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Introduction

Tyranny of the majority and rural environmental injustice

1. Introduction

A pervasive logic commands state-industrial complexes across developing and developed nations: rural sites have ample resources and fewer people, an ideal pairing for taking and dumping. Such widespread, utilitarian thinking and practice have caught some scholarly reference. Rural poverty pockets seem especially targeted for hazards and waste (Bullard, 1993), industries profile rural towns as least resistant (Di Chiro, 1998), and the poorest of the poor continue to be rural people of color (Cole and Foster, 2000; USDA ERS, 2015a). The addition of the term rural could apply to the contexts of many recent environmental justice (EJ) studies, such as Bell's (2013) and Scott's (2010) work on mountain top removal, Harrison's (2011) study of pesticide drift, and Mailin's (2015) review of uranium mining. Yet the rural goes largely unnamed – an implicit, rather than explicit, dimension of environmental injustice (for more, see Pellow, this issue).

A first, and critical, aim of this Special Issue is pulling the rural from the periphery of thought around environmental injustice and bringing it into the core. Scholars in this Special Issue find much analytical power in the rural. As an ideology and materiality, the rural helps reveal dependencies, cycles, laws, discourses, and economies behind environmental injustices. As such, this Special Issue brings the rural explicitly to the forefront of EJ scholarship, alongside race and class, to better address inequality in the ecohuman community. In the spirit of a broader formation approach to inequality (Pellow, 2000), this issue speaks to the ecohuman community as the interaction of ecology with human activity to shape the possibilities and realities of one another (Bell and Ashwood, 2016).

The rural helps identify relationships between people, ecology, and justice that bear similarity across disciplinary, nation-state, and even continental boundaries, as does this Special Issue. Epidemiologists, drawing on participatory work in North Carolina and Japan, capture regional health disparities in nuclear power and hog production areas (see Kelly-Reif and Wing, this issue). Legal scholars document in Canada and the United States the marginalization of sparsely populated places and people through the branding of the rural other in the courtroom (see Pruitt and Sobczynski, this issue; Van Wagner, this issue). In Ecuador, the devaluing of rural people, places and livelihoods aids in their dispossession, as an anthropologist traces (Partridge, this issue). Tight restrictions on landownership and access perpetuate stark inequality in South Africa, marring people and the landscape, as retold by a public health scholar, sociologist, and a community activist (Stull, Bell, and Ncwadi, this issue). From the Riverina-Murray region of Australia,

to biofuel production in Iowa, fracking in Pennsylvania, and the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, sociologists and environmental scientists document varying levels of environmental concern, procedural inequality, and status shaped by the rural political economy (Kulscar, Selfa and Bain, this issue; Mailin and DeMaster, this issue; Masterman-Smith et al., this issue; Otsuki, this issue). Together, these authors find that the rural brings a level of categorical unity that aids in the deconstruction of environmental injustice.

The second aim of this Special Issue, and particularly of this introduction, is to forge theoretical continuity between the rural, race, and class as dimensions of environmental injustice. To do so, we draw on de Tocqueville's concept *tyranny of the majority* as a utilitarian intersection between state authority and wealth generation that helps explain environmental injustices along the lines of race, class, and rurality in the democratic context. The various nation-states explored in this Special Issue share the auspices of democracy amidst substantial environmental inequality. We argue that the utilitarian triumph of majority rule, a cornerstone of the democratic creed, affronts classically liberal human rights and the republican public good familiar to EJ. We identify the encroachment of tyranny of the majority on minority rights from the positions of rurality, race, and poverty.

2. Why rural?

The explicit use of the rural in this Special Issue may well raise a variety of concerns about the uncertainty the word *rural* carries with it. Notoriously, at this stage of scholarly debate, it is impossible to define singularly. Rural uncertainty has flourished, spurred on by the shrinking numbers of people living in rural places; in some cases, the shrinking number of sparsely populated places; reduced rural funding streams; and the broader disciplinary move in sociology towards networks, flows, and mobilities (Ashwood and Bell, 2016; Pender, 2015; Beaulieu, 2005; Urry, 1995, 2000). Nothing, not even what some thought to be distinct spaces like urban and rural, seem to hold much currency amidst globalization, critics at the time charged (Hoggart, 1990). Such materialist lines, like metropolitan versus non-metropolitan and urban core versus scattered, continue to promise little good news in terms of rural vitality (Bell, 2007). The United Nations reports that a minority of the global population, only 46 percent, lives in rural places (United Nations, 2014). In the United States, a mere 15 percent of the population lives in rural places (USDA ERS, 2015b). In Australia, only one in three people live outside major cities,

what the Bureau of Statistics refers to as rural, regional, and remote areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In South Africa, 35 percent of households are in rural places (Statistics South Africa, 2009). And in Ecuador, a comparable number: about 37 percent live in rural places (World Health Organization, 2009). The story is the same across the national contexts that this Special Issue includes: if one designates the meaning of the rural as people living in sparsely populated places, and if those people are annually registering less of a share of the national population, the rural appears perpetually in decline. The rural seems to be losing to the urban bully and fraught in a fight for more capital. Perhaps, then, the rural no longer counts for much.

Other sociologists counter, with an idealist approach, that the rural is more than a head count or a thin stand of people (Bell, 2007, 1994; Cloke, 2006; Halfacree, 1993, 1995; Cloke and Little, 1997). Rural is a body of thought, a representation, with politics and cultural currency that do not fit such a strict, material sense of the rural. Rural continues to flourish in many places and senses, where a variety of countryside framings influence how people live in and understand the world. As a plethora of political movements across the globe show, the rural still bears much cultural authority in everyday life (Woods, 2003, 2006; Desmarais, 2007). The rural continues to be an apt political tool in general elections and rhetoric. All is not bucolic, ideological bliss. Deterministic approaches to the environment and rural can facilitate domination across differences of gender, class and race, and the exclusion of the rural other (Little, 1999).

How then, amidst such controversy over its meaning, can rural serve the study of environmental injustice? The answer is a relational one. Ideas of the rural have material impacts, and vice versa. One does not come *before* the other. As such, debates over the rural fold into similar debates over the key dimensions of environmental injustice: race and class. Pulido (1996) pinpoints four predominant issues with mainstream approaches to environmental racism: singular definitions of racism, limiting racism to overt actions or discrete events, denying racism as ideology, and the race versus class debate. Singular definitions of rural may prove critical one day in the courtroom for judgments if rural targeting becomes illegal. In part, that's why environmental injustice focused on *disproportionate* burdens and direct *targeting* – to gain footing in the courtroom for substantial judgments against polluters. Such a narrow meaning was vital to piercing the corporate veil and determining intent. But for scholars working on rural vulnerabilities now, such an approach could, as Pulido (1996) writes, hamper political movements that capitalize on many diverse meanings and actions of rurality to promote a shared framing (Benford and Snow, 2000). Narrowing what the rural means at the beginning of its exploration as a dimension of injustice limits the study of it and potentially overlooks the ideological role of the rural. As Partridge (this issue) points out, rural people can be titled “a problem,” such as “the Indian problem,” facilitating their limited access to land, water, and environmental outcomes. A solely materialistic, rural curtain eclipses the varying ideas of the rural and can play into a singularly doomsday view of rural decline and its sacrificial status.

Without attention to ideology, as Pulido warns in her study of race, scholars can also reify the very injustices they seek to overcome. With an absolute approach to material rural, such as few (and decreasing) numbers, rural decline can feel like an insurmountable inevitability. From there, utilitarian logic flourishes, the bane of many fights wrought against environmental injustice. With such thinking, targeting rural black communities, the poorest demographic in the United States where poverty is on average a startling 37 percent, makes simple sense (USDA, 2015a). There are fewer people, less money, and cheaper resources: why *wouldn't* industry logically settle there? Narrowing the rural definition to *only*

sparsely populated reifies the targeting of such spaces for industries aiming to control risk, like the United State's Federal Code of Regulation's limitations on nuclear plant siting. Such logic self reproduces by leaving the meaning of human life to the loudest, collective voice, not barebones human rights. So goes the logic of minority targeting: the few of voice take the most of burden. This default position of minority burden, and majority benefit, ties into the chicken-and-egg debate specific to environmental injustice, riddled with the same utilitarian logic – that plants roost where the eggs lay. Rural has the eggs – cheap land, more poverty, fewer people, and natural resources – so toxic industries consequently follow to help them hatch, or so the logic goes. Arguments become so mixed up with corporate or governmental intent to overburden minorities, that the systematic disenfranchisement of large groups of people, along helpful categorical lines, like race, class and rural, can become lost. The point, Pulido (1996) and Pellow (2000) stress, is that these processes are part of a much larger sociohistorical formation that shapes inequality. The rural burden is not an inevitable one, and thinking of rural targeting as only a discrete event and ignoring it as part ideology, serves to reify utilitarian logic.

On the tail of recent debates over the rural, we might go so far as to say the well-heeled discussion puts the field in an excellent place to move forward with the study of rural environmental injustice. As this special issue is testament to, documenting the material impacts of such injustices, like eroded landscapes, radiation, cancer, asthma, extinction, and pollution, does not come at the expense of studying ideological constructions of the rural – like backward, brain drained, uneducated, primitive, native, trashy, hillbilly, and resource rich. The rural ideologically and materially plays a role in the justice rendered within the ecuman community – and warrants our attention.

3. Tyranny of the majority

Bringing rural to the table of environmental injustice requires some theoretical continuity with existing dimensions of vulnerability. We find a perhaps unlikely source for fodder – Alexis de Tocqueville, and his concept tyranny of the majority, drawn from the American case, but applicable to democracies elsewhere that operate within majority rule. Alexis de Tocqueville, the son of an aristocrat, and a white Frenchman visiting what he unapologetically called the new world, stands in many senses far from EJ concerns. In his early 1800s chronicle of American democracy, he wrote that African Americans and American Indians were “naturally distinct” and “below” white men (Tocqueville [1969] 1835: 317). Women scarcely registered in his study, but in his few references, he saw them as subservient to men. Mostly, he spent his time documenting a minority of people who lived in the United States at the time – the white, property-owning men who were allowed to participate in democracy. Despite such glaring inequalities, Tocqueville registered the United States as an egalitarian, liberal-democratic nation, and many political scientists have followed his lead. Tocqueville has provided the theoretical backbone of countless treatments of the United States as a place that protects and upholds individual rights (Hartz, 1955), what he famously characterizes as the freeing of each individual link from the feudal chain.

America, like many democracies across the world, has repeatedly failed to live up to such liberal ideals, something Smith (1993) contributes to competing ideologies. Smith (1993) takes issue with scholars who argue that inequality is an exception to the otherwise liberal norm in American democracy. Such scholars then mistakenly, he argues, use Tocqueville as a theoretical tool to argue that U.S. democracy is fundamentally dedicated to

equality. Smith (1993) points out that nativism, racism and patriarchy have long challenged such equal conditions. Although today women and other minorities have fuller rights of citizenship and have felt the embrace of the democratic state, problems still abound. With the crippling of one unequal hierarchy comes the rise of new ones. After the dismantling of slavery in America, Jim Crowe policies arose across the country to keep people from voting. Later, the integration of public schools was countered with the rise of private white ones after the U.S. Supreme court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education*, and for-profit prisons today are disproportionately filled with people of color. Counter to the prevailing argument that America is ever moving forward toward classic republican and liberal ideas, Smith suggests that racist and nativist ideologies consistently reemerge in American politics. America is not quite as liberal, in the classic sense, as interpretations of Tocqueville make it seem.

We offer some caution and counter to such critiques of Tocqueville, pressing that the existence of inequality does not render his critiques of the equality of conditions obsolete. Even Tocqueville himself resisted the conclusion that equality truly reigned in democracies. He saw equality as an internal contradiction. As citizens gained the right to vote and the hereditary and cultural ties of feudalism faded, he warned that people could become individualistic and even egoistic. Therein festered a series of problems, in Tocqueville's view: self-interest, apathy toward government, unchecked bureaucratic control, and majority rule over minority rights. Tocqueville certainly failed to give attention to state inclusion or economic inequality, resulting in a multitude of oversights with regards to class, racism, xenophobia, and patriarchy. But he did provide a framework to understand domination and oppression within democracy's institutions through a concept that remains an understudied and underutilized tool as part of his theories: tyranny of the majority, what he considered to be the greatest threat to the American republic. Inequality and equality are not always oppositional, but rather can simultaneously feed on each other in the democratic state.

The act of voting and the thought collectives produced in democracies operate on majority logic, where the minority loses and the majority reigns. For the most part, tyranny of the majority has been written off as an unviable threat, under the presumption that people vote in the best interest of each other. Louis Harz, for example, writes that the American majority is, "an amiable Shepard dog kept forever on a lion's leash" (Hartz, 1955:129). Such thinking can facilitate blind faith in the notion that "the people," synonymous with the majority, are out for "all people". We counter that majority rule is closely aligned with utilitarianism, and that the majority's rule can overwhelm human rights and shared public goods. Voting and participation, at the heart of democracy, operate on a fundamentally utilitarian principle: who gets the most votes wins the day. And although there are some constitutional and international protections of human rights regardless of their collective numerical worth, democracies continue to function based on the rule of numbers. Thus the issue is not just *competing* ideologies, like racism or neoliberalism, that work against classic liberal notions of democracy and human rights. Rather, liberal democracies themselves allow bigoted ideologies to flourish when the majority agrees that they should.

Therein lies a democratic contradiction and challenge: democracy, while standing on the legs of equality, operates on the fundamentally unequal premise of majority rule. The voice of the minority is perpetually quieted under the institutions and customs of majority rule, regardless of how loud it tries to speak. Tocqueville writes, "When once [the majority's] mind is made up on any question, there are, so to say, no obstacles which can retard, much less halt, its progress and give it time to hear the wails of those it

crushes as it passes. The consequences of this state of affairs are fate-laden and dangerous for the future" ([1969] 1835: 248). When those who can vote do, they transfer their views into a numerical vote for a candidate. Under majority, utilitarian logic – a way of thinking that can shift from most money to most people – the minority of money and people can be left to the majority's designated ends. As the human individual has become legally synonymous with the corporation, the weight of majority rule has shifted toward profit, in addition to the human voice of majority rule. When most equals best, majority stands synonymous with profit, like Gross Domestic Product, leaving human rights vulnerable to majority corporate supremacy (for example, see the recent Supreme Court rulings in the U.S., including the 2005 *Kelo v. City of New London* where gross economic revenue trumps family and human property rights). The concept tyranny of the majority helps realize the state-based mechanisms by which the privileged majority acts. Unlike what Tocqueville anticipated, though, it's not just a tyranny of the people's majority, it's the tyranny of profit's majority.

For those dedicated to EJ, minority sacrifice to majority interest is fundamentally unacceptable. EJ as a movement responded to the lack of attention that race and class received in the mainstream environmental movements; and today, such principles have converged with public policy and scholarship (Sze and London, 2008). The first principle of EJ laid forth by the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington D.C. "affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction." The principle positively affirmed, in the context of violation, that Mother Earth is a quintessential public good and that all possess the right to be free of ecological destruction. The word "right" comes up in nine of the first ten principles, including "... right to participate as equal partners and every level of decision-making ..."; and "... right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment" Specifically "Native Peoples," "Genocide," "people of color" and "all peoples," clarify that such peoples are not being protected, even in the context of the classic liberal bastion hosting the meeting: the United States of America. EJ seeks equal treatment for those bearing unequal burdens. As such, it searches for equality amidst inequality, simultaneous to reducing abuse of the planet, so that collective burden declines. Democracy's rule of the majority can fail to facilitate such a balance when the minority stands in the way of what 'the most' view as progress.

A critique of minority vulnerability as endemic to democracy has yet to explicitly surface in EJ literature. In contrast, scholars have identified more democratic and participatory governance as a solution to injustice. Scholars reason that if more people participate and their voices have bearing on decisions, then injustices will decline (Frickel and Bess, 2011; Harding, 2008; Moore, 2006; Fung and Wright, 2003). Other scholars look to dismantle capitalism as a second solution (Foster et al., 2009). Unless over production and the internal crises of capitalism are addressed, the dispossessed and property-less will bear the brunt of environmental and economic burdens (Foster, 2005; O'Connor, 1988; Schnaiberg, 1980). For others, a third option, more regulation through the precautionary principle, can resolve downstream impacts (Harrison, 2011; Brown, 2007). By regulating industry more, people will suffer less. By giving the government more authority, justice will abound.

Tyranny of the majority offers a fourth tool to comprehend how the structures of democracy enable environmental injustices institutionally and culturally. Tyranny of the majority carries currency in two primary ways: first, in institutions and laws; and second, in customs and intellect. In his *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, Martin Luther King captured Tocqueville's concern that the minority be expected to surrender its rights under existing laws and institutions. He identified legal injustice as happening when "a

numerical or powerful majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself.” He continues “... a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself” (King, 1963). Extended to the rural, a just law is a law that any citizen, across racial, class or urban/rural differences, would be willing to follow. Thus, a risky industry is no more justifiable in an area where few bear the risk than in an area where many do. That, though, is rarely the case for the rural. Van Wagner (this issue) details the legal status of rural as residual, and even uninhabited, spaces for extraction and dumping. Institutionally, Kelly-Reif and Wing (this issue) find that government agencies closely align with industries to prop up parasitic extraction from the rural to serve urban needs.

These material structures that enable rural targeting are informed by customs and cultural approaches to the rural as backward, primitive, and underdeveloped. The majority’s tyranny operates incestuously by shaping broader thought collectives that the minority itself can embrace, what Desmond and Emirbayer (2009) call symbolic violence, drawing on Bourdieu, in the context of racial domination. The treatment of industrialization as synonymous with progress is one such example, where the worldview of the industrialized majority can impose development policies in rural places (Partridge, this issue). The marginalization of the rural for toxic and hazardous industries is not necessarily met with active resistance. Tocqueville warns that “... while the majority is in doubt, one talks; but when it has irrevocably pronounced, everyone is silent, and friends and enemies alike seem to make for its bandwagon” ([1969] 1835: 254). The majority can form a “formidable fence” around thought ([1969] 1835: 255). Utilitarian thinking behind development and growth machine logic can leave those who may receive limited benefits none-the-less in support of schemes that perpetuate their own vulnerability, as Kulscar, Self and Bain (this issue) and Mailin and DeMaster (this issue) document. Rural as a dumping ground to house the byproducts and extract the materials necessary for industry can be internalized by those living in such places.

For those who dare to protest, Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) critiques of protest carry the wrath of majority judgment, compounding the pressure on those already marginalized as the other. When standing against a locally undesirable land use, diverging from the majority path can be met with the sense that one must nearly renounce the right of citizenship, as in the case of protesting hog confinements (see Pruitt and Sobczynski, this issue; and Tocqueville [1969] 1835). The language of NIMBY itself carries a demeaning logic: that the minority is somehow lesser for standing up for their personal rights and not the larger collectives. Accusations abound that the minority, for example those active in the U.S. Black Lives Matter movements, should instead care that All Lives Matter. When the minority objects, it faces the disapproval of the majority’s collective interests, however jarring the minority experience may be. It’s a profoundly majority-centric democratic judgment.

Some minority statuses are much longer lived, like racial oppression and intergenerational poverty. Others can be more recent, as NIMBY suggests – a jarring experience for those accustomed to majority status. In such cases, the minority can suddenly find itself outside of the shelter of the majority, denied “exclusive privileges possessed for centuries” and forced “down from a high station to join the ranks of the crowd” ([1969] 1835: 248). Tocqueville aptly warns that the minority in some cases can respond with “physical force” and even “anarchy” ([1969] 1835: 260). Tyranny of the majority helps make sense of reactions to environmental injustice that are outside of the government and even actively adverse to it, like so titled ecoterrorism.

Tyranny of the majority, a state centric critique of environmental

injustices, calls for more attention to the rights of humans across geographical, racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality, and economic differences. At the time of his writing, Tocqueville saw a series of restraints on majority rule. “Though it often has a despot’s tastes and instincts, still [the majority] lacks the most improved instruments of tyranny” ([1969] 1835: 262). Amongst those, Tocqueville identified decentralized administration, decentralization of wealth and people on the land, lawyers that affronted the passions of majoritarian whims, and the jury as a thought body that legitimizes authority. Centralization of wealth and people has markedly accelerated in the democratic landscape since Tocqueville wrote, and bureaucratic control has expanded markedly. Questions abound for further research to understand and counter majoritarian rule over minority rights. How is it that majority rule infiltrates high courts, like the United States Supreme Court, designed to protect individual rights? As Chemerinsky (2014) details, the Supreme Court often votes in line with majority views, regularly casting aside the interests of the minority that the Bill of Rights intended to protect. How does majority logic benefit the wealthy? A simple critique of the tyranny of the majority concept is that economically, very few hold the majority of wealth internationally, and consequently direct much of global politics. Thus a minority seemingly reigns. Rather than opposing these two lines of thinking against each other and framing tyranny of the majority in opposition to narratives of the 1%, a more productive line of thinking lies in revealing how they feed into each other. Why does the idea of greater Gross Domestic Product enjoy status as a public good that serves the people? Why then is the minority subservient to the pursuit of GDP projects in majority interest? More generally, citizens included in democracy have the capacity to participate most markedly by casting a vote. Other players in the ecohuman community do not, and require human representation. How does dependence on the state, even a democratic one, shape environmental injustices when many actors in the ecohuman community cannot participate directly? As Pellow (this issue) suggests, a more critical view of the state can help move such lines of inquiry forward. These questions and others we have yet to anticipate offer ample material for future research on the rural as a dimension of environmental injustice, especially within the democratic condition.

4. Article summaries

The following papers forge initial inroads to studying the rural as an explicit dimension of environmental injustice in Australia, Canada, Ecuador, Japan, South Africa, and the United States; and across the disciplinary perspectives of anthropology, environmental studies, epidemiology, geography, law, public health, and sociology. Topically, the papers touch on EJ as tied to mining and resource extraction, agricultural practices, collective action, energy production, and litigation. We have arranged the papers by topic in order to create a coherent flow across the collection as a whole. Last, David Pellow’s dynamic commentary compels a promising conversation between rural studies and EJ, as he places the papers in their broader scholarly and political contexts. Altogether, it makes for a probing and nuanced review.

In *A devil’s bargain: Rural environmental injustices and hydraulic fracturing on Pennsylvania’s farms*, Stephanie Malin and Kathryn DeMaster link the perspectives of EJ, natural resource dependence, and the sociology of agriculture to examine the environmental injustice implications when unconventional natural gas production or ‘fracking’ enters rural agricultural spaces. Their analysis of interviews and observations completed at the epicenter the Marcellus Shale region in Pennsylvania illuminate the conditions under which small and midsized farmer operators risk entrenchment in the web of natural resource dependence. Locked into a ‘devil’s bargain’,

farmers anticipate natural gas leases to support their agricultural livelihoods, eventually compounding their vulnerability through intersectoral dependence. Faced with corporate bullying and procedural inequities around lease terms, land-owning farmers contend with multiple environmental risks that increasingly challenge their ability to manage their land and determine a future on their own terms. This work adds to our understanding of the important ways that uneven energy production and agricultural production interact to foster structural dependencies that further limit the already constrained options for farmers.

Extending that framework of privilege and vulnerability, Laszlo Kulcsar, Theresa Selfa and Carmen Bain use Freudenberg's theory of privileged access and privileged accounts to examine the promotion and development of biofuels plants in rural Iowa and Kansas. In an article titled *Privileged access and rural vulnerabilities: Examining social and environmental exploitation in bioenergy development in the American Midwest*, the authors find that in six communities, actors from the state and local government, local economic leaders, and natural resource interests align themselves with agricultural interests by using their 'privileged access' to public resources to promote bioenergy development. Privileged accounts from these local elites equate to a game of 'double diversion' that sways the conversation away from negative environmental externalities. Largely unified local support for biofuels production results, despite evidence that benefits to local livelihoods are minimal and the potential for long-term environmental harms are real. Concerns over environmental injustices and inequalities are sidelined, overshadowed, and silenced in ways that help perpetuate asymmetries in the distribution of both benefits and vulnerabilities.

As another example of the power of official discourses in shaping local perspectives, Kei Otsuki examines how the current EJ emphasis on participation as a road to procedural equity serves to perpetuate consensual, rather than dissensual, politics in post-disaster rural Tohoku, Japan. Drawing on media reports, policy documents and interview excerpts, Otsuki, in *Procedural equity and corporeality: Imagining a just recovery in Fukushima*, critically evaluates the historical processes that led two rural-nuclear towns to accept interim nuclear waste storage facilities. She illustrates that while the ongoing focus on public participation may ensure procedural equity, it remains unclear whether it moves forward real political equity. Otsuki argues for a corporeal approach that would shift the foundations that sustain a nuclear-based place framing of villages like Futaba and Okuma, to a rural-based framing that might allow the (re)visioning of a just, post-nuclear society to emerge.

Continuing along these lines, Estair Van Wagner considers the dominant role law plays in the construction of rural as residual. In *Law's rurality: Land use law and the shaping of people-place relations in rural Ontario*, Van Wagner takes an eco-relational perspective to consider land use conflicts over aggregate mining extraction in Ontario's Niagara Escarpment. Findings illustrate the material consequences that result when legal and policy conceptions perpetuate a notion of rural places as sacrifice zones. Van Wagner cautions that when place-protective, rural land-use activism works from individualistic and exclusionary places, existing environmental burden and colonial land-use patterns are accentuated, and the potential for more just and transformative alliances are diminished.

Lisa Pruitt and Linda Sobczynski also come from a legal perspective to consider law's role in shaping people-place relations. *Protecting people, protecting places: What environmental litigation obscures and reveals about rurality* considers how conservation litigation that seeks to protect places from degradation can render invisible the needs of local, poor whites. Using the case of a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) adjacent to a federally protected Buffalo National River wilderness, Pruitt and Sobczynski illustrate how the failure of litigation efforts, whether from a conservationist,

economic or social (EJ) perspective, demands a more robust and multi-dimensional conceptualization of rural if EJ advocates are to re-discover or re-engage rural in all its complexities.

Tristan Partridge shifts the focus to south of the equator by looking at the challenges involved in repositioning the 'Indian problem' in the highlands of rural Ecuador informed by histories of dispossession and systematic social and political exclusions. In a case study of San Isidro, Partridge traces collective action efforts of indigenous peoples that challenge historical inequalities and counter current modernization focused policy efforts. In this way, Partridge engages environmental injustice as a socio-historical process rather than an outcome of a discrete event. Reframing and critiquing historical dispossession through collective action, Partridge asserts, holds promise for shaping a more just and equitable future in struggling rural places more broadly.

In another look at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, Kaitlin Kelly-Reif and Steve Wing bring a public health perspective to considering the rural dimension of EJ. In *Urban-rural exploitation: An underappreciated dimension of environmental injustice*, Kelly-Reif and Wing examine the negative consequences of energy production in Japan and industrial hog farming in North Carolina for rural people and places. Drawing on these two examples, the authors illustrate the complex ways that the suppression of feedback between consumption and production perpetuates parasitic urban-rural relations. Extraction from the rural lessens the urban-rural collective capacity to address global environmental problems simultaneous to unjust burden. They call for the development of a scientific framework for monitoring pollutants and health outcomes in rural places built on a partnership between researchers and rural community members as a means for promoting broader, more just goals.

Helen Masterman-Smith, John Rafferty, Jillian Dunphy, and Shelby Gull Laird provide a look at the developmental nature of EJ in *The emerging field of environmental justice studies in Australia: Reflections from an environmental community engagement program*. The paper situates the field of EJ in rural Australia as "patchy and thin" after providing a review of policy and scholarship across a range of disciplinary fields. The authors then present insights gleaned from a canvassing of rural residents about the environment in the Riverina-Murray region. Four major categories of issues—political and economic, community mobilization, population and other emerge from an open-ended survey question and provide insights into rural residents' perception of their position within the environmental political economy.

Finally, Valarie Stull, Michael Bell and Mpumelelo Ncwadi provide an account of *environmental apartheid* defined as "the deliberate use of the environment to marginalize racially defined groups". While recognizing environmental apartheid as a manifestation of environmental racism, the authors argue that it works from a reverse process wherein environmental abuse is committed *in order* to marginalize racially defined groups. KuManzimdaka, South Africa provides a case study rich with illustrations of how the material practices of "rural power" and symbolic practices of the "power of rural" work to marginalize already vulnerable groups and exacerbate the implications of that marginalization. The authors highlight the promise of collaborative and participatory efforts in moving this place, long in the margins, toward a more just and inclusive future.

5. Moving forward

Meeting at a crossroads, EJ and rural studies scholars have much to learn from each other in future work. Environmental domination, treadmills of production, acute poverty, industrial development, and metabolic rift are a few amongst many processes at the center of

modern states and economies often mired in injustice. The rural speaks to the spatial contexts and ideologies that propel these processes forward with unequal impacts. Moving forward, rural studies can help pinpoint the periphery of thought, space, and politics within the core, to the core, and those semi places in between.

Tyranny of the majority provides a tool to understand how materiality and ideology intersect in the rural case to shape the political economy of modern democratic states. Tyranny of the majority captures the oppression by the dominant thought collectives of profit and people mediated by those within democracy's institutions and those nonhumans excluded from its representation. As Pellow (this issue) mentions, there is much work yet to do to better understand, and counter, rural environmental injustices. Namely, the tendency of environmental justice and rural studies literature to turn to government interference as a mechanism to counter the inequality fostered by 'free markets' overlooks problems endemic to the state, as tyranny of the majority suggests. Such thinking can also validate the idea of a 'free' market by framing it in opposition to state interference or regulation. Yet the law undergirds all markets, and the law could not exist without the state, democratic or otherwise (Sklar, 1988). Critical questions arise as to what kinds of legal forms, like securities, futures, corporations and their subsidiaries, facilitate what kinds membership in the democratic state and consequent environmental inequalities (for more on the corporations and the environment, see Pretchel and Touche, 2014; Prechel and Zheng, 2012). For example, the corporation gaining legal standing as a human in favor of profit reshapes markets and democracy in dialogue with each other. But what actors still have no legal standing? Countless members of the ecohuman community, as Pellow (this issue) writes. There is much to learn from the great oppressions and exclusions of the past in the democratic state. Slavery and the American Indian genocide are not blips in the democratic story, but arguably endemic minority underrepresentation and exclusion of those deemed 'sub-human'.

These exciting papers and Pellow's insightful commentary open the door to further explore these topics and more. We hope that this SI helps to bring more recognition to the rural as a central, mediating point in the understanding and countering of environmental inequality.

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