewing local activists, I identified nine ways in which political action in relation to Perry Ridge was justified by the activists. Taken together, these perspectives challenge the conception that place plays a coherent or unified role in relation to environmental activism that can be demonstrated by reference to an overarching cultural understanding of nature or for that

matter an overarching analysis of capital, colonialism, local sovereignty or any other abstract discourse.

Instead, it will be argued that there is not just one 'place' that is referred to by activists, nor is there one specific way in which place becomes political for environmental activists. The activists involved in the blockade conveyed a number of contrasting understandings of place based on divergent interactions with the social and ecological networks that they engaged with at the place of Perry Ridge. These diverse accounts of the political importance of Perry Ridge will be presented in point form below.

1.

Activists claimed that the Perry Ridge blockade was justified because Perry Ridge is a site bearing particular natural features that they understood are worth protecting. In this understanding, the Ridge is framed as a storehouse of vast amounts of fresh water that supplies the downstream Columbia River system. As an intact forest ecosystem, the Ridge provides habitat for large numbers of migratory caribou and a range of other species.[187] Activists also referred to the presence of rare species of plants and animals on the Ridge as important factors in their involvement in the blockade.[188] These perspectives indicate that Perry Ridge is important as a place in relation to which it is important to

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[187] Personal interview with Marilyn James, July 26th, 2010.

[188] Personal interview with Shanoon Bennett, July 27th, 2010.

implement land management practices that reflect the values held by activists in relation to the species and resources present there.

As an example of this type of approach to the Ridge, the Perry Ridge Water User's Association (PRWUA) launched a campaign in the late 1990s to create an ecological reserve on Perry Ridge to protect the resources located there. The PRWUA proposal outlines a series of blue listed animals and red listed plants that would be protected by the proposed reserve.[189] In the proposal, lists of species are augmented by detailed descriptions of the quantifiable characteristics of ecosystem features and the managerial responses that should be adapted to these resources.[190] In this sense, the place of the Ridge is important as a site at which animal species and natural resources can be found.

A further example of the relevance of Perry Ridge for activists as a place that has specific natural characteristics can be found in the Slocan Valley Ecosystem-Based Plan issued by the Silva Forest Foundation in 1996. Intended to be part of the CORE process, this document presents an exhaustive description of what proponents of ecosystem-based forestry management desire to see implemented. The document divides Perry Ridge into a watershed by watershed grid and indicates in minute detail which type of management practices should be applied to each particular co-ordinate with this grid. These documents are intended to be applied to all ecosystems. The Silva website states: "Ecosystem-based

[189] See chapter One of the PRWUA application for the creation of an Ecological Reserve at http://www.perryridge.org/ecoreserve/chap1.pdf.

[190] For an index of PRUWA's ecosystem reserve proposal see http://www.perryridge.org/ecoreserve/index.pdf.

conservation plans (EBCPs) are necessary in order to protect and maintain ecological integrity and biological diversity at all spatial scales, from small land and water ecosystems to large landscapes."[191] Reports for this study were completed using GIS mapping and present a management plan for the Slocan Valley based on its specific ecosystems that has become a model for a generalized mapping process that have since been applied to other communities by the Silva Foundation and local partners.[192] The Silva ecosystem based management plan and PRWUA's ongoing efforts to form an ecological reserve on Perry Ridge indicate that in many ongoing ways Perry Ridge was viewed by activists as a site within nature bearing specific natural characteristics. These characteristics are presented as being part of the physical place of Perry Ridge, yet are also present in other places.

2.

Activists indicated that articulations of the Ridge as a particular kind of environmental site was at times a strategic measure taken in relation to political power. In this perspective activists articulated place based on their perception of political power structures. Within current power structures, linking the specific place of Perry Ridge up with broader claims about the environment was perceived as making a great deal of

[191] ilva Forest Foundation Website. "Ecosystem-Based Conservation Planning." http://www.silvafor.org/ebcp.

[192] See Silva Forests site, "Slocan section" for more information about the Slocan Valley ecosystem based management plan and its links to more recent maps generated by Silva. (http://www.silvafor.org/slocan),

sense. Activists indicated that they were always on the defensive, needing to develop arguments for why logging should not happen at Perry Ridge and at other locations, rather than being able to articulate what type of land-use should take place or why they viewed the place as important.[193] As Marilyn Burgoon framed it, “The question never came up of should logging be the issue, instead the agenda set by the federal government was that logging was happening, so logging was the issue.”[194]

In the context of these power relations, activists understood that a good strategy was to develop and publicize scientific data concerning the particular importance of the resources present on the Ridge. Activists believed that this language of nature was the language which would be most effective to influence the provincial government and its legal system. Drawing from the previous success of other activists and a strategic analysis of the current institutional political climate, activists chose their language with the intent of leveraging broader support among other allies and to attempt to convince government of the value of protecting the Ridge.[195] In this perspective, what motivated activist's articulations of place was their perception of power relations. How they understood place themselves was not expressed.

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[193] This point came up during interviews with Stephan Martineau, Marilyn James, Marilyn Burgoon and Shanoon Bennett.

[194] Personal interview Marilyn Burgoon, July 26th, 2010.

[195] Marilyn Burgoon indicated during a personal interview (July 26th, 2010) that this observation was based in part on the recent Clayoquot Sound blockades, in which the recommendations of the Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel were perceived in having played a part of the successes attained of activists at Clayoquot.

In this method of justifying political action in relation to place, strategy dictates how place is articulated. Place in this articulation is viewed as part of a broader political field dominated by actors who are perceived as structuring the field of political struggle and in relation to which activists strategically craft their articulations.

3.

Activists justified political action in relation to Perry Ridge by referring to cultural traditions that justified direct action as a political tactic. These cultural traditions are both local to the Slocan and also exist on a more general level. As one activist put it, her understanding of the importance of Perry Ridge as a place was influenced by:

> ...a long history beyond my lifetime of the Slocan Valley as a place of refuge and of values, a place that was cherished by Sinixt first nations as a holy valley, holy land, the Doukhobor immigrations here [and their commitment to] toil and a peaceful life, their relation with the land and a continuity of that with urban refugees such as myself coming from the US during the Vietnam war and looking for a place this pure and this beautiful that we could love and cherish and also protect.[196]

In this view, the actions of historic cultural groups that have lived in the Slocan Valley and taken steps to develop and practice low consumption, self-sufficient lifestyles provide the justification for political action. Similarly, another activist indicated that her

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[196] Personal interview with Pamela Stevenson, 29th July 2010.

involvement in the protest was influenced by the care that previous inhabitants of the Slocan had shown to the land.[197]

Generally speaking, the local cultural traditions that were referred to by activists were the Sinixt First Nations, the Doukhobors from Russia and the immigration of self-identified "urban refugees" and American draft dodgers in the 1970s. The Sinixt are a local Indigenous First Nation who were driven nearly to extinction within Canada during conflicts with miners and other settlers who invaded the Slocan Valley despite resistance from local Sinixt during the period from 1880-1920.[198] The Sinixt were then given a small Indian Reserve near Castlegar, BC, although most of the nation chose to live in the USA where they also had traditional territory and were granted access to a much larger reserve. In 1956 Mary Joseph, the last Sinixt living on the Reserve near Castlegar, died and the federal government declared the nation extinct in Canada. Since the 1980s, members of the Sinixt Nation have returned from the American side and have engaged in legal and political struggles to regain federal recognition and the right to claim traditional lands within Canada where eighty percent of their traditional territories are located.[199] The Sinixt currently draw on their cultural legacy of maintaining local animal and plant

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[197] Personal Interview with Shanoon Bennett, 27th July 2010.

[198] Katherine Gordon, *The Slocan: Portrait of a Valley*, (Winlaw: Sono Nis Press, 2004).

[199] Katherine Gordon, *The Slocan: Portrait of a Valley.* For more information on the Sinixt see David Aaron, "Clearing the confusion on the 'extinction' of the Sinixt," *Nelson Daily*, November 17th 2010, http://thenelsondaily.com/news/issues/clearing-confusion-extinction-sinixt-8300, and Rex Weyler, "Back from extinction," *The Tyee,* June 29th, 2008, http://thetyee.ca/News/2008/06/30/BackFromExtinction/.

resources as well as demands for the recognition of cultural sovereignty to support their demands for implementing ecosystem based resource management in the Slocan.[200]

The second local cultural tradition that was cited as influential for activists is that of the Doukhobors, a Russian religious sect that emigrated to the Slocan and the surrounding region in the 1910s and 1920s. The Doukhobors built communities that relied on local resources and practiced high levels of self-sufficiency. The Doukhobors experienced severe repression in the 1950s for attempting to maintain traditional Russian language and educational practices and by the 1960s many had abandoned traditional cultural practices.[201]

The third cultural tradition that activists cite are the cultural practices of urban immigrants and draft dodgers who emigrated from urban areas in North America to the Slocan Valley during the 1960s and 1970s. This group, which can be considered as part of the back to the land movement, engaged in attempts to pursue self-sufficiency and develop more sustainable resource management practices in the Slocan. Prominent examples of these attempts are the efforts of the Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project which developed alternate land-use management policies for the Slocan in the 1970s. Local activism continued from the 1970s to the 1990s as local groups lobbied the Provincial government and developed local innovations in relation to

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[200] Personal Interview with Marilyn James, Sinixt spokeswoman, July 26th, 2010.

[201] Stephan, Martineau, “Humanity, Ecology and the Future in a British Columbia Valley: A Case Study” *Integral Review* 4, (2007), 30-31.

a range of different issues including reducing pesticide use and challenging local land use to establishing alternative education institutions and local barter systems.[202]

While these cultural traditions are disparate, there are important commonalities across the traditions listed above, including commitments to local self-sufficiency and a desire to resist industrial development of the Slocan Valley. These traditions have continually been developed in opposition to trends within the broader society of British Columbia. This disjuncture has led to the sense of a historical continuity of shared struggle for a particular vision of Perry Ridge and the Slocan Valley across diverse local cultural traditions. Here activists view joining the Perry Ridge blockade as taking part in a tradition of local cultural commitment to political action.

While these local cultural influences are important, it is also clear that cultural influences on the protests weren't entirely linked to traditions related to the Slocan Valley but were also connected to broader traditions. Notably, recent blockades in Clayoquot Sound were viewed as providing a general momentum for moving towards certain environmental reforms.[203]

4.

Activists justified the blockade by articulating Perry Ridge as a place at which diverse economic practices could occur. The economic interests of the industrial logging

[202] For an overview of these and other efforts see Katherine Gordon, *The Slocan: Portrait of a Valley*, (Winlaw: Sono Nis Press, 2004).

[203] Personal interview with Marilyn Burgoon, July 26th, 2010.

industry and those who are dependent upon it are well known in relation to places like Perry Ridge as expressed in the position of what has been described in this thesis as the development coalition. Some activists who opposed the logging challenged this economic paradigm by articulating economic interests based on alternate resource management plans for the Ridge. Activists argued that alternative logging methods, such as horse and selective logging, were appropriate logging practices that would lead to more long-term sustainable local logging and ultimately greater revenue generation in the Slocan.[204] It was argued that most of the easily harvestable timber in the Slocan watershed had already been harvested and that levels of timber harvesting would have to be substantially cut for a long period of time in order to let these reserves bounce back.[205] In addition, it was argued that value-added wood production and a more thorough effort to direct logging revenues towards the local community would best benefit the local community.[206] It was understood that Slocan Forest Products and the various contractors it hired were not locally run and took profits, jobs and timber out of the communities of the Slocan Valley.[207]

In these economic arguments, activists proposed that in the long run logging would be more sustainable and locally profitable if it was based on considerations of the limits of local ecosystem capacity and managed by local decision makers. In this view,

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[204] Frank Nixon personal interview, July 28th, 2010; Steven Martineau personal interview October 5th, 2010.

[205] Personal interview with Stephan Martineau October 5th, 2010.

[206] *Ibid.*

[207] *Ibid.*

Perry Ridge is viewed here as a site within a more ecologically centred economic paradigm that is engaged in reacting against the tendency of capitalist economies to take resources away from the communities of the Slocan Valley.

5.

Activists justified the blockade by articulating Perry Ridge as a place that is the source of fresh water utilized in the course of daily inhabitation. Fresh water gathers on the Ridge and drains into several watersheds along the Ridge including McFadden Creek at the South end of the ridge, Hird Creek, Rice Creek and Nixon Creek and many others further north that are used for domestic consumption. Of important consideration here is that Perry Ridge is shaped like a large loaf of bread. This means that there are marshy wetlands located on top of the Ridge that provide local creeks with their water. Residents consume this water directly from the creeks by way of gravity feed systems that have been established over the past eighty years. Based on this local use of fresh water, it was understood that logging on the Ridge would damage the quality and quantity of this fresh water, which would in turn damage quality of life in the Slocan. Shanoon Bennett stated about the top of the Ridge: “ Up there it is a sponge, if you want (water) flow you can't log – when you log water heats up; if we start getting temperatures rising above 20 degrees in the main river stem you will start experiencing huge changes in coliform counts; (when this happens) we're basically killing off the waterways and everything

connected to it."[208] Similarly, another activist stated that the protest was about the health of the community of the Slocan Valley, which meant protecting the specific water resources.[209] Another stated, "we were standing up there for our watersheds."[210] Organizationally, these concerns for watersheds were expressed in the SVWA's decades of watershed protection campaigns.

At first glance, this perspective appears to reference a resource, water, that can be understood as a quantifiable resource. In this view, this argument is an extension of the argument made earlier that the place of Perry Ridge is important as a site of certain quantifiable resources. However, it is also clear that the perception of threat to *specific* watersheds on the Ridge that residents relied on for their fresh water mobilized Slocan Valley residents to join the protest. In this sense, it was important that the Ridge was home to *specific* creeks that provided explicit uses for life on the western slope of the Slocan Valley. In the case of Perry Ridge this means that traditions of cultural practice in relation to specific creeks were understood to be endangered by potential logging. These practices included drinking the water from Perry Ridge unfiltered, which meant that spring run-off and other alterations in landscape practices had immediate effects on daily use of water. When run-off and other disruptions occur, residents fix their water boxes and lines themselves. These boxes draw water away from creeks and are set up and maintained by residents. Activists understood that the Ministry of Forest's logging plans

[208] *Ibid.*

[209] Personal Interview with Laurie Kauffman-Paquot July 26th, 2010.

[210] Marilyn Burgoon Interview, July 26th, 2010.

had the potential to disrupt these practices. In this sense, political action in relation to Perry Ridge is justified by activists as a consequence of relations with the water on the Ridge developed through particular patterns of inhabitation.

6.

Activists justified political action in relation to Perry Ridge by articulating the Ridge as a geological place that could become insecure and endanger the safety of those inhabiting the Slocan Valley. In this perspective, the Ridge was perceived as structurally unstable and was seen as posing the danger of a potential landslide. The most notable evidence of the instability of Perry Ridge came in 1996 when a sinkhole developed in Austin Greengrass's property that led to a drop in his property value from $104,000 to $6,900. This sinkhole was believed to be connected to the presence of underground water running off of Perry Ridge that had been impacted by private logging and raised more general fears over landslides and general instability in relation to the Ridge.[211] This empirical evidence of instability was supported by reports authored by the geologist Allen Isaacson. Isaacson indicated that Perry Ridge was geologically unstable and recommended that no industrial logging be undertaken.[212]

In this context, many residents connected logging to the threat of landslides and expressed fear of a landslide as providing the justification for their participation in the

[211] Perry Ridge Water Users Association newsletter, March 1998, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/perryridge/news/98march.html.

[212] *Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter* Fall 1997, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall97.html.

blockade. It was believed that the landform of Perry Ridge was unstable and that logging would have dangerous implications for resident's safety and the safety of other creatures.[213] The importance of the need to stop logging on the Ridge in this perspective explicitly has to do with the fact that Perry Ridge rises above the residents who live in the valley bottom, at the bottom of the slope running off the Ridge. In this sense, activists viewed the Ridge as a potentially unstable presence in their everyday lives which they hoped to make more secure by stopping industrial logging. As in the discussion of fresh water, political action here is influenced by particular relations developed through inhabitation rather than a concern for nature as a whole.

7.

Activists justified their involvement in the Perry Ridge blockade because they believed that through the blockade the communities of the Slocan Valley had a chance to obtain greater autonomy from broader structures of political authority. Many believed that the Slocan Valley was a community that would implement more sustainable resource management practices than the Provincial government if given the chance. While people were aware of deep divisions in the community, they also were aware of an Angus Reid poll conducted in 1996 that indicated 90% support for linking logging with the limits of local ecosystems.[214] As Shanoon Bennett indicated, her participation in the protest was

[213] Personal interview Marilyn James, July 26th, 2010.

[214] "A Chronology: Twenty years of watershed defence," *Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter*, Nov 15-30, 2001, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/01nov15.html.

based in part on the fact that it involved her community expressing itself and desiring to implement an innovative form of ecosystem-based land management through the process of taking control of their own resources.[215] Another activist stated that she joined the protest because she understood that the protest was about the community coming together to try to take control of its specific future.[216]

In this argument, the place of Perry Ridge is viewed as important because of the conflict that exists between interests in the local community and current structures of political authority. These forces were seen to impose several undesirable influences on the Slocan Valley. These influences included what were perceived as the failure of the provincial government to implement proper techniques of land management.[217] Also noted was the argument that the provincial government and the forest industry were part of a unified and corrupt system which was actively engaged in destroying the capacity of local communities to self-manage their own resources.[218] As Marilyn James indicated, she understood that the protest was part of opposition against forces which were extending trauma to communities intending to be locally self-sufficient in the Slocan Valley and beyond.[219] While activists recognized that there were many within their communities who

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[215] Personal Interview with Shanoon Bennett, July 27th, 2010.

[216] Personal Interview with Laurie Paquot-Kaufmann July 26th, 2010.

[217] Personal Interview with Frank Nixon, July 28th, 2010.

[218] Personal Interview with Shanoon Bennett, July 27th, 2010.

[219] Personal Interview with Marilyn James July 26th, 2010.

agreed with plans for logging, it was felt that a majority of people in the community supported resource management plans that would practice ecosystem based logging.[220]

In this perspective, activists understood the Perry Ridge blockade in the context as an attempt by the community of the Slocan Valley to gain increased local authority over the management of local resources. Here the place of Perry Ridge is understood in terms of a struggle over political authority between different factions, and the blockade is viewed as an important step in challenging the current distribution of political authority so as to increase levels of local sovereignty.

8.

Activists indicated that they became involved in the blockade because of the character of the community involved in the blockade. In this understanding, the commitments of core activists brought other activists to the blockade at the Ridge.

As Pamela Stevenson indicated, she was drawn to take part in the protest because of the commitments taken by those organizing the protest to non-violence and a commitment to attempting not to make critical judgments, but instead to educate others and spread these commitments. In this sense, it was the human community involved in the blockade and the ethical and political commitments made by this group that led some activists to take part in the protest. In this argument, the social elements of Perry Ridge

[220] Personal Interview with Stephan Martineau, October 5th, 2010.

and the Slocan Valley were considered more important than considerations of the ecological character of the Ridge.

9.

A ninth way in which the Ridge was said to be important was in terms of the ethical practice in relation to inhabited land called for by membership within the Sinixt Nation. The Sinixt are called to care take the Slocan as part of their obligation to the places in which they live. Sinixt spokesperson Marilyn James indicated that as a member of the Sinixt she follows the *wbuplak'n* which she translates as the law of the land. James stated that based on this law, "you carry responsibility as the traditional people from this territory, it's your land and you have to take care of it."[221] Care in this sense arises out of ethical responsibility to attend to the sustainability of the specific place(s) in which one has historically dwelt. In this perspective, the particular cultural tradition of the Sinixt in relation to the ecological place of the Slocan brought members of the Sinixt to participate in the blockade. The cultural commitments articulated by James apply most directly to inhabited places rather than to nature as a whole.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that activists gave divergent arguments to justify their participation in the Perry Ridge blockade. As the war in the woods analysis would

[221] Personal Interview with Marilyn James, July 26th 2010.

anticipate many activists did justify their involvement in the blockade by describing Perry Ridge as a site that had specific natural characteristics which should be managed in particular ways. At the same time, activists also indicated that rather than articulate the Ridge in terms of their own concerns, they made strategic political articulations of the Ridge based on their consideration of existing political power structures. This indicates that while participants' values of nature were important, political considerations influenced the descriptions that activists made of the Ridge. This means that in addition to just considering the values activists held in relation to nature, the prevailing political power relations must also be considered in an analysis of the blockade.

But the picture gets far more complicated. Perry Ridge was also articulated as politically important as the site of an economic conflict between various economic networks. At the same time, some activists declared that they viewed Perry Ridge as a potentially unstable physical presence that threatened their daily inhabitation and could become more unstable due to logging. Others articulated Perry Ridge as a site at which they were compelled to practice diverse ethical and cultural traditions. This multiplicity of different articulations of the political importance of Perry Ridge refutes the argument that place is important for environmental activists solely in terms of values that they placed on nature. Instead, the place of Perry Ridge as it was approached by activists is informed by a variety of different political understandings.

Recognizing that the activists involved in the Perry Ridge blockade had diverse political commitments, it is also clear that several of these political commitments were

linked with their inhabitation in the Slocan Valley. Through the course of living in the Slocan various issues – including identification with aspects of local political history, fear caused by the instability of Perry Ridge, and particular patterns of domestic water use – led activists to develop political commitments to the blockade. These commitments would not be intelligible based on a political analysis that relied on analysis of abstract social relations and did not consider specific local socio-ecological relations. The range of different articulations outlined in this chapter points to the plurality and particularity of the political space that influences an event like the Perry Ridge blockade.[222]

[222] The term political space is drawn from the work of Warren Magnusson (1997, 2003). The term refers to the inherent politicality of any attempts to resolve or represent political conflicts.

Chapter Four: The environmental movement and local ecological knowledge

This chapter will explore some of the consequences of the understanding that has been developed over Chapters Two and Three that political commitments held by environmental activists are often linked to knowledge generated through interactions in specific places. In this view that has been developed, the political commitments of environmentalists are enactments in the ongoing process of relating to the land as it is encountered in specific places rather than expressions in relation to the general cultural terrain of nature. Rather than relying on a strict prioritizing of the phenomenal or the concrete over the abstract, this argument is based on the understanding that all knowledge is part of ongoing cultural interactions with place. As such, knowledge never represents place itself but is engaging with, and is a product of, the ecological and social terrain that comes before knowledge.[223] In this view, places and the cultural knowledge through which we know them are always hybrids, co-mingled spaces of ecological and social relations that are always more than the product of human control.[224]

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[223] This discussion is intended to echo Ammiel Alcalay's discussion of the precedence of the world as a text to be read and written that he offers in an essay on Jacques Derrida in a collection of his writing entitled *memories of our future,* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1999) 50.

[224] Whitehead, *Divided Natures,* 132.

The first section of this Chapter will generalize conclusions on the basis of the case study of the Perry Ridge blockade. It will be argued that each theorist reviewed in Chapter Two offers insight into the politics of a case such as Perry Ridge. However, none of the perspectives are adequate to address all of the different political concerns expressed at a site such as the blockade. Instead, instances of environmental politics are complex political spaces in which activists express a range of concerns that are often related to local political characteristics.

The second and third sections of this Chapter will develop an analysis of the distinct ways in which activists at Perry Ridge articulated aspects of the land at Perry Ridge as politically important. These sections draw on the work of geographer Steve Hinchliffe who discusses how different articulations of place enact distinct styles of inhabitation with the land through the relations that they engender in specific places. Through this discussion a rough distinction will be made between local ecological knowledge and the more explicitly ecogovernmental knowledges based on the particular forms of inhabitation that are engendered by these discourses.

Section One: Interpreting the Perry Ridge blockade

The empirical investigations undertaken in this thesis have challenged the interpretation of war in the woods perspective as an analysis of environmental politics. The war of the woods analysis views disputes over land-use in British Columbia as conflicts between loggers and environmentalists that take place in terms of different

values about nature. In this framing, the war in the woods is understood as a conflict over different management programs of nature. Instead, it has been demonstrated over the course of analysis of the Perry Ridge blockade that activists involved in demonstrations over land-use in rural British Columbia had a range of distinct political commitments that influenced their participation in land-use activism.

Instead of offering exclusive support for the war in the woods analysis, research into the Perry Ridge blockade has supported elements of the claims made by the theorists explored in Chapter Two of this thesis. Initially, it is clear as the war in the woods analysis would indicate, a politics of nature was being played out at Perry Ridge that conforms closely with the politics that the war in the woods analysis refers to. Many activists viewed Perry Ridge as a site within nature which should be managed in view of natural resources and amenities. As Kirkpatrick Sale leads us to understand, many activists were politically committed to the Perry Ridge blockade on the basis of knowledge generated through their inhabitation in the bioregional place of the Slocan Valley. Through witnessing the instability of the Ridge and through daily use of fresh water, activists developed understandings of the natural place of Perry Ridge that influenced their political activism.

However, as John Meyer's text *Political Nature* leads us to understand, the place of Perry Ridge was also a political place in relation to which activists, and those who opposed the activists, had many contrasting values. None of these distinct values, neither the environmentalist discourses of nature nor contested arguments of economic necessity

represented the place of Perry Ridge. Instead, Perry Ridge was a contested place that was impacted by different values of place and the powerful forces that held a role in ordering politics at the Ridge.

This said, as Edward Casey's work leads us to understand, the politics of activists at Perry Ridge were also influenced by the intermingling of diverse traditions of cultural practice with the specific ecological place of Perry Ridge. This intermingling led to encounters with the specific place of Perry Ridge that were more than an encounter with nature or cultural and political influences but was rather an encounter with the dynamic place that existed at Perry Ridge during the blockade. Several activists noted that their involvement was due to several factors coming together at the blockade that were particular to that local place including the specific community that existed at the protest and attachments to the ecological place of Perry Ridge generated through the course of inhabitation.

However, as Doreen Massey's work leads us to understand, these knowledges of place, even locally specific knowledges, often become intelligible in relation to traditions of social relations that influence understandings of place, subjectivity and politics and the encounters that take place on the basis of these understandings. The attempts of activists to stop logging were informed by affinities with traditions of activist practice that included protests at Clayoquot Sound and previous ones in the Slocan Valley that informed how activists understood the place of Perry Ridge. These traditions were linked to broader cultural traditions of resistance to capitalism, colonialism and environmental

destruction. However, supporting Casey's analysis, these general social relations were also in important ways altered and transfigured by the political and ecological conditions specific to the place of Perry Ridge.

This overview indicates that all of the political analyses reviewed in this thesis offer important insights into understanding the politics of places like the Perry Ridge blockade. However, when taken in isolation, none of these analyses give an adequate view of the politics of a place like Perry Ridge. Instead, analyzing environmental activism at a place like Perry Ridge needs to reflect the diverse political commitments that coexist in the same place. The politics of places such as Perry Ridge are representative of the meeting of several competing intelligibilities, each of which entail understandings of place, subjectivity and politics.[225]

Here it is important to note that the distinct political understandings expressed at a place like the Perry Ridge blockade are not 'subjective' in the sense that they are the articulation of a subject who is contested before the articulation. Instead, through articulating place, a particular subjectivity is enacted that emphasizes particular connections with the networks present in place.[226] Further, as we have gleaned from Edward Casey and Doreen Massey, the subjectivities and attendant politics that are

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[225] For a similar conclusion see Doreen Massey, "Spaces of politics," in Doreen Massey, John Allen, Philip Sarre, Eds, *Human Geography Today,* Cambridge: Polity Press 1998. Also see Magnusson and Shaw (2003)

[226] Michel Foucault, "Preface to the History of Sexuality, Vol. 2," in Paul Rabinow, Ed. *Foucault Reader,* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 333.

articulated at places like Perry Ridge are in important ways local to these places. This analysis has been demonstrated through the case study of Perry Ridge. It has been seen that many of the political commitments activists held in relation to Perry Ridge were formed on the basis of inhabitation in the specific cultural and ecological place of the Slocan Valley. This finding indicates that analysis of environmental politics in rural areas needs to attend to the specific local political relations that are in play in specific places, as well as to interaction that play out in relation to abstract social relations such as nature, capital, colonialism and so on.[227] The implications of this point will be explored in more depth below in relation to question of how discourses of nature relate to local political and ecological places. However, before expanding on this point, it is important to explore the influence that relations with ecological aspects of place have on the political relations in places.

Section Two: Links between place, knowledge and environmental activism.

Having gestured to the complexity and also local particularity of a case of environmental activism such as the Perry Ridge blockade, the rest of this Chapter will consider how the politics of Perry Ridge were influenced by specific interactions with the non-human land at Perry Ridge. This analysis is undertaken as a partial response to the claims made by Timothy Luke that environmentalism in North America is engaged in the

[227] Massey, *Spaces of Politics,* 287.

process of extending managerial control over non-human life. In Luke's analysis, environmentalism extends ecogovernmental power to ever more specific life-forms, creating vast webs of technological and governmental relations that can be manipulated by the social forces that control these relations.[228] While not discarding Luke's analysis, these reflections are intended to demonstrate that Luke's critique is better directed towards certain tendencies within environmental politics rather than towards the whole body of practice that takes place under the rubric of environmental politics. It will be argued that local ecological knowledges and the activism that develops in relation to these knowledges are far less prone to becoming managerial discourses than are the environmental knowledges that are based on more generalized understandings of nature. This argument contends that, like social relations, the non-human ecological relations present in specific places are able to influence the politics of that specific place.[229]

This investigation of the diverse knowledge mobilized by environmental activists is important beyond a critique of the general arguments against environmentalism mobilized by Luke and Guha. The ways in which we understand environmental activism will have a large impact on the way in which it is practiced and on the relations that it engages in with local political places. As Karena Shaw has argued: "Our modes of understanding, practices of knowing and acting, structures of social and political

[228] Luke, "On Environmentality," 57.

[229] This position follows from Casey's work in *Getting Back Into Place* and is also echoed by David Abram, who describes the non-human elements of place as "potentized fields of intelligence." David Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, (New York: Vintage, 1997) 260.

organisation, and so on, establish and reflect political possibilities, and [. . .] these spaces are always both enabling and constraining for indigenous peoples (as well as many other 'marginal' peoples)'."[230] While resisting the designation of the activists in the Slocan Valley as 'marginal' peoples, it is important to consider whether the development of local environmental knowledge in the Slocan is constrained by the practices of knowing and acting that are enabled within the practice and analysis of certain practices of environmentalists.

In order to test the applicability of Shaw's point we need to recognize the extent to which intersections between place and the knowledge articulated by environmental activists are also enabling and constraining in relation to the non-human elements of place. As has become clear in the case study of Perry Ridge, environmental activists' articulations of place are not just representations of *a* geophysical place, instead they arise in part in relation to the networks found in place. In this understanding, articulations of place form connections to other networks of practice present in place. These connections are made to networks of *both* human and nonhuman practice. In this sense, knowledge practices are enacted in relation to specific places, in turn enacting relations in these places. This implication indicates that, as Steve Hinchliffe and Sarah Whatmore have phrased it: "lived realities that can and do demand responses and entail all sorts of obligations."[231] Through enacting these "obligations and responses," knowledge practices

[230] Karena Shaw, "Indigeneity and the International," Millennium*:* 31:1 (2002), 55-81.

[231] Hinchliffe and Whatmore, "Living Cities," 129.

enact engagements that can be called *styles of inhabitation* in relation to the networks found in place.[232]

Styles of inhabitation are political because through them relations are enacted with diverse networks of practice. Here the understanding of politics recognizes that mundane practices of inhabitation are themselves political because of the relations they are continually enacting. These practices are themselves political because they are engaged in a politics of inhabitation through the navigation of the sharing of place between a multiplicity of human and non-human networks of practice.[233] It is to these politics of inhabitation that this chapter now turns.[234]

Before beginning, it is important to consider two of the limitations of an analysis based on styles of inhabitation. First, beginning from an understanding of place as the meeting points of ecological and social networks, it is very difficult as an external observer to gain an understanding of the networks that any individual or group is responding to. This complexity indicates that an analysis based on styles of inhabitation needs to emphasize the partiality of the analysis generated.

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[232] This phrase comes from Steve Hinchliffe who argues that contesting our lived environments involves styles of inhabitation. For Hinchliffe, some styles are more open than others to establishing diverse connections with humans and nonhumans encountered in the course of inhabitation (Hinchliffe: 208).

[233] Hinchliffe and Whatmore, "Living Cities," 125.

[234] The term politics of inhabitation is also from Hinchliffe who writes that a politics of inhabitation consists of experimenting with different styles of inhabitation, each of which is always enacted in relation to non-human presences.

As has been argued in this thesis, there is no set number of networks and no representation that together could be called the place of Perry Ridge. Instead, there are many networks not present at place that play a role in determining particular articulations of place. As an example, Shanoon Bennett's knowledge of the importance of particular habitat conditions for the round-leaved sundew and bogbean species that she encountered at Dragonfly Lake on Perry Ridge referenced knowledge she had accumulated in order to recognize these species and understand their habitat.[235] In this sense, Bennett's articulation of Perry Ridge is enacting a style of inhabitation in relation to networks within place that is based on her specific cultural knowledge and patterns of bodily inhabitation that many other activists are unaware of and would not be relating to.

A second limitation arises because inhabitation is bodily and not just discursive as is emphasized in greater detail in this Chapter. Inhabitation and knowledge arise out of the body, which is continually bringing us into place in accordance with the specific aptitudes of our body.[236] These characteristics are linked to the particular characteristics of the body as well as to cultural influence.[237] As Tim Ingold writes in relation to the cultural inheritances that influence inhabitation:

> Human children, like the young of many other species, grow up in environments furnished by the work of previous generations, and as they do so they literally

[235] Prsonal Interview with Shanoon Bennett, July 27th, 2010.

[236] *Ibid,* 70.

[237] See Casey, *Getting Back Into Place,* especially 41-106, where Casey discusses the body in place.

> come to carry the forms of their dwelling in their bodies – in specific skills, sensibilities and dispositions.[238]

In the context of this culturally constituted bodily inhabitation, it needs to be emphasized that a 'style of inhabitation' is to a great extent an immersive practice of inhabitation. The knowledge practices analyzed in this consideration of styles of inhabitation represent only a portion of the styles that are enacted towards non-human networks through discursive acts of inhabitation. In a more thorough sense, dispositions towards the non-human are enacted through every aspect of inhabitation, discursive and non-discursive.[239]

As an example of the range of distinct engagements undertaken with non-human elements through inhabitation, an event such as the Perry Ridge blockade presents a particularly intense series of engagements. Styles of inhabitation are practiced as protesters gather at a specific place in the forest, attempting to act in relation to what they understand is the well-being of the place, while also engaging with each other and a powerful oppositional force in the presence of the police and other oppositional social forces. Through this dynamic process some communities, some networks of practice, are drawn together and strengthened, while connections between other networks are weakened. In this context, it would be an Arcadian undertaking to trace all the networks

[238] Ingold, "Building, Dwelling, Living," 77.

[239] For an example see Davide Panagia's text *The Political Life of Sensation* (2009) in which Panagia argues for the recognition of the politics of sensation that is enacted through public conviviality and other acts of sensation.

of practice that an activist or a community is relating to and the styles of inhabitation they enact in relation to these networks as they engage in environmental activism.

With these considerations in mind, rather than attempting to articulate a general consideration of styles of inhabitation, this section will trace the styles of inhabitation that inform articulations of the fresh water at Perry Ridge. Discourse is both easy to trace from a desk and has a powerful, although perhaps overstated, effect on styles of inhabitation in general. The following section will explore the interactions that support and are engendered by distinct discursive claims in relation to non-human practices found at the place of Perry Ridge.

Section three: Reconsidering articulations of Perry Ridge in terms of relations with the land.

Keeping the limitations outlined above in mind, this section will review the styles of inhabitation expressed in relation to particular non-human networks present at the Perry Ridge and ask what modes of connection, what interactions, are enabled by discourses in relation to these aspects of the land as found at Perry Ridge. Here the discourses articulated in relation to the water running off Perry Ridge will be given close attention.[240] This section will consider how this aspect of the land is articulated, and by

[240] To refer to dozens of creeks and a complex sponge like underground reservoir as 'a network' is a huge reduction and one that can be interpreted as a move towards an abstract understanding of the water of the

extension connected with, by three different perspectives associated with the Perry Ridge blockade.

Initially, many activists viewed the fresh water at Perry Ridge in terms that proceeded from a set of beliefs about nature to certain prescriptions for the management of Perry Ridge as a site within nature.[241] Generally, the set of beliefs that guided these interventions was a commitment, as Stephan Martineau framed it, to basing resource use around the principle of taking only what was sustainable. This approach would ultimately entail the creation and implementation of ecosystem based management approach for every ecosystem. As Martineau indicated, Perry Ridge was an excellent place to argue for this kind of management, although the Ridge was not itself important to the articulation of this argument, except in strategic terms.[242]

As this overview indicates, the style of inhabitation enacted by activists who viewed the fresh water on the Ridge in terms of general beliefs about nature, is one that tends towards a managerial interaction. This managerial style of inhabitation is directed towards the creeks in such a way that they are viewed in a totalizing sense as a particular classification of a creek within a watershed that itself has quantifiable characteristics. Here it can be argued that this approach is only able to address the specific networks

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Ridge. The intention here is to emphasize the relatively particular aspect of water running off Perry Ridge while also keeping the case study general enough so that different articulations can be evaluated.

[241] Stephan Martineau, Marilyn Burgoon and Shanoon Bennett all expressed this style of argument point during personal interviews.

[242] Personal interview with Stephan Martineau October 5th, 2010.

found in a place to a limited extent because the encounter with a specific creek is always preceded by reference to a model and is understood in relation to this model. Activists who are not scientists are not encouraged directly to develop knowledges about the place of Perry Ridge and the knowledge used to articulate the water is couched in general managerial terms. Therefore, in the articulation of the creek as a site within a general model of nature that most activists have no first hand knowledge of, the creeks are only connected to insofar as is afforded by the model.[243]

Next it is important to consider the perspective of the water on Perry Ridge that was articulated by various activists as they framed the water in terms of a specific natural ecosystem or bioregion. As indicated above, in the articulations of some activists, Perry Ridge was viewed in terms of management plans that were as big as the province of BC or even larger. However, the Silva Forest Foundation generated a plan that was specific to the ecosystems of the Slocan Valley. This plan, released in 1996 and supported by over seventy percent of the residents of the Slocan, calls for management of the local economy based on the carrying capacity of local ecosystems.[244] The plan was generated through extensive study of the carrying capacity of the local ecosystem by scientists linked to Silva.[245]

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[243] Hinchliffe, "'Inhabiting,'" 208.

[244] "Poll shows Valley residents support Silva plan," *Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance Newsletter*, Fall 1996, http://www.watertalk.org/svwa/news/fall96.html.

[245] "Slocan Valley," Silva Forest Foundation Website, http://www.silvafor.org/slocan.

Silva Forest's ecosystem based plan for the Slocan Valley views the water that flows off the eastern slope of Perry Ridge in terms of a range of different classifications. These classifications index the historical cultural use of the Sinixt as well as current patterns of settlement and use, the extent of logging, forest and water resources as well as areas where there is potentially unstable terrain. Based on this data, the plan dictates what types of use are appropriate to allow for the ecological sustainability of the region.[246]

Stepping back, it is important here to consider the styles of inhabitation that are generated by this local management plan. The Silva Forest Foundation's ecosystem-based plan operates on a less extensive level of abstraction due to its focus on relatively specific subject areas. However, the observations used to support Silva's articulations of the fresh water were gathered by experts in accordance with previously existing scientific models that are then applied to Perry Ridge. The plan is aided by the specific scientific tools and mapping techniques used to manufacture its data, as well as the financial and organizational apparatuses that support the Silva Forest Foundation. The knowledge generated through these tools and apparatuses is then circulated to activists and utilized as a tool to reinforce certain forms of political authority. In terms of the style of inhabitation, the Silva plan does not encourage extensive direct engagement by activists with the land that knowledge is articulated in relation to although it does generate knowledge that is relatively specific to the Slocan Valley.

[246] "Slocan Valley," Silva Forest Foundation Website, http://www.silvafor.org/slocan.

A third style of inhabitation was articulated by Frank Nixon and elements of the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance in their reference to the fresh water on the Ridge. These voices stated their opposition to logging on the Ridge partly in terms of understandings of the water that runs off Perry Ridge that they had gathered over the course of their own inhabitation in the Slocan Valley. This knowledge is an example of local ecological knowledge. As an example of this type of knowledge, I will relate a detailed story that Frank Nixon told me to express his opposition to the way in which the Ministry of Forests approached the fresh water on the Ridge. Frank told me that the Nixon family has been homesteading on a seven hundred acre plot of land on the slope of Perry Ridge for nearly one hundred years. Through the course of this lengthy inhabitation, Frank inherited the knowledge that a large fire on Perry Ridge around 1910 led to a sharp reduction in the flow of water in Nixon Creek that runs off Perry Ridge. Because of this reduced flow, the Nixon's were unable to grow a sufficient crop of summer grains for several years until mature tree cover returned to the Ridge. Nixon understood that the reason for this decrease in water flow was because only mature tree cover was able to hold sufficient water in the soil on the Ridge to allow enough water to ensure year round flow in Nixon Creek.

Nixon relied on this information when he and his brother Ed hired logging contractors to selectively log part of the Nixon family property on the slope of Perry Ridge in the 1980s. This round of logging did not disrupt the water flow of Nixon Creek or any other local creeks. During the CORE process, Nixon witnessed representatives

from the MOF claiming that clear-cut logging on the Ridge would lead to increased flow in the creek. In response, he argued that the clear-cut logging favoured by the MoF and the style of roads that they relied on would have serious impacts on the flow of water in Nixon Creek. Nixon thought that the water flow would be increased in the spring months but in summer, when there were no trees on the Ridge to hold water in the ground, the flow of the creek would be drastically reduced.

The local ecological knowledge passed on in this story forms the basis of one of Frank Nixon's reasons for taking part in the Perry Ridge blockade.[247] This understanding is based in part on his knowledge of the interplay between snowmelt, tree cover, the shape of the Ridge and the flow patterns of the streams that come off of the Ridge in relation to the specific agricultural uses that he uses the creek flow for. Nixon has gathered this knowledge through the course of his own daily inhabitation and his attempts to attain self-sufficiency on his family's homestead.[248] Nixon's livelihood as well as a great deal of careful practice is directly implicated in the knowledge that he articulates in relation to the Ridge. This implication is due to the immersive style of bodily inhabitation that he has enacted in relation to the Ridge and gives his knowledge of the Ridge a level of investment that would not be transferable to other places. Nixon and his family have engaged in a style of inhabitation in relation to their homestead that attempts to address the specific intelligences embedded within the land that allow water to flow off Perry

[247] Personal interview with Frank Nixon, July 28th 2010.

[248] Personal interview with Frank Nixon, July 28th 2010.

Ridge into Nixon Creek and eventually bring water to the Nixon's fields. Nixon's knowledge could be generalizable to other landforms but this transfer would bring in variables generated by the networks, ecological and social, encountered in another place that might render this knowledge ineffective.

In much the same way as Nixon's, the politics engaged in by the various groups that make up the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance are linked to knowledge generated through inhabitation of the Slocan Valley. This link between political action and the fresh water running off the Ridge can be attributed to both cultural and physical factors. Over the course of spending decades studying and defending the watersheds which they inhabit, the Alliance has fought for the protection of water quality, quantity and timing of flow while also resisting the utilization of chemicals in their drinking water. The knowledge that supports these actions has been generated by experts like Herb Hammond and Allen Isaacson but is also based on observation of the quality and quantity of watershed flow by residents who conducted independent water testing studies throughout the 1990s.[249] In addition, there is a whole body of practice built around the water that residents who use the water all take part in: taps are opened, clean water is drunk, pipes must be kept warm in the winter time. When spring run-off or other creek disturbances

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[249] Personal Interview with Marilyn Burgoon, July 26th, 2010. Burgoon has been a long-time director of the Perry Ridge Water Users Association. Herb Hammond was associated with both the Silva Forest Foundation and the SVWA and Allen Isaacson was an American geologist hired by the PRWUA to conduct geological feasibility studies in relation to logging on Perry Ridge.

muddies the water, residents climb the Ridge to check on water boxes and clear them of debris.

In addition, the physical shape of the Valley, which allows water to gather in unpolluted areas that are relatively free from development and then flow down towards the houses of residents also plays a role in influencing the types of knowledge that are generated in relation to it. If there was no Perry Ridge, the watersheds would take a different form, likely one that would be more centralized into larger creeks and amenable to interventions by the Provincial government through centralized water distribution and water quality testing sites.

The argument made here in relation to Frank Nixon and the SVWA supports the assertion made in this thesis that the political relations in which humans are engaged can become meaningful in relation to specific places. We have seen that the development of culture and politics can be developed in accordance with the complexities specific to particular places.[250] Understood in this way, observation of specific places leads to knowledge that is in some sense specific and not generalizable and yet potentially also leads to political action that other knowledge practices might not inspire. However, it can also be said that the extent to which knowledge developed in relation to a specific place influences political action depends on the styles of inhabitation that activists enact in relation to places.

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[250] Casey indicates that cultural patterns are always intertwined with places and argues for a more intensive recognition of this inevitable link in contemporary society (2009: xxxv).

As this review of the different styles of inhabitation enacted in relation to the fresh water on Perry Ridge indicates, the knowledge practices enacted by environmental activists in relation to elements of the land differ widely. Here it is important to make a distinction between *local environmental activism* and what Luke has called eco-governmental discourses. Eco-governmental knowledge tends towards application to large areas and is not based on direct interaction with the non-human practices that make up specific sections of the land. Local environmental activism indicates activism that is undertaken on the basis of knowledge that has been developed either by individuals or as part of a community. This local ecological knowledge has been tested through practical experience and is deployed in relation to the place(s) it has been generated in relation to.[251]

In discussing local knowledge, it is important to avoid some of the pitfalls that can accompany the use of the term. The term "local knowledge," was popularized by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz to describe the knowledge found when studying particular localized cultures, such as the Javanese people of Indonesia, and the Chinese.[252] However,

[251] Local ecological knowledge (LEK) should not be confused with traditional ecological knowledge(TEK). Similarly to the understanding of LEK used in this thesis, TEK refers to knowledge that is gathered and applied through engagement with specific places. However, TEK is also understood to include the cultural values and worldviews through which local environmental knowledge becomes intelligible.(Gagnon and Berteaux 2009: 1)

[252] Clifford Geertz, "Local Knowledge and its Limits," *The Yale Journal of Criticism,* 2, (1992): 132.

there is a tendency in this approach to assume that while the knowledge generated in these localities is specific, the ways in which knowledge is generated can be understood in universal ways. In this sense, anthropologists have represented themselves as being able to develop explanations about how knowledge is generated in exotic localities as if these localities represent particular conditions of general knowledge.[253]

With this pitfall in mind, local knowledge in this understanding is developed through the interplay between specific cultural traditions and particular areas of land. This usage carries some of the emphasis that James C. Scott gives to local knowledge in his seminal discussion of local and general knowledge *Seeing Like A State.* Scott states that local knowledge is based on extremely close observation of and interaction with specific environmental conditions, in contrast to general knowledge which is derived through the application of general rules.[254]

As such, the analysis of local ecological knowledge is distinct from analysis of local knowledge as knowledge that is generally intelligible but is found in a specific local community. Through a focus on local ecological knowledge, this thesis has developed a limited discussion of the specific knowledge practices that are subjugated by managerial accounts of environmentalism. Here it is not local communities as such that are silenced but instances of what have been referred to as local environmental activism and the knowledge that is specific to a specific inhabited political space that can be lost. When

[253] Anja Nygren, "Local Knowledge in the Environment−Development Discourse : From dichotomies to situated knowledges," *Critique of Anthropology*, 19 (1999) 267-288.

[254] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 324.

local environmental activism is interpreted as the perspective of the political values of a local community, it can be viewed in terms that are based on general economic or political analyses without acknowledging the importance of the emergent specificity of local knowledges articulated by local communities.

While these local knowledges are easily silenced, the practices on the basis of which they are articulated distinguish local environmental activism from eco-governmental environmentalists. Distinguishing local environmental activism is important because of the specificity of the political engagements that these activists are engaged in relation to specific areas of land. Activists engaged in developing local ecological knowledge are potentially attuned to idiolocal particularities in the land that might easily be missed when activists rely on utilizing expert and managerial knowledge to develop political responses in relation to specific places.[255] Local environmental activists are engaged in immersive relations with non human practices. These practices include learning how to maintain and establish gravity fed water systems, gathering local plants, hunting, growing crops and a whole range of other practices that depend on knowledge generated through local interactions with non human practice. Through these engagements diverse traditions of practice are established that challenge the managerial tendencies found in North American environmentalism.

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[255] Scott, *Seeing Like a State,* 6.

To conclude these reflections on local ecological knowledge, it is important to consider the question of strategy for environmental activists. It has been demonstrated that even within a relatively small scale blockade such as the one at Perry Ridge in 1997, there were pressures to articulate the politics of the blockade in terms of a politics of representation. This politics is centred on articulating the Ridge as a collection of species, natural resources and then applying management plans to these resources. As we saw in chapter three, many activists at the Ridge blockade framed their messaging based on considerations of how it would be received by the broader public in British Columbia and environmentalists outside of the Slocan Valley. As Ricardo Hubbs indicated, in 1997 Clayoquot Sound loomed large and there was a concerted attempt “to Clayoquot” the Perry Ridge blockade by making it a large scale environmental protest, one that would resonate with others across the province and the world.[256] Doing this meant linking the Ridge with “the environment” in ways that would draw sympathetic media and political attention from outside the Slocan Valley. This was achieved by publicizing the importance of the fresh water reserves and animal habitat found on Perry Ridge as well as the intact characteristics of the ecosystem.[257]

Here the strategic goal of identifying with the environmental movement meant emphasizing articulations of Perry Ridge that emphasize managerial prescriptions rather than articulating local ecological knowledge. If there are important differences between

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[256] Personal Interview with Ricardo Hubbs, November 3rd, 2010.

[257] Personal Interviews with Ricardo Hubbs and Marilyn Burgoon.

the styles of inhabitation enacted and promoted by these two methods of articulating place, this strategic decision should be questioned.[258] Through pursuing the strategic goal of "Clayoquoting" Perry Ridge, environmental activists perpetuate the subjugation of local ecological knowledge. This silencing takes place as activists claim that Perry Ridge is political as a natural site in relation to which various management exercises need to be undertaken, ungulate grazing range needs to be protected, fresh water reserves need to be maintained, etc. By articulating such managerial goals, activists do not articulate the importance of the ongoing inhabitation that forms the basis of local ecological knowledge.

With this in mind, if is important to consider the broader context of such a strategic choice from the perspective of an attempt to develop local ecological knowledge. How does Clayoquoting of Perry Ridge benefit local environmental activism and knowledge? Indirectly there are benefits that can accrue as people might be more inclined to explore a park than they would a hillside. However, even if Perry Ridge is

[258]Here it should be made clear that the point is not to purify the discourse of environmental activists towards an

ideal discourse based on local environmental knowledge. The distinct networks that meet in place(s) demand diverse sets of political responses. The politics engaged in by the Silva Forest Foundation in arguing for ecosystem based management plans are important politics in relation to the strategic context presented by the Provincial Government and broader cultural pressures towards managerial representational politics. Rather than attempting to streamline political discussion, the intent here is to look at how discursive practices participate in the process of sharing between human and nonhuman members of communities that is politics and challenge the dominance of an instrumental strategic thinking within the environmental movement.

managed in an ecologically sensitive way, this has no direct impact on the development of local ecological knowledge. In light of this, it can be suggested that activists who are committed to developing local ecological knowledge as a basis of their activism should consider distinguishing their activism from managerial discourses by more explicitly exploring what it would mean to centre environmental activism around local ecological knowledge and the importance of building local environmental activism.

Such a strategic goal runs against the orthodox strategy for environmental activists. However, given the tendency of mainstream environmentalism towards managerial approaches to place, it can be suggested that there is a broader distinction between a politics of inhabitation and a politics of representation than is usually acknowledged by environmentalists of all persuasions.

Here an open question of how local environmental activists can engage in effective political strategy needs to be considered. Of course, in diverse ways there are already sub-currents within environmental activism that are focused on publicizing this type of environmental activism such as various environmental education facilities, some local food associations, wildcrafting networks, watershed alliances and looser connections among local environmental activists. This indicates that mobilization around local environmental activism is well underway. One strategic goal already being pursued is the project of developing closer alliances with the indigenous nations of British Columbia. This is already being pursued by figures such as Nancy Turner, author of a

number of books and articles that present TEK as a living body of practice that can be adopted in areas such as forest management and artistic practice.[259]

However, in many cases local environmental activism remains undefined as a body of practice or as a movement. The borders between these associations and managerial discourses of environmentality remain blurry. This is problematic because as has been argued, there are very different styles of inhabitation and networks of practice embedded within these distinct discourses. Settler communities in North America are relatively new to this land and are entangled within economic, cultural and political networks that subjugate and resist local ecological knowledge. This indicates that more conceptual work needs to be done emphasizing the existence and practical knowledges developed by local environmental activists. Articulating the range of practices and knowledge that are enacted within local environmental activism is a particularly important concern for political ecologists. This will allow for the sharing of the diverse ways of being that are embedded within local ecological knowledges and a better understanding of the political effects of local environmental activism.

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[259] See Nancy Turner, *Plant Technology of First Peoples in British Columbia,* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), and Nancy Turner, "Keeping it Living: Applications and Relevance of Traditional Plant Management in British Columbia to Sustainable Harvesting of Non-timber Forest Products," (paper presented at the Non Timber Forest Products in Alaska conference, 2004), http://www.ncrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/gtr/other/gtr–nc217/gtr_nc217page%20066.pdf.

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the role that local knowledge plays in relation to environmental activism. The overarching argument is that interactions with the ecological and social elements of specific places play an important role in environmental activism that becomes subjugated when we approach environmental activism in terms of an analysis based on an understanding that it takes place in relation to nature. This subjugated element is an important element of environmental activism and deserves more scholarly study. This argument has been made over the course of an engagement with a series of theoretical analyses and exploratory research in relation to the case study of the Perry Ridge blockade that occurred in 1997 in the Slocan Valley.

Theoretically, it has been demonstrated that humans are not primarily engaged with nature as it has been culturally conceived in western society: as a field that is distinct from humans and is the location of distinct resources. Instead, a case has been made to understand humans as directly involved with specific places through lived inhabitation. This inhabitation does not occur in relation to nature but rather in relation to particular areas of land on the basis of bodily encounter and the influence of social traditions. On the basis of these lived encounters with socio-ecological places, knowledges emerge, elements of which have been shown to be intelligible in relation to the relational contexts

found in specific places. In this view knowledge is not engaged in representing place but is always part of the ongoing play of cultural engagement with places.

This conclusion indicates that analyses of environmental politics that fail to consider evolving local ecological knowledges and instead understand these politics in terms of generalized understandings of nature, are ill-suited to developing an accurate understanding of the politics of environmental activists. As we have seen, many environmental activists use this language of nature as a tactic to influence the politics of place. While these discourses are able to resonate on a broad scale, it has been argued that these discourses of environmental politics represent incursions into the politics of particular places that are unsuited to properly reflect the complexity of local politics.

It should be noted that the critique that has been developed here of the language of nature is not simply an assertion that moving from the local to the general entails a loss of detail through the shift to abstraction. Such an argument illogically assumes that the local is somehow more real or concrete than the general.[260] Instead, both, or rather *all,* scales are equally real or concrete and vital, although they contain distinct relations. In this context the ways in which humans act in relation to specific places, at both local and more general scales, is politically important. Utilizing the scientific language of nature for places assumes the appropriate of these historical cultural discourses to guide our relations with the land.

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[260] This argument is developed from Massey (1994).

Utilizing these scientific discourses of nature to articulate place ensures that environmental activists demands will be able to resonate on broader scales than they would be able to if they utilized more localized discourses. Because of this resonance, scientific discourses have been perceived as strategic tools for environmental activists to utilize. This wide resonance ensures that activists are able to generate intense cultural responses in relation to these discourses of nature that can wield power influence in the politics of place. However, this apparent effectiveness raises concerns over the strategic consequences of using these discourses of nature for environmental activists. Generating a wide cultural resonance through discourses of nature means that attempts to engage directly with local political and ecological processes are not taken nor are they emphasized as important.Further, the attention that is generated in relation to the specific social-ecological place will not be attuned to these local processes and instead will be addressed to the wider-scale politics engaged with by discourses of nature. As a consequence of this broader focus, it is likely that more place-specific political processes will be de-emphasized.

Alongside this theoretical discussion, an empirical argument has been made in relation to the land-use conflicts that occurred in British Columbia most intensively during the 1980s and 1990s. These conflicts are often understood as part of the war in the woods between environmentalists and the development coalition over how to manage the environment. Based on interviews that I conducted, it was found that activists involved in the Perry Ridge blockade in the Slocan Valley in 1997 were acting on the basis of local

ecological knowledge developed through the course of their inhabitation in the Slocan Valley. This local ecological knowledge was used in conjunction with beliefs about nature and a range of other concerns to justify the activists participation in the Perry Ridge blockade. These empirical findings indicate that some activists at the Perry Ridge blockade were engaged in a political struggle based on knowledge generated during their inhabitation in the Slocan Valley and the particular socio-ecological relations that manifested through their engagement with that place. This finding supports the theoretical arguments made in this thesis and indicates that any analyses of rural environmental activism that does not address the importance of local ecological knowledge will be lacking depth and understanding.

It has been argued that the war in the woods analysis, which tends to label all of those who resisted provincial land-use policies as “environmentalists,” presents a vastly oversimplified analysis of political conflicts over land use in British Columbia. This research indicates that analysis of environmental politics needs to take into consideration the influence of local ecological knowledge. There are meaningful distinctions amongst environmental activists based on the different knowledges they use to articulate place, and the styles of inhabitation that allow for the development of these knowledges. These knowledges are in turn strengthened and introduced into places through the articulation of this knowledge.

Politically, this distinction amongst types of ecological knowledge is especially important because local ecological knowledges are much more specific and appear to be

less prone to developing into imperialistic managerial discourses than are the discourses of place as nature, that have been iterated within the war in the woods discourse. When place is understood in terms of fungible natural characteristics or the amenities that can be derived from it as nature, it readily becomes standing reserve, appearing as if it awaits one or another managerial discourse. When these managerial approaches to place become dominant, it is increasingly hard for local knowledges of both human and non-human relations to be developed and heard. While there is nothing objectionable about these more abstract discourses of nature in themselves, the ease with which these discourses can jump scales into discussions in relation to more local and particular discussions of a specific place is problematic. As has been demonstrated, these local discussions are often more attuned to the local complexities of specific places, creating a political specificity of these discourses that can be lost when these conflicts are rendered in more abstract terms. With the loss of each local discourse, each partial place-specific observation, there is a greater danger of the increase of managerial and imperialistic approaches to place and the subsequent levelling of the socio-ecological particularities of place.

These findings demonstrate some of the complexity of a rural environmental struggle in which activists are also inhabitants of the political space that is being contested. We have seen in case of the Perry Ridge blockade that activists felt that due to the political pressure caused by the power of the provincial government and desires to "Clayoquot" Perry Ridge, adopting the language of nature was seen as a beneficial political tactic.. This decision to articulate place in relation to nature is problematic

because the complexities of inhabitation and the specific local knowledges generated therein are not addressed. It can be argued that this shift in discourse to more abstract knowledge makes attentive resolution of local political issues and the development of local ecological knowledges more difficult although it does allow for more superficial resolutions in the form of projections of nature.

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Appendix 1
Perry Ridge Interviews

As part of the research for this thesis, I conducted interviews with eight activists who were involved in the Perry Ridge blockade. These interviews were intended to be exploratory research that would help me gain an understanding of how activists at Perry Ridge viewed the Ridge as politically important. All activists were residents of the Slocan Valley at the time of the blockade and continue to reside there. These interviews were all done in person and recorded with an electronic recording device except for the interview with Stephan Martineau which was conducted over the telephone. Interviews were conducted through the summer and fall of 2010. I contacted potential interviewees on the basis of personal referrals and research into the blockade. Research was done in accordance with a research proposal entitled 'Nature, Place and Politics.' Approval for this project was given by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics office in April of 2010. This research project was completed under the supervision of Warren Magnusson and was assigned Protocol Number 10-179 in the Research Ethics filing system. All participants in this research agreed to have the proceedings of their interviews used in this research and all agreed that they could be attributed by name in the research.

Interviews took the form of open-ended discussions concerning the Perry Ridge blockade, but the following list of questions was used to guide the conversation.

1. How long have you lived in the Slocan Valley?

2. How do you remember the protests that took place in the 1990s over land use?

3. How would you characterize these actions? What were people asking for? What were you asking for?

4. Who were the actions opposing?

5. What was the extent of your involvement in the protests in the Slocan Valley in the 1990s?

6. How would you say that your relationship to this place, the Slocan Valley, influenced your involvement in these actions?

7. Do you think that your views about nature and the environmental world are influenced by your relationship to this place?

8. How would you say that your relationship to this place informs your sense of who you are?

The following is a list of participants that were interviewed along with the dates and locations when they were interviewed.

Laurie Kaufmann-Paquot, Marilyn Burgoon, Marilyn James, July 26th, 2010, Sinixt Big House, Vallican, British Columbia.

Shanoon Bennett, July 27th, 2010, Sleep is for Sissies Coffeehouse, Winlaw, British Columbia.

Frank Nixon, July 28th, 2010, private residence, Perry Siding, British Columbia.

Pamela Stevenson, July 29th, 2010, private residence, Appledale, British Columbia.

Stefan Martineau, October 5th, phone interview conducted in Victoria, British Columbia.

Ricardo Hubbs, November 5th, private residence, Winlaw, British Columbia.