Global Environment/Local Culture: Metageographies Of Post-Colonial Resistance

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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.”

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

Global Environment And Critical Geopolitics Prominent among 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 behaviours by corporations acting beyond the control of any single state government. 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. Destruction of rainforests has been linked directly to campaigns to protect Aboriginal peoples. Understanding forest destruction as a global process, especially because of the transnational 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.5

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, Indigenous peoples and sympathetic social scientists have in conceptualizing the appropriate political responses to these “environmental” concerns suggests that the geographical categories used to understand these processes need much more critical scrutiny.6 Such territorial assumptions and explicit formulations of exclusionary spaces even haunt works such as Thom Kuehls’ radical account of the possibility of ecopolitical resistance.7 Here, geopolitical forms of governmentality and specifically assumptions of societies in particular spaces reassert themselves in the concluding pages of Kuehls’ book when he tries to suggest alternative arrangements to the hegemonic practices. This happens despite his very careful and thoughtful engagement with the spatial assumptions implicit in Locke’s notions of property and law. Such difficulties suggest that much environmentalist analysis remains caught within the spatial imaginary of the contemporary social sciences described by Gupta and Ferguson in the epigraph 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. To grapple with these difficulties I have borrowed the term metageography, understood as the “spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world,” from the work of Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen. 8 Such a critique is also one of the purposes of the growing literature in critical geopolitics which examines how such “geopolitical reasoning,” that is the practices by which the world is imagined and divided, have important political effects.9 These critical readings of the taken for granted modern political categories supplement other analyses of the ways in which international relations in particular, and social sciences more generally, have relied on modern assumptions of politics to silence the violence involved in the European rise to dominance. 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.\textsuperscript{10}

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 interests.\textsuperscript{11} Often victims of legal doctrines of “\textit{terra nullius},” based on Lockean 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.\textsuperscript{12} 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.\textsuperscript{13} 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 sometimes 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.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Geographies Of Resistance} The Aboriginal struggles over access to resources and the demands for 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. The contemporary processes whereby Indigenous peoples struggle to reassert both their cultural practices, 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. 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 is coming from the meeting of Indigenous cosmologies with claims to global danger.\textsuperscript{15}

To explicate these themes using a case study from a current research project on questions of community and identity related to environmental controversies, requires what might seem to be a digression into some empirical 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.\textsuperscript{16} But precisely why they might not seem to be promising places for such analyses is an implicit part of the argument in the rest of this paper concerning the widely taken for granted metageographies of territory and identity, as well as environment, to which globalization is supposedly a challenge. The paper suggests that these geographical modes of reasoning, which have constructed boundaries that obscure many contemporary political connections, are important to understanding the modern processes of “disappearance” of conquered and dispossessed peoples. Resistance requires, as the rest of the paper suggests, among many other social practices, a direct confrontation with this modern geopolitical reasoning.

**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 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 Mi’kmaw 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'kmak people in public meetings where some people from 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. The Mi'kmak “Sacred Mountain Society” members were offended that a quarry would be proposed on the mountain above one of their most sacred Mi'kmak sites, “Klooscap’s Cave,” the resting place of the Mi'kmaq’s culture hero Klooscap.

In the words of one local activist, “The mountain and its cave is indeed sacred to all Mi'kmak ... because of the prophecies that foretold the arrival of the Europeans, the prophecies that told that in time of extreme hardship our culture hero would return and deliver us.” The disruption of the culture hero's resting place in the cave is a matter of concern to many of the Mi'kmak on Unama'ki (the Mi'kmak 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'kmak people, the sense that the mountain ought not to be disturbed was widespread. This was also linked to a widespread assumption that whatever jobs the quarry might generate would not go to Mi'kmak people.

The controversy has contributed to the revival of interest in traditional Mi'kmak cultural expression and to the assertion of Mi'kmak identity on the political landscape of Cape Breton where it had been relatively invisible for decades. This is illustrated in the words of one Mi'kmak 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 “It's 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. Given the historic difficulties with alcohol among the Mi'kmaq population since European colonization, the naming of the mountain after an elusive moonshiner (illegal 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: “It's 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.”

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.
Thus there was a very considerable irony when Sulian 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. 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 Sulian 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 and hence 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.” This invocation of spirituality and the appropriateness of thinking about 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.

Sulian Herney also travelled 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. 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 been 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.26

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.27 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.28

**Nogamuk or Environment?** The importance of understanding the category of environment as an imposition on the cultural and political dimensions 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 iden-
tifiable 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?

**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. 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, as they are in Lockean formulations of property and resources. 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 discourses of Lockean liberalism
are premised on a powerful distinction between environment
and humanity, nature and civilization, one that both extends
the themes of terra nullius and the availability of nature as an
external entity for the extraction of resources, and simultane-
ously perpetuates assumptions of a hostile nature in “need”
of taming that feed back into the assumptions of the “need”
for technological control.29 These are modern modes of
knowing that conceptually break down places and cultures to
reduce them to component resources that can be appropriat-
ed.30 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” dimen-
sions in contention. Crucially, the boundary between human-
ity and nature structures these understandings.31

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
on a long history of colonial power and resource appropria-
tion.32 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 under-
stood 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.33

These linkages between globalization and environment
are complex, but the point here is that it is precisely the tech-
nologies and cultural assumptions of modernization triumph-
ing 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 onological 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 away" who were opposing the proposal, was a matter of "external" interference in local matters. 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. 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.
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 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 unprepared newcomers. Late in 1999, the Canadian Supreme court upheld the rights of Mi’kmaq people to fish outside the normal fishing regulations in the Province. That this was done on the basis of a 1760 treaty is of significance; clearly here is a 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. This court ruling once again caused clashes between non-Native fishermen and Mi’kmaq people.

The early seventeenth century Concordat worked out with the Catholic missionaries was nearly forgotten until recently, when scholarly research traced its recognition of Aboriginal dominium and the spiritual implications of the agreement between the Mi’kmaq and the Holy See. 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 exercised by 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 social science knowledge practices of the twentieth century, often simply denied many important cultural and spiritual 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.

**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.\(^{45}\) While the economies of some states may be remarkably open in some senses at the beginning of the twenty first century, 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.\(^{46}\) 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, and undercut many traditional subsistence ecologies that are integral to Aboriginal material cultures, long prior to the widespread use of carbon fuels 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.\(^{47}\) 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.\(^{48}\) 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, 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.” 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. Circumnavigations 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 or North America acts to legitimate a politics premised on assumptions of violence.51

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.52 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

Until recently the voices of Indigenous peoples have been frequently marginalized from discussions of global environmental issues. Their emergence into the discussion of global politics in the last decade, has been closely tied to questions of tropical deforestation and cultural destruction. Political alliances with environmental organizations have not always worked well, but the specification of particular Indigenous struggles as part of a “global” phenomenon is clearly part of the process that has produced such events as the Indigenous forum in Sweden that Sulian 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. 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.

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.\textsuperscript{56}

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.\textsuperscript{57} 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.\textsuperscript{58} 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 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.”\textsuperscript{59}

But the difficulties of clearly formulating such discussions suggest that they are caught up in the ironies of the metaphysics of modern politics. Not least of the difficulties with these arguments is the long running discussion 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. 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. But to do so suggests an extension of the argument beyond Kuehls’ arguments about species to more integrated understandings of ecology, as well as challenging the geographical specification 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” deterriorialized 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. Thus resis-
stance 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." This also implies that resistance also has to challenge the violence and disruptions of the global culture of consumption. 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 how the academic literature in international relations usually presents such matters. 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 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. 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 re-imagine politics without a collapse into the modern assumptions of liberal autonomous individuals with infinite "needs" and burgeoning rights to everything. The Mi'kmaq refusal to consider Klooscap's mountain as a source of aggregate and their insistence on specifying it in terms of a spiritual 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.65 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.66 The reinvention of modes of cultural expression in the revival of cultural traditions, and the insistence that these be taken seriously in gaining political recognition of the historical violence and amnesia of the past, does not necessarily suggest the possibility of benign “environmental” governance in radically different economic circumstances. The lack of objectification implicit in the absence of an equivalent concept to “environment” in Mi’kmaq language does not necessarily imply that given control over 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 what they have always been when attempting to conserve a dynamic “nature” that is interconnected by organizing matters in territorially defined exclusive units.67 While the case can be made that as an island Unama’ki is a better case than most for trying such experiments, and the Mi’kmaq have gone on to make ambitious plans for rethinking modes of use of resources on and around the island, 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.

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 Sulian 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. 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. “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.” Likewise, 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 most criticisms of globalization encompass.

The overarching conclusion to be drawn from this discussion of culture, resistance and environment is that many of the limitations to the modern political and conceptual imagination are directly related to the inadequate metageographies available. Both environmentalists and Aboriginal peoples deserve better from twenty first century social science.
Notes

I have incurred many intellectual and practical debts in writing this paper. 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 was 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 and to Susan Tudin for her work in Carleton’s library. My thanks also to colleagues and students in the Geography Departments at Syracuse University and at Queen’s University for the opportunity to present much earlier versions of some of the ideas in this paper at seminars in their departments. Finally thanks to Philip Mackintosh, Fred Judson, Thom Workman and Hélène Pellerin for their thoughtful criticisms of earlier drafts. The remaining errors and interpretive failings herein are my responsibility alone.

4. 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).
18. Field research interview (1997). The spelling of “Klooscap” is not consistently rendered in English; sometimes it appears as Kluscap and also as Glooscap.
19. 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).
20. 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.
21. 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.”
22. On this theme of mapping as the eradication of Aboriginal identity see Shapiro, *op cit*.
24. 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* 11, p. 785. Note however that the request to give verbal testimony was relayed from Nova Scotia to Scotland by email.
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29. Post-colonial societies have adopted this Lockean formulation too as for instance the case of Malaysia shows: See Maureen Sioh “Authorizing the Malaysian Rainforest: Configuring Space, Contesting Claims and Conquering Imaginaries” *Ecumene* 5/2 (1998).
34. Field research interviews, 1997, 1998. A process also very evident in the controversy over the Redlands proposal in Harris. See Mackenzie, *op.cit*.
35. 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).
36. 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.
41. The notable exception which the visitor to the museum nearly trips over while looking at the displays is the carved stone eagle presented to Sulian Herney by the people of Harris in recognition of his visit and testimony at the Redlands inquiry. Sulian Herney subsequently donated the carving to the museum in reciprocal recognition of the importance of the historical connections between Nova Scotia and Scotland.
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52. 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* 88/3 (1998).
61. Kuehls, *op. cit.*
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