

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IS POLITICAL: EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Mark Mysak, B.S., M.E.S.

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APPROVED:

Robert M. Figueroa, Major Professor
J. Baird Callicott, Committee Member and
Chair, Department of Philosophy and
Religion Studies

David M. Kaplan, Committee Member

Irene J. Klaver, Committee Member

James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the Robert
B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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The dissertation is a philosophical approach to politicizing place and space, or environments broadly construed, that is motivated by three questions. How can geography be employed to analyze the spatialities of environmental justice? How do spatial concepts inform understandings of environmentalism? And, how can geography help overcome social/political philosophy's redistribution-recognition debate in a way that accounts for the multiscalar dimensions of environmental justice?

Accordingly, the dissertation's objective is threefold. First, I develop a critical geography framework that explores the spatialities of environmental injustices as they pertain to economic marginalization across spaces of inequitable distribution, cultural subordination in places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public places of deliberation and policy. Place and space are relationally constituted by intricate networks of social relations, cultural practices, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes, and I contend that urban and natural environments are best represented as "places-in-space."

Second, I argue that spatial frameworks and environmental discourses interlock because conceptualizations of place and space affect how environments are perceived, serve as framing devices to identify environmental issues, and entail different solutions to problems. In the midst of demonstrating how the racialization of place upholds inequitable distributions of pollution burdens, I introduce notions of "social location" and "white privilege" to account for the conflicting agendas of the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement, and consequent accusations of discriminatory environmentalism.

Third, I outline a bivalent environmental justice theory that deals with the spatialities of environmental injustices. The theory synergizes distributive justice and the politics of social equality with recognition justice and the politics of identity and difference, therefore connecting cultural issues to a broader materialist analysis concerned with economic issues that extend across space. In doing so, I provide a justice framework that assesses critically the particularities of place and concurrently identifies commonalities to diverse social struggles, thus spatializing the geography of place-based political praxis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Environmental Justice in Context

There are multiple and conflicting narratives of environmentalism in North America, yet I suggest that its history can be understood as the concurrent evolution of two broad-based and heterogeneous movements. The dominant movement is epitomized by the mainstream environmental movement, concerned foremost with biodiversity preservation, protection of wilderness areas, natural resources management, sustainable energy, climate change, population control, and atmospheric, land and water pollution. Its history is often said to begin in the late 19th century when John Muir championed the preservation of pristine and undisturbed natural environments against Gifford Pinchot's utilitarian and managerial approach to conservation (Nash 1982). In the early 1960s, the publication of Rachel Carson's critique of the biochemical pesticides industry in *Silent Spring* reintroduced environmental issues to the forefront of public awareness. An effect was the federalization of environmentalism at the highest executive level through new national offices, namely the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Environment Canada (established in 1970 and 1971 respectively), and the legislation of federal acts, notably the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Another effect was the formation of professionalized environmental organizations, such as the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), that to this day exert considerable political leverage and are an adjunct to the environmental policy-making process.

At the same time, a movement concerned with environment-related social and economic inequities evolved in parallel, focused specifically on urban and industrial issues pertaining to

clean air and drinking water, waste disposal and disease prevention, quality housing and safe work environments. Some accounts trace its origin to the late 19th-early 20th century reformist movement as instantiated by Jane Addams and Alice Hamilton's social epidemiology research at Hull House in Chicago, and which later intersected with the 1960s Chicano (notably Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers), American Indian, and African American civil rights movements for social justice (Gottlieb 1993). For the latter, this environmentalism took the form of a movement against environmental racism as manifested in the disproportionate placement of environmental burdens, such as hazardous waste sites, toxic incinerators, polluting industries and landfills, in impoverished communities of color, a seminal case being the construction of a toxic waste dump to dispose of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Warren County, North Carolina, in 1982. In its contemporary form, this environmentalism is known as the environmental justice movement, encompassing a diversity of social movements, most prominently the anti-toxics, labor, civil rights, American Indian, radical scholars, environmental, and feminist movements (Cole and Foster 2001). What they share is a greater critique in the conviction that environmental problems are political issues that cannot be solved apart from social and economic justice, especially at the intersections of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and colonialism. They also share a transformative approach in the recognition that remedying environmental injustices requires challenging and ultimately transforming dominant social relations and institutional arrangements.

Scholarship in environmental justice has likewise evolved. Early research in the United States was concerned with the fair distribution of environmental burdens and goods across space. The focus of much attention was the debate pitting class against race: does class or race predominantly account for the disproportionate placement of pollution burdens in communities

of color? While some argued that the distribution pattern is caused by economic factors—notably issues of class—others argued that it is the result of cultural factors—notably racism. According to this latter view, race, rather than class, is the primary factor determining the location of environmental burdens, and this is due to the U.S. history of racial segregation and ongoing institutional or structural racism.¹ The implication is that focusing solely on equitable market distributions is insufficient. Rather, alleviating environmental injustices is also a matter of procedural justice pertaining to representation or participation: the inclusion of different groups in the public realm of environmental policy regarding subsequent distributions of environmental goods and burdens.²

More recent environmental justice scholarship has exploded the range of subject matter and areas of study. Whereas early environmental justice research privileged quantitative methods, such as census definitions and statistical data, in debates of class versus race, contemporary research is interdisciplinary, embracing a diversity of methodologies that inform

¹ Figueroa (2003, 32) argues that racism is institutionalized in at least three ways: “*structurally, habitually, and by perpetuating ongoing racist legacies* [emphasis in original].” Structural racism refers to concrete institutional arrangements, such as laws and social policies (e.g. racial residential zoning, Jim Crow laws, the Cerrell Report), that systematically disadvantage racial or ethnic groups because they are perceived as less deserving of opportunities and social goods. Habitual racism conjoins institutional and individual racism, occurring whenever people are so used to thinking and acting in customary racist ways that they are not even aware that their beliefs and actions have negative consequences for racial or ethnic groups (e.g. racist cultural patterns of valuation, prejudices, stereotypes). Lastly, the perpetuation of ongoing racist legacies refers to the normalization of historical discrimination, even when there are no immediate racist institutions or racist habitual acts. Historically, racist structural laws and policies socially disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups, and to this day, even though many of these laws and policies no longer exist, racist effects continue to be felt insofar as these groups are disproportionately poor, have less social status, perform devalued blue-collar work, and inhabit polluted environments.

For my purposes I use structural racism and institutional racism interchangeably throughout the dissertation. Therefore my use of structural racism encompasses Figueroa’s general notion of institutional racism and its three distinctions. This is consistent with Powell’s (2007, 43) definition of “structural racism” as “racist ideologies and practices embedded in structures and institutional arrangements.” The important point is that structural or institutional racism exists even when there is no singular action, prejudice, or intent to discriminate. This is because racist norms are infused in social institutions, thus producing racist effects in the absence of identifiable racist actors.

² A clarification is in order from the outset. Procedural justice may be instantiated in many ways, namely in terms of representation or participation. Therefore procedural justice is a broad concept encompassing both representation justice and participatory justice. I favor participatory justice, or what I will refer to as participatory parity, and the reasons will be given as the dissertation unfolds.

new questions, explanatory frameworks, and envisioned solutions. Some scholarship emphasizes that environmental justice requires not only distributive and procedural justice, but also recognition justice: recognizing the diversity of group identities and respecting their distinct cultural traditions, environmental practices, knowledge systems and values. Further, the theoretical diversity is exemplified in the “cultural turn” of nature rhetorics, exploring how discourses are hegemonic conceptual devices insofar as representations of nature and the identities of disenfranchised groups intersect, interlock, and reinforce each other to justify social domination and the exploitation of nonhuman nature. From this perspective, environmental justice requires challenging the legitimacy of dominant discourses and representational systems that culturally devalue specific groups and stigmatize the places they inhabit. Moreover, other research remains firmly embedded in the Marxist tradition of critical social theory as it stresses the materiality of environmental injustices, critiquing global socioeconomic and political institutions, relations, and processes that systematically produce and sustain environmental degradation and social oppression. From this perspective, environmental justice requires creating democratized, socially just, and ecologically sustainable structures of social organization and institutions of governance. In sum, contemporary environmental justice scholarship has produced an enriched understanding of the contextual character of environmental justice and its multilayered dimensions, uncovered the many ways through which environmental injustices are produced and experienced, adopted an increasingly global scope of analysis and perspective, and emphasized that solutions must be culturally sensitive and specific.

Interestingly, what the diversity of approaches to environmental justice share in common, I contend, is an intimate connection to the discipline of geography. The discursive, cultural, social, economic, political, and ecological dimensions of environmental justice are deeply

entangled with basic geographical concepts of place and space—terms whose meanings are contested, especially by critical geographers, environmental philosophers, and political ecologists—as it deals with society-environment relationships, multiscale spatial analyses of distributions of environmental goods and burdens, and mapping the discursive, political, and physical terrains wherein place-based and culturally-specific struggles are waged (Pulido 2002). At a basic level the relevance of geography for environmental justice has always been recognized. Early sociological research in environmental racism focused on Cartesian spaces of inequitable distribution in order to determine which groups disproportionately live in proximity to local pollution burdens such as cancer clusters (Walker 2009). And, later research expanded spatial analyses beyond simple localities to more complex globalities in order to account for inequitable distributions across global spaces, notably between industrialized and developing nations. Yet, I maintain that the myriad ways that environmental injustices are inherently intertwined with complex sociospatial dynamics connecting place/space and locality/globality has been insufficiently explored in the scholarship of environmental philosophy, including philosophical approaches to environmental justice.³ The multiple dimensions of environmental justice and geography interlock discursively, culturally, socially, economically, politically and ecologically, and for this reason there is a pressing need for theoretical research that excavates critically the landscape upon which they meet.

³ The relationships connecting place/space and locality/globality, and how these concepts are distinguished, will be articulated in chapter III. Anticipating misplaced criticisms, from the outset I point out that relationships and distinctions are not clear-cut and unequivocal; for instance, places are not necessarily defined in terms of locality, and spaces are not necessarily defined in terms of globality (although in my analysis often places are localized or localities are placialized, and spaces are globalized or globalities are spatialized). Rather, relationships and distinctions are dialectical because places/spaces and localities/globalities are produced and sustained by complex webs of cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows at various spatialities, while conversely affecting these webs. As such, I will argue that places and spaces (indeed all environments) are relationally constituted—instead of being Newtonian container-spaces—and thus emphasize that spatial dynamics are multiple, overlapping and shifting, and place/space and locality/globality distinctions blurred.

2. Objectives and Significance

The major problem addressed in the dissertation is the production of environmental injustices pertaining to inequitable distributions, cultural misrecognitions, and political exclusions at various spatialities. At this point a basic question poses itself. Why is theorizing geographical concepts of place and space important for environmental justice? First, it is important because at a basic level “[t]he notion of environmental justice is about place,” as Bill Lawson (2001, 51) says, and I add that it is also about space. Environmental justice is about place because environmental impacts are experienced by people in relationships with others within shared environments (in local community places), while also being about community mobilization and political engagement in response to environmental problems (in public places of political deliberation concerning environmental policy). It is also about place because the environmental identities of some cultural groups, namely African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Latinos and Hispanics, are devalued, and the stigmatized environments they inhabit are disproportionately polluted (places of misrecognition such as the inner-city and ethnic enclaves). Yet, environmental justice is about space because many environmental issues, such as climate change, ozone depletion, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and air and water pollution, transcend national borders and are often caused by global political-economic processes extending across space, differentially impacting spatially-distant places (spaces of inequitable distribution). Not only does a toxic waste incinerator, for example, impact the local community where it is located, but its construction is affected by the global capitalist system that must dispose waste by-products somewhere, most often in less economically developed regions where unemployment and poverty are common.

Second, theorizing geographical concepts is important because spatial frameworks affect the ways that urban and natural environments are perceived, are used as framing devices to define social and environmental issues, and entail different solutions to problems, including different understandings of sustainability and justice. Although almost everyone is in favor of justice and sustainability, it is not clear what we mean exactly by these terms. For instance, sustainability may refer to carrying capacity, population, consumption, ecological footprint, natural capital, global human impact, etc., and justice may be understood as distributive, procedural, participatory, recognition, reconciliation, restorative, etc.⁴ Regarding the latter, David Harvey (1996, 5) says that “[c]oncerns about social justice (and how to understand and operationalize foundational beliefs about that contested term)... intertwine with the question of how to understand foundational geographical concepts,” and for this reason justice and geography should not be treated or theorized independently. The broad implication is that we must comprehend how different spatial frameworks provide different understandings of the world and reference systems for situating ourselves and place in this world, and consequently condition our notions of social and ecological sustainability, and of social and environmental justice. To give one example, presupposing an absolute conception of space supports mainstream environmentalism’s goal of preserving pristine wilderness areas, undisturbed by human activities. A relational conception of space, in contrast, lends credence to the environmental justice movement’s depiction of the environment that includes urban environments, thus blurring the boundary separating nature and society. This example suggests how concepts of place and space are value-laden insofar as privileged groups map the discursive terrain that underlies and

⁴ Justice and sustainability are value-laden concepts, and for this reason many questions pose themselves. To name a few, what does justice entail? What should we be sustaining? Who is deserving of justice? For whom are we sustaining environments? What are the best means for ensuring justice? How do we achieve social and ecological sustainability? Can “development” be just or sustainable? And, are social justice and environmental sustainability compatible objectives? Or, as Dobson (2003) argues, are they most often conflicting goals?

supports some environmental platforms and subordinates others. In this way environmentalism is firmly embedded in webs of power relations, its discourses and representational systems contested, and therefore politicized through and through. A critical geography of environmental justice theorizes places, spaces, and environments in contexts, particularly the political context, and thus emphatically asserts that *the environmental is political!*⁵

There are two main questions driving the research project. First, how can geography be effectively integrated with environmental justice scholarship so as to understand the multiple spatialities of environmental injustices? Second, how can geography help synergize social/political philosophy's conflicting paradigms of justice—distribution and recognition—so as to develop an environmental justice framework that successfully identifies, challenges, and remedies environmental injustices at various spatial scales? Accordingly, the dissertation's primary objective is twofold. First, I develop a critical geography framework that explores the spatialities of environmental injustices as they relate to complex networks of social relations, cultural practices, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes which produce contingent and qualitatively distinct urban and natural environments. Simply put, this objective is concerned with theorizing the problematics at hand. Second, I outline a theory of bivalent environmental justice that critically evaluates and respects the particularities of place, at the same time as it identifies commonalities to different struggles, thus spatializing the geographical landscape of place-based political agency and praxis. In short, this objective is concerned with proposing solutions to the various problems discussed throughout the dissertation.

⁵ Figueroa provides this expression in his paper "The Environmental is Political: Identity, Heritage, and the Scope of Environmental Justice Paradigms," presented at the twelfth annual meeting of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy, Duquesne University at Pittsburgh, October 20, 2008.

The set of secondary objectives pertains to specific incarnations of environmental justice issues as they intersect with geographical concepts of place and space, thereby supporting the dissertation's twofold primary objective. These include (but are not limited to):

- 1) I demonstrate how modern science and the social contract presuppose a dualistic logic of identity and hegemonic representations of nature that legitimize social oppression and the exploitation of nonhuman nature (chapter II).
- 2) I argue that urban and natural environments are relationally constituted—by intricate sets of feelings, discourses, patterns of valuation, cultural practices, traditions, social relations, political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, and socioecological flows—rather than being absolute, therefore supporting a concept of “dialectical space” as “places-in-space” (chapter III).
- 3) I analyze critically the spatialities of environmental injustices in terms of places of misrecognition (cultural subordination), spaces of inequitable distribution (economic marginalization), and public places of deliberation and environmental policy (political exclusion), while also exposing the spatial tension pitting instrumental spaces against social spaces (chapters III and IV).
- 4) I examine how conceptualizations of place and space (with specific attention to the racialization of place) condition environmental discourses, representations, framing devices, political strategies, and proposed solutions, thereby accounting for the conflicting environmentalisms of the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement, and consequent accusations of discriminatory environmentalism (chapter IV).

- 5) I uncover how the spatial practices of everyday life can (re)appropriate instrumental spaces and transform them into social spaces that resist the colonization of place, with a detailed focus on the politics of place, identity, and difference (chapter V).
- 6) I develop a bivalent environmental justice framework that synergizes distributive justice and the politics of social equality with recognition justice and the politics of identity and difference, thus connecting cultural issues to a broad-based materialist analysis in a way that overcomes social/political philosophy's redistribution-recognition debate (chapter V).

As a whole, the dissertation can be understood as a philosophical approach to politicizing places, spaces, and environments in the goal of bridging a discourse between environmental justice, geography, and social/political philosophy, in the process critically mapping new domains of political struggles toward ecological sustainability and social justice.

The dissertation builds on existing environmental philosophy and environmental justice scholarship. Specifically, the critical geography framework endorses the ecofeminist thesis that all forms of domination (including the exploitation of nonhuman nature) are interconnected historically, conceptually and practically (Warren 2000), the social ecology contention that the root causes of environmental problems are socioeconomic and political in origin (Bookchin 1990a), and the environmental justice argument that environmental burdens are borne disproportionately by marginalized groups (Bullard 1993). Yet, the dissertation advances scholarly thought in environmental philosophy and philosophical approaches to environmental justice since in general both have paid insufficient attention to the relevance of geography, especially concepts of place and space. It is true that some environmental philosophers do indeed extensively theorize place and locality. To cite a few examples, while some efforts are directed

toward theorizing ecophenomenologies of place and Heideggerian ways of authentically dwelling and ecologically being-in-the-world (Brown and Toadvine 2003), others draw on postmodernism to develop bioregional narratives of place and community belonging (Cheney 1995), and still others follow the “cultural turn” of nature rhetorics to emphasize discursive constructions of local environments (Evans 2002). I revisit these trends in more depth in the dissertation, but for now I point out that in general such efforts theorize place and locality in abstraction from space and globality. This is to say that most environmental philosophies of place fail to consider the ways that global socioecological flows and political-economic processes extending across space intersect with local or place-based cultural practices, beliefs, discourses, traditions, knowledge systems, social relations, values and norms to dialectically produce—both materially and discursively—distinct places-in-space, including natural environments. The political ramification is significant: community—associated with place and locality—is divorced from political-economy—associated with space and globality—consequently failing to connect the cultural politics of identity and recognition justice to a broader materialist analysis concerned with the politics of social equality and distributive justice.

3. Methodology

The dissertation is a philosophical approach to environmental justice that is premised on the conviction that scholarship can make important contributions to political struggles for social justice and ecological sustainability in theory, praxis and policy. A few points of clarification are in order, however. In accord with much feminist epistemology, I emphasize that the dissertation develops a socially contextualized—hence situated and partial—theory of environmental justice, an explanatory account that is rooted in the Western philosophical tradition and reflects my

perspective as a North American, middle-class, heterosexual, educated, white male. Therefore I do not take it for granted that this philosophical framework is superior, wholly inclusive, and applicable cross-culturally because I recognize that different approaches—non-Western, grassroots activist, literary, spiritual, etc.—are valid and appropriate in particular contexts. As I argue throughout the dissertation, diversity, pluralism, and inclusivity are normative commitments which environmental justice and philosophy ought to embrace, and consequently there is not only one theory that is true and better than all others. That being said, I am not saying that all theoretical accounts are equally valid (i.e. philosophical relativism) because some accounts do indeed provide better—more thorough and comprehensive—social understandings or knowledges than others, however partial and incomplete these inevitably may be. To say that explanatory frameworks are situated and partial is simply to recognize that all accounts are value-laden—hence politicized as they are politically embedded in given social norms and institutional relations—and can therefore be challenged and contested across a range of different publics. Thus, the dissertation should be understood as the careful expression of my evolving perspective in the midst of ongoing conversations—I am speaking *with* others rather than *for* them—concerning the multilayered dimensions of environmental justice issues in the shared political quest for justice and sustainability.

In the process of developing a critical geography framework for environmental justice, I introduce or appropriate specific terms to construct my arguments. The ideas expressed by such terms will be defined and defended whenever they are encountered in the body of the dissertation, but an indication of the meaning of some of these, especially as they relate to methodology, is necessary at this point. Specifically, the dissertation is rooted in the tradition of critical social theory. In Nancy Fraser's (1991, 253) opinion "no one has yet improved on Marx's

1843 definition of Critical Theory as ‘the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age’,” thus clearly enunciating the political character of the theoretical task at hand. According to Iris Marion Young (2000, 10), the approach of critical social theory, broadly conceived, is “socially and historically situated normative analysis and argument” with regard to the social conditions under which individuals live, and a conscientious exploration of what social arrangements could or ought to be. Because critical theory is inherently normative—openly espousing commitments to emancipation, freedom, social equality, justice, human dignity, and moral worth—conceptual analysis is not only concerned with identifying and critiquing existing relationships of dominance in terms of their discursive, cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental dimensions, but is simultaneously committed and actively engaged in transforming these relations so as to institute social arrangements that are conducive to human flourishing. In this fashion I wholeheartedly adopt Marx’s (1978, 145) eleventh thesis of the “Theses on Feuerbach” that proclaims that in general “philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it [emphasis in original].”

Critical geography is firmly embedded in the tradition of critical social theory. Critical geographers develop conceptual analyses, explanatory models, and methodologies for understanding and critiquing inequitable power relations, neocolonial institutional arrangements, and political-economic processes that generate and sustain uneven spatial development and corresponding social injustices on the basis of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and so forth, at various spatialities (Harvey 1996). Of key importance is the concept of spatiality which I invoke throughout the dissertation. In short, I define spatiality in terms of the complex assemblage of individual-society relationships that interlock and coalesce to produce different types of spaces and places—e.g. instrumental spaces of distribution, commodified spaces of

consumption, social spaces of cultural reproduction, stigmatized places of misrecognition, public places of political deliberation, etc.—at multiple scales like households, neighborhoods, cities, regions, provinces, nation-states, and global arenas. The concept of spatiality thus stipulates that places and spaces are constituted by sets of social relations rather than being absolute, reflecting dominant relations of power and institutionalized social arrangements. For this reason much critical geography is centered on the social production of inequitable spatialities, uncovering how different places, spaces, and environments are contingently (re)produced by complex networks of social relations, institutions, and political-economic processes that conjoin spatially-distant places, privileging some localities and marginalizing others. At the same time, the approach of critical geography is inherently and openly normative as it holds the conviction that it is possible and desirable to transform the world's spaces into “better” places.

A question poses itself at the outset. What is the difference between political ecology, an established Marxist approach in the social sciences (e.g. in geography and anthropology), social ecology, a philosophically Marxist approach in environmental philosophy, and my description of critical geography? In brief, political ecology is a spatially-oriented discipline that examines how social, political, and economic factors account for environmental changes and problems at different spatial scales (Barnett et al. 2003), and social ecology is a transformation-oriented approach that explores how social oppression and the exploitation of nonhuman nature are caused by unjust and unsustainable socioeconomic relations and political institutions (Bookchin 1999). Although critical geography, political ecology, and social ecology share points in common, I argue that critical geography is the preferred framework for environmental justice for the following reasons.

First, most social ecology is Marxist philosophically—theorizing broad-based, abstract, and utopian visions of social transformation (e.g. decentralized confederations of eco-communities)—whereas political ecology is Marxist from a social science perspective—conducting applied and concrete empirical investigations to understand social and environmental issues (e.g. sustainable management practices). Social ecology and political ecology are thus mired in the institutionalization of the naturalistic fallacy in the form of is/ought, fact/value, or empirical/normative conceptual binaries. Jon Barnett et al. (2003) explain that, on the one hand, much political ecology is focused on empirical research, yet restrains from overtly espousing normative commitments, appealing to broad-based social transformation, and engaging in political activism. On the other hand, social ecology is inherently normative and transformative because scholars incorporate specific values and ideals into their theories in order to critique present social relations relative to visions of just and sustainable future societies. Critical geography, in contrast, is Marxist philosophically while being more empirically significant than social ecology, thus bridging the gap between the empirical and the normative. In accord with the tradition of critical social theory, critical geographers adopt norms through which they interpret the empirical details pertaining to the social and environmental conditions under which people live, thus deconstructing fact/value, is/ought, and empirical/normative distinctions in the process.

Second, while critical geography shares with social ecology a framework that is philosophically Marxist, they are different since much social ecology is radical in the traditional Marxist sense of class-based materialism, whereas I interpret critical geography as radical in its post-Marxist considerations of critical race, postcolonial, and feminist theory. Although social ecology is normative and oriented toward social transformation, a problem is that it tends to

privilege class and reduce other forms of domination to economic exploitation (or social hierarchies), a reductionistic framework that has encountered fierce criticisms from feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theorists (Young 1990a; Mohanty 1991; Pulido 1996). In addition, social ecology does not analyze spatialities and scalar differences to the same degree of sophistication as a critical geography approach that is grounded in both philosophy and social science empirical research.

I thus hold that critical geography is a valuable conceptual framework for environmental justice scholarship for three reasons. First, the dissertation explores the spatialities of environmental injustices through a philosophical lens in the tradition of critical social theory, and therefore it is necessary to adopt an approach that is normative and simultaneously pays careful attention to the empirical as it pertains to the production of concrete places, spaces, and environments. Second, critical geography and environmental justice are both post-Marxist in their focus on intersections of race, gender, and class oppression, a point substantiated by the observation that the environmental justice movement is predominantly comprised of peoples of color, women, and the working class. Third, critical geography spatializes environmental justice's grassroots, normative, and transformative approach with a theoretical analysis that relates social injustices and uneven geographical development to global socioeconomic relations, political institutions, and ecological processes extending across space. Conversely, environmental justice placializes critical geography with a political stance that respects cultural identities and differences, and strives for social transformation through grassroots activism. This is significant because it helps undermine place/space, local/global, and theory/practice dualisms. Critical geography and environmental justice are thus co-informative and complement one another.

Finally, I point out that the dissertation is philosophically pluralistic since it draws from both continental and analytical traditions, notably environmental justice, critical social theory (including critical geography, critical race, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives), environmental philosophy (namely ecofeminism and social ecology), social/political philosophy, phenomenology and hermeneutics, and philosophy of biology and ecology. And, although the dissertation constitutes a philosophical approach to environmental justice, it is interdisciplinary in scope as it borrows from diverse academic disciplines, especially human geography, cultural studies, political ecology, environmental studies, and an assortment of historic and contemporary case studies and examples.

4. Outline of Chapters

The second chapter, “Naturalizing Oppression: Nature and Constructions of Otherness,” is contextual in purpose as it develops basic concepts and overall serves as a point of departure for theorizing a critical geography of environmental justice. Specifically, the chapter’s objective is to reveal how some groups naturalize other groups to justify their oppression. The main premise is that social oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, etc., including the exploitation of nonhuman nature, intersect and reinforce each other. I suggest that this is because relationships of domination are construed upon a dualistic logic of identity, and I conceptualize these relationships in terms of a colonizing master subject who perceives himself as radically separate and superior to colonized others. Furthermore, the relationship between the master subject and the other maps onto modern science’s representations of natural objects. Modern science projects an a priori mathematical understanding onto nature depicted as inanimate and mindless matter, and such representations justify its exploitation for human ends.

Finally, I argue that the construction of naturalized others is reflected in social contract theory. Groups who are associated with nature, materiality, and the body are perceived as being incapable of meeting political liberalism's norm of disembodied impartiality in the public sphere, and as a consequence these groups are deprived of equal social status within the body politic.

The purpose of these explorations is to make clear that scientific and social contract discourses regarding representations of nature are never neutral. Rather, they are politicized through and through because they are used as conceptual tools of oppression against devalued groups who are naturalized. This discussion is important for two reasons. First, it underlies the dissertation's argument that the environmental is political insofar as environmental discourses uphold the social relations, cultural patterns of valuation, institutional arrangements, and political-economic processes that produce the different spatialities of environmental injustices. Second, it implies that not only depictions of nature, but also conceptualizations of place and space, broadly construed, are politically-laden and relevant to environmental justice scholarship.

An innovative feature of the dissertation is its emphasis on geography, and chapter III is accordingly titled "Politicizing Place and Space: Toward a Critical Geography of Environmental Justice." The chapter's purpose is to connect discursive issues of representation to a broad-based materialist analysis of social oppression and ecological degradation, thus outlining the theoretical framework for the critical geography of environmental justice the dissertation develops. The primary thesis is that places and spaces, such as natural and urban environments, are dialectically constituted—materially and discursively—by complex assemblages of social relations, cultural practices, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes which connect spatially-distant environments. This means that places, spaces, and environments are not pre-existing containers inside which relations, practices, flows, and processes occur, but are rather sets of

relations, practices, flows, and processes that contingently materialize themselves and which are discursively represented. In good dialectical fashion, I point out that places, spaces, and environments conversely affect the social relations, cultural practices, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes which together produced and sustain them. In the midst of this discussion I introduce a concept of “dialectical space” as “places-in-space” to emphasize the relational constitution of places, spaces, and environments. I also draw from phenomenology to distinguish place and space with reference to a person’s experiences, in the process theorizing a geography of the body and developing a concept of place-based identity.

Furthermore, in the third chapter I explore how economic globalization (i.e. neoliberalism or capitalist modernization) affects urban and natural environments, with specific attention to the spatial tension inherent in the dialectical constitution of places-in-space. Building on a Habermasian framework, I show how the instrumental spaces of the global political-economy are increasingly encroaching upon the places of everyday life, transforming them into commodified and homogeneous suburban spaces of consumption conducive to the mobility and accumulation of capital. At the same time, I argue that globalization impacts people differently. Whereas disenfranchised groups are “stuck in place,” global elites are able to transcend space and colonize spatially-distant environments, ultimately producing uneven sociospatial development and environmental injustices. I emphasize, however, that not only political-economic processes and its inequitable distributions across space, but also hegemonic cultural practices, patterns of valuation, discourses, norms and traditions embedded in place produce and sustain uneven geographical development and corresponding environmental injustices. Thus, the third chapter ends with a discussion of the spatialities of environmental injustices as they pertain to spaces of

inequitable distribution, places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public places of environmental policy.

In chapter III I argued that places, spaces, and environments are relationally constituted, and in chapter IV, “The Environmental is Political: Race, Place, and Contested Environmentalisms,” I constrict this analysis by focusing on the racialization of place. Building on the critical geography framework previously outlined, the chapter’s goal is to uncover how the racialization of urban and natural environments produces places of misrecognition that legitimize inequitable distributions of environmental burdens across space, and political exclusions from the public arenas of environmental debates. The main thesis is that racialized representations of polluted places, such as inner-city neighborhoods, and the stereotyped identities of minority groups inhabiting them intersect to socially constitute each other. This is concerning, however, insofar that discursive representations of place and identity have adverse livelihood effects, a point I develop in the context of the discriminatory politics of garbage disposal as substantiated in the empirical findings of the *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* (1987), *Toxic Wastes and Race Revisited* (1994), and *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007* (2007) reports on environmental racism. This analysis therefore investigates the many ways that environmental issues are social—hence political—problems that differentially impact groups and the places they inhabit.

Moreover, in chapter IV I introduce a concept of “social location” to account for the conflicting agendas of the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement. The social location of mainstream environmentalists—i.e. their privileged position within society’s social status order and institutional relations—affects how they perceive environments, identify and frame environmental issues, and what they deem solutions to

environmental problems. The concern, however, is that in general mainstream environmentalists are not aware that their privileged positionality conditions their wilderness agenda (which tends to suppress urban environmental issues), nor are they aware that they are racially privileged and that their discourses reflect this white privilege. The consequence is a subtle, albeit unintentional, form of institutional racism resulting in accusations of discriminatory environmentalism (Figueroa and Mills 2001). Accordingly, the chapter concludes by stipulating that environmental justice requires not only the fair distribution of environmental burdens across space (distributive justice) and greater political representation or participation in public places of environmental policy (procedural justice), but also requires identifying, challenging, and transforming hegemonic environmental discourses, especially racialized representations of environments that produce places of misrecognition (recognition justice).

Finally, the goal of chapter V, “The Politics of Place and Space: Exploring the Geography of Environmental Justice,” is to develop a bivalent environmental justice framework equipped to deal with the spatialities of environmental injustices—in terms of spaces of inequitable distribution, places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public places of deliberation—critically analyzed in chapters II through IV. The primary thesis is that a theory of bivalent environmental justice, combined with the singular, yet two-dimensional, norm of participatory parity, is the ideal philosophical framework for a spatialized politics of place that synergizes distributive justice and the politics of social equality with recognition justice and the politics of identity and difference, thus overcoming the redistribution-recognition debate. Specifically, I begin the chapter by observing how some groups are creating places of socialization that resist the colonization of place by global political-economic processes transcending space, while other groups are articulating a politics of place that fosters places of

recognition from where to celebrate cultural differences, cultivate empowered identities, and have their voices heard. These possibilities exist because places-in-space are produced and sustained by intricate assemblages of social relations, cultural practices, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes, while conversely producing and sustaining these relations, practices, flows and processes. This presents an emancipatory potential since transforming a place's spatial dynamics is concurrently to alter the cultural, social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics constituting that place.

The politics of place are prone to important criticisms, however. A notable problem is that the politics of place tends to abstract localities (and identities therein) from the global socioecological flows and political-economic processes that produce and sustain them, thus failing to grasp the dialectical dynamism of places-in-space. This is concerning to the extent that place-based identities are reified: repressing differences within groups, fostering exclusions between groups, and ultimately degenerating into regressive fragmentations. What is needed, then, is a spatialized politics of place that recognizes cultural identities and differences, and simultaneously identifies commonalities to distinct struggles in order to establish relations between groups. And, I argue that bivalent environmental justice is the ideal philosophical framework to this sociopolitical task. Whereas the recognition dimension of justice critically evaluates and respects only the particularities of place that are compatible with the politics of social equality, the distributive dimension of justice uncovers commonalities pertaining to the ways global political-economic processes similarly impact spatially-distant, place-based groups, thereby connecting cultural issues to a broader materialist analysis. In this way bivalent environmental justice stresses differences within some overarching unity, thus spatializing the landscape of place-based political agency and praxis. This is significant, I suggest, because it

leaves open the possibility that diverse social groups and movements may weave webs of relationships and forge coalitions toward an environmentalism of sociospatial transformation that travels from one place to another across space.

CHAPTER II

NATURALIZING OPPRESSION: NATURE AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF OTHERNESS

1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore how some groups naturalize other groups as a means of justifying social oppression. In the second section I draw on concepts developed by feminist, postmodernist, and postcolonial theorists to show how Western rationality manifests a dualistic logic of identity. I then argue that reason's dualistic structure underlies human relationships, and I conceptualize relations of dominance in terms of a colonizing master subject who construes himself as radically separate and superior to human and nonhuman others. I complement this analysis with ecofeminist arguments by Val Plumwood and Karen Warren to uncover how nature/culture value dualism is used to conceptually associate particular groups (women, peoples of color, gays and lesbians) with the body, materiality, and nature in order to legitimize their subordination. According to Warren (2000), this constitutes a logic of domination, and according to Plumwood (1993), entails the partnership of reason with domination.

In the third section I suggest that the dualistic logic of othering originates in Greek rationalism and is inherited by modern science's empiricism, ultimately justifying the exploitation of nonhuman nature for human ends. I argue that the relationship between the master subject and the other maps onto modern science's representations of natural objects. Specifically, natural entities are reduced to quantifiable objects-for-use since they are "forced" to conform to the master subject's projection of a priori mathematical-physical concepts. Projecting scientific concepts onto nature deprives nonhuman beings of intentionality and agency. The concern is that science reduces nonhumans to objects in order to use them, and this produces relations of domination.

Finally, in the fourth section I argue that the master subject's construction of naturalized others is reflected in social contract theory. I explore how both Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* postulate a hypothetical state-of-nature (or an original position) that marginalizes specific groups—women, peoples of color, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, among others—whose bodies, social roles, and traditional work mark them as being closer to nature. The consequence is that they are perceived as being unable to meet liberalism's norm of disembodied and impartial objectivity in the political public sphere. This is manifested in the way dominant groups are privileged, while naturalized groups are socially subordinated within the political process. The point is that discursive representations of devalued groups and nature intersect and reinforce each other, and negative images legitimize social relations and institutional arrangements that produce and sustain environmental injustices. This discussion is important because it underlies the dissertation's argument that the environmental is political.

2. The Master Subject's Logic of Domination

Members of the Frankfurt School argue that Western reason is an important conceptual instrument of domination. In contemporary society, rationality is applied to the ever more predictable, efficient, and orderly functioning of the labor process, economy, bureaucracy, science, and military-industrial complex. In general, Western reason is identified with instrumental reason, characteristically mechanistic, reductionistic, technocratic and analytical. Although precise details differ, Herbert Marcuse (1964), Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1972), and Jürgen Habermas (1987) respectively argue that instrumental rationality is used for the domination of external nature, as well as for the control and manipulation of social relations

and the domination of internal or human nature. Summarizing their views, Seyla Benhabib (1986, 162) says that instrumental reason generates processes of social rationalization in which “the apparatus of administrative and political domination extends into all spheres of social life.” The implications are startling: according to Marcuse (1964, 169), “[t]he web of domination has become the web of Reason itself.”¹ Deconstructing reason’s structure thus becomes an important emancipatory task. To this end, in what follows I show how Western rationality internalizes a dualistic logic of identity. I then argue that rationality’s dualistic structure underlies human relations of domination, and I conceptualize this relationship as one between a colonizing master subject and a colonized other.

i. Rationality and the Dualistic Logic of Identity

Plumwood (1993, 190) argues that “the deep structures of mastery are buried in the foundations of western intellectual frameworks and conceptual history. There is scarcely a subject or a topic which is not entwined in the knots of dualism these conceptual structures have created.” Plumwood is saying that the tradition of Western philosophy rests upon a foundation that manifests a “logic of identity” or “centric logic.” The breath of scholarship on this topic is vast, so I present only salient points that are relevant to this chapter’s goals. Suffice it to say, the history of Western philosophy is preoccupied with the search for some primordial ontological substance (or self-identical subject) that provides the epistemological foundation for reliable knowledge production. In the third section I trace the history of this quest from Platonic

¹ This conclusion led Marcuse (1964) and Adorno (1972)—and Horkheimer (1947; 1972) to a lesser extent—to abandon hope in the emancipatory potential of reason altogether. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas fine-tunes this analysis, distinguishing between instrumental reason and communicative reason. Whereas the systems (economic and bureaucratic institutions) colonize the lifeworld by unleashing instrumental processes of rationalization, objectification and reification, communicative reason fosters uncoerced intersubjectivity conducive to participatory democracy. Habermas’ point is that it is not reason wholesale that is colonizing, but rather success-oriented, strategic, instrumental rationality that results in domination.

rationalism to scientific empiricism, so for now I simply point out that René Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* exemplifies this search.² In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes argues that because he thinks he cannot doubt that he exists. Cartesian metaphysics rests on mind/body dualism, and the certainty that the self exists—the ontology of subjectivity or thinking subject—provides the foundation for a practical philosophy that becomes modern science. Postulating a primordial substance or self-identical subject manifests a logic of identity. Young (1990b, 303) explains that identity logic “seeks to understand the subject, the person, as a self-identical unity,” as evidenced in Descartes’ preoccupation “with the unity of consciousness and its immediate presence to itself.”

A careful analysis uncovers some assumptions and tendencies characterizing the logic of identity.³ Paraphrasing Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of what he calls logocentrism’s metaphysics of presence—Western philosophy’s quest for a rational language that transparently and accurately represents the world (its “presence”) to an observing subject—Young (1990b, 303) says that a symptom of identity logic is the obsession “to think things together in a unity, to formulate a representation of whole, a totality.” Thinking proceeds by ordering the flux of experience (particulars) in terms of concepts and categories, and therefore rationality is related to

the universal, the one principle, the law, covering the phenomena to be accounted for. Reason seeks essence, a single formula that classifies concrete particulars as inside or outside a category, something common to all things that belong in the category. The logic

² Another example is Marxism’s philosophy of the subject that represents history as the unfolding capacities of a universal collective subject—humanity—who creates himself through his own work activities (self-realization). The universal subject’s work will enable him to appropriate the forces of production, presently monopolized by the capitalist elite, in order to build a just society. In this way humanity’s work is transformative and history-shaping.

³ As Heidegger (1962) points out, Descartes’ *cogito* posits a self-identical “I” that presupposes the meaning of Being, and therefore he does not uncover the meaning of Being implicit in the concept of substantiality. Descartes neglects “the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or—more precisely—the *meaning of the Being of the ‘sum’* [emphasis in original]” (Heidegger 1962, §6, 46). Simply said, who is this “I” who thinks? Heidegger says that the Western tradition blindly presupposes Being, and therefore is not firmly grounded in a fundamental ontology. Consequently, his *Being and Time* expounds the thesis that an understanding of the meaning of Being—the *Seinsfrage*—is the most important task of philosophy.

of identity tends to conceptualize entities in terms of substance rather than process or relation; substance is the self-same entity that underlies change, that can be identified, counted, measured (Young 1990a, 98).

Nancy Hartsock (1990, 162), drawing from Nancy Jay, observes that this desire for order and stability is exemplified in formal logic's principle of identity ($S=S$), principle of non-contradiction ($S \neq \text{not-}S$), and principle of the excluded middle ($S/\text{not-}S$). The first principle simply says that if anything is S , it is necessarily S (self-same identity). The second principle says that it is impossible for something to be both S and $\text{not-}S$. And, the third principle states that something must be either S or $\text{not-}S$. Formal logic's principles are used to create self-identical substances, and these make universal knowledge possible because, like Platonic Forms, they are permanent, unchanging, and identified as the same over time.

Following Derrida, Michael Zimmerman (1994, 139-40) says that, “[a]lthough metaphysics explains difference in terms of a prior unity,” the prior unity, including the identity of the subject (the Cartesian self), “is never self-sufficient and stable, but always bound up with its other.” Zimmerman is saying that the self-identical substance (or Cartesian subject) does not exist a priori; rather, the primordial substance (or self-identical subject) needs some other thing against which to define itself in order to assert its self-same identity. The desire to produce a unified identity (or closed totality) produces duality and not unity—an inside and an outside—since the self-identical substance ensures its “purity” by excluding the “impure” particulars that threaten contamination. Solid barriers are constructed to ensure pure essences, resulting in inside/outside and self/other dualisms. In accord with the principles of the excluded middle ($S/\text{not-}S$) and non-contradiction ($S \neq \text{not-}S$), particulars are either part of the self-identical substance ($S=S$), or they are excluded altogether. In this way logical thinking abstracts by focusing on selective aspects of phenomena and excluding other aspects, and consequently

differences are conceptualized as being absolute, implying radical otherness.⁴ I emphasize, however, that a substance's identity—its inside—is made possible by relations to its outside or background, and therefore relations are ontologically primary (contra the atomistic logic of self-identity). This is because “[a]ny identifiable something presupposes a something else against which it stands as background, from which it is differentiated” (Young 1990a, 98). As structuralists have demonstrated, meaning is not intrinsic to signs or words themselves, nor in what they refer to, but rather arises from relationships since a proposition is meaningful precisely because it is differentiated from others within a linguistic system. To summarize the point at issue, all assertions of identity in logic rest upon a prior duality, and therefore Western philosophical concepts are construed through relations.

ii. The Master Subject-Other Relationship

Identity logic's dualistic structure underlies human relationships. In general, the Western philosophical tradition represents individuals as atomistic and self-identical substances who assert themselves against others. Some postcolonial and feminist theorists conceptualize this relationship as one between a colonizing master subject and a devalued colonized other. The framework of the master subject-other relationship is widely used in feminist and postcolonial

⁴ In the preface of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues that the laws of self-identity and non-contradiction are abstractions. A substance is by definition identical with itself ($S=S$); consequently, self-identity is represented as a datum. Paraphrasing Hegel, Yovel (2005, 21) explains that self-identity “refers to a manifold of sensible data, unites it according to patterns of connection (called ‘categories’) supplied by the understanding.... and attributes those connections to the unity of an objective world and temporal sequence which is separate from the I and faces it.” Yovel is saying that formal logic abstracts by categorizing the flux of experience in terms of a priori mathematical concepts, and subsequently defining the ontological essence of entities in terms of mathematical properties. Hegel says that such knowledge examines the surface dimension of an entity—the properties that make formal logic possible—without looking at its depth dimension—its interiority, or the thing itself. An entity is therefore “forced” to abide to the laws of self-identity and non-contradiction. I discuss this topic in more depth in the third section with regard to Heidegger's account of modern science.

scholarship.⁵ The master subject is the assortment of dominant groups in society—whites, heterosexuals, men, Euro-Americans, etc.—while the other represents subordinated groups—ethnic minorities, peoples of color, gays and lesbians, women, etc. The relationship between the master subject and the other is sometimes analogized to that of a center to its margins (a conceptual centrism): the master subject is construed as the center while the other is peripheral, located on the margins.⁶ In what follows I demonstrate how the master subject, construed upon a dualistic logic of identity, legitimizes the subjugation of otherized groups. I also justify my privileging the concept of the master subject as a useful framework for understanding how the various axes of oppression intersect, interlock, and reinforce each other.

The creation of human ontological natures involves two conceptual acts internalizing the principles of formal logic. First is a conceptual practice of hybridization whereby the master subject and the other's respective traits are categorized into mutually exclusive groups or alternatives. In accord with the principles of non-contradiction and of the excluded middle, the center's qualities are construed as the opposite of the traits defining the margins. Men, for example, are defined in opposition to women—what is masculine is by definition not feminine (and vice-versa)—just like peoples of color are defined in opposition to whites—what is black is by definition not white (and vice-versa). The dualistic structure of centric logic secures the master subject's identity because the center and the margins are defined against each other, in

⁵ Plumwood theorizes the master subject in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* and also in *Environmental Culture*. In addition, Haraway refers to the master subject in "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*), as does Hartsock in "Foucault on Power: a Theory for Women" (in *Feminism/Postmodernism*).

⁶ The allure of the term "marginalization" for geography is its attention to location. While marginalization usually refers to the material effects of unjust socioeconomic and political relations, Reed (2003, 37) says that discursively it is used "to define the position of an individual or social group as part inside, part outside the dominant area or region." Groups inhabiting "spaces on the margins" (hooks 1990, 145) are on the outskirts of society, discursively and materially: they are culturally devalued, economically marginalized, and politically disempowered.

terms of absolute differences—they are “dissociated” or “hyper-separated” to use Plumwood’s (2002) terms—therefore neglecting the similarities that exist between them. Between the center and the margins it is the differences (and not the similarities) that matter most, even if the other resembles the master subject in some aspects. Differences, then, are construed as radical otherness. The outcome is an “ontological break or radical discontinuity between the group identified as the privileged ‘centre’ and those subordinated” (Plumwood 2002, 101).

The second act consists of a conceptual practice of purification within the group disjuncts themselves whereby similarities are emphasized and differences ignored. For example, what women supposedly share in common is more important than what distinguishes them. A common argument is that women’s nature is biologically determined and places them closer to nature because of their reproductive capacities, and therefore women *qua* women share a universal set of female experiences. Again, from the perspective of the Euro-American master subject, different ethnicities (Asians, Indians, Muslims) are quasi-identical since they look alike. Neglecting the differences that exist within the categories enables the creation of homogeneous and mutually exclusive groups (men/women, whites/peoples of color). This shows how dualism and reductionism are deeply entangled with each other because they create radically separate and internally homogenized groups. The centric logic of identity perpetuates the illusion that there exists a difference in kind, and not merely a difference in degree, between the master subject and the other, instead of focusing on both their differences and similarities—between and within the categorical disjuncts—and emphasizing affinity, continuity, and similarity.

The master subject perceives himself as an atomistic self hyper-separated from others and surrounding environments. This atomism is consistent with the Cartesian self that depicts individuals in terms of independent minds (thinking things) imprisoned within the physical body.

In addition, Hobbes' social contract theory in *Leviathan* is the analogue to atomism in natural philosophy—natural bodies in perpetual movement—insofar as he represents persons as egoistical atoms whose natural condition is originally asocial. Again, contemporary liberalism's social contract depicts individuals “as freely moving social atoms, each with his or her own intrinsic properties, creating social interactions as they collide in social space,” and construes the individual as “ontologically prior to the social” (Levins and Lewontin 1985, 1). Communities are fictitious bodies since they are nothing but the sum of atomistic selves, each person acting in his own selfish interests, and consequently the state's social contract is needed to enforce social order. Non-surprisingly, a self perceived as being radically separated pits people against each other, fostering competition and conflict. Social atomization is ideological since it internalizes a Hobbesian assumption: each atomistic self is in a state of war against others. The master subject, then, is by nature self-maximizing and instrumentalizing because the center construes the margins as being radically different and separated in order to exploit them for instrumental ends.

This last remark pinpoints the problem at hand. The dualistic logic of identity is oppressive, ultimately legitimizing the master subject's (or center's) domination of groups identified as the other (or margins). Warren (2000) argues that identity logic produces a logic of domination consisting of three essential components: dualism, value hierarchy, and justification. Value dualisms promote value-hierarchical thinking, defined as up-down thinking that places greater value, status, or prestige on what is *up* rather than what is *down*, and which subsequently justifies the oppression of the term deemed *down* by the term represented as *up*. The list of dualisms is long, but common ones include nature/culture, human/nonhuman, reason/emotion, mind/body, white/black, subjectivity/objectivity, fact/value, male/female, hetero/homosexual, self/other, private/public, and production/reproduction. Accordingly, culture, human, reason,

mind, white, objectivity, fact, male, heterosexual, self, public and production are valued, while their radically construed opposites—nature, nonhuman, emotion, body, black, subjectivity, value, female, homosexual, other, private and reproduction—are devalued. Since disjuncts are defined as oppositional (rather than complementary) and exclusive (rather than inclusive), value dualisms and value-hierarchical thinking create a belief that one disjunct is more valuable than its opposite, thus legitimizing domination. Male/female value dualism, for example, justifies the oppression of women, and culture/nature dualism generates anthropocentric value judgments that deem humans superior to nonhumans. As such, the logic of domination constructs devalued others in order to justify oppression, a conceptual practice which Plumwood (2002) appropriately diagnoses as the partnership of rationality with domination. This logic is unsound, however, because it presupposes the false prescriptive claim that “[s]uperiority justifies subordination [emphasis in original]” (Warren 2000, 48).

It is important to point out that value dualisms are not mere dichotomies. There is nothing wrong in asserting differences or similarities, or making value judgments, in certain contexts. In fact, humans must think dualistically (in the sense of mere dichotomy) insofar as we inevitably categorize the flux of experience into concepts. In an epistemological context “every conceptual scheme structures and hierarchizes its material, as part of the tension intrinsic to the move from a particular to a general concept encompassing the particular” says Robert Frodeman (1995, 126). Defining a conceptual space in a given way—privileging some aspects and ignoring others—is a value-laden act since concepts could in principle be theoretically defined differently. But, in general we think that it is a category mistake to say that privileged concepts (or universals) dominate or oppress other concepts or the objects (the particulars) they represent. In apolitical contexts, then, value dualisms and hierarchical thinking do not necessarily generate a logic of

domination.⁷ To give a less abstract example, human beings are unique in their self-consciousness, reason, imagination and creativity. In this regard there is a dichotomy between human and nonhuman beings because the latter do not possess these capacities to the same extent. Such dualisms are unproblematic because descriptions of differences are just that. Likewise, in depoliticized contexts ascribing more value is also justified. For example, humans are better hockey players than monkeys, just like professional hockey players are better skaters than philosophy students. In relatively apolitical contexts, then, making value judgments is justified insofar as they do not legitimize domination—professional hockey players are not justified in oppressing philosophy students or monkeys just because they are better at a given sport. The problem arises when dualisms—men are rational and women are emotional; humans have minds while animals lack them—are subject to value hierarchical thinking—reason is construed to be superior to emotion; minds are construed to be superior to bodies—in political contexts because then superior groups are justified in dominating inferior groups, thus producing injustices—on average men are paid more than women in the same profession; humans have political standing while nonhumans lack agency and are denied moral consideration. I therefore define contexts as “political” if the relations therein represent humans or nonhumans in ways that legitimize subjecting them to conditions or treatments that adversely impact their well-being or livelihood.⁸ To summarize, it is to apply value hierarchical thinking to dualisms in political

⁷ In the next section I argue that epistemological contexts are not always as depoliticized as it is often thought. For instance, modern science’s reduction of nonhuman beings to the chemical properties of their bodies “objectifies” and produces relations of domination whenever it impacts their well-being—e.g. perceiving cows as sources of protein or as “meat” raised in factory farms. Furthermore, in chapter IV I argue that representations of nature are never neutral because dominant environmental discourses (such as mainstream environmentalism’s wilderness agenda) marginalize alternative discourses (such as the environmental justice movement), with corresponding cultural, socioeconomic, political, and environmental impacts on minority groups. Thus, environmental discourses, including representations of nature, are sociopolitical issues.

⁸ My argument entails that only beings with needs and interests can be dominated or oppressed. Therefore I deny that it is possible to oppress a rock, for example. Yet, throughout the dissertation I develop a socioecological

contexts that produces a logic of domination because the oppression of devalued groups—or groups associated with disjuncts deemed less valuable—is legitimized by their alleged inferiority.

According to Warren (2000), sexism, racism, heterosexism, colonialism, classism, ageism, ableism, anthropocentrism, speciesism, including all other “isms” of domination, manifest the logic of domination’s three essential components—dualism, value hierarchy, and justification—in politicized contexts. First, the master subject—whites, Euro-Americans, heterosexuals, men, etc.—defines the other—peoples of color, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, women, etc.—as his radical opposite, resulting in dualisms. In accord with the principles of the excluded middle and non-contradiction, a person is either a woman or a man, white or black, heterosexual or homosexual, and so on. Second, rather than perceiving differences as variations only, the master subject ranks them in terms of their presumed worth. The master subject ascribes more value to the traits that he only possesses, and therefore judges himself as being superior. In addition, his privileged qualities are part of his very nature or identity. The other, to the contrary, lacks the master’s valued traits. In order to ensure his identity, the master subject projects negative qualities onto the other and construes her as biologically embodying these traits. Albert Memmi (1967, 71-2) accurately describes this process in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.

The colonialist stresses those things that keep him separate rather than emphasizing that which might contribute to the foundation of a joint community. In those differences, the colonized is always degraded and the colonialist finds justification for rejecting his subjectivity. But perhaps the most important thing is that once the behavioral feature or

relational ontology which entails that, although we cannot dominate or oppress rocks themselves, we commit injustices toward beings if their well-being is dependent on relations with these rocks (such contexts are political because well-being is at stake). Figueroa and Waitt (2008) argue that when visitors to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia climb Uluru (or Ayers Rock to use its colonial name), they perpetuate the colonial legacy of oppression against the Anangu people whose environmental heritage and identity is defined in relation to this rock, and who themselves do not climb. In this case objectifying the rock as an obstacle to be “conquered” (or climbed) produces relations of domination since it disrespects the cultural traditions of the Anangu people.

historical or geographical factor which characterizes the colonialist and contrasts him with the colonized has been isolated, this gap must be kept from being filled. The colonialist removes the factor from history, time and therefore possible evolution. What is actually a sociological point becomes labeled as being biological, or preferably, metaphysical. It is attached to the colonized's basic nature. Immediately the colonial relationship between colonized and colonizer, founded on the essential outlook of the two protagonists, becomes a definitive category. It is what it is because they are what they are, and neither one nor the other will ever change.

A common biologizing strategy is to reduce the other to a corporeal body—a body identical to that of all others, that is, they are “just bodies”—rather than perceiving her as a unique individual. While the master subject maintains an illusory sense of autonomy and denies his own social location—he occupies a neutral, disembodied, unmarked, and therefore presumably objective and universal position—by contrast, the other is represented as being imprisoned in her body, firmly rooted in a concrete place. The other's identification with the body (and not mind) serves to homogenize and stereotype otherized groups as embodying devalued traits. An example will clarify. Because in general (in the West) white skin is the social norm against which minority groups appear, the latter are epidermalized. Peoples of color appear as colored—the pigment of their skin marking them as different—precisely because they are contrasted with the dominant white identity that is not-colored and therefore normalized. This shows, says Maureen Reed (2003, 43), how the master subject constitutes “the norm or standard against which others are judged. This process renders the perspective of one's group [the other] invisible at the same time as one is stereotyped and marked as other.” Third, because the respective differences characterizing the master subject and the other are supposedly biologically determined, and because the master's traits are deemed superior, the master subject's domination of the other is justified. Domination is thus natural and inevitable.

At this point a clarification is in order. I have exposed how the master subject, construed upon a dualistic logic of identity, otherizes some groups as a means of legitimizing social

subordination. Yet, the question arises: why is this term preferable to another such as “dominant subject,” “dominant narrative,” “hegemonic voice,” and so forth, that may entail a different style of reasoning? A criticism is that the master subject suggests 19th century Hegelianism, therefore seemingly privileging the master-slave relationship as the most basic and fundamental form of domination.

Plumwood responds precisely to this criticism in her article “Does Ecofeminism Need the Master Subject? A Response to Janis Birkeland.” Although the master-slave relationship does indeed constitute an important relation of dominance, she abstains from prioritizing it either historically or methodologically. As previous remarks indicated (and which will be discussed again in the fourth section), the master-slave relationship is only one of many possible relations of domination—others include racism, sexism, eurocentrism, classism, etc.—and therefore I am not privileging it as most important or fundamental. What must be understood is that the concept of the master subject is not synonymous with master-slave relations. Plumwood (1996a) clarifies, explaining that

the concept of the master subject is a placeholder or variable which defines a *determinable* subject place that can be occupied by a range of determinate forms; the concept of mastery stands to androcentrism, eurocentrism/racism, anthropocentrism etc., much as the concept of colour stands to red, blue, green, etc. [emphasis in original].

Plumwood is saying that, because the identity of the master subject (or subject place) is specifically characterized by dualisms and hierarchical thinking, it produces a logical structure of domination common to multiple forms of oppression. The master subject contrasts himself with the other; not only does he master the slave, but he is also the masculine to the other’s feminine, the rational to the other’s emotional (or irrational), the mind to the other’s body, the civilized to the other’s savageness, and so on. The concept of the master subject is useful because, instead of adopting a hierarchical strategy of rank reductionism in which the various axes of domination are

reduced to a fundamental form of oppression like patriarchy or class exploitation, it makes visible how various oppressions intersect, interlock, and reinforce each other insofar as they share the same logical structure. Further, although some theorists may prefer to enumerate a long list of oppressions to account for its various forms—e.g. we can talk of “*white supremacist, naturist, capitalist patriarchy* [emphasis in original]” (Plumwood 1996a)—the problem is not only that such a strategy is long-winded, awkward, and inevitably leads to questions concerning the completeness of the list, but it also puts forward an additive account of oppressions instead of emphasizing how different manifestations intersect and support each other. In contrast, the concept of the master subject makes this last point evident, acknowledging the differences characterizing distinct relations of domination while recognizing that they share a common logical structure. It can also account for relations of domination that are not yet recognized or theorized thoroughly—anthropocentrism and speciesism, for example.

iii. Anthropocentrism

The dualistic logic of othering also maps onto anthropocentric human-nature relations, justifying the domination of nonhuman beings and the exploitation of the environment. The three components of the logic of domination are clearly manifested in the master subject’s relations with nonhuman others and the environments he inhabits. First, an assortment of dualisms defines the master subject as radically separate from the environment. Because the master construes his identity as atomistic—human subjects are isolated atoms moving in an external space called the environment—he perceives himself as interacting superficially with nature, and believes that these relations do not affect the constitution of his self-identity. Most often he represents nature as a place outside himself—a place “out there”—conceptualizing it, and the nonhuman beings

living therein, as radically other. Nature/culture dualism (or human/nonhuman dualism) is reinforced by Cartesian substance dualism that reduces all that exists to “just two categories: thinking matter and extended matter—or, more colloquially, ‘us’ and ‘it’” as Neil Evernden (1985, 75) succinctly puts it. The human mind, with its capacity to reason, is unique—it makes us human, defining our essence or nature—and ontologically distinguishes us from our own bodies, while also hyper-separating us from a homogenized and physical nature. Like otherized human groups, animals are reduced to being passive and exchangeable bodies exhibiting an assortment of evolutionary ancestral traits, such as instincts and desires. Together then, radical exclusion (dualism) and homogenization (reductionism) classify humans and nonhumans as two different substances. Second, value hierarchical thinking is evident in that the master subject values consciousness and his capacity to reason, while devaluing instincts, emotions, and other cognitive traits associated with animality. In general, the scientific worldview depicts nature as “lowly” matter in motion, that is, nature is nothing but passive, mindless, physical stuff.

Accordingly, nature is represented as natural resources that have value only to the degree that they satisfy human interests; in other words, nature has instrumental value but is devoid of intrinsic value since it lacks agency. Value hierarchical thinking is thus used to inferiorize the animalized sphere of embodiment and the realm of nature. Third, because nature appears as mindless and inert devalued matter, it is justifiably subdued and appropriated by the master subject. In this way the logic of domination is anthropocentric—human-centered—because humans perceive themselves apart from nature and devalue the material realm, ultimately legitimizing its manipulation and exploitation to satisfy instrumental purposes.

The master subject’s atomistic conception of self and sense of absolute autonomy are dangerous illusions. Foremost, he denies his dependency on relationships with human and

nonhuman others to sustain his false sense of autonomy and superiority. Not only does he disregard the importance of social relationships in the constitution of his identity, but he also ignores the ecological fact that his well-being is dependent on healthy environments. Plumwood (2002, 17) says that dominant groups “misunderstand their own enabling conditions—the body, ecology and non-human nature for example, often because they have written these down as inferior or constructed them as background in arriving at an illusory and hyperbolised sense of human autonomy.” The master subject construes himself apart from the environment, perceiving it as a space “out there” in which to dump his waste products and derive natural resources for his self-maximizing activities of consumption. Denying his own corporeality, and failing to recognize his dependency on the environments that sustain his existence, the master flirts with personal, collective, and ecological suicide. In the next section I build on these points by looking at modern science’s conceptualizations of the natural realm. I argue that the scientific paradigm reduces nature to quantifiable lifeless objects in order to manipulate and exploit them for instrumental ends. The consequence, I suggest, is the disenchantment of the world and ecological death as manifested in global environmental problems.

3. Modern Science and Nature

Drawing from Plumwood’s *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, I hypothesize that the dualistic logic of identity originates in Greek rationalism and is inherited by the Enlightenment’s philosophical empiricism. Plumwood (1993, 191) argues that “[w]e can understand the development of this story about reason and nature as a story whose stages correspond to the historical stages in the process of colonisation of otherness.” In what follows I explore this “process of colonisation of otherness,” beginning with Plato and culminating in modern science.

Although modern science shares with Platonic philosophy devalued views of nature, what is novel is the way it exerts power *over* natural objects by projecting mathematical concepts onto the world understood as lifeless matter, ultimately legitimizing its domination for human ends.

i. From Greek Rationalism to Scientific Empiricism

Platonic philosophy represents the first stage in the colonization of otherness, and it is directed against human *internal* nature. Plato postulates two ontological realms: the realm of the Forms (Being) and the realm of matter (Becoming). On the one hand, the material realm of Becoming—the world of bodies, sense-perceptions, appearances, and nature—is quasi-real, located between Being and not-Being, and provides opinions only. On the other hand, the immaterial realm of the Forms and of Being—the world of ideas, abstract numbers, and rational principles—is true and real, timeless and unchanging, and is therefore identified with knowledge. Knowledge of the Forms is acquired by elite philosophers (and the gods) who cultivate the virtues of pure reason, hyper-separated from the material body. For Plato, a person's internal nature—the body's senses, emotions and appetites, that is, the nature within—is chaotic, directed toward the “lowly” material world of Becoming and uncertainty, and for this reason must be coerced by a disembodied and sovereign rationality. The Platonic virtuous life is thus premised on a relation of domination: reason as superior justifiably commands, threatens, and coerces the inferior body in order to acquire knowledge of the Forms and actualize its divine potentiality.

Interestingly, Plato's privileging of disembodied reason, and devaluation of everything associated with the body, suggests an affinity with death. Genevieve Lloyd (1984, 6) explains that in the *Phaedo* Plato describes

the intellectual life as a purging of the rational soul from the follies of the body. The philosopher's life prepares his soul for release from its prison-house at death. His soul

despises the body and flees from it to pursue pure and absolute being with pure intellect alone. Reason enables the soul to go away to the “pure, and eternal, and immortal, and unchangeable, to which she is akin.”

Baird Callicott (1989a, 182) likewise points out that in the *Phaedo* Plato says as a (half) joke “that philosophy is the study of death, an exercise in the disentanglement of the soul from the body.” Callicott (1989a, 182) also notes that in the *Cratylus* “Plato alleges that the word *body* (*sôma*) was derived from *tomb* (*sêma*). The body is thus the tomb of the soul as well as its place of imprisonment [emphasis in original].” Plato’s preoccupation with the body’s death (a point he shared with the Pythagoreans) might explain why he was warmly admired by early Christian theologians who despised life on earth and made a symbol of death—the cross—the defining symbol of their religion. Plumwood (1993, 97) summarizes the implications of Greek rationalism rather succinctly: she says that Plato’s hatred of nature, matter, and biological change itself—which together constitute the very basis of life—implies that Platonic philosophy “not only devalues nature, it is profoundly anti-ecological and anti-life,” and consequently it is best described as a “philosophy of death.”

Scientific empiricism corresponds to the second stage of the colonization of otherness, and it is directed foremost against *external* nature (the material world “out there”). A fundamental transition occurs with the beginning of the Enlightenment. Rationalist accounts of knowledge are replaced with empirical accounts. The focus of inquiry shifts away from the Platonic Forms toward “the lowly material objects which the older Platonic rationalism held to be incapable of providing knowledge and to be unworthy of proper rational study” (Plumwood 2002, 47). What is most novel, however, is the exercise of power *over* natural objects. Although Plato is concerned with reason’s domination of internal nature—controlling one’s emotions and appetites in order to escape the realm of Becoming and rationally contemplate the transcendental Forms—modern

science uses the power of reason as an instrument to control and dominate—i.e. acquire knowledge of—external nature for human ends. What does not change, however, is the devalued status accorded to the natural realm of matter, and the obsessive urge to control everything associated with nature. Consistent with Platonic philosophy, a prerequisite to modern science’s domination of nature is the self-mastery of human desires and emotions characterizing the nature within. Scientists must master their subjectivity and become disembodied minds in order to conduct impartial scientific investigations and acquire objective knowledge of the ontologically separate and “lowly” material world. Together, the control of inner nature and the devaluation of external nature provide scientific empiricism with the conceptual apparatus needed to discover the world’s physical laws and justifiably exploit nonhuman nature for instrumental ends.

I am hypothesizing that Greek rationalism provides the ontological framework for Cartesian substance dualism. Plumwood (1993, 112) describes how Descartes dispenses with Plato’s “subtleties of the divided self.... and the division between the rational and irrational parts of the soul” to instead develop substance dualism and mathematics as the ontological foundation for a practical philosophy that is modern science. Yet, modern science is greatly indebted to Greek rationalism, in particular to Platonic form/matter and soul/appetite dualisms.⁹ First, mathematical concepts are similar to Plato’s Forms: they are abstract and rational principles that enable scientific knowledge production. Scientists focus on quantifiable primary properties because they are said to represent the true nature of objects and the structure of the universe. In contrast, beginning with Galileo (and later Descartes and Locke), secondary qualities, such as colors, sounds, tastes and smells, are deemed subjective and not constitutive of natural objects themselves. Second, Cartesian

⁹ Husserl (1970) says that modern science inherits from the Greeks an attitude: the tradition of approaching reality *theoretically*. Galileo, for instance, inherits the idea of science itself, that is, the idea of perceiving the world in a theoretical manner. In the process “man becomes a nonparticipating spectator, surveyor of the world; he becomes a philosopher” (Husserl 1970, 285).

science presupposes that humans only possess a mind (or soul for Plato), and self-consciousness and reason are valued accordingly. Nature, to the contrary, is comprised of material bodies and devoid of mind, and consequently it is deemed valueless apart from human interests. The extrusion of mind-like qualities to an independent realm divests bodies of final causes or teleology, and such “dead” matter in motion is now available for appropriation. The scientific benefit of substance dualism is that it makes possible the mathematical-mechanistic conception and understanding of nature by isolating minds from bodies, thereby leaving science to deal with “untainted” objects only.¹⁰ This is indispensable because, although bodies are known through mathematical and mechanistic descriptions, minds as thinking things—i.e. the phenomenological experience of consciousness—are not reducible to mathematical concepts.¹¹ In this way modern science’s mechanistic-mathematical paradigm presupposes substance dualism, and together they reinforce each other. The scientific worldview represents natural entities as inert mechanisms (an ontological point) that can be known by taking them apart and understanding their parts (an epistemological

¹⁰ Human bodies are scientifically investigated like the rest of nature, as inert machines, mechanistically and reductively breaking wholes into parts. Medicine, for example, breaks a human body into distinct parts to understand its functioning. An elbow acts as a hinge and the heart functions as a pump. Difficulties arise, however, when science attempts to comprehend entities undergoing development because wholes are not reducible to the sum of their parts. Organisms, for instance, grow and develop in order to actualize their potential for maturation and reproduction. In accord with the Aristotelian tradition, all life-forms possess a purpose (*a telos*), and each natural kind grows and develops into its inherent possibilities. An acorn’s teleology is its potential to produce acorns that might develop into oak trees, thereby continuing the ongoing cycle of life that ensures the perpetuation of its kind. Organisms develop into “what-they-are-not” yet are “constituted-to-become.” This reveals the self-negating nature of development that does not abide to the laws of self-identity and non-contradiction. Organisms are not self-identical since they develop into qualitatively different forms. And, they contradict the law of non-contradiction since they become “what-they-are-not” in the process of developing. Thus, insofar as scientific explanations (in genetics, chemistry, biology) presuppose the principles of logic, they have difficulties accounting for an organism’s purpose or *telos*.

¹¹ Modern science does not exclude human consciousness entirely as an object of inquiry. While some cognitive scientists maintain that hormones have a significant impact on emotions, desires and feelings—hence the experience of being a thinking being—others contend that minds are mere epiphenomenon with no causal powers, and others still deny that consciousness exists. But, because cognitive scientists work within the mechanistic-mathematical paradigm, they cannot question the legitimacy of the paradigm itself. Consequently, scientific endeavors that attempt to fully understand the functioning of the mind will fail because the human experience of thinking cannot be understood reductively as mechanistic or mathematical. The problem is that materialism attempts to give an objective description of consciousness that abandons all points of view, thus ignoring its defining feature—its first-person qualitative “feel.”

point); reductionism is thus an epistemological consequence of the ontological commitment to Cartesian mind/body dualism.

ii. A Priori Projections of Mathematical Concepts

Modern science's mechanistic models presuppose Cartesian substance dualism and are supported by mathematical concepts. Having discussed mind/body dualism, I presently expound on science's mathematicity. Science's basic concepts are universal mathematical axioms which are said to overlap the natural articulations of the world. Physics, for instance, conceptualizes the universe as constituted by the distribution of some fundamental substance or force, such as molecules, atoms, ions, quarks, mass, electric fields, waves, etc., in space and time. Martin Heidegger (1993b, 301) however argues that "[t]he highest axioms, as mathematical, must establish in advance.... how the thingness of things is determined," therefore implying that the theoretical axioms scientists postulate do not exist in things themselves. Trish Glazebrook (2000, 9, 14) clarifies what Heidegger is saying: the mathematical offers "the a priori projection of certainty" since it posits special axioms which are "known beforehand and brought to experience by the understanding." We count four objects, for example, because we possess the concept four a priori. Numbers do not exist in things themselves, but rather we project them onto objects as mathematical properties which are subsequently known and calculated.

Heidegger's thought is influenced by Immanuel Kant (B xiii, 20) who says, in the "Preface to Second Edition" of *Critique of Pure Reason*, "that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own." This insight inspires Kant's philosophical Copernican revolution. Kant (B xvi-xvii, 22) explains that Copernicus, "[f]ailing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved round

the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest.” Ultimately it was Copernicus’ “move” to displace the observer as the center of measurement that enabled him to uncover knowledge regarding the movement of celestial bodies. Following Copernicus, Kant argues that a similar strategy can be employed in metaphysics and epistemology. Instead of trying to understand the concepts in our mind as produced by sense impressions, we must assume that we have pre-established concepts in our mind to which the world of experience conforms (Kant calls these “synthetic judgments a priori”). Thus, sense impressions conform to our a priori concepts that we possess independently of experience.

According to Shannon Dea (2009, 61), Kant is “simply asserting the hermeneutical structure of understanding within the sciences,” corresponding to what Heidegger (1962, §32) calls “fore-understanding” and “fore-conception.” Heidegger’s notions of fore-understanding and fore-conception build on Kant’s thesis that we have pre-established concepts in our minds to which the world of experience conforms; i.e. we “force” our experiences to fit our a priori concepts that are grasped in advance. Heidegger contends that all descriptions involve interpretation, and interpretation as fore-understanding and fore-conception is framed by our a priori conceptions which reflect specific beliefs, presuppositions and values. Scientific theories, for instance, are bounded by pre-established basic concepts—concepts of space and time, mass, motion, energy, etc.—that “determine the way in which we get an understanding beforehand of the area of subject-matter underlying all the objects a science takes as its theme, and all positive investigation is guided by this understanding” (Heidegger 1962, §3, 30). Consequently, far from uncovering knowledge of objects as they are in themselves (an impossible feat), Heidegger

argues that modern science projects an understanding that discloses only partial knowledge of beings.

If Heidegger, following Kant, is correct, then science does not discover facts, but rather sets-up objects to disclose only the properties that correspond to the laws of mathematical-physics which are known prior. Knowledge of bodies is uncovered through the projection of mathematical models onto objects represented as thing-like mechanisms with the intention of mapping their quantifiable properties. In his introduction to Heidegger's essay "Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics," David Farrell Krell (1993b, 269) says that "[t]hings' become aggregates of calculable mass located on the grid of space-time and ultimately a play of forces issuing in (partly) discernible and (variably) predictable jumps across that grid.... the grid remains a transparency laminated on the 'things'." Projecting mathematical concepts onto nature conceptualized as a space-time container of matter in motion is epistemologically useful because it reduces the sensory flux of experience to a comprehensible unity. Edmund Husserl (1970, 27) says that ideal geometric forms "are sensibly experienceable and sensibly-intuitively conceivable, and the types [of shapes] that are conceivable at any level of generality, fade into each other as a continuum." Therefore a plethora of particulars are experienced, and afterwards specific sense-experiences are abstracted from the sensory flux in order to construct ideal geometric forms that conform to our a priori concepts. It is also epistemologically useful because it dispenses with the Platonic problem of knowledge in a temporal world of continuous change. Projecting atemporal and changeless mathematical concepts makes possible universal laws since it creates the illusion of eternity. The concern, however, is that scientific concepts are also used as conceptual tools for manipulating and exploiting nonhuman nature.

iii. Science, Power, Death

The projection of a mathematical order onto nature reveals how science's conceptual framework is intimately coupled with power. Scientific experimentation poses the conditions to which nature abides insofar as entities are "forced" to conform to a priori concepts. The objects that are studied are depicted as objects-for-use since scientists focus only on the aspects deemed useful to the purposes of the study, thereby manipulating and controlling them in the process. Such perceptions are reinforced by the presumed ontological separation of subjects from objects (or mind from nature) that makes possible objective knowledge production—a "view from nowhere" uncontaminated by subjective values and beliefs. Plumwood (2002, 46) explains that object/subject dualism results in the "passification of the objectified.... since as a vacuum of agency, will and purpose, they [natural objects] are empty vessels to be filled with another's purpose and will." Similarly, Heidegger (1993b, 303) says that

the "I" becomes the special subject, that with regard to which all the remaining things first determine themselves as such. Because—mathematically—they first receive their thingness only through the founding relation to the highest principle and its "subject" (I), they are essentially such as stand as something else in relation to the "subject," which lie over against it as *objectum*. The things themselves become "objects" [emphasis in original].

Heidegger is saying that subjects tend to control objects of study with the forms of thought that are forcefully imposed on them. In accord with Plato's cosmology in the *Timaeus* whereby god's cosmic reason shapes formless and disorderly matter to create the earth, today, scientists are the master subjects who manipulate mindless nature for instrumental ends. The problem is that this suggests a logic of domination. Foremost, the projection of mathematical-physical concepts onto nature deprives nonhuman beings of intentional and teleological qualities. When this happens nonhumans are objectified and otherized—they are reduced to quantifiable bodies-in-motion in order to use them—and consequently denied consideration of their interests since as objects they

necessarily lack agency. In such cases science produces relations of domination because nonhumans are defined in ways that have detrimental impacts on their well-being (such epistemological contexts are therefore politicized). For instance, nonhumans are deemed mere natural resources—a forest is depicted in terms of square-feet of timber, and pigs are a food source of bacon and pork—to be appropriated for human consumption. Once again, I emphasize that it is not the act of defining itself that entails domination. The problem arises when dualisms are subject to hierarchical thinking in political contexts in which it makes sense to talk about domination and oppression. Then a logic of domination emerges because the oppression of the groups deemed less valuable can be legitimized by their alleged inferiority, with corresponding repercussions for the beings in question. Thus, scientific conceptual schemes are oppressive whenever they are used directly or indirectly to dominate nonhuman beings without due consideration to their well-being.

I argued that Greek rationalism formalized the dualistic logic that philosophical empiricism inherits, and which modern science develops further in order to exploit the environment. With this comes a scientific ethos, that is, an ethical attitude affecting the ways scientists conduct their investigations. Scientists conceptualize objects of knowledge as resources for appropriation by the knower. In the context of scientific experimentation, perception of external objects occurs with the goal of determining how the data can be used to satisfy the interests of the sovereign master subject. Research begins with the formulation of hypotheses that satisfy the purpose of the study. Complex problems are divided into simple ones so as to ensure the best results. The objects that are studied are then used to corroborate or refute the pre-selected hypotheses, but they are rarely encountered fully (in themselves) since they are reduced to quantifiable objects-for-use. Because nature is a priori conceptualized as mindless matter, non-

surprisingly, scientists tend to disregard processes or behaviors suggesting nonhuman subjectivity or agency. Simply put, the questions asked frame the answers that are uncovered. Research tends to focus on the aspects of the objects deemed useful to the purposes of the study, manipulating them in the process of fitting data into pre-determined mathematical systems and theories. In this context perception represents an act of aggression since the master subject cuts off and ignores the aspects of objects that cannot be manipulated for instrumental ends.

With the scientific paradigm's monopoly of knowledge (or truth) comes the disenchantment of the world—"the death of nature" to cite the title of Carolyn Merchant's (1980) book—that is, the eradication of vitalistic and animistic assumptions concerning life on earth. Life itself is studied with the conceptual tools of mathematical physics. Because nature is reduced to quantifiable properties and mechanistic motions, science attempts to explain life in terms of the lifeless. In this way the mathematical measurements of "dead" matter constitute "the standard of intelligibility" according to Hans Jonas (1966, 74). Evernden (1985, 18) says that "[t]he condition for discovering the *real* properties of nature—number, size, shape, and so forth—is the exclusion of life and all the qualities dependent on it [emphasis in original]," therefore suggesting that life itself is unnatural. Descartes' mechanistic biology of animals is a case in point. Animals are made of extended matter in motion; they are biologically determined machines that instinctively react to environmental stimuli according to their unconscious desires. This is not to deny that a cat differs from a rock, for example. Although they are different, it is not because the cat has a mind, but rather because its parts are structured to form a complex living machine. An animal is only a mechanical apparatus constructed of many parts of matter, yet the physical atoms do not feel or think. The implication is that "dead" matter constitutes the primordial ontological substance of the universe and life remains the unsolved problem. This is

paradoxical to say the least, considering that science is practiced by living beings, and because much medical research is undertaken with the goal of curing physical ailments, thereby potentially postponing death indefinitely (and mastering time itself in the process). Further, if the primary constitution of the world is in terms of “dead” matter, it follows that it is a meaningless place.¹² Lacking all meaning, value or agency, apart from human interests there are no “rational”—hence scientific—reasons to abstain from manipulating nature because science is “neutral,” and either way, to put it bluntly, nature does not care since it has no point of view. Impartial, disembodied, scientific investigations are said to be objective, yet I suggest that science is more accurately described as nihilistic. Plumwood (2002) diagnoses such reasoning as psychopathic, a symptom being the master subject’s denial of dependency on others and surrounding environments. In our present ecological predicament nihilism is manifested in the destruction of the natural world humans and all beings depend on for survival, as evidenced in increasing ecosystemic disturbances and species extinctions. Thus, too often nihilism is expressed through destruction, and destruction results in mass death.

¹² In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl argues that modern science’s theoretical attitude is an abstracting type of experience. This is because scientists abstract facts from their subjective experiences of the perceived measurements that ensure objective verification. Husserl (1970, 130) emphasizes, however, that it is because of the pre-givenness of the world that “objective science has a constant reference of meaning to the world in which we always live.” This is to say that the world is a priori meaningful since subjectivity is pre-given in the world before all theorizing takes place. Scientific propositions possess truth-value—they are valid and meaningful—because the world is always already endowed with subjectivity. It is only once the theoretical attitude is bracketed and abstracted from the pre-theoretical lifeworld of lived experience that meaning is lost. Science can then falsely claim that it studies the world itself, and that its underlying essence is mathematical and devoid of subjectivity, meaning and purpose. Similarly, in *Being and Time* Heidegger says that science is not practiced independently of one’s world of concerned involvement. Instead, understanding happens in an ontological web of relationships that is intelligible and therefore meaningful. Ultimately, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology aims to unshackle the theoretical bracket in order to experience the lifeworld in its pre-givenness, in the process revealing how science is grounded in the pre-theoretical and intuitive self-evidence of human experience. Simply put, subjective experiences are prior to the world of objects, just like the world of facts studied by scientists is known through their subjective experiences.

4. The Social Contract, Nature, and the Other

In the chapter's second section I argued that the master subject otherizes devalued human groups (including nonhumans), and in the third section I showed how modern science projects a mathematical understanding onto nature depicted as inanimate objects. In both cases the consequence is the same: the domination of human and nonhuman others is justified. In this section I argue that the master subject-other relationship is mirrored in Hobbes' and Rawls' social contract theories. Specifically, I show how postulating a hypothetical state-of-nature (or an original position) subordinates groups whose bodies, social roles, and traditional work mark them as being closer to nature—especially peoples of color, indigenous peoples, women, and gays and lesbians—and in chapter IV I conversely demonstrate how nature is racialized (and also feminized). In the public sphere this is reflected in the way some groups are privileged and disproportionately occupy positions of institutional power, while groups associated with the body, materiality, and nature are socially subordinated within the political process. Thus, the purpose of these explorations is to uncover how discursive representations of nature and devalued groups intersect, interlock, and support each other, and which in later chapters I argue legitimize social relations, cultural practices, and institutional arrangements that produce the spatialities of environmental injustices.¹³

¹³ Theorists of the Frankfurt School, notably Marcuse (1964), Horkheimer (1947; 1972) and Adorno (1972), argue that the exploitation of nature (using instrumental reason) results in social oppression. Social ecologists, most prominently Bookchin (1990a), reverse this thesis: social oppression results in the domination of nature. My dialectical approach rejects causal explanations. Although human oppression and the exploitation of nonhuman nature intersect and reinforce each other, having occurred in conjunction throughout history, I abstain from saying that either is primary. And, although it may be advantageous and worthy to engage in struggles against social oppression (e.g. racism) divorced from struggles against environmental destruction (and vice-versa), I contend that a society that abolishes all forms of social oppression is also environmentally just and sustainable.

i. The Naturalized Other

I previously dissected the anatomy of oppression, demonstrating how the various axes of domination (racism, sexism, homophobia, colonialism, androcentrism, xenophobia, classism, ageism, ableism, anthropocentrism, speciesism, etc.) intersect and uphold each other because they all share the dualistic logic of othering. Presently, I further refine my argument, continuing to excise the multiple layers of oppression in order to expose how the logic of domination devalues disjuncts deemed closer to nature and the body. In each case the other—ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, women, gays and lesbians, etc.—is conceptually represented as embodying the assortment of devalued disjuncts associated with the natural realm—the body (and not mind), emotions (and not reason), reproductive work in the private realm (and not productive work in the public realm), and so on. From the perspective of the master subject, women, for example, are emotional beings engaged in natural and bodily reproductive work, while indigenous peoples, to give another example, belong to “primitive” cultures and tend to overpopulate the underdeveloped and “wild” places they inhabit. Both women and indigenous peoples are conceptually associated with the devalued and naturalized disjuncts of various binaries. To the contrary, Euro-American white men are rational beings engaged in cultural and cognitive productive work (as opposed to bodily work). The critical point I emphasize is that all forms of oppression interlock insofar as they are reinforced by nature/culture value dualism: the assortment of traits forming the identity of subordinated groups is associated with the devalued natural realm of materiality, in the process reducing the other to her body, hence to nature itself. Associating some human groups with nature legitimizes their oppression because, as C. S. Lewis says, “[n]ature’ is the name for what we have, to some extent, conquered” (qtd. in Evernden

1992, 132). In this way ideologies of nature construed as separate from society, and devoid of mind and reason, are used as conceptual tools of oppression against naturalized groups.

Specific examples support my argument. Historically and still to this day, women's work involves the body and materiality insofar as they are generally responsible for childbearing and breastfeeding, raising children and caring for the elderly, cooking and cleaning, among many other responsibilities. In addition, Fraser (1991, 261) says that, although women occupy the workplace, they are perceived differently therein since they are represented "as feminized and sometimes sexualized 'service' workers; as members of the 'helping professions' utilizing mothering skills; ... as 'working wives,' 'working mothers' and 'supplemental earners'." This reveals how women's social roles and work—raising children or pink-collar jobs in the service industry—are corporealized and naturalized because they often involve emotional activities of compassion, care and empathy.

The concern is that since Plato the body is perceived as a source of undesirable qualities, and the virtuous life is associated with disembodied reasoning. To this day, Western philosophy privileges reason and depreciates subjective traits, such as values, emotions, intuitions, feelings and instincts, since they are said to cloud, distort, or bias reasoning and the observation of objective facts existing independently of human minds. Western epistemology, for instance, clearly distinguishes facts and values. To accurately represent reality and acquire knowledge according to correspondence theories of truth, an investigator adopts a disengaged and impartial epistemological stance that abstracts from subjective traits which distort perception.

Furthermore, the Western tradition of ethical theory likewise devalues subjective and bodily traits. Although there are notable exceptions, namely David Hume's description of the moral sentiments of pleasure and pain in *A Treatise of Human Nature* and also contemporary feminist

ethics of care, in general reason is considered the indispensable faculty for making sound moral judgments—e.g. utilitarian cost-benefit analyses that maximize happiness, and Kant’s deontological categorical imperative are cases in point. Moreover, in social/political philosophy reason figures centrally in the social contract theory as formulated in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, and developed further in Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (the “original position” thesis or “veil of ignorance”). Finally, modern science presupposes fact/value dualism since facts are deemed superior to values in terms of credibility and cognitive authority.¹⁴

The problem is that construing reason and emotion dualistically suggests that women are compassionate and caring, as opposed to rational, and by definition irrational, unpredictable and erratic. Because women’s historical practices are identified with the nature-outside (responsibilities such as giving birth) and also the nature-within (caring activities such as raising children), they are biologically construed as embodying an assortment of natural functions and character traits, and therefore conceptualized as being closer to nature. Just like nature is the mindless background upon which the commonwealth is constructed, women represent the passive background environment, within the private family sphere, upon which men, actively engaged in intellectual pursuits, construct the polis in the public realm. In a patriarchal context women’s association with nature defines them

as passive, as non-agent and non-subject, as the “environment” or invisible background conditions against which the “foreground” achievements of reason or culture (provided typically by the white, western, male expert or entrepreneur) take place. It is to be defined as a *terra nullius*, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings, and hence available to be annexed for the purposes of those supposedly identified with reason or intellect.... It means being seen as part of a sharply separate, even alien lower realm, whose domination is simply “natural,” flowing from nature itself and the nature(s) of things [emphasis in original] (Plumwood 1993, 4).

¹⁴ It is for this reason that debates regarding the risks of GMO foods, for example, are framed in terms of scientific facts rather than moral concerns; only factual claims count as meaningful evidence. It follows that only trained scientists—experts at discovering facts—have the necessary skills to conduct scientific investigations and participate in decisions pertaining to the risks or safety of biotechnology.

Women's biological essence is associated with passive and natural bodily properties, as opposed to active and cultural rational traits, and therefore their subordination is inevitable and natural.¹⁵

This reveals the gendered construction of nature/culture dualism: character traits deemed natural and bodily are feminized and confined to the private sphere, while cognitive traits associated with the intellect are masculinized and define the public realm. Rationality is thus conceptualized as transcendence of the feminine, the body, and everything signifying nature.

Representations of nature are sometimes used as conceptual instruments to oppress particular groups. This is accomplished through anthropomorphic perceptions. Ynestra King (1989, 118) explains that human concepts are projected onto nature, and ideas of what is natural are subsequently "projected back onto human society as natural law." Over a century ago, social Darwinists projected economic metaphors of the marketplace onto nature—e.g. species "investment strategies," "survival of the fittest," nature as "red in tooth and claw"—to later re-import them back into society as justification for the presumed naturalness of capitalist class exploitation. Nowadays, sociobiologists analogize nature to a capitalist market system where scarcity and competition define the natural order. For example, E. O. Wilson understands

a colony of social insects as operating somewhat like a factory constructed inside a fortress.... [the] colony must send foragers out to gather food while converting the secured food inside the nest into virgin queens and males as rapidly and efficiently as

¹⁵ Interestingly, Anderson (1995) observes that such gendered assumptions are reflected in models of human reproduction. Sperm cells are active, competing in a race to inseminate the passive egg, thereby initiating the development of a fetus. Similarly, each cell of the body is biologically controlled by a nucleus construed as the DNA "master" molecule. Whereas the master nucleus is represented as an active male, the cytoplasm is analogized to a passive female that provides the nurturing environment for the nucleus to perform its cellular functions. The representation of DNA as a master molecule (or "selfish" gene) implies hierarchy and centralization (typically male traits), similar to the functioning of a totalitarian government. The uncritical acceptance of gendered functions might explain why many scientists downplay the importance of cytoplasmic heredity, and consequently why fewer studies have been conducted. Lastly, Anderson observes that cellular explanations are sometimes modeled after the patriarchal family. She says that "[t]he cells of an individual organism cooperate because of the bonds of kinship: they share the same genes. The constitutive parts of an individual cell cooperate because they are ruled by a wise and benevolent patriarch, the 'master molecule' DNA," just like a human "family is governed by male heads of households enforcing cooperation among its members" (Anderson 1995, 67).

possible. The rate of production of the sexual forms is an important, but not an exclusive, component of colony fitness (qtd. in Haraway 1991, 65).

Similarly, Donna Haraway (1991, 58-9) argues that understanding nature in terms of energy exchanges, feedback systems, and communicative processes “means a re-theorizing of natural objects as technological devices properly understood in terms of mechanisms of production, transfer, and storage of information,” explanatory models that have been “systematically constituted in terms of the capitalist machine and market.” Such scientific observations are thus interpreted through the lens of a mechanistic worldview filled with metaphors of free-market production, war, and competitive sexuality.

The problem is that such models legitimize oppression insofar as they presuppose that dominance hierarchies are natural and inevitable. A few examples will elucidate.

Anthropomorphic judgments concerning women are projected onto nature and subsequently used to reinforce male stereotypes concerning the nature of women (female nature). Everyday language clearly reveals how the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature intersect and reinforce each other. Warren (2000, 27) observes how women are described with sexist-naturist animal metaphors.

Women are dogs, cats, catty, pussycats, pussies, pets, bunnies, dumb bunnies, cows, sows, foxes, chicks, bitches, beavers, old bats, old hens, old crows, queen bees, cheetahs, vixen, serpents, bird-brains, hare-brains, elephants, and whales. Women cackle, go to hen parties, henpeck their husbands, become old biddies (old hens no longer sexually attractive or able to reproduce) and social butterflies.

Similarly, peoples of color are animalized with racist-naturist language. Historically, African Americans men were represented “as children, animals, and nature. During slavery African Americans were described as ‘mere brutes,’ ‘animals,’ ‘dogs,’ ‘coons,’ ‘apes,’ ‘gorillas’” (Warren 2000, 59). At first they were perceived to be relatively harmless, childlike, and unable to properly take care of themselves. Slavery supposedly benefited them since white masters ensured their

well-being. When slavery was abolished following the Civil War, such images were substituted with ones depicting African American men as dangerous and predatory “animals (‘coons,’ ‘brutes’) and ‘rapists’ whose lust and sexual instincts threatened the safety and sanctity of ‘pure’ white women” (Warren 2000, 60). These examples show how the otherization of women and African Americans was (and still is) accomplished by naturalizing, animalizing, and eroticizing them.

To focus on the latter point, historically the construction of an eroticized other was intimately related to devalued sexual behaviors. Merchant (1980) says that the Enlightenment’s witch-hunts resulted in countless pagan (or nature-worshipping) women being burned alive at the stake, and Greta Gaard (2004) adds that some women were persecuted because they engaged in erotic practices deemed to be “deviant.” Homosexuality was (and still is) perceived as animalistic and sinful, therefore accounting for the fact that homosexual men were burned at the stake with women. At the same time on a different continent, American Indians were perceived “as ‘uncivilized,’ ‘primitive,’ ‘savages,’ ‘uncultivated,’ ‘heathens,’ whose elimination or conversion to Christianity was a God-given right of white settlers” (Warren 2000, 60). From the master subject’s point of view, the sexual behaviors of indigenous peoples were animal-like and savage. Gaard (2004, 37) says that indigenous peoples were “perceived as overly sexual, and their sexual behaviors [were] described as sinful and animalistic. The indigenous women [were] eroticized while the men [were] feminized.” For the master subject, heterosexuality is the compulsory social norm and deviance legitimizes colonization. In this fashion, as Gaard (2004, 38) appropriately says, “the queer erotic of non-Westernized peoples, their culture, and their land, is subdued into the missionary position—with the conqueror ‘on top’.”

The purpose of these historical explorations is to show how the Enlightenment's persecution of "witches" and homosexuals, the subordination of women, the enslavement of African Americans, and the genocide of indigenous peoples were all legitimized by the same logic of domination: the human other was feminized, eroticized, animalized—hence naturalized—and consequently devalued and socially subordinated. These examples demonstrate how various forms of otherization intersect and reinforce each other. In a society where animals, sexuality, femininity, and nature are devalued, women, African Americans, American Indians, and gays and lesbians are conceptually construed as embodying these inferior traits in order to justify their subjugation by heterosexual, white, Euro-American men (the master subject).

Conversely, the nonhuman other—nature itself—is feminized and raced, thus legitimizing the exploitation of nonhuman nature. In chapter IV I focus extensively on the racialization of both rural and urban environments, so at this point I limit my discussion to the feminization of nature. Merchant (1980) observes that pagan views represented nature as a nurturing and bountiful mother (hence the expression "Mother Nature"). With the advent of the Enlightenment, such images were substituted with representations depicting nature as a wild, erratic, cruel, devil-worshipping woman who must be subdued and conquered. Warren (2000, 27) says that nature was no longer a mother but a female who was "raped, mastered, controlled, conquered, mined" in order to penetrate and discover the secrets of her "womb." "Virgin timber [was] felled, cut down," and "fertile" soil was tilled, while infertile land was deemed "barren," similar to a woman who is unable to have children (Warren 2000, 27). Historically, scientific metaphors exhibited an aggressive attitude toward both nature and women. To give one prominent example, Evelyn Fox Keller (1985, 36) cites Francis Bacon, deemed the father of modern science, endorsing science and technology as a means "to conquer and subdue her

[Nature], to shake her to her foundations” so that she becomes a slave for the purposes of bettering humanity. While earlier examples showed that anthropomorphized ideologies of nature are projected onto women (including other groups) to justify gender oppression, these examples demonstrate that feminine characteristics are projected onto nature to legitimize its exploitation. Thus, women’s social oppression and the exploitation of nonhumans intersect and reinforce each other: the exploitation of nonhuman nature is justified by its feminization, and the domination of women is justified by naturalizing them.

ii. Hobbes’ State-of-Nature

I contend that the master subject’s construction of naturalized others is reflected in social contract theory. Groups who are feminized, raced, eroticized, and animalized are subordinated within the social contract because they are biologically, historically, socially, and discursively associated with the body, materiality, and nature. Much moral and social/political philosophy distinguishes between society and a state-of-nature. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that the commonwealth is fabricated through the coordinated activities of persons abiding to the rules and laws of a social contract. In its absence humans inhabit the state-of-nature—a cruel, brutish, and savage place that is “red in tooth and claw”—a violent space in which each person wages war against all others to ensure individual preservation (according to *natural law*). Leaving the state-of-nature to construct society is possible only on the basis of a social contract that enumerates the laws citizens agree to follow (each individual thus sacrifices a little personal freedom), thereby coordinating individual self-interest, ensuring personal security, protecting individual liberty, and maintaining relative peace and harmony in society.

For Hobbes, the body politic of the polis is analogized to a human body. Paraphrasing Hobbes, Charles Mills (2001, 73) describes how the commonwealth is represented as a

giant body politic made flesh, the sovereignty [or *Leviathan*] is its artificial soul [located at the head], the magistrates are its artificial joints, reward and punishment are the nerves, wealth and riches are its strength, counselors its memory, concord its health, sedition sickness, and civil war death.

In theory, the social contract is a voluntary contract between citizens represented as being similar and equal. Citizens construct the body politic of the polis on a space that again is in theory a genderless, asexual, and colorless space. The problem is that some groups are perceived as being closer to nature. Although all citizens have both a body and mind, some groups, because of their traditional tasks, social roles, biological functions, or color of their skin, are construed as being more corporeal than others. This leads Mills (2001, 73) to extend further Hobbes' bodily depiction of the body politic and ask: "[w]hat about excretion, the lower intestine, the urinary tract, the anus? If the body politic is to be thought of as literal, as materialized, surely further anatomical distinctions need to be made on its torso, the lived space of its citizens." Which groups, in other words, are identified with the polis' debased metabolic functions? The concern is that the social contract's separation of society from nature might inadvertently discriminate if it is more difficult for groups historically, biologically, socially, and symbolically identified with the body to leave behind the state-of-nature in order to enter society and be recognized as equally civilized political subjects.

My analysis suggests that women and peoples of color are excluded from the social contract, or have subordinated social status within, precisely because they are construed as naturalized others. To focus on women first, because historically (and still today) their responsibilities involved physical work in the private sphere, and because biologically they give birth among other bodily functions, they are conceptually represented as being more corporeal

than men. According to social contract theory, politics requires that individuals leave the state-of-nature and enter society in order to engage in intellectual activities in the public sphere. However, women's bodily functions and social chores prevent them from readily meeting this criterion, and this helps explain why traditionally they were deemed apolitical, belonging in the private space of the home rather than in the public body of the polis. By contrast, historically men were not burdened with feminine bodily chores, nor do they give birth, thus freeing them to pursue intellectual activities and political work. The implication is that, because men are rational—by definition less emotional and less attached to their bodies than women—they are the ideal candidates to participate in public deliberations concerning the administration of the polis, and consequently the public body politic is construed as a masculine space. Likewise, historically peoples of color were slaves engaged in physical labor, “the work appropriate to the body without a brain: unskilled, bottom-status, the most menial of the menial” (Mills 2001, 83). Mills (2001, 81) adds that their colored bodies symbolize the physical earth itself, implying that they “have the body that is the most thoroughly material, unable to escape embodiment, indeed nothing *but* a body, and so is not an equal member of a polis, which requires both body and mind for civic participation [emphasis in original].” Once again, the implication is that minority groups are incapable of leaving the realm of nature and enter society as equals, therefore justifying their subordinated status within the social contract.

For these reasons the social contract's postulation of a hypothetical state-of-nature is ideological and hegemonic to the extent that its representations serve to exclude naturalized groups from full membership in society. Foremost, this is because women and peoples of color (but also other groups) are naturalized as others since their bodies and bodily work are deemed too corporeal, as opposed to the disembodied and intellectual pursuits white men engage in.

Instead of being a contract in which all groups can enter the public sphere to participate as equals in political deliberation, the social contract is gendered and racialized in that equal recognition and inclusion requires the appropriate sort of masculine white body. This is necessary, argues Carole Pateman (1991, 68-9), because, insofar as the commonwealth is conceptualized as a unified body politic made flesh, its

unity is represented in a very literal sense by the person of their (absolute) master and ruler, Leviathan. They create him “to bear their person,” and, Hobbes states, “it is the *unity* of the representer, not the *unity* of the represented, that maketh the person *one*.” No such unity would be possible if both sexes took part in the constitution of Leviathan—there could be no representative figure who could represent the “person,” the bodily form, of both sexes.... If the representer is to be unified, he must be *he*. To attempt to represent both sexes within the figure of one master would be to dissolve his unity and oneness and to shatter political order [emphasis in original].

Likewise, the master ruler—*Leviathan* himself—must be white to ensure the unity and oneness of the commonwealth. Thus, the social contract is more accurately described as a contract between white men, as evidenced in the fact that white males disproportionately occupy institutional positions of power, while other groups are socially subordinated or excluded altogether from the political process. In chapter IV I revisit this social contract argument in the context of the politics of garbage disposal, once again demonstrating how political domination is “made incarnate in” the body politic’s “extended flesh,” traversing it “from head to toe” (Mills 2001, 76).

iii. Rawls’ Original Position

I argue that contemporary political liberalism likewise devalues the social status of naturalized groups. Drawing from Hobbes, liberalism rests on a representation of individuals as social atoms. Communities are represented as the sum of atomistic selves, each person acting in his or her own selfish interests, and the state is needed to ensure societal order. In principle,

citizenship is defined as a social contract between free and equal individuals who voluntarily come together to create the nation-state. Citizens are expected to sacrifice a certain amount of personal freedom (obey the laws) and perform certain duties (pay taxes) in exchange for state services (police protection, basic legal rights) that ensure the protection of individual liberty.

Rawls' (1971) theory of justice as fairness is arguably the most influential version of social contract theory in contemporary social/political philosophy. Like Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Kant's categorical imperative, Rawls postulates a hypothetical state-of-nature in order to develop the "original position" that defines his theory of justice. Rawls asks what principles of justice rational agents would contract to govern society's political institutions if they emerged from the state-of-nature and occupied an original position for this task? The hypothetical original position says that each rational agent monologically chooses principles from behind a "veil of ignorance" with regard to the position he or she will occupy in society: in terms of class position, social status, occupation, and also on the basis of identity traits such as gender, race, and sexuality. In accord with the Kantian deontological framework, this means that a rational person chooses principles that he or she would be willing to universalize—the principles that all rational agents would agree upon and abide to in all circumstances once the polis is established—regardless of situational contexts, disparities in natural abilities and intelligence, and other personal or group differences. Rawls says that there are two basic principles of justice that rational agents in the original position would choose. First, they would agree that each person has the right to the most extensive set of basic individual liberties—freedom of speech and association, equality of opportunity, the right to private property, political participation, police protection, etc.—compatible with the freedom of all others. Second, they would agree to a principle that social and economic inequalities are justified only if they benefit the least advantaged in society.

There are problems with Rawls' theory, however. Although there are multiple criticisms stemming from the communitarian tradition and the politics of recognition which I discuss in chapter V, at this stage I focus only on problems that particularly impact groups construed as being closer to nature. First, Rawls presupposes the public/private distinction, and this directly affects many women. Rawls maintains that politics is located in the public sphere, separate from the private sphere, and therefore principles are to be chosen by people outside the family. But, what happens within the family? Susan Moller Okin (1991, 185) argues that, because "those in the original position are only the heads or representatives of families, they are *not in a position to determine questions of justice within families* [emphasis in original]." The consequence is that issues deemed to be private family matters, such as domestic violence, marital rape, and the gendered division of household work, are suppressed from the public places of political deliberation.¹⁶ The concern, then, is that Rawls' theory of justice separates the public from the private sphere, depoliticizes the latter in the process, thus perpetuating women's social subordination.

Second, Rawls' theory presupposes that rational agents leave behind a hypothetical state-of-nature when they enter the public sphere to deliberate from an original position, therefore ignoring the significance of mothers "nurture" that teaches children the social skills necessary to engage in future public deliberations concerning the political administration of the polis. I am arguing with others that it is precisely because such reproductive work is associated with the body and nature that it is deemed less important than work undertaken in the political public realm. Work performed in the home is perceived as fulfilling the environmental background

¹⁶ Fraser points out that as of 1991 most legal jurisdictions in the U.S. did not recognize marital rape. Fraser (1991, 262) explains that "[a] wife is legally subject to her husband; she is not an individual who can give or withhold consent to his demands for sexual access. Consider also that even outside of marriage the legal test of rape is whether a 'reasonable man' would have assumed that the woman had consented."

conditions before “real” work begins in public institutions. The devaluation of bodily work within the family is evidenced by the fact that domestic work is not paid and does not contribute to the economy. Vandana Shiva (1997, 61) argues that this devaluation is premised “on the assumption that if producers consume what they produce, they do not, in fact, produce at all.” Regenerative work in the private sphere, associated with the body and nature, is thus opposed to productive work in the public sphere, associated with mind and society. And, because women’s reproductive work in the household is consumed by their families, it is deemed nonproductive, merely repeating the cycles of life, and therefore does not figure in national accounting systems that measure gross domestic product (GDP). The point is that, because women’s social roles and bodily work is identified with the state-of-nature of the private family, they are perceived as being less capable of adopting the standpoint of the original position that is a precondition for participating in the political public sphere. As a consequence the state is less obliged to provide social programs and services, such as socialized day care or paid maternal leave, which might foster women’s participation in public life and political institutions.¹⁷

The third and closely related concern is that Rawls’ neglect of the private sphere is consistent with the master subject’s denial of dependency on others. Liberalism’s atomistic self construes political agents according to a model of an autonomous and property-owning white male who participates in rational deliberations in the public sphere. The problem is that the ideology of the atomistic self conveniently hides the fact that political agents have their own basic needs satisfied by others (mostly women) within the home. Social contract theories such as Rawls’ ignore the fact that it is the devalued, feminine, bodily work performed by women in the

¹⁷ There are many ways to politicize the private sphere. In industrialized countries this can be done by democratizing the household along gender lines, and socializing some of women’s private work. Of key importance, as Fraser (2007, 31) notes, is that social welfare programs, such as free daycare or paid maternal (or paternal) leave, do not “stigmatize single mothers as sexually irresponsible scroungers.” Such measures would blur the boundaries separating the public and private realms.

household that ensures the fulfillment of men's basic needs and makes it possible for them to subsequently engage in masculine intellectual activities in the public sphere. Likewise, political elites devalue blue-collar work, such as garbage collection and janitorial duties—the menial work ideal to bodies without brains—that nonetheless must be performed by somebody for society to function. Political agents, to say the same thing differently, are able to engage in rational work since they are not responsible for time-consuming household responsibilities, such as raising children, nor responsible for manual work, such as cleaning-up society's trash, that is indispensable to the continued existence of the polis. The criticism, then, is that liberalism's conception of a political agent is premised on an unequal division of labor. Autonomous white men (including a few women and ethnic minorities) can actively participate in public affairs because the private sphere's household work and the polis' blue-collar work are disproportionately performed by women and minority groups. Thus, the social contract fosters a denial of dependency: the political agents who monopolize the public sphere judge a person's worth in terms of a hierarchy of rationality that devalues bodily and physical work, but on which they depend for survival.

Fourth, political liberalism supports the state's efforts to construe a homogeneous identity of its citizens, often on the basis of shared language, ancestry, or some other cultural characteristic. This implies that the similarities of citizens, or what they have in common, transcend their differences, thus reinforcing homogeneity.¹⁸ In principle, all citizens are represented as equals in the public sphere. Citizens are expected to abstract themselves from what differentiates them, such as personal and groups identity traits, disparities in income and resources, and physical and intellectual competences, in order to reach common social

¹⁸ In chapter V I will discuss the debate of similarities versus differences in the context of justice theories, or what is specifically referred to as the redistribution-recognition debate.

understandings. Equality is therefore conceptualized as sameness, thus reproducing a logic of identity because differences are reduced to unity, and universals abstracted from particulars.

The concern, as Young notes in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, is that privileging autonomy, impartiality, and sameness inadvertently excludes or disadvantages otherized groups whose identities fail to meet these political standards, even when they are accorded equal social status. David Kaplan (2003, 155) says that, unless such groups “adopt the identity of the mainstream—assimilate to a white-Anglo-heterosexual-male identity,” they are disadvantaged in the political process. Young (1990a, 10) adds that the impartial standpoint is in fact non-neutral and partial, representing a dominant cultural viewpoint, and therefore perpetuates “cultural imperialism by allowing the particular experience and perspective of privileged groups to parade as universal.” In this way liberalism’s rationalistic, impartial, universal perspective serves an ideological function. Alison Jaggar (1989, 158) says that, from the point of view of the master subject in a position of social power who perceives himself as a dispassionate and impartial decision-maker, “[t]he more forcefully and vehemently the latter groups [the others] express their observations and claims, the more emotional they appear and so the more easily they are discredited.” Claiming impartiality secures the authority of dominant groups since otherized groups who express diverging concerns (or dissent) are easily discredited as being biased and non-neutral special-interest groups. This is evidenced whenever women activists—Lois Gibbs (at Love Canal, NY), Penny Newman (at Glen Avon, CA), Rachel Carson, etc.—are dismissed as being hysterical housewives, bitter spinsters, or angry lesbians.

To summarize, social contract theories such as political liberalism perpetuate the oppression of some groups by postulating a hypothetical state-of-nature informed by hegemonic representations of nature and ideologies of what is natural. Foremost, too often women and

peoples of color are prevented from adopting liberalism's disinterested and impartial original position since their bodies permanently mark them as being closer to nature. Their bodies signify the earth itself—either because of their biological functions, social roles, and traditional work, or because of symbolic associations with the color of their skin—manifesting their embodied situatedness and partiality, as opposed to the impartial, disembodied, rational, white men who monopolize the political public sphere.

I suggest, however, that the uncritical acceptance of the impartial perspective is symptomatic of the master subject's denial of dependency on relations with others and the environments he inhabits. Indeed, careful analysis reveals that the impartial perspective is a conceptual abstraction since each person (including philosophers) inevitably engages in deliberation from a given social location. As I argue in chapter IV with reference to the mainstream environmental movement, this is simply to say that not only a person's worldview—a set of values, beliefs, assumptions, etc.—but also one's structural position within society's institutional relations and social status order—in terms of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc.—affects the way one represents and understands the world, and subsequently conditions one's political struggles. What social contract theorists too often forget is that valuing autonomy over relationships, universalism over situatedness, and similarities over differences reflect their privileged social location that is not always shared by others with different worldviews and occupying disempowered structural positions. Good intentions aside, claiming impartiality and universality denies that one is speaking from a social location, and this is problematic because it politically marginalizes groups who do not meet liberalism's universalized political norms. The result is that groups who “don't fit the norm” are socially subordinated within, or excluded altogether from, the political process. Thus, my analysis in chapter II ends by asking three

questions that inform the arguments developed throughout the dissertation. Which political norms are privileged and which ones excluded? And, ultimately, who decides? This is to say, whose voices are heard and whose are silenced?

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I used the concept of the master subject to uncover how modern science and the social contract presuppose ideologies of nature that devalue and marginalize some human groups—and also nonhuman beings, legitimizing the exploitation of nonhuman nature—thereby revealing how discursive representations are never neutral but rather politicized through and through. This conclusion is significant because it implies that not only representations of nature, but also geographical depictions of place and space, broadly construed, are politically-laden and relevant to environmental justice. Accordingly, an innovative feature of the dissertation is its emphasis on geography, and I suggest that the critical geography of David Harvey has much to offer.

Drawing from Harvey, in chapter III I argue that place and space are relationally constituted by social relations, practices and processes, rather than being pre-existing containers inside which relations, practices and processes occur. More specifically, I explore how urban and natural environments are materially and discursively produced by cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes that conjoin locality and globality—in other words, connect spatially-distant places—yet cause uneven sociospatial development and environmental injustices at various spatial scales. Incorporating geography into my analysis is important because it connects discursive issues of representation to a broader materialist analysis, a necessary task insofar as discourses are always already “embedded within

material practices and modes of social relating within institutionalized frames, and operate as forms of political economic power” (Harvey 1996, 221). Thus, geographical concepts of place and space provide the theoretical bedrock for the critical geography of environmental justice the dissertation develops.

CHAPTER III
POLITICIZING PLACE AND SPACE: TOWARD A CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. Introduction

In this chapter I develop a critical geography framework that politicizes place and space, uncovers how they are relationally constituted, and begins to explore the spatialities of environmental justice. Place and space are concepts encompassing multiple meanings, referencing spatial scales from the local to the global, and entwined with various cultural, social, economic, political, and ecological contexts. To name a few, space and place refer respectively to geographical settings, “such as milieu, locality, location, locale, neighborhood, region, territory.... city, village, town, megalopolis.... home, hearth, ‘turf,’ community, and nation” (Harvey 1996, 208). In addition, place and space apply to political and socioeconomic domains, such as public places of policy-making, institutional arenas of democratic deliberation, and spaces of production, consumption, and business transactions. Space and place may also designate symbols, metaphors, and psychological states. For instance, we speak of “‘material,’ ‘metaphorical,’ ‘liminal,’ ‘personal,’ ‘social’ or ‘psychic’ space” (Harvey 2006, 119), and also of spaces of identity and of “our place in the cosmos.... internaliz[ing] such notions psychologically in terms of knowing our place or feeling we have a place in the affections or esteem of others” (Harvey 1996, 208). Again, while some physical spaces are abstract and mathematical (Newtonian or Cartesian spaces), other places are qualitatively experienced and “lived through” (a person’s home), and others still are dematerialized and virtual (virtual spaces in cyberspace). The meanings of place and space, then, are only decipherable in specified contexts.

To briefly recapitulate salient points from the dissertation's introduction, theorizing geographical concepts of place and space is important to the scholarship of environmental justice for two primary reasons. First, it is important because environmental justice is inherently intertwined with complex sociospatial dynamics connecting place and locality with space and globality. Environmental justice is about place because environmental injustices impact and are experienced by people in communities embedded in local geographical settings. It is also about place because the identities of some cultural groups, such as American Indians and African Americans, are stereotyped and devalued, and the environments they live in are stigmatized, racialized, and exceedingly polluted, thus producing places of misrecognition. In addition, environmental justice is about place because it concerns groups of people mobilizing, engaging in political practices of resistance, and entering public places of policy to counter environmental injustices. Environmental justice is concurrently about space, however. This is because many environmental and social problems, such as climate change, species extinctions, ocean and atmospheric pollution, diminishing natural resources, escalating population, poverty and malnutrition, and increasing socioeconomic disparities between North-South hemispheres, impact global environments and are exacerbated by international financial institutions and political-economic processes extending across space. This is to say, the global political-economy produces and sustains spaces of inequitable distributions of economic goods and environmental burdens, and as a consequence differentially impacts spatially-distant urban and natural environments.

Second, theorizing place and space is important because spatial frameworks affect how environments (including nature) are perceived, are used as framing devices to define and identify ecological and sociopolitical issues, and entail different solutions to problems, including

different and sometimes conflicting understandings of sustainability and justice. The implication is that geography, justice, and sustainability should not be theorized independently because they interlock to conceptually condition one another. In other words, before talking about environmentalism we must grasp how different spatial frameworks—e.g. relational vs. absolute space—provide different representations of the world and conceptual maps for situating our place in this world, and consequently condition the ways we construe environmentalism—e.g. the mainstream environmental movement vs. the environmental justice movement. Furthermore, spatial frameworks are value-laden since dominant groups map the discursive landscape in ways that support their environmental agendas, while excluding alternative environmentalisms from the political arenas of deliberation and policy. Thus, environmentalism is inherently embedded in webs of power relationships, its spatial frameworks, representations, and discourses contested, hence politicized. For this reason a critical geography of environmental justice theorizes places, spaces, and environments dialectically. The benefit, as Thomas Simon (1990, 216) says, is that it analyzes environmentalism in contexts, particularly the political context, thus placing “the political to the forefront of ecological concerns.”

To this end, in this chapter I draw from Harvey’s *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* to theorize and distinguish place and space, while exploring how different spatialities are materially and discursively produced by complex networks of cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes. In the second section I discuss mathematical space, and in the third section I develop a phenomenology of lived place. Mathematical space is abstract and instrumental, representing Newton’s absolute receptacle-space. Phenomenological investigations suggest, however, that it is modern science’s over-reliance on sight, to the detriment of the other senses, that grounds the concept of mathematical

space. This is important because it implies that different spatial concepts are possible, namely relational space and place.

Therefore in the third section I theorize a geography of the body to argue that place is defined relative to a person's body. Place is the social space or lifeworld that a person inhabits, experiences in relationships with others, and actively builds through local cultural traditions, norms, values, and the spatial practices of everyday life. Furthermore, a phenomenology of lived place reveals the relational constitution of both places and identities embodied therein, thus supporting a concept of place-based identity. Quite simply, identity is not only construed through relations with human others, but also with nonhuman beings and surrounding geographical environments. I emphasize, however, that places, bodies, and identities cannot be abstracted from the global socioecological flows and political-economic processes stretching across space and connecting spatially-distant places.

In the fourth section I explore how place and space, broadly construed, interlock to dialectically produce one another. I develop a notion of "dialectical space" to emphasize that places and spaces are inextricably intertwined and relationally constituted, hence my frequent use of the term "places-in-space." Specifically, my argument is that the material and discursive production of contingent and qualitatively distinct places-in-space, such as urban and natural environments, is affected by: (1) cultural practices, social relations, patterns of valuation, and norms and traditions embedded in place; (2) political-economic processes and socioecological flows of capital, commodities, and natural resources extending across space; and (3) conversely, places-in-space affect the cultural practices, social relations, patterns of valuation, norms and traditions, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows which together produced and sustain them.

Finally, in the fifth section I uncover how economic globalization (or neoliberalism) impacts different places-in-space. I relate this discussion to Habermas' (1987) account of the colonization of the lifeworld by the systems, arguing that the instrumental spaces of the global political-economy are increasingly encroaching upon the places or social spaces of everyday life in order to facilitate the mobility and accumulation of capital. At the same time, I contend that globalization impacts people differently. Whereas disenfranchised groups are "stuck in place," global elites are able to transcend space and colonize spatially-distant places, ultimately producing uneven sociospatial development and corresponding environmental injustices at various spatialities.

2. Exploring Space

In chapter II I uncovered how modern science projects a mathematical understanding onto the world which is subsequently known through empirical investigations. In this section I supplement that discussion by examining science's representations of mathematical space. I begin by outlining basic characteristics of Newtonian space, and then explore the historical emergence of this concept with regard to the invention of the alphabet. This analysis is important because it suggests that different spatial concepts are plausible. Furthermore, phenomenology reveals that spatial representations are conditioned by human physiology, and I contend that it is modern science's privileging of sight, and devaluation of the other senses, which grounds the concept of mathematical space. The implication is significant: lived space/place is prior to disembodied abstract space.

i. Mathematical Space

The Western tradition's dominant conception of space is that of absolute, abstract, mathematical space. Modern science inherits the Newtonian conception of space as absolute, a thing-in-itself, a receptacle existing independently of the entities and phenomena therein. Absolute space is an abstract Cartesian realm, defined in terms of the mathematical coordinates of particles positioned on a mathematical space-time matrix. Harvey (2006, 121) says that Cartesian space "is usually represented as a pre-existing and immovable grid amenable to standardized measurement and open to calculation" through scientific experimentations. Dea (2009, 63) adds that "[i]t no longer matters where a motion occurs; the very same equation applies to it everywhere" because "individual entities are the indifferent manifestations of universal laws." In this way the nature of Newtonian/Cartesian space is fixed and stable, infinite and universal, isotropic and homogeneous, and systematically ordered, corresponding to the idealized geometrical space of Euclid.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* makes important contributions to an analysis of abstract space. Through the a priori projection of mathematical axioms onto the world, Heidegger (1962, §15) argues that modern science conceptualizes objects as present-at-hand; i.e. entities disclose themselves in terms of their mathematical properties against the background of an abstract and homogeneous space. Glazebrook (2000, 56) explains that by focusing exclusively on the present-at-hand of entities, "[t]he thinghood of things consists in their bodily occupation of and movement between spatiotemporal coordinates." In this way science conceives of matter inside a receptacle-space as "standing presentness" or "Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more" (Heidegger 1962, §18, 122). In accord with the metaphysics of substance, physical entities as inert bodies are "just there," occupying a mathematical "world-point" undistinguishable from

any other, and consequently they are placeless. Heidegger (1993b, 286) argues that, following Newton, “[e]ach body can in principle be in any place. The concept of place itself is changed: place no longer is where the body belongs according to its inner nature, but only a position in relation to other positions.” It follows that the universe is comprised of the totality of particles present-at-hand, each occupying a location in space identical to that of all others. Each particle occupies a unique position, excluding the possibility of two entities occupying the same mathematical point at a given time. The concern, according to Heidegger, is that scientific representations of mathematical space abstract objects from their relations (or the totality of involvements) with other entities which he argues define their place in the world.

Furthermore, Mark Gottdiener (1994, xiv) says that “[a]bstract space is the structural correlate of instrumental human action.” Because abstract space can be mathematically mapped, it becomes the instrumental space upon which engineers and urban planners construct cities, the instrumental space in which geopolitical conflicts occur, and the instrumental space through which capital is exchanged, circulates, and accumulates. It is also the space wherein the body politic is constructed and the social contract negotiated, the background container-space postulated in Hobbes’ state-of-nature thesis and Rawls’ original position, the given physical geography or ahistorical stratum belonging to nature. Gottdiener (1994, 121) adds that many disciplines, some currents of urban geography and ecology for instance, presuppose Newtonian space and therefore “can be characterized as essentially spaceless, because locational relations are conceived of as operating *within* space—that is, within a space acting as a container, more often than not hypothesized as being a featureless plain [emphasis in original].” Social processes are construed as happening inside a space rather than producing space, thus implying that geographical locations, territories, regions, and environments have always been there, unaffected

by society. In this way space itself is reified because it, and the social relations happening therein, become things subject to manipulation and control for instrumental ends.

The history of maps demonstrates one way this happens. Michel de Certeau (1984) describes how medieval maps emphasized significant places, such as sites of pilgrimage and places to spend the night, while also indicating distances in terms of approximate walking times. Early maps supplied performative information because they recommended actions to travelers. With the advent of modern science these maps were gradually replaced with ones abstracted from lived experiences. A map now emphasized abstract space, disengaging itself from “the pictorial figurations of the practices that produce it” and the spatial “itineraries that were the condition of its possibility” (de Certeau 1984, 120-1). Nowadays, state or provincial maps are mathematically standardized and emphasize the quantifiable properties of human spaces, such as the density of urban centers and the major highways that connect them, yet seldom indicate places of cultural, historical, or spiritual significance.¹ Evernden (1985, 101) states that, because maps focus on mathematical properties, they “cannot reveal the significant places since, by convention, there are none.” For this reason de Certeau claims that contemporary maps are “totalizing devices,” alienating insofar as they reduce the heterogeneity of places to a formal ensemble of homogeneous geometrical spaces and mathematical measurements.²

¹ Interestingly, GIS technology allows people to create maps in virtual space that indicate the location of whatever addresses or landmarks they may want to know, including places of cultural or spiritual significance; for example, a person can create a map of Montréal that indicates the location of McDonald’s, movie theaters, museums and churches. Yet, such maps are also construed in terms of the present-at-hand because entities are mathematically represented as objects inside an abstract and homogeneous virtual space. Thus, the virtual spaces made possible by GIS are visual spaces abstracted from our other sense-perceptions, and in the next subsection I conduct a phenomenology of spatial perception to show how the concept of mathematical space is grounded in modern science’s privileging of sight over the other senses.

² Similarly, Haraway says that in medicine the body itself is analogized to a receptacle-space in order to map it. She says that “[g]ene mapping is a particular kind of spatialization of the body” (1997, 141), and that “the immune system is a map” used to distinguish “the normal and the pathological” (1991, 204). Likewise, Appadurai (1996, 133) says that “statistics are to bodies and social types what maps are to territories: they flatten and enclose”;

Interestingly, science's privileging of mathematical space over lived place mirrors the historical transition of oral-based cultures into literate cultures. In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram describes how oral cultures did not have concepts of abstract space and linear time, nor did they conceive of time and space independently. Rather, their place-time worldview was based on the temporal unfolding of experiences embedded in the qualitatively distinct places surrounding them. Oral cultures told stories that recalled the history of the places they and their ancestors inhabited. In their stories a space was always experienced as a lived place, a qualitative matrix or field of experience that "spoke" to them as it recounted its history. In a way it was the sensuous places themselves that spoke through humans, their tales communicated through various story-telling rituals.³

Abram argues that the invention of the alphabet produced a novel experience, notably the experience of abstract space. Because writing is a solitary endeavor, it abstracts from social relationships with others, and disengages narratives from the places where lived events took place and were experienced. This happens because the act of writing "freezes" stories—it controls, objectifies, or, in Abram's words, "casts a spell" on the temporal flux of experience—with words typed onto white spaces of paper. Likewise, although historically reading was a

they are quantifying and homogenizing tools useful for purposes related to "taxation, sanitation, education, warfare, and loyalty."

³ Abram (1997) says that shamans performed specific rites in order to decipher the language of the other beings speaking in the shared places humans and nonhumans inhabited. A shaman listened to nonhuman voices, and communicated in turn with these beings. These experiences are not restricted to indigenous cultures, however. Klaver (2003) recounts a hiking expedition in the mountains of Montana during which an immense boulder tumbled down the side of a mountain. She says:

Astoundingly, a big stone was on the move by itself, inserting itself in our discourse, leaving us silent, awestricken.... By rolling downhill the stone rocks our world. It inserts itself into our dialogue, "speaks up," audibly. But all this is only possible because it *was already* part of our world, albeit latently so. We—and now I include *it*, as well—participated in the same space/place. At the moment it rolls down, our little club of philosophers becomes part of its world. We sense its being-in-the-world. At that moment the place has become *consciously* shared with.... a rock [emphasis in original] (Klaver 2003, 158-9).

For Klaver, the rock's downward movement unearthed meanings which "spoke" to the hikers. This suggests how even nonliving entities "speak" a language of their own that humans can decipher if they are attuned to its "speech."

social activity because texts were read out loud to groups of people, nowadays it too has become a solitary act that happens anywhere, usually far away from the places described in the text. Abram's point is that the alphabet "freezes" lived events—the world is now experienced as a thing, comprised of a series of fixed objects abstracted from our sensing bodies—in the process disconnecting us from the "felt" sensuousness of the places we all inhabit. The consequence is that the diversity of geographical places is translated into an abstract alphabetical space, the mere backdrop where human narratives unfold.

Moreover, Abram argues that the invention of writing made possible the idea of absolute time. In accord with Aristotle's representation of time as a number in motion traveling between two fixed points, scientific time is conceived as an infinite linear sequence of points, each representing a "now-point" separating the past from the future. Similarly, the act of inscribing alphabetic characters onto blank sheets of paper, just like reading, reduces a narrative to a series of now-moments—nouns "freeze" the temporal flux of experience—abstracting the narrative from its temporal embeddedness in distinct places. In this way the emergence of literacy cultivated a disembodied experience of time as a sequence of singular events, corresponding to the West's idea of history as playing out along an irreversible path, each occurrence itemizable and succeeding each other in linear fashion.

In short, Abram's argument is that the alphabet altered forever the ways humans experience the world, making possible concepts of abstract space and linear time, yet disconnecting us from our sensing bodies in relations with the places we inhabit. The implication is that abstract space does not exist a priori, independently of human experiences, and consequently different spatial concepts are plausible.

ii. A Phenomenology of Space

Phenomenological investigations reveal that our senses present the world to us—or rather open us toward the world—in specific ways, subsequently conditioning our understanding of this world. And, because the Western tradition privileges sight over the other senses, its knowledge of reality is informed predominantly by visual experiences. There are many reasons for this, and I presently focus on some salient points. Sight presents us with a singular and unified experience of the world. Visual perception can be analogized to the functioning of a camera; the world appears as a series of pictures or representations on the lens of the eyes, reflecting the objects existing “out there.” To the extent that vision functions like a camera, says Susan Sontag (1977, 23), “the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles,” similar to the way the letters of the alphabet “freeze” the flux of experience when we read or write. This is because sight perceives the world as a set of distinct objects located inside a background and homogeneous container-space. In this way “looking at” objectifies, similar to the way a camera transforms a subject into a photographed object when taking a picture. Furthermore, vision creates the impression of being neutral, passive, and detached observers of events in the world. Acquiring visual information is the least sensuous mode by which we interact with the world surrounding us. When we look, we are anonymous onlookers, dispassionately observing events happening at a distance.

I suggest that it is due to the non-involved experience of seeing that vision is privileged by Western philosophy and modern science. John Hanson (1977, 172-3) explains: “[t]he Cartesian idiom is filled with visual oppositions, the most famous being the ‘clear and distinct’ against the ‘dark and obscure.’ Similar expressions suggest that, for Descartes, discourse, thinking, and even existence were essentially visual in nature.” Likewise, much epistemology

adopts a “camera model” of knowledge since our mental representations are reliable and deemed justified true beliefs to the extent that we “become polished *mirrors* of that world [emphasis in original]” (Evernden 1992, 79), accurately depicting reality in accord with correspondence theories of truth. Again, scientific investigations rely on impartial and controlled observations, and these favor explanations of the world in terms of visual evidence. Science uncovers knowledge by a panoptic “looking at,” a detached and impartial epistemological stance conducive to measuring the quantifiable properties of entities inside a background container-space. The effect, according to Evernden (1992, 79), is that sight is deemed “the most trustworthy of our sources of knowledge—which leads us to concentrate increasingly on visual information, and even to contrive methods by which phenomena normally open to our other senses may be ‘translated’ into visual form.” It is for these reasons that Jonas (1966, 152) argues that the Western “mind has gone where vision pointed.”

While there is no doubt that vision provides much useful information, I point out that it also conceals. Glazebrook (2000, 117), paraphrasing Heidegger, explains that Being cannot be grasped by scientific representations that focus exclusively on the present-at-hand, “[h]ence its forgottenness in the age of the world picture.” In addition, seeing is unable to perceive relationships between objects, or the totality of involvements for Heidegger, because by definition relations are not things. The consequence is that to this day many scientific disciplines (albeit not all; ecology for example) continue to construe the relations between entities as being less important than the entities themselves, and this is because the mathematicity of objects—the quantifiable properties which are visually perceived and measured—is deemed most real and true. Moreover, the West’s over-reliance on sight, to the detriment of the other senses and corresponding ways of knowing, objectifies and instrumentalizes, presenting an image of the

world as encompassing an assortment of inert objects to be appropriated for human ends. I suggest that this happens because we have placed sight on a pedestal—only it provides objective knowledge, visually confirming the accuracy of quantifiable measurements—while devaluing the evidence derived from the other senses; i.e. smell, hearing, taste, and touch perceive subjective secondary qualities, unable to accurately represent the “real” constitution of the world. In this way qualitatively distinct places are reduced to mathematical space. The result, as I argued in chapter II with regard to modern science and nature, is the disenchantment of the world.

Phenomenological explorations reveal that the concept of abstract space is grounded in human physiology, specifically in the evidence proffered by the eyes. The implication is that vision is one way only of experiencing, relating to, and gaining knowledge of the world, and is in fact dependent on the other senses for its proper functioning. As such, a Cartesian pure mind would be unable to experience, touch, taste, smell, hear—hence acquire knowledge of—the world in any meaningful sense. It is only because we are embodied beings in relations with the world that we can experience, perceive, and ultimately know it. Jonas (1966, 154) specifies with regard to sight.

The basic fact, of course, is that vision is the part-function of a whole body which experiences its dynamic involvement with the environment in the feeling of its position and changes of position. The “possession” of a body of which the eyes are a part is indeed the primal fact of our “spatiality”.... Without this background of nonvisual, corporeal feeling and the accumulated experience of performed motion, the eyes alone would not supply the knowledge of [abstract] space.

Jonas is saying that seeing requires a body that can move around so as to perceive spatial properties like the dimension of depth. This means that disembodied sight, or the Cartesian view from nowhere, is an abstraction. Similarly, Marjorie Grene (1968, 173) recognizes

the priority, in experience, of the concrete to the abstract. The child’s dawning awareness of his body as *his* and of its localization at the center of things and events moving identifiably around it—it is this primary spatialization, so to speak, which underlies all

spatial concepts, physical, geographical, mathematical, or what you will [emphasis in original].

The implication is significant: phenomenologically, lived space is prior to abstract space. It also means that were we to place more importance to the evidence gained by different senses—touch, for example—our understanding of the world would change accordingly. It is for this reason that oral cultures experienced places as being animate, the earth sensuously enveloping its human inhabitants. Defining space in terms of its sensuous qualities “is not a more limited or narrowly focused apprehension” of the world, Tim Ingold (1993, 38) contends, but “one that rests on an altogether different *mode* of apprehension—one based on an active, perceptual engagement with components of the dwelt-in world, in the practical business of life, rather than on the detached, disinterested observation of a world apart [emphasis in original].” Likewise, to other species the world is experienced and perceived differently. To name a few, insects have compound eyes, honeybees perceive ultraviolet wave lengths to pollinate flowers, while bats navigate by processes of echolocation (sonar), an ability also shared by whales and dolphins. These examples support my argument. Rather than inhabiting a singular mathematicized world of things inside a container-space, it is our disproportionate reliance on visual information that grounds the concept of abstract space (and also linear time as Abram argues). Accordingly, our other senses, and the ways they perceptually present the world to us, provide different understandings of the world, and therefore different spatial concepts are plausible.

To recapitulate, phenomenological insights reveal that spatial concepts are affected by the ways humans sensorially relate to the world. This means that Newtonian mathematical space is one way only of conceptualizing space and experiencing the world, another being a concept of relational space/place which I develop throughout this chapter. “The difference in meanings,” according to Harvey (1996, 294), “is between putting down a marker such as 30.03°S and

51.10°W on a map of the globe or naming the city of Porto Alegre in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil.” I pursue this topic in later sections, so for now suffice it to say that there are multiple spaces, each affected by sensory experiences, but also by social relations, cultural practices, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows that connect, produce, sustain, and transform them (the meaning of these latter terms will be given shortly). At this stage of the argument what is most important to grasp is that space can be conceptualized as either abstract or relational in different contexts. This is because “spatialization is social practice, and there are several ways to spatialize” says Haraway (1997, 138). I am not denying that conceptualizing space as mathematical is useful to specific goals and appropriate in particular contexts—it makes possible the technological feats and innovations of engineering, for example. Indeed, the decision to privilege a spatial concept over another is informed by contextual considerations. What I am questioning is modern science’s assertion that mathematical space accounts completely for the one way the world is, independently of our sense-experiences and social relations embedded in place. To quote Harvey (1990, 216) again, there is no “‘universal’ language of space, a semiotics of space independent of practical activities and historically situated actors.” It is the failure to understand—or to “see”—how human perceptions and social relations affect conceptualizations of space that perpetuates spatial reification.

It follows that privileging one spatial framework over another, notably mathematical space over relational space, is not a neutral act. This is because a spatial framework provides a set of ordering principles for understanding the world and our place in it—rules for bounding, individuating, and ultimately defining objects, subjects, relations and processes—and different spatial frameworks provide different understandings of the world and reference systems for situating ourselves in this world. A person’s situatedness refers to her place, or more specifically

her body's place in the world. We are always already embedded in place, and therefore the places we inhabit in large part define who we are. Thus, before exploring how different geographies, such as urban and natural environments, are relationally constituted, space must first be distinguished from place, that is, the body's lived place.

3. Exploring Place

This section is dedicated to a comprehensive discussion of place. The section is divided into two parts. In the first part I theorize a geography of the body to argue that a defining feature of places, which I use interchangeably with lifeworld and social spaces, is that they are lived. We are embodied selves in social relations with others and the shared places surrounding us. We experience the places we inhabit and we actively construct them, both materially and discursively, through locally-based cultural practices, patterns of valuation, relationships, norms and traditions.

However, not only places, but also the identities embodied therein are relationally constituted. In the second part I explore this point, examining critically the idea of relational self to argue for a notion of place-based identity. Like places, the self is materially and discursively produced by local cultural practices, patterns of valuation, relationships, norms and traditions, but also by relations with surrounding environments, and it is through narratives that we develop our sense of place in the world. The point I stress is that places, bodies, and identities interact in complex ways, and thus they cannot be treated independently.

In the fourth section I expound on these claims to argue that places (but also the embodied identities therein) cannot be abstracted from the global socioecological flows and political-economic processes extending across space and connecting spatially-distant

environments. My argument is that multiscalar webs of socioecological flows, political-economic processes, social relations, and cultural practices produce and sustain distinct places-in-space for a time, thus making evident that urban and natural environments are relationally constituted instead of being absolute.

i. The Geography of the Body

Phenomenology is indispensable to theorizing place, in particular the thought of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty must be grappled with because both have greatly influenced environmental philosophy, especially recent developments in ecophenomenology that privilege place as the ontological foundation for environmental ethics. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's respective thought is dense, so I restrict my discussion to points relevant to my argument. I then build on this analysis by theorizing a geography of the body in which I argue that places are existentially "lived through," each experienced in terms of a different assortment of feelings, and these are performative insofar as "felt" experiences inform the social relations and spatial practices of everyday life. We do not just occupy a physical space, but actively construct our place in the world, thus making evident its relational constitution. Finally, I propose a distinction, defining concepts of place and space with reference to the body.

a. The Body's Place: Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty

Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutic in *Being and Time* makes an important contribution to the relational constitution of place, in particular his existentiells of being-in-the-world, the present-at-hand and the ready-at-hand, and building and dwelling. In short, existentiells are the ways that people engage with the world and which reveal the meaning of

existence. In defining the existentiells, Heidegger often uses adverbs—worldliness, spaceishness, ready-at-handness, etc.—instead of nouns to avoid reifying as objects—world, space, human action, etc.—what he argues are relationally constituted. This is important because, as Abram (1997) argues, writing and reading rely primarily on sight, in the process translating the temporal flux of experience into “static” nouns—hence things—and resulting in what Heidegger calls the forgetfulness of Being symptomatic of the West’s metaphysics of presence.

For Heidegger, the world is not an independent receptacle-space containing various objects. Nor is it the sum total of all entities occupying specific mathematical coordinates. Instead, the world is the relational-whole—a primordial totality of relationships—which humans are embodied in, surrounded by, related to, engaged with. Heidegger’s point is that we are always already in relations with the world, and this is why it is possible to encounter entities. The fact that a subject can encounter an object implies that the knower is already related to the object—“Being-already-alongside-the-world” to use a Heideggerian phrase (1962, §13, 88)—and consequently the relation between subject and object is prior to the subject-object differentiation. Michael Gelven (1989, 60) explains “that the presupposition of the very subject-object distinction is grounded in an already admitted basis of relationship—i.e., that the subject has a world in which the object can occur.” As such, we are never worldless since being-in-the-world constitutes our existential nature. It is because the world is so close and encompassing that most of the time we are blind to its ontological relational structure. Because the world is not a thing, often we see right through it, eluding scientific attempts to understand it in terms of objects inside a container-space.

Heidegger (1962, §15) argues that the world cannot be understood fully if we only look at it in terms of the present-at-hand (its quantifiable properties). Rather, the world is grasped in the

ways we existentially relate to it and the other beings we encounter in our day-to-day lives, and this is in terms of the ready-at-hand. At a fundamental level we relate to entities in terms of their usefulness. For example, I am aware of a saw as a tool that I will use to cut a log in order to start a fire in the goal of cooking the fish I caught earlier today. An entity's ready-at-handness is its tool-using character as revealed through its manipulation for a given purpose. This means that we do not understand the world by merely looking at it, bracketing the world of experience to become a disembodied Cartesian self observing from a view from nowhere. Rather, we understand the world by experientially engaging with entities through habitual activities for the sake of specific ends and future goals. We understand the world, in other words, by uncovering the ways we contextually relate to it through our intentional acts. The implication, then, is that the only way Descartes' pure mind could even begin to think about his existence and the reality of the external world is because he is always already in that world. Thus, Heidegger argues that, because we are always already in relation to the world, the world is a web of intentional relations, an involvement space that we existentially inhabit as intentional beings, thereby revealing the world's a priori meaningfulness.

Heidegger's phenomenological description of *in* refers to a feeling of familiarity that is experienced toward the places we inhabit, dwell, and relate to. Places are not a priori, abstract, spatial receptacles, but are rather the locations where we feel familiar and the places where we dwell intimately, while also building and cultivating them with attunement and care. *In* is not interpreted in the Newtonian sense—e.g. putting a rock into a separate container. We do not inhabit and move around inside an abstract receptacle-space, but are rather *in* the world because we are always already in relation with it and others in shared places (being-with-others-in-the-world). This is to say, with others we dwell *in* places that are familiar to us. Dwelling and

building are primordial ways of being-in-the-world according to Heidegger, in the process creating places for ourselves, establishing our place in the world.⁴ He stresses, however, that these places do not exist prior to our dwelling and building them. In his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking,” Heidegger (1993a, 355-6) explains with a bridge example.

The locale is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a locale, and does so *because of the bridge*. Thus the bridge does not first come to a locale to stand in it; rather, a locale comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge [emphasis in original].

Young (1997, 138) clarifies, saying that “[t]he bridge across the river gathers the shores, revealing a nexus of relationships, a context.” As we dwell and build things we establish relations between ourselves and entities, thus creating a place. For Heidegger, then, the real nature of space is revealed through our engagements with the world in terms of the ready-at-hand (and not the present-at-hand of modern science). As such, space is existential since it is phenomenologically “lived through,” defined in terms of our actions and relations with others and the world. Thus, Heidegger’s thought develops a relational concept of lived place through our habitual activities of being-in-the-world and the ways we relate to other *Daseins* in the shared world.

Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* enunciates its own theory of relational place, with particular attention to the body’s place. Merleau-Ponty departs from Husserl’s transcendentalism (or Cartesian cogito) as expounded in *Cartesian Meditations*. Through a process of “bracketing,” Husserl aims to purge consciousness from everything deemed extensional or external (this is Descartes’ *res extensa*). What remains is the pure stream of

⁴ Heidegger (1962) seems to say that only humans can be *in* place. Being-in-the-world is an existentials that belongs to *Dasein* only, and not to entities merely present-at-hand in the world. For example, two rocks that are present-at-hand are worldless and cannot “touch” each other since they are not aware. Heidegger appears to be saying that, even though nonhuman beings are in the world, they do not have a place or world in the phenomenological sense (they are not world-forming).

consciousness or transcendental ego, its defining feature being intentionality. Like Descartes, Husserl maintains that it is the disembodied mind who thinks and perceives. To the contrary, for Merleau-Ponty it is not consciousness that intentionally reaches out to mental objects of reference, but rather the body-self who relates to other bodies within the shared physical world they inhabit. Body-selves occupy an intersubjective field of experience, and they are always interacting with each other in common places. It is as bodies that others make themselves known to our sense-experiences, and it is as a body that each person is perceived by others. The implication is that it is not a disembodied mind who experiences and thinks, but rather an embodied self in relations with other bodies in the world (thus undermining Cartesian mind/body dualism). Abram (1997, 45), paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty, says that “[t]he living body is thus the very possibility of contact, not just with others but with oneself—the very possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge.” Merleau-Ponty’s point is that our sensory experiences of the earth and other bodies therein are prior to the mental space of intentionality that is Husserl’s focus. All experience, including thought, is fundamentally “carnal” because we are existentially tuned for relationships with embodied otherness, and indeed are human only in relations with others. Rather than conceiving otherness in opposition to one’s body-self, Merleau-Ponty conceives it in terms of reciprocity. This insight provides the foundation of his argument for participatory perception.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty develops further his thoughts regarding the body’s experiences of the world by exploring the reciprocity intrinsic to all sense-perceptions. Summarizing Merleau-Ponty’s argument, Abram (1997, 89) explains that “[t]he event of perception, experientially considered, is an inherently interactive, *participatory* event, a reciprocal interplay between the perceiver and the perceived [emphasis in original].” Although

experiences are always of something toward which our senses are directed or attuned (i.e. intentionality), perception is on-going reciprocity because it involves continuous exchanges of sensory information between my body-self and the other entities I relate to and perceive. A body-self can establish relations with another entity because they are both bodies interacting with each other and inhabiting the same place-world. In this way perception is participatory, “an attunement or synchronization between my own rhythms and the rhythms of the things themselves, their own tones and textures” (Abram 1997, 54). The implication is that whenever we perceive the world, simultaneously the world experiences itself through our body-selves. To put it another way, “to *see* is at one and the same time to feel oneself *seen*; to touch the world is also to be touched by the world [emphasis in original]” (Abram 1995, 75n35), thus manifesting what Merleau-Ponty calls the “reversibility” inherent in all perceptual experiences. Similar to Heidegger’s being-in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty’s argument is that participatory perception reveals how the body-self is always already in relation with other bodies in shared place-worlds or the lifeworld. For Merleau-Ponty, the lifeworld is the horizon of all meaningful sensory experiences; it is the given and self-evident earthly and sensory background that makes human cognition and interactions possible. The earth itself, as the lifeworld, is comprised of “an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles” (Abram 1997, 39). The earth, then, is not an object, but is rather the fundamental grounding for all lived experiences. Body-selves inhabit this earth, experiencing different portions of its sensory mosaic, and together the assortment of lived place-worlds comprises the topography of the earth’s lifeworld geography.

To quickly recapitulate, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty respectively argue that the body is always already in place, thus emphasizing the relational constitution of place. Simply existing is

to be and dwell in a place (being-in-the-world), and therefore emplacement is not a choice but rather a condition of existence (Heidegger). More precisely, it is the body-self, rather than a disembodied mind, who experiences and perceives the places she inhabits (Merleau-Ponty). Place is the socioecological space or lifeworld an embodied being existentially experiences and “lives through” in relations with others in the world. The important point, as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological analyses persuasively demonstrate, is that place is existential and existence is spatial.

b. Place Construction

On a basic level we exist in place geographically—i.e. physically and ecologically—our bodies embedded in landscapes of sensuous experience which satisfy organic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, and from which we derive knowledge of the world. Because places are “lived through,” we inhabit various places, each experienced in terms of a different assortment of feelings and emotions. Places encompass a “structure of feeling,” to use Arjun Appadurai’s (1996, 182) expression, that is experienced by a body. To give an example, places are defined as being close or faraway relative to embodied experiences. Places are near to the extent that we are familiar with them. Zygmunt Bauman (1998, 13) says that “[n]ear’ is a space inside which one can feel *chez soi*, at home; a space in which one seldom, if at all, finds oneself at a loss, feels lost for words or uncertain how to act [emphasis in original].” We feel at home in places we encounter in our daily routines. It is the pleasures of the body and memories of good experiences that attach us to specific places—“I feel good here!” Places that are far away and foreign, in contrast, are spaces we rarely enter, and about which we know little. Such places disrupt one’s sense of familiarity since we do not know what to expect, and for this reason we

might experience uneasiness or fear when encountering them. When we encounter faraway places we depart the places we are familiar with, sometimes feeling displaced, uprooted, and out-of-place. But, it is only because our bodies are always already in place that we can be displaced. This shows how each person is always already embodied in place, and it is through our embodiment that places are sensuously experienced as being near or faraway, comforting or threatening, and the like. For a sensing body in movement, the world is not an abstract space looked “at from the outside, with astronomical, cartographic clarity” says Bronislaw Szerszynski (2006, 96), but is rather a sphere we “inhabit from within,” and whose horizons change as we move from one place to another.

Moreover, feelings and emotions are performative insofar as experiences inform actions. Places are not only experienced, but they are also affected by spatial practices or bodily “ways of operating” (de Certeau 1984, 93). Appadurai (1996, 182) clarifies this remark, saying that a place is “a structure of feeling that is produced by particular forms of intentional activity and that yields particular sorts of material effects.” Through the movements and actions executed by emplaced and experiencing bodies, each person actively constructs the places she inhabits. For example, when I move into a new apartment my actions gradually transform an initially unexperienced space into a lived place, my place—I bring in my furniture, I decorate with plants and posters, I paint the walls, in the process building my home in a way that reflects my identity. In this way my actions are spatial practices that produce a place. To give another example, the general spatial form of a city is designed by urban planners, and the physical structures are built by construction workers. Yet, de Certeau adds that the spatial practices of pedestrians contribute to the production of a city’s social spaces. He says that the “intertwined paths” of the masses of walking pedestrians “give their shape to spaces. They weave places together,” thereby

spatializing the city through their bodily acts (de Certeau 1984, 97). The abstract designs of urban planners are built by construction workers and subsequently transformed into lived places by the pedestrian trajectories of walkers who appropriate the city's topography. This demonstrates how cities are social places, the product of multiple social relations including the spatial practices of everyday life.

Furthermore, cultural factors embedded in locality contribute to the material and discursive production of places. This is because the distinctive character of neighborhoods is shaped by the cultural practices, values, norms, customs, and traditions of subjects who live in them—e.g. ethnic neighborhoods, such as a Chinatown and Little Italy, are characterized by unique traditions, festivals, and architectural designs. In addition, places are discursively built using representations and symbols. Naming a place, for example, is a signifying practice that creates a place, ascribes a meaning to it, and allows us to identify it as the same over time. Conversely, locality is materially and discursively inscribed onto bodies through various cultural practices, values, norms, customs and traditions. Appadurai (1996, 179) observes that in many cultures

[c]eremonies of naming and tonsure, scarification and segregation, circumcision and deprivation are complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies. Looked at slightly differently, they are ways to embody locality as well as to locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities.

This is consistent with Michel Foucault (1984) who, throughout his writings, argues that power relations permeate bodies and produce them. Social norms, for instance, are inscribed onto bodies whenever we conform to our culture's rules of etiquette, dress codes, customs, etc., in the process shaping our bodies in specific ways. Together, these points demonstrate some of the ways that body-selves and the places they inhabit are relationally constituted, interacting to materially and discursively produce each other through the combined effects of people's

feelings, relationships, cultural norms, traditions, discursive representations, and the spatial practices of everyday life. We do not just occupy a geographical space, but actively construct our place in the world through our practices and relationships, roles and responsibilities, belief systems and values, and the stories will tell about them—thus places have histories.

c. Place and Space: A Distinction

At this stage of my argument I propose a place/space distinction. On the one hand, places are social spaces, defined relative to a body's movements and actions, and in terms of that body's experiences, practices, and relations with others in shared environments. Places are the lifeworld, the settings of cultural practices, social interactions, and communicative exchanges—in short, the intersubjective spaces of everyday life—and for this reason they are always “felt,” whether negatively (e.g. urban ghettos are perceived as threatening) or positively (e.g. “home sweet home” is familiar and safe). In general, places are associated with locality because most often we have feelings, memories, and experiences associated with places near us insofar as we frequently encounter them and engage with others therein. However, it is possible to have affinity toward places faraway if we previously experienced them—physically while traveling, but also through other means such as literature or newscasts—and preserve our memories.

On the other hand, space is more abstract, encompassing the multitude of settings a body has not experienced, and for this reason is usually associated with globality, territories situated faraway, spatially-distant with reference to the places a person inhabits. A person attaches little or no meaning to such spaces because she has not traveled to them, nor learned about them. Yet, spaces are not always located far away; indeed, spaces are localized whenever they are unexperienced and unknown to a person. Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera (1999, 43)

call such localities “empty spaces” since they are “places to which no meaning is ascribed.” Common examples include the homogeneous and instrumental spaces of airports, freeways, large parking lots, anonymous motel rooms, and the like. The implication is that, although localized and globalized spaces are abstract, they are not abstract in the Newtonian scientific sense of mathematical container-space. Instead, spaces are abstract to the extent that they are disembodied and unexperienced, thus substantiating my claim that places and spaces are relationally constituted and defined relative to embodied agents.

A benefit of my conceptual distinction is that it entails that place is not unequivocally conjoined with locality, nor is space unequivocally conjoined with globality, although often they do overlap. This is important because it allows for some crossover between place/space and locality/globality—i.e. place can be globalized (or, to say the same thing, globality can be placialized), and space can be localized (or locality can be spatialized)—a significant concession given the dialectical concept of places-in-space I will soon develop. As such, spatial dynamics are complex and “messy,” and locality/globality and place/space distinctions are blurred, shifting, and relative to phenomenological experiences.

Furthermore, because I define space and place in relation to the body, it follows that what I deem a place is a space to someone else, and vice-versa. The meaningful places I inhabit—Ottawa, Montréal, and my family’s cottage on Wolfe Lake near Westport—are spatially-distant and (most likely) unexperienced to persons living in countries across the world. For a citizen of Ghana who has not traveled and knows little about Canada, my places are represented as spaces, that is, they are unexperienced and unknown regions that are spatially-distant and empty of meaning. Bauman (2000, 104) explains that each person carries a mental map that depicts what she deems meaningful places and empty spaces.

Each map has its empty spaces, though on different maps they are located in different places. The maps that guide the movements of various categories of inhabitants do not overlap, but for any map to “make sense,” some areas of the city [or province, nation, world] must be left out as senseless.... Cutting out such places allows the rest to shine and bristle with meaning.

The point is that it is through a body’s affective ensemble of relationships, practices, traditions, norms and values that a person distinguishes place and space. Places are experienced as meaningful social spaces—through our social interactions, spatial practices, cultural values and norms they come to mean something to us, either negatively or positively—whereas unexperienced and unknown spaces are meaningless—hence they are placeless. Quite simply, physically we are located in space, and from a first-person point of view this space is placed.

The fact that places acquire meaning against the background of homogeneous empty spaces implies that place and space are inextricably interconnected and relationally constituted. In the fourth section I expound on this point to argue that place and space are not only defined relative to, and affected by people’s experiences, relationships, practices, traditions, and norms and values, but are also impacted by global socioecological flows and political-economic processes. More specifically, I argue that the global political-economy’s flows of people, information, capital, and natural resources across geographical spaces conjoin faraway places; hence my notion of dialectical space as places-in-space. Before undertaking this topic, however, I first discuss the body’s place as it pertains to the relational constitution of identity.

ii. Place-Based Identity

A phenomenology of the body’s place anchors the feminist notion of relational self. Susan Sherwin (1998) argues, in the context of medical ethics, that the Western representation of the atomistic self has resulted in a deep sense of frustration because of its abstract and

generalized nature. Drawing from the communitarian challenge to liberalism, Sherwin develops a concept of self that creates room for personal aspects of relationships in ethical analysis.⁵ This is important because “selves are inherently social beings that are significantly shaped and modified within a web of interconnected (and sometimes conflicting) relationships” (Sherwin 1998, 35). Several authors have developed this idea in the context of environmental philosophy. Notably, Plumwood (1996b) defends the relational self as an alternative to the atomistic self of rationalistic approaches.

In this section I analyze critically the relevance of relational self, in particular how it supports a notion of place-based identity, or “environmental identity” to use Robert Figueroa’s (2006) term. I argue that the personal and collective dimensions of identity are materially and discursively construed through relations with other beings in shared places, and it is through narratives that we articulate our sense of place in the world. My argument is that places, bodies, and identities interact to relationally constitute one another, and therefore cannot be treated in isolation.

a. Relational Self

The basic characteristic of the relational self is that a person’s identity is defined through relationships with others in shared communities, and cannot be conceptualized apart from these relations. The self does not exist independently and prior to its relationships since people become individualized through dialogical processes of socialization within the communities they inhabit. Specifically, identity is psychologically, cognitively, physically, and ecologically

⁵ The communitarian challenge to liberalism is centered on many points. To mention one point only, communitarians argue that liberalism’s conception of the self—as manifested in Rawls’ original position—is flawed since it conceptualizes persons to exist prior to their shared values, goals, desires, and interpretations of the good. In other words, liberalism’s self is too abstract and atomistic, neglecting the fact that people are constituted by their culture, history, traditions and society, that is, construed by relationships.

conditioned by relationships. Sue Campbell (2003, 32) says that on a psychological level we become human in relationships with others because “the abilities that are necessary to being a person, and hence to being a moral agent, develop only in relations with other persons and only with the support of shared communal practices that have the development of these abilities as their goal.” Relationships, then, are essential to self-esteem, moral development, and emotional well-being, while also shaping many of our individual personality traits.

The notion of relational self is further supported by research in child cognitive development that draws from constructivist epistemological theories (Pearce 1977). An infant does not perceive its environment in terms of distinct objects. For the infant, the self is everything because she has not learned to divide the world into entities with clearly delineated boundaries, including herself (as such there is no self). Until the child acquires the cognitive structures needed for conceptual thinking, the identity of a tree, to give an example, is undetermined because what we mean by “tree” does not exist independently of linguistic constructs. What are the physical boundaries of a tree? Does the tree include the roots, the soil through which nutrients are exchanged, the fungi that live inside the tree? To an infant the tree does not possess distinct boundaries and is continuous with its surroundings. Richard Evanoff (2009, 59) explains that, “[s]ince the world does not naturally divide itself into discrete objects, any linguistic classification of phenomena is in a sense arbitrary, although our constructions will nonetheless be constrained by how things actually are in the world.” As a child acquires the abilities for language and conceptual thinking through processes of socialization, she construes her self and world according to her society’s representations and worldview. In Euro-American cultures, the child learns to perceive the world in terms of opposing dualities, in the process

representing the self atomistically and separated from other humans, nonhumans, and the environment.

Furthermore, we are physically and ecologically dependent on our relationships with others to sustain our existence. Physically, the food we eat, the houses we live in, and the clothes on our backs is grown, built, and sewed by people in our communities, but also by people in spatially-distant places. In addition, the body itself is produced through labor (blue-collar and white-collar work produce different muscle tones), consumption practices (clothes shape physical appearances), and eating habits (meat-based and vegetarian diets have different health impacts). On an ecological level we depend on healthy environments for food, fiber and fuel, but also for oxygen and other molecular compounds. Proper metabolic functioning requires the continuous exchange of gases and fluids with our immediate surroundings. Paul Shepard (1969, 2) says that “[t]he epidermis of the skin is ecologically like a pond surface or a forest soil, not a shell so much as a delicate interpenetration. It reveals the self ennobled and extended.... as part of the landscape and the ecosystem.” It is also interesting to realize that most organisms are themselves complex ecosystems. This is because most species, including humans, contain a variety of microscopic organisms living inside their digestive tract. A descriptive account by Lewis Thomas (1975, 86) clearly demonstrates this.

There they are, moving about in my cytoplasm.... They are much less closely related to me than to each other and to the free-living bacteria out under the hill. They feel like strangers, but the thought comes that the same creatures, precisely the same, are out there in the cells of seagulls, and whales, and dune grass, and seaweed, and hermit crabs, and further inland in the leaves of the beech in my backyard, and in the family of skunks beneath the back fence, and even in that fly on the window. Through them, I am connected: I have close relatives, once removed, all over the place.

Not only is the concept of relational self applicable to social relationships, but it applies also to ecological relationships because on a physiological level “[t]he world is, indeed, one’s extended

body” (Callicott 1989b, 113). To be human, then, is ultimately to depend on others. Or more accurately said, to be human is to be interdependent with humans, nonhumans, and the environment itself because we are always already in interpersonal and mutually constitutive socioecological relationships with them.

The concept of relational self is not immune to criticisms, however. Wendy Donner (1997) argues that, although some accounts of rationalistic self are appropriate objects of feminist critique, a distinctively bounded self, characterized by reason and autonomy, is an indispensable aspect of emancipatory politics. This is important because too much emphasis on relations seems to imply that it is impossible for subjects to distance themselves from these relationships in order to critically evaluate them, and subsequently accept or reject these relations. This is a valid concern, yet I maintain that Plumwood’s (1996b) notion of relational self supports the autonomy of persons. The relational self should not be confused with the ecological self of deep ecology.⁶ Relational self does not wholly succumb to holistic interpretations because a person is autonomous, even though she is in relationships with others in shared communities and surrounding environments. According to Plumwood (1996b, 172),

[o]n this relational account, respect for the other results neither from the containment of self nor from a transcendence of self, but is an *expression* of self in relationship, not egoistic self as merged with the other but self as embedded in a network of essential relationships with distinct others [emphasis in original].

⁶ Some deep ecologists contend that developing an ecological self involves a process of identification with nature. Naess (1989) argues that the self transcends the narrowly bounded and isolated ego. He draws from the Buddhist conception of no-self to argue that Self-realization is understanding that self includes the whole world with which we are related and inextricably embedded. To the extent that a person develops an ecological conscience, compassion toward the nonhuman world will follow naturally.

The concept of ecological self is not devoid of difficulties, however. Salleh (1984) argues that the ecological self is an abstraction. She says that when a deep ecologist maintains that he is the rainforest and the rainforest is him, he is engaged in a process of self-aggrandizement whereby the ego absorbs everything into himself, in the process disregarding the differences that define nature’s integrity. In addition, overemphasizing that humans are part of nature may lead to a surrender of self to the larger whole, with corresponding political impacts as instantiated in Nazism’s organicist totalitarianism. I discuss these criticisms again in chapter V in the context of the politics of place, identity, and difference.

I stress that identity is not dependent but is rather interdependent, arising in relationships with others. Relational self recognizes our distinctiveness and also our continuity with others. This is because by definition a relation entails that two things exist, in this case a distinct self who relates with someone or something else (and vice-versa). The implication is that we are conditioned by relationships but likewise influence them, thus enabling the possibility of critiquing these relations.⁷ Plumwood's critical point is that autonomy and difference do not entail hyper-separation or radical exclusion, just like continuity, similarities, and relationships do not entail sameness or identity. Consequently, relational self "enables a recognition of interdependence and relationship without falling into the problems of indistinguishability" (Plumwood 1996b, 172). Because both differences and similarities with others are recognized, each person retains her individuality, integrity and uniqueness, in contrast with the "oceanic" merging of self with the universe practiced in some practices of meditation and advocated by some deep ecologists. To recapitulate, the self does not stand in absolute opposition to other selves (dualism), nor is it fused with others and the places they inhabit (monism), but is rather in webs of relations with others in shared places. The notion of relational self thus provides a basis for undermining the master subject's atomistic representation of self, a topic I revisit in chapter V in the context of the politics of place and space.

⁷ This closely resembles the Gadamer-Habermas debate, particularly the issue concerning the role of tradition and history in understanding. Gadamer (1976) argues that each person always already belongs to a history, tradition, and culture that provide the hermeneutical horizon of pre-understanding that makes understanding possible. In contrast, Habermas (1980) says that tradition and culture also transmit prejudices that systematically distort communication. Habermas worries that Gadamer precludes the possibility of distancing ourselves from our history, tradition, and culture—stepping outside one's horizon or lifeworld—in order to critique them.

Ricoeur's (1981) dialectic of distancing and belonging provides an answer to the impasse. Ricoeur argues that no opposition exists between our historical belonging to a culture, tradition and history, and the possibility of distancing ourselves to critique them. Although we always already possess a horizon of pre-understanding that makes understanding possible, distancing allows a person to step away from her tradition, history, and culture in order to engage in an objective critique of ideology. For Ricoeur (1981, 91), distancing is the condition for the "emancipation of the text" since it "constitutes the most fundamental condition for the recognition of a critical instance at the heart of interpretation." I contend that Plumwood's notion of relational self is consistent with Ricoeur's dialectic of belonging and distancing.

b. Multiple Narrative Selves

The concept of relational self implies that identity is not stable, nor is it singular. Rather, it entails that we possess multiple and overlapping identities, each contingent on a different assortment of socioecological relationships. While some aspects of identity are personal—our physical appearance, sense of humor, intelligence, etc.—other aspects are collective—our religion, nationality, cultural history, etc. I emphasize, however, that the personal and collective dimensions of identity do not oppose each other. Instead, they are mutually constitutive because individuals are always already in relations with others in shared environments. This means that any personal/group identity distinction is sociological rather than ontological.

I suggest that the boundaries of the self mirror how we perceive what is important to us; they are a means of self-identification, a way to create a place for ourselves in the world. We define ourselves in terms of multiple personal and group traits—on the basis of hobbies, talents, and individual preferences, but also in terms of gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.—and social roles—on the basis of employment, political affiliation, citizenship, etc.—and also in terms of the environments we inhabit—household, neighborhood, city, countryside, nation-state, etc. The traits, social roles, and places we use to define ourselves reflect the socioecological boundaries of the self we deem most important in a given context, yet we can always define ourselves differently. Lisa Kretz (2005) says that “[a] sampling of the wider selves I take my self to be include: a human-self, a family-self, a partner-self, an animal-self, a sister-self, a friend-self, a daughter-self, a dog-caretaker-self, and a living-organism-self.” Kretz is saying that the boundaries of her self are narrow or wide depending on the individual and collective traits, social roles, and human and nonhuman beings she identifies with. For example, if I identify myself primarily in terms of my Canadian-self, then, what I share in common with other Canadians—the

country's history, the public health care system, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), hockey, the national anthem—is most important to my identity.⁸ In this case I define my identity against those of other cultures and nationalities, potentially fostering exclusions. In contrast, if I define myself in terms of a social-self or human-self, then, what is most important to my identity is what I share with other humans, notably self-consciousness, language, the ability to reason, and the need for love and friendship. Consequently, I tend to identify myself apart from, and radically different than, nonhumans and the natural realm. Again, if I identify myself primarily in terms of an ecological-self or animal-self, then I relate to nonhumans and affirm my continuity with them since I recognize that we share the need for adequate nutrition and the desire to avoid pain (among many other things) to ensure survival. I am not questioning the idea that living beings possess a distinct center of individuality. I am simply stating that the distinctions between one's self and others, and between one's self and the environments we inhabit, are not as clear as the atomistic conception of the self implies because we have multiple, overlapping, relationally constituted identities. What I am saying is that a unified self arises as a function of one's many socioecological selves between which we navigate—a unity in diversity—each applicable to the various socioecological communities we inhabit.

Furthermore, it is through narratives that we articulate our personal, collective, and ecological identities, and these are filled with spatial metaphors insofar as they locate and situate our place in the world. When we talk about identity we “make frequent reference to spatial

⁸ There is no singular Canadian identity, yet other shared characteristics include: Tommy Douglas, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the RCMP or Mounties), Neil Young, the Group of Seven, the Prairies, the Stanley Cup, Stompin' Tom Connors, the Canadian Shield, multiculturalism, Tim Horton's, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Prime Minister, les Acadiens, the Governor General, Parliament Hill, Wayne Gretzky, poutine, beavers, the oil sands, maple syrup, Céline Dion, caribou, the loonie and toonie, the maple leaf, Molson Canadian beer, cottage country, Peter Mansbridge, the Maritimes, large per capita ecological footprint, Canada Day, Don Cherry and Ron MacLean, Hockey Night in Canada, First Nations, snow, the windchill effect, Canada geese, bilingualism, BC “bud,” Leonard Cohen, Québec, Margaret Atwood, residential schools, national parks, Ben Johnson, the peacekeepers, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Mr. Dressup, the Rockies, polar bears, le Bonhomme Carnaval, the Arctic, Winterlude, curling, Mordecai Richler, the Tragically Hip, etc.

metaphors—we talk of the boundaries of identity, of diaspora and of mapping identity” explain Paul Cloke and Jo Little (1997, 279), revealing “that identity is movable, varied and contested.” To give an example, my identity is articulated in a spatial story that connects my life experiences to spatially-distant cities, namely Vancouver, Montréal, Ottawa, Halifax and Denton, which I inhabited over the course of my university studies. Narratives allow us to construct a cohesive identity while also making the world intelligible. Yet, our narratives concerning ourselves and our place-worlds are socially constructed since they are open-ended and never complete. Benhabib (1986, 349) explains that “the past is always reformulated and renarrated in the light of the present and in anticipation of a future.” Moreover, we are not the sole authors of our identities and the stories we tell about them because we are in relations with others in shared places, and these people play a role in our stories. Individuals are not social atoms who are separate from the collective and who narrate their identities in isolation, but rather, as Kaplan (2003, 95-6) says, “[m]y identity is tied up in larger group identities, as well. Like a personal identity, our collective, political, and social identities are partly chosen, partly inherited, constituted by the stories we tell about it.” Although our narrative identities are socially constructed, they acquire a sense of stability to the extent that they are collectively authored and grounded in shared histories, cultural practices, traditions, values, and also in shared places.

Kwame Anthony Appiah (1994, 154) clarifies the previous remark, saying

my identity is crucially constituted through concepts and practices made available to me by religion, society, school, and state, and mediated to varying degrees by the family. Dialogue shapes the identity I develop as I grow up, but the very material out of which I form it is provided, in part, by my society.

For Jim Cheney (1995, 33), this latter point implies that narratives “include not just the human community, but also the land, one’s community in a larger sense.” This is because the relations

that define a community are broader than the human community. They include the entire ecological community, thus suggesting a concept of place-based identity.

c. Environmental Identity: The Case of San Luis

The concept of relational self entails that identity is not only construed through relations with human others, but also with nonhuman beings and surrounding environments. Identity must be rethought in terms of relationships with different beings within both social and ecological environments. Therefore it is not just social and cultural traits, roles, relations, and practices that shape one's identity—or, more accurately said, a person's multiple and overlapping identities—but also the environments one inhabits. This opens the possibility of reconceptualizing identity in terms of place-based identity, which I use interchangeably with Figueroa's concept of environmental identity. Figueroa (2006, 371-2) defines "environmental identity" as

the amalgamation of cultural identities, ways of life, and self-perceptions that are connected to a given group's physical environment... Environmental identity is closely related to environmental heritage, where the meanings and symbols of the past frame values, practices, and places we wish to preserve for ourselves *as members of a community*. In other words, our environmental heritage is our environmental identity in relation to the community viewed over time [emphasis in original].

Culture is inseparable from environments as evidenced in the distinct place-based identities of different groups. To give a few examples, in England, images of the countryside reproduce and sustain "a mythical and nostalgic white heritage" (Agyeman and Spooner 1997, 197). Again, Latino environmental identity is historically cultivated through their environmental values and sustainable practices, such as land-based economies centered on farming and herding, that define their cultural lifestyles, beliefs, norms and traditions (Figueroa 2001). Sometimes, however, a person's environmental identity is construed in terms of negative signifiers. As I demonstrate in chapter IV, Mills (2001) argues that African Americans are represented as "black trash" since

their identity is associated with the polluted urban environments they often inhabit as a result of the U.S. legacy of racism. These examples show that identity is relationally conditioned by the places we inhabit, and because emplacement is a condition of existence, each person has a place-based identity. For this reason place-based identities are not restricted to the natural environments people inhabit, but also include urban environments, or more generally the places where they live, work and play.

In chapter IV I will focus mostly on urban environmental identities, so now I present an example of rural place-based identity to elucidate my argument. Devon Peña (2002) describes how the ancestors of the Latino residents of San Luis, Colorado, began using acequias over 400 hundred years ago. The acequias are a capillary network of ditches that collect water from melting snow in nearby mountains, and transport it to the fields below. The acequias allowed the first Latino settlers of the region to practice sustainable agriculture, and to this day ensure nutritional sustenance. In addition, their cultural practices, values, and traditions have developed alongside the stories and narratives that connect the community and the land in meaningful ways. This refers to what Robert Figueroa and Gordon Waitt (2008, 328) call “moral terrains,” “the web of values layered over places through discourses that establish normative practices and socio-environmental belonging.” It is also consistent with what Cheney (1995, 31) calls “bioregional narratives,” stories that bind together “self and geography” and which “locate us in the moral space of defining relations” that includes the self, community, and surrounding environment. For the community of San Luis, the mountain watershed is a meaningful and normative social space, providing a geography of environmental values, and having shaped their biocultural identity across multiple generations—an environmental heritage according to Figueroa (2006). The community identifies itself materially, culturally, and spiritually with the

surrounding landscape, and it is through narratives that place, memories, and identity are articulated into a meaningful whole.

Peña explains that the place-based identity of the residents of San Luis is threatened by logging operations that began on a nearby mountain two decades ago. Historically, the mountain is on land that the community perceives as a commons, providing the water flowing into the acequias. Yet, private interests (the Taylor ranch) claim to legally own the watershed (although litigation is still pending), and to this day logging operations continue. Logging materially, culturally, and spiritually threatens the place-based identity of the San Luis community. First, logging exposes the ground to more sunlight, increasing the rate of snowmelt and flows of water from the mountain watershed. The problem is that by late summer the acequias are dry because there is no mountain snow left to replenish them, consequently jeopardizing agricultural sustenance and economic livelihood, and making it difficult to satisfy basic nutritional needs. Second, logging disturbs the sense of place and identity of the local community. Peña (2002, 66) explains that logging destroys the watershed's ecological qualities that act as "biophysical anchors of memory" for place-based identity, thus "producing a sense of being violated and emptied of spirit." A local resident declares:

How can I ever be the same in this place? Taylor has raped the mountain. He has logged it until the soil bleeds, until the land flows off the mountain and right into the creeks and acequias like so much debris and sediment. I am torn up by this violence against the trees. Taylor has clear-cut my soul (qtd. in Peña 2002, 66).

Logging not only threatens the community's traditional ecological knowledge and the environmental management practices which satisfy basic physical needs, but also ruptures the place-based memories, spiritual beliefs, and cultural values and traditions that were historically

cultivated through relations with the mountain watershed, and which to this day define their sense of place.⁹

Finally, the case of the San Luis community shows that places, and the place-based identities therein, are not only shaped by material, cultural, and spiritual factors embedded in locality, but are also affected by socioecological flows and political-economic processes extending across globality. For instance, private property interests are protected by national laws, and corporate logging practices are linked to the global political-economy through international trade agreements (e.g. regarding the export of tree products). This is important because it means that places cannot be abstracted from the global political-economy's socioecological flows of capital, commodities, and natural resources that connect spatially-distant environments. Accordingly, the purpose of the next section is to explore how places and spaces, broadly construed, dialectically constitute each other and are accurately represented as places-in-space. My argument is that cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes interlock to materially and discursively produce contingent and qualitatively distinct urban and natural environments.

4. Dialectical Space: Places-in-Space

A critical geography of environmental justice encompasses a materialist analysis, uncovering the cultural, social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics connecting place and space. In previous sections I argued that place and space are defined relative to a body's

⁹ There are endless examples of disrupted place-based identities. Johnson (2002, 274) says that if salmon become extinct, many American Indians in the Northwest "would cease to be 'Indians' because... an integral element of their cultural identity—from spiritual practices to economic livelihood—is lost. They would still be Indians racially, but they would not be Indians as they define themselves, and as they have a right to define themselves." Again, for the Anangu people in Australia, Uluru (or Ayers rock) in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park defines their environmental identity, and so when tourists climb the rock they disrespect the environmental heritage of the Anangu who themselves do not climb (Figueroa and Waitt 2008).

sensuous experiences, spatial practices, social relations, and cultural traditions, norms and values. In short, places are familiar and experienced by a body who engages with them, while space refers to the assortment of places that are unknown and unexperienced to that body. In this section I argue that the relationships between place and space are dialectical. For my purposes I borrow Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin's (1985, 136) understanding of a dialectical relation as one where a community (or place) is "a contingent structure in reciprocal interaction with its own parts and with the greater whole [or space] of which it is a part. Whole and part do not completely determine each other." A dialectical analysis stresses heterogeneity and development. It resists ascribing fixed traits and properties to entities such as communities, localities, and places. It also resists understanding processes in terms of unidirectional, mechanistic, and causal relations. Treating the relationships between place and space dialectically entails that "what goes on in a place cannot be understood outside of the space relations which support that place any more than the space relations can be understood independently of what goes on in particular places" (Harvey 1996, 316). For Harvey (1996, 426), the implication is that, while communities (and people therein) are significant sites of agency in the construction of localities, they are moments in a social process and "cannot be understood independent of the [global] social processes that generate, sustain, and also dissolve them."

Space and place are relationally constituted, and I suggest that a useful concept to understand such processes is dialectical space: the material and discursive construction of places-in-space is affected by intricate networks of cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes, and, conversely, places-in-space transform the practices, relations, flows, and processes that produced and sustain them. To put it more precisely, the production of places-in-space, such as urban and natural environments, is a

complex dialectical process that can be understood as encompassing three interlocking and interpenetrating stages that internalize the effects of the others:

- 1) Local cultural practices, patterns of valuation, social relations, and norms and traditions shape local environments, and also affect global political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, and socioecological flows extending across spatially-distant places or global environments (i.e. extending across space).
- 2) Global political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, and socioecological flows shape spatially-distant places or global environments, and also affect local cultural practices, patterns of valuation, social relations, and norms and traditions therein.
- 3) Local and global environments in turn transform the cultural practices, patterns of valuation, social relations, norms and traditions, political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, and socioecological flows which together produced and sustain them.

In my analysis, cultural practices and social relations are identified with Habermas' (1987) concept of the lifeworld which, to say it again, I am using interchangeably with social space and place. The lifeworld constitutes the intersubjective background horizon of social norms, assumptions, and meanings that make communication possible. According to Benhabib (1986, 239), it is "the domain of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization." The lifeworld is the communicative space of social relations, of cultural practices and patterns of valuation, of discourses and imaginaries which in sum define and mold distinct places. In contrast, in my analysis socioecological flows and political-economic processes are identified with global power politics, financial governing bodies, and multinational corporations acting across, connecting, and shaping spatially-distant places. They are similar to Habermas' systems

of capital and bureaucracy acting strategically, and functioning independently of the lifeworld's communicative foundation.¹⁰ In a globalized world the dialectical relations connecting, producing, and sustaining places and spaces are multiple, overlapping, heterogeneous and complex. For this reason I restrict my analysis to two spatialities: urban environments (cities) and natural environments (nature).

i. Urban Environments

Cities are home to billions of humans worldwide, and escalating numbers of people inhabit urban centers. Presently, 50 percent of the global population lives in urban environments, estimated to rise to 67 percent by 2030 (Van Wagner 2008, 15). At first glance, a city appears as a physical structure that is relatively fixed in a localized space. It is a center of jurisdiction responsible for the administration of social services, a space for business transactions, commodity production, and activities of consumption, a setting where law and order is enforced, and a place characterized by unique symbolic monuments and cultural signifiers. According to a Newtonian representation of space, the city is a receptacle inside which social relations occur, and according to a Marxist representation, a city is a capitalist space produced by economic processes of capital accumulation and relations of class struggle. However, both accounts are increasingly challenged as oversimplified in a globalized world. Although many aspects of our lives, such as a job, family, and sense of identity, appear to be firmly entrenched in the local places we inhabit—either occurring in a place (Newtonian), or conditioned by those who own that place's means of economic production (Marxist)—intensifying patterns of global

¹⁰ Summarizing Habermas' framework, Fraser (1991) specifies that there are in fact two systems and two lifeworlds. The systems include the economy and the bureaucratic state, and are concerned with the material reproduction of society. The lifeworlds include the nuclear family and the democratic public sphere of political deliberations, and are concerned with the symbolic (or cultural) reproduction of society.

connectivity reveal that identities, bodies, communities, and the environments we inhabit are increasingly impacted by global socioecological flows and political-economic processes connecting spatially-distant places. For this reason a discussion of globalization is in order.

Globalization has deepened processes of global connectivity. Although contemporary globalization encompasses multiscalar dynamics, Nick Stevenson (2003, 156) says that in general it “describes a process in which the world’s financial markets, political systems and cultural dimensions form increasingly intense relationships.” Anthony Giddens (1990, 64) likewise understands globalization “as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.” Technological developments, for instance, foster communication and social interactions to an unprecedented extent, speed, and intensity. Cell phones, the television, the internet, and laptop computers transcend space and time, allowing people to interact instantaneously with others throughout the world, and providing access to vast sources of information. At the same time, global capitalism is no longer impeded by nation-states since capital is exchanged and moves freely across national borders; for example, the oil fueling our cars and the garments on our backs originate in spatially-distant places and circulate via the global political-economy across instrumental spaces. In addition, the speed of global travel and increased international migration is challenging identity on the basis of a homogeneous culture belonging to a particular territory or nationalistic attachment to a homeland. Migration and the ease of travel foster diversity and multiculturalism; Toronto, for example, is comprised of almost 50 percent minority groups for whom English is not their primary language, with their extended families living in different countries. “The world is flat” proclaims Thomas Friedman (2006), and a useful metaphor for conceptualizing globalization is that of “flows” of commodities,

capital, images, information, natural resources, and people traveling relatively freely across space. Interestingly, Joachim Blatter et al. (2001) maintain that processes of globalization are more accurately described in terms of “glocalization” because this notion makes clear that global flows are related to processes of localization. Following Roland Robertson, they go on to say:

Glocalization, a combined notion of globalization and localization, refers to the fact that the current explosion of interterritorial linkages and communications is not just a phenomenon of increased “horizontal” interaction, but also has to be understood in its “vertical” dimension, characterized by direct mergers of local and global processes (Blatter et al. 2001, 6).

I interpret Blatter et al. as saying that glocalization is characterized by a two-dimensional dialectical process of intensifying cultural localization, on the one hand, and intensifying economic globalization, on the other hand. In short, globalization understood as a phenomenon of glocalization connects locality to globality and place with space, while blurring the boundaries separating them. It is for this reason that I conceive of cities as places-in-space to emphasize the relations connecting them to various spatialities.

In the globalized world, Harvey (1996, 294) states that an urban environment, such as New York City or Los Angeles, is a produced space, more or less stable, more accurately represented as a permanence or crystallization in the “spatio-temporal dynamics of socio-ecological processes” that include global flows of information, capital, people, commodities, and natural resources. Analogously, Manuel Castells’ (1996) “network society” describes cities as nodes in complex networks of information, people and commodities, bounded by social, cultural, and historical norms at local and national scales, and deeply entrenched in the global political-economic system. Harvey and Castells respectively argue that, instead of being stable and durable places, urban environments are fluid, always changing and transforming themselves in response to cultural, social, economic, political, and ecological dynamics happening in local

places and circulating across global spaces. Locality is not an isolated and self-contained cultural, social, political, economic, or ecological unit, but is rather “a node in networks of production, distribution, and consumption, which contain multiple sites of ecopolitical cooperation and intervention” (Zehle 2002, 337). The point I emphasize is that neither local cultural practices and social relations, nor global socioecological flows and political-economic processes are solely responsible for the spatial production of cities, and consequently place and space cannot be treated in isolation. Cities are produced by the place-based cultural practices and social relations of everyday life, yet urban development must be located within the larger context of the global political-economy and its socioecological flows.

In previous sections I explored how locally-based cultural norms and traditions, social relations and spatial practices, and discourses and patterns of valuation combine to produce distinct places. I now supplement that discussion by uncovering some of the ways that political-economic processes and institutional arrangements produce cities. Urban centers are sustained by a complex matrix of social, political, and economic institutions at local, state (or provincial), national, and international scales. At local scales, cities are materially constructed through the physical activities and spatial practices of people in relations with each other in shared places. This is because at a basic level it is people embodied in place who physically construct the buildings they subsequently inhabit. Moreover, while the city is a place structured around consumption (shopping districts), a place where commodities are purchased, used, and eventually discarded in waste disposal sites, people also consume city places themselves; for example, touristic attractions or city parks are consumed through recreational activities. The builders and users of urban environments, then, are people engaged in everyday life activities. Yet, the spatial morphology of cities is also affected by state (or provincial) institutions. To give

a few examples, state laws and zoning regulations concerning land-use, highway construction for transporting people, natural resources and commodities, telecommunications infrastructure and power grids, waste treatment plants and state subsidization of suburban developments, among many other factors, all affect the spatial structure of a city. Again, at the national level cities are affected by private property laws, the legal system, the real-estate market, government-run or subsidized social services and programs (the postal service and health care), and a corporate-bureaucratic infrastructure (the military-industrial complex) that provides employment. The real-estate sector, for instance, functions because it is supported by the credit, finance, and legal systems that protect private property rights and the accumulation of capital. Gottdiener (1994, 220) says that at the national level “fractions of financial, industrial, and commercial capital all combine with the state to provide an organized structure for the property sector.” Finally, at an international scale cities are connected to the global political-economy through socioecological flows of capital, commodities, natural resources, and information across instrumental spaces. They are also affected by global financial institutions (namely the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank), international trade laws, agreements, regulations, and rules of commerce (such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), the value of national currencies, transnational corporations, and the international division of labor.

This brief analysis shows how the spatial organization of cities is hierarchically connected to various institutions whose geographical jurisdiction increasingly extends across space, and through which the global political-economy functions. I emphasize, however, that the spatial organization of cities cannot be causally reduced to being a product of class relations and

capital accumulation as some Marxist analyses maintain—global capitalism determines the spatial morphology of cities—precisely because cities are dialectically produced. Global political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, and socioecological flows interact with each other (sometimes in contradictory ways), and also with local cultural practices, social relations, patterns of valuation, and norms and traditions to contingently materialize the spatial topography of a city. The implication is that changing the political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, socioecological flows, cultural practices, social relations, patterns of valuation, norms and traditions at either local, state, national, or global scales has corresponding effects on the spatial morphology of cities. And, conversely, altering an urban center's spatial structure affects the cultural, social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics that produced and sustain that city. Once again, this is because places-in-space are constituted by multiscalar networks of practices, relations, flows and processes, and places-in-space in turn constitute these same networks.

Furthermore, while the bodies of urban dwellers are shaped by cultural practices, social relations, discursive representations, and norms and traditions, they are also affected by the same socioecological flows and political-economic processes that produce and sustain cities. The body is not a self-identical bounded substance, just like space and place are not pre-existing containers. Instead, the body is open and porous to the world, constituted by multiple flows, processes, relations and practices, contingently materializing itself, and discursively represented. A dialectical understanding stresses that a body is fluid since it “internalizes the effects of the processes that create, support, sustain, and dissolve it” (Harvey 2000, 98). Ecologically, a body is sustained by relations with its surrounding environment (metabolic processes of food intake, respiration, and perspiration). Physically, the body is produced through labor (manual or

intellectual work), consumption practices (clothing), and eating habits (vegetarian or junk-food diets) that are intimately connected to the global political-economy. For example, the cotton required to make my t-shirt may have been grown in the American mid-West, sewed in sweatshop factories in East Asia, and purchased in Paris during a vacation (Rivoli 2006). Culturally, de Certeau (1984, 147) argues that traditions and place-based practices intersect with diets to produce different bodies: “[t]he foods that are selected by traditions and sold in the markets of a society also shape bodies at the same time that they nourish them; they impose on bodies a form and a muscle tone that function like an identity card.” de Certeau is saying that the practices of everyday life shape our bodies in unique ways; for example, the decision to smoke, exercise, wear designer clothes, and so on, are some of the ways by which people construct an identity. Discursively, the body is produced through dominant representations and patterns of cultural valuation. This was demonstrated in chapter II when I argued that some groups naturalize other groups to justify their oppression. Group identities and social status—in terms of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc.—including presumed behavioral dispositions—violent or friendly, dirty or clean, etc.—are discursively marked upon different body types. Together, these points demonstrate how cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows converge to produce bodies materially and discursively, and different assemblages of practices, relations, processes, and flows produce different bodies. It follows that if the sociospatial dynamics that define a body’s environment are drastically transformed, the body may be unable to adapt, dissolving itself in death.

Finally, a dialectical analysis abstains from privileging cultural practices, social relations, and political-economic processes over other socioecological flows. Estair Van Wagner (2008, 14) argues that global connectivity involves not only enhanced communication and “the

pathways of global capital and human mobility.... [but] also the pathways of rapid and undetected viral transmission.” She shows how the socioecological flows producing and produced by global cities have facilitated the transmission of infectious viruses and diseases, namely severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), swine flu (the H1N1 virus), and avian flu (the H5N1 virus). In turn, this has led to a restructuring of urban environments as manifested in the strict policing of public spaces such as airports, more severe immigration and traveling restrictions, and the quarantining of infected bodies inside closed spaces such as hospitals. The implication is that it is not only the relations, practices, and travels of human actors at various spatialities that affect places-in-space, but also those of nonhuman actors as manifested in human-nonhuman networks of viral transmission. Moreover, nonhuman organisms circulate worldwide via the global political-economy. To give a few examples, plant species for agriculture and clothing, poultry and fish for food consumption, biological organisms for the pharmaceutical industry, and so forth, are sold and purchased across globalities, and eventually consumed in localities. As such, the global political-economy is inextricably embedded in the ecological web of life. Harvey (2006, 88) appropriately remarks:

On the ecological side, therefore, we have to understand how the accumulation of capital works through ecosystemic processes, re-shaping them and disturbing them as it goes. Energy flows, shifts in material balances, environmental transformations (some of them irreversible) have to be brought thoroughly within the picture. But the social side cannot be evaded as somehow radically different from its ecological integument.

Harvey’s point is that the mobility, exchange, and accumulation of capital, commodities, and resources are ecological processes just as much as they are political-economic processes. This is important because it implies that the cultural, social, economic, and political dynamics that produce cities are not separate from the ecological processes and flows that sustain them.

It is for these reasons that Van Wagner argues that cities are messy places, encompassing complex networks of humans, nonhumans, and inanimate matter. A city can be accurately conceptualized as a “porous space,” affected by the “traffic” that circulates through them—socioecological flows of raw materials, nonhuman organisms, and humans in relations with each other, connected to cities worldwide by political-economic processes. Cities, then, are best described in terms of fluidity, hybridity, porosity, and messiness because such metaphors make clear that they are dialectically constituted by intricate ensembles of human-nonhuman relations, practices, flows, and processes at various spatial scales, and contingently materialize themselves as places-in-space.

ii. Natural Environments

I argue that natural environments are likewise relationally constituted by multiscale socioecological flows and processes, and by nonhuman relations and practices. Although nature is discursively defined with representations—in chapter II I mentioned that nature is feminized, and in chapter IV I demonstrate how it is racialized—in what follows I argue that nature itself is physically produced through the life activities of organisms at local scales, and also by socioecological flows and processes at global scales.

Newtonian representations of nature as container-spaces are increasingly challenged by recent developments in the environmental sciences. The contemporary paradigm states that ecosystems are constituted by ecological processes rather than being “things” or “receptacles,” therefore seemingly adopting a relational conception of space. Most ecologists believe that natural environments are systematically interconnected, that human beings are part of this organic continuity, and that the destruction of the biosphere threatens the survival of many

species on the planet. Callicott (1996, 353) observes that “recent deconstructive developments” in ecological thinking question “the existence of unified communities and ecosystems, the diversity-stability hypothesis, and a natural homeostasis or ‘balance of nature’” to instead emphasize “‘chaos,’ ‘perturbation,’ and directionless change in living nature.” Many ecosystems lack stability since they do not persist over time, nor resist environmental disturbances adequately, although others do quite well. And, ecosystems lack integrity since they are temporary groupings of organisms, randomly adapted to the same climatic and environmental conditions. Nature, then, is a complex assortment of abiotic and biotic components which are interconnected through ecological processes and flows, such as food webs and energy cycles, and which produce and support an ecosystem’s spatial structure for a time. Recent ecological thinking thus emphasizes the developmental constitution of ecosystems.

A developmental conception of nature recognizes the active role that organisms play in constructing their surrounding environments. At a local level, environments are produced through the life activities (or spatial practices) of nonhuman species. Niche construction theory asserts that organisms do not move into ecological niches existing independently of organisms. Rather, organisms actively build every aspect of the ecological niche they inhabit. Kevin Laland et al. (2001, 117) state that “organisms choose their own habitats, choose and consume resources, generate detritus, construct important components of their own environments (such as nests, holes, burrows, paths, webs, pupal cases, dams, and chemical environments), and destroy other components.” Furthermore, the life activities of some species ensure the environmental conditions required for the survival of most life-forms worldwide. The temperature of the Earth’s surface, the concentration of chemical nutrients, and the salinity of the oceans is kept relatively constant by the life activities of microorganisms (Sapp 1994; Margulis 1998). Again,

earthworms, ants, and termites engage in soil formation and decomposition, trees ensure air filtration, and plants perform photosynthesis that provides the primary energy compounds consumed by all organisms in the food web (Sapp 1994; Margulis 1998). The combined activities of organisms in their local environments affect the ecological processes extending across global environments, which conversely affect local environments and the organisms therein. Ocean currents and the circulation of nutrients, El Niño and La Niña phenomena, the chemical composition of the atmosphere, photosynthetic rates, solar radiation through the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, floods and droughts, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, among many other factors, are to some degree affected by the life activities of organisms and have differing impacts on global and local environments. Through intricate complexes of organism-environment relationships the earth as a whole appears to self-regulate itself, a thesis expounded in James Lovelock's (1979) "Gaia hypothesis" which describes the planet itself creating the ecological conditions required for the sustenance and further evolution of biological life.

Niche construction has two radical implications for the Darwinian interpretation of evolutionary theory.¹¹ First, consistent with the concept of relational self, organisms can no longer be construed independently of their environments. In nature there are no organisms without environments, and vice-versa, because they are always already in mutually constitutive ecological relationships. Organisms adapt to their environment, but also modify it to satisfy their

¹¹ The standard Darwinian interpretation of evolution by natural selection states that within a population some organisms are able to better adapt to fluctuating environmental conditions than others, and these organisms are more likely to survive and reproduce. Consequently, future generations inherit the genetic traits which enhanced the survival and reproductive rates of their ancestors, and as a result the distribution of traits within a population changes over time. Therefore Darwin's theory conceives of evolution as a process in which "blind" natural forces select for fitness-enhancing random mutations.

Darwin's theory rests on a flawed assumption, however. It conceptualizes environments and organisms as ontologically distinct: "[t]he environment 'poses the problem'; the organisms 'posit solutions,' of which the best is finally 'chosen'" (Lewontin 1983, 276). Selection pressures are located in the environment conceptualized as a container-space inside which organisms evolve, thus suggesting that ecosystems would exist in their present state in the absence of species.

needs. Species are contextually related to each other and their surroundings as they co-evolve, and ecosystems are collectives constituted by relations between organisms and their ecological context. Second, “[t]he metaphor of adaptation must.... be replaced by one of construction” according to Levins and Lewontin (1985, 104). As an organism develops, it inevitably consumes resources, and its actions affect the selection forces defining its surrounding and self-created environment. The construction that occurs is a necessary condition for the survival and reproduction of each species. This is significant because it entails that organisms must be conceived as “being both the object of natural selection and the creator of the conditions of that selection” (Levins and Lewontin 1985, 106), and consequently they can no longer be conceived as passive “vehicles” for genes. Through their life activities, organisms actively condition their own evolution and that of their offspring since they contribute to the selection pressures they will encounter over the course of their lives. Future generations will be exposed to these same environmental conditions and can thus be said to inherit the local physical environment. What is novel about such a view is that organisms can be construed as “guiding” their own development and the evolution of their offspring insofar as they actively “participate” in evolutionary processes.¹²

¹² What follows is speculative, but I suggest that agency—i.e. intentional behavior, or the capacity to make choices—evolved because it allowed organisms to actively “participate” in their own evolution. Any behavior that indicates preferences—e.g. the turning of a sunflower toward the sun, or the growth of an amoeba along a particular directional axis—indicates that an organism has some degree of agency. A few examples will clarify my point. Trees possess a certain degree of non-conscious agency because they are teleological organisms; they have a purpose and are thus intentional beings to a certain extent. Although an acorn does not consciously know that it is striving to become an oak tree, there are no grounds to conclude that it is not actively—i.e. for itself—striving to do so. Again, as an amoeba moves, its form changes according to the non-conscious desires of its sensori-motor system. An amoeba acts to preserve its integrity and identity. Its agency depends on its power of locomotion. Bookchin (1990a, 200) describes an amoeba as “an incipient self, an identifiable being, that is engaged in immanently preserving its identity. Indeed, it exhibits a dim sense of self-directiveness, the germ of what eventually appears as purposiveness, will, and intentionality.” I therefore suggest that all organisms exhibit agency, and I conceive human consciousness as a particularly complex form rather than an exclusive case.

Furthermore, I speculate that, as neurological complexity increased, freedom itself evolved because organisms had greater possibilities of making choices that could either harm or improve their chances of survival

Furthermore, humans, like all other organisms, have intervened extensively in nature, greatly affecting the constitution of natural environments at both local and global scales. At this stage of the planet's history there are few environments whose present state has not been impacted by society. Everything from farms to rainforests is no longer natural if this means free of human presence (Levins and Lewontin 1985). To give a few examples, many wilderness preserves, such as Yellowstone National Park and Banff National Park, exist because humans have intentionally minimized activities in these regions, yet adopted methods of ecological management, such as controlled fire-burning practices and species reintroductions, to ensure ecosystem integrity. Again, the Canadian prairies are the result of centuries of human excavation into the wild frontier and subsequent farming practices. In addition, the expansion of cities has drastically transformed surrounding rural environments; the countryside, for example, consists of an endless succession of agricultural fields producing food for urban populations. I suggest that Roderick Nash's (1982) idea of a continuum of environments is useful for conceptualizing various ecosystems. Nash (1982, 6) postulates

and that of future generations. This is to say that organisms which developed increasing capacities to make choices increased their fitness. Bookchin (1990a, 200-1) stresses the radical implications of this idea.

Species interact with each other and their environment, moreover, to produce increasingly more diversified ecosystems, many of which open new avenues for evolutionary development and greater subjectivity that leads to elementary choices in following, even developing, new evolutionary pathways. Life, at these levels of complexity, begins to play an increasingly active role in its own evolution. It is not the mere passive object of "natural selection"; it *participates* in its evolution so that we are obliged to change our terminology from Darwin's day and speak of "participatory evolution" [emphasis in original].

With Bookchin, I am suggesting that the capacity of organisms to "make choices" and "participate" in evolution gradually evolved into human consciousness and its experience of freedom. Biehl (1991, 116-7) concurs with Bookchin when she says:

Subjectivity is not unique to human beings; it too has a natural history of its own. From its most rudimentary forms in unicellular organisms, as mere self-identity and sensitivity, it has expanded throughout natural history.... Mind thus derives as a form of a broad evolution of subjectivity, in the course of the cumulative development of increasingly complex forms. In this sense, human subjectivity is "the very history of natural subjectivity, not merely its product."

This happened because evolutionary development is cumulative: new forms evolve from, and build upon, earlier forms. In this way it is possible to conceive how consciousness evolved. Consciousness is an expression of a complex form of agency, and the brain is an evolved structure through which human self-consciousness functions. I am thus speculating that evolution created an arena for the development of agency and the actualization of freedom.

a spectrum of conditions or environments ranging from the purely wild on the one end to the purely civilized on the other—from the primeval to the paved. This idea of a scale between two poles is useful because it implies the notion of shading or blending. Wilderness and civilization become antipodal influences which combine in varying proportions to determine the character of an area.

Nash's continuum of environments supports the point at issue: while humans have significantly impacted the environment, they are not unique in modifying or destroying ecosystems while other species live in balance. Ultimately, this is because all organisms modify their natural habitats through their life activities.

This last point is significant. It implies that not only ecological flows and processes, but also cultural, social, political, and economic dynamics must be considered to understand how natural environments are produced, sustained, transformed, and eventually destroyed, thus lending credence to Marx and Engels' assertion in *The German Ideology* that, so long as humans exist, the history of nature is simultaneously the history of human labor since they are mutually conditioned. Although the ecological sciences are increasingly adopting dialectical frameworks which suggest a relational understanding of natural environments—construing ecosystems in terms of energy flows, communication exchanges, food webs, disturbances, and so forth—in general they fail to connect ecological processes to social processes such as the global political-economy, thereby reinforcing the nature/society dichotomy. And, because many ecologists abstract ecological processes from social processes, they implicitly presuppose the Newtonian paradigm of space: ecological flows and processes happen inside natural spaces, apart from social relations and processes happening inside societal spaces.

Instead, the socioecological relational ontology the dissertation develops stresses that humans and nonhumans are always already forming collectives within shared environments, and together they produce, modify, and destroy the natural, rural, and urban environments they

inhabit. Collectives can be conceptualized as “hybrids of humans and nonhumans” or “natural/cultural hybrids” to use Haraway’s (1997, 126, 168) terms, thus making evident the analytic inseparability of culture and nature as independent realms. Haraway gives ample examples to support her argument that the world is constituted by nature-culture hybrids: frozen embryos, pacemakers, domestic animals such as dogs, cuisine, biotechnology, etc. To focus on one example only, she observes that

a seed contains inside its coat the history of practices such as collecting, breeding, marketing, taxonomizing, patenting, biochemically analyzing, advertising, eating, cultivating, harvesting, celebrating, and starving. A seed produced in the biotechnological institutions now spread around the world contains the specifications for labor systems, planting calendars, pest-control procedures, marketing, land holding, and beliefs about hunger and well-being (Haraway 1997, 129).

In sum, Haraway’s point is that nature and society are not ontologically separate, dualistically construed categories; instead, they always already interpenetrate to relationally constitute one another.

Contrary to many ecological models, I argue that natural environments are physically produced by nonhuman life activities and human practices at local scales, and also by socioecological flows and political-economic processes at global scales. Recognizing this fact is crucial because, as Harvey (1996, 187) correctly observes, flows of commodities and capital “formed and continue to form a coordinating network that keeps contemporary ecological habitats reproducing and changing in the particular way they do. If those money flows ceased tomorrow, then the disruption within the world’s ecosystems would be enormous.” I am not saying that we cannot ever speak of nature apart from society (and vice-versa) in some contexts, nor am I suggesting that we cannot ever conceptualize wilderness and cities as relatively stable “permanences” for some purposes. But, although it may be advantageous to conceptualize them as independent and stable environments in some circumstances, a critical geography uncovers

the ways they interpenetrate and are relationally constituted by cultural, social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics at various spatial scales. This means, according to Harvey (1996, 392),

not only that ecological processes have to be incorporated into our understanding of social life: it also means that flows of money and of commodities and the transformative actions of human beings (in the building of urban systems, for example) have to be understood as fundamentally ecological processes.

The point is that if ecologists and environmental philosophers correctly maintain that everything is connected to everything else—holism, biocentrism, or ecocentrism—then, there is no justification to perceive cities as unnatural, or abstain from describing issues of political-economy and its flows of capital, commodities, and resources in terms of ecological processes. There simply is no theoretical justification to consistently abstract human environments and social, cultural, political, and economic dynamics, from natural environments and ecological dynamics. Critically examining nature is simultaneously to critically analyze society (and vice-versa), just like to modify one is to transform the other, and to challenge the root causes of environmental problems is to attack the dominant social structures of political-economic power. The “web of life” which ecologists speak of must be understood in terms of both its ecological and social dimensions.

Finally, a dialectical conception of places-in-space lends credence to the environmental justice movement’s understanding of environmentalism as including both urban environmental issues centered on equity and justice, and issues traditionally associated with mainstream environmentalism (a point I discuss in more depth in chapter IV), thus blurring the boundary separating nature (the environmental) and society (the political). Striving toward clean living and safe working environments, for instance, are not just social, cultural, political, and economic issues, but they are also environmental issues. Conversely, traditional environmental issues, such

as wilderness areas and biodiversity preservation, are likewise social, cultural, political, and economic issues. A critical geography of environmental justice treats environmental issues within contexts, in particular the political context, thus emphatically emphasizing that the environmental is political. It also discards outdated Romantic ideals of living harmoniously in balance with nature, or preserving nature in an undisturbed pristine state. Like all other species, humans modify—construct and destroy—their natural habitats and consume resources, including other organisms, to survive. The dilemma that must be addressed is not whether, but how humans should intervene into nature, and toward what goals? In other words, how can we spatially structure societies so they are socially and environmentally just, and socially and ecologically sustainable?

5. Globalization and the Colonization of Place

In the previous section I argued that cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes intersect in complex ways to produce contingent and qualitatively distinct places-in-space in the form of urban and natural environments. A spatial tension exists, however. Places—the lifeworld or social spaces of cultural values, norms and traditions, that is, the intersubjective spaces of everyday life—are increasingly threatened by the instrumental spaces of the global political-economy. Drawing from Habermas' account of the colonization of the lifeworld in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, in this section I argue that globalization facilitates the colonization of place.¹³ Although globalization encompasses various

¹³ Habermas (1987) argues that social evolution manifests a gradual decoupling of the lifeworld from systems of capital and administration acting strategically. In contemporary society, “subsystems of purposive rational economic and administrative action.... have become independent of their moral-political foundations” (Habermas 1987, 154). Habermas acknowledges that the uncoupling of systems and lifeworld is not bad in-itself, nor is there anything inherently colonizing in the instrumental logic of systems of bureaucracy and capital. In fact, Habermas thinks that these systems are needed to ensure social order—the state’s institutions of law and order—and provide for the assortment of material and social needs—industrial production of goods and the welfare state’s provision of

processes, having cultural, social, political, and economic dimensions, I focus mostly on economic globalization which I use interchangeably with neoliberalism and capitalist modernization. Specifically, I argue that global political-economic processes increasingly encroach upon the local cultural practices, patterns of valuation, social relations, and norms and traditions characterizing distinct places-in-space, transforming them into the commodified and homogeneous spaces conducive to the mobility and accumulation of capital (e.g. suburban spaces of consumption). The benefit of analyzing the tensions implicit in places-in-space is that it helps account for the production of uneven sociospatial development—in terms of “rapid and uneven urbanization; increasing population density; ecological changes ranging from global climate change to dam building; war and displacement; poverty; malnutrition; inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services” (Van Wagner 2008, 15)—and corresponding environmental injustices pertaining to economic marginalization across spaces of inequitable distribution, cultural subordination in places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public arenas of deliberation and policy. In what follows I pursue this train of thought, focusing on four facets of globalization that show how dominant groups transcend space and colonize place: colonialism, neoliberalism, global environmentalism, and urban development.

social services. Problems arise when impersonal systems acting strategically increasingly regulate the social and communicative relations in the lifeworld, as evidenced in “an elitist splitting-off of expert cultures from contexts of communicative action in daily life” (Habermas 1987, 330). More precisely, social pathologies are due to the penetration of forms of economic and administrative rationality into areas of action that resist being converted over to the media of money and power because they are specialized in cultural transmission, social integration, and child rearing, and remain dependent on mutual understanding as a mechanism for coordinating action (Habermas 1987, 330).

Therefore Habermas (1987, 355) argues that economic and political systems are colonizing to the extent that they “make their way into the lifeworld from the outside—like colonial masters coming into a tribal society—and force a process of assimilation upon it.” The consequence is that the lifeworld’s consensus-oriented communicative foundation is no longer needed to coordinate society.

i. Transcending Space, Colonizing Place

A defining characteristic of globalization is a dialectic of mobility and fixity that impacts people differently. For some, globalization offers the possibility of moving in space, acting across great distances, and controlling places to an unprecedented extent. Global mobility is liberating to the extent that some groups transcend space, both physically and virtually. For example, a person can, given sufficient capital, travel at a moment's notice, instantaneously communicate with others worldwide, and invest from a distance in places faraway. Chief executive officers (CEOs) and shareholders are indeed “de-territorialized” and “disembodied” in the sense that they own companies, yet often do not live in the regions where these operate, an advantage being that they are unburdened by the social constraints of localities, such as laws, cultural norms and customs. Bauman (1998, 19) adds that, “[t]hanks to new ‘bodylessness’ of power in its mainly financial form, the power-holders become truly exterritorial even if, bodily, they happen to stay ‘in place’.” To give a concrete example, in Michael Moore’s documentary *The Big One*, Phil Knight, the CEO of Nike, admits he’s never been to Indonesia to observe the labor practices and work conditions in Nike’s factories. This example shows how globalization facilitates the ability of global elites to trade and invest in spatially-distant places they do not inhabit and may never visit. The ability to transcend space and colonize place reinforce each other: the more the financial elite control economic production in concrete places, the more they have the capital needed to transcend space—physically by air travel, and virtually by investing in electronic technology—and colonize new places, thus reinforcing their power.

The capacity to transcend space is problematic, as Harvey (1990, 234) correctly points out, because “those who command space can always control the politics of place,” thus shaping the livelihood possibilities for countless disenfranchised groups whom they will never directly

encounter. The plight of the poor is exacerbated by the fact that often they do not have the financial means to relocate or migrate, in addition to being confronted with strict immigration rules and restrictions. In general, impoverished groups are not only economically marginalized, but also physically they are “stuck in place.” Their bodies are firmly emplaced, susceptible not only to oppressive local laws and cultural norms, but also to the “unintended effects of the transnational mobility of a select group of elites” (Van Wagner 2008, 25). For those on the margins, the global elite’s increasing capacity to rapidly transcend space and colonize place is threatening since distance no longer provides a solid barrier of defense against unwanted human interactions.

ii. Colonialism

Globalization is not a new phenomenon, having occurred throughout history, albeit in different forms and degrees of intensity. What its various manifestations share in common, I contend, is the spatial expansion of an institutional set of social, political, and economic relations that benefit groups who construe themselves as the center, in the process colonizing distant places and assimilating (more or less successfully) groups on the margins to the dominant cultural order.

The history of European colonialism clearly demonstrates this process of spatial colonization. Generally said to begin with Christopher Columbus’ “discovery” of the “New World” in 1492, imperial powers, namely England, France, Portugal and Spain, invaded, conquered, and militarily occupied parts of Asia, Africa, Australia, the Middle East, and Latin and South America in order to expand their territories and ensure access to the natural resources needed to sustain their economies and military dominance. Raw materials, such as precious

minerals (gold), plant species (rubber), food crops (sugarcane, spices), and energy sources (coal, timber, and later oil), were extracted or produced on plantation colonies, and subsequently transported back to the urban centers of imperial nations, namely London, Paris, Lisbon and Madrid. The result was the impoverishment or enslavement of the inhabitants of colonized territories, and in some cases the partial eradication of their place-based cultures as happened to the Incas, the Mayas, American Indians, and the aboriginal peoples of Canada and Australia.

The colonization of place occurred not only physically through spatial expansion into new territories, but also discursively using hegemonic representations of space. In particular, European concepts of abstract and instrumental space were forcefully imposed on local cultures. One way this was accomplished was using maps. Renaissance maps of the world placed Europe at the center (recall the master subject) and represented colonized territories as the margins, places of misrecognition located on the peripheries (thereby keeping the other in her place). The effect was to discursively represent Europe as most important, panoptically surveying the world through its imperial gaze, and to this day such maps are used in schools. Again, the colonization of North America forcefully imposed John Locke's conception of space as private property onto aboriginal peoples, in the process displacing the communal structure of their societies and altering the cultural practices, values, norms and traditions defining their place-based identities and environmental heritages. In *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke argues that land is unowned and valueless until transformed by human labor, and this view helped justify European theft of aboriginal lands for appropriation into the capitalist system of commodity exchanges. In both cases—the imposition of a global cartography, and a concept of space as private property—the effect was the same: “[i]t is to force a singular discursive representational exercise upon multiple cartographies, to suppress difference and to establish homogeneity of representation”

(Harvey 1996, 284). Colonialism as a form of globalization can thus be understood as a process of Europeans transcending space in order to colonize spatially-distant places, both physically and discursively.

iii. Neoliberalism

With colonialism abolished over the course of the 20th century, a new world order had to be implemented to ensure that global spaces of inequitable distributions remained intact, thereby continuing to transfer natural resources and raw materials from the margins to the center. Accordingly, I suggest that the present structure of the global political-economy serves this purpose, continuing capitalism's historical trajectory of spatial expansion in its quest for profit. The primary agents of contemporary globalization are no longer nation-states but rather transnational corporations (TNCs) and global financial institutions, most notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Although opinions vary, there is a general consensus that "[t]he goal of globalization is to streamline economies into a single economic, political, and even cultural order to facilitate the accumulation of capital" as Kaplan (2003, 182) succinctly puts it. To this end, global economic institutions establish financial regulations, trade laws, and rules of commerce to which all governments must abide as a precondition for membership in these financial governing bodies. Specifically, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) treaty of the Uruguay Round (1986-1994) of multilateral trade negotiations, having established and operating through the WTO as of January 1st, 1995, regulates international trade, while also influencing domestic and national economic policies worldwide.

Careful analysis reveals that the global political-economy is structured to ensure that the most powerful industrialized nations, predominantly situated in the Northern hemisphere, have access to natural resources (fossil fuels and resources of genetic diversity), mostly located in developing nations in the Southern hemisphere (e.g. the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)), that are required to sustain economic growth and the lifestyles of Northerners. Although contemporary globalization has catalyzed a shift toward a postindustrial economy that is increasingly dematerialized and symbolized, notably the global commerce in information, this trend should not be interpreted as implying “the end of geography” (O’Brien 1992) for the obvious reason that industrial production and agriculture ensure the provision of people’s basic needs. Indeed, in a globalized world with diminishing natural resources, escalating population and migration, ecological degradation and climate change, war and the displacement of refugees, uneven urbanization and lack of basic infrastructure, poverty and malnutrition, and increasing socioeconomic discrepancies between Northern and Southern hemispheres, geography matters more than ever. Shiva (1997, 11), citing the United Nations Development Program, observes that “while \$50 billion flows annually from the North to the South in terms of aid, the South loses \$500 billion every year in interest payments on debts and from the loss of fair prices for commodities due to unequal terms of trade.” She further notes that TNCs control approximately 70 percent of global trade (Shiva 1997, 113). Shiva thus argues that neoliberalism safeguards the North’s access to the South’s resources through international free trade agreements and rules of commerce that allow TNCs to conduct business unimpeded throughout the world. The result is intensifying material inequalities, uneven sociospatial development, and environmental injustices across global spatialities, notably between nations in Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Economic globalization is a complex phenomenon—socioecological flows and political-economic processes are multiple, institutional actors and relations are numerous, and specific details vary on a case-by-case basis—so what follows are generalized remarks supporting my argument that globalization facilitates the colonization of place as instantiated in uneven sociospatial development and related environmental injustices. Industrialized countries are affluent compared to developing nations. Canada, for example, has ample national parks, relatively strict environmental, work and safety regulations, social programs such as unemployment insurance and health care, and overall a high-standard of living. Further, industrialized urban centers, namely New York, Chicago, Toronto, London, Paris, Geneva, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo, are the major finance and business centers of the international economic system. They are the primary centers of the information economy, the nodes through which capital and commodities circulate, housing corporate headquarters and global financial institutions. These urban centers are cosmopolitan in character, attracting large investments, visited by countless tourists, and manifesting affluence and material abundance. They are privileged places, yet such environments are made possible by what Cinder Hypki calls “geographies of sacrifice,” that is, “places that have been sacrificed” to capitalism’s industrial growth (qtd. in Di Chiro 2002, 306).

At a global scale the “geographies of sacrifice” are predominantly located in the Southern hemisphere since most countries are poor, under-industrialized, and less economically developed. In order to stimulate economic growth and “catch-up” to the North, developing nations receive loans from the World Bank and IMF to invest in the infrastructure, such as roads, power grids, and telecommunication networks, needed to facilitate the production of goods and services. Yet, these loans come with conditions for receiving future loans or paying lower

interest rates on current loans, typically in the form of structural adjustment programs. These programs stipulate policy changes that aim to integrate the economies of developing nations into the global market economy. In general, this is accomplished through economic liberalization or deregulation measures conducive to free trade—hence national economies are privatized rather than nationalized—while cutting social services, such as health care, education, unemployment and disability insurance, to reduce the national debt and repay accumulated interest on World Bank and IMF loans. The result is an influx of foreign investments and TNCs that extract raw materials (fossil fuels, timber, minerals), farm cash crops (coffee, sugar, cotton, fruits), and establish sweatshop factories that produce cheap goods for sale in the global marketplace (exceedingly consumed by Northerners). In addition, structural adjustment programs seek to eliminate barriers to trade. They stipulate that developing countries keep wages low and provide lax environmental, health, and work and safety regulations in order to create a good business climate—in other words, institutional conditions conducive to the maximization of profit—to attract foreign TNCs seeking to reduce production costs, the justification being that these measures will stimulate the nation’s economy. However, Shiva (1997) maintains that this “good” business climate privatizes benefits and socializes costs, thereby benefiting economic elites and burdening the poor. The plight of disenfranchised groups in the South is exacerbated in that health, environmental, and work and safety regulations are deemed illegal by the WTO. Kaplan (2003, 181) notes:

To date no environmental, health, food safety, or worker safety law challenged at the WTO has been upheld. Even though in each case these laws were established by democratic processes, they were all declared barriers to trade, hence illegal.... The system is designed so that the interests of finance and commerce always win out over the interests of citizens and democracy.

Therefore national laws that seek to prevent the import of hazardous wastes or dangerous products from the industrialized North (e.g. Canadian asbestos) are deemed illegal by global financial institutions since they hinder “free” trade, in the process undermining the power of governments and democratic institutions—hence threatening democracy itself.¹⁴ Free trade, then, is not freeing for everyone.

Furthermore, internationally financed mega-projects have significant impacts on the environment and the capacity of local populations to satisfy basic needs. The construction of highways, dams and mines, and intensive agricultural and aquacultural production cause habitat destruction, species extinctions, and land, water and air pollution. Warren (2000) says that environmental deterioration particularly impacts poor rural communities who rely on biodiversity for nutrition, energy, medicine, fiber and housing. To give one example, the Green Revolution’s monocultures and the production of cash crops replace biological diversity with homogeneity, while also depriving local people of food since farms produce crops for export. As local farming communities dwindle, unable to compete with the industrial farms of foreign TNCs, people are driven off the land, usually settling in the barrios of overpopulated urban centers. The outcome is that the basic needs of large segments of the population are not satisfied and poverty is widespread.

¹⁴ Bauman (1998) argues that the creation of new nation-states since the end of colonialism and the dismantling of the Soviet Union supports global capitalism. The new states are often weak, less resourceful, and less powerful. Capital exerts great pressure on all states to destroy barriers that impede market liberty; consequently, governments are subordinated to market forces (trade wars have replaced the Cold War). Chomsky (2005, 158) explains that “government policies that private power finds unwelcome will lead to capital flight, disinvestment, and social decline until ‘business confidence’ is restored with the abandonment of a threat to privilege; these facts of life exert a decisive influence on the political system.” This means that governments must not interfere with the economic interests of industrial elites since the survival of the state is dependent on the health of the economy that is privately owned and narrowly concentrated, hence not subject to democratic control. In such a context Bauman maintains that a task of governments is to provide the police force needed to safeguard and protect the interests of the economic and business elite, notably controlling local pressures stemming from the poor, activists, and concerned citizens.

The case of Ogoniland in the Niger Delta basin of Nigeria is one of countless examples supporting my claims. As a member of OPEC, Nigeria is one of the world's largest producers of crude oil (the fifth largest producer within OPEC), with oil production consistently generating approximately 90 percent of its foreign exchange earnings. Tunde Agbola and Moruf Alabi (2003) observe that oil development is a joint responsibility of the Nigerian nation-state (a military dictatorship until 1998), local elites, multilateral organizations, and foreign multinational corporations, namely Royal Dutch Shell (which extracts approximately 50 percent of Nigeria's oil exports), Mobil, and Texaco/Chevron Corporation. Whereas the political and financial elite inhabit the affluent northern part of Nigeria, petroleum extraction occurs in the impoverished southern region of the Niger Delta where minority ethnic groups, such as the Ogoni (but also the Ijaw, Urhobo, Ibibio, Itsekiri, Efik, and Ikwerre), experience severe environmental degradation that threatens traditional subsistence practices of farming and fishing. Protests and signs of resistance from the Ogoni people have been countered with police violence and military repression—some evidence suggesting at Shell's request—resulting in the murder of civilians and four Ogoni chiefs, and the hanging deaths of Nigerian author/activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other leaders of The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1995.

In their quest for profit, the agents of economic globalization have colonized and polluted the land, the oceans, and the atmosphere. Not only external places, however, but also “the interior spaces, the ‘genetic codes’ of life-forms from microbes and plants to animals, including humans” (Shiva 1997, 3) are being colonized in capital's obsessive drive for further accumulation. Kaplan (2003, 181-2) explains that the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) facilitates this process by stipulating “that food

and medicine that was once under the public domain must now be privatized through global patent law.” Using genetic engineering and biotechnology, corporate food manufacturers modify the gene sequences of traditionally bred plants in order to create “new” plant varieties—e.g. seeds that produce their own insecticides—and TRIPS protects their right to patent these “discoveries” and sell them for profit.

This is problematic for various reasons, however. Foremost, biodiversity is removed from the local intellectual commons and transformed into private property, with significant livelihood consequences for subsistence farmers in developing nations. Traditionally, seeds are deemed a commons, freely exchanged between local farmers. But, with the advent of intellectual property rights and patents protected by TRIPS, seeds are transformed into commodities that must be purchased, concurrently disturbing the ethical and cultural basis of subsistence agricultural communities worldwide who have always bred and shared seeds freely.¹⁵ The plight of agricultural communities in developing nations is exacerbated in that corporations such as Monsanto have engineered seeds containing a “terminator” gene that inhibits their reproductive capacity, rendering them sterile, thereby forcing farmers to purchase new seeds annually. Moreover, the established discourse of TRIPS suggests that traditional ecological knowledge concerning agriculture and medicine is not really knowledge—it is unscientific in the Western sense, hence devalued—because it is communal rather than privately-owned and produced in scientific laboratories, ultimately legitimizing its theft under the banner of intellectual property rights, a trend which Shiva (1997) calls “bioprospecting” and “biopiracy.” To summarize, corporate control and monopoly of plant seeds results in multiple environmental injustices in

¹⁵ TRIPS has also been used to prohibit African countries from producing generic pharmaceuticals for people afflicted with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) (Kaplan 2003, 182). Further, the cell lines of humans have been patented. Shiva (1997, 3-4) notes that the U.S. commerce secretary has patented the cell lines of the Guami of Panama and of the Hagahai of Papua New Guinea, and that the biopharmaceutical company Myriad Pharmaceuticals “patented the breast cancer gene in women in order to get a monopoly on diagnostics and testing.”

developing nations: it undermines economic and food security, disturbs social organization and cultural livelihood, devalues traditional ecological knowledge and environmental heritages, deteriorates the environment and threatens biodiversity, and colonizes and commodifies life itself.

The above points show that neoliberalism threatens not only biodiversity, but also cultural diversity because it disregards the place-based practices, traditions, knowledge systems, norms and values of disenfranchised groups inhabiting the Southern margins. Indeed, neoliberalism must eradicate cultural diversity to the extent that traditional lifestyles are obstacles to economic growth. Kaplan (2003, 182) says:

Cultural diversity is an obstacle for the agents of globalization. It is more efficient to produce, distribute, and market goods and services if economic, political, and cultural conditions are the same everywhere. Global capitalism not only homogenizes modes and relations of production but it attempts to homogenize consumers and cultures as well.

Anthropologists generally refer to this phenomenon as the “Americanization” of cultures worldwide; Western consumer culture gradually encroaches upon the environments of diverse groups to produce places of cultural misrecognition. A reactionary consequence is a resurgence of religious and ethnic sectionalism, particularism, and xenophobic outbursts against outsiders, often motivated by the desire to insulate traditional lifestyles from the West’s cultural hegemony. Consequently, Shiva (1997, 103) argues that

[g]lobalization is not the cross-cultural interaction of diverse societies; it is the imposition of a particular culture on all of the others. Nor is globalization the search for ecological balance on a planetary scale. It is the predation of one class, one race, and often one gender of a single species on all of the others.

Such perceptions are widespread, helping account for why many disenfranchised groups, particularly from the Southern hemisphere, perceive the dominant neoliberal order as a form of

neocolonialism: reinforcing the power and wealth of the elite few, while continuing to oppress the subordinated many.

iv. Global Environmentalism

The ability to transcend space and colonize place is also manifested in the arena of sustainable development and the politics of global environmentalism. Shiva (1993) argues that these discourses tend to emphasize global or collective responsibility for environmental problems, while pushing to classify areas of rich biodiversity, the oceans, and the atmosphere as “global commons” to be scientifically managed by experts presumably acting in the interests of humanity. Robert Figueroa and Claudia Mills (2001, 434), paraphrasing Shiva’s concerns, explain that emphasizing

global ecological issues such as desertification, climate change, acid rain, and ozone depletion ends up turning over the world’s environmental management strategies, trade control, and political power to elite institutions and political entities which determine the fate of the rest of the world.

The problem is that focusing on global responsibility deflects attention from the fact that it is the Northern political and financial elite who are responsible for much environmental destruction and social oppression. Shiva (1993, 151) argues that, although “globalization of the local is responsible for destroying the environment which supports the subjugated local peoples,” advocates of global environmentalism aim “to shift the blame and responsibility” for environmental problems onto poor communities worldwide “that have no global reach” and who are excluded from the public places of environmental policy. This is evidenced whenever the South’s escalating population, or increasing demands for refrigerators, air-conditioners, and automobiles in India and China, are deemed the biggest threats to the environment.

Within political arenas of global environmentalism and sustainable development, important decisions are disproportionately influenced by Northern political and financial elites—notably the G-8, the eight most powerful nations—and also the few Southern elites who benefit from the present structure of the global political-economy. Non-surprisingly, the topics discussed, solutions proposed, and decisions made reflect their interests, rather than representing the collective interests of communities worldwide. Shiva (1993, 150) argues that the decisions mirror the concerns of “a particular local and parochial interest which has been globalized through the scope of its reach,” monopolizing international political space and aspiring to global control of the planet, unimpeded by local, regional, and national constraints. Because the elite reap the benefits of the present structure of the global political-economy, proposed solutions to social and environmental problems do not seriously question its fairness or sustainability. Instead, Wolfgang Sachs (1993) says that international documents, such as the Brundtland Report: Our Common Future (1987) and The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), propose solutions that maintain the neoliberal status quo: reductions in carbon emissions and CFCs, the transfer of technology, capital, and Northern scientific expertise to the South, and economic arrangements revolving around free trade, debt relief, and access to Northern markets. Other proposals instrumentalize environments, depicting nature as commodities, including pollution itself (pollution credits), to be traded or sold in the open market. To cite a few examples, the Kyoto Protocol binds most industrialized nations (excluding the U.S. who has not ratified the treaty) to a cap and trade system (or emissions trading) of greenhouse gases. Again, through debt-for-nature swaps, powerful environmental organizations, such as the World Wildlife Fund, pay a portion of a developing country’s foreign debt in exchange for conserving its biodiversity (e.g. the Amazon rainforest). In general, the goal is to implement strategies that

will allow Southern nations to scientifically manage their natural resources while developing their economies in sustainable ways in order to achieve Northern lifestyles—ecological modernization, or “catching-up development” to use Maria Mies (1993, 55) term—thus leaving intact, and in fact encouraging, intensifying processes of economic globalization, capitalist modernization, and an ascendant neoliberalism. From the perspective of developing nations, emphasizing global environmental problems, and maintaining that only the market economy provides solutions, are ideological tools used to safeguard the North’s access to the South’s natural resources, while the environmental costs, mostly generated by the industrialized North, are shared equally worldwide.

Furthermore, I contend that discourses of sustainable development and global environmentalism mask racist undertones. Sachs (1993) argues that the Brundtland Report and The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development presuppose that a country is civilized to the extent that it increases its economic production. Sachs (1993, 4) says that “the degree of civilization in a country is to be indicated by the level of its production.” Therefore a society is “civilized” and “mature” if it is industrially developed. Looked at from this perspective, at this stage in history the white North is most civilized, whereas the colored South is less developed—i.e. “primitive”—but with a little more effort might “catch-up.” Such views presuppose that all societies are following the same historical trajectory of development, in terms defined by the North. Further, discourses of global environmentalism and sustainable development manifest white paternalism. Because the goal of the South is to develop economically and become like the North, the latter are represented as the leaders of the world, leading the way by example, and presenting themselves as the altruistic providers of solutions to the South’s problems. This is

hypocritical to say the least, conveniently disguising the fact that the North is greatly responsible for social oppression and environmental problems worldwide.

v. Urban Development

The colonization of place occurs also at more local scales, as evidenced in the instrumental and consumption logic of urban construction that produces uneven sociospatial development within cities. In accord with Habermas' (1987) argument that systems of capital and bureaucracy colonize the communicative lifeworld, I argue that instrumental spaces increasingly colonize the social places that provide arenas for the expression of place-based cultural practices, social exchanges, values, norms and relationships. One reason this happens is because urban centers are integrated into the global political-economy. The logic of capitalism entails spatial expansion and spatial reorganization in its unrelenting quest to maximize profit. Optimizing this process requires the production of homogeneous, yet fragmented, spaces conducive to the mobility and accumulation of capital. Accordingly, modern cities are "orderly" and "efficient" to the extent that they operate like businesses and espouse models of public administration that hierarchically divide municipalities into series of functional spaces, each specialized in concrete tasks: the spaces of public management and administration (local government, city hall), of publicly-subsidized social services (hospitals, schools), of business development and private sector growth (the high-tech industry, the real-estate market), of consumption and entertainment (sporting arenas, shopping malls), of residential housing (suburban neighborhoods), etc. What these places share in common is that they are instrumentalized: either they are bureaucratized to perform specialized administrative functions

(recall Habermas' systems of administration), or they are commodified to facilitate business transactions and provide spaces of consumption (recall Habermas' systems of capital).

To give a few examples, the fragmentation of space into privately-owned parcels of land makes possible the real-estate marketplace that reifies places as exchangeable things that are bought and sold. Again, most urban planners, architects, and engineers spatially design cities in terms of mathematical grids because these facilitate its public administration and support the private interests of capital. In this way a typical urban design is comprised of endless rows of parallel streets and identical suburban homes, different suburban communities connected to the downtown core and shopping districts by a system of arterial freeways. Consequently, a primary problem of contemporary urbanism is ensuring the fluid circulation of increasing numbers of automobiles to and from work, shopping malls, and entertainment complexes. In addition, the few natural environments on a city's outskirts are commodified; they are recreational resources that are valued to the extent that they are consumed through tourism or outdoor activities like hiking, camping and fishing.

Urban designs internalize an instrumental logic of consumption insofar as they are spatially organized to facilitate shopping. As such, urban designs impose consumption values because “[t]he fixing of spatiality through material building creates solidly constructed spaces that instantiate negotiated or imposed social values” (Harvey 1996, 230).¹⁶ For instance, consumption spaces, such as shopping centers, singles bars, entertainment districts, movie

¹⁶ Theorists of the Frankfurt School—notably Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man*, and Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (particularly their essay “The Culture Industry”)—have extensively discussed the commodification of Western culture. Similarly, Baudrillard (1994, 67), in his discussion of the “hypermarket of culture,” argues that culture is a commodity to be purchased. This is evidenced in that cultural codes, symbols, and images are integrated into media, advertising, and marketing strategies. In sum, Baudrillard says that the media create images that produce an emotional “rush.” Their goal is to captivate audiences with spectacles devoid of meaning insofar as the images have no reference to the real world; they are simulacra, referring only to other images *ad infinitum*. The concern is that such spectacles result in a form of controlled socialization; the general public conforms to the dominant, commodified, cultural values that support the interests of the elite who own the technologies that produce and propagate hyperreality's symbols and images.

theaters and theme parks, are replicated everywhere, catering to the insatiable appetites of consumer culture. I suggest that such commodified spaces can be described by what Georges Benko (1997, 23) calls “non-places,” places indistinguishable from each other, to be passed through quickly while engaging in fleeting activities of consumption. Shiva (1997, 110) adds that “[t]he homogenization processes of [urban] development do not fully wipe away differences. Differences persist—not in the integrating context of plurality, but in the fragmenting context of homogenization,” or, more accurately said, in the fragmenting context of homogeneous production and consumption. It is because most North American cities are spatially structured according to the instrumental logic of consumption—i.e. the basic economic and political forces, processes, and relations shaping them are the same—that they tend to look alike; most have the same box stores (Walmart), fast-food restaurants (McDonald’s), and jungle of advertisements lining important streets, their downtown cores invaded by the skyscrapers of financial institutions, banks, and corporate headquarters. Benko (1997, 23) observes that the non-places (or instrumental spaces) of systems of capital and administration monopolize city spaces to such a degree that “[n]ever before in the history of the world have non-places occupied so much space.”

With Habermas (1987), the concern is that systems acting strategically continuously threaten to colonize the lifeworld, an unending struggle because between democracy and capitalism exists a permanent tension. In my spatial analysis this translates into a tension pitting place or social space—the lived places of cultural practices, social integration, relationships, norms and traditions—against instrumental space—the functional spaces conducive to the mobility and accumulation of capital. In general, social spaces, such as parks, city squares, town halls, community centers and (Canadian) universities, are public rather than privately-owned,

and for this reason they are obstacles to capitalism's drive for spatial expansion and reorganization. Yet, an effect of neoliberalism is that cities must market themselves as economically competitive and prime business environments in order to attract private sector investments and fuel growth and development. As a result public spaces are privatized, sold by municipal governments to the highest bidder, while also offering tax relief to corporations as incentive to conduct business inside city spaces. Basic social services, such as education, health care and public transportation, are likewise economized and privatized; government social programs are increasingly aligned with economic growth and performance, or they are taken over altogether by private firms specialized in the provision of public services—e.g. universities operate according to market strategies, and insurance companies provide basic health insurance. A consequence is that it becomes more and more difficult for municipalities to implement or justify social programs that strive toward equity, social inclusion, and provision of basic needs for all.

The concern, according to Murray Bookchin (1999, 91), is that what were once human-scaled cities, places of social communion where citizens actively engaged in the administration of the polis, have been transformed into large metropolitan belts with “immense, overbearing, and anonymous marketplaces. They are becoming centers primarily of mass production and mass consumption.” As social spaces are dissolved, citizens have fewer arenas for interpersonal exchanges and public deliberation, ultimately threatening democracy and citizenship in the Athenian sense.¹⁷ When once public places become privatized, access is restricted to

¹⁷ Historically, the concept of citizenship emerged in Athens. A citizen (only men were citizens) was actively involved in performing the civic duties related to the functioning of the polis. Citizenship involved an attitude of public spiritedness and the collective commitment to govern the city, while ensuring the military defense of the state. Accordingly, the population size of the polis was small enough to foster communal relationships and dialogue between citizens. In contemporary political thought, communitarianism draws from the Athenian tradition and describes citizenship as a process of political participation whereby individuals actively assume civic responsibilities in order to contribute to the common good of their society.

consumption purposes only. This fragments social groups, separates them from each other, and pushes community life off the streets and public squares into the anonymity of shopping malls and private homes.¹⁸ Not only spaces but also human relationships are redefined in terms of consumption (buyer-seller relations), pitting the interests of people against each other, and fostering rivalry and asociality. Non-surprisingly, the dissolution of social spaces adversely impacts mental health, a point substantiated in the almost mundane daily experiences of isolation, loneliness, alienation, and increasing rates of depression and suicide. These points support the issue at hand: in the context of global capitalism, the instrumental logic of urban development sacrifices the psychological, social, and material needs of citizens to the interests of capital and its pathological drive to transcend space and colonize place.

As such, the history of urban development in the United States can be understood as a process in which the instrumental spaces of capital increasingly colonize urban places. A concrete example will elucidate my argument. Marshall Berman (1988) observes that during the first half of the 20th century, Robert Moses, a builder of highways in New York City, reshaped the urban landscape so it revolved around the car industry. Instead of building open public places and boulevards (as existed in Paris) or investing in public transit, Moses engineered an intricate system of roads, notably freeways, that allowed people to inhabit suburban neighborhoods, brought them into the city for work, and transported them back to the suburbs to engage in

¹⁸ I suggest that the dissolution of public places is beneficial to political and economic elites since it further disempowers already disenfranchised groups, thus securing their power and interests. This point is supported by observing political responses to public mobilizations—worker mobilization in factories, or the mobilization of African Americans within inner-cities—that potentially threaten the status quo. Harvey (1990, 237) says that “[o]ne of the principal tasks of the capitalist state is to locate power in the spaces which the bourgeoisie controls, and disempower those spaces which oppositional movements have the greatest potentiality to command.” This might explain why a disproportionate number of African Americans are in U.S. prisons. Gottdiener (1994, 278) says that the prison system is a “social control mechanism” used to spatially confine minority groups who might revolt against their oppression. In accord with Foucault’s (1984) analysis of discourses, disciplinary power, and institutions of medicine (hospitals), criminology (prisons), and psychiatry (asylums), Harvey and Gottdiener both argue that controlling places, or confining human others in enclosed spaces like prisons or urban ghettos, are spatial strategies used for social control; they ensure that the elite control the institutional arrangements that support their interests.

activities of consumption. According to Berman (1988, 307), this newly produced urban lifestyle “integrated the whole nation into a unified flow whose lifeblood was the automobile. It conceived of cities principally as obstructions to the flow of traffic.” The appeal of Moses’ urban vision was that it allowed people to limit their encounters with the downtown core of the city—perceived as an urban “jungle” of steel and glass, a place breeding criminals and drug-addicts—to instead occupy the safe and clean havens of the suburbs.

There are numerous problems with Moses’ urban spatial design, and I presently focus on three of them. First and foremost, the construction of cities around a network of highways spatially sedimented class and racial inequalities since only the affluent, predominantly white, could afford an automobile to escape the downtown core and inhabit clean suburban neighborhoods—a sociological phenomenon referred to as “white flight.” In contrast, the poor, predominantly colored and ethnic minority groups, were confined to polluted inner-city neighborhoods. In addition, freeways were built through communities of color, thus lowering property values and adversely impacting environmental conditions and human health, ultimately producing environmental injustices that persist to this day. In these ways urban design was a political tool of social control that served class-based and racial ends. Second, reliance on private automobiles supported the interests of the car industry, while providing new spaces and opportunities for economic development in suburban environments. Third, driving alone to and from the city absorbed countless hours, and concurrently accelerated the dissolution of public places. Whereas in the past more people used public transportation or walked to and from work (or other destinations), in the process interacting with others in public places, the time spent driving left little time for social interactions. Thus, this example clearly shows how the instrumental logic of consumption spaces shapes the spatial structure of urban environments, in

this particular case producing uneven sociospatial development that benefited affluent whites and exceedingly burdened minority groups and the lower class.

Although I mostly described how the instrumental spaces of the political-economy colonize places at various spatialities, uneven sociospatial development is also caused by local cultural practices, social relations, patterns of valuation, norms and traditions stemming from within the lifeworld itself. Martin Matušík (1998, 22) says “that racist, patriarchal, and homophobic attitudes seriously affect existing lifeworlds and liberal procedures (e.g., court rooms and juries and judges) *from within* [emphasis in original],” a claim instantiated by oppressive social customs and lifestyles, overt prejudices and stereotypes, and violence toward despised groups. For instance, the post-Cold War era has witnessed a resurgence of ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious sectionalism and conflicts worldwide—between Chechens and Russians, Croats and Serbs, Kurds and Turkmen, Jews and Arabs, etc.—in which the politically dominant cultural group uses excessive military force to repress devalued groups. When racial, religious, or ethnic tensions are prevalent, disenfranchised groups are either displaced and forced to migrate, or they are socially and spatially isolated, confined to a city’s margins or other impoverished places of misrecognition like inner-city ghettos, barrios, and ethnic enclaves. South Africa’s apartheid system, the history of African American slavery and plantation colonies, and Canada’s placement of aboriginal peoples in reservations are cases in point.

Furthermore, the many ways that cultural factors like race affect urban sociospatial development are amply displayed in the scholarship of environmental justice. I discuss this topic in the next chapter, so for now suffice it to say that most North American cities have clean neighborhoods inhabited by affluent white groups, and polluted neighborhoods inhabited by poor minority groups. This observation is confirmed by the empirical findings of the *Toxic Wastes*

and Race in the United States (1987), *Toxic Wastes and Race Revisited* (1994), and *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007* (2007) reports which demonstrate that race, rather than class, primarily accounts for the fact that African Americans disproportionately inhabit polluted urban environments (whereas whites occupy clean environments). Specific causes are complex and vary on a case-by-case basis, but racialized urban demographics are usually caused by intersections of capitalist economic forces—lower property costs in the inner-city attract polluting industries—with hegemonic patterns of cultural valuation—racialized representations of stigmatized places—and institutional racism—racist structural policies, racist habitual norms, and the perpetuation of ongoing racist legacies. The critical point I stress, then, is that cultural factors such as race matter because misrecognitions and exclusions have detrimental impacts on the socioeconomic livelihood, health, and environments of minority groups.

Therefore my argument should not be interpreted as romanticizing places and place-based cultural groups therein because I recognize that some group identities are oppressive. In fact, in chapter V I argue that, although some place-based identities ought to be cultivated and respected, others ought to be deconstructed if they generate or uphold social subordination. As such, my argument clearly states that not only political-economic processes, but also cultural practices and social relations, norms and traditions, and patterns of valuation and discourses may produce and sustain uneven sociospatial development, a case in point being the racialization of polluted urban environments, such as inner-city ghettos, which I discuss in depth in chapter IV. It is for this reason that throughout this chapter I stressed that it is the intersection of global socioecological flows and political-economic processes extending across space, with local cultural practices and social relations embedded in place, that produce and sustain uneven sociospatial development at various spatialities. In the upcoming chapters I fine-tune this

argument, exploring how cultural factors and political-economic factors interlock and interpenetrate to produce environmental injustices pertaining to spaces of inequitable distributions of goods and burdens, places of cultural misrecognition and disrespect, and political exclusions from public places of environmental policy.

6. Conclusion

Presently, the full consequences of globalization are unknown. Although the instrumental spaces of the global political-economy are increasingly encroaching upon the social spaces of everyday life in order to facilitate the mobility and accumulation of capital, at the same time increased flows of people, images, ideas, and information provide an open field of opportunities for re-imagining identity, community, and politics in both theory and praxis. This possibility exists because places-in-space are produced by multiscale networks of flows, processes, relations and practices, and, conversely, places-in-space affect these networks. It follows that transforming a place's spatial arrangements is concurrently to alter the cultural, social, economic, political, and ecological dynamics which sustain that environment. In chapter V I examine critically these emancipatory potentialities, particularly how some communities are resisting the colonization of place with their spatial practices that (re)appropriate instrumental spaces and transform them into social spaces conducive to communicative exchanges, while other groups are articulating a politics of place that celebrates cultural identities and differences.

Before pursuing this topic, in chapter IV I refine this chapter's argument for the politicization of relationally constituted places-in-space, broadly construed, by exploring how the racialization of place produces places of misrecognition which legitimize inequitable distributions of environmental burdens across space, and political exclusions from the public

arenas of environmental policy. Whereas in chapter II I argued that devalued human groups are naturalized, conversely, in the early sections of chapter IV I expose how different environments are racialized, and I argue subsequently that these representations uphold the discriminatory politics of urban waste disposal as substantiated in the three *Toxic Wastes and Race* reports. In the final sections I argue that conflicting representations of the environment (or place and space, broadly conceived) inform the respective political agendas of the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement. At the same time, I contend that the failure of mainstream environmentalists to recognize that their privileged social location conditions their wilderness agenda is symptomatic of the master subject's blindness to white privilege. The consequence is that mainstream environmentalists are not aware that their perceptions of both natural and urban environments are racialized, resulting in accusations of what Figueroa and Mills (2001) call "discriminatory environmentalism."

CHAPTER IV

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IS POLITICAL: RACE, PLACE, AND CONTESTED ENVIRONMENTALISMS

1. Introduction

In chapter III I argued that places-in-space, such as urban and natural environments, are relationally constituted by intricate webs of cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows, and in chapter IV I constrict this analysis by focusing on the racialization of place, a topic salient to the scholarship of environmental justice and environmental racism.¹ Building on the critical geography framework developed in chapter III, I use Charles Mills' account of the racial contract to argue that places are discursively represented in terms of the racial signifiers of their inhabitants, and this has serious cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental impacts for devalued minority groups. I focus on the racialization of both natural and urban environments.

In the second section I uncover how wilderness is racialized in contradictory ways. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, nature was represented as a threatening, wild, cruel, indigenous (native) space inhabited by the devil; in the Puritan tradition it was conceived as a space to be conquered, domesticated, and civilized in order to construct the Promised Land; and, in the Romantic tradition it was deemed a pure, pristine, undisturbed (white) space offering a refuge from the corruption of (black) cities. Furthermore, I examine how polluted urban neighborhoods, such as inner-city ghettos and ethnic enclaves, are represented as dangerous and dirty urban "jungles," and, conversely, minority groups are perceived as "black trash" contaminating the places they inhabit.

¹ Ecofeminists, namely Merchant (1980), Plumwood (1993; 2002), Warren (2000) and Gaard (2004), have argued extensively that nature is feminized and eroticized, and for this reason I focus primarily on race. However, in chapter II I did briefly broach this topic.

In the third section some of the cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental repercussions of discursive constructions of place are critically assessed. I argue that the racialization of place fosters the fear of the other and the stigmatization of the places they inhabit, legitimizing the discriminatory politics of garbage disposal as revealed in the findings of the *Toxic Wastes and Race* reports on environmental racism. Because some human bodies are perceived as polluting the places they occupy, it is therefore “logical” to contain pollution in wasted spaces already soiled by devalued racial signifiers, a point supported by the empirical fact that minority groups disproportionately inhabit polluted urban environments.

In the fourth section I argue that mainstream environmentalism’s discourse of wilderness preservation presupposes a Newtonian representation of nature, in the process (inadvertently) excluding the environmental concerns of minority groups who conceptualize environments relationally. This reveals how all environmental discourses are socially contextualized and value-laden (rather than universal and impartial) since they are conditioned by people’s social location—or “positionality” to use Laura Pulido’s (1996, 25) term—within the institutional structures that frame their environmental struggles. Consequently, representations of nature, what counts as environmental issues, and proposed solutions are politically contested across space and the site of on-going place-based struggles.

Dominant social locations are white, and this is significant considering the chapter’s focus on the racialization of place. In the fifth section I argue that most white environmentalists are not aware that they are racially privileged, nor are they aware that their environmental discourses reflect this white privilege, resulting in accusations of discriminatory environmentalism. The charge of discriminatory environmentalism is also based on the tendency of mainstream environmentalists to privilege the welfare of nonhuman species and the

preservation of natural habitats, while neglecting the polluted urban neighborhoods of disenfranchised groups. Thus, I conclude that countering discriminatory environmentalism requires not only the fair (re)distribution of environmental burdens (distributive justice) and greater political representation or participation in existing institutions (procedural justice), but also identifying, contesting, and transforming hegemonic environmental discourses, especially racialized representations of natural and urban environments that produce places of misrecognition (recognition justice).

2. The Racialization of Place

Building on the third chapter's concept of place-based identity, I argue that representations of environments and the identity of inhabitants therein intersect and reinforce each other through their co-constitutive social constructions. Different groups have their identities defined in terms of relations with the environment(s) they inhabit, and, conversely, the environments themselves are represented in terms of human signifiers such as race, thus manifesting the racialization of place. Paraphrasing Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Lawson (2001, 46) defines racialization as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group." Racialization occurs whenever the social understanding of specific contexts is "colored" by normative racial signifiers. Accordingly, the racialization of place refers to the projection of racial signifiers onto specific environments, more often than not producing places of misrecognition.

This section is divided into two parts. In the first part I argue that Western perceptions of nature are discursively constructed and racialized in the process, and in the second part I focus on the racialization of urban polluted environments and its consequences for minority groups. In

both instances I maintain that racialized representations of place are politicized since they restrict opportunities to enjoy natural environments, devalue cultural identities, impact socioeconomic livelihood, exclude from political arenas of environmental policy, disturb urban environmental integrity, and endanger human health.

i. Racialized Natural Environments

Western perceptions of nature are clearly racialized, albeit in contradictory ways. In what follows I undertake a brief historical sketch, examining how the Judeo-Christian, Puritan, and Romantic traditions discursively construed wilderness differently, yet each nonetheless manifests the racialization of place. I argue that racialized representations had grave repercussions for aboriginal peoples, ultimately legitimizing the colonization of the “New World” and the “Wild West.” At the same time, I expose how many contemporary ecological and agricultural discourses are raced. Weeds, for instance, are construed as undesirable and invasive alien species which must be eradicated, and this has significant consequences for minority groups naturalized as behaving like weeds.

a. Wild (Native) Nature, Pure (White) Nature

With the beginning of the Enlightenment, the Judeo-Christian tradition replaced pagan views depicting nature as a caring and bountiful mother (Mother Nature) with images of wilderness as a threatening, savage, cruel, native space inhabited by the devil. Joseph Desjardins (2006) observes that biblical texts contrasted wilderness with heaven and the Promised Land; nature was a feared place, being forsaken by God. The term wilderness itself suggested that nature was untamed and chaotic, a wild environment threatening human survival. In *Leviathan*,

Hobbes' social contract portrayed nature as "red in tooth and claw," a brutish, cruel, and dangerous environment against which humans have struggled to build the commonwealth. In addition, indigenous peoples were represented as uncivilized savages, more animal than human, living in Hobbes' state-of-nature. Not only were "natives" a part of nature, but they were continuous with its fauna and flora. John Pilger (1989, 23) notes that an early edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* described Australia's indigenous peoples as "[m]ore ferocious than the lynx, the leopard, or the hyena, he devours his own species," and that in *Triumph in the Tropics*, an Australian textbook commissioned in 1959 for the Centenary celebrations, indigenous peoples were perceived as half-wild dogs.

Judeo-Christian representations were clearly racialized. Natural spaces and their aboriginal inhabitants were both defined with negative signifiers. Mills (2001, 77) says that "the savagery of the one leaching into the other, so that these spaces [were] savage because of their inhabitants, and that their inhabitants [were] savage because they live[d] in these spaces." In anthropomorphic fashion, the presumed wildness of indigenous peoples infected the spaces they occupied, while the brutishness of nature turned them into animal-like savages. To the first European settlers, indigenous peoples were dangerous since they embodied nature's wildness, and "the savages took the savagery of their spaces with them wherever they went" (Mills 2001, 79). Such views described indigenous peoples as little more than brutes, legitimizing European colonization of North America (described as a discovery) and the eradication of its indigenous "pests" (described as a civilizing mission).

The Puritan tradition perceived nature in more ambiguous terms. Although it was still a place to be avoided, "[t]he Puritans believed that their faith was being tested in the New England wilderness" (Desjardins 2006, 154). For the Puritans (and like Plato), the savagery of nature

referred not only to the wilderness “outside,” but also to the wilderness “inside” identified with the corrupt appetites and predispositions for sinful behaviors. David Williams says that the early Puritans “understood that the experience was *spiritual* and that their sojourn in the literal wilderness was but a symbol of a spiritual state [emphasis in original]” (qtd. in Zimmerman 1994, 66). At the same time, the Puritan view encouraged aggressive intervention into nature in order to build God’s kingdom. Wilderness contained ample raw materials for achieving the good life. Consistent with Bacon and Descartes’ respective appeal to use modern science to subdue and conquer nature for human ends, wilderness was no longer feared, but rather mastered for the betterment of humanity. Such measures were justified because nature was perceived to be empty of people (indigenous peoples were animals, quasi-human at best), a *terra nullius* that was “just there,” belonging to no one, and therefore available for human appropriation. Articulating precisely this point in the context of Europe’s enclosure movement, Locke argues, in *Second Treatise of Government*, that in the state-of-nature unused land is unowned, valueless, and wasted. It is only once nature is transformed by human labor that it acquires value and becomes private property. Locke’s social contract theory had serious consequences for American Indians and aboriginal peoples. Because historically they did not recognize private property, they did not own the land nor contribute to its value in the Lockean sense; consequently, they were depicted as “the objects rather than the subjects of the distinctively human process of molding nature to human ends, which contractarianism presumes” (Mills 2001, 78). Finally, the wildness of animal-like indigenous peoples, just like that of the land, had to be dealt with—tamed, domesticated, or eradicated—so the civilized white space of the polis could be constructed. This was necessary because, as Mills (2001, 79) appropriately puts it, their “wildness [was] always

lurking beneath the veneer, threatening relapse and the undermining of all the labor that ha[d] gone into the creation of the polis and the clearing of its foundational whitened space.”

This historical sketch demonstrates that, although the Judeo-Christian and Puritan traditions perceived nature differently, they shared in common perceptions of indigenous peoples as wild brutes and animals, quasi-humans at best, that must be dealt with. Historically, white Euro-Americans—the colonizing master subject—employed two strategies to deal with the wild otherness of indigenous peoples. Paraphrasing Claude Lévi-Strauss, Bauman (2000, 101), in *Liquid Modernity*, summarizes the essence of these strategies.

The first strategy [*anthropoemic*] consisted in “vomiting,” spitting out the others seen as incurably strange and alien: barring physical contact, dialogue, social intercourse.... The extreme variants of the “emic” strategy are now, as always, incarceration, deportation and murder. The upgraded, “refined” (modernized) forms of the “emic” strategy are spatial separation, urban ghettos, selective access to spaces and selective barring from using them.

The second strategy [*anthropophagic*] consists in a soi-disant “disalienation” of alien substances: “ingesting,” “devouring” foreign bodies and spirits so that they may be made, through metabolism, identical with, and no longer distinguishable from, the “ingesting” body. This strategy took an equally wide range of forms: from cannibalism to enforced assimilation—cultural crusades, wars of attrition declared on local customs, calendars, cults, dialects and other “prejudices” and “superstitions.”

To put it otherwise, the first strategy was pursued through war—the master subject’s extermination of the other—and the second strategy was accomplished using the colonial system of reservations—the eradication of their wild otherness through domestication. European voyages of discovery can thus be understood in terms of a racist narrative in which white civilization brought light to the dark and savage recesses of wilderness as it colonized spatially-distant places. It is a story “in which civilized white space, the space of the moving frontier, expand[ed] into the vacuum of nonwhite space—red space, black space, Indian Country, Dark Continent” (Mills 2001, 78), ultimately justifying the conquest of the Wild West. The end result

was the theft and robbery of indigenous lands, the murder of millions of indigenous peoples, and the confinement of those who survived in the colonial system of reservations.²

The Romantic tradition, in North America identified principally with the New England transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, offers a third representation of nature.³ This tradition emphasized spiritual and aesthetic experiences in wilderness. Nature was perceived as a symbol of purity, innocence and authenticity; it was an unsoiled place providing a refuge from the corrupting influences of cities. Contrary to the Judeo-Christian and Puritan traditions, nature was identified as the Garden of Eden, a paradise purified of the degeneracy of industrial society. Such images are warmly embraced by most environmentalists nowadays. Foremost, this is because the Romantic tradition provides a narrative legitimizing the creation of wilderness preserves to ensure nature's integrity in a pristine state; sanctuaries where the last traces of an untouched nature can still be encountered, insulated from the contaminating disturbances of human civilization.

I argue that Romantic representations are also racialized, albeit in ways different than the Judeo-Christian and Puritan traditions. To say it bluntly, mainstream environmentalism's Romantic views of nature are white landscapes informed by a nostalgic white heritage. Although the Romantic tradition appears to break from the Judeo-Christian and Puritan traditions by valuing experiences in nature, all three are premised on a racist narrative of human conquest and colonization. Specifically, the Romantic tradition is rooted in the American narrative of nature as a wild frontier. This Jeffersonian narrative recalls the quest of a white, heterosexual, rugged,

² Although no one knows with certainty how many people were killed in the centuries following Columbus' "discovery" of the "New World," LaDuke (1993, 101) cites an estimate that puts the Western hemisphere's indigenous population at 112,554,000 in 1492, and at 28,264,000 in 1980.

³ Specifically, Emerson's *Nature* and Thoreau's *Walden* are classic pieces which eloquently articulate Romantic views of nature.

autonomous male who encounters nature in order to test himself. The white male is confronted with numerous challenges—he must hunt for food, build a shelter, fend off wild predators, brave nature’s elements—in the process discovering himself and achieving manhood. According to Mei Mei Evans (2002, 183), the narrative’s representational paradigm serves an ideological function: the identity of the heterosexual white male is privileged—he becomes a “real” man and a “true” American—and deemed most deserving of entering wilderness and having transformative experiences therein. However, people with different identities, namely women, gays and lesbians, and peoples of color, are perceived as “aliens” when they enter nature because it is construed as a white, masculine, heterosexual space—i.e. it is a “sanitized” landscape purged of deviant bodies. From a white lens perspective, some groups are perceived as bodies-out-of-place in the wilderness, manifesting their otherness. Julian Agyeman and Rachel Spooner (1997, 199) explain that this is because “[i]n the white imagination people of colour are confined to towns and cities, representing an urban, ‘alien’ environment, and the white landscape of rurality is aligned with ‘nativeness’ and the absence of evil and danger.”

It follows that certain groups are less deserving of the wilderness experiences advocated by the New England transcendentalists. Nature is supposedly a place open to everyone, yet it is not easily and safely entered by human others. This is not only because some groups are perceived as intruders in nature—they “blemish” white representations of wilderness—but also because they enter nature in fear of meeting white heterosexual men. Evans (2002, 185, 189) clarifies, saying that women, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians enter wilderness at their own risk with sometimes violent consequences, her claim substantiated by “the dragging death of James Byrd Jr. [an African American] in Jasper, Texas, in 1998,” and also in the killing of “Matthew Shepard, a gay college student.... brutally beaten, bound, and left to die on a deserted

stretch of road in Lander, Wyoming,” in 1998. The regularity of such murders—both these incidents happened in 1998—strongly suggests that the white, racist, rural environments depicted in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are still common today.

To summarize, mainstream representations of nature, insofar as they borrow from the Romantic tradition, are construed by white hegemony: they are racist, androcentric and heterosexist, ultimately privileging white heterosexual men’s access to nature. This is clearly an environmental justice issue since it concerns not only the equitable distribution of environmental burdens, but also the fair distribution of environmental goods, such as the opportunity to enter and enjoy natural environments.

b. Weeds and Race

I argue that many ecological discourses uncritically presuppose this racialized narrative of nature as a white landscape. Conservationists generally deem native plant species the rightful inhabitants of natural environments. In contrast, they tend to describe undesirable plant species as non-native, alien, and exotic species—hence they are construed as weeds. Weeds *qua* weeds are socially constructed, however, because they are not defined in terms of intrinsic biological traits or qualities; rather, some plants are defined as weeds to the extent that they invade and overpopulate native environments, compete with agricultural crops, and are difficult to control and eradicate. It is because weeds hamper agricultural practices and other human endeavors that they are anthropomorphized as being opportunistic and aggressive, perceived as being useless and out-of-place. Weeds are thus a form of symbolic pollution which must nonetheless be eradicated or confined to specific regions.

The problem is that such ecological discourses are racialized because alien plant species are anthropomorphized as having the stereotyped traits associated with devalued minority groups, while these groups are naturalized as behaving like weeds.⁴ This is to say, the behaviors of alien plant species are analogized to those of “alien” human groups who presumably pollute the native countryside when they visit, and overpopulate the urban environments they inhabit. Conversely, Jozef Keulartz (2009, 44) says that devalued groups, notably immigrants and ethnic minorities, are perceived as embodying the characteristics of weeds, “such as sexual robustness, uncontrolled fecundity, low parental involvement with the young, aggressiveness, and predatory behavior.” To the extent that ecology and agriculture analogize bio-invasion to immigration, they reproduce the master subject’s logic of domination which naturalizes human others. Daniel Spencer (1999, 97) explains:

An examination of the attitudes of white settlers toward nonwhite inhabitants of the land makes clear that the same logic and strategies that shaped their response to weeds as a perceived threat to civilization were operative in their relations with nonwhites. Just as settlers used anthropomorphized language to describe weeds as “aggressive,” “pioneering,” and “colonizing,” so nonwhites were naturalized and viewed as human weeds that must be removed, domesticated, or improved.

This passage clearly demonstrates how weeds and racial signifiers intersect and reinforce each other. It also reveals how racialized ecological discourses have racist undertones. James Fenton (1986, 21), a conservation biologist, shares this intuition, suggesting that

⁴ In *War and Nature*, Edmund Russell describes the ways that agricultural metaphors pertaining to pest-control were used in war propaganda during WWII. Germany and Japan, for instance, were described as dangerous pathogens that had to be gassed using chemical warfare. Killing German and Japanese enemies were “natural” responses to “natural” threats. Russell’s (2001, 132) environmental history describes how the Allies “*seemed to regard the enemy as a species of animal pest* [emphasis in original],” and seemed “to believe they were contending with an *invasion of large armed ants* [emphasis in original],” images which helped legitimize the bombings of civilians in urban centers (in Dresden, Germany, and in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan). Conversely, war metaphors were (and still are today) used to justify the extermination of insects with pesticides. Chemical warfare against natural “enemies”—i.e. pest-control against insects—was necessary because they menaced human welfare. In both cases the logic was the same: because civilians and soldiers were threatened by either nonhuman (insects) or human (Germans and the Japanese) enemies, it was logical and natural to eradicate enemy pests.

perhaps dislike of alien species is indeed similar to racial discrimination—wanting to preserve the genetic integrity of one’s own stock (a natural human failing). Alien species are welcome in strictly defined areas (gardens) but must not be allowed to pollute the native culture (the wider countryside).

The implications are startling, and I focus on two of them. First, such passages entail that racism is not only a social, cultural, or biological construct associated with skin color or ethnicity, but also an ecological construct as manifest in racialized agricultural discourses and the racialization of natural environments—i.e. nature is a white landscape, inhabited by native species, and purged of human “aliens” and invasive weeds. Second, racialized ecological discourses imply that white natives are the rightful inhabitants of wilderness and the countryside, whereas minority groups are perceived as polluting bodies who are out-of-place—contaminating and threatening native communities—when they enter nature. Therefore protecting white rural communities requires that peoples of color and ethnic minorities be confined to particular spaces, such as the already polluted urban environments of the inner-cities they inhabit. Just like weeds disturb ecological relations, human others disrupt the social relations of native whites inhabiting rural environments.

To recapitulate, the problem is that mainstream environmentalists have uncritically accepted the dominant American narrative of nature as a white landscape, and ecological ideas concerning native and alien plant species. This is problematic because racialized representations of nature adversely impact minority groups. The consequences, as I argue in upcoming sections, are environmental injustices on multiple levels: minority groups are denied environmental goods, such as access to wilderness areas, but also clean living and safe work environments; they are confined to impoverished urban environments that are disproportionately polluted; they are excluded from political arenas of policy regarding distributions of environmental burdens and

goods; and, their bodies themselves are discursively perceived as polluting the places they inhabit.

ii. Racialized Urban Environments

Although many cities are multicultural as they are inhabited by various ethnic groups, in this section I argue that the racialization of place is clearly visible in most North American urban environments. I complement last section's discussion of racialized constructions of nature by showing how urban polluted neighborhoods are anthropomorphized as having the stereotyped character traits associated with minority groups, and, conversely, these groups are portrayed as "black trash" to borrow Mills' (2001) expression. In contrast, suburban neighborhoods are perceived as clean, unsoiled and pure, and their white inhabitants deemed civilized and more environmentally conscious. At the same time, I uncover how pollution discourses are also racialized—pollution is perceived as matter-out-of-place—and symbolic associations suggest that "foreign bodies" contaminate the places they inhabit. The purpose of these investigations is to argue subsequently that discursive representations have serious cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental repercussions for minority groups naturalized as waste.

a. Black Trash

In the United States, African Americans (but also Latinos and Hispanics) exceedingly live in heavily industrialized and polluted urban environments. These places are often called ghettos, slums, or the inner-city. They are usually situated on the outskirts of a city's business and shopping districts, physically bounded and concealed by freeways, factories and warehouses. In the past, African Americans were forcefully constrained to these places by segregation laws.

What is puzzling is that racialized demographic patterns have persisted to this day. A frequently cited explanation is class-based: minority groups are poor and tend to inhabit polluted urban environments due to low property and rental costs, while the more affluent, predominantly white, relocate to clean suburban areas. Yet, a race-based explanation also suggests itself. Because poverty is associated with crime (burglary, drug trafficking, prostitution), minority groups live in areas portrayed as cesspools of pollution, disease, corruption, violence, and social decay. These communities are relatively powerless to influence the ways they are represented on television and in newspapers which solely report incidents of crime and violence in their neighborhoods. Thus, communities of color are not only economically disadvantaged, but they are also culturally devalued because they live in places of misrecognition. Poverty and negative cultural images intersect to discursively produce stereotyped representations of minority groups inhabiting stigmatized environments. Accordingly, they are construed as “human trash” living in places filled with waste.

Historically, blatant racism depicted African Americans as descended from “a continent plunged in darkness, primitivism, and violence”—a place without history according to Hegel’s philosophy of history—with blackness representing “the space of nothingness” according to Mills (2001, 83).⁵ As increasing numbers of slaves were shipped to southern plantations, elite whites feared an uprising that would spread Africa’s wild savageness and infect civilization. Once slavery was abolished following the Civil War, many “freed” slaves, including poor immigrants and the working class, relocated to northern cities in search of work; as a result, cities were frequently perceived as urban “jungles” and urban “wilderness,” breeding crime and corruption due to mass unemployment and poverty. To this day, metaphors of the city as the

⁵ In *La raison dans l’histoire*, Hegel argues that not only Africans, but also women are ahistorical beings since their reproductive functions condemn them to repeating the cycles of life.

frontier, jungle, and wilderness reveal a lot about the social status of their inhabitants. Lawson (2001, 42) argues that negative attitudes about inner-city neighborhoods intersect with racial categories to foster “negative racial sentiments about black Americans,” and this has “adverse impacts on the lives of the poor black people who live in cities.” Residential location is therefore supposedly indicative of the types of people who live there. More affluent groups do not enter inner-city environments because they are dirty and dangerous. Fear of the other is intimately associated with specific places; the desolate streets of rough black neighborhoods are avoided or passed through as quickly as possible.

In accord with the concept of place-based identity developed in chapter III, I am arguing that representations of urban places and the group identities therein reinforce each other through their co-constitutive social constructions. In what follows I focus on African Americans to show how they are symbolically represented as embodying the negative qualities characterizing their polluted urban environments. One reason is because black is symbolically associated with trash. Mills (2001, 83) declares:

Their blackness signifies dirt, death, evil; (illicit) sex, shit, excretion; diabolism, savagery, lack of civilization; and the most manual of manual labor, shit work. These images and associations enter into a dark synergy with one another, generating an all-purpose negative signifier, conceptualized in the vocabulary of pollution and disease and threat to civilization.

To put it bluntly, African Americans are portrayed as violent, dirty and savage, hence “black trash” littering an already dirty environment. Conversely, urban polluted environments are anthropomorphized as having the devalued traits characterizing the black bodies that contaminate them; polluted places are uncivilized, wild and dangerous, hence black. Skin color is a negative signifier for polluted regions—blackness signifies dirt and excrement—and dirty neighborhoods reflect the presumed status of their inhabitants, associations which are mirrored in

the names of such places: “Niggertown, Darktown, Bronzeville, the black belt, the ghetto, the inner city” (Mills 2001, 87). Haraway (1991, 223) says that colored neighborhoods symbolize “the dark source of infection, pollution, disorder, and so on, that threaten to overwhelm white manhood (cities, civilization, the family, the white personal body) with its decadent emanations.” Consequently, black bodies themselves are perceived as garbage that must be contained in specific areas. This shows how perceptions of devalued groups and their environments reinforce each other to produce places of misrecognition: while polluted spaces are raced, peoples of color are naturalized as waste.

Before proceeding, a point of clarification is in order. I am aware that devalued white groups are also associated with trash, hence the expression “white trash.” Stereotypes define these groups as being poor, uneducated, religious, conservative, and racist. They are sometimes called “rednecks,” and tend to inhabit impoverished polluted neighborhoods or “backwards” rural environments, therefore supporting last section’s assertion that minority groups feel threatened when they enter countryside spaces. The important point is that symbolic associations of particular identities with trash—for both whites and blacks—reveal how these people are valued by society at large. I argue, however, that “black trash” connotes explicit racism, a cultural factor that is not manifest in the term “white trash.”

b. Pollution and Foreign Bodies

Pollution discourses are racialized, relying heavily on bodily metaphors. In scientific terms, pollution can be defined as a chemical substance that endangers human health in sufficient doses. Common forms of urban pollution include smog from car exhausts, water contamination from industries, and radiation exposure from electrical plants. Pollution refers not only to

chemical compounds, however, but symbolically it refers to social disorder and moral degeneracy, distinctively human traits. Marilyn Manson, for example, is depicted by religious groups as the Antichrist who corrupts—hence pollutes—the youth. Again, rap musicians presumably preach sex, drugs and violence, and the inner-city neighborhoods they inhabit are stereotyped as dangerous areas to be avoided. Pollution, then, is opposed to purity; it is a negative signifier conceptually associated with dirt—dirt not as earth, but rather as contaminating matter-out-of-place—that soils one’s body and one’s conscience. Therefore polluters are not only guilty for physical pollution, but also for moral pollution as signified by their lifestyle choices and body types. Just like exposure to chemicals poses a threat to physical health, encounters with “foreign bodies”—people who look different and act in strange ways, that is, bodies-out-of-place—endanger personal safety. This fear of the other gives rise to exclusionary territorial behavior in the form of white gated-communities, and also helps account for the racialized housing demographics of most U.S. cities. The point to grasp is that pollution, in terms of chemical contaminants and moral corruption, threatens physical and moral purity, and therefore pollution, and those associated with it, must be kept at a distance.

Beth Berila (2004) observes that pollution discourses borrow viral metaphors from medical discourses. Pollution is a threat to the master subject’s body, his community body, and even the nation’s body. In each case a body is deemed healthy if it is relatively self-contained, clearly bounded, and homogeneous. Berila (2004, 130) cites Sara Ahmed to this effect: “a good or healthy [body]... does not leak outside itself, and hence does not let outsiders (or foreign agents/viruses) in.” Pollution is dangerous precisely because it penetrates and infects a person’s self-contained healthy body, threatening its homogeneity and exposing its porousness. Bauman (2000, 109) adds that foreign chemical substances may enter the individual body as they are

ingested or breathed in, just like human foreigners leak “surreptitiously into the neighborhood of the body”; in both cases we must “get it (them) out of my (our) system.” The community is thus analogized to an individual’s self-contained body, and both internalize the master subject’s dualistic logic of identity. A healthy community body is purged of “foreign bodies”—ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, immigrants—in order to ensure its health and purity, just like the master subject hyper-separates himself from the other to secure his sense of absolute autonomy. Bauman (2000, 184) says that the community must be “thoroughly cleansed of all foreign, ingestion-resistant substances, all points of entry closely watched, controlled and guarded, but heavily armed on the outside and encased in impenetrable armour.” To rid ourselves of physical dirt and garbage we wash our hands, clean our house, and discard the junk in waste disposal sites removed from our neighborhoods. Likewise, to rid ourselves of contagious “foreign bodies” threatening to morally infect our communities, we isolate ourselves by erecting secure boundaries, and keep the others in their places, far away, in already dirty neighborhoods. In this way pollution discourses are ideological and can be used for social control.

c. White Suburban Places

Whereas polluted urban environments are disproportionately inhabited by impoverished minority groups, in contrast, clean urban environments are predominantly occupied by affluent white groups. Historically, European white spaces symbolized civilization, and today “civilized” urban spaces are clean and safe relative to the dirty and dangerous environments of minority groups. The prototype representation of a white environment is the suburb. Robert Bullard (2000) notes that these spaces are usually non-industrialized, and environmental regulations are more strictly enforced. Evernden (1992, 119) describes such neighborhoods as relatively safe,

homogeneous and orderly, as evidenced in the endless rows of identical houses surrounded by freshly mowed lawns purged of weeds

by the ablution rites of chemical lawn maintenance. This spectacle is even defended by laws that punish any who permit “noxious weeds” to grow in their yards.... the weeds have become noxious.... because of their conceptual effect on suburbanites; they are a *pollutant*. They are intrusions into the order of the lawn, and into the domain of human willing. Clearly then, as “natural” (wild) entities which must be excluded, weeds are dirt, as is the rest of nature [emphasis in original].

Just like minority groups are represented as “foreign bodies” that pollute their neighborhoods, noxious weeds are pollutants that intrude on the order of lawns and the cleanliness of suburbs, and for this reason must be eradicated. Weeds are alien plant species—plants-out-of-place—and in the previous section I discussed the implications for groups who are naturalized as behaving like weeds.

The place-based suburban identity, with its obsession with cleanliness and order, and its white environment interlock to reinforce one another. Carl Anthony (1995, 270) says that whiteness signifies “pure granulated sugar, pure white bread. Meaning unsoiled, unsullied, undamaged, unconnected with dirt.” Thus, white people’s “transparent” skin is “uncolored” and symbolizes purity, and their white environments are clean and safe, exemplifying good environmental conditions. Accordingly, cities become civilized and livable to the extent that law-abiding whites constitute the majority. Lawson (2001, 45) explains that “[w]hites must move into urban areas and carve out a livable area. The white living area is seen as a haven in the wilds of the urban wilderness.” The sociological phenomenon of “yuppie” gentrification solidifies these representations. Cities become civilized when white urban “pioneers” leave the suburbs to relocate in previously destitute quarters of the urban “jungle.” This reveals how a vision of white space, inhabited by affluent white groups, constitutes the normative standard of physical, moral, and symbolic cleanliness and purity. The implication is that white spaces will more likely reflect

sound environmental conditions—these places are purified and clean—and that a white person is more likely to be environmentally conscious and become an environmentalist.

3. Place Discrimination and the Politics of Waste Disposal

The purpose of the above explorations was to show how racialized representations of place and place-based identities therein intersect and discursively constitute each other to produce places of misrecognition. I contend, however, that in general mainstream environmentalists are not aware that their environmental discourses, particularly representations of pristine nature and urban polluted environments, are raced. Consequently, they have not examined critically how their negative attitudes of cities shape their environmental agendas, with corresponding cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental impacts for minority groups (specifically pertaining to places of misrecognition, spaces of inequitable distribution, and political exclusion from public places of policy). Lawson (2001, 42) says that “if it is true that the overall conception of cities by most Americans is negative, environmentalists must consider what happens when those attitudes combine with negative views of racial groups who live there.”

In this section I argue that the racialization of place upholds a subtle form of environmental discrimination on the basis of the urban places minority groups inhabit. I develop this argument with reference to the politics of waste disposal. More precisely, I argue that the racialization of polluted urban environments legitimizes unjust distributions across space, particularly the disproportionate placement of environmental burdens in communities of peoples of color. Whereas in chapter II I argued that the social contract is unfair to groups associated with nature and the body, I supplement that analysis with chapter III’s concepts of place-based

identity and relational place/space to presently argue that the social contract is a spatial contract that is racialized. In the fifth section I revisit this topic in the context of discriminatory environmentalism, with careful attention to mainstream environmentalists' white privilege.

The environmental problem of garbage disposal is usually depicted as a challenge confronting the raceless population of a polis, constructed upon a raceless space. Such a view is consistent with political liberalism's social contract. To briefly recapitulate, Rawls' (1971) justice theory presupposes that the similarities, or what citizens have in common, are more important than their differences, and therefore liberalism's procedural norm of equality in the public sphere is conceptualized as sameness. The hypothetical original position states that each rational agent monologically chooses universal principles of justice from behind a veil of ignorance that disregards situational contexts, such as class position and social status, disparities in natural abilities and intelligence, and group identity traits pertaining to gender, race, sexuality, etc. For this reason the political public sphere is presumed to be a raceless, genderless, asexual space—a place prior to culture, in accord with the original position—in which citizens engage in deliberation and make impartial decisions concerning the administration of the city. Furthermore, the space upon which the city is constructed is analogized to the space of the public sphere. This is to say that the body politic of the polis rests upon a raceless, genderless, and asexual background environment that is “just there,” and its various locations, such as districts or neighborhoods, are represented as being the same. This space belongs to the state-of-nature because it is deemed the ahistorical stratum or given physical geography upon which the polis is built, and from which culture and politics emerge. I question, however, the accuracy of these spatial representations. In what follows I pursue this train of thought as I analyze critically the politics of garbage disposal, in the process excavating the polis' space in order to expose how

race and class factors interlock to produce places of misrecognition and exclusion, and spaces of inequitable distribution of pollution burdens.

Cities produce waste products that must be disposed of somewhere, preferably in spaces removed from the places people inhabit. The problem is that some groups inevitably live closer to waste disposal sites than others, and most often these are minority groups, namely African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Latinos and Hispanics. Although Peter Wenz (1988) and Vicki Been (1995) argue that the distribution pattern is caused by class factors—minority groups (and the working class) tend to inhabit polluted urban environments due to low property costs, while affluent white groups relocate to clean suburban areas—the *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* (1987), *Toxic Wastes and Race Revisited* (1994), and *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty* (2007) reports present empirical evidence for environmental racism. They demonstrate that the location of environmental burdens is primarily the result of cultural factors, specifically racism. Summarizing the findings, Bullard (1994, 17) says that race, rather than class, is “the single most important factor (i.e., more important than income, home ownership rate, and property values) in the location of abandoned toxic waste sites.” In addition, Stephen Sandweiss (1998, 35) notes that a national study titled “Unequal Protection: The Racial Divide in Environmental Law,” conducted in 1992 by the *National Law Journal* to investigate discrepancies in the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) cleanup efforts at 1100 Superfund sites,

concluded that the average fine imposed on polluters in white areas was 506 percent higher than the average fine imposed in minority communities. It also discovered that cleanup took longer in minority communities, even though the efforts were often less intensive than those performed in white neighborhoods.

These studies empirically demonstrate that minority groups disproportionately inhabit urban polluted environments. In other words, polluting industries, landfills, toxic incinerators,

hazardous waste sites, and the like, are exceedingly located in communities of poor peoples of color. Robert Gottlieb (1993, 305) states:

These communities are often at the margin—in barrios, on reservations, in inner-city ghettos, in abandoned regions of the South—out of sight, out of mind. A solid waste incinerator sited in an inner-city African-American neighborhood removes garbage and its disposal from suburban households and wealthier urban areas; a hazardous waste disposal site in the rural South removes industrial wastes from the northeastern industrial cities where they are produced and where their products are consumed.

The implication is that the problem of waste disposal—and pollution in general—does not impact everyone equally. Instead, pollution discriminates between groups inhabiting different environments. This is not only because bodies are physiologically different—some are more vulnerable to pollution and disease than others—but also because social and environmental contexts differ. Pollution is sociospatially contextualized since class and race (among other cultural factors such as gender) intersect with discursive representations of place to produce discrepancies in terms of safe drinking water, clean air, quality food, health care access, and clean living and safe work environments.

The findings of the *Toxic Wastes and Race* reports debunk the assumption that garbage disposal is a problem confronting a raceless population inhabiting the raceless space of a polis. Drawing from Hobbes' analogy of the social contract's body politic to a human body made flesh, the polis is the place where citizens live, and with Mills I argue that this space is racialized through and through because representations of place and bodily identities therein discursively constitute one another. Quite simply, there are white spaces which are clean and where environmental regulations are strictly enforced (in the suburbs), and colored spaces which are dirty and where environmental regulations are lax if enforced at all (in urban ghettos). Mills (2001, 87) argues that, because colored environments are construed as deteriorating and dirty places, they are represented as the taboo regions of the white body politic, the “functionalist

space analogous to the body parts below the belt, the ones we keep hidden,” thus lending credence to Frantz Fanon’s (1967, 180) assertion that “[t]he Negro is the genital.” Whereas the body politic’s sovereignty (or soul) is identified with white, affluent, clean, suburban neighborhoods, Mills (2001, 88) adds that, like a digestive system, the sole function of colored neighborhoods is to collect white society’s “waste products, its excreta” so it is “kept out of white sight.” White suburban environments must purge themselves of the waste they produce to ensure their cleanliness and purity, and it makes sense to dispose of trash in already soiled and polluted environments discursively represented in terms of debased metabolic processes. Thus, far from being an impartial contract negotiated upon a raceless, background, receptacle-space (the state-of-nature thesis), the body politic’s space is relationally constituted and its social contract is accurately described as a spatial contract that is raced, thereby helping account for the empirical fact that minority groups are more likely to inhabit polluted and culturally stigmatized environments in close proximity to toxic waste facilities and cancer clusters, among other environmental hazards.

Furthermore, because group identities are construed through relations with the environments people inhabit, and because racial signifiers are associated with pollution, colored bodies are perceived as environmental problems that must be dealt with—hence Mills’ expression “black trash.” While white bodies symbolize disembodiedness and non-corporeality, Mills (2001, 74) says that “blacks *themselves* have been thought of as disposable, an excrescence in the body politic, and thus part of the problem [emphasis in original].” Similar to the dumping of garbage in designated areas, subordinated minority groups, namely African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Latinos and Hispanics, are concentrated in concealed and insulated ghettos, slums, and ethnic enclaves. Nowadays, the perpetuation of ongoing racist

legacies, poverty, and hegemonic patterns of cultural valuation (e.g. habitual prejudices, negatives images in the media) intersect to perform this task adequately. The underlying motivation of such “logic” is racist: it stipulates containing polluting racial signifiers in places already contaminated by pollution burdens. In other words, it is “logical” to confine physical trash and “human trash” in already soiled environments such as inner-city neighborhoods because “like seeks like.” Anthony (1995, 271) argues that “[i]t’s not an accident, for example, that the environmental justice movement is focused on both toxic waste *and* race. If you throw people away and you throw material away, it is no accident that they are not separated: you just throw them away together [emphasis in original].” The disproportionate placement of environmental burdens in communities of poor minority groups reveals how they are valued by the affluent white decision-makers of the polis. It is not surprising, then, that some minority groups feel “[w]e don’t have the complexion for [environmental] protection” (qtd. in Mills 2001, 88).

Critically analyzing the social contract’s politics of waste disposal in terms of spatial arrangements makes clear that racism is a social relation that is spatialized. And, I argued that the spatiality of racism is evident in that the racialization of place produces places of misrecognition and exclusion, that is, hegemonic representations and patterns of cultural valuation which legitimize spaces of inequitable distributions of environmental burdens. Further, it demonstrates how seemingly innocent depictions of place are politicized insofar as racialization upholds subtle forms of discrimination. This is because, as Figueroa (2001, 175) points out, discursive representations “have political impacts for those people whose social location and environmental identity are wrapped up in these associations.” In this way the racialization of place can be used as a discursive tool of oppression, especially against groups symbolically associated with waste,

ultimately perpetuating institutional practices that adversely impact socioeconomic livelihood, cultural recognition, political inclusion, environmental integrity and health. It is for this reason that throughout the remainder of the dissertation I argue that environmental justice is not only about equitable distributions of environmental burdens across space (distributive justice), but also about acknowledging and respecting different place-based identities (recognition justice), and including the diversity of cultural and social groups in all facets of sociopolitical life (procedural justice).

4. Whose Environment? Conflicting Environmental Movements

In chapter III I remarked that, although the environmental sciences are increasingly adopting relational models of ecosystems (e.g. in terms of energy flows, communicative exchanges, food webs), in general they fail to connect ecological processes to social processes (encompassing cultural, political, and economic dimensions), thus reinforcing the nature/society dichotomy. And, I suggested that, to the extent that scientific models abstract ecological processes from social processes, they implicitly presuppose a Newtonian conception of space: ecological processes happen inside environmental spaces, construed independently of social processes happening inside societal spaces. Likewise, most often mainstream environmentalists perceive nature as a pristine and undisturbed wilderness sanctuary existing “out there,” apart from civilization. Again, such views are Newtonian because nature is deemed some kind of receptacle-space containing multiple objects and nonhuman species related by food webs and energy flows. I contend that the Newtonian concept of space supports mainstream environmentalism’s agenda of preserving natural environments in an undisturbed pristine state. The concern, however, is that by construing natural spaces as absolute—wilderness is “just

there”—rather than relational—constituted by ecological processes, but also by social, cultural, political, and economic dynamics at various scales—not only do mainstream environmentalists reify nature as a “thing” apart from society, but they are not aware that their environmental discourses and representations of nature are racialized and reflect privileged social locations.

The environmental justice movement, in contrast, adopts a relational conception of space. Figueroa and Waitt (2008, 332) explain that “‘environments’ are construed as a set of socially uneven and circumscribed interactions, rather than as a concern for something ‘out there,’” and therefore the environment is defined to include natural, rural, and urban environments. For Dana Alston, an organizer of The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (in Washington D.C., 1991), the environmental justice movement’s perception of “the environment is woven into an overall fabric of social, racial, and economic justice” (qtd. in Gottlieb 1993, 269), encompassing the places where we live, work and play. This shows how the environmental justice movement perceives the environment more holistically than do mainstream environmental groups who narrowly construe environmental issues insofar as they separate society from nature in order to pursue their wilderness agenda.

In this section I argue that conflicting environmental discourses inform the respective political agendas of the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement. To this end, I first uncover how all discourses are inextricably coupled with power, and hegemonic to the extent that they subordinate alternative discourses. I argue, however, that environmental discourses are socially contextualized and politicized (rather than universal and neutral) since they are conditioned by environmentalists’ social location—on the basis of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, social occupation, political affiliation, etc.—within the institutional structures that frame their environmental struggles. Consequently,

environmental discourses pertaining to representations of nature, framing devices for identifying environmental issues, understandings of justice and sustainability, and proposed solutions are politically contested across space and the site of continuous place-based political struggles.

i. Environmental Discourses and Hegemony

Two basic questions pose themselves from the outset. First, what is nature? And second, what counts as an environmental issue? Significant literature exists regarding the first question (Nash 1982; Oelschlaeger 1991; Evernden 1992). It is often hypothesized that the concept of nature emerged when humans began to alter significantly their surrounding environments with the invention of agriculture approximately ten thousand years ago. Nature was then perceived as an object to be domesticated (to grow food), and construed as being a place apart from society. Within academia there is a general consensus, observes Evernden (1992, 89), that humans created wilderness in the sense that “nature is, before all else, a category, a conceptual container that permits the user to conceive of a single, discernible ‘thing’.” Evernden (1992, 20) adds that “[t]he possibility of having a *thing* called nature is as significant a development as a fish having a ‘thing’ called water: where there was once an invisible, preconscious medium through which each moved, there is now an object to examine and describe [emphasis in original].” In Western popular culture, nature is usually depicted as wilderness and the “great outdoors,” and most often mainstream environmentalists adopt Romantic representations of nature as being an undisturbed, pristine, unsoiled space.

Suffice it to say, *nature*, and its adjective *natural*, are broad elusive concepts whose meanings vary cross-culturally. Accordingly, my argument is that the meaning(s) of nature is a social construction because it is affected by discourses, values, norms, practices, relationships,

and social locations (I define “social location” in the upcoming subsection). Although nature exists as an assortment of physical objects—as Holmes Rolston (1997, 42) says, “there is a realm out there, labeled nature, into which things have been put before we arrive”—it is impossible to talk about it apart from language, cultural factors, and social locations. To say that nature is a social construction is not to deny that nonhuman entities exist, however. Warren (2000, 58) says that we can still “climb a tree, swim a river, cultivate a plant, destroy an ecosystem, or enjoy being in nature.” But, although these physical entities exist, what we mean by “tree,” “river” and “nature” are social realities. And, because discourses, values, norms, practices, relationships, and social locations are fluid and dynamic, environmental discourses concerning nature are socially contextualized and contingent, and likewise what counts as environmental issues is value-laden and politically contested.

The point I stress is that environmental discourses are socially constructed and the sites of ongoing political struggles. Although this point is relatively uncontroversial in academia (namely in the humanities and the social sciences), this is not always the case in different contexts like mainstream environmentalism. Failing to understand that discourses are value-laden, socially contextualized, and politicized is problematic because some are deemed objective, common-sensical, and applicable cross-culturally, excluding alternative discourses in the process. While in general marginalization refers to unjust socioeconomic relations, such as the inequitable distribution of social and economic goods across space, the discursive dimension of power refers to Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Paraphrasing Gramsci, Fraser (1997, 153) defines hegemony as “the power to establish the ‘common sense’ or ‘doxa’ of a society, the fund of self-evident descriptions of social reality that normally go without saying.”⁶ Hegemony, in other

⁶ In Western society, scientific discourse provides the categories through which we understand the world. Because science is said to be objective, value-neutral and universal, it monopolizes knowledge production and truth.

words, reflects the privileged status of dominant groups with regard to discourse. Stevenson (2003, 4) says:

The power to name, construct meaning and exert control over the flow of information within contemporary societies is one of today's central structural divisions. Power is not solely based upon material dimensions, but also involves the capacity to throw into question established codes and to rework frameworks of common understanding.

The ability to define and represent is a power-laden act since imposing presumably universal and ahistorical meanings, interpretations, and social understandings necessarily silences other points of view. Accordingly, environmental discourses are hegemonic to the extent that mainstream common-sense beliefs about nature and environmental issues become so ingrained that they are unquestioned, taken as self-evident, presumably mirroring objective reality. When this happens environmental discourses are reified, obscuring how they are socially constructed, contextualized and politicized, thereby subordinating (albeit perhaps inadvertently) alternative environmentalisms such as the environmental justice movement.

ii. Social Location

I argue that environmental discourses are affected by what Pulido (1996, 25) calls “positionality.” Pulido’s notion of positionality, which I use interchangeably with “social location” and “structural position,” is most important to understand the differences opposing mainstream environmentalism and the environmental justice movement. Although mainstream

In contrast, drawing from Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, feminist philosophers of science, such as Haraway (1991), Harding (1991) and Longino (2002), argue that science’s presumed disembodied and objective “view from nowhere” is a myth since its epistemological context of discovery is value-laden, and scientists are always already socially situated. Every step of scientific research, including the selection of problems, the formulation of hypotheses, the choice of methods for data collection, the interpretation of results, the ways of disseminating conclusions, and so on, are conditioned by value-laden interests and social interactions. Harding, Haraway, and Longino are not saying that science is not valuable, but that it is partial, situated, and politicized. The danger is that scientific claims of objectivity, neutrality, and universality are hegemonic insofar as they deny their own situatedness and discredit non-Western and non-scientific—hence less valuable and inferior—discourses such as traditional ecological knowledges, thereby perpetuating the oppression of indigenous peoples worldwide (Maffie 2003). A question thus poses itself: is science racist?

environmentalists and environmental justice activists are sometimes concerned with the same environmental issues (e.g. climate change), they frame their struggles differently because they occupy different social locations—a person’s social status as it intersects with race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, occupation, etc.—within institutional (social, political, and economic) arrangements. Alison Wylie (2003, 31) likewise defines social location structurally:

What individuals experience and understand is shaped by their location in a hierarchically structured system of power relations: by the material conditions of their lives, by the relations of production and reproduction that structure their social interactions, and by the conceptual resources they have to represent and interpret these relations.

This is to say that not only a person’s worldview—a set of values, norms, beliefs and assumptions—but also her structural position in society’s social status order and institutional relations affects the way she represents and understands the world, and subsequently conditions her political struggles.⁷ Pulido (1996, 28) clarifies: “participants in subaltern struggles encounter environmental concerns not only from a different perspective [or worldview], but also from a different structural position that may entail entirely different solutions and courses of action.” On the one hand, environmental justice activists might be concerned with climate change because rising sea levels threaten the livelihood of poor black communities inhabiting the lower 9th ward in New Orleans. On the other hand, mainstream environmentalists might be concerned with climate change because melting polar ice caps cause habitat destruction for many arctic species such as polar bears. The implication is that we must identify the social location of the person being envired to understand how that individual represents the environment, defines or frames environmental issues, and what she or he perceives as possible solutions to the problems at hand. Harvey (1996, 117) shares a personal anecdote from Earth Day 1970 that supports my claims.

⁷ Pulido’s concept of positionality and Wylie’s notion of social location are similar to Warren’s (2000, 46) definition of a “conceptual framework” that “functions as a socially constructed *lens* through which one perceives reality. It is affected and shaped by such factors as sex-gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, affectional orientation, marital status, religion, nationality, colonial influences, and culture [emphasis in original].”

The following day I went to the Left Bank Jazz club, a popular spot frequented by African-American families in Baltimore. The musicians interspersed their music with interactive commentary over the deteriorating state of the environment. They talked about lack of jobs, poor housing, racial discrimination, crumbling cities, culminating in the claim, which sent the whole place into paroxysms of cheering, that their main environmental problem was President Richard Nixon.

As Harvey's anecdote makes clear, because minority groups occupy a disempowered structural position, for them environmental issues include poor living conditions, lack of employment, poverty, dirty air, unsafe drinking water, and other socioecological issues afflicting their urban environments.

A point of clarification is in order. To say that positionality conditions a person's environmentalism is not to say that social location determines it. Nor do some positionalities confer epistemic authority and privilege over all others. As Linda Alcoff (1995, 106) says, positionality emphasizes "the relevance of location, not its singular power of determination." This is important because it entails that, although differently positioned individuals become environmentalists for different reasons and pursue different goals, their environmental discourses are contingent on evolving social relations between people in shared environments. In principle, so long as environmentalists interact and listen to each other, their respective agendas can evolve to consider the environmental concerns of others. Unfortunately, at present many mainstream environmentalists fail to acknowledge their social location, thus inhibiting such dialogue.

Pulido's notion of positionality helps understand why mainstream environmentalists tend to choose environmental struggles privileging natural environments, while ignoring the urban environmental problems of minority groups. Whereas the environmental justice movement is concerned with improving living and work conditions in polluted urban environments, mainstream environmentalists often perceive these places as unnatural and not environmental issues. Such perceptions reflect the different social locations of white mainstream

environmentalists and colored environmental justice activists. In general, the basic needs, such as housing, employment, quality food, and clean air and water, of the residents inhabiting white environments have always been met, and overall conditions of life are more than adequate. These places define the privileged social location through which white environmentalists conceptualize the environment as pristine nature and pursue their wilderness agenda. Likewise, environmental philosophers can ask “deep” questions regarding abstract ontological issues, such as intrinsic value and fostering human-nature relations through wider identification with nature, since their “shallow” concerns are taken care of.⁸ As such, many philosophers privilege ethical and metaphysical concerns over political analyses of the materiality or social causes of environmental problems. In contrast, the primary environmental concern of minority groups living in degraded places is to ameliorate the quality of their urban environment; therefore they aspire toward improved housing conditions, clean neighborhoods, and safe work environments, among other issues. Yet, these priorities are judged as being “shallow” and anthropocentric according to “deep” and naturalistic ecological interpretations. Non-surprisingly, then, many environmental justice activists are reluctant to adopt the environmentalist label, and for the most part they have unproblematically accepted their anthropocentric labeling.

The problem is that mainstream environmentalists, including many environmental philosophers, fail to realize that they are speaking from a privileged social location—Euro-American, white, middle-class, and educated—which historically has monopolized environmental discourse, having evolved from the legacy of John Muir’s nature preservation political agenda. Further, in recent decades mainstream environmentalism has become

⁸ Naess (1973) first distinguished “deep” and “shallow” ecology. While deep ecology is concerned with ontological questions regarding human relations to nature, Naess says that shallow ecology is reform-based and concerned with environmental issues as they intersect with human welfare: managing natural resources, pollution reduction, health and safety issues, etc.

increasingly professionalized, notably the “Group of Ten” (a self-designated title) scientifically and legally informed environmental organizations, and an adjunct to government policy-making processes.⁹ Figueroa (2001, 177) argues that

mainstream environmentalists often *do* come from similar background conditions, similar economic conditions, and similar educational settings as those who make environmental decisions in government and private agencies. The similarities in social location between mainstream environmentalists and agency officials or legislators serves to reinforce a status quo epistemology for determining what constitutes an environmental issue, what environments deserve attention, and the appropriate political channels of discourse [emphasis in original].

Figueroa is saying that a person’s social location conditions the environmental struggles she chooses, and these interests will be similar to those of people occupying similar structural positions; hence “affluent lobbyists battle over affluent interpretations of environmental concerns” (Figueroa 2002, 317). And, because mainstream environmental groups and politicians share a similar social location, their environmental concerns are considered in public places of political deliberation and policy-making, while the voices of the environmental justice movement are silenced.

Emphasizing positionality is important because it reveals that environmental discourses are not foundationalist, concerning some already existing nature “out there,” just like environmental issues do not exist a priori, apart from differently positioned groups in social relations with each other. Instead, it makes visible how environmental discourses are politicized

⁹ Gottlieb (1993) states that the Group of Ten environmental organizations includes Sierra Club, Izaak Walton League, National Audubon Society, National Parks and Conservation Association, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife, Wilderness Society, Environmental Defense Fund, and Environmental Policy Center (other influential groups include Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, and Friends of the Earth). Pulido (1996, 23) says that these groups constitute a “highly organized, technocratic, and powerful lobby based in Washington, D.C.... complete with lawyers, scientists, and lobbyists ready to sue, study, and advise.” Their activities focus primarily on regulation, legislation, litigation and electoral politics, and therefore they define themselves against grassroots groups and community activists. For this reason Hofrichter (1993, 7) argues that mainstream environmentalism’s “approach has often been piecemeal, legislatively driven, and oriented to compromise at every level.” He thus concludes that mainstream environmentalism is “not a movement for social reconstruction,” since by “acting within a predetermined framework defined by government agencies, the necessary direct challenge to industry remains almost unspoken” (Hofrichter 1993, 7).

through and through because they are value-laden, socially contextualized, and contested across a range of different publics inhabiting different places.

5. Discriminatory Environmentalism

Mainstream environmentalists occupy privileged social locations, yet in general they are not aware that their environmental agendas are conditioned by what Pulido (2000, 12) calls “white privilege.” In this section I argue that mainstream environmentalism’s blindness to white privilege upholds a subtle, albeit unintentional, form of structural or institutional racism that Figueroa and Mills (2001) call “discriminatory environmentalism.”¹⁰ Discriminatory accusations are also based on mainstream environmentalism’s tendency to focus on the welfare of nonhuman species and the preservation of natural environments, while labeling anthropocentric efforts to improve the urban environmental conditions of disenfranchised human groups. The problem is that too often mainstream environmentalists fail to understand how environmental problems intersect with social justice issues since both are caused and perpetuated by political-economic processes that transcend space and colonize place in global capitalism’s unending quest to accumulate capital. Finally, in the chapter’s conclusion I assert that the environmental is political and argue that countering discriminatory environmentalism—or environmental injustices, broadly conceived—requires not only the equitable distribution of environmental burdens across space (distributive justice) and greater participation within public places of environmental policy (procedural justice), but also identifying, challenging, and transforming hegemonic environmental discourses, especially racialized representations of place that stigmatize the

¹⁰ Recall that I am using structural racism and institutional racism interchangeably. See footnote 1 in the dissertation’s introduction (chapter I).

environments that minority groups inhabit, thus producing places of misrecognition (recognition justice).

i. White Privilege

Privileged social locations are white, and this is important considering the chapter's focus on the racialization of place. In the previous section I argued that mainstream environmentalists often fail to recognize that they are speaking from a privileged social location—indeed, from the master subject's structural position—and in this section I supplement that analysis by arguing that they are likewise unaware of their white privilege. Pulido (1996, 18) says that “[w]hite privilege is so hegemonic that few whites are even cognizant of it. What appears to be natural and fair to whites may be reinforcing the inequality and subordinated status of nonwhites.” Quite simply, race is not an issue for whites (including most environmentalists) in their daily lives because they are racially privileged.

In general, racism is defined as a person's intention to discriminate against or physically harm another person because she or he is perceived as being different, usually on the basis of skin color or ethnicity. Yet, critical race theorists argue that racism is also structural and institutionalized. This is evidenced whenever social policies negatively impact minority groups, in terms of higher rates of unemployment, poverty, infant mortality and drug addiction, yet privilege the social status of whites. Maintaining the status quo, for instance, benefits white groups mostly as substantiated in the predominantly white constituency of people in institutional positions of social, economic, and political power. Structural racism and white privilege are not identified through intentions to discriminate, but are rather uncovered by looking at disparaging

effects. It is the failure to consider both intent and effects “that allows whites to acknowledge that racism exists, yet seldom identify themselves as racists” (Pulido 2000, 15).

This is significant for the environmental justice movement. On the one hand, critics, such as Wenz (1988) and Been (1995), who argue that the placement of environmental burdens in communities of color is the result of the market economy define racism on the basis of the intent-standard. This is in accord with the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which limits racism to cases involving a proven intent to discriminate (Figueroa 1999). Under this view the market economy is not racist because there is no identifiable person who intends to discriminate, and therefore socioeconomic disparities are fair and legalized. Accordingly, the solution is said to reside in a more equitable (re)distribution (or compensation) of environmental burdens within existing social, economic, and political institutions, and for this reason the distributive justice paradigm is favored. A concern, however, is that failing to prove an intention to discriminate results in victims of poverty or environmentally-induced sickness being blamed for their plight; they are poor because they are lazy, or their lifestyle choices made them ill.

On the other hand, environmental justice activists argue that the primary factor is race on the basis of the effects-standard. This is in accord with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which acknowledges that racism is not limited to the intent to discriminate, but may also be discovered whenever social policies inadvertently produce disparate effects that disproportionately burden minority groups (Figueroa 1999). It is also consistent with Bullard’s (2000, 98) often quoted definition of environmental racism as “any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color.” Although there is no intent to discriminate, under this

view the market economy is structurally racist as evidenced in the disproportionate number of hazardous waste sites, incinerators, landfills, and polluting industries in communities of color. It is for this reason that environmental justice activists argue that more equitable distributions within existing social, political, and economic institutions will not produce fair outcomes in the long run since they do not challenge structural racism, that is, the legitimacy of dominant discourses and institutions that maintain the status quo and uphold white privilege. Instead, alleviating environmental burdens is also a matter of recognition justice and procedural justice: respecting the diversity of cultural and social groups occupying different social locations, and allowing them to participate in the public places of environmental policy regarding subsequent distributions of environmental burdens and goods. Kristin Shrader-Frechette (2002) argues that imposing environmental burdens on communities who have not participated and consented to the decisions made is *prima facie* unjust, and Christian Hunold and Iris Young (1998) add that it is only when a decision-making process includes all groups potentially affected by environmental problems that distributively just outcomes will result. I discuss this topic in depth in chapter V when I explore the geography of bivalent environmental justice, but for now suffice it to say that both recognition justice and procedural justice must complement distributive justice to ensure fairness in all facets of sociopolitical life. In this way only can white privilege—structural racism discovered through the effects-standard—be identified and challenged.¹¹

From the perspective of environmental justice activists occupying subordinated social locations, there are at least two ways by which white privilege is manifested in most environmentalist circles. First, mainstream environmentalists monopolize the discursive power to

¹¹ Figueroa (1999) observes that “[t]he debate surrounding the effects-standard versus the intent-standard, and the respective federal legislation, ironically presents one of the standard examples of redistribution-recognition debates in the history of environmental justice in the United States.” Simply put, the intent-standard favors distributive justice, while the effects-standard favors recognition justice. The redistribution-recognition debate will be discussed in more depth in chapter V.

represent nature and define environmental issues in ways that support their interests, while labeling the environmental justice movement as unenvironmental, shallow, and anthropocentric. Taking positionality seriously reveals, however, that environmental discourses like the wilderness agenda are value-laden, socially contextualized, and reflect the interests of white environmentalists occupying privileged social locations. The point is that environmental discourses are never neutral because the reification of dominant discourses empowers white environmentalists, while excluding the environmental concerns of colored environmental justice activists, in the process politically disempowering them, culturally devaluing them and stigmatizing the environments they inhabit, and perpetuating inequitable distributions that have serious livelihood impacts. I stress, however, that mainstream environmentalism's discourse is only one of many possible discourses, as evidenced by the fact that the environmental justice movement defines the environment and environmental issues more inclusively and holistically. Second, white privilege is manifested in the influence accorded to professionalized environmental groups, predominantly white and affluent, in government policy-making. Pulido (1996, 192) points out that, although mainstream "environmental ideas and activism may be marginal at times, the voices carrying them are not. Moreover, if they are, it is, perhaps, because they choose to be." In contrast, colored environmental justice groups do not have the luxury of "choosing" their social location—choosing whether to strategically participate within or outside institutional structures, or choosing to reduce consumption and simplifying lifestyles ("chosen simplicity")—since they are structurally disempowered from the outset.

Drawing from Mills (1997, 126), my analysis suggests that "[r]ace is *sociopolitical rather than biological, but it is nonetheless real* [emphasis in original]." Foremost, this is because unbalanced sociopolitical relations of power produce and sustain institutional practices,

policies, and discourses that have serious—hence real—livelihood repercussions for minority groups. To say the same thing differently, race is not a biological essence related to skin color; instead, race is a set of politicized sociospatial relations that systematically marginalize groups whose identities, bodies, and living environments are marked as being different precisely because they contrast with dominant white identities and their unsoiled environments. In this way race, including whiteness, is intimately connected to unfolding relationships of dominance between differently positioned groups, privileging white groups inhabiting clean suburban environments and marginalizing colored groups inhabiting polluted urban environments. The implication is that, although white privilege is not intentional, it nonetheless constitutes a subtle form of structural racism that is easily ignored by white environmentalists who think they are engaged in racially-neutral environmental issues. Symbolically, then, whiteness is blinding—i.e. normalized—since as a racial signifier white skin is not colored, hence invisible. Anthony (1995, 269) adds that whiteness is “an unmarked, unnamed status, a structured invisibility that lends itself to false, universalizing claims,” and consequently blinds mainstream environmentalists to the ways their social location affects how they represent the environment, frame environmental issues, and what they perceive as possible solutions. I thus hold that whenever environmentalists contend that they are concerned with raceless environmental issues, they are indeed engaged in racialized projects insofar as these sustain the hegemony of a white environmental movement. Just like a fish is not aware of the water surrounding it, white environmentalists are unaware that mainstream environmentalism is conditioned by experiences of whiteness precisely because they are racially privileged.

ii. Justice vs. Nature? Social Causes of Environmental Issues

As mentioned in my discussion of social locations, the accusation of discriminatory environmentalism is also based on mainstream environmentalists' focus on the welfare of nonhuman species and preservation of natural environments, while neglecting the polluted urban environments of disenfranchised communities in both industrialized and developing nations. This mirrors the efforts of some environmental philosophers to extend moral consideration to nonhumans, while labeling anthropocentric efforts to improve the environmental plight of subjugated human groups (recall the "shallow" and "deep" ecological distinction).

Such endeavors are problematic, I argue, not only because they reflect the environmental concerns of groups occupying privileged social locations (and benefiting from white privilege), but also because often they fail to consider the ways that the exploitation of nonhuman nature and social oppression interconnect and support each other, thus reinforcing the nature/society divide. On a discursive level, I argued that representations of place-based identities and environments interlock to relationally constitute each other (chapter IV), intersecting with nature/culture dualism to devalue naturalized groups, nonhuman beings, and nature itself (chapter II). On a material level, I argued that the causes of social oppression and the exploitation of nonhuman nature are often traced back to political-economic processes (economic globalization, neoliberalism, or capitalist modernization) that transcend space and colonize place, thus producing uneven sociospatial development and environmental injustices (chapter III).

Consistent with this train of thought, Bookchin (1990a) argues that environmental degradation and social oppression are predominantly caused by industrialization, a "grow or die" market economy, militarization, and institutionalized power hierarchies. He adds that it is these social factors that account for consumption and population differentials between industrialized

and developing countries. As such, Bookchin holds that the primary causes of overconsumption and overpopulation are social, originating in unsustainable and unjust institutional systems that create the social conditions perpetuating these behaviors; therefore overconsumption and overpopulation are symptoms rather than causes of environmental problems. This is why differences between countries exist. On the one hand, the birth rate in developed countries, where basic needs are generally satisfied, is relatively stable, although statistically people are overconsuming and depleting the planet's resources. On the other hand, populations in the developing world continue to increase at an alarming rate because basic needs are not met. Yet, developing nations do not consume to an extent that threatens life on earth. The concern is that focusing exclusively on symptoms such as population has racial undertones; nonwhites are "breeding like rabbits," thereby justifying strict immigration policies (e.g. in the U.S. against Mexicans). Again, focusing on overconsumption (and not on industrial production or economic globalization) reinforces the perception that human nature is greedy, competitive, and "cancerous"—"programmed" by evolutionary natural laws, with capitalist society analogized to a natural world that is "red in tooth and claw"—thus deflecting attention from the social causes of the ecological crisis.

Similarly, Bullard (1993) argues that environmental problems are fundamentally issues of social power because it is unbalanced power relations that uphold the social, political, and economic systems that cause and perpetuate ecological degradation and environmental injustices worldwide. He appropriately remarks:

The crux of the problem is that the mainstream environmental movement has not sufficiently addressed the fact that social inequality and imbalances of social power are at the heart of environmental degradation, resource depletion, pollution, and even overpopulation. The environmental crisis can simply not be solved effectively without social justice (Bullard 1993, 23).

Bullard is saying that, if the mainstream environmental movement is to achieve its goals, it must challenge the underlying power relations that support unsustainable and unjust political-economic processes extending across space and impacting all places. Simply said, struggles against environmental destruction are simultaneously struggles against social oppression, and vice-versa, a point emphatically emphasized by the environmental justice movement.

To give a concrete example, there are strong connections between agriculture, capitalism, war, pollution, health, and threats to cultural diversity. In his environmental history *War and Nature*, Edmund Russell argues that, although the Green Revolution's intensive use of pesticides greatly enhanced agricultural food production and generated tremendous corporate profits for some (notably for Dupont and Monsanto), it also killed wildlife (birds and insects), polluted environments (pesticide runoffs contaminated lakes, rivers and aquifers), endangered the health of Latino farm workers in the U.S., while also being used in war as defoliants and biowarfare (in WWII and Vietnam). Furthermore, Shiva (1997, 48) argues that Green Revolution agricultural methods were ecologically destructive since they "substituted the regenerative nutrient cycle with linear flows of purchased inputs of chemical fertilizers from factories and marketed outputs of agricultural commodities. Fertility was no longer the property of soil, but of chemicals." Ecological diversity was replaced with biological homogeneity in agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fishery, in the process rendering managed ecosystems susceptible to ecological breakdown since monocultures poorly resist environmental disturbances. In addition, the Green Revolution threatened not only biological diversity, but also cultural diversity by destroying subsistence economies, eradicating traditional ecological knowledges, and displacing the ethical and cultural heritages of place-based agricultural communities (especially in developing nations

such as India).¹² In accord with Carson's socioscientific critique of the pesticides industry in *Silent Spring*, Russell and Shiva respectively argue that much environmental destruction is social in origin, intimately connected to agrichemical corporations and the military-industrial complex.

Another example will further elucidate my argument. In Canada, the oppression of many aboriginal peoples—the devaluation of their cultures, economic marginalization, political exclusion, environmental degradation and impacts on health—is caused and perpetuated by the Canadian colonial government that disregards Aboriginal title, land claims (including historical treaties), and right to self-governance. Specifically, many of their social and environmental problems are connected to government-sanctioned contracts for natural resource extraction on unceded aboriginal lands and territories. First Nations communities are particularly vulnerable to environmental injustices because most often they do not have the social status and financial resources needed to appeal court rulings and laws, challenge government and corporate infringements of their rights, and the economic means to develop infrastructure to ensure environmental quality (e.g. facilities that detect *E. coli* contaminations of drinking water supplies). To give a few examples, the James Bay hydroelectric project, undertaken by the Province of Québec on unceded lands, diverted rivers and flooded the territory of the Cree and Inuit of Northern Québec without their prior consultation or permission (Sam-Cromarty 1996); uranium mining at Port Radium, located near Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories, impacted the environmental integrity, traditional fishing practices, and health of the Sahtugot'ine (Chance, website); the Canadian military's burying of Agent Orange on the ceremonial grounds of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stoney Point, located near Ipperwash Provincial Park in Southern

¹² Similarly, Curtin (1996) makes explicit connections between environmental degradation and women's oppression in India. He argues that environmental problems disproportionately impact Indian women economically and in terms of demands on their labor. Curtin (1996, 72) says "that in the mosaic of problems that constitute women's oppression in a particular context, no complete account can be given that does not make reference to the connection between women and the environment."

Ontario, endangered health and disrespected their environmental identity and heritage (Dixon 1995). In addition, the location of landfills, the bioaccumulation of toxins in the arctic (not to mention climate change), and the continued logging of old-growth forests threaten the environmental integrity, cultures, and health of First Nations communities across Canada (LaDuke 1993; Weaver 1996). These cases demonstrate that threats to First Nations cultural diversity and the environments they inhabit are social in origin, intimately related to the Canadian nation-state and the political-economy.

Good intentions aside, mainstream environmentalism's ongoing reluctance to establish connections between social justice and environmental issues has a dire consequence: at best, environmentalism will remain discriminatory, and at worst, it will fail altogether. Let me explain with a few examples. Mainstream environmentalism's narrow conceptualization of environmental issues as concerned with wilderness and nonhuman species, while excluding issues related to urban and work environments, perpetuates debates of jobs versus the environment. The result is that mainstream environmentalists fail to make connections between industrial production, health, and the environment as a whole—industrial practices cause worker illnesses, contaminate communities, and pollute water, land and the atmosphere—consequently alienating the working class as a possible ally. Furthermore, attempting to solve dilemmas of saving nature versus feeding people (Rolston 1996), for instance, without addressing the social causes responsible for creating the dilemmas in the first place, will ultimately fail and perpetuate oppression. Continuously feeding people in a world dominated by agrichemical corporations and the military-industrial complex (the Green Revolution) is ecologically unsustainable. Likewise, attempting to save nature by denying the basic needs of disenfranchised groups—e.g. in India the creation of wilderness sanctuaries has displaced indigenous peoples from the lands that sustain

their livelihood (Guha 1989)—is unethical, unjust, and constitutes environmental fascism. How will such decisions be made? Whose voices will be included in political deliberation? And, ultimately, who will make the final decisions? It is only by focusing on the social causes of environmental degradation and human oppression that horrifying dilemmas of saving nature versus feeding people can be avoided.

Lastly, I maintain that environmentalists' almost exclusive focus on nonhuman species and natural environments supports the perception that environmentalism is an affluent white movement—indeed, its constituency is predominantly white and affluent—that exhibits an anti-urban elitism and conceals a subtle form of structural racism. Lawson (2001, 51) observes that many environmentalists have “a seemingly perverse disdain for certain humans and their habitat,” which suggests, according to Figueroa and Waitt (2008, 332), that “the ills that accompany harmful industrial practices are overlooked precisely because these burdens fall on marginalized groups.” To say the same thing differently, because the polluted urban environments of minority groups contrast with the Romantic images of pristine wilderness favored by white environmentalists inhabiting clean suburban environments, the latter perceive cities as unnatural and therefore suppress urban issues from their agenda, in the process excluding minority groups from the political arena of environmental policy. Mainstream environmentalism is thus not an environmentalism appropriate to all groups, but is rather ideally suited to affluent white groups whose living, work, and recreational environments are already safe, clean and “green.”

6. Conclusion

As the chapter nears its end, I emphasize that environmental issues are social—hence political—problems that are firmly embedded in webs of power relations, and which differentially impact groups and the places they inhabit. The environmental is political for three basic reasons. First, inequitable distributions of environmental burdens and goods across space impact socioeconomic livelihood—in terms of employment, health, housing, clean air, safe drinking water, quality food, and so forth—disproportionately affecting already disenfranchised minority groups. In short, this issue is concerned with the material effects of spaces of inequitable distribution. Second, privileging the social location of whites and the environments they inhabit, while devaluing the social location of minority groups and the neighborhoods they live in, affects which groups are included in political arenas and participate in decisions regarding subsequent distributions of environmental goods and burdens. This issue is therefore concerned with political exclusions in public places of environmental policy. And third, discursively some groups are represented as being closer to nature and the body, while others and the racialized places they inhabit are conceptually associated with trash, and I argued that cultural devaluations legitimize institutional practices that cause and perpetuate inequitable distributions and political exclusions. Thus, this issue is concerned with the cultural effects of places of misrecognition. Together, these three issues intersect to account for the various spatialities of environmental injustices.¹³

¹³ Because nonhuman beings are likewise otherized (chapter II), I suggest that they also experience multiple environmental injustices, and consequently for them also the environmental is political. In the dissertation's conclusion (chapter VI) I discuss emerging philosophical avenues for future environmental justice scholarship, and I suggest that the dissertation's critical geography framework and theory of bivalent environmental justice (outlined in chapter V) can be used to deal with justice *to* nonhumans and *to* the environment itself, that is, non-anthropocentric environmental justice.

Accordingly, I argue that distributive justice—the fair spatial distribution of environmental goods and burdens (or compensation if redistribution is not possible)—is essential to redress the material effects of spaces of inequitable distribution, while procedural justice—the inclusion of groups occupying different social locations in decision-making regarding subsequent distributions—is essential to deal with political exclusions in the public arenas of environmental policy. I add, however, that a solid approach to environmental justice requires not only equitable distributions of environmental burdens and greater participation or representation in the political realm, but also needs recognition justice to account for cultural devaluations in places of misrecognition. Recognition justice is concerned with acknowledging and respecting the place-based identities and heritages of diverse groups in all facets of sociopolitical life, and simultaneously challenging the master subject’s hegemonic discourses and representations of place that produce and sustain places of misrecognition. It is for this reason that Mills (2001, 89) says that “[e]nvironmentalism’ for blacks has to mean not merely challenging the patterns of waste disposal, but also, in effect, their *own status* as the racialized refuse, the black trash, of the white body politic [emphasis in original].” As such, I agree with Fraser (2003) that there can be no distributive justice without recognition justice (and vice-versa), a point I build on in the next chapter when I outline a theory of bivalent environmental justice that encompasses these two justice dimensions connected by the universal norm of participatory parity.

Ultimately, the environmental movement must openly recognize that environmental discourses are rooted in culture and class and are therefore socially contextualized. For this reason the environmental movement needs to become an inclusive and democratized community in which all environmentalists acknowledge their positionality—make visible the structural position conditioning their discourses, representations, framing devices, assumptions, values and

beliefs—and are politically bound to their social location. This point cannot be overemphasized because a condition of justice is that individuals and groups have the ability and opportunity to actively participate as equals in all facets of sociopolitical life, and to do so in culturally-specific ways that are socially recognized and respected. An inclusive and democratized process provides disenfranchised groups with opportunities to contest hegemonic environmental discourses and the “expertise” of professionalized environmentalists—thereby broadening the boundaries of environmental debates—in an open community of deliberation where situated knowledges are presented, evaluated, and ultimately agreed upon or rejected according to procedural norms which foster critique and uptake of criticisms. I elaborate on these points at the end of chapter V, but for now suffice it to say that an inclusive democratic process produces more thorough social understandings and is indispensable for identifying, challenging, and ultimately eliminating all traces of white privilege and racism in the environmental movement. In this way only can there be “an environmentalism of equity and social justice, an environmentalism of linked natural and human environments, an environmentalism of transformation” (Gottlieb 1993, 320).

In chapter V I build on my critical geography framework to develop a bivalent environmental justice theory equipped to deal with the various problems discussed in chapters II through IV, namely the spatialities of environmental injustices as they pertain to spaces of inequitable distribution, places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public places of policy. To this end, I first observe how some communities are creating places of socialization that resist the colonization of place by political-economic processes that transcend space. In addition, some disenfranchised groups are cultivating and celebrating place-based identities, cultural differences, and distinct lifestyles as a way to empower themselves and generate places of recognition. Thus, in the upcoming chapter I explore critically the liberatory potential of these

new social movements that are practicing a politics of place. Ultimately, the purpose of chapter V is to develop the philosophical framework for a theory of bivalent environmental justice that respects cultural identities, group differences, and the particularities of place, at the same time as it identifies commonalities to distinct struggles and establishes relations across space, thus spatializing the geographical landscape of place-based political agency and praxis.

CHAPTER V

THE POLITICS OF PLACE AND SPACE: EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. Introduction

In chapters III and IV I developed a critical geography framework that politicized place and space as it explored the spatialities of environmental injustices, and in this chapter I outline a theory of bivalent environmental justice that deals with the various issues encountered over the course of the dissertation. I begin by uncovering how diverse social and cultural groups are articulating a politics of place (which I use interchangeably with a politics of difference or identity politics) that affirms place-based identities and lifestyles as the privileged locus for resisting the hegemonic discourses, patterns of cultural valuation, social policies, economic processes, political relations, and institutional arrangements that disempower and subordinate them. It is thought that unique cultural practices, traditions, and lifestyles produce decolonized places of recognition wherein to cultivate empowered group identities. This possibility exists because places-in-space are produced and sustained by multiscalar webs of cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows, and, conversely, places-in-space affect these webs. Here lies an emancipatory potential because transforming a place's spatial arrangements is concurrently to transform the cultural, social, economic, political, and ecological dynamics that sustain that place. This is accomplished, I argue, through people's everyday spatial practices of resistance.

Although a place of one's own and a robust identity are prerequisites to having one's voice heard, the politics of place are subject to important criticisms, and these are discussed in the third section. There are multiple concerns, yet most revolve around the failure to challenge

the dualistic structure that defines locality and place against globality and space. Instead, a politics of place is prone to simply revalue and privilege traditionally subordinated disjuncts, thus keeping intact the master subject's centric logic of identity. The worry is that, insofar as place-based communities are treated in abstraction from global socioecological flows and political-economic processes, they fail to grasp the dialectical constitution of places-in-space—places exist always already in relation to space, and vice-versa—and consequently fail to connect issues of recognition justice and the politics of identity and difference, to a broader materialist analysis concerned with issues of distributive justice and the politics of social equality. These failures are concerning to the extent that place-based identities are reified, repressing differences within groups and fostering exclusions between groups.

What is needed, then, is a philosophical framework that respects group identities and acknowledges cultural differences, without reifying or insulating communities altogether. And, this is accomplished, I contend, by identifying commonalities to distinct struggles and establishing relations between groups, thus spatializing the geographical terrain of place-based political agency and action. The fourth section dedicates itself to this task. I argue that the preferred framework for a spatialized politics of place appropriate to the diversity of environmental justice struggles, one that synergizes the distributive politics of social equality with the recognition politics of identity and difference, is Fraser's (1997; 2003) paradigm of bivalent justice and its singular, yet two-dimensional, norm of participatory parity (this is a form of procedural justice). Specifically, I argue that, whereas the recognition dimension of justice critically evaluates identities, differences, and the particularities of place, the distributive dimension of justice uncovers commonalities pertaining to the ways global political-economic processes impact spatially-distant, place-based groups.

Finally, of crucial importance is that there be institutional public places conducive to social interactions and communicative exchanges, and I argue that a deliberative democracy that internalizes participatory parity and the two dimensions of justice is the ideal democratic platform for environmental justice. Public places are not confined to institutional arenas, however, but are created through everyday spatial practices and relationships, and therefore permeate the geography of social life. I suggest that in uncoerced communicative exchanges with people who are different resides a transformative potential; participants critically assess their previously held views, jointly produce new social understandings, and transform themselves accordingly, in the process negating the master subject's hegemonic logic of identity and perceptions of otherness. This is significant because it entails that through open communication diverse place-based groups may weave webs of relations, thus mapping the geographical landscape for a coalitional politics of sociospatial transformation that extends across space.

2. Decolonizing Place

In the globalized age of capitalist modernization, the instrumental spaces of the political-economy are increasingly encroaching upon the places of everyday life, in the process producing uneven sociospatial development and the various spatialities of environmental injustices. This topic was extensively investigated in chapter III, and in this section I revisit this issue to show how communities are resisting the colonization of place with spatial practices that (re)appropriate commodified spaces and create social spaces conducive to communicative exchanges. At the same time, I explore how disenfranchised groups are articulating a politics of place that empowers them to counter the colonization of place. These groups seek settings where to affirm positive place-based identities and have their voices heard. Although there are concerns

with privileging what bell hooks (1990, 145) calls “spaces on the margins” (I discuss criticisms in the third section), I argue that the unique cultural identities and lifestyles of disenfranchised groups foster decolonized or “liberated” places of recognition from where to challenge the discourses, patterns of cultural valuation, and institutional (social, political, and economic) arrangements that perpetuate their oppression.

i. Spatial Practices and Places of Resistance

Creating social spaces is a practice that resists the colonization of place. My argument borrows from Habermas and Foucault’s respective theorizations of places/spaces which oppose (more or less successfully) political-economic structures and the underlying power relations that support them. For Habermas (1987), this place is the lifeworld, a communicative and intersubjective social space that regulates (or “keeps on a leash”) systems of capital and bureaucracy acting strategically. Foucault (1984) calls such spaces “heterotopic,” fostering resistance practices which elude disciplinary power without being outside their capillary networks of operation. Accordingly, I argue that non-exploitative socioeconomic and political relations (as Marxists call for) that also respect place-based cultural identities and differences (as post-Marxists call for) must be sought through spatial transformation. This is because to transform a place’s spatial arrangements is concurrently to change the sets of cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows that produced and sustain that environment. The implication is that struggles to create unoppressive and unalienating social relations are simultaneously struggles to restructure spatial relations, in particular efforts to “liberate” places from the colonizing logic of instrumental spaces. As such,

treating social and spatial aspects independently is a false abstraction that hampers struggles for social emancipation.

de Certeau (1984) argues that it is through the spatial practices of everyday life, rather than through class revolution alone, that social transformation happens. Praxis has a spatial component since having access to social spaces, or places of one's own, is a precondition to speaking freely, being heard, and acting. Because social spaces are materially and discursively produced by an assortment of cultural practices, traditions, norms, discourses, relationships, and so forth, open spaces conducive to social interactions exist everywhere. Within a city, for instance, places include apartments, parks, coffee shops, public streets, jazz clubs, museums, etc. What these places share in common is that they are lived and experienced as meaningful; they are the places that define people and their communities, places where individuals feel at home. Thus, they are sites that potentially resist the colonizing logic of political-economic processes that transform places into commodified and consumption spaces, while also being arenas where uncoercive social relations and communicative exchanges can flourish. Unalienated social relations flourish in uncolonized social spaces, and therefore having access to social spaces and places of one's own are significant domains of political struggle.

Within urban centers, many neighborhood groups are attempting to (re)appropriate instrumental spaces and transform them into social spaces. For instance, communal living arrangements, community gardens and parks, counterculture communes, food coops, and even free universities (the free university of New York (FUNY)) are some of the ways communities are decolonizing spaces and producing places wherein people interact with each other and forge relationships. Again, community organizing and opposition to corporate development projects,

rent strikes, no-growth movements, neighborhood activism, and land-use reforms aim to create what Sara Evans and Harry Boyte (1992) call “free spaces.” Free spaces provide

settings which create new opportunities for self-definition, for the development of public and leadership skills, for a new confidence in the possibilities of participation, and for wider mappings of the connections between the movement members and other groups and institutions (Evans and Boyte 1992, xix).

Free spaces are important because they empower, providing places where people are transformed from being passive victims to active citizens resisting and challenging the social conditions and institutional arrangements adversely impacting them. Harvey (2000, 184) says that “[i]t is within these spaces that alternatives can take shape and from these spaces that a critique of existing norms and processes can most effectively be mounted.” In short, spatial practices are acts of resistance to the extent that they transform instrumental spaces into places conducive to the creative expressions of everyday life, consciousness-raising, and political agency and praxis.

A few examples will elucidate my argument. Gottlieb (1993) describes the events surrounding the creation of People’s Park on the campus of Berkeley in the late 1960s. Student activists seized a vacant lot owned by the university, and proceeded to plant trees and flowers, and construct benches, tables and swings. In the end, “[t]he land was declared ‘liberated’ for the environment” (Gottlieb 1993, 102), a symbolic gesture that affirmed the existential right and freedom to collectively use space. The park was not only physically “liberated” from private ownership, but also discursively “freed” since its users gave it a new name (People’s Park) that reflected collective values. This event was significant because it symbolized the possibility of sociospatial transformation, demonstrating how instrumental spaces can be decolonized and converted into social spaces of everyday life. Similarly, Hypki says that “liberated” places—e.g. “green” public places where people can engage in artistic and cultural activities—create “geographies of possibility” and “geographies of hope” (qtd. in Di Chiro 2002, 306). In some

cases, however, the attempt to (re)appropriate space results in violence, as witnessed in the multiple riots in Los Angeles since the 1960s. The point, though, is that, because we all exist in some place, the locus for sociospatial transformation is everywhere, and for this reason “[i]t is not necessary to travel to the revolution” as Gottdiener (1994, 150) succinctly puts it.

Furthermore, the spatial practices of individuals may coalesce into collective occupations of large spaces, in the process challenging the legitimacy of dominant power relations, and sometimes succeeding in transforming the institutional arrangements that sustain those spaces. A historical example will elucidate this point. Berman (1988) describes how the urban project of constructing the broad and open boulevards of Paris—undertaken by Baron Haussmann under the Second Empire (1852 to 1870)—was motivated by the need for rapid deployment of military troops and artillery in case of insurrections against Napoleon’s imperial regime. Their construction produced an unintended effect, however. The boulevards, lined with cafes and shops, brought together large numbers of people into the open streets, fostering dialogue between pedestrians, while also making visible the countless wretched and poor inhabiting the city. On at least two occasions in Paris’ history—the Paris Commune in the spring of 1871, and the events of May 1968—the boulevards provided “a medium for bringing explosive material and human forces together” (Berman 1988, 165), resulting in political demonstrations and mass strikes by the working class and student movement. On these two occasions, the spatial practices of Parisians revolutionized the polis for a time, appropriating and occupying public spaces, such as streets, universities, government buildings and factories, and restructuring political institutions as in the control of the city by local assemblies of the working class. The case of Paris shows how spaces are appropriated and transformed through the spatial practices and social relations of

subjects. It also shows that struggles against oppressive cultural, social, political, and economic arrangements are simultaneously struggles for the control of places-in-space.¹

The fact that the spatial practices of everyday life may produce new social relations and spatial configurations reveals, according to Mills (2001, 78), how spaces are “full of internal heterogeneities, geodesics of power and exclusion, fault lines and barriers, structured throughout by relations of power. Space is constructed discursively, in its dominant representations, and materially, in the real world.” Similarly, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991, 1-2) says that the world is “traversed with intersecting lines of power and resistance,” and this opens the possibility of mapping and engaging in “cartographies of struggles.” Foucault’s (1980) analysis of power helps understand what Mills and Mohanty are saying. Foucault develops a more positive account of power to replace traditional (Marxist) repressive explanations. He argues that power is not a substance that is possessed and which is used by elites (at the “top”) to oppress particular groups (at the “bottom”)—for this reason Foucault rejects Marxist analyses of the proletarian overthrow of the bourgeoisie and appropriation of power. Rather, power is defined relationally. Foucault (1980, 98) clarifies his position:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.

Power operates in a web-like system of fluid relations, and for this reason it is always shared.

The implication is that, wherever there is power, there is always the possibility of resistance.

¹ A more recent example consists of the anti-globalization protests that happened in Seattle in 1999. Protesters occupied the streets, insisting to be included as participants in the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) political negotiations regarding global trade agreements. I discuss the anti-globalization movement in more depth in the fourth section.

This helps explain how the spatial practices of everyday life, or what Foucault calls the multiplicity of “micropractices,” are important sites of political struggle.

ii. The Hermeneutic Structure of Everyday Life

From Foucault’s account, it follows that people are not entirely molded by instrumental spaces and the dominant social relations that sustain them. de Certeau (1984) likewise rejects the presumption that the public is shaped by commodity products, consumption spaces, and the barrage of advertisements that suffocate urban environments. This view falsely presupposes that consumption is a passive activity, the person analogized to a receptacle that absorbs the products imposed on her. de Certeau (1984, 166) says that this “assumes that ‘assimilating’ necessarily means ‘becoming similar to’ what one absorbs, and not ‘making something similar’ to what one is, making it one’s own, appropriating or reappropriating it.” Just like instrumental spaces can be appropriated and transformed into social spaces, individuals can appropriate consumer products for critical and liberatory ends, a point substantiated whenever artists or musicians use commodities and technological innovations to express themselves politically. It is for this reason that de Certeau analogizes the body’s spatial practices of everyday life to speech acts. He says that the act of walking, for example, is a “pedestrian speech act” in which people appropriate the city’s topography in order to produce their own “spaces of enunciation,” similar to the way a speaker appropriates a language to communicate her own intentions (de Certeau 1984, 97-8).

I suggest that de Certeau is correctly applying the hermeneutic act of interpretation to other domains of social life.² Appropriating space, just like appropriating commodities, is similar

² An important term in philosophical hermeneutics (or dialectical hermeneutics) is the “hermeneutic circle.” The hermeneutic circle describes a process in which a reader goes back and forth between the parts (or words) and the whole (or sentences) of a text in order to arrive at an understanding. A reader understands the whole of a text with reference to its parts, and, conversely, she understands the parts in the larger context of the whole. Indeed, this

to the act of reading in that the reader fuses his own world with the world of the text to create a new world. According to Paul Ricoeur (1981), although a reader is presented with the world of the author inscribed in a text, she does not passively absorb the text's intended meaning, but rather appropriates it to invent a new meaning and produce a new world. Ricoeur holds that the act of textual interpretation comprises four worlds. To summarize his argument, first, there is the world of the author who writes in the goal of communicating an intended meaning. Second, the words an author inscribes on paper for an unidentified audience creates the world of the text. Third, the world of the reader consists of the horizon of his pre-understanding—the horizon comprising the reader's beliefs, presuppositions, values, attitudes, etc.—which is socially, culturally, and historically constituted. Finally, interpretation happens when the world of the text and the world of the reader fuse to create the new world of the interpreted text, resembling what Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976) calls the “fusion of horizons.” Ricoeur's account suggests that understanding is not a matter of recovering the meaning implicit in or “behind” a text, but rather of letting the text unfold and disclose its world “in front” of the reader. Understanding happens “in front” of a text as a reader incorporates the text's world into her own world, modifying it and creating a new world, thereby enlarging the horizon of her understanding and transforming herself in the process. It is likewise in this way, says de Certeau, that people appropriate commodities and mainstream symbols, refashion and transform them accordingly, thus creating new meanings and opening new possibilities of sociopolitical life.

dialectical movement of going back and forth between parts and whole is an inherent feature of all facets of human life involving understanding.

Furthermore, philosophical hermeneutics distinguishes between explanation, understanding, and interpretation. The natural sciences deal with knowledge that is more objective and which scientists try to *explain* (they tend to focus on the facts or parts), whereas the human sciences deal with knowledge that is more historicized and which social scientists try to *understand* (they tend to focus on the whole). Ricoeur (1981) overcomes the explanation/understanding dichotomy by developing a theory of interpretation in which “[e]xplanation and understanding are two moments in a dialectical unity” (Kaplan 2003, 66). For Ricoeur, to interpret is both to explain and to understand. Thus, the dialectical movement between explanation and understanding that defines the act of interpretation constitutes another manifestation of the hermeneutic circle.

I suggest that de Certeau's hermeneutical analysis of consumption practices of everyday life applies to other facets of globalization. Although processes of intensifying economic globalization, capitalist modernization, and an ascendant neoliberalism are commodifying and homogenizing places worldwide, at the same time, globalization's flows of commodities, people, information, images and ideas fuel the imagination. According to Keulartz (2009, 46), globalizing processes "create opportunities for hybridization, i.e., the mixing and blending of cultural identities that leads to new forms of diversity." This is facilitated foremost by increased flows of information that are no longer inhibited by state borders. The television, for instance, is accessible to increasing numbers of people, offering images of different lifestyles and new possibilities of livelihood. In addition, the internet is de-territorialized, allowing people to interact and forge relationships with others across space, producing what Appadurai (1996, 8) calls "communities of sentiment" wherein people identify with others on the basis of shared interests, beliefs and experiences, without ever meeting face-to-face. Similarly, Habermas (1987, 390) maintains that, although the corporate monopoly of mainstream media strengthens social indoctrination by colonizing the lifeworld, "there is a counterweight of emancipatory potential built into communication structures themselves," suggesting that social movements can use channels of mass communication for democratic and emancipatory ends.³

³ Habermas (1987) holds that the integrity of the lifeworld is potentially safeguarded by the paradoxical nature of societal rationalization. Although systems increasingly encroach upon the lifeworld—interfering with its communicative structure in order to secure their power and ensure the expansion of capital—in the process the state must assume an increasing number of responsibilities, such as deal with unemployment and recessions, in order to maintain the support of the population at large (especially during election years). Benhabib (1986, 233) explains that "the actions of the state may demystify the power relations in the name of which it acts, thus leading to increased demands for legitimation and political participation." The point is that, to the extent that systems assume the functions previously performed within the lifeworld, issues enter the public realm and become politicized. For Habermas, this paradox presents an emancipatory potential, notably the possibility that citizens will engage in uncoerced dialogue and participatory decision-making within public institutions (safeguarded by procedural norms), thus regulating the systems acting strategically.

Globalization's networks of electronic communication facilitate access to information for many (although not for everyone equally; e.g. the internet is not always easily accessible), providing conceptual resources for imagining new identities, novel practices, and better worlds. Harvey (1996, 112) says that "[t]he imaginary of spatiality is of crucial significance in the search for alternative mappings of the social process and of its outcomes." Appadurai (2000, 6) shares a similar view as he says that the imagination "allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries." I thus contend that the imagination itself is spatial practice because it can use communication networks to appropriate global flows of information for the purpose of creating social spaces that, paradoxically, resist the same global processes that colonize places and subordinate groups therein. Berman (1988, 348) concurs, saying that "[t]he process of modernization, even as it exploits and torment us, brings our energies and imaginations to life, drives us to grasp and confront the world that modernization makes, and to strive to make it our own." Berman's argument is that Modernity is characterized by a Marxist dialectic of destruction and creation—hence the book's title, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*—and therefore implicit is the possibility of replacing oppressive systems with new ones conducive to different expressions of modern life.⁴ Contrary to the critical theorists of the

⁴ In a frequently cited passage from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848, Marx and Engels (1978, 476) proclaim:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society.... Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

With Marx and Engels, Berman (1988, 121) says that capitalism "feed[s] itself on its own self-destruction," therefore supporting his claim that Modernity is defined by a dialectic of destruction and creation: the modern economy, and the culture that develops alongside it, gradually destroy the environment, social institutions, art, ideas, values and meanings, yet they are endlessly created anew. The paradox is that the present must be destroyed in order to fuel further growth and progress.

Frankfurt School, the imagination is not shackled by capitalist commodification or economic globalization. Nor is it merely a fantasy, pastime, or a means of escaping the hardships of life. Instead, globalization stimulates the imagination to envision new lives, better places, and a just and sustainable world, even when confronted with oppression.

iii. Identity and a Place of One's Own

In the United States, the social identities of minority groups (namely African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Latinos, Hispanics, Muslims, Hindus, disabled peoples, and gays and lesbians) are despised, distorted, stereotyped, maligned, and devalued (or ignored altogether) by the dominant cultural group, and the internalization of such beliefs reinforces their oppression. This is because, as Fanon (1967) argued in the context of Africa's history of slavery and colonialism, an important tool of oppression is the projection of negative representations of self onto disenfranchised groups, devalued images which are subsequently internalized psychologically. It follows that social liberation is only possible if subordinated groups reject and purge themselves of negative perceptions of self (Fanon controversially advocated violent confrontations to this end). In addition, the environments they inhabit are discursively represented as dangerous and dirty (racialized places such as inner-city ghettos), and materially they are targeted as sites for waste disposal and industrial production, among other polluting practices, that further degrade their environments and jeopardize human health. For these groups, having decolonized places of their own is indispensable because they provide settings where to recover their history, reaffirm positive identities, exercise their cultural traditions and lifestyles, and have their voices heard, thus challenging negative representations that legitimize institutional practices which deteriorate social and environmental conditions in their communities (e.g. the

politics of garbage disposal). Whenever a person speaks, she asserts her identity, and does so from a concrete location. Therefore a prerequisite to speaking, being listened to, and acting is that a person's identity be acknowledged and that she has some place, somewhere, to speak from, be heard, and act. For the subaltern, then, the tasks of creating solid identities and having places of their own—i.e. places of recognition—cannot be separated in their political struggles.

My argument is that a politics of place is simultaneously a politics of identity, albeit a critical one (this qualification is crucial, a point I will clarify in the fourth section). This is because, as I argued in chapter IV with regard to the racialization of place, discursive representations of environments and the identity of inhabitants intersect to socially construct one another. It is also because, as I argued in chapter III with reference to concepts of place-based identity and relationally constituted places-in-space, identity is always already physically, ecologically, socially, and culturally embedded in place, yet connected to spatially-distant environments by socioecological flows and political-economic processes. In both chapters my reading of identity reveals an intimate affinity with place and space, thus supporting the dissertation's assertion that the environmental is political. Furthermore, my argument emphasizes that identities are fluid sites that contingently materialize themselves in different places, and which are discursively represented. And, the fact that identity is multiple, overlapping, contingent, shifting, negotiated, formed and reformed mirrors the myriad ways that places-in-space are "lived through," produced, contested and mapped. This is politically important because it implies that not only places-in-space, but also identities themselves can be appropriated and reshaped to counter oppression; indeed, in good dialectical fashion, to alter one (a place) is to simultaneously change the other (an identity), and vice-versa. The point I emphasize is that, although identity is not a substance, just like space is not a container, having a place of one's

own where to construct an identity is critical since it is the precondition for groups being able “to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate” (Harvey 1990, 48).

For disenfranchised groups, affirming a positive identity in places they call their own produces a series of cracks or ruptures in society’s web-like system of power relationships.

Pulido (1996, 47) says that

the creation of an affirmative identity can never be fully distinguished from resistance because the action and consciousness required to build such an identity, even if it simply allows one to live with a shred of dignity, is an act of resistance and an exercise of power itself. It is the power of self that is the crucial first step in imagining the possibility of resistance or another reality.

Pulido is saying that appropriating one’s stigmatized identity, and refashioning it more positively, is a spatial act of resistance that empowers because in the process a person affirms her agency and place in the world. There are many ways that identity formation is empowering, and to elucidate my argument I briefly revisit the master subject’s centric logic of identity discussed in chapter II. Affirming a positive identity is important because everyone has an identity, but for marginalized groups their bodies mark them as others. This is because the identity of dominant white groups, for instance, is the social norm (or background) against which non-whites appear, and therefore symbolically white skin is uncolored, transparent, and even invisible—hence normalized. In contrast, the identities of minority groups like African Americans are corporealized precisely because their bodies mark them as different from the perspective of the dominant white identity. Yet, insofar as the master subject defines himself against devalued others—locating them as the margins to his dominant center—affirming a positive identity destabilizes and decenters (to use postmodern terms) the master’s position as the privileged vantage point that shapes perceptions of otherness. For this reason hearing the voices on the

margins is politically important because they “outline the features of the dominant monovoice” that systematically silences them (claiming to be the only voice) and defines them as marginal (or in terms of a lack of the master subject’s traits) precisely “because they are abused by power” (Quigley 1995, 184). With Foucault (1980), because power is a social relation, where there is power there is resistance, and therefore nurturing the agency of marginalized groups simultaneously challenges the authority of dominant groups. I thus contend that, for the subaltern, cultivating a positive identity in places they call their own produces places of recognition, in the process challenging hegemonic discourses, patterns of cultural valuation, and institutional arrangements that perpetuate their oppression (in terms of inequitable economic distribution, cultural misrecognition, and political exclusion).

A concrete example will demonstrate how disenfranchised groups are sometimes able to reappropriate their disturbed place-based identity and reaffirm it positively, resulting in what Peña (2002, 73) calls “resistance identities.” I revisit the struggles of the Latino community of San Luis, Colorado, against the environmentally destructive practices of a privately-owned logging company. Recall that logging threatens the community’s traditional ecological knowledge (the acequias) that sustains economic livelihood. In addition, logging culturally and spiritually impoverishes the residents by rupturing the memories and relationships to the mountain watershed that defines their sense of place. The community, then, is materially, culturally, psychologically, and spiritually displaced. Yet, the community is resisting. Notably, threats to their cultural lifestyle, practices, values and traditions have accentuated their sense of place. To account for this sentiment, Peña (2002, 71) says “that a sense of place may become more salient and obvious to members of a local culture during times of crisis and dramatic change. There is nothing like a new threat to make people more aware of their attachment to

place.” The disruption of the community’s sense of place and place-based identity has fostered an attitude of resistance, a stance that began by recollecting the “memory maps” and narratives that historically connected their ancestors to the land. At the same time, the residents have reappropriated their shattered place-based identity and refashioned it in such a way that allows them to continue living in their disturbed environment. It is for this reason that Peña (2002, 71) emphasizes that “[d]isplacement may be followed by regeneration and resurgence.” A local resident expresses this point succinctly: “[y]ou have to change, but you don’t have to die” (qtd. in Peña 2002, 72).

I am suggesting that the recollection and affirmation of attachments to place inform the community’s distinct spatial practices of resistance against the institutionalized discourses, relations, practices, and processes that threaten their socioeconomic livelihood, cultural identity and values, traditional ecological knowledge, and the environmental integrity of the mountain watershed they inhabit. The community’s spatial practices of resistance are manifested in many ways. Peña observes that, because the community has inhabited the watershed for centuries, the residents continue to exercise “historic use rights” to the natural resources needed to sustain their livelihood (the land is perceived as a commons). Specifically, they engage in trespass crimes on the enclosed lands being logged (surrounded by barbed-wire fencing) to pursue their traditional hunting and wood-gathering practices. In addition, the community has undertaken a legal campaign to restore the land grant and gain community ownership of the commons. These spatial practices are some of the ways that the residents “are actively reinventing themselves out of the ruinous rubble” caused by logging, “restoring their own place-based identities while struggling to reinhabit disturbed places” (Peña 2002, 74-5).

This example is not an isolated case because similar (albeit not identical) place-based struggles are happening worldwide. To cite a concrete case, historically the marginalization of women in India took place in a context where land had been managed in unsustainable ways, and animals were treated strictly on the basis of their economic value as natural resources. To this day, because of women's role as primary caretakers of their families and food producers in their communities, environmental degradation affects them, both economically and in terms of demands on their labor, to a greater degree than it does other groups (Curtin 1996; Warren 2000). Deforestation, for example, intensifies women's responsibilities as it becomes more time-consuming to gather the firewood needed to cook for their families. In response, the women of the Deccan Development Society—a rural grassroots organization in the state of Andhra Pradesh—have successfully implemented an ethic of care in their environmental management practices (Rao 2002). Their social relations and spatial practices provide job security for women of the community, remediate land degraded by previous unsustainable environmental practices, and attend to the well-being of their animals rather than focusing merely on their economic value. Moreover, some rural communities in West India have revived traditional ecological knowledge pertaining to rainwater harvesting practices (e.g. water catchment ponds), demonstrating that industrial water management schemes are not needed to satisfy basic needs (Hooja, website). Similar to the San Luis community, such cases show how communities are not passively succumbing to their displacement and oppression, but attempting to empower themselves in response to environmental degradation and social inequities. These examples also make evident that a common strategy of resistance is recollecting cultural practices, environmental heritages, and traditional ecological knowledges in order to rekindle place-based identities.

The strategy I am developing can be interpreted as a form of identity politics. Drawing from the paradigm of recognition justice, a politics of identity affirms the significance of lifestyle and cultural differences, and seeks institutional rights that respect these differences. Identity politics is often associated with multiculturalism that aims to revalue the identities of subordinated minority groups. African American or gay identity politics, for example, treat race or sexuality “as a cultural positivity with its own substantive content.... This positivity is assumed to subsist in and of itself and to need only additional recognition” (Fraser 1997, 24). However, I reject the assertion that the cultural positivity of identity is its substantive content—there is something fixed and stable (a substance) that defines a person’s identity—precisely because it conflicts with the socioecological relational ontology of identity and environments I developed throughout the dissertation, and also because such a position is susceptible to multiple criticisms to which I am sensitive. Before proceeding with my argument for a spatialized politics of place, a discussion of these points of contention is in order. To this end, in the next section I argue that most criticisms revolve around the failure to challenge the master subject’s dualistic logic of identity that defines locality against globality (or place against space) and reifies communities, ultimately repressing differences within groups and legitimizing exclusions between groups. Then, in the fourth section I develop the bivalent environmental justice framework for a spatialized politics of place that respects group identities and acknowledges cultural differences, but also identifies commonalities to distinct struggles in order to establish webs of relations across space, thus broadening the geographical terrain of place-based political agency and praxis.

3. Uprooting the Politics of Place

A politics of place that perceives cultural differences and identities as being substantive is susceptible to multiple criticisms. While some are directed against the idea of a self-identical subject, others deconstruct the notion of group identities, and others still are concerned with the political repercussions of the ideal of community. In different ways I suggest that the various criticisms revolve around the master subject's dualistic logic of identity that seemingly grounds the politics of place, identity, and difference. What the criticisms share in common is the perception that efforts to liberate disenfranchised groups by revaluing their identities and communities reproduces the master subject's dualistic logic of domination as discussed in chapter II.

To quickly recapitulate, the centric logic of identity construes the self as an atomistic self-identical substance who defines himself against others by emphasizing differences and denying similarities. Likewise, group identities and communities are deemed internally homogeneous, solid, and self-sufficient unities. The construction of group identities is accomplished with two conceptual acts. First is a conceptual act of hybridization whereby the traits characterizing different groups are categorized into mutually exclusive alternatives. For instance, a black person is by definition not white, a woman is not a man, and a gay or lesbian person is not a heterosexual. Between groups it is the differences, and not the similarities, that matter most, thus neglecting the traits they share in common. In this way Plumwood (2002) says that differences are conceptualized as radical otherness. Second is a conceptual act of purification within groups themselves. Although between groups the differences are most important, within groups the differences are ignored and the similarities are emphasized, thus enabling the creation of homogeneous social identities; for example, what homosexuals share in

common—their sexual orientation—primarily defines their group identity. Young (1990b, 307) argues that the conceptual practice of purification creates a totalizing singularity, fusing the subjectivities of persons in a shared whole, fulfilling the “desire to bring multiplicity and heterogeneity into unity,” thereby reducing individual differences to sameness.

Once again, the worry is that a politics of place that is simultaneously a politics of identity internalizes the master subject’s dualistic logic of othering, in the process reifying groups and the environments they inhabit instead of perceiving them as relationally constituted and contingent. In what follows I expound on this point by discussing five interrelated and mutually supporting criticisms: group identities as sites of oppression, the dualistic construction of identity and corresponding exclusions, the reification of place, the threat of parochialism, and the bounds of postmodern politics of place.

i. Group Identities as Sites of Oppression

The first criticism pertains to the obvious fact that some groups are despised, stereotyped, stigmatized, maligned and devalued. Some social identities are sites of oppression, and members of these groups might not want to affirm and celebrate their identity precisely because it imprisons them. For instance, some communities are patriarchal, racist, and homophobic; consequently, uncritically reaffirming and revaluing these group identities may perpetuate the oppression of subgroups within them. Harvey (1996, 363-4) says that “[t]he identity of the homeless person, the racially oppressed, the economically deprived, the woman beset by violence, the worker, the colonial subject, is forged out of certain conditions (material, discursive, psychological, etc.) embedded in the social process.” Harvey is saying that revaluing marginalized identities may inadvertently reinforce the hegemonic discourses, patterns of

cultural valuation, institutional relations, political-economic processes, and social conditions that produce and sustain oppression. Lakshman Yapa concurs, saying that the “poor do not wish to affirm their poverty, they wish to negate it by moving out of it” (qtd. in Pulido 1996, 12). Again, in some cultures women experience misrecognition and exclusion to the extent that they are not accorded the same scope of rights as men, and domestic abuse is tolerated. And, although in other cultures (e.g. Euro-American) women generally do not lack recognition, they are nonetheless subordinated in the ways they are valued; for example, even though women’s work in the private sphere is recognized as important to the maintenance of the family, it is not deemed productive and therefore is not paid nor factor in economic accounting systems (e.g. gross domestic product (GDP)). The issue, then, is not one of simply recognizing and affirming the value of all group identities. Rather, the issue at hand concerns the way some groups are valued, and whether some identities ought to be deconstructed instead of being recognized to begin with.

ii. Identities, Dualisms, Exclusions

The second criticism stems from feminist scholarship and states that if the goal of identity politics is the creation of singular group identities, then it is an impossibility. Much feminist theory, especially that originating from developing nations (Mohanty 1991), argues that women (including other groups) differ from each other in important ways. For example, the experience of being a woman in the United States is different than the experience of being a woman in India due to different historical, cultural, social, political, economic, and environmental contexts. As such, their experiences of gender oppression are not identical, especially because for an Indian woman patriarchy intersects with a history of colonialism, among various other factors. Thus, the feminism they theorize is different and not applicable cross-culturally.

Furthermore, Judith Butler (1995) rejects the idea that there is such a thing as a feminine identity in any context. Drawing from Foucault and postmodern assertions of the “death of the subject”—a self-identical, stable, unified self does not exist—Butler (1995, 50) argues that “[i]dentity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary.” This is to say, a politics that imposes a singular, homogeneous, normalized group identity represses differences within groups and excludes subgroups or persons who do not fit the social norm. Young (1997, 14) clarifies, saying that “[t]he very act of defining a gender identity excludes or devalues some bodies, practices, and discourses, at the same time that it obscures the constructed, and thus contestable, character of that gender identity.” Butler and Young both argue that there is no singular identity that exhaustively defines women since they share no universal traits or experiences in common (whether biological, historical, cultural, or social), and, insofar as a group identity is postulated, it will become reified and perpetuate social exclusions.

The problem is that a politics of place that uncritically adopts a politics of identity does not challenge the structure of dualisms that define disjuncts in opposition (men/women, black/white, gay/straight). Instead, the master subject’s dualistic logic of identity is simply reversed: the traditionally suppressed disjuncts (women, black, gay) is revalued and privileged. Peter Quigley (1995, 177) explains that, because disjuncts (e.g. men/women) are not reified substances but are rather relationally defined in terms of “their differences from one another, foregrounding one term is always at the expense of the other and requires a powerful act of displacement and violence.” Stevenson (2003, 26) concurs, saying that “[c]laims to ‘identity’ are always caught up in the construction of an inside and an outside. It is the cultural production of the abject and the marginal that enforces processes of cultural and symbolic exclusion.” The

worry, then, is that a politics of place that uncritically revalues and privileges subordinated identities does not challenge the process by which these are constructed through exclusion. As such, it adopts the master subject's dualistic logic—defining groups as mutually exclusive (the conceptual act of hybridization) and internally homogeneous (the act of purification)—in the hope of countering oppression. Although listening to the voices coming from the spaces on the margins is crucial, suggesting that they are intrinsically emancipatory is problematic insofar as it ignores how disenfranchised groups are discursively, culturally, socially, and politically disempowered (with corresponding economic livelihood impacts) precisely because they are defined in terms of differences to the dominant center.

For these reasons Butler advocates an anti-identity political strategy firmly embedded in the postmodern tradition: identities are constructed, multiple and shifting, rather than pre-given, singular and stable. According to Noël Sturgeon (1997), overcoming oppressive relations such as racism requires deconstructing the racial ideology that defines blacks (or nonwhites) as raced precisely because they contrast with the dominant white identity that is normalized. The failure to do so obscures the way that whites themselves are racialized. Sturgeon admits that there is biological diversity with regard to skin pigment, but she says that this variation is not reducible to binary oppositions that define the racial essences of different groups. Likewise, queer politics do not treat homosexuality as a naturalized sexual identity that needs only revaluation (this is the strategy of gay identity politics). Rather, Fraser (1997, 24) says that such politics aim “to deconstruct the homo-hetero dichotomy so as to destabilize all fixed sexual identities.” Sexuality does not fit into one of two categories—heterosexuality or homosexuality—but instead encompasses different and ever-shifting expressions.

The strategy of revaluing the identities of subordinated groups is mirrored in some approaches to environmental philosophy. Drawing from cultural feminism, some ecofeminists, such as Starhawk (1988) and Charlene Spretnak (1989), revalue historically marginalized disjuncts, notably nature, women, and the body. Just like cultural feminists celebrate femininity (e.g. women's nature and ways of knowing) to counter gender oppression, Starhawk and Spretnak emphasize the "aliveness" of nature because they believe that "Gaian" images will generate compassion and care toward the ecosphere. However, Janet Biehl (1991) argues that Starhawk and Spretnak are reacting to the traditional Newtonian conception of nature as "dead" matter that historically (and still today) justified its exploitation for human ends. This is to say, their strategy tries to overcome dualism with monism: nature as a whole is alive, meaningful, and intrinsically valuable. Bookchin (1990b, 147) adds that, because dualism and reductionism are closely coupled, reactions against dualism sometimes "foster its counterpart in an equally crude monism that simplifies all of reality into a single, often homogeneous, agency, force, substance, or energy source." This criticism is also directed to deep ecologists who try to overcome nature/culture dualism by emphasizing that humans are part of nature. In a frequently quoted passage reflecting deep ecological thinking, Warwick Fox (1984, 196) states:

This is the idea that there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence. In other words, the world simply is not divided up into independently existing subjects and objects, nor is there any bifurcation in reality between the human and nonhuman realms. Rather all entities are constituted by their relationships. To the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of a deep ecological consciousness.

Once again, this results in monism—"I am the rainforest and the rainforest is me"—and keeps intact the dualistic structure. Bookchin and Biehl therefore argue that the problem with ecofeminists and deep ecologists who celebrate historically devalued entities or beings (nature,

women, the body) is that such strategies adopt value-hierarchical thinking to revalue denigrated disjuncts, thus reenacting the “violence” of the master subject’s dualistic logic of domination.

a. Local/Global Dualism and Biscalar Environmentalism

The second criticism applies also to dualistic construals of locality/globality and place/space in the environmental movement. Similar to the way advocates of identity politics aim to counter oppression by revaluing subordinated identities (yet keeping the structure of dualisms intact), some environmentalists privilege locality and place, while others favor globality and space, as the preferred spatial scale for political action regarding environmental problems. I focus on the latter trend first, and then discuss strategies that emphasize place.

To the extent that globalization’s intensifying flows of people, information, and commodities have destabilized our sense of belonging to a nation-state, citizenship is being reconceptualized in terms of environmental (or global) citizenship to better reflect the cosmopolitan world we now inhabit. Environmental citizenship is construed on a global scale for the obvious reason that many environmental issues (e.g. climate change, ozone depletion, air and ocean pollution) are international in scale, and finding solutions requires global collaboration—hence global environmentalism which I discussed in chapter III. Andrew Dobson and Derek Bell (2006, 10) explain:

Universalizing conceptions of environmental citizenship seem to demand blindness of us as far as particular places are concerned, distance from those same places, and a movement that “can be both a source and expression of commitments that transcend the local and the particular”—a movement, in other words, toward the universal.

For Szerszynski (2006, 75), this translates into “a *transformation* of vision, one that relies on an imaginative removal of the self from immediate everyday engagement in the world [emphasis in

original]” toward a global de-territorialized perspective. Simply put, an environmental citizen is a citizen of the world whose political community encompasses the whole of humanity.

Environmental citizenship is confronted with difficulties, however, and I presently focus on salient points relevant to my argument.⁵ Derek Heater (1999) argues that historically citizenship is grounded in a sense of community defined by shared language, history, culture, traditions, and the like. The problem is that humanity does not possess any of these traits in common. To support his point, Heater observes how recent efforts to unify the European Union have been more or less successful. One reason is because contact with people who are different—the other—may breed feelings of contempt and hostility rather than sentiments of affinity and solidarity, a point substantiated by the many ethnic tensions throughout Europe.

⁵ There are many criticisms, and I expound on two additional ones. First, environmental citizenship is usually rooted in the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics. Citizens are taught “green” values conducive to environmental sustainability. Individual lifestyle practices are targeted. People are encouraged to use CFL light bulbs, turn off lights and electrical appliances to save energy, conserve water, reduce, reuse and recycle. The presupposition is that environmental sustainability is foremost a matter of changing everyday personal practices. Moreover, environmental citizenship has been adopted by some governments. Szerszynski (2006, 75) cites Environment Canada’s website: “[e]nvironmental citizenship encourages individuals, communities and organizations to think about the environmental rights and responsibilities we all have as residents of planet Earth. Environmental citizenship means caring for the Earth and caring for Canada.” According to Éric Darier, Environment Canada’s concept of environmental citizenship presumes that “self-regulation is better than government regulation, and that voluntary action is the most effective way to achieve enduring results” (qtd. in MacGregor 2006, 114-5). Environmental citizenship is thus individualized: people must learn about environmental problems and become responsible environmental citizens.

The problem is that environmental citizenship’s emphasis on individual “green” behaviors deflects attention from the socioeconomic and political dimensions of ecological unsustainability and environmental injustices. Environment Canada’s focus on individual actions conveniently obscures the responsibilities of its own government in regulating and “cleaning-up” its own industries and the corporations who cause environmental problems at local, national, and international spatialities. Instead, it suggests that it is irresponsible citizens (and not social, political, and economic institutional arrangements) who are responsible for ecological destruction. For this reason environmental citizenship can be interpreted as a status-quo approach limited to state-sponsored enticements for people to care about the environment. The consequence is that its discourse has been co-opted by corporations and governments in ways that erode its transformative political potential.

Second, MacGregor (2006) argues that environmental citizenship does not address gender inequality since it remains rooted in public/private dualism. She argues that environmental citizenship does not take into account the fact that women tend to work more hours than men since, in addition to working outside the household, they are often the primary caretakers within the private realm. The concern is that environmental citizenship’s focus on voluntary and individual lifestyle changes in the private sphere neglects the fact that eco-friendliness requires sufficient capital and adequate time. “Green” products are usually more expensive, and “green” practices, such as washing dishes by hand rather than using a dishwasher, are often more time-consuming. The worry is that environmental citizenship might disproportionately burden the poor and result in the intensification of women’s work. MacGregor’s (2006, 113) concerns are warranted since “the equation of citizenship with responsibility has become an ‘escape route’ for governments as they move to dismantle the welfare state,” and as instantiated in the increasing privatization of basic social goods and services.

Thus, Heater argues that, to the extent that environmental citizenship attempts to unite all cultures on the basis of shared membership to the human species, it remains a vague and elusive concept. The difficulty is that environmental citizenship demands that citizens adopt a global perspective, or bird's eye view of the world. This is an abstraction, however, because it situates people outside of the world altogether—a view from nowhere uprooted from our relationships to concrete places—alienating us from it in the process.

In contrast, much environmental philosophy adopts the reverse strategy, extensively theorizing place and privileging locality as the primordial ontological foundation for environmental ethics. For instance, Heidegger's (1993a) existentials of building and dwelling are used to conceptualize ecophenomenologies of place and ways of ecologically and authentically being-in-the-world (Brown and Toadvine 2003). According to deep ecological thinking with Heideggerian undertones, overcoming environmental crises is a matter of developing an ecological sense of belonging and (re)learning how to feel or be at "home" in the natural places humans inhabit as a biological species. Ecology, for Joseph Grange (1977, 146), is about learning anew how to build places with care and "dwell intimately with that which resists our attempts to control, shape, manipulate and exploit it." In addition, some "primitivists" desire a "return to nature" and a rejection of civilization—calling for deindustrialization and the abandonment of modern science and large-scale technologies—to counter the alienation and destructive effects of Western societies. It is thought that environmental sensitivity and sustainability is cultivated by living in nature, as exemplified in the supposedly ecological lifestyles of indigenous peoples (the myth of the noble savage). Again, bioregionalists aim to create ecologically sustainable communities that respect the biophysical limits of the surrounding environment. In accord with the Aristotelian-communitarian tradition and the place-based

politics of identity and difference, bioregionalism celebrates the distinct characteristics of localities, promoting “environmental politics towards a preservation and enhancement of the achieved qualities of particular places” (Harvey 1996, 170). For this reason Cheney (1995) calls for postmodern environmental ethics as bioregional narratives—“storied residences” to use his term—that reject totalizing narratives. In each of these cases it is thought that locally-based communities are the natural starting points for political dialogue concerning ecological issues, thus implying that some form of politics of place is the privileged scalar platform for environmentalism.

The concern is that, similar to the way some ecofeminists emphasize the aliveness of nature to counter the scientific worldview of “dead” matter, emphasizing locality and place over globality and space is in part a reaction to the Enlightenment’s universal meta-narratives—discourses of justice, truth, rights and rationality, each emphasizing the similarities of people over their differences—that are associated with unprecedented human oppression (e.g. the Holocaust) and environmental destruction in the past few centuries. Instead, drawing from postmodernism’s rejection of Marxist grand narratives of social liberation—that is, the intensification of the class struggle will result in a proletarian revolution that replaces capitalism with communism—that failed to achieve their emancipatory goals and often justified oppression—e.g. Stalinist and Maoist slave labor camps—multiple, contingent, local micro-narratives of place are privileged as alternative moral, epistemological, and political frameworks.⁶ Yet, such strategies, I suggest, simply privilege the reverse pole of the binary

⁶ Lyotard expounds this thesis in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. He argues that Modernity is characterized by ahistorical and universal meta-narratives, specifically that of modern science which claims to unearth knowledge of the one real way the world is (another is Marxism’s philosophy of the subject and narrative of history). In contrast, he defines the postmodern era as skepticism toward all meta-narratives. Postmodernism emphasizes a diversity of discontinuous and paradoxical micro-narratives that challenge totalizing accounts of truth. Rather than aiming at consensus, postmodernism is grounded in paralogy: it uncovers instabilities or “cracks” in dominant paradigms in the hope of displacing, shifting, and decentering them. For this reason Lyotard

dualism that pits sameness against difference, particularity against universality, uniformity against discord, space against place, and locality against globality. Differences, particularity and discord, which are associated with place and locality, are valued over and construed in opposition to sameness, universality and uniformity, which are associated with space and globality. Once again, the criticism is that such strategies keep intact the dualistic structure pitting place against space and locality against globality.

To recapitulate, what these contrasting approaches to environmentalism share in common is that they define place and locality in opposition to space and globality, thus presupposing place/space and local/global dualisms. Consequently, environmental groups tend to adopt one of two conflicting spatial strategies. On the one hand, groups that advocate concepts of environmental citizenship and platforms of global environmentalism stress the spatial or global nature of environmental problems, while abstracting from local environmental problems and cultural issues embedded in place. On the other hand, movements such as bioregionalism focus on local environmental problems and place-based cultural issues, while abstracting from the global spatialities of the political-economy through which commodities, resources, and capital circulate. What is missing, then, is the attempt to synergize the biscalar poles of environmentalism in a way that respects the particularities of place, and concurrently establishes relations between groups across space, thus undermining local/global and place/space dualisms.

advocates the inclusion and participation of multiple actors who negotiate ever-changing meanings and rules of language games at local scales.

However, a question is whether postmodernism is itself “cleansed” of the meta-narrative(s) it critiques? Indeed, Lyotard’s postmodern argument for discontinuous, paradoxical, fragmented micro-narratives can also be seen as making universal truth claims and exemplifying a will to power. This is because, in arguing that reason is contextualized, historicized, localized, plural and relative, postmodernists are asserting a general theory about the nature of reason and truth claims that is applicable cross-culturally—i.e. contextualism, pluralism, and relativism are true (universally!) for all cultures. Another question is whether meta-narratives should be condemned outright, or whether some universal discourses, such as Enlightenment universals of liberal democracy, social equality, human rights and justice, are ever justified? I discuss this point in the fourth section.

iii. The Reification of Place

A closely connected criticism is that too much emphasis on locality leads to the reification of place. Just like identity politics may reify identities as self-identical substances, a politics of place may reify places as fixed and isolated sites—Newtonian containers that are “just there”—inside which social relations, cultural practices, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes occur. As discussed, the politics of place are associated with locally-based communities of resistance, often disenfranchised groups asserting their identity and fighting to have their voices heard. And, because it is easier to control a local place than to control an abstract global space, some groups try to insulate their communities from the effects of global capitalism and the expansion of consumer culture. For such groups, spaces on the margins are valuable because they are places where cultural differences and place-based identities are cultivated and preserved.

Interestingly, the Western canon of utopian philosophical literature is characterized by this longing and desire for place. The narratives of Plato’s *Republic*, Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, and Thomas More’s *Utopia* take place in isolated and spatially self-enclosed communities. Nowadays, the formation of communes or intentional communities in isolated regions exemplifies this continuing search for a place of one’s own. Countercultural communes, the Amish and Luddite communities, lesbian separatist communities in rural Oregon, to name a few, are interspersed across North America. Such localities are often perceived as insulated natural units subsisting by themselves, and they are romanticized as idyllic sanctuaries as popularized in slogans such as “small is beautiful.” Moreover, I suggest that the urban strategy of appropriating instrumental spaces and creating social spaces is mirrored in mainstream environmentalism’s wilderness agenda, a goal being the establishment of national parks. According to this view,

pristine wilderness regions—conceptualized as Newtonian receptacle-spaces—are undisturbed by social, political, and economic processes extending across space. Thomas Birch (1995, 156) says that “[w]ilderness reservations are best viewed as holes and cracks, as ‘free spaces’ or ‘liberated zones,’ in the fabric of domination and self-deception that fuels and shapes our mainstream contemporary culture.” Just like social spaces are needed for the flourishing of human relationships, mainstream environmentalists argue that wilderness areas are needed to provide places where nonhuman beings can prosper and the integrity of ecosystems is preserved.

The problem is that it is erroneous to think that a community or a natural environment (or any place for that matter) exists or can exist outside of the global political-economic processes and socioecological flows that connect spatially-distant places. As discussed in chapter III, this is because place and space are relationally constituted, and these relations are intrinsic and continuous rather than extrinsic and incidental. The concern, as Harvey (1996, 426) says, is that overemphasizing community, locality, or natural places as the privileged site for sociospatial transformation “abstracts from the dialectics of place and space and treats one side of the antinomy as a self-sustaining entity endowed with causal powers.”

iv. Place and Parochialism

The fourth criticism is concerned with how the politics of place, especially if reified, entail parochialism. Drawing from the feminist critique of identity politics, Young (1990b) argues that “the ideal of community,” represented as a self-enclosed unit that defines itself against others (thus internalizing the master subject’s dualistic logic of identity), fosters sentiments of dislike, disrespect, and hostility toward outsider groups and strangers. Paraphrasing Richard Sennett, Bauman (1998) says that rural communities in the U.S. are often close-knit with

clearly established cultural codes of belonging, concerned with law and order, suspicious of and intolerant of differences. Such communities are highly uniform and homogeneous, being ethnically, religiously, racially, and class-wise similar. Bauman (1998, 47) goes on to say:

Uniformity breeds conformity, and conformity's other face is intolerance. In a homogeneous locality it is exceedingly difficult to acquire the qualities of character and the skills needed to cope with human difference and situations of uncertainty; and in the absence of such skills and qualities it is all too easy to fear the other, simply for reason of being an-other—bizarre and different perhaps, but first and foremost unfamiliar, not-readily-comprehensible, not-fully fathomed, unpredictable.

As a consequence, people who are unfamiliar and perceived as too different are not welcomed into these communities. I demonstrated this in chapter IV, arguing that minority groups are analogized to weeds, perceived as disrupting the social relations of native whites inhabiting rural environments. In this fashion Young (1990b, 302) says that “[t]he desire for community relies on the same desire for social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism.” The criticism, then, is that it is naive to believe that communitarian politics of place will necessarily respect human diversity and uphold values of freedom, democracy, justice, openness to foreigners, and so forth, rather than institute oppressive practices such as homophobia, racism, sexism, and the like.⁷

⁷ I suggest that nationalism (or patriotism) represents the ideal of community at a larger spatial scale. Nationalism is reinforced by the nation state's efforts to discursively, symbolically, and culturally construct a homogeneous representation of its “people,” usually on the basis of shared ancestry, traditions, language, among other cultural traits. The state's homogeneous identity draws from political liberalism in that the similarities of citizens, or what they have in common, transcend their differences, thereby reinforcing homogeneity. Nationalism is cultivated in many ways: the singing of national anthems, the celebrations of national holidays such as Canada Day, supporting the troops, support for Olympic athletes, etc. In recent decades, nationalism has been used as a way to preserve cultural identities from globalization's increased flows of people, information, and Western cultural signifiers.

It is true that nationalism has sometimes promoted sentiments of cultural unity and preserved traditional lifestyles in nations whose territories are relatively restricted (e.g. the creation of new states following the collapse of the Soviet Union). It is also true that within large nation-states whose population is culturally diverse, nationalistic sentiments have sometimes encouraged multiculturalism that respects various ethnicities (e.g. in Canada). But, in many cases nationalism has encountered resistance since there is rarely a singular identity that defines the various cultural groups inhabiting a given nation (e.g. Quebeckers and First Nations communities in Canada). And, in some instances, tensions escalate to such a degree that they result in violence against despised groups, a recent case being the Serbian ethnic cleansing of Croats and non-Serbs during the Yugoslavian civil war (specifically the Bosnian War of 1992-95). Furthermore, nationalism has often been mobilized for war against other countries, usually under the

The threat of parochialism applies readily to environmental movements such as bioregionalism. The concern is that bioregionalism shares traits in common with Nazism's philosophy of nature. According to Zimmerman (1994, 175), "Hitler denounced the evils of modernity (including liberal democracy, capitalism, and communism), proclaimed the need for renewed contact with elemental forces, and stressed the importance of restoring folk-customs, traditions, and attitudes." Nazism appealed to Germans who felt uprooted by liberal capitalism's social atomism, urging them to relate their individual interests to the collective interests of the nation, thus fusing their sense of self to the larger whole. Creating a unified Germany in which citizens shared a well-defined and homogeneous identity required that the nation cleanse its "blood and soil" of despised groups, namely Jews, but also ethnic Poles, the Romani (gypsies), Soviet prisoners of war, people with physical disabilities, the mentally ill, homosexuals, and other political and religious outcasts.

As many historical events demonstrate, overemphasizing that people are fused with their communities, just like overemphasizing that humans are part of nature ("I am the rainforest"), may lead to a surrender of self to the greater whole, with potentially dangerous political consequences as substantiated in Nazism's organicist totalitarianism. I am not saying that belonging to a community is in-itself racist, chauvinistic, or exclusionary. With Young (1990b, 312), the point is that appealing to a sense of community belonging "within the context of a racist and chauvinistic society, can validate the impulses that reproduce racist and ethnically chauvinistic identification." This means that the ideal of community advocated by a politics of place is important, but it must be a qualified and critical ideal. What is crucial is to identify, critique, and ultimately transform the cultural, social, economic, and political conditions that

banner of protecting a nation's values and ensuring its safety against military threats (e.g. the U.S. wars against Vietnam and Iraq). In this way nationalism may foster xenophobic sentiments toward otherized groups within and outside a given nation.

convert place-based feelings and attachments to community into exclusionary or even neo-Nazi beliefs and practices.

v. The Bounds of Postmodern Politics

Finally, the fifth criticism also concerns the political implications of valuing place over space and locality over globality. Drawing from Foucault and Derrida, the politics of place advocate local struggles waged by different social actors and place-based groups, implying that the most that can be hoped for is that they may coalesce into a collective effort for a time. Once again, this strategy is preferred because it abstains from exporting universal—hence totalizing—meta-narratives, discourses, and strategies of social liberation like Marxism to places where different groups may be forced to conform; hence deconstruction is justice for Derrida (1997).

Joel Handler (1992, 719) adds:

The new social movements can be considered the archetypical form of postmodern politics—grass roots, protest from below, solidarity, collective identity, affective processes—all in the struggle against the established order outside the “normal” channels.... On the other hand, there is no grandiose plan for a better society.

The strategy, in other words, is for marginalized groups to support each other while each engages in different place-based resistances and local political struggles. Following Foucault, groups abstain from imagining utopian, large-scale, societal transformations since it is theorized that such efforts will ultimately perpetuate the normalizing regimes of social control and disciplinary power that (re)produce social oppressions.

Although caution is in order, postmodern politics are problematic because they deny that it is ever possible, nor desirable, to develop strategies for global sociospatial transformation. All political strategies (including moral dilemmas and epistemological claims) are relative or contextually applicable at best since it is impossible to step outside one’s lifeworld in order to

evaluate and critique them objectively. This is concerning, however, not only because it leaves no place for reconstructing Marxism or socialist politics, but also because as a matter of principle postmodern politics cannot offer substantive proposals for building transformative social geographies. Steven Best (1989, 361) says that postmodern theorists

fail to see how repressive and crippling the opposite approach of valorizing difference, plurality, fragmentation, and agonistics can be. The flip side of the tyranny of the whole is the dictatorship of the fragments.... Without some positive and normative concept of totality [or universality] to counter-balance the poststructuralist/postmodern emphasis on difference and discontinuity, we are abandoned to the seriality of pluralist individualism and the supremacy of competitive values over communal life.

I agree that narratives of place are important tools in the quest for sociospatial transformation, yet I qualify that their usefulness is limited, best suited to local struggles. Local resistances or the practices of everyday life are not useful to address issues that affect spatially-distant places, that is, global problems extending across space. To name a few, climate change, biodiversity loss, ocean pollution, escalating population, economic globalization, and poverty and war are socioecological issues that affect the entire planet. Abstaining from developing a global political strategy to confront these issues, to instead focus exclusively on local problems embedded in place, leaves intact global political-economic processes and institutional arrangements that cause and perpetuate these issues, in the process becoming “a part of the very fragmentation which a mobile capitalism and flexible accumulation can feed upon” (Harvey 1990, 303).⁸ As such, postmodern politics, to the extent that they consistently fail to imagine concrete alternatives to capitalist modernization, maintain the status quo and can thus be interpreted as being politically conservative. I revisit this issue in the upcoming section, but for now suffice it to say that a politics of place and identity may decay into an ideology of difference, failing to connect issues

⁸ This thesis is developed thoroughly in two books: Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity*, and Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.

of cultural recognition to a broader materialist analysis concerned with global political-economic issues that impact all places-in-space.

4. Place, Space, and the Geography of Bivalent Environmental Justice

In the chapter's second section I argued that social spaces (or decolonized places) are produced through people's spatial practices of everyday life. Places of recognition are liberating because they provide disenfranchised groups with arenas where to cultivate empowered place-based identities and have their voices heard. In the third section I argued that a politics of place is subject to important criticisms, most revolving around the dualistic logic of identity that reifies groups and defines them against each other, ultimately degenerating into regressive fragmentations, exclusions, and parochialism. What is needed, then, is a spatialized politics of place that recognizes the significance of distinct communities, without succumbing to the temptation of insulating them, nor deconstructing them altogether. To this end, in this section I argue that a spatialized politics of place must recognize group differences, while also identifying similarities in order to establish connections with others across space, thus expanding the geographical terrain of place-based political agency and action. I argue that Fraser's (1997; 2003) theory of bivalent justice and its singular, yet two-dimensional, norm of participatory parity is the preferred philosophical framework for this sociopolitical task, and most appropriate to the diversity of social and cultural groups engaged in struggles for ecological sustainability and environmental justice.

i. The Redistribution-Recognition Debate

Social/political philosophers have extensively debated the relevance of differences and similarities for justice theory. For the most part theorists have adopted one of two conflicting approaches, corresponding to what Fraser (1997) calls the redistribution-recognition debate—that is, the debate between class politics of social equality and cultural politics of identity and difference—and which Figueroa (2003) succinctly summarizes in the environmental justice context.

On the one hand, the distributive justice paradigm is class-based, concerned with injustices as they pertain to economic marginalization. From this perspective, specific forms of social and cultural oppression are said to be caused by economic factors of class differentials and labor exploitation; accordingly, remedying injustices requires redistributing economic goods equitably and restructuring the division of labor. Distributive justice emphasizes socioeconomic fairness on the basis of similarities, implying that differences are inequitable and symptomatic of injustices. It follows that a condition of social equality is treating all groups alike, thus revealing how distributive justice is grounded in political liberalism that construes the similarities of citizens (and not their differences) as being the salient feature of the political public realm. In this way the distributive justice paradigm is assimilationist and universalist. However, a notable concern, as I argued in chapter II, is that the dominant group—Western white men—is presupposed as the social norm to which others conform and aspire to become like; therefore women (and other subjugated groups) strive to become like men by integrating themselves into patriarchal institutions and submitting to pre-existing androcentric (or heterosexist and racist) standards and rules.

On the other hand, the recognition justice paradigm is concerned with injustices as they pertain to social and cultural patterns of valuation, and the exclusion of particular groups from the political process. From this perspective, dominant valuational patterns and social norms affect subsequent economic distributions; accordingly, remedying injustices requires transforming symbolic codes of valuation, respecting cultural diversity, and representing all social groups in political institutions. Recognition justice privileges differences over similarities because they are deemed politically relevant. It follows that a condition of social equality is treating disenfranchised groups differently—e.g. affirmative action or preferential treatment. Proponents argue that it is precisely by treating all groups alike that oppression is perpetuated. Once again, this is because political liberalism’s privileging of similarities over differences excludes women (among other groups) from the political process since their bodies and biological functions mark them as being closer to nature (as opposed to culture), and also because historically (and still today) they are primarily responsible for bodily work in the private realm (as opposed to cognitive work in the public realm). The consequence is that they are less likely to meet liberalism’s norm of disinterested and disembodied impartiality—hence objectivity—in the political public sphere as theorized in Rawls’ (1971) original position. A notable concern, however, is that such a strategy potentially essentializes and reifies group identities, generating exclusions between groups and repressing differences within, thus keeping the structure of dualisms intact.

A concrete example helps elucidate the points of contention in the redistribution-recognition debate. Warren (2000) describes how American Indian Ojibwe communities in northern Wisconsin are fighting for legal recognition of their treaty rights to spearfish for walleye in off-reservation regions, at times (at night and during spawning season), and in ways

(using electric headlamps and metal spearheads) not permitted to non-native white Americans. Looked at from the distributive lens, on the one hand, everyone should be treated equally irrespective of cultural differences, and therefore all groups have equal rights to spearfish, or none whatsoever. Looked at from the recognition lens, on the other hand, the issue extends beyond the equal distribution of fishing rights. What is also at stake is the issue of respecting traditional cultural practices and environmental heritages, and this requires differential treatments, in this specific case allowing the Ojibwe to spearfish in regions, at times, and in ways not permitted to their white neighbors. This example demonstrates how the redistribution-recognition debate presupposes the dualistic construction of similarities versus differences. Insofar as either disjunct is privileged results in different understandings of injustices and proposed remedies, and also conflicting meanings of social equality and valuations of difference.

I argue that the debate pitting differences versus similarities constitutes a false dichotomy. Indeed, it is possible to reconceptualize relationally the meanings of similarity and difference so they are not defined in exclusion. Similarity does not necessarily mean sameness or identity, just like difference does not necessarily signify radical exclusion, absence of relationship, or absolute otherness. This is because to acknowledge that differences exist does not entail that similarities are absent, and vice-versa. My suggestion is consistent with Plumwood's (2002) notion of continuity introduced in chapter III. Continuity implies that groups share commonalities without being the same, or, to say the same thing differently, they are distinguished even though they are connected. To relate this discussion to my argument for place-based identity and places-in-space, groups do not stand in absolute opposition, hyper-separated, and defined against each other, nor are communities homogeneous units in which individuals fuse their personal identity with a singular group identity. Rather, individuals and

groups are in multiple relations with others in the communities they inhabit, and also connected to others worldwide through electronic mass communications and globalization's socioecological flows of information, commodities, capital, people, images, and so forth, that produce and sustain place-based communities and identities therein. Communities, then, are heterogeneous, yet exist by virtue of the intricate webs of cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes that impact and relationally constitute all places-in-space.

I therefore define group differences and similarities relationally rather than conceptualize them as substantive traits or categories. The implication is that both differences and similarities are politically relevant because people, communities, and the environments they inhabit differ from one another, yet share commonalities since they are connected by socioecological flows and political-economic processes (in fact, without commonalities at some level, interactions are impossible). In this way exclusion between groups and homogenization within groups are challenged, in the process decentering the position of the dominant group (or the center) who places disenfranchised groups on the margins because their bodies, identities, and the places they inhabit mark them as being radically different.

ii. Spatializing the Politics of Place

I argue that respecting the diversity of place-based identities and simultaneously identifying similarities between groups is the *sine qua non* for an environmentalism of sociospatial transformation since this enables and fosters relationships across space. The question presents itself: how can a spatialized politics of place respect the differences of locality while also finding points of commonality? On a fundamental level all political struggles are embedded

in place. This is because we are embodied beings, always already in space which is placed—ecologically, physically, socially, and culturally—and in relationships with others in shared environments. Accordingly, social movements of minority groups, women, colonized peoples, gays and lesbians, environmentalists, and grassroots activists are relatively empowered to command and organize in place; i.e. they are able to sway the political-economic processes, institutional arrangements, social relations, cultural practices, patterns of valuation and discourses originating in locality. Yet, these “militant particularisms,” to borrow Raymond Williams’ (1989, 242) expression, remain relatively powerless to organize across space and challenge global processes of capitalist modernization that colonize spatially-distant places and produce environmental injustices.

The difficulty for the spatialized politics of place I am developing is how to connect “felt” place-based struggles with a universalism that by definition abstracts to some degree from the particularities or differences of locality. However, I maintain that this abstraction is not problematic in-itself because it simply recognizes the dialectical constitution of places-in-space. Focusing on the global, and excluding the local, is as much of an abstraction as it is to focus on place apart from space. In this way the environmental politics of place as exemplified in bioregionalism are just as abstracting as the global politics of environmental citizenship. The difference is that, whereas the former abstracts from globality, the latter abstracts from locality. The task, then, is to mediate between these two levels of abstraction; according to Harvey (1996, 399), “a move from one level of abstraction—attached to place [and differences therein]—to quite different levels of abstraction capable of reaching across a space” on the basis of commonalities. Moving from locality to globality requires that we demonstrate, in Williams’ (1989, 249) words, how “the defence and advancement of certain particular interests, properly

brought together, are in fact the general interest.” To summarize, the diversity of social, cultural, and environmental groups must respect the differences that distinguish them, at the same time as they forge alliances by uncovering how their respective struggles are connected.⁹ In doing so, groups may reach out across geographical space to others in distant places, thus mapping the political landscape for a broad, yet place-based, “glocal” environmentalism of sociospatial transformation.

This is a difficult task, however. I suggest that for the most part the mainstream environmental movement has failed to do so because it grounds its political struggles in ethical or scientific discourses, frameworks which are ill-suited to the task at hand. To discuss ethics first, some groups assert the “sacredness of Mother Earth,” while others theorize philosophical concepts of intrinsic value, biocentrism, and ecocentrism as the basis for an environmental ethics concerned with preventing the “rape” and despoliation of the planet. Such notions subsequently inform politicized wilderness agendas that aim to preserve biodiversity in pristine wilderness areas like national parks. These strategies are advantageous insofar as they frame environmental debates in terms of strong moral claims—environmental destruction is immoral for an assortment of reasons.... hence wrong! Yet, I suggest that they are problematic for two reasons. First, most ethical theories in the Western tradition, including the scholarship of environmental ethics, assume that they are ahistorical and apolitical in that abstract principles are rationally justified a priori and subsequently applied to particular situations—e.g. Kant’s deontological ethics, Rawls’ (1971) original position, and Paul Taylor’s (1986) biocentric ethic and attitude of respect for nature. However, drawing from Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, feminist

⁹ Fraser and Nicholson (1990, 35) use knitting metaphors to eloquently describe the sociopolitical task at hand. In their words, “this theory would look more like a tapestry composed of threads of many different hues than one woven in a single color.... This, then, is a practice made up of a patchwork of overlapping alliances, not one circumscribable by an essential definition.”

scholarship has shown that the idea of an impartial philosopher is a myth since his or her arguments are always already situated in conceptual paradigms, political contexts, and cultural worldviews. Simon (1990, 214) says that most ethical theories are developed in the political context of liberalism, and “[t]hat fact alone should raise suspicions about the projected political innocence and timelessness of the ethics produced in this manner.” The problem is that using presumably universal and ahistorical ethical theories to address environmental problems threatens to disrespect the particularities of place such as different ethical systems; as such, they are not applicable cross-culturally. Second, Figueroa and Waitt (2008, 333) maintain that the social ontology of most ethical discourses “is perversely simplistic and atomistic in its discursive architecture,” concerning the “moral actions and values exchanged between *individuals* [emphasis in original]” which are subsequently “stretched to cover *relational* contexts and community boundaries [emphasis in original]” (Aldo Leopold’s “Land Ethic” being a notable exception). This implicit individualism results in much environmental ethics focusing foremost on the individual rather than society. Taylor (1986), for example, says that transforming individual attitudes is the critical task, leaving aside questions regarding the restructuring of political-economic systems and their role in causing and perpetuating environmental injustices and ecological destruction.¹⁰

Furthermore, professionalized environmental groups, namely the Group of Ten, adopt a different strategy, grounding their arguments in scientific evidence. To briefly recapitulate earlier discussions, a problem is that science is hegemonic to the degree that it claims to be objective, universal, neutral, and concerned with facts only. Similar to most Western ethical theories, science supposedly abstracts from the value-laden—hence biased and devalued—particularities

¹⁰ Taylor’s (1986) biocentric ethic is also individualistic in the sense that it applies only to beings represented as teleological centers of life. Thus, larger entities, such as communities or ecosystems, are excluded and denied moral consideration.

of place, and for this reason is presumably applicable across space. Once again, this is false because Kuhn and feminist philosophers have convincingly argued that science is normative—its epistemological context of discovery embedded in values, beliefs, assumptions, and political and cultural contexts—and becomes a tool of oppression to the extent that it is used to devalue different cultural worldviews and traditional ecological knowledges (Haraway 1991; Harding 1991; Longino 2002; Maffie 2003). Indeed, I suggest that modern science is a local knowledge system rooted in place, albeit a dominant one that is globalized, extending across space as it colonizes other places. The problem is that, because science claims it is apolitical, not only is it appropriated by dominant groups to support their interests—e.g. the military-industrial complex and corporations fund much scientific research; science is heralded as the solution to global environmental problems and the eradication of poverty in developing nations—but it is unable to challenge the legitimacy of global power politics and economic system which in earlier chapters I argued are greatly responsible for ecological destruction and environmental injustices worldwide. Insofar as science is exclusively concerned with facts and technical solutions to ecological problems, it fails to recognize how these are sociopolitical issues. To give one last example, even seemingly scientific matters concerning the health risks posed by pesticides are not just technical issues which experts are best trained to solve, but also value-laden issues involving questions such as how to determine, evaluate, and distribute risk (Tesh 2000). What constitutes an “acceptable” risk? How much pesticides exposure is “safe”? What counts as legitimate evidence or proof? Should the focus be on finding cures to pesticide-related diseases, or on questioning the production of pesticides to begin with? And, ultimately, who decides? These questions expose how seemingly scientific and technical environmental issues are intimately connected with sociopolitical issues of justice and fairness.

To quickly summarize, I contend that, so long as the mainstream environmental movement grounds its political struggles exclusively in scientific or moral discourses, two adverse consequences follow. First, the environmental is displaced from the domain of the political, and, second, it will continue to systematically exclude the diversity of environmentalisms worldwide. These points were discussed in chapter IV with regard to mainstream environmentalism and the environmental justice movement, and are also substantiated in the critique stemming from non-Western nations (Guha 1989; Mies 1993; Shiva 1993).

iii. Bivalent Environmental Justice

I argue that the preferred philosophical framework for a spatialized politics of place appropriate to the diversity of social and cultural groups whom together form the environmental justice movement, one that synergizes the distributive politics of social equality with the recognition politics of identity and difference, is the paradigm of bivalent justice. In contrast to ethical and scientific discourses, justice, being a primary concept in social/political philosophy, concerns the responsibilities and practices of agents in relational contexts, and for this reason provides the ideal framework for the socioecological relational ontology developed throughout the dissertation. Bivalent justice is a broad conception of justice, encompassing two dimensions or lenses: distributive justice and recognition justice. To briefly recapitulate earlier discussions, distributive justice, on the one hand, is concerned with issues pertaining to the political-economy, namely material inequality, poverty, labor exploitation, and class differentials. In the scholarship of environmental justice, the distributive paradigm refers to the fair and equitable distribution of economic/environmental goods and burdens across space. Recognition justice, on

the other hand, is concerned with cultural issues of identity and difference, respect and representation, cultural imperialism, status hierarchies, and patterns of cultural valuation. For environmental justice, this pertains to respecting different place-based identities and environmental heritages, and including all groups in the public places of environmental policy regarding subsequent distributions of economic/environmental goods and burdens—i.e. procedural justice, and more specifically participatory justice, or what I will later refer to as participatory parity.

Most importantly, bivalent justice is unique because it synthesizes the redistribution-recognition debate. Neither dimension of justice is privileged, nor is one reduced to being an indirect effect of the other. Instead, bivalent justice emphasizes that, although the distribution and recognition lenses can be analytically separated for epistemological purposes, in our social ontology, inequitable distributions and misrecognitions interpenetrate and intersect in complex ways to produce the various axes of subordination, such as classism, racism, sexism, colonialism, homophobia and xenophobia, including place discrimination on the basis of the stigmatized environments minority groups inhabit. The implication, as Fraser (2007, 26) puts it, is that remedying economic injustices of inequitable distribution and cultural injustices of misrecognition “requires changing both the economic structure and the status order of contemporary society. Neither, alone, will suffice.” Thus, bivalent justice is transformative, challenging the legitimacy of inequitable distributions of economic goods and environmental burdens, of political decision-making processes that exclude certain groups, and of hegemonic discourses and patterns of valuation that further marginalize disenfranchised communities inhabiting stigmatized and polluted environments.

Before proceeding, a point of clarification is called for. Fraser's bivalent justice theory is correct when it comes to traditional social justice issues, but incomplete as it lacks an environmental justice perspective. As such, a justice theory that fails to account for injustices as they pertain to the environment is deficient, and this is precisely Fraser's shortcoming. In what follows I build on Fraser's bivalent justice theory to develop a theory of bivalent environmental justice that accounts for the distributive and recognition dimensions of environmental injustices.¹¹ However, I emphasize that a theory of bivalent environmental justice not only extends Fraser's model to environmental justice contexts in order to clarify and deal with traditional debates and issues. Instead, I am making the much stronger claim that a theory of bivalent environmental justice makes Fraser's theory correct precisely because it does not restrict itself to the conventional axes of social subordination, but rather pushes the bivalence of justice to account for the environment, a necessary step insofar as social oppressions, environmental injustices, and ecological problems—indeed, all “isms” of domination—intersect, interlock, and reinforce each other.

Furthermore, the theory of bivalent environmental justice I will outline is centered on the spatialities of environmental injustices pertaining to spaces of inequitable distribution, places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public places of deliberation and policy, and to this end the critical geography framework developed throughout the dissertation proves indispensable. Foremost, this is because the critical geography framework explored the

¹¹ Anticipating a potential challenge, it might be questioned whether Fraser's bivalent justice theory sufficiently accounts for—i.e. identifies, challenges, and remedies—the multiple axes of social oppression, especially as they pertain to environmental justice contexts. Fraser argues that distributive and recognition justice are interlocking lenses of one broad conception of justice which she construes in terms of participatory parity (this will be discussed shortly). However, it is possible that other kinds or dimensions of justice, such as reconciliation or restorative justice, are problematically excluded from the bivalent model. In short, it might be argued that a holistic environmental justice theory ought to be trivalent or multivalent. These are important questions, indeed, yet in my analysis I maintain that a bivalent model is the preferred social/political philosophical framework for environmental justice because it successfully accounts for social oppressions, environmental injustices, and ecological problems at various spatialities.

spatialities of environmental injustices as they relate to intricate networks of cultural practices, social relations, socioecological flows, and political-economic processes which contingently produce and sustain different urban and natural environments, and conjoin spatially-distant places. Critical geography thus contributes to environmental justice a sophisticated understanding as to how local cultural and social factors interact with global political and economic factors to cause and uphold uneven sociospatial development insofar as some places are privileged and others are marginalized. In turn, environmental justice contributes to critical geography a political and normative stance that emphatically recognizes and respects cultural differences, identities, and the particularities of place, while actively striving for sociospatial transformation through grassroots struggles and activism. In short, critical geography spatializes environmental justice, and, conversely, environmental justice placializes critical geography, thereby undermining place/space and local/global conceptual binaries.

In the following subsections I outline a theory of bivalent environmental justice that shows how critical geography and environmental justice are co-informative and complement one another. Specifically, I argue that a spatialized politics of place that adopts a bivalent justice framework satisfies two conditions, each concerned with a different dimension of environmental justice. First, it must develop an epistemology that assesses critically the group “differences that make a difference” to borrow Linda Nicholson’s (1990, 10) expression. Second, it must critically identify and promote the “similarities that can provide the basis for differing groups to understand each other and form alliances” says Nancy Hartsock (1996, 52). Accordingly, I argue that the recognition dimension of environmental justice fulfills the first condition by critically evaluating the diversity of place-based group identities. And, I argue that the distributive dimension of environmental justice satisfies the second condition by uncovering similarities

pertaining to the ways that political-economic processes adversely impact spatially-distant, place-based groups (and concurrently affect their political struggles). I subsequently argue that Fraser's (2003) universal and singular, yet two-dimensional, standard of participatory parity mediates between both justice dimensions, successfully synergizing the distributive politics of social equality with the recognition politics of identity and difference.

a. Recognition Justice

I begin with the recognition dimension of bivalent environmental justice. Recognition justice authentically respects cultural diversity, celebrates unique identities and lifestyles, includes all groups in all facets of social life, and represents them in the political process. I argue, however, that not all cultural differences or place-based identities should be recognized for the reasons discussed previously: while some should be valued, others, especially if they are hegemonic, reified, and foster social exclusions, should be deconstructed.

I suggest that Fraser's (1997, 203-4) dissection of the four meanings of difference is crucial to this task. The first view, sometimes referred to as humanism, says that differences are symptomatic of oppression, symbolizing deviation or the stunting of capacities. To the extent that differences exist indicates that some groups are privileged and others are oppressed, in particular groups marked as the other and located on the margins. Accordingly, the political goal is to abolish differences between groups—for example, with regard to racial and gender inequalities. I interpret this view as being consistent with political liberalism, distributive justice, and the politics of social equality.

A second view, called cultural nationalism, vehemently affirms the value of the differences that distinguish groups. Gynocentrism in feminism and Afrocentrism in antiracist

politics, to name a few, maintain that the differences which define them are culturally superior to the traits of their oppressors, namely white patriarchal culture. The political goal, then, is not merely to celebrate cultural differences; rather, the goal is to universalize them so they may replace inferior group traits. To cite one example, radical strands of essentialist feminism deem women superior to men—presumably because they are biologically predisposed to care and love, while the latter are intrinsically competitive and violent—and consequently proponents sometimes imagine a world without men (with technological innovations replacing the reproductive function of men). I suggest that this position constitutes a substantive or essentialized version of identity politics.

A third position says that differences are merely that: cultural variations that are neither inferior nor superior to others. Young (1990a) holds this position, arguing that differences should be affirmed and celebrated as manifestations of cultural diversity. She therefore rejects the position that differences should be eliminated (the first view), or that they should be universalized (the second view). This position appears consistent with some strands of communitarianism and multiculturalism that draw on the politics of recognition. What is most important is recognizing, respecting, and including different groups in all facets of sociopolitical life.

Lastly, the fourth view is Fraser's (1997, 204) preferred position, recognizing "that there are different kinds of differences." She argues that some differences are of the first kind, being oppressive, and therefore should be abolished, while other differences are of the second kind, being empowering, and therefore should be universalized. Still, others are mere expressions of diversity and should be enjoyed. Fraser (1997, 204) goes on to say:

This position implies that we can make judgments about which differences fall into which categories. It also implies that we can make normative judgments about the

relative value of alternative norms, practices, and interpretations, judgments that could lead to conclusions of inferiority, superiority, and equivalent value. It militates against any politics of difference that is wholesale and undifferentiated. It entails a more differentiated politics of difference.

Fraser's position is best, I contend, because it distinguishes between kinds of differences and maintains that they can be judged in terms of their social consequences. Haraway (1991, 161) concurs, saying "[s]ome differences are playful; some are poles of world historical systems of domination. 'Epistemology' is about knowing the difference."

In contrast to postmodern currents that tend to uncritically value all differences, presumably because there is no vantage point to judge their respective merits, Fraser's position suggests normative conditions to appraise them. Specifically, I argue that different place-based identities ought to be cultivated only if they satisfy the following criteria:

- 1) They do not cause recognition injustices; i.e. they do not produce or uphold places of misrecognition, nor do they breed intolerance between or within groups (e.g. as do white supremacists toward African Americans, and patriarchal communities toward women).
- 2) They can be synergized with distributive justice and the politics of social equality; i.e. fair distributions of economic/environmental goods and burdens across space, and equal social rights regardless of identity traits pertaining to race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, place, and the like (this criterion will be discussed shortly).

Thus, cultural diversity and place-based identities are celebrated to the extent that they are not repressive and parochial, but rather conducive to open relationships with others who are perceived and treated as social equals. In contrast, group identities that are hegemonic ought to be deconstructed and ultimately transformed.

I argue that the group identity that must be deconstructed and transformed is the master subject's identity. Recall that the master subject is the Euro-American, white, heterosexual,

consumerist male who positions himself as the dominant center against which devalued others are located on the margins. Because the master subject's identity perpetuates the oppression of others, deconstructing the dualisms that ground relationships between the privileged center and the stigmatized margins is critical to remedying environmental injustices. Deconstruction is needed because identity politics alone—or the affirmative politics of multiculturalism—keeps intact the dualistic structure that defines groups against each other, in the process leaving unchallenged the content of the master subject's reified identity.

Consequently, my call for deconstructive-transformative remedies is directed foremost to the dominant group and consumer culture whose social location is positioned at the summit of society's institutionalized status order. This is important because the dominant group “shapes the way in which politics, morality, economics, science, and technology are used to generate the injustices” (Figueroa 2006, 375). Figueroa is saying that emancipation is not merely a matter of subaltern struggles; rather, a condition for social liberation is that the dominant group transforms itself since it is predominantly responsible for producing and upholding inequitable economic distributions, cultural misrecognitions, and political exclusions. A few examples will elucidate. To the extent that the dominant group is consumerist, it legitimizes the global capitalist system that commodifies places and assimilates non-Western groups; consequently, remedying environmental injustices requires contesting this consumerist identity and culture that exceedingly places environmental burdens in communities of color whose place-based identity is represented as “black trash.” Again, in chapter IV I argued that, because mainstream environmentalists occupy a privileged social location, they inadvertently exclude the environmental concerns of disenfranchised groups to instead pursue their wilderness agenda; consequently, the mainstream environmental movement must transform itself to avoid

perpetuating discriminatory environmentalism. The point is that marginalized groups have no choice but to adapt, change, and construct an identity in order to survive. What is critical, however, is that the dominant group deconstructs its hegemonic identity and transforms itself accordingly. For this reason I place the onus for transformation on the dominant group rather than on the subaltern.

Further, the master subject's identity encompasses multiple intersecting elements—it is white, male, heterosexual, Euro-American, and so on—and people are differently positioned along these axes of domination—whereas some persons are white heterosexual women, others are black homosexual men. This means, according to Plumwood (2002, 205), “that we are positioned multiply as oppressors or colonisers just as we are positioned multiply as oppressed and colonised.” And, because identities are relationally constituted, each person can and ought to contest, oppose, and reconstruct the aspects of their personal and collective identities that perpetuate oppression, adopting what Plumwood (2002, 205) calls “traitorous identities.” In this way men can be feminists, just like whites can support antiracist politics and become “white renegades” or “race traitors” to use Mills’ (1997, 127) expressions.

Deconstructing identities is a delicate task, however. As mentioned previously, disenfranchised groups often need to assert a positive identity to empower themselves because their voices are depreciated or silenced altogether. It is for this reason that their struggles involve not only distributive issues of economic goods and environmental burdens, but are also struggles for cultural recognition and political inclusion. Accordingly, I am arguing that the efforts of marginalized groups to construct positive and empowered identities, albeit critical and qualified ones, are warranted because they are on the margins—discursively, culturally, socially, politically, economically, and geographically—struggling to be acknowledged and heard, and

having positive identities and places of their own from where to speak are preconditions to being included as equals in all facets of sociopolitical life. The implication is that uncritically applying deconstructive-transformative strategies wholesale to all groups is antithetical to emancipatory aims.

It is for this reason that I maintain that the identities of disenfranchised groups should not always be deconstructed, but instead ought to be cultivated if they are not repressive and exclusionary, and can be synergized with distributive justice and the politics of social equality (this will be discussed in upcoming subsections). Against postmodern assertions of the death of the subject, abandoning outright the possibility that disenfranchised groups can construct a positive place-based identity in order to express themselves perpetuates their oppression.

Responding to postmodern arguments in the context of feminism, Rosi Braidotti appropriately remarks:

The truth of the matter is: one cannot de-sexualize a sexuality one has never had; in order to deconstruct the subject one must first have gained the right to speak as one; before they can subvert the signs, women must learn to use them; in order to de-mystify meta-discourse one must first have access to a place of enunciation (qtd. in Benhabib 1995, 32n14).

Simply said, deconstructing a group's identity is possible only if that identity is recognized to begin with. Similarly, Plumwood (1993, 62), paraphrasing Alcoff, explains the dangers of postmodern positions for feminism: "[t]o the extent that it evades or rejects all identities, it is unable to provide a basis for validating some forms of women's identity over others. Hence it cannot provide a basis for a politics based on feminist identities, or even for the claim that women are oppressed." The problem is not so much that postmodern theorists deconstruct the categories of identity, namely gender, sexuality and race, to argue that all group identities are heterogeneous and fragmented instead of being unified and self-identical. Indeed, I advocate

deconstructionist strategies to contest the hegemony of the master subject. Rather, the concern is that too much emphasis on deconstruction and differences, while rejecting outright attempts to reconstruct collective identities on the basis of commonalities, hampers efforts at building relations between groups, and is politically stifling because it denies the feasibility or desirability of large-scale sociospatial transformation. The problem, as Zimmerman (1994, 240) points out, is “[h]ow can a liberation movement proceed.... if there is no agreed upon class to liberate,” or no agreed goal to strive toward?¹²

Consequently, I argue that affirming a positive identity and having a place of one’s own from where to speak are important because “[t]here must be some sort of compensating recognition to correct this [the master subject’s] devaluation, but it must be a critical and qualified one” says Plumwood (1993, 63). A spatialized politics of place cultivates the voices that do not reify identities into immutable substances. It is precisely because identity is fluid and relational (rather than a fixed substance) that it is possible to reappropriate one’s devalued place-based identity and construct it more positively, in the process challenging the dominant discourses that support the status quo and perpetuate environmental injustices—e.g. dumping industrial waste in communities of minority groups represented as “black trash.” Pulido (1996, 47-8) explains that, although ethnicity is a social construct, it is an “identity which members of the group place upon themselves” and which “acts as a positive force for the protection and promotion of group interests” (Pulido calls such identity practices “strategic essentialism”). This is significant, I contend, because it implies that, although there are important differences within all groups, individuals share identity traits in common without these being substantive or

¹² Similarly, if our current perceptions of nature are nothing but social constructions, and if it is impossible, nor desirable, for diverse environmental groups to collectively agree upon discourses, agendas and strategies, then it follows that environmentalism is a “dead-end” because there is no way to distinguish an ecological, sustainable, and just environment from an unecological, unsustainable, and unjust environment.

biologically determined. I am not that concerned with identifying precisely what the members of groups share in common—whether it is biological, historical, geographical, cultural, social, political, and so forth—insomuch as arguing that all groups share some commonalities that provide a basis upon which to construct contingent—i.e. relationally constituted, hence contestable and evolving—yet nonetheless *real* place-based identities that are “lived through” and are conducive to countering oppression. Acknowledging some commonalities is indispensable because, without something that is shared and defines a social group, there is nothing to ground feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial politics, including environmental politics for that matter.

I conclude this discussion by asserting that identity can be both a site of oppression and a site of resistance for disenfranchised groups. It is a site of oppression because identities are to some extent shaped by the dominant society’s discursive representations, cultural patterns of valuation, and institutional arrangements which uphold and perpetuate oppression. Yet, it is a site of resistance since identities can be appropriated and transformed in ways that raise self-esteem and empower, facilitate consciousness-raising, inform spatial practices of everyday life, and lead to community engagement and neighborhood activism. It is for this reason that a spatialized politics of place recognizes only the identities that do not produce recognition injustices within and between groups, and which are compatible with distributive justice and the politics of social equality. Yet, I emphasize once again that identity is relationally constituted rather than substantive. It is for this reason that the spatialized politics of place I am developing encompasses a justice dimension of recognition instead of a dimension of substantive identity, thus avoiding misplaced criticisms. Recognition implies a reciprocal encounter with others, making explicit that identity on the basis of gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, region, and the

like, is a set of social relations. In contrast, identity politics may obscure the relational constitution of the self and insinuate that gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and place are homogeneous and essentialized “things.”

b. Distributive Justice

A spatialized politics of place must not only evaluate group identities and differences, but it must also identify commonalities that provide a foundation for establishing relations and alliances between spatially-distant, place-based groups. Whereas the recognition dimension of bivalent environmental justice fulfills the first condition, I now argue that the distributive dimension satisfies the second condition. In chapter III I demonstrated how places-in-space (and identities therein) are relationally constituted by sensuous experiences, discursive representations, social relations, spatial practices, and cultural norms and traditions, but also by socioecological flows, institutional arrangements, and political-economic processes extending across space. Here lies the commonality that connects the diversity of place-based groups and their struggles: all places-in-space are affected by flows of commodities, information, resources, capital, and people that circulate via the global political-economy. This is important because it means that, although communities are important sites of political action, they cannot be understood apart from the global flows and processes that produced and sustain them. Place exists in relation to space, and vice-versa, the implication being that communities are not defined *against* others but rather *with* others since they are in co-constitutive relationships. Different groups wage place-based struggles for cultural recognition—on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, region, etc.—and locally-based struggles for economic redistribution—concerning urban design, anti-poverty, local land uses, etc.—and I argue that

what connects them are global political-economic processes which inequitably distribute economic goods and environmental burdens across space, concurrently affecting the cultural, social, political, economic, and ecological conditions of the places they inhabit and against which they struggle.

At this stage of my argument I analyze two struggles for recognition—gender and race—to show how the cultural sphere is inextricably entwined with the political-economic sphere. Drawing from the recognition paradigm, some feminists argue that gender issues are fundamentally struggles against institutionalized patterns of cultural valuation that privilege masculine traits and stigmatize everything signifying femininity (and the body). Androcentrism, in other words, causes women’s misrecognition and status subordination. Although this is certainly the case, gender issues are also class-based struggles concerned with economic redistribution and with restructuring the political-economy. Approached from the distributive lens of justice, gender struggles are intimately related to the political-economy’s division of labor that distinguishes between paid productive work and unpaid reproductive work, and also between male-dominated, white-collar, professional work and feminized, pink-collar, service-industry work. In addition, women, especially single mothers, are disproportionately poor, a sociological phenomenon described as the “feminization of poverty.” For these reasons Fraser (2007) says that gender issues are struggles against both androcentrism (or misrecognition) and a political-economic system that produces gender-specific class differentials (or inequitable distribution). Likewise, from the recognition lens, racism appears as a struggle against oppressive patterns of cultural valuation that privilege “whiteness” and devalue everything signifying “blackness” or “brownness,” and that is, like gender, also conceptually coded as being more corporeal. The result is that the bodies of ethnic minority groups and immigrants are

racialized and construed as being inferior, resulting in social status subordination. Looked at from the distributive lens, Fraser explains that race issues are struggles against a political-economic system that produces racially-specific distributive injustices; for example, it distinguishes “between menial and non-menial paid jobs, on the one hand, and between exploitable and ‘superfluous’ labor power, on the other” (Fraser 2003, 22), or, to put it otherwise, between white-dominated, cognitive, professional work and ethnic-dominated, bodily, “shit work” to use Mills’ (2001) expression.

An analysis of gender and race makes evident how cultural struggles for recognition interpenetrate with political-economic issues of labor exploitation, material inequality, class differentials and poverty, and, conversely, how class-based struggles for economic redistribution are embedded in cultural norms, social status hierarchies, and hegemonic valuational patterns of misrecognition. As such, remedying injustices are two-dimensional struggles for recognition and redistribution because culture and class are interpenetrating spheres. Although both dimensions can be analytically separated for epistemological purposes, in our social ontology all social relations, spatial practices, and political struggles are entwined with economic and cultural factors. It is for this reason that throughout her writings Fraser (2007, 33) theorizes this point in depth, on multiple occasions asserting “*no recognition without redistribution*” and “*no redistribution without recognition* [emphasis in original].”

Because culture and political-economy interlock, it follows that place-based struggles for recognition are simultaneously struggles for equitable distribution of economic/environmental goods and burdens at local and also global scales. This is because the political-economies at local, state, and national scales are interconnected with the global political-economy as I demonstrated in chapter III with regard to the production of places-in-space. However, this does

not mean that all place-based struggles for recognition can be reduced to political-economic struggles for equitable distribution. Nor does it mean that different issues are affected to the same degree by global political-economic processes. Indeed, if cultural issues could be reduced to political-economic issues, then, justice would require that identity differences pertaining to gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality be abolished because they would be symptomatic of inequitable economic distributions (they would correspond to Fraser's first meaning of difference). Rather, I am arguing that bivalent justice's two dimensions intersect differently to produce distinct axes of oppression—subordination on the basis of race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, religion, region, etc., and also in terms of the different environments that groups inhabit. Whereas traditional Marxist class-issues are located near the distributive pole of the continuum, cultural issues of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer identity politics are located near the recognition pole, and others still, such as race and gender, are positioned near the center. To give an example from the scholarship of environmental justice, poor and colored communities suffer disproportionate environmental burdens due to misrecognition (racial status subordination) and inequitable distribution (class differentials), and for this reason struggles against environmental racism are positioned near the center of the spectrum. The point is that, although distributive issues pertaining to the global political-economy impact places and struggles therein differently, none are insulated altogether because all places-in-space are connected to others worldwide as a result of intensifying globalization and capitalist modernization. For example, although struggles against homophobia are located near the recognition end of the spectrum, they are nonetheless struggles for economic redistribution as they deal with issues of uneven sociospatial development in the “gay villages” (or “gayborhoods”) of urban centers, the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Trade-

Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the lack of generic pharmaceuticals to treat people afflicted with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and the global commerce in gay pornography, erotic literature, and prostitution.

To briefly summarize, all political struggles are simultaneously struggles for recognition and redistribution—hence struggles for bivalent justice—because culture and political-economy intersect and constitute one another in complex ways. And, I argued that the distributive dimension of bivalent environmental justice is important because it makes evident how diverse struggles for recognition (and also locally-based struggles for redistribution) are connected by global political-economic processes which inequitably distribute economic goods and environmental burdens across space, consequently impacting all places-in-spaces. This is significant because it identifies commonalities to distinct struggles and establishes relations between groups, thus spatializing the politics of place.

c. Bivalent Justice in Practice

There are ample case studies that show how bivalent environmental justice successfully mediates between the politics of recognition and distribution. The Zapatistas resistance in the impoverished Chiapas region of Mexico is a case in point. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation is a mostly indigenous-based struggle against the Mexican nation-state. They seek greater democratization of the government and indigenous control of the land so that natural resources extracted from Chiapas directly benefit local populations. Harvey (2000, 88) explains that the Zapatistas “make claims based on locality, embeddedness, and cultural history which emphasize their unique and particular standing as a socio-ecological group.” And, they appeal to universal principles of justice and social equality, such as basic human rights, dignity, respect

and inclusion, in order to protect their distinct cultural identity, practices, traditions, livelihood, and rights of political autonomy and self-determination. At the same time, the Zapatistas relate their struggles for cultural recognition to distributive justice issues revolving around the global political-economy. This is evidenced in that their revolt began on January 1st, 1994, coinciding with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This date is noteworthy because it connects their place-based struggles to global trade agreements that threaten their environmental identity, heritage, and institutions of local governance.

Connecting their place-based struggles to global political-economic processes is important because it helps understand how different cultural groups worldwide are waging similar—but not identical—battles insofar as their oppression is perpetuated by processes of intensifying economic globalization and capitalist modernization. There are countless numbers of disenfranchised groups engaged in similar struggles: to name a few, Fanmi Lavalas in Haiti, the Landless Peoples Movement in South Africa, the Movement for Justice in El Barrio in the United States, Narmada Bachao Andolan in India, the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign in South Africa, and the Homeless Workers Movement and Landless Workers Movement in Brazil. Emphasizing this shared point of connection—they are struggling against the same global political-economic forces that transcend space and colonize place—allows the Zapatistas to establish relationships with similarly disenfranchised groups (and garner support from grassroots groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) so as to create a transcontinental network of resistance against the ascending neoliberal order. I am not saying that resistance cannot be supported by cultural traditions, ethical theories, or scientific discourses; rather, I am saying that these are important, but they must be connected to a broader critique of the global political-economy. In doing so, social groups and movements adopt a transformative approach (and not

merely a reformist approach) that contests the neoliberal status quo. And, I argue that this is precisely what the Zapatistas are doing. The advantage is that, regardless of ethical norms, cultural traditions, or knowledge systems, understanding local struggles for recognition and distribution in the larger context of global processes that produce spaces of inequitable distribution and places of misrecognition helps forge coalitions between groups—a unity in diversity, or diversity and differences within some overarching unity (but not uniformity). Together then, different groups may begin to map the discursive, political, and physical terrain for a “glocal” movement of sociospatial transformation whose geography extends across space.

Furthermore, the emergence of global civil society in recent decades exemplifies efforts to mediate between recognition issues embedded in place and distributive issues extending across space. Global civil society encompasses a diversity of non-governmental organizations, extra-parliamentary groups, and grassroots movements of opposition and protest concerned with social and environmental issues at local, national, and international scales.¹³ Examples are numerous, but relatively known ones include anti-war, human rights, and environmental groups (e.g. Amnesty International, Oxfam, Greenpeace), and also loosely-organized coalitions such as the anti-globalization movement. Revisiting some of my earlier claims, the effectiveness of global civil society is enhanced by using networks of electronic communication that transcend national borders. The Zapatistas, for instance, have established a transcontinental web of

¹³ Habermas (1987) observes that the increasing encroachment of systems upon the lifeworld has catalyzed a growing extra-parliamentary and grassroots movement of opposition, protest, and resistance. He says that new conflicts and struggles “arise along the seams between system and lifeworld” (Habermas 1987, 395). For these new social movements—feminist, environmental, anti-nuclear, peace, gay and lesbian, multicultural, etc.—the issue is not only one of fair distribution or compensation by the welfare state. Rather, conflicts revolve around issues of cultural and symbolic reproduction, socialization, and social integration—what Habermas (1987, 392) says are “questions having to do with the grammar of forms of life”—that are threatened by the systemic colonization of the lifeworld (e.g. the commodification of lifestyles or consumer culture). New social movements, in other words, are increasingly concerned with issues related to the cultural politics of difference and identity (or recognition justice). This does not mean that issues related to the social politics of equality and economic production (or distributive justice) are no longer important. As I argue throughout the dissertation, both issues must be dealt with—hence bivalent environmental justice.

relations by using cell phones and the internet to organize “encuentros” (encounters) in which different struggles, problems, tactics, and solutions are discussed (these efforts resulted in the creation of Peoples Global Action in 1998). As the case of the Zapatistas instantiates, electronic communication technology can be used to create public spaces in cyberspace, providing forums conducive to sharing information and forging relationships with groups worldwide. The Independent Media Center (Indymedia), for example, is a global participatory network of journalists that provide alternative—hence non-corporate—interpretations of political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues and events, while also providing links to activist groups engaged in similar struggles. As stated on their website, “Indymedia is a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage. Indymedia is a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth.” To give a lesser known example, TAO is a tech-collective that offers internet services to groups working for social justice. On their website it says: “[w]e believe in free access to information and technical tools, and are actively engaged in creating a democratic space for alternative and secure means of communications.” These decentralized networks are important because they provide decolonized places for forging loosely-knit, yet broad-based, political coalitions encompassing diverse locally-based social and environmental activist groups. Rather than being hierarchically structured organizations, networks are horizontally structured and are a means for coordinating collective action. Most importantly, these coalitions can sometimes exert significant resistance and become important players in global politics.

There are numerous examples that demonstrate the political effectiveness of grassroots “glocal” coalitions, but a prominent case is the anti-WTO protests that happened in Seattle from

November 30th to December 3rd, 1999, and which catalyzed the anti-globalization movement worldwide.¹⁴ Participants were diverse as they included NGOs concerned with environmental, labor, consumer protection, and social justice issues, student groups, labor unions (e.g. American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)), religious groups (e.g. Jubilee 2000), radical political groups (e.g. Black Block), and indigenous resistance movements worldwide (e.g. the Zapatistas). Together, they formed a loosely-based and decentralized coalition in which groups opposed the WTOs free trade policies for different reasons: pro-labor, anti-capitalist, religious values, cultural rights, and environmental concerns. Yet, and this is the point I emphasize, their respective struggles were connected in the recognition that global political-economic processes were principally responsible for the social oppressions and environmental destruction they respectively condemned. It is the recognition of this point of commonality that brought together diverse groups to engage in spatial practices of protest calling for greater democratization of global financial institutions.

The anti-globalization movement demonstrates that it is possible to engage in local struggles and simultaneously resist political-economic processes that transcend space and colonize place. In contrast to global citizenship, global environmentalism, and movements in the Marxist-socialist tradition that demand distance from and blindness to the particularities of place, global civil society exemplifies how “[o]ur view of the local needs to be transformed by considering it in connection with the wider global, but the transformation is incomplete without it coming to rest in particular places at particular times” (Dobson and Bell 2006, 10). In other words, diverse groups are involved in common struggles against ecological destruction and environmental injustices, yet they recognize that there is a multiplicity of entry-points and tactics

¹⁴ Other protests that have come to define the anti-globalization movement include: the 50th anniversary of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Madrid, Spain, in October 1994; the Summit of the Americas in Québec City, Canada, in April 2001; and the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy, in July 2001.

toward this end, each reflecting different place-based identities, cultural practices, and environmental heritages. These points are of utmost significance, I contend, because they entail that it is by forming broad, yet locally-based, coalitions that we can spatialize the politics of place.

d. Participatory Parity

On a basic level I suggest that struggles for both distributive justice and recognition justice can be understood as struggles for equal social status in all facets of sociopolitical life. What distinguishes both dimensions of justice is the aspect of the social process—economic distribution, or cultural recognition and inclusion—each privileges as being primary to this end. Whereas class-based politics are focused on equitably distributing the material resources needed for participating as equals in sociopolitical life, the cultural politics of recognition are concerned with ensuring that all groups are valued, respected, and accorded the requisite social standing. Yet, I argue that both distributive and recognition dimensions of justice are necessary for securing the equal social status of groups occupying different social locations (or structural positions), and herein lies the strength of the bivalent justice paradigm.

Fraser's (2003) universal standard of participatory parity argues precisely this point as it encompasses the salient features of bivalent justice. Specifically, participatory parity is a singular, yet two-dimensional, normative standard of justice that can be used to evaluate the fairness of cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and institutional structures at various spatialities. As such, it posits two necessary conditions for having equal social status. Whenever social arrangements violate either condition for participatory parity, injustices are committed.

First, material resources must be equitably distributed to ensure that individuals and groups have the opportunity to participate as equals and have their voices heard. Therefore class differentials pertaining to large inequalities in income, resources, and leisure time are unjust because they deny some groups the means to engage in sociopolitical life. It follows that a society institutionalizes sexist inequitable distribution, for instance, if women's time-consuming and reproductive work in the household is not paid, and consequently deprives them of equal opportunities to engage in paid productive work in the public realm. Participatory parity's first condition is thus concerned with society's economic order and class differentials traditionally associated with the distributive paradigm of justice.¹⁵

To give a concrete example, the failure to meet participatory parity's distributive condition disadvantages economically marginalized groups when they enter the political arena. When corporations negotiate with impoverished American Indian communities over uranium mining rights on their territories, some communities are willing to accept considerable health risks (associated with exposure to uranium isotopes) if financially compensated. In such instances the conditions for justice are not met since these communities most likely would not accept health risks given fair distributive conditions that provided for basic needs and ensured a decent quality of life. In contrast, corporations are able to hire lawyers and scientific experts to support their interests, namely "proving" that uranium mining poses negligible health risks to nearby communities. This example shows how the opportunity to participate does not guarantee

¹⁵ Shrader-Frechette's (2002, 24) "principle of prima facie political equality" is similar to Fraser's normative standard of participatory parity since it emphasizes political equality in decision-making processes. In accord with participatory parity's distributive condition, Shrader-Frechette (2002, 25) recognizes that "[p]olitical equality is closely related to economic equality because it often requires economic equality, at least in the sense of equal economic opportunity. Otherwise political power is likely to be controlled by economic power." As such, Shrader-Frechette seemingly postulates a weakened class-based distributive condition for justice; for example, in some cases she recommends "trumping" property rights to ensure political equality. However, her principle is focused foremost on procedural justice because all participants must have equal opportunities to participate in the policy process. Specifically, all views and concerns must be equally considered and reflected in the decisions made.

that one's voice will carry as much weight in political deliberation as those with more material resources, nor does it assure that the decisions made will be fair.

Second, a condition to having the requisite social standing for participating as equals in sociopolitical life is that cultural identities, practices, traditions, beliefs, values, knowledges, and the like, be institutionally recognized and respected. Therefore Fraser (2007, 27) argues that “institutionalized value patterns that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them” are unjust because misrecognition prevents some groups from having the social esteem and status needed to be treated as equals. It follows that a society institutionalizes sexist misrecognition, for instance, if it devalues feminine traits and represents women as less-than-equal participants in sociopolitical life. Again, the failure to meet the recognition condition marginalizes American Indian communities even when they have the opportunity to enter the political arena to negotiate over uranium mining rights. This is because often their traditional ecological knowledges are devalued in public places of political deliberation, whereas scientific expert knowledge is privileged. Participatory parity's second condition thus pertains to society's status hierarchies and cultural patterns of valuation associated with the recognition paradigm of justice.

Participatory parity is a universal normative standard rooted in the Kantian deontological tradition. It is a universal in two ways: first, it includes all groups in sociopolitical life, and second, it ascribes equal social status to all humans. However, Young (1990a, 105) stipulates that “[u]niversality in the sense of the participation and inclusion of everyone in moral and social life does not imply universality in the sense of the adoption of a general point of view that leaves behind particular affiliations, feelings, commitments, and desires.” Young's point is that recognition of differences can be synergized with the universal norm of social equality. In fact,

she argues that recognition of differences is the condition for social equality, and consequently in some circumstances persons and groups ought to be treated differently to prevent injustices (as the case of the Ojibwe and spearfishing rights demonstrates). Ultimately, such decisions are contextual and informed by considerations of justice. For instance, in certain contexts emphasizing gender differences is fair, but in other contexts downplaying gender differences is fair. To give an obvious example, the assumption that everyone has the equal opportunity to become a politician neglects the fact that women tend to be responsible for time-consuming and unpaid domestic responsibilities in the private sphere. In such a context treating women as having the same equality of opportunity as men is unfair because it neglects the economically devalued and time-consuming work that they perform, and which men are usually not burdened with. Women are disadvantaged in this context, and consequently consideration of gender differences is relevant. Conversely, ignoring differences is often justified. The fact that women tend to perform more housework than men, and as a result are less likely to occupy political positions, does not mean that their vote is less important. In such circumstances gender differences are not relevant to the judgment that all votes are of equal value. This example demonstrates how ensuring equal social status does not entail treating all persons and groups identically, but instead requires contextualized differential treatments.

Furthermore, this shows how, paradoxically perhaps, the particularities of place and identities therein are recognized and respected only if they are safeguarded by universal principles of justice such as participatory parity. In the parlance of social/political philosophy, this means, as Kaplan (2003, 106) puts it, that “[t]he good is prior to the right but requires the right in order to achieve a full sense of the good life, which is a just life, with others, in just

institutions.”¹⁶ It is for this reason that Fraser (1997, 182) stresses “that cultural differences can be freely elaborated and democratically mediated only on the basis of social equality,” that is, on the basis of justice universals. But, to say that participatory parity is a universal is not to say that it is derived through a private act of monological reasoning in which a person appeals to transcendental and ahistorical ethical or justice principles (such as Kant’s categorical imperative or Rawls’ veil of ignorance). Rather, participatory parity is an intersubjective universal that is the product of collective struggles, practices, and dialogical exchanges between persons having unique place-based identities and occupying different social locations, in other words, a universalism that is firmly “embedded in the context of a historically specific political culture” (Habermas 1994, 135). It is an intersubjective universalism because all participants dialogically agree, through undistorted communicative exchanges of reasons, that participatory parity secures the necessary recognition and distributive conditions for groups to interact as social equals (albeit in culturally-specific ways) in debating the legitimacy of different cultural practices, social relations, institutional structures, political-economic processes, including the justice universals themselves. In this way citizens create the universals through discursive exchanges and acts of reasoning together, rather than discovering them through monological reflection. Consequently, groups are not only accorded equal rights but are the authors of these rights.

As a two-dimensional principle of justice, participatory parity can be understood as mediating between universality and particularity (or between similarity and difference, locality

¹⁶ Drawing from the Kantian deontological tradition, political liberalism (as exemplified by Rawls’ theory of justice) privileges the right—procedural commitments of fair and equal treatment, freedom of speech, religion, and association—over the good—substantive commitments concerning the ends, purposes, and values of life—and therefore remains neutral between differing ideals of the good life (hence the separation of church and state). In contrast, drawing from the Aristotelian teleological tradition, communitarianism privileges the good over the right. Communitarians argue that liberalism’s universal discourse of rights, justice, and equality falsely abstracts from the social bonds of communal life. This is to say, justice principles (or the right) are derived from the values, beliefs, and conceptions of the good life shared by people in relationships within communities. Thus, communitarians like Taylor (1994) argue for a historically and socially contextualized interpretation of both the good and the right.

and globality, and place and space). Harvey (2000, 242) explains that justice is a universal to the extent that it abstracts from specific cases and contexts, yet “becomes particular again as it is actualized in the real world through social practices.” To say the same thing using different metaphors, justice is distant and spatialized since it abstracts from localities to formulate universal principles, yet ultimately these are applied in concrete and proximate places. Or again, justice mediates between a dialectic of blindness and sight. In Rawls’ (1971) theory of justice, for instance, the veil of ignorance requires blindness. But, once the liberal society is constructed and the veil is lifted, citizens see the identities they have and the structural positions they occupy. Szerszynski (2006, 86) argues that from this point on “it is imperative to *see* in order to detect and correct any injustice [emphasis in original].”

To summarize, participatory parity secures the equal social status—on the basis of two justice conditions: economic distribution and cultural recognition—required for different groups to pursue their differing ideals of the good life and cultivate unique place-based identities so long as they satisfy two dialogically negotiated and mutually agreed upon universal criteria: (1) they do not produce recognition injustices, that is, they do not breed intolerance within or between groups; and (2) they can be synergized with distributive justice and the politics of social equality, that is, fair distributions of economic/environmental goods and burdens, and equal social rights regardless of identity traits pertaining to gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, place, and so forth. Thus, although the socioecological relational ontology I developed throughout the dissertation supports the communitarian challenge to liberalism, I contend that universals are important because they safeguard against particular conceptions of the good that may justify environmental injustices. In this way justice universals are not opposed to the particularities of place, but in fact serve to protect them.

I therefore state that the postmodern/communitarian wholesale attack on universals (or the right) is misplaced for two reasons. First, universals are inevitably presupposed in the practices of everyday life involving social interactions. Following Karl-Otto Appel, Habermas (1990) argues that universals are inherent in communicative exchanges. This is because when we talk, we presuppose the validity of the discursive rules of argumentation that make what we say comprehensible to others. To prove his point, Habermas explicates that a skeptic who denies that universals exist contradicts himself since, in the very act of articulating his criticism and assuming that he is or can be understood, he necessarily presupposes that the principles of communicative rationality are universally valid (a “performative contradiction” occurs). To put it otherwise, the skeptic employs principles of rational discourse and commitments to truth in giving reasons that support his argument against universals. But in doing so, he presupposes the very point at issue as he claims a truth status for his utterances which he denies to everyone else.

Second, because universals cannot be dispensed with altogether, the deconstructionist attack should be directed toward the universals that oppose the distributive and recognition conditions of participatory parity (consistent with my earlier argument that deconstructing identities ought to be undertaken critically). Deconstruction should be applied to the ideological discourses—e.g. free trade, economic growth, development, progress, private property, etc.—that support the cultural, social, political, and economic arrangements which produce and sustain spaces of inequitable distribution and places of misrecognition, thus excluding some groups from having equal social status in all facets of sociopolitical life. The universal right to private property, for example, is hegemonic because it favors the interests of economic elites, in the process displacing, impoverishing, and devaluing groups for whom the land is a shared commons (recall the community of San Luis). Thus, universals are presupposed in the practices of

everyday life and uphold dominant institutional structures, yet it is epistemologically important to distinguish between those that promote contexts of justice and fairness, and those which reinforce oppression.

iv. Public Places of Deliberative Democracy

The praxis of bivalent environmental justice requires institutional public places where people can engage in critical evaluations of all facets of sociopolitical life, mediate relations of power, settle conflicts, and make administrative policy decisions in the equitable interests of everyone. And, I contend that a deliberative democracy that internalizes participatory parity's two-dimensional principle of justice is the preferred democratic platform for environmental justice because it encourages diverse place-based groups to actively participate in political deliberation in culturally-specific ways.

There are various schools of thought concerning what democracy is and what it should be, but a discussion of this subject matter exceeds the breath of the dissertation. For my purposes I need only to distinguish between a deliberative model of democracy that stresses communicative mechanisms, and a rational choice (or interest-based) model that highlights aggregative mechanisms. In a rational choice model the democratic process, analogized to an economic marketplace, is a competitive bargaining process for conflicting needs and interests between individuals and groups conceptualized as egotistical social atoms moving in space. A rational choice model needs only to provide the political arena for different interest groups to plead their cases, and final decisions are made by impartial decision-makers who "aggregate the preferences of all interest groups. The decision-making outcome.... reflect[s], on balance, a mix of predominating preferences" (Cole and Foster 2001, 107). The goal, then, is not to reach

common understandings and make consensual decisions, but rather to have one's interests "win" over those of all others. The notable problem, however, is that participatory parity's two conditions are not met, and consequently individuals and groups do not always have the material resources (distributive justice) and social status (recognition justice) needed to participate as equals in sociopolitical life. In a deliberative democracy, in contrast, citizens are represented as interdependent and as having some interests in common, a point that is corroborated by the notion of relational self. Further, individuals and groups are encouraged to politically participate in uncoerced communicative exchanges in the goal of creating new social knowledges, reaching shared understandings, and finding solutions to collective problems through consensual decision-making processes. As such, a deliberative model expands the bounds of democracy beyond occasional elections and a representational model of democracy. Extensive literature exists on deliberative democracy, notably Habermas and his followers, that is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and so I restrict my discussion to salient points.

Within institutional public places, participatory parity's two conditions must be met to secure the social equality of all participants, and also to ensure that the democratic process itself (i.e. the decisions made therein) is fair. First, the recognition dimension of justice requires that all groups be recognized as equals and included in uncoerced and undistorted deliberative exchanges and decision-making processes, especially if the issues debated potentially affect them. Failure to meet this standard is *prima facie* unfair because it unjustifiably imposes conditions (e.g. environmental burdens such as hazardous waste facilities) upon groups to which they have not consented, and which, good intentions aside, may socially marginalize, culturally devalue, economically impoverish, politically disempower, and deteriorate the environments they inhabit. To the extent that a democracy is inclusive and self-questioning, it respects,

recognizes, and listens to the diversity of voices articulating different social perspectives and cultural experiences. In this way the democratic process is transformative because unengaged persons potentially become citizens in the Athenian sense insofar as they are actively involved in deliberating public issues that impact people's lives. Second, the distributive dimension of justice requires that all groups have the material resources needed to participate as social equals, and this may entail substantial redistributions of wealth, resources, and environmental goods and burdens—indeed, it may entail a restructuring of the economic system itself. Objections that such stipulations are “unrealistic” are illegitimate, I contend, because in general they reflect the interests of persons and groups occupying privileged social locations and who benefit most from current socioeconomic and political arrangements. It follows that a democratic process that fails to meet participatory parity's conditions will inevitably (albeit perhaps inadvertently) sustain cultural misrecognition, inequitable economic distribution, and political exclusion, and for this reason is not democratized in a meaningful sense, that is, genuinely concerned with remedying environmental injustices.

I elaborate on this last point. A deliberative democratic process that institutionalizes participatory parity is the preferred political setting to identify, remedy, and ultimately prevent environmental injustices. Foremost, this is because equal social recognition and inclusion of disenfranchised groups, especially communities most at risk, in decision-making processes will most likely result in fair (re)distributions of environmental goods and burdens. Hunold and Young (1998, 87) explain:

If a democratic process involves the communication of all the legitimate needs and interests of those affected, and if people must defend proposals with reasons that take everyone's interests into account and that they believe others will accept, then the process is most likely to arrive at a [distributively just] solution acceptable to all because it is the fairest.

Simply said, to the extent that the deliberative process is inclusive and just, it will consider consequentialist outcomes and most likely produce equitable distributions. To this end, Hunold and Young (1998) propose procedural and substantive guidelines for deliberative decision-making processes. The five procedural guidelines—procedures aimed at ensuring an egalitarian participatory structure—they recommend are inclusiveness, consultation over time, equal resources and access to information, shared decision-making authority, and authoritative decision-making. The four substantive guidelines—what topics, questions, and institutionalized assumptions can be debated in decision-making processes—they endorse include large unit of review, nature of facility, alternative methods, and equity and fairness. These procedural and substantive guidelines support the two justice dimensions of participatory parity, and for this reason can be used as normative criteria for assessing the fairness of deliberative decision-making processes in both local and global political arenas (and also at spatial scales in between).

At local scales, a deliberative process is useful for assessing whether a hazardous waste facility, for instance, is needed, and if so, consensually determine a location. In this scenario the political process includes all stakeholders and, most importantly, the communities most at risk in all stages of deliberation (e.g. the Love Canal Homeowners Association). Rather than simply consenting to the placement of a toxic waste incinerator in a community (perhaps with some compensation) once many decisions have already been made by experts, deliberative democracy informed by participatory parity requires that all groups potentially affected have the right to participate from the outset in discussions concerning hazardous waste (procedural guidelines). In addition, all participants are allowed to broaden the boundaries of the debate, in the process challenging the hegemony of scientific experts who wield spatially abstract knowledge (e.g. statistics, scientific models, census definitions), and who often frame and restrict the scope of

“legitimate” questions that can be discussed by non-experts (substantive guidelines). This is important because, although professionalized environmental groups support their agendas with scientific findings, lay knowledge based in people’s everyday experiences can improve the quality of social understandings in general, including complex technical matters. Lois Gibbs (1982), for example, collected important data concerning the location of underground water channels and the health conditions of the residents of Love Canal, NY. Without her input, such data would not have been examined by scientific experts, thereby continuing to jeopardize the health of the community. The case of Love Canal shows that together expert and lay knowledge produce more thorough social understandings of complex environmental matters.

At global scales, a deliberative process can be used to democratize the financial institutions, namely the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, that negotiate the policies, agreements, rules and regulations, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, by which the political-economy functions. This process can also be used to implement sustainable and fair “development” strategies for developing nations. In such cases the political process includes representatives from federal governments and financial governing bodies and, most importantly, delegates from impoverished nations, disenfranchised communities, NGOs, and grassroots groups worldwide who may experience disproportionate burdens as a result of the decisions made (e.g. the Zapatistas).

Thus, in both local and global political arenas, participatory parity’s distributive and recognition conditions, combined with deliberative democracy’s procedural and substantive guidelines, ensure that all groups speak for themselves, rather than someone speaking for them as

Alcoff (1995) warns against. In this context all problems and proposed solutions are critically assessed through uncoerced exchanges of reasons, genuine consideration of conflicting points of view, and uptake of different social understandings. It is only once these ongoing conversations have taken place that decisions are made and one perspective is privileged, albeit contingently, over others.

The above discussion implies that within political institutions consensus is the democratic ideal, but not a necessary condition. What is most important is not that all participants agree on final outcomes, but rather that everyone is satisfied with the fairness of the deliberative process. If the decision-making process is just and inclusive, dissenting groups are less likely to doubt its legitimacy, and for this reason they will continue to deliberate even though they might disagree with the final outcomes. James Bohman (1996, 101) explains that in a deliberative process “reasonable disagreements may still persist. That, however, is just the point: that all *unreasonable* disagreements, as well as all unreasonable *agreements*, be eliminated [emphasis in original].” And, so long as there are opportunities for review and uptake of criticisms, participants can justifiably expect that a change in publicly convincing reasons will eventually reflect different points of view and result in different outcomes. In this way the threat that political institutions may themselves become hegemonic centers of power is minimized. As such, the essence of deliberative democracy is ontogenic—developmental and transformative—thereby taking seriously Marx and Engels’ (1978, 476) thesis in *The Communist Manifesto* that “all that is solid melts into air” and accentuated in a globalized world that explodes all static forms of sociopolitical life. Consequently, a flexible democratic process welcomes change rather than resists it, evolving to reflect the social perspectives and understandings of diverse groups, and thus genuinely acknowledges and responds to the particularities of place.

Finally, public places are not confined to institutional contexts, but are created through the practices of everyday life—whenever people speak and listen to one another, for example. Revisiting the chapter’s earlier argument, public places are conducive to communicative exchanges, cultural reproduction, and processes of socialization, and therefore resist becoming colonized, instrumentalized, and commodified by global political-economic processes that transcend space. In addition, social spaces are located in multiple settings, in diverse places such as universities, community centers, churches, public parks, street corners and coffee shops, and also in the virtual spaces of the internet (websites, listservs, email, blogs). Thus, public places permeate the geography of social life, and consequently the locus for sociospatial transformation is everywhere.

5. Conclusion

I conclude with a few remarks on the transformative potential inherent in communicative exchanges. When people enter public places, they are likely to encounter individuals who have different personal experiences, cultural values, belief systems, and social perspectives. Such places, especially those located in urban environments, can be analogized to a stir fry rather than a melting pot (to borrow cooking metaphors) because within them persons interact with others who are different. To the degree that social spaces are inclusive and welcoming, they are ideal settings for dialogue between subjects having diverse identities and occupying dissimilar social locations, and herein, I suggest, germinates the seed for sociospatial transformation. Let me explain. In such interactions lies a potential for developing what Young (1990b, 319) calls “openness to unassimilated otherness.” This is because when individuals engage in uncoerced and genuine conversation with people who are different, they treat each other as social equals,

attentively listen to what everyone has to say, consider the needs and interests of all participants, and respect diverse points of view without necessarily agreeing or identifying with them. Kaplan (2003, 176) says that communicating and reasoning across differences requires “an exchange of questions and answers” in which each person adopts “the perspective of the other.” Simply said, to the extent that subjects want to understand the perspectives of others, they display an openness to learn and a willingness to revise their social understandings.

I contend that in communicative exchanges persons accomplish two tasks—in theory and practice, respectively—which are prerequisites for sociospatial transformation. First, undistorted and uncoerced communication negates the master subject’s centric logic of domination. This is because, according to Benhabib (1986), in genuine dialogue the other is not an object that is subsumed under the master subject’s hegemonic representations and cognitive categories. Rather, in dialogical communication the other is herself another subject who can contest the master subject’s theoretical concepts, dichotomies, and representations so as to ensure her integrity and autonomy. Epistemologically, then, dialogue creates new social understandings that are jointly produced instead of making others conform to dominant theories, discourses, and perspectives.

Second, on the level of praxis, persons tend to transform themselves when they gain new social understandings. Genuine dialogue is transformative because, through reflective and open communicative exchanges of experiences, opinions and standpoints, people are presented with reasons supporting points of view which may challenge previously-held beliefs. And, insofar as new perspectives are integrated into cognitive horizons, subjects create new social understandings and transform themselves accordingly (recall the hermeneutics of Gadamer and

Ricoeur). Indeed, it is in this fashion that persons, groups, and cultures evolve.¹⁷ This is significant, I suggest, because through jointly produced social understandings persons are more likely to make connections between disparate issues—e.g. various oppressions intersect, reinforce each other, and are perpetuated by institutional sets of social, political, and economic relations—in the process identifying commonalities between groups and helping forge relationships. Transformation may induce what feminist scholarship calls “consciousness-raising,” empowering individuals to reinterpret their private experiences of oppression as public issues, and to perceive themselves as political agents who can actively engage in politicized practices of everyday life. This newly discovered sense of political agency and critical consciousness may subsequently express itself in community work and grassroots activism as it infuses all facets of sociopolitical life, notably the public sphere of the workplace and places of deliberation and policy, and also the private sphere of the household, family, and sexual relations. At a basic level political struggles originate in place, yet by communicating with others and establishing connections different groups weave webs of relationships that gradually spatialize the bounds of political agency and praxis. And, it is through coalitions, I suggest, that diverse place-based groups may begin mapping the discursive, political, and geographical landscape for an environmentalism of sociospatial transformation that travels from one place to another across space. Hope lies in solidarity!

¹⁷ Habermas (1994) says that fundamentalist cultures are dogmatic precisely because they fail to critically assess their social understandings through uncoerced communicative exchanges of reasons with people having different cultural worldviews. “They leave no room for ‘reasonable disagreement’” says Habermas (1994, 133), and vehemently resist cultural transformation. Although some cultures are able to insulate themselves and persist in a non-evolving state for a time, in general they survive only if they are willing to transform themselves, and this is increasingly the case in a globalized world.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

1. Summation

The purpose of the dissertation was to develop an environmental justice framework that took critical geography as its starting point. It is a philosophical approach to politicizing places, spaces, and environments that built upon Harvey's (1996) argument that geographical concepts and understandings of justice and sustainability interlock because spatial frameworks affect how urban and natural environments are perceived, are used as framing devices to identify social and environmental issues, and entail different solutions to problems. For this reason the dissertation conceptualized places, spaces, and environments in contexts, especially the political context, and thus argued emphatically that the environmental is political.

The dissertation's primary objective was twofold. First, I developed a critical geography framework that explored the spatialities of environmental injustices as they pertain to economic marginalization across spaces of inequitable distribution, cultural subordination in places of misrecognition, and political exclusion from public places of deliberation and policy. Place and space are relationally constituted by complex networks of cultural practices, social relations, political-economic processes, and socioecological flows, and I argued that urban and natural environments are best represented as places-in-space. Second, I outlined a bivalent environmental justice theory that accounts for the spatialities of environmental injustices by connecting cultural issues to a broad-based materialist analysis concerned with economic issues. In doing so, I provided a framework for critically evaluating the particularities of place and simultaneously identifying commonalities to different struggles, thus spatializing the geography of place-based political agency and action. As a whole, the dissertation can be interpreted as

having bridged a discourse between environmental justice, geography, and social/political philosophy, in the process mapping the discursive, political, and physical landscapes wherein struggles for ecological sustainability and environmental justice are waged.

As mentioned in the introduction, the dissertation must be understood as the careful expression of a socially contextualized and evolving perspective in the midst of ongoing conversations regarding the multilayered dimensions of environmental justice. This means that I acknowledge that the dimensions which I investigated still need to be analytically refined and studied in more depth. There is much potential and opportunities for future work in the field of environmental justice, whether building on the dissertation's critical geography framework and bivalent environmental justice theory, or pursuing other directions altogether. That being said, it is hoped that the dissertation contributed some important insights to these ongoing conversations, however partial and incomplete these may be.

Furthermore, the dissertation is a philosophical approach in the tradition of critical social theory that is premised on the conviction that environmental justice scholarship can make significant contributions toward ecological sustainability and social justice in theory, praxis and policy. Indeed, as a critical social theorist I insist on evaluating theoretical frameworks relative to normative commitments and in light of their implications for political struggles. Therefore in what follows I expound on some of the theoretical, practical, and policy implications entailed by my arguments. Finally, I end with a brief discussion of unfolding horizons of philosophical inquiry, with specific attention to recent efforts to theorize justice *to* the environment—i.e. non-anthropocentric environmental justice.

2. Implications for Theory, Practice and Policy

The dissertation's social epistemology makes clear that diversity, pluralism, and inclusivity are normative commitments which the scholarship of environmental justice and environmental philosophy ought to embrace. Research must be theoretically pluralistic and methodologically diverse to avoid becoming hegemonic and excluding groups having different social perspectives and occupying disempowered social locations. Because spatial concepts and understandings of justice and sustainability interlock, careful attention to context is indispensable. The fact that cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental dynamics vary across space implies that environmental justice research originating in the U.S. might not be useful for understanding intersections of social justice and environmental problems in other contexts. In Canada, for example, differences pertaining to the history of colonialism, urban and rural geography, race relations, social policies, and government-sanctioned exploitation of natural resources may significantly affect the spatialities of environmental injustices and concurrent political activism for vulnerable groups such as First Nations communities. It is therefore crucial that future academic research pay careful attention to the contextual particularities of place. Yet, it must do so, as I argued in chapter V, at the same time as it relates local contexts to the broader sociospatial dialectic so as to develop a materialist analysis of the myriad ways the global political-economy and its socioecological flows impact all places-in-space. Ultimately, there is one sure way to mediate between place and space, locality and globality, contextuality and universality, and similarities and differences without reproducing the axes of domination, and that is by openly espousing an epistemological stance of diversity, pluralism, and inclusivity that fosters uncoerced dialogue and produces shared social understandings.

Furthermore, a deliverable of the dissertation was to contribute new knowledge to the scholarship of environmental justice and environmental philosophy. Theories are important because they provide understandings of the world and reference systems for situating our place and practices in the world. Theorizing in a vat is insufficient (and impossible!), however. Foremost, this is because epistemologies are always already contextually situated and socially located—hence politicized through and through as they are embedded in institutional relations and given social norms—and therefore affected by the social movements and political struggles of that age. As a consequence academics ought to reflect upon and engage with political practice and policy work because they do so inevitably (albeit often indirectly), whether they recognize this social reality or not (e.g. supposedly “apolitical” theories maintain the status quo). This is simply to say that environmental ethics, broadly conceived, ought to follow the approach of critical social theory and evaluate its theoretical systems in light of their implications for contemporary social movements and political struggles for justice, social equality, cultural recognition, human dignity, and ecological sustainability.

Specifically, environmental philosophers, ethicists, and justice theorists need to step outside of their analytical “comfort zone” and supplement theoretical frameworks with case studies from both developing and industrialized nations. In doing so, they must provide recommendations and strategies for ameliorating the plight of disenfranchised groups worldwide. They must also respond to ecofeminist calls for empirical data and introduce concrete case study analyses that are pertinent and useful to environmental policy (Warren 2000). Empirical data is needed because it is only by understanding, respecting, and including the culturally-specific experiences, values, lifestyles, practices, and knowledges of disenfranchised groups in theory, praxis, and policy that environmental injustices can be identified, contested, and remedied. The

dissertation argued that environmental injustices are social in origin, produced and sustained by institutional discourses, patterns of valuation, and webs of relations, practices, processes and flows, and therefore at some level they must be dealt with in the public places of political deliberation and policy-making. In short, theory, praxis, and policy are all important sites of investigation and engagement, yet they should not be abstracted from each other. For these reasons I recommend that environmental philosophers, ethicists, and justice theorists practice applied or “field philosophy”—i.e. “soil” or “dirty” its theoretical models and work toward sociospatial transformation—thus instantiating Marx’s eleventh thesis in “Theses of Feuerbach” that the purpose of philosophy is not only to interpret the world, but rather to change it.

3. Non-Anthropocentric Environmental Justice

The dissertation is rooted in the history of Western philosophy. Accordingly, it suggests avenues for future philosophical inquiry on topics salient to the traditional literature of environmental ethics and philosophy. Since its emergence as an academic discipline in the 1970s, there have been numerous efforts to develop a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic that grants moral consideration, worth, or intrinsic value to nonhuman beings and nature. Deep ecologists, most prominently Arne Naess (1989), expound notions of Self-realization and biocentric equality which entail that all species are intrinsically valuable. Similarly, Paul Taylor’s (1986) biocentric ethic argues that organisms are “teleological centers of life” and therefore beings with inherent worth since their development is a directed process. Adopting different approaches, Peter Singer (1975), on the one hand, develops a utilitarian sentience-based argument that gives moral consideration to the interests of nonhuman beings, whereas Tom Regan (1983), on the other hand, builds on Kantian ethics to make a case for ascribing rights to

animals. Moreover, Baird Callicott (1989) develops an ecocentric perspective, drawing on Hume, Darwin, and Leopold's "Land Ethic" to argue that the environment (or ecosystems) as a whole is the "entity" deserving of moral concern.

While all these thinkers have made important contributions toward a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic, part of the reason they continue to encounter fierce criticisms, I suggest, is because for the most part they consistently privilege ethics over justice. A justice framework has much to offer, however, since "justice, construed as the ways in which individuals or collectives carry out ethical practices, or are treated as moral subjects" (Figueroa and Waitt 2008, 333-4), applies readily to the socioecological relational contexts that define the domain of the political. Justice concerns the responsibilities of agents in collectives, and because we form associations with nonhumans in shared environments, a justice framework can provide a robust foundation for arguing that moral and political deliberation should not take it for granted that human interests are the only significant factors at stake.

Following this train of thought, some recent environmental justice scholarship is concerned specifically with justice *to* the environment. This recent "turn" attempts to unblock environmental justice from its characterization as fundamentally anthropocentric. In general, the aim is to reconceptualize environmental justice to include nonhumans and the natural environments all species depend on for survival. John Dryzek (1990), for instance, proposes to transform the Habermasian paradigm of discourse ethics into an ecological communicative rationality that extends to the biosphere as a whole, and Plumwood (2002) develops an "ecojustice" theory that encompasses distributive principles supplemented by an "intentional recognition stance" as the recognition principle of non-anthropocentric justice.

Consistent with these efforts, I suggest that the dissertation's bivalent environmental justice theory can be developed to account for non-anthropocentric justice. The dissertation espoused a socioecological relational ontology to explore the spatialities of environmental justice as they pertain to human relationships, and I propose that the theoretical framework can also account for human-nonhuman relationships. A socioecological relational ontology says that humans and nonhumans always already form collectives in shared environments. This point is significant because it implies that socioecological collectives cannot be abstracted from the social relations therein.¹ Herein lies the possibility of challenging the traditional boundaries of the political as applying to humans only (supposedly because nonhumans lack consciousness or some other cognitive capacity that confers agency). I thus suggest that the dissertation's socioecological relational ontology can be used as a point of departure for arguing that nonhumans belong in the community of justice in the sense that they are deserving recipients of justice, and minimally deserve consideration of their interests.

The environmental is political because environmental issues are social problems which are inextricably entwined in webs of power relations, not only between humans, but also between human and nonhuman beings within the environments they co-inhabit. In chapter IV I argued that for humans the environmental is political for three reasons. First, inequitable distributions of economic goods and environmental burdens have serious livelihood impacts for some groups. Second, disenfranchised groups are excluded from the public arenas of political deliberation regarding distributions of goods and burdens. And third, discursively some groups are represented as being closer to nature and the body, while others are conceptually associated with

¹ This point is crucial to avoid recreating nature/culture and anthropocentric/non-anthropocentric dualisms that have plagued the history of environmental ethics scholarship. The concern is that theorizing *ecological* justice (concerned with nonhumans) apart from *environmental* justice (concerned with humans) could reproduce dualisms insofar as it depoliticizes the domain of the ecological by treating nonhumans and humans separately.

trash, and cultural misrecognitions legitimize institutional practices that perpetuate inequitable distributions and political exclusions.

I suggest that nonhuman beings similarly experience distributive and recognition injustices, and consequently for them also the environmental is political. First, they are subject to inequitable distributions: many species suffer a disproportionate share of environmental burdens, notably habitat destruction that causes species extinction. Coal mining employing mountain-top removal, to give one example, destroys Appalachian ecosystems, in the process impacting humans, nonhumans, and the environment itself. Second, they experience misrecognition: the Western tradition devalues nature and denies that nonhuman beings have agency. Consequently, they are construed as inferior biological machines or natural resources for consumption; for example, cows are represented as beef, pigs as bacon, forests as timber, and land as real-estate property. It follows that most often their interests are not considered in decision-making, thus justifying their maltreatment; for example, animals experience pain as we raise them for food in factory farms or subject them to medical tests, and ecosystems are destroyed as we mine for coal and oil. In these ways nonhuman beings (including natural environments) experience distributive and recognition injustices which deprive them of moral consideration and political standing.

Ultimately, the principal difficulty is to persuasively demonstrate how a bivalent justice theory that was originally conceived anthropocentrically—i.e. not meant to deal with the exploitation of nonhuman species and nature itself—can account for non-anthropocentric justice. What follows is speculative, but I propose that the dissertation's bivalent environmental justice framework can be refined so that nonhumans are included in the community of justice. In chapter V I argued that a spatialized politics of place respects group differences, identifies commonalities, and transforms identities which uphold oppressive relations, and I likewise

suggest that humans ought to acknowledge both their differences and similarities to nonhumans and transform exploitative interspecies relationships. This has both recognition and distributive justice dimensions. On the one hand, distributive justice entails that some resources be available for the flourishing of nonhuman beings; for example, preserve endangered habitats and ensure a socioecological “commons” to be shared by humans and nonhumans alike. Recognition justice, on the other hand, requires an “openness to the non-human other as potentially an intentional and communicative being” as Plumwood (2002, 194) stipulates in her “intentional recognition stance.”² This last point is crucial because non-anthropocentric environmental justice is feasible only if we subvert the master subject’s otherization that depicts nonhumans as biological machines, “dead” matter, and natural resources to be exploited for instrumental ends.

Finally, interspecies participatory parity provides the bridge connecting the distributive and recognition dimensions of non-anthropocentric environmental justice, and, following Dryzek (1990), I recommend construing interspecies parity in communicative terms. Although nonhumans cannot rationally deliberate, humans can “listen” attentively and cultivate a sensitivity to the needs, interests, and preferences of other species. Nurturing these abilities is, indeed, the *sine qua non* of non-anthropocentric environmental justice because in the process

² Plumwood’s non-anthropocentric justice theory is quite sophisticated, and at first glance she appears to offer a satisfactory answer to the problem at hand. However, a closer inspection reveals that Plumwood does not construe environmental justice the way I, among others such as Figueroa (2003; 2006), do. There are at least two reasons for this.

First, Plumwood’s theory of ecojustice is not bivalent in the sense expounded in the dissertation, as she must add an intentional recognition stance in order to arrive at a non-anthropocentric justice framework that appears to be bivalent. In other words, her ecojustice theory is additive (distributive principles + intentional recognition stance = non-anthropocentric justice) rather than being bivalent in my sense, that is, the distributive and recognition dimensions of justice are inextricably coupled in our social ontology (although they can be analytically separated for epistemological purposes), and participatory parity constitutes the bridge connecting both dimensions.

Second, Plumwood avoids an important question that potentially undermines her project: does including nonhumans in the community of justice change the nature of justice itself? If the agency of nonhumans is recognized as Plumwood desires, it is possible that the dimensions of justice will be affected. This is to say, if the criterion of agency shifts from human consciousness to Plumwood’s intentional recognition stance, the nature of justice might change to such an extent that bivalence (originally construed anthropocentrically) is no longer adequate, and therefore requires another dimension of valence. In such a case non-anthropocentric justice would be trivalent, or perhaps even multivalent. The question, then, is what might constitute the new dimension(s) of justice?

nonhumans are granted agency and included in the community of justice as deserving recipients of justice. Interspecies participatory parity can be safeguarded by deliberative democracy's procedural and substantive guidelines to ensure that within public arenas the interests of nonhuman species are genuinely considered. Thus, non-anthropocentric environmental justice is inclusive and normative: deliberative democracy fosters interspecies parity, and uncoerced dialogue facilitates the critique of discursive representations, patterns of valuation, and institutional arrangements that otherize and exploit nonhuman beings. In this fashion different species indirectly participate in moral and political deliberation because their well-being is considered. Although there are potential problems with speaking for nonhuman others, to modify Alcoff's (1995) thesis, these pale in comparison to not representing them at all.

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