

# Fogo Island Arriving: An Anti-Essentialist Reading of the Production of Place

Daniel Banoub

Volume 27, Number 1, Spring 2012

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds27\\_1art02](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds27_1art02)

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

0823-1737 (print)

1715-1430 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Banoub, D. (2012). Fogo Island Arriving:: An Anti-Essentialist Reading of the Production of Place. *Newfoundland Studies*, 27(1), 33–62.

# Fogo Island Arriving: An Anti-Essentialist Reading of the Production of Place

DANIEL BANOUB

## INTRODUCTION: FOGO ISLAND ARRIVING

FOGO ISLAND, 1968. An intertitle: "Newfoundland Project: Introduction to Fogo Island." Waves crash over a rocky coastline. You hear the ethereal timbre of a woman's voice, a haunting melody, high and in a minor key. The shot pans to the left, from the sea towards the coast, past a stage and flakes,<sup>1</sup> until it focuses on a saltbox house, laundry waving bucolically in the wind; the melody, still tentative, seems vaguely familiar. A series of establishing shots present a rural and remote fishing village, gradually expanding in scope, until you can see the entire bay. The voice, now accompanied sparsely by an acoustic guitar, begins "She's Like the Swallow," a traditional English folksong sung in Newfoundland.

The music stops and you see a car driving up a dusty and rough road, its wheels chewing the gravel as it climbs a hill. The narrator begins:

Challenge for Change is an experiment in the role of communications in social change. As part of this experiment, we filmed local people talking about the problems of a changing community, and played back these films in that community. We chose Fogo Island as the location of this project for many reasons: the Extension Service at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland is deeply involved with the needs of the Newfoundland people. One of its Community Development Officers, Fred Earle, was born and raised on Fogo Island. He knows, and is known, by all its people. We felt that we, as outsiders, could not go into a community without the help of such a person . . . Fogo Island is a fishing community off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, 40 miles north of Gander.

### 34 *Banoub*

As the narrator continues to introduce you to the community (its size, its geographic location, its economic features), you watch a middle-aged man (stern, serious, stolid), whom you assume is Fred Earle, drive into a community, which you assume is Fogo Island. You have arrived.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

On 2 March 2011, at a ceremony held in the gymnasium of the Fogo Island Central Academy, nine councillors were sworn in to form the first municipal council of the newly amalgamated Town of Fogo Island, following an election held on 22 February 2011. Discussions of island-wide amalgamation began in July 2007, following a proposal by the Fogo Island Initiative Committee, involving representatives from the five municipal councils on the island. Two years later, a feasibility study was conducted and amalgamation was recommended. On 10 December 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the mayors of the five municipal councils on the island, the head of the Fogo Island Co-operation Committee, the president of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, ensuring amalgamation and pledging a \$4.8 million investment from the provincial government.

For many, this was a historic moment: the newly created community of Fogo Island would ensure the continuing prosperity of the area, creating a more flexible and enticing business environment and reversing the economic decline created by an aging and declining tax base. For many, moreover, this was also a historically resonant moment: the process of municipal amalgamation, and the discourse surrounding it, echoed the history of island-wide co-operative development in the 1960s — the period documented by the “Challenge for Change” program of the National Film Board (NFB). In an address at the 2 March 2011 ceremony, Councillor Nadine Decker stated, in the common language of 1960s community development, “These are very challenging times for us right now with a lot of change. However, with these challenges and change comes the possibility for creative solutions and opportunities” (Wells, 2011: 5). Fogo Island’s history of co-operation, resilience, and adaptation, she argued, were demonstrated in 1967 by the creation of the Fogo Island Improvement Committee and the Fogo Island Shipbuilding and Producers Co-operative, proving Fogo Islanders’ ability to respond to socio-economic challenges and a deepening recession with creative and positive solutions. The processes, techniques, and rhetoric of the island’s recent municipal amalgamation and the local history of co-operative and community-based development in the 1960s are very deeply, self-consciously, and deliberately enmeshed.

\* \* \*

For an astute reader, however, there is an inconsistency in the two vignettes presented above: the NFB introduced us to the “community of Fogo Island” in 1968;

however, that community did not officially exist until 2 March 2011. As one examines the literature concerning the area, this anachronistic inconsistency in nomenclature abounds. Scholars, politicians, activists, and locals interchangeably and indiscriminately refer to “Fogo Island” and “Fogo” to describe some sort of island-wide community. However, as one delves deeper into the historical literature — the accounts of missionaries, merchants, and early historians — a different system of nomenclature emerges: “Fogo Island” is very rarely, if ever, used. This paper takes this inconsistency in nomenclature as neither inconsequential nor accidental; rather, I will argue, it offers an entry point to understanding the massive social, political, ecological, and economic changes that occurred around Fogo Island in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section, through a close reading of the secondary literature, seeks to historicize the concept “Fogo Island,” arguing that it is a relatively new way of thinking and writing about the area. I begin by undermining the conventional introductions to the study of Fogo Island, arguing that “Fogo Island” should not be treated as a geological assumption. I then proceed to offer a rough periodization of the changing nomenclature used to describe the area. The second section attempts to locate this conceptual change in the changing material circumstances of the area since Confederation in 1949, arguing that the historical emergence of Fogo Island was overdetermined by a vast network of human, non-human, and non-living agents. The conclusion, in an attempt to unify these two distinct sections, plays on the two definitions of “articulation,” exploring the political possibilities created through this alternative framework. This paper, in contrast to most studies of Fogo Island, does not treat “place” as predetermined, ahistorical, or natural, as a fundamental, or *essential*, concept; rather, it proposes an anti-essentialist reading of the production of place.<sup>4</sup>

## ONE: TRACING CONCEPTUAL CHANGE AND THE STUDY OF “FOGO ISLAND”

The dictionaries most of us use, the defining dictionaries, will, in proportion to their merit as dictionaries, list a range of meanings, all of them current and it will be the range that matters. Then, when we go beyond these to the historical dictionaries, and to essays in historical and contemporary semantics, we are quite beyond the range of the proper meaning. We find a history and complexity of meanings; conscious changes . . . or changes which are masked by a nominal continuity so that words seem to have been there for centuries, with continuous general meanings, have come in fact to express radically different or radically variable, yet sometimes hardly noticed, meanings and implications of meaning.

— Raymond Williams (1976: 15)

## I

Introductions matter. Literally translated, the word, derived from Latin, means to lead (*-ducere*) inward or to the inside (*intro-*). Introductions, however, do more than simply “lead into” an argument; they establish the parameters of the investigation and delimit the field of analysis, presenting certain assumptions as natural while dismissing others. Through the literary and rhetorical legerdemain of the introduction, then, an author does more than simply “lead into” an argument; through this process of delimitation, the author actively *produces* and *naturalizes* the objects of analysis. Skilled writers will present the objects of analysis as natural phenomena through the art of introduction, hiding the discursive fabrication behind their opening paragraphs. Objects of analysis, if successfully introduced, will seem natural and unquestionable; nevertheless, one must remember that objects of analysis are produced, at least partially, by the discourse that describes and introduces them.<sup>5</sup>

Fields of analysis, moreover, as they expand and are institutionalized, often develop a set of conventions for introducing their object. These tropes, like the discursive fabrication behind the introduction, become accepted as too straightforward and natural to question. The study of Fogo Island, as a field of analysis, has developed a particular set of conventions for introducing the area.<sup>6</sup> The following section will analyze the conventional tropes used to introduce Fogo Island by examining two books: Robert DeWitt’s *Public Policy and Community Protest: The Fogo Case* (1969), the first major academic study of Fogo Island, and Robert Mellin’s *Tilting: House Launching, Slide Hauling, Potato Trenching and Other Tales from a Newfoundland Fishing Village* (2003), the most famous book concerning Fogo Island. These introductions produce “Fogo Island,” the object of analysis, as the result of immutable laws of nature and geography, not as the result of specific historical processes.

In the spring of 1966, the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Memorial University of Newfoundland received a request from the federal Department of Fisheries for a “sociological study of the implications of the resettlement programme in Newfoundland” (DeWitt, 1969: iv). The Household Resettlement Program, introduced by Premier Joseph Smallwood after Newfoundland joined Canada, sought to centralize the scattered population of rural Newfoundland into larger communities, facilitating the transition to large-scale, industrial production. In the 1961 census, the last census before the relocation program began, the province had roughly 1,000 named communities, of which 970 had fewer than 500 residents and 800 had fewer than 300 residents (Sider, 2003 [1986]: 81). The vast majority of these communities were coastal, sustained by the inshore, small-scale fishery. By the 1970s, a third of the named communities had been abandoned, “the largest forced relocation campaign ever in a western capitalist democracy” (*ibid.*, 3).

*Communities in Decline*, by Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews, a broad and critical overview of the household resettlement program, was published by ISER in 1967. A collection of essays, first presented at a research colloquium discussing Iverson and Matthews's text in February 1967, edited by Michael Skolnik, was published the following year. ISER, following these preliminary findings, agreed to extend the research project, funding DeWitt's 1969 study, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, which examined communities resisting resettlement on Fogo Island, and Cato Wadel's *Marginal Adaptations and Modernization in Newfoundland* (1969b), a more general study of the changing socio-economic adaptations in outport Newfoundland in the context of the resettlement program.

This growing academic and governmental focus on Fogo Island emerged alongside the "Fogo Process," an activist alternative development program, organized by Donald Snowden and Fred Earle, of Memorial University's Extension Service, and Colin Low, of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). The "Fogo Process," according to Low, was:

A community development program in Newfoundland, well planned and well funded, that used film as a catalyst to generate local debate — to give local people a voice and even editorial control — and to provide those people with access to people in power, via film. Not one film, but a whole series of mini-films. It was meant to be a step in incorporating media into the democratic process, (Low, 2010 [1984]: 17)

Through the use of radical participatory filmmaking techniques, an active and successful anti-resettlement campaign was emerging in the communities of Fogo Island. People were discussing radical, alternative development strategies, such as the Fogo Island Co-Operative, through film.

DeWitt's study, then, emerged in the intersection of the growing academic and governmental interest in the implications of, and reactions to, the household resettlement program and the alternative rural development work of the Extension Service and the NFB. Both research interests were present on Fogo Island when DeWitt originally visited the area in September 1967. He had originally planned to study religious pluralism and factionalism between the different communities on Fogo Island; however, after a few weeks in the communities on the island, and following the federal government's request for sociological studies of resettlement, DeWitt changed his research plan, seeking to identify "the most important forces, on the one hand, for resettlement from Fogo Island, and, on the other hand, for local development" (DeWitt, 1969: 1).

DeWitt's book is the first major social scientific study to be conducted on Fogo Island. His text, consequently, helped establish the conventional tropes for discussing and introducing Fogo Island. His introduction to the island has been repeated and refashioned, with varying degrees of fidelity, in virtually every subsequent study of Fogo Island. DeWitt begins with a map: the 10 communities on the island,

connected by dark lines signifying roads; a dark circle representing the motel in the middle of the island; dark squares and triangles representing fish plants and community stages, bracketed if they are no longer operating (*ibid.*, viii). After a short discussion of his hypothesis and research technique, he proceeds to the “general description” of the island. “Fogo Island,” he states, “is located in Notre Dame Bay on the north east coast of Newfoundland; the Sir Charles Hamilton Sound separates the Island by 10 miles from the nearest point of contact on the Newfoundland mainland at Carmanville” (*ibid.*, 3). The island, he notes, is 110 square miles in area, and is “underlain by volcanic and sedimentary rocks of Precambrian to Paleozoic ages” (*ibid.*). The topographic image of the map is echoed in DeWitt’s cartographic and geological language.

Following the conventional format of natural history, DeWitt subsequently proceeds from geology to climatology, pedology (soil characteristics), botany, land biology, marine biology, and, finally, to human history and demography (*ibid.*, 4-12). Several features emerge as important: “the dominant climatic influence is the Labrador current”; “the soil of Fogo Island . . . is such that it has limited agricultural potential without draining, liming and fertilizing” (*ibid.*, 4); there is limited plant and animal life on the island, ranging from stunted trees and berries to moose, caribou, and seals, with an abundance of bird life; and, finally, there are extensive marine resources, namely, cod, capelin, flounder, herring, salmon, mackerel, smelt, lobster, and squid (*ibid.*, 5).

Fogo Island, he notes, has been settled by Europeans for almost 300 years, “but during this time there has been only a small increase in population” (*ibid.*, 6). The population, he notes, is 4,470 people, spread among 10 communities that range in size from Fogo, with 1,152 people, to Shoal Bay, with 67 (1969: 6). Fishing is the most common occupation and incomes generally are low (*ibid.*, 9). Following Confederation, the extension of services has begun to erode Fogo Island’s isolation, bringing modern communication technologies and services (*ibid.*, 11). “Fogo Island,” DeWitt summarizes, echoing hundreds of descriptions of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, “is a barren, exposed outpost of Newfoundland society characterized by severe weather, isolation from the mainland, and limited economic opportunities” (*ibid.*, 12). “The abundant fisheries resources of the area,” he concludes, “have sustained the population, and dictated its history” (*ibid.*).

Robert Mellin, writing almost 40 years later, presents a very similar introduction to Fogo Island in his book on vernacular architecture in Tilting, a community on the northeast corner of Fogo Island. His book, derived from his doctoral dissertation, “Folk Housing in Tilting, Fogo Island” (1990), was based on a period of fieldwork in the late 1980s. “On the far eastern edge of the North American continent,” he begins, “on a small island eight miles off the northeastern coast of Newfoundland, is the small outport of Tilting, Fogo Island” (Mellin, 2003: 2). He then describes the long, difficult journey to Fogo Island: from Montreal or Boston, a two-day drive to Sydney, Cape Breton, a six-hour ferry to Port-aux-Basques, a

seven-hour drive to Gander, another hour north, and a 50-minute ferry ride to Fogo Island. Between the two pages of his geographic description is an aerial photograph of Tilting from the late 1940s, taking up the entirety of the third page, which displays the rugged landscape, the fragile vernacular architecture, and the vast Atlantic Ocean.

Fogo Island, Mellin continues, “is 15 miles in length and 9 miles wide, and about 120 square miles in area” (ibid., 5). After establishing the geographic characteristics of the island, he progresses, like DeWitt, to ecology and, then, to human history and demography. Fogo Island, as he describes it, has limited land-based resources, but a rich marine ecology; it was first visited by Europeans in the sixteenth century, but was not settled permanently until the eighteenth century; it “owes its existence to the inshore cod fishery” (ibid., 11); and, following Confederation, modern conveniences and communication technologies finally broke its isolation and opened it up to the modern world (ibid., 14). Mellin, like DeWitt, introduces Fogo Island as a collection of geographical and biological characteristics. In other words, “Fogo Island” is a place assumed to have always existed — a product of rocks and water — and was merely discovered by the ancestors of the current occupants in the seventeenth century.

## II

Gerald Sider, in *Lumbee Indian Histories*, investigates the emergence of the Lumbee people, an indigenous tribe in North Carolina, in the context of colonial domination. The Lumbee,<sup>7</sup> he argues, did not arise naturally out of their ecological environment; the group, and their surrounding environment, was formed, deformed, and re-formed through colonial domination — through the reorganization of space, the introduction of credit, the restructuring of kin relations, changing relations of production and, finally, by brutality and violence. These processes simultaneously formed the Lumbee as a community and produced intense divisions, tensions, and contradictions *within* that community.

For Sider, the production, resolution, and reproduction of internal divisions among Native peoples, in the context of colonial domination, highlights the importance of history in social scientific analyses, “especially ‘history’ as the uncertain, problematic, negotiable, and necessarily contestable connections to be made or denied between past, present, and impending future” (Sider, 1993: 281). Sider concludes, “to ask, in sum, for a history or an anthropology of ‘the Cherokee’ or ‘the Creek’ or ‘the Tuscarora’ — or ‘the Lumbee’ — is to miss, from the outset, some of the most fundamental features of native social life and historical process” (ibid., 233); it ignores how that group was formed in the colonial crucible through the conjunction of domination and struggle.



To ask, similarly, for a history or anthropology of Fogo Island without historicizing the concept “Fogo Island” is to obscure several fundamental aspects of social life and historical process.<sup>8</sup> DeWitt and Mellin, despite their separation by 40 years and different academic disciplines, present very similar introductions to the study of Fogo Island. Introductions, however, as discussed earlier, do much more than the word implies; instead of merely “leading (*-ducere*) into (*intro-*)” an argument, they actively produce and naturalize the object of analysis. Both scholars introduce Fogo Island following a basic schema: (1) geology–geography–cartography; (2) climatology–pedology–biology–ecology; and (3) social history–demography; or more succinctly: land–nature–society. This introductory convention raises two questions: first, how does this schema produce Fogo Island as an object of analysis and, second, what are the effects of this discursive production in the study, and politics, of Fogo Island?

In these introductions, Fogo Island — as a locality upon which to base identity and politics — emerges as an *assumption*, arising naturally out of the “volcanic and sedimentary rocks of Precambrian to Paleozoic ages” (DeWitt, 1969: 3). The conventional introductory schema found in most studies of Fogo Island produces, through its simple topographic imagery, the object of analysis — “Fogo Island” — as an object of nature, an outcome of rocks and wind and ocean currents. These introductions, despite dealing with vast amounts of time — such as the movement of the tectonic plates, the creation of the Grand Banks, the development of the cod biomass and hundreds of years of human activity — remain, fundamentally, *ahistorical*, presenting Fogo Island as the natural product of the ancient schema land–nature–society, not the result of modern historical processes, the conjunction of domination and struggle, of livelihood and resistance.

The ahistorical schema land–nature–society, repeated endlessly in discussions of Fogo Island, misses several essential questions: Was “Fogo Island” always a basis for identity and politics? Were there other ways of thinking about the area? How did “Fogo Island” emerge historically?

### III

Tracing conceptual change presents an interesting problem for the historical anthropologist: How can we isolate the precise point when locals, activists, scholars, or government employees started thinking and writing about an issue differently? Moreover, how can we isolate, precisely, the historical emergence of “Fogo Island” as the organizing concept for thinking and writing about the area and, more importantly, for basing political resistance? How can we identify, with any historical accuracy, conceptual change? Raymond Williams, in *The Long Revolution*, argues, “it is always difficult to date an experience by dating a concept, but when a word appears — either a new word or a new sense of a word — a particular stage has been

reached that is the nearest we can get to a consciousness of change” (Williams, 1961: 73). Similarly, Quentin Skinner, in “Rhetoric and Conceptual Change,” argues, “there cannot be a history of unit ideas as such, but only a history of the various uses to which they have been put by different agents at different times” (Skinner, 1999: 62). Williams and Skinner, then, call for the close examination of words, arguing that one must pay close attention to their use. By tracing changing vocabularies, they argue, the social scientist is able to trace much broader patterns of social understandings. This rhetorical methodology, which traces the changing use of words, presents a concrete way of materializing conceptual change.

In the literature on Fogo Island, there are three common ways of naming the island: “Fogo Island,” “Fogo,” and “Fogo and Twillingate.” Following Williams and Skinner, the changing vocabulary is not merely an example of academic inconsistency or inaccuracy; rather, the changing ways of *naming* the area reflect changing ways of *knowing* the area. Each name — Fogo, Fogo Island, Fogo and Twillingate — represents a different concept, and each concept is related to a different constellation of specific material, socio-natural relations. These three concepts, furthermore, are not discrete, historically bounded, or separated from each other; they are different modalities that have existed, and been employed, concomitantly throughout history.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, certain historical specificities emphasize or encourage the use of particular ways of thinking about the area, altering the political, social, and natural landscape.

The changing historical vocabulary in studies of Fogo Island can be demonstrated by tracing two sets of citations: the first, a petition sent to the House of Assembly in the mid-nineteenth century, quoted by Judge D.W. Prowse in 1895 and by Gerald Sider in 1986; the second, more peculiarly, a statement from the Honourable P. Templeman in 1920, quoted by Harold Innis in 1940 and by Eric Witcher in 1969. Both sets of citations demonstrate a seemingly unconscious shift in vocabulary, from “Fogo” to “Fogo Island.”

In *A History of Newfoundland*, the seminal nineteenth-century historical monograph, Judge D.W. Prowse does not once mention “Fogo Island”; when discussing the area, Judge Prowse exclusively uses “Fogo.” In a discussion of outpost critiques of the truck system, he writes:

The one from Fogo says: “For a number of years back we have been struggling with the world, as we suppose, through the impositions of the merchants and their agents by their exorbitant prices on shop goods and provision, by which means we are from year to year held in debt so as not daring to find fault, fearing we may starve at the approach of every winter. We being at the distance of seventy leagues from the Capital, where we suppose they arrogate to themselves a power not warranted by any law, in selling to us every article of theirs at any price they think fit, and taking from us the produce of a whole year at whatever price they think fit to give. They take it on themselves to price their own goods and ours also as they think most convenient to them. (Prowse, 2007 [1895]: 379)<sup>10</sup>

“Many Irishmen,” he notes, signed the above petition, including, “Patrick Murray, Peter Fowler, Toby McGrath, Michael Burke, James Meehan, John Greary, Wm. Borders and Wm. Keefe” (ibid., 379). It is possible that Judge Prowse used “Fogo” to specifically refer to the community of Fogo, not the full island. However, by using John Carrick Greene’s *Of Fish and Family* (2003), an exhaustive collection of Tilting family histories, we can deduce that this petition was written in *Tilting*, not Fogo. Tracing the family names of the “Irishmen” — Murray, Fowler, McGrath, etc. — we discover that all the aforementioned men were living in Tilting in the first half of the nineteenth century. “Fogo,” then, does not refer to the community of Fogo, but, rather, to the broader area that includes Tilting.

In 1986, Gerald Sider quotes the same petition to the House of Assembly, citing Prowse, as a way to introduce his discussion of the linkages between fishing people’s cogent analyses of domination and inequality and their concomitant powerlessness to alter the material circumstances of their lives. Sider, interestingly, prefaces this quotation with, “in the mid-nineteenth century, fishermen on *Fogo Island*, just off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, petitioned the House of Assembly . . .” (Sider, 2003 [1986]: 275; emphasis added). Sider does not explain his use of “Fogo Island.” One may assume, then, that it was either unconscious or it was considered so obvious and acceptable that it did not require elaboration. In other words, in the century between Prowse’s and Sider’s texts, the accepted nomenclature for the area changed from “Fogo” to “Fogo Island.”

The second set of citations follows a similar trajectory over a shorter historical period. At the Convention for Licensed Codfish Exporters, a two-day conference in early September 1920, the Honourable Philip Templeman held the floor and made a bold proclamation: “there is no fish in the country better than that produced at Fogo” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1920: 65). He went on to lament the current state of the fishery, arguing that current fish technologies, namely, the cod trap, produced lower-quality cured fish. Two decades later, in *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy*, Harold Innis quotes Templeman’s statement, similarly using the word “Fogo” (Innis, 1978 [1940]: 474). Twenty-nine years later, Eric Witcher repeats Templeman’s statement, citing Innis. He writes, peculiarly, “there is no fish in the country better than that produced at *Fogo Island*” (Witcher, 1969: 23; emphasis added). Witcher, like Sider, neither emphasizes nor justifies his editorial change; the linguistic transition from “Fogo” to “Fogo Island” is either unconscious or self-evident. Interestingly, it occurs over a much shorter historical period than the first set of citations: just 29 years, between 1940 and 1969.

These two sets of citations, petition–Prowse–Sider and Templeman–Innis–Witcher, demonstrate minor changes in the ways scholars have talked about the area over time. These minor changes, however, must not be dismissed as irrelevant; rather, they must be analyzed and situated in their historical context. These linguistic transitions are a marker of the profound social, political, economic, and ecologi-

cal transformations occurring in the area, now labelled “Fogo Island,” throughout the twentieth century. My analysis of the transition from “Fogo” to “Fogo Island,” finally, undermines and denaturalizes the conventional schema for introducing and producing Fogo Island — land–nature–society — by *historicizing* it, demonstrating that “Fogo Island” emerged out of specific historical processes, not the immutable laws of nature and geography.

#### IV

The conventional study of Fogo Island, exemplified by DeWitt and Mellin, obscures the fact that, before the twentieth century, “Fogo Island” was not the standard nomenclature for the area. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the area was more commonly referred to as “Fogo and Twillingate,” the names of the two largest population and economic centres in the area. For example, in his 1697 diary, Abbé Jean Baudoin notes, “In Fogo, Twillingate, and other scattered populations in the northern part of the island there are: 150 men, 30 fishing stations, 14 boats, and 4,000 quintals of fish” (McKay, 1976: 13; Witcher, 1969: 4). Similarly, in his 1738 “scheme of the fisheries,” Captain V.H. Vanburgh notes that the population of Fogo and Twillingate is 399 in the summer and 295 in the winter (Chaulk, 1969: 4; Prowse, 2007 [1895]: 284; Witcher, 1969: 5). In 1739, a report from the government in St. John’s states that, out of 1,118 fishing boats operating in Newfoundland, 80 are operating out of “Fogo and Twillingate” (Dwyer, 1989: 33).

By the nineteenth century, however, the language had changed. For example, as mentioned earlier, Judge Prowse, the pre-eminent nineteenth-century historian, exclusively uses “Fogo” to describe the area. In 1832, after Newfoundland gained representative government, a general election was called and electoral districts were constructed. Thomas Bennett, a member of the Conservative Party, was elected as the Member of the House of Assembly for the “Electoral District of Fogo” (Witcher, 1969: 70; Pickett, 1992: 148). Throughout the nineteenth century, the government attempted to extend services to the area, such as roads and education, by appointing committees in the “Electoral District of Fogo.” In 1855, the House of Assembly undertook an investigation into “pauperism” in Newfoundland, noting, “pauperism exists to a great extent in Fogo District” (Sider, 2003 [1986]: 239).

“Fogo Island,” as the dominant way of speaking about the area, emerged in the twentieth century, sometime between 1940 and 1969, between Innis’s text and the work of DeWitt and of Witcher. This period, moreover, is one of the most important in the twentieth century for Fogo Island, and for Newfoundland and Labrador more broadly. In 1949, under the leadership of Joseph Smallwood, Newfoundland joined the Canadian confederation. The following decades were characterized by Smallwood’s obsession with modernization and development, an attempt to com-

pletely restructure Newfoundland and Labrador's economy and society. By the time DeWitt published his book in 1969, after two decades of massive change, "Fogo Island" was the most natural way of thinking about the area, obfuscating the history of changing nomenclature and socio-natural relations.

DeWitt (1969), Mellin (2003), Sider (2003 [1986]), and countless other scholars in the twentieth century use "Fogo Island" as the organizing concept for thinking about the area, ignoring its historical specificity. I have sought to undermine these ahistorical analyses through a rhetorical reading of the literature, seeking to historicize the concept "Fogo Island." The emergence of "Fogo Island" as the organizing concept for describing the area is much more than a simple change in vocabulary; it is a reflection of major historical ruptures in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Fogo Island.

## TWO: TRACING MATERIAL CHANGE AND THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF "FOGO ISLAND"

In the summary terms of a post-Althusserian conception of overdetermination, every entity or event exists at the nexus of a bewildering complexity of natural and social processes, constituting it as a site of contradiction, tensions, difference, and instability. Each overdetermined site or process participates in constituting all others; every cause is an effect, every relationship is a process of (inter)change and mutuality. The analysis of such complexities requires the adoption of an "entry point" that betrays the concerns of the analyst but cannot secure ontological priority or privilege.

— J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996: 29)

The preceding section located the historical emergence of the concept "Fogo Island" through the secondary literature, arguing that the rhetorical transition from "Fogo" to "Fogo Island" occurred, discontinuously, around the 1960s. This section will consider the *conceptual* shift from "Fogo" to "Fogo Island" in the changing socio-natural assemblage of *material* relations, showing that the concept "Fogo Island" was produced by a plethora of changing material circumstances, beginning in the early nineteenth century and proceeding into the 1960s. This section provides a challenge for an anti-essentialist reading of Fogo Island's history: How can I begin to write about the "changing socio-natural assemblage of material relations" without resorting to the deterministic and reductionist narrative of the transition from merchant capital to industrial capital?

Following Gibson-Graham, I must find an "entry point," an analytical starting point from which to gain purchase on the broader historical problem. In an attempt to avoid grand historical narratives, I will present a relatively minute historical incident: Robert Mellin, in his book on Tilting, notes:

Before travel by road replaced travel by sea, all houses faced the waterfront, turning it into a stage. “The first thing a man wanted to do in the morning when he opened his eyes was to look at the harbor.” . . . Today, since travel by road is the main mode of travel, new houses are built with the front of the house facing the road. (Mellin, 2003: 28)

Over the course of the twentieth century, the spatial organization of communities on Fogo Island was reacting to the massive changes occurring in the province. More interestingly, he notes, “some of the older houses that originally faced the harbor were later turned on their foundations to face the road” (ibid.). This observation raises an important question: What inspired people to change the spatial orientation of their communities, from the sea to the roads?

This spatial reorientation, I will argue, marks the conceptual transition from “Fogo” to “Fogo Island” *materially*; it reflects a changing organization and awareness of the socio-natural production of place. People in Tilting, and the other communities on Fogo Island, literally turned their backs on the transatlantic networks of mercantile commerce and sea trade that characterized their past, turning landward and placing their focus on Fogo Island — in effect, *producing* “Fogo Island” as a social concept and as a place. People did not change the direction of their houses all at once; neither official state policy nor local leaders imposed the decision. It was a personal and historically discontinuous action. Nevertheless, it reflects a more fundamental socio-natural shift and must be considered as a response to wider historical processes. The following section investigates why people once focused the spatial orientation of their communities towards the sea and why this changed in the middle of the past century.

## I

Relatively little is known about Fogo Island’s pre-contact history; however, according to oral history, Fogo Island was at least frequented, if not settled, by the Beothuks: many people claim that Fogo Island’s original name, “Terra del Fuego” (commonly, though inaccurately, described as Portuguese for “Island of Fire”),<sup>11</sup> emerged because European fishermen, at night, would see Beothuk campfires on Fogo Island (Marin, 1974: 33; Pickett, 1992: 6). With the beginning of permanent European settlement in 1728, the historical record becomes much clearer. In just 10 years, the settlement at Fogo had expanded considerably, consisting of “seven fishing ships, four sack (cargo) ships, seventy ‘passengers,’ fourteen fishing ships’ boats, twenty-four residents’ boats, 135 byeboatmen<sup>12</sup>, twenty-one families, and 215 residents, 143 of whom remained over the winter” (Dwyer, 1989: 33, quoting Innis, 1978 [1940]: 148).

Settlement continued to expand throughout the eighteenth century: by 1750, Tilting had been populated by Irish Catholics, mostly indentured servants from Waterford, employed by merchants in Poole, on the south coast of England; by 1803, Joe Batt's Arm and Barr'd Islands first appear in the historical record and Fogo Island had roughly 450 full-time residents (McCay, 1976: 16). By the end of the nineteenth century, Fogo Island had 25 named communities and a population of nearly 4,000 (*ibid.*, 19). After 1884, Fogo Island's population began its pattern of fluctuating and diminished rates of increase, as:

Birth, death, and especially out-migration rates, changed in response to economic depressions, persistent poverty, and mercantile exploitation in the fishery and to expanding opportunities in the growing urban-industrial centres of North America. (*Ibid.*, 18)

Fogo Island's steady expansion slowed after the late nineteenth century, remaining relatively constant until the instability of the 1960s and the ecological disasters in the groundfish fisheries of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The communities of fishing families on Fogo Island did not live in quiet isolation. They were involved in complex networks of transatlantic trade, producing salt cod on Fogo Island for the Caribbean and Southern Europe and using supplies and labour from Western Europe. During this period on Fogo Island, furthermore, wealth and influence were concentrated in the community of Fogo (Brown, 1968: 30; Cull, 1988: 33; Greene, 1960: 21). Coughlan, Slade, and Earle — the three main merchants in the area — all kept their headquarters in Fogo. Until the early twentieth century, all medical, postal, electoral, and communication services were located in Fogo. Tensions between communities on Fogo Island were very strong, exacerbated by religious divisions and lack of communication.

In this situation, homes constructed to face the water were entirely logical. The ocean dictated everyday life, both literally and metaphorically: one could work only in certain oceanic weather conditions, and one's work was organized by certain transatlantic socio-economic conditions. This situation, furthermore, produced a certain space, illuminated by a certain terminology; people lived in communities divided internally and externally by religion. Some communities were predominantly Catholic (e.g., Tilting) while others were predominantly Protestant (e.g., Fogo), and still others were and are internally divided (e.g., Joe Batt's Arm). Consequently, the communities on the island were more closely connected to Poole, England, than to one another. "Fogo Island" had yet to arrive.



## II

The expansion of automotive transportation, through the development of automotive infrastructure and increasing use of automobiles, has had profound effects on rural Newfoundland and Labrador; in short, it has constituted a radical restructuring of spatial organization. Communities formerly connected by sea travel became connected by a series of roads and highways, severing some relationships and creating others. This spatial transformation, moreover, is deeply implicated in several other massive transformations in rural Newfoundland and Labrador: the expansion of roads is simultaneously produced by, and helped produce, changing regimes of capital accumulation, changing techniques and regimes of state power, and changing manifestations of local political resistance. The decision to change the orientation of homes on Fogo Island, from facing the sea to facing the island interior (Mellin, 2003: 28), would have been incomprehensible without a road towards which to turn; the road, furthermore, is related to a wider series of transformations on Fogo Island.<sup>13</sup>

The first government grant for the construction of an interior road on Fogo Island dates back to 1848 (Witcher, 1969: 73); however, it was not until a century later, following Newfoundland's confederation with Canada in 1949, that a reliable, paved road between the communities on Fogo Island became possible. In 1972, the main highway between Fogo, Seldom Come By, and Joe Batt's Arm was finally paved (Pickett, 1992: 3). In 1963, the provincial government abolished the local road boards, assuming total responsibility for road construction and care (Pickett, 1992: 3; Carter, 1984: 60). Several dissatisfied fishers, clergy, teachers, and merchants formed the Fogo Island Road Improvement Association, quickly expanding its initial concerns with road improvements to include pressuring the provincial and federal governments for other major improvements (Carter, 1984: 60). However, the Committee — derisively known as the “Fogo Island Destruction Association” (DeWitt, 1969: 51) — collapsed within its first year, “largely due to community rivalry, conflicts, and feelings of futility” (*ibid.*). In a few short months, despite the initial excitement, participation dwindled.

The following year, however, in 1964, the situation on Fogo Island changed dramatically. Fred Earle, raised in Fogo and living in Lewisporte, returned to Fogo Island as an Extension Representative from Memorial University, seeking to “enrich the standard of life in less privileged places through local discussions of the economic and social needs, the encouragement of educational activities and the formation of lasting organizations” (*ibid.*). Earle, with the help of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and United clergy, brought renewed interest in an island-wide association. A few months later, the Fogo Island Improvement Committee was formed, largely seeking alternatives to resettlement and, according to Cato Wadel, “creating an enlarged sense of community” by encouraging the notion that all the communities on Fogo Island must work together (Wadel, 1969a: 22-23).



The creation of the Improvement Committee and the official incorporation of the Co-operative in December 1967 were the culmination of a long history of co-operative organization on Fogo Island. The co-operative movement dates back to the early twentieth century, with the emergence of the Fishermens' Protective Union (FPU). The FPU opened branch operations in Barr'd Islands in 1909 (Witcher, 1969: 43), Joe Batt's Arm in 1911 (Brown, 1968: 33), and Tilting in 1916 (Greene, 1960: 22). Although the many branches of the FPU Trading Company closed shortly after their conception, the branch at Tilting operated until the early 1970s (Carter, 1984: 47).

The second wave of the co-operative movement occurred in the 1940s and 1950s, in the form of consumer co-operatives, local credit unions, and buying clubs (*ibid.*, 53). These co-operatives pooled buying power, concentrating capital while equitably redistributing the returns, rather than producing commodities. Based on the success of these consumer co-operatives, and encouraged by government co-operative field workers (*ibid.*, 51), talks of forming a regional producers' co-operative emerged in the early 1950s. In 1951, however, a co-operative attempt to purchase a fish processing plant, which was built and subsequently vacated by Fishery Products, was foiled by waning government support and a hostile private corporation: after beginning to raise money for the purchase of the plant, Fishery Products reopened the plant, destroying the co-op (*ibid.*, 58). Snowden (1965: 37) and DeWitt (1969: 73-74) attribute the decline in co-operation on Fogo Island to this failure. Snowden (1965: 37) states, "the disheartened co-operative field worker believed he could not responsibly expect people on the Island to have any faith in further attempts to organize a regional co-operative fishery."

Fred Earle, the Memorial University Extension Representative, and local leaders, then, had to combat intense feelings of apathy and futility in order to organize the producer's co-operative movement in the 1960s. Premier Joseph Smallwood, in an address to the people of Fogo Island on 23 September 1967, stated:

Fogo Island has no future unless big changes are made . . . . You have three roads to choose from: (1) drift, where the consequence is death for Fogo Island, (2) resettlement, where government would have to back you, or (3) development, if you are honest and God-fearing and ready to work. (DeWitt, 1969: 13)

Smallwood's eschatological rhetoric reflected prevalent trends on Fogo Island: many residents were extremely pessimistic with regard to their future on Fogo Island. One of DeWitt's informants states, "It's hopeless on Fogo Island. You can kill yourself fishing for nothing or go on the dole. That's not much of a choice, is it?" (*ibid.*, 26). The Improvement Committee and the Co-op, then, in order to successfully organize the local population, had to work against not just an apathetic state and hostile private business, but also the hopelessness that the two engendered in the population, attempting to create and sustain a hopeful vision of the future.

During the 1967 fishing season, the co-operative movement on Fogo Island faced another setback. In 1966, two members of the Improvement Committee attended a fisheries conference on the west coast of Newfoundland, where they became acquainted with the leadership of the United Maritime Fishermen (UMF) (Carter, 1984: 60-1). On 29-30 March 1967, a similar conference was held on Fogo Island and attended by UMF representatives, who suggested “that all of the Island’s fish plants and community stages profitably could be organized on cooperative lines” (DeWitt, 1969: 74). This highly attended meeting garnered significant support for the co-operative movement from Fogo Island residents (Sheppard, 1972: 6). UMF, following this meeting, submitted a proposal to the provincial government for a loan of \$400,000 to begin operation in time for the 1967 season (DeWitt, 1969: 64), along with a petition from the Improvement Committee with over 1,000 signatures (Carter, 1984: 62). By April 1967, rumours spread that UMF would not be awarded the contract; by May 1967, the government announced that it had awarded the fish plant in Seldom Come By to the Yellow Fish Company, a private Spanish-Japanese corporation, and that it would assist the Earle merchant company to remain open for another season (DeWitt, 1969: 75).

The provincial government advised the Improvement Committee to direct its efforts to the Rural Development Division of the Department of Community and Social Development (Carter, 1984: 63), which argued the main “problem” on Fogo Island was an adequate and reliable fish supply. The Improvement Committee, in contrast, was more interested in “improving the Island’s economy by obtaining the facilities and organization for a centralized fish processing and marketing co-operative” (ibid., 64). Their attempts at institutional change, according to Bonnie McCay (1976: 78), were redirected towards technological solutions: namely, the creation of a longliner fleet.

Nevertheless, in the fall of 1967, Earle and Sons continued to phase out their operations and the private firm at Seldom Come By folded after heavy losses (ibid.). By late 1967, following the withdrawal of private business, a co-operative became the only solution and was financed, reluctantly, by Premier Smallwood’s government. On 17 December 1967, the Fogo Island Shipbuilding and Producers Co-operative was officially incorporated, with 127 charter members, a Board of Directors — selected, almost exclusively, from Improvement Committee members (ibid., 80) — and \$635 in share capital (Carter, 1984: 65). The Co-op’s constitution, drawn up the following day, isolated three main aims and objectives:

1. To promote the economic interests of its members only, by using their united funds and efforts for the procuring, processing and marketing of economic goods, as well as construction and repairing of fishing vessels;
2. To promote the co-operative movement through association with other registered co-operative societies within the province of Newfoundland, other provinces of Canada, and countries abroad for purposes of material aid;

3. To conduct educational work among its members in order to attain the above objects. (Sheppard, 1972: 9-10)

The Co-op, however, was not allowed to sell to other co-ops; it was obligated, by governmental decree, to deal with private firms and use private marketing associations, with the hopes of eventually encouraging the return of private business to Fogo Island (McCay, 1976: 77).

The emergence of the Improvement Committee and the producers' co-operative, then, provided the necessary institutions for what Cato Wadel, in *Community and Committees*, terms the "enlargement of the sense of community" (1969a: 22) on Fogo Island. Wadel notes, however, that there was a third necessary element for the development of an island-wide sense of community: the Amalgamated School Board. In 1964, meetings were held to discuss the possibility of an amalgamated central high school on Fogo Island (*ibid.*, 29). However, meetings ceased after disputes over the potential location of the central high school. Talks resumed in the fall of 1967, involving Anglican, United Church, and Pentecostal denominations, creating a new board of education (*ibid.*). In 1968, the new board began meeting with the superintendents of provincial education boards; however, little action was taken over that year, due to inactivity and miscommunication (*ibid.*, 30). Nevertheless, by late 1968, the new board began holding monthly meetings and began extensive fundraising. The 1969-70 school year was the first that Fogo Island schoolchildren attended a denominationally amalgamated school (Pickett, 1992: 156). Three years later, the Fogo Island Central High School was finally erected and opened, teaching over 1,000 students (*ibid.*, 157).

These three processes — the emergence of the Improvement Committee, the incorporation of the Fogo Island Co-operative, and the amalgamation of the school boards — encouraged the settlement of the centre of Fogo Island by requiring central and, more importantly, *neutral* locations for meetings (Wadel, 1969a: 38). The construction of the Fogo Island Motel in 1965, the Co-op's shipyard in 1968, and the central high school in 1972 are material crystallizations of these new island-wide processes, both producing the conditions of existence for, and representing, a new set of spatial relations.

The motel served as a meeting place for Fogo Island residents, for both formal events, such as Improvement Committee meetings, and for informal events, such as the weekly dances, attended by hundreds of residents from all parts of Fogo Island (DeWitt, 1969: 21). The shipyard was constructed in Shoal Bay, a community of only 67 in 1961 (*ibid.*, 6), which was "chosen by the Improvement Committee as being central, as favoring no single town, and as being least likely to induce inter-community rivalry or jealousy" (Carter, 1984: 70). This decision went against government suggestions, "[which] argued, rationally enough, that the ice-free harbour and the landing place for the ferry [at] Seldom Come By, would be the most ideal place to locate the shipyard" (Wadel, 1969a: 38). The central high school,

similarly, was constructed in a previously uninhabited area of Fogo Island, near the motel.

These buildings served as nodal points, neutral locations that brought together the disparate communities on Fogo Island. Prior to their construction, communication and relationships between communities did occur; as Donald Snowden states, in an interview with Wendy Quarry, “There were, within communities, people who talked to some people and wouldn’t talk to some others. Between communities and among communities there were varying degrees of contact” (Quarry, 1984: 32). For example, Annie Wheeler (1994: 3-5) remembers travelling regularly over the course of her childhood between Fogo, her hometown, and Joe Batt’s Arm, where her uncle managed the Earle and Sons Co. store. Nevertheless, sustained and meaningful contact between communities did not exist on Fogo Island before the 1960s. As one anonymous informant states:

In the past each community lived to itself, sort of. We were not enemies to each other but there was no connection. I remember when I first went to work as a boy (in Fogo), well, a man from Tilting was a stranger. If you came to Fogo it was a big event. Half a dozen men would get in a boat and come to Fogo, that was a big thing. Of course they had to come by boat anyway. I would have to go and tell father that there were six men up from Tilting. After all they would only come once or twice a year and sometimes not at all for the year. They all came to do business in Fogo. That was a way of life. (Wadel, 1969a: 6)

The patterns of communication and social relations were reformed throughout the 1960s, through both technological (the introduction of telephone, film, television, etc.) and social (the emergence of the Co-operative, amalgamation of the school boards, etc.) processes.

### III

We have, then, three new social groups — the Improvement Committee, the Co-operative, and the Amalgamated School Board — and three new buildings — the motel, the shipyard, and the central high school — connected by a network of newly constructed highways. These changes, moreover, at once required and were a prerequisite for a series of technological innovations in the fishery: the introduction and expansion of the longliner fleet. A theoretical movement in economics — the turn towards “appropriate technology” (Schumacher, 1973) — encouraged this process, supporting small-scale, decentralized approaches to rural development. This development strategy, argues McCay (1976: 4), “attempts to modify past trends in planned, purposive development planning by assigning priority to small-scale, decentralized, and ‘appropriate’ innovations in both technology and

the organization of production.” In Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically, “appropriate technology” refers to the development of the small-scale inshore fishery, not to the offshore industrial trawler fishery.

After being denied control of the Seldom Come By fish plant in 1967, the Fogo Island co-operative movement was told to submit a blanket request for assistance to the Rural Development Division of the provincial Department of Community and Social Development (Carter, 1984: 63; McCay, 1976: 75). This blanket request, argues McCay, allowed, in effect, the agency to take over decision-making processes in the Co-operative, prioritizing the need for funding over Co-operative autonomy.

The development agency isolated the “serious decline in fishing productivity . . . due to the increased intensity of offshore trawler fishing upon the cod stocks of the northeast coast and Labrador region” (McCay, 1976: 78) as the fundamental “problem” on Fogo Island. The Rural Development Division reduced the manifold problems on Fogo Island to the lack of an adequate fish supply, justifying a “reformulation and simplification of solutions which fit into government policy” (*ibid.*). In other words, “if a consistent supply of fish could be produced,” argues political economist Marlene Bilous, “private concerns would seek to establish a business based on this supply” (Bilous, 1973: 17). A simple technological fix, the construction of a longliner fleet, became the means by which to ensure an increase in productivity (*ibid.*, 17-18; McCay, 1976: 78). Government assistance and technical expertise refashioned the goals of the Co-operative, from producing institutional and social change to encouraging technological changes.

Longliners, a term used throughout the Atlantic provinces of Canada, designates a motorized fishing vessel, ranging from 35 to 100 feet and using, primarily, synthetic gill nets (McCay, 1976: 82). They were first adopted on the south coast of Newfoundland in the 1950s; however, fishing people on the northeast coast of Newfoundland were slow to adopt the technology, despite the wishes of politicians and scientists. In 1958, a small-scale entrepreneur attempted to finance a longliner in Joe Batt’s Arm, selling fresh cod to the local fish processing plant. The plant and the longliner venture, however, were short-lived: both ended in 1960 (*ibid.*, 85). Nevertheless, by the mid- to late 1960s, the use of longliners and synthetic gill nets began expanding rapidly, fuelled by a series of federal and provincial government subsidies. Between 1960 and 1968, the use of longliners increased almost fivefold in Newfoundland and Labrador; between 1963 and 1970, the fleet on Fogo Island expanded from two to 20 (*ibid.*, 86).

The Fogo Island Co-operative, with a \$75,000 loan from the provincial government and an \$80,000 advance on credit from Earle’s Freighting of Carbonear, began construction of four 50-foot longliners in the winter of 1968 (Carter, 1984: 70-71). Four inshore fishermen, along with their agnatic kin, successfully applied for government loans, subsidies, and bounties to finance the construction of their longliners (McCay, 1976: 80). At that time, 90 per cent of the cost of longliner construction could be paid by government assistance and the final 10 per cent could be

paid, in part, by providing labour and materials to the shipyard (Carter, 1984: 71). Carter notes that “in the first year of operations, about 45 per cent of the down payments was met by credit for labour and timber” (ibid.). By its second season, the Co-operative shipyard had launched four longliners and employed 18 people (ibid., 78). The fleet of 20 longliners and its associated development, at that time, “accounted for about forty-four percent of the wage labour force on the island” (ibid., 79).

The expansion of the longliner fleet, and concomitant technology (synthetic gill nets, motors, radars, echo sounders, etc.), was an integral part of the larger reorganization of the production on Fogo Island. In part a local response to the wider crisis in the fishery, in part imposed by the provincial and federal governments, the construction and use of longliners required and facilitated a new set of spatial relations on Fogo Island.

In April of 1968, the Co-op, with a membership of nearly 200, began operating the community stage at Deep Bay, supplying fishermen in the spring and purchasing fish at the end of the season. That same year, the Co-op took over, on a short-term basis, the salt-fish drying facilities at Seldom Come By from the Fishermen’s Union Trading Co., creating about \$40,000 worth of labour (ibid., 73). In April of 1969, the Co-op requested and received permission to lease the Seldom Come By plant from the provincial Department of Fisheries (ibid., 75). The Co-op presented plans for marketing of cod, salmon, lobster, and turbot, and a probable market for lumpfish roe in Germany (ibid.). In its second season, the Co-op reopened the plant at Joe Batt’s Arm, which was formerly operated by Fishery Products, landing and processing over six million pounds of fish; moreover, “twenty-five hundred drafts of heavy salted cod were split and salted at Joe Batt’s Arm, and then taken to Seldom Come By for drying, grading and packaging for export” (ibid., 79).

The production of fish, for the first time, was spread across the entirety of Fogo Island instead of concentrated in specific communities. The movement of goods and people — capital and labour — over the newly constructed highways presents a fundamental transformation in the political economy of Fogo Island. The truck system of merchant capitalism produced a particular network of associations: men fishing with their agnatic kin would produce fish, on credit, for a Poole merchant, using supplies shipped in from the Caribbean and Western and Southern Europe. This system would produce tightly knit communities, tied together through both intimacy and antagonism, connected in a triangle of transatlantic trade. McCay (1976: 15, n. 1) notes:

Like other large bays along the east and northeast coasts of Newfoundland, Notre Dame Bay has long been a relatively self-contained social and economic entity [having] stronger economic and socio-cultural ties to European ports of trade than to each other.

This pattern, furthermore, is replicated on a smaller spatial scale. As Wadel explains, “transportation was primarily by sea which meant that ‘across the bay’ often had more interaction than communities on the Island separated by relatively short distances over land” (Wadel, 1969a: 6). For example, the communities on the south shore of the island, such as Little Seldom and Seldom Come By, have closer connections with communities on “mainland” Newfoundland, such as Carmanville and Lewisporte, than with other Fogo Island communities.

This transatlantic system of trade produced the earlier concepts “Fogo and Twillingate” and “Fogo.” The community of Fogo, the centre of wealth and trade in the area, was the main point of contact for European merchants and markets. Subsequently, “Fogo” — usually, but not exclusively — referred, synecdochically, to a wider network of social relations; that is, “Fogo” incorporated and subsumed the various communities on Fogo Island. By the end of the 1960s, however, “Fogo Island” became the more appropriate term, a result neither of happenstance nor of political correctness. This new term, “Fogo Island,” reflects the manifold transformations that occurred in the area over the early to mid-twentieth century: the failure of local private business and merchant capitalism, the declining cod stocks, the expansion of the industrial fishery, the reinvigoration of the co-operative movement, the amalgamation of the school boards, the construction of a longliner fleet, the development of communication and transportation infrastructure, and the settlement of the interior of the island.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSION: ARTICULATING COLLECTIVE LIFE ON FOGO ISLAND

I have traced two broad arcs in this paper: first, I have investigated the politics of writing, arguing specifically that the techniques of introducing Fogo Island in the secondary literature produce a certain, seemingly natural, object of analysis. “Fogo Island,” as an object of analysis, is presented in this literature as the inevitable result of geography and geology, not history, culture, and power. This secondary literature and its object emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, following Confederation in 1949 and the massive political economic transformations of the 1960s, while eclipsing earlier terms for describing the area (“Fogo and Twillingate” or, simply, “Fogo”). Second, I have attempted to establish the material conditions for this conceptual shift, outlining, in the second section, the changing material circumstances on Fogo Island in the 1960s through the spatial reorganization of the island. This section employed an anti-essentialist strategy, which rejected the fixity and simplicity of simple cause-and-effect relationships. The emergence of “Fogo Island” — in the starkest theoretical terms — is overdetermined,<sup>15</sup> both produced by and producing a vast network of humans, non-human, and non-living agencies.



I will seek to bridge these two arcs by playing on the double entendre of “articulation,” which denotes both uttering and suturing, first presented by Stuart Hall and elaborated by Tania Li. Through the concept “articulation” I will attempt to historicize the material and conceptual production of “Fogo Island,” arguing that it can produce new political possibilities for contemporary issues on the island.

## I

Stuart Hall, in the introduction to *Questions of Cultural Identity*, examines the question of identity, noting that the concept has provoked, simultaneously, a “veritable discursive explosion” (Hall, 1996: 1) and a deep, deconstructive critique in the social sciences. Hall, following the post-structuralists, agrees that social scientists, from a variety of disciplines, must eschew outdated concepts of identity that presume an “integral, originary and unified identity” (ibid.). Nevertheless, Hall notes that social scientists cannot simply abandon or abolish the concept of identity and concomitant questions of the “subject.” As an alternative, he presents the concept of “identification” (ibid., 2) as a means to critique overly essentialist studies of identity without abandoning the concept altogether, predicated on assumptions of process, contingency, and uncertainty. Hall presents a “strategic and positional” concept of identification, concluding: “identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption” (ibid., 3).

Tania Li takes up Hall’s formulation, contrasting two different articulations of indigenous identity in the hilly interior of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia: the impoverished swidden (slash-and-burn land-clearing) farmers of Lauje region and the “prosperous, literate, Christian farmers [of Lake Lindu] growing irrigated rice and coffee” (Li, 2000: 150). Interestingly, she notes, it is in the latter location, prosperous Lake Lindu, that a “collective, indigenous identity has been persuasively articulated” (ibid.). The two locations, despite similar historical roots — scattered swidden farmers, loosely organized in tense and unstable trade and tribute relations with coastal powers — have produced very different political outcomes in post-Suharto Indonesia.

Li’s goal, she states, is “to set out an alternative approach to the question of indigenouness that is theoretically more adequate to the diversity of conditions and struggles in the Indonesian countryside, and alert to the political risks and opportunities posed by familiar framings” (ibid., 150-51). In other words, she seeks to discuss the historical construction of the concept “indigenous” without framing the emergence of indigenous identity as opportunistic or inauthentic, as neither the strategic “invention of tradition” nor an example of false consciousness. She posits, in contrast, that the process of group identification as “indigenous” is not natural or inevitable, nor is it invented, adopted, or imposed (ibid., 151). Rather, it is “a *positioning* which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and reper-



toires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle” (ibid.). “The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as indigenous,” she concludes, “are the contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of *articulation*” (ibid.).

## II

Articulation denotes both enunciating and suturing, speaking and bringing together. Articulation, thus, merges the two distinct threads of this paper: first, the politics of writing and, second, the politics of overdetermination. The two sections of this paper, in other words, mediated by the dual meanings of “articulation,” present a single broad argument: “Fogo Island,” as a concept with which to think, to organize collective life or to self-identify, is not natural, inevitable, or ahistorical; rather, it is contingent, uncertain, and nebulous, emerging in a specific historical context through the cultural and political work of articulation, the process of positioning oneself in the complex network of socio-natural relations of overdetermination. The previous sentence is a pleonastic way of making a much simpler point: “Fogo Island” is a relatively new form of self-identification for the inhabitants of the island and a relatively new way of thinking about the area for academics.

Discussions of this period of Fogo Island’s history often describe the Fogo Process, fostered by the NFB, as the determining cause for the enlargement of a sense of community on Fogo Island. Stephen Crocker (2008) and Susan Newhook (2009) have both upset the ubiquitous “NFB saves Fogo Island” narrative by arguing for the importance of Donald Snowden, Fred Earle, and the Memorial University Extension Service in creating and exporting the Fogo Process. These important arguments, nevertheless, share two common assumptions with the conventional history of the period: first, they present the “Fogo Process” as the determining cause of the enlargement of the sense of community and, second, they assume “Fogo Island” as the natural foundation upon which to base one’s sense of community.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, this paper, through a rhetorical reading of the secondary literature and an anti-essentialist reading of the political ecological history, seeks to historicize “Fogo Island” and “place” more generally, arguing that they are the contingent result of the work of articulation, of positioning oneself in a network of socio-natural relations.

Fogo Island is once again achieving international prominence through the entrepreneurial savvy of Zita Cobb and the Shorefast Foundation, who have been developing the region as a world-class ecotourism destination, with stunning architecture, an international artist residency program, and the construction of an enormous, elite hotel. As “Fogo Island” becomes an increasingly valuable commodity to be marketed, it is important to note that it is not *simply* natural — a collection of geological, climatological, and biological characteristics to be quantified and ana-

lyzed by natural scientists. Rather, it has been produced by a series of human, non-human, and non-living actors. If “Fogo Island” is not a natural resource — if it is, rather, the historical and contingent product of articulation — then it is certainly not a *finished* product. Instead of being constrained by a set of predetermined political, economic, natural, and cultural features, we can ask a broader, and more hopeful, question: How can we organize the most sustainable, equitable, and just model for collective life on Fogo Island?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A stage is an “elevated platform on the shore with working tables, sheds, etc, where fish are landed and processed for salting and drying, and fishing gear and supplies are stored” (Story et al., 1982: 525-26). A flake is a “platform built on poles and spread with boughs for drying cod-fish on the foreshore” (ibid., 187-88).

<sup>2</sup>Susan Newhook (2009: 171) provides a similar description of the opening scene of the NFB film “Introduction to Fogo Island.”

<sup>3</sup>The research for this paper was undertaken while completing my Master of Arts at York University. Due to a lack of both resources and time, I was unable to complete ethnographic fieldwork for this project. The ethnographic component would necessarily augment and enrich this argument. Nevertheless, without the historical and anti-essentialist perspective outlined in my paper, I believe that fieldwork would remain partial. If one studies “Fogo Island” without questioning the production of place, certain key features of social process will be elided.

<sup>4</sup>Framed in positive terms, Fogo Island — and the production of place, more generally — is contingent, historical, and socio-natural. Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff (1987: 2-3) define essentialism as the “specific presumption . . . that any apparent complexity — a person, a relationship, an historical occurrence, and so forth — can be analyzed to reveal a simplicity lying at its core.” In studies of gender and identity, essentialism has been productively undermined by post-structuralist critique (see the first part of the Conclusion); however, what does this project mean for studies of place? Can an island be considered “socially constructed”? This paper does not posit that “Fogo Island” does not exist in the material world (i.e., that it is the product of social construction), nor does it suggest that the physical characteristics of Fogo Island necessarily form the conditions for the production of place (i.e., “Fogo Island” is a natural product of geology). The anti-essentialist position, in other words, seeks to outline the material, social, and discursive conditions for the production of place from a historical perspective.

<sup>5</sup>This perspective is indebted to Timothy Mitchell’s analysis of Egyptian economic development in *The Rule of Experts* (2002).

<sup>6</sup>These techniques for introducing the study of Fogo Island did not emerge in a vacuum. They are deeply connected to broader movements in the social and natural sciences. For example, they are descendants of the colonial practice of separating the landscape into discrete knowledge domains — geology, flora, and fauna — that dates back to the natural history of the eighteenth century (Braun, 2002: 48).

<sup>7</sup>As Gerald Sider points out, this particular indigenous group has had many different names since the nineteenth century, reflecting different divisions within the indigenous populations of Robeson County, North Carolina. Beginning with the “Croatan” in 1885, followed by the “Indians of Robeson County” from 1911 to 1913, and the “Cherokee of Robeson County” until the 1930s, they eventually settled on the “Lumbee Indians” in the 1950s, after a long struggle for federal recognition (Sider, 1993: 3-4). However, in the 1970s, around 10 per cent of the Lumbee Indian population began identifying themselves as “Tuscarora.” He concludes, “Each of these different names came tied to a different vision and version of history, and less neatly but still crucially, they were also tied to different visions and versions of the path to the future” (ibid., 4).

<sup>8</sup>Sider insists that history must remain anthropological and anthropology must remain historical. Social scientists, in other words, must approach difference with a nuanced cultural relativism while simultaneously recognizing the historical nature of these differences (Sider, 2003 [1986]: 62-63). He frames this problem in terms of culture and class, the domains of anthropology and social history, respectively. By rethinking both concepts, he seeks to root culture in the social-relations of production-appropriation and the social relations of daily life and work (ibid., 64-66).

<sup>9</sup>One of the anonymous referees of this paper offered many counter-examples to my periodization (such as the 1970s Fogo-a-go-go nightclub in St. John’s, owned by former Minister of Social Services Tom Hickey). These counter-examples were helpful and instructive; however, I must stress that the ways of thinking about Fogo Island are not historically discrete or bounded. There are examples of people talking about “Fogo Island” from the nineteenth century and examples of people talking about “Fogo” in the 2000s. Nevertheless, these counter-examples, I argue, demonstrate the *historicity* of these concepts: they are in flux, debated, and contentious. I have simply tried to begin to outline the contour of these debates.

<sup>10</sup>This statement is such a cogent and incisive analysis of the truck system — formed in anger by outport fishing people — that it bears repeating in full.

<sup>11</sup>“Terra [Tierra] del Fuego” is, in fact, Spanish for “Land of the Fire.” The Portuguese for “Island of Fire” is “Ilha do Fogo.” It would seem that the popular description perhaps has the language of origin (Portuguese) correct but not the phrase. Tierra (Terra) del Fuego is a well-known island at the southernmost tip of South America, separated from the mainland by the Strait of Magellan.

<sup>12</sup>“By-boatman” or “byeboatman” is a “fisherman engaged in the inshore cod-fishery in small craft” (Story et al., 1982: 78). A “by-boat” or “byeboat” is a “fishing craft, usually undecked, of variable size, design and rig, owned and used in the inshore cod-fishery by men migrating annually as passengers to Newfoundland, the craft being left on the island on their return to the West Country of England” (ibid., 77).

<sup>13</sup>The following section follows a conceptual logic, tracing the emergence of “Fogo Island” from the construction of roads to the development of co-operatives to the amalgamation of the school boards to the settlement of the interior, and so on. In order to trace these changes I have had to eschew a more conventional chronological narrative.

<sup>14</sup>This section, as mentioned above, has sought to problematize conventional narratives of simple causality and determination “where the ‘economic’ has often been privileged as the fundamental, necessary or *essential* constituent of social systems and historical events” (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 24); or, framed in classical Marxist parlance, narratives that

describe the economy as the social base, determining a variety of social and cultural superstructures. It should be noted that while my periodization has lined up temporally with conventional narratives of the transition from merchant to industrial capital, I have sought to undermine this narrative through an anti-essentialist reading of Fogo Island's history. In other words, perhaps the transition from merchant capital to industrial capital is not simply an economic story; perhaps it is the story of a vast, yet specific, network of social, natural, political, and economic actors.

<sup>15</sup>Louis Althusser, in his essay "Contradiction and Overdetermination" (1996 [1969]), borrows the term "overdetermination" from Freudian dream analysis. Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1999 [1900]), uses the term to describe the relationship between dream content and dream thoughts; Freud goes beyond the "simple notion of multiple causation among independently existing entities that merely influence each other complexly" to imply the notion of constitutivity — "the idea that the dream content is constituted by the thoughts that happen to be elicited after the dream" (Resnick and Wolff, 1987: 283, n. 1). Althusser, similarly, through his elaboration of overdetermination, sought to reject the reductionism and simplification of cause-and-effect relationships in Marxist analysis. Overdetermination, for Althusser, expressed the "irreducible specificity of every determination; the essential complexity — as opposed to the root simplicity — of every form of existence" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 27). He argues, in his most concise, almost pithy, formulation, "the existing conditions are the conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1996 [1969]: 208).

<sup>16</sup>"In sum, the Fogo Process allowed people to form an ideal common image of themselves as a collectivity, something that their material conditions of life had made difficult to achieve" (Crocker, 2008: 69). In contrast, I offer this paper as a minor refinement of this argument. Instead, I have argued that: (1) there are more actors at play in the formation of a common image than simply the Fogo Process; and (2) "Fogo Island" — as opposed to some other constellation of social relations — should not be presumed to be the only way for people to think of themselves as a collectivity.

## Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. 1996 [1969]. *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster. London: Verso.
- Bilous, Marlene. 1973. *Community Development on Fogo Island: A Socio-economic Analysis*. Ottawa: Department of Regional Economic Expansion, mimeo.
- Braun, Bruce. 2002. *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Brown, G.A. 1968. *A Brief History of Joe Batt's Arm*. mimeograph, Maritime History Group, available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Carter, Roger Alexander. 1984. *The Fogo Island Co-Operative: An Alternative Development Strategy?* M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Chaulk, Cyril R. 1969. *Growth and Development of Fogo, Twillingate & Dependencies*. mimeograph, Maritime History Group, available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.

- Crocker, Stephen. 2008. "Filmmaking and the Politics of Remoteness: The Genesis of the Fogo Process on Fogo Island, Newfoundland," *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Studies* 2, 1: 59-75.
- Cull, Sharon. 1988. *An Ethnographic Study of the Community Joe Batt's Arm, with Particular Reference to the Changes Following Resettlement in the 1960s*. honours dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- DeWitt, Robert L. 1969. *Public Policy and Community Protest: The Fogo Case*. St. John's: ISER Books.
- Dwyer, Allan. 1989. *An Economic Profile of Fogo Island Planters and the Slade Merchant Company, 1785-1805*. M.A. thesis, McGill University.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1999 [1900]. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J.K. 1996. *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 1920. *Rules and Regulations Made under the Codfish Exportation Act: Also rules and regulations relating to the standardization of codfish, and including proceedings of the convention for Licensed Codfish Exporters*. St. John's: Centre of Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University.
- Greene, Donal J. 1960. *Tilting*. mimeograph, Maritime History Group, available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Greene, John Carrick. 2003. *Of Fish and Family: Family Trees and Family Histories of Tilting, Set against the Background of Historical Developments in the Newfoundland Fisheries, 1700-1940*. St. John's: Triumphant Explorations.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- Innis, Harold. 1978 [1940]. *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Introduction to Fogo Island*. 1968. Colin Low, dir. National Film Board of Canada, in collaboration with Memorial University of Newfoundland. At: < [http://collections.mun.ca/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT+/extserv&CISOPTR=136&CISOBX=1&REC=10](http://collections.mun.ca/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT+/extserv&CISOPTR=136&CISOBX=1&REC=10)>.
- Iverson, Noel, and Ralph Matthews. 1967. *Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland*. St. John's: ISER Books.
- Li, Tania Murray. 2000. "Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 1: 149-79.
- Low, Colin. 2010 [1984]. "Grierson and Challenge for Change (1984)," in Thomas Waugh, Ezra Winton, and Michael Brendan Baker, eds., *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary and the National Film Board of Canada*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Marin, Clive. 1974. *Fogo Island*. Pittsburgh: Dorrance and Co.
- McCay, Bonnie. 1976. *"Appropriate Technology" and Coastal Fishermen of Newfoundland*. Ph.D dissertation, Columbia University.
- Mellin, Robert. 1990. "Folk Housing in Tilting, Fogo Island, Newfoundland," Ph.D dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
- . 2003. *Tilting: House Launching, Slide Hauling, Potato Trenching, and Other Tales from a Newfoundland Fishing Village*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Architectural Press.

- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techo-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Newhook, Susan. 2009. "The Godfathers of Fogo: Donald Snowden, Fred Earle and the Roots of the Fogo Island Films, 1964-1967," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 24, 2: 171-98.
- Pickett, Patrick. 1992. *A History, Town of Fogo, Newfoundland, 1728-1992*. Fogo, Nfld.: Seaside Retired Citizens Club.
- Prowse, D.W. 2007 [1895]. *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial and Foreign Record*, 2nd ed. Portugal Cove, Nfld.: Boulder Publishing.
- Quarry, Wendy. 1984. "Interview with Donald Snowden," in *National Council of Developmental Communication: Issue Dedicated to Donald Snowden*. Available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Resnick, Stephen, and Richard Wolff. 1987. *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schumacher, E.F. 1973. *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Sheppard, Manson H. 1972. *A Brief History of the Fogo Island Shipbuilding and Producer's Cooperative*. mimeograph, available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Sider, Gerald. 1993. *Lumbee Indian Histories: Race, Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Southern United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2003 [1986]. *Between History and Tomorrow: Making and Breaking Everyday Life in Rural Newfoundland*. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press. (Expanded version of *Culture and Class in Anthropology: A Newfoundland Illustration*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.)
- Skinner, Quentin. 1999. "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3: 60-73.
- Snowden, Donald. 1965. *The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland: An ARDA Study of Co-operative Organization from the Viewpoint of Industrial and Social Development*. St. John's: Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Story, George M., W.J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds. 1982. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. At: <[www.heritage.nf.ca/dictionary/d2ction.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/dictionary/d2ction.html)>.
- Wadel, Cato. 1969a. *Community and Committees: Community Development and the Enlargement of the Sense of Community on Fogo Island, Newfoundland*. St. John's: Extension Service, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- . 1969b. *Marginal Adaptations and Modernization in Newfoundland: A Study of Strategies and Implications in the Resettlement and Redevelopment of Outport Fishing Communities*. St. John's: ISER Books, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Wells, Karen. 2011. "Marking a New Beginning," *Lewisporte Pilot*, 9 Mar. At: <[http:// www.1portepilot.ca/News/2011-03-09/article-2314977/Marking-a-new-beginning/1](http://www.1portepilot.ca/News/2011-03-09/article-2314977/Marking-a-new-beginning/1)>.
- Wheeler, Annie. 1994. *Cherished Memories*. mimeograph, available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Williams, Raymond. 1961. *The Long Revolution*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Witcher, Eric. 1969. *History of Barr'd Islands*. mimeograph, Maritime History Group, available at Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.