

When State says Yes, but Country says No – localizing a conflict in a globalized world

A case study of motivation and perceptions of change through participation in the
campaign against the Browse LNG Precinct, Australia

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Abstract

In the wake of the state government of Western Australia presenting a plan to develop a liquefied natural gas precinct, a campaign was sparked, drawing Aboriginal peoples, community members, ‘outsiders’ and environmental groups to vocally question the intentions of the proponents through on-site blockades and the social media. This thesis presents a case study of arguments and motivations for people to engage in the campaign, and perceived changes from this engagement. The material was gathered through ethnographic field work with the campaign and interviews with participants. Based on a politics of place, social movement theory and interview material, the campaign is identified as a ‘localized transnational resistance’ movement. Further, using theories of political ecology and environmental subjectivity, I argue that through different forms of motivators to engage in the campaign, the people in it construct a new sense of place among the participants. Also, it is argued that through the agenda of the state of Western Australia with regards to this project, some people have reacted with an increased environmental awareness as a sort of ‘shock response’.

Keywords: political ecology, politics of place, social movements, environmental subjects, development, self-determination, Aboriginals, Australia.

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1. Introduction

Broome, a small tourist and pearling town of approximately 17 000 inhabitants¹, resting on the coast of the Timor Sea of the Indian Ocean ca 2 200 km from Perth and ca 1 900 km from Darwin, in the north-west of the state of Western Australia (See Figure 1), is going through changes. The state government of Western Australia (led by the Liberal Premier² Colin Barnett), along with the commercial proponents (led by Woodside, but also consisting of BHP Billiton, BP, Chevron and Shell – all major gas and oil developers) are intent on constructing the Browse liquefied natural gas (LNG) precinct (or gas hub) at James Price Point, 50 km north of Broome (See Figure 2). Even though there is an official agreement signed with a group of traditional owners³, the resistance within some Aboriginal factions, parts of the Broome community, and other interest groups has only grown stronger as the decision process has developed. The anger has mainly been directed at Woodside and Colin Barnett, the most public proponents. The conflict culminated on 6 July 2011 – termed ‘Black Tuesday’ by the opposition – when riot police from all over Western Australia were flown in to break up a 30 day blockade set up by the campaign.⁴ However, after the Black Tuesday, the campaign has continued with non-violent direct actions in Broome and on country⁵. A conflict like this can be seen as an explicit node for a multitude of factors important to the academic field of human ecology; it gathers issues of scale, politics, science, power, culture, and sustainability in a mélange of voices, discourses and practices. There are dynamics that stretch from the local community, through the state and federal governments, to the global gas market, all of which shape the features and outcomes of the conflict.

I travelled to Broome to with the intention to conduct research on the relation between the Aboriginal opposition and environmental organizations in the campaign against the gas hub. But when I arrived on country, I found myself drawn to the question of why the people where there at all, and why they displayed such passion for this area. At first appearance they are there to protect this country from what, in their eyes, is harmful industrial development. And, in a way, many of the catch-phrases used by individuals with regards to conservation and the environment are “too resonant with prevailing

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *regional population growth, Australia*. Released 20 March 2012

² By ‘premier’ I refer to the head of the state government. Australia is a federal parliamentary monarchy divided into six states and two territories, and each has their own parliament, government and premier. Overarching this is the federal parliament and government, where Labor party Julia Gillard is currently prime minister of Australia.

³ Traditional owners are the group or groups of indigenous people historically residing and/or responsible for the continuation of cultural practice and law in an area.

⁴ Nicholas Perpetch and Lauren Wilson, “Arrest as angry locals take on Woodside” in *The Australian*. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/arrests-as-angry-locals-take-on-woodside/story-fn59niix-1226088397171>. Accessed 26 April 2012

⁵ In Australia, the term ‘country’ alludes to a specific tract of land, and the sense of land that emanates from there (Briggs 2007, 408), in this case the area where the gas hub is intended to be built.

rhetoric around environmental conservation to sound original”, as Arun Agrawal reflects in his study on environmental subjects. But”, he continues, “to dismiss them because they are being repeated by many others would be to miss completely the enormously interesting, complex, and crucial, but understudied, relationship between changes in government and related shifts in environmental practices” (2005, 2). He defines environmental subjects as those “for whom the environment constitutes a critical domain of thought and action” (2005, 16) Hence, subjectivity in this sense is based on both thought and action: there is an important relation between discourses and perceptions on the one hand, and action and practice on the other; in this thesis I focus on discourse and perception. My hope is that with the help of this work, I can point to and highlight the diversity of ideas expressed by the people constituting the campaign, as well as show how internal and external dynamics shape subjectivity.

My research questions thus developed during my field work to cover two main areas of inquiry; 1) *how do people motivate their engagement in the campaign against the gas hub?* and 2) *what are their perceptions of how this engagement has affected them, and how can this be interpreted?* I believe these questions to be important to research, in order to develop an understanding that reaches beyond the official discourses developed by the campaigners. It is my contention that the field of human ecology can be understood as a certain methodology in understanding people and their surroundings in an academic context. However, it could also be understood as an awareness and sensitivity for the human-environmental interaction and dynamic in any set of questions that one asks, potentially stretching beyond the realm of academia.

I will present different arguments and motivators in categories, to clarify the different discourses that people display. I have divided the interviews into the following categories: *political/ideological, environmental, social, cultural, and spiritual*. These categories serve as an analytical tool to understand the different motives and motivations that people display for entering into the campaign, and why they do not want the development to go ahead. Arturo Escobar (2001, 2006, 2008) discusses notions of place-making and a politics of place as a localizing resistance to the (seemingly) all-encompassing rhetoric and practice of the global market (see below). I wish to show through the presentation of my data, *how* this place-making is expressed by members of the campaign, and as noted above, I focus on the aspects of expressions of perceptions. I believe that this can serve to highlight the diverse and deep sets of meanings and values that the participants attribute to the country and the campaign itself, and the very personal connections that people attach to the campaign and country.

Outline of the thesis

After the introduction, I present a brief background to the conflict, including the main argument for and against the development of the gas hub, and an outline of the opposition. I then discuss the theoretical framework through which I have interpreted the conflict, analyzed the data and written this thesis. In this section I also present and discuss related research, to situate my work in a broader scholarly context.

I then turn to the presentation of my fieldwork and the material that I have gathered and which constitute the core of my findings. First, I discuss methodological reflections and implications which have guided my research and writing processes. Then, in the chapter on the presentation of material and findings, I present different motivating aspects that I have distinguished, and construct a set of categories to which I claim that most of the discourse of the participants can be assigned to, and analyze these with the help of a theory of politics of place, mainly derived from Arturo Escobar's various works. I also present and analyze material related to the participants' perception of change, stemming from the engagement with the campaign. This section I analyze with the help of Agrawal's notion of environmental subjectivity. Finally, I conclude the thesis with a discussion tying together the research questions with my findings, and suggest vantage points for further research.

2. Into 'the last wilderness' – a context and background to the conflict

The Kimberley is a region that not many Australians actually get to, but that is sort of burned into our national DNA. Like the Barrier Reef and Kakadu, it is a place of natural wonders so rich and fragile that we dare not risk interference (Stevens 2011).

There is a persistent view of the Kimberley as a place ripe for exploiting, in whatever way possible, for the financial benefit of the rest of Australia and the world. It is variously seen as a food bowl, a new mining frontier or a huge reservoir from which to pipe water to an increasingly dry, populated south (Laurie 2010, 235).

Presented above are two very different views of the Kimberley related to the imaginary of the region at large. In a column in *the Australian* Stevens (2011) points out the idealizing aspects of how people relate to the area, whilst Laurie in her book *The Kimberley: Australia's Last Great Wilderness* (2010), highlights the different economic projects that have been carried out or planned for the region. Here the disparity between idea and practice is elucidated. However, no matter of how the Kimberley has

been thought of, used or developed, a fact remains that it is a very remote region, with very few inhabitants. The Kimberley covers 440 000 km² of the Australian main continent, and with 35 700 Inhabitants⁶, the Kimberley has a population density of one person per 12,5 km². First settled by Aboriginal groups at least 30,000 years ago (O'Connor 1999), the Kimberley region was the last region in Australia to be permanently colonized and settled by Europeans, and at the time of their arrival there existed between 30 and 60 language groups (McGregor 2004) and up to 30,000 inhabitants in the Kimberley (Yu 1994).

The first pastoral station – large parcels of land leased to white cattle owners to keep their herds – was established in 1882, more than a hundred years after the continent was claimed by James Cook to the British crown, and fifty odd years after the whole of Australia was ‘claimed’ as a colony by the British Empire. From the establishment of a cattle industry until the 1960’s, the pastoral stations were the hubs of the economic and social life of the Kimberley (Smith 2003).⁷ While Aboriginal culture and community continued to exist outside the pastoral system, gradually from the beginning of the 20th century, Aboriginals came to be centered around the pastoral stations (Jebb 2002) and Christian missions (Yu 1994), in a highly asymmetric relation with the white minority. Beginning at the end of the 1960’s however, a combination of economic and political processes and policies pushed Aboriginals from the vanishing pastoral stations and missions, to become fringe dwellers (in both a physical and social sense of the expression) of the major communities in the Kimberley (Jebb 2002; McGregor 2004; Smith 2003).

While holding a special place in many Australians’ minds as being unspoilt and pristine, the Kimberley has long been exploited for different purposes by the colonizing settlers, beginning with the use of grazing land and a brief gold rush in the 1880’s (Yu 1994), through diamond mining⁸ and with an abundance of minerals and coal and gas deposits in the ground (ACIL Tasman and Worley Parsons 2005). Besides being rich in land-based resources, in the Timor Sea offshore hydrocarbon reserves are also abundant. Discovered in the 1970’s, but lying dormant due to a lack in profitability and technological capacities, they have now been deemed ripe for extraction and export to the East Asian markets. The natural gas is to be processed onshore by piping it from underneath the sea bottom, and then shipped off to importers overseas.

⁶ Kimberley Development Commission, population estimate as of 2010,

⁷ Along with the establishment of pastoral stations came the demand for unpaid labor, hence began the systematic disruption of presettlement life (O'Connor 1999, 8). Apart from the stealing and fencing off of land for the people who had traditionally lived there the resettlement onto pastoral stations and subsequent forced labor of Aboriginals, coupled with the abduction of Aboriginal children (the so-called ‘Stolen Generation’) to be put in the hands of Christian missions or white families were some of the hardest blows to the indigenous’ way of life before colonization.

⁸ Rio Tinto owns the Argyle diamond mine, one of the worlds’ largest producer of diamonds:
<http://www.argylediamonds.com.au/index.html>

The state government intends to create a multi-user precinct, as the Department of State Development (DSD) considered that “it is inevitable that unless one west Kimberley onshore location of suitable area to accommodate multiple developers is identified, ad hoc proposals for development sites will continue to be made well into the future” (Department of State Development 2010, ES-15). They researched different locations where to construct the gas hub, and on December 23 2008, the state announced James Price Point as the preferred location for the development. The executive summary states assessments concluded that “while a Kimberley site may cause marginally higher net environmental and heritage impacts than site options outside the region, it was most attractive based on technical and economic considerations” (Department of State Development 2010, ES-16).

The reason for me briefly introducing the history of the Kimberley since colonization is a conviction that it is imperative to understand the roots of the current situation. Also, though ‘colonialism’ is a common cover term for the processes which indigenous populations all over the world have been subjected to by various imperial powers, the colonial context needs to be described and analyzed for each region and locality, as the patterns of colonialism differ in each context (Burman 2009, 126). Thus in order to understand the official rhetoric and policies adopted to improve the Aboriginal population’s economic position, this situation needs a historic and social context. Indigenous citizens of Australia generally make out a socio-economic disadvantaged group, where labor participation, education and life-expectation are significantly lower among the indigenous population than the non-indigenous, and the relative income status has decreased since 1996 (Altman, Biddle, and Hunter 2009). Given these inequalities, the proposed gas hub is put forward by proponents as the savior for the Aboriginal population in the Kimberley. To illuminate the rhetoric I will continue with a brief presentation of the arguments for and against the proposed development.

State says Yes – differing views on ‘development’

“This is the biggest act of self-determination for Aboriginal people in Australian history.”

- Colin Barnett, Premier of Western Australia⁹

“I don’t think they should have to hand over or sign over their land and rights, for education, health and housing services.”

- PH, member of the Broome No Gas Community Group¹⁰

Before presenting some of the arguments on each side of the gas hub conflict, I need to point out that these are complex and interrelated in ways that may not allow me to venture deeper into them, as that

⁹ Quoted in an interview between Mark Colvin and Colin Barnett in the program “PM” on 6 Dec 2011 - <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2011/s3385018.htm>

¹⁰ PH 120122

is beyond the scope of this thesis. Parts of the community in and around Broome support the development, in the hope that it will bring employment and rising house prices, which would allow home owners to sell or sublet their houses during the construction phase. This is the most labor intense process, and there are expectations of between 2 500 to 6 000 workers required during the years it would take to build the precinct, along with other infrastructure, such as roads and housing for workers (Department of State Development 2010, ES-25).

After negotiations and a voting process among the *Goolarabooloo* and *Jabbir Jabbir* Aboriginal groups the Kimberley Land Council, on behalf of the Native Title claimants, signed a Native Title Agreement on 30 June 2011¹¹. The Department of State Development, the commercial proponents (Woodside) and the Kimberley Land Council claim that the compensation deal struck between the traditional owners and the gas companies is the only credible way out of poverty and disadvantage for the indigenous communities of the Kimberley. The deal, which involves royalty payments in the numbers of AUS \$1,5 billion (approximately €1,2 billion), the largest ever signed between traditional owners and resource companies in the history of Australia, is hailed by some as the way forward to indigenous self-determination. However, this deal has been heavily criticized, partly because the long-term social benefits of royalty payments to Aboriginals as a compensation for signing away control over traditional land remains questioned (Altman 2009), but also because the negotiation process is seen by the opposition as unfair and biased from the outset. This critique stems in part from the notice of compulsory acquisition by the Department of State Development, which led former KLC director Wayne Bergman to proclaim that they were negotiating with the state and commercial proponents “with a gun to our head”.¹² However, the KLC have been consistently supportive of the gas development, and this has led to critique that instead of representing the wishes of the Native Title claimants, the organization has pursued its own agenda. Conflicts within the claimant groups have led to the *Goolarabooloo* filing a separate Native Title claim, which however has not yet been accepted by the National Native Title Tribunal, on the grounds that the native title area wasn’t sufficiently identified, and that there is already another claim group.¹³

Along with the announcement of the chosen location for the development in 2008, Premier Barnett also announced the intention that, should the Native Title claimants not negotiate an agreement within six months, a process of compulsory acquisition would be initiated, which would mean that should the Native Title claimants vote against letting up their land in exchange for economic compensation, the

¹¹ KLC website, accessed 2012-04-28: <http://klc.org.au/2011/06/30/traditional-owners-sign-james-price-point-agreement/>

¹² As quoted in ABC’s *Four Corners* show “Rush To Riches”, originally aired 21 June 2010.
http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/special_ed/20100621/kimberley/

¹³ The National Native Title Tribunal is the federal agency registering and arbitrating Native Title matters. WC 11-1:
http://www.nntt.gov.au/applications-and-determinations/registration-test/pages/wa_-_registration_decision_-_wc11_1-1_goolarabooloo_families.aspx

state has the legal right to compulsory acquire the land, potentially leaving the traditional owners without any compensation at all. The primary Aboriginal entity that the state and Woodside have been negotiating with is the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), the Aboriginal organization granted the judicial rights to negotiate Native Title issues for the different groups of the Kimberley, by acting as representatives for the Native Title claimants of the area, which are the *Goolarabooloo* and *Jabirr Jabirr* Aboriginal groups. ‘Native Title’ is the recognition by the common legal system in Australia that there are traditional owners who can claim “native title” to a certain area, on grounds of proving ‘connection’ (in forms of both lineage and continued cultural practices) to the times of colonization and annexation of the land by the British crown. The *Mabo* Case in the Australian High Court effectively refuted the notion of Australia as “terra nullius” – the legal fiction that Australia at the time of colonization was in effect ‘empty land’.¹⁴ If no one ‘improved’ the land ‘properly’ (i.e. enclosing it for agriculture), then there was never any theft of land, and hence no land to return to its traditional owners; thus paving the way for justification of the racist policies of the white Australian system. Whilst the following legislation, the Native Title Act (1993) (NTA) was an important act of recognition, and initially carried with it hopes of reconciliation, progressive collaboration, and Aboriginal self-determination, in many instances it has brought disappointment, as the expectations has not always matched the realities that Aboriginal groups encountered, especially when cases have involved urban areas or control over mineral resources (Banerjee 2000; Smith and Morphy 2007). The NTA has had, and continues to have, a profound effect on the social realities of the diverse indigenous groups of Australia (cf. Smith and Morphy 2007).¹⁵

Thus, a main argument voiced by the opposition is the legitimacy of the decision and negotiation process. Whilst the voting amongst the native title claimant group delivered a vote in favor of the development, claims of ‘extortion’ through the notice of compulsory acquisition by the DSD have been made. As one campaigner put it: “Basically they were told ‘you have the right to negotiate, but you can’t say no. If you do say no, you get nothing, so you better say yes, and you get money.’ I mean, what would you say?”¹⁶ Related to the compulsory acquisition, the WA Supreme Court decided in December 2011 that the notice to take land filed by the state was invalid; however not on the grounds of the voting process, but that the area designated to be acquired was not properly defined. The opposition claims that this necessitates the re-starting of the negotiations, as any potential agreement should be signed under the new terms, whilst Premier Barnett says that it has no practical effect but that the DSD re-applies the notice to take the land.¹⁷

¹⁴ For more on the Mabo decision and terra nullius, see e.g. Connor (2005); Russell (2005)

¹⁵ For more on Native Title issues, see also Sutton (2003); Toussaint (2006); Bartlett (1993)

¹⁶ GJ 120119

¹⁷ Ben Collins, “Disagreement over impact of Supreme Court decision on James Price Point traditional owner gas deal”, 6 Dec 2011 in *ABC*. <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/12/06/3384858.htm>

The rhetoric of the proponents of the development with regards to Aboriginal groups is situated within the discourse of self-determination, as mentioned above. After the abandonment of the official policy of assimilation of Aboriginals into white society, from the late 1970's and onward self-determination has been the reigning paradigm in official Aboriginal policy. It is based on the idea that indigenous people are going to be able to make their own choices about their own future, and ensure independency from the 'welfare colonialism' of the past (Cowlshaw 1988; Yu 1994; Morris 1988). Combined with the ideology of neoliberalism, self-determination has the past few decades been based on the conviction that individual and market-based solutions are the way out of social and economic marginalization for indigenous Australians (Walter 2010, 123). Throughout the thesis I understand neoliberalism as the economic policies dominating the capitalist countries since the late 1980's, broadly defined by deregulation, privatization and the belief in market forces' superiority over the Keynesian welfare state (Larner 2000), but also an individualistic focus in social policies (Bauman 2002, 55 - 72).

A problem with the idea of self-determination is that liberty has its limits. And Aboriginal liberty especially, is circumscribed by a hegemonic culture and society, where usually only certain choices are deemed by the government as being positive for Aboriginal self-determination, and should the traditional owners, for example, say no to signing away their land, then notices of compulsory acquisition awaits around the corner. Also, self-determination has, when it has been politically suitable, also been blamed for any failures with regards to indigenous policies (Walter 2010). As Cowlshaw writes "the claim that Aboriginal groups were to ask for and get what they wanted disguised the obvious fact that only certain things could be requested. . . . but the limits on what the bureaucracy could provide were not spelled out" (1988, 101). Seldom are other ways of knowing the world allowed in the debate, and this is problematic when discussing vaguely defined concepts such as self-determination. For Aboriginal self-determination is only accepted when they (as individuals or groups) determine their selves to the main paradigm of thought, i.e. western capitalistic mode of life (Banerjee 2000; Briggs 2007).

One of the arguments by the oppositon against the gas hub is the linkage between Aboriginality, physical surrounding and the intimate knowledge of its mythology and use. By Aboriginality, I refer to the identification by people as Aboriginal, a cultural process which involves both internal (Aboriginal) and external (hegemonic culture) referents.¹⁸ The existence of a songline (or song cycle) running through this tract of land carries with it cultural significance that is a major part of Aboriginal mythology and ontology. In short, a songline is a route along which Aboriginals follows the dreamtime (called *Bugarrigarra* in this area of Australia) and the dreamtime ancestors and their spirits

¹⁸ For more on discussions of Aboriginality, see e.g. Beckett (1988); Muecke (1992)

and sing their creation of the world, thus both mapping it (in ways of learning the geography, biology, use and the taxonomy of the land) and, in a way, recreating it over and over again (Chatwin 1987), as well as learning culture and law through exercising these traditions. As cultural knowledge and connection is linked to the landscape (encompassing land, water, sky and life), to disrupt a part of the song cycle would mean disrupting all of it, in that it will be severed. Several anthropological and archaeological reports have been conducted in the area (a procedure that is required by the Aboriginal Heritage Act of 1972 (WA) (AHA) whenever any development is intended in WA), and they assert the major significance of the song cycle area, both for Aboriginal culture and tradition, as well as a broader cultural heritage perspective (see e.g. Bradshaw and Fry 1989; O'Connor, Quartermaine, and Nyanya 1989). In recognition to its importance, parts of this song cycle was included in the *Lurujarri* Heritage Trail in 1988, a walking trail along which the *Goolarabooloo* take family as well as non-Aboriginal people to walk and learn about the land, as a part of an ideology of reconciliation between white and Aboriginal people in modern Australia, expressed by *Goolarabooloo* progenitor Paddy Roe.

Other arguments against the development are based on cultural and scientific significance of ancient dinosaur prints,¹⁹ social impacts on the town of Broome (such as domestic violence, suicides, abuse, overcrowding²⁰), and the corporate social responsibility of the commercial proponents, and environmental impacts, on the marine biodiversity especially. Environmental motivations and arguments constitute a central part of the campaign rhetoric; the proposal would doubly affect the environment; globally through increased CO₂ emission, and locally through the physical impact on the marine and terrestrial ecosystems, as well as air pollutants, as well as changes in local activities and possibilities related to the local environment. Efforts have been made by the campaign (The Wilderness Society et al. 2011) to counter and debase the *Strategic Assessment Report* compiled by the DSD (Department of State Development 2010). For example, the people at *Walmadan*, with the help of Environs Kimberley conducted a community-based scientific survey of turtles nesting on the shores north and south of the Point itself; “one of the goals was to find evidence, because Woodside did a survey and did some research on turtles and on all the environmental things that impacted their work here. . . . In their research they only found one turtle nest. . . . We needed some like, evidence, to sort of counter-prove that,”²¹ says one of the people responsible for the survey, because people who reside along the coast claim that there are many more turtles than that. The same kind of community survey was done with regards to humpback whales, who migrate and breed along the Kimberley coast (Cecarelli et al. 2011).

¹⁹ Victoria Laurie, 27 Aug 2011 “Dinosaur tracks fuel opposition to \$35bn gas project near Broome” in *the Weekend Australian Magazine*, accessed 16 Apr 2012, www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/dinosaur-tracks-fuel-opposition-to-35bn-gas-project-near-broome/story-e6frg8h6-1226122981105

²⁰ Louise Middleton 120112

²¹ TT 111219

Arguments of legitimacy arise from each side of the conflict, where each flank tries to renounce the other. The main argument to delegitimize the campaign by the proponents of the gas hub is 1) that the *Goolarabooloo* don't have the right to speak for country since they are not the traditional owners (see below), and 2) that this is an Aboriginal issue, that shouldn't involve non-Aboriginals and 'outsiders'. On the other hand, the opposition tries to delegitimize the proponents by saying that 1) the state is acting undemocratically towards Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike, and 2) that the commercial proponents, mainly identified as Woodside, lack the corporate social responsibility to legitimately proceed with the project.

Country says No - A brief description of the campaign

The campaign against the Browse LNG Precinct, or gas hub, is not too easily pinned down. At the time when I was conducting my field work, the campaign was based in three localities in and around Broome, except for the nationwide work through the social media and the Wilderness Society. First there was Broome, where meetings took place and demonstrations and rallies were held. Second, *Walmadan*, a camp that is based around an Aboriginal camp site and a part of the *Lurujarri* Heritage Trail, and lies where the port facilities for the gas hub are intended to be constructed. As one person says: "we're physically in their way, to stop them from getting through that. So we have a big strategic position in that way. And it's also for surveillance, to watch what they're doing."²² The third position was Black Tank, or *Inalbaldigoon*; the site where Black Tuesday took place, and where campaigners routinely stopped the construction convoys. However, Black Tank was dismantled in December 2011 in preparation for the wet season.

Although the non-hierarchical structure of the campaign is often forefronted, Joseph Roe, the senior law boss for the *Goolarabooloo*, can be seen as the formal head of the campaign at large; he is the current senior custodian of Aboriginal law and culture – i.e. the one who holds the cultural knowledge about Aboriginal law and practice in this country where the proposed gas hub is meant to be built. The country in which the James Price Point lies is historically *Ngumbarl* country, which has later been incorporated into the area of the *Jabirr Jabirr* group; thus there are two Aboriginal groups claiming connection to the country under conflict. The *Goolarabooloo*, with Joseph Roe at its front, have consistently been vocally opposed to the development, whilst many - but certainly not all - *Jabirr Jabirr* have been in favor of it. Hence, the *Goolarabooloo* is the core Aboriginal group who oppose the gas, and they are the ones who have been construed by media and campaigners alike as the rallying point around which the opposition has gathered, as can be seen in comments such as these: "Even

²² NA 111214

though, you know, a lot of people in this campaign aren't indigenous or whatever, but I feel like we're all sort of under the Goolarabooloo umbrella."²³ Other Aboriginal opposition to the gas comes from people who are traditional owners in nearby country (in Broome, the Dampier Peninsula and the Kimberley) as well as Aboriginal academics and politicians.

Apart from the Aboriginal opposition, there is a significant non-Aboriginal element constituting the campaign. The town of Broome and its surrounding is where the gas hub is being contested on the ground, and many townspeople have rallied to the opposition against the gas. There is the Broome No Gas Community Group, a loosely organized group for 'concerned community members', who are not directly affiliated with any political or ideological group. Environmental groups have also mounted resistance and helped gain attention to the issue. Environs Kimberley is the local environmental group; they are only working with environmental issues concerning the Kimberley. The Wilderness Society is a nationwide environmental non-governmental organization (eNGO), working a lot with lobbying the media and politicians on a state and national level. There are also prominent public profiles who have stated their support for the opposition; among them are musicians John Butler, Missy Higgins, Paul Kelly and the Pigram Brothers. A significant amount of the campaign is directed through social media and other information channels. Individuals in the campaign are vividly blogging about and documenting the campaign, and there have been art shows in Broome to raise public awareness around the issue, as well as continuous video production. Also, Katherine Muir at the University of Adelaide is currently writing on the community action, personal stands and social media representations (Muir 2012).

3. Theoretical framework

I suggest that Australia can be broadly understood as both urban and remote, dry and waterlogged, densely and sparsely populated, and culturally plural and singular. Depending on one's vantage point and knowledge, Australia may also be described as both resource rich and impoverished, socially heterogeneous and homogeneous, politically conservative and liberal, and touched by and distant from the connections, disconnections, and disturbances evoked by globalizations. Within these broad descriptions, Australia is, of course, also many shades in between (Toussaint 2006, 226 - 227).

This quote provides a suggestion to the image that Australia often may attract and evoke; among its own population, but also the rest of the world. Australia is a land of divides – between ecosystems and cultures as well as populations and economies. It can on the one hand be seen as a rich First World nation state, but on the other a peripheral state of the world system. This relation is highlighted in the

²³ TT 111219

relation between the rural and the urban; the urban centers are loci for the core accumulation of wealth, whilst, in Western Australia specifically, the rural is marginalized through resource extraction. Just as much as it is a major political and economic power in the Pacific region, Australia is a resource frontier and an extractive economy; and much of these resources are extracted from land either owned or under claim by Aboriginal groups (Altman 2009).²⁴

The current events in the north-west of WA encompass many dimensions and scales of dynamics and forces interacting at both a local, regional and global scale. Here a parcel of land is being contested by everyone from the smallest to the biggest stakeholders; Aboriginal people and organizations, local townspeople, the state of Western Australia, and five multi-national energy companies, amongst others. At the same time, during my time in the field I quickly realized it is so much more than a parcel of land is being fought for; it is also what economic development path local Aboriginals, the town of Broome, Western Australia and even Australia as a nation shall take?

A political ecology framework

The contestations over land, resources, culture and politics can be understood within the framework of political ecology. Political ecology is not a unified theory, but can rather be seen as common areas of inquiry (Agrawal 2005, 209). In this thesis, however, my framework draws mainly upon Paulson and Gezon's presentation of political ecology. They identify four key articulations of political ecology: 1) the recognition that (unequal) social relations guide resource use in ways that are not necessarily benefitting the local and global environment, and 2) that there exists a plurality of rationalities, ideas, and interests in relation to the environment (Paulson and Gezon 2005, 2). As Escobar notes, "not only economic factors and ecological conditions, but cultural meanings, define the practices that determine how nature is appropriated and utilized" (2006, 124). Further, 3) the realization of global connectedness with regards to resource use and conflicts over it, and 4) is a "refined concept of marginality, in which political, economic, and ecological expressions may be mutually reinforcing" (Paulson and Gezon 2005, 2).

The controversy over the proposed gas hub at James Price Point incorporates all aspects introduced above as essential political ecological ontological standpoints: 1) the land use that the state and commercial proponents advocate would affect the local environment through marine and terrestrial infrastructure and transportation, and the global environment through CO₂ emissions. Whilst it is argued that this is worth doing for the benefits it would bring for Aboriginals, Broome and the state of WA, it will undoubtedly change the local environment, as well as the inhabitants' access to land and

²⁴ For more discussions on indigenous land claims, benefit sharing and competing resource interests, see Bartlett (1993); O'Faircheallaigh (2006, 2010); Wynberg, Schroeder, and Chennells (2009)

resources. 2) There is indeed a plurality of perceptions of the land use and in relation to the local and global environment, economy and society in the case of the James Price Point conflict, as the state and the commercial proponents see different forms of value in the region than do the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal opposition. 3) The global dynamics of the gas industry and economic relations between countries (specifically Australia and East Asia) are instrumental to the feasibility of the project from the investors' side (BernsteinResearch 2009; Copeland 2009). International relations, politics, and the energy market directly affect the extraction of gas and development of facilities such as the Browse LNG Precinct. 4) Through colonial resource relations, Aboriginals have suffered a cyclical nature of dispossession (Toussaint 1995, 101). S.B. Banerjee notes that "as the recent history of Aboriginal land rights in Australia indicates, there are significant continuities from past colonial relations and practices into present-day land-rights issues" (2000, 7). Also, indigenous peoples have historically been dispossessed of both rights to hold and speak for land, as well as articulations of ways of knowing the land. Relations between knowledge and power play a big role in these kinds of conflicts (Mignolo 2000).

Further, Paulson and Gezon stress the importance of scales. Place and space, local and global, are bound together through people and networks; differences and inequalities in local environments are produced and mediated through the interactions of capital, institutions, governance and individuals' agency (2005, 7 - 10). Through the relations and processes presented above, in the conflict over the James Price Point the global and the local become (and have been since the offset of the modern/colonial world system (Mignolo 2000)) two sides of the same coin. However, it is not a unidirectional flow of influence, as is often assumed; local places are not simply scenes where the theater of globalization is enacted, but are agents in shaping both the form that the local *and* the global take (see e.g. Escobar 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Hannerz 2002; Harcourt and Escobar 2005).

A theory of politics of place

Place can be seen as a 'lived and grounded space' (Escobar 2001, 156). Further, Stein (2006) writes that place can be understood as "bits of consciousness [and] an important part of the creation and sustenance of place. These subjective elements are mediated by human experience, whether real or imagined, concurrent or in memory" (60). Place is not only the physical features of the environment, but equally, or perhaps more important, is the cognitive aspects of place. One could say that places make people, just as much as people make place, and that place "introduces specificity and difference" (Benterrak, Muecke, and Roe 1996 [1984], 17). As the title of his article hints at, Escobar suggests that culture 'sits in places' (2001, 147); that is, local cultures are defined through the establishment and negotiations of boundaries (which are by no means static) that are intrinsically bound to the physical and mental localities in which these actions take place. Escobar continues by stating that "boundaries

and links to places are certainly neither natural nor fixed, and while boundaries do not exist in a ‘real’ sense, their construction is an important aspect of the active material and cultural production of place by groups of people that, while heterogeneous and diverse, do share the . . . here and now of social practice” (Escobar 2001, 152).

Here, I understand politics of place as a creative linkage between political theories of ecology, economy and movements on the one hand, and a phenomenological theory of place on the other. One should also understand a politics of place as place-based, but not place-bound (Escobar and Harcourt 2005, 5) In their book *Reading the Country: An Introduction to Nomadology*, Bentrak, Muecke and Roe also discuss a politics of place, and write that the concept of nomadism – the practices of living, thinking, acting within a nomadic life-style – should not be seen as a *lack* of western capitalistic models of life – but rather that it should be explained in the positive terms that it brings to its practitioners (1996 [1984], 244). I argue that the same goes for the campaign against the gas hub; it is not an opposite of ‘development’, rather it is a negotiation, a conscious dialogue (albeit in a heated-up discussion climate), and it brings with it many more aspects than just the political side of the conflict. I will use these theoretical vantage points presented above to analyze the way the campaign members I have interviewed construct their rhetoric around the locality that Broome, James Price Point and its surroundings constitute, as well as linkages to the global space, against which it is articulated.

Environmental subjects

An important theoretical concept for my thesis is Agrawal’s notion of environmental subjects, which I mentioned in the introduction. According to Agrawal, three distinctive but interrelated elements shaped the processes of what he calls ‘environmentality’, which refers to the governmentality of the environment, developed from the Foucauldian notion of governmentality (the government of government).²⁵ The three elements are: 1) new ways of knowing the surrounding environment (through changes in science and priorities), 2) regulatory communities/governmentalized localities (the decentralization of government to incorporate the local villages to control the surrounding forests), and 3) the making of environmental subjects, for whom the environment “constitutes . . . a conceptual category that organizes some of their thinking; it is also a domain in a conscious relation to which they perform some of their actions” (Agrawal 2005, 164). What I am explicitly concerned with in this thesis is the latter, the making of environmental subjects. Agrawal argues that in the case of Kumaon, India, the active government of ‘nature’ gave birth to the concept of the ‘environment’ (ibid, 202), and in extension, environmental subjectivity. The environment can be said to be relational, in that it is an entity with which we relate and conceptualize ourselves and our surrounding. In Agrawal’s

²⁵ Governmentality, in short, alludes to how “modern forms of power and regulation achieve their full effects not by forcing people into state-mandated goals but by turning them into accomplices” (Agrawal 2005, 217).

view, environmental subjects are a 'product' of governmentality and of dynamics of resistance and collaboration between local, regional and state actors.

The contemporary Australian society is already submerged in a discourse of the environment; however, environmental discourses and subjects continue to be formed and shaped throughout time. These discourses are formed through practices of governments (on all levels of society), eNGO's, corporations, institutions and citizens, and, I would argue, environments themselves. Subjects are posited in a matrix of power relations; they are neither entirely independent agents of their own free will, nor are they entirely products of their surrounding structures. Rather, they are in a constant dialectic between the dualism of structure and agency which constitutes society (Giddens 1984). Through this dialectic, different standpoints on environmental and political matters *are shaped by each other*. Agrawal writes that "processes around the environment always involve power/knowledges and subjectivities and area always mediated by institutions. Instead of a selective conceptual focus on 'politics', 'institutions' or 'subjectivities and *the* foundation of which to build an analysis of changing environmental relations it can be more fruitful to examine how these concepts shape each other and are themselves constituted" (2005, 203).

Even though the campaign uses rhetoric of the environment, it doesn't mean that all participants subscribe to or fit in the description of being environmental subjects. Further, one environmental subject is not identical to the next; if the environment constitutes a critical domain of thought and action, it is not defined *how* those thoughts and actions are expressed through each subject. However, there is also an element of collective identification around any certain issue. Agrawal also recognizes that environmental subjectivity can be co-constituted by the self-interests of individuals (165); it is thus not imperative that an active relation and engagement with the environment is some puritan altruism.

In this case study I focus explicitly on the 'subjectivities', i.e. the campaigners, but I posit them within a matrix of power/knowledges, politics, institutions and scales, and do not ignore the relational powers that they exhibit and effect over each other. Just like people and places are mutually constitutive of each other, so are the government and the governed/subjects.

There is, however, an analytical implication that the adaption of Agrawal's theory has and need be discussed. Agrawal presents a sociological and historical study which involves a quantification of environmental subjectivities, whereas I apply the concept on the campaigners based solely on interview material. Also, Agrawal's work covers more than a century of governmental/environmental policy and resistance/collaboration from the local communities, whereas my case study covers a bit

over seven years, including the history of the conflict. However, environmental subjects, I will argue, can be formed in a shorter time-span too, depending on the dynamics of the context.

The campaign as a social movement

In the thesis I will understand social movements as “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (Diani 1992, 2). As you may have noticed, I also use the words ‘campaign’ and ‘opposition’ interchangeably to describe the network which constitutes the movement against the gas hub. Much has been written on social movements in the last decades (cf. Goodman 2002; Johnston 2009). Following Goodman’s (2002, xv - xxiv) distinctions of social movements and protest strategies, I argue that the campaign can be broadly understood as one of ‘transnational resistance’ to global capitalism. He writes that transnational resistance movements “have not retreated into national or local enclaves [as ‘localist confrontation’ movements do], nor have they leapt into cosmopolitan globalism [as ‘globalist adaptation’ movements do]; instead, they have sought to construct forms of transnational resistance that bridge the national versus the cosmopolitan divide” (ibid, 2002, xxi). Using this perspective on social movements, and combining this with Escobar’s theories presented above and the material I present, I will in the conclusion argue for a redefinition of the campaign as a social movement.

It is also important to distinguish between reasons for joining a social movement, and the arguments that the campaign forefronts. E.g. the potential loss of biodiversity may be an important argument why the development of the gas hub should not go ahead, but the motivations for some individuals joining the campaign may have nothing at all to do with biodiversity issues. Tsing writes that social mobilizing is based on “negotiating more or less recognized differences in the goals, objects, and strategies of the cause”, and that “the point of understanding this is not to homogenize perspectives but rather to appreciate how we can use diversity as well as possible” (2005, x). This, I think, is paramount to understanding this campaign; it is not based on a single identity, or a single ideology. Rather, it is diverse in its constitution and how people identify with it. I understand the motivations of the people in the campaign not as a coherent whole, but bits and pieces of information and relations which people (re)construct, individually and collectively, into a manageable understanding and rationale of events and processes taking place near or far away (both mentally and physically), and ways of constructing a desirable path into the future. Another important aspect of the theoretical understanding of social expression is what Becker (1996) notes; that “we should not jump from the expression of a private thought to the conclusion that that thought determines the person’s actions in the situation to which it

might be relevant” (62). Thus, what people think and how they argue, is not by necessity correlated to how they act.

Both Benterrak, Muecke, and Roe (1996 [1984], 168 - 172) and Johnston (2009, 12) bring in the term ‘bricolage’ in their discussions of nomadic Aboriginality and social protest movements respectively. The term refers to the innovative practice of using the means at hand to produce a practical outcome. The campaign against the gas development can be seen as existing in between different layers of culture (e.g. subaltern and hegemonic), knowledges (Aboriginal and Western) and scales of power (local/regional/global), and the opposition employ any methods means of resistance available to the at a given moment. Through this, they apply the practice of ‘bricolage’ too, through individuals and as a collective use of social media (Muir 2012), and responses to different events and processes.

An analysis of a previous protest movement in Australia concerning cultural and environmental issues is provided by Banerjee (2000), who examines the colonial and post-colonial discourses surrounding the Jabiluka uranium mining project in Kakadu National Park in the mid-1990’s, where the Northern Territory government and commercial interests wanted to develop a uranium mine in a World Heritage listed national park and the home of remote Aboriginal communities. This project was met with fierce resistance from environmental and Indigenous groups, much like the James Price Point project. Banerjee says that the opposition to the Jabiluka mine development can be understood as constituting a ‘hybridity’, “a space [which I take to understand as both metaphorical and physical] that overcomes the separation of colonizer and colonized, a space that permits the negotiation of antagonistic situations, often a space to situate present day struggles” (Banerjee 2000, 6). I believe the notion of hybridity is a useful tool for understanding the relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals within the campaign. Further, relating to Shohat (1992), Banerjee criticizes the post-colonial discourse with regards to Fourth World peoples (a term sometimes used to refer to indigenous populations in colonial-settler states) who in a way have been ‘abandoned’ through the use of the *post*-colonial. The Fourth World peoples’ relation to the imperial/colonial power has merely been replaced by a permanent settler-colonial nation on what used to be their territory, and the continuation of colonial relations is thus swept under the rug. Banerjee suggest using the term ‘recolonization’²⁶ (ibid, 7) to identify the continuity of colonial relations in settler-nation states. Of course, the government of Australia (or any other permanently settled ‘recolonial’ state) cannot admit to an imagery of itself as a colonial power, but it remains that in settler-colonial nation-states, the past, present and future ownership of land of the colonists/settlers is founded on the taking of the land, despite any moral or legal rights to do so originally (Bartlett 1993, 37).

²⁶ A term employed by Aboriginal activist Jacqui Katona, one of the Aboriginal elders in the *Jabiluka* campaign.

4. Methods and Methodology

Due to a lack of time in the field, and limited space in the thesis, the picture I paint of the campaign and its participants will by necessity consist of more or less broad brush strokes. I was put in contact with the Goolarabooloo through anthropologist Nicholas Green, who first worked with the group more than 20 years ago, and I was given the opportunity to assist him on a trip to Broome. He was conducting a report on the ethnographic significance of the songline going along the coast through the *Walmadan*/James Price Point area, which has become the object of interest as ethnographic material relating to the current conflict over the area. I joined him in Broome and on country for two days in early November 2011, and was introduced to some people in the campaign, including *Goolarabooloo* members Frans Hoogland, Philip Roe and Richard Hunter.

At the end of November I returned on my own to Broome, and the field work I conducted was carried out over six weeks, from November 25th 2011, to January 23rd 2012, with a break over Christmas and New Year. When with the campaign before Christmas, I stayed for four weeks, mainly out on country, living in the camps; first at Black Tank, and then at *Walmadan*. I tried as much as possible to take part in the everyday activities at the camp, to properly submerge myself in the work that was carried out in the different camps. Apart from informal discussions and note taking, during this time I conducted 11 recorded interviews with 6 women and 5 men. I also attended a community rally against the gas in December, as well as a Broome Shire meeting where a number of legal issues relating to the construction sites were discussed. After New Year, I returned to Broome for just over two weeks, and stayed mainly in Broome, since the wet season had started and I wanted to research the town side of the campaign more thoroughly than I had the first time I was there. During my second field work visit I interviewed 6 women and 4 men, and participated in the first weekly “no gas meeting” of 2012.

The data I present in the thesis is almost exclusively from the recorded interviews that I conducted. The interview methodology was drawn mainly from James P Spradley’s *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979, 58 - 68). This included the elements of continuous explicit explanations of the purposes of the project, the recording of interviews and the formulation of open-ended questions. I adapted the questions with regards to who I was interviewing, but most importantly *where* I was interviewing them, as there is a difference between the campaign as it is lived and conducted in the camps on country and in Broome itself (interrelated as the sites and people are). I conducted a total of 16 semi-structured interviews with 18 persons, recorded with a digital recorder. These form my primary data, but I also draw upon informal discussions, telephone interviews and field notes. I tried consciously to speak to as diverse a group of people as possible, with regards to origin (Australian or foreigner, locals or ‘outsiders’), age, gender, and participation in the campaign. Of course the data I gathered is not any

kind of statistical representation of the cross-section of the group that opposes the gas hub, but by engaging as diverse a set of individuals as possible, I have been able to reflect more nuanced on the diversity within the campaign as a whole.

I did not spend a lengthy amount of time with the people in the campaign, and wasn't present for most of the time that the campaign has been going on, but still wanted to grasp some on how people have been affected by the campaign. Instead of trying to pinpoint an 'objective' notion of change, I ventured into the *perception* of change carried by the participants themselves. I asked open-ended questions such as "how do you feel that the campaign has affected you?" (See Appendix 2 – interview frames for more detail on the interviews). One fundamental epistemological assumption that ethnographic interviewing rests upon is that what people say has some kind of value as a tool for analysis. This is not to say that all that is said should be taken at face value, but without the assumption that what an interviewee says is relevant, then there is no point in doing interviews at all. Stein, on the geography of place, writes that "to fully understand a given behavior . . . a fundamental appreciation of the meaning it has for its participants is critical. This would include, of course, the meaning of the places in which behavior is enacted" (2006, 62). This guided me in my interest in trying to understand *how* people related to the area and town specifically.

A hard balance to strike, both on a theoretical level and in the field work, is between the uniqueness of an event, and its similarities with other processes around the world. Analytically, comparisons constitute an important aspect of human ecology (Geertz 1972, 23), but it is also crucial to analyze and understand the unique aspects of specific events or processes, in order to contextualize beyond simple generalizations, which at best generate inadequate explanations, and at worst misguided policies. With regards to transnational resistance movements the balance becomes another. The collaboration and comparisons with other situations similar to the James Price Point conflict can potentially prove a disservice to the opposition, as it risks undermining their main argument; the uniqueness of place, culture and environment that exists in and around Broome for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike. On the other hand, similarities and differences can help highlight, or downplay, certain elements that one wishes to show or hide.

As an analytic concept, I try to avoid using the term 'nature' as something entirely external to the social construction of our immediate and global surrounding (as many positivist realists would have it), because the polarizing dichotomy of nature vs. culture is an outdated socially constructed division which need abandoning if we are to deal properly with issues of environmental degradation in all its forms (Wallerstein et. al. 1996, 78). Also it is a distinction that certainly is not universal (Escobar 2001); For example, 'traditional' Aboriginal ontology and ways of constructing social life-worlds extend beyond the inter-human dimension and in to the landscape, and together with it the flora and

fauna (Graham 1999). However, whilst conducting fieldwork and interviews, I did not express my views on the nature-culture relation, as what is important in this case is the campaigners' view of themselves and the campaign, and not mine. The arguments over James Price Point are often framed in terms of nature and culture, where nature connotes the kind of untouched wilderness the Dampier Peninsula is seen as holding (and which in a way echoes the romanticized view of the history of Aboriginals as not 'touching' nature).

Issues of *representation*

The gender representation in my data is relatively well balanced, with a few more women present in the interviews and talks that I had with people. This reflects my general impression of the campaign as there being somewhat more women engaged, both in town and out on country. I am not applying a specific gender perspective in the thesis. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, analysis of gender roles in social protest movements carries relevance, especially connected with politics of place, and environmental issues (see e.g. Agrawal 2005, 211 - 214; Harcourt and Escobar 2005).

Although I have one recorded interview conducted with an Aboriginal campaigner, an issue that is evident in the data representation is the lack of Aboriginal voices in my interview material. Part of this relates to my own cultural (and personal) sensitivity. Having read about how many indigenous peoples have been (mis)treated/(mis)represented by anthropologists and scientists alike, for different purposes, made me more aware of my role as a researcher in relation to the Aboriginal participants than others, and therefore I sometimes found myself more reluctant to ask the Aboriginals which I spent time with outright for interviews. Therefore, the views of Aboriginality presented here, are mainly from the non-aboriginal campaigners whom I interviewed. Banerjee (2000, 3), informs us of the importance of scholarly awareness of the presentations of indigeneity in academic works, which also are *re-*presentations of indigenous peoples. Throughout the thesis I will try to be as clear as possible in clarifying who is speaking, who they are speaking for and about whom they are speaking.

A methodological choice which I made and want to defend, is the fact that I did not engage with any of the parties or people who are active supporters of the gas hub, such as the Kimberley Land Council (KLC) or the Woodside office in Broome. While this begs to question any potential skew in the presentation of the issue, I must make this perfectly clear; this is not an attempt at a 'neutral' account of the events, neither the ones that I have partaken in, nor the historical development of the conflict. First off, I, both as a person and a researcher, bring with me my bias and ideological baggage, which if I would try to claim neutrality would sink any theoretical argumentation the moment it left the harbor. Also, as an epistemological benchmark ethnography is concerned with the lived and experienced realities of the people which we as scholars conduct fieldwork with, and about, and according to

Becker (1996) “the nearer we get to the conditions in which they [the participants] actually do attribute meanings to objects and events, the more accurate our descriptions of those meanings are likely to be” (58), and since my interest rested with personal experiences and impressions in a politically sensitive environment such as the campaign against the gas hub at James Price Point, I had to make sure that the people with whom I spent my time could trust me, both as a person, and with regards to my research intentions. Therefore I chose actively *not* to engage with Woodside, the KLC, or any other pro-gas party.

In order to present the findings in a somewhat organized state, and to illuminate the diversity of issues involved for the people I interviewed and talked to, I introduce categories of motivators under which I argue that most arguments can be filed. I use the word ‘motivator’ to captivate motivation, argument and relatedness simultaneously; these are channeled in the different conceptualized categories which I present. These categories are not to be understood as constituting a razor-sharp divide between the different arguments, but as an analytical separation to elucidate the wide range of arguments, ideas and concepts within the campaign. The *representations* I lay out in this section are from all the people whom I conducted recorded interviews with. If in the text, I make generalizations, these only extend to the people with whom I have interacted and interviewed. In the case I use full names in the presentation this is because these people are persons who to some extent are some of the public faces of the campaign.

5. Kimberley Calling – the campaign and the people: findings and analysis

“I’m not a campaigner, you know. I’m just a person that’s there.”²⁷

An issue, which needs to be addressed before presenting the data, is the relation between the campaign and the traditional owners of the area. In the background I have sketched a brief overview over how the native title claim groups relate to each other, and structural relations between indigenous Australians and the state. One of the arguments of the gas hub proponents is that the traditional owners have had their say, by voting in favor for the gas. To this one campaigner says that, while struggling with the sensitivity pertaining to the situation and the fact that the campaign is in fact opposing a certain group of the traditional owners, “a very simplistic argument is if the bloke next door here wanted to stick a nuclear waste dump in his backyard, I’d campaign against that as well.”²⁸ Another

²⁷ NM 111220

²⁸ KM 120122

person says that, “one of the things we have to keep in mind, and has been kinda lost, is that.. historically it’s not whitefellas land, it’s Aboriginal land. But for now, it is, I would say the Broome community’s land. And that’s not all blackfellas. So I believe that the whitefellas should, if they don’t want it here, they should be fully involved in it, and they should do everything they can to keep it. They shouldn’t just say ‘Oh, it’s the Aboriginal’s land, they’ve gotta protect it, they’ve gotta do it.’”²⁹

Even though it is a heated debate, and words are thrown around, especially when there is confrontation between campaigners on one side, and security personnel and construction workers on the other, when asked explicitly, I gathered that most people I interacted with in the campaign showed a sense of understanding why there are traditional owners who have signed the agreement with the government. Generally, the reasons that campaigners see for the signing of the agreement are threefold: the lack of connection with the land, the poverty of the traditional owners and the ideology pushed by the state and the KLC. As one campaigner expresses it: “they haven’t had grown up with that close connection that the Goolarabooloo do. So if they live in a community where they don’t have much money, they’re quite poor, you can kind of understand they don’t have that connection [with country].”³⁰ Another person involved with the campaign says that where the KLC is leading the community is “down the path that’s given us global warming, climate change, it’s given us the global financial crisis, and it’s a cultural system that’s given us massive mental health and depression problems, you know. And he [Wayne Bergman, former KLC director] wants to say ‘well, Aboriginal people got a right to buy in to that.’ Well, no. I think they’ve got a right to look for something else.”³¹ This quote leads us to the first category of motivators; ideology.

5.1 Motivators for engaging in the campaign

Political/Ideological motivation

Part of the arguments and motivations for engaging in this campaign can be traced to political/ideological views. In this context, by ideological views I refer to how people reflect upon the current political system, and utopian visions of how things *should* be. It should not be assumed that all participants in this campaign are streamlined in ways of political/ideological orientation. Environmental concerns and a localized opposition can be found in ideologies of both the radical left, and conservative right; indeed, the philosophical and historical origin(s) of environmental movements remains very diverse (Sörlin 1991, 25 - 26).

²⁹ CD 111217

³⁰ EM 111205

³¹ KM 120122

That said, the ideological arguments I encountered during my fieldwork, implicitly or explicitly, questioned the neoliberal agenda of the government of WA. One person concludes that “the source of the disease, the source of our problem lies within our own government. And that’s who we need to be targeting, and changing. And informing, and fighting against, is our government,”³² and Louise Middleton, author of the Hands off country blog³³ says that “the corporate power in Australia is scary, and it’s not something I really appreciated until I started on this campaign. And started to see the absolute depth of corruption, and manipulation of government and government policies.”³⁴ Here one can identify two different focal points for the critique; one is targeting the government, with its policies and politics, whereas the other critiques the corporate power that influence the public arena and government. Of course, these critiques inform each other, as the quotes above imply. For example, when asked who the interviewees saw themselves as fighting, I received differing answers; including Premier Colin Barnett, the Department of State Development, Woodside, as well as Martin Ferguson, Labor party federal minister for resources and energy and tourism. All these individuals and institutions are interrelated through politics and legislation, but can be said to represent different aspects of what the interviewees see as negative.

Further, there exists a critique of the mainstream rhetoric of progress and development: “a lot of people just think it’s no way of stopping it. It’s going ahead. Nothing you can do about it. You can’t stop progress. And, I think it’ll be great when we prove that you can stop progress.”³⁵ This explicitly targets the growth-centered economy on which capitalism is built. Another person says: “When we went down to Perth for Christmas, to come into town to do shopping, you just got this massive thrust of money and consumerism in your face. You’re just launched into that. That’s not here, it doesn’t have to be.”³⁶ Broome and the Kimberley is thus presented as an escape or break from the consumer-driven capitalism of the post-Fordist era (Bauman 2008, 36) other cities are submerged in.

There is also an image of the Kimberley as having the potential for an ‘alternative economy’. One person states that “there is a sustainable economy here in Broome and the Kimberley’s, based on a different viewpoint. You know this is what the local families are trying to project and carry forward as the way of this [region], in the next decade. To say that it is possible to have eco-tourism here, that is sustainable and brings all the families back to their connection with the land, and makes people aware internationally of what we have here, as far as heritage and culture and respect for this area,”³⁷ and

³² NA 111214

³³ This blog is coauthored together with Nik Wevers: <http://handsoffcountry.blogspot.com/>

³⁴ Louise Middleton 120112

³⁵ CD 111217

³⁶ KM 120122

³⁷ KJ 120122

another says: “so you’ve got . . . a whole bunch of people up here in the Kimberley who are working towards, trying to advocate what they’re calling a culture and conservation economy. . . . Rather than one that’s based on exploitation of mineral resources and destruction of country.”³⁸

Environmental motivation

[The Kimberley] is unique in the fact that it’s almost one of the last untouched wildernesses that are a complete ecosystem. In the water and on the land.³⁹

The quote above may seem like a sentence loaded with as many cliché phrases as possible; consider the words *unique*, *untouched wilderness*, *complete ecosystem*. What is interesting, however, is that in some respects it is true. While academically I may reserve myself against the idea of any inhabited region as ‘untouched’, on the grounds that human activity almost invariably affects the environment in which it takes place, the fact remains that the marine ecosystem around the Kimberley is one of the least impacted by humans globally (Halpern et al. 2008), and some of the least impacted terrestrial ecosystems in Australia are found in the Kimberley (Carwardine et al. 2011).

Further, the importance laid upon the Kimberley as a sort of last outpost of the non-industrialized Australia, cannot be understated. One woman told me that “I’ve been watching this campaign up here in the Kimberley for the last couple of years. Following what’s been happening, and what was happening to the *Goolarabooloo* people. And it really touched a nerve with me, because, the, because it is Australia’s last remaining wilderness. And I’m passionate about the environment, and because of the injustice that was so blatantly happening here,”⁴⁰ and another stated the importance of protecting this region “because I think it’s a very small corner of Australia that’s actually left with biodiversity intact. And I think we have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure the protection of that.”⁴¹ One major concern, reflected in the statement by Martin Pritchard, director of Environs Kimberley, is that “when we piece together all the proposals and concepts from both industry and the government, we have a clear picture of the agenda here [in the Kimberley], which is heavy industry. And one of our concerns around the JPP [James Price Point] apart from the immediate massive impacts to the local environment is that JPP would be the foot in the door to industrializing the rest of the Kimberley.”⁴²

³⁸ KM 120122

³⁹ KJ 120122

⁴⁰ NA111214

⁴¹ Louise Middleton 120112

⁴² Martin Pritchard 111205

Apart from environmental concerns for the local and regional environment, there are also more universalistic motivations for the people involved. Louise Middleton says: “I also feel really strongly about the fact that, we have, as a first world nation, and as an educated nation, we have the responsibility to fight and argue for the protection of the planet. For the people that can’t, I’m talking about . . . all these places that are suffering from the oil and gas industry across the planet.”⁴³ Another woman says that “the big over-arching issue [for environmental groups] is global warming, that is the main thing that they’re trying to fight. Saving the Kimberley, and saving the forests in Tassie are all solutions to the global warming problem.”⁴⁴

While highlighting the environmental motivations and relatedness to the issue, it should also be noted that some people are mainly concerned about the local environmental effects, and are not so much discussing the global climate effects. One woman states that “I just call it [the campaign] Save the Kimberley. I don’t actually like to say no gas. I don’t like that, because gas, you know, I’m not against the gas. I just don’t want it there, that’s all. I think it’s a bit misleading for a lot of people,”⁴⁵ and another person says that “I’m not anti gas, I’m just anti location”.⁴⁶

Cultural motivation

You meet some of these Aboriginals and you get to know them. And that’s motivating, because you see how connected they are to the land. And you just go like, how can these people just try and tear it out from under them. This is their home, this is what they know. This is what they’ve been taught. You can’t just come in and clear it, and expect them to go somewhere else, you know. It’d be like going into your town, and ripping it apart. Destroy it and go “I’m sorry ‘bout that, you’ll figure it out”.⁴⁷

To the non-Aboriginals, preconceptions of Aboriginal culture also play a role in the engagement. One person says “I’ve always like really felt for the Aboriginal people, and the way that they’ve been dispossessed, and the way our media, and our society treats them. And, so that was a big part of me wanting to come up to the Kimberley. Because it was my understanding that there was lots of Aboriginals up here that was still living close to country, and connected to country,” and “the way that they [*Goolarabooloo*] think about people, this is my words, putting their culture in my words from what I can see, is everybody has something good to give, and you tolerate the bad with the good, and

⁴³ Louise Middleton 120112

⁴⁴ NA 111214

⁴⁵ BM 111221

⁴⁶ PH 120122

⁴⁷ CD 111217

work on the good. And the bad will go away.”⁴⁸ Another woman involved told me that “what’s happening in the peninsula at the moment is really quite perfect. Every year more and more family groups are opening up their country, with their little fishing spots, with their little huts; come and stay here. *That’s* giving the Aboriginal people self-determination. You can’t steal someone’s land, and then teach them to mine it, when their soul is the land. And their law is in the ground of the land.”⁴⁹

Also, the interlinking of cultural and environmental protection and sustenance is reflected by many of the people I interviewed. “I hope people can see that this land is what it is because of the way that the people, the traditional custodians, have cared for this land for so long,”⁵⁰ and “through their traditional custodianship, through their traditional maintenance of song lines and all these sort of things - the Lurujarri trail – if they’re allowed to do that properly then a lot of the environmental stuff will actually be maintained.”⁵¹

To the Aboriginal campaigners I talked to, cultural survival is paramount to their engagement. One woman said to me that “I’m here to protect what my grandmother left me, for my future generations,” and that “we didn’t ask for this, we didn’t sign up for this. It’s something we have to do.”⁵² Also, whilst eco- and cultural tourism is one argument for a sustainable economy of the region, an Aboriginal woman recognized the bidirectional impact of tourism with regards to Broome and its Aboriginal inhabitants. On the hand, she thinks that should the gas hub be built, Broome “will be ruined. . . . This is an international holiday destination, there’s people from all over the world.” At the same time, she says that “tourism is a big problem. Not the people themselves, but building for tourists. Food goes up, fuel goes up. Broome is not built for people, it’s for tourists.”⁵³ Here, one can discern a concern for the negative impacts of tourism, at the same time as she recognizes its importance to the town of Broome, and she suggested some sort of cultural fee that would go to the Aboriginal community and conservation of cultural sites.

Social motivation

I’ve always been passionate about the Kimberley, I’ve always been passionate about Broome. I’ve lived here for quite some time. I love this town; I think it’s a very unique place. Nowhere else but here.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ NA 111214

⁴⁹ RK 120119

⁵⁰ PS 111212

⁵¹ EM 111205

⁵² MA 111128

⁵³ JA 111128

⁵⁴ BM 111221

‘Nowhere else but here’ is a slogan for the Kimberley, and the name of a song by regional musicians the Pigram Brothers. The sense of community which supposedly defines the Kimberley in contrast to other places, is often highlighted by the people who I interviewed. Here, focus is laid upon the social, and economic, aspects of the perceived effects on the area, should the development go ahead. “What I’ve come to experience up here is really quite unique in being a community that is so united. I’ve been involved in other environmental causes, where . . . it’s a smaller scope of the community involved.”⁵⁵ Here he also differentiates this campaign from environmental campaigns driven mainly by explicitly environmental causes. The Broome No Gas Community Group, the group of ‘concerned community members’ that constitute a major part of the campaign does not have an environmental ideology per se. “It was a community group that didn’t want to be necessarily affiliated with any environmental or political group. So what they wanted to do was separate themselves, and just be a voice of the community. That was just a very good, broad cross section of people, who wanted to be able to speak their mind and also give power to everyone that was living here, to say ‘we’re all involved in this, this is our community’.”⁵⁶ In part, the rhetoric is of course to reiterate the social legitimacy of the group and the campaign at large, but it is also an important statement that the issue is broader than ‘just’ an environmental issue.

One person who runs a business in town said that “we are there as business owners in town, as concerned community members. . . . So we’re just really, threatened towns people,”⁵⁷ and another stated that “for us, as a business, [if the gas hub is built] that means I wouldn’t be able to afford the wages for my part-time staff to be in here. Because I wouldn’t be able to afford the rent.”⁵⁸ A third person says: “Broomers, people who have been here, this is their residence, this is where they’ve lived their whole life. They’ve grown up here, they come down here camping with their kids and families. They get the.. benefits of all the tourism, for their small businesses in town. They really benefit through the tourist season. And to see them losing that, you know, that they may lose their small town that they love, it’d just be devastating to them.”⁵⁹

Small scale thinking, with regards to both environment and community, is also an important aspect of the motivation: “it seems just like the way the world is going, is everyone is developing into thinking bigger is better. And it’s not, you know. You wanna keep that small town community, and good relationship with your neighbor.”⁶⁰ Louise Middleton says that “it’s only now, that the solar panels are

⁵⁵ EM 111205

⁵⁶ KJ 120122

⁵⁷ PN 120122

⁵⁸ PH 120122

⁵⁹ CD 111217

⁶⁰ CD 111217

installed, that the composting shit toilets are in, that the gardens are in . . . they're just now getting to that position that they can offer a cultural experience . . . and the Dampier peninsula has been working towards that for a long time . . . so I find that [the shire council supporting the gas] absolutely a total disrespect.⁶¹

One aspect of the social is of course personal relations. Some people have been longstanding friends of the *Goolarabooloo* family; others have been involved in other parts that pertain to the campaign. Other people have walked the *Lurujarri* heritage trail, and befriended the *Goolarabooloo* that way. One woman who was helped by the family when their car broke down a few years ago, and came back to help out with the campaign said that, "in my head it's *Goolarabooloo* like that, you know, I feel I'm working with and for."⁶² Another person says that an important aspect is, "my connection to the *Goolarabooloo*, and that's the main reason I'm here, for them,"⁶³ and a third person says that "my connection to the family . . . it's almost like I . . . never had a choice whether I wanted to become part of this or not. Because I live on their land, and they really took me on as part of the family. And it's our backyard. I've never been involved in any other campaign in my life."⁶⁴

Spiritual motivation

It all might be a little bit spiritual for some people to comprehend, but the Kimberley is calling, you know. Calling up people to come along and help. That's why you're here obviously, you're part of that calling.⁶⁵

An aspect that permeates some people's involvement in the campaign, but which is not forefronted in the public discourse and argument against the proposed development, is the spiritual dimension of involvement. Without developing an argument on the ontological status of this spirituality, I would argue that, for some people this is an important part of experiencing and expressing a sense of place, beyond the social and environmental dimensions. Of course, these are intertwined in a complex relationship. The spiritual aspect stretches into the physical features and the people involved, i.e. the man quoted above, who said that I was a part of the calling of the Kimberley. Another woman said that "you feel the power of the land. The dunes here that we sleep in like, how crazy is it when you can feel the hot and the cold sort of, waves and the energy sort of coming out of it. And when the storms are coming over, the crazy energy in the air. It's so strong. It's because it hasn't been developed on

⁶¹ Louise Middleton 120112

⁶² TT 111219

⁶³ EM 111205

⁶⁴ GJ 120113

⁶⁵ NM 111220

yet, you know, there's still so much power that's wild and free."⁶⁶ She points to the power residing in the country as being there because there has been no industrial development. Another woman said that there is a vortex, a power place in this area, and that's probably why the proponents want to develop here specifically,⁶⁷ and yet another person proposed that it is the minerals in the earth which creates the energy, and that's why energy companies dig all these up from the ground. Another woman I talked to, claimed the importance in observing the country, be in it and feel it; "this country is pretty powerful, and it's been a bit of a roller coaster ride for me personally. Not planning on being here, and then staying here, being ill a couple of times, wanting to be active and participate in the campaign, but just having to sit back and.. and heal, has made me have a lot of time to just sit and be in country, and observe what's around me."⁶⁸

There is as shown a sense of spirituality among some of the people I interviewed, and it is my contention that this can be linked to the idea of Aboriginal life and culture in the area. I do not suggest that the non-Aboriginal campaigners take over the whole of Aboriginal cosmology, but that certain aspects are incorporated into the spirituality, such as the assertion of the power of the landscape itself. Here perhaps is an explanation of the term 'Country says No', which appears in the title suitable: it is a catchphrase that the opposition uses to assert the fact that it's not only people who do not want the development; even country itself does not want the gas hub, according to them.

Analysis: A turn towards place

In the theoretical framework I identified the campaign against the gas hub as a 'transnational resistance' movement, based on the social movement categories of Goodman (2002). The presentation of categories of motivators has elucidated how some people in the opposition construct, display and reason around their engagement with the campaign. The process can be seen as one of framing the events around them into particular sets of understandings and worldviews which are represented in the display of motivations as told to me. The presentation of a discourse around the conflict entails, as I have shown in the previous section, varied focal points to which people attach their motivations.

There exists a refined argumentation about the overarching issues of corporate power, exploitative capitalism and state agenda, as well as the global environment, and identification with other regions and peoples in similar situations. This I understand as the 'transnational' side of the rhetoric on behalf of the people I interviewed; the identification with transnational issues that are as relevant in the

⁶⁶ TT 111219

⁶⁷ HS 111201

⁶⁸ PS 111209

Kimberley as it is in other places. The ‘localized’ side of the campaign is related to the construction of a sense of place for the people involved.

The construction and connection to *this specific* area, town and landscape that people display gives the movement strength in arguing for the protection of this place. This is paramount both to the official rhetoric of the campaign, and to the people in it who I have interviewed. This is done partly through the assertion of local environmental and social values, as well as a highlighting of the supposedly already ‘sustainable economy’ that exists within the region, through eco- and cultural tourism. But it is also done through the interlinking of these factors with cultural ones, such as the cultural diversity of the Broome community, and the continuation of cultural heritage and knowledge through the *Goolarabooloo* and the *Lurujarri* Heritage Trail. Escobar and Paulson mention the construction of a discourse of biodiversity as incorporating ‘territory plus culture’, that cultural autonomy and biodiversity go hand in hand (2005, 258). This is also a refined articulation of an area where scientific and cultural knowledges of the environment are used by subaltern movements in a complementary fashion. While not explicit, a similar reasoning is shown by some of the campaigners, exemplified by the notion that if the *Goolarabooloo* will be allowed to continue their cultural practice, then the environmental conservation comes with it. This, I would also argue, applies to the spiritual side of the reasoning – the conviction that the perpetuation of Aboriginal law and culture is indeed what makes the country powerful and alive. This echoes Aboriginal epistemology of the song cycles, from which the powers of the land emanate. In this sense, I believe, as I have argued above, that Aboriginal conceptions of the environment and the life-world enters into some of the campaigner’s construction and sense of place.

Escobar identifies two broad strategies/processes working in different directions: one is the globalizing aspects of capital and the state through neo-liberalism and techno-science, trying to shape the local spaces in ways favorable to them. The other is the resistance strategies of the opponents, a place-making that assert and strengthen the attachment to local territory, environment and culture, and the national and global collaborative strategies with NGO’s and similar struggles (2001, 161). These two broad conceptualizations of strategies can be applied on the conflict at James Price Point: the first strategy can be said to be the way of the Western Australian state government and its commercial proponents, and the second is exemplified by the opposition through its assertion of culture, place and biodiversity as an interdependent linkage, and through the collaboration between the local campaign and the Wilderness Society, and the linkages with e.g. an Irish campaign against an offshore natural gas project⁶⁹. The similarities in rhetoric and discourses between different campaigns show the relevance that these subaltern movements have as a localized arena for concerns on a global scale. It

⁶⁹ <http://www.shelltosea.com/content/links>

shows that there are movements in different localities, experiencing similar things, and opposing these in similar, but localized fashions.

In the theoretical discussion I introduced the idea of the campaign as a ‘transnational resistance’ movement (Goodman 2002, xxi). However, as I have shown, the campaign against the gas hub outside of Broome is also very much concerned with the construction of the local; it is certainly not a movement where the agents are lifted out of their local/national context (James 2002). Also, the conscious construction of place is an important feature of some ‘new’ social movements, as Escobar points out (2001, 139). Combining the theoretical perspectives of Goodman and Escobar’s politics of place with the material I have presented, I argue that the campaign can be understood as a social movement constituting a ‘localized transnational resistance’. This redefinition emphasizes the fact that the campaign focuses on a defense of the local, but that although the campaign firstly local, there is an active concern among its members about the transnational issues embodied in the local conflict. This redefinition also highlights the aspect of scale in the conflict; the social movement that the campaign constitutes is shaped by local and global dynamics.

5.2 Perceptions of change throughout the Campaign

You gotta look past the progress. At some point progress gotta stop, because we’re destroying the planet. And we don’t have anywhere else to live. And I think that’s one thing that’s really.. yeah it makes you feel really passionate about being here, because you are protecting the only place we have to live. Well being a part of the planet . . . So I think being here has changed my perspective on a lot of things. And then just, it’s been really good to see people this passionate about things.⁷⁰

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the engagement in a social movement such as this is how it may change the ideas about and interpretations of the participants’ surrounding world. Investing the amount of time and energy that people do in a campaign such as this, it is unlikely that it would not affect them at all. However, *how* people are affected, is not a given. I present here a few of the impressions which people themselves told me of. One campaigner said of the people who have been involved that, “I can see in people’s eyes, that there’s, something’s changed in their consciousness, and they’re aware that it’s not just, they don’t wanna just spend their lives earning money, and living comfortably. There is a bigger purpose of themselves, and they do see that the corruption and destruction is going on so immensely that they wanna do all they can to stand up.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ CD 111217

⁷¹ PS 111209

Others told me of how they now started thinking about how these local events interrelate with others, on a global scale: “For me too, I’m now more aware that this is happening on a global level. From the Amazon, people in the Amazon, the big companies going in and taking native lands and trashing their food bowls. . . . I suppose my awareness level has really dramatically changed. It’s not just on the other side of the world: it’s happening here.” Another person said that “with the gas now, well suddenly you don’t really have a choice other than getting involved – well that’s how I felt anyway – and standing up for what you believe in. But to do that, you have to educate yourself about what it’s all about. So you know, I’ve started reading, and talking to people, learning about all the companies and what they’re doing around the world, and what they’re doing to indigenous cultures.”⁷²

A perception of change I came across is the heightened sense of community and strengthened ties between the campaigners. For all the divides that have been shafted within the town – and there has been such a divide, between a pro-gas and a no-gas side – people I interviewed generally agreed that the cohesion *within* the campaign community, and across the indigenous/non-indigenous divide, has been very strong and quick. One man said that “personally, I find that it has divided the community, but it has also joined the . . . no-gassers who are out there now, it has joined us together as a community, and it’s also joined the indigenous no-gassers as well,”⁷³ and a woman I spoke to said that she had been very well integrated in the community, despite only living in Broome for 12 months.⁷⁴ Further voices claim that “there’s a very positive side to the whole community aspect, that . . . it’s helped me feel even more part of the community, and be more aware of the community,”⁷⁵ and “it has defined me. I always knew I loved this community. But it has made me realize how much I love it. And for the reasons that I love the diversity of cultures here.”⁷⁶ These are exhibitions of a refined awareness of and appreciation for the Broome area with regards to community and local culture.

Shifts in motivations are also evident among some; the reason why one joined the campaign is not necessarily the reason why they continue their engagement at a later stage. One woman said that “my primary motivation was conservation . . . and our strong ties with *Goolarabooloo* was why we went up to *Walmadan*, but my main motivation now, where I get my ‘mm, I’m gonna get these guys’ attitude from, is the ground ozone.”⁷⁷ Another person said that “before, when I arrived I didn’t have that passion to save it, cos I didn’t know what I was saving,”⁷⁸ and a third interviewee said that “I came up here kinda blind to what’s going on. . . . Then once you get involved in it, it gets away from the whole

⁷² GJ 120113

⁷³ PN 120122

⁷⁴ HS 111201

⁷⁵ NM 120122

⁷⁶ KJ 120122

⁷⁷ RK 120119

⁷⁸ PS 111209

just saving the Kimberley, to stopping major corporation[s] from destroying the planet. There's a lot bigger picture here, than just saving the Kimberley, just saving James Price Point. Which was really motivating, to think that if we can stop this, it will be in the history books."⁷⁹

Some people say that their political view hasn't changed, but for others a shift in political vantage points has been an outcome of the campaign. "It has made me politically stronger. I, for the first time in my life, would quite happily chain myself to a bulldozer. And I never in my life thought that I would do that. You know, I would happily embarrass my grown children by doing something like that. . . . It's just raised my anxiety level and made me so angry, that I'm doing thing that are out of character."⁸⁰

Analysis: Change and Subjectivity

Agrawal claims that the 'when, how and why' some people develop or incorporate an environmental awareness into their perceptions and actions is paramount to understanding environmental subjectivity (2005, 169). In the previous section I presented some of the perceptions of change that engaging in the campaign have resulted in, according to the participants themselves.

Unsurprisingly, people assign a great deal of importance to the conflict over the proposed gas hub. It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many of the people whom I talked to, and several said that they had never taken part in a campaign prior to this. As presented above, people experience a diversity of changes in perception and motivation: some people highlight the sense of community (appreciation of the diversity and strength of the community); others claim that they have become 'politically stronger' and learnt more about 'how politics work'. Yet others have experienced a change in what drives them to participate in the campaign (e.g. from personal relations to environmental reasons), or they have switched the *scale* with regards to environmental conflicts (connecting their own struggle to others around the world).

I suggest that the emergence of stronger environmental subjects from the campaign is related to two processes, which can be analytically separated. The first is the power dynamics between the different factions: since the state government and its proponents proposed the development of the gas hub, some people have felt threatened, want to find ways to stop the development, and thus engage in the campaign against the gas. The campaigners use any means available to defeat their adversaries, including environmental arguments, and this leads to a heightening of peoples' knowledge of their local and global environment. This can be interpreted as an instrumental subjectivity, as a means to an

⁷⁹ CD 111217

⁸⁰ PH 120122

end. But secondly, people also attach emotionally through the engagement; the activities of being on country, collaborating across cultural and social divides, as well as learning more about the environment by actively engaging with it, changes some peoples perspectives on what the environment is, and should be. Thus, what initially may have motivated someone to join the campaign has evolved into new, perhaps to the participant previously irrelevant aspects, motivations. I would also suggest that the campaign has affected some people in such a way that it goes beyond the ‘social means to a political end’ that Goodman identifies as constituting some social movements (2002, xix). Instead the campaign against the gas hub becomes an instrument for looking at oneself and the reality where one lives.

In Agrawal’s case study he discusses how conscious efforts by the governing elements to change environmental regulation, over time, produces new environmental subjects. The process of developing a common agenda which benefits both state and local interests can take a long time, and in the case of Broome and the campaign against the gas, one cannot say that the government and the local community are furthering each others’ goals – at least with regards to how relations are at the time of writing.

With regards to the James Price Point conflict, I argue that the perceived sense of crisis heightens the sense of place, and thus the environmental consciousness, as a sort of ‘*shock response*’ subjectivity. But also, a focus on *practice* and *relatedness* when forming environmental subjects is important. Environmental subjectivity works on a level where individual subjects construct meanings through the mental processes towards environmental, cultural and social categories. But it is also grounded in the (everyday) actions of the people, of being-in-the-world; on country or in Broome itself.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis I have presented the conflict over a proposed gas hub in the Broome region of Western Australia. I have interpreted it through a political ecology framework to contextualize the events, both the brief history of the Kimberley and the dynamics of the conflict itself. As most lived events in the world, it is constituted by complex network of people, institutions, power, ideologies and knowledges; these forces circumscribe the actions of all entities involved, be they the government of Western Australia, the commercial proponents, Aboriginal and community groups and eNGOs as well as people acting as individuals.

In order to clearly conclude the thesis, I repeat my research questions in order to link my results to them: 1) *how do people motivate their engagement in the campaign against the gas hub?* and 2) *what are their perceptions of how this engagement has affected them, and how can this be interpreted?*

Relating to the question of how people motivate their engagement, I applied the concept of a politics of place on the categories of motivators I identified and presented: political/ideological, environmental, cultural, social, and spiritual. I argue that these categories all serve as instruments in constructing a sense of place, opposing the proposed development of the gas hub through asserting the local as an alternative way of understanding the world. Even though forces of global capital and information involves dynamics that creates ripples in localities where it sits at the moment, and even though many have become more mobile the local – culture, environment, economy, etc. – is still the place where most people's everyday events *take place*. And this defense of these local features of place becomes a crucial tool for the people in the campaign when they motivate themselves to engage in the campaign. Given this, one can interpret the opposition as a *turn towards place*. Of course, people have had a sense of place prior to the conflict, but what is relevant in this context, is the construction of a demarcation of identity as belonging to place as a political tool. With the help of these factors, I argue that the campaign can be seen as a 'localized transnational resistance'. In Escobar and Harcourt's words, the campaign is place-based, but the overarching issues are not place-bound. Again, we return to a scale dynamic with regards to how the campaign and the politics of place interact, from the local to the global. It is important to note though, that just because people use a construction of place as a political tool, it does not mean that identification with a given locality is reduced to just being a political tool.

Relating to the second set of questions, I presented participants' views on the perceived changes they had experienced. I used Arun Agrawal's notion of environmental subjectivity and how these are formed in the space between power/knowledge, institutions and communities and individuals in a certain locality, to interpret these perceived changes. I suggest that the dynamics between the opponents and proponents of the gas hub is one of the driving forces to explain these changes in awareness. I argue that the change in subjectivities displayed by the participants can be understood as a 'shock response' to the development proposals by the government and commercial proponent. Related to this are the new relations that people actually create with their surroundings, mediated through the campaign, its people, environment and events. The initial concern for negatives changes may have caused some people to join, and the engagement itself then creates new ways of identifying with the local environment, and new ways of articulating it, which I argue can be understood as a refined environmental subjectivity.

With regards to the relevance to the intersection of culture, power and sustainability, I believe that I have sufficiently showed through my presentation, analysis and discussions that these fields are of uttermost importance to understand how the conflict came to be, how it is shaped, and how it will evolve in the future. Further research relating to the conflict could be conducted to more thoroughly analyze the components of the campaign from cultural, gender and power dynamics. Another interesting topic is how the alternative visions of a sustainable economy in the Kimberley are formulated, and can potentially be implemented. These research topics require a more thorough and lengthy work, however.

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Appendix 1: Figures and Maps



Figure 1: Broome & the Western Dampier Peninsula, with the proposed Browse LNG Precinct. The Black Tank camp was based in the intersection of Cape Leveque Road and Manari Road. Source: *Browse Liquefied Natural Gas Precinct Strategic Assessment Report: Part 1 Executive Summary*, by the Department of State Development. Copyright: Department of State Development.

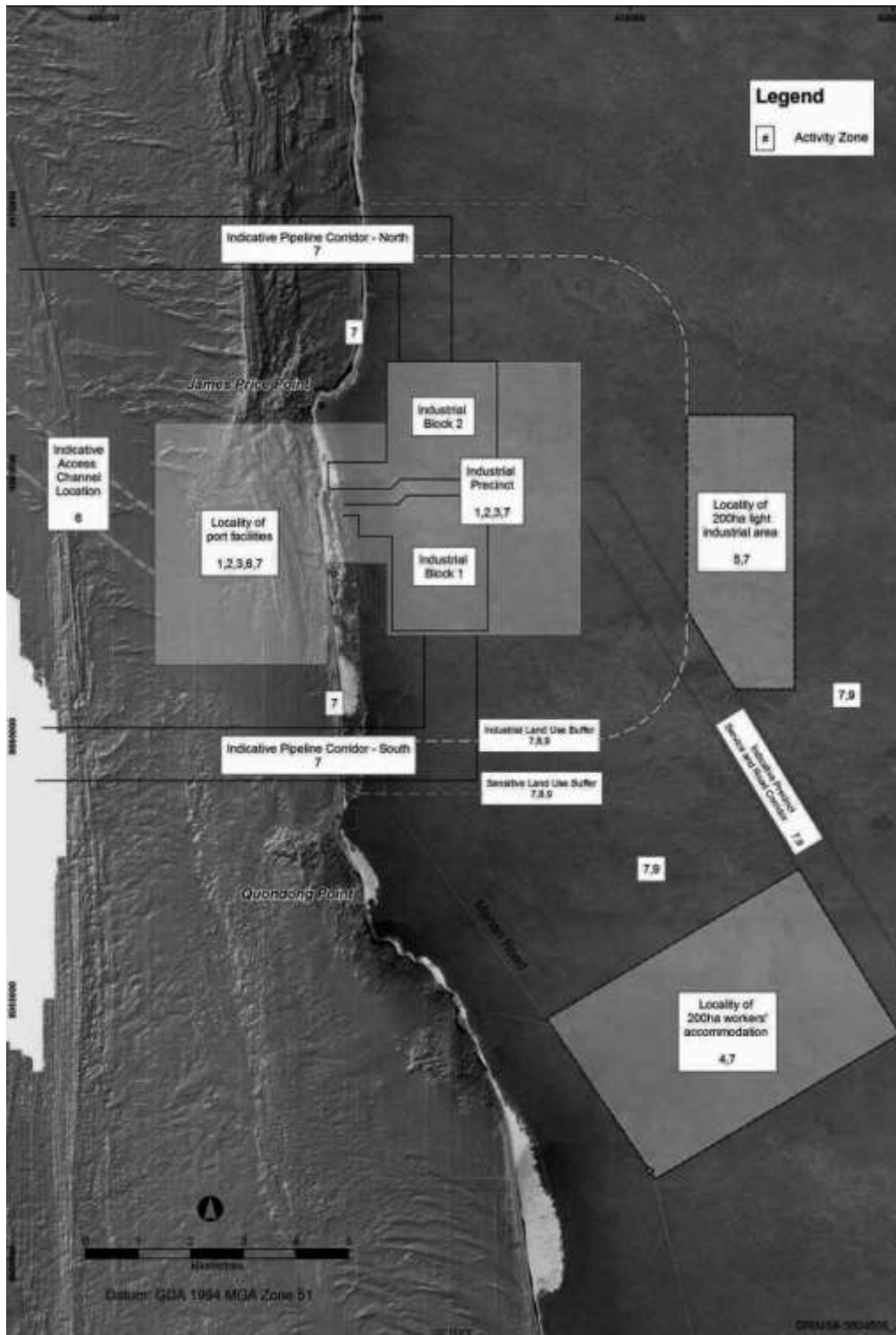


Figure 2: Detailed plan of the Browse LNG Precinct. The *Walmadan* Camp is situated right in between where the port facilities and Industrial Blocks 1 & 2 are intended to be constructed. Source: *Browse Liquefied Natural Gas Precinct Strategic Assessment Report: Part 1 Executive Summary*, by the Department of State Development. Copyright: Department of State Development.

Appendix 2 – interview frames

Below are presented two interview frames that I guided my interviews and questions through. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, and I used these questions to ensure continuity between the different interviews that I conducted, to more easily compare and analyze the interviews as an entity. I started the interviews with explanations of the purpose of doing recorded interviews, my role and my responsibilities towards the people I interviewed and the campaign at large. This was informed by Spradley's *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979), and the importance of making sure that the participants understand and consent to the research.

Interview frames for people on country

- How long have you been here on country?
 - o How did you find out about the campaign?
 - o What motivated you to come out here?
 - What was your main motivation?
- Do you have any previous experience from this kind of campaigning?
 - o If so, what kind?
- Can you tell me how the campaign works out here on country?
- Can you describe a typical day in this camp?
- Can you tell me about your role in the camp?
- Have there been any specific events that have impacted you during your time here?
- Can you tell me about your connection to this country/area?
- What are the main reasons you think that the plant should not be developed here?
- Do you think that it should be developed somewhere else?

Interview frame for people living in Broome

- Can you tell me how long you have lived in Broome?
- How did you find out about the campaign?
 - o What motivated you to engage in the campaign?
 - What was your main motivation?
- Do you have any previous experience from this kind of campaigning?
 - o If so, what kind?
- Have you been engaged in any community groups etc?
- Can you tell me about how the campaign works here in town?
- Can you describe a typical day in the campaign/work in town?

- Can you tell me about your role in the campaign?
- Have there been any specific events that have impacted you during your time here?
- How do you feel that engaging in the campaign has affected you personally/psychologically?
- Can you tell me about your connection to this country/area?
- What are the main reasons you think that the plant should not be developed here?
- Do you think that it should be developed somewhere else?