

LOOKING TO OREGON:

Comparative Challenges to Forest Policy Reform and Sustainability in British Columbia and the US Pacific Northwest

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INTRODUCTION:

IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY ...

IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, it has become increasingly difficult to see the forest for the troubles. The emergence of competing social claims related to protecting economies, societies, and ecologies has prompted recent observers to describe BC forests and forestry as “in trouble” (Barnes and Hayter 1997), “in transition” (Burda et al. 1998), and even “intemperate” (Braun, forthcoming). Within this context, pressure has been placed on BC forest policy makers to “look to Oregon,” both to better understand what is at stake in British Columbia’s contested forest sector and to gain insights into how to undertake reforms aimed at social and environmental sustainability in the province’s forest sector. For example, a review of public documents produced by nine environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) in British Columbia reveals that four such groups specifically cited “the Oregon experience” as a model for encouraging enhanced value-added production in the BC forest industry and economic diversification in forestry communities (Reed 1999). For these groups, Oregon represents both past and future for British Columbia – a model of how to move beyond the boom and bust cycle of dependence upon forest resource extraction.

Without question, there is much to be learned from comparisons between Oregon and British Columbia. The two share close regional proximity and a strip of temperate rain forest along their western shores. This forest belt has provided a foundation for the development of a regional forest commodity production complex that figures prominently in the global forest sector. With its substantial publicly

held forest lands, and its history of economic dependence upon the forest sector, Oregon, more than any other state, exhibits parallels to British Columbia. Moreover, like British Columbia, Oregon experienced a series of intense conflicts over its forested landscape, culminating in the listing of the northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1990 and in a series of subsequent changes in forest policy.

Yet, calls to base BC forest policy reform on the Oregon experience are potentially problematic. Such calls tacitly rely on a view that links Oregon and British Columbia by way of parallel stages in a progression from extraction to cultivation in the forest sector and from the “staples trap” of dependence to diversification in the economy more broadly. This view implies a transition that has a definite, identifiable, and more or less determinate ecological *and* institutional trajectory based upon what might be called a “resource cycle” model. From this perspective, the dynamics of resource exploitation are viewed not as historically contingent but, rather, as predictable and to some degree inevitable. Since Oregon has achieved greater “progress” towards converting its old-growth forest inventory into young growth stands than has BC, the resource cycle model holds that British Columbia can see the image of its future in Oregon.

Despite the potential merits of comparative analysis and policy prescriptions, we argue that there are at least two main pitfalls associated with invoking some version of a resource cycle model. First, resource cycle models that posit definitive stages of depletion in resource systems often overlook issues of social justice. As a result, as analytical tools for comparative examination of progress towards sustainability, such models are lacking. This is important within the context of Oregon and British Columbia as there may well be social justice dimensions of the Oregon model that should be avoided in developing policy prescriptions for British Columbia; however, in order to see these dimensions, we have to look for them. Second, the resource cycle model, in asserting the primacy of resource extraction per se as the “problem,” obscures and even ignores the ways that important social, political, and economic processes constitute resource appropriation. On the one hand, resource cycle schemes may assert archetypal paths to depletion without ever calling into question the political economy of resource appropriation. This runs the risk of naturalizing industrial commodity production within a broader context of capitalist society. On the other hand, while ignoring or naturalizing broad issues of

political economy, the resource cycle idea lacks sensitivity to crucial issues of local context. In particular, by emphasizing similarities between British Columbia and Oregon based on their common forest dependence, resource cycle thinking may err by subordinating social processes to ecological ones. This gives short shrift to the capacity of environmental politics to “construct” ecological scarcity and, at the same time, obscures critical differences between British Columbia and Oregon forest industries and policies as well as their general political and institutional milieu. We argue that such differences may be as important as are similarities to any prescriptive project aimed at improving forest policy and practices.

In this article, we argue that a historically specific and geographically sensitive political economy approach offers a better platform from which to develop comparisons and to draw out policy prescriptions. By a political economy approach, we refer to a way of thinking that “recognises the power of institutions to shape the economic and ecological landscape – the location of activity, the structure of production and communities, the nature of trade relations and the patterns of land use” (Hayter 2000, p. x).¹ Drawing on this perspective, we first provide an overview of recent political struggles over the forests in Oregon and British Columbia and then discuss in more detail the potential pitfalls of invoking resource cycle narratives. Subsequently, we discuss important similarities and differences between British Columbia and Oregon along four axes of comparison: (1) regional economic structures and context, (2) forest industry structure and organization, (3) forest governance, and (4) environmental politics and political culture. Despite the cursory nature of our review, it is certainly apparent that broad similarities do exist between Oregon and British Columbia. Dependence upon a common forest resource base, some shared industrial patterns, and some intersecting forest policy challenges certainly offer a basis for comparison based on shared characteristics. Yet, British Columbia and Oregon offer different political economic contexts structured by different legal and policy traditions, and different climates of political expectations. National and local states provide important sources of geographic differentiation, making development trajectories socially and historically contingent. This is not something emphasized by a more unitary resource cycle

¹ For more background on political economy as an approach to social, and particularly geographical, analysis, see Peet and Thrift (1989). For a discussion of political economy and environmental issues, see Prudham (forthcoming) and Harvey (1996).

approach. Thus, we offer a framework of comparison based on local models. More explicit attention to the interplay of exogenous and endogenous factors offers a more satisfying platform for the explication of policy alternatives in two different jurisdictions. While we do make reference to specific policies, it is not our goal to promote specific policy positions; rather, our goal is to illustrate the analytical purchase of an approach that elevates the political and social dimensions of resource appropriation in relation to ecological change in order to better understand the comparative dynamics of change in Oregon and BC forestry.

FORESTS AS CONTESTED TERRAIN

In both British Columbia and Oregon, industrial use and state regulation of forests have been pillars of post-war economic development – pillars that have been increasingly eroded during the last two decades. Beginning in the 1970s, an era of relative stability was replaced by one of increasing turbulence, including heightening concerns about the long-term adequacy of timber supplies and volatility in wood commodity markets (Graham and St. Martin 1989; Hibbard and Elias 1993). In addition, public interest groups became increasingly sceptical about the capacity of existing management regimes to meet an increasingly complex and often contradictory set of forestry and land-use objectives (Pearse 1976; Dana and Fairfax 1980). The increased public concern for non-timber values, adjustment to young-growth forests, and a growing mistrust of government institutions led to heightened civic monitoring of forest practices and public involvement in forest policy.

Yet it was the economic recession of the 1980s that truly shook the foundations of industrial forestry and forest policy in the Pacific Northwest. Widespread economic disruption was visited upon rural timber towns throughout the Northwest, as mills cut back their payrolls or closed altogether. As the recession eased, production rebounded but employment did not. Technological change affecting logging, lumber, and pulp milling, along with corporate restructuring, re-invented an industry featuring fewer and more productive workers (Barnes and Hayter 1992, 1994; Hayter 2000). At about the same time, environmental organizations became more mobilized in forest politics. Sporadic protests that had targeted logging operations in the 1970s became more strategic and focused during the 1980s. In both juris-

dictions, ENGOs initiated several high-profile campaigns, garnered international attention, and succeeded in making wilderness and ecosystem preservation legitimate public policy concerns (see e.g., Dietrich 1992; Wilson 1998).

By the late 1980s wilderness preservationists and workers had become engaged in increasingly bitter conflict, each claiming and seeking to protect the well-being of future generations, albeit from very different perspectives (see Proctor 1995). Resource-dependent communities faced a declining or degraded resource base upon which traditional modes of employment and wealth generation relied. Capital movement and changing trade relations, activism by networks of ENGOs, and (at least in Canada) the affirmation of the rights of First Nations peoples all combined to produce a climate of profound change and transition. If sustainability of ecosystems had become the driving issue for the environmental movement, then sustainability of resource-dependent communities had become the driving issue for workers in the resource industries (Commission on Resources and Environment [CORE] 1994; Brown 1995; White 1995). The crisis culminated in Oregon with the listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, a series of legal battles, and the Northwest Forest Conference held in Portland in April 1993. Up north, political conflict peaked during the hot summer of 1993, when environmental activists, workers, and company representatives engaged in extended confrontations at barricades in the Clayoquot Sound area (Reed 1999). In the years since, ongoing struggle among competing interests has perpetuated fractured relations among workers, communities, environmental groups, firms, and state agencies, perpetuating a forest policy crisis.

Despite the atmosphere of turmoil, by the late 1990s a growing consensus of academics and activists portrayed Oregon as having passed through a significant economic and social transition; by contrast, British Columbia was perceived as remaining mired in painful change and adjustment. In an influential report on the economies of the four Pacific Northwest states (supported by thirty regional economists), jobs in aerospace and timber industries were viewed as remnants of a passing economic era. Yet, at the same time, the economies of these states were seen as "winners." The report indicated that, between 1988 and 1994, while forestry and aerospace industries showed persistent decline, overall economic well-being increased by 18 per cent in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana

– two and one-half times above the national average over the same period (Power et al. 1995). According to the report, this apparent paradox was the result of increased opportunities in value-added and high technology production, prosperity which could be realized for workers in resource industries if only they had effective training and education. Furthermore, the attractive natural landscape of the Pacific Northwest, coupled with a favourable lifestyle, was seen to spur population and job growth in the region. With economic diversification and a landscape re-packaged for leisure consumption rather than for extraction (on this issue, see Freudenberg 1992), the report and a growing chorus of voices sought to link the Pacific Northwest to an emerging discourse about the “New West,” unshackled from its ties to resource industrialization. Recently, this view has influenced the political discourse in British Columbia, where activists have begun to argue that British Columbia is poised to make just such a transition and that policy should seek to accelerate it (e.g. Greenpeace Canada 1998; Sierra Club of British Columbia 1997; Western Canada Wilderness Committee 1999).²

THE RESOURCE CYCLE

This notion of parallel transitions, particularly the view that Oregon is further ahead of British Columbia in a forest sector “transition,” is predicated upon an implicit or explicit idea of a resource cycle model; that is, a model that posits determinate stages in a progression from boom to bust, from extraction to exhaustion, followed (it is hoped) by conservation measures and renewable harvesting³ along with overall economic diversification. According to this line of reasoning, renewable and non-renewable resource sectors go through a cycle of boom and bust revolving around the exploitation of resource stocks to the point of exhaustion. Even sectors that are in principle renewable (e.g., forestry and fisheries) go through expansion and collapse, propelled by market forces that result in harvesting pressures in excess of the regenerative capacity of natural systems. What we call resource cycle models (see Clapp 1998 for a recent elaboration) are elements of a much broader discourse of decline and fall in resource systems – narratives that cut across wide ideological divides. They may be

² For a thorough discussion of some of the myths and realities, as well as the politics, of the New West, see McCarthy (1999).

³ See, for example, Tollefson (1998) for a description of this archetypal way of representing the typical stages that industrial forestry goes through.

expressed as prescriptions (e.g., under “pulse” style harvesting based on dynamic optimization models within neo-classical resource economics frameworks [see, for example, Conrad and Clark 1987; Pearce and Turner 1990]). At the same time, a boom and bust resource cycle model may also be expressed in the form of universal morality plays such as Hardin’s (1968) “tragedy of the commons,” wherein individual economic actors systematically overexploit common property resources acting in their apparently unenlightened self-interest. A similar narrative of decline propelled by resource exhaustion also provided a key thematic for the development of the new western environmental history (Cronon 1992). For our purposes, however, the question is: How useful is a resource cycle perspective in undertaking regional comparisons?

A specific recent formulation of the resource cycle “model” may be found in Clapp (1998), who states “all wild populations under commercial use, sooner or later pass through a resource cycle – that is, a pattern of over-expansion followed by ecosystem disruption and economic crisis.” Although Clapp stresses what he calls “mutually reinforcing political and economic causes” (130), his emphasis falls on the apparent inevitability of resource booms and busts in renewable resource sectors. What this view suggests is that changes in physical availability, and particularly declining resource stocks, lead in more or less predictable fashion to social and political arrangements and responses as resources become exhausted. That is, while he emphasizes policy and institutions as integral to the resource cycle, Clapp simultaneously expresses a certain fatalism by placing these policies and institutions anterior to depletion itself, rendering them limited in their capacity to alter the basic trajectory of the resource cycle.

Clapp does not apply the resource cycle to a BC-Oregon comparison; he does, however, use timber production data to locate various geographic communities along the trajectory of the resource cycle, including regions as large and diverse as Chile, the United States, and “the West” (represented by data from Northwestern California). The implication of his approach is that one can use physical data on stocks and harvest levels to locate different jurisdictions along a typical trajectory – one that includes not only resource availability, but also social and political dynamics. Once a particular place is “located” on the depletion profile, it is apparently possible to “read off” particular economic, social, and political/policy responses. Thus, if we apply the resource cycle model to comparing Oregon and British Columbia,

then we would say that, since more old-growth has been exploited in Oregon, it is now at some point further along in the resource cycle than is its northern counterpart, which is exactly what ENGOS in British Columbia suggest. In other words, there is a certain archetypal path from old-growth extraction to forest exhaustion (including some form of forest renewal) that involves the state of physical stocks *and* attendant "typical institutional" stages of development; along this path, Oregon is ahead of British Columbia.

We are highly sympathetic to Clapp's project and note that some variant of the resource cycle phenomenon is, indeed, extremely pervasive. We certainly do not question the idea that biological populations, communities, and even entire landscapes have been transformed by human use, particularly by their appropriation into networks of industrial production and exchange. Moreover, rapid regional and even global depletion has indeed factored centrally into the historical dynamics of many resource systems, perhaps most famously with regard to fisheries (see, for example, McEvoy 1986).

However, we argue that there are several potential pitfalls entailed by the notion of an abstract resource cycle model derived from depletion profiles. First, in reference to issues of social and ecological sustainability, all too many contemplations on resource depletion and environmental degradation are silent on issues of social justice. Yet, as David Harvey (1996, 182) reminds us, "all ecological projects (and arguments) are simultaneously political-economic projects." A considerable literature on the political economy of natural hazards and environmental degradation shows clearly that these processes are never socially neutral in either their constitution or their effects (see, for example, Watts 1983; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peluso 1992; Lonergan 1993; Liverman 1999). Clapp's resource cycle model is also conspicuously silent on this issue (also noted by Millar and Winder 1999). Sustainability, as used by Clapp, is all too un-problematically reduced to the achievement of sustained yield in resource harvesting, which he views as both historically rare and structurally improbable. Yet if resources – renewable and non-renewable alike – are to be over-exploited and depleted, then what could be more central than the issue of who wins and who loses by such environmental transformations (Rees 1990)?

A second and very much related problem is that the broad historical context for resource depletion is never explicitly examined. Clapp's version of the resource cycle, like Hardin's tragedy of the commons,

assumes and thereby naturalizes capitalist social organization, with resource appropriation by atomistic, self-interested firms experiencing a collective action problem (Millar and Winder 1999). However pervasive such dynamics may well be in the contemporary world, they are nevertheless the product of a particular era and cannot be simply assumed in discussions of human-environment relations (Harvey 1974), not least because capitalist market relations might be a critical part of the problem! This is not to say that Clapp prescribes strengthening property rights or the extension of free market resource allocation, as he points out in response to Millar and Winder (Clapp 1999). Moreover, Clapp does make reference to the interaction of market dynamics and rates of biological productivity. However, he does not specifically develop an analysis of resource depletion as socially produced by capitalist social formations and is, therefore, guilty of un-problematically assuming, and thereby discursively reproducing, industrial capitalism as the context within which resource cycles occur and against which policy prescriptions struggle, apparently without much possibility of effect.

Not only does ignoring the political and economic context leave out the possibility of developing general insights about market capitalism and resource depletion, but, somewhat paradoxically, it also implicitly assumes an unjustifiably homogeneous model of markets precisely by failing to make specific markets relevant to the analysis. What would be an improvement is a model that explicitly frames most contemporary resource depletion as a product of capitalist social relations but that also renders the particular historical and geographic dynamics of capital accumulation and social regulation subject to scrutiny. This approach would recognize market capitalism as relevant without discursively positing "it" as a trans-historical phenomenon (Gibson-Graham 1996). We believe Clapp has provided a very useful point of departure for thinking about renewable resource exploitation, and we take him at his word when he says that "structural forces are [not] the only determinants of the outcomes of specific resource crises" (Clapp 1999, 328). Nevertheless, we seek to balance the emphasis he places on ecological-economic structures with the idea that politics and institutions thoroughly constitute as well as condition the resource cycle. We argue for an approach that couples recognition of ecological dynamics and sensitivities to disturbance and depletion with careful, geographically and historically specific accounts of institutions and actors as well as with a truly interactive view of the relationship between society and

nature.

Some simple observations highlight the salience of this line of thinking. There is certainly ample evidence that the forests of British Columbia and Oregon have undergone dramatic material transformations (cf. Chase 1995).⁴ This is most apparent in age and size class data of standing timber showing a conversion of the resource from one type (old-growth) to another (young-growth) over time. For example, Figure 1 shows the reduction in timber densities in Oregon associated with the replacement of older forests with younger ones, which is particularly dramatic on industrial lands in the state. Moreover, it is also clear that the conversion has progressed further in Oregon than it has in British Columbia. By the early 1990s, most estimates placed the remaining old-growth inventory in Oregon at no more than 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the total acreage of timberland in the Oregon Douglas-fir region.⁵ Analogous data for British Columbia are somewhat more difficult to obtain, yet current estimates indicate that a much larger proportion of the forested landscape remains old-growth, probably in excess of 40 per cent in the coastal region (MacKinnon and Eng 1995; Marchak et al. 1999).

Given these data, in light of resource cycle thinking and in reference to calls to “look to Oregon,” one would expect Oregon to be further ahead of British Columbia along some archetypal path from depletion to diversification. Yet what is notable is how little purchase this characterization has. Consider, for instance, the fact that political “crisis” in the forest peaked at approximately the same point on both sides of the border. As noted, this speaks to commonalities in the *politics* of forest use and specifically contradicts any deterministic or functional relation between stages of resource scarcity and environmental politics. Consider further that, despite different levels of remaining old-growth, Oregon and British Columbia demonstrated remarkable coincidence in the timing of peak employment levels in their forest sectors. In Oregon, aggregate employment in the wood products sector peaked in 1978–79 at about 85,000 employees. The recession of the early 1980s precipitated a dramatic restructuring of

⁴ The ecological implications of these transformations are still being assessed (Dale, Hemstrom et al. 1986; Kirk et al. 1992; Thomas et al. 1993; Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound (BC) and Bunnell 1994; Kohm and Franklin 1997)

⁵ Based on data in Gedney (1988), about 7 per cent of the total timberland acreage in western Oregon (the Douglas-fir portion of the state) was stocked with old-growth, defined here as timber in excess of 200 years old. This includes about 20 per cent of the public timberland area and about 1 per cent of the forest industry’s timberland acreage.

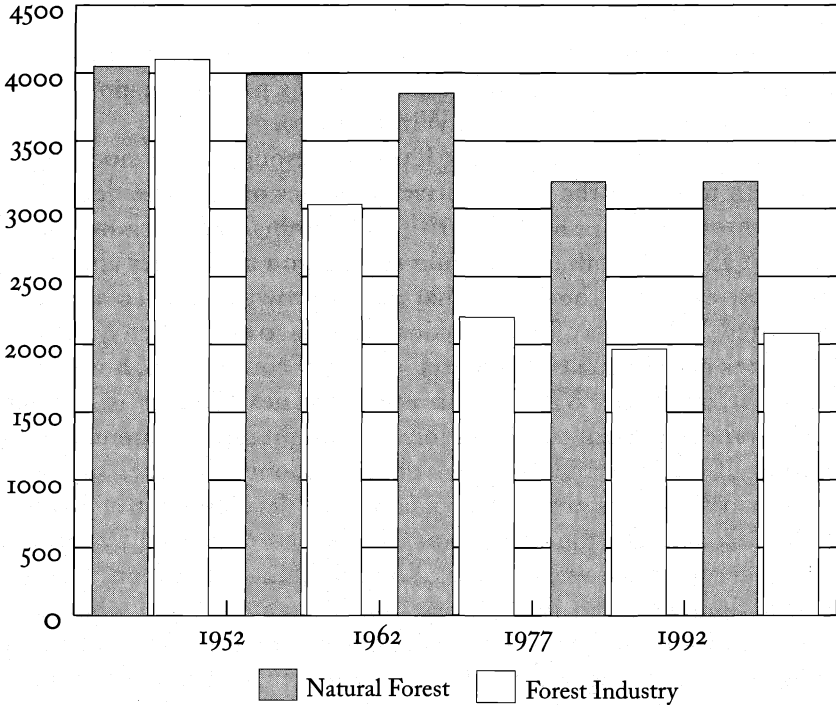


Figure 1: Density of Softwood Timber, Oregon 1952-1992. Powell et al. 1993.

the industry, the fallout from which has been a permanent reduction in employment even when harvest levels are considered. By 1995, employment in the state's forest sector had fallen to about 57,000 workers (United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 2000). In close parallel, British Columbia's aggregate wood products employment also peaked in the late 1970s. The recession in British Columbia also initiated deep restructuring, exacerbating longer-term employment losses through productivity improvements. From a peak level of about 80,000 jobs, total employment in the BC forest sector fell to under 64,000 in 1995 (Marchak et al. 1999, Appendix C). Again, reductions in harvest levels cannot wholly explain this decline, which has at least as much to do with productivity-induced job loss as it does with the dynamics of resource extraction per se. Curiously, while a labour-saving technological imperative is indeed referenced as part of Clapp's (1998) resource cycle model, he represents this imperative as an inevitable economic response to

depletion. We would suggest instead that any technological imperative needs to be theorized in terms of the broader context of industrial capitalist dynamics (Storper and Walker 1989) and then examined as a site of political struggle and contestation as part of the politics of resource industries (Millar and Winder 1999).

Thus, even at a relatively crude level, the resource cycle model does not seem to match the comparative dynamics of resource depletion and environmental politics in British Columbia and Oregon, and it is not at all obvious that we should see Oregon as “further ahead” in any sense except to the degree that its old-growth resource has been exhausted. What this offers analytically seems to be an open question. This does not obviate the potential merits of comparison, however – quite the opposite. With this in mind, we next discuss in greater detail some important considerations that might inform careful examination of Oregon and British Columbia along four axes of comparison. While it is clear that forest policy development in British Columbia and Oregon could (and should) be enhanced by undertaking comparative work, the striking differences between the two jurisdictions point to the need to consider carefully (1) when and how policy approaches in one are applicable or even relevant to an understanding of the other and (2) the contextual ways in which such comparisons may be offered.

AXES OF COMPARISON

1. Regional Economic Structures and Context

One important axis of comparison is the economic context within which these sectors are situated. In particular, the role of the forest sector needs to be understood within the context of the regional economy more generally. Calls for local and regional economic diversification are among the most common suggested forest policy reforms on both sides of the border, but particularly in British Columbia. Given this, it may come as a surprise that the forest sector accounts for about the same share of employment in British Columbia as it does in Oregon (see Table 1). In both jurisdictions, employment in the forest sector has declined rapidly in recent decades both as a proportion of total employment and as a proportion of manufacturing employment. The structure of employment at the community level may well be more concentrated on forestry in British Columbia than it is in Oregon. Indeed, there is some reason to expect this to be the

TABLE 1

Some indicators of comparison between the British Columbia and Oregon forest sectors

	Oregon	British Columbia
Forest sector employment as per cent of total employment	<5	~5
Forest sector shipments as per cent of value of all shipments	>50	<33
Per cent of workforce in solid wood products	85	<75
Per cent of forest-sector workforce unionized	10-20	~75
Per cent of forest land base "publicly" held	58	95

Sources: Employment data for Oregon come from the United States Department of Commerce (2000); for British Columbia they come from Schwindt and Heaps (1996) and Marchak et al. (1999). Value of shipments data for Oregon come from United States Department of Commerce (1995); for British Columbia they come from Forgacs (1997). Organized labour data for Oregon come from personal communications with the International Woodworkers of America (IWA, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Woodworkers), the WCIW (Western Council of Industrial Woodworkers), and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics; and for British Columbia they come from personal communications with Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada, the Pulp, Paper, and Woodworkers Union of Canada, and the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers of Canada (see also MacLellan [1991] and Widenor [1995]).

case since the province's rural hinterland is less "connected" to the outside world via transportation networks than are Oregon's rural areas. In particular, economic diversification in Oregon, while concentrated in the Portland-Eugene corridor, has been in some important respects a phenomenon stretching the length of Interstate 5 through the state, drawing smaller centres such as Grants Pass and Medford into a transportation and trade services driven economy. However, careful comparative work would be required to substantiate differences between the degree of community forest dependence in British Columbia and Oregon.

Similarities between British Columbia and Oregon in terms of the relative importance of the forest sector as a source of employment fly in the face of the resource cycle model since, as noted above, the two are apparently at different stages of old-growth depletion. These similarities, however, point to potential lessons to be learned across the border (albeit in both directions rather than uniquely based on the "Oregon experience") in coping with long-term stagnation and decline in forest-sector employment, particularly in small com-

munities.

In other respects, however, it is clear that the economies of Oregon and British Columbia, and the role of the forest sector within them, are different. In particular, as measured by value of shipments instead of employment, the forest sector remains more important as an engine of economic activity in British Columbia than it does in Oregon (see Table 1). This points to an Oregon economy that is generally more diversified than British Columbia's and that is, in particular, much less dependent upon forest products export markets than is its northern cousin (Wilkinson 1997). The increasingly diversified structure of the Douglas-fir region's economy is one of the reasons that the economic impacts of cutbacks in federal timber sale programs have been less severe than many predicted (Stewart et al. 1993). It is also the basis of calls for British Columbia to follow suit by encouraging investment in high-technology development, seemingly a panacea of contemporary regional economic development policy and inspired, in particular, by the growth of high-technology investment in Oregon during the 1970s and 1980s. There may well be important lessons here for British Columbia in attempting to undertake policy-driven diversification, although Oregon's problems with attracting investment at the expense of tax revenues and state and community regulatory capacities likely offer as much instruction in what to *avoid* (Fodor 1997) as in what to emulate.

2. *Forest Industry Structure and Organization*

In drawing potential forest policy lessons from Oregon and applying them to British Columbia, or vice-versa, it is crucial to appreciate pervasive differences in patterns of industrial organization in their respective forest industries. Two such differences are apparent in the areas of commodity orientation and industrial relations.

Despite being located in such close proximity to one another, the forest sectors of British Columbia and Oregon exhibit rather striking differences in their respective commodity orientations. In Oregon's Douglas-fir industry, solid wood products (traditionally lumber and plywood) are the main engine of the state industry, accounting for most of the employment and controlling most of the primary raw material supply. By contrast, the pulp and paper sector in British Columbia is more important as an employer (see Table 1) and commands more of the province's primary wood fibre supply. The reasons for these differences are not entirely clear, although, in the Oregon

Douglas-fir belt, solid wood products have historically commanded a premium in stumpage as a function of competitive advantages in raw material utilization (Prudham 1999). Other factors may include more competitive bidding processes for public timber in the United States and small business set-aside programs for federal timber. Whatever the reason for them, these differences in commodity orientation may be important within the context of forest policy reform because of different profit margins, scale economies and flexibilities in production technologies and processes, the competitive structure of particular commodity markets, and the relative importance of domestic and international demand.

Another difference between the forest sector in British Columbia and that in Oregon is the size and role of the unionized workforce. In Oregon, the Industrial Woodworkers of America (IAM/AW) and the Western Council of Industrial Woodworkers (WCIW) represent workers in the solid wood products industry, while the Pulp and Paper Workers Union represents workers in the paper sector. Overall union density in the Oregon forest sector peaked in the 1950s at about 80 per cent, however, and has been falling more or less continuously since (Lembcke 1978; Widenor 1991). In recent years, the rate of decline in union membership has actually exceeded the rate of decline in employment. During the 1980s, persistent recessionary conditions prompted firms to undertake deep restructuring, one facet of which was a systematic assault on organized labour (Widenor 1995). These developments drastically reduced the influence of the wood products unions in Oregon, both in direct negotiations with firms and as a voice in debates over forest policy. Significantly, the timing could not have been worse vis-à-vis labour's influence on the policy process, given that it immediately preceded the spotted owl crisis. Thus, in Oregon, the crest of environmentalist power corresponded with the trough of union influence.

By contrast, organized labour's fortunes in the wood products sector in British Columbia have diverged markedly from its fortunes in the US Northwest, particularly since the early 1980s. The same recession in the industry produced significant industrial instability, and BC firms also undertook restructuring, not least by introducing labour-saving technologies and trimming employment. However, the unions (the IWA-Canada in solid wood products; the Communications, Energy, and Paper Union and the Pulp and Paper Workers of Canada in the paper sector) maintained a much higher level of union density

in British Columbia throughout this period (see Table 1) and have fiercely resisted the kinds of wage concessions seen south of the border (MacLennan 1991). While the industry bargaining pattern was broken by concerted corporate action in the US Northwest during the late 1980s, unionized workers in British Columbia succeeded in securing agreements to ban outsourcing from numerous employers throughout the province during a pivotal strike in 1986 (Widenor 1995).

These differences in industrial relations are significant and pervasive. Reflecting on the role of organized labour in British Columbia, Hayter and Barnes (1997, 191) state:

In British Columbia's forest economy, more employees are unionized than are not, union contracts establish yardsticks for the non-union sector, unions have the capacity and clout to represent workers effectively, and British Columbia's forest unions are part of a Canadian tradition of unions that recognizes broader social obligations than, say, does US-based business unionism.

This, in turn, translates into an entirely different political landscape within which policy reform is undertaken. And this difference is exacerbated by the fact that the provincial government in British Columbia has for much of the last decade been formed by the New Democratic Party, traditionally a close ally of Canadian organized labour. In as much as the natural resource policy process is thoroughly political in both its constitution and effects (Rees 1990), it seems inconceivable to discuss the comparison of policies without reference to differences in industrial relations.

3. Forest Governance

In British Columbia and Oregon, the dominant philosophy guiding forestry policy and public land management for most of the twentieth century has been one of scientifically guided multiple-use sustained yield (MUSY) (Haley and Luckert 1995; Tollefson, 1998; Cortner and Moote 1999). MUSY was developed as a rational approach to promoting and regulating commodity production while ostensibly providing some accommodation for other claims on the forest landscape (e.g., recreational pursuits). It is dominated by administrative-rationalist discourse and practice, championing efficiency, professional expertise, and the application of objective science to resource management problems (Hays 1980; Dryzek 1997). It has been shown to be an inherently and naively Promethean and reductionist philosophy, resulting in short-

falls between anticipated and actual rates of forest regeneration (Hirt 1994; Dellert 1998) as well as being narrowly interpreted in privileging maximum timber yield at the expense of a wider assortment of social and ecological management objectives. Not coincidentally, in both British Columbia and Oregon, forest management on public and private lands has traditionally served the interests of industrial wood commodity manufacture (Marchak 1983; Marchak et al. 1999; Prudham 1998). Under intense political pressure, this philosophy is giving way to more ecosystem and community-based approaches (Bengston 1994). Yet, while promotion of these ideas has been important on both sides of the border, the specific institutional development of social policy and regulation has diverged in significant ways. Two dimensions are noted here: tenure arrangements and forest practices and planning.

Tenure

One of the most striking contrasts between the Oregon and British Columbia occurs in the arena of forest tenure. Oregon is among the US states with the highest proportion of its land base retained in public ownership. Yet still, on a state-wide basis, 42 per cent of commercial timberlands are held in the form of fee simple title by a combination of smaller private ownerships and larger industrial private ownerships. In western Oregon's Douglas-fir region, where the most productive and heavily stocked forests are located, slightly more than half of the commercial timberland is privately held, including 35 per cent by industrial landowners (Powell et al. 1993). This distinct mix of private and public lands is the legacy of a historical shift in federal policy vis-à-vis the public domain in the American West, from a philosophy emphasizing disposal or transfer of lands from public to private ownership to one stressing federal retention (Dana and Fairfax 1980). This shift – near the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century – led to the creation of federal forest reservations, which later became the national forests, and also led to substantial federal lands reclaimed from railroad grants and administered under the Bureau of Land Management (Richardson et al. 1980). Timber from the federal lands is made available through sales that offer cutting rights only, without enduring title over the land. Despite representations of these sales as “open” and “competitive” markets in US disputes with Canada over stumpage rates (e.g., within the context of softwood lumber trade), US federal timber markets have

their own non-competitive aspects. These include the development of significant monopsony power in federal markets by certain large mills and industrial landowners (Mead et al. 1983) as well as federal provisions for insulating firms from price volatility (stumpage rate adjustments) (Adams and Haynes 1991) and for the division of road-building costs in the federal forests – all of which significantly undermine claims that federal timber sales are competitive (O’Toole 1988; General Accounting Office 1997).

In contrast to the situation in Oregon, in British Columbia 95 per cent of forested lands are in public ownership. These lands are administered under two forms of tenure, both of which grant private firms more extended exclusive control over public lands than do US federal timber sales. Tree farm licences are exclusive, area-based tenures granted to companies for a period of twenty-five years, while forest licences are volume-based, non-exclusive rights of access to timber within a prescribed area over a fifteen-to-twenty-year period. Despite their ostensibly temporary character, both types of lease arrangements have become known as “evergreen” licences because they contain clauses that virtually guarantee ongoing rights of harvest, allowing companies to consider them to some extent as transferable, bankable financial assets (Haley and Luckert 1995).

British Columbia’s tenure system was developed to provide sufficient security of timber supply to attract investment in large-scale capital-intensive, manufacturing facilities. During the post-war period, the provincial government deliberately moved away from supporting small-scale operators, choosing instead to grant tenures to larger, more integrated forest products companies (Bengston 1994; Tollefson 1998). Policy makers viewed these companies as more reliable and stable employers, based on the expectation that they could withstand market variability better than could smaller companies. It was also thought that security of tenure would encourage responsible management practices, and larger firms were considered a better bet for providing high-resource rents and tax remissions based on enhanced profits captured through scale economies in manufacturing. As a result, small firms have been more prevalent in Oregon, operating alongside large integrated companies and relying largely on federal timber sales to supply their mills. There are some recent indications that tightening fibre supply in Oregon is continuing to prompt consolidation (e.g., Weyerhaeuser’s recent bid for Willamette Industries). However, this trend only moves industrial structures in Oregon closer to those of

British Columbia, where, by the late 1980s, ten firms controlled more than half the resource base (Marchak 1988; Widenor 1995) and where, by the late 1990s, 85 per cent of timber allocation in the province was granted to large companies (Marchak et al. 1999).

Different tenure arrangements are central to understanding the comparative dynamics of political conflicts over forest management. In both Oregon and British Columbia, the conflict has been almost entirely directed at public land management policies and regulations. Yet, while this covers most of the commercial forest land in British Columbia, it excludes private landownerships in Oregon, which now supply almost 80 per cent of the state's total volume (Oregon Department of Forestry 2000). The development of political momentum behind forest policy reform in the state was directed overwhelmingly at public lands, in part because the Endangered Species Act (while equally applicable to private and public lands in the United States) has been subject to intense political struggles over relatively broad judicial interpretations of government obligations to compensate landowners for regulatory infringements, or "takings." As a result, despite significant changes in forest practice rules applying to private lands enacted in Oregon in 1991, it is striking how much of the forested land base in Oregon has been almost entirely exempt from reform efforts.⁶

At the same time, there seems little doubt that the politics of forest management have been more intense vis-à-vis public lands in Oregon precisely because of its "public" character. While nothing is inherently sacrosanct about private property, lands nominally designated "public" are unquestionably more likely to be seen as contestable by the public, while public capacity to restrict private land use is more likely to be seen in terms of takings.⁷ This speaks more generally to the importance of the representation of BC forest lands as public, their quasi-private character notwithstanding. This discursive representation, along with genuine differences in access and governance over publicly administered lands, renders such lands more open to social regulation by civil society than are private lands, particularly in the United States,

⁶ It does bear mentioning that most of the remaining old-growth is on federal lands.

⁷ This is not to suggest that the takings debate is exclusive to private lands. In fact, individuals and firms have tried to argue that ex ante regulation and restriction of public access and tenure rights are forms of taking. Our point here is that the success of this representational strategy is more likely to garner sympathy in lands designated as private rather than public. For a discussion of the takings issue in British Columbia, see Cohen and Radnoff (1998). For the United States, see McCarthy (1999) and Echeverria (1998).

where the legal and cultural associations of private landownership make public governance much more problematic, particularly in the American West (McCarthy 1999). These are central concerns that render problematic any discussion of the supposed forest management benefits of creating more secure private rights over public forest lands (cf. Binkley 1997). More generally, the very different tenure arrangements in British Columbia and Oregon need to be factored into discussions about firm and public agency decision making regarding forest practices and forest regulation.

Forest Practices and Planning

Another important axis of comparison between British Columbia and Oregon concerns the historical and contemporary tendencies of forest practices and forest management planning. Certain commonalities are central. For one, clear-cut logging has for some time been the most widely practised and accepted harvesting method in both jurisdictions and, indeed, along the entire West Coast. Justification of this method has included arguments surrounding worker safety as well as silviculture, the latter argument focusing on how clear-cuts may emulate natural disturbances, opening up patches of forest for re-establishment of shade-intolerant conifers, particularly Douglas-fir. However, there is little doubt that support for clear-cutting in the industry revolves primarily around its economic attributes (particularly its efficiency) rather than its ecological attributes (Rajala 1998). As a land-use practice, however, clear-cutting has become increasingly controversial and contested within scientific and public discourses. Soil erosion, slope instability, stream sedimentation and associated fisheries impacts, habitat fragmentation and biodiversity loss, and even impacts on scenic and cultural values have been invoked as rationales for reducing the size and configuration of clear-cuts or, indeed, for eliminating them altogether. At the same time, considerable political pressure has been placed on firms and regulatory agencies to achieve greater reforestation success.

While broadly similar challenges confront both jurisdictions vis-à-vis the politics of forest management, the opportunities and constraints in confronting these challenges are shaped in important ways by distinct policy regimes. In British Columbia, the regulation and enforcement of forest practices under the provincial Forest Act has generally been *laissez-faire* and slow to change. To the frustration of environmental interests and the occasional embarrassment of the

provincial government, until quite recently changing forest practices have been driven by federal statutory protections for fish and wildlife habitat rather than by provincial forestry regulations. Similarly, silvicultural and reforestation practices have also been relatively slow to develop in British Columbia. Firms found that, as wood became scarce on the Coast, they could gain access to more supply in the Interior with relatively little need to take replanting seriously. During the 1970s, this resulted in the emergence of considerable areas of lands deemed not sufficiently restocked under existing provincial standards (Marchak 1983).

Despite a rising chorus of dissent, it was not until the late 1980s and into the 1990s that the provincial government began to initiate changes aimed explicitly at promoting greater sustainability in land management and community economic development through forest management policy. In 1987, the provincial Forest Act specifically required replanting of cutover lands for the first time. Propelled by increasingly intense conflicts over forest management, from 1992 onward, six new initiatives including new acts and major policy or planning initiatives were introduced, affecting both land management practices and economic transition planning. An important example is the new Forest Practices Code, which was made law in 1995. This code laid out more stringent requirements for forest management with increased penalties for violations. In addition, responsibility for determining public lands allocation were removed from the Ministry of Forests and placed within a new agency responsible to Cabinet. The processes of the Ministry of Forests, which had been characterized as arbitrary, exclusive, and narrowly focused on interests of timber extraction, were replaced by more open, public processes (Tollefson 1998). These provided increased access to diverse stakeholder groups to participate directly with government agencies in setting objectives and participating in the allocation of public lands.

Oregon has a longer tradition of stringent forest practices regulation than has British Columbia, particularly vis-à-vis reforestation. The state was, in fact, the very first in the United States to pass legislation establishing rules over forest practices – the Oregon Forest Conservation Act, 1941. Although the act did not require replanting per se, it did establish restocking standards, relying on the use of leave-trees (i.e., trees left to naturally re-seed clear-cuts). This coincided with the origins of industrial tree farming in the state. In subsequent decades, manual seeding following clear-cutting became the norm, and the

state now has a distinct reforestation sector that serves both public and private landowners (albeit one that is characterized by shocking exploitation of immigrant farm workers who perform most of the planting [see Prudham 1999]). Although Oregon had its own problems during the 1970s and 1980s with (public and private) lands that were not adequately reforested (see, for example, United States Congress House Committee on Agriculture 1977), on the whole this problem has been more adequately addressed here than in British Columbia.

This difference suggests a possible connection between fee simple ownership of timberlands and superior land management practices (particularly reforestation) – a connection that no doubt seems compelling to enthusiasts of privatization (e.g., Binkley 1997). However, here again care should be taken in making comparisons with an eye to following the Oregon example. In Oregon, reforestation success has been superior to that in British Columbia on private *and* public lands. Far from being a product of tenure per se, greater “enthusiasm” for reforestation in Oregon has more to do with earlier recognition of (and action on) the old-growth depletion problem, industrial willingness to pursue reforestation in the face of federal threats to appropriate or more strictly regulate private lands, and the development of increasingly stringent state regulation of forest practices.⁸ In short, when comparing forest tenure systems as an influence on forest practices, it is absolutely central to consider important regulatory differences as well.

In terms of the broader context of forest planning processes and public land-use management, there is no doubt that legislative and policy reforms aimed at broadening the commodity orientation of public forest management and improving public access were more advanced in the United States than in BC in the 1970s and 1980s. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA), 1974, and the subsequent National Forest Management Act (NFMA), 1976, were significant within this context. While the NFMA officially authorized clear-cutting in national forests (Hirt 1994), the RPA and the NFMA together established national and regional processes for the establishment of forest management plans and, in the process, opened new avenues for public input. Led, in part, by the US Forest Service’s New Perspectives Program, local initiatives to take a broader ecological approach to management and to establish partnerships

⁸ On the struggle over private forest regulation, see Robbins (1982, 1987).

among managers, researchers, educators, and citizens were also developed (Cortner and Moote 1999). In addition, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Parks Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Environmental Protection Agency all introduced initiatives to protect and restore ecosystems.

Through the 1990s, ecosystem-based planning was advocated for all federal land and resource programs. In 1994, the Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team (FEMAT) undertook the first large-scale application of ecosystem analysis and planning, developing a plan for managing old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. Once again, however, in drawing comparative lessons for British Columbia, it is important to note the overwhelming focus of these reforms on public lands. This has contributed to the dichotomization of public and private land policy in Oregon and other states with substantial federal lands – a phenomenon largely absent from British Columbia due to its very different tenure situation.

4. Environmental Politics and Political Culture

In both British Columbia and Oregon, intense political disputes have developed over endangered species and spaces, and direct action protesting logging has become familiar up and down the entire West Coast. Using tactics that made them the darlings of the nightly news, environmental protesters staged mass rallies to generate support and interest and, at the same time, camped high in trees, “locked down” machinery and road gates, and buried themselves in the ground to place their bodies between the forests and the firms (Dietrich 1992; Prudham 1998; Wine 1998). It is certainly clear that strong similarities in tactics employed by ENGOS on both sides of the border are no accident and that considerable learning and sharing has been undertaken, not least because some groups are active in both the United States and Canada, and many belong to coalitions that bridge the international boundary.

At the same time, however, these similarities mask important differences between the avenues of mobilization sought by environmentalists – differences that speak to further differences between British Columbia and Oregon. American courts have traditionally provided ENGOS with greater access to legal redress than have Canadian courts (Holland 1996; Knopff and Glen 1996). Thus litigation has factored more centrally into ENGO strategies in the United States than it has in Canada. In Oregon, the most powerful strategy pursued

by ENGOs has been legal challenges based on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The listing of the northern spotted owl as threatened under the ESA in 1990 is the most famous example of this, for the listing was forced, in part, by a petition and threatened lawsuit on the part of an obscure East Coast environmental group known as GreenWorld (Dietrich 1992). This action was followed by several competing legal challenges, the most significant of which culminated in 1992 when Judge William Dwyer ruled that, in their Environmental Impact Statements for the management of northern spotted owl habitat, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management had not provided sufficient protections for the bird. He ordered an immediate halt to any timber sales in spotted owl habitat until the federal government corrected the matter. This decision led to changes in forest policy that effectively reduced public timber harvest in Oregon, Washington, and California to one-quarter of the harvest levels of the 1980s. The effects of these reductions in terms of total volume sold and harvested have been particularly dramatic in Oregon, given the preponderance of federal lands in the state.

Unlike in the United States, in British Columbia environmental organizations can challenge neither the legitimacy nor the implementation of land-use plans in Canadian courts (Holland 1996). Moreover, an endangered species bill, first introduced by the federal government in 1995, has yet to be passed. As a result, environmental organizations have placed greater emphasis on corporate boycotts and eco-certification than on the courts to promote appropriate environmental practices. These include a very high-profile boycott effort that grew out of the Clayoquot Sound campaign and that garnered considerable support in Europe.

Environmental politics in British Columbia are also distinguished from those in Oregon because of issues surrounding the province's First Nations. During the 1990s, the Supreme Court of Canada heard several legal challenges to provincial and federal title and jurisdiction over natural resources and decided to recognise and define Aboriginal rights in a way that made First Nations key players in contemporary decisions about public lands and resource management (see, for example, Commission on Resources and Environment 1992, 1994; David Suzuki Foundation 1998). These decisions have led to heightened tensions between First Nations and non-First Nations peoples (including several high-profile confrontations throughout the country), further litigation, and ongoing disputes – all of which are generating

serious uncertainty for future land allocation and management decisions in the province. Although there are certainly profound questions pertaining to "Indian country" in Oregon, different regional histories and legal situations, along with lower Aboriginal populations in the state, combine to generate a much lower profile in contemporary debates over forests and forest policy.

These differences in environmental politics, combined with aforementioned differences in the institutions of forest governance, speak to wider differences between Oregon and British Columbia vis-à-vis state roles and societal expectations. That is, while we have emphasized differences in the forestry arena, in many ways these differences reflect and reinforce important differences in political cultures. One example is the persistence of a more corporatist model of industrial relations in British Columbia than in Oregon, which, in large part, is a product of higher union density within the province as a whole (not just in the forest sector).⁹ Labour's strength in numbers, combined with a tradition of engaging a breadth of social and political issues, helps to create a very different political culture of expectations in British Columbia (and Canada) (Hecker and Hallock 1991; Adkin 1998). Such differences are underscored by the fact that a social democratic party (the NDP) formed the government in British Columbia from 1991 to 2001 as well as by the fact that the welfare state remains much more intact north of the border. In addition to labour relations per se, one tangible way in which this different political culture affects forestry outcomes can be seen in the provincial government's decidedly more interventionist approach to industrial restructuring and policy reform. In British Columbia, when changes in land allocation and forest management practices were announced in the early 1990s, government was simultaneously obliged to ensure transition measures for forest workers on a scale not attempted in Oregon. Moreover, the provincial government has, over the years, been much more inclined than have the US and Oregon governments to provide money for company bailouts, joint ventures, or even outright purchase of mills when private companies have failed. For example, the BC government's intervention in the Skeena pulp mill's failure simply has no parallel in Oregon (Hayter and Barnes 1997).

⁹ These differences, in turn, reflect divergence in the fortunes of organized labor in Canada and the United States overall. Union density in the United States now stands at about 14 per cent, down from about 35 per cent in 1960 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1998; Reich 1992, 212). By contrast, overall union density in Canada is now at about 35 per cent to 40 per cent and has not exhibited a similar decline.

Far from being mere contingencies, these political and institutional differences shape the political landscape within which forest policy reform is being contested. They also shape the acceptability of some claims over others and, thus, the ways that reform will be undertaken. This underscores the fact that, the “hollowing” out of the welfare state under economic and political globalization (Jessop 1994) notwithstanding, the state (national and local) remains a crucial category of socio-spatial differentiation (Hirst and Thompson 1996; Painter 2000) – a container for both reflecting and reinforcing the contingencies of highly place-specific social struggles (Giddens 1985).

CONCLUSION:
STAPLES, PARTICULARISM,
AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

These observations on political and institutional specificities in British Columbia and Oregon raise the question as to how to understand environmental politics and, particularly, the relationship between ecological change and political mobilization. We have tried to argue that implicit in the invocation of Oregon as a model for British Columbia is some version of a resource cycle model. This, in turn, requires seeing the physical stage of depletion as key to understanding the politics and economics of resource use in the past, the present, and presumably the future. We see this as inherently problematic. In fact, given the juxtaposition of very different amounts of remaining old-growth in British Columbia and Oregon on the one hand, and the near simultaneity of political conflict and crisis over forest policy in both jurisdictions on the other, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, at least within the context of the ancient forest campaign, scarcity has been socially constructed in important ways. That is, while the forests of British Columbia and Oregon have been unquestionably transformed by decades of industrial commodity production and favourable state policies, the translation of these transformations into politics is ultimately contingent. It is thus highly problematic to suggest a nature prior to or outside of the social realm and, therefore, capable of providing an explanation for, or prediction of, social and political phenomena (FitzSimmons 1989; Cronon 1995).

While there is a need to counter overly deterministic thinking on environmental politics within a resource cycle framework, it is also important to reflect upon recent literature dealing with the social

production of nature. In its broadest terms, the social production of nature holds that what is encountered as nature is increasingly socially produced by specific processes, not least by industrial appropriation and commodity production (Smith 1984; Castree 1995). The obvious salience of this thesis to old-growth forests transformed by industrial logging is clear. Yet, as we have argued, despite its emphasis on economic process, the resource cycle, at least as developed by Clapp, does not give due attention to the specific social processes and institutional context within which depletion and transition occurs; that is, to the historically and geographically specific social production of nature within a broad political economy of capitalism. This is central, not least in assessing the character of resource depletion as a social process.

In considering the challenges of forest policy reform in the Pacific Northwest, several questions remain, including: (1) is it useful to look to Oregon, and if so, what is it we are looking to? and (2) is there anything we can say about commonalities between British Columbia and Oregon that helps to avoid recourse to excess particularism? Our reservations about looking to Oregon are not meant to suggest that we think nothing can be learned from doing so. Quite the opposite. However, opening the issue of difference raises questions: What exactly do we refer to as the Oregon model? What we are looking at when we look to Oregon? Clearly, ENGOs are strategic in their invocation of Oregon in comparison with British Columbia. Oregon has seen more sweeping changes in public forest policy and, to some degree, greater overall economic diversification. Moreover, the state's aggregate economy performed reasonably well during the 1990s despite the forest crisis. Thus, as political rhetoric from a narrow environmental interest group perspective, looking to Oregon is to some degree understandable. However, when aimed at the construction of a more broadly sustainable model of economic development, there may well be as much about Oregon to avoid as to emulate. It is clear that transition in the forest sector, whether attributable to long-term productivity related job losses or more recent raw material supply restrictions, has not been socially neutral in Oregon. Glib (or cynical) invocation of Oregon's overall economic performance disguises the fact that many chronically depressed social and economic conditions remain concentrated in rural communities that historically relied upon the forest sector. Many of these communities have yet to develop an adequate economic base and are not buoyed by the "recreation revolution" (Somers and Somers 1954; Brown 1995; Radtke et al. 1997;

Reed 1999). Moreover, their declining economic fortunes have been exacerbated by systematic and sustained restructuring of social programs (e.g., social welfare reform) and cuts to the Head Start Program. In remote communities such as the Illinois Valley of southwestern Oregon, restructuring in the forest industry since the 1980s and dramatic declines in local federal timber supply have been accompanied by spiralling rural joblessness and poverty as well as income stagnation and decline (particularly relative to state-wide levels) (Prudham 1998). Such localized social dislocations have persisted amid the aggregate indications of regional economic well-being, reproducing an uneven geography of economic development in the Northwest. Surely, as we look to Oregon as a model for sustainability, this type of dichotomization between rural and urban, between have and have-not, is to be avoided.

Finally, lest we be misunderstood as advocating excessive local particularism or exceptionalism, we offer some thoughts on reconstructing a regional comparative agenda. There are certainly commonalities between Oregon and British Columbia that are worth pursuing, including the forest landscape itself and, to some significant degree, the policy paradigms that have governed public forest management during the post-war period (e.g., emphasis on commodity production, maximum sustained yield doctrine). At the same time, it is important to underscore that, if Oregon and British Columbia share a similar forested landscape, they also share an overwhelming historical reliance upon capitalist industrial commodity production in the appropriation of this forested landscape and upon policies designed largely to sustain this type of appropriation. Indeed, government agencies on both sides of the border are now grappling with how to address the contradictions of commodity reliance and how to meaningfully incorporate more diverse sets of values into forest management policies. This includes applying new concepts, such as ecosystem and adaptive management, to policy and land management practices. There is much to be learned by sharing these experiences, keeping in mind that differences are as potentially instructive as are similarities.

However, rather than starting our analyses by referring to resource depletion and stages thereof, it may be equally, or perhaps more, useful to begin a comparison based on some common conceptualization of the dynamics of capital accumulation and state policy formation in the forest sector. This includes the articulation of local and global

within the context of commodity markets, within which locally specific institutions and actors may be situated, after the fashion of considerable work conducted within the Innisian staples tradition of Canadian political economy (Hayter and Barnes 1990; Millar and Winder 1999). Here, we find recent attempts in economic geography to develop local models, building on the so-called "institutional turn," to be a more satisfying analytical point of departure (Martin 2000). As Hayter (2000) notes, this local model approach is designed to embed local markets within broader social processes (e.g., international commodity trade and financial flows) while, at the same time, emphasizing how local actors and institutions shape outcomes. This certainly does not obviate the importance of considering the multiple challenges of sustainability or the salience of resource depletion and environmental change; rather, it reconfigures the analysis of sustainability issues in terms of geographically nested social processes and institutions.

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