Andriko Lozowy, "Refinery 1," B&W Print, 2005
20.32cm X 30.38cm (8 x 12 inches)

University of Alberta

ICONS OF OIL

The Photographer-Researcher and Collaborative Practice

by

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Dedicated to Amy, my parents
and those who support the creative process.

Abstract

This thesis is a multi-modal exploration of the photographer-researcher as a

methodological opportunity to gain multiple, collaborative and collective

perspectives on living in relation to the Alberta oil sands zone of North America.

Using participatory-photography with youth, this thesis is one part of a larger project

that explores notions of 'community building' in Fort McMurray, Alberta,

Canada. Through the camera lenses of the photographer-researcher (myself), and

youth-participants this place is seen in relation to the Athabasca Tar Sands and oil

industry landscapes in the practices of photographers such as Burtynsky, Essik, Lenz

and myself. Fieldwork was conducted relying on cameras and images from my

photographic practice and from participants that collaborated in a community-based

process to produce representations of place over two years (2009-

2011, whereisfortmcmurray.com). As a form of visual ethnography, youth were asked

to respond to the question 'Where is Fort McMurray?' with cameras, a process that

generated temporary community formations around practices of image making. This

thesis represents a series of collaborative and negotiated engagements from a number

of perspectives resulting in a collective body of work in dialogue with relationships

of people and the Alberta oil industry zones.

Preface

When people ask me what my research is about I say, "Fort McMurray and the oil sands." I pause for a minute to let the person generate a response. The most common descriptions of Fort McMurray and oil sands follow as such: industrial operations, tailings ponds, smoke-emitting refineries, boreal forest, boreal forest deforested, open-pit mines, as well as gargantuan and apocalyptic landscapes—a place that is difficult to fathom:

Fig P.1 Edward Burtynsky, Alberta Oil Sands #9. Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, 2007.

Asking people what the name of a place brings to mind revealed that people refer to place—regardless of whether they have been there or not—through expressive and imaginative language. The image above comes from Canadian photographer Edward

Burtynsky, who has produced a number of oil sands–based image collections.

Burtynsky's work has become widely known through national and international

gallery exhibitions and published photographic collections (*Oil* 2009, *Manufactured*

Landscapes 2003, *Residual Landscapes* 2001).

In addition to aerial photographs, another narrative of bountiful work

permeates the visual discourse and is connected to oral traditions that excite those of

a working age looking to reap monetary rewards. The image below offers a revelation

about the trade-offs of working in the oil sands industry; the dream is a rather

mundane experience, as this thesis and related research also indicate[1].

Fig P.2 Peter Essick, *National Geographic Magazine*, March 2009. Caption from *National Geographic*: "The lunch line at one of four Mac's convenience stores in Fort McMurray offers a boomtown snapshot. Most customers are men between 25 and 30 years old, and many work at the mines. Tobacco, sugar-laden drinks, and bags of salty snacks sell briskly."

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[1] "As a nation, Canadians seem to have been incapable of long-term planning and can only blunder along with ad hoc crisis management... The Syncrude project has demonstrated the structural problems which underlie the whole future of development of energy policy in Canada" (Page, R. 1976. *Arctic Institute of North America*. V. 29:4 - 181-252). See also the research of Dorow and Dogu The Spatial Distribution of Hope In and Beyond Fort McMurray, in *Ecologies of Affect: Placing Nostalgia, Desire and Hope*. 2011: 271-292). and forthcoming *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol 38 – No 1.

Fort McMurray and the Athabasca region of northern Alberta, now known as the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has a long history, truncated by the distinguished lack of written records prior to European contact in the 1700's. The historical component here serves as a brief contextualization to help illustrate some significant points about Fort McMurray and the broader region. Bitumen, oil sands, tar-sands, these are the common words used to describe what is materially akin to the tar-like-sands. Throughout the thesis the common parlance is oil sands, though each version is somewhat interchangeable, yet depending on the context, highly politicized[2]. Often these debates serve well for selling newspapers, but for the purposes of this thesis I am more concerned with the geographical and social interrelations of the tarry-sands and the people who live nearby.

According to a report by the Alberta Geological Survey, drawing on a number of sources, the Athabasca area was originally inhabited by many groups of First Nations People including the Cree, Chipewyan, Prairie Dene and Anzac Metis. The bituminous sands of the Athabsaca region were first acknowledged by fur-traders when Wa-pa-su, now the name of a work-camp, then a Cree fur-trader, brought a sample to the Hudson's Bay Company post at York Factory in Northeastern Manitoba in 1719. Although credited with applying bitumen to water-proof canoes it wasn't until 1778 that Peter Pond wrote about the occurrence of visible deposits of bitumen along the Athabasca River[3].

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[2] For a more detailed discussion about the oil sands vs. tar sands debate see Keely Kinder's Oil sands or Tar Sands? What these Words really mean in Alberta. Video at: http://vimeo.com/20353103
[3] Details about the historical discovery and development of the Athabasca Oil sands can be found in; Carrigy and Kramers 1973, Strom 1986, Houlihan and Evans 1988, Wightman 1992, and others.

In 1920 D. Diver "was the first to try and produce oil from the bitumen by an in-situ method" by lowering a heating unit to the bottom of a well (Alberta Energy and Utilities Board 2000: 4). In 1921 Dr. Karl A. Clark successfully pioneered a method for separating and recovering oil from tar sand[4] using hot water and a chemical reagent. Clark's method served as the scientific and technological development needed in order for economically viable commercial industrial methods to gain prominence (www.canadianpetroleumhalloffame.ca/karl-clark.html).

Fig P.3 A7054. Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta[5]

Throughout the 1940's Max Ball, Sidney Ells, L.R. Champion and others pioneered the basic structure of leasing lands, building extraction plants and refining bituminous sands into fuel oil, diesel, gasoline and coke. By 1948 Karl Clark's hot-

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[4] *The Tar Sands: Syncrude and the Politics of Oil.* 1976. Hurtig Publishers.
[5] Davidson, D. and Mike Gismondi. 2011. *Challenging Legitimacy at the Precipice of Energy Calamity.* and Gismondi, M. and Debra Davidson. 2012. Imagining the Tar Sands 1880-1967 and Beyond. *Imaginations.*

water separation process emerged as the commercially dominant separation method and achieved a production level of 500 tons per day.

In 1967, Great Canadian Oil sands Ltd. (now Suncor), held by Sun Oil Company of Pennsylvania opened the first commercial oil sands plant that could successfully upgrade bitumen to crude oil. Bitumen, heated and mixed with hot water, separates, and together with lighter hydrocarbons is shipped by pipelines principally to markets in the U.S. Midwest and Canadian refineries (Alberta Energy and Utilities Board 2000: 6).

Fort McMurray, Alberta is geographically situated in close proximity to the ongoing efforts of surface mining, horizontal drilling and SAGD (Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage) that have emerged as the modern technological methods for extracting bituminous sands from subterranean deposits. Fort McMurray represents a human and commercial hub of activity where people muster to deploy their efforts at gaining monetary rewards for the difficult work of extraction, refinement and transportation. Oil sands serve as the primary resource around which all manner of other industries and services revolve, be they industrial, commercial or service oriented processes.

Writing of Fort McMurray, as a place unto-itself, one must keep in mind the co-evolution of oil sands processes and an able bodied workforce passing through and taking up residence in Fort McMurray. Fort McMurray was once a city but is now officially designated as an urban service area[6]. Fort McMurray has been marked

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[6] Of Alberta's countless Unincorporated Places, only two of them are considered Urban Services Areas. Sherwood Park, which is within Strathcona County east of the City of Edmonton, was Alberta's largest hamlet for a number of years until 2003 when it was eclipsed by the unprecedented growth of Fort McMurray, which is within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Fort McMurray was incorporated as a City until April 1, 1995, when it was amalgamated with a portion of

by rapid growth and periods of decline since Suncor began commercial development of the oil sands in 1967.

Fort McMurray grew with the expansion and development of the oil sands as a productive zone. In 1971 the city's population reached 6, 734, and by 1981 had climbed to 30, 772 (Leadership Wood Buffalo 2007: 5). The population of Fort McMurray has been subject to the boom and bust cycles of the global oil economy and tensions between oil-producing/consuming and oil-consuming (only) nations has exacerbated the peaks and valleys of the curve. In 1987 the population peaked at 37,000 just before it declined to 34,000 in relation to low oil prices that slowed production. In 1992, Guy Boutilier became the youngest mayor of Fort McMurray and on April 1, 1995, the City of Fort McMurray and the Improvement District No. 18 North and Central councils were amalgamated to form the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Leadership Wood Buffalo 2007: 5). From an economic perspective, Boutilier proposed amalgamation in order to broaden the tax-base to include the oil sands projects thereby benefiting Fort McMurray as an urban centre with a greater capacity to serve the people who live and work in the industry.

With a sense of the interconnectedness of Fort McMurray and the Athabasca Oil Sands as co-dependent, interrelated and connected in many ways I now turn to focus my attention on the thesis as a contribution to knowledge. At the heart of the contribution is the notion of the photographer-researcher as a development of a multi-model practice based set of methods and practices that give the researcher and opportunity to ask social question in visual ways. This thesis is rooted in field work

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its large surrounding rural municipality to create the Regional Municipality Wood Buffalo, largely as a means to ensure taxes from the developments were shared. Meanwhile, Sherwood Park has never experienced any incorporated status since it was first settled in December 1955. (Source: http://www.altapop.ca/unincorp.htm).

that was conducted primarily in Fort McMurray as well as the refineries near Edmonton. Fort McMurray and the oil sands were chosen as a site of interest precisely because of the interrelationships between industrial practices of oil extraction and refinement, and the people who live and work in relation to these industrial processes. The photographer-researcher is an emergent methodological concept that draws on contemporary methods of visual sociology and other disciplines in order to gain insight and generate new knowledge about what it means to live, work, grow-up, raise a family, explore, and reflect on places that have been heavily influenced by industrial processes of grand scale, global economic fluctuations, highly mobile workforces, immigration, relocation, and opportunities for 'a better quality of life' for many individuals and their families.

This thesis pursues two axes of inquiry that involve a concept of the photographer-researcher as a set of methods that use photographic art practices for the purpose of social research. The thesis deals with images that work to create ideas of place, specifically Fort McMurray and the oil sands.

Axis one represents my own photographic practice of exploring place by using a camera. The trajectory towards camera-based exploration is rooted in an early desire to create images, reflect with them, and to share them. The term I use to describe what it is I do is photographer-researcher. This preface gives some insight into the working parameters but will be discussed in much more detail in chapter one

The Photographer Researcher.

As a child, I recall driving by the Strathcona refineries and looking out the window mesmerized by the twisted metal architecture that seemed such a contrast to

the prairie landscape, the suburban homes, the covered shopping malls, the single-story brick and cinder-block schools, which were the steel-clad commercial buildings I was most accustomed to in my youth. The refineries presented themselves as something alter, different than block-standard. The refineries at night offer a surreal, almost stage-like display, the ground-level flood lights illuminating steel columns and pipes, the tall structures adorned with flashing lights and smoke pumping white across the black night sky. This thick description is memory reflected in words, and it informs my present-day activities of approaching the refineries as a social and photographic subject. Bringing together photography and research into a method of photographer researcher, I am struck by multiplicity as a tenet of visualicity (Shields 2004)—the visible and invisible. Visualicity as defined by Shields incorporates six dialectical aspects; the gaze and the glance, focus and depth, and representation and exposure. Visualicity is a tool for thinking through a process of constant questioning. I wonder at the possibility of dwelling in "*perpetuum mobile* of immanent materiality," a collusion in interior and exterior fluctuations (Mules, W. 2006: 86). Images allow one to gain insight into a given subject. Visual literacy offers the viewer to see beyond the representation, into imagination.

In 1947, near Leduc, Alberta, a major crude oil discovery was made. This discovery led to the transformation of Alberta's economy and fed a population boom. Leduc No. 1 was an active producer of crude until 1977. Within that time, Canada as a nation, fueled by the oil boom, became self-sufficient and ultimately a major exporter of oil (Byfield, T 1998: Volume 9). In 1948, my grandfather on my mother's side arrived in Canada as a Ukrainian immigrant. After working for six months on a potato farm on Prince Edward Island, he saved up enough money to

send for his wife and son. When the three were reunited in Canada, they purchased

three train tickets to the furthest destination they could travel to with $200. As

though by chance, my relatives arrived in Edmonton, Alberta, this prairie place that

reminded them of the fertility of the European breadbasket they left behind. They

arrived in Alberta as the oil boom took foot in Leduc. Meanwhile, Sun Company

(now Suncor) continued to explore and refine the tar sands mining operations. I

reflect on my relative's arrival as I explore the lands in and around Edmonton with a

camera. For some reason my interest is always intensely focused on the refineries,

and I have made many attempts to drive, walk, and bicycle with a camera,

photographing a place that is decidedly marginal, yet porous to the flow of incoming

synthetic crude and the outgoing of refined products. I am also struck by the visual

spectacle of the output of gasses and vapors (smoke) that pour out at a constant rate

from so many ominous stacks. I retell these stories of my relatives and my

exploration because I see them as integral to a reflexive process of an affective

(Davidson, Park & Shields 2011) experience of a particular place (Edmonton) that

continues to draw new immigrants. The simultaneous growth of dwellings, roads, -

shopping centers, pipelines, and refineries all work(ed) together to establish particular

melodious or discordant components that together work to create an Edmonton that

is at once a singular place and largely reliant on an abundant resource as a literal and

metaphorical source of energy.

  When I say exploration, I refer to spending time in a given place—driving,

walking, and cycling so that I can get as close to the subject as possible. In other

words, the act of photography is a methodical and slow process, where the

photographer waits patiently for all the elements to momentarily take shape in the

frame. The following image emerged out of a series of photographs I took at night while at the Syncrude and Suncor refineries 50km north of Fort McMurray. This image required patience as a slow shutter speed technique was used in order to stretch the effects of light and smoke.

Fig P.4 Andriko Lozowy. 2011. The Bucketwheel and Refinery at Night. (See *Imaginations*. 2012. Sighting Oil Issue)[7].

Photographing at night using a digital camera and a tripod, I created a number of images that work to demonstrate a different perspective than the bulk of images widely available online. Embedded within the images I created is the constant struggle to be honest and aware of my own privileged status. I am a white male, academic researcher, and an individual with a camera and some skills to operate it. As

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[7] This image depicting a bucketwheel in the foreground and the Syncrude refinery in the background has been featured on the cover of *Imaginations: Journal of Cross Cultural Image Studies* 2012 issue Sighting Oil.

a personal practice, I have endeavored to reveal Fort McMurray and the oil sands from a ground-level perspective. These photographs emerge as artifacts of an arts-based research practice of data collection. These images illustrate the various moments of my research process. The vantage point is grounded, in a manner of speaking rather than distant and aerial. By intersecting and cross-cutting Fort McMurray on foot, by bicycle, and at night meant that encounters with people, the place, and the environment of Fort McMurray and the oil sands tended to sidestep or challenge everyday patterns of the workday.[8]

Axis two represents photographic practice pursued collaboratively with a local group. As a practical way to counter the outsider perspective as well as a component part of my duties as a research assistant, which grew into its own project, I worked with youth in Fort McMurray to teach photographic skills, promote collaborative learning, and encourage them to critically examine the place they refer to as home by asking, *Where is Fort McMurray?* Youth participants were encouraged to make concerted visual statements and share them publicly through ongoing exhibitions.[9]

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[8] I recognize that the yolking together of art and research is controversial. Much more could be said about this union; more could be said about light and shutter speed appropriate to a visual arts thesis, but due to limitations of space, the focus here is oriented to the contribution made by the images to social research and to documenting a social and environmental context.

[9] Twenty one images created by youth participants are currently on display at the Fort McMurray Public Library. (Feb 2011 - ?)

Fig P.5 Milauni Desai. 2009. Where is Fort McMurray?[10]

Milauni moved to Canada with her father in the mid 2000's while her mother and younger sister remained in India. In an interview with Milauni, the photographer confessed, "It's so dusty here. It even comes in the house when the windows are shut. It's just so dusty." She told me her family expected her to become a doctor. "Doctor's don't have to worry about a bad economy," her father told her. "I just want to finish high school and leave, perhaps to university somewhere, perhaps back to India with my mother," she said. "What is community," I asked? She replied, "Community is where you live. It's your school, your work, your neighbors... Fort McMurray is growing so fast, too fast." The image above and the stories I gathered while working with Milauni and the group of youth participants do a different kind of sociological work than my own images do. Together, images and stories told by youth, in community, speak in the language of specificity. These specific narratives,

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[10] http://whereisfortmcmurray.com/pictures/

both visual and textual, work to respond to specific absences within the research and knowledge-producing practices for which some have criticized social science[11]. Working with youth made it readily apparent that with some encouragement, access to resources like cameras, and a willingness to participate, the possibilities for collective reflection and critical creative expression can be cultivated. The practical application learned through the process of working with youth—and this perhaps redundantly stated—is that there is great benefit to those who participate in temporary creative projects that offer skills and opportunity to work with others. In particular, the youth who participated verbally expressed their gratitude profusely as they took up cameras and explored their own community. The obvious point to make here is that the process that was followed throughout this research course— and in particular as a facilitator of a youth-based collaborative research project— offers a kind of manual for those who may feel compelled to activate their own research project with community service as a vital space of learning.

In both the individual and group aspect of this research axis, my practice as a researcher engaged in professional photographic practices as well as the youth participant collaborators engaged in amateur photography serve to speak to a set of absences or silences. These become apparent when one investigates the visual discourse or iconology of place, specifically of Fort McMurray and the oil sands. This thesis is about recognizing the absence of ground-level perspectives on place from the point of view of the pedestrian, the cyclist, the curious outsider—someone who is present as an observer and ethnographically inclined to look for patterns of behavior. Outsider status offers the benefit of a fresh perspective; newness means

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[11] O'Neill J, Sociology as a Skin Trade. New York: Harper and Row 1972. Shields, R 'meeting or Mis-meeting? The Dialogical Challenge to Verstehen' *British Journsal of Sociology* 47:2 275-294.

that nothing has become normal or banal. Instead, everyday life and, in this case, working with youth offers countless opportunity to gain insight.

Over the course of research, I learned that this group of youth, embedded in a kind of community, could offer a range of perspectives on place that are significant to their worldview. The youth participants were amateurs brought together by a keen desire to learn photography and to make creative and critical responses to the prevailing visual streams of images about Fort McMurray and the oil sands. Youth participants respond to a need for local and place-based expressions of visual representations. Their images offer a momentary fragment that serves to comment on the lack of this kind of image production. This kind of image production, elevated through the process of a methodical teaching of ethics, esthetics, techniques and ongoing discussion—then displayed for public consumption and exposition and subsequently included as part of an academic research project about community—exemplifies a strategy for valorizing the creative and community-making work done by a group of youth. The suggestion is that this course of action, with tangible material output in the form of exposition and public dialogue is available as a kind of method for critical engagement for anyone who has the desire to facilitate such an endeavor[12].

The work of this thesis is a response to that which is absent within the spectrum of available visual representations of Fort McMurray and the oil sands and works to respond by generating visual and cultural material that transcends the limits of research as a product, and instead feeds back into an ongoing, critical process of

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[12] The community of Fort McKay, 50km north of Fort McMurray, has expressed interest and has secured funding through one of the oil companies in having a researcher come and facilitate a similar project with the youth in their community.

dialogue that is on-going. Simultaneously as visual works are generated, the ethnographic project of taking time to observe and participate in a local culture is very much underway. Lastly, the collaborative and participatory action resulting in temporary community assemblages signified the importance of opportunities for the engagement of youth.

This thesis represents a multitude of collaborative intersections. In addition to the collaborative research conducted with youth participants, many of the chapters that follow are also the generative result of working together with various colleagues. These collaborations and intersections produce a kind of collective perspective that affects the overall research design, process, analysis, writing, and dissemination. At each phase of thesis work over the past five years I have worked with others in order to gain skills and perspective on the social world of living in relation to the Alberta oil sands. The initial impetus to consider the social world in relation to the oil sands projects came from a question posed by a mentor about spatial relations. As a means to explore and challenge the bounds of existing precedents, I arrive at this point with a thesis that bears my name on the cover. However, I am deeply indebted and grateful to those I have worked together with over the course of five years of doctoral studies and research. I will say more about the individual chapters and how they have emerged in the following introduction.

This is a thesis by publication and it differs from a monograph in that it takes the form of a dossier. By my own admission I am aware that there are shifts in tone and timbre as the numbered sections represent individual and collaborative efforts to tarry with key components. Due to the limits of this project, time, funding, deadlines, and the need to move onto next-steps, there is much that could have been explored

in greater detail. The limits of the work here mean that some questions are taken up and some answers are provided. Other questions and avenues could have provided equally and alternatively engaging modes of research. Upon reading the thesis one could say that there could be more theoretical engagement, or that the methodological components could be elaborated upon. My response is that this is true, more elaboration could be useful for the reader. My current view is that the component parts that comprise this thesis, some of which is published material, represents a project that is complete. That which resides beyond the scope of the component parts, perhaps further theorization, should be counted as the next steps. The limits give this project a definitive shape and structure.

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Introduction

Fig I.1 Natalia Riordon. 2009. Where is Fort McMurray?

This thesis is a multi-modal exploration of the photographer-researcher as a methodological opportunity to gain multiple, collaborative and collective perspectives on living in relation to the Alberta oil sands zone of North America. The image above is a representation of one way that the photographer-researcher as a method can be actualized as a material expression of a sense of place—from the point of view of a youth participant. I start here because the photographer-researcher as an empowering tool might be the most distinct and crystalized contribution of this project.

Words of a youth participant -

"The highway, I want to photograph highway 63 sign and the cars going by in the background."

I had just begun giving presentations to students in Fort McMurray's three high schools as a way to offer an opportunity to participate in a visual ethnographic and collaborative action project using cameras. I had put together a slide show of photographs gleaned from Internet searches of "Fort McMurray," "tar sands," and "oil sands." I also brought a collection of cameras as a means to offer students an opportunity to get their hands on digital single lens reflex cameras (DSLRs). I explained that I was interested in listening and having them share their perspectives on Fort McMurray and the oil sands in relation to the photographs I scrolled through on a slideshow. The slideshow was meant as a provocation. The cameras passed around the room were the inspiration; the potential of an exhibition was the promise.

Photographs of Fort McMurray and the oil sands tend to depict polarities. Glistening aerial views, technological marvels like the giant trucks used to haul oil sand, neatly uniformed oil sands workers, tailings ponds with Greenpeace banners strewn across the mouths of tailings pond spouts, open-pit mines, vistas of alienating refineries—the list goes on.

"The highway…" a voice sounded out in one of the first classes to which I presented. The student made her response to my two-part question: "If you had an opportunity to photograph this place (Fort McMurray and surrounding area) what would your key image be?. What statement would you want to make"? The student's response was crystalized in that moment: her obsession was the main highway south to metropolitan center. Her excitement could hardly be contained. "When do we meet?" she asked. "Soon," I replied.

The level of interest and excitement that the project elicited from potential participants was overwhelming at first. This excitement soon became channeled like a strong current, which suggests that working with youth and cameras is an opportunity for less clinical but more in-depth form of social science research. Working with youth also seems to be a way to work with a less cynical population than the typical group of adults. In practice, this amounted to a marriage of ethnographic fieldwork, visual sociology, art photography, and methods from qualitative sociology, such as interviews and participant observation. I drew on my existing knowledge of these disciplines and my familiarity with descriptions of what visual sociology involved, such as the following:

> Visual sociology is not really a specialized field of sociology in the same way as the sociology of law, or sociology of culture, but a cross cutting field of inquiry a way of doing and thinking that influences the whole process of researching (conceptualizing, gathering and communicating). It is not only a 'sociology of the visual' (as subject) but also as method for sociology in general (whatever its field: law, religion, culture, etc.) and a way of thinking, conceptualizing and presenting ideas and findings.   – Pauwels, L. 2011: 13.

Visual sociology offers a set of working parameters, methods, modes, and best practices. Key insights are afforded by a youth-perspective on how people interact with each other and the environment they find themselves. The concepts of visual sociology have been established over the recent decades with handbooks that often include other qualitative methods (Ball and Smith, 1992; Chaplin, 1994; Banks, 2001, 2007; Margolis and Pauwels, 2011; Pink 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012), readers (Prosser, 2000; Hamilton, 2006; Stanczak 2007) as well as a growing number of academic journals (*Visual Studies, Visual Anthropology, Visual Anthropology Review, Visual Communication, the Journal of Visual Culture, Visual Culture in Britain,* and *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*). However, descriptions of visual sociology such

as the one given above may gloss over the multiple registers on which participants engage with researchers and with a research project as a way of conducting their own personal research and reflection, making their own statements and intervening in topics that are significant to them – "the highway…" "The highway" is a symbolic and visual representation that brings together the intersections of a whole multiplicity of layers. Many of the youth participants talked to me at length about the highway and there seemed to be some amount of a collective agreement that a) the highway represents the lifeblood of Fort McMurray, b) if the highway is slowed, stopped, or delayed for any reason, everyone in Fort McMurray is affected, and c) flow becomes a kind of representative barometer, a way to gauge if all is well, or not.

At the conceptual level, my own interest and collaboratively-based trajectory was crystalized when I was asked to interpret a place using visual means[13]. The image that comes first in this thesis (2005) depicts a large storage tank at the Strathcona refinery seen through a chain link fence. At the time my goal was to explore the concepts of spatialization (Shields, 1986, 1988) and affect (Davidson, Shields and Park, 2011). Spatialization and affect offer a vocabulary, an approach, a conceptual tool for *theory making* that can be mobilized by visual sociologies. By conceptualizing and presenting my work, I began to realize that my interests lay in a particular set of methods such as empirical approaches to visual documentation involving image recording (Greenfield, 2004) and image-based ethnography (Harper, 1982, 1987, 2001; Schwartz, 1998; Page 2005), where still photography figures prominently. The

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[13] When I began the dissertation process I had not yet discovered the established networks, books, and journals that contribute to the literature on visual sociology. I applied myself in an inductive manner to pursue the possibilities of what a visual sociology could be. As I moved along, I collected concepts and ideas that have been established, and I now recognize how my own trajectory is influenced and challenged by the discourse.

variation in presentation formats led to a range of research reporting styles, semiotic

analysis of visual representations (Boaz, 1955; Levi-Strauss, 1958; McLuhan 1951),

ethnomethodology (Lynch and Sharrock, 2003; Garfinkel, 2006), and

autoethnography (see *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 2006; Ellis and Bochner,

2006; Goodall, 2000, 2008; Bochner, 2001), where an account may take many forms,

such as a play, a descriptive report, a photographic display, or a performance.

I have made mention of a broad yet site-specific range of forms of visual

sociology, each worthy of extensive discussion. This thesis is focused on a practice-

based working-through of a range of methods and therefore does not allow for a

comprehensive and detailed review of all relevant literature.[14] A more detailed

reading of available methods as a site of comparison may be useful for further

research. The following pages will help to introduce the reader to the chapters to

come as well as the influences and precedents set by those who have come before

me. My practice in the field, if we take Fort McMurray as such, was developed in the

context of team-work on a broad, ongoing ethnography of place that ranged from a

qualitative assessment of local culture to a political economy of migration.[15] It

chooses to contribute one part of a larger story. This limitation is reflected in the

decision to respond to the availability of cameras and the enthusiasm of the

participant. Following their lead meant that the resulting investigation of place was

emergent and dependent on their selections of what was important (highways, dust,

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[14] For those interested in a comprehensive text detailing visual sociology as a range of methods that relate to but go far beyond the contents of this these please see: the *Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (2011).

[15] With Prof. Sarah Dorow as Principle Investigator, this SSHRC-funded team involved other faculty, such as Prof Michael Haan, Prof. Rob Shields and other students, such as Goze Dogu. In addition, this was part of a wider orbit of research projects on the social and cultural aspects of the development of the oil sands by investigators such as Prof. Mike Gismondi (Univ of Athabasca) and Prof. Imre Szeman (Univ. of Alberta), amongst others.

waiting…), their choice of timing, vantage point, and focus. This contrasts with forms of visual sociology that were not pursued: asking respondents to comment on a preselected set of images and a questionnaire, for example.

Over the course of research (2009-2011), thousands of photographs were generated and archived. A small selection of 22 images chosen by the youth participants was displayed at The Fort McMurray Public Library from February 2011 to April 2013. The set of images displayed at the library is also available online at (http://whereisfortmcmurray.com/pictures/).

One of the problems with visual sociology where primary data collection involves taking pictures is that the researcher ends up with too much data. Thousands of digital images have been generated by both my own photography practice and that of the youth participants. I have decided to follow the suggestion made by Luc Pauwels who writes, "Visual representations often have no 'intrinsic' or fixed value for research" (Pauwels, 2011). Pauwels continues by stating that the research value of images is related to their value as an element in a process that leads towards reasoned and substantiated inferences. The goal here is to reduce the number (from thousands) of images to just a few that help distill the essence of the thesis. My argument will be that these images shed light on or crystallize patterns—patterns of content, theme, effects, and presentation—within the larger set of photos. These images are not merely stylistic but social. 'Shedding light' is making something understandable or intelligible, creating meaning and thus taking a position—a vantage point at ground level—that is partial demonstration or exemplification rather than a proof of a single hypothesis. Instead, these images are

indicators of *truths* of community and place, plural. They involve not only a deductive logic but, as noted above, an inductive logic and participatory process.

I have already mentioned that the visual work generated by this thesis—my own and the youth-participant photographs—work in relation to an existent body of work that is always being expanded. The particular set of images that this thesis works in relation to have to do with the specific topic of industrial landscapes of Alberta, oil sands, and Fort McMurray. However, before we can discuss the images of a specific discourse, I will spend the next few pages offering a brief exegesis on photography and landscape photography, more generally. The following pages offer a brief historical review of some events, considerations, and overt connections that inform the undertaking of this thesis. The vignettes highlight an existing discourse favoring the parallels of technology and subjectivity. Before we get into the historical component, I must first introduce the pedagogical framework for how I want you, the reader, to learn to look upon images and image creation. Of course, you may already have these skills, so I apologize if this is a review. Here I will refer to ways of seeing—a play on a book title by John Berger—as a process of visual literacy, or learning to see.

Visual literacy is used here to describe the process that allows one to make sense across images. In the case of this thesis project, there are many images and visual literacy could be thought of as the capacity to recognize patterns, similarities, differences, as well as imagine into and beyond the limits of the set as a group. Visual literacy can be thought of as the process of empowering individuals so that anyone can make their own interpretation. Following visual literacy, visualicity can then be thought of as a tool for observing the seen and unseen. In other words, and this a

loose paraphrasing of Shields 2004 example, the bicycle courier who frequents the

streets of a busy city at high speeds expresses the ability to see into the future, as

much as ten seconds. This ability has been characterized as the power to keep the

bicycle courier upright and on to their destination as countless scenarios are played

out in the imagination as a means to be selective about the path.

Speaking of historical developments, the project at hand recognizes the influence of

co-developments of technology, perception, and works to creatively establish a

contrast to what was once a heavily positivistic dialogue. *Berger* and Mohr (1982)

suggest that photography and positivism emerged together (Stanczak 2007: 4).

> The camera, as an apparatus for capturing systematic representations of an
> observed world, served the "strict empirical construction of knowledge in
> Western science" (Tagg 1993 in Stanczak 2007: 4). In the nineteenth century, in
> the era of "'taxonomies, inventories, and physiologies,' photography was
> understood to be the agent par excellence for listing, knowing, and possessing,
> as it were, the things of the world"' (Solomon-Godoeau in Schwartz and Ryan
> 2003: 2). In her cultural history of photography Mary Warner Marien traces a
> detailed history of the origin of photography as 'several photographies' (2002:
> 21).

The notion of several photographies in Marien's work refers to the multi-

modal forms that paralleled each other as development and adoption of mainstream

versions took shape. In a contemporary context, one could argue that capturing

images through a lens constitutes photography as the ubiquitous act, whereas the

apparatus itself—the device that captures, stores, and is changed—may offer

fundamentally different kinds of experiences.

One major contrast could be regarded as an analogue and digital divide. While

working collaboratively with youth, one insight was recognizing the ubiquity of

screens on smart phones as the prevailing surfaces of image transmission. Youth

participants were noted for their reliance on immediacy as a means to convey to themselves and to others the kinds of images they captured. Small screens serve immediate feedback while using a smartphone or a DSLR. While looking upon those small screens, participants shared ideas and asked questions quickly about how they could adjust the settings and the technical features to achieve their desired results. In contrast, youth participants were rendered speechless when they witnessed the pause between pressing the print button on a computer and waiting for their images to emerge from the printer. When they finally had their own work in their hands, they simply marveled and looked upon an alien object: an 8" x 10" printed image. The translation of digital image capture onto a material substrate saw the participants experience intermedia[16] first hand. For the youth participants, handling a material version of their digital creation emerged as an observable revelation. Their expressions offered muted bewilderment They were pleased to have something physical to offer as a means to spark a conversation with other than words.

> The inventors of photography—Talbot, Daguerre, and Niepce— "all shied away from explaining photography as an invention that makes images through human agency" (2002: 23). Instead, around the mid-nineteenth century, the explanation was that photography emerged as a way for nature to impress herself as a kind of spontaneous reproduction or autography (Marien 2002: 23). Empiricism prevailed following the invention of photography. Commercialization of multiple formats emerged. By the 1840s, photography began to "proliferate as a craft, ...[and] was regularly called an art-science" (Marien 2002: 260). Photography became a normal part of colonial economic and social governance practice within colonies by the mid-1850s. Although Daguerre did little work regarding the further development of photography, others such as William Henry Fox Talbot pressed on, mingling art, science, and low-light photography for potential surveillance applications and worked with still photography in series. Talbot understood that images could be represented in a series where 'the meaning of an image preceded not "just from one example, but from all of them and from their arrangement" (Marien 2002: 31).

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[16] Intermedia – from the analogue, to the digital and back again. Intermedia has its roots in the Fluxus, meaning flow, flowing, fluid, movement. Influences were musician John Cage, Richard Maxfield, Dick Higgins, George Brecht and others.

Like Claude Monet, Talbot studied the effects of light and cultivated a level of aesthetic awareness (Marien 2002: 32). Throughout the 1850s and onwards, cameras and photographic techniques of the day became paramount in areas of science such as biology and medicine, where microscopes and cameras were used collectively. Hugh Welch Diamond photographed mental patients in a belief that they might better understand themselves (Marien 2002: 39). August Sander attempted to capture the relationship between physiognomy, labour, class, and moral character in his portraits (Sander 2002). The mug shot was developed as a side profile, emerging out of the application of photographic practices to document non-Western, racialized and exoticized subjects (2002: 39). Photography was also used to document wars; expeditions and travel; natural disasters and fires; as well as monuments and portraitures (Marien 2002: 32-80). Despite the prevalence of photography across a range of subject matter, there remains little to show and see of child labourers and working folk, with the exception of prolific category smashers like Dorothea Lange. Ordinary activities are rarely seen "unless performed in an exotic culture" (Marien 2002: 76).

Theorists argue that photography "remains a powerful tool in our engagement with the world around us. Through photographs, we see, we remember, we imagine: we 'picture place'" (Schwartz and Ryan 2003: 1). In the mid-1800s, throughout the territories now referred to as the Canadian Prairies, Humphry Lloyd Hime pictured place. Schwartz has written on the role that Hime played, while funded by the Canadian Government, in colonizing the West. Hime produced images that profiled fertile land and the idea of potential prosperity. Hime designated images such as *The Prairie Looking South*[17] as representative of the "Fertile Belt," and the image and title work together to re-signify what was previously thought of as a 'nothing there' sort of place.

Alongside the development of photography, technological advancements have allowed cameras and their operators to deploy cameras into service in increasing number and types of places and situations, such as while rock climbing or scuba diving. The portability and ubiquity of cameras allows for work at the interstices of

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[17] *Prairie Looking South* appears in chapter five, *Reframing oil sands*.

people in relation to place by seamlessly merging everyday life with, for instance, photographic-research practices. A debt of gratitude is owed to anthropology's use of cameras as a visual and professional means to capture the 'exotic' while weaving together photographic practice/representation and geographical inquiry/imagination (Schwartz and Ryan 2003: 6).

Although there is selective reference to the history of photography throughout this thesis, no comprehensive overview is provided here. The history of photography is already well-covered in several texts (Newhall 1982, Rosenblum 2008, Trachtenberg 1980, Berger 1992). The history of photographic and technological developments over the last century have shaped the practices of photography deployed here, however their genealogy and development falls outside of the scope of this thesis. Instead of a historical account of photography and its developments this thesis is focused on contemporary practices of photography as possible methods for doing social research.

The focus here is on the recognition of an available visual discourse that features Alberta industrial landscapes, oil sands, and Fort McMurray, followed by a dual effort by the youth participants and myself, collaborators adding, contributing, and expanding the existing discourse. Simultaneously, questions of community, home, place, and belonging have been asked as a form of autoethnography and followed with ethnographic and visual research studies methods in order to give some insight into living in relation to industrial landscapes, oil sands, and Fort McMurray.

This thesis is comprised of five main chapters. Each of the five main chapters is rooted in one or more styles or methods of what is referred to as visual sociology.

In general each of the chapters offers a variation on the photographer-researcher as a set of methods. In addition, because of the collaborative nature of many of the chapters, the thesis as a whole offers a collective perspective that expands the standard definitions of the genre. Under the rubric of visual sociology, the subject is the Alberta oil sands and the effects that such a large scale[18] mining, refinement, and distribution network of trucks, migrant workers, pipelines, heavy equipment, and primary natural resources has as a power to affect many levels of people, places and environments. The following numbered sections provide an introduction to the chapters that follow. As well as providing a synthetic summary of the arguments and findings to come, these numbered sections also contain a necessary amount of contextualization. The intention is to introduce the reader to a series of themes as well as offering vignettes that would otherwise be found in a more traditional literature review. Unlike a more traditional thesis, the work here is responding to the intersections of photography, collaborative and collective research, as well as participant-based and ethnographic methods. What this suggests is that no single kind of literature offers an appropriate spread or cross-section. Instead, the strategy here is to offer specificity across a range of readings, while simultaneously acknowledging the assumptions and making suggestions for further reading.

1. *Photographer as Researcher (Lozowy)*

   I grew up in Sherwood Park, Alberta, directly east of Edmonton. Between Sherwood Park and Edmonton the Imperial Oil (Exxon), Suncor and Petro Canada

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[18] Alberta's oil sands underlie 140,200 square kilometers (km2) (54,132 square miles) of land in the Athabasca, Cold Lake and Peace River areas in northern Alberta.
(http://www.energy.alberta.ca/oilsands/791.asp#Geography)

(Chemco) refineries stand. This thesis builds towards collaboration and collective practices on many fronts, but it begins here with a form of autoethnographic photography of industrial landscapes. My interest began with the refineries near Edmonton, their physical and piped connections with oil, the oil sands, and the energy industry. I continue to be struck by the refineries muted appearance as they simultaneously weigh so heavily upon the landscape. I am both motivated by classical sociological questions that begin with *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how* a culture prevails, by recognizing patterns and behavior. I am also struck by the nonplussed attitude of those who live close to the refineries. In contrast, those who experience the refineries as a landscape, they for the first time seem intensely focused, perplexed by the scale and swiftness of the billowing smoke, yet able to verbally gesticulate their incomprehensibility at perceiving such a site. My own familiarity with refineries as places on the margins of mental and social landscapes suggests that these are precisely the kinds of sites that need to be made strange, re-signified or reimagined, especially for locals.

While working alone photographing the refineries, I was able to consider the ways in which photography adds emphasis to observations (Wells 2011: 9). I learnt that *the emphasis* must also be considered as a component of the intersection of the psychological (human) and physiological (camera) elements that contribute to a given perspective. People look through lenses that frame and bring focus to particular elements in a given image. Together the photographer and the camera already represent a mutual, interdependent, collective and collaborative process. This collaboration must also be kept in perspective, as it is important to continually "acknowledge… the limitations of physiology, the visual optics afforded by a

camera's optical system all in conjunction with socio-cultural framing that directs images to predispositions, ongoing interests, curiosities and concerns" (Wells 2011: 32).

When I began with the initial photographic practice from a ground level perspective,[19] I was quickly introduced to the work of Stephen Shore, *Uncommon Places* (2004), and Hilla and Bernd Becher, *Industrial Landscapes*, (2002). I also found that contemporary photographers such as Edward Burtynsky had already published *Manufactured Landscapes* (2003), documenting the effects of industrialization on the environment, and *Oil* (2009), which documented the production, distribution, and use of combustible non-renewable fuel. I found this at once promising, yet disappointing that once again, nothing is new.

In 2009, *National Geographic* featured Fort McMurray and the oil sands as photographed by Peter Essick, in an article 'Scraping the Bottom: The Canadian Oil Boom'. Garth Lenz, another photographer has documented environments changed by the industrial processes of oil extraction in Canada. Like Burtynsky, Lenz is capitalizing on international interest by offering "limited edition, signed, fine art prints" (http://garthlenz.com/#/touring-exhibit--the-true-cost-of-oil/editorial-42). Burtynsky, Essick, and Lenz, form a triad of contemporary photographers that have worked to create visual representations of oil sands—land that as been scraped and 'scaped. Wells cites W.J.T. Mitchell: "Landscape is best used not as a noun, but as a verb, 'to landscape'" (Mitchell 1994). Wells continues: "To 'landscape' is to impose a certain order." (2011: 2). In effect, the photographer becomes landscaper who

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[19] The ground-level perspective is of importance here because it references a tradition written about by de Certeau, the walker. Elena Siemens in her *Theatre in Passing: A Moscow Diary* (2011) writes that she takes on the walker approach, but with a camera. In contrast,the flaneur represents a search for the panorama.

imposes a certain order. However, Lenz populates his landscapes with humans and machines, focusing on the mundane and fleeting interactions that make this a working landscape and give us a sense of a close-up view, whereas Burtynsky has made it a trademark to emphasize often depopulated, 'unhuman', over-scaled objects and environments that we can only witness as sublime.

In the introductory essay to Saskatchewan photographer John Conway's *Uncommon Views* Penny Cousineau-Levine writes, "When shown Canadian photographs alongside those made in Britain, the United States, and elsewhere, whether documentary photographs or portraits or landscapes, the almost universal response of ('students in the History of Photography course') was that they could see "nothing" in these images, that there was "nothing there" (Penny Cousineau-Levine in Conway, *Uncommon Views* 2005: 31). Conway's project offers images that belie the banality and mundane subject matter of a presumed Saskatchewan[20], a province many people claim to 'sleep through' while driving across Canada. Conway offers reflections of oil tanks, storefronts, farm crops, ominous orbs (like plastic covered bales), decaying signs, and an open sense of place with *infinite* horizons.

In contrast to Conway's uncanny photographs of Saskatchewan, Courtney Milne's, *Saskatchewan the Luminous Landscape* (2005) provides an alternative and classically normative view, that of pastoral landscapes evoking nostalgia. Milne works to represent the spectacle of Saskatchewan couched in a genre of beauty, picturesque, long-shadowed sunsets, and farming culture—a land bathed in long sun summer evenings (Davidson, Park, Shields 2011). I bring Milne and Conway together here as two examples of the qualitative nature of photography. *The Luminous Landscape* and

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[20] Consider that the unofficial motto is "Easy to draw, hard to spell."

the *Uncommon Views*—each title speaks to a particular perspective and in turn lends itself to adoption by a particular audience, perhaps those seeking aesthetically pleasing and conventional (beauty) representations versus those seeking a critical, uncanny, grotesque glimpse into times and places of aesthetic harmony. To bring the thought back to the quote at the beginning of this section, I have been for years struck by this notion of, "nothing there." *The students, said there was nothing there.* What could it mean to look upon/at photographs and reply, that one sees nothing there? Could it be that what is kindled within the onlooker is an emotion, an affect, a sense that is out of the reach of words? If so, is this a problem of language and representation (Lyotard 1993, 1997)?

Peering into refinery spaces sets up the 'photographer researcher' as one who makes a certain kind of enquiry into places that presume and imply their own marginality by fencing and obscuring within. Inside, internal patterns are not observable from the outside. Photography as personal practice offers a starting point for the unfolding of a thesis that will shift towards collaborative photographic research practices and conclude with a chapter wherein my own practice as photographer researcher becomes the subject of a curatorial process for another author (see Chap. 5). The collaborative and collective practices of making images stands in stark contrast to the photographer and their camera as an external and sometimes dispassionate eye. In contrast to 'nothing there', the participants argue that there is 'something there' in the images they produced. Rather than a distant vantage point, or even the curious portraits of moments of routine—such as the tradesmen in overalls, lined up with pop and candies that might help while contending the buttons of a gigantic machine during a long, monotonous shift—the

collaborative photographs assume the point of view of a collaborative looking from within.

2) The Camera as a Tool for Assembling "Community" (Lozowy, Dorow and Shields)

Reflecting on the teamwork of the wider study of Fort McMurray, Chapter 2 *Cameras Creating Community* offers a collective perspective of three researchers[21], as collaborators and authors[22] who write as one voice to distill a few years' worth of ethnographic fieldwork. Using an open question as a research motivation and provocation for collaboration with youth participants, "Where is Fort McMurray?" helped frame "What is community?" Established methods of photovoice, photonovellas, community-based participatory action are discussed first to make the point that in the broader study of Fort McMurray, the research reveals an under-explored area where the research tool (the camera) can itself become an apparatus for (micro)community[23]. We hypothesize that, even as we study community, the

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[21] While writing as a group, it is difficult to escape the 'we.' Please excuse its use in this note: we cobble a view that temporarily explodes *Jean Piaget's,* amongst other's, notions of an individual pursuit of knowledge involving increasingly complex instruments for knowing and understanding the world (John-Steiner 2000: IX). Instead, we rely on a set of social and psychological raconteurs such as sociologist Howard Becker, who wrote, "The artist... works in the center of a network of cooperating people whose work is essential to the final outcome" (1982). Les Vygotsky expressed that "an individual learns, creates, and achieves mastery in and through their relationships with other individuals" (John-Steiner 2000: IX); For Bakhitin, "Alterity is a phenomenon to be accepted, positively described" (Wertsch 2000: 25), "... I cannot do without the other; I cannot become myself without the other I must find myself in the other; finding the other in me (in mutual reflection and perception)" (1979: 312). Interdependence is at the heart of some of the work undertaken here in this thesis. Interdependence allowed me to work with others towards building connections so that the divisions of individuality become foggy and unidentifiable.

[22] At this starting point, my entry was already in motion. The SSHRC project was already framed as a large scale ethnographic (Dr. Sara Dorow, Goze Dogu), ethnologic, and spatial (Dr. Rob Shields), as well as quantitative analysis (Dr. Mike Hahn) of multiple layers of community, governance, corporate practice, migrant workers, etc. These layers defined clear areas of focus for individual researchers working together in collaboration. Each individual researcher brought particular expertise in order to coalesce around the topic of community, neo-liberal governance, and Fort McMurray. From the outset, collaboration would be central to most methodological choices made.

[23] Like John Berger's seminal work, *Ways of Seeing,* the work here is about *building upon* in order to reveal theoretical concepts by way of providing detailed accounts of people and places, questions

camera assembles people around itself, and as it does so, the configuration of a given

community is affected and thus shaped by the camera[24].

Using cameras borrowed from the University of Alberta's Intermedia Research

Studio[25] students were afforded the opportunity translate ideas and creative

expression into photographs, images, representations of place regardless of how

mundane the subject. Participants were self-selected, meaning that they each chose to

participate after being presented with an opportunity. Participants emerged from a

range of high school aged (15-19 year old) students in Fort McMurray. Fort

McMurray is of interest here because of its role as a resource economy service

provider of people and goods. Fort McMurray has seen marked growth in the last

number of years as the global demand for oil continues to increase.

While conducting ethnographic and later, participant action research in Fort

McMurray participants were offered workshops to familiarize themselves with digital

SLR's, have conversations about ethics and photography, discuss technical aspects of

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related to visual discourses of oil sands in the context of the Neo-liberal politics of Canadian sand Albertan governments (Harvey 2005, Stenger 2010), where democracy is said to be outmoded by other concepts like NeoCapitalism and PostDemocracy (Crouch 2004).

[24] In his introduction to *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions* (2011), Stephen Spencer writes, "We are living in a visually saturated culture (Gombrich 1996; Mitchell 1994) and that late modernity has undergone a 'visual turn' towards an... 'ocularcentric' culture (Jay 1994; Jenks 1995; Mitchell 1994)" (Spencer 2011: 11). In addition, and here Spencer quotes Lewis, who writes of zones, "[the] new public sphere can be regarded as the mediasphere... the conflux of macro and micro processes of communication and social engagement" (Spencer 2011: 11). One main stream/thread that unifies this larger thesis is an ongoing, malleable, and changeable dialogue between—if we can really bracket zones of the 'mediasphere' (Lewis 2007: 5)—the media and the public, or, phrased another way, the visual and the social. What can we glean from the pointing and re-pointing of the concept of the visual?

[25] *Back and fourth, to and fro*, a working 'definition' of Intermedia represents another way to say "from the analogue to the digital and back again." The shifting represents ways we have used technology in the last number of years. At present I have identified two main channels of Intermedia process—ways of using apparatuses like video cameras, digital cameras, audio recorders, web design, production tools, etc—as a), pragmatic uses of technology to enable 'illustrative' forms of research dissemination and b), something more akin to the production of 'fine' art, otherwise referred to, by many, as that which has no directly apparent use value.

cameras, composition, color, perspective and all manner of related technical and social topics. As the project progressed it became clear that cameras constitute a catalyst for the theatrical nature of creating community, cameras create a social event. As participants made their way around town with cameras they would invariably become part of the landscape, while photographing places, each other, strangers, passerby's and those who would hail the participant photographers and request that they too be photographed.

While the participants of *Where is Fort McMurray?* did their work of generating images, they also offered their insights and provided context to that which they found the time to capture with cameras. In relation to the kinds of images generally found in the public domain labeled 'Fort McMurray', these youth generated images that provided a much-needed counter-perspective. Instead of the typical ethnographic style of documenting, often with an audio recorder, participants were invited in as research collaborators to actively generate material that would be subsequently used in an exhibition and as a means to instigate conversations. The photographs generated by the participants stood as material evidence (something one can react to viscerally) of the polarizing views that be taken up and projected about the imaginary ideas called to mind when the word *community* is propelled into service. The seen and the unseen emerge as polarities of the tenuous relationship of how people live in relation to one another.

3) Youth Picturing Place: Fort McMurray (Lozowy)

> "It is frequently emphasized that methodologies are developed for/with
> particular projects, they are interwoven with theory and 'as most good
> researchers know, it is not unusual to make up the methods as you go along.'

Indeed '[t]he methods should serve the aims of the research, not the research serve the aims of the method' (McGuigan 1997: 2)" (Pink 2001, 2007: 5).

Chapter three is a material extension of the more theoretical second chapter. Where chapter two looks at working with youth as participant collaborators and teasing out an idea—*What is community?*—Chapter three looks at contrasting the creative output of the youth participants in relation to the readily available images. This chapter is an acknowledgement that without the collaborative and collective efforts between my colleagues and the youth participants, there would be nothing to write about. Chapter three begins by bringing the reader into the local public library where the photographs created by the youth are on display. This chapter moves forward along three main ideas: a) Felix Guattari's ecosophy of the mental, social and environmental ecologies that symbolize ways in which awareness needs to be a collective effort in order to live well and mitigate harm, b) three examples of photographs that represent and reference Fort McMurray and the oil sands as a means to offer a contextualization for, c) the images created, edited and presented by the youth participants. This chapter demonstrates another way to provide a report of the working relations between youth and whatever their own concept of community is and was made to be at a given time. Youth participants made visual responses as an active engagement with that which they perceive – a necessary step towards fostering the kind of on-going dialogue that sparks moments of engagement throughout the community. These moments of engagement could otherwise be read as conversations that serve to offer individuals an opportunity to interact.

Liz Wells, in her 2011 *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*, notes that she begins her enquiry into landscape photography in 1992 when upon

visiting an international exhibition of photography relating landscapes to environments she wondered why of the seven photographers whose work was on display there were no women? Wells then began to curate exhibitions by female landscape photographers. Of course Wells makes a response to a whole host of photo-historical context. I introduce Wells here as a way to connect between her process of noticing the absence of women landscape photographers and the two axis process that guides this thesis. Axis one refers to my own personal practice of exploring place, through walking, with a camera, in order to render places on the margins of physical and mental landscapes as key elements of spatial production. By bringing forth and focusing on that which is routinely passed without much reflection, my photographic process illuminates these places with a temporary glint of light that casts reverberations of insight into the future visions of these spaces. The second axis refers to the recognition, like Wells had, that a visual discourse of oil sands, and Fort McMurray, lacked a concerted effort by youth to picture place.

Although the focus is not entirely on materiality, the chapter does begin with the product, 'the deliverable' by another name. The product, the twenty one images that now reside at the Fort McMurray public library, exist as physical manifestations, photographs, made more important as the amount of time between when they were taken and the present grows greater. Another way to think about these photographs is as a refined set of twenty-one, rather than thousands. The twenty-one images are symbolic of the much larger set of images. These photographs depict spatial and cognitive maps of a particular and temporary group of youth in Fort McMurray gathered around the temporary community maker—the camera. Each image represents a marked transition, a clear statement that works in relation to the starting

point of conversations with youth that begin with "I don't knows." These images, regardless of their composition and content, represent the "I'll show you—there is something here to be seen."

If National Geographic means *over exposure* of some areas, then the questions becomes, *What has been missed? What has been left out?* Of course, the shortcoming of creating patchwork networks of knowledge are not the fault of any given publication, or media stream. It is prudent to consider editorialization, the shaping and scaping of imaginary landscapes, places that exist as half-truths and shifting mirages. Again, the challenge is to imagine the kind of "scaping one is doing while entertaining the challenge of knowing."

The images in the later section of chapter three were each selected by the youth participants as a means to clarify a point, make an expression, or to voice a concern. If the possibility—or, the imagination—is big enough to share images with a global audience, then perhaps creative and reflexive practices that challenge dominant forms of media can become more commonplace? Perhaps with the advent of masses of images moving freely by way of smartphones and the Internet, critical practice has already entered into the common parlance of the times? Perhaps the duty of the academic researcher is to insist on reflexivity of representative practices like photography. In other words, take everyday practices like 'iPhoneography' and elevate the process to the level of critique.

My overall efforts aim to create space—first by doing photography as practice, then by sharing, as various forms of exhibition or dialogue. The ethnographic, collective and collaborative work with youth in Fort McMurray is a practice of identifying structures of power, dominant streams of images, repeating narratives,

gender bias, and making creative, artistic/critical, responses. In my doctoral fieldwork, I took it upon myself to teach a group of predominantly female participants more than just the basics of manual photography, aesthetics, ethics, and composition and then ask them to make photographic responses to prevailing visual dominance, as illustrated by Burtynsky, Essick, and Lenz, amongst others. Chapter three takes a reflexive look at the twenty-one images that were exhibited at the Fort McMurray public library (February 2011 – March 2013). As an exhibition space the library offers another space to be considered as a meeting ground for viewers to glimpse and gaze upon images as an ongoing and negotiated process.

4) Mashup: New Representations of the City (Lozowy & Shields)

The chapter on mashups is the unexpected result of following through with an otherwise standard course of research. The authorship of this chapter is comprised of a back and forth dialogue between the two authors, where the end result equals a synthetic voice speaking as one. In some respects this chapter may seem out of place in a thesis about oil and photography. At the confluence of these two subjects is a recognition of a phenomenon of the 'online mashup' that simultaneously works to identify place by multiplying the surface areas through collage.

This chapter represents a variation on the question, *What is community*. It asks, *What is a mega city?* What is a mega city may sound like an oblique and strange question when the channel of inquiry is Fort McMurray. Rather than strange, it may be more fruitful to ask how Fort McMurray is or functions as a mega city in relation to other places known as mega cities. The other reason that the chapter fits here unquestionably is because the material produced by youth, the mashup itself,

represents yet another perspective on youth and visual culture in relation to the Alberta industrial landscape and its visuality. In contrast, photography with DSLRs represents a more esoteric set of potential outcomes. The youth were excited by cameras and the opportunity to point and shoot with an apparatus of substance. Mashups, on the other hand, represent a kind of postcard sent from one to another, or many, where the meanings—the intentions—are flung far off the given page, or screen.

One of the theoretical components of this chapter is an analysis using iconology/iconography. Here Pavel Florensky is called upon to help elicit the invisible and unseen characteristics. Another key term used in Mashups is visuality (Shields, 2004). Visuality refers to the process and effects of representation, and mashups pair well as they can be thought of as an approach to collage (Cambre, 2011) and to bricolage (Hebdidge, 1979, 2012. Harper, 1986.). In an almost semiotic analysis of a key image, it—the mashup—is torn from its context to stand in for a representation of a whole suite of ideas and spacings. The boundaries of what can be said and expressed, even comprehended, for the anonymous viewer is a recognition of the transformations, of surface, of viewer as the boundaries are stretched. Youth making mashups also represents a simultaneity—another way to consider that youth are living vicariously through their own creations, their avatars, their doubles (thereby moving beyond the bounds of dimensionality as is commonly referred to as 'real life').

Mashups represents an area of specificity that goes beyond the bounds of photography and oil sands, and instead emerges directly from it. Mashups could be seen as a digression from the thesis. However, it deserves a place here because it can

be identified as that which emerges over the course of a research project, wherein upon finishing the data-collection process, one may ask, *What to do with it?* Mashups are about making room for the unexpected, ethnographically-curious and theoretically-poignant phenomenological moments.

This chapter aims to peer into and observe a private world made public and to make inferences based on what has been learned through the related project (youth as collaborative photographers) and mashups in relation to a broader social and cultural world that one (and the youth at hand) may not yet grasp exists.

5) Reframing oil sands (Patchett & Lozowy)

A reframing of the oil sands remains grounded in the practices, methods, and theories of the overall thesis but simultaneously expands the view. Together with geographer Dr. Merle Patchett, I collaborated on later-stage fieldwork. Together we travelled by automobile from Edmonton to Fort McMurray, Alberta. Coming from a different academic, social, and geographic background than myself, I was able to act as material and theoretical tour-guide. As I performed my regular duties— photographing, taking notes, and remarking to myself the kinds of changes I have noticed—Patchett was able to experience and observe in her own way.

As with the Mashups chapter, this chapter is also somewhat unconventional in that Patchett speaks, writes first, and plays a curatorial role that helps to build out the concepts of oil-culture, petro-culture, as well as provide commentary on visual protagonists like Burtynsky. Secondly, Patchett makes a series of interpretations on how my own practices of photographing and working collaboratively with youth can

be seen as a mode of re-signification by way of new representations, new photographs, new streams.

Patchett begins her curatorial critique by locating herself within in her hometown of Aberdeen, the oil capital of Europe. The 1988 Piper Alpha explosion is burned into her memory. Her father, a BBC cameraman at the time, was called in to cover the scene from a helicopter. Coming from Scotland to Alberta in the late 2000s Canada exemplified a booming yet relatively stable economy, one that allowed her and her husband to take advantage of an opportunity to travel and work.

Patchett moves to theorize the tar sands industry as an idea that casts a long shadow globally, one of environmental destruction. For Patchett, Burtynsky's vision leaves much to the imagination, a critique directed at the access to particular views, to the flattening of planes, to the shocking bewilderment imparted to the viewer. Taking Burtynsky's Alberta oil industry–related images into account, Patchett creates space for my own images by pointing out the glaring differences as well as the geographic quotient that acknowledges that the industrial oil landscape has been the landscape I have shared throughout my life, while Burtynsky has the luxury of touring and turning away.

As Patchett's curatorial contextualization comes to a close, my own words fill the pages, framed as a conversational response to an interview process conducted by Patchett. My writing highlights a few theoretical bodies that appear throughout the thesis but that are given slightly more space here, nearly toward the end. One way to think of the method here is as a theatrical event, revealing by removing the masks.

Gillian Rose (2006), Regula Burri[26], and Vilem Flusser are discussed here as theoretical and methodological informants for my own photographic, reflexive, and autoethnographic (Chaplin 2012, Burnier 2006, Anderson 2006) process.

Thesis as Project

Over the course of the chapters that follow, my intention is to reveal five aspects that emerged over the last five years (2008-2013) of a research project that considers the industrial landscape of Alberta oil sands as a material subject that intersects in a myriad of ways with other material landscapes as well as imaginary landscapes created and perpetuated through human interaction and narrative. Secondly, the thesis explores two kinds of related methods that can be broadly defined as visual sociology or, more specifically, participant or collaborative and collective research with youth, and autoethnographic or reflexive photographic methods for data collection. Time as a longitudinal factor is another important layer to consider with the methods listed here. In this case, a photographic practice over time serves as a record of change in a way that a written account may not (Chaplin 2012).

Instead of reproducing a thesis that follows in a traditional course that builds up from a singular research question, the work here is more amorphous and fluid, as technology and media play fast with the concepts we as sociologists try to

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[26] A sociology of images (Burri 2012: 45) aims to move beyond the assumption that photography is hitched to the locomotive of positivism (Sekula 1981: 16); it is not a straightforwardly mimetic set of representations of things. Rather, I agree that "photography, is not an independent or autonomous language system, but depends on larger discursive conditions, invariably including those of the verbal-written language." I side with Sekula who suggests that "photographic meaning is always a hybrid construction, the outcome an interplay of iconic, graphic, and narrative conventions" (Sekula 1981: 16) as well as a kind of dominating aspect within a larger matrix/spectrum of sensorial experience wherein the visual is privileged, above, for example, the aural, or the tactile, giving way to an embodiment of the senses (Mitchell 2005,. Pink 2001, 2007: 4; Larsen 2005: 417).

temporarily pin down. My hope is that a sense of places on the margins of intersections of media representations and lived experiences may be read as temporary counterpoints that may otherwise be subsumed under the pressure to picture every aspect of everyday life univocally. *Icons of Oil* tarries with the fabric of people and places in relation to the Alberta oil sands.

1. Photographer as Researcher[27]

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.
Marcel Proust

Fig 1.1 Refinery 1, Andriko Lozowy

I peer through chain-link and the barbed-wire fence. The uniformed guard approaches with purpose and delivers his order to me, "I'm going to have to confiscate your camera!"

Fig 1.2 Andriko Lozowy. Fenced Views. 2008.

Fig 1.3 Andriko Lozowy. Just Passing By. 2008.

Fig 1.4 Andriko Lozowy. New Black Cloth. 2010.

Fig 1.5 Andriko Lozowy. Private Vista. 2008.

This chapter gives an account of the *photographer-researcher* as a contemporary model for pursuing questions typically asked by social research. The photographer-researcher presented here takes a similarly reflexive and critical stance as does Liz Hingley in her 2011 article "Photographer as researcher in the project 'Under Gods: Stories from Soho Road" (Visual Studies 26: 3, p260-269). Hingley builds on the precedent-setting work of Tagg (1988), Henning (2000), Sekula (1989), and others who note that the camera in the hands of a researcher is falsely assumed as a tool of objectivity, positivism, and a scientific view (2011: 260). Hingley notes the obstacles as well as the benefits of cameras in research as opportunities to capture and present valid, qualitative and thick description, and insists that:

> contemporary research [with cameras] is now a mode and medium of exchange with an equivalence of function and agency acting across cultural differences. [As] visual researchers, we need to retain a critical stance with respect to these methods, cognisant of the reflexive eye of the photographer, rather than adopting them unquestioningly. (2011: 260).

Liz Hingley is an international award-winning photographer who collaborates with universities in developing visual research projects. In the context of this thesis, Hingley is emblematic as a practicing photographer (read: whose ongoing artistic practice is deeply informed by equal parts education and social background that work to constitute her photography practice). Like Liz Hingley, my own awareness of the intertwined nature of my education and social background inform the artistic and, in this case, photographic practice that has become the basis of a visual kind of sociology that can best be described here as photographer-researcher. Photographers have long held themselves as researchers of some kind or another. For example, Walter Benjamin, writing on August Sander and the atmospheric qualities of photographs versus technological advancements towards a perceive

objectivity, emphasizes "Sander's scientific and ethnographic ambition, his intention to impartially commit to record the entire range of social types, an encyclopedia of social roles or functions rather than an album of persons… the aim… for Benjamin, is to objectively document its historical moment" (A. E. Benjamin 2005: 171). Here objectivity is regarded as a kind of technologically parallel vision, wherein rather than a gestural or artistic quality, photographs by Sander reveal a kind of photographer-researcher's vision. Benjamin's sense of Sander's images is that they offer a glimpse into a single temporary time and space capable of reflecting a broader sociality that grounds the image beyond a recognition of the human subjects.

Of course, Sander offers just one example of the active photographer-researcher, as well as being a photographer, as taken up by the history of photographic discourse. Perhaps if we consider Sander in a contemporary context, where interdisciplinarity among academic circles is more apparent, then the naming of photographer-researcher would be more apt. Perhaps Sander would have self-identified as a photographer-researcher amongst many other activities, hobbies, and pursuits that he undertook.

Another distinction of the photographer-researcher is that the concept has been around for some time and written about in various forms. One characteristic that I see as apparent in this conjoining, practice–based term is the notion that as a photographer, one may be typified as a subtle observer on the fringes, as one peering in and capturing moments, at once masked by the camera standing in for the eye. Here the researcher—and especially the ethnographic researcher—is recognized as the one who enters into the flow of everyday life with a perceived subject or object group or place. The researcher makes every effort to listen closely and participate,

making the peopled connections an intimate process of revealing. Thus the concept of the photographer-researcher may seem oxymoronic or ironic, at the very least. My approach is one of bringing these two disparate notions of photographer and researcher together in order to consider social questions with others as well as pursue the methodical artistic practice of photography, individually and collaboratively. The photographer researcher has a history worth pursuing, yet this is not the space to pursue such an endeavor. Instead, the focus here is on detailing the process that was undertaken as a means to exploring industrial landscapes, oil sands, and Fort McMurray. The photographer researcher appears in (Heisley, McGrath and Sherry[28]; Banks 1995; Heinonen and Cheung 2007; Rod, Picazo, Peiro, Portela 2007; Payne 2012).

What are the risks of this hybrid – the photographer-researcher? My stance in this thesis is that bringing these two roles together forces us to be hyper-aware of that which may have been overlooked previously. For instance chapter two will be focused on an example of working with youth—working with youth clearly revealed the moment of coming together and temporary community. It is not just the moment of the coming together of the photograph but also the moment of the researcher-respondent exchange—waiting for the moment when it is atypically beautiful. Hence, the importance of the banality of a lot of the scenes that are represented in the masses of archival images. The photographer-researcher problematizes and puts into new relations, the figures and roles of researcher, photographer (whether artistic or documentary), the respondents, and social groups.

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[28] Heisley, D. D., McGrath, M. A., & Sherry Jr, J. F. (1991). To everything there is a season: a photo-essay of a farmers' market. *Journal of American Culture*, *14*(3), 53-79.

This chapter treats examples of the photographer researcher as an actor and process/skill engaged with notions of an objective eye. Chapter two on the other hand, adds the interdependence of the photographer-researcher with groups and places, allowing the creation of a community to appear.

As well as illustrating the photographer-researcher as a kind of interventionist method to stage photographs as points of dialogical intersection, this chapter also refers a second key term, visualicity (Shields 2004), which may help to elucidate the praxis that the photographer-researcher embodies.

Here visualicity refers to the active process of living in relation to the visible world, transmitting hope and desire into place, and making a response to affect made manifest (Davidson, Park, Shields, 2011). The key intersection here is that of a petroculture and petrosociety (Szeman and Whiteman, 2012: 55) that refers to the prevailing cultural force of the day, where oil—as a minable, refinable, and combustible form of energy—has come to dominate disparate and far-reaching places on earth. The camera allows the photographer-researcher to document zones of production. Zones of production mark landscapes as industrial. My process has shown me that industrial landscapes, the zones of production, are often veiled in plain view. Remote locations, security guards, inscrutable mechanisms on a gargantuan scale discourage public engagement and observation. Views into refinery spaces are regimented by the miles of chain-link fences. However, the refinery as a whole and networked entity cannot hide. In plain sight, the industrial landscape casts its long shadow over those who pass by.

The following sections of this chapter will be used to give voice to and acknowledge Edward Burtynsky, Tim Edensor, and Trevor Paglen as a constituent

group of photographers and researchers that provide a baseline for my own efforts as photographer-researcher. The last section of the chapter returns to my own practice-based method while attempting to draw out similarities and differences to Burtynsky, Edensor, and Paglen. The photographer-researcher will be detailed in relation to the processional steps forward. Time will also be spent referring back to visualicity and how it can be useful as a theoretical tool that uses imagination to see and thus see the unseen.

Gaining perspective with Edward Burtynsky

Edward Burtynsky is best known for his book of photographs *Manufactured Landscapes* (2003) and a film by the same name (2006). Burtynsky is an internationally-recognized artist of large-scale photographic works. Burtynsky's method developed over many years of photographic practice exemplifies his desire to picture residual landscapes or second geographies, places that are other than pristine and beautiful depictions of place (Campbell 2008: 42). The notion of residual landscapes or second geographies spoken about here is perhaps a more general way of thinking of the specific kinds of places that are examined in this thesis. Depending on their source, industrial landscapes and oil sands are often shown as a manifestation of a certain kind of depiction, be it from a large company, a particular governmental body, or as a form of activism that is usually in opposition to the industrial process on some level. The contrasting idea behind the residual landscape is one of expressing views on and off the margins. Industrial landscapes as a typological project have been the object of focus for, i.e., that is? Bernd and Hilla Becher (1988, 1990, 2002, etc.). One could argue that the Bercher's work aestheticizes certain spaces, yet the point is that as

spaces, they reside at the margins geographically as well as culturally in regards to what may be typified as a beautiful landscape. Instead of a beautiful landscape, these industrial landscapes may represent other ideas, such as technological innovation, economic power, and industriousness.

Edward Burtynsky is keenly aware of the kind of images that he undertakes to produce and acknowledges the dialogical nature of making and reading images. Burtynsky states:

> My work is dedicated to seeking out a landscape that speaks to [a] global dilemma: too many people, unsustainable extraction rates of limited resources, and toxic by-products – our larder and our future is currently under siege! I believe photography is a perfectly suited medium for this type of message because there is a patent trust and faith that what the photographic image represents is a "real" place in the world. However, I don't necessarily think that any given photograph is either entirely truthful [or entirely fictional]. The person making a picture has invested a certain amount of their personal knowledge, consciously attempting to influence the audience with a specific point of view… In the reading of stills, the image offers only part of the information, the viewer brings to it the other part, and together they create a unique gestalt that is never exactly the same from one person to the next. (Campbell 2008: 43).

Another way to consider the quote above is to bring visualicity into the conversation. By this I mean to say that from a practice-based approach, Burtynsky chooses to bring his photographic attention to landscapes that are alternative or secondary. Think of a supporting cast or perhaps the nature of by-products that give context to that which is more highly prized, the lead actor, or the most valuable refined fuel. By picturing second geographies or residual landscapes, one may need to work even harder than if one were looking upon a pristine landscape to press forward with an ongoing and open-ended dialogue. "The camera is nothing more than the evolution of mark-making tools, but it is certainly an important tool that has allowed civilization to see itself like never before and allowed the development a vast

lexicon of visual linguistics" (Burtynsky, in Campbell 2008: 45).

Edward Burtynsky states that rather than producing a documentary film he produces a "still image, large and full of detail, that allows one to metaphysically enter a place" (Campbell 2008: 42). The series on oil sands found at edwardburtynsky.com is an essential point of reference when considering the Alberta oil sands as they have been widely disseminated and reproduced in many magazines and articles, especially in Alberta. In large part, these images position the viewer above the grounds of oil sands extraction, mines, and tailings ponds. Burtynsky writes

> I don't think of my images as pure documentary acts, either, in that they're highly researched and selected places, seen from very specific viewpoints, using a specific lens for the composition that I want to construct, and there's the selection of film type, time of day, quality of light, et cetera. Everything has been considered, so it's about what a place looks like from my point of view for a few minutes, in the right season, under just the right conditions. This is seeing the world in a malleable way.

This malleability of seeing refers to the dubious nature of representing some form of objective truth. Instead of an objective truth, what can be said is that the camera as an available tool for writing has been pressed into action at a specific time, in a specific place, to capture an image of what is temporarily apparent to the photographer and the camera as a matter of an artist working within the limits of an apparatus's capabilities and known limits. In particular, the images that appear in the Alberta oil sands series were taken while flying over specific areas, using a wide perspective. For Burtynsky, the act of finding and choosing a subject is an act of finding the largest or most visually-stunning depictions of a particular kind of example of human influence upon landscapes. In relation to the oil sands images, there is an ambitious project underway to represent as much as possible in as great of

detail as possible without any visible sign of human beings. There are machines within these frames, but unlike some of his other series—such as *Shipbreaking*, where humans figure prominently—there are clearly no people in these images?.

I wonder to myself what the nature or significance is of a perspective that eliminates human figures. Perhaps these spaces, particularly the images depicted in the Alberta oil sands series (1-10), make reference to representations of the places in need of illumination—visualization—because they are those landscaped by gargantuan machines and toxic ponds. The overwhelming toxic composition suggests that these oil sands spaces may be better off as forgotten space, marginalized, second, and residual? Burtynsky suggests that our future may be at siege and uncertain, as we have seen that lands blocked from view are powerless against those who would hunt it, deforest it, burn it, mine it, and eventually dump all manner of detritus into the holey landscape. I find myself disoriented, not only with what I see, but with the unseen regime of effects that will affect at every strata of biological, material, geographic, economic, political, and social level without discrimination.

The Burtynsky discussion above makes explicit the notion of the photographer-researcher as one who is engaged in an ongoing and open-ended discussion. At the same time, the photographer-researcher is working with the concept of visualicity as a learning tool, one that ensures that a given amount of seeing beyond the actuality of a given image is always in play. At one level, the representation seen upon viewing the image can do the work of transporting the viewer into the scene while visualicity is enacted as a reminder to imagine into the myriad of flowing components that at one time intersected, if only briefly, to

generate a scene. The power of the viewer is granted as a component piece, an acknowledgement that any and every image can only ever display fragmented partiality. For instance, this notion of partiality can be explored through the a discussion of 'the city'.

As cities grow, change, distort, they make themselves more or less available to grand conceptualization of themselves as individual, yet whole. The larger the city, the bigger the population, the more difficult, or impossible it is to render the city as an actual place (Steinberg & Shields 2008) through representation (Woodward, Jones III, Marston, 2010: 271-280). Perception and representation of place is the question here. For instance, how do different people, groups, and/or organizations perceive the refineries on the east-side of Edmonton? From the point of view of a child looking out of a car window, the refineries may seem like static factories endlessly making, pumping, belching, and announcing their productivity, no matter how abstract the products. The fact is that the refineries represent an alter-place that appears vastly different in comparison to the more mundane places like schools or picturesque, pristine landscapes. In terms of a spatial compartmentalization of geographical zones, refineries may take on a different kind of appearance to city councilors, politicians, and planners, those involved in governmental decisions. Indeed, the economic benefits of self-sufficiency and the added bonus of a commodity for export looks superb on paper. Zoning and bylaws from the standpoint of a politician likely reveals far more than the average citizen may ever care to find out.

PIPELINES

OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
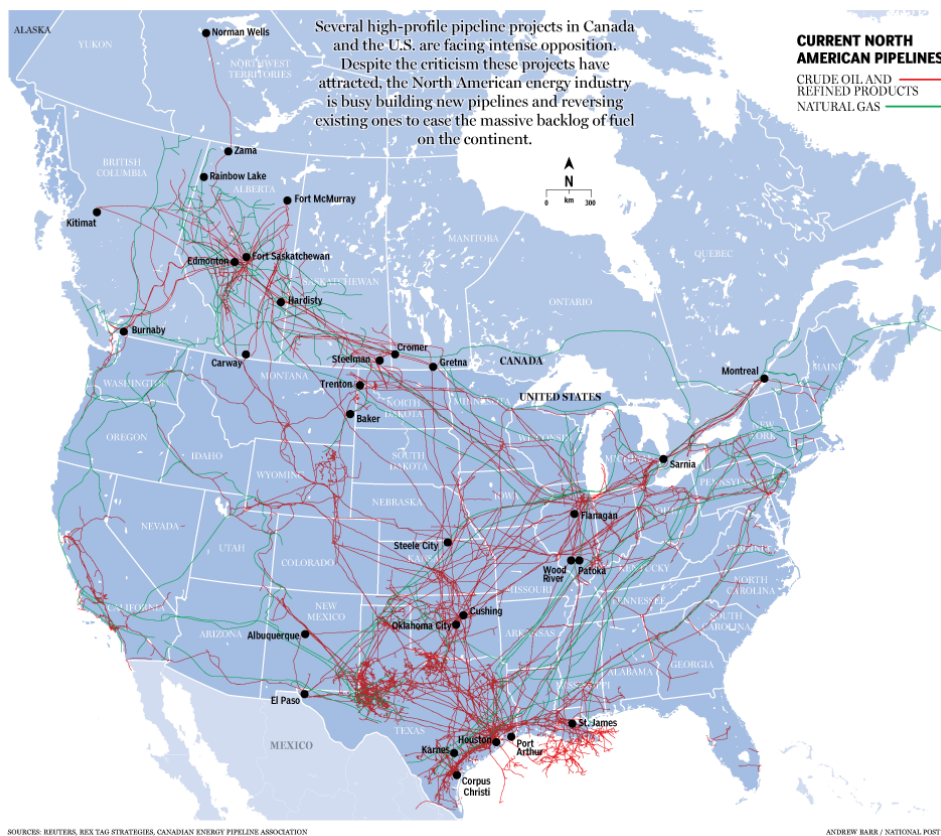
Fig 1.6 Pipelines Map (Accessed January 24, 2013:
http://business.financialpost.com/2012/04/30/graphic-pipelines-of-north-america/?__lsa=48ed-9600).

Fragmentation of spatial relations is one way to think about the difficulty of merging maps, such as the one above with an on-the-ground experience of every day life (Marston, Jones III, Woodward 2005: 416-432). Even when the perspective is on-the-ground (Freeman and Craig. 2008), where a photographer may stand and photograph the landscape, there may be a sensation of confronting that which is too grand to grasp, similar to the notion that cities are rendered unintelligible yet aesthetically seductive (Giblett, R. 2009) by their scale.

The image below comes from a series by Edward Burynsky.

Oil Fields #22
Cold Lake, Alberta, Canada, 2001

Fig 1.7 (Accessed January 24, 2013: http://www.edwardburtynsky.com/)

The contrast between the pipelines map and this image from Edward Burtynsky serve to locate the abstraction of the former and illustrate a material quality in the later. But rendering geographical space as intelligible, perhaps by photographic means, proves inadequate as a means to understanding the connections, flows, and interdependence of zones and scales. Fragmentation is persistent. In this regard, it may be useful to think of Burtynsky's images as fragments, but fragments that are disguised as views at such a grand scale[29] that they

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[29] Edward Burtynsky's images are often displayed in large format (i.e., 36" x 48" etc).

disorient, as photographic objects of art. They encourage the viewer to look upon and into the landscapes but are taken from such a high vantage point as to defy the viewers' imagination of how they themselves or any human could enter and participate in the scene. They are the antithesis of a close-up, ground-level view on these sites as ongoing social activities.

Burtynsky's images feature an aerial perspective of oil sands operations. Because these images are captured with large-format cameras, they provide tremendous detail through representation. As large-scale prints possess the ability to invoke a fixated gaze from the viewer while obscuring the implicit toxicity (Peeples, J. 2011). At the same time, photographic prints by their very abstraction, may serve to disconnect the viewer from a timely and unsightly scene. However, in the case of Burtynsky, if it was not for these image we may never view these scenes at all. By contrast, through a process of on-the-ground photography, my intention is to offer photographs, glimpses of a particular subject, in order to gain insight into industrial and other places as, once again, phenomena difficult to fathom due to the distancing imposed by the fences, guards, and security cameras. Methods of representation can only offer fragments, and perhaps the best one can do is become familiarized with as many fragments as possible in order to cobble together some fractured understanding.

Gaining access with Tim Edensor

Having just considered the photography of Edward Burtynsky, perspective, and visualicity in relation to a particular kind of subject matter, I now turn the focus towards another photographer researcher, Tim Edensor. In the next section I will

discuss Edensor in the particular context of *Industrial Ruins* (2005), though I do so

with an acknowledgement to a comment posited by one of his students: "You know,

he doesn't write on Industrial Ruins anymore." Respectfully I acknowledge

Edensor's current pursuits and even turn to his later writings later on the question of

what is of significance to the thesis at hand is the use of photography as a method

for gathering a kind of data, as well as the use of photographs in his 2005 text. He

writes

> …photographs are never merely visual but in fact conjure up synaesthetic
> and kinaesthetic effects, for the visual provokes other sensory responses. The
> textures and tactilities, smells, atmospheres and sounds of ruined spaces,
> together with the signs and objects they accommodate, can be empathetically
> conjured up by the visual material in the absence of any realistic way of
> conveying these sensations, other than through words and images.
> Photographs of ruins are also particularly valuable because whilst their
> derelict sites are in a fluid state of material becoming, they can reveal the
> stages of temporalities of decay. (2005: 16).

Here Edensor identifies an extended range of sensorial perception that is

offered when one gazes upon a photograph. In another sense, related to visualicity,

the gaze "references the wider context, atmosphere and resources or affordances of

the city" (Shields 2004: 9. Online). The refineries on the eastside of Edmonton may

prove to be the enduring icon of the city. Coupled with Edensor's synaesthetic and

kinaesthetic effects of looking, or gazing, upon images, the compounded effects of

photographing second geographies or marginalized spaces may be akin to eating the

charred and oiled remains found in a grease tray of a commercial restaurant grill,

rather than a delicately-prepared main course.

While considering the post-industrial British countryside, Tim Edensor

remarks upon the fences that once encircled industrial sites—once, suggesting the

past, because they are now fractured and permeable (2005).

Instead of a space of decay, refineries may be thought of as proto-ruins, or ruins in the making. Chain link fences and metal fabrications have a lifespan, likely, longer than the proliferation of the hydrocarbon resource known as bituminous sands.

Another component of the photographer-researcher relates to Edensor's notion of the modern-day ruins explorer. The photographer-researcher explores in order to get close, to get in position, accessing multiple perspectives. For Edensor, the exploration involves noticing the contrast between the punch-card schedules hung on decaying walls and the regrowth of organic landscapes within the now hybrid forms of recontextualized pastoral reserves. Edensor writes, "[i]n those neglected and forgotten places on the margins… [these places and their forms] offer an alternative politics of engaging with the past" (138). In a similar manner, the very notion of standing outside and photographing into places may mean that there is a political engagement afoot. Additionally, photographing active industrial sites as well as those in a processional state of decay involves not only engagements with the past but also certainly with the present and the future.

Like my own childhood and the Alberta industrial landscape, Edensor has an intimate relationship to the British landscapes of industrial ruin. British industrial ruins play a part in his childhood memory as zones his mother warned him to stay away from. Instead of the unbroken fences that I face with the refineries, Edensor is confronted with fences one can squeeze through. Edensor is no longer outside. Once inside, all material elements become objects of intrigue, as he relies on his body and his senses to navigate through unfamiliar terrain, facing sensations that run counter to habitual corporeality. His industrial ruins are "replete with multiple

affordances which lurk, waiting to break out, bewilder and overwhelm the senses"
(124). Again the similarity is striking, for that which cannot be sensorialy shared are
those multiple affordances, those sensory triggers that the photographer-researcher
experiences as they approach and interact with subjects and objects. The smell of the
refineries is impossible to articulate though a photograph, though the smell—the
odour—may well be the point of significance or even the reason one may created a
photograph. However, the technology of the day is limited in its programmed
capabilities, and as such I return to the notion of visualicity as a means to suggest
that the seen and the unseen may need to be expanded beyond the limits of a sighted
expression of what appears. Instead, perhaps what is needed is a resignification of
the more gestural or artistic forms of photography as a less precise tool, akin to the
technological capacities of wet-plate technology (circa 1900s), when even the
repugnant odors of the developing and fixing chemicals gave the photographer pause
to remember at least an odiferous world. Beyond that, even the prints carried with
them the smell of a chemical reaction that actively took place upon the paper. As I
gaze upon images of refinery stacks with a trail of smoke, I gag on the memory,
made visceral by a retching body.

I find it troubling that spaces—be they to the east of the City of Edmonton,
Alberta, or north of the City of Fort McMurray, Alberta (see Pipelines Map, above),
and elsewhere—occupy large tracts of land and yet detract from their own physical
and economic presence by being veiled. In both cases, the refineries and the oil sands
are marginalized as a means to draw attention back to a more picturesque centre, for
instance, the silhouetted skyline of a given city. A city government may try to present
itself as a particular skyline, yet from a vantage point just east of the Edmonton

refineries, the duplicity of skylines is readily apparent - The tall stacks of the refineries in the foreground, are echoed by the the office towers and condominiums of Edmonton's downtown in the distance.

Writing on Cezanne, Deleuze and Guattari remark on the elemental qualities of painting as absent from but entirely within the landscape (1994: 169).

> Discussing Landscape and Power W.J.T. Mitchell argued that landscape is best used not as a noun, but as a verb, 'to landscape' (Mitchell, 1994). This acts as a useful reminder that landscape results from human action, whether from direct intervention to make changes on the land (town planning, landscape architecture, gardening…), or from exploring how land might be represented (in writing, art, film, photography, or everyday journalism and casual conversation). To 'landscape' is to impose a certain order. (Liz Wells 2011: 2)

If considering the work of Deleuze and Guattari together with Wells and Mitchell, one could argue that landscape is an active process, beyond physical manipulations in a space. Rather, the activity necessary is akin to a visual dialogism wherein the reticent implication of looking, perhaps at anything, emblemizes the active doing and making of, landscape. The absence described by the former refers the gazing individual to look beyond static and sanctioned symbolic appearances in order to recognize abject places that represent difference.

The city reveals itself in peculiar and subjective ways to its citizens and tourists. A city planner and an engineer may appreciate the connections between disparate places. Roads, pipelines and railways facilitate mobility for people, raw materials and consumer goods. Jonas Larsen (2005) writes about the 'Kodak moment' where physical road signs indicating pre-selected photographic vantage points guide the productive and performative act of photography. In regards to the refineries near Edmonton—without the benefit of the city planners knowledge, without the

academic or experiential knowledge of working at one of these places—what stands in front of us, stands without tourist signage that gives an outline of what is there. The viewer, the actor attempting to engage with this amorphous and aloof space of production is left to, a),perform normalcy and simply pass by without stopping to gaze, b), ramble around, c), walk about, and wonder at the regime of security in place. Is it about safety, the possibility of a terrorist attack, perhaps the possibility of snapping some key photographs in order to build one's own refinery?

Considered as economic and political space, refineries and oil sands are often referred to in the local media as the engines that drive the economy, employing many people as highly skilled professionals, operators, technicians, laborers, service staff, etc. My intent is not to take an explicit politicized stance for/or against the industrial operations and how they function as economic sites of capital and material flows. My concern here is about living everyday life in relation to industrial landscapes that purport to be invisible from any from of critical approach. From the point of view of safety, I will mention that refineries and oil sands operations are quite literally dangerous zones, hence the logic of clear demarcation through fences. The threat of injury or death is ever present. I am not asking to walk around on a self-guided tour. Instead, I merely want to stand, observe, gaze, and photograph the landscape as Humphrey Lloyd Hime (1858. *Camera in the Interior: The Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition*) would have a hundred years ago.

Trevor Paglen

Oil companies have become skilled architects, especially when it comes to public relations and the management of their own public image. When considering

images from corporate media streams—such as promotional material and investor reports—there are clean lines, smooth textures, and techno-flow of late modern capitalism (syncrude.ca/users/folder.asp?FolderID=5703). Oil-producing corporations produce swift and slick flows of imagery designed to communicate palatable examples of industrial and technological mastery. These corporate representations of the energy industry compete for out attention with those of Burtynsky and others.

Using photographic imaging techniques involving telescopic lenses, Trevor Paglen has managed to 'map' some of the darkest, invisible corners of the world, including the CIA's extraordinary rendition program (capmap.fanweb.ca/about-the-project). Paglen traces the CIA's network of secret prisons and gives their shapes a density that says as much about the future of democracy as it does about the dismal confines of the post-modern prison. He writes:

> "[g]eography… is not just a method of inquiry, but necessarily entails the production of a space of inquiry. Geographers might study the production of space, but through that study, they're also producing space. Put simply, geographers don't just study geography, they create geographies" (2008: 32).

Paglen suggests, and I follow, that one must proceed as a body of sense and perception as a photographer/geographer/researcher making decisions, being affected, and producing reflections of place that may appear too amorphous to the human eye but that as photographs resemble opportunities to gaze and imagine. Resituating the body and the participation of the observer, the photographer, in the image undoes the abstraction and impenetrable surfaces of both Burtynsky and of the corporate representations. Paglen writes:

in all of my work, I deliberately blur lines between social science, contemporary art, investigative journalism, and even more obscure disciplines to construct unfamiliar yet meticulously researched ways to interpret the world around us (Thompson 2008: 75)

Here Paglen makes a claim about his process, one that involves deliberate blurring disciplinary boundaries in order to create novel approaches to interpretation. Again, I find myself allured by the seductive nature of the ghostly subject matter that Paglen often focuses on, such as space, prisons, secret military bases, and the way he brings together multi-disciplinary methods in order to yield intriguing results. On the one hand, the images that Paglen creates may first appear strange, even banal, but when taken with the accompanying text, usually an essay of some kind, the viewer is afforded what could be considered a rare glimpse. Paglen writes his own visual representations into history as a kind of window into, what for many people is, unknown.

Another way to consider the active process of the photographer-researcher is to consider other notions of looking. For example, Debbie Lisle's characterization of the act of looking suggests a kind of 'subject-object-world assemblage.' Lisle notes that the multiple lines of sight at work in a photograph indicate 'multiple – and mobile – relationalities' (2009: 6). Lisle's subject-object-word assemblage is useful here as a means to consider the thesis as a layered process wherein the photographer-researcher works to make the lines of sight more comprehensible. The photographer-researcher, in this thesis, works to transition from glancing to gazing, by applying the cameras effect of freezing an image and creating a more singular point of focus. Multiplicities and mobilities are apprehended, as one variation of the photographer-researcher in action, and seem to create opportunities for more in-

depth analysis through limiting the sensory input/output and bringing focus, in this case upon an image or a set of images.

   She bases this understanding on Deleuze's dispersed account of agency in the act of perception: For Deleuze, a work of art – for our purposes, a photograph -- is not an inert or still document, but rather a 'block of sensations' (Deleuze 2003). It is not a finished object produced by an autonomous viewer or piece of technology; rather, it is a combination of percepts, initial perceptions, and affects, physical intensities that pass through all subjects at the point of visual perception. This kind of relational encounter with an image not only deconstructs modernity's foundational distinction between the subject and the object, it also opens up an affective connection between all subjects engaged in the act of looking—in this case, the photographer, the subjects, and objects within the photograph and the viewer (Lisle 2009: 5). Lisle's contention takes account of the affective level of perception, that is, the pre-interpretive moment when images reach out to 'grab' us. This changes our traditional understanding of how a photograph 'moves' us. This movement that reaches out to grab us could also be thought of as a logical extension or processional step forward, from the characterization of Tim Edensor's explorations that rely heavily on sensory perception, especially in relation to and inside of places that may be characteristic of divergent rhythms than that which may be apparent in a primary, picturesque, or ideal landscape of beauty (Edensor 2010: 3). The broader suggestion here may be that localized time, or a temporalized place—such a second geography, a marginalized place, or altogether alternative landscape—encourages by its silence the very act of gazing and imagining upon, into, past, amidst, and between in order to broaden and deepen one's understanding of the

'twists and fluxes of interrelation' (Amin and Thrift 2002: 30) through which 'multiple networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs and information' (Urry 2006: ix) are brought together to produce a particular but ever-changing, complex mix of heterogenous social interactions, materialities, mobilities, imaginaries and social effects (Edensor 2010: 3)

As a photographer-researcher (Hingley 2011), I methodically make images as a process of critical inquiry. At each opportunity I question what it means to look, to landscape, to 'image'. Perhaps the photographs above reveal that which is inconvenient to think about in the present moment (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006), when one is hurried along by security guards so as not to disturb the localized flows. Here the photographer-researcher is an investigator in the model of the social sciences and a creator in the model of the visual arts. As such, this persona disrupts standard narratives of meaning, fieldwork, and disciplinary boundaries.

As a photographer-researcher, I make images with cameras as a means to establish a practice, a way to approach a subject. With a camera in hand, I move forward as through guided by an unseen force, perhaps the camera's desire to capture. Or is the desire mine alone? Do I project my intention along the narrow lines of a set program through the apparatus that sees, frames, and captures (Flusser 2000) My practice-based method is to start with a walk, when one is permitted, and this is done almost always without the aid of maps (Martin, K. 2009, Siemens, E. 2011). In this case, the subject is an industrial landscape that makes up the eastern periphery of the city of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Szeman and Whiteman use the term petrosociety (2012: 55) and oil capitalism (Szeman 2009: 20) to refer to the interdependence of cultural, social, political, and economic factors that rely almost entirely on the availability of inexpensive, highly-mobile and accessible petroleum-based fuel. This does not mean that social, political, economic, and individual

practices will forever stay the same. Instead, they identify the precarious dependence (Worden 2012) upon a non-renewable energy source as a near totalizing force of change (Szeman 2007).

Refineries[30] rise high above the ground as scenes of twisting pipes, and metallic drums form assemblages of intrigue (See Fig. 1.3). Refineries dot the global landscape by stamping wide footprints wherever oil as a primary resource may be currently extracted through mining, steam-assisted gravity drainage (SAGD), fracking, and drilling. Refineries are not an isolated event. They exist, instead, near or far from sites of extraction and add a certain futuristic appearance and noxious odor of off-gas from their processes in nearly every continent. Exhaustive lists of upgrading and refinery sites are available online, and details include daily processing capacity. In Alberta alone there are at least five upgrading facilities that convert heavy oil, bitumen, into synthetic crude (energy.alberta.ca). In addition, there are four refineries processing synthetic crude into more refined oil-based products destined for commercial and consumer use.

The refineries near Edmonton are not unique structures, and they may simply appear as tangles of twisted metal and billowing smoke from their stacks. One could argue that refineries, like other built elements of city-regions, have become ubiquitous and invisible, part of a normalized landscape. The discursive process of normalizing landscapes like refineries is woven together in a North American context with some of the major themes of the twentieth century, such as the Industrial Revolution, photography, and suburbia. In response to the prevailing economic and

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[30] Refinery Row is the unofficial name given to the refineries east of Edmonton and west of Sherwood Park. The two main refineries are the Strathcona Refinery (Imperial Oil) and Suncor Edmonton Refinery (Suncor). In addition, 40 kilometres northeast of Edmonton, near Fort Saskatchewan, is the Scotford Upgrader (Shell) .

social forces, my own practice contributes to an ongoing knowledge process. Photographing refineries and industrial landscapes is an established practice, one that follows from the Industrial Revolution. The camera (Newhall, B. 1982. Marien, M. 2010. Sekula, A. 2010), the automobile (Forsyth, A. 2005. Mees, P. 2012), and post-war idealizations of family life and suburbia (Owens, B. *Suburbia.* 1972, 1999. Dunham-Jones, E. 2011) have relationships that contribute to a social climate where refineries are cast in dark privacy as unseen but essential elements of urban and economic life. Since the camera became a popular tool, photographers have worked to capture, represent, and make places familiar, thus rendering the familiar known (Wells, 2011: 2). My argument here is that they ought to be dredged out of darkness into full luminous view, in other words, making the strange familiar by exposing the hidden.

The distinction between the refineries and the area of the oil sands is that refineries are located on the periphery of urban centres—where about one million people live and work—and are primarily a site of refinement. The oil sands are a different kind of place, where the primary activity is extraction by way of open-pit mining, SAGD projects, and drilling for new locations. The oil sands are in close proximity to Fort McMurray in the Wood Buffalo region. It is not by accident or chance that both Fort McMurray and Sherwood Park have shorn their previous civic incarnations as 'cities' to become 'urban service areas'. Fort McMurray is an epicenter of the boom-bust economy where migrants, immigrants, and temporary foreign workers swarm to take part in the modern-day gold rush.

The refineries near Edmonton exist in relation to a large urban population. Continuous fencing encircles the entire perimeter of each operation. The entry and

exit gates are controlled by security personnel. In contrast, the 'oil sands' refers to a multiplicity of activities across enormous zones of land. The possibility of simply driving around and exploring presents itself easily, although recently new measures, especially along the major Highway 63, have been taken to obscure the view of tailings ponds by clothing high chain link fences in black mesh. Near Fort McMurray, the land is wild and roguish, stretching on for long distances, penetrated by unsigned winding patterns of dirt roads, trees, sand berms, and truck crossings. The refineries near Edmonton, on the other hand, fit within an peri-urban industrial zone clearly defined and demarcated by paved highways and secondary roads. Close proximity to a major population means that control of space is tightly regimented; one cannot simply drive around the refineries.

Conclusions

Throughout the chapter, I have tried to present a case for the photographer-researcher as an established agent and method for practice-based research. As the first body chapter of the thesis, this may ask more questions than it answers. There is a recognition that in doing hybrid and inter-disciplinary forms of research one will surely walk past key influences, make assumptions, and posit ideas that have been put forward elsewhere. My claim is not to say that I have invented or established a new practice, rather, this project identifies an existing set of practices and carries them forward using the resources of the academic literature in order to influence my own choices as a photographer-researcher.

The photographer-researcher is taken up here as methods-based set of practices that underscore the entire thesis. The importance of naming the practice is

done here in the first chapter in order to identify the interconnections between a secondary theoretical tool, visualicity, the seen and the unseen, the visually-recognizable alternative landscapes and second geographies, the Alberta industrial landscape, oil sands and Fort McMurray, and lastly the connections and affect of living in relation to these kinds of landscapes—the social in relation to the economically-championed extractive processes deemed significant by a culture addicted to cheap (read poorly accounted) energy.

By considering Edward Burynsky, Tim Edensor and Trevor Paglen as photographer-researchers, I hope to show the somewhat ironic pairing of these two titles. As photographers, observation is of utmost importance, followed by the revelation of some aspect of truth and/or beauty. As researchers employing cameras, familiarity and careful listening, and expanded sensorial attentiveness brings the photographer-researcher closer as a more active participant in what cannot pretend to be an objective operation. As Liz Wells reminds us of W.J.T. Mitchell, landscape is more effectively used as a noun rather than a verb. The active process of picturing a landscape is at once the active process of making a scene, a place, recognizable. This may be either through recognizable referents, or the opposite, as unseen seconds or supporting scenes. Edward Burtynsky's *Manufactured Landscapes*, which resemble a surreal and sublime alternative reality, remind us of the limits of photographic representation regardless of the large scale of the formats for capturing images and presenting images on gallery walls. At the same time I acknowledge Burtynsky for his groundbreaking work of revealing those landscapes that prefer to remain behind protective corporate-veils.

The photographer-researcher invites those who wish to bring the power of photography and ethnographic fieldwork together as a legitimate means to collect data, critically analyze and make truth-claims about the intersections of people and places. The photographer-researcher is merely another hybrid form of established research practices that must adapt to ongoing changes in the ways that humans interact with each other, and the ways that humans interact with the broader environment.

2. *The Camera as a Tool for Assembling "Community"* [31]

In response to the global mythology spawned by visual representations of Fort McMurray, Canada, this article examines a critical, collaborative youth project that sought oblique entry points to prevailing storylines of "community" and to what it might mean to live in the shadow of one of the world's largest resource extraction complexes. Building on visual methodologies where participants are encouraged to produce representations of home and place, we explore the two-way dynamic of the camera as a catalyst for assembling a temporary research collective and, by the same token, as a tool for composing and assaying the contours of "community." The project under consideration encouraged participants to learn skills of photography and to dynamically engage with other participants, researchers, and the place(s) of Fort McMurray around the creation and public display of images in both on-line and off-line spaces. Where possibilities of "community" are polarized, occluded, and/or over-determined by the visual narratives of rapid resource development, collaboration around the camera helps to discern and speak back to the fault lines of community – including as they play out in the everyday lives of youth. Specific photos and the narratives around them are used to illustrate how the camera created and revealed iterations and relations of community across multiple scales, from the microcosm of the photography research group to the regional infrastructure of oil sands production.

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[31] A version of this chapter has been published. Lozowy, Dorow, Shields 2013. *Canadian Journal of Sociology.*

Introduction

Community is a common reference in political and media discourses and is a rallying point for responses to local issues. However, what "community" refers to, and what is at stake, is an open question. In the case of Fort McMurray, the reference is as much to collective affect (Davidson, et al. 2011) as to an aspiration – a struggle to both build and imagine a community in what has been called the Canadian "resource hinterland" of boom and bust resource developments (White 1979; Hechter 1975). Of course, we assume that ideas of community are multiple and emergent; community appears through practices that establish insider status (Elias and Scotson 1994), performances of belonging (Cohen 1982), and experiences of *communitas*, the affect of togetherness (Turner 1974). If "community" is a thing, it is virtual in the sense of an intangible good known through its effects (Shields 2006). Our aim is to explore the unintended and diverse consequences of its invocation and the different regimes of practice and knowledge that constitute it (Creed 2006). More specifically, we consider the consequences and knowledges of community made possible when a camera is used – and when photography is made the central apparatus of research – by drawing on a project that invited youth to be collaborators and co-investigators in the search to "find" Fort McMurray as place, community and conjuncture.

Previous work on image-based research, including photovoice and photonovellas (Wang 1999, 2001; Wang and Burris 1994), community-based participatory research (Lopez, Robinson, and Wang 2005), and reflective and interpretive collaborative participant-based projects (Berger 1982; Pink 2001; Rose 2001; Sontag 1977), helped us find our way to the question of community via the

practice of photography and the "camera as tool." However, this is not, as in the

tradition of photovoice, a matter of the camera as a device for empowering the lived

authenticity of community voices (Wang, Cash, and Powers 2000: 81-89); when

deployed with youth, many such projects have explicit pedagogical goals such as

activating citizenship or promoting safety, and/or they set out to document a specific

process. Nor is it, as in some branches of visual sociology, a concern with the

camera as a methodological tool for representing or capturing community life.

Rather, our project came to be about the camera as an apparatus of community –

itself a kind of organizing principle, a catalyst of people-place-research relations, and

thus an aid in sensing some of the extant and possible meanings of community.

Szeman and Whiteman (2012), in a photographic essay on Fort McMurray, draw on

the work of Allan Sekula to explore "the possibilities of the photographic image – its

almost unprecedented capacity to provoke conceptual, theoretical and political

openings as a result of its relation to the real" (48); we step back to ask about the rich

methodological possibilities for pursuing the idea and practice of community when

the camera-and-the-photograph are used to provoke such openings.

The ironic but provocative sociological insight is that any camera as a

photograph-making technology assembles subjects and photographers and viewers

around it as social groups. Thus, the camera could serve as an "inward-looking"

organizing principle for our collaboration as well as an "outward-looking" research

medium asking after emplaced community. It was an active agent of creating,

refracting, and re-imagining "community" as it applied, in one and the same

moment, to our research collaboration – which we take to include us and the youth -

and to Fort McMurray (cf. Pink 2011: 92-101). In short, the camera articulated us to

the youth, the youth to Fort McMurray, and us to Fort McMurray in particular ways. That articulation was furthered as the images created by the youth made their way into formal spaces such as the public displays and Flickr.com site directly facilitated by the project, as well as informal, unanticipated spaces such as personal web sites and internet postcards. As an intervention on visual sociology's usual approaches to the camera – as aid to representation of and/or for community – our paper argues for the camera and the photographic relations of practice around it as a methodology for sensing the particular configurations of people, place, and feeling that constitute the idea and problem of "community" (Creed 2006). And in this specific context, the camera helps to sense how these configurations are virtually shaped with and against Fort McMurray as resource town and as metonym for the now visually iconic oil sands.

Participants were recruited with the question and the promise of working/learning how to operate the latest single lens digital cameras, and a medium format film camera (a Mamiya 645). Participating youth borrowed cameras for periods of a day to about a week between meeting up to take photos or discuss the images that had, and had not, been taken. These participants were, like many contemporary youth, familiar with photography as an everyday aspect of smartphones and social networking sites. We organized the project in part via a Facebook page, arranged rendezvous by text message (SMS), and publicly archived the images on Flickr. But it also became important to the project that we offered participants the opportunity to move from low-resolution, small screen mobile phone "pics" to art photography, with a promise of access to "serious" albeit not commercial photographic technology, an introduction to film processing and digital

image editing, and large-format digital fine art printing. We also had some local technical assistance from interested personnel in the digital media and photography program at Keyano College in Fort McMurray.

The photo project was part of a larger study of social life in Fort McMurray, an urban centre in northern Alberta with a population between 70,000 and 100,000, depending on boom-bust cycles and varying by census source. The city has grown at the center of the Athabasca oil sands formation, a vast deposit of bitumen underneath the boreal forests of northern Alberta that is extracted through open strip mines and through steam injection (Government of Alberta 2012; Toxic Alberta, VBS.TV 2008; Dyer et al. 2008). With that growth has come high mobility and high infrastructure stress. The airport and outlying airstrips support the movements of workers for the oil industry who travel from distant homes to Fort McMurray or to huge work camps at outlying mining and processing sites. Fort McMurray shares with other resource economies a clash of local culture and place with global capitalism (see, for example, Kashi and Watts 2010; Cheshire 2009). As an oil "boomtown" it illustrates the power of economics to assemble a cosmopolitan group from all over the world around an industrial task. It produces a settlement, but one where social reproduction is dependent on shift work, variations in the fortunes of oil prices, and globalized investment decisions. These realities compound the market on one hand and the face-to-face interests and projects of neighbours on the other, adding to the tenuousness of community and democracy as social realities. Fort McMurray was dis-incorporated as a town in 1995 and was designated an "urban service area" within the much larger Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (at some 70,000 square kilometers, the RMWB covers most of the northeast corner

of Alberta). The formation of this new entity ensured that the formal system of tax extraction would more fully encompass the reach of bitumen extraction, further imbricating the social relations of place with the oil resource economy.

The gaze of the camera is especially salient to the production of community in Fort McMurray, whose global notoriety has been accomplished in part through aerial visual depictions of giant tailings ponds and vast mining operations (cf. Szeman and Whiteman 2012), alongside more intimate depictions of bar scenes, bumper-to-bumper pick-up trucks, and weary coverall-clad workers. These have appeared in a special issue of *National Geographic* (March 2009), the widely exhibited photographs of Edward Burtynsky (2001; 2004; 2007), countless media specials such as *The Globe and Mail's* "Shifting Sands," and films such as H2Oil and Petropolis. Just as the very name "Fort McMurray" has become to some degree synonymous with the oil/tar sands in popular national and global imaginaries, so have these images blurred the boundaries of the oil/tar sands and the lived communities of people around them, confounding and multiplying notions of community. In the years in which our research project unfolded (2008-2010), official and unofficial community narratives – of family-friendly activities and growing recreational and charitable opportunities – were marshaled to counteract these "big lens" images of a scarred physical and social environment (Dorow and Dogu 2011). These particularly fraught politics of the visual in Fort McMurray make suspect those who arrive from elsewhere with cameras.

It was in this context that youth were invited to create their own images, to locate "their Fort McMurray." But it was also in this context that what was activated by the camera in research opened us to what is at stake in the naming and disclaiming

of community in Fort McMurray – including the diverse meanings and uses of the visual and its production and circulation as a media iconography. In this way our project is attentive to the multiple ways of experiencing place that might otherwise be occluded by the global hyper-visibility attendant on this singular resource economy. Much as we might not have intended it, the camera foregrounded the tensions and possibilities of asking about community in this particular context; and it did so precisely because it opened the mundane political tensions and possibilities of collaborations as researchers interacted with places and participants. Fort McMurray faces contemporary versions of hyper globalism, migrant workers, social organizations desperately trying to keep up with demand, and an economy of dollars that appears disproportionately gargantuan in relation to economies that function without such close proximity to resource extraction. Fort McMurray is a place where the scale and intensity of resource extraction, accompanied by diverse sets of cosmopolitan peoples in various states of coming and going and staying, condenses our focus on community and demands that we find other ways of asking about it. The camera and collaborative research efforts around it offer an opportunity to know community differently, and to observe how they converse and conflict with this and with other dominant forms of visualicity.

Of course, while "community" itself is not visible per se, its constituent members, activities and infrastructure are. We are, on one hand, dealing with visual culture, but on the other, we are dealing with a regime of visualicity, a conception of visual culture or the scopic that also includes the invisible, the public secret, the overlooked and the barely glimpsed as well as the visually clichéd (Shields 2004). This allows us to speak to what is missing or suppressed rather than only what visual

culture studies tends to focus on, namely, the manifestly visible. The camera collects visual samples in which collective aggregates of bodies and/or objects are composed together in and as images. As aggregates, rather than monadic objects, images can capture situations and interacting elements. That is, affect appears in the spaces between entities in any image, and it is these relations captured visually that, over thousands of photographs, assay the contours of the virtual-but-real intangibles such as community, place and identity. These intangibles are further assayed in the "social life" of the images as they traverse and even create new social spaces.

We pursued a course of research that, via recruitment in select local high school classrooms, brought together a core group of a dozen youth. Primarily comprised of young women, the group represented a range of cultural backgrounds oversimplified as First Nations, Metis, Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern, Québécois, Ontarian, Albertan. Like the adult population of Fort McMurray, these youth brought with them the multiple and shifting perspectives of community and place that come with living in a place of intense development and observing the inward and outward flow of people. Depending on where "home" was, participants variously related to Fort McMurray as a place they had lived all their lives, as a place to make money and leave, and/or as a place where one did not initially feel at home but where one eventually might. Initially conceived as a contained six-month project, the research collaboration evolved over the course of two and a half years and continues to have an on-line and public presence, with participants occupying various roles as subjects, participants, collaborators, researchers, and advocates. Multi-level collaboration meant an ebb and flow with one another and with variously connected individuals and groups, from the high school teachers who encouraged

students to participate and the Keyano College personnel who lent the use of the photo lab, to the personal and public sites where the images were displayed.

Guided by an overarching concern with the elusive concept of community, we settled on asking participants (and also naming the project) the just-abstract-enough question, "Where is Fort McMurray?" Taken colloquially, the question asks with a deceptively broad stroke; taken literally, the questions seems to ask at geography; and taken metaphorically, we found that responses developed as introspective reflections on what it means to be in relation to a place. Depending on respondents' maturity, social location, and cultural background, "Where is Fort McMurray?" offered us a starting point to any conversation, ensuring that we would not be getting a singular response. We discuss below how our project arrived and took off from this question, and then use two particular images produced during the project to exemplify the camera as a tool for asking after community. As suggested above, we are interested in how the people-place-feeling relations created in the process of making images, i.e., assembled around the camera, open up the possibility of asking about the limits and possibilities of community assembled by the images themselves.

Where is Fort McMurray?: the question, the walkabouts, the images

When we held exploratory meetings about the project with a small group of Fort McMurray teachers and school officials in early 2009, the question "Where is Fort McMurray?" seemed to resonate with them as an open, acceptable, and inviting way to shape and launch the project with youth. Given local concerns about over-determined ideas about the place (as, for example, a wild frontier boomtown), "where" seemed to work better than "what." Would the camera lens find multiple

and diverse Fort McMurrays? Would a younger, generational image of the interactions that constitute community life be exposed? Would this lie in different places/spaces and thus cut through (or at least bypass) the polarization of insider/outsider? How would it negotiate Fort McMurray's conflation with, or subsumption to, oil?

Youth were then invited into a working collaboration by way of provocation. We began by presenting to high school classrooms of both wide-eyed and shut-eyed students the dominant and alienating media images of the "tar sands" that appear when one uses Google images to search out Fort McMurray. Aerial views of the town site seemed to register as minor curiosities to the students as they tried to quickly determine their relative location on such images. But as we scrolled by the next images of the oil sands and sites of bitumen extraction, the energy in the room changed and some of the students began to say things like, "That's where my dad works," or, "That's not Fort McMurray, that's not where we live." We would make our response by asking, "Isn't it interesting to note that via a Google search, Fort McMurray very quickly becomes geographically abstracted and shifts north and south and east and west, in every direction other than the town?" We asked the students if they thought it was curious that Fort McMurray is represented by images of places like open pit mines and upgrading facilities. The students responded with puzzled looks on their faces. So we changed tactics and brought their attention to the numerous digital cameras that we had brought along. Cameras were passed around the room so that students could get their hands on the apparatus. The students held the glass/magnesium and plastic to their faces and peered through the small focusing viewfinder. Looking through a single lens reflex camera rather than simply looking at

a back-lit illuminated screen was for most of these students a novel experience. As the cameras made their way down the rows, some snapped the shutter in quick attempts to picture their fellow students. There was an excitement growing about the possibility of learning skills associated with digital and film photography. Aperture, shutter speed, film speed, ISO. With aerial shots of the oil sands, the boreal forest, city hall and downtown still scrolling on the screen, the cameras changed hands, and we returned anew to the central question Where is Fort McMurray?: Where is it really, to you? Where do you go? What is your sense of this place? What would you want to share about it?

Some students said they liked it here, some said they hated it, some said they were just here for the money, some said their families moved out here in order to be gainfully employed. Time wound down and cameras made it back to the front of the room. Interested in attracting participants, we asked our final questions: Who wants to learn photography? Who wants to work individually and in groups to create some images of this place? Who wants to show their work at the end of the project in a public display? Who has an idea for an image? Hands went up like a shot. "I want to take a picture of Highway 63 - because it is so important to the whole town. When the road closes down, the whole town shuts down and we all have to wait." Another replied, "I want to get up to a high place, I want to go up to Gregoire [a suburban neighborhood] and picture the town as it sits amidst the forest and the rivers, because it really is quite beautiful here." Another replied, "It's so dusty here, I want to picture the dust, but I'm not sure how yet." In this context, image-making is not neutral; even without probing their digital technologies more deeply, images and

cameras were articulated with media discourses and a broader, Big Lens visual culture.

After numerous rounds of classroom visits students within the school system of Fort McMurray had been presented with an idea, with a potential project - the choice to take part was up to them. The project may have seemed curious, strange, exciting, frightening, odd. But when asked, the dozen or so students who eventually made up the group (from all three public high schools, each with its own reputation and range of students) said that they came because they wanted to learn photography. They wanted to learn the skills associated with a camera that offered a level of complexity beyond what their small point-and-shoot and phone cameras could offer. In most cases the reasons and motivations for joining in the project about Fort McMurray was not evidenced as directly social. Rather, students gathered around the idea of photography. The way into the place was to create a group; the way into asking about Fort McMurray as a place and community was through photography and the weekly cycle of meeting up in small groups, looking for shots, and loaning and retrieving cameras; and the way into the pulse of youth in Fort McMurray was for a small self-selected sample to build a temporary, although not ephemeral, community of interest around the camera. The suggestion here is that cameras constitute a catalyst for all manner of generative, imaginative, and active spatial manifestations that create moments, and time-spaces that produce ordered differences (Shields 2006) though everyday activities and rituals that generate representations.

As the weeks went by we would meet up with various combinations of youth – sometimes even just one or two – at their school or the library or another agreed-

upon location, depending on the day of the week. What this meant was that the researchers teaching about cameras (usually Lozowy) could have long conversations with participants that always began with the question "Where is Fort McMurray?" as a beginning framing question, followed by a few instructions on the basic functions of the camera - and then, we could pause and listen. When youth posed technical questions such as about depth of field, the transfer of knowledge was palpable, reinforced by the opportunity to practice and master in the moment.

During these walking sessions the students would suggest that they wanted to go photograph a certain place, a building, or a particular quality. When we moved in these geographically fluid ways we were participants in *communitas* as well as in a hunt that was motivated by students' own interests in picturing through the camera lens. At review sessions all of the images would get loaded onto the computer and viewed using a data projector. We could sit together as a group as different individual photographers took turns screening their own photos (we do not discuss in this context either film printing technique or digital printing and the algorithmic role of a what could be called a "visual software coding culture" in predetermining the available effects on screen and paper). This gave the photographers an opportunity to self-gauge how quickly or slowly the images should be moving, as well as full control of stopping and speaking to any of their own images. In these moments the participants would have a chance to engage in conversation with one another.

It was here that potential lay for battles over presumed, pictured, and idealized notions of community to take place. Throughout the process the participants became researchers, learning from one another, agreeing, disagreeing and making insightful comments and rebuttals within a group of similarly aged peers. At the same time, the

group included a handful of students from each of the three high schools, and thus, most students had never met each other. Much of the time discussions were quite diplomatic. Diplomacy seemed to veil the uncertainty of critically engaging with "community" amid its polarized camps of outsider and insider, hyper-visible critique and reactive defense.

Two Images: "community" in Fort McMurray

While the images under discussion varied greatly, a few of them stood out, becoming touchstones for participants, including us, because of their frank representation of stigmatized activities. In one case, a group of three friends who spent most of their time photographing each other captured some images of the three of them as they shared a hookah. When this particular image flashed on the screen the three of them shrugged in anxious anticipation of what we may say. Instead of presuming any judgment, we opened up the conversation by simply inviting them to tell about the image. A couple of the students spoke a narrative of their own experience of self and place: "If you don't drink and do drugs in Fort McMurray then you are nobody."

This is one of the more poignant statements made about identity and place that we heard while working with the photographer participants, precisely because it makes intimate and perhaps even mundane what is otherwise a key site of anxiety about community – drugs and drug use – by expressing it as an admixture of status-recognition and of a kind of belonging that arises from performances of particular practices and shared activities. The image in question shows one of the participants exhaling with her eyes squinted. She sits in the foreground, on the floor, with her

back against a bed. The day-lit but dim surroundings of the bedroom are mundane but telling. They include a bag of snacks on the bed, a poster on the wall, towels stuffed at the base of the door behind her, the tall hookah in her hand. A companion's red-sleeved arm in a front corner balances the orange of a bag of chips. The even depth of field keeps everything relatively visible and in focus so we have few clues about the priority of relations between the central figure and the interior – there is no dramatic lighting or use of a flash. The aesthetics argue against this being staged; the composition with the "accidental" arm adds to the snapshot realism. The young woman is relaxed but her eyes squint, concentrating on inhaling. Is it tobacco? Is it drugs? This is a photo that starts debates. (It also started debates within our research team. The photo is not included here due to the exigencies of research ethics, even as its exclusion raises another set of ethical questions.)

In this case, this particular group of participants has shared, in response to the question "Where is Fort McMurray?," a vital and embedded glimpse into meaning and identity politics in Fort McMurray. These youth have pictured place, have sought after community. But in so doing, they have negotiated a double imaging of community: from the inside, one of sharing a secret activity in an intimate everyday space of friendship, and from the outside, one of Fort McMurray as a temporary encampment rather than sustained community, a site where drugs-and-money symbolize the hollowing out of social cohesion, the social excesses of resource extraction. This latter imaging of community casts these youth as abject, "at-risk" (Shields and Sharkey 2008) and in need of rescue from the very moment of *communitas*, of familiarity and engagement with place and with others in that place, that is being depicted. Yet here, rescue is recast as an empowering tool, as in, rescued

from boredom and thrust into a world of active engagement. In other words, rather than remain as victim of prevailing aerial and resource narrative, the youth participants worked to identify their own spacings.

As unearthed in our broader research project, anxieties about Fort McMurray's youth centered around a social profusion of money and drugs that, in turn, represented the double-edged sword of economic opportunity. The cameras, their images, illuminate social fault lines around the idea of "community" which, by dint of collaboration, implicates researchers in those fault lines. These include a hypersensitivity to attacks on community from the outside – from formal and social media depictions of it as a frontier town, as no place to raise a family – or even to debates on community within Fort McMurray. These sensitivities and sociopolitical cleavages marked in discourse and images such as the hookah photo revealed a protocol of social science research ethics woefully unprepared for the complexities of community both encountered and produced "in the field" (see Candea 2007; Coleman and Collins 2006). In our case, the field was "found" through the question Where is Fort McMurray? But it is also local within the boundaries of the urban agglomeration, regional in that it references the Athabasca Tar Sands area, and global in the form of media critiques cited above (see Fraser 2007).

The photograph with the hookah did not go away; rather, it became one of the images that the students decided they wanted to include in a first, private showing. The participants responsible for the image made their own decision and justified why they wanted to show it - for them this image represented the social world that they inhabit, enact and live through. It lived next to pictures of other social worlds – swing sets, the busy highway, backwoods trails, downtown intersections, workers

waiting for the bus. This mini exhibition was the first big milestone of the project. "Where is Fort McMurray?" would first be on display at Keyano College in Fort McMurray, and was held in the very room that we had used to meet, share images, learn photo editing on the iMacs with Photoshop, print the images (thanks to the College's large format printer), and finally to show them off. Later these images were put on prominent display on the walls of the brand new public library (attached to the much-celebrated Suncor Community Leisure Centre). Whereas youth participants were unsure initially about having their work exhibited to the public, a year and half after the photography project they had enough enduring sense of themselves as a group and the experience as a project that they had precisely this interest. The images on display continue to act as provocations in their own right. By this we mean that when locals, or folks who are new to Fort McMurray come in and have a look, these images may provoke a series of questions: Where did these images come from? What about the images that didn't make it up here? What else, or what's missing? And with luck, someone will come by and say, I can do better, I can respond.

Photographs and, during the project, the Camera, became the social meeting point. In other words, the camera as an apparatus (Flusser 2000) became the black box with which we could follow through with a certain kind of technicality and glean some information about the process and the product. Simply put, cameras gave students/youth in Fort McMurray the opportunity to hold, think, look, observe, photograph, picture, imagine, discuss, lead, follow, explore, and begin to express their own individual and oftentimes critical perspective of what, where, when, why, who and how Fort McMurray is represented and lived. We discovered that the

camera was the provocation, a catalytic agent providing an occasion for assembling community: the collective learning and walking, the sharing of images in public exhibits and personal websites and informal workshops, the composing and configuring of relations of people-place-feeling in the images themselves. The takeaway here is that participants had the opportunity to etch their own representations of Fort McMurray onto place, and thus resignify that which may have previously been predetermined and out of reach. The camera became a tool for engagement – mastery, even.

For Flusser, an image is based on the chance situation of the snapshot but is then created and distributed mechanically by programmed apparatuses. The photo is an image of a frozen, magical glance at a state of things that would otherwise be unremarked upon, slipping past the gaze (Flusser 2000: 76; Shields 2004). This is because photography is understood to construct the momentary situation of matter and movement as the visualization of an event. It is able to perform this translation because Flusser's "apparatus" is an institution, an interdependent set of interactions which produces its own mode of knowledge and its own truth-effects through what is revealed rather than via reference to a pre-existing set of moral judgments such as those on community. By implication, it intervenes against existing dispositions of power-knowledge by allowing the youth to deploy the Camera's own regime of power. With almost all of the youths' images one witnesses a struggle that goes beyond the register of representation to the real – both material and virtual - as what is truly at stake. It is a way of sensing (Shields and Lozowy forthcoming).

The relationship of inside and outside is germane: the hookah photo is just a kid in a bedroom, but that it is a bedroom in Fort McMurray is what matters because

this is the image that is to be suppressed, hidden, given that it represents a minor, identifiable participant in the project, and suggests a social excess that can't be contained. This image documents and locates it, speaking back to that anxiety. The image echoes the "opportunity and growth" theme of some of the media images, but again in a kind of mundane, intimate, non-sensationalized way. The image with the hookah affectively pulled researchers and participants alike into the intimate anxieties of community in Fort McMurray, and then cut right through them with its mundane documentation.

Figure 1. by Milauni Desai

A second image almost moved in the other direction, from a seemingly mundane documentation of "growth" toward a set of troubling questions about its implications for community. An image of a large dump truck or heavy hauler being

used in the construction of new suburban infrastructure (see Figure 1, see Shields 2012) was created by a member of the group who demonstrated a keen willingness to be a part of the project from the beginning. Even on one occasion when no other students showed up, Milauni was happy to learn what she could and to walk me (Lozowy) around nearly the entirety of Fort McMurray. As we walked, and rode the bus, and even made a stop at the mall so she could pick something up, she asked questions about how to do particular things with the camera. As I helped her to practice and refine techniques, she spoke to me in a very open and candid way about this place that she now calls home; at the time, she had been in Fort McMurray for maybe two years. When we first met in 2009, Milauni was motivated to photograph the dirt and dustiness of Fort McMurray. She lived in a newly built suburban home in Eagle Ridge, touted as the city's first fully "planned community," where the latest mixed housing developments were being carved out of the boreal forest in an attempt to keep up with the impossible growth in demand for housing. She would tell me about the fact that, even with the windows and doors of the house closed, there would soon appear a fine layer of silty dust on virtually every surface. And so, she said, she had wanted a way to represent two prevailing and pervasive themes: a) the silty dust that manages to get into one's house even when the windows are closed, and b) the observatory reflection, based on the position of her bedroom window, with a view to the development and construction of Eagle Ridge, that "it's happening too fast." She wanted to represent the place, the community, her perspective of place, as one that is perpetually dusty, perpetually under construction.

The "suburban heavy hauler" image emerged out of a series of images that Milauni created one day while she noticed a particular amount of movement going

on with the trucks and construction vehicles that could be seen out her back window. The series of images sees her moving away from her house on foot, until she reaches a particular angle, the place wherein everything lines up. All manner of juxtaposition reaches its fever pitch. There is a solidity and a clarity in the image that insists on a pause from the onlooker. In figure 1, there is a sense that this series captures a very temporary moment: the truck is in motion, the moment is destined to repeat, the machine does the job it was designed to do. We are at the site and event of the production of the suburb as "second nature" where even the topsoil will be artificial. The machine crosses a foreground scarred and scraped of its natural surface, caught just exiting the photo as a dark mass of angular metal and tires. Hazy through the trailing dust one sees a field of new streets, sidewalks, and lamp posts, and in the distance the type of row of two-storey houses this site will become. Almost a blur, still further in the background behind the houses is a dark band – the raw edge of the aspen and spruce forest in which (locals know) lie the tar sands sites only some 10km distant. Printed in black and white, no colours enliven the horizontality of this composition. It effectively positions the viewer in the dangerous proximity of the heavy hauler with the domestic infrastructure of human community on the far side of industrial construction activity.

There is something curious happening here as well, there is a heaviness, perhaps that of the house-sized machine that outweighs the residential neighborhood. And in this moment one can recognize that this is indeed Fort McMurray, because *this machine is the surplus form* – a social simulacrum of – an extractive process that takes place in an ongoing way just to the north. This machine is one that was built to carry an enormous burden of the weight of earth uncovered

to reveal bitumen. It is a stark contrast with the lightweight construction of wood-frame suburban houses. However, as the scale of the machines that are now used in oil sands mining have grown to gargantuan proportions, these smaller but nonetheless disproportionately large heavy haulers (Lozowy 2012) have "escaped" and found their way into the town via surplus equipment auctions. Youth in Fort McMurray have little contact with the realities of either open pit mines or the drilling and maintenance of steam injection wells that can be seen from the air to now grid the forests. As a result, surplus haulers blend with any other yellow-painted construction equipment, but by their size they add an eery, *unheimlich* quality of out-of-placeness into the construction zones of suburbia. It is this contrast we see in the photo. And it is this contrast, this tension, that belies a direct translation from the pace and growth and wealth of oil production into the sheltered "good life" of suburban community.

Assembling Community: The Camera as Catalyst

"Photographs cannot be studied in isolated form, but rather must be linked in multiple and complex ways to other forms of material evidence" (Schwartz & Ryan 2003: 7). The multiple and complex material evidence is in the series of steps along the way, without which the images might emerge as fetishized objects that, in turn, fetishize the place – an eventuality made all the more inviting by Fort McMurray's already over-determined global notoriety. The images that emerge from the series and the question "Where is Fort McMurray?" work as a set of processional results against fetishization and instead, the intent here is to provide a grounded and detailed account of what it means to activate the question as an exploration of community.

Over the course of the two years of active project time we discovered that the camera was a tool for apprehending the people-place-feeling of "community" precisely because it was the catalyst for *communitas*. This dual action is a manifestation of Flusser's idea of the camera as an apparatus that makes events out of the flow of everyday life and community, through the people, questions, places, and practices that it assembles. As researchers we started on the outside, from our university base in Edmonton, with a few questions about how "community" is conjured, captured, and/or denied by people living in this place called Fort McMurray. As we moved inwards, we employed some techniques of visual methods and active forms of social engagement to cultivate an active response with an "inner circle" of youth. Both amongst participants and as images on public display, the photographs provoked and continue to provoke comment through their content, through their presence in informal online spaces and in the "serious" local institution of the public library, and through their juxtapositions (in the library, for example, a section label for shelves of "Young Adult Fiction" is ironically close to the framed pictures). In other words, we have worked together in *communitas* with young people, in a community that is of interest, to learn about the various faultlines and storylines of that community, to learn about these through the flows and patterns of young people, to emerge with a story of process and engagement, and finally to offer photographs as a "conversation with other than words."

Of course, this was a community of interest to us because of what Fort McMurray is and is imagined to be: boomtown, economic engine, oil capital, cosmopolitan backwater, work destination. And in that vein, we have attempted to illustrate the connections between a place of global hyper-visibility, methods of

inquiry at the level of visual analysis, and the co-production of visual artefacts as emergent and temporary constructions, sites and representations of community. Our objective has been a constant practice of tuning in to numerous perspectives. In this way we have taken our cue from practices of photography that suggest a multi-level look at a given subject. From our starting point at the university in Edmonton, we could only take in visual and oral representations of place that flow along the corridors and pathways of media representations, corporate representations, and occasional activist images aimed at offering counter perspectives to the former two streams. Images such as those in Burtynsky's "oil sands" series and *National Geographic's* March 2009 exposé on Fort McMurray contribute to a kind of externalized public knowledge. This public, or common, knowledge is precisely what we as researchers hoped to explore and challenge, to hold up to the youth as an object of interest and interlocution. The danger with floating, external, and public knowledge is perhaps that this is where narratives of power and place become strong, and often polarized.

Hyperbolic and polarizing images are part of the social fact of the oil sands, the effects of which are real in how they inform the way "community" can be imagined or emplaced in Fort McMurray. The stories of the two images told herein provide different and partial ways in to assaying those effects. The first assembles a relation of people-place-feeling around that which is supposed to represent the potential hollowing out of community wrought by rapid resource development. It tells an intimate, mundane, inside story that both reveals and flies in the face of anxiety over youth drug culture. The second takes something as seemingly commonplace as building a suburban housing community and makes it into not a haven from, but a

corollary to, and almost a metaphor for, oil development: through dust, through pace, through size.

Cameras creating community refers to the multiple and fluid ways in which visualicity, the seen and the unseen, colludes with stratified, leaky, affective patterns of thought, speech, action, memory, and storytelling – as the basis for phenomenological expressions. Simply put, the youth participants cannot help but feel the effects, the leitmotifs, of cultural tropes dominated by oil, money, and growth. The youth participants worked with cameras through visual means to actively represent individual experiences rendered as images. A conversation with other-than-words here refers to the fact that word-based conversations follow, as a second order, a more highly contested and perhaps petty forum for transmitting truth claims about *being in the world.* Making photographs and the resulting images require us to work up anew our personal formulations and enunciations of what is seen to be taking place in what amounts to a moment of second thought or a new encounter with the place in both its material and virtual aspects (such as community).

As we struggle to articulate affect, the two images in this paper offer a glimpse in both mundane and banal ways into a project that both flourished and found difficulty – the difficulty of studying social process. It seemed in this case to boil down to the simple act of inviting youth to produce images in a sub-dominant space and to a practice that made possible a) another kind of community and b) sideways discernment of that which binds and fixes community, especially one fixed by dominant images. *Communitas*-by-camera reveals the processes of constituting community while it makes the artifice involved in representation clear to participants. It also shows how community is articulated not only to shared social process (taking

pictures) but also to place and to temporal-spatial routines that become the subject

of the photos. Cameras as an apparatus of community thus take us to the frontiers

of the sociological questions that can be asked and that are amenable to research.

3) Youth Picturing Place: Fort McMurray[32]

Researcher In Place

In the late 2000's I made my way to Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada as a research assistant. I had just begun my doctoral studies and was invited into a research team that included Dr. Sara Dorow and Dr. Rob Shields. At the time Dr. Dorow was the principle investigator of a research project funded by both the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and a Killam Cornerstone Grant. As a research assistant my responsibility was to work with youth in Fort McMurray. The youth project is considered a part of the larger social research project. There is a distinction between working with adults and working with youth––ethics protocols deem youth as a vulnerable population. This added layer of vulnerability translates into a rigorous ethics application and review[33] by the University of Alberta ethics board. Once the ethics review was successfully passed, in two sequential years, I was then able to implant myself into the geo-social-spatial landscape of Fort McMurray as a photographer-researcher. As a photographer-researcher working with youth, the process evolved into an empowering manifestation of youth participants becoming photographer-researchers themselves.

Twenty-one images displayed at the Fort McMurray public library, and found here at the end of the chapter, represent one version of an end. The images in the library represent the material result of a collaborative and visual research process with youth. The purpose of this chapter is to give an account of how this set of

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[32] A version of this paper has been presented at the Royal Geographical Society Conference 2011.
[33] Application to the research ethics board took place on two occasions, for the years 2009/10 and 10/11. The application forms and letters of approval are included in the appendices of this thesis. These ethics documents detail fieldwork processes that are left out of the thesis body due to constraints on space and time.

images function as a kind of response to existing and publically available images of Fort McMurray and oil sands when viewed through the lens of Felix Guattari's ecosophy found in *The Three Ecologies* (1989, 2000, 2008). Guattari's *Three Ecologies,* or registers -- environmental, social and mental – are used to theorize the research project with youth in a slightly different way than in chapter two. In chapter two, Turner's (1983) commuinitas represents the primary theoretical avenue to discuss temporary community assemblage as youth participants gathered around the camera. This chapter explores another theoretical avenue espoused by Guattari as a means to identify, a) implicit assumptions based on my own experience and educational course, and b) to explore the research at hand through the *Three Ecologies* and tarry with the environmental, social, and individual ecologies of a given geo-social-spatial environment, Fort McMurray and the Alberta oil sands. In particular this chapter is concerned with presenting a limited discussion on a visual discourse about Fort McMurray and the Alberta oil sands operations. This presentation of available materials and vignettes, read through Guattari, establishes a foundation, or a series of perspectives upon which the images created by youth can then be viewed at the end. This chapter is ambitious as it attempts to map Guattari's ecosophy as a means to think about the kinds of registers that the youth participants tended to relate to through walking conversations and conversations about the images they made. In addition, the chapter engages with a small fraction of the available oil sands and Fort McMurray visual discourse in order to establish a contrasting case for the images created by youth that are revealed at the end of the chapter.

My assignment was to work with youth in Fort McMurray, in order to pursue a course of visual ethnographic research (Pink 2007; Stanczak 2007; Mitchell, C. 2011; Mitchell & de Lange 2011; van Leeuwen 2011) that could eventually be displayed as an exposition within the community[34]. The intention was to work with youth, as collaborative participant-researchers at each step—from learning to use cameras, workshops, critiques, group sharing, post-production, and exposition. The purpose was to engage with youth in order to work dialogically to arrive at some manner of truth-claims about what it means to live in relation to the Alberta oil sands. Working photographically offered participant-researchers the opportunity to express points of view, perspectives, and reflections without depending on a traditional oral interview format to do so.

Fort McMurray was chosen as a research location because it represents a kind of delirious confluence of capital, labour and power. To paraphrase Dorow's research proposal: Alberta experiences a confluence of shifting economic relationships, marking the social and spatial landscapes with abundance and scarcity. Fort McMurray, Alberta is at the heart of the expansive Alberta oil sands projects. The population boom has brought an unprecedented strain on "public infrastructure, social services and community identities" (Dorow 2009, unpublished).

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[34] Photovoice represents one particular variant of participatory photography for social change. Photovoice resembles a pro-active kit of available tools available to anyone who wants to offer experiential photographic opportunities to individuals with the intention of positive social change. www.photovoice.org.

Shields adds:

> These are the largest global deposits of bitumen – an oil resource second only to Saudi Arabia in scale. The petrochemical economy entails global circuits of expertise: Nigerians, Venezuelans, Chilean refinery technicians, Filipinos, Chinese, Brits and Americans work alongside the largest exclave of Newfoundlanders, not   to mention others from across Canada. A municipal official told us 'we know we are going to grow. We've targeted 250,000 people by 2030' (Shields, 2012 15: 205- 215).

Dorow and Shields highlight the vibrant and tenuous nature of Fort McMurray as a place wrought with contentious points of view. These kinds of depictions help social researchers to pause to interpolate what rapid changes mean for people at the confluence of powerful economic, social, cultural and individual forces. People come from around-the-world to find gainful employment, be it as technical and highly skilled workers as engineers, laborers from across Canada, unskilled workers vying for the limited opportunities to get behind the wheel of a taxi-cab and then vie again for the most lucrative fares.

With pride and a sense of perspective I can now say (2013) that a collection of twenty-one images created by the youth participant-researchers was prominently displayed at the Fort McMurray public library (February 2011– February 2013). This small set of images represents a fraction of the over four-thousand images that were created through the collaborative and collective efforts of the youth-participants and myself. This chapter offers an opportunity in the thesis to think theoretically about what Guattari calls ecosophy "– between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations and human subjectivity)…[and] it is the ways of living on this planet that are in question, in the context of the acceleration of techno-scientific mutations and of considerable demographic growth" (2008: 19-20). I use Guattari's plotting of the three registers as a means to explore component parts of

the research process. At the same time I consider an underlying course of activism that I naively presumed would take the forefront of the mental environment of youth participants. I say naiveté in the previous sentence to identify a key assumption of what I thought would take precedent as I worked with youth to teach them photography skills, offer workshops framed as walking-with-cameras events, and have extended group conversations with the participants while they revealed their images on a projector screen to the rest of the group.

From this temporo-spatial vantage I can identify the areas of greatest success working with youth during this research—these are the unique moments where, as described in detail in chapter two, is when the camera becomes a kind of place that facilitates the bonding and gathering of youth participants in a spirit of communitas (Turner 1983). At the same time I can identify a perceived lack of political action on the part of the youth participants and of my own self. It is on this point that the dichotomous relations between what may be termed participatory action research (PAR) (McTaggart, R. 1997; Minkler, M. and Wallerstein, N. eds, 2008; Stringer, E.T. 2007) and the course of action I followed, one heavily influenced by Pink, Stanczak, Rose and others, responds dialogically to the questions that emerge from locations and situations that participants find themselves in. I differentiate this project from other forms of PAR and in particular, Photovoice, because here I actively worked to enable participants to uplift their own skills, analytical interest and thus to deepen and develop their involvement. What I mean is that participants were offered encouragement to approach Fort McMurray with a new found freedom and space to navigate their own community, on foot, asking questions of others, conversing, and photographing what they saw, or what they staged, in order to reveal their own

particular perspective. By pressing for a personalized, sometimes individual, and sometimes group perspective, participants were empowered to evoke responses and representational scenes out of the everyday mundane scenes, places, and actions they witnessed. Youth participants worked to de-fetishize particular aspects of life in Fort McMurray—for instance the prevalence of drug use amongst youth and adult populations. At the same time their images avoid obvious transgressions upon environments affected by the, once again 'contested,' ecological effects of the oil sands projects. As is the case with social research, this researcher is pleasantly surprised by what appears, and yet laments the fictitious and idealized responses one hoped for.

To refer to the leading literature on visual, ethnographic and collaborative methods Sarah Pink's, *Doing Visual Ethnography* addresses many of the issues faced by those interested in employing images in academic research and writing. Pink describes three primary methods; 1) Making visual representations, producing images; 2) examining pre-existing visual representations, and; 3) collaborating with social actors in the production of visual representations (Banks cited in Pink 2007: 40). The work here relates first to Pink's second mode – focusing on images that have been created by others for various purposes, followed by her first and third methods. Before I proceed with presenting the prevailing visual cultural in question, I must first dwell on some points of looking at images.

In their 2007 *No Caption Needed* Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites state "each image presents a pattern of motivation that can make some responses more likely than others" (8). My interpretation of the quote above translates as a recognition of the way images travel, either through print media or online, and how

each image carries with it a set of codes (signs and signifiers) that are culturally loaded. As images travel, they support meaning-making that is powerfully emotional. In *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin writes, "a photographic discourse is a system within which culture harnesses photographs to various representational tasks" (1982: 87). Burgin, like Hariman and Luciates, suggests that certain images deploy a subliminal force. Perhaps the force spoken of here is like that of Guattari's "structures producing signs…" (2008: 32). In short, if the power of extracting tar-sand via mining—represents structures producing materiality, then the images, the visual cultural production emanating from the same place, represents a less tangible, though more schizophrenic cultural force. The images that I will present in this chapter, first by reviewing some publically available examples, and second by presenting the collection of images that youth participants selected to present, will make the argument that, as with the contentions of living in relation to the oil sands projects, images represent another set of representation where there is simply no consensus.

Visual methods are considered here as modes of action that can be employed by researchers to collect and analyze data for the purposes of research. For instance a geologist may use a camera, video camera or even a microscope in order to more closely examine a subject. Information and images may be created, collected and stored in databases or archived for storage or further examination (Schwartz 2004: 2). Sarah Pink writes "visual methods are rarely used in isolation from other methods and, correspondingly, visual materials should be analyzed in relation to other research texts" (2007: 136). This last statement is applied throughout the thesis in order to apply relative methods to relative opportunities in order to proceed with sensitivity.

In addition to visual methods, multi-modal analysis argues that an image ought (can, should, may be) read in conjunction with its own surroundings. For example a billboard mounted on a building can be read as a part of the landscape, meaning that the billboard is not a single element but rather the individual elements work in relation to one another. There is a danger when "we disassemble albums, mat watercolors, and lift photographs from pages, reducing visual narratives to individual images" (Schwartz 2004: 5). Catherine Schwartz signals that as researchers we must be aware of how altering an image by moving it to another place changes the correspondence and context, much like words lifted from a book can in no way hope to contain the essence in its entirety. When images are relocated, shaped, color-corrected and re-presented, one must be critically aware that seemingly isolated images arrive in a relation. They bear witness to their own displacement, to where they came from and may be abstract in their present location although images still function without or with different sets of accrued memories and subsequently adapt to new surroundings as though it is an original setting.

John Berger argues "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (1972: 7). This statement may be somewhat unsettling and I faithfully adopt a perspective that encourages subjective interpretation. Images within a visual-sensorium insist on dialogisms between image and viewer. "Sociologists tend to deal in large, abstract ideas and move from them (if they do) to specific observable phenomena that can be seen as embodiments, indicators, or indices of those ideas. Photographers conversely, work with specific images and move from them (if they do) to somewhat larger ideas" (Becker 1974: 19). This last sentiment refers precisely to the somewhat paradoxical nature of the photographer-researcher. As Becker

points out, sociologists as researchers—and photographers as practice-based artists – symbolically allude to an inductive–deductive divide. My suggestion is that as a photographer-researcher, it is important to be aware of opinions that suggest photographs relate specifically to a positivist capacity to know. On the other hand, some may argue that photographs don't say or do anything empirical at all. In this thesis, the assumption is that the photographer-researcher as an applied method is most effective as a means to gather detailed information, representations, scenes, and then think longitudinally, or even iconologically, reading across images, to arrive at making claims. Wagner writes, "taken-for-granted practices of 'collecting' and 'taking pictures' involve some of the same technical and representational processes that many researchers rely on to support empirical work in the physical and natural sciences, medicine, engineering, history, the social sciences and some forms of the humanities" (2011: 55). Visualicity relates to modes of moving from the specific to the general in parallel, adjacent, and simultaneous moments as visibility affords a perspective upon motion, stillness and the spaces between the general and the specific.

Before moving on I will attend to another assumption explored through a fictitious example: A researcher could be working with a marginalized population such as folks who are without homes in an inner-city situation and may lead a visually-based research project to actively inform and make political claims based on rights-to-access based on a perceived lack. In this example, there is alienation, and in terms of globalized marketplaces the homogenous tendency would be towards residential dwellings complete with every facet of social, emotional, spiritual, physical well-being as the ideal. In the case of working with youth in Fort McMurray I

assumed that there would be some participants who may feel alienated and angry about the ecological, or ecosphic (the environment, social relations and human subjectivity). I hoped this would be grounds for a resistance, a manifestation, some desire to strike with the force of photograph's printed at 24" x 18". My initial tactic, which began with a slideshow in classrooms of potential, eager students presented images that emerged from the three visual streams of oil sands related imagery, but this seemed only to serve as a kind of abstraction. Being an outsider I did not realize that there is a significant difference between "Fort McMurray" and the "oil sands" projects. This difference between Fort McMurray as a place where people live and perform community, and the oil sands, the places where people work and make money, are easily considered as one and the same if the avenue of exploration begins with a Google web search. To my detriment, I spent much time researching three prevailing streams of visual culture regarding the oil sands, and then proceeded to show high school aged students in classrooms these images. The logical breakdown came as I screened images of oil sands and simultaneously asked the students the question "Where is Fort McMurray?" Perhaps on some level my hope was that high-school aged students would jump at the opportunity to add to the canon of images exemplifying the ecological and environmental effects of oil sands projects. Perhaps I had hoped that they would perform the political work of finding the cracks and fissures of social life in Fort McMurray, the kind outlined by Dorow above, the kind of place that is experiencing unprecedented growth, and where the infrastructure cannot pretend to be enough.

I presented the open-call to participate in a project that offered an opportunity to get to use digital single lens reflex (DSLR's) cameras, work in groups, learn

photography, and present their work in a public exposition, a group of students arrived at the appointed time and place to bump elbows, point at street scenes, point cameras at trees, point cameras at each other, etc. Over twenty participants showed up on the first day, most of them young women, though a few young men joined in as though they had been brought along somewhat unwillingly. As the project continued the core group of participants were all young women, the young men simply never returned.

Typical arrangements found in Fort McMurray reveal a veritable army of over-sized pick-up trucks complete with a 'lift kit,' tinted windows, and in some cases the now classic artificial bull testicles hanging-off the hitch-ball-hole. As one observes hyper-masculinity expressed through 'tough' looking trucks it becomes easy to envision that the operator is of comparable stature, temperament, and male. This is certainly not true in all cases, but there is a prevailing cultural force, as though a culture unto its own in Fort McMurray. Fort McMurray sits at the receding edge of the Boreal Forest, a veritable unending wilderness that stretches into an imagined infinity to the north. This geo-spatial location positions Fort McMurray as a modern frontier-town, and like any frontier-town, it is at the leading edge that cuts into geography. It also cuts down and displaces any population of people that may actually have resided their for centuries without ever calling it a frontier. Instead, the First Nations people of Northern Alberta simply called it home. Once again I find it all to easy to slide the significance of place past the bounds of Fort McMurray into the supporting structure that keeps it firmly ensconced as the urban service area that it is.

From within the monster trucks that traverse and cross-cut the surrounding land of

Fort McMurray, often times on gravel, or dirt, or bitumen, roads that may not pass as

roads in a more civilized environment steps, the worker. Peter Essick's image (Fig

3.1) does well to exemplify just who commands these vehicles. The presumed

shabbiness, dirt covered, work-wear and reflective suits betray, or perhaps signify the

singular focus on work+hours=reward. During one of the brief moments while I

had an opportunity to speak with a high-school aged male, he told me that he too "is

just here for the money." His family had moved to Fort McMurray from Quebec,

and his father, had been encouraging his high-school aged son to apply his skills as

an auto-mechanic—into that of a heavy mechanic where the pay would be much

more generous. During boom times in Fort McMurray, unskilled, semi-skilled, and

skilled workers can trade their labour power for a high monetary return. Thereby

creating personalized illusions of wealth equated to power.

The trade-off's are deliriously high when considered socially, physically, and

perhaps spiritually, but then again so are the monetary rewards. So, the question

becomes, why did young-men pull away from and simply not respond to the open

call to participate? What is it about a youthful female population, within a hyper-

masculinized context of frontier-like cowboys dismounting monster-trucks, that gave

them the impetus to participate? Is there an unwritten code of growing up in Fort

McMurray that says, if you are male your options and path towards cash is clear,

whereas if you are a woman, your options are perhaps more varied. Women are

certainly found driving these same trucks and are found in each of the hyper-

masculinized roles of heavy labour, just in smaller numbers. Women are also found

in the many levels of government and non-profit agencies that our research team

interacted with. The Mayor of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Melissa

Blake was re-elected in October 2010, after previously serving two consecutive terms

as Mayor and two as Councillor. Of the participants I interacted with during the

photography project, their responses were more varied. Some wanted to simply

leave, some to university, some to Keyano College in Fort McMurray, some to work

at Suncor or Syncrude, some to travel, some back to India, the list goes on. What was

striking to hear was the change in their voices over the course of two years, many of

them completing their final years of high-school in the time period of the research.

As time passed, their perspective on Fort McMurray softened if it had begun as a

vehement rejection of the place as anything remotely good. Perspectives also shifted

from viewing Fort McMurray as a place of innocence and family, into a place of

work, where one could attain a high paying job, get a mortgage, start a family—and

this from the mouths of eighteen year olds.

For some, the horizon of possibility was much less distant, and found in the

present, a geographical place where one's family had been for generations, this was,

is, and always will be home. Perhaps for those who call Fort McMurray home for

generations find a way to distance themselves from normalized subjectivity through a

singularization that is transversal to the closed logic of a strict hierarchy—and could

be considered a work-first or post-democratic and purely-capitalist culture in Fort

McMurray, forward, rather than back[35], into assemblages that weave generations

together upon the land as stewards. Those with a connection to place, those with a

[35] Guattari writes: "Obviously it would be inconceivable to try and go back to old formulas, which
relate to periods when the planet was far less densely populated and when social relations were much
stronger than they are today. But it will be a question of literally reconstructing the modalities of
'group-being,' not only through 'communicational' interventions but through existential mutations
driven by the motor of subjectivity. Instead of clinging to general recommendations we would be
implementing effective practices of experimentation, as much on a micro-social level as on the larger
institutional scale" (2008: 24).

sense of solistalgia (Albrecht 2005: 41-44), existential distress caused by environmental change, seemed to suffer more deeply as they must bear witness to the change as though wounded themselves[36]. For many, the pain is simply a cost-benefit analysis, and time spent in Fort McMurray is seen as a temporary sentence, before life can officially resume elsewhere.

As a photographer researcher I posed questions to a group of youth living in Fort McMurray aged sixteen to nineteen who find, or rather found themselves within a defined set of cartographic lines. I asked them to respond to the question "Where" as co-researchers, and they were asked to 'ask' at the layers of the social, "is Fort McMurray?" Taken colloquially the question could read as a *where is it at* in Fort McMurray? Or *what's up* – or *what's happening*?

If you have ever had the opportunity of working with young people and have tried to get them to respond critically—coherently or with some semblance of thought other than rolling eyes and "I don't knows," you will know the task is a challenge. In this case the challenge was met with photography as a visual method towards a practical means of starting a dialogue with other than words, within the very community that is most closely proximate to the oil sands. Beyond the social-scientific, the rewards, the relationships, and experience of this fluid form of research proved to be a bountiful collaborative research experience with many opportunities to think critically on the epistemological and methodological choices available to researchers. One key insight was that collaborative and collective processes at every stage of the project offered many opportunities to discuss the meaning of process as

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[36] This section may be later strengthened and expanded by considering Marcel Mauss, Seasonal Variations Of The Eskimo: A Study In Social Morphology 1979

individuals and groups merged together, intersected, contested, agreed, and expressed their points of view.

Fort McMurray has become a lively focus for all manner of representation, through photographs, news reports, of activism against corporations and environmentally damaging practices. Fort McMurray has also become mythologized and imprinted into the unwritten and oral narratives of those who have spent time there, and amongst secondhand storytellers of the place as a legend. Within certain social circles in Canada, Fort McMurray has been idolized as a place where one can easily attain a high paying job. General laborers in most oil related jobs start with a high pay average: "according to Statistics Canada, the average gross weekly earnings of non-farm payroll employees in Canada amounted to $860 (540 GBP) as of August 2010. The average weekly earnings in the mining and oil-and-gas-extraction industry was $1,801 (1200 GBP). In other words, these are jobs that pay roughly $100,000 (62,000 GBP) a year.[37]"

Youth were asked to respond by way of photography. Throughout the photography process for them, and the facilitation process for me, I ensured that the project kept returning to the framing question, "Where is Fort McMurray" as a way to refocus. Methodologically, this meant that each instance was an opportunity to start with the question and then decide which direction or how to proceed in a considered, or a wild and reckless manner.

In Guattari's *Three Ecologies*, he contrasts the domination of contemporary cultural industries that focus on media and signs with a reactionary return to tradition, place and what he calls 'subjective conservatism' in popular culture. This

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[37] (http://nexuscanada.blogspot.com/2011/01/albertas-oilsands-investment-jobs-and.html).

'existential contraction' both disempowers and distracts from the exercise of power through the media and intangible signs and syntax (Guattari 2008:31). The production of signs, syntax… media, advertising and subjectivity is very different than the kind of production that is found on job-sites throughout the Wood Buffalo region where coveralls are blackened with sticky tar. The production I am more concerned with here could be thought of as a meta-production of space, or a production of transmittable ideas. Fort McMurray, and more specifically the oil sands have been featured in an ongoing production of visual and representational materials that serve to communicate messages to a broader populous. 'Where is Fort McMurray' interrogated these competing powers by asking the participants to reflect on the oil sands industry which Fort McMurray serves, the media images of the oil sands and the youths agency as creators of their own images in response.

In the next section I will focus on a small sample of images that relate to a broader discourse of industrial landscapes, oil sands and Fort McMurray. These examples are meant to provide a brief contextualization for reading the images created by youth—in relation to living in close proximity to the inflow and outflow of people and oil. I will begin by exploring the case of the Canadian oil boom as a feature in *National Geographic Magazine*.

Visual Discourses of oil sands and Fort McMurray

The centres of power regarding the extraction, upgrading and transportation of bituminous sands represent an extensive and piped network that spreads itself across

North America (pipelines map Fig 1.6).[38]   The Canadian Oil Boom appeared in ₛₘₐₗₗ

ₚᵣᵢₙₜ on a magazine cover that dominated by the prescriptive *Saving Energy: it starts at*

home (March 2009). With distribution of *National Geographic* in the millions, based on

the 8.5 million memberships, I consider this issue of the publication a key moment

of exposure when Fort McMurray, and the Alberta oil sands started to embody and

occupy a broader global, mainstream, discussion in terms of energy extraction.

Whatever the initial reaction the magazine does well to illustrate a varied canvas of

colors, images, activities, people and a particular culture.

The March 2009 issue of *National Geographic* depicted both, the oil sands and

Fort McMurray as an expansive range of diverse lands, bearing all manner of people,

flora and fauna - wild, tamed, and often with the heavily constructed or

manufactured evidence of human influence. The Oil Boom lands are made visible

through a narrative of aerial and close range images. Peter Essick's images are

striking and crisp. From the images alone there is an acknowledgement of Alberta,

and Fort McMurray as a nexus of global traffic, including temporary foreign workers,

local migrants, displaced peoples, and underhanded political maneuvers that pose as

prosperity.

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[38]   ). As one may ascertain by glancing at the pipelines map, there are dollars to be made in ensuring that Alberta crude keeps moving. Presently (March 2013) the President of the United States is considering the approval of the Keystone Pipeline that would cut a path from Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada through the Mid-Western United States on its way a number of sites in Illinois, Oklahoma and Texas for upgrading. Much could be said about the royalties paid by transnational companies to the municipal, provincial and national governments of Canada, but there is simply not enough time or space to do so. The royalty reviews and the selling of Alberta crude at a low price could easily be the subject of an entire thesis. The question remains, why does oil-rich Norway have $50Billion surplus, while oil-rich Alberta currently faces a $50Billion deficit—and is the scapegoat for a government forced to make budget cuts in almost all sectors. I digress.

Peter Essick is a commercial and freelance photographer who has worked closely with *National Geographic* on many assignments over the past 20 years. In a video that accompanies the article online Essick states that 'this was one of the most difficult assignments he has ever had,' and that 'while flying over the tar sands operations, production plants were radioing to the helicopter he was in, asking the photographer what he was doing and threatening to call the authorities unless they left.' Essick describes the experience and the process as 'something he felt that he had to do, that it was important for this to be documented.'

Photograph by Peter Essick

The lunch line at one of four Mac's convenience stores in Fort McMurray offers a boomtown snapshot. Most customers are men between 25 and 30 years old, and many work at the mines. Tobacco, sugar-laden drinks, and bags of salty snacks sell briskly.

Fig 3.1 Peter Essick, National Geographic. March 2009 and online:
http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/03/canadian-oil sands/essick-photography

The caption for the image above reads: "the lunch line at one of four Mac's convenience stores in Fort McMurray offers a boomtown snapshot. Most customers

are men between 25 and 30 years old, and many work at the mines. Tobacco, sugar-laden drinks and bags of salty snacks sell briskly." When I mention the *National Geographic* article in conversation with friends and family they often remark that this image affected them much more deeply than any of the images that depict the physical operations and alterations to the landscape. Folks tell me that 'this image reveals the truth.' Whether an image can reveal truth shall be left up to debate, but I can state that this image reveals a particular perspective on a particular event. The particularities of this image reveal a seldom seen, or seldom photographed assemblage of particularly uninterested men waiting to purchase arm-loads of goods. Perhaps truth is called out, as a recognition that topographical manipulation can only proceed when laborious workers are sufficiently fueled.

Informally, Dr. Shields and I have used the term, the human in ruins, to describe the long faced look of dejection upon the workers in Fort McMurray. The human in ruins may evoke mentions of Bauman's *Wasted Lives* (2003), but this concept is different in that it describes a twisted entanglement of a scale balanced by money and work. All hope rests with the prospect of a comfortable and wealthy reprieve in the future. "I'm just here for the money." "I have a plan, four years and I'm going home". "Some people have a plan, but those who don't often find themselves in a kind of downward spiral." Guattari writes: "A capitalist subjectivity is engendered through operators of all types and sizes, and is manufactured to protect existence from any intrusion of events that might disturb or disrupt public opinion. It demands that all singularity must be either evaded or crushed in specialist apparatus frames of reference" (2008: 33). In the case of Fort McMurray, perhaps what was most revealing about the images in Peter Essicks contribution is a capitalist

subjectivity wherein all actors can see themselves as capitalists pursuing a collectivity

that leaves no space for singularity whatsoever. The human in ruins exchanges time

and labour-power in order to participate, like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*, as

though a literal cog in the machine. One might ask then, isn't the human in ruins

simply ruined by sovereign ownership? Perhaps not, as the response to a question by

a researcher often concluded with "they pay me enough to keep my mouth shut." In

Guattari's terms, singularity is undoubtedly crushed by a very specialized and

cognizant accounting apparatus.

Lets take a look at the oil industry in Alberta as it provides a rhythm for the

cultural ripples of a place pictured through a visual discourse. The images that

formed my starting point emerge from the 'readymade' collection provided by a

Google search. A Google-images search provides a simple starting point for anyone

interested in places as pictured. Google's method is well documented in that it ranks

and presents searches made through browsers (Elmer 2004, Google "How Search

Works,' 2012). Google's ranking methods produce programmed results made more

or less visible as indexing systems rank by search queries, tags, authors, types, images,

etc. Through the exploratory Google search, using a kind of birds-eye view of the

'pictured landscapes' three primary categories emerged; corporate, activism, and

commercial. I queried 'Alberta oil sands,' 'Alberta Tar Sands,' 'Fort McMurray' and

'Bitumen.' I used this simple process to diligently gather a broad perspective on the

images that are commonly searched and viewed. The following images represent a

few different styles, they represent a kind of bottomless-well of available images.

More research could be done disentangling and mapping typologies of images. In

this case, these images represent a starting point.

1.

Fig 3.2 Syncrude *Fact Book*, 2007 (p.10)

I refer to the image above from a 2007 Syncrude publication—the *Fact Book*.
Dr. Karl Clark is seen working on a version of his patented oil sand and hot water
aeration vessels. Clark is intently focused. By scientific and industrial accounts, the
work done by Clark is read amongst the pages of Alberta's history as a grand success.
The purpose of the *Fact Book* is stated "to provide employees and visitors with
comprehensive information about Syncrude Canada Ltd," though it may also reach a
much broader audience of professionals, stakeholder and beyond. In the *Fact Book*

images are printed in the stark contrast of black and white-ness. The contrast of dark

and light allows the hero, the scientist, to appear illuminated atop the darker

background. The depth of field privileges the objects closer to the lens by signaling

that certain elements are brighter, lighter and further ahead. Within the context of

the *Fact Book* this image appears just a few pages after the image of the expansive

boreal forest. While some may view an image of the boreal forest as majestic, others

may claim that it is vacant, others will note the economic potential of this

unoccupied and fertile land. Throughout the *Fact Book* there is no mention of First

Nations people at all. However it should be noted that Syncrude and other oil

companies do publish advertising and 'educational' materials that seem to work in

relation to "a history of colonial domination associated with a White gaze and the

many myths and stereotypes it has produced" (Friedel 2008: 245). The appearance of

First Nations people is conspicuously absent from the *Fact Book* – the contrast is that

other publications produced for Syncrude rely on a perceived connection to First

Nations people[39]. The constructed narrative here would have the viewer believe that

the forest is an endless and infinite resource potential. The *Fact Book* asserts what are

presumably the facts; trucks rule, open land, early oil pioneers, engineering prowess,

technical mastery, the environment (bison of course), and the future. Overall the *Fact

Book* purports some account of what is by virtue of its material presence, besides

these are just the facts.

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[39] Friedel's article "(Not so) crude text and images: staging Native in 'big oil' advertising, *Visual Studies*, Dec 2008: 238-254, deals specifically with staged social responsibility through a perceived visual alignment of Native bodies and landscapes with corporate advertising.

Coker 8-3, the largest of its type in the world, was constructed as part of the Syncrude Stage 3 Expansion.

Fig 3.3 Syncrude *Fact Book*, 2007 (p.54)

Near the back of the *Fact Book* appears this image above. The text across from the image states "the future starts here." The caption imprinted on the image speaks to technical and engineering mastery, the Coker 8-3, the largest in the world. This image reaches high with its industrial columns and skeletal design. One visual reference here could be to Bernd and Hilla Becher who are known for photographing industrial complexes as a matter of typology. Another inference that we can make from this image is that the size and scale of this project signal that— there is more to come, more construction, meaning more jobs. However, not everyone knows that it only takes 10% of the number of people in the construction phase to operate these earth bound behemoths.

The images in the *Fact Book* represent a significant stylistic mode tied together through a seamless design and tonal unity. Syncrude likely paid a large sum of money

to an advertising agency in order to design and produce this document. When I came

upon it I was excited to find an artifact in print rather than just online. I took my

time thumbing the pages as I would a new book, impressed by the layout. The text

seemed to come into play only as a secondary bolster to the images. My final

impression of these images as a series is that Syncrude is trying to represent itself in

what appears to be a straightforward way as though 'all of the facts are present.' My

sense is that publications like these, generated by oil companies, serve primarily as

positive propaganda. Positive propaganda keeps workers 'informed' about their own

company. This kind of business-meets-facts is easy to accept as a complete picture,

until one presses further.

2.

I am reminded of the term 'culture jamming' as proffered by *Adbusters*

magazine and founder Kalle Lasn. From the *Adbusters* website: "we are a global

network of culture jammers and creatives working to change the way information

flows, the way corporations wield power, and the way meaning is produced in our

society" (http://www.adbusters.org/). Culture-jamming takes the approach of

resignification. By resignifying a space or a place with an altered message—adbusting

aims to phreak normative values. In a similar manner *Greenpeace* radicalizes ordinary

and strategic places as sites of manifestation and action through visual means.

Fig 3.4 *Greenpeace.* Tarsandswatch.org

From the *Greenpeace* website: "Greenpeace activists suspended their bodies 42 meters over the North Saskatchewan River today to hang two 7 x 15 meter banners from the High Level Bridge in Edmonton. The banners depict the areas under current and projected tar sands development with the message 'Stop the Tar Sands.' They hang in full view of the Alberta legislature, which opened today. November 5, 2007" (http://gallery.greenpeace.ca/main.php?g2_itemId=418). The ordinary, though dramatic place, the High Level Bridge in Edmonton, served as the strategic

location to deploy anti-tar sands banners within a clear line of sight of the opening

day of the provincial legislature.

Fig 3.5 *Greenpeace*. Tarsandswatch.org

The next image depicts another banner, this time on land leased and mined by

Syncrude. The pipe in the image is dumping waste-water containing tailings from tar-

sand separation, into a 'tailings pond.' This banner event followed the incident where

over 1500 birds drowned in a tailings pond.

Carrie Tait, Financial Post. Published: Tuesday, March 31, 2009

> CALGARY -- A somber and apologetic Tom Katinas, chief executive of
> Syncrude Canada Ltd., Tuesday said he was embarrassed by the fact that 1,606
> migratory birds died in one of the company's toxic waste ponds last April, but
> added the oil sands giant has boosted its waterfowl deterrent systems. Syncrude
> originally estimated that 500 migratory birds died when they landed on its Aurora
> tailings pond last spring – news that sparked international outrage and further
> intensified the oil sands' ugly reputation.
> (http://www.financialpost.com/story.html?id=1448397).

From the Greenpeace website:

> Jul 30, 2008 World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands - Greenpeace activists deployed a massive banner reading "World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands" and attempted to temporarily stop the flow of toxic waste water into a 2km wide tailings lake used by Syncrude's Tar Sands operation in Northern Alberta. From: Greenpeace Canada.

From the Fort McMurray website 'MyMcMurray':

> A small group of Greenpeace activists have broken-into Syncrude to draw attention to its campaign against oilsands development. The protesters say they have blocked a pipe that flows into the same Aurora North tailings pond where 500 ducks died last April. Greenpeace spokesman David Martin said they have also unfurled a skull and crossbones banner that reads `World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands.'
> (http://www.mymcmurray.com/news/modules.php?op=modload&name=New s&file=article&sid=4018).

The news reportage, partly sparked by the Greenpeace action helps to reveal that there is no consensus on the details. In matters of oil sands politics, dialectics are a fading memory.

3.

Fig 3.6 garthlenz.com

The image above is from GarthLenz.com Photography, a commercial photographer noted as a member of the International League of Conservation Photographers. Lenz presents his version of commercial photography with an eye towards the environment. This image goes beyond the narrow scope of the *Fact Book*. Perhaps it would be more effective to consider the image above as a hybrid form representative of artistic, aesthetic, environmental, and commercial production. It seems to me that Lenz is working to reveal a kind of realism framed as an objective reality.

One of the fundamental problems with commercial photography is that the control of images means power. Commercial photographers exist within the means of commerce and capitalism, so even though they may represent their work as critical, objective, and revealing –there is a price attached to using images. I imagine that in some cases photographers would be willing to lend their support and their images as Lenz does, whereas other photographers may be more inclined to be protective of their intellectual property.

I have spoken with commercial photographers in Edmonton who were flown up to a specific oil sands operation, spent three days in safety training, were told repeatedly that if the images they took were to appear online or in print without the explicit release of the company that they would be sued, and were then given one day to proceed with their photographic assignment. I was fortunate enough to stumble into just such a conversation and I was even able to view the images they took, however, I was not allowed to do anything more than look. In this sense, I was able to see into another regime of control that is serious about a manicured appearance.

Working with Youth: making public

From 2009-2011 I worked with youth in Fort McMurray to facilitate a photography project that set the foundation for gaining access to insights generated by youth. Because of their ages, 15-19, they experienced many things for the first time. As young people they found themselves moving from childhood into adulthood—where expectations and ideals are met with responsibilities and duties. For me as a researcher, I was afforded a glimpse into temporally based social change.

The youth that I met in 2009 were different in 2011. As I am critical of *National Geographic* for painting only a snapshot of life in a particular geographical zone - I acknowledge that I am doing equal or worse damage by bracketing time and space. However, if there is something to learn here, my account of the process serves to offer a look into a perspective on what and how a group of individuals chose to represent Fort McMurray with photographs while they gathered around cameras as temporary community assemblage. Youth participant-collaborators created images in relation to their own social register, their own experience, their access to places and zones, their own interests, and their own level of experiential consciousness in relation to a collective worldview.

As I mentioned earlier, chapter two focused upon the social connections, temporary gathering facilitated by the camera as a tool. This chapter has thus far served to inform the reader of an existent visual discourse that circulates/emanates from Fort McMurray and the oil sands. In addition I have spent some time referring to Guattari's *Three Ecologies*, as a way to think through a process of working with youth. In the case of the images yet to come in this chapter my point is that—the opportunity for youth to take pictures provided a ground to move beyond

ambivalence into the realm of, not only commingle with others as assemblage, but also to express creative-vision and contest public visual paradigms. As I mentioned earlier as well, there is still a sense of failure because by the logic of the *Three Ecologies* I cannot claim a major success in the environmental register. Perhaps this area would be suited to further exploration at a later time?

While working with youth in Fort McMurray there were a few opportunities to present images as sets to see what kind of feedback could be provided. In each instance the images, and the participants present were met with a mix of harsh criticism, "this doesn't give a complete picture", or "there is so much more out there," or "yes, these are great, we need more of this kind of work produced by youth for the community to see." By being present while images were on display meant that myself, the youth participants and community members could once again gather around photographs (in this case printed images) to have conversations. In some cases tensions emerged. Especially tense was the aura around an image depicting the youth participants themselves partaking in a hookah. The image with the hookah served to support an unwanted stereotype, a stereotype that particular educators worked daily to dismantle. For the youth who created, selected, printed and hung the image as part of the set, they simply wanted to express their most honest reflections—regardless of whether or not a particular stereotype would be perpetuated. The hookah example represents one form of direct feedback that served as social dialogue made manifest as a form of censorship. In general, each iteration

was an experiment in exposure—gauging the response of the community, and responding accordingly[40].

While conducting social research with images it is of paramount importance to be aware of the context within which images are created, as well as the broader context of an audience observing the process and images produced. The example of the hookah image illustrates a series of ethical questions that compound the difficulty of a given situation. The situational as well as ongoing ethical concerns were revealed as potential legal harm to the participant, potential social embarrassment, potential reinforcement of socially entrenched racism and so forth. The ethical concerns and issues raised reflect the gravity of the situation and conversely reflect the importance of deeper methodological and ethical deliberation in an effort to proceed with right action.

My expectations for what youth participants would create were open to ecosophy (Guattari 2008) as a process for moving and thinking beyond passivity. I expected that youth would create some kind of alter-reality along the lines of resignification or activism—one that perhaps followed the course of environmental revelations. Instead, the achievements lay in the more subtle levels of the social and the individual. Towards these ends, youth participants as photographer-researchers returned to a temporary hive of activity where images would be revealed, shared and discussed. The visual representations that emerged were scenes of everyday life taken from the point of view of youth who travel on foot, by bus, in parents' cars, etc. These youth participants moved along the well-defined and mundane pathways to

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[40] I say 'accordingly' to signal the implicit dialogue. At each instance where commentary could be made upon a given image, someone was listening. Regardless of whether or not there was a verbal response made, some change, some alteration of course would be made.

and from school, the bus stop, the gym, the karate studio, the family restaurant, a friends house, the park, the river, the point, the walking trails… to reveal a Fort McMurray as shown below.

Fig 3.7 J. Thibault. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.8 N. Riordon. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.9 Y. Chen. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.10 P. Gonzales. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.11 Y. Chen. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.12 P. Gonzales. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.13 M. Desai. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.14 M. Desai. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.15 A. Hachem. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.16 A. Ahmed. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.17 A. Lozowy. where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.18 P. Campbell. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.19   S. Morrison. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.20 J. Houle. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.21 S. Morrison. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.22 A. Lozowy. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.23 M. Desai. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.24   J. Houle. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.25 J. Houle. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Fig 3.26 A. Hachem. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.
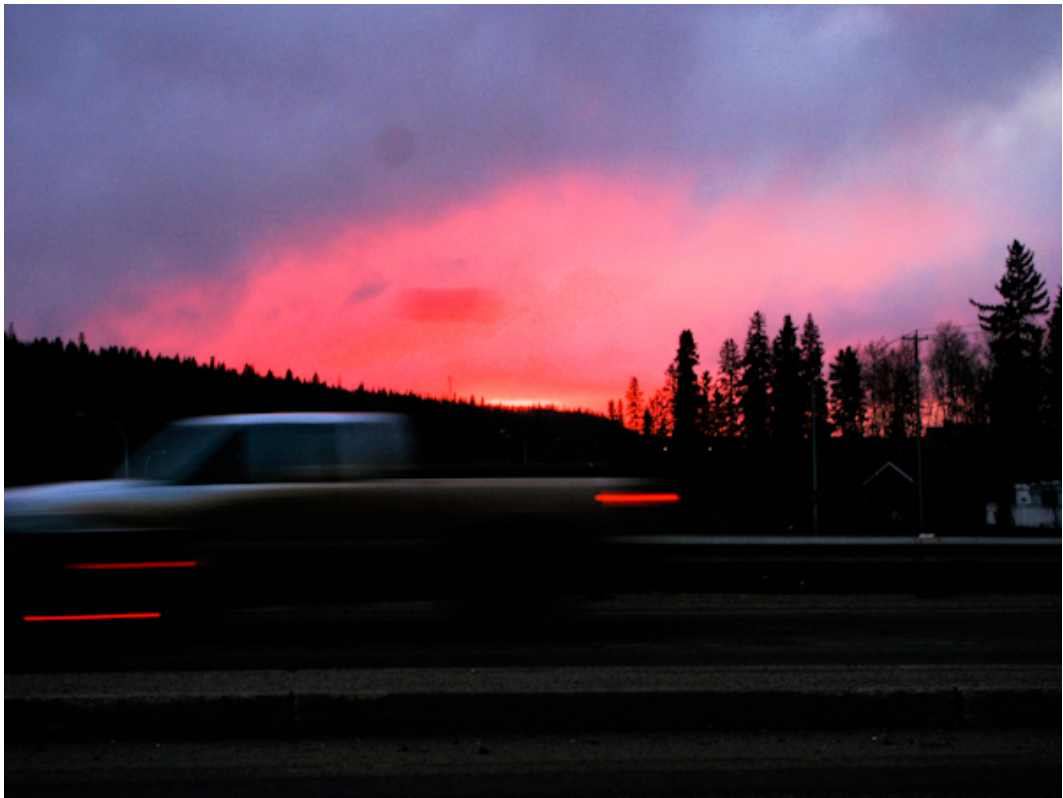
Fig 3.27   J. Houle. Where is Fort McMurray, Library Series.

Taken as a set, these images produce a close geography, an uncommon or even experimental geography. As Nigel Thrift suggests, these need to be appreciated via a non-representational theory concerned with the performative 'presentations', 'showings' and 'manifestations' of everyday life (1997: 142). These may not be images for the kind of overview and review of place given by *National Geographic* - instead these are close, within, and perhaps unintelligible to those of us outside. The images generated by the youth engaged in a collaborative and collective research process mark a shift away from the dominant visual discourse on Fort McMurray and the oil sands. The work by youth offers an imaginative vision of possibility that aims to encourage others to creatively burst out from oppressive regimes. Collective assemblages of people partaking in creative opportunities transcend the pervasive "atmosphere of dullness and passivity" (Guattari 2008: 45) and strike hard a victory-bell for at least two ecologies.

4. Mashup: New representations of the city [41]

Fig. 4.1. Riordon and Thibault. Oh Yeah we are that cool.

City: Non-Representable

Representations of the mega-city depend on viewers' understandings of conventions, contexts, and references to elements that are not directly present or included. When we look at a photograph or a realist painting we see both an image of something and a representation of a virtual world whose space is imagined to extend off the canvas and whose contents are frozen in a temporal process of aging, the unfolding of an event or an action. A photo of a person reflected in mid-air as they leap into a puddle, for example, is also a representation of a world in which there are puddles, rain, and in which people land under the force of gravity with an inevitable splash. Simultaneously when we speak of the city, we also refer to the

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[41] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication. Lozowy, Shields 2013.
Theory Culture & Society: The Megacity Online.

corporeal body, the digital avatar, as well as Pavel Florensky's reminder of the invisible. Like a Christian attempting to explain their own trinity, we fail to represent clearly what we mean, so we ask for you, the reader to 'take on faith' the individual trinity.

To fully appreciate a representation, the viewer or listener must understand this 'worlding' aspect: an image does not simply present an object or a moment, but represents a visible and an invisible world. The viewer initiates an encounter that requires their own imaginative labour in fleshing out the before and after, the flow and durée of an event that is summarized in one split second. This is part and parcel of an extensive environment in which a photographer must once have held a camera to create an image, or where a wall must have stood to anchor a closed circuit camera. Even an isolated object on a plain backdrop has an imputed scale in relation to the viewer's body. In this sense, an encounter is staged between the suggestive representation and an audience's own mode of knowing and imago of the world. In this labour, the viewer is positioned in relation to both the representation as a surface and as a scene that one may inhabit virtually.

Cities are known through representations that bring what Innis (1950) and later McLuhan (1964) refer to as the 'bias' of particular media to bear, better permitting some aspects of the city to be appreciated by the viewer, and further press upon the notion of seen and unseen, the visible and the invisible. This is not merely a question of an image highlighting the visual part of the sensorium; rather, the representation smuggles in its capacity for a certain type of worlding, which allows the city to be known in different ways, as different processes and has implications for the priorities that underlie the development of the city. This turn from the representation itself as

merely 'witnessing' an object, to the knowledge process and practices that take place has been referred to as 'non-representational theory' (Anderson & Harrison, 2010). It is widely explored in contemporary art where artists such as Barbara Holub set out to show that even in mere sketches there are no innocent images: habitual ways of seeing are couched in commonsensical understandings of what is possible in the world as lived. One tends to see again what one has already seen, repressing difference and excluding otherness (Gebetsroither, 2011).

The changes in representational practices and media are significant insofar as they allow the city to be known in different ways: to be recognized as a 'mega-city', for example, in contrast to being characterized by other key factors or as a different sort of urban environment. The rise of choreographed trapeze work in Chinese and East Asian video and Hong Kong cinema allows roofscapes to be re-imagined as stepping stones in choreographed chases and one-on-one combat, in denial of gravity, and in a moment of clarity and command above the congested alleys of the Asian city, shows how one set of representational practices in cinema can be used to capture part of the distinctive urban-ness of mega-cities and the frustrations in their relationship to the urban totality that people dream of overcoming.

Theories of visualicity consider the selectiveness of representations, that is, both the visual culture and those elements of the landscape and world around us that are not represented and thus rendered invisible or that are represented but only peripherally or out-of-focus so they are minimized. This interest in the process and effects of representation suggests that all representations, such as these cinematic shots, the urbanity of Dumas' early detective novels of the mid-nineteenth century (Shields, 1995), the sociable parks painted by Impressionists such as Manet, the dark

streets of film noir and postwar Hollywood film (Straw 2009) or the lush cityscapes of late twentieth-century Hollywood feature films (Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2001), enframe the potentiality for bodies and objects to enter into efficacious combinations that produce ongoing urban-ness (Perniola, 1995). Through manipulations of depth of field, focus and visibility, representations foreground specific aspects of the sensorium, of representational practice and stage, or expose only selected elements of the social and object world (Shields, 2004; Lenoir, 1998).

Mashups

Visual mashups are a new approach to collage. Although 'mashup' has other definitions, all of which denote a type of putting together, or bricolage, our specific interest is in the emergence of a type of calling card presented on personal webpages, such as on Facebook.com that is made from collaged photos and text. These compositions give an insight into their creator's and audience's worlds, on- and offline, in everyday life.

Mashups derive from the 1960s US countercultural interventions of Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman to rework politics and gain attention in the context of '60s mass media. Mashups were part of a tactic of political and media pranksterism. Turn-of-the millennium 'DJ mashups' originate in disc jockeys' musical combinations and medleys of songs produced by others. Some become hits themselves, while others are polemical engagements with musical legends, such as DJ Dangermouse's 'Grey Album', a music video comment on the Beatles 'White Album' and their performances. In its accompanying video version sequences of a 1960s Beatles performance are edited and cut so that the screen figures pronounce DJ

Dangermouse's vocal track as well as repeatedly returning to loops of the original refrain and selected riffs. Web 2.0 programmers and designers refer to mashups as software that brings together a set of applications under one user interface. These 'software mashups' allow fluid data and process mediation and customized user experiences (Maximilien, Ranabahu, & Gomadam, 2008: 32). Other 'data mashups' are used to map information cartographically. With 'Wilderness Downtown', the band Arcade Fire shows what can be done in an interactive digital mapping mashup.

The 'visual mashup' reproduced here (see Figure 1) is torn from its context of youth engaged in Social Networking Sites acutely aware of visible signs of the age and school grade of their peers: an object-traveller from the foreign land of Canadian high school youth aged 14 to 18. This group, regardless of its ethnic diversity, is relatively privileged and geographically peripheral, but economically central astride global circuits of resource extraction. Visual mashups present a reworking of photographs representing urban youth and their worlds. The textual fragments or syntagms may work as slogans, informational captions or narrative fragments. In all cases, they are speech acts that modify the pictorial surface and graphic space. Facebook's mashups are produced with the aid of web-based image editing applications such as Picnik.com. Picnik.com offers web-browser based image editing (in fact, Flickr.com has links throughout its own user interface that encourage image editing through this now popular website). '"Of course" it is so simple', we thought, as we try to master software the youth of today are employing. However, the effect is extremely difficult to obtain (see http://japanization.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/lolita1.jpg as another example). What are image/text/design compositions like this conveying as they attempt to shock and awe viewers, or 'friends' on Facebook? In our

ethnographic research, one youth suggested that, a program like picnik.com is used 'to make images look better' in that increasing the contrast or the saturation on most digital images yields a more striking and/or clearly focused image. But this is something else entirely: these compositions have the look and flavour of youth culture from another land, emphasizing cuteness with no regard for western compositional aesthetics. They contrast with most attempts at visual mashups archived on other sites, which are either album art for musical mashups or parodic applications of image-warping and mirroring functions of software such as Photoshop. A survey of these creations online shows that they belittle the seriousness of the scenes depicted by transforming the subjects in the images. Text rarely figures in the final result unless it was contained in the initial image. Those mashups are like humorous cartoons; however, Facebook mashups, such as the one reproduced here, are more intriguing

presentations of three elements: self, social relations and social environments.

A twenty-first century Mona Lisa

Illustration 1: Mashup Image from Facebook: 'oh yeah we are that cool' (Used by permission of the creators, copyright 2008-2010). This visual mashup from Facebook features a montage of two mirror images of two young women slightly askew on a blue background animated by darker translucent swirls. This representation depicts a retail environment policed by private security in uniform, which exists in contrast to the teens' functional windbreakers and hoodies. However, the images are colour-shifted into an unreal overexposed fluorescent-tinted yellow-green that removes the image from the order of any particular social or

urban space. The two framed images are of two friends, two young, probably white women posing with a cardboard cut-out figure of a dark-skinned security guard (skin tones are distorted by the overexposure, yet race still can be read in these images). In the left image, part of the sign on this life-size placard-figure (the 'plaguard') reads 'No Shopliftin' bolstering the neutral expression, authoritative pose and uniform the 'plaguard' wears, and giving a sense that these teens inhabit a threatening and authoritarian environment. The women on both sides look directly out, catching one's eye. In the image on the right, the teen purses her lips in an indecipherable expression and drapes her arm around the 'plaguard', resulting in an insouciant moment that one could interpret as a patronizing gesture of white privilege. Less immediately legible is the caption across the top, which comments on the scene: 'oh yeah we are that cool'. Indeed, they seem to be notorious in their own eyes, the text 'veneering' their avowal onto the graphic elements (cf. Lyotard 1985: 213).

The major structure is the symmetry of the two montaged photos. A certain cut-out quality to the 'plaguard' in the left image hints at the effort invested in achieving this mirroring effect. The differing sizes of the figures moves the 'plaguard' from the middle ground slightly behind the woman on the left image to the foreground next to and almost propped-up by the woman in the right image. There is, however, a transformation. On the left, there is a serious warning and a separateness of the figures, which endows the security guard with a stern voice, whereas the closeness of the figures on the right suggests a certain detente between authority and resistance. Text and image reinforce each other by entering into a circuit of signification. The caption 'oh yeah' provides an overarching text for the counterposed graphic space of blue frame and greenish images and figures, providing

a counterpoint to the text embedded in the images. The spatial cutting up of the overall graphic space allows the viewer to quickly recognize the portrait photo-frame reference (many contemporary childrens' photo frames include an embossed text or a message on them and are constructed to hold two photos). The 'we' is equivocal, embracing both the figures in the mashup and the Facebook audience, who must become virtual, so-called 'friends' with the creators of the image to see it on their Facebook web pages. Under these conditions, the viewer is actually already a member of the 'we' of the caption. They could project themselves into the mashup, 'friending', commenting in a process that constructs not only affinities but symmetries between their squared-off personal webpages on Facebook. Befriending means to not only treat 'as-if' a friend but 'as-if-present' and alive to the interaction. This is played out in a certain befriending of the the cardboard fantasy-figure. The 'plaguard' is treated as if he/it were alive. Is he Facebook incarnate, inspector-general, surveyor-god and geometer of this virtual world?

Doubleness and mirroring are also an important feature in this mashup. The security guard cut-out is one of several doubles: the framed mirroring images, the two women, and the doppelganger 'plaguard', both a figure alongside the women and also different from them as a fake cardboard placard. There are also binaries of gender and race. The montaged photos are flattened, with no clear depth of field, negating any attempt to treat them as two inhabited spaces – as the major source of meaning of the overall composition. Instead, it is clear that this is a virtual space. All of the figures in the mashup of left woman-plaguard::plaguard-right woman are closely cropped and seem to be arranged on the pictorial surface of the mashup. The two images and the caption are streaked, blended by the overlay of swirls. The

restlessness is suggestive of the play of desire across the binaries while the mocking friendliness of the right-hand woman with the 'plaguard' suggests a moment of playfulness with codes of conduct and authority, while also hinting at privilege that might ground such a reversal of subordination, fortune and abjection. 'Oh yeah we are that cool' is a assertion of self-empowerment and perhaps what must not be stolen or shop-lifted is self-respect regardless of the social structures of inequality in which both young women and the flexible workforce of security guards and other members of the 'precariat' find themselves (Toscano, 2004). The choice of script font for the upper caption adds informality against the commanding shoplifting text. The 'plaguard' suggests the flattening of all of the figures, both fleshy and cardboard. The social space these figures inhabit is the empirical space of intuitions and representations as well as the space in which social relations are lived and class and power struggles unfold (cf. Marx, 1973). This conflictual space is recovered and re-appropriated through representation in the mashup, but it is not a social space that the viewer can easily imagine themselves into; rather, the mashup creates a writerly rather than a painterly social space in which the viewer is positioned as participant, witness and interpreter out in front of the mashup as a pictorial surface rather than a visual representation of a scene. Logged into Facebook, one is already in a virtual screen environment, and one's relation to the images is very much an interaction of one entity amongst others in a landscape, like a driver passing a roadside sign or billboard: it is coded primarily as a semiotic index (pointing elsewhere) rather than a symbol (in and of itself).
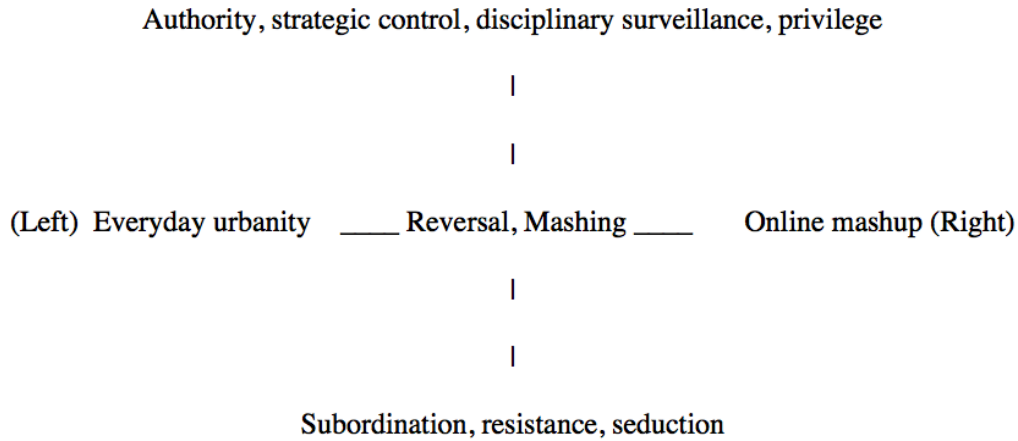
As a space of representations and of mediated interactions, Facebook forms a context in which this mashup appears alongside naively presented portraits and

images, even while the mashup comments on the forms of association such as virtual 'friending' and affirms the camaraderie of the moment between actual friends. The mashup is a space of re-representations that reworks the inhabited world of consumption and production under neoliberalism by cutting apart and slamming together discourses of space (the shopping mall and retail environment), embodiment (sexual and racial difference) and comportment (cool). We take the desire that is mobilized by this collision as reality – a virtual reality, a u-topia situated not in a specific mall or place nor in the order of the mashup, but in the virtual world of Facebook (cf. Lyotard, 1985:214).

The compositional structure of this mashup is also not painterly. Rather, it is diagrammatic: two squares within a rectangle. The careful artistic direction of the eye – rooted to key knots and intersections of vanishing points and lines – is replaced by a restless surface where the eye does not find an immediate focus. It roams between highlights (the red shoplifting warning, the bright over-exposed reflectiveness of the 'plaguard') and details (the upper caption, the womens' jackets, the 'plaguard's' contrasting uniform) unless one concentrates on the mashup and willfully engages in meaning-making. The fantasy thus captures the viewers and induces them to engage in the game of desire and repression that is as much the subject of the mashup as are the social, racial and sexual status and relations of the figures.

Within this symmetry, the black and red shoplifting warning is a singular 'chromatic event', a red cliché advising of the risk, the actual possibility, of prosecution of effectively all tactical 'guerrilla' forays into a strategically surveilled, disciplinary space of all-seeing panoptic power (de Certeau, 1984; Foucault, 1979). The effect of the cut-off words disrupts the message of authority. Alongside the

fantasy-figure of cardboard 'plaguard', the graphical tools of 'those in charge' are taken up by kids to re-present a new reality of pervasively circumvented rules and a power-situation in which the master is too easily seduced by the subordinated (Baudrillard, 1990). The merchant and police need consumers, fans, addicts and wayward teens to complete the ironic complicities of capitalism in unequal exchange and dominated power relations. Gender underscores these moves of and against authority: fantasy, seduction and friendship queering and trumping white masculinist clichés of control - a marked absence against which the representational network of the entire mashup is thrown. It is in this sense that the mashup advances a utopia of resistance and reversal between the dominant shopping mall guard and subordinate teen flâneur (Shields, 1989). By mashing up these binaries, the distanced, objective relationship to the urban as a physical city is altered toward an immersive experience of a mega-city that has exploded beyond (hence mega-) a simple datum of the material to include the informational and virtual .The mashup is polysemic: its meaning is only completed by entering into its fluid world – a non-place space (utopia cf. Lyotard 1985) of force blended with compliance to yield the insouciant gaze and half smile of the woman on the right – a Mona Lisa for our age.

Authority, strategic control, disciplinary surveillance, privilege

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(Left) Everyday urbanity   ____ Reversal, Mashing ____   Online mashup (Right)

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Subordination, resistance, seduction

The Leonardos of picnik.com do not expect our endorsement or evaluation. They and their mashups inhabit a different world, time-shifted to a place we found we could not catch up with despite months or ethnographic immersion, years of community engagement and attempts to participate in the exchange of mashups. That is to say, we experienced a particular difficulty in narrating the particulars of the instances in which these images were displayed and received. We felt one step behind our participants, describing a present that had always already past, and from which our respondents had moved on. The time-shift is significant in pointing to a difference in subjectivity and intent: ours', to fasten down a factual urban present for observing subjects; theirs', to inhabit the moment of reversals that form the event celebrated in the mashup.

We can, however, observe a second axis of symmetry that cuts the technological screen of Facebook. The mashup functions to montage offline moments of everyday life into an online visual experience and to impute an affective

synthesis back into embodied interaction in the city. Here, aggressive retail surveillance, even being caught shoplifting, and the solidarities of friendship are collaged together in an online experience that Facebook 'friends' are invited to witness. This is 'coolness' borne by the visual and which the mashup indexes. Witnessing desire's confident seduction of power with such aplomb, the viewer is offered membership in the utopian circle of coolness. Mirrored into offline interaction as the right side image mirrors the left, viewers are empowered to embody this tactical reversal in everyday life, for better or worse.

The mashup organically represents a life doubled between two interiors: mall-like urban social spaces and the online environments of the internet. Like these environments of total design, anticipating users' choices in advance and limiting their options to preselected consumer options, the mega-city is an interior. Mashed-up visuals work in relation to one another as a new kind of dialogue – one that may require a different literacy to comprehend. They are not 'pictures of the city'; instead, they mashup flows and interactions in a visual nexus of image and text. Mashups form a commentary on a particular urbanity that is at once concrete and virtual. They work not by a logic of critique but by reversal: recoding everyday life through an online visual mirror-image that reverses relations of domination and subordination. In the process, mashups are establishing the next generations' understanding of what cities are. The mashup is a simulacrum of that moment of time: the reversals can be repeated as a form of recollection because they are crystallized in a restless graphic space.

Deleuze's ethnology – a project of thinking though bodies-in-formation – has been described as a process of muddying the boundary between human and non-

human. Facebook.com boxes 'friendship' as a façade for a grand artistic project in which the limits of human capabilities are tested. These mashups represent a subjectivity that involves an uninhibitedly performative expression of tarrying with the fabric of human and non-human (virtual) possibilities (Ansell Pearson, 1999). For creators of mashups the manipulation of time-shift/out of time expression signals bodies and minds, comporting contortions beyond embodied and temporary inhibitions. The mashup represented here does well to offer a glimpse of an interspecies – human and non-human – co-mingling. The women play femmes fatales to both human security guards and to the virtual 'plaguard', operating on both sides of the modernist division of the human and technology. This history is dismissed with blind ignorance and without dues in the innocence of re-appropriation. This is seen not only on Facebook but on Berlin-like graffiti walls painted in a radiant neon immediacy, marking the temporary passage of meaning-making and of Being and beings, all too quickly erased in a city that is no longer a polis but extruded beyond the status of collective will and fashioning to become an overarching ecology. In seeking our own 'coolness' of critical distance as our vantage point and method to describe a simultaneously embodied and mediated subjectivity that can be recognized in the play of the mashup's elements, we can only narrate this event after the fact. The mashup itself offers an advance over narrative and autobiographical representations of subjects and their associations within this situation of mediated embodiment, a dynamic geography that is simultaneously on- and offline (Boyman, 1995:viii).

What does this mean for the mega-city? For starters, the city has just gotten bigger. This contemporary urbanity is noteworthy for its experimental grounds of co-

mingling, cohabitation. The fact that the mashups in question seem to elude over-determination seems to suggest that, once again, the margins offer space for resistance. This is not to say that the margins purport to stand-off as alterity, but rather as essential for vitality in city life, be it mega-city or otherwise. It could be said that mashups, human and non-human cocreations ensure that urban, psychological, and cultural change is underway. If we suspend the need for proof through representation, this dynamism is as fundamental as entropic forces or nature.

5. *Reframing the Canadian Oil Sands* [42]

From 'On-High' to the Roadside:
Scalar Aesthetics and the Canadian oil sands – Merle Patchett

From Aberdeen to Alberta

From 'On-High' to the Roadside: Scalar Aesthetics and the Canadian oil sands

Growing up in the Scottish coastal city of Aberdeen—the 'oil capital of Europe'—I

was keenly aware that oil and water can be a volatile mix. Aberdeen became the

centre of the European oil industry during the North Sea oil boom of the 1970s. The

international oil crisis of the same decade had led to a huge rise in worldwide oil

prices and this made extracting oil from the North Sea an attractive opportunity for

multi-national oil companies like BP, AMOCO and Shell. Although drilling

platforms were stationed 100 miles off the coast in the North Sea, the spectre of oil

pervaded the city: from the emergence of Europe's busiest heliport which supplied

the rigs with workers, to the mammoth oil service vessels docked in Aberdeen

harbour, to the expansion of the city itself through new housing, offices and schools.

However the spectre of offshore production was rudely and radically illuminated on

the night of July 6, 1988. In a series of explosions the Piper Alpha oil rig, located 120

miles offshore, was obliterated in a blaze of fire, killing 165 of the 226 men on board.

Two crewmen operating a rescue vessel were also killed, bringing the death toll to

167 men on "the night the sea caught fire" (Matsen 27).

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[42] A version of this chapter has been published. Patchett, Lozowy 2012. *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies 3-2.* Curatorial Essay by - Dr. Merle Patchett, Photographs and Response by – Andriko Lozowy.

Fig 5.1 "Mayday Mayday... we're abandoning the radio room; we're abandoning the radio room. We can't talk any more, we're on fire."—Mayday Message from the Radio Room before it was engulfed by the fire.In the disaster's aftermath the Cullen Inquiry, which began in January 1989 and lasted 13 months, established the causes of the tragedy and made recommendations for future safety regimes offshore. Those affected by the tragedy were left questioning why it took a multi-fatality event for an evaluation of the oil and gas regulatory system to take place and why the rig owner's—Occidental Petroleum—were yet to be prosecuted. The victims of the disaster set up the Piper Alpha Families and Survivors Association to campaign to bring Occidental to justice. Although the Cullen Report (made public on November 12, 1990) was highly critical of Occidental's safety program on Piper Alpha prior to the disaster, Lord Fraser, the Lord Advocate and Scotland's chief legal officer, concluded that there was not enough evidence for a conviction. As Lord Advocate for Scotland, his analysis could not be questioned and Occidental suffered no penalty for their negligence in the Piper Alpha disaster.

The lack of corporate accountability was a huge blow for the Piper Alpha Families and Survivors Association. In 1991, the association erected a memorial sculpture in Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen to ensure that those who perished, many whose bodies were never recovered, were at least publically and individually accounted for. The park is just a short walk from my family home. Engraved on a pink granite plinth, topped by a larger than life-size bronze sculpture of three oil workers, are the names of the dead. Their ages at death are also given. With the youngest 19 and the eldest 65 the dead span three generations.

Piper Alpha remains the world's deadliest offshore oil disaster and is an event that woke, not just Aberdonians, but the world itself to the human cost of investing in an oil economy. Revisiting the Piper Alpha memorial as an adult now living in Edmonton, Alberta—Canada's 'Oil City'—I am keenly aware that our continued dependency on oil as an energy source guarantees further fatalities and environmental damage because oil exploration, capture, refining and transportation are inherently dangerous and destructive processes. Yet, I am also aware my presence in Alberta is due to the relative economic stability and job security afforded by Alberta's oil economy. This is the dirty truth any Albertan has to reconcile with. Oil was first discovered in Alberta in 1902, and its production continues to fuel the province: oil and gas royalty revenues make up 30% of the Government of Alberta's total revenue (Nikiforuk). 1947 saw the drilling of the first successful conventional well at Leduc, just South of Edmonton and overnight Canada went from being "oil poor" to "oil rich" (McRory 82). Today, 1 in 15 Alberta jobs are related to energy and Alberta's per capita GDP is higher than all other Canadian provinces and US states (Levant).

Before moving to Edmonton, all I knew about the province was that it was home to the controversial 'Tar Sands' project, the largest surfaced-mined reservoir of crude bitumen in the world. Situated North East of Edmonton, roughly centered on the boomtown Fort McMurray, the Athabasca 'oil sands' is the world's largest Capital Oil Project, currently producing 1.3 million barrels of oil a day (see Fig. 1). Commercial production began in 1967 and the total area of exploitable reserves covers 140,000 km²—an area larger than England (Levant 2011). Oils Sands are naturally occurring mixtures of sand, clay, water, and an extremely dense and viscous

form of petroleum technically referred to as bitumen. The primary methods of extraction are surface mining or in-situ drilling and the three main operating companies are Suncor Energy, Syncrude and Shell Canada. About two tons of oil sand must be dug up, moved and processed to produce one barrel of synthetic crude oil, and up to 5 barrels of water are consumed for every barrel of oil produced, making the oil sands Capital Project the world's most carbon and water intensive oil production process.
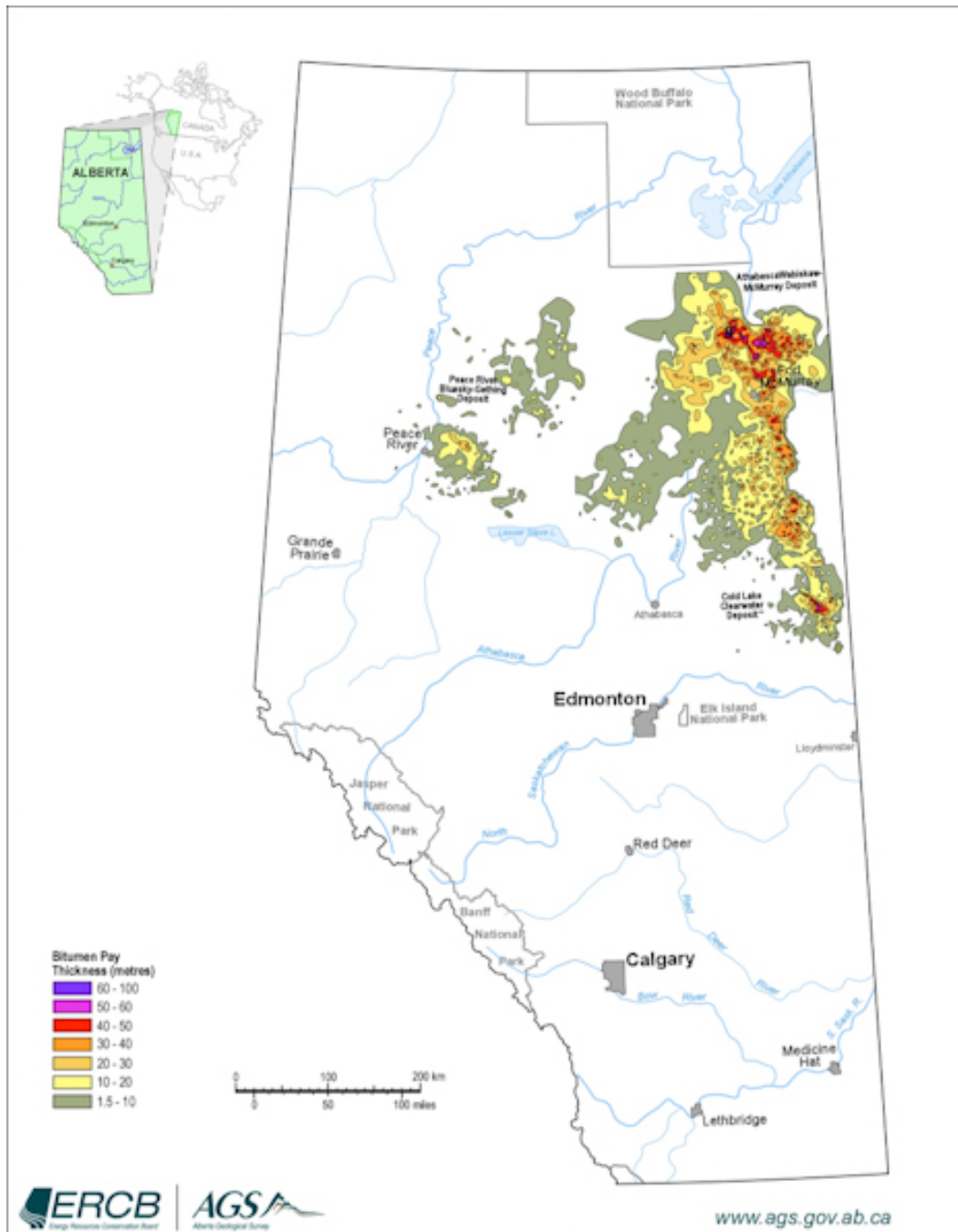
Fig 5.2 Location of the Athabasca, Cold Lake and Peace River oil sands in Alberta. Map.

The oil sands Capital Project is also one of the world's most environmentally destructive industrial projects. For example, in order to surface mine the bitumen large swathes of Canada's Boreal Forest are being deforested to the point where the

project is slated to have the second fastest rate of deforestation on the planet after the Amazon Rainforest Basin (Nikiforuk). The process of turning the oil sand into crude oil also produces numerous toxic byproducts. The water used to strip the bitumen from the sand, for example, is discharged afterwards as contaminated water into "tailings" ponds. The leftover "tailings" are a mixture of dirty water, clay, silt and sand but can also contain copper, zinc, iron, residual bitumen, mercury, arsenic, naphthenic acids and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). Alberta's inventory of tailings ponds is now 720 million cubic meters, which cover an area of about 130 square kilometers. Their contents are highly toxic to all forms of life. This was brought to international attention in April 2008 when some 500 migrating ducks mistook one of these ponds for a hospitable stopover, and, on landing on its oily surface, died. When Greenpeace broke into a Syncrude processing facility and suspended a banner that read "World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands" over the pipe discharging tailings, overnight they changed Canada's historically "green" image to one of "corrupt petro-state" (Monbiot).

Fig 5.3 Greenpeace activists enter Syncrude's Aurora North oil sands operation and suspend a banner that reads "World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands."

Where is Fort McMurray?

The Greenpeace image introduced a worldwide online audience to the environmental hazards associated with oil sands mining in Alberta (see Fig. 2). It also introduced the same audience to the dominant aesthetic strategy employed to capture the oil sands industry: that of emphasizing the scale of the industry by photographing it from on high. Since the appearance of Edward Burtynsky's aerial photographic-mappings of the region in 2007, aerial perspectives of the Canadian oil sands—

capturing the scale of the oil sands industry from above—has become the dominant photographic approach.

This 'scalar aesthetic' is, according to Imre Szeman, "an obvious approach to a site like the Alberta oil sands, which are estimated to be the size of Florida and include numerous surface mining sites and vast tailings ponds that permit a direct visualization of environmental destruction" (435-6). Other notable examples of this approach include Peter Essick's 2009 photographic series that accompanies Robert Kunzig's National Geographic article "Scraping the Bottom: The Canadian Oil Boom" and aerial photographer Louis Helbig's 2010 touring exhibition Beautiful Destruction. This scalar aesthetic has also been mobilized cinematically in Peter Mettler's 2009 Petropolis, a film that consists entirely of aerial panning shots to emphasize the size and scope of the oil sands.

These aerial views of the oil sands have helped to shape and polarize perceptions of the world's most colossal industrial site, including my own. So, when I was presented with an opportunity to visit Fort McMurray and the Tar Sands, I jumped at the chance to see this site with my own eyes. Andriko Lozowy, a colleague at the University of Alberta, had invited me to join him on a planned research trip to the region. Lozowy was engaged in a photographic project led by the provocation "Where is Fort McMurray?" This question was in part a response to the lack of geographical specificity offered by the dominant elevated perspectives that promoted a visual culture of Fort McMurray that stressed nullification or an erasure of representation. For part of this project, Lozowy had invited a group of Fort McMurray high school students to offer their response to this question through the practice of photography. Through a collaborative exchange, Lozowy offered the

students the opportunity of learning the basics of photographic techniques while engaging the students to create images that would offer a different visual narrative to the one found in the dominant visual imagery depicting the region. Before elaborating further on this project, it is pertinent to explore the scalar aesthetic, originating in Edward Burtynsky's photographs, that the students were attempting to work against.

Death from Above

Burtynsky's large-scale aerial perspectives of surface mines, refineries, and tailings ponds in his series depicting the oil sands industry in Fort McMurray offer disturbingly sublime depictions of a landscape degraded by petroleum production. Equally at home on the office wall of a CEO of an oil company or the campaign materials of environmental lobbyists, his images of the oil sands have been critiqued for their aestheticization of the toxic byproducts of oil sands production, like tailings ponds and sulphur pyramids. Jennifer Peeples introduces the concept of the "toxic sublime" as a means of analyzing the tensions arising from visual representations of environmental contamination like those found in Burtynsky's oil sands series, where the beauty of the images "obfuscates the health and environmental risk of the polluted sites they photograph" (Peeples 373). For example, in Alberta oil sands #10 Burtynsky produces an alchemical conversion of toxic tailings ponds into one of sublimity (Fig. 3). Although depicting a tailings pond, the viewer could easily mistake the vista for a river delta or estuary, where the intention of the photographer was to catch the light of a setting sky reflecting off the river channels and pools.

Fig 5.4 Edward Burtynsky, Alberta oil sands #10, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, 2007.

Burtynsky's painterly preoccupation with composition and light in his oil sands

images resonates with the aesthetic registers of the picturesque and the sublime. In

landscape painting, the sublime has traditionally been defined as the awe or anxiety

felt in the face of nature's power over humankind (Haworth-Booth). Inversely,

Burtynsky seeks to provoke the awe felt when witnessing the grandeur and horror of

human-altered landscapes by capturing their scale (Burtynsky, Manufactured

Landscapes). His method of using large-format cameras and reproducing the images

as large-format (up to 100cm x 150cm) pictures is an intentional strategy to evoke the

Kantian mathematical sublime where sheer scale produces awe. However,

Burtynsky's strategy of capturing the toxic landscapes of the Tar Sands from on high

(usually from the vantage afforded by a helicopter) provoke a crisis of vision, as the aerial perspective flattens the landscape, disorientating any sense of measurable scale. This flattening of the landscape presents a visual argument between foreground and background, magnitude and insignificance, the known and the unknown (Dielh 120). While this strategy makes his images visually and aesthetically compelling, and thus more in tune with Kant's dynamical sublime, Burtynsky's aerial mappings have been criticized for evoking the abstraction of remote sensing and setting up an aesthetic encounter of "disinterested contemplation" (Lang 425). By maintaining a studied ambiguity, aesthetic and ideological, about the epic scale and grandeur of bitumen extraction and its waste sites, Burtynsky, according to Mike Crang, "plays around with the balance between questions of beauty (the awe) and questions of ethics (the awful)" (Crang 1094).

Jennifer Peeples argues that the horror of the toxic sublime—awe at the immensity of human-made environmental degradation—can call into question the personal, social and environmental ethics that allow places of contamination like tailings ponds to exist. However, the scalar aesthetics deployed by Burtynsky in his oil sands series can leave one feeling a sense of bewilderment and inertia at the thought of rectifying a problem that exceeds our comprehension. While Burtynsky's compositional choices render his images fraught with tensions that require thought and contemplation, which can lead to contradictory sensations of horror and wonder, this does not necessarily provide the impetus for attitudinal change. His scalar aesthetic, for example, confronts two major barriers to the impetus necessary to mobilize action on the part of the viewer. First, Burtynsky's high-angled perspective presents his subject matter of tailings ponds and open pit mines as

transcending the scope of the frame, setting up a visual argument between magnitude and insignificance thereby resisting any meaningful visual representation. In other words, while Burtynsky's perspective indicates the massive scale of production of the oil sands, what is not clear is the magnitude of environmental degradation. Second, the high vertical angle summons questions of enormity and thus feelings of impotence, which can leave the viewer "unclear what action one could take, even if one wanted to." (Szeman 437).

Burtynsky's own lack of an overt critical positioning on the Oils Sands has left him open to the criticism of being a cosmopolitan privileged viewer who "floats free" from the environmental degradation and human labour depicted (Crang 1098). Furthermore, while Burtynsky has felt free to focus his lens on the human labour behind the landscapes of industrial mega-projects in China and Bangladesh in his 2000 Shipbreaking series, he has chosen to steer away from explicitly depicting the human labour involved in the manufacture of the Alberta oil sands. This could be because Burtynsky, aware of the polarization of the oil sands in both political and public discourse, feels the power of these images resides in their ambiguity. More cynically, with so many Canadians making a living from, or living comfortably because of the oil sands, perhaps it is also in the ambiguity of the images that they maintain their largest audience and marketplace appeal. Burtynsky's limited captions describing the images have also been a point of contention for some critics. His captions for his Alberta oil sands series merely state the number of the photograph in the series, the location ("Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada"), and the date. For example, in a photograph from the series which depicts immense acid-yellow sulphur stockpiles with Syncrude's main processing plant in the background, the caption

notes only "Alberta oil sands #6 Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, 2007."

Burtynsky's reticence to name operating companies or their toxic by-products, could

be a preservation strategy employed in order to ensure his own continued access to

the world's most colossal industrial sites. Yet, by partitioning the oil sands operating

companies and their environmental contaminants from full view, Burtynsky also

represses connections not only between the viewer and viewed, but between the oil

sands and its broader geopolitical context.

In an article written for The Walrus, Burtynsky attempts to dispel some of the

uncertainly around his environmental views and particularly his reticence to directly

critique resource extraction in his own country (Burtynsky, "Extraction"). In the

article, he calls for the Canadian government to mandate sustainable practices in the

extraction and sale of Canada's natural resources, including the Alberta oil sands.

However, his detractors see this as mere tokenism: a letter to the editor sharply noted

that, despite his undisputed talent as a master photographer, "Alas, as an

environmental activist, he is a failure" (Vincent). As one commentator summed up,

"while Burtynsky's photographs of Canadian industry make for great art, they

operate within the Canadian political mainstream and do little to shake up the

consciousness of a public content to keep looking away from the social and

environmental degradation that is taking place in its own backyard" (Nickerson).

Reclamation

Andriko Lozowy has not had the luxury of being able to look away from the

'dark specter' of oil production actually taking place in his backyard. Lozowy grew up

in Sherwood Park, Edmonton, in the shadow of 'Refinery Row', industrial home to

the largest oil refinery facilities in Western Canada. Since a teenager, Lozowy has

found photography a useful tool for investigating and making sense of the built

environment of oil production that has dominated his neighbourhood skyline.

Although fenced in and highly patrolled, the camera's zoom offered a means of

interloping into industrial sites deemed out of bounds. Of course, pushing the

boundaries or railing against the establishment is the prerogative of the teenager,

something Lozowy recognized later in life when engaging the group of Fort

McMurray youth to respond to the question "Where is Fort McMurray?" Teaching

the students the techniques of digital photography, Lozowy hoped to empower them

by equipping them with the tools to create an alternative view of their own backyard.

While Burtynsky's images have certainly helped to bring the oil sands and Fort

McMurray international attention, the reproduction of his scalar aesthetic has meant

that the dominant optics in this case has become one of partitioning the oil sands as

an active and place-based industrial site from view. By asking "Where is Fort

McMurray?", Lozowy seeks to address this loss of geographical specificity and

dislocation by bringing us back down to earth, or rather in this case bitumen.

Through the project, Lozowy and his student participants therefore sought to

overturn the dominant scopic regime by offering a point of view in, rather than on

Fort McMurray.

A series of images from the venture was collaboratively curated by Lozowy

and the student participants to form an online exhibit also entitled Where is Fort

McMurray? (Lozowy, Where). The images offer a perspective of Fort McMurray

from the vantage point of local youth: the regular repeated lines of suburban

rooftops, the blur of a fast car, the overgrown tracks of a disused railway line, the

lush greenery framing a winding river valley, and the cramped yet colourfully-decorated confines of a shared bedroom. These are windows into Fort McMurray at the human scale.

Lozowy has similarly taken a more on-the-ground approach in his own photographic practice when responding to the provocation "Where is Fort McMurray?". In contrast to Burtynsky's aerial mappings of immense ungraspable scenes, Lozowy's approach is more modest: to see what you can document of the world's largest industrial site from the public access roads running through it.

What answers do they offer to the question "Where is Fort McMurray?" Where his students, by nature of their age, were limited to directing their lenses on the town site of Fort McMurray, Lozowy was compelled to follow the 24/7 circular flow traffic heading north on Highway 63 to the town's industrial heart: the oil sands. Highway 63 passes through the oil sands between Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay and offers a 'public' point of view for the committed (some may say foolhardy) photographer onto the private sites of industrial production. I say committed since stopping or merely slowing down on this highway—one of the most dangerous roads in Canada—is a risky endeavour. This is something I discovered when accompanying Lozowy on one of his photographic field trips.

Touring the Tar Sands

Until 1970, Highway 63 did not even appear on a map. Since then the 240-kilometre-long, two-lane highway has become the critical artery in and out of Fort McMurray (see Fig. 5). Drivers in the know call it "Hell's Highway," or the "Highway of Death". When Lozowy and I drove north to Fort McMurray from Edmonton

along Highway 63, it was not hard to imagine why it had earned these monikers. On any given day, thousands of logging trucks, SUVs, semi-trailers, buses and tanker trucks form a frantic parade to and from Fort McMurray and the oil sands bitumen mine sites. Often a dozen different convoys of extra-wide loads carrying tires, turbines, and cockers the size of houses completely dominate the ridiculously inadequate two lane highway. Known as one of the provinces deadliest highways, forty-six people died in crashes on the road between 2005 and 2009, with another 310 people injured in the same period. On the day that we traveled Highway 63 it was mid-winter, making the already hazardous conditions seriously treacherous, a fact evidenced by the recurrent appearance of wrecked and abandoned vehicles along the hard shoulder of the highway. The four and a half hour drive north to 'Fort Mac' was the longest, most drawn-out white-knuckle ride of my life.

Fig 5.5 Andriko Lozowy, Highway 63

After such a journey, the sight of 'Fort Mac' does little to convince that it was worth the risks. Of course, for those working at the oil sands the economic rewards to be had there far outweigh the dangers of the drive and the numbing dullness of the town itself. To the tourist, Fort McMurray appears makeshift: a ramshackle grid of functional building blocks that define a boomtown: a place to sleep and eat. Yet the town itself never sleeps. As the urban service centre for the region, it serves the 24/7production of the oil sands. The constant hum of traffic and the repetitive approach, stop, idle and depart at the chartered bus stops which run workers back and forth to the mines make Fort Mac a difficult place to get some sleep for the uninitiated.

The next morning, bleary-eyed Lozowy and I joined the procession heading across the reinforced bridge above the Athabasca River north to the oil sands. Two oil-town kids, we shared an interest in exploring the oil landscapes that were ever-present, yet eluded us in our youth. Our intention was to document what we could of the private spheres of oil sands production from the roadside—Lozowy with his camera, and me with my sound recorder.

With Lozowy driving, I was free to take in the sights. Yet from the car window, with boreal forest cleared and land flattened, the view is not unlike that of the Prairies: a featureless and flat topography dominated by sky.
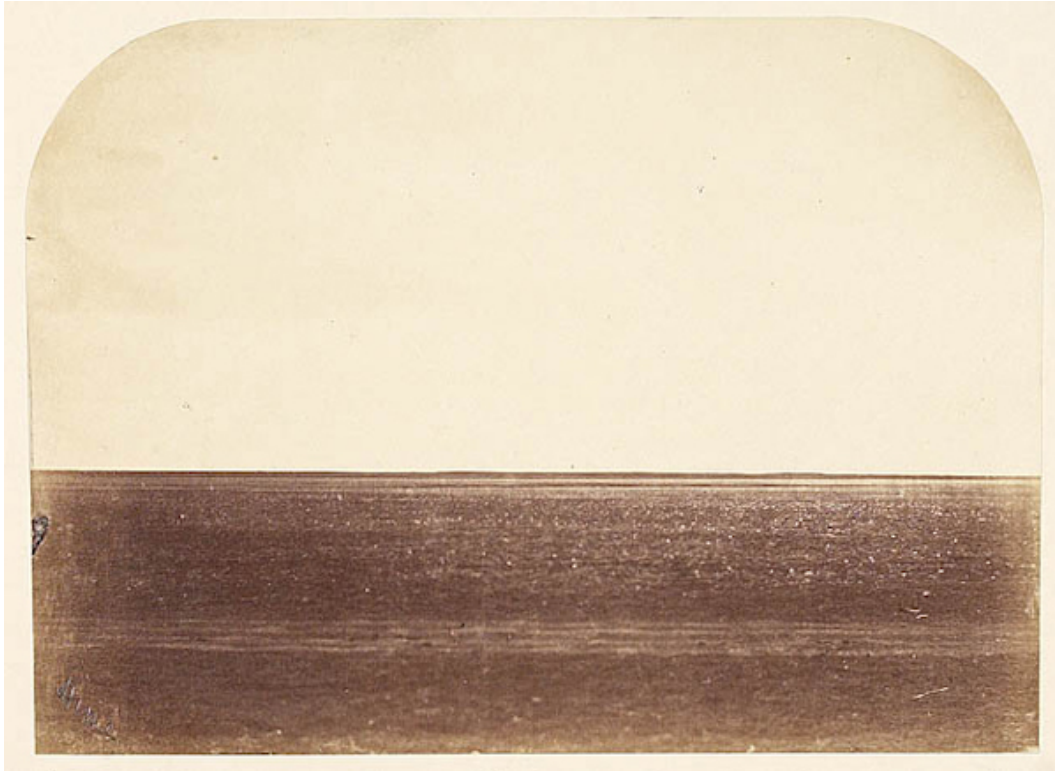
Fig 5.6 Humphrey Lloyd Hime, The Prairie, Looking South.

Historically, artists have encountered difficulties in depicting the Prairie landscape, primarily because of the Prairie's lack of geographical features that would contribute to a 'view'. Surveyor and photographer Humphrey Lloyd Hime famously captured the Prairie's flat and featureless topography in the 1858 photograph: The Prairie, Looking South (Fig. 6). A "monument to treelessness", this stark image reduces the Prairie landscape "to what Canadian novelist W. O. Mitchell has called 'the least common denominator of nature': earth and sky" (Schwartz 968). However, to view Hime's image as empty or desolate would be a misreading. Hime, as Schwartz records, was a surveyor for the Canadian Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expeditions whose purpose was to determine the possibilities of westward expansion (968). While treelessness had once been an indicator of aridity and sterility, advances

in agricultural technology meant the vast ocean of Prairie photographed by Hime was no longer viewed as an arid desert but rather as a fertile, untouched territory receptive to settlement, agriculture and westward expansion. While Hime's vision was promoted by the Canadian government, it was not necessarily shared by those people already living on and from the land at the time, like the First Nations and Metis. Viewed in these terms, according to Schwartz, Hime's "quintessential portrait of the prairie, so bereft of content, can be seen as a geographical imagining, one which reflects the economic hopes and political dreams of Canadian expansionists and British imperialists" (969).

Understanding the active role photography has played in the processes by which people have come to articulate their assumptions about land and land use in Canada, Lozowy has recognized the power of displacing Hime's 'prairie aesthetic' to the flattened and cleared lands north of Fort McMurray on the roads cutting through the oil sands mining sites. Here treelessness becomes a monument to the significant clearing of Boreal forest it takes to access oil sands deposits and the resulting disturbance this has on the animal species and aboriginal communities that depend upon this ecosystem. Thus, instead of surveying an empty stage for the projections/imaginings of Canadian expansionists, Lozowy documents the actual landscapings of what some have called "modern Canadian imperialism" (Nikiforuk 68).

Amidst The Detour and Delay

The smoking chimneys of a Suncor refinery offered the first visual indication of mining operations north of the bridge crossing the Athabasca River. As we drove

towards them, the air in the car grew thick with the aroma of hydrocarbons. Some

have compared the smell of mined bitumen to that of heated sea coal, which is why

the oil sands were historically known colloquially as 'Tar Sands' due to tar's similar

appearance, odor, and colour. Having driven this miasmic stretch of Highway 63

many times on his photographic field trips, Lozowy acted as a tour guide to me as

passenger-seat tourist. To the left he pointed out Crane Lake Reclamation Area:

reclaimed wetland habitat from a former mining site. A giant roadside metal Crane

sculpture invited us to make our first roadside stop and potential 'Kodak moment'.

The form of roadside photographic touring practiced by Lozowy on Highway 63 is

not unlike how one is encouraged to visually consume picturesque Canadian

landscapes like the Rockies, either out of the car window or at the designated 'picture

stops' that pepper the highway. Susan Sontag has famously argued that photography

enables a touristification of the world, where "every subject is depreciated into an

article of consumption, promoted as an item for aesthetic appreciation" (Sontag

110). However, while the 'romantic tourist gaze' seeks to reproduce static and

unrealistic visions of untouched 'wilderness', Lozowy seeks to capture the

contingencies the romantic tourist gaze seeks to edit out (Urry 139).

The traditional assumption is that photography is an inert form of visual

representation that freezes and captures discreet moments in time and space. Having

made many return visits to this area, Lozowy's aim is to document the changeable

nature of this manufactured landscape. Trees are felled, tons of soil and sands are

dug up and moved, tailings ponds fill and are then drained, filled in, contoured, and

planted. This landscape is far from static. Of course, the traditional tourist snap-shot

can be thought of as technology dealing only in the 'frozen moment' (Henning 138).

For example, Burtynsky's framed aerial snap-shots of the Athabasca oil sands, touring worldwide as part of his OIL exhibition, offer audiences a vision of this industrial landscape in aspic. Although taken several years ago, the ideological authority of Burtynsky's mappings presents a static understanding of the landscapes of oil sands production, resonating with Barthes' notion of the camera's ability to "embalm" the living world (Barthes 14). Furthermore, within the context of OIL, which narrates the story of oil from extraction and refinement to transportation and the end of oil, the Alberta oil sands become buried within the scale of oil that Burtynsky seeks to emphasize. Ranging from NASCAR rallies in the United States, to gigantic parking lots of Volkswagen cars in China, to fields of abandoned oil derricks in Baku, Burtynsky's OIL images underline the global permeations of oil on humanity and the environment. Yet, by doing so they also work to further erase the oil sands from view as they become enmeshed within an even greater scalar aesthetic.

Lozowy, by comparison, seeks to explore this sense of the oil sands industry falling away from view. Moreover, by working with rather than against this sense of erasure, he also seeks to resist the inertia and stasis found in Burtynsky's images in order to capture the shifting (and shifted) nature of the oil sands. It is Debbie Lisle's view that, far from being static, there is inherent mobility in photography and by extension the photograph, and this has an important antecedent at the level of production. Lisle's point is that the action of clicking the camera's shutter is never an isolated moment: "rather, it is punctured by all the previous clicks and moments leading up to it" (Lisle 3). As such, the photographer's contact sheet or computer file becomes a "visual travelogue of discrete moments that bleed into one another." (3) This is certainly the case in Lozowy's series Looking Left at Syncrude, a digital

archive of photographs Lozowy took from his car window while driving around one of Syncrude's tailings ponds (Lozowy, "Looking Left").

Taken at close intervals, the photographs contained in this online archive act almost as a praxioscope: one image bleeds into the next, capturing the fluctuations of land, sky and dust the moving car affords around the perimeter of the pond (see Fig. 7). Here, it becomes clear that it was Lozowy's movement prior to clicking the camera's shutter that shaped and determined the photograph's content. Lisle goes one step further than this to argue that all photographs, no matter what they depict, are saturated with "the potential mobility of the world's materials" and so in this sense are never still: "indeed, the world of flux out of which the image is extracted includes the image itself, and in this sense, an image can never be isolated from the world in which it was derived" (Lisle 4). Following this, Lisle argues that a photograph should be read counter-intuitively, "not as an arrest of movement or a freezing of time, but as a collection of signs that is always potentially mobile". This relates to Gilles Deleuze's notion of the movement-image, where the movement-image reflects a commitment "to show or create the kind of space of movement that is prior to the representation of static objects" (Thrift and Dewsbury 417).

Fig 5.7 Andriko Lozowy, Image 19

While Lozowy's approach to photographing the oil sands from the roadside may seem similar to that of the roadside tourist in search of the perfect 'Kodak moment', Highway 63 disallows for the leisurely composition-time usually expected for this type of image-making. His method of taking photographs on-the-move, often out the window of a moving or idling car, underlines the fact that one is not encouraged to stop and take in the view on the roads that intersect and frame oil sands production areas. For example, beyond the Crane Lake Reclamation Area stop, which is marketed as a Nature Reserve with a designated car park and connecting nature trails, there are no more parking stops between it and the oil sands mining sites. Attempting to stop your car along this stretch of Highway 63 is a dangerous business, as I found out when Lozowy stopped on the hard shoulder during our road trip. As soon as Lozowy stopped the car, the gargantuan trucks buffeting past us

honked their horns in protest to our slowing their beeline to the mines and refineries. On the passenger side, I learnt very quickly that opening the door had to be timed carefully to coincide with a break in the traffic, as the almost constant stream of over-sized vehicles stopped for no one.

By comparison, I found Lozowy to be quite the expert in roadside stealth. Even when a newly erected fence occluded a previously open view onto one of the tailings ponds, Lozowy climbed atop the stationary station-wagon (from the starting position of his car seat) and managed to take several shots, even though both he and the wagon were being buffeted by the force of the trucks driving past. As such, Lozowy's method produces a seeing body that is able to respond to contingencies and accidents en route (Dubow 268). For Walter Benjamin, it is only amidst the detour and delay that critical practice can begin. Following Benjamin, one could argue that Lozowy's detours from the expected drive opened us up to experiencing particular types of encounters—the unplanned, the contingent, and the unforeseen. Coupled with this for Lozowy is a resistance to integration or closure: the 'delay' and 'detour' are characteristic of an in-between spatio-temporal frame, a moment of contemplation, a 'working through' of the creative process rather than a conceptual context aimed at fixing the objects of landscape in time and space.

Working in this way, Lozowy produces an alternative view, one that encounters the contingent as it folds in and out of the path of observation. By taking us with him on his tour amidst the detour and delay through the oil sands epicenter, we become his passenger and the car window our frame. This strategy, of offering a point of view in, rather than on the oil sands, reconnects the viewer with the viewed and relocates the oil sands in placed-based experience. This rescaling of the oil sands

makes them seem more approachable physically, politically, and representationally.

However, Lozowy is not simply restoring representation. By taking his photographs on the move and by making return visits, he also emphasizes the strangeness of the momentary and the material of a landscape in flux. If, as viewers, we break with the view that the photograph presents a "vision-as-semblance"and instead pay close attention to its affective intensities, it becomes possible to recover these "contingencies the gaze edits out" (Dubow 268). In Lozowy's photographic series that follows this essay, it is the fleeting flashes of affective detail that jump out and grab us: orange scarecrows warn of potential toxicity and harm to health, clouds of dust signify unsettled earth, ringed water marks document disappearance, a newly erected fence yet to soften into its surroundings has something to hide, and worker camps are reminiscent of the Gulag.

Fig 5.8 Andriko Lozowy, Refinery at Night

The function of a photograph cannot be simply reversed from freezing a moment in time to animating a moment in time. Rather, Lozowy's images set in motion "feelings of absence in the present (i.e. 'it is not there') and present imaginings of the past (i.e. 'but it has been there')" (Lisle 4). This argument is in tune with Benjamin's concept of the dialectic image, where "what has been comes together with the now" to constitute what Benjamin calls "dialectics at standstill" (Benjamin 463). Yet, rather than read Benjamin's concept of standstill as turning the world to stone, Lisle promotes an understanding of Benjamin's conception of stillness as "something fizzing and pulsating with 'political electricity'" (Buck-Morss qtd in Lisle 219).

Photographs for Lisle, just like the dialectic image, are charged with an "affective punch" that is fizzing with political electricity (219).

Here, Lisle extends agency to the photograph by arguing that it is the

photograph itself that shapes the emotive and affective experience of the viewer: i.e.

it is the image that demands something of the viewer, rather than the other way

round. She bases this understanding on Deleuze's dispersed account of agency in the

act of perception:

> For Deleuze, a work of art—for our purposes, a photograph—is not an inert or still document, but rather a 'block of sensations' (Deleuze 31). It is not a finished object produced by an autonomous viewer; rather, it is a combination of percepts (initial perceptions) and affects (physical intensities) that passes through all subjects at the point of visual perception. This kind of relational encounter with an image not only deconstructs Modernity's foundational distinction between the subject and the object, it also opens up an affective connection between all subjects engaged in the act of looking; in this case, the photographer, the subjects and objects within the photograph and the viewer. (Lisle 5)

It is, therefore, Lisle's contention that taking account of the affective level of

perception (i.e. the pre-interpretive moment when images reach out to grab us)

changes our traditional understanding of how a photograph 'moves' us.

The "affective punch" of Lozowy's images resides in their ability to conjure

the past and present together in a flash. Take, for example, Lozowy's image of an oil

sands refinery at night (Fig. 8). For me, this photograph initiates an awakening to the

burning rays of a past light that lit up the North Sea on the night of July 6, 1988.

That night my dad, a BBC cameraman, had taken me and my sister to the swimming

baths, but before we got into the pool my dad was paged and asked to cover a news

story: the Piper Alpha oil platform was on fire. With the aid of a helicopter, my dad

was the first news cameraman to the scene and the first to capture the towering

inferno that had engulfed the rig, its crew and lit up the surrounding sea.

In Benjamin's terminology, this is the shock effect of the dialectic "at a

standstill" : the sudden spark, the profane flash that lights up a dark thought and allows it to make itself felt in the present (Benjamin 462). The image for me lights up a night when a culture that kept the oil flowing at all costs set the scene for the destruction of an oil platform and the deaths of 167 men. It also portends that this volatile scene, now displaced, is poised to spark again. History will repeat itself, as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill evidences, because oil exploration, capture, refining and transportation are inherently dangerous and destructive.

Not long after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Burtynsky was unsurprisingly back in his helicopter, taking aerial photographs to capture the scale of the spill, 50 miles off the Louisiana coastline in the Gulf of Mexico. Many of Burtynsky's pictures from this day are aesthetic masterpieces.

His aerial vistas depicting the lustrous and painterly gestures of oil slicks emulsifying into the cobalt blue gulf, much like his images of oil sands tailings ponds, produce a toxic sublime. The aesthetic pleasure to be found when encountering these images is impossible to forestall, the context notwithstanding. This again underlines the risks of invoking the toxic sublime. The beauty of Burtynsky's images "obfuscates the health and environmental risk of the polluted sites they photograph", which in this case happens to be an oil spill of epic proportions (Peeples 373).

Similarly, his use of an aerial perspective to capture the epic proportions of the spill reproduces the same problems associated with the scalar aesthetics deployed in his oil sands series. The view from on-high summons questions of omnipotence and thus feelings of impotence, leaving one feeling a sense of bewilderment and inertia at the thought of rectifying a problem that exceeds both the frame and comprehension.

While Burtynsky's compositional choices render his images fraught with tensions that elicit contradictory sensations of attraction and repulsion, his images ultimately, to my mind, do not provide the impetus for attitudinal, never mind behavioural, change.

To conclude, Burtynsky's scalar aesthetic has trained us to see and aestheticize the Canadian oil sands in limited and troubling ways. By offering the viewer a point of view in, rather than on the oil sands, Lozowy's photographic project Where is Fort McMurray? disrupts the dominant obfuscatory aerial imaginaries, enabling a more critical and politically meaningful photographic engagement with this oil project. Similarly, by reworking the Prairie aesthetic to reflect modern times, Lozowy is able to relocate the Alberta oil sands in place-based experience. Thus even for those of you who have not, and may never, visit the oil sands, or who never grew up with landscapes of oil production in your backyard, living in a time of peak oil, its dark spectre will permeate your lives. This is why Lozowy's following tour of the Alberta oil sands may provoke emotive and affective experiences to awaken your attention to its crude realities.

Fig 5.9 Andriko Lozowy, Bitu*men.*

Frames for Reading

In this electronic exhibit, Merle Patchett, a geographer, interprets and contextualized my photographs and my photographic practice that is informed by the discipline of sociology. Together, Sociology and Geography are taken up here as a point of reference towards thinking critically about limitations and potentials for the emergence of combined thinking in creative ways.

Patchett asked me why I photograph? I replied that I do it to document crude realism, to engage in a categorization of sorts, to perform active engagement with people and landscape, to create a physical and material artefacts, to challenge structures of power, and as an aspiration of being part of a great documentarian practices of which all forms of photography are initiates.

Fig 5.10 Andriko Lozowy, Bison View.

In my hands the camera becomes active, an apparatus of production, creating

objects of a certain order: images. As such, I consider the etymology of 'image',

which comes from the French image (c.1200), or artificial representation and imagier

(late 1300s), meaning "to form a mental picture." Imagination, as a noun follows to

refer to "a faculty of the mind that forms and manipulates images" (OED).

I also consider the production of images and photography itself in a manner

that is similar to Vilem Flusser's (1920-1991), although transposed into a

contemporary twenty-first century context.   In Towards a Philosophy of

Photography, Flusser argued that images signify material elements in time and space

that are made comprehensible to us as abstractions, a reduction of dimensions (8). In

order to render images out of space and time, the precondition of imagination must

be in play so that we may encode phenomena into two dimensional symbols and be

able to read these symbols (ibid). Flusser illustrates a kind of underpainting of normalized image uses. In order to read images, we apply our collected and collective knowledge as we gaze.

Fig 5.11 Andriko Lozowy. Driving into.

Working in the early 1980s, Flusser followed his publication of Towards a Philosophy of Photography with Into the Universe of Technical Images, where many of the undertones of the initial text are taken up and ordered into a linear and pragmatic approach. Flusser insists on a dialogical system logic. Like Innis, Barthes, McLuhan, and Baudrillard, Flusser is often categorized as a media theorist concerned with the interdependence and relationships of humans as social actors in relation to technology. In Flusser's view, contemporary societies need to embrace the visual's multi-dimensionality and relinquish long-held linear texts of reductive abstraction.

Flusser passed away in 1991, and if we may appropriate his thinking to the present

day then we can think into the ways in which information exerts a decisive influence

on our lives, images as flowing streams:; photographs, films, videos, computers, all

operating in a profoundly different way than linear writing. Images have mutated our

modes of behavior, our perceptions, our values (Flusser: 5) and as such Flusser

makes the point that what it means to publish is "to put a subjective observation into

the symbols of a social code" (2011, 1985: 12).

Fig 5.12 Andriko Lozowy. Silent Canons.

Perhaps this is precisely the point at which fate has brought together the

geographer and the sociologist. On the one hand, we can think of these two

disciplines as each occupying a clearly defined epistemological position and establish

an approximate stance on how macro or micro, or how small or large the scale and

scope of vision ought to be. Indeed, both approaches seem to align their trajectories, at least as broadly defined, around an impetus to broad vision, and it seems to us, that in each case, the depth of vision is often pursued by the sub-disciplines, those seeking some manner of spatial or cultural specificity from which one could gain insight.

If we consider Max Weber and the aim of sociology, then we should note that the goal is clearly outlined as concerned with understanding the cultural conditions and meanings of society (Weber qtd in Burri 46). Regula Valerie Burri keenly points out, that classical sociologists have mostly neglected the understanding that such analysis must include "the visual" (Burri 46). Geography, although an historically 'visual' discipline has been criticized for not properly theorizing how and why it is visual and what kind of power relations are at play until Gilliam Rose's famous intervention in 2003.

Fig 5.13 Andriko Lozowy. Berm.

The work of Flusser and Burri both emphasize the importance of considered and critical analysis of the scope of the visual. On the one hand, Burri works to persuade her audience that "the visual," is a kind of matter in which we live (Jenks). On the other hand, Flusser insists that we must take note of the cultural mutation afoot, from linear text to another kind of image world entirely. Burri and Flusser press upon us that we ought to consider the ways in which three dimensions, plus time, are working as interdependent systems, in dialogue, interacting, reflecting, refracting, and all the while we need to be diligent as scholars to take note of the ways in which humans interact, change the dimensions, and are shaped by them.

Fig 5.14 Andriko Lozowy. Looking Left at Syncrude.

In short, the geographer and the sociologist emerge as social-geographers, cultural geographers, human-geographers. Through collaboration Patchett and I stand to resist the notion that text alone is the beholder of an "objective" truth

(Daston and Galison). The goal here, by publishing, writing, editing, and thereby shaping the now muddied waters of a given discipline, is to press upon the thinking faculties of our dear readers to apply self-analysis of individual notions of how ideas, images, myths, become known, how they work to change thought, and how thought is transmitted as imaginaries.

Whatever the aesthetic merits, every representation of landscape is also a record of human values and actions imposed on the land over time. What stake do landscape photographers have in constructing such representations? A large one, I believe. Whatever the photographer's claims, landscapes as subject matter in photography can be analyzed as documents extending beyond the formally aesthetic or personally expressive. Even formal and personal choices do not emerge sui generis, but instead reflect collective interests and influences, whether philosophical, political, economic, or otherwise. (Deborah Bright 126)

Camera in hand I consider the ways in which photography as action, as process, as performance, can be an embodied manipulation towards a synthesis of specific techno-logical and scientific/mathematical constraints. The camera compresses, reduces, takes note of light, and fuses together all manner of the photographer's aesthetic, cultural, social, sign+signifed concepts and, in a flash, captures a reduced form of a world 'out there.' Out there, becomes, here, and here, quickly turns to join again with out there.

My methods are syncopatic, and tangential, in order to approach a given subject I find that immersion, and fresh eyes lead me towards planes of vision requesting their capture. I follow black-top thorough fares and laneways towards zones beyond my usual traversals. In the region of Wood Buffalo that contains the

municipality of Fort McMurray, there are many fences and signs that clearly mark spaces as private, no trespassing allowed. In Calgary, at the tops of office towers, neos signs bearing the names of 'Suncor' and 'Syncrude' beam brightly, whereas in Fort McMurray these same signifiers rest on humble placards mounted to wooden fence posts. Their message is clear; private property, danger, keep out!

The highway resembles a long stage, automobiles press their rubber tyres into the surface. The highway provides a false sense of security. Highway 63 serves a primary purpose, to guide workers to the oil sands operations. The highway is public, but on either side is private property—it is bordered on all sides by the subject, objects of order in space.

To me, Highway 63 represents an access route to visit places that magnify the views of oil refineries near my birthplace in Edmonton, Alberta. In other words, visiting the oil sands is like coming to the well.

So why come and photograph? I travel as an explorer, a researcher, a photographer - these are my points of reference. This triad of actions is a process, a motif, a way of seeing the world. Photography underscores and supports my larger research project that is academically based and geographically rooted in the town of Fort McMurray. As traveller, I move from Edmonton to Fort McMurray and beyond in order to work with others, and what exists outside, out there.

As a photographer, I engage with photography from the point of view of public lands as points/spaces of access that allow me to direct my gaze and camera at—or into—or upon private sites of production. Images speak as evidence of the strangeness, the sublime, the uncanny topographical features that arise in a place where boreal forests stood untouched by human force just a short time ago.

Fig 5.15 Andriko Lozowy. Distance and Scale.

Even before I visited this landscape, I knew that I needed to go and see for myself. At first gaze I was struck with a sense of horror and a deep sense of loss and tragedy. Two terms to help describe the psychological perplexities and emotions that arise: One is Saudade, which is a deep longing for that which is gone and may never return. This sense of loss developed as a form of Solistalgia (Albrecht), which is the loss felt by environmental change, the feeling one may have when returning to a place after a long time has passed—like New Orleans after Katrina. Following on these two terms, Saudade and Solistalgia, the question of why photograph can be answered by a single word: duty, a service to memory, to public perception, to landscape changes. It is a duty to document, to provide evidence and artefacts for hard dialogues and discussions.

Since 2009, I continue to return, to travel, to ask with a researcher's critical eye, and to bring into focus using a camera as production apparatus and creator of representation.

Even if the images are just for myself, I find value in this endeavor as an active process. More recently I have been asked to share—colleagues and friends say, "you've been there, can we see your photographs?". And in these instances the duty becomes clear. My responsibility is to share these photographic images that compress and obscure time and space.

I work to express photographically the imaginary of subject as place. In this instance, the imaginary is the story of place transformed through the distribution of photograph as objects and artifacts. Rather than obscure the relationship between image and object, my mode has been to re-enter the image of place: photograph again and again, and establish a visual dialogue of communication that intends to move beyond the rigid constraints of singularity. I ask, what would the land, and the landscape itself reveal if it was shown the objects of our perusal?

6. Mega Haulers [43]

Mega Haulers move massive quantities of material from one place to the next. Mega is used to denote million, and generally refers to exponentiation or repeated multiplication. Mega haulers are thus known for their very large capacity to hold and transport materials. For the sake of simplicity this entry focuses on Mega Haulers, but it is noted that the term Ultra Haulers has been used, in particular by World Mining Equipment editor Mike Woof in his illustrated book, Ultra Haulers: Global Giants of the Mining Industry.

In common parlance the term Mega Hauler is associated with a range of applied uses such as; pick-up trucks signified by the ability to traverse any type of landscape while towing a heavy cargo trailer; container ships that are often described in relation to the number of football fields long they are; tractor trailers for myriad uses of on-road heavy transport such as long distance container shipment, refuse collection and construction; heavy hauler trucks such as the Caterpillar 797 series that represent the highest off-road payload capacity of 400 tons. The Terex MT 6300AC and Caterpillar 797 series, 'B' and 'F' models are some of the biggest trucks in the world in use and are predominantly used in mining operations to transport raw materials like heavy metals and bitumen.

Historically speaking it is worthwhile to consider the trajectory from horse drawn trailers to the current Mega Hauler incarnation. Mike Woof, author of Ultra Haulers notes that initially it was mining operations that created a demand for moving heavy material around a mine site. At the same time as teams of horses

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[43] Appears as published in- *Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste: The Social Science of Garbage.* 2012: Sage.

struggled to free trailers with solid wheels through difficult terrain other operations employed train-tracks. However the train track system is limited by its bi-directionality. In 1925 Holt and Best merged to proceed under the name Caterpillar and began selling crawler tractors to replace earlier models that used metal and solid wheels that were known for poor breaking capacity and limited traction. Crawler tractors used a rolling track system that ensured good traction. Although the rolling track system provided sure footing movement was slow meaning that the track system would be inefficient for moving massive quantities of material distances of a few miles.

Since 1998 Caterpillar has been manufacturing the most recognizable fleet of Mega Haulers otherwise known as off-highway, ultra class, two-axle, mechanical powertrain haul trucks. At the heart of these mega transport machines have been a historical evolution towards larger and more robust engines, heavy-duty construction materials and increased comfort for the driver. Promotional materials from manufacturers of these Mega Haulers hi light; safety as first priority; a reliable and efficient engine and transmission; superior braking control; durable and flexible steel structure body for performance; long life; minimal maintenance; ergonomic, comfortable, productive and safe operator station to minimize operator fatigue; and, customer support and serviceability.

In mining, Mega Hauler trucks are typically paired with a correspondingly large hydraulic shovel. Each shovel full can equal 100 tons per scoop and top the trucks off with 400 tons of bituminous sands.

The Alberta oil sands represents one of the largest scale mining projects in the world. In terms of the production of consumable goods, Oil has come to play a

primary role in the composition of many of the products that we currently buy, from clothing to food, to packaging to fuel. Alberta's oil sands operation in Canada have been a driving force behind the development and use of, in particular the Caterpillar 797 series Mega Haulers. The oil sands correlate to an massive area totaling some 27,000 Sq/M (70,000 Sq/Km). One of the primary methods of oil sands extraction involves simple mining techniques, albeit on a exponentially large scale. Keyano College, the regional post-secondary education institute offers training courses for a range of heavy equipment. Information for prospective students note that Heavy Hauler trucks are used for hauling oil sands to feed the crushers, as well as overburden to waste dumps. Heavy Haulers rather than Mega Haulers is the preferred verbiage in regards to oil sands mining operations.

Photographers, such as commercial photographer Edward Burtynsky, i.e., Manufactured Landscapes and Oil, and freelance photographer Peter Essick, i.e., National Geographic March 2009, have used a birds-eye aerial view in order to photograph the oil sands mining operations. Upon viewing the aerial photographs only then can the viewer recognize the perceived need for exponentiation of scale. Simply put, Mega Haulers strive to master the massive landscape. As seen from above - the image may appear to resemble a child's sandbox complete with yellow dump trucks.

Mega Haulers can be characterized by their shear scale. Photographs are commonly shared between friends and online that depicts a person standing next to one of these trucks. In particular, children are often pictured as dwarfed next to one wheel of the truck. In relation to scale are the staggering numbers and capacities that mark these Mega Haulers. The capacity to carry 400 tons of material is seen as an

engineering challenge to design and build a machine capable of providing years of service wherein the demand for raw materials is still increasing. To illustrate the magnitude once again, consider that these trucks are moving back and fourth between the track based shovel in the mine and dumping the load in the crusher that may be up to a few miles away, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

Conclusion

This thesis brings a study of visual culture and photographic production together within the contemporary context of the Alberta oil sands and the lived experiences of those who are affected by it. Collaboration figured prominently at each stage of the research and allowed for the emergence of the key findings that may have proved elusive as an individual researcher. This thesis demonstrates that collaboration is an emergent form of social research that moves beyond the limits of single-scholar pursuits. The claim about this research is that it is collaborative, partial and eschews a grand narrative. This thesis insists that community is a kind of performed-emergence—as cameras change hands, people take turns looking through the lens and people exchange positions as viewers, photographers and subjects. While collaborators discuss the possibilities of selecting images and making choices about particular images, a dialogue is made available and invites the viewer, the reader and the onlooker into and beyond the frames of individual images. These spaces of exploration could be thought of as reaching beyond representational boundaries and into conceptual zones where actors negotiate the terms of their analogue and digital configurations to produce hybrid-forms of self. The stories told around the images become active negotiations with time, place and imagination. The dialogue between actors (as individuals in 'the social') asks '*what would I do if I was the photographer set against what I can see in the image*?' Community as a collective of individuals makes itself apparent as temporally and spatially present and vibrant. This is in contrast to pictorial representations made by, for instance, Edward Burtynsky high-up in his helicopter, distanced by an individualistic approach to

documenting and revealing a manufactured landscape that claims the Alberta oil sands for itself.

This thesis endeavors to set out a new kind of collaborative and collective research model or at least a variation on the precedents. In this regard the precedents have been set and detailed by Sarah Pink (2001), Marcus Banks (2001), Mak (2006), Nair and White (2006) and Goldfarb (2002) who represent the emergent literature on community-based and participatory research with cameras and video cameras. In addition, it has drawn on visual/digital storytelling (Lambert 2009), autophotographic method (Ziller 1990) and visual narratives (Rich and Chalfen 1999). Visual methods involving groups and multiple types of participants are detailed extensively by the Sarah Pink (2001, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012).

The thesis considers relationships between the methods and processes mentioned above and works to distinguish itself, not as an entirely new approach to collaborative and collective methods, but by insisting upon the importance of individual stories within a collaboratively-fettered movement that aims for the opportunities afforded by sidestepping the prevailing insistence upon conclusion. This thesis, in its entirety, is framed as a dialogue that does not insist upon the reader's adherence to a particular perspective as presented by the author, but rather acknowledges that the singular voice of the thesis author emerges as the temporary chorus of a multitude of voices that may at times harmoniously agree, but more often than not—and this is where the reader is of key importance—the dialogue is open to debate, disagreement and change.

At the heart of the thesis is the acknowledgement of the power of collaboration with youth participants wherein the youth gain recognition as co-researchers within a

community of their own peers and in-dialogue with a project facilitator. This figure is the photographer-researcher. By asking "Where is Fort McMurray" the researcher facilitator is afforded a view into the negotiated spaces of claims for and against community on a tangible level of everyday life experiences.

This thesis is multi-faceted and reveals the ways in which five-years of academic effort represent changes and growth spurred on by a massive amount of data, multi-modal practices of inquiry, a literature review that is broad-and-deep and continues to divulge areas for further reading as well as areas in need of academic inquiry. Summarizing and positing conclusions to a long course of action insists upon a commitment to admitting that there is always more work to be done. The sense that there is always more work to be done contrasts with the need to complete the dissertation. The nature of constant questioning, of needing to re-approach and re-assess one's own research questions and assumptions, reveals a particular kind of training. My hope is that even a fraction of the findings here, put into writing and/or action, will be helpful to both an academic and public audience. On the one hand, I have already been fortunate enough to link academic research and collaborative participatory action photography as a photographer-researcher. On the other hand, there are always more avenues to pursue, more work to be done.

My academic questions are rooted in a genuine interest in the effects of living in close relation to the Alberta oil sands. My response to these questions follow authoethnographic, ethnographic and visual sociological methods. These have provided ways to act as an interlocutor between people and place. In the case of this thesis cameras offer individuals an opportunity to express without a primary reliance on the use of oral or written words. Put another way, the *conversation with other than*

words refers to an ongoing dialogue that is implicit in each photograph. This dialogue is present in each photograph generated throughout this research process whether created by myself or created by the youth participants. The dialogue extends beyond images in relation to other images. The dialogue also includes the impulse spurred on by the act of taking pictures—to respond visually first, and sometimes orally later.

The PhD process provides a synthetic analysis. Time is the necessary quotient towards awareness. In addition to the time it takes to make realizations, those same realizations are direct reflections of a given experience. That experience cannot be dictated or limited to the objectives of a given course of action set out at the start of a five-year research program. Of course the objective goal is to respond to initial questions, such as how do people live in relation to the oil sands, but the means of getting to an answer, has emerged as a hybrid form of an extensive range of practices manipulated to function as the means to ask again and again. Asking again and again means a diligent adherence to unsettling my own beliefs and notions. In this regard, working collaboratively as a collectivity has proved to be a useful tactic to distill notions and various truths rather than claim either an abstract or individual truth.

Main Findings

Over the course of research I worked in various ways to make discoveries that, at this stage, seem like a collection of vignettes or meditations on the interactions of people in place, affect, photography and the Alberta oil sands. Using a visual sociological lens – meaning, the full integration of visual thinking from conception to process to output – this thesis asks: what does it mean to live in relation to the Alberta oil sands? The thesis moves through a series of five main

chapters. The organization of the thesis is chronological and demonstrates a number of modes: from photographer-researcher, to facilitator of youth and cameras, to youth as photographer-researchers themselves, to a semiotic analysis of other visual assemblages made by youth, concluding with a dialogue between curator and the photographer-researcher.

Chapter one, *Photographer as Researcher*, reveals the context of my experience growing up next to oil refineries. Childhood is referred to through the memories of passing by, looking through the car window at the tall and twisted metal structures belching out smoke and fire from their chimneystacks. As a student of spatial studies (Shields 1991, Lefebvre 1991) and affect (Davidson, Park & Shields 2011) my interest was sparked to approach the refineries with camera in-hand as an object of inquiry. As I photographed and reflected on the process it became clear to me that there are a number of barriers to access, in particular the refineries to the east of Edmonton that are completely enclosed by chain-link fences and patrolled gates. In addition to the physical barriers to access there are a number of security measures that can be and are deployed upon any person who chooses to bring their attention to bear on the refineries themselves. On a number of occasions while photographing into the refineries from outside the fence I was asked to stop, hand over the camera (which I refused to do) and leave. In addition there are a numerous surveillance cameras that observe the perimeters of the refinery compounds. Taken together these systems of deterrence speak as a unified voice that insists that the passerby in an automobile, ought not gaze for too long upon the structures beyond the fence. The key discovery made here is that the refineries that border the lands of a populous city exist along a marginalized space, a corridor that facilitates the inflow and outflow of people, raw

materials, refined materials. They strike upon the landscape a menacing form that is erected high into the sky, can be seen for miles and yet demand, by way of forces to distracting and minimizing themselves, that they are not to be gazed upon. The refineries to the east of Edmonton claim a large geographical footprint within the borders of quickly moving roads where there are no sidewalks, merely ditches and land berms that discourage the walker from slowly taking in the surroundings. What I found while exploring place as a photographer-researcher is that structural, material and economically vibrant forms that feature prominently upon the natural and built landscapes enforce their presence by way of simultaneously enforcing their absence. Present and absent, literally and metaphorically describe the refineries east of Edmonton. When passing by in a car, they are the forms that pulsate with the proverbial weight and odor of production. However, when one breaks with the usual and common pattern of passing by in a car and chooses, for instance to walk with a camera pressed to ones face, then the regime of power shifts into a more defensive mode and renders the refineries as a cloaked and shadowed place that one ought not peer into.

It is from this local and ground-level starting point that my interest became a path to academic inquiry: hence the photographer-researcher was born. I wanted to know if my own experience of living in relation to the refineries as spatial alienation was something that could be felt as perhaps an even deeper manifestation of the endemic problems of living close to the heart of oil production in Alberta. What started to emerge with close analysis, usually by way of visual means, of what it means to live in relation to the Alberta oil sands is that the relationship is perpetually in dialogue as the visibly present and the visibly absent produce variable assemblages

of truth and fiction. From this humble beginning of walking with a camera, a method was adopted as a means to approach the social, the spatial and the geographical critically.

Chapter two, *Cameras Creating Community*, establishes collaboration as the central figure for the rest of the thesis. If chapter one, *Rumination's on Industrial Landscapes*, sets the course for an enquiry of living in relation to the Alberta oil sands by way of visual sociological means, at each level thinking visually, then chapter two represents the establishment of collaborative and collective intersections as a working mode at each level as a kind of interdependent pedagogy. Chapter two demonstrates a working relationship between a) myself as a researcher in training under the guidance of Dr. Rob Shields and Dr. Sara Dorow and b) myself as researcher and facilitator on a project populated by youth participants. These two distinctions make the collaborative elements appear simplistic, however these are merely the most clearly definable relationships. The strength of the chapter, the collaborations that stretch across these two categories involve many community members, other researchers, families, educators, the list goes on, serve as a fertile ground for the recognition of the contribution to the field.

By bringing together an interest in the experience of living in relation to the Alberta oil sands, visual sociological methods – in particular auto-ethnographic and auto-photographic methods with community based participatory action research—this chapter makes that claim that cameras create community. At one level, cameras create community when they are put into the hands of eager high-school aged participant researchers. When cameras were lent out the students would set forth into their community of Fort McMurray, armed with the question 'Where is Fort

McMurray?' With cameras in hand they worked independently and in groups to navigate Fort McMurray and the surrounding area. Youth participants carried on conversations about what they saw, what they wanted to see, what they didn't see, what the digital screens on the backs of the cameras told them, what they agreed on, what they did not agree on. In addition, as they moved through spaces of familiarity and difference, they represented a kind of movement, an action, a temporary community formation of mobility. The key point that the chapter makes is that cameras create community by becoming a kind of place. The camera began to occupy what would otherwise be a named location and the youth participants would gather around the camera, to share their images, insights and comments with each other, with passers by, with me. As a matter of process, these walking community-compositions were representative of spaces of negotiation, where ideas and ideals would intersect to generate photographs captured in fleeting moments. As the project moved forward over a series of weeks the student participants had time to walk, photograph, share their images with the larger group, discuss their images, select their favorite or strongest images, learn to digitally process their images, print and hold onto their images as material artifacts, mount and display their images as a group and respond to the invited community of attendees during an evening of exposition.

Chapter three, *Youth Picturing Place: Fort McMurray*, is a riff on the title of Schwartz and Ryan's edited collection *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (2003). Schwartz and Ryan argue that photography is a powerful tool for engagement (2003: 1) and taken with David Harvey's notion of a geographical-imagination offers inroads towards meaning-making in social and cultural life (2003:

6). Photography is a practice that allows us to tease out the geographical, spatial and political imaginaries of everyday life. Chapter three acts like a compendium to chapter two's notions of collaboration and temporary community assemblages by presenting the edited collection of participant photographed, selected, produced and displayed images (2011-2013) at the Fort McMurray Public Library. One of the key points about the collection of images is that the youth participants choose not to self-identify their own work, meaning no artist signatures or names were placed on individual images. Instead they all felt content to have their names presented on the masthead that accompanies the collection. On this point I make the argument that the youth participants felt many things at once, partly a shyness to claim their own work, but more importantly a kind of egalitarian and collective expression of a shared experience now translated as a collected exhibition. The youth participants seem to feel more inclined to present their more or less political work as a group effort, rather than bear the burden or any direct attack. This included even sidestepping any kind of named favoritism or audience selection by those who view the collection. These images as a collection speak back the community of Fort McMurray, the place these images were created and the place these images now appear as reminders of a kind of temporary effort and a dialogue that is ongoing as the images speak to each other in their displayed state, as well as provoking the onlooker to respond.

Chapter four, *Mashup: New Representations of the City*, considers youth-based cultural productions of digital postcards as critical examples of the intertwined nature of analogue and digital worlds. While working with youth on the *Where is Fort McMurray* project, I had access to semi-private and public communions as youth participants posted and pasted pastiche-like images on each other's Facebook 'Walls'.

For the purposes of working with youth circa (2009-2011) Facebook.com represented a lingua-franca, or common forum for youth to be a part of. Facebook.com is a social network people of all ages visit or consult repeatedly throughout the day, to see what friends have written, posted or commented on. Amidst the lively activity of comments and pictures I came across a particular example where multiple images and text were mashed together to make a new assemblage. This was seen as a unique phenomenon because of the multiplicity of signs and signifiers embedded within the mashup. The youth participants are seen in the mashup along with a security guard. The whole assemblage is considered as a means to interpret that which resides beyond the limits of an image. Labour is a key quotient in the analysis of the mashup as an object—as production translates as a kind of constellation of representation. The representation is taken up here as a means to explore non-representational theory as a means to see and to imagine the on- and off-line lives of the creators. "They are not 'pictures of the city'; instead, they mashup flows and interactions in a visual nexus of image and text" (Chapter 4).

Chapter 5, *Reframing Canadian Oil sands*, represents the unique opportunity to be critiqued and curated within the bounds of one's own thesis. Geographer Merle Patchett and I journeyed to Fort McMurray and toured around the oil sands in February of 2011. As a photographer-researcher and an experimental-geographer, respectively, I paused to approach landscape and the visual horizon with a camera. At the same time Patchett collected sounds and samples while contrasting a present material reality with the memories of Aberdeen, Scotland. Patchett explores Edward Burtynsky's images a means of establishing a contrasting perspective. The sublime representations by Burtynsky are seen here as problematic in that they aestheticize

the violent horror of environmental sublimation on a gargantuan scale. Burtynsky's images play a key role in publicizing a local phenomenon that has global affect and effect. Yet, the abstraction of an aerial view carved out of an even larger panorama defies our comprehension. In this light, my own photographs are taken up as a means to acknowledge other working modes of the photographer-researcher. The reframing, as the title suggests, is an invitation to consider other critical perspectives. At the same time, by re-visiting places over time, the change becomes evidenced through comparing images. This change is too subtle to witness by standing in place, or even photographing once. Instead the photographer-researcher attends again and again to the diligent work of re-approaching.

Fluctuation and mobility, along with detours and delays, are seen here as component elements of practice-based research. The appearance of unforeseen elements offers glimpses into temporary intersections of all manner of subject, object, background, foreground, light, depth of field, composition, frames, etc. By virtue of an on-the-ground approach with cameras, the Alberta oil sands have an opportunity to develop as a kind of place-based engagement – rather than aerial, alien and disconnected nausea. In the later portion of this chapter I pause to review my own working methodology as a means to elucidate the photographer-researcher as an immersive process of looking, listening, reflecting, and acknowledging my own biases and assumptions to share my own perspective with an audience that may not be so privileged as to have access to geographical place in the same way.

Further Research

Throughout the thesis there have been multiple instances where I have alluded to areas for further research. This thesis process has privileged the visual and in many cases has referred to the literature on visual methods, yet more could be said regarding the detailed specifics of methods at each instance. At the same time, each chapter is presented here as part of a thesis by publication that does not purport to resemble a cohesive monograph. A monograph could be a fruitful avenue of pursuit and any one of the chapters could be a useful staring point upon which to base a more cohesive text. For instance, the photographer-researcher could be examined in far greater detail wherein a philosophy of such a working mode could be explored. Following the example of Sarah Pink, an entire methodology could be developed enabling other photographers and researchers to have the benefit of a rigorous set of guidelines at their fingertips. Each of the chapters here represents a timely focus on one area or another, however, in terms of thinking of next steps, I can look over the thesis with a larger perspective and acknowledge that as far as my own academic pursuits, the surface has merely been scratched. As I reflect on the thesis as a whole I value each instance as an opportunity to pursue my interests in visual methods, perception, the production of space, collaborations, as well as multi-disciplinary forms of research that extend beyond the bounds of single-scholar pursuits in Sociology.

Other opportunities have presented themselves to pursue similar research and collaborative projects with youth. In particular the First Nations and Metis community of Fort McKay, Alberta have invited me to produce a similar project to that of the Fort McMurray work, with their own youth. In 2011 introductory

consultation meetings were held with community members, potential funders (TOTAL energy) and planning groups. At the time, it was decided that I would not pursue this project and instead maintain my focus on the thesis. At a later point working with youth in another configuration may well prove to be a good comparative case study. Again, the limits of the thesis give it a definitive shape, while offering countless opportunities for next steps.

Last Words

In this thesis, cameras bring people together and serve to focus a collective sense of community. At the same time, the comingling of bodies, minds, ideas and images serves to draw out the tensions between presences and absences, the seen and the unseen—thereby bringing certain points for discussion and dialogue to the fore. However, just because points of interest are brought forward does not mean that all parties are keen to discuss them. The limits of this thesis and the photographer-researcher as method can be thought of as the insufficient capacity to create revolutionary change on a grand scale. Instead, the value of these working modes offer individuals an opportunity to share, learn and do their best to acknowledge difference and proceed respectfully.

Throughout the thesis people are seen gathering around the camera. Mobility and fluidity, which may seem counter to previous notions of community are seen here as characteristic components of this approach to community and collectivities. In the context of people in relation to place mediated by the use of cameras—this thesis makes a point of working towards figuring out ways to reflect on our experiences in virtual and analogue environments. Self-reflection through working

with cameras and images, as a photographer-researcher, and working with youth

participants has yielded many opportunities to find ways to commingle, to bump

elbows, and to experience the effervescent communitas of the socius as an

evolutionary and ongoing process of critical reflection and creative expression. The

discoveries made here offer a starting point for further academic research as well as

practical tools for use in everyday life.

Appendix A: Ethics Documents 2009-2010

Visual Landscapes:
Youth and the Case of Fort McMurray.

PLEASE NOTE: This application for ethics approval is for one project under Dr. Sara Dorow who receives funding from two funding sources. As a collaborator my portion of the project may be subject to one or both of the funding sources. The larger projects have already met general expectations for ethics approval. This proposal is being submitted because a new area of specialization has been created. This proposal speaks directly to the addition as a continuation and further elaboration of the approved project. Thanks!

Visual Landscapes: Youth and the Case of Fort McMurray (May 1, 2010 – April 30,2011): Exists as an area of specialization of the two projects listed below.

SSSHRC (May 1, 2008 – April 30, 2011):
SOCIAL LANDSCAPES OF NEOLIBERAL GROWTH:
THE CASE OF FORT MCMURRAY, ALBERTA

Killam Research Fund (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 200?):
MAPPING COMMUNITY IN AN OIL BOOMTOWN:
THE CASE OF FORT MCMURRAY

Principal Investigator: Andriko Lozowy (Doctoral Student, Sociology)
Team Members (to date): Dr. Rob Shields (Supervisor), Dr. Sara Dorow (Collaborator)

Note* As far as this specific project, Visual Landscapes, is concerned Andriko Lozowy will be regarded as Principle Investigator under direct guidance from Dr. Sara Dorow and Dr. Rob Shields.

Overview of the Project
This project aims to understand place and community from the perspective of youth in a local context that profoundly experiences and exemplifies neoliberal globalization. The research project is interested in two kinds of questions: a) what are the variety of ways that youth understand and perceive Fort McMurray as a place (or set of places)?; and b) what are the challenges and benefits of using photography as a way for youth to explore and express their experience of place?
This projects endeavors to engage in a collaborative effort with youth towards a deeper understanding of place and place making. This project is multi-layered, it involves youth living in Fort McMurray, photography and issues of belonging, not belonging, place, community and home. The project goal is centered on creating a photography exhibit that comprises of: meeting facilitators and educators; meeting youth and engaging with them; encouraging youth to create images of their own experiences and understandings of place; conducting workshops

with youth to discuss their images and encourage creativity; choosing images together with youth to print in large format and display in a public venue; host the exhibit; and follow up with youth to debrief about the project and encourage their own valorization and process of empowerment. Youth are the core of this project and the course it takes will depend on how a group of youth sees their involvement as something fun and of value for their own personal as well as interpersonal development.

The project strives for a cross-section of youth who represent a diversity of perspectives in Fort McMurray, including immigrant and Aboriginal youth. However the study is not a focus on any one group in particular, rather the goal is to have participants representative of 'youth' in Fort McMurray.

The project employs auto-ethnographic, ethnographic and visual methods. Ethnographic fieldwork will rely on participant observation and semi-structured interviewing. Visual methods include participant use of cameras, as well as image use to discuss concepts and understandings of place and community. Throughout, field notes on participant observation will be kept, and interviews will be recorded and transcribed where possible and permitted (otherwise, notes will be taken by hand). Participant observation is focused on the process of visual creation, the use of the visual method and subsequent discussion. Directly related to the focus on process I make the clear distinction that I will not be keeping notes on specific participants. Rather my focus is to use an auto-ethnographic method to reflect on visual methods in practice.

Written consent forms (see attached sample) will be utilized for all formal interviews except in cases where it would be culturally inappropriate or politically sensitive (i.e., certain cultural groups in Fort McMurray). Participants will be required to complete consent forms that include terms of use and ownership of created images.

Research Design

The fundamental goal is to collaborate with youth in a mutually beneficial project that aims to give voice to youth through images. In the process those involved will be responsible for making decisions about what and what not to photograph. As a collaborative project my intent is to act as a facilitator who guides youth through the process of picture making, discussion, editing, processing and producing a final installation.

Allow me to elaborate on the order of events; 1) contact educators and facilitators who work with youth; 2) meet potential participants at schools and the youth centre and introduce the project, this way I can provide examples of what the project could be as well as distribute consent forms; 3) upon meeting again, participants with signed consent forms will be welcomed into the project, at this point observation of the process will begin; 4) youth take photographs that are discussed and 'vetted' in the group; 5) exhibit is developed and put on; 6) follow up interviews with youth about the process.

Participants will be drawn from high school aged students 15 and over. The target group is ideally representative of a cross section of youth in Ft McMurray. The following individuals, educators and coordinators have already been contacted; the project has been introduced and explained to them. Additionally they have all expressed support for the project. Details of the identified and supportive groups are

as follows: Colours, facilitated by Ahmed Maher - Physics teacher at Westwood High and advisor for the group Colours (a multicultural student group); Sara Loutitt - Aboriginal Studies teacher at Father Mercredi High School; and Eva Aquino – Father Mercredi High School (CALM class teacher, religious studies teacher); and, Jill Martin – English teacher at Westwood High (teaches many Aboriginal students).

Additionally there are two other possibilities that have been identified as places where marginalized (those outside of formalized education) youth congregate informally, such as; The DugOut, a youth centre where facilitators run activities and serve inexpensive meals; the second location is a public space consisting of a plaza outside of the provincial building where the current library resides. This second location is adjacent to the main bus stop and is a popular place for youth to gather and 'hang out.' The latter location is key to accessing youth who may be regarded, or rather dis-regarded, as marginal or at-risk. These youth are desirable as participants because their participation will allow for a greater diversity of participants. Representation from a diverse and broad spectrum of youth is key to establishing a viable cohort of youth with different experiences across a possible range.

Assessment of Risk and Steps to be Taken to Minimize Risk

There are several potential risks in this project, most of which qualify as minimum risks. I outline risks here, and explain what we plan to do to minimize risk to human subjects directly or indirectly involved in the project.

1) Confidentiality of Organizations, Clients, Educational Institutions, Students, Staff, and Practices

Participant observation through collaboration is a rich practice for general understanding of the cultural specificity of a place. By being part of conversations of place and community, especially regarding image making ensures that rich discussions and experiential learning will be happening at all times. There is understandable concern that the researcher will be observing the above-mentioned parties, and that individuals may divulge sensitive material. It is imperative that the researcher make it clearly know that their involvement is double, that of collaborator and as a researcher. To help minimize these risks, the following steps will be taken, and agreed upon with each organization before fieldwork begins. The reality is that much of this will depend on building a trusting relationship (which I have already begun with a few individuals who work with youth in the context of High Schools and the Youth Centre).

•all relevant staff will be informed that I am conducting research, the adult coordinators and educators listed above will be considered the point people;

•field notes will focus on the process of using these visual methods within the specific context of Fort McMurray rather than on youth as subjects. When taking field notes, I will not use any specific names or identifying information, and will not refer to specific incidents or people at any length; if there are any activities that I think might be too sensitive, I will check with the point person and not include those in field notes if they are deemed too sensitive;

•the consent form has been written in an accessible way;

•the project and consent will be explained verbally at each meeting and individually if needed;

•my focus is on youth between 15 and 17 years old. I imagine that 14 year olds may be interested in participating in which case they and their parents/guardians (if applicable) will be required to complete the consent form just as their older peers. I also imagine that people 18 and over might participate, in which case consent will be sought but a parent/guardian signature will not be necessary. I do not wish to discourage youth to participate based on age, however the focus of the research is aimed at 15 to 17 year olds and therefore those youth outside of those ages will not be regarded as primary subjects; the two school boards (public and Catholic) will be contacted as soon as ethics approval is received, to get their OK on using school groups as a starting place for the project;

•field notes will be taken at discrete times and places;

•I will not observe at any small meetings at Schools or other Organizations without the express permission of each person present;

•I will not observe at any larger non-public meetings or events at the Schools or other Organizations without the permission of the person in charge;

•Adult volunteers and collaborators will be invited for interviews in person, and with no coercion (i.e., I will only ask a second time if a person has said 'yes' or 'maybe' the first time);

•youth collaborators will be invited for interviews in person, and with no coercion (i.e., I will only ask a second time if a person has said 'yes' or 'maybe' the first time);

•as part of the iterative process of creating images and discussing them in small groups each participant will have had to provide a completed consent form, signed by both them an a parent/guardian, that gives the researcher permission to observe the discussions and events. These consent forms will be gathered between the first and second meetings with each group;

•In cases where collaborators would like to participate in individual interviews I will conduct interviews in semi-private spaces (such as a coffee shop or small meeting space at Keyano College) so as to protect the privacy of the interviewee but also for my own safety; again, the consent form covers the interviews and will be signed by both youth and parent/guardian (where applicable);

•In informal situations, such as the plaza of the provincial building I will make every effort to identify myself and the project as well as encourage subsequent meetings in which case consent forms may be taken home and returned, as well as offer the option of complete anonymity for any contribution;

•due to the nature of the project I would like to make it possible for participants to make a valuable contribution even if they only attend one meeting or workshop. In this case I suggest that participants claim anonymity as authors of images. Also, I would insist that they are given my own contact information should they wish to return to the group in a more formal manner (with a consent form), or if they would like their contribution removed entirely. This only applies if the one-time participant produces an image of exceptional quality and the group chooses to select the image for the final exposition;

•I will inform Dr. Dorow or another member of the research team of where and when I will be conducting interviews, and will carry a cell phone with me;

•as is customary in community-based research, I will offer to 'give back' to the community not only in the form of the collaborative project on which I work, but

also through a report or presentation that focuses on issues they have identified as important for their own understanding.

2) Voluntary and Informed Consent

When dealing with such a wide variety of potential participants, voluntary and informed consent will have to be gauged accordingly. Since the key participants are youth aged 15 to 17 there is an obvious level of risk bearing in mind that under 18's in Canada are not recognized as autonomous individuals capable of making decisions regarding their own sovereignty. In response to this classification of youth as minors I take seriously the practical implications of completed consent forms and transparency of the project for anyone concerned, most importantly parents, guardians and participants themselves.

For example, if a young person responds to a flyer inviting participants, I will be sure to confirm that he or she is over 18; if not, parental/guardian permission will be sought. As another example, some clients of the organizations may be dealing with substance abuse or mental health issues; if it appears that an interviewee has any such issues I will ask a series of questions to assess whether he or she can repeat back to me aspects of the project and consent form, and will only proceed if they can do so.

Another approach would be to consult with adult youth contacts and point people as to whether the benefit of taking part in the project outweigh the risks for certain individuals. For instance I view the benefits of participation as an opportunity to engage in community and experience the creative process of working with a diverse group of similarly aged youth whom they may not have previously known.

Benefits of the project; include the potential to learn leadership skills, follow-through on a creative project, empowerment as a group of individuals creating space for voice, as well as a working knowledge of photographic practices. In the past, youth from Fort McMurray have worked collaboratively with volunteers from faith based leadership organizations to create other artistic projects towards raising awareness for services available to youth in distress.

To speak of risks; I am aware that I am not equipped in any accredited way to deal with youth who may be facing challenges such as substance abuse, physical and mental violence, etc. If I was to enter a situation wherein an individual was in need of support or assistance related to the above matters then I would be in close contact with either; the schools and/or the youth centre who would be able to refer youth to services if needed.

Finally, as mentioned above, there may be contexts where consent is obtained verbally (and recorded), e.g., when there are cultural or literacy barriers to written consent.

3) Supplementary Participant Observation

General school observations will simply go into field notes, but nothing specific or beyond the meetings will be entered or kept on record to preserve anonymity and reinforce the focus on the process.

General observations at the youth centre will also be done with an eye to general context and with the permission of the director.

4) Photos

Photos will mostly be taken in public spaces where people would reasonably expect to be observed. Where this is not the case, permission from individuals being filmed will be obtained, or identities will be disguised by altering images. Some of these images might be used in publication to help set the context for the spaces and places of Fort McMurray. Images that appear in the public installation will all be required to have attained consent of the author/photographer, completion of reasonable consent, and in cases where individuals are clearly portrayed the photographer will obtain consent from the photographed individual.

6) Safekeeping of Data

All digital fieldnotes, transcripts, and images will be kept secured on a password-protected laptop. All handwritten or printed versions of fieldnotes or transcripts will be kept secured in a locked office. If I am in a hotel room in Fort McMurray, I will attempt to keep these items in a lockbox of some sort.

Social Landscapes of Fort McMurray: Youth Perspectives
~consent form for youth participants~

Andriko Lozowy (Principal Investigator) & Dr. Sara Dorow (Research Collaborator);
University of Alberta

You are being invited to participate in a research project about youth perspectives on Fort McMurray. The main part of the project is a collection of photography produced by a diverse group of young people that explores what Fort McMurray is to them, both individually and collectively. We are seeking your consent to take part in the project, to include your photography in the public exhibit of the project, and/or to be interviewed as part of the research project associated with the exhibit. The research project is interested in two kinds of questions: a) what are the variety of ways that youth understand and perceive Fort McMurray as a place (or set of places)?; and b) what are the challenges and benefits of using photography as a way for youth to explore and express their experience of place? (The project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and a Killam Cornerstone Grant from the U of A.)

The photo project, to take place in May 2009 in Fort McMurray, will include some workshops on photography, creating photography exhibits, and ethics when photographing people; collective planning of the photo exhibit; and an exhibit of youth photos in Fort McMurray. We hope to publish some research about the experiences and results of this unique project, and for that reason, we are inviting participating youth to take part in an interview toward the end of the project. The interview will be conducted by someone from the research team, will take up to one hour, and will be conducted in a place where you feel comfortable (you, your parent/guardian, and the interviewer will work out an appropriate place and time). The interviewer will ask you about your experience of taking part in the photography project, what you think you learned by doing so, and what you think is meaningful or interesting about the photographs included in the exhibit (including your own).

If you take part in an interview, here are some other important things to know:
First, if you do not want to discuss a particular issue, you do not have to. If at any time you want to end the interview, please just say so. And if you decide that you do not want to be included in this research project after all, we will not use the interview in the research.
Second, we hope you will benefit from taking part in the interview. You might enjoy telling your own story, and helping other people to learn something about your experience and perspective.
Third, if you want the interview to be anonymous, we will change your name and other identifying information when we write any articles or reports about the project, and whenever we talk about the research. Otherwise, if you agree, we will use your name.
Fourth, I would like to audio record the interview so we can report your ideas in your own words. If you agree to be recorded, the recording will be transcribed (typed), and only members of the research team will look at the whole interview. We will use parts of the interview in our research publications and presentations, to help people understand the photography project from the perspectives of you and other participants. The audio recording and the typed-up interview will be kept in a safe place, on a password-protected computer. If you do not want the interview to be recorded, I will take notes instead.

If you are including your photography in the research project, then here are some important things to know:

First, we are asking permission to publish one or more of your photos in our research results, and will discuss with you which photo(s) might be published.

Second, I we include your photos in our research project, you may do so under your name, or anonymously.

Third, if your photos are included in the exhibit, then we will work with you to get permission from people who appear in your photos when necessary.

Please feel free to ask me any questions you have about the research project, the interview, or the interviewer. If at any time you have questions or comments, you can contact Sara Dorow (Associate Professor of Sociology) at sdorow@ualberta.ca or at (780) 492-4301.

For each item below, please indicate if you do or do not give consent, and then sign. If you are under 18, then we need permission from both you and your parent/guardian.

Interviewee Initials   Parent/Guardian Initials
Permission to take part in the photo project:
yes ____   no ____   _____

Permission to be interviewed:
yes (with name) ____   yes (anonymously)____   no ____   _____

Permission to audio record the interview:
yes ____   no ____   _____

Permission to publish photos:
yes ____   no ____   _____

Permission to be contacted
for follow up research: yes ____   no ____   _____

_____   _____
Interviewee Name   Interviewee Signature   Date

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian Name   Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher Name   Researcher Signature   Date

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Arts, Science & Law Research Ethics Board (ASL REB)
Certificate of REB Approval for _Fully-Detailed Research Proposal_

Applicant:___**Andriko Lozowy**_____

Supervisor (if applicable):____**Sara Dorow**_____

Department / Faculty: _____**Sociology / Arts**_____

Project Title: __**Visual Landscapes: Youth and the Case of Fort McMurray**__

Grant / Contract Agency (and number): _____**SSHRC and/or Killam Research Fund**

(ASL REB member) Application number: _____**2051**_____

Approval Expiry Date: _____**March 24, 2010**_____

CERTIFICATION of ASL REB APPROVAL

I have reviewed your application for research ethics review and conclude that your proposed research meets the University of Alberta standards for research involving human participants (GFC Policy Section 66). On behalf of the *Arts, Science & Law Research Ethics Board* (ASL REB), I am providing <u>expedited research ethics approval</u> for your proposed project.

Expedited research ethics approval allows you to begin your research with human participants immediately. This research ethics approval is valid for one year. To request a renewal after (*March 24, 2010*), please contact me and explain the circumstances, making reference to the research ethics review number assigned to this project (see above). Also, if there are significant changes to the project that need to be reviewed, or if any adverse effects to human participants are encountered in your research, please contact me immediately.

ASL REB member (name & signature):___**Judith Golec**_____ *Judith Golec*____

Date: _____**March 24, 2009**_____

November 7, 2008

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Appendix B: Ethics Documents 2010-2011

All questions marked by a red asterisk * are required fields. However, because the mandatory fields have been kept to a minimum, answering only the required fields may not be sufficient for the REB to review your application.

Please answer all relevant questions that will reasonably help to describe your study or proposed research.

1.0 *** Short Study Title** *(restricted to 250 characters)***:**
Visual Landscapes: Youth and the Case of Fort McMurray

2.0 *** Complete Study Title** *(can be exactly the same as short title)***:**
Visualizing Oil Sands Development

3.0 *** Select the appropriate Research Ethics Board (***Detailed descriptions are available by clicking the HELP link in the upper right hand corner of your screen***):**
REB 2

4.0 *** Is the proposed research:**
Funded (Grant, subgrant, contract, internal funds, donation or some other source of funding)

5.0 *** Name of Principal Investigator** *(at the University of Alberta, Covenant Health, or Alberta Health Services)***:**
Andriko Lozowy

6.0 **Investigator's Supervisor** *(required for applications from undergraduate students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and medical residents to Boards 1, 2, 3. HREB does not accept applications from student PIs)*

Rob Shields

7.0 *** Type of research/study:**
Graduate Student - Thesis, Dissertation, Capping Project

8.0 **Study Coordinators or Research Assistants:** People listed here can edit this application and will receive all HERO notifications for the study:

Name	Employer

There are no items to display

9.0 **Co-Investigators:** People listed here can edit this application but do not receive HERO notifications unless they are added to the study email list:

Name	Employer
Sara Dorow	AR Sociology

10.0 **Study Team** *(Co-investigators, supervising team, other study team members):* People listed here cannot edit this application and do not receive HERO notifications:

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Role/Area of Responsibility	Phone	Email

There are no items to display

1.0

* **Type of Funding:**

Grant (external)

If OTHER, provide details:

2.0

* **Indicate which office administers your award.** *(It is the PI's responsibility to provide ethics approval notification to any office other than the ones listed below)*
Other

If OTHER, provide details:

3.0 * **Funding Source**

3.1 Select all sources of funding from the list below:

Killam Research Fund - Vice President Research (UofA)	8183
SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council	SSHRC

3.2 If not available in the list above, write the Sponsor/Agency name(s) in full (you may add multiple funding sources):

There are no items to display

4.0

* **Indicate if this research sponsored or monitored by any of the following:**

There are no items to display

If applicable, indicate whether or not the FDA Investigational New Drug number or FDA Investigational Device Exception is required:

The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the study complies with the applicable US regulations. The REB must also meet particular review criteria and this application will likely receive full board review, regardless of level risk.

1.0

* **Are any of the investigators or their immediate family receiving any personal remuneration (including investigator payments and recruitment incentives but excluding trainee remuneration or graduate student stipends) from the funding of this study that is not**

accounted for in the study budget?

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

If YES, explain:

2.0 * **Do any of investigators or their immediate family have any proprietary interests in the product under study or the outcome of the research including patents, trademarks, copyrights, and licensing agreements?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

3.0 **Is there any compensation for this study that is affected by the study outcome?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

4.0 **Do any of the investigators or their immediate family have equity interest in the sponsoring company? (This does not include Mutual Funds)**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

5.0 **Do any of the investigators or their immediate family receive payments of other sorts, from this sponsor (i.e. grants, compensation in the form of equipment or supplies, retainers for ongoing consultation and honoraria)?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

6.0 **Are any of the investigators or their immediate family, members of the sponsor's Board of Directors, Scientific Advisory Panel or comparable body?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

Do you have any other relationship, financial or non-financial, that, if not disclosed, could be
7.0 **construed as a conflict of interest?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

If YES, explain:

Important
If you answered YES to any of the questions above, you may be contacted by the REB for more information or asked to submit a Conflict of Interest Declaration.

1.6 Research Locations and Other Approval

1.0 * **List the locations of the proposed research, including recruitment activities. Provide name of institution or organization, town, or province as applicable**
College Site, High-School, Community Centre, Coffee Shop, Sports Centre, Participants Home, Public Courtyards, PI's temporary residence.

2.0 * **Indicate if the study will use or access facilities, programmes, resources, staff, students, specimens, patients or their records, at any of the sites affiliated with the following** *(select all that apply):*

Not applicable

List all facilities or institutions as applicable:

3.0 * **Indicate if the proposed research has received or will require ethics approval from other Research Ethics Board or institution. Choose all that apply:**

Not Applicable

If OTHER, list the REB or Institution:

Name

There are no items to display

Does this study involve pandemic or similar emergency health research?

4.0 ⚪ Yes ⚪ No

If YES, are you the lead investigator for this pandemic study?

⚪ Yes ⚪ No

5.0 **If this application is closely linked to research previously approved by one of the University of Alberta REBs or has already received ethics approval from an external ethics review board**(s)**, provide the HERO study number, REB name or other identifying information. Attach any external REB application and approval letter in Section 7.1.11 – Other Documents.**
Visual Landscapes: Youth and the Case of Fort McMurray
Approved - March 24, 2009
Expired - March 24, 2010
Application # - 2051

2.1 Study Objectives and Design

1.0 **Date that you expect to start working with human participants:**
5/1/2010

2.0 **Date that you expect to finish working with human participants, in other words, you will no longer be in contact with the research participants, including data verification and reporting back to the group or community:**
2/28/2011

3.0 * **Provide a lay summary of your proposed research suitable for the general public** *(restricted to 300 words)*. **If the PI is not affiliated with the University of Alberta, Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health, please include institutional affiliation.**

This project aims to understand place and community from the perspective of youth in a local context that profoundly experiences and exemplifies neoliberal globalization. The research project is interested in two kinds of questions: a) what are the variety of ways that youth understand and perceive Fort McMurray as a place (or set of places)?; and b) what are the challenges and benefits of using photography as a way for youth to explore and express their experience of place?

This projects endeavors to engage in a collaborative effort with youth towards a deeper understanding of place and place making. This project is multi-layered, it involves youth living in Fort McMurray, photography and issues of belonging, not belonging, place, community and home. The project goal is centered on creating a photography exhibit that comprises of: meeting facilitators and educators; meeting youth and engaging with them; encouraging youth to create images of their own experiences and understandings of place; conducting workshops with youth to discuss their images and encourage creativity; choosing images together with youth to print in large format and display in a public venue; host the exhibit; and follow up with youth to debrief about the project and encourage their own valorization and process of empowerment. Youth are the core of this project and the course it takes will depend on how a group of youth sees their involvement as something fun and of value for their own personal as well as interpersonal development.

4.0 * **Provide a description of your research proposal including study objectives, background, scope, methods, procedures, etc)***(restricted to 1000 words)***. Footnotes and references are not required and best not included here. Research methods questions in Section 5 will prompt additional questions and information.**
The fundamental goal is to collaborate with youth in a mutually beneficial project that aims to give voice to youth through images. In the process those involved will be responsible for making decisions about what and what not to photograph. As a collaborative project my intent is to act as a facilitator who guides youth through the process of picture making, discussion, editing, processing and producing a final installation.

Allow me to elaborate on the order of events; 1) contact educators and facilitators who work with youth; 2) meet potential participants at schools and the youth centre and introduce the project, this way I can provide examples of what the project could be as well as distribute consent forms; 3) upon meeting again, participants with signed consent forms will be welcomed into the project, at this point observation of the process will begin; 4) youth take photographs that are discussed and 'vetted' in the group; 5) exhibit is developed and put on; 6) follow up interviews with youth about the process.

Participants will be drawn from high school aged students 15 and over. The target group is ideally representative of a cross section of youth in Ft McMurray. The following individuals, educators and coordinators have already been contacted; the project has been introduced and explained to them. Additionally they have all expressed support for the project. Details of the identified and supportive groups are as follows: Colours, facilitated by Ahmed Maher - Physics teacher at Westwood High and advisor for the group Colours (a multicultural student group); Sara Loutitt - Aboriginal Studies teacher at Father Mercredi High School; and Eva Aquino – Father Mercredi High School (CALM class teacher, religious studies teacher); and, Jill Martin – English teacher at Westwood High (teaches many Aboriginal students).

Additionally there are two other possibilities that have been identified as places where marginalized (those outside of formalized education) youth congregate informally, such as; The DugOut, a youth centre where facilitators run activities and serve inexpensive meals; the second location is a public space consisting of a plaza outside of the provincial building where the current library resides. This second location is adjacent to the main bus stop and is a popular place for youth to gather and 'hang out.' The latter location is key to accessing youth who may be regarded, or rather dis-regarded, as marginal or at-risk. These youth are desirable as participants because their participation will allow for a greater diversity of participants. Representation from a diverse and broad spectrum of youth is key to establishing a viable cohort of youth with different experiences across a possible range.

The project strives for a cross-section of youth who represent a diversity of perspectives in

Fort McMurray, including immigrant and Aboriginal youth. However the study is not a focus on any one group in particular, rather the goal is to have participants representative of 'youth' in Fort McMurray.

The project employs auto-ethnographic, ethnographic and visual methods. Ethnographic fieldwork will rely on participant observation and semi-structured interviewing. Visual methods include participant use of cameras, as well as image use to discuss concepts and understandings of place and community. Throughout, field notes on participant observation will be kept, and interviews will be recorded and transcribed where possible and permitted (otherwise, notes will be taken by hand). Participant observation is focused on the process of visual creation, the use of the visual method and subsequent discussion. Directly related to the focus on *process* I make the clear distinction that I will not be keeping notes on specific participants. Rather my focus is to use an auto-ethnographic method to reflect on visual methods in practice.

Written consent forms will be utilized for all formal interviews except in cases where it would be culturally inappropriate or politically sensitive (i.e., certain cultural groups in Fort McMurray). Participants will be required to complete consent forms that include terms of use and ownership of created images.

5.0   Describe procedures, treatment, or activities that are above or in addition to standard practices in this study area *(eg. extra medical or health-related procedures, curriculum enhancements, extra follow-up, etc)***:**

6.0   If the proposed research is above minimal risk and is not funded via a competitive peer review grant or industry-sponsored clinical trial, the REB will require evidence of scientific review. Provide information about the review process and its results if appropriate.

7.0   For clinical research only, describe any sub-studies associated with this application.

3.1 Risk Assessment

1.0   * Provide your assessment of the risks that may be associated with this research:
Minimal Risk - research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research (TCPS2)

2.0   * Select all that might apply:

Description of Potential Physical Risks and Discomforts
Participants might feel physical fatigue, e.g. sleep deprivation
Participants might feel physical stress, e.g. cardiovascular stress tests
Participants might sustain injury, infection, and intervention side-effects or complications

The physical risks will be greater than those encountered by the participants in everyday life

Potential Psychological, Emotional, Social and Other Risks and Discomforts
Participants might feel psychologically or emotionally stressed, demeaned, embarrassed, worried, anxious, scared or distressed, e.g. description of painful or traumatic events
Participants might feel psychological or mental fatigue, e.g intense concentration required
Participants might experience cultural or social risk, e.g. loss of privacy or status or damage to reputation
Participants might be exposed to economic or legal risk, for instance non-anonymized workplace surveys
The risks will be greater than those encountered by the participants in everyday life

3.0   *** Provide details of the risks and discomforts associated with the research, for instance, health cognitive or emotional factors, socio-economic status or physiological or health conditions:**

Participant observation through collaboration is a rich practice for general understanding of the cultural specificity of a place. By being part of conversations of place and community, especially regarding image making ensures that rich discussions and experiential learning will be happening at all times. There is understandable concern that the researcher will be observing the above-mentioned parties, and that individuals may divulge sensitive material. It is imperative that the researcher make it clearly know that their involvement is that of both collaborator and researcher. To help minimize these risks, the following steps will be taken, and agreed upon with each organization before fieldwork begins. The reality is that much of this will depend on building a trusting relationship (which I have already begun with a few individuals who work with youth in the context of High Schools and the Youth Centre).

4.0   *** Describe how you will manage and minimize risks and discomforts, as well as mitigate harm:**

- all relevant staff will be informed that I am conducting research, the adult coordinators and educators listed above will be considered the point people;
- field notes will focus on the process of using these visual methods within the specific context of Fort McMurray rather than on youth as subjects. When taking field notes, I will not use any specific names or identifying information, and will not refer to specific incidents or people at any length; if there are any activities that I think might be too sensitive, I will check with the point person and not include those in field notes if they are deemed too sensitive;
- the consent form has been written in an accessible way;
- the project and consent will be explained verbally at each meeting and individually if needed;
- my focus is on youth between 15 and 17 years old. I imagine that 14 year olds may be interested in participating in which case they and their parents/guardians (if applicable) will be required to complete the consent form just as their older peers. I also imagine that people 18 and over might participate, in which case consent will be sought but a parent/guardian signature will not be necessary. I do not wish to discourage youth to participate based on age, however the focus of the research is aimed at 15 to 17 year olds and therefore those youth outside of those ages will not be regarded as primary subjects;
- the two school boards (public and Catholic) will be contacted as soon as ethics approval is received, to get their OK on using school groups as a starting place for the project;
- field notes will be taken at discrete times and places;
- I will not observe at any small meetings at Schools or other Organizations without the express permission of each person present;
- I will not observe at any larger non-public meetings or events at the Schools or other Organizations without the permission of the person in charge;
- Adult volunteers and collaborators will be invited for interviews in person, and with no coercion

(i.e., I will only ask a second time if a person has said 'yes' or 'maybe' the first time);
- youth collaborators will be invited for interviews in person, and with no coercion (i.e., I will only ask a second time if a person has said 'yes' or 'maybe' the first time);
- as part of the iterative process of creating images and discussing them in small groups each participant will have had to provide a completed consent form, signed by both them an a parent/guardian, that gives the researcher permission to observe the discussions and events. These consent forms will be gathered between the first and second meetings with each group;
- In cases where collaborators would like to participate in individual interviews I will conduct interviews in semi-private spaces (such as a coffee shop or small meeting space at Keyano College) so as to protect the privacy of the interviewee but also for my own safety; again, the consent form covers the interviews and will be signed by both youth and parent/guardian (where applicable);
- In informal situations, such as the plaza of the provincial building I will make every effort to identify myself and the project as well as encourage subsequent meetings in which case consent forms may be taken home and returned, as well as offer the option of complete anonymity for any contribution;
- due to the nature of the project I would like to make it possible for participants to make a valuable contribution even if they only attend one meeting or workshop. In this case I suggest that participants claim anonymity as authors of images. Also, I would insist that they are given my own contact information should they wish to return to the group in a more formal manner (with a consent form), or if they would like their contribution removed entirely. This only applies if the one-time participant produces an image of exceptional quality and the group chooses to select the image for the final exposition;
- I will inform Dr. Shields and/or Dr. Dorow or another member of the research team of where and when I will be conducting interviews, and will carry a cell phone with me;
- as is customary in community-based research, I will offer to 'give back' to the community not only in the form of the collaborative project on which I work, but also through a report or presentation that focuses on issues they have identified as important for their own understanding.
- research participants will be instructed in workshop style seminars on considerations that they will need to make regarding who is in the photographs they create.
- participants will be required to obtain consent from known persons in photographs, i.e., family members, friends. In these instances the represented parties will sign a person release. In cases where a friend or family member is represented but is not recognizable, such as the back side of a person, consent will not be required.
- in the case where a depiction of an individual in a photograph is made, but the person is not known to the photographer, consent will not be sought. Rather, these images will be reviewed and deleted from the project, they will not be stored, or archived for public use.
- in the case where any individual is represented in a demeaning way upon review by the PI, and the participants, the image shall be deleted from the project entirely.
- the general rule regarding privacy of those represented in any given photograph is, obtain consent if possible. If consent is not sought, or not possible, the image will not be used as part of any subsequent presentation, publication and/or archive.

5.0   * **If your study has the potential to identify individuals that are upset, distressed, or disturbed, or individuals warranting medical attention, describe the arrangements made to try to assist these individuals. Explain if no arrangements have been made:**
I am aware that I am not equipped in any accredited way to deal with youth who may be facing challenges such as substance abuse, physical and mental violence, etc. If I was to enter a situation wherein an individual was in need of support or assistance related to the above matters then I would be in close contact with either; the schools and/or the youth centre who would be able to refer youth to services if needed.

3.2 Benefits Analysis

1.0   * **Describe any potential benefits of the proposed research to the participants. If there are no benefits, state this explicitly:**
Participants will gain skills in collaborative process, leadership, responsibility, photography, computer assisted design and expressive arts.

2.0   * **Describe the scientific and/or scholarly benefits of the proposed research:**
This project intends to employ recent methods involved with Visual Sociology. The basis here is on ethnography, auto-ethnography and cultural theory. Theory, Culture and Society & Visual Studies are two key goals as publication venues.

Participant observation through collaboration is a rich practice for general understanding of the cultural specificity of a place. Fort McMurray represents a place of social contention where global energy demands collide with everyday life for individuals and families. The study is thus timely and informative, given the innovation of the methodology and the social significance of the site.

3.0 Benefits/Risks Analysis: Describe the relationship of benefits to risk of participation in the research:

Benefits far outweigh the risks for participation in this research project. The design is strategically oriented so that youth will be made to feel comfortable, gain confidence, learn new and transferable skills as well as have the opportunity to continue working with innovative ideas and modes of expression after the research is over.

A risk may involve verbal confrontation with other youth who may have different opinions regarding aesthetics as well as social opinions. Additionally it should be noted that as with any form of expression, in this case, photography, publicly displayed, there will be a range of opinions expressed by those that view the images.

Risk will be mitigated by positive benefits.

4.1 Participant Information

1.0 * Who are you studying? Describe the population that will be included in this study.

2.0 * Describe the inclusion criteria for participants (e.g. age range, health status, gender, etc.). Justify the inclusion criteria (e.g. safety, uniformity, research methodology, statistical requirement, etc)

The project strives for a cross-section of youth who represent a diversity of perspectives in Fort McMurray, including immigrant and Aboriginal youth. However the study is not a focus on any one group in particular, rather the goal is to have participants representative of 'youth' in Fort McMurray.

3.0 Describe and justify the exclusion criteria for participants:

The target group of participants is youth aged 15 to 18. This is the target group because the research design is geared specifically at studying youth perspectives on Oil production and the effects on their own lives. This is an area of interest, as has been shown in the literature that youth represent a grey area of knowledge. Youth are generally not asked to participate in larger social science surveys and thus little is known. This research project aims to work collaboratively with youth in order to ensure that they are met on their own terms, abilities and general social involvement.

Key participants are youth aged 15 to 17 there is an obvious level of risk bearing in mind that under 18's in Canada are not recognized as autonomous individuals capable of making decisions regarding their own sovereignty. In response to this classification of youth as minors I take seriously the practical implications of completed consent forms and transparency of the project for anyone concerned, most importantly parents, guardians and participants themselves.

For example, if a young person responds to a flyer inviting participants, I will be sure to confirm that he or she is over 18; if not, parental/guardian permission will be sought. As another example, some clients of the organizations may be dealing with substance abuse or mental health issues; if it appears that an interviewee has any such issues I will ask a series of questions to

assess whether he or she can repeat back to me aspects of the project and consent form, and will only proceed if they can do so.

4.0   *** Will you be interacting with human subjects, will there be direct contact with human participants, for this study?**

🔘 **Yes** ⚪ No
Note: No means no direct contact with participants, chart reviews, secondary data, interaction, etc.

If NO, is this project a chart review or is a chart review part of this research project?

⚪ Yes ⚪ No

Participants

5.0

How many participants do you hope to recruit *(including controls, if applicable)*
24
Of these how many are controls, if applicable *(Possible answer: Half, Random, Unknown, or an estimate in numbers, etc).*

If this is a multi-site study, for instance a clinical trial, how many participants *(including controls, if applicable)* **are expected to be enrolled by all investigators at all sites in the entire study?**

6.0   **Justification for sample size:**
As this is a continuation of research in progress the established sample group includes 12 participants. The goal for the coming research is to include the original 12 and grow in size to double the group.

One reason would be that experienced participants can mentor new participants.
Another reason to keep the group relatively small is so that the Primary Investigator will be able to give due care and attention to facilitating the group without becoming too overwhelmed.

7.0   **Does the research specifically target aboriginal groups or communities?**

⚪ Yes ⚪ No

4.3 Recruit Potential Participants

Recruitment

1.0

1.1 How will potential participants be identified? Outline how you will identify the people who will be approached for participation or screened for eligibility.

1.2 How will people obtain details about the research in order to make a decision about participating? Select all that apply:

Potential participants will contact researchers

Researchers will contact potential participants

Contact will be made through an third party or intermediary (including snowball sampling)

1.3 If appropriate, provide the locations where recruitment will occur *(e.g schools, shopping malls, clinics, etc.)*
Educational Institution, High Schools, Youth Organizations (through posters, handbills)

Pre-Existing Relationships

2.0

2.1 Will potential participants be recruited through pre-existing relationships with researchers *(e.g. Will an instructor recruit students from his classes, or a physician recruit patients from her practice? Other examples may be employees, acquaintances, own children or family members, etc)***?**

◯ Yes ◉ **No**

2.2 If YES, identify the relationship between the researchers and participants that could compromise the freedom to decline *(e.g. professor-student)***. How will you ensure that there is no undue pressure on the potential participants to agree to the study?**

3.0 **Outline any other means by which participants could be identified, should additional participants be needed** *(e.g. response to advertising such as flyers, posters, ads in newspapers, websites, email, listservs; pre-existing records or existing registries; physician or community organization referrals; longitudinal study, etc)*
In all instances, recruitment materials including, posters, fliers, internet materials, and email messages - the project will be identified as a University of Alberta Research Project. This will ensure clarity of purpose.

4.0 **Will your study involve any of the following** *(select all that apply)***?**

There are no items to display

4.4 Third Party or Intermediary Contact Methods

1.0 **If contact will be made through an intermediary** *(including snowball sampling)***, select one of the following:**
Intermediary provides potential participant's contact information to researchers with participant's informed consent for release of contact information

2.0 **Explain why the intermediary is appropriate and describe what steps will be taken to ensure participation is voluntary:**
The intermediary was used in the previous year and may be used again. The intermediary's are educators at the three high-schools in Fort McMurray.

The order of operations is as such > Contact Educators > Educators agree to promote the recruitment session > Time is set aside > Researcher visits class to speak about the project > Consent Forms are passed to interested parties > Participants voluntarily join the Facebook group 'Where is Fort McMurray' > Research Project meeting time established > Participants arrive with signed consent forms.

4.5 Informed Consent Determination

1.0   * **Describe who will provide informed consent for this study (select all that apply). Additional information on the informed consent process is available at:** http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter3-chapitre3/#toc03-intro

    All participants have capacity to give free and informed consent

    Third party consent will be sought

Provide justification for requesting a Waiver of Consent (Minimal risk only, additional guidance available at: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/chapter3-chapitre3/#toc03-1b

2.0   **How is participant consent to be indicated and documented? Select all that apply:**

    Signed consent form

Except for "Signed consent form" use only, explain how the study information will be communicated and participant consent will be documented. Provide details for EACH of the option selected above:

3.0   **Authorized Representative, Third Party Consent, Assent**

3.1 Explain why participants lack capacity to give informed consent *(e.g. age, mental or physical condition, etc.)*.
Participants under the age of 18 will be required to provide third party consent from a parent or legal guardian.
Participants under the age of 18 with no parents or legal guardian will be given an opportunity to provide evidence of their own understanding of consent, and with approval of the research team will be considered a participant of the research project with full autonomy, and they may choose to not participate or withdraw at any time.

3.2 Will participants who lack capacity to give full informed consent be asked to give assent?
◯ Yes   ⦿ **No**

Provide details. IF applicable, attach a copy of assent form(s) in the Documentation section.

3.3 In cases where participants (re)gain capacity to give informed consent during the study, how will they be asked to provide consent on their own behalf?
Participant will be asked to carefully review and agree to the same consent form as all participants.

4.0   **What assistance will be provided to participants, or those consenting on their behalf, who have special needs?** *(E.g. non-English speakers, visually impaired, etc)***:**
Inclusion and diversity of participants is fundamental to the project.
Considerations will be made on a case-by-case basis, and in close consultation with intermediary organizations.
Consent by participants under the age of 18 will be considered carefully, and only with consent from parent/guardian.

5.0   * **If at any time a <u>participant wishes to withdraw, end, or modify their participation in the research</u> or certain aspects of the research, describe how their participation would be ended or changed.**

Participants who wish to withdraw or not participate in any portion of the research may do so at any time up until publication.
Participants may withdraw, at any time, from any portion, or whole of the project. Participants may withdraw by communicating their notice, by email, phone, letter, or verbally. Once a participant withdraws evidence of their participation in the research will be destroyed.

6.0 **Describe the circumstances and limitations of <u>data withdrawal</u> from the study, including the last point at which it can be done:**

7.0 **Will this study involve any group(s) where non-participants are present? For example, classroom research might involve groups which include participants and non-participants.**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

5.1 Research Methods and Procedures

Some research methods prompt specific ethic issues. The methods listed below have additional questions associated with them in this application. If your research does not involve any of the methods listed below, ensure that your proposed research is adequately described in Section 2.0: Study Objectives and Design or attach documents in Section 7.0 if necessary.

1.0 *** This study will involve the following** *(select all that apply)*
The list only includes categories that trigger additional page(s) for an online application. For any other methods or procedures, please indicate and describe in your research proposal in the Study Summary, or provide in an attachment:

Interviews (eg. in-person, telephone, email, chat rooms, etc)

Sound or Image Data (other than audio or video-recorded interviews)

Materials created by participants (eg. artwork, writing samples, etc)

2.0 *** Is this study a Clinical trial? (Any investigation involving participants that evaluates the effects of one or more health-related interventions on health outcomes?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

3.0 **If you are using any tests in this study diagnostically, indicate the member(s) of the study team who will administer the measures/instruments:**

Test Name	Test Administrator	Organization	Administrator's Qualification

There are no items to display

4.0 **If any test results could be interpreted diagnostically, how will these be reported back to the participants?**

5.6 Sound or Image (other than audio- or video-recorded interviews) or Material Created by Participants

1.0   **Explain if consent obtained at the beginning of the study will be sufficient, or if it will be necessary to obtain consent at different times, for different stages of the study, or for different types of data:**
Consent obtained at the beginning of the study will be sufficient. The stages include, participant observation, interviews, production of photographs and follow up interviews. These areas are all covered in the consent form to participate.

2.0   **At what stage, if any, can a participant withdraw his/her material?**

3.0   **If you or your participant's audio- or video-records, photographs, or other materials artistically represent participants or others, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those that may be represented or identified?**
Images depicting other participants, or even general public, will not be made public without the previous consent of those depicted.

4.0   **Who will have access to this data? For example, in cases where you will be sharing sounds, images, or materials for verification or feedback, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those who may be represented or identified?**
Only the Principal Investigator.

5.0   **When publicly reporting data or disseminating results of your study (eg presentation, reports, articles, books, curriculum material, performances, etc) that include the sounds, images, or materials created by participants you have collected, what steps will you take to protect the dignity of those who may be represented or identified?**
Images will be carefully selected so that the identity of participants depicted will be kept anonymous, unless otherwise agreed upon by those depicted in the images.

6.0   **What opportunities are provided to participants to choose to be identified as the author/creator of the materials created in situations where it makes sense to do so?**
The lines of communication will remain open by way of email and Facebook networks that will allow the researchers to obtain further consent for those who agree to recognizable depictions.

7.0   **If necessary, what arrangements will you make to return original materials to participants?**
Participants will retain their own photographs in digital format on disc or by way of electronic transfer.

5.7 Interviews, Focus Groups, Surveys and Questionnaires

1.0   **Are any of the questions potentially of a sensitive nature?**

        ◉ **Yes** ○ No

If YES, provide details:
Questions pertaining to home, belonging, not-belonging, community may touch upon (low level) sensitive issues to be handled with responsibility, care and discretion.

2.0   **If any data were released, could it reasonably place participants at risk of criminal or civil law suits?**

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

If YES, provide the justification for including such information in the study:

3.0   **Will you be using audio/video recording equipment and/or other capture of sound or images for the study?**

⦿ **Yes** ◯ No

If YES, provide details:
Interviews will be audio-recorded (with participants' permission). Photographs of the project in process will be collected as data.

6.1 Data Collection

1.0   ***** **Will the researcher or study team be able to identify any of the participants at any stage of the study?**

⦿ **Yes** ◯ No

2.0   **Will participants be recruited or their data be collected from Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health or data custodian as defined in the Alberta Health Information Act?**

◯ Yes ◯ No

Important: Research involving health information must be reviewed by the Health Research Ethics Board.

3.0   **Primary/raw data collected will be** *(check all that apply)***:**

Anonymous - the information **NEVER** had identifiers associated with it (eg anonymous surveys) and risk of identification of individuals is low or very low

Directly identifying information - the information identifies a specific individual through direct identifiers (e.g. name, social insurance number, personal health number, etc.)

Indirectly identifying information - the information can reasonably be expected to identify an individual through a combination of indirect identifers (eg date of birth, place of residence, photo or unique personal characteristics, etc)

All personal identifying information removed (anonymized)

Made Public and cited (including cases where participants have elected to be identified and/or allowed use of images, photos, etc.)

4.0   **If this study involves secondary use of data, list all original sources:**

5.0   **In research where total anonymity and confidentiality is sought but cannot be guaranteed** *(eg. where participants talk in a group)* **how will confidentiality be achieved?**

1.0 * **Personal Identifiers:** will you be collecting - at any time during the study, including recruitment - any of the following *(check all that apply)*:

Surname and First Name

Telephone Number

Email Address

Age at time of data collection

If OTHER, please describe:

2.0 **Will you be collecting - at any time of the study, including recruitment of participants - any of the following** *(check all that apply)***:**

There are no items to display

If OTHER, please describe:

3.0 * **If you are collecting any of the above, provide a comprehensive rationale to explain why it is necessary to collect this information:**

4.0 **If identifying information will be removed at some point, when and how will this be done?**
This will be done at all stages previous to data or findings becoming public.

5.0 * **Specify what** <u>identifiable</u> **information will be RETAINED once data collection is complete, and explain why retention is necessary. Include the retention of master lists that link participant identifiers with de-identified data:**
Names and Email contact lists will be retained in the case that consent for use of images, or as an identifiable participant in an image is needed.

6.0 **If applicable, describe your plans to link the data in this study with data associated with other studies (e.g within a data repository) or with data belongong to another organization:**

1.0 * **How will confidentiality of the data be maintained? Describe how the identity of participants will be protected both during and after research.**
Digital Data will be kept within encrypted folders on my own computer.

2.0 **How will the principal investigator ensure that all study personnel are aware of their responsibilities concerning participants' privacy and the confidentiality of their information?**
Team members are my own mentors so I will expect them to conduct themselves in an ethical manner.

3.0 **External Data Access**

* 3.1 Will <u>identifiable</u> data be transferred or made available to persons or agencies outside the research team?

◯ Yes ⦿ **No**

3.2 If YES, describe in detail what identifiable information will be released, to whom, why they need access, and under what conditions? What safeguards will be used to protect the identity of subjects and the privacy of their data.

3.3 Provide details if identifiable data will be leaving the institution, province, or country *(eg. member of research team is located in another institution or country, etc.)*

6.4 Data Storage, Retention, and Disposal

1.0 *** Describe how research data will be stored, e.g. digital files, hard copies, audio recordings, other. Specify the physical location and how it will be secured to protect confidentiality and privacy.** (For example, study documents must be kept in a locked filing cabinet and computer files are encrypted, etc.)
Once the raw data has been sufficiently tilled and mined, it will remain in storage on an encrypted external hard drive in a locked cabinet.

Encrypted Hard Drive + Locked File cabinet.

2.0 *** University policy requires that you keep your data for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the study but there is no limit on data retention. Specify any plans for future use of the data. <u>If the data will become part of a data repository or if this study involves the creation of a research database or registry for future research use, please provide details.</u>**

3.0 **If you plan to destroy your data, describe when and how this will be done? Indicate your plans for the destruction of the identifiers at the earliest opportunity consistent with the conduct of the research and/or clinical needs:**
Participants will be able to post their images to a closed flickr site with an option to delete them at any time. Creating an archive is of primary importance.

7.1 Documentation

Add documents in this section according to the headers. Use Item 11.0 "Other Documents" for any material not specifically mentioned below.

Sample templates are available in the HERO Home Page in the **Forms and Templates**, or by clicking HERE.

1.0 **Recruitment Materials:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Recruitment Poster 1	History	0.01	5/5/2010 8:14 PM	
Recruitment Flyer Handbill 2010	History	0.01	4/3/2010 1:14 PM	

2.0 **Letter of Initial Contact:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

3.0 **Informed Consent / Information Document(s):**

3.1 What is the reading level of the Informed Consent Form(s):
High School

3.2 Informed Consent Form(s)/Information Document(s):

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Request Permission to Reprint Material	History	0.02	5/18/2010 8:45 AM	
Request to Reproduce Physical Likeness	History	0.02	5/18/2010 8:43 AM	
Delete Attempt Failed	History	0.02	5/5/2010 8:08 PM	
Social Landscapes of Fort McMurray - Consent Form	History	0.01	5/5/2010 8:06 PM	

4.0 **Assent Forms:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

5.0 **Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description
Example Questions for Interviews	History	0.01	4/3/2010 2:38 PM	

6.0 **Protocol:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

7.0   Investigator Brochures/Product Monographs *(Clinical Applications only)***:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

8.0   Health Canada No Objection Letter *(NOL)***:**

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

9.0   Confidentiality Agreement:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

10.0   Conflict of Interest:

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

11.0   Other Documents:
For example, Study Budget, Course Outline, or other documents not mentioned above

Document Name	Version	Date	Description

There are no items to display

Final Page

Appendix C: Posters

WHERE IS FORT MCMURRAY?
YOUTH PICTURING PLACE

FORT MCMURRAY PUBLIC LIBRARY
PHOTOGRAPHY INSTALLATION
FEBRUARY 2011
OPENING FEB 4, 7PM

UNIVERSITY OF
ALBERTA

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Reframing Canadian Oil sands: Image Notes:

Fig 5.1 Image of the Piper Alpha ablaze taken by a crew member operating one of the rescue vessels. Image © Cardiff University Engineering Department.

Fig 5.2 "Location of the Athabasca, Cold Lake and Peace River Oil sands in Alberta." Alberta Oil sands. Alberta Geological Survey, May 9, 2012. Web. August 20, 2012. Image ©Energy Resource Conservation Board.

Fig 5.3 Guy, Karen. Greenpeace Activists Enter Syncrude's Aurora North Oil sands Operation and Suspend a Banner that Reads "World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands." Photograph. Latest Photos. Greenpeace, July 23, 2008. Web. August 20, 2012. <http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/photos-and-video/latest/braving-toxic-fumes-and-the-sa/>.

Fig 5.4 Burtynsky, Edward. Alberta Oil sands #10 (Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada). 2007. Photograph. Edward Burtynsky Photographic Works. Web. August 20, 2012. <edwardburtynsky.com>.

Fig 5.5 Riordon, Nathalie. Untitled. 2009. Where is Fort McMurray? Web. August 20, 2012.
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Fig 5.6 Lozowy, Andriko. Highway 63. 2011. ? Unpublished. Reproduced with Permission of Photographer.

Fig 5.7 Hime, Humphrey Lloyd. The Prairie, Looking South.1858. Photograph. 1936-273/C-018694. Library and Archives Canada , Ottawa.

Fig 5.8 Lozowy, Andriko. Image 19. 2011.? Unpublished. Reproduced with Permission of the Photographer.

Fig 5.9 Lozowy, Andriko. Refinery at Night. 2010. ? Unpublished. Reproduced with Permission of the Photographer.