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Toward an interim politics of resourcefulness for the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Based upon the need for meaningful political responses to socio-natural change, in this article we develop an interim politics of resourcefulness as a strategy for addressing the limitations of post-political environmental governance. Drawing on political and epistemological insights of Third World Feminism as well as an ongoing collaborative with environmental justice organizations in West Atlanta, we argue that visions for just socio-natural futures must necessarily be generated in conversation with historically marginalized communities. We offer an interim politics of resourcefulness as one way of forging those kinds of engagements between academic researchers and communities, and describe the forms that such engagements have taken in our own research.

While climate scientists reached consensus on the relationship between human activity and a warming planet decades ago, the necessity for both elite and popular imaginaries in Western liberal democracies to contend with the inevitability of climate change is a more recent phenomenon. Indeed, climate change was on the agenda in Davos this year (Confino et al 2014) at a “high level private session” of the World Economic Forum, and the World Bank has put climate change at the center of the Bank’s mission (World Bank 2014). Far from Davos, in living rooms and church basements, everyday people organize themselves to address and mitigate carbon emissions and the impact of global warming. Thus it seems we can no longer imagine futures, capitalist or otherwise, without thinking about climate change specifically or socio-natural transformation more broadly. This is the condition of the Anthropocene. Geologists can quibble as to whether we are really in a new geological era, the irreversible consequence of human activity of a certain kind. What is clear enough is that we are in a new political era, in which futurity is conditioned by the consequences of a changing planet.

The fact of climate change and the consequences it reaps may be a problem at the planetary scale, but neither the causes nor the consequences can be understood as evenly distributed. Like crises of capitalism, those who stand to suffer most from it did not precipitate this crisis. “Climate justice” is the term meant to signal these uneven causes and consequences of climate change, both “geographically and socially” (Chatterton et al 2013, 2). In their recent piece “Climate Leviathan” Joel Wainwright and Geoff Mann (2013) ask: “do we have a theory of climate justice?” and answer a resounding “no.” We want to suggest that not only do we not have a theory of climate justice, but that we cannot have a theory of climate justice; not yet.

Vulnerability to climate change is not the only thing that is unevenly distributed – so too is the ability to meaningfully influence climate futures and contribute to the process of imagining and enacting alternative futures. This uneven capacity is shaped

and conditioned along persistent axes of sedimented social difference. The margins are where climate change will be most acutely experienced (IPCC 2014), where it has been least produced, and where the barriers to imagining and engendering alternative futures are highest. The claim that the capacity to envision and engender alternative socio-natural futures is unevenly distributed is not a claim about the essential nature of the marginalized, but rather an observation about the present nature of social formation – an observation about the margins themselves. The challenges that historically marginalized communities face in producing and enacting visions of socio-natural futures, are material, cultural, and political. What may seem to some like the banalities of poverty in the US present meaningful, material barriers to their capacities to simply be together in space to reflect on their concerns and develop strategies for the future.

These challenges must be remediated if we are to develop *just* theories of socio-natural futures and climate justice. Here we are drawing on the epistemological tradition that emerges largely from feminist and postcolonial scholars to argue that knowledge is always partial and situated, both geographically and in relation to social and political power structures (Anzaldúa 1987, Haraway 1988, Harding 1991, Rose 1997). Work in this tradition holds that knowledge is situated not only by the social and geographical location of the knower, but also by the methods by which it travels (i.e., through academic journals, community-engaged projects, or policy circles) and the strands of thought with which it is engaged (i.e., continental philosophy, subaltern studies, the Frankfurt School, Third World Feminism etc.). This argument has been made through philosophical and theoretical critique of critical and mainstream epistemologies and the sorts of representational regimes they reify and politics they engender, as well as through the observed and lived experiences of political movements.

In particular, “Third World Feminists,” and feminist of color mobilized forceful critiques of second wave feminist theory and practice, demonstrating the ways in which its failure to engage substantively with the lives and political desires of women of color, poor women, and women beyond the Western world rendered much second wave feminist theory and practice not only inadequate, but harmful to the degree it reproduced marginalization (Mohanty 1988, 2002; Lorde 1984, hooks 1984, Ong 1988). This powerful observation and critique shifted the horizons of much feminist theory and practice away from universalizing narratives regarding the substance and subjects of justice, and toward diverse politics of epistemology that focused on how and by whom knowledge and associated visions of the future can and should be produced. This epistemological posture has focused on: the production of knowledges that can learn from other knowledges (rather than contest or silence them); the processes of “achieving” various standpoints that do not reinforce universalizing subject positions, and the creation of space for the “view from the margins” (see for example Peake and Reiker 2013, Nagar 2006, Haraway 1988).

The transformative possibilities that inhere in experiences, world views, and knowledges that are marginalized or rendered invisible is echoed in a more recent set of observations about politics in general, and environmental governance in particular. Ranciere and others (Mouffe 2005; Swyngedouw 2007; Paddison 2009) have used the concept “post-political” to highlight how that which is understood as “political” in the present often does little to substantively challenge the larger social and political order. Ranciere uses the term, “the part of those that have no part” to refer to the modes of life that are obscured and marginalized by the dominant social order. For Ranciere, moments that can be understood as “properly political” are those in which the “part of those that have no part” are rendered visible, and in this sense bring about a rupture in the social order. “Politics” he argues, “before all else, is an intervention in the visible and sayable” (37, 2010).

Swyngedouw has extended this analysis to environmental governance, arguing that much of the public discussion about environmental futures favor technological fixes in the same register as the damage wrought (cutting CO2 emissions, for example) rather than the substantively *political* question of the kinds of natures we want to inhabit (2007, 22). The notion of the “post-political” turns on a specific and somewhat counter-intuitive use of the term “political,” yet we find it useful for identifying and understanding the ways in which environmental governance is intensely circumscribed with implications for the capacity of historically marginalized communities to meaningfully engage or transform environmental governance processes in accordance with their own visions. Crucially, this reading of post-politics does not assert that politics are no longer relevant or possible (see McCarthy 2013), but rather identifies an approach to governance that actively marginalizes or constrains antagonisms that would meaningfully transform or challenge the social and political order and proceeds as though the questions that these thinkers consider “properly political” are not valid or even possible questions to consider.

Following on from these debates, we are proposing an “interim politics of resourcefulness” (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013) as an approach and epistemological posture for social science inquiry that aims to produce knowledge about the form that just socio-natural futures might take. Given that the causes and consequences of climate change and socio-natural transformation are unevenly distributed, social science inquiry must, we argue, necessarily substantially engage and actively resource those who are most vulnerable. We understand this vulnerability to be largely socially produced along persistent and sedimented access of social difference. We are proposing an approach that does not seek to produce a theory of climate justice, but rather a politics that seeks to produce *the conditions in which* just theories of climate justice can emerge. As such, resourcefulness is a political and epistemological posture aimed at remediating the conditions that produced and reproduce the uneven capacity to engender alternative futures. It is an “interim” politics in that it prioritizes the act of cultivating the conditions in the immediate term that are conducive to full participation in knowledge production and visioning practices, over and above working toward the realization of

predetermined, philosophically deduced conceptions of climate, environmental, and social justice.

In the following sections, we describe an ongoing collaboration that takes resourcefulness as its guiding principle between Derickson and community-based environmental justice organizations in West Atlanta. We engage Ranciere's political ontology to interpret the efforts of a nascent struggle around environmental politics in West Atlanta as a struggle for historically marginalized publics to "take-part" in bringing about alternative socio-natural futures. We note, however, what we consider to be critical shortcomings in Ranciere's interpretation of politics, insofar as it emphasizes spontaneous and ephemeral rupture and provides little comment on the possibilities of forming political solidarities, particularly between those who are not recognizable within the dominant social order and those who are. We turn then to Mouffe's conception of "chains of equivalence" to consider how such forms of solidarity might be conceived. We conclude that an interim politics of resourcefulness is an epistemological and political strategy for forging solidarities that seek to redress the everyday challenges historically marginalized communities face as they seek to articulate and realize alternative socio-natural futures in the context of postpolitical environmental governance.

Resourcefulness in two registers

Resourcefulness, as we have practiced it and described it elsewhere (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013, Derickson and Routledge 2014), is a political posture and an epistemological approach to collaborative research with historically marginalized communities in two registers. First, it raises a set of empirical questions regarding the ways communities are co-constituted with the social formation, with important implications for their varying capacities to shape environmental futures. We have argued that resourcefulness should be understood as *relational* in the sense communities themselves cannot and should not be understood to *be* resourceful as a characteristic in their own right, but rather their capacities for mobilizing resources are in relation to the social formation – the political, economic and cultural practices that interact to create our social world.

Second, the notion of resourcefulness can serve as a normative ideal and an ethical practice of scholarly research (Derickson and Routledge 2014). As a normative ideal, resourcefulness can serve as one condition (among many) that political action and public policy can aim to bring about. Elsewhere we have argued that as a normative ideal, resourcefulness is far more compelling than the currently fashionable "resilience," because it is expressly concerned with the capacity of communities to articulate and realize their own visions of the future (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013). As an ethical practice of scholarly research, resourcefulness is aimed at designing research questions, processes, and practices in ways that are always informed by the concerns, desires, objectives, and needs of historically marginalized communities. In other words, research should *resource* the capacity of historically marginalized communities. This is not to supplant intellectual and scholarly questions, nor to suggest that scholars should serve communities

uncritically (see *Autonomous Geographies* 2010), but rather to suggest that whether and how the act of scholarly research resources historically marginalized communities should always be a substantive consideration in research design.

Taken together, as set of empirical questions, a normative ideal, and an ethical practice of scholarly research, resourcefulness can be understood as an “interim politics.” Rather than a politics that has in mind a particular future that it seeks to call into being – i.e., carbon neutral, socialist/anti-capitalist, anti-racist, etc. – an interim politics seeks to proliferate the capacity of all groups to cultivate and work toward a range of competing visions.

Invisibility and environmental politics in West Atlanta

In this section, we describe some ongoing work that Derickson is doing in West Atlanta to offer an example of the challenges facing historically marginalized communities engaging in environmental politics in the context of postpolitical environmental governance, and to illustrate both the potential and necessity of an interim politics of resourcefulness. The project underway in West Atlanta is a collaboration between Derickson, two community-based nonprofits and their networks and local residents. The goal of the project is to resource the capacity of residents of the Proctor Creek watershed to develop and engender visions for the watershed in and against the context of postpolitical environmental governance. In collaboration with the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance and Eco-Action, in her capacity as a faculty member at Georgia State University and the University of Minnesota, Derickson has attempted to practice resourcefulness as an approach to scholarly research in West Atlanta. This has largely taken the form of a three-year project to support the development of a Watershed Stewardship Council of residents in the Proctor Creek watershed.

The watershed is located in the northwest quadrant of the City of Atlanta, and historically served as the channel for raw sewage from downtown to the Chattahoochee River. The watershed’s environmental condition and demographic features are well predicted by decades of research on the alarming correspondence between low-income communities of color and environmental degradation. Primarily home to low-income African Americans, the watershed contains over 29 “hot spots” identified by the EPA. The creek itself floods often due to poor storm water runoff management in the region. The floods often breach low-lying homes in the watershed, carrying sewage, sewage, chlorine disinfection byproducts, and untreated storm water runoff, and leave behind disease-causing pathogens, mold, and higher incidences of mosquitoes infected with West Nile Virus (Vazquez-Prokopec et al., 2010). The neighborhoods in the watershed are also notable for their high levels of vacant housing.

The challenges that residents of the Proctor Creek Watershed have faced as they attempt to engage with state agencies to change the environmental conditions in the watershed are emblematic of post-political environmental governance and provide insight into the applicability of resourcefulness as an interpretive frame as well as a

normative ideal and ethical practice of scholarly research. As residents have sought to establish a community-based resident board of “stewards” to represent community concerns, communicate local knowledge, and influence the processes and agencies that produce and govern the watershed, they have found a startling refusal on the part of the EPA, the city Watershed department, and other environmental nonprofits to engage with their analysis and objectives. Invisibility is a common theme that arises in interviews with stewards, both in terms of the spaces they are concerned with and the concerns they have raised.

One steward jokingly suggested that the failure of the city officials to see thousands of discarded tires during what they claimed was an exhaustive survey of the creek indicated that Klingons (a species from the science fiction series *Star Trek*) must have used their powers of invisibility to hide the tires from view. Recounting his conversation with city officials who claimed there were no discarded tires along the creek, he said “We were out there also, but we saw signs of the Klingons. And you know, they’re notorious for their cloaking devices, and we’re sure that’s what happened with these pictures, and why you didn’t see this.”

The steward further elaborated on a sense of invisibility in later comments, when he describes the work of the stewardship council as similar to an adolescent girl biding her time and waiting to be noticed:

“[What we’re doing is] Helping people in their vision so they have a chance to see. It’s there, but you have to help them take those veils.”
[He described advising his granddaughter that a boy she was interested in would someday notice her]. “And what I said was, you just take your time, you develop your skills, and do all the things you need to do, and all of a sudden, one day, out of nowhere, it will hit him, he’ll smell the perfume, it might be an aha moment, and he’ll say: where have you been all my life? And that’s what will happen to you. And this is what occurs here [referring back to the work of the Stewardship council].”

Residents have also been met with a direct refusal by the EPA to engage in inquiry about the systemic production of environmental degradation and its uneven manifestations, even when using the language of environmental justice or working in historically marginalized communities. When approached by the EPA for a discussion of environmental protection in the watershed, residents indicated a strong interest in linking discussions of poor environmental quality and vacant housing and disinvestment in the neighborhood. They were particularly interested in drawing connections between storm water management and associated flooding that had led to public health concerns in the neighborhood and contributed to the high levels of vacant housing. Despite framing their engagement in terms of “environmental justice,” the EPA refused to facilitate such a discussion, choosing instead to teach residents how to hold community-based clean ups.

This refusal was evidenced further at a recent environmental justice conference hosted by the EPA in Atlanta. “Environmental justice” is a term and a social movement born out of a desire to politicize and problematize the uneven exposure of people of color to environmental pollutants and locally undesirable land uses (United Church of Christ 1987; Bullard 2000). In addition to? a desire to politicize this racist distribution of exposure, a fundamental platform plank of the movement has been that no one should be exposed to environmental toxins. By extension, then, environmental justice activism can be understood as challenging the hegemony of racist, state-supported, industrial capitalism that has produced, sanctioned, and externalized the cost of environmental degradation at a nearly incomprehensible scale. Yet in practice, the EPA’s engagement with the concept of environmental justice is to discuss management of the environment (though not necessarily the mitigation of environmental degradation) in poor communities and communities of color, with little acknowledgement of the broader social relations that produced these distributions.

For example, one of the sessions at the conference was titled “Achieving Environmental Justice: Best Practices and Success Stories – Collaborations Between Communities, Government agencies, business and industry.” The panel included four community organizers from the Southeast, all of whom were African American, and one white woman from New Jersey who represented Rhodia Chemical, a company that produces chemicals for cigarette filters and bioaccumulative chemicals like solvents and surfactants. As each community organizer offered a brief set of remarks on how and why they became involved in environmental justice activism, a recurrent theme was premature death in their communities. One man told the audience that every single founding board member of his organization had died of a rare respiratory disease, which he attributed to living in close proximity to a chemical plant. Another woman told the audience that “death was all around us” when she started her work. But this was not the topic at hand at this particular EPA-hosted “environmental justice” panel. Instead, along with the businesswoman from Rhodia, which had plants in the vicinity of most of the panelists, panelists discussed finding “win-win” solutions with environmental polluting firms like Rhodia, through weekly conference calls, job-placement programs, and forums designed to “foster trust” between the companies and residents living near their facilities.

The above vignettes are meant to illustrate the degree to which historically marginalized communities in West Atlanta and the region more broadly struggle to achieve visibility and recognition for their environmental concerns, even when the subject is “environmental justice.” This invisibility, along with the EPA’s posture toward these communities can be seen as an expression of post-political governance in terms of the effort to generate a consensus between government, industry and local residents, actively overlooking or not acknowledging the incommensurability of environmental justice and some forms of chemical and industrial production, despite the overwhelming evidence of environmental degradation and negative health outcomes (i.e., death).

Resourcefulness and the possibilities of rupture

In our reading, Ranciere's conception of politics is quite useful for understanding what is at stake in West Atlanta. Though his body of work is far too extensive to justice to its nuances here, we take his conceptualization of politics to be as follows. The social world is ordered by a "distribution of the sensible" (2010, 36) through which meaning and sense is made. This ordering, however, is never fully reflective of or sensitive to the myriad ways the lives are lived, and as such, the distribution always has an outside, or what Ranciere calls "the part of those who have no part" (2010, 33).

By way of illustrating the work that the "distribution of the sensible" does, Ranciere suggest that it has a "slogan": "Move along! There's nothing to see here... here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but move along" (2010, 37). He continues "It asserts that space for circulating is nothing but the space of circulation. Politics, by contrast, consists in transforming this space of 'moving-along', of circulation, into a space for the appearance of a subject: the people, the workers, the citizens. It consists in re-figuring space, that is in what is to be done to be seen and named in it" (2010, 37). Politics, for Ranciere, occurs when "the part of those who have no part" are rendered visible in ways that radically destabilize the social order. We read Ranciere as arguing that the incompleteness of the distribution of the sensible renders it inherently unstable, thus making what he considers political an ever-present possibility. He uses the language of "rupture" (2010, 98) to describe the moments of destabilization of the distribution of the sensible.

There is much in Ranciere's framework that helps us understand the environmental politics of state agencies and historically marginalized communities in West Atlanta. When city officials or EPA representatives deny the extent of pollution, claim to not see what is in plain sight, and refuse to make connections between pollution and neighborhood disinvestment, this is usefully understood as "post-political" governance, or governance which casts the watershed and the space of West Atlanta as a place where there is "nothing to see" and nothing to do but "move along." In fact, stewards have argued state agencies are only concerned with the environmental well-being of the watershed to the degree that it impacts the cleanliness of the water that flows through the creek and empties into the Chattahoochee River, a major source of drinking water in the region. They are not nearly as concerned, they argue, with the public health concerns regarding mosquito breeding in tires, flooding, erosion and dumping in the watershed itself.

The stewards clearly understand their efforts as an attempt to bring themselves and the space of the watershed in the realm of the seeable, the visible, the recognizable. As the quote from a steward talking about his granddaughter above illustrates, he is longing for and expecting a moment in which he and the rest of the stewards and the work they have been doing will "help them with their vision" and the environmental managers will have an "aha" moment when they really see the Stewards and the

creek for the first time. The work of the Stewards then can be interpreted an attempt to transform the watershed and the creek from a space of flow and circulation where there is “nothing to see” into a space for what Ranciere calls “the appearance of the subject.”

Yet there are ways in which Ranciere’s framework obscures as much as it illuminates. In our reading, his emphasis on the ever present *possibility* of politics tells us little about why and how some ruptures happen and some do not, or as Povinelli (2011) puts it “how and why...some things move from potentiality to eventfulness to availability for various social projects?” (14). Ranciere appears to consider these kinds of ruptures random. Indeed, as Corcoran notes in the introduction of a volume of Ranciere’s work he edited and translated, “if Ranciere continually emphasizes the chance-like nature of politics against all the attempts to explain political events by referring to underlying causes” it is because he believes “*nothing* explains why people decide to rise up and demonstrate their equality with those who rule” (2010, 9, emphasis in original).

In our own engagement with what Paddison (2009) calls “local insurgencies” and what might be understood as “not-yet-insurgent” local initiatives, we have observed that what might appear to be a rupture is in fact a moment in a much longer process and that the “decision” to work to bring about rupture is conditioned substantively by unequal resource distributions. To bring about a “rupture” requires tremendous amounts of resources and labor, much of which remains unseen and unaccounted for in Ranciere’s conception of politics as a result of his emphasis on the ever-present availability and possibility of politics.

In West Atlanta, residents who are working to shape environmental futures not only face symbolic hurdles, but wide ranging material hurdles as well. These include things like limited access to the means of mass communication (cell phones, internet, photocopy machines), limited and unreliable transportation, affordable childcare, space to be together, financial resources, flexible employment schedules. These material challenges pose meaningful hurdles to the process of cultivating collective subjectivities, envisioning alternative political futures, and calling into being political rupture. As one steward put it:

I think folks want to participate, but they themselves don’t have jobs, can’t pay bills, don’t have a cell phone to call anybody or internet to get on and reach out to people – its like an every day what do I do? I don’t have the internet, I don’t have a phone, the library is about 3 and half miles from here, lack of transportation, MARTA doesn’t come through here anymore.

Relatedly, Ranciere’s emphasis on radical equality of the subject, and any politics that proceeds as though this is the case, runs risk of minimizing the radically uneven topography of the social world. Politics is always possible, but it is also almost

always very painful, difficult, risky and costly, and the price is not evenly distributed, even amongst those who might constitute the part of which has no part.

Finally, in our reading, Ranciere's insistence that nothing can explain what brings about rupture, precludes him from offering insight into how solidarities might be forged between political subjectivities that occupy knowable and seeable relationships to the partition of the sensible and the part of those that have no part. We get little guidance from Ranciere, for example, about how the production of academic knowledge might contribute to the kinds of ruptures he describes. As academics seek to articulate theories of environmental justice, climate justice, and just socio-natural futures, this is an important consideration.

Chantal Mouffe's (2005) work provides insight into how these questions might be addressed in conversation with Ranciere. Like Ranciere, Mouffe is concerned with discerning what might be considered "properly political" in the context of postpolitical hegemony, and conceives of anti-essentialist political subjectivities as the location of politics. For Mouffe, the social world is conditioned by hegemony that functions as the grammar through which sense is made. Unlike Ranciere, however, Mouffe has a clear political strategy of cultivating solidarities that knit together various political subjectivities through what she (with Laclau 2000) calls "chains of equivalence" with the goal of developing a counter-hegemonic formation.

Mouffe's is primarily concerned with finding methods for strategic and solidaristic political alliance that do not elide conflict but are likewise not obliterated by conflict. For Mouffe, political subjectivities are partial, socially constructed and anti-essentialist formations around which the "constitutive we" of democracy is constructed. While this "constitutive we" always has an outside "they," Mouffe turns to agonism to imagine a "we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents" (2005, 20). She contrasts this with antagonism and consensus based approaches, arguing that the former seek to eradicate the opponent and the latter eradicate politics by eliding unresolvable difference. By contrast, in an agonistic radical democratic political framework, affinity groups actively seek to engage one another explicitly with respect to conflicting visions and strategies for the establishment of a new hegemony.

The political posture Mouffe advocates for is a "war of position" (in Gramsci's terms) launched against "a multiplicity of sites" toward a "vanishing point" on the horizon toward a new hegemony. Mouffe uses the metaphor of a "vanishing point" on the horizon in contradistinction to a telos: while a vanishing point can orient action, it can never be reached. It is in this sense that we see Mouffe's framework as compatible with an "interim politics." Moreover, we see strong affinities between the feminist politics of epistemology we outlined above and Mouffe's objectives for working toward justice in ways that are expressly attuned to learning from and with differently situated knowledges, experiences, and points of view. Finally, we see promise in this conception of "chains of equivalence" that are sutured together,

partially and ephemerally, as a way to conceive of the possibility and praxis of solidarity across the partition of the sensible, or between those who are able to be seen and heard around questions of environmental futures, and those who occupy the “part of those that have no part.”

An interim politics of resourcefulness

What Ranciere calls the “part of those who have no-part” is not only a symbolic relationship to the partition of the sensible, but, we argue, also a material and social relationship to the resources necessary to make collective claims and effectively disrupt the partition of the sensible. On this basis, we propose an interim politics of resourcefulness in two registers outlined above as the proper political response to this uneven distribution of capacity in the face of post-political environmental governance.

For example, Derickson’s collaborative work in West Atlanta (and elsewhere, see MacKinnon and Derickson 2013, Derickson and Routledge 2014) has sought to cultivate resourcefulness in communities as a normative ideal and her approach to research has been informed by resourcefulness as an ethical practice of scholarly research. This has taken the form of becoming and staying engaged with the work of the Stewardship Council on its own terms, and not in accordance with research schedules or driven by academic outputs. It has also included working on projects with the Stewardship council that are not directly related to the research, including grant writing, brochure design, and meeting facilitation. More substantively, it has taken the form of channeling resources wherever possible from the academic institutions where Derickson has been affiliated, by writing grant budgets in ways that include community residents as researchers and collaborators rather than informants, using research funds to contribute to the salary of a community organizer rather than hiring a research assistant in the area, and making the university space available for computing, printing, and meeting. More subtly, resourcefulness as Derickson has practiced it entails sensitivity to, and a built in effort to remediate, the mundane and everyday challenges residents face in becoming engaged and sustaining participation. This has entailed offering rides to interested participants, ensuring a meal is served at every meeting (even when funders and institutions have strong aversions to food related expenditures), and facilitating the project in accordance with resident priorities and organizational needs rather than the cycles of academic outputs.

Finally, as we have laid out elsewhere in detail (Derickson and Routledge 2014), resourcefulness as a practice of scholarly research entails a “triangulation” of the research question, to consider not only the advancement of scholarly knowledge, but equally the needs and priorities of the communities with which we work, as well as the political projects that are advanced by the findings of the research (see Derickson and Routledge 2014 for a more substantive explanation of triangulation). Most importantly, the triangulation of research questions is a method for collaboratively producing knowledge in ways that “speak back” (Sheppard et al 2013) and relate the work in communities to the broader intellectual and academic

community, as a way to create space in intellectual projects for the concerns of historically marginalized communities to be recognized and engaged with meaningfully. We offer the above examples to illustrate what we believe to be one of many possible ways to enact an interim politics of resourcefulness as an academic.

Conclusion

As feminist and post-colonial scholars have argued convincingly, the act of knowing and theorizing is always situated, both in geographic places and in intersectional relations to power structures. Failure to confront the overwhelming degree to which historically marginalized communities are underrepresented in the mainstream and critical spaces of knowledge production and theory building runs the risk of reifying marginalization and universalizing from partial perspectives. In the context of post-political environmental governance, this focuses attention on the challenges of producing knowledge about environmental futures in ways that retain fidelity to the perspectives and capacities of historically marginalized communities. We have offered resourcefulness as a conceptual frame with multiple dimensions as a way of fostering the capacity of historically marginalized communities to conceive of and engender alternative environmental futures.

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