

Knotty Tales: Canadian Staples and Post-Staples Forest Policy Narratives in an Era of Transition from Extractive to ‘Attractive’ Industries

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Introduction

The forest sector plays a very important role in Canadian political economy. This is not surprising, given that almost half, or over 400 million hectares, of Canada’s land mass is comprised of forests and other wooded land. Canada exports more forest products than any other country in the world, and is the number one world producer of newsprint and the number two producer of softwood lumber and wood pulp. The United States is the biggest market for Canadian forest products, followed by the European Union, Japan and China. In 2005, the total value of Canadian forest-product exports was \$41.9 billion, with British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario’s forest industries making up the largest proportion. The forest industry in Canada contributed 2.9 percent to the GDP and \$31.9 billion to the trade balance in 2005, employing 339 900 people in direct jobs (Canadian Forest Service 2006).

Despite the significant place of the forest sector in Canada, especially for the more than 300 communities across the nation that depend upon it for at least half of their income, the forest industry is in decline. With few exceptions, the export of forest products has dropped since 2000, and along with it, the contribution of forest products exports to Canada’s trade surplus has also fallen (Canadian Forest Service 2006). In addition, wood supply is in decline. While the Canadian Forest Service (2006), basing its estimate on annual harvest levels and annual allowable cuts, contends that wood supply remained stable between 1994 and 2004, other commentators disagree (see Howlett and Rayner 2001; Marchak, Aycock, Herbert 1999). The province of Quebec recently took steps towards rectifying its wood supply crisis by reducing its annual allowable cut by 20 percent. Employment in the forest industry has also diminished, with 22 200 fewer people working in the forest sector in 2005 than in 2004. This drop in employment is due in part to the closure of many mills since 2003 (Canadian Forest Service 2006).

Political economists have typically understood the forest sector as part of the Canadian staples economy: early European settlers used forests for fuel, farming and construction purposes, and industry began later to cut raw timber and manufacture pulp and paper for export (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 25-26). According to the staples narrative, introduced by William Mackintosh (see essay collection published in 1974 [1967]) and elaborated by Harold Innis (1930), in order to settle the land and extract its resources, including forest products, colonists and settlers built an entire society and economy “organized around the labour force, technological regime, legal order, and financial system needed to serve the ends of resource extraction” (Luke 2003: 95). Building upon Innis’ work, a nationalist political economy school has criticized the domination of the Canadian resource economy by foreign capital, markets and technology, and advocated a ‘made-in-Canada’ industrial strategy. Studies on the forest sector have been especially prominent in probing the contingencies, specificities, and possibilities of building a forest policy that is more socially equitable, more value-added oriented, and more integrated into the national economy.

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More recently, however, many observers in the political economy and policy community tradition have noted a shift from an “*extractive* to an *attractive* model of development” (Luke 2003: 92, emphasis ours) within the forest sector, or what Hutton in calls the “staples in decline syndrome” (Hutton 1994). Though he concedes that it is possible to overstate the staples in decline syndrome, he maintains that “we may be at the advent of a ‘post-staples’ state, in which resource extraction is essentially a residual of the national economic structure, a vestige of an historical development which sustained many Canadian regions” (Hutton 1994).

In order to evaluate the extent to which Hutton’s observations ring true, this article grapples with divergent methods of approaching and analysing forestry. This allows us room not only to evaluate historical and contemporary forestry concerns, but also to explore how specific concerns have come to be understood as central *through* the approaches employed to analyse the sector. For example, political economy perspectives typically concentrate on European settlers’ impact on an ‘unexploited frontier’ and the subsequent development of a resource extractive, export-oriented economy. Concerns stemming from this approach often centre upon how to create a forest sector that is domestically owned and controlled and integrated through backward and forward linkages into a national economy. Peripheral to this narrative is First Nations’ presence in and claim to forest land, as well as their often violent removal from the land upon which the Canadian forest sector is built (Willems-Braun 1997).

In contrast, accounts that foreground the colonial encounter often focus on First Nations communities’ particular relationships with and claims to the land, and understand European immigration and policy-making as influencing, disrupting and shaping, but never completely severing, relationships between First Nations and the land. Concerns based on this approach usually focus upon the importance of First Nations self government and access to land (c.f. Alfred 1995, 1999; Monture-Angus 1995, 1999) in contemporary forestry policy.¹

In the first section of this article, we rely on a political economy perspective to review the history of forest policy. Then, using the contemporary examples of the softwood lumber dispute, forests as carbon sinks, and forests as parks, we argue that while there are some indications of a shift from a staples to a post-staples forest economy, there is also a high degree of continuity. In the second part of the article, we identify narratives that extend beyond the political economic and question, reexamine, redefine and reformulate the very terms and assumptions upon which forest sector analysis has traditionally rested. In conclusion, we discuss the implications of this analysis for Canadian forest policy, and the potential for change that comes from action inspired by the different stories identified.

The Staples to Post-Staples Narrative in the Forest Sector

The staples story typically begins by discussing how early settlers cut or burned down forests in order to clear land for homes, crops and livestock, as well as to obtain wood for fuel and building purposes. The forests are here first considered impediments to settlement and ‘civilization’ in the new colony, but quickly become sources of income through extraction (Drushka 2003: 27). By 1763, both France and Britain had secured royal reserves of timber in Eastern Canada. The purpose of such early forest policies was to serve the interests of imperial powers in attaining naval timbers for masts and shipbuilding (Drushka 2003: 20, 23). Britain became dependent on Canadian lumber after U.S independence, and especially during Napoleon’s blockade of the Baltic (Lower 1973; Mackay 1985). Commentators often point out that early emphasis on the export rather

than manufacturing of forest products within Canada served to stimulate the industrial capacity of Britain and France while simultaneously foreclosing the emergence of a manufacturing base in the colony (see Beyers and Sandberg 1998: 100).

Confederation in 1867 is seen as having occurred to facilitate the further development of a national staples economy. It provided the central organization and guarantees for funds to build railways and canals to transport large and heavy lumber across long distances. The 1867 Constitution Act granted the provinces ownership, legislative authority, and therefore definite jurisdiction over forest land (Nelles 1974; Beyers and Sandberg 1998: 101). Commentators view provincial ownership of forest land and the development of an economy based on staples export as crucial in the emergence of the Canadian forest sector, and often highlight the resulting mutually beneficial relationship established between government and industry (Beyers and Sandberg 1998; Howlett and Rayner 2001). As they started to implement various tenure and licensing policies, provincial governments generated considerable revenues through allowing industry to remove trees from Crown lands (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 25-26). This system is seen to have worked well for both parties, as industry could access trees while avoiding the costs of land ownership, and governments could create jobs and use forest-generated income for measures popular with the electorate (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 33).

Provincial governments' extensive use of income generated from forests has been viewed as putting them in the contradictory position of both regulating and profiting from industrial forest practices (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 43). This provides a very strong bargaining position for corporate interests (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 33), and has served to undermine government's autonomy (Beyers and Sandberg 1998: 102). Closed policy networks, which have emerged in the sector as a result of this situation, have allowed forest policy to be decided by the state and forest industry, with provincial governments favouring large forest companies to hold long-term leases (Beyers and Sandberg 1998: 102, 103; Pratt and Urquhart 1994; Sandberg 1992).

Staples narratives usually emphasize the role mechanization played in the development of the Canadian forest sector (Drushka 2003; Rajala 1998; Swift 1983), for example how the introduction of steam-powered machinery, chain saws, mechanical wheeled skidders, and harvesting machines sped up the pace of logging (Drushka 2003: 33; Swift 1983: 133-134). As clearcut logging became increasingly common, entire watersheds were progressively emptied of trees (Drushka 2003: 34).

Despite the early establishment of forestry schools and the emergence of scientifically trained forestry professionals (see Nelles 1974; Gillis and Roach 1986; Judd 1993; Sandberg 1999), several forest inventories conducted in the 1930s revealed that many forests had been seriously depleted (Drushka 2003: 42). Economics, not preservation, was the driving force behind scientific forestry, and conservationist measures were confined to fire suppression and the creation of timber reserves (Beyers and Sandberg 1998: 103). After 1947, sustained yield, the principle which states that tree fibre removed from the forest each year should equal the amount of fibre added through tree growth, began to come into effect. In the 1970s and 1980s, foresters embraced integrated and multiple-use resource management. Its aim is to manage forests for a number of values at the same time, including timber, recreation, and animal habitat. Ecosystem management only emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, with the goal of ecosystem rather than timber health (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 46-47).

Authors in the political economy tradition have often pointed out that Canadian conservationist measures have resulted in the exacerbation rather than relief of the wood supply crisis, with both the volume of timber and the area of forest cut down increasing throughout the twentieth century (Drushka 2003: 59; Lawson, Levy and Sandberg 2001:

292). Critics discuss how measurements of a 'sustainable' extraction rate can be manipulated heavily to favour industry's economic imperatives, and how sustained yield's encouragement to eliminate older stands first allowed companies to persist in their preference for cutting previously uncut forests rather than forcing them to revamp their logging practices (Lawson, Levy and Sandberg 2001: 293). Canada's staples-based economy, with its previously-established commitment to providing foreign markets with a large supply of raw material, is argued to be partially responsible for allowing forest management to be particularly open to economic dominance (Beyers and Sandberg 1998: 103).

Since the 1960s, however, many groups and individuals, displeased with the way the forest sector favoured timber interests to the exclusion of alternative forest values, mobilized to affect forest policy. These groups included First Nations who challenged the unjust policies and practices that left them increasingly isolated from lands over which they had claim (Willems-Braun 1997: 99). They also consisted of conservation groups which differed widely from one another in terms of goals for the forest, and included: hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation groups; tourism and fishing operators; and small-bush operators for whom tenure and licensing systems are difficult to obtain (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 43-44). Preservationist environmental groups also succeeded in having more lands designated as parks (Lawson, Levy and Sandberg 2001: 104-105). The mass support garnered for anti-logging protests like the ones in Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia and Temagami, Ontario revealed the strength of the environmental movement in contending with Canada's dominant forestry model.

The Canadian forest industry now faces not only a declining resource base and a number of challenges from First Nations and from environmental groups (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 51), but also an ever-increasingly global capitalism where producers in rival countries are able to produce and export timber less expensively than can Canadian firms (Marchak 1995). To aggravate the situation, and despite increased production, the forest sector has experienced serious job loss (Howlett and Rayner 2001: 37), and forestry dependent communities have consequently suffered (Baldwin 2000: 30).

Paradoxically, such conflicts over the fate of Canada's forests have made them into international tourist destinations, allowing attractive development strategies to become possible ways for communities to remain viable (Luke 2003: 97-98). For example, tourism at Clayoquot Sound did not take off until the early 1980s, when the international media turned its gaze on the environmental struggle to 'save' the last of this forest (Luke 2003: 96). Clayoquot Sound thus became a tourist destination not only because of its beauty, but also because of the perception that that beauty might at any time disappear (Braun 2002). By the mid-1980s, several tour operators had started to provide ecotourism packages, including whale watching, kayaking and hot springs tours, for the growing number of visitors.

Questioning the Staples to Post-Staples Transition

But to what extent has the Canadian forest sector, as suggested by a political economy analysis, experienced a staples to post-staples transition? We contend that many contemporary trends reveal that the staples extraction model continues to exert a strong influence on the Canadian forest political economy. This is evidenced in the continued revenue associated with the forest resource and trade sector (Global Forest Watch 2000), but it is perhaps most obvious in the increasing grip of the market on all things forest-related. Neoliberal policies in government have cut the funding and reduced the capacities of forest and natural resource departments to develop and enforce forest

regulations. Forest management and monitoring have been delegated to the forest companies who now more or less police themselves. The rise of certification of environmentally sustainably produced wood products that involve industry-wide initiatives as well as environmental organizations is another ingredient of this phenomenon (Clancy and Sandberg 1997). But the trend extends further and in subtler ways. In the following, we review several recent developments in the forestry sector—the softwood lumber dispute, forest carbon sequestration, and preserved areas—and show how these challenge some aspects of, but in many ways continue to support, the staples model.

The Softwood Lumber Dispute

The softwood lumber dispute focuses on the United States forest industry's claims that Canadian lumber exports are unfairly subsidized through the Canadian Crown land lease system. According to the U.S. industry, some provincial governments set artificially low harvesting or stumpage fees on forests cut on Crown lands, thus providing an unfair competitive advantage to Canadian lumber producers exporting to the U.S. market. From the Canadian perspective, by contrast, the stumpage rates are not considered low, but to be an integral tool to attract forest industry investment to remote regions in Canada. This has allowed the forest industry to remain competitive in international markets where it faces severe transportation cost disadvantages. In the see-saw battle that has ensued, various American, North American Free Trade Association and World Trade Organization trade tribunals have consistently ruled in Canada's favour. In April 2006, Canada and the United States reached a framework agreement outlining terms of a settlement to this dispute. However, a considerable number of politicians and industry partners remain skeptical about the fairness of the deal (Canadian Forest Service 2006).

Apart from trade considerations, environmental issues have also been connected with the softwood lumber dispute. In recent years, Canadian environmental, labour, and First Nations groups have supported the U.S. position, maintaining that low stumpage rates are related to job loss and environmental degradation. They argue that the provision of a steady supply of cheap raw materials to industry prevents the growth of labour-intensive higher value-added products and promotes practices such as clear cutting over alternatives such as selective logging (Hayter 2003: 716; Peters 2002). They have called for forest policies that: ensure full market value for the forest resource; resist calls for compensation by industry if stumpage prices rise; strengthen export bans on raw logs; implement environmental protection; and recognize of Aboriginal title. Yet these aspects of the softwood lumber dispute have had a very low profile in the Canadian public debate which persistently calls for 'free trade' in lumber products while retaining low stumpage rates. In some cases, even those prominently opposed to the forest practices of the industry, have come to this position. Former Ontario NDP premier Bob Rae, when in opposition, was arrested for protesting the cutting of old growth red and white pine at Temagami in the early 1990s. By 2001, however, he represented a coalition of Canadian lumber producers promoting the intercontinental free trade of lumber products (*Record* 2001). Prominent figures in the labour and environmentalist field, such as Jack Munro, once President of the International Woodworkers of America, and Patrick Moore, founder of Greenpeace, are similarly part of the Canadian forest industry lobby and strong supporters of the free trade in lumber products.

The story of the softwood lumber dispute is also routinely told as an economic story and a competition between Canada and the United States in the public, political and academic discourse. Conventional magazines and newspapers, as expressed in the Virtual

News Index, contain scant references to the environmental aspects of the dispute while focusing on the trade gains or losses of Canada (*Economist* 2003). In the academic literature, a nationalist narrative remains prominent where the softwood lumber dispute figures in “an unanticipated and undesirable outcome [read fewer exports] for the lumber industry” or as having a “negative impact” on the forest industry (Hayter 1992: 153; Bernstein and Cashore 2001). The coverage repeats the nature of similar trade disputes in the past where the United States is portrayed as the bully and Canada as the hapless victim (Parenteau and Sandberg 1995; Sandberg and Parenteau 1997) while the truth is more complex and subtle.

Forests as Carbon Sinks

Our second example concerns the forest’s role in carbon sequestration. Carbon sequestration or the “carbon sink” concept operates on the principle that forests are capable of holding or “sequestering” greenhouse gases and therefore play an important role in the global efforts to deal with climate change. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 was the first global initiative to deal with carbon emissions, and it focused primarily on the reduction of such emissions through conservation measures.

The United States introduced the carbon sink concept at a United Nations Conference in the Hague in 2000, arguing that afforestation efforts as well as existing forests should be part of the overall calculation when determining the emission quotas for individual countries. This is based on dubious science showing that tree plantations are better carbon sinks than old growth forests, which allows for the proposition that clearing old growth forests and replanting them will result in carbon reductions (Scott 2001a; 2001b). The European Union countries were outraged by the proposal, labeling it “a farce” and a means to escape previous commitments to carbon emission reductions. In the U.S. and Canada, however, the idea of forests as carbon sinks has become conveniently incorporated into a staples paradigm, where both existing forests and forest plantations are put forth as important ingredients in calculating those countries’ contribution toward the reduction of carbon emissions under the Kyoto Protocol.

Parks Versus Staples?

Given that Canada has always been economically dependent on the export of natural resources, it appears that the decision to set aside areas for preservation, including as provincial and national parks across the nation, indicates that Canada is moving away from its resource extractive economy. Yet a closer inspection leaves a different impression. First, only a very small percentage of land has actually been set aside for protection, less than eight percent across the nation (Global Forest Watch 2000: 11). While the decision to protect thirteen percent of forest land on Vancouver Island is considered a major environmental accomplishment, this of course still leaves eighty-seven percent open to industrial forestry. Similarly, provincial and national parks occupy only a small percentage of protected lands in Canada.

Further, while national parks now have a mandate to ensure the ecological integrity of each park (Parks Canada website), provincial parks do not share this mandate, and continue to allow resource extraction to take place within park boundaries (Bella 1987: 2). Since neither industry nor provincial governments want to have exploitable resources locked up in parks, they generally prefer the opening of provincial rather than national parks (Bella 1987: 2). Also, in deciding locations for national parks, governments have attempted to ensure that resources are either exhausted within, or

remain outside, park boundaries (Bella 1987: 38). National parks continue to be encroached upon by development and resource extractive activities that sometimes involve intensive resource use directly adjacent to park borders (Sandilands: 2000 137).

Though it seems contrary, a productivist bias is also evident in non-extractive uses of parks. Not only do high volumes of tourist traffic and their corresponding roads and recreational services place ecological stress on parks (Hermer 2002; Sandilands 2000), but also parks in Canada have always been motivated at least as much by profit as preservation (Bella 1987). For example, Banff National Park was opened in 1885 with the explicit purpose of drawing wealthy travelers to enjoy scenic vistas while spending money on fine dining and accommodations (Stefanick 2001: 159). Bella argues that while logging exploits the timber resource, parks exploit another natural resource: scenery (1987: ix). Though M'Gonigle cautions us not to think that the industry of viewing forests is as ecologically destructive of forests as the industry of chopping them down (2003: 131), it is also important to look at how these seemingly opposed activities may in fact not be so different. As Braun argues, by remaking forests into the image of the timber commodity, industrial forestry abstracts forests from their cultural and ecological surrounds (2002). Similarly, by valuing forests for their scenery or "viewscapes," attractive industry like (eco)tourism creates nature as *visually* rather than ecologically important (Braun 2002: 143, 146).

Staples By and For More People? : From Extractive to Attractive Forest Industries

It has been argued that Canadian resource policy suffers from an "environmental blind spot" that is a function of Canada's continued dependence on polluting resource industries and international markets (Williams 1992). Canadian timber companies remain vulnerable to the export markets of the United States, Europe and southeast Asia, and to the international demand for staple products and the requests of international customers of forest products. As a result, innovative industrial development and environmental protection or preservation remain difficult to achieve,

While this narrative of the forest sector as a mature staples industry is the most often told in Canada, this does not mean it is *the* story about forestry in Canada. In this section, we review various other interpretations of the situation of the Canadian forest sector that both add to and challenge the dominant political economy narrative. One important alternative way to envision Canadian forest development is through concentrating on labour rather than trade, and tracing the means by which forest labour has been controlled and displaced over time. Labour and social historians like Ian Radforth and Richard Rajala, for example, focus specifically on how mechanization affected forest labour (Radforth 1987; Rajala 1998). While mechanization of the forest sector was a boon to industry since it allowed for access to new forest land and enabled trees to be cut down more quickly, these authors show how workers suffered from mechanization. They demonstrate that pre-industrial logging practices like oxen or horse logging required a great deal of skill and knowledge on the part of wage workers and contract labour, particularly those in charge of driving animal teams. Consequently, employers depended heavily on this labour, which resulted in a high degree of labour control over the workplace. Radforth (1987; see also Radforth 1986) argues that the introduction of machinery in northern Ontario was a way employers could overcome the independence, skills, and militancy as well as, after the Second World War, the labour scarcity of bush workers. Rajala (1998) similarly contends that mechanization in British Columbia was an attempt to make the 'working forest' operate like a factory, where employers would seize relatively more power, and workers receive relatively less. Other authors show how technological innovations continue to negatively affect forest workers,

for example through creating huge mills and machines that process more wood with fewer workers, thus substantially lowering employment and union membership in the forest sector (M'Gonigle and Parfitt 1994; see also Mercure 1996; Howlett and Rayner 2001).

Other historians challenge the assumption that it was entirely workers of European descent who participated in Canadian forestry (McManus 1999). Knight (1978: 118) and Van Wyck (1979) show that many First Nations people laboured in the forest industry in British Columbia and Ontario beginning in the very earliest days of logging. Some bands prospered early from trading timber with Europeans, others performed wage work as loggers and mill employees and sometimes made independent contracts with the lumber industry to cut saw logs or railway ties (Van Wyck 1979: 78-87). Such studies reveal that Native people were not only present within, but also essential to, the emergence of the forest industry, disrupting both the common assumption that the lives of First Nations people were and remain peripheral to the development of Canadian society, and the popular stereotype that Native people are somehow inherently ecological beings opposed to extractive industry (Drushka 2003; Swift 1983; see also Furniss 1999; Perry 2001).

Indeed, Aboriginal people remain very active in the forest industry, and some narratives emphasize their struggle for benefits associated with the current industrial regime: employment, revenue and timber (Westman 2005). Many recent discussions about First Nations involvement in the forest sector focus on "joint business ventures" between industry and various First Nations (Hayter 2000: 339). These partnerships allow corporations access to timber on Native reserves, as well as secure resources for corporations at a time when corporate access is increasingly threatened by First Nations land claim and treaty-making processes (Hayter 2003: 723). These partnerships are often touted as "win-win" situations, for industry because "it's increasingly becoming a marketplace expectation that businesses demonstrate good corporate citizenship," and for First Nations because "they've been able to provide employment opportunities for their people" (*First Perspective* 1998; Kimble 2003). Partnerships have also been criticized for potentially lessening the chances for more radical changes by taking attention away from land claim issues (Lawson, Levy and Sandberg 2001: 301).

Along similar lines, various authors show that immigrants of colour, and not only white Europeans, built the forest sector. While colonial officials believed that Canada should become a white settler nation, or a "Britain of the North" (Berger 1966: 4), this racist desire often conflicted with Canada's growing demand for labour with which to build the nation (Mackey 1999; Perry 2001). Indeed, since the Canadian government had difficulty attracting enough British and European migrants, it allowed immigration from China, India and Japan. But in the context of attempting to build a white settler colony, racial hierarchies of citizenship emerged, and Asian migrants were considered temporary workers rather than potential citizens, a bias which was reflected in the regulated entry of Asian men according to labour market needs, and a differential residency and citizenship status (Dua 1999a: 244). Attempts to restrict entry to Asian women through a series of changing regulations designed to prevent the permanent settlement of Asian men, lasted until 1947 (Dua 1999a: 245; see also Dua 1999b).

Some commentators show how racial hierarchies of citizenship directly impacted the forest sector. Adachi, for example, discusses how Japanese labourers at sawmills in British Columbia worked in the early 1900s for lower pay than white workers (Adachi 1976: 27). In 1922, British Columbia "passed a resolution asking the federal government to... empower the province to make laws prohibiting 'Asiatics' from acquiring proprietary interests in... timber lands... and other industries as well as employment in them" (Adachi 1976: 140). In 1934 the Board of Industrial Relations in British Columbia

developed a minimum wage system for the province's sawmill industry. This system also allowed for up to 25% of the total number of employees to be paid less than the minimum wage, an allowance created so that employers could hire low-paid Asian workers (Li 1988: 45). This research shows that immigrants who differed from the "British norms of racial, cultural, and political acceptability" (Abele and Stasiulis 1989: 241) were less fortunate in the forest sector than were white male workers, thus revealing racial hierarchies in the labour force which contributed to the profitability of the forest industry. Indeed, as Li points out, white workers and capitalists directly benefited from racist labour policies: because Asian workers were paid less, white workers were paid more, and profit margins remained high (Li 1988: 45).

While most political economy approaches to the forest sector focus on the activities of European men, some studies reveal the critical role played by women. Scholars argue that even during periods of mostly male migration to Canada, women, though undervalued and unpaid or underpaid, have always performed essential labour, for example as household workers or cooks in logging camps (Abele and Stasiulis 1989; Marchak 1983; Reed 2003). In a recent study, Reed explores the lives and perceptions of women who support industrial forestry in British Columbia, demonstrating how the socially and historically constructed notion of 'working forest' history as a story of white *workingman's* culture (Dunk 1991) has dramatically shaped women's experiences in forest communities. Reed highlights how even though most jobs in the forest sector are currently unstable due in part to restructuring and job loss, women who work in the forest industry frequently have jobs that are more economically marginalized than men's (2003: 37; see also Hayter 2000: 266). Perhaps more revealing, however, is the difficulty women face in obtaining steady, well-paying jobs in forestry towns. They are more than three times as likely than are men to enter into a service occupation, whereas men are more than six times more likely than women to be employed in primary industries (Reed 2003: 88). As one of Reed's interviewees, who works four part-time jobs, states, "a woman in this area cannot get a full-time, forty-hour-a-week job that pays properly to support a family... women are still making seven-fifty an hour" (quoted in Reed 2003: 93).

Abele and Stasiulis argue that the Canadian staples economy cannot be sufficiently comprehended without attending to the ways in which hierarchies of gender, race and ethnicity led to the exploitation of some groups more than others (1989: 242; see also Adachi 1976; Li 1988), and therefore to "significant conflicts, contradictions, and hierarchies in the structuring of the Canadian working class" (Abele and Stasiulis 1989: 260). Though, as previously discussed, the racial composition of Canada never matched the colonial intention to inhabit the nation with white Europeans, Abele and Stasiulis' work shows how power operated to shape a system of forest governance whereby white male subjects comprised the decision-making elite. Racial and gender hierarchies continue to shape the forest sector today (Reed 2003).

Earlier we suggested that though there are some signs of a shift away from large-scale industrial forestry, there is also much evidence supporting Canada's continued dependence on the export of the timber staple. Here we examine the staples to post-staples transition in a different light. Recalling that environmentalist pressure to save forests is closely tied with an increase in attractive industries, the insight of some authors that those privileged in terms of class, those who can afford to visit pristine sites of attractive development, are the ones who have usually benefited from environmentalist initiatives will not come as a surprise (Stefanick 2001; Lawson, Levy and Sandberg 2001; Bella 1987).

Moreover, Luke complicates the extractive to attractive discourse by arguing that attractive development strategies have been historically tied to locations where there is no other alternative to extractive or manufacturing industry, and can provide job

opportunities only “if these attractions can be made alluring enough by aggressive mass-media promotions” (2003: 97). Further, employment in attractive industry is often low-paid nonunion service work, most often performed by women and people of colour (Luke 2003: 98). His study makes clear the consequences of viewing this form of capitalist development as innocent, since constructing a good attractive capitalism against a bad extractive capitalism may serve to further marginalize forestry workers while failing to inquire into the consumptive practices of (eco)tourists (Sandilands 2003: 153). Injustices associated with attractive development, for example in job insecurity and unlivable wages, are also masked.

This representation also has the potential to allow an extremely commodified notion of nature—the image commodity—to pass as ‘true’ nature, thereby foreclosing discussions about what kinds of human-nature interactions should be fostered (Cronon 1995: 81). Thus while attractive industry may provide some alternative employment opportunities for suffering communities in resource towns, and this may have some positive ecological outcomes, this work shows that attractive industry is not the solution, either economically or environmentally, that it is sometimes represented to be.

Conclusion: Beyond the Staples to Post-Staples Transition in the Canadian Forest Sector

Innis’ early studies, as well as more recent political economy accounts, allow us to comprehend how Canada’s position as a European colony led to Canada’s historical and contemporary situation as an exporter of staples products. More recent analysis demonstrates the essential roles played by various actors not generally featured in the political economy tradition, thereby providing a more nuanced reading of the history of the Canadian forest sector. Putting these two forms of analysis together allows us to fundamentally rethink forest policy analysis and move beyond the ‘staples to post-staples’ political economy debate.

The stories told by postcolonial and feminist authors force us to examine some “uncomfortable facts about Canada” (Abele and Stasiulis 1989: 242), including the ways in which the marginalization of First Nations peoples preceded and has been inscribed into forest policy, and how different groups of immigrants have been incorporated differently into Canadian political economy. They also reveal that changes within the forest sector, for example through increased environmental concern and attractive industry, while perhaps indicating a shift away from environmentally destructive resource extraction, do not necessarily mean a move towards social and environmental justice.

For First Nations justice may mean a thorough exploration and recapture of traditional governance structures and dynamics that are based on oral and spiritual foundations that emphasize sharing, nurturing and promoting place-based inter-personal, inter-species, and inter-generational responsibilities. These ideas are congruent with some of the ideas of ecoforestry and bioregionalism, the notion that place centredness, ecological integrity and social equity ought to be the point of departure in any forest endeavour (Drengson and Taylor 1998). They suggest we reexamine the dominant view of nature as commodity which has informed the construction of forests both as resources to be extracted and as viewscapes to be commodified. In sum, these alternative approaches call upon those interested in social and environmental justice to explore the ways in which colonialism, capitalism, and a neoliberal economy have fundamentally shaped the forest sector in Canada, and to attempt to think about forests, and forest policy, in dramatically new ways.

A very unfortunate but plausible conclusion that can be drawn from this account is that most progressive attempts at reforming Canadian forest policy, be they oriented towards extractive or attractive goals, are hopelessly compromised. The federal and provincial governments' fight for access to the American market for lumber through the pursuit of a 'fair' softwood lumber agreement, and the prominence this debate takes in the public sphere, continue to chain the Canadian forest industry to the role of staple supplier of crude material and the neglect of environmental concerns. The invention of the carbon sink concept in the context of the climate change debate has allowed Canada to divert attention from reducing carbon emissions to lobbying hard for having its forests, and better still its forest plantations (though based on a questionable science), count towards meeting its Kyoto targets. Parks and preserved areas, we conclude, form a limited strategy to protect forests. Many areas are confined to marginal areas, others are compromised by their commercialization, and both constitute part of a mind trick that suggests that forest preservation is all about setting aside a small percentage of protected forests while vigorously exploiting the rest.

We have also been critical of the historical and contemporary work that recognizes the role of marginal and dissenting groups within the forest sector. These studies are surely important in telling and celebrating the often untold stories of contributions and challenges posed by allegedly marginal (while in fact central) actors in the Canadian forest sector. We caution, though, that such stories may lead to affirmative action policies that assist such groups in becoming integrated into the very social forest structure that marginalized them in the first place. The last set of analyses provides, we suggest, the most critical lens with the widest implications for forest policy. It suggests that we question the very categories we use to define the forest industry and preservation sectors and the social relationships that go along with them. This involves critically examining the notion of forests as 'resources' and 'commodities', and the very notion of a market economy with the private property rights and profit incentives that are part of it. Criticisms of the staples and the 'staples to post-staples transition' ideas are strategically important in that our analysis suggests many different angles from which forest reform can occur, but it is also important to consider the policy implications of a broader historical critique of the market economy, and its categories and definitions, and the way in which they shape thinking about policy alternatives and future political economic trajectories. If forest reforms in First Nations, for example, result in just the same forest industry activities and social divisions as in the current society, they fail to represent substantial change from the status quo. In the end, the path ahead needs to be determined by communities themselves where critical analyses and self-reflection form important ingredients in taking short-term strategic action while at the same time working for long-term fundamental change.

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ENDNOTES

1 These two stories emphasize different kinds of concerns that contain different policy implications. Many scholars argue that story-telling practices cannot be separated from political and economic practices, and therefore recognize the importance of attending not only to stories themselves, but also to how and by whom the stories are told (Braun 2002; Haraway 1989; King 2003; Jacobs 1996; McLeod 2000; Said 1993).