From Iron Curtain to Timber-Belt

Territory and Materiality at the Finnish-Russian Border

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The paper shows the Finnish-Russian border changing from a political periphery into a focus for international ecopolitics, because of how landscapes either side have been treated under different geopolitically informed regimes of government. On the Finnish side landscape was transformed into industrially managed forests, whereas the Russian border zone was left largely unmanaged. Historical social links across the border were reactivated after the end of the Cold War, and young Finnish forest activists in particular have created social links here. Their activities challenge accepted ideas of sovereign territory and beg revisions of the analytical tools for addressing processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation such as those at play in ecopolitics.

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In the face of environmental destruction state borders can easily seem meaningless.[1] If this is an exaggeration, border environments nevertheless throw the weakness of state sovereignty into relief. This paper sketches a picture of one region, along Russia's – formerly the Soviet Union's – 900 km border with Finland, where state sovereignty is challenged by international networks of governmental and non-governmental organisations and by ecological processes. Russian Karelia[2] has been 'open' to international traffic for over a decade though for most of the twentieth century, crossing the border was extremely difficult and access to the region from within the Soviet Union was also restricted. After all, it was part of the boundary between what US President Ronald Reagan famously called the Evil Empire and market-led democracy. Today it is an object of intense concern for Finnish and international environmentalists. It is the focus of interest because of its exceptionally unfragmented boreal[3] forests, the result of the fact that the region was so long valued as a frontier, the edge of a territory.

Here ecopolitics challenges sovereign territory, since the valued forest lies inside Russia, whilst many of those seeking its protection come from elsewhere. But Karelia is also deeply connected to the history of Finnish national identity. It has nourished ideas and practices of the good life that draw a variety of resources from forests, something that has become important economically as well as culturally in Finland. Thus this paper argues that what provokes the interest of Finnish environmentalists and fosters social links across the border is the materiality of the border's forests. Deterritorialised ecopolitical concerns articulate with Finnish historiography in which forests are both resource and symbol for the nation. Besides supporting recent critical work on territories and territorialisation (Appadurai 1996, Lugo 1997, Ó'Tuathail and Dalby 1998, Paasi 1996, Brock 1999), a broader point follows, namely that as an empirical as well as critical pursuit, anthropology needs to attend to re-territorialisation as much as to de-territorialisation.

For power remains spatialised (e.g. Brock 1999, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). The intensifying competition over access to environmental goods and avoidance of environmental evils (Harvey 1996) is but one arena where continuity and change in the spatial relations of power needs to be better understood. Flows of capital,

movement of information and displacement of people do not necessarily indicate the weakening hold of territory as an organising principle of social and political life. Certainly international environmentalism challenges hegemonic notions of space (Kuehls 1996), highlighting the disjunctures between the space of ecopolitics (the politics of global risk) and the space of state control. Yet understanding the effects of such disjunctures requires further theoretical work. This paper, focussing on the border zone where the history of Cold War logic, ecological processes, and late-twentieth-century economic patterns meet, demonstrates why.

As the border opened up, the forests beckoned logging companies, especially Finnish ones, to exploit easily accessible, abundant reserves of timber. The companies were soon followed by environmental protestors who feared irreparable damage to Karelia's ancient forests. Activists thus pitted themselves against corporate power on behalf of nature and sustainable lifestyles. In so doing, they also challenged ideas about sovereign territory and about the rights to harvest natural resources for a world market. Yet on the face of it, their protest looked like a familiar romanticisation of living 'close to nature'.

A young Finn, let me call her Anna, told me she would love to move to Russian Karelia.[4] The world on the Finnish side of the border with its high-tech and consumer-oriented life contrasted unfavourably in her eyes with the almost subsistence-based village life on the Russian side. Here energy is conscientiously saved, water is carried in buckets from river or lake to the house, and waste disposal is not an issue since nothing is wasted. After a lifetime's participation in conservation, Anna had a strong desire to live out what she considered a sane lifestyle. "I'd like to move here [to Russian Karelia]," she told me. "This is where people, forests and large lakes exist side by side in a proper balance. I mean, it's selfish of me, I know, but this really is how a good life can be lived." Rather than reiterate the argument that such attitudes are typical of metropolitan coloniser (environmentalist) towards peripheral colonised (Cronon ed. 1995), I want to show that similarities in activists' and local people's ways of valuing the forests still transcend political boundaries. Environmentalists like Anna may be influenced by a media-enhanced global discourse which constructs concerned 'global' eco-citizens at the same time as it constructs differently valued others – whether backward peasants or ecologically wise savages – but they are also situated historically and geographically in ways that inflect their environmentalism.

A brief methodological note is in order here. My research was designed to examine conflicts over forest use in a country, Finland, with a powerful self-image of homogeneity and consensus. Historical records and analyses of political shifts, along with attention to various media, have provided input, as have the conversations all Finns seem to launch into when it comes to talking of forests. The current text, however, is based on ethnographic work with Finnish activists[5], which took me to both sides of the border and led to conversations with people on the Russian side. This work began to suggest alternative questions about young environmentalists' orientations to the nature and people of this region. This part of my research is limited to fewer than a dozen activists. Many more Finnish activists campaigned on Russian Karelia throughout the 1990s, publicising illegal logging, and even more young Finns and Russians have carried out biodiversity surveys of the forests in order to produce the necessary documentation for conservation measures to be implemented. News coverage and letters to editors, interviews in a range of environmental organisations, and conversations with non-environmentalists, further demonstrate that many people have supported the young men and women at the heart of the effort to prevent the introduction of Finnish-style industrial forestry in Russian Karelia. Events in its forests began to reflect Finnish values, and it is the view from Finland, which this paper presents.

Nature, Science and Ecopolitics[6] at Borders

At first sight Karelia's belt of ancient forests seems like an obvious target for international environmentalism. As a recent publication puts it, these forests "are one of the most important

boreal biodiversity centres of Europe" (Ovaskainen et al. 1999). Another refers to the area as the 'Green Belt' of Fennoscandia, noting that this "unique natural complex |...| has been preserved and offers an opportunity to sustain evolutional and distributional dynamics – the prerequisites of biological diversity – on an exceptional scale" (Kleinn 1998). However, one could ask, as many have in the Amazon and elsewhere (Kuehls 1996, Conklin 1997), what gives the wealthy and privileged the right to protect biodiversity elsewhere when they have destroyed their own at home? Why do already disempowered groups become identified with nature, a passive if highly valued object, when the rich insist on identifying with civilisation and progress even after they have destroyed their environments?

In creating copious knowledge about the ecological value of the region, sometimes together with Russian counterparts, Finnish activists throughout the 1990s acted as if their work was deterritorialised, part of the global imperative to promote economically viable and ecologically healthy resource use (Ovaskainen et al. 1999). Nature does not stop at borders and therefore by definition the environmentalist agenda is conceptualised as transnational. It is seen as scientifically based, and accordingly activists referred to the knowledge that promoted their enthusiasm as free of political or cultural biases. Finnish activists are connected to organisations like UNESCO, they work with large NGOs[7] like Greenpeace, and with the international umbrella organisation dedicated to protecting such forests in the Northern hemisphere, the *Taiga Rescue Network*, a group that brought international delegates to Karelia in 1996 to promote the political process. German organisations have fuelled the idea of the area as a World Heritage site (Kleinn 1998).

Like government officials who promote technomanagerial interventions as the only answer to ecological destruction, environmentalists here contribute to the world-wide power of ecology as a moralised scientific discourse (Takacs 1996). Many of the other actors involved in cross-border traffic speak another apparently universal language, that of economics. The *Oikos*, or household, is at the root of both these discourses: eco-nomics and eco-logy. The *Oikos* draws attention to the idea that the planet as a whole is home and its management is a shared responsibility across borders. It seems hopeful to think that problems such as global environmental degradation and global economic volatility actually carry the promise that eventually state borders will be seen for the mere human constructions that they are. But the reality so far warrants rather less optimism.

The crisis of environmental politics is inextricably bound up with a crisis over boundaries (Kuehls 1996). Ecological processes pay no heed to borders, yet states remain crucial to their government and so "ecopolitics cannot be reduced to either domestic or international policy" (Kuehls 1996: 117). But ecopolitics is also bound up with a crisis of policing (the appropriate spaces of) knowledge, science and expertise. Reliable knowledge and trustworthy expertise are necessary to the political process of environmental protest just as they are to resource management. Ecopolitics is thus a forum for generating new criteria for legitimate concern over territories, linking groups distanced in space, and reconfiguring existing networks of knowledge. It generates new collectivities held together by trust in purveyors of knowledge, as environmentalists in the border zone constantly bring different spatial scales and various scientific logics into conjunction with each other. The intensity of the traffic in these competing forms of science is an important change from an earlier condition where scientific expertise was spatialised in more fixed, often national ways, as I shall show below.

In insisting on a scientific basis for their concern, those protesting logging appear to be endorsing the official discourses that cross this border rather than challenging them. Just like employees of the Finnish Environment Ministry, Moscow-based activists, German researchers, or local conservation officials, activists connect across the border in the language of scientific ecology. Collaborative research proliferates as do publications like the report *On the Ecological and Economic impacts of wood harvesting and trade in north-east Russia* (Myllynen et al. 1996). Finnish and Russian nature enthusiasts, many of them students, spent sum-

mers in the mid-1990s mapping and surveying the region's biodiversity, and in their view, science and economics are best able to transcend cultural differences unless they are cynically manipulated. Such a Eurocentric perspective (Szerszynski et al. 1996) has allowed administrators and scientists from a range of institutions to identify common goals and carry out collective projects, for instance co-operation under the "Finnish-Russian Development Programme on Sustainable Forest Management and Conservation of Biological Diversity in Northwest Russia", administered on the Finnish side through the Ministries of the Environment, of Agriculture and Forestry and for Foreign Affairs. The process is clearly managerial and technical in character, with the umbrella project aiming to encompass "economic, environmental, social and market aspects" (NWRDP 1997:3). Forests are treated as an external resource needing to be managed for the common good - whether as industry resource or as biodiversity – through government action.

The power of modern scientific discourse in much of the world rests precisely in the conviction that it is above politics and that only the world, not society or religious dogma or even financial interest, is reflected in it. However, social studies of science have done much to demonstrate that contrary to such proclamations of transcendence, these claims are not devoid of culture or power, and that science remains a *cultural* practice (e.g. Latour 1987, Haraway 1997). Still, when wedded to the common-sense notion that we all know what nature is, it is hardly surprising that ecopolitics should make science carry so much of its argument. Technical and scientific languages remain preeminent when international agendas in the name of a healthy, global environment are articulated. And the technical language of the global economy, conceptualised as necessary or transcendent rather than historically constructed, is easily wedded to the technical languages of both resource use and nature protection, often enough with similar ends in mind (Luke 1995).

Governing Forests

Activism thus indirectly supports the policing of resources and endorses particular forms of expert knowledge, but it also resists the Lockean conception of land as only valuable when it is productive in a way the state recognises.[8] Activists challenge older ideas about nature, territory and state power, by allowing them to be drawn in by the concreteness of the forests in ways that the state cannot dictate. As I have argued elsewhere in more detail (Berglund 2000), as they became tangible economic assets, forests were made a particular focus of social relations in Finland and until the 1980s the state's role in defining ideal attitudes towards forests, as well as policing authorised knowledge about them, was impressive and it reached practically every square kilometre of the territory (Michelsen 1995, Berglund 2000) giving substance to the ubiquitous claim that "Finland lives off the forest". This thoroughgoing government of Finland's natural landscape, as much as the isolation of the Russian border zone, is what has produced the sharp discontinuity in the biophysical characteristics of the forests on both sides of the border. The landscape that now draws activists, locals and others into collaboration is thus the direct result of policing the frontier and of constituting Finland and Russia in mutual opposition.

As Finland became increasingly connected to an international network of trade in the mid-nineteenth century, domestic life became more professionalised and increasingly governed through state apparatuses of knowledge production (Häkli 1998). The state surveyed and documented the nation's progress. Sustained interest in timber extraction as well as in the population was fostered, and Finns came to believe that their right to self-determination was as irreducibly natural as their dependency on a natural resource. They depended on the forest for timber, but also for many other goods such as berries and wild game, as well as for the many auxiliary industries that paper and pulp manufacture brought with it. Since the 1860s, Finland invested purposefully in the forest products industries, and gradually what lay within its borders became homogenous as nature and

nationhood were consolidated together (Berglund 2000).

Today the border demarcates both the landscape of Finnish national pride – the homogenous landscapes of industrial forestry – and the landscape of environmentalist desire – the Green Belt of Karelia. Satellite imagery, but also the naked eye, can easily distinguish the border because of the contrast in vegetation. The Russian side of the border is the legacy of purposeful neglect, whilst on the other side, state forestry has affected practically all of Finland's surface area. Although much of Finland is forest and most of it is pleasant to wander in and to enjoy, its biological diversity has clearly suffered, from selective replanting in response to industry needs, and from management that emphasises ease of access.[9] Thus, the quality of the forests on either side of the border is one form of the "recognisable and concrete manifestations of government and politics" to which Wilson and Donnan (1998) wish to draw anthropological attention.

I believe it is of utmost importance to demonstrate or reiterate the rather obvious point, that economic and political regimes, particularly at large scales, have long-term and often irreversible consequences. Significantly, governmentality (Foucault 1991) is made manifest not only in 'correct' Finnish attitudes towards forests, influenced as they are by state-led forest science together with hegemonic aesthetic sensibilities, but also in the biophysical environment itself. With the benefit of hindsight these landscapes, which had appeared natural and unquestioned, can now be seen to be the result of sustained and transformative intervention within a sovereign space through sovereign regimes of management.

As I noted, scientific discourse gains legitimacy from appearing to be an unmediated reflection of the world. Scientific institutions seek to make it appear that the people, the institutions and the values embedded in them are an almost inconsequential background to the foregrounded facts, supposedly speaking for themselves (Latour 1987). Only facts and policy recommendations – the former unassailable, the latter prone to human fallibility – are admitted as part of the science-policy process. In Finland this process fed into the highly valued consensus characteristic of national politics, a consensus where science, well-being and government have often appeared to be synonymous. The limit of the consensus has always also been spatialised, producing the sense that it is bounded territory which guarantees order and enables life to flourish. In official post-war rhetoric, life on the Finnish side is, as the proverbial phrase puts it, "like winning the lottery", whilst life on the other side is, well, rather different.

Until the mid-1970s[10], the official rhetoric of forest-based prosperity broadly corresponded to the experiences of Finns across the country. The modern forest, intensively managed to produce a sustained yield of timber, became a focus of national as well as professional pride (Michelsen 1995) but also something that people thought about in highly personal terms. This was (and is) because most of the forests consumed by the paper and pulp industry were privately owned, not in the alienating hands of large corporations or even of the state (Berglund 2000). Orvar Löfgren (1993) argues that landscapes perceived as national become arenas of emotional resonance and, along with other material manifestations of national peculiarity, provide arenas for contesting and challenging what it means to be a nation, or part of one. It is not surprising then that in independent Finland, that is since 1917, challenging the forestry expertise has always also been seen as threatening to a national consensus.[11] Even complaints about foul-smelling paper and pulp plants were long shrugged off with the quip that money smells. Forest politics has, as a consequence, been a typical arena for socialisation into the role of social critic. Institutional continuity in forest protest is manifest for instance in an organisation called the *Nature League*, prominent when forest-industries lobbies need to name their enemy.[12] Throughout the 1990s critics of the forest sector were regularly portrayed as irresponsible, romantic and even traitors of the nation by the mainstream media and representatives of the forestry sector.[13]

Activists' efforts are probably rightly interpreted by older generations as a sign that young people's allegiances are no longer with the for-

est industries which used to protect fatherland and family. For earlier generations, these symbolised belonging to a land where people were free, democratic and able to fulfil themselves with the help of a market economy, to a land which, above all, saved itself from the fate of so many, developing into a liberal democracy rather than a satellite of Moscow. Consonant with these kinds of views, Russian Karelia is sometimes portrayed in the media as a site of disorder and danger, whereas for young activists, this 'wrong' side of the border is a locus of virtue.

This probably reflects economic changes, as forestry is losing out to other sectors of the economy, such as an expanding telecommunications industry. Nevertheless, for the foreseeable future the critique of forestry will remain central to alternative politics. It is also worth mentioning that forest activists are among the few in contemporary Finland who mount a sustained challenge to neo-liberal economics and foster critical debate on technology and science.

Situated Ecopolitics

Let me now return to a more ethnographic sense of activism. In the early 1990s, after the border was opened, environmentalists accused Finnish companies of plundering Karelia's irreplaceable old-growth forests for short-term profit, and they literally followed the timber lorries crossing the border.[14] In addition to mapping biodiversity, a few activists have acted as private investigators tracking down criminals and apprehending Finnish loggers cutting down areas already set aside for conservation.[15] In the wake of political and economic upheaval, the border zone quickly became known as the Wild East, haven of unscrupulous and corrupt operators, once again drawing Finnish attention to the proximity to, even contiguity with, the Russian Other.

Unlike those who highlight the dangerousness of the border zone, Finnish activists behaved as if rather than going abroad to Russian Karelia, they were coming home and leaving the alien behind. Crossing the border is also thought of as travelling back in time, perhaps to an earlier Finland. For despite Russification policies, many inhabitants of Karelia speak a language closely related to Finnish and unrelated to Russian, and which allows locals and Finnish activists to share their experiences in an atmosphere of special intimacy. Karelia has long been romanticised by Finnish intellectuals, and there are special cultural connections to the region, not just among activists, but among state representatives and other Finns.

Significant social bonds between some activists and villagers (and, although I have little direct evidence, probably between ministry-level actors also) were created because the groups from both sides of the international frontier share ideas about the importance of forests for living the good life.[16] Knowledge about forests is constantly created in both decontextualised technoscientific discourses and in sensuous engagement. And much of the latter is utilitarian, not solely romantic. Indeed, a number of activists come from rural homes where forests are not primarily sources of aesthetic pleasure, but of financial support. Within Karelia's forests and through contacts with the inhabitants of the forest villages, historically specific forms of sociality thus articulate with world-wide, deterritorialised discourses of the biological. Even in a globalised epoch, and even among citizens of wealthier, highly modernised countries, social life remains imbricated in material processes.

What I suggest is that the tangible reality of Karelia resonated with activists so strongly because they were already familiar with making their home, albeit in a very different way, in the forest. They compared their own homeland, with its manicured forests, to what they encountered here and found it wanting. The long conversations about berry picking, saunas and building materials that these activists could carry out with locals were only possible because of a partially shared concrete understanding of the practical use of forest resources. The manipulation of the material aspect of the forest was probably the aspect talked about most when activists and locals conversed. Pragmatics and aesthetics, not biodiversity, fuelled their discussions, as did a sense of profound injustice and, often, shame for their compatriots' actions.[17]

One of the prominent young men involved often used strong language to refer to the lies,

cynicism and greed promoted by the forest products industries. His long-term involvement had led to a sophisticated understanding of the politics of forest exploitation and of forest protection. A skilled negotiator and campaigner, he had closely observed how the large conservation organisations seek to co-opt smaller players and be co-opted themselves into diluted forms of intervention. Involved in these processes himself, he came to be seen for a few years as the most knowledgeable expert on the conservationist side. Yet like so many others whom I met, he insisted that an extensive old-growth forest is more than a repository of biodiversity or an object of aesthetic contemplation; it is a locus for material, but above all, spiritual regeneration.

In a taped interview one young woman, who was extremely effective in uncovering the illegal activities of timber companies, insisted that "actually, the important knowledge comes from bumping into these issues in practice. That's where you get the intuition that's so important. It's about understanding [not information]". As she continued, she shifted away from talking about the forests themselves to telling me about confrontations with drunken loggers and other Finns, about helping an injured prostitute to hospital, and about her personal motives for continuing the campaign even when criticised for romantic and utopian attitudes. "Yes", she continued without prompting, her involvement might reflect a utopian strain of thinking, but even more unrealistic was the dream of continued economic growth. What border could Finnish companies cross once these forests had been consumed? And what, activists ask, drives Finnish companies to leave such devastation in Karelia when at home at least they persistently (and cynically) argue that they take ecological fragility seriously.[18]

Activists felt that they were supporting the views of the local population in decrying the industrial use of local forests.[19] In Soviet times, as today, forests in Russia have been classified on scientific grounds and their use has been controlled by state-experts (Myllynen et al. 1996). However, state forestry reinforced customary practices according to which forests immediately surrounding villages were used

for domestic purposes only. Today's clear cuts, many carried out by Finnish companies, are thus a tangible sign of how times have changed.

In Vuokkiniemi, the largest of the Karelian villages, a local teacher recounted how "we've lived from the forest all our lives," and talking of the first clear cut she ever saw, she said it had been like "entering the hallway to Hell" (see Berglund 1997). Resin collecting used to employ most men until less than two decades ago. Women still stock jams made from forest berries in their cellar along with mushroom preserves and medicinal plants. Interest is also growing in commercially viable forms of sustainable forestry, although concrete measures to promote it are in early stages.[20] Clearly, Karelia is a region where human life and ecological systems mutually constitute and frequently nurture each other. Even before Stalinist obsession with forests as security, villagers' forestry practices were sustainable, geared towards partial export from the region (as resin, formerly tar), and to hunting, fishing and domestic timber needs.

I suggest that although Finnish activists' rhetoric has often supported the international discourse about the region as a repository of the globe's biodiversity (see Kleinn 1998), much of what sustains their enthusiasm comes from their relationship with the people living there and from their sympathy with the people's attitudes to the forests. I am not, however, claiming that all those from outside Finland have the

converse attitude which sees nature as an external resource only to be reified and romanticised yet still 'managed'. Indeed, the internationally run *Taiga Rescue Network* has done much to emphasise the politico-economic and cultural components of conservation itself. But my point is that Finnish activists specifically are identifying these forests as something already familiar, providing further impetus for seeking connection with people in ways that challenge the idea that specific natural resources are, and should be, under the authority of one sovereign power.

The Cultural Significance of Karelia

The Karelian case suggests that cross-border environmentalism is complex and multi-directional and impossible to narrate into a singular argument. Part of the problem is that the connection between ecology and culture can be, and has been, used to argue that Karelia is more a part of Finland than of Russia and would thus be better off under Finnish sovereignty.[21] But even more radically, ecopolitics potentially challenges the whole concept of sovereign territory (Kuehls 1996).

In addition to the conjunction of transnational, media-infiltrated environmentalism with the truly noteworthy material characteristics of this border, cross-border traffic is also inspired by Karelia's special place in the Finnish national consciousness. Many Finns who do not join activists feel strongly about these forests simply because Karelia is thought of as the cradle of Finnish national culture. Although in the twentieth century it was associated with the unknown and frightening Soviet power, starting in the eighteenth century, peripheral Karelia in fact produced Finland's 'exotics within'. As Finnish nationalism became more confident, Karelia, which lay administratively on both sides of the border, came to symbolise a quintessentially national folklore, the locus of the cultural authenticity which nineteenth century European nationalisms needed in order to constitute the self as collective subject. Thus, when early nineteenth century Finns, after being transferred in 1809 from Swedish to Russian rule, asked the question "who are we?", the answer came from folklorists. They argued that Finland's cultural roots lie in the backwoods of Karelia, poorly connected both to Finland and to Imperial Russia, but enjoying a vibrant oral tradition, imagined to have been lost from the rest of the country along with modernisation.

The image of Karelia as some kind of proto-Finnish condition also suggested that an essential element of Finnishness was the bond between people and forest. A broadly Herderian notion of the uniqueness of all peoples informed the way that the early nineteenth century romantics imagined the relationship between people and nature. They came to celebrate the environmental circumstances of the emerging nation, drawing on Herder's ideas about the significance of varying physical environments for the evolution of national character (Wilson 1976).

Karelia came to symbolise true Finnish character, as the folklore collected by the young intellectuals of the early nineteenth century inspired an emergent vernacular, non-Indo-European literature. The documentation of Karelian oral tradition inspired high art which came to be seen as belonging to Finns as a fully recognised collectivity, not just an uncultured adjunct to either Sweden or Russia. Today, with the opening of the border, Karelia is increasingly represented for public consumption as an ideal tourist destination, a place where time has stood still and where even Soviet power has failed to crush the vitality of the Karelian spirit, one connected far more closely with Finnish than with Russian or Soviet identity.

And even this overtly cultural significance of Karelia does not exhaust the reasons Finns today are keen on cross-border connections. After the Second World War a large area of Finland, over 10 per cent of the territory, known as the Karelian Isthmus, was ceded to the Soviet Union. This experience solidified a sense of shared Finnish identity across language and class boundaries (though arguably Sami and Gypsy minorities have a different view) such that the name Karelia rings louder than others in contemporary consciousness[22], and that is in many senses an unstable, liminal space, one that inspires both desire and fear.

Through most of its independence the Finn-

ish collective imagination has easily accepted a self-image of a homogeneous, consensual people, and when the border was shown to be permeable, those inside Finland overcame internal squabbles in order to keep the enemy out. Importantly, the strengthening consensus was accompanied by an enhanced self-consciousness of being at home in forested landscapes. Some of the mechanisms of this homogenisation were top-down like the spread of forest professionals across the territory, or the fashion for painting forested landscapes, but many were bottom-up, like collective resistance by smallholders to company ownership of land. Because of the way they have been constituted through the nation-state apparatus as citizens with both rights and responsibilities towards that state, Finns value forests in both utilitarian and in aesthetic terms (Berglund 2000).

Because of this history, it is no surprise that Finns are quick to respond to forests beyond the border. After all, for some Finns Karelia ought to come under Finnish rule. Arguments for organic as well as exclusive human-nature relations that have hovered in political debate for over 100 years (Paasi 1996) continue to flourish, for instance that people there speak a related language and should be part of the economic, political and cultural system of the West. And yet my ethnographic work, combined with efforts to question the applicability of territorial logic in the contemporary political conjuncture suggests, perhaps provocatively, that for the activists I have talked about here, such politics of authenticity are marginal to, if not outright contrary to their goals.

Thus activism does generate deterritorialised collectivities that cut across such politics, as Appadurai highlights. And although state-based practices of nature inform Finnish activists, their encounters with nature and people go beyond what the state can govern. The significance of forests for young activists increasingly diverges from the experiences of older generations, who were perhaps more empowered by the earlier national imaginary. One last example may make the point. On one of my trips to Russian Karelia, an elderly Finnish woman visiting as a tourist bemoaned the state of the forests there, aghast at the lack of management. Yet it is precisely this feature which has attracted the positive attention of the activists. The ecopolitical challenge to territorial thought is only provoked by the fact that these forests, in this place, have been here a certain time. They are irreducible both to state-protected market values and to arguments about the exclusive property of any ethnic group or state.

The critics' joint agendas thus draw attention to what Kuehls calls the "nonsovereign territorial nature of ecopolitics" (1996: 118), that logging is in any case not confined to any bounded territory, but both fuels and is fuelled by world-wide consumer desire for its products. What is going on in Karelia cannot therefore be analysed simply as a conflict over who is master in the region. Such an analysis would remain as impotent as the appeals to nature and to territory it sought to explain. This is because ecopolitics already crosses borders with little heed to national sovereignty.[23] Even modern states are not capable of imposing exhaustive injunctions on how their populations should connect with the environment. In Finland, despite a century of state rhetoric in which the perfect forest is the productive forest, commercial utility – whether for industry or tourism – hardly exhausts the ways nature is actually practised let alone dreamed of. And for those who currently make their home in Russian Karelia, state fantasies of control and progress have long been at odds with place-bound realities.

Conclusion

Borders thus remain salient spaces for comparing and contrasting similarity and difference, in biophysical or infrastructural terms, and in terms of authoritative knowledge. As Russian Karelia demonstrates, this recently opened border zone produces trajectories of trustworthy knowledge and of images of the good life that travel as much through contiguous, if partially bounded space, as they do along the hierarchies of state institutions. That is, activist encounters with local villagers, though they may be few in the grand scheme of Finnish life, nevertheless open up conceptual spaces, mediated by the materiality of the region, where territoriality and the idea of home are important, but are not

defined in the terms of state institutions. And although the language of international science remains important, I have argued that it hardly promises to create truly global collectives with identical commitments leading to a sense of global identity. Such an identity, I suspect, is not going to emerge out of grassroots environmentalism.

Ecopolitics is then neither national, confined within borders, nor truly global. But it remains played out both within and against territorial logics. There is still a huge market for wood products, and everywhere that forests (or other renewable resources) and people share a territory, these forests and the people become entangled. This applies not just to Russian Karelia but to many areas, especially in the tropical world (particularly South East Asia) where northern forest-products companies are transforming more and more places into profit machines (Carrere and Lohmann 1996). At an empirical level, neither the exploitation of timber nor environmentalism can be said to have become de-territorialised. Instead, they are being re-territorialised.

As more and more space is consumed by productive machinery and waste disposal, the fight over some territory promises to intensify. What needs to be pursued is not the question, to whom does a certain territory belong, but rather: is the hype of deterritorialisation prematurely displacing questions about what new boundaries and barriers are emerging in the world today? And at what level of analysis does the drive to de-territorialise prove analytically productive? Since political practice and social theory have unfolded for 300 years in matrices of space and time that operate territorially, such questions are difficult to articulate let alone answer conclusively. But oddly enough, it seems to be at the edges of territories, at borders, that one might best turn to examine them.

Notes

1. Thanks to Hastings Donnan and Dieter Haller for organising the panel and for comments.
2. I use this formulation because the contiguous region inside Finland is also known as Karelia.
3. A type of forest with much spruce and pine, interspersed with rivers, lakes and mires. The fact that these forests are continuous across a large expanse is significant ecologically, as is their age.
4. I have since learned that she did purchase a home there.
5. Nine months in 1996 including three trips to Russia of a few days each, interviews in Finland since then, and two trips to Russia in 1999.
6. To foreground the fact that environmentalism is not a straightforward practice let alone a self-evidently virtuous one, borrowing from the geographer Thom Kuehls (1996) I shall refer to the struggles over Karelia's forests as ecopolitics.
7. Non-governmental organisations.
8. Kuehls (1996) elaborates on the connection between ecopolitics and Lockean conceptions of sovereignty over productive land.
9. See Lowood (1990) on scientific forestry and its impact.
10. Increased mechanisation and transformations in the political economy of forest products has meant relative decline since the mid-1970s. Marchak (1995) and Donner-Amnell (1991).
11. Twentieth century domestic politics was always accompanied by forest debate (Lehtinen 1991, Berglund 2000).
12. More ethnographic detail can be found in Berglund (forthcoming).
13. This is borne out in professional publications and was abundantly clear in encounters, including nine interviews with high-ranking representatives from corporate and state proponents of industrial forestry.
14. Information is available from environmental organisations in electronic form, and Finnish research continues to expand (http://www.luontoliitto.fi/forest/russia/index.html, and Haapala 1999.)
15. Kleinn (1998) provides detail.
16. Bonds between the activists from Finland and those from Russia, especially Moscow were also clearly close, but I had little opportunity to become familiar enough with them to make a stronger argument.
17. Motives for interaction are, of course, heterogeneous on both sides, and understandings of ecopolitics are also highly varied. Complicating the picture is also the fact that a partial moratorium on logging Karelian old-growth was instituted by the largest Finnish companies in 1997.
18. In Finland where plots are often small by international comparison, extensive clear cutting is illegal. In Karelia, however, many companies claim that they are following local custom, in other words regulations inherited from the Soviet era, where they denude hectare upon hectare of forest paying little if any heed to replanting. See Marchak (1995).
19. Attitudes are varied. Also, revenues from local timber have, despite administrative and politi-

cal set-backs, been used to pay for instance for the Vuokkiniemi School (See map).

20. Based on personal communications on both sides of the border and newspaper articles. E.g. 'Runokylä ei elä yksin suojelusta', *Karjalainen*, 27/10/97.
21. Debate still surrounds the injustice of the loss of 'southern' Karelia to the Soviet Union in the Second World War. For the context see Paasi (1996) and below.
22. But see the argument in Paasi (1996) that it was only the war that really secured homogeneous identity and unquestioned allegiance to the Finnish nation-state.
23. Ecopolitics is equally inconsonant with pan-European or global claims to sovereignty such as demands that Karelia or the Amazon be 'saved' from their inhabitants in the name of biodiversity.

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