

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND RESISTANCE:
RETHINKING THE SPACES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

By Simon Dalby

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies,
Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6 CANADA
Email: simon_dalby@carleton.ca

Paper presented to the University of Washington Department of Geography seminar series on "Borderlands of Globality: Transnational Spaces and Struggles" (April 14, 2000)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost my thanks to the members of the Canadian First Nations' Environmental Network who allowed me to attend their meeting in Eskasoni, Unama'ki in June 1997. This paper was partly inspired by listening to their articulations of First Peoples' painful "environmental" predicaments in many places. My thinking has also been helped by numerous people in Unama'ki/Cape Breton who have been talked to and interviewed as part of this project. Bill Hipwell's excellent field research, and his insistence that I think hard about the implications of aboriginal peoples for understanding contemporary social processes is much appreciated. The research for this paper is supported by a Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council research grant to Fiona Mackenzie, Madeleine Dion Stout and the author to investigate "Community, Identity and Environmental Threat." My thanks to both my colleagues for their insights, to Susan Tudin for her work in Carleton's library, and to Philip McIntosh for a detailed critique of an earlier draft. My thanks also to colleagues and students in the Geography Departments at Syracuse University and at Queen's University for the opportunity to present earlier versions of some of the ideas in this paper at seminars in their departments. The remaining errors and interpretive failings herein are my responsibility alone.

ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND RESISTANCE: RETHINKING THE SPACES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

“Representations of space in the social sciences are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture and disjunction. The distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is predicated on a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy “naturally” discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorize contact, conflict and contradiction between cultures and societies.”¹

“Surely we have had enough of a politics of little boxes.”²

GLOBALIZATION, BOUNDARIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In the aftermath of the cold war discussions within the discipline of international relations concerning the appropriate designation of the current world order have been interconnected with discussions of the topics and methods for studying contemporary political phenomena at the largest scales. Clearly matters have changed and the dominance of a specification of the world as sovereign states organized into geopolitical blocs needs to be replaced by a more complex and nuanced understanding of territory and identity. Contemporary changes also suggest the necessity of incorporating movement in various forms into the analysis both because it is obvious that things are changing in many not easily predictable ways, and that people, things and money are flowing across boundaries at an accelerated rate.³ The themes of border crossings, and the changed functions of boundaries permeate these discussions.

The specific term “globalization” has many uses but most of them coalesce around themes of novelty, acceleration, interaction, movements and consciousness and sometimes also threats to existing social arrangements. Loosely it is used as an economic term to denote the acceleration of the interconnections in the global economy especially in the financial sectors, in the last few decades and the related phenomena of the rise of both relatively open international financial markets and “global corporations.”⁴ It suggests a political economy in which the territorial state is less important in the structure of both global politics and economics than it used to be.⁵ Globalization encapsulates many aspects of current debates about political priorities although as the argument in this paper elaborates, it all too frequently constrains them within the geopolitical terms of the nation state that the phenomenon is supposedly challenging.

Considerations of the new circumstances of the post-cold war geopolitics are often simply incorporated into traditional discussions of states by focusing on the twin processes of

¹ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson “Beyond “Culture”: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference” in Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (eds) Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 33-34.

² R.B.J. Walker “International Relations and the Concept of the Political” in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds) International Relations Theory Today (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p. 324.

³ Joseph Camilleri and Jim Falk The End of Sovereignty?: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmenting World (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1992); Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (eds) Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Boundaries (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.)

⁴ R.J. Barnett and J. Cavanagh Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

⁵ Susan Strange The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

integration and fragmentation.⁶ The assumptions that globalization is either an opportunity opened up by the declining importance of states, or a danger precisely because of this declining power, re-inscribes the discussion in the classic terms of international relations and the debate as to whether the state is obsolete or obstinate.⁷ This paper points out that these discussions presuppose a highly dubious political geography of relatively autonomous polities in the face of a history that might be much better understood in terms of contested political differentiations rather than autonomous precisely bordered units. If the focus is specifically on borders then the assumptions of the territorial state are especially important given the dominance of state boundaries in the contemporary cartographic imaginary.

The reconsideration of boundaries in terms of movement, territory and identity is an important locus of discussion for attempts to think differently about world politics, if not international relations. Considerations of identity are often articulated from marginal locations far from the centers of state power and the supposed *loci* of foreign policy making. Frequently linking themes of culture and environmental threats, they challenge claims to both nationhood and economic progress in ways that have useful heuristic potential for rethinking world politics and the specific understandings of politics in the literature of international relations. In short this paper suggests that the question of globalization and international relations might be better read as a critique of the taken for granted assumptions, and explicitly the spatial reifications of international relations thinking from which globalization is analyzed, rather than as a matter of novelty requiring a rethinking of the discipline's intellectual premises.

To make this case the paper looks in some detail at an unconventional (by the standards of international relations) empirical example in a very marginal place. But precisely why this place is not a conventional way to think about international relations is part of the argument in the paper that follows the case study. The latter sections focus on the need to challenge the conventional "meta-geographic" assumptions that structure conventional thinking.⁸ In part it supports the point that David Campbell makes clear in his analysis of the representations of Bosnia; face to face encounters in particular places are an important corrective to the cartographic generalizations that so frequently structure foreign policy thinking and the Anglo-American discourse of international relations.⁹

More specifically this paper looks at a controversy some years ago concerning proposals to build a "super-quarry" in Cape Breton, the northern part of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. The purpose of the analysis is to argue both that conventional understandings of international relations, and the contemporary concerns with environment, are not adequately understood either within the administrative jurisdictions of modern states or within the themes of international relations thinking. The latter sections of the paper use the case study to explore some of the questions of territory, identity and culture, that are often obscured by the practices of international relations. The paper concludes that there are dimensions of the politics of resistance that have some novel aspects in contemporary times even if they are matters of continuity in important ways that the claims to novelty in globalization discussions often ignore.

⁶ Ian Clark Globalization and Fragmentation: International Relations in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷ R.B.J. Walker Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁸ On metageography as "spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world" see Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁹ David Campbell National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice in Bosnia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT AND CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS

Prominent among the contemporary critics of globalization, environmentalists often view its processes as a combination of economic and political changes that reduce the possibilities for local regulation of destructive behaviors by corporations acting beyond the control of any single state government.¹⁰ But the threat from “global” actions is often portrayed as the source of numerous environmental dangers in specific places, where habitat disruption endangers species and where modern economies encroach on ecosystems and aboriginal landscapes simultaneously threatening cultures and their ecologies.¹¹ The destruction of rainforests has been linked directly to the campaigns to protect aboriginal peoples. Understanding forest destruction as a global process, especially because of the trans-national trade in timber, suggests that globalization directly endangers peoples in many specific places while simultaneously endangering everyone through the indirect effects of atmospheric and climate change.¹²

But while the issues of cultural and forest destruction, as well as the politics of the location of “dirty” industries can be understood in these terms, the difficulty that many activists and indigenous peoples, as well as sympathetic social scientists have in conceptualizing the appropriate political responses to these “environmental” concerns, suggests that the territorial categories used to understand these processes need much more critical scrutiny.¹³ But such territorial assumptions and explicit metaphors of exclusionary spaces also haunt works such as Thom Kuehl’s much more radical account of the possibility of ecopolitical resistance.¹⁴ Even here geopolitical metaphors of governmentality and specifically assumptions of societies in particular spaces reassert themselves in the concluding pages of his book when he tries to suggest alternative arrangements to the hegemonic practices. Such difficulties suggest that much environmental concern remains within the spatial imaginary of the contemporary social sciences described by Gupta and Ferguson in the epigram that begins this paper.

The irony of environmentalists caught in conventional spatial categories, given their professed concern for the global, suggests the need for sustained critique of the geopolitical premises of such thinking. Such critique is one of the purposes of the growing literature in critical geopolitics which examines how such geographical categorizations have important political effects precisely by how the world is imagined and divided.¹⁵ These critical readings extend analyses of the important ways in which international relations has relied on modern assumptions of politics to silence the violence that the European rise to dominance involved, because as Michael Shapiro puts it: “Contemporary global understandings remain attuned to historical narratives that naturalize a particular, territorially oriented view of sovereignty, reinforce it with a political economy story that disparages pre-commercial systems of livelihood and exchange, and substitutes myths of evolutionary development for histories of violent confrontation and usurpation.”¹⁶

Indigenous or aboriginal peoples in many parts of the world are still frequently facing brutal dispossession by encroaching populations of agricultural settlers, petroleum and mining

¹⁰ Josh Karliner The Corporate Planet (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1997).

¹¹ Numerous arguments on these themes are collected in Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (eds) The Case Against the Global Economy, and for a Turn to the Local (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996).

¹² Patricia Marchak Logging the Globe (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995).

¹³ The lack of geographical reflection on these matters is especially clear in Robert O. Keohane and Marc A. Levy (eds) Institutions for Environmental Aid: Pitfalls and Promise (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Thom Kuehls Beyond Sovereign Territory: The Space of Ecopolitics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Gearóid Ó Tuathail Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby (eds) Rethinking Geopolitics (London: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁶ Michael Shapiro Violent Cartographies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 17.

interests.¹⁷ Often victims of legal doctrines of “terra nullius,” based on assumptions that land and resources which have not been formally recognized as individual property by a state or colonial government are therefore available for “settlement” and resource exploitation, numerous native cultures have been damaged or destroyed by expanding agricultural populations, the destruction of land and rivers by mining and logging, and the processes of legal dispossession that are an integral part of colonization.¹⁸ Lacking either effective legal recourse, or social organizations to preserve their ecologies, cultures and modes of living, indigenous peoples are displaced by these processes of land enclosure and resource appropriation. Their cultures are destroyed by the traditional combination of disease, relocation, despair, alcohol and impoverishment accelerated by the introduction of manufactured items to replace subsistence economies. These processes are often aggravated by the definition of “their” areas as threats to national security precisely because they are not “settled” and patrolled by state military institutions that can thus ensure the territorial integrity of the state.¹⁹

GEOGRAPHIES OF RESISTANCE

The aboriginal struggles over access to resources and the demands to cultural autonomy continue in many places. Indigenous peoples in North America, Australia and elsewhere have been campaigning to correct the historic consequences of conquest and dispossession.²⁰ The contemporary processes whereby indigenous peoples struggle to reassert both their cultures, and their access to economically useful resources, have a number of important implications for how globalization and environment are understood and especially for the inadequate geographical premises of much contemporary thinking about these matters.

To explicate these themes this paper draws an example from a current research project on questions of community and identity related to environmental controversies.²¹ To do so requires what might seem to be a digression into some details in two places that might not at first glance seem to be sensible locations for considering matters of identity, culture, movement, globalization, conflict or resistance. But precisely why they might not seem to be promising places is an implicit part of the argument in the rest of this paper concerning the widely taken for granted spatial assumptions about territory and identity, as well as environment, to which globalization is supposedly a challenge. It is about what has been obscured by the modern “disparagement” of the conquered and dispossessed which has constructed boundaries that obscure many contemporary political connections.

Klooscap’s Mountain

In 1988 a mining company called “Kelly Rock Limited,” under the directorship of local businessman Dave MacKenna, proposed to mine large quantities of aggregate for road building from a coastal site on “Kelly’s Mountain” in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. The plan involved loading the crushed rock into large freighters docked on site for direct shipment to ports on the east

¹⁷ “Statement of the International People’s Tribunal on Human Rights and the Environment: Sustainable Development in the Context of Globalization” *Alternatives* (Vol. 23. No. 1. 1998), pp. 109-146.

¹⁸ B.R. Johnston, (ed.) *Who Pays the Price? The Sociocultural Context of Environmental Crisis* (Washington: Island Press, 1994).

¹⁹ J.D. Hill “Alienated Targets: Military Discourse and the Disempowerment of Indigenous Amazonian Peoples in Venezuela” *Identities* (Vol. 1. No. 1. 1994), pp. 7-34; David A. Martin “Building Heterotopia: Realism, Sovereignty, and Development in the Ecuadorian Amazon” *Alternatives* (Vol. 24. No. 1. 1999), pp. 59-81.

²⁰ Richard Howitt, John Connell and Philip Hirsch (eds) *Resources, Nations and Indigenous Peoples* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996); Winona Laduke *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Boston: South End, 1999).

²¹ See Simon Dalby and Fiona Mackenzie “Reconceptualizing Local Community: Environment, Identity and Threat” *Area* (Vol. 29. No. 2. 1997), pp. 99-108.

coast of North America as part of an increasingly “global” construction material trade. Local communities were divided between those people who supported the proposal on the basis of the promised one hundred jobs that it might provide in an area of high unemployment, and those opposed to the quarry because of the environmental disruptions they feared would damage the local fishery as well as the tourist trade in one of the most scenic areas of Nova Scotia.

The indigenous native Mi’kmaq population on the island were nearly entirely opposed to the quarry understanding it as one more in a series of appropriations of land and resources by the white population with little consideration of either native tradition, rights or opinion. The conflict over the proposed quarry generated a formal federal and provincial environmental review process that dragged on until late 1994 when it was terminated due to Kelly Rock Limited’s failure to complete their full technical assessment of the proposal. Probably the most dramatic moment in the controversy came as a result of the high profile intervention by members of the Mi’kmaq people in public meetings where some members of local bands appeared in camouflage clothes invoking native warrior identities and the confrontation between “warriors” and the Canadian military at Oka in Quebec some months previously.²² The Mi’kmaq “Sacred Mountain Society” members were offended that a quarry would be proposed on the mountain above one of their most sacred Mi’kmaq religious sites, “Klooscap’s Cave,” the resting place of the Mi’kmaqs’ religious figure “Klooscap.”

In the words of one local activist “The mountain and its cave is indeed sacred to all Mi’kmaq ... because of the prophecies that foretold the arrival of the Europeans, the prophecies that told that in time of extreme hardship our prophet would return and deliver us.”²³ The disruption of the prophet’s resting place in the cave is a matter of concern to many of the Mi’kmaq on “Unama’ki,” to use the Mi’kmaq name for the island, who are interested in reviving traditional cultural practices. Although the sometimes confrontational tactics of the “warriors” were not appreciated by many Mi’kmaq people, the sense that the mountain ought not to be disturbed was widespread.

The controversy has contributed to the revival of interest in traditional Mi’kmaq culture and to the assertion of Mi’kmaq identity on the political landscape of Cape Breton where it had been relatively invisible for decades.²⁴ This is illustrated in the words of one Mi’kmaq person, who, during a conversation about these matters corrected the author’s specification of the mountain in question as “Kelly’s Mountain” by stating bluntly: “Its called Klooscap’s mountain, we’ve renamed it.” The insistence on renaming the mountain to change its significance from one reflecting the history of colonization to one expressing Mi’kmaq heritage reflects both the revival of indigenous traditions and the insistence on the right of the Mi’kmaq to specify the cultural terrain of Unama’ki.²⁵ Given the historic difficulties with alcohol among the Mi’kmaq population since European colonization, the naming of the mountain after an illusive “moonshiner” (illegal

²² Wayne Grady “From Mountain to Molehill” Harrowsmith Jan/Feb 1991. The controversy got national media exposure in Canada. See for instance “The Fight over Kelly’s Mountain” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Land and Sea TV programme, 29 October, 1990; John Spear “Battle rages over Mountain” Toronto Star 20 June 1991, p. 21; Kevin Cox “A prophet’s last dwelling place” Globe and Mail 9 March 1993, p. A1, 2.

²³ Field research interview 1997. The spelling of “Klooscap” is not consistently rendered in English; sometimes it appears as Kluscap and also as Glooscap.

²⁴ Mi’kmaq is frequently spelled Micmac and sometimes Mi’kmaw, but the Mi’kmaq spelling is now more widely used. For an ethnography of the Mi’kmaq see Stephen A. Davis Mi’kmaq (Halifax: Nimbus, 1997).

²⁵ But another Mi’kmaq person, interviewed in 1998, had a different suggestion in terms of renaming the mountain. “No, I don’t think it should be named Kluscap Mountain. It should be named Mawe’nu, Kluscap’s grandmother. The rock that symbolized Mawe’nu was destroyed with the construction of the Seal Island Bridge. The Mountain should be renamed in her honour.” This reflects the long term struggles over the cultural landscape and the simple fact that not all Mi’kmaq think alike on these issues.

alcohol distiller) named Kelly who lived on the mountain, was seen as a doubly insulting gesture by the white settlers. In the words of one interviewee: "Its ironic, they have stereotypes about Mi'kmaq people, one of them is that we are drunks. Yet they name our sacred site after a white drunk named Kelly."²⁶

Connections and Change

Cape Breton has been important to Europeans for centuries. The once rich fishing grounds off its coasts attracted European fishermen and made the control of the coastline and its port facilities a matter of contention between France and Britain through much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Mi'kmaq were involved all through this period as rivals for local resources, military protagonists and the object of various religious struggles. The battles over, and the eventual destruction of the major French port at Fort Louisbourg, attests to the importance of this region in the rivalries of European geopolitics as well as to the growth of power in the American colonies in the eighteenth century.

Following the final establishment of British control over both Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, and the subsequent incorporation of the island as part of Nova Scotia, European settlement was extended across the island. Many of the non-Mi'kmaq settlers on Unama'ki/Cape Breton came from Scotland. There is a long history of emigration, especially from the highlands and islands of Scotland. Some of the emigrants made their way to Cape Breton, where to this day the Scottish heritage is both a major tourist attraction and the site of considerable study and teaching of Gaelic language and music. Road name signs are sometimes posted in Gaelic rather than Mi'kmaq on parts of the Island, recording the appropriation of the land by Scots on both maps and the landscape.²⁷

Thus there was a very considerable irony when Sulien Herney, one of the leaders of the Mi'kmaq "Sacred Mountain Society," was invited by people on the Island of Harris in Scotland to give testimony to a public inquiry into a proposed "superquarry" on Harris.²⁸ Redlands Aggregate Limited proposed to construct a superquarry, very similar to the one proposed for Klooscap's mountain, which might disrupt fishing and tourism in an area where many of the Scots immigrants to Cape Breton, who had historically dispossessed the Mi'kmaq, came from in the nineteenth century. But Sulien Herney went to Scotland, and made quite an impression in the local media, not least because he took with him some native North American clothing that attracted the attention of Scottish photo-journalists.

Drawing parallels between the case of the Harris controversy over Redland's plans to quarry on Roineabhal and the Kelly Rock proposal to quarry on Klooscap's mountain, he requested the inquiry grant him permission to give verbal testimony and not provide a definitive written paper beyond some talking points. He pointed out that this was consistent with his oral cultural background the appropriate way for him to make his intervention in the proceedings. In establishing his credentials he noted that "In the history of the Mi'kmaq First Nation we have never been defeated in war. We never ceded our aboriginal rights that were handed down to us by the Creator."²⁹ This invocation of spirituality and the appropriateness of thinking about

²⁶ Field research interview 1998. Another interviewee had a further suggestion to reclaim an old name for the mountain: "Kelly was a drunken moonshine maker, it is an insult to us all to call Kluscap mountain after this person. The Mi'kmaq have always called it Kukmijnewimk, Grandmother's place."

²⁷ On this theme of mapping as the eradication of aboriginal identity see Shapiro *op cit*.

²⁸ Fiona Mackenzie "The Cheviot, The Stag ... and the White, White Rock?": Community, Identity and Environmental Threat on the Isle of Harris" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (Vol. 16. 1998), pp. 509-532.

²⁹ See Alastair McIntosh "Public Inquiry on the Proposed Harris Superquarry: Witness on the Theological Considerations Concerning Superquarrying and the Integrity of Creation" *Journal of Law and Religion* (Vol. 11), p. 785. Note however that the request to give verbal testimony was relayed from Nova Scotia to Scotland by email.

quarrying and environmental matters in these terms challenged both the “scientific” and utilitarian premises of the inquiry and powerfully called into question the appropriate technical “knowledges” defined as relevant to such discussions.

Sulien Herney also traveled to Sweden, and as a spokesperson for the First Nations’ Environmental Network at “Indigenous Forum ‘94” in Arvidsjaur, Sweden in August 1994, called on Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien to declare Klooscap’s Mountain a protected area.³⁰ His actions in building “international” connections to add to the political pressure to preserve the mountain suggest that the politics of local controversies cannot be adequately understood solely in terms of autonomous local politics, important though these remain in understanding environmental conflicts. Thus:

The mountain has to support the unity, of not only the Mi’kmaq population but also the world community, and that an awful lot of good has come out of that mountain. More human relations, healing, solidarity, union, unity has come out of that mountain than any of the gravel and granite that could be possibly shipped anywhere, more than any jobs that could have been created as a result of that superquarry. I think what the mountain has produced is something that can’t be bought. ... It produced a lot of pain, but it produced a lot of education, healing, tolerance, pride, spirituality and identity back into the people. So I don’t think any Dave MacKenna or any other company will ever be able to go to that mountain and attempt to make a superquarry out of it. I don’t think the world community will allow it.³¹

The specification of the world community here suggests that the local dimensions of the struggle are interconnected to the larger questions of environmental and indigenous struggles in other places. The assumption in this suggestion is that the quarry is now a matter of “international” concern given the networking activities of the activists and the connections developed between the local activists and indigenous and environmental activists elsewhere. Clearly local opposition to the consequences of actions designed to feed into global markets, for in this case, aggregate for road building, is complicated by the globalization of indigenous and environmental struggles through the growing networks that link local struggles to larger campaigns. But the specification of these as solely environmental struggles is always in danger of collapsing complicated cultural matters of identity into a catch-all category that eviscerates their rich politics.³²

Nogamuk or Environment?

The importance of understanding environment as an imposition on the cultural and political dimension of what was going on in Unama’ki at the time of the controversy over the Kelly Rock proposal is caught in the following conversation, about the larger context of the Mi’kmaq cultural revival, between one of the researchers (‘R’) and a Mi’kmaq interviewee (‘MI’):

MI: I think we are just returning back to our old teachings in the last few years. We’ve lost practically everything that is identifiable as being a Native person, including the care and the love of Creation. That was lost through the non-use of the Mi’kmaq language. When you use English and you talk about the environment you sort of separate yourself as “it” and “me”, when in our language it’s “us” and “we”. It’s the same thing. There’s no differentiation between the environment and humanity.

R: That’s very interesting. Could you give me any examples?

³⁰ Chris Hayes “Chretien urged to protect caves sacred to Mi’kmaq” Cape Breton Post 17 August, 1994.

³¹ Field research interview 1997.

³² Michael Watts, “Nature as Artifice and Artifact” in Bruce Braun and Noel Castree (eds) Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 243-268.

MI: All right. If I tell you, that tree over there, the hardwood tree? “See how beautiful it is? Look at the leaves on it. Are they beautiful or what?” Now that’s very uncomfortable for me to say in English. But if I really say it in Mi’kmaq and I translate it to what I’m saying in English: “See that tree over there? Isn’t she beautiful? Look at her leaves.” I would give it personality. I would give it a personal pronoun, I would recognize it by giving it a personal pronoun. And I indeed must respect it because there is no differentiation between her and I.

R: Is this related to the Mi’kmaq concept of Nogamuk?

MI: Nogamuk? Yes. We are all related.

R: We are all related.

MI: That’s the difference I think. When you use the Mi’kmaq language anyway, I’ve been speaking it all my life, the concepts of environment and conservation and all that stuff never were an issue until very recently. And once they became an issue they were easily found. I found them right away within the language. As to why ... the philosophical use of the language when you deal with Creation and you deal with everything around you. It was always there but it was never put to use.

The most important point for the discussion here is the clear implication that environment is a concept that is not part of the Mi’kmaq ontology. The distinction is not one that makes sense until the Mi’kmaq are directly engaging with the “modern” Canadian state over the themes of the degradation of their surroundings and their attempt to reassert control over the fishery and land that once directly supported them. The distinction is simply not one that makes cultural sense precisely because people, land, water and fish are not ontologically separate. The struggles are not therefore strictly “environmental” in the conventional sense of the word as used in scientific parlance and in many “environmental” political campaigns.

In dramatic contrast to the Mi’kmaq notion of Nogamuk (“we are all related”) the technocratic discourses of neo-liberalism are premised on a powerful distinction between environment and humanity, nature and civilization, that both extends the themes of terra nullius and the availability of nature as an external entity for the extraction of resources, and simultaneously perpetuates assumptions of a hostile nature in “need” of taming that feed back into the assumptions of the “need” for technological control. The assumptions of nature as external, in some ways threatening, especially when portrayed as a “jungle” and in need of taming suggests clearly that the environmental discourses that specify nature as dangerous or in need of management are cultural phenomena drawn from a distance.³³ They are modern modes of knowing that conceptually break down places and cultures to reduce them to component resources that can be appropriated.³⁴ The partial reversal of these discourses, where the environment is represented as something that needs to be protected, usually maintains the crucial ontological premises of the argument, and hence can miss the “cultural” dimensions in contention. Crucially the boundary between humanity and nature structures these understandings.

Most of these discourses can be understood as urban modes of power/knowledge that specify matters beyond the urban habitats of the scientists and government functionaries who invoke such knowledges in the processes of project appraisal and policy deliberation. The culture that can know the world in these terms is a culture of consumption and one that is based

³³ Post-colonial societies are no exception to this generalization as the case of Malaysia shows. See Maureen Sioh “Authorizing the Malaysian Rainforest: Configuring Space, Contesting Claims and Conquering Imaginaries” Ecumene (Vol. 5. No. 2. 1998), pp. 144-166.

³⁴ Alf Hornborg “Environmentalism, Ethnicity and Sacred Places: Reflections on Modernity, Discourse and Power” Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology (Vol. 31. 1994). pp. 245-267.

on a long history of colonial power and resource appropriation.³⁵ In these terms environment is the residual category to urban understandings where nature has to be controlled, domesticated and tamed in the expansion of civilization. Understood in this geopolitical framework environmental insecurity suggests that contemporary changes can be understood as the disruptions resulting from the extending power of urban markets to appropriate resources, degrade ecosystems and displace peoples in rural areas in the process.³⁶

These linkages between globalization and environment are complex, but the point here is that it is precisely the technologies and cultural assumptions of modernization triumphing over environment that, when linked to the current global scope of economic activity, are at the root of the processes that have generated the discourses of global environmental insecurity in the first place. This much is perfectly obvious to many of the Mi'kmaq people living in Unama'ki, but it is not an ontological understanding that makes much sense to technocrats trying to promote quarry "development" to deal with all manner of social difficulties in Cape Breton.

HISTORY AND IDENTITY

In arguing against those who wished to preserve Klooscap's mountain, proponents of the Kelly Rock Quarry often suggested that opposition in the case of some (non Mi'kmaq) local environmentalists, not actually born in the area, or to use the evocative local phrasing, "come from aways" who were opposing the proposal, was a matter of "external" interference in local matters.³⁷ They also dismissed spiritual arguments from the Mi'kmaq implying that they were not to be taken seriously on a number of grounds. Both strategies to dismiss the arguments of opponents simultaneously employ a powerful "politics of forgetting" and a spatial "privileging of the local" that reflects the larger discursive strategies of disparagement in play elsewhere in discussions of contemporary modernization.

Invoking the identity of the insider and dismissing the opponents as outsiders is a highly ironic political claim. In making this rhetorical move the population descended from Scots settlers ignores its historic displacement of the Mi'kmaq population, and the subsequent centralization of the Mi'kmaq settlements into a few reserves which simultaneously deprived them of what limited access they had to resources in the area and increased their dependency on meager government support.³⁸ The politics of inside and outside, the attribution of authentic community to long established local families is a powerful and widely used political claim to legitimacy, but one that, given the modern human propensity to move, settle, exploit and move on again, requires historical amnesia of various forms to be effective. Here the aboriginal claims based on residency, caught in their use of the phrases "first peoples" and "first nations" are obviously most effective given their presence prior to European arrival. Nonetheless that in Cape Breton these can be ignored in a cultural specification of inclusion which very obviously excludes the Mi'kmaq, suggests both the power of forgetting and the cultural violence of the "inter-national" relations between white and Mi'kmaq.³⁹

The irony is especially rich in the case of the Scots population of Cape Breton which is descended from many people who were in turn displaced from the Highlands and Islands of

³⁵ Simon Dalby "Geopolitics and Global Security: Culture, Identity and the 'Pogo Syndrome' " in Ó Tuathail and Dalby *Op.cit.* pp. 295-313.

³⁶ Simon Dalby "Ecological Metaphors of Security: World Politics in the Biosphere" *Alternatives* (Vol. 23. No. 3. 1998), pp. 291-319.

³⁷ Field research interviews, 1997, 1998. A process also very evident in the controversy over the Redlands proposal in Harris. See Mackenzie *Op. cit.*

³⁸ Some of the stories of this Mi'kmaq history are collected in Rita Joe and Lesley Choyce (eds.) *The Mi'kmaq Anthology* (East Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia: Pottersfield Press, 1997).

³⁹ In the case of one letter to the editor of the local newspaper, the dismissal of the importance of Gluscap was specified in terms of the reassertion of the primacy of the "God of the Bible" as the owner of all the world. See "Mountains belong to biblical God" *Cape Breton Post* 7 April, 1994, p. 5.

Scotland in the historical processes of the “clearances.” Local crofters were dispossessed by the expansion of commercial agriculture, and especially the extension of sheep pastures, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The processes of dispossession and forced cultural change were accelerated after the defeat of the last Jacobite challenge to the British crown at the battle of Culloden in 1746. While it is easy to overly simplify the causes of the harsh plight of the highlanders in the face of growing English geopolitical power, the complex processes of what might well be termed “privatization” that encouraged emigration, were part of the processes of modernization and social change in Scotland that both strengthened the British state and facilitated the dramatic social transformations of the industrial revolution which were soon to follow elsewhere in Britain.⁴⁰ The clearances remain a powerful theme in contemporary understandings of highland identity and in the politics of Scottish nationalism that has emerged again recently.

The settlement of Cape Breton by displaced Scots settlers is only part of the story of Cape Breton. Like the rest of the Maritime areas of Canada the economic plight of many communities through the twentieth century was one aggravated by their peripheral location.⁴¹ The East coast of the island has been the site of coal mines and an ill-fated steel industry, both of which have left a legacy of environmental destruction and persisting problems of unemployment. Federal subsidies of the coal industry through the DEVCO corporation are gradually being withdrawn causing further political change on the island. Overfishing in the Atlantic waters has destroyed many of the fish stocks, the cod fishery being only the highest profile ecological disaster.⁴² Much of the conventional literature on the fate of Cape Breton tells this story of hardship and the lack of permanent prosperity, but usually does so by excluding the aboriginal histories.

But the Mi'kmaq have these other histories, ones of dispossession and the denial of prior agreements. Indeed the lost history of the Mi'kmaq is only now being rediscovered and used as the basis of claims to land, cultural recognition and access to fishing resources. Through a series of treaties and agreements with the French and British royalty and their agents in the “new world,” the grand council of the Mi'kmaq attempted to establish working arrangements with the various settlers and military forces in the larger area of what is now incorporated as the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.⁴³ The eighteenth century wars against the colonial powers and the nineteenth and twentieth century attempts to force Mi'kmaq people to live on reserves are usually not part of the conventional history of Nova Scotia. Even the new “Hector” museum in Pictou, commemorating the arrival in Nova Scotia of the sailing ship the Hector from Scotland, nearly completely excludes the Mi'kmaq story and the help that the local Mi'kmaq provided to ill equipped and prepared newcomers.⁴⁴ Late in 1999 the Canadian Supreme court upheld the rights of Mi'kmaq people to fish outside the normal fishing regulations in the Province. This once again caused clashes between non-native fishermen and Mi'kmaq people. That this was done on the basis of a 1760 treaty is of significance; clearly here is a

⁴⁰ The standard popular history of the clearances is John Prebble The Highland Clearances (London: Penguin, 1969). On the difficulties of historiography in this case see Murray Pittock The Myth of the Jacobite Clans (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

⁴¹ Stephen Royle “Only Thirty Minutes from the Great Circle Route: Canada’s Peripheral Atlantic Islands” Scottish Geographical Magazine (Vol. 109. No. 3. 1993), pp. 171-179.

⁴² Michael Harris Lament for an Ocean (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998).

⁴³ For a brief summary of the complicated history of the conflicts and treaties see Don Julien “The Micmac Story” in Joe and Choyce Op. cit. pp. 13-20. The treaties with the British Crown are anthologized in The Mi'kmaq Treaty Handbook (Sydney, Nova Scotia: Native Communications Society, 1987).

⁴⁴ The notable exception which the visitor to the museum nearly trips over while looking at the displays is the carved stone eagle presented to Sulien Herney by the people of Harris in recognition of his visit and testimony at the Redlands inquiry. Sulien Herney subsequently donated the carving to the museum in reciprocal recognition of the importance of the historical connections between Nova Scotia and Scotland.

matter that could be considered as international politics in some senses, although such disputes are usually considered to be a domestic matter within the modern state.⁴⁵

The early seventeenth century concordat worked out with the Catholic missionaries was nearly forgotten until recently, when scholarly research has traced its recognition of aboriginal dominium and the religious implications of the agreement between the Mi'kmaq and the Holy See.⁴⁶ The development of a specifically Mi'kmaq Catholicism, reflected in part in the discussion of the importance of "Creation" and Nogamuk in the interview discussed above, shows the long influence of cultural syncretism. The unhappy history of abuse and language obliteration in residential schools run by Catholic institutions in the twentieth century has also triggered a response in terms of demands that the church live up to very longstanding commitments. To judge such demands as outdated, or not relevant to the practical details of current grievances, is to miss the point of Mi'kmaq claims to respect and recognition as a people precisely on the basis that formal agreements between sovereign peoples ought to be upheld in principle. The political assertion of an identity as a people is fundamental to these arguments, not least precisely because the assimilative strategies of modern states have for so long operated on premises that deny such status in the first place.

The subsequent European treaty of Westphalia marks the growing emphasis of political authority to the emerging nation states in Europe with their claims to territorial sovereignty. But the concordat remains important to the Mi'kmaq in terms of defining their autonomy of religious and cultural identity, an autonomy that their activists are trying to reassert again. It is important too because it predates the treaty of Westphalia and the codification of modern assumptions of exclusive territorial sovereignty that are supposedly now challenged by processes of globalization. It is significant for the argument about globalization because it is a formulation of identity in non-territorial terms, between equal peoples on principles of culture, law and religion. This reinforces the contention that the contemporary liberal state-centered economic and cultural orthodoxies, as well as their related international relations knowledge practices of the twentieth century, often simply deny many important cultural and religious dimensions of existence.

There are three obvious implications of this for the discussion in this paper. First, the forgotten history is important because it reflects a common theme in contemporary claims to the novelty of globalization. But there is a half-millennial long connection across the Atlantic that deals with matters of intercultural relations and the use of resources and territory in Nova Scotia that is frequently forgotten precisely by the exclusion of the aboriginal dimension of Canadian history and the implicit assumptions of *terra nullius* that support European "rights" to the territory and resources. Second, culture and identity are also matters of concern to globalization theorists, but as the discussion of the concordat shows, such matters are far from new. The continuity of relations between the Mi'kmaq and Europeans suggests a history of cultural interchange that belies either the simple models of cultural homogenization that often appear in discussions of globalization, or their historical antecedents in colonial narratives of assimilation and "civilization." Third, understanding the relations between Mi'kmaq and Europeans in the longer historical context also suggests that the exploitation of resources, in the area which is now understood to be the maritime provinces of Canada, is a long standing matter and hence the arguments over who decides the fate of Klooscap's mountain are in this sense nothing new.

⁴⁵ John DeMont "Lobster Wars" *Macleans Magazine* (Vol 112. No. 41) 11 October, 1999. pp. 20-21. See in general Steven E. Silvern "Scales of Justice: Law, American Indian Treaty Rights and the Political Construction of Scale" *Political Geography* (Vol. 18. No. 6) 1999. pp. 639-668.

⁴⁶ James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson *The Mikmaq Concordat* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1997).

COLONIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

The important point about the appropriation of resources at a distance is that they were crucial to the rise of European power and wealth.⁴⁷ While the economies of some states may be remarkably open in some senses in the 1990s, clearly the interconnections of trading routes and the environmental despoliation that results is part of a long history of colonization that is simply continuing now at a somewhat more hectic pace, albeit once again without formal rule by European colonial authorities. Part of the colonization process involved the importation of European plants and animals to newly “discovered” territories where they have had dramatic effects especially in the last few centuries. The introduction of horses into the Americas and rabbits into Australia are only some of the more high profile animal introductions.⁴⁸ The widespread introduction of crops such as wheat has also had dramatic ecological results on grasslands in particular, while the impact of deforestation is widespread. These changes had cumulatively altered many ecosystems long prior to the acceleration of atmospheric change that is the focus of current attention on “global change.”

Understood in these terms the question of globalization and environment requires an analysis of the practices of ecological change and a consideration of both the subsistence and commercial export uses of these products. If mobile human populations have long brought their ecologies with them then the question of environmental change is tied into much of human history and the displacement of populations is also often a matter of ecological change. The pace and scale of these processes have obviously accelerated dramatically in the last half century spurred on by technological innovations including the green revolution and other innovations during the cold war.⁴⁹ Nonetheless the precise qualitative shift that can be designated as globalization needs some clarification. This may come in terms of the corporate concentration of grain production, the attempts to patent seed crops internationally, or the emergence of bio-technology innovations at a global scale, but at least in terms of environmental changes these are easily understood as extensions of earlier practices. So too alas are the contemporary pollution problems of the rapidly growing urban places in the “South.”

In a similar manner the current international trade in food, and in particular the import of numerous vegetables into Europe and North America, has a history that can easily be traced back to the repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain in the 1840s. But as the history of Cape Breton attests, the appropriation of food from afar by European fishing fleets predates this by centuries. It is also worth noting that the demand for fish as a foodstuff was in part driven by food restrictions by the Catholic church that limited the number of days that the faithful could eat meat. The cultural specification of resources and the impact of religion on ecology is clear here too. All this also reinforces the importance of understanding processes of cultural interaction and environmental change at the appropriate historical and geographic scale. It also suggests the importance of understanding processes of environmental appropriation as intrinsic to European expansion, not least because the economic patterns of resource extraction established in the colonial period have been the historical antecedents to both today’s global economy and the patterns of environmental destruction now designated global.

There are further implications of thinking through the connections between aboriginal experiences and the globalization of environmental concern. John Agnew suggests that the emergence of a global understanding, or of the globe as an object of knowledge in European cultures was to a substantial degree a consequence of the encounter with the “New World.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ J.M. Blaut *The Colonizer’s Model of the World* (New York: Guilford, 1993).

⁴⁸ Alfred Crosby *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁴⁹ John H. Perkins *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution : Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ John Agnew *Geopolitics: Revisioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998).

The intellectual frameworks available to explorers and conquerors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were fundamentally challenged by the presence of “new lands” and new peoples.⁵¹ Circum-navigations and the preliminary attempts by Europeans to appropriate land and wealth, and also to force the new realities into the categories of Christianity, a process reflected in the case of Unama’ki, by the Mi’kmaq concordat, were influential in the changing cosmologies of Europe and the emergence of geographical vision that produced the planet itself as an object of knowledge well before contemporary senses of globality became popular.

Ironically it can also be argued that some of the most powerful intellectual arguments in the modern European understandings of international politics, and the supposed limits of political community, are premised on misunderstanding the history and social structure of the conquered peoples of North America. Thomas Hobbes, whose Leviathan is widely cited in international relations literature concerning the supposed state of nature that exists between people without the benefits of sovereign government to regulate their affairs, premised some of these assumptions on the supposed situation of the North American population. As David Bedford and Thom Workman suggest, in their analysis of “The Great Law of Peace” of the Iroquoian Confederacy, this misunderstanding of the political arrangements of North America acts to legitimate a politics premised on assumptions of violence.⁵²

The traditional value placed on these treaty arrangements also shows the importance that contemporary native leaders place on asserting rights under existing treaties and regaining the crucial recognition that contemporary amnesiac specifications of politics so frequently forget. Again the concordat suggests the importance of these themes, not least because contemporary commentators are struggling to get the Catholic church to live up to various promises. But the importance of such cultural practices also undermines the ethnocentric assumptions of “primitive” peoples as consisting of isolated autonomous cultures with clear borders dividing them from civilized states.⁵³ Links between and among native peoples, and their often partly nomadic lifestyle, suggest that cultures may have had wide ranging differences, but assumptions of autonomous cultures now threatened by forces ‘outside’ their borders is an inadequate geographic formulation for understanding contemporary processes in all but the case of a few very isolated aboriginal peoples.

OPPOSITION, RESISTANCE AND THE “GLOBAL” ENVIRONMENT

These considerations return the discussion to the initial themes of this paper, the concept of a global environment as an object of political discourse. More specifically it requires some further comments on the implications of taking voices from the margins of the contemporary discussion seriously and asking questions about the political strategies of resisting environmental despoliation. Until recently the voices of indigenous peoples have been frequently marginalised from discussions of global environmental issues.⁵⁴ Their emergence into the discussion of global politics in the last decade, has been closely tied to questions of tropical deforestation and

⁵¹ Tzvetan Todorov The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

⁵² David Bedford and Thom Workman “The Great Law of Peace: Alternative Inter-Nation(al) Practices and the Iroquoian Confederacy” Alternatives (Vol. 22. No. 1. 1997), pp. 87-111.

⁵³ This is also the thrust of Matthew Sparke’s analysis of the mapping practices of the nation state in the context of the claims to native sovereignty elsewhere in Canada. See Matthew Sparke “A Map that Roared and an Original Atlas: Canada, Cartography, and the Narration of Nation” Annals of the Association of American Geographers (Vol. 88. No. 3. 1998), pp. 463-495.

⁵⁴ In the New York Times press coverage of the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 for instance, indigenous peoples were simply not discussed, although one photograph of a group of aboriginal people leaving a conference hall did make it into the pages of the American “newspaper of record.” See Simon Dalby “Reading Rio, Writing the World: The New York Times and the “Earth Summit” “ Political Geography (Vol. 15. No. 6&7. 1996), pp. 593-614.

cultural destruction. Political alliances with environmental organizations have not always worked well, but the specification of particular indigenous struggles as part of a “global” phenomena is clearly part of the process that has produced such events as the indigenous forum in Sweden that Sulien Herney attended in 1994. The operation of politics here pays little attention to the conventional assumption of relatively autonomous political communities within bounded spaces.

But consideration of the global environment also requires understanding these matters as questions of politics and identity. The “global” culture that can specify the planet as an object of political knowledge has done so as part of practices that have been enormously destructive, while simultaneously constructing a world of affluence literally unimaginable a few centuries earlier. But the irony of globalization as enhanced communication also suggests that the multiplicity of specific resistances have become aware of each other’s struggles in ways that are much more extensive than in earlier periods. As an increasing number of writers are commenting, the politics of globalization is about media, modernity and diasporas but also about the connections of solidarity between different specific political campaigns.⁵⁵ Discussing these possibilities of resisting “globalization from above” also forcibly suggests once again that the political imaginary of state-territorial politics is a major obstacle to serious political inquiries.⁵⁶

This theme of the connections between specific political struggles, ones that may have little in common, except that they resist “globalization from above,” raises some of the most difficult and interesting of contemporary political questions. There is a rich irony in “local” oppositions constituting a “global” movement. Indeed in many cases the politics of environmentalism can easily fall into the geopolitical trap of simply celebrating the local in the face of “global” threats. But this is a politics that in the context of “local” communities often simply reproduces the logic of state sovereignty which is, when linked to the practices of modernization and development, so often the rationale used by state agencies to appropriate the resources from the “local” community in the first place.⁵⁷

In Chiapas the enclosure of common lands and the marginalization of peasants and indigenous peoples has led to a political struggle using guerrilla warfare as a powerful theatrical device in a campaign waged sometimes more in the international media than in the South of Mexico.⁵⁸ Crucial to the arguments in the Zapatista case are practical strategies which do not directly seek to either overthrow or “capture” the Mexican state. Rather than accept the modern identity of Mexican, or accept that politics is what states do, the challenge by the Zapatistas is both a claim to cultural autonomy and a rejection of the assumed authority of the state to specify the terms of modern development. In doing so both the assumptions about globalization and the cultural constructions of the global are directly challenged while also being practically engaged.

In trying to deal with these difficulties Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash suggest an understanding of local claims in terms of autonomy in the face of what they theorize as “the global project” of the affluent and powerful social minority of humanity.⁵⁹ They recognize the irony of understanding the opposition to “global” forces by the human majority using the terms of the powerful and affluent minority. Indeed they insist that the only political strategies that make sense are precisely those that resist the temptations to reinterpret local struggles as a “global” project. Using the example of the co-optation of numerous environmental organizations in the Rio “Earth Summit” process, they argue that in claiming global space, local campaigns are

⁵⁵ Arjun Appadurai *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁵⁶ R.B.J. Walker *Social Movements/World Politics Millennium* (Vol. 23. No. 3. 1994), pp. 669-700.

⁵⁷ See Cara Stewart “Old Wine in Recycled Bottles” Paper for the annual meeting of the British International Studies Association, Leeds, December, 1997.

⁵⁸ Paul Routledge “Going Globale: Spatiality, Embodiment, and Mediation in the Zapatista Insurgency” in Ó Tuathail and Dalby *Op. cit.* pp. 240-260.

⁵⁹ Gustavo Esteva and Suri Prakesh *Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures* (London: Zed, 1998).

bound to lose by trying to operate on their enemies' terrain. Advocating a "pluriversal" strategy of radical pluralism which draws on many of the themes in the post-development literature their stance suggests the possibilities of numerous strategies to resist "the global project."⁶⁰

But the difficulties of clearly formulating such discussions suggest that they are caught up in the ironies of the modern geographical presuppositions of politics. Not least of the difficulties with these arguments is the long running debate about invoking sovereignty as a political strategy for native peoples in Canada, given the spatial precepts and territorial assumptions now normally associated with the concept.⁶¹ By challenging the taken for granted spatializations of contemporary social understandings cultural claims to autonomy, but not separation, and respect as people regardless of territory, are important to reimagining politics and identity. Formulated in these terms, sensitive to the implied spatialities in claims to autonomy, it might be possible to theorize these political movements of opposition in ways that usefully extend and modify Thom Kuehls' arguments about ecopolitics connected to a spatial understanding of governmentality.⁶² But to do so suggests an extension of the argument beyond Kuehl's arguments about species to more integrated understandings of ecology, as well as challenging the residual geographical constraints of metaphors of political space and protected areas by focusing on connections and distant consequences of local actions.

As the example of Unama'ki once again suggests, interconnections are not new, although the speed of many of them has accelerated in ways that suggest novelty. Indigenous peoples' networks of opposition are only partly a "new" deterritorialized politics. Might they be better understood as an extension of ancient native traditions of cooperation, treaty making and travel. Looking at indigenous struggles in these terms, coupled to the existence of such agreements as the Mi'kmaq concordat, also helps in the task of challenging the persistence of state territorial understandings and the attribution of fundamental differences to geographic areas. It also puts the claims that "the world community" wouldn't allow mining on Klooscap's mountain, in the Mi'kmaq interview transcript discussed above, into a perspective of historical continuity. This politics emphasizes the importance of understanding both historical and contemporary identities as more than struggles defined in terms only of class, gender, nationalism and state citizenship on one hand, and as about much more than interstate relations and conventional boundary practices on the other.

ENVIRONMENTAL GEOPOLITICS

The grassroots reactions to modern projects suggest the limits of the industrial identity and the necessity of understanding politics as about something more than states, boundaries and jurisdictions. Resistance is about the politicization of what is usually represented as a technical matter, a matter that is often especially clear given the environmental discourses in play in discussions of "development." It is also about challenging the violence and disruptions of the culture of consumption that is premised on just that, consuming, rather than sustaining. Working out the alternatives at a local level suggests a politics very different from that of state bargaining at international conferences and the other themes that are central to international relations.⁶³ Instead people and empowerment are substituted for abstract analyses of population. Above all the critical historical analysis of globalization suggests the necessity of understanding the

⁶⁰ Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (eds) *The Post-Development Reader* (London: Zed, 1997).

⁶¹ See for instance Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long "Tribal Traditions and European-Western Political Ideologies: The Dilemma of Canada's Native Indians" in Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long (eds) *The Quest for Justice: Aboriginal Rights and Aboriginal Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 333-346.

⁶² Kuehls *op. cit.*

⁶³ Eric Laferriere and Peter J. Stoett *International Relations Theory and Ecological Thought: Towards a Synthesis* (London: Routledge, 1999).

processes of modernization as disruptive, and individual modern consumer identities, whose actions endanger the “global,” as premised in part on the appropriation of distant resources.

The argument that follows from linking this critique of conventional metageographies and the arguments about postmodern grassroots is not one that necessarily denies the importance of engaging in activities of “global civil society” or engaging in political coalitions to address some of the particular facets of globalization.⁶⁴ But the “postmodern grassroots” argument does suggest the limitations to such thinking when premised on the universal claims of liberal subjectivities and the instrumental understandings of politics. In this sense as a strategy of resistance, the refusal of the category of the global is not an abrogation of political responsibility, but rather an attempt to reimagine politics without a collapse into the modern assumptions of liberal autonomous individuals with infinite “needs” and burgeoning rights to everything.⁶⁵ The Mi’kmaq refusal to consider Klooscap’s mountain as a source of aggregate and their insistence on specifying it in terms of a religious site emphasizes the important politics of ontology in challenging the rationality of liberal economic identities.

The difficulty of understanding politics and identity in these terms suggests either that they are incoherent romanticism, or perhaps, viewed in terms of an inter-cultural encounter, they reveal just how hegemonic the modern geopolitical vision of a “global” world has become. Pushed a little further in terms of the point made above about the Great Law of Peace, such considerations may lead to the possibilities of alternative ways of living premised on mutually agreed constraints on living and livelihood. But these are probably only imaginable once the premises of autonomous subjectivity, and the related assumptions of “naturally” occurring differences between places and “their” cultures, have been replaced by a more complex geographical imagination that understands the flows and interconnections, and the tremendous variation in access to and consequences of them, as more important than the artificial spatial identities of the modern geopolitical imagination.⁶⁶ This de-colonization of the geographical imagination is not going to be easy, but its necessity seems indisputable if non-modern cultures are to make some recognized contribution to shaping ongoing “global” social processes.

Neither is there any guarantee that indigenous cosmologies necessarily will provide environmentally sustainable modes of existence.⁶⁷ The lack of objectification implicit in the absence of an equivalent concept to “environment” in Mi’kmaq does not necessarily imply that given control over the environment of Unama’ki the Mi’kmaq could rebuild a rich ecology in the region. On the other hand, and this is probably the more compelling argument, the white population with its technocratic administrative apparatus of “resource management” hasn’t exactly a good track record of resource stewardship. In part, of course, the difficulties would be

⁶⁴ See for instance Fred Gale “Constructing Global Civil Society Actors: An Anatomy of the Environmental Coalition Contesting the Tropical Timber Trade Regime” *Global Society* (Vol. 12. No. 3. 1998), pp. 343-361.

⁶⁵ Tim Luke *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ Doreen Massey, “Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place” in J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner (eds) *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 59-69.

⁶⁷ This discussion is complicated by widespread assumptions of a “pristine” nature in North America prior to Columbus. See William Denevan “The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Vol. 82. No. 3. 1992), pp. 369-385. A recent overview of these issues is in Shepard Krech *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999). Whatever conclusions are drawn from this discussion of the scale of environmental influence, the suggestion that past practice, whatever its record, is likely to be a good indicator of future performance should native peoples get enough autonomy to take charge of resource management in their territories, is not necessarily very helpful given the massive disruptions of both ecology and culture in the last few centuries.

what they have always been when attempting to conserve a dynamic “nature” that is interconnected by organizing matters in territorially defined exclusive units.⁶⁸ While the case can be made that as an island Unama’ki is a better case than most for trying such experiments, probably the lesson to be learned from the ongoing controversies about native fishing and other resource disputes is the necessity of considering jurisdictions at a variety of scales, and the impossibility of resolving these difficulties at any single territorial scale of administration. How a politics of ecological connection might work practically as a preferable alternative to one of bounded spaces and autonomous subjectivities remains a major task for critical scholars.

While the possibilities of a post-sovereign and post-territorial politics may not be very obvious at present, at least part of the struggle to think these ideas through may be coming from the meeting of indigenous cosmologies with claims to global danger.⁶⁹ The modern understanding of a single globe is not necessarily linked to a scientific and managerial mentality which sees it as a detached object that can be colonized. It is also part of a broad “ecological” discourse that sees humanity as part of a vulnerable biosphere, a formulation that of course also draws from aboriginal ideas expressed in the Mi’kmaq case as “nogamuk.” The unlikely “environmental coalitions” that cross boundaries, epitomized by Sulien Herney’s journey to Scotland, are an important part of challenging the premises of sovereign spaces that facilitate colonial control. Indeed, thinking about how difficult it is to accommodate his actions in the conventional understandings of international relations only emphasizes the point. While similar dimensions of globalization are frequently understood in discussions of urban diasporas in global cities, the important point here is that connections and political linkages also operate in terms of activist politics related to indigenous peoples and environments.⁷⁰

The “global” problems of ozone holes and climate change are global in only some senses and caused directly by only part of humanity. Challenging the formulations of boundaries between nature and culture will inevitably be tied to unraveling the importance of crossing state boundaries as well as borders between peoples. Local environmental struggles are frequently about matters of global markets. Despite the obvious acceleration of processes of degradation in the last few decades, the disruptions of “environmental space” caused by “Northern” consumption have specific geographies with a much longer history than the recent claims to environmental novelty or the conventional state based assumptions of international relations thinking encompass.

The overarching conclusion to be drawn from this discussion of borders, culture, resistance and environment is that many of the limitations to the modern political and conceptual imagination are related to the limited spatial vocabularies available. “The very dynamics that drive transversal dissent unfold in the cross-flows and interstices of global life, in the gray zones that lie unexplored along the lines of geopolitically perceived necessity.”⁷¹ Borders there may be, but their invocation as ontological categories severely limits the conceptual apparatus available for rethinking pressing matters of politics on an endangered planet.

⁶⁸ See Daniel Botkin Dischordant Harmonies: A New Ecology of the Twenty First Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁶⁹ Franke Wilmer “Taking Indigenous Critiques Seriously: the Enemy ‘R’ Us” in Karen T. Litfin (ed.) The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998, pp. 55-78.

⁷⁰ Appadurai, Modernities at Large; Michael Peter Smith “Can You Imagine? Transnational Migration and the Globalizaion of Grassroots Politics” Social Text (39, Summer 1994), pp. 15-33.

⁷¹ Roland Bleiker Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000, p. 274.