

# **Territorialisation and the Assemblage of Rural Place: Examples from Canada and New Zealand**

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## **Abstract**

This chapter draws on ‘Assemblage Theory’, as developed by Manuel de Landa, to explore the significance of processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation in understanding the restructuring of rural places. In particular, it emphasises the potential for ‘Assemblage Theory’ to make the connection between political-economic processes and their material effects, cultural dimensions of place identity, and the territorial expression of a place. This can help us to understand how rural places are changed by restructuring processes, including globalisation, but also how such places adapt and survive. The chapter concludes with short illustrative examples from Canada and New Zealand.

## **Introduction**

The territorialisation of rural places has long been a focus of inquiry by geographers. On the one hand, rural places are culturally perceived as deeply embedded in their territories, if understood etymologically as a connection to the land or *terroir*. The traditional industries of rural areas have been based on exploiting the land and its natural resources, and the physical geography of rural places has historically determined their accessibility, shaped their settlement pattern, influenced their social and economic forms and left a mark on their sense of identity and cultural practices (Woods et al., 2011). Yet, at the same time, defining and delimiting the territories of rural places, in the sense of a bounded space, has proved problematic. From the 1970s onwards, numerous attempts have been made in several countries to map and classify the division of rural and urban space, sometimes as governmental exercises (see for example Cloke 1977; Isserman 2005). However, these efforts have been rightly critiqued as methodologically flawed and analytically impotent (Cloke 2006; Woods 2009).

Moreover, the rise of the political economic perspective in the 1980s, with its attack on spatial fetishism, demonstrated that rural places, like all localities, are incorporated into wider social, economic and political structures, and that social relations in place are determined more by the global processes of capitalist accumulation and class struggle than by territorial factors. Territories might have relevance if they are understood as the spatial competence of

local authorities that have sought to mediate broader processes, but which have no inherent agency. As the political economic approach threatened to undermine the usefulness of 'rurality' as an academic concept (Hoggart 1990), the cultural turn responded by conceiving the rural as a social construct. This emphasised the cultural dimensions of rural being, but further detached rurality from territory. It held that different constructs of rural identity (and indeed, place identity) could overlap across the same space, recognised that urban lifestyles might be performed in rural space, and conversely, that rural lifestyles could be performed in urban space (see Woods 2011a). More recent relational approaches have reintroduced the material dimension of rural places (Heley and Jones 2012; Murdoch 2003; Woods 2011a), but in stressing the connectivity of place have imagined rural places as spatial formations other than bounded territories. Rudy (2005), for example, dismisses the framing of Imperial Valley in California as a 'region' to reconceptualise it as a 'cyborg'.

In this chapter, I seek to recover the territorialisation of rural place by turning to assemblage theory, particularly as developed by Manuel de Landa. Proposed as a new ontology of society, assemblage theory offers an attractive way of conceptualising place, not only because of the emphasis it places on territorialisation and deterritorialisation as intrinsic features of assemblages, but also because it allows consideration of cultural expressions and affects as expressive components of assemblages. Assemblage theory further presents opportunities for analyzing how places are reconfigured through processes of restructuring, such as globalisation, as illustrated through two brief case studies from Canada and New Zealand at the end of the chapter.

### **Assemblage theory and place**

Assemblage theory, which has become fashionable in human geography in recent years, refers broadly to a relatively loose and diverse set of ideas and approaches that derive inspiration from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Anderson et al., 2012). Although Deleuze and Guattari never posited a clear definition of the concept, they repeatedly deployed assemblage in two senses: first, to refer to the composition of things as unstable collections of "heterogeneous elements that may be human and non-human, organic and inorganic, technical and natural" (Anderson and McFarlane 2011: 124); and second, to refer to the process of coming together (or *agencement* in the original French). The terminological inexactitude of Deleuze and Guattari has allowed subsequent writers to use

and develop the concept with different inflections and emphasises, but Anderson and McFarlane summarise that the term assemblage,

is often used to emphasise emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy, and connects to a wider redefinition of the socio-spatial in terms of the composition of diverse elements into some form of provisional socio-spatial formation.

(Anderson and McFarlane 2011: 124)

In this chapter, I particularly draw on the post-Deleuzian embellishment of assemblage theory by the Mexican-American philosopher Manuel de Landa, most notably in his 2006 book, *A New Philosophy of Society* (De Landa 2006). In this, de Landa presents assemblage theory as a new ontology for understanding society through analysis of the components that comprise social entities, and helpfully outlines the principles of assemblage composition that provide a framework for analysis.

First, assemblages are composed of material components and expressive components. Material components are the physical elements that comprise an assemblage – both natural and manufactured, but also technologies and people. Expressive components are the affective characteristics and capacities that influence our perception of an assemblage. In de Landa's (2006) example of an ecosystem as an assemblage, he identifies the soil, sunlight, trees and animals as material components, and their forms, colors and habitats as expressive components. Moreover, individual components can perform both a material and an expressive role, such that the two are different ends of an axis, not discrete categories.

Second, and most importantly for this discussion, assemblages are subject to forces of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, the former giving an assemblage shape and the latter destabilising its form and unity. Territorialisation here need not necessarily be understood in its literal sense, but may refer to any form of diagram or matrix that holds the various components of an assemblage together; however, as de Landa (2006) makes clear, territorialisation can be literal in the claiming of ground, the occupation of space. As Anderson and McFarlane put it, "assemblages always 'claim' a territory as heterogeneous parts are gathered together and hold together" (2011: 126). Thus, in the example of the ecosystem, territorialisation is enacted through food chains (which do not have a geographical form), but also through the colonisation of particular sites by plants and animals

and their adaptation to specific local environmental conditions. Deterritorialisation, meanwhile, is driven by factors including climate change, the invasion of exotic species and evolutionary mutation, which alter relationships between the components of the ecosystem and disrupt its geographical map.

Third, an assemblage is described and given an identity through the application of 'expressive media', such as language, in processes of coding and de-coding. Thus, the use of the term 'ecosystem', and the body of scientific knowledge and theory that it implies, is an act of coding that describes and represents the assemblage to which it is applied. As theories are critiqued, language evolves and representations are challenged, the coding of assemblages may change, with old meanings stripped away through acts of de-coding, and new representations constructed.

Fourth, assemblages are characterised by 'relations of exteriority', in other words, they are defined not by their internal components, but by their relations to other assemblages and their external interactions. The capacities of assemblages, thus, "do depend on a component's properties but cannot be reduced to them since they involve reference to the properties of other interacting entities" (de Landa 2006, p. 11). Moreover, a component of an assemblage is not defined by its place in the assemblage, but rather by its capacity to interact with multiple relations, producing an independent interchangeability such that "a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different" (ibid, p. 10). This potential for the components of an assemblage to defect to other assemblages and, equally, for new components to be incorporated into an assemblage, further means that assemblages are never settled, but are dynamic and constantly changing. As Anderson and McFarlane note, assemblage "can only ever be a provisional process: relations may change, new elements may enter, alliances may be broken, new conjunctions may be fostered" (2011, p. 126).

The appeal of assemblage theory in contemporary human geography reflects its resonance with recent interests with relational geographies, non-representational theory and the politics of affect (Anderson et al., 2012), but also perhaps the centrality that it affords to territorialisation. This may explain why many of the geographical applications of assemblage theory to date have focused on trans-local assemblages that operate across space, such as diasporic networks, the itineraries of peripatetic activists, and disaster relief mobilisations.

Certainly, applications in rural geography and rural sociology have been primarily concerned with such trans-local assemblages, including work on the global land-grabbing assemblage (Murray Li 2014), global biofuel assemblage (Hollander 2010), forest management (Murray Li 2007) and rural microfinance (Rankin 2008).

In contrast, there has been surprisingly little examination in geography of places as assemblages. The few exceptions include McFarlane's (2011) work on Mumbai and São Paulo, Venn's (2006) engagement with global cities, and Rosin et al. (2013) on Central Otago, the only study to focus on a rural area. Notably, Saskia Sassen has also written about cities as assemblages, but she makes clear that she uses the term only in its dictionary sense, and does not borrow conceptually from either Deleuze or de Landa (Sassen, 2006).

This neglect is especially curious given that de Landa himself sets a precedent by devoting a chapter of *A New Philosophy of Society* to considering cities and nations as assemblages. In this he works through the analysis of the city as an assemblage, identifying buildings as material components and an iconic skyline among the expressive components. Territorialisation, he proposes, occurs through processes including residential practices, such as that captured by Burgess's famous concentric model, whilst deterritorialisation follows from the disruption of these patterns, for example by gentrification. Meanwhile, the relations of exteriority of a city include the interactions between town and countryside, with de Landa suggesting that the classic market town and its relations to surrounding rural communities forms an exemplar of an economic assemblage (de Landa 2006).

Starting from this model, it is not too difficult to image how rural places might similarly be deconstructed as assemblages. The material components might include the landscape, buildings, crops, livestock, wildlife, people, economic commodities that are produced or traded, and cultural artefacts, among others; whilst expressive components could include the aesthetic qualities attributed to the landscape, the emotional attachments of people to particular sites and localities and their sense of identity, and even the nebulous idea of the rural idyll as it is invested in an experience of calm, tranquillity and nostalgia.

The territorialisation of rural place might be expressed through its community structure and practices, its social stratification, and the relations between established local families, but also through aspects that literally tie the place to territory: the settlement form and field system;

the practice of working the land through farming or forestry and the intimate, embodied knowledge of territory that imbues; the passing down of property through family inheritance; the identification of landmarks as symbols of place identity or boundary markers. However, these territorial forms are always contingent and subject to deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation through factors such as in- and out-migration, new building developments, the closure or rationalisation of local services, the amalgamation of municipalities, and so on.

From this perspective, the very description of a place as ‘rural’ is an act of coding that positions the place within collective geographical imaginations, and which implies certain associations and expectations that will vary from individual to individual and thus will always be contested. Furthermore, other practices of coding might also be observed, through acts of naming, mapping and measuring, and through formal representations such as eligibility for rural development funds.

Together, the multiple identities and mobilities of material and expressive components (as they might be part of several different assemblages simultaneously), the processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, and the acts of coding and decoding, connect a rural place to other places and other assemblages. The relations of exteriority of a rural place thus include its interactions with local towns and with the wider region, migration flows and commuting patterns, economic transactions, and power relations to centres of political authority. As these are inherently unstable, rural places are hence always dynamic, always open to change.

By adopting this assemblage theory approach to understanding rural place, we can posit a number of further observations about territorialisation and its relation to culture. First, territories do not make places – rather, territories are the outcomes of the territorialisation of places. This is an important counter to the environmental determinism of some earlier variants of regional geography, which suggested that the form and character of local cultures and economies were moulded by their territorial setting. As elements of the local environment are enrolled into a place-assemblage these will inevitably have a bearing on its form, character and culture. But as noted above, an assemblage cannot be reduced to the properties of its components and accordingly a place cannot be reduced to, or constrained by, its territory or environment.

Second, territorialisation does not necessarily result in bounded, discrete territories. The emphasis in assemblage theory on the exteriority of relations highlights the positioning of places within complex webs of social relations. The territorial form of a place-assemblage is consequently not as a discrete unit of smooth space, but as a knot, an entanglement of constellation of relations within these webs. As such, the territories of places have indistinct or fuzzy boundaries, with relations that spill over into and conjoin with other places (Jones and Woods, 2013). Moreover, they are dynamic, forever shifting their centre of gravity, claiming and deserting space, and sprouting relations that extend in new and unexpected directions. The decline in agricultural employment, for example, has shifted the locus of everyday life in rural communities away from the fields, whilst the closure of shops and schools means that significant elements of a community's social interactions may now take place in neighbouring towns and villages. Meanwhile, the maintenance of social relations between emigrants from rural communities in distant cities, their formation of hometown associations, celebration of local festivals, exchange of local gossip, and continuing involvement in community life through the mediating technologies of e-mail and Skype, might be seen as a new dimension of territorialisation for rural places.

Third, as processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation involve the arrangement of material and expressive components, so they are closely implicated in the expression of culture through these components. Material components of rural places include cultural artefacts such as folk dress, vernacular architecture and furniture, regional dishes and food products, folk songs and music, and so on. In some cases, such components can act as anchors to physical territory: recipes that use locally-grown produce, furniture made with local wood or stone, songs and poems that reference local landmarks. Yet, the mobility of cultural artefacts can also make them agents of deterritorialisation, as they are exported to other places, enrolled into other assemblages, and hybridised through contact with other cultures. Both these aspects are important for endogenous rural development strategies that commoditise cultural artefacts, valorising not only their material role as components of place, but also their expressive role: embodiments of nostalgia, authenticity, tranquillity, naturalness, wholesomeness, heritage, and pleasure that can be taken away and plugged into the assemblage of the buyer's home.

Fourth, the coding of rural place is also a cultural act replete with references to territory. Codings that are applied to rural places from the outside are commonly informed by

mainstream cultural discourses of the rural, and their associated stereotypes. These range from idealised notions of rural idyll derived from media portrayals of the rural idyll, through to negative stereotypes of the rural as backward, deprived and depraved. Such external coding frequently incorporate an imagined territorialisation of rural places as far-away, remote, isolated and difficult to get to, and thus as separated from mainstream urban society. At the same time, codings articulated from within rural places also assert territorialisation as differentiation, but used to distinguish their communities from neighbouring places and people. Such coding of territorial differentiation is incorporated into, and expressed through, folk culture in the form of song, poetry, story-telling, humour, sporting rivalries, and the use of dialect, which in many cases also reference and reinforce connections to the land and to the local environment, even after the material basis for such connections has been eroded.

### **Places as assemblages and rural restructuring**

Rural places have been subjected to significant social and economic restructuring over recent decades, as economies have been diversified away from farming and other primary industries, populations have been reconfigured through flows of out-migration and in-migration, old class and power structures have been challenged, local services have been rationalised and reorganised, landscapes and habitats have been overlain with new environmental regulations, and diverse elements from landscape features to cultural traditions have been commodified as tourist attractions. In popular discourse, these processes of restructuring are often presented as having diluted rural identity, diminished place-distinctiveness and depleted the cultural and economic sustainability of rural localities. It is perceived that places are all becoming the same, and certainly that they are all beholden to the same social and economic trends. Territorial differentiation seems less relevant.

Assemblage theory, as outlined in this chapter, offers an alternative perspective in which restructuring can be understood not as the erosion of place-difference, but as the re-assembling of places as the substitution of material and expressive components is accompanied by processes of reterritorialisation and recoding. Take, for example, the impact of post-war agricultural modernisation. From an assemblage perspective we see that agricultural modernisation involved the introduction of new material components, including machinery and agri-chemicals, together with new farming practices that produced new territorialisations with larger farm units and larger fields, and led to new relations of exteriority as farmers increasingly produced commodities to contract for supermarkets and



food processing corporations. The reduction in demand for farm labourers – a redundant material component - meanwhile prompted deterritorialisation in the form of changed social, labour and power relations in the village, the shift of everyday working life away from the fields, an increase in commuting to neighbouring towns for work, and intensified out-migration. Depopulation led to abandoned properties which, in time, became enrolled in new assemblages of counterurbanisation as cheap property for migrants seeking to escape the city. Depressed agricultural villages were re-coded as desirable places to live, attracting new in-migrants who brought with them not only new material components, but new expectations about the expressive roles of the village's components, reflecting their mental model of the rural idyll. Furthermore, as new in-migrants established their own social networks and activities, commuted to work, and shopped at the nearest supermarket, they contributed to the further reterritorialisation of the village and the reconfiguring of its relations of exteriority. Thus, through these incremental changes, the assemblage of the village has been transformed, but it remains a place, an assemblage, a territory. Whether or not it is perceived as any less rural as a result is a question of coding.

The deployment of assemblage theory as an analytical tool in this way also resonates with the relational approach to researching globalisation in a rural context as discussed in Woods (2007), which positioned globalisation not as a force impacting on rural places from the outside, but as a phenomenon that is reproduced through rural places in acts of negotiation, contestation and hybridisation. In particular, deconstructing rural places as assemblages corresponds with the call in Woods (2007) for research to examine “the micro-processes and micro-politics through which place is reconstituted, treating human and non-human actants agnostically, and [being] sensitive to the historical legacies of past engagements with global processes and forces” (p. 503).

The analytical potential of assemblage theory for examining the restructuring of rural places in the context of globalisation is explored through two brief illustrative case studies, from Canada and New Zealand, both in the final part of a restructuring process.

### *The outports of Newfoundland*

The first case study concerns the small, remote fishing villages, called ‘outports’, of Newfoundland in eastern Canada. The outports were established by European settlers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as part of the territorialisation of their emigrant communities, the

locations reflecting the centrality of fishing as the economic driver of the colony, but also the harshness of the terrain and the climate. As place-assemblages, the outports are composed by material components including the rocky landscape, wooden buildings, boats, residents and the sea; combined with expressive components including the sense of isolation and qualities of resilience and community. Most important, though, were the fish, especially cod, that traditionally performed both material and expressive roles – as a commodity that provided the community with its income, and as a symbol of the community’s identity and its reason for being.

The territorialisation of the outports reflected these components and their context. On land, the territorial reach was limited and defined by the inaccessibility of the location and the distance to larger settlements. However, the territorialisation of the outports also extended out to sea, encompassing regular fishing grounds and maritime features that were known intimately by the fishermen who worked the ocean.

The precarious existence of the outports highlighted the contingency of the relations that comprised them, and like all assemblages they were subject to constant change. The introduction of some new material components improved life – motors for boats, skidoos, communication technologies such as telephones and satellite dishes that reshaped their external relations. Other changes presented more serious challenges, the two most notable of which followed external acts of re-coding.

The first challenge stemmed from the collapse of Newfoundland’s major banks in the 1920s and the ensuing political and economic crisis that led to a narrow vote for the colony to join the Canadian confederation in 1948. The Canadian government, charged with rescuing the Newfoundland economy, imposed a new coding on the outports that represented many as unsustainable and unaffordable and demanded their evacuation. Between 1956 and 1965, 115 communities were resettled, in some cases involving a literal reterritorialisation as houses were transported across ice or floated across water (O’Flaherty 2011). Often, the abandoned land remained part of the imagined territory of the community, but primarily as an expressive component – a site of nostalgia and remembrance, visited only in an annual pilgrimage.

The second challenge concerned the central component of the outports, the fish. The ocean had always been where the outport communities intersected with other fishing communities

from both sides of the Atlantic, but during the twentieth century it became increasingly a point of intersection with a growing global fisheries assemblage, powered by industrial trawlers and large corporations. The intensified capacity of the global fisheries assemblage accelerated the depletion of the once-plentiful cod stock, to the point that the fish were re-coded as an endangered species. In 1992, the Canadian Minister of Fisheries declared a moratorium on fishing for northern cod that was intended to last two years, but which was still in force at the time of this writing, 22 years later.

The moratorium removed cod overnight as a core material component of the outports. The loss of the central economic component in turn undermined the function of other material components, including fish storage and processing facilities, and many of the boats and workers, and fundamentally altered the relations of exteriority of the outports. The major response, however, was a dramatic act of deterritorialisation, as thousands of people left the outports for the provincial capital, St John's, and further afield. In hope that the moratorium might be lifted, many of these migrants retained ties to the outports, in some cases keeping property, such that in practice the migration served to extend the territorialisation of the outports, with geographically dispersed appendages. Moreover, some residents entered 'fly in, fly out' employment working shifts in the offshore Newfoundland oil industry or the oil sand fields of Alberta.

At the same time, efforts to diversify the economy of rural Newfoundland focused on developing tourism, which in turn required the recoding of the outports and their components. Landscapes that were once perceived as hostile and threatening are now coded as unspoilt and exciting, and icebergs that were once risks to shipping are now natural wonders. The tourists attracted are themselves new material components in the outports, their arrival facilitated by transport assemblages involving aircraft and cruise ships, and creating new relations of exteriority with places in mainland Canada and the United States.

*'The adventure capital of the world': Queenstown, New Zealand*

The second case study concerns the rural resort town of Queenstown, in South Island, New Zealand, which has been transformed over the last two decades by its positioning as part of global tourism and amenity migration networks (see also Woods 2011b). Originally established in the 1860s, Queenstown grew and crashed in a short-lived gold-mining boom before settling into existence as a farming community made possible by the introduction of

merino sheep as a core material component. In the 1920s the introduction of another material component – a ski lift – prompted the coding of the town as a year-round resort, and the launch of a tourism industry that expanded to become the mainstay of the local economy, but which for fifty years was primarily fed by domestic visitors.

The reconfiguration of Queenstown as a global resort depended on two innovations that introduced two further new material components into the locality. The first was the fitting by entrepreneur William Hamilton of a water jet to a flat-bottomed boat, inventing a jet boat that could be manoeuvred swiftly in the fast but shallow rivers of New Zealand, and which within ten years was being used for commercial tourist trips on the Shotover river near Queenstown. The second innovation was the attaching of an elastic rope to Kawarau Gorge Suspension Bridge to create the world's first commercial bungee-jumping operation. Significantly, both these components also perform expressive roles in the Queenstown assemblage, as signifiers of thrill and adventure. This association, which connected with the growing global culture of adventure tourism, was further reinforced by the later coding of Queenstown as “the adventure capital of the world” in the slogan of the local tourism agency.

The expansion of international tourism was facilitated by the upgrading of its airport, intersecting with budget transport assemblages. This enabled the arrival not only of adventure tourists, but also of more conventional tours, especially from east Asia. These latter tourists were attracted less by the search for adventure than by the mountain landscape, opportunities to consume New Zealand rural culture (albeit with the familiarity of Asian food and Japanese- and Korean- language gift shops, which had also been introduced as new material components), and by filming locations for movies including the Lords of the Ring trilogy, which recoded parts of the local landscape as ‘Isengard’, ‘Lothlórien’ and ‘Dimrill Dale’.

International tourism reconfigured the territorialisation of Queenstown, reshaping its economic and labour market structures (by 2004, tourism contributed NZ\$620 million to the local economy, and 50 per cent of employment was in accommodation, catering, retail or cultural and recreational services (Woods, 2011b)), and spatially opening up new areas to tourism, shifting the zoning of areas for conservation and recreation, and physically developing land for infrastructure. Reterritorialisation was further driven by the demand for new housing under pressure from a rapidly expanding population, including from international amenity migration. In the early 2000s it was estimated that up to a quarter of all

property sales were to foreign buyers. These purchases injected foreign capital (and especially Asian capital) as the latest material component introduced to Queenstown, fuelling new housing and resort developments, whilst overseas investors and homeowners reshaped its relations of exteriority.

However, the subdivision of agricultural land for development sparked controversy, which focused on the coding of Queenstown as a place. On the one side, the neoliberal local government administration (whose territory had been expanded through municipal amalgamation), actively encouraged development with minimal land use planning controls, representing Queenstown as a business- and growth-friendly town. On the other side, conservation groups and amenity in-migrants campaigned for more controls, coding Queenstown as a fragile environment under threat from over-development. Queenstown's global relations of exteriority meant that the conflict overspilled the locality, soliciting interventions by external agents such as the actor Sam Neill, and being covered in the international media (see Woods 2011b). Notably, though, it was the pro-developed lobby that appealed to Queenstown's local culture and its expressive components in its defence, presenting growth as consistent with the town's dynamics of change and its adrenaline culture:

Progressive growth brings jobs and investment but areas of high scenic values throughout the district will be cherished and protected. Occasionally, used sparingly, if benefits can be proved. But there will be change, as there has been change since the establishment of Queenstown in the early 1860s. (Queenstown Mayor in *The Otago Daily Times*, quoted by Woods 2011b: 377).

Queenstown likes healthy entrepreneurs. This is an adrenalin-pumping beautiful place which can never be spoilt. It is a magnet. (Queenstown Mayor in *The Evening Post*, quoted by Woods 2011b: 377).

In contrast, the anti-development campaigners were positioned as the representatives of an elitist, globalised culture that was external to Queenstown. Thus, through these arguments, the wealthy amenity migrants who objected to development were being rhetorically deterritorialised from Queenstown as an assemblage – despite their material presence – and

the claim of local business elites to control the coding of place and its territorialisation was re-affirmed.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has commenced an exploration of the potential for assemblage theory to be employed to understand the reconstitution of rural places under globalisation and other processes of restructuring. In so doing, it aims to recover a concern with the territorialisation of rural place, which arguably has been marginalised by conceptual turns in rural geography since the 1980s. However, an assemblage theory perspective leads to a radically different understanding of territory, not as a discrete bounded space, but as the shape taken by place as an assemblage of heterogeneous components and relations. In this way, the territorialisation of a place has both spatial and non-spatial dimensions, and is shaped by the social relations that connect a place to other places and assemblages, and which mean that the character of a place and its territorialisation are always dynamic and changing.

Moreover, the assemblage approach has the capacity to illuminate the connections between culture and territorialisation. Culture is intrinsic to the assemblage of place in a number of ways. Cultural artefacts are among the material components of place, and the expressive components of place include symbols of identity and affects such as emotion that are enrolled into cultural expression. The organisation, and substitution, of material and expressive components influence the territorialisation of a place, in some cases anchoring the assemblage in specific geographical sites, in others acting as mobile elements that can reshape the external relations of place. Equally, the coding of places draws on both local and global cultures to construct meanings that may include comments on the territorialisation of place. As such, culture is tightly implicated in territorialisation.

Indeed, the added value that an assemblage approach provides in exploring questions of territorialisation, cultural sustainability and regional development arguably comes from its agnostic treatment of both materiality and culture, recognising that components of place have both material and cultural/expressive roles, and that both are engaged in territorialisation. In a rural context, particularly, this includes the role that nature plays in the territorialisation of place. Natural components such as rock, soil, water and vegetation enrolled into place-assemblages serve to anchor place to a particular site. Yet, as they are enrolled into the place-assemblage, natural components are also extracted from their setting, modified, combined

with other components and re-coded as food, fuel, building material, fibre, etc., and acquire a mobility that contributes to the relations of exteriority of the place-assemblage and the stretching of its territorialisation. At the same time, the *in situ* re-assembling of natural components into new material forms – stones into buildings, for example – or cultural forms – as parts of a ‘landscape’, for instance – can contribute to giving a place shape and identity, and thus is itself part of the process of territorialisation. In each of these settings the inclusion of natural components reflects their materiality, but their role is also defined by cultural expression. This can be observed in the two examples discussed in this chapter. In Newfoundland, the materiality of the cod and their incorporation into assemblages of fishing and trade explains the territorialisation of the outport communities but also underpins local cultural identity. When the cultural meaning of the cod is re-coded by external environmentalists and politicians and the material role of the fish is suddenly transformed by the fishing moratorium there is a concurrent re-territorialisation of the outport communities, even if the expressive role of the cod lingers in local culture. In New Zealand, the mountain environment as a material component is central to the territorialisation of Queenstown, literally giving it shape, but the mountains also perform an expressive role reflecting cultural norms about rurality, adventure and environmental fragility that on the one hand attracts tourists and amenity migrants, but on the other hand stokes political debate about the impact of development.

An assemblage perspective therefore shows rural places to be anchored in particular sites through the enrolment of static material components, but also to be entwined in manifold external relations that are spatially diffuse. As such, it faces the same problem as other relational approaches to place: how does one identify where one place or locality ends and another starts? This lack of precision about the boundaries of place presents methodological challenges for locality research (see also Jones and Woods, 2013); however, careful application of de Landa’s (2006) model provides a partial answer by revealing the act of drawing boundaries to be part of the process of territorialisation itself. In other words, whilst an assemblage approach rejects bounded territories as a starting point for locality research, it recognises that bounded territories are delineated to give a place-assemblage shape and to attempt to make it stable and governable. Territorial boundaries are thus part of the assemblage of place, and thus have meaning and influence, even if they are repeatedly breached by exterior relations and the mobility of components, or if tensions exist between multiple and non-congruent mappings of territory (see for example Rosin et al., 2013).

This observation has implications for thinking about territory and sustainable development, pointing to the paradox that whilst rural sustainability initiatives often emphasise the endogenous development of local resources, sustainability can only be fully understood in terms of how the diverse components of rural localities interact with broader, complex ecological, economic and cultural systems through relations of exteriority, and that although bounded territories can provide a structure for policy intervention they are at best temporary and contingent fixes on a dynamic and networked world. Thus, in our examples, issues of environmental, economic and cultural sustainability were tied together for the Newfoundland outports in the management of cod stocks, yet the mobility of the fish across any notions of bounded territory and their alternative enrolment in the assemblages of industrial fishing (leading to a depletion of stocks) and of marine conservation (leading to the moratorium) means that the sustainability of the outports is depended on exterior relations that extend beyond their formal territories. Similarly, attempts to introduce more sustainable modes of development in Queenstown have faltered on the limitations of local actors to control those parts of the Queenstown assemblage that extend beyond the formal territory of the district council, and which are defined by their external relations with the global economy, tourism and migration flows (see also Woods 2011b for further discussion).

The brief examples discussed in this chapter hence point towards the insights that the application of an assemblage approach provide in understanding how places are constituted and reconstituted within broader currents of social and economic change, and how these are reflected in the territorialisation of place. Further research within this framework might probe questions about the nature of the material and expressive components that comprise places, how these are arranged and rearranged in processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, how they come to be mutated and substituted over time, how the relations of exteriority of place connect it into wider networks and how these may come to stretch or curtail its territorial expression, and, not least, about the role of culture in cohering and representing the territorialisation of place but also in opening up new opportunities and lines of flight that might lead to new territorial forms.

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