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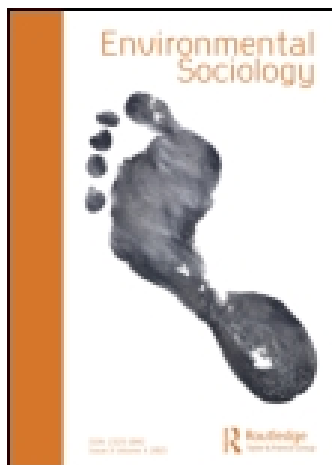
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Stephanie Sodero^a & Mark C.J. Stoddart^a

^a Department of Sociology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

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A typology of diversion: legitimating discourses of tourism attraction, oil extraction and climate action in Newfoundland and Labrador

Stephanie Sodero* and Mark C.J. Stoddart

Department of Sociology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

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Focusing on the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada's easternmost province, we analyse a typology of diversionary techniques that lend legitimacy to the contradictory projects of expanding tourism and fossil fuel use, on the one hand, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, on the other hand. We combine the work of two bodies of legitimacy theory within environmental sociology. First, we draw on techniques of distraction, as detailed by Freudenburg and Alario and Gramling and Freudenburg, to explore how discursive misdirection maintains an incongruous status quo in the public and political spheres. Second, we draw on Norgaard's work on cultural nonresponse that describes how climate change denial is constructed in private and interpersonal spheres. Informed by policy documents and interviews with stakeholders, we identify and analyse three legitimization techniques – pursuing divergent policies, manipulating timelines and diverting attention – that sustain policy tensions and delay substantive climate action. By combining and extending public and private spheres of legitimization theory, we identify a complex typology of interrelated techniques used by actors to actively construct, and arguably distort, social-ecological relationships.

Keywords: climate change; diversion; energy; legitimization; tourism

Introduction

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada's easternmost province, like other regions, has developed and released comprehensive tourism, energy and climate change action plans. To varying degrees, the goals of each plan are ambitious, the content aspirational and the language earnest. The quandary, however, is that the intentions of the plans are at cross-purposes, offering divergent views of managing social-ecological relationships. The government sets out to concurrently double tourism revenue, maximize oil revenue and reduce greenhouse gases. Comparable to exhaling and inhaling simultaneously, the government wishes to both expand fossil fuel use and contract emissions. This is the foreseeable outcome of a complex political structure made up of isolated ministries pursuing diverse political interests. However, it is the construction of the legitimacy of such contradictions that we aim to explore. Such policy paradoxes, especially in the realm of climate and resource politics, are so common as to almost be unremarkable. We use the case of Newfoundland and Labrador to examine the typology of tactics used to legitimize divergent policies within a particular context, thereby adding to the repertoire of legitimating tactics described by Freudenburg and Norgaard.¹

Through our analysis, we link two existing concepts from environmental sociology. First, we draw on techniques of distraction (Freudenburg and Alario 2007; Gramling and Freudenburg 2012) to explore how discursive misdirection is used to maintain an incongruous status

quo in the public and political spheres. Second, we draw on Norgaard's (2011) cultural nonresponse toolkit, which describes how climate change denial is constructed in private and interpersonal spheres. By combining and extending public and private spheres of legitimization theory, we identify a complex typology of interrelated techniques used by actors to construct, and arguably distort, social-ecological relationships. This results in greater analytical opportunities than yielded by either framework in isolation. Drawing on provincial policy documents and stakeholder interviews, we identify three key legitimization techniques – pursuing divergent policies, manipulating timelines and diverting attention – that sustain policy tensions and delay substantive climate action.

Newfoundland's political ecology

Since the 1992 cod fishing moratorium, two prominent strategies were pursued to diversify Newfoundland's economy: *attractive* development in the form of tourism and *extractive* development in the form of the oil (Luke 2002).² Both sectors are central to the provincial economy and both are embedded in a petroc capitalist mobility complex that centres on the 'production, exchange, and consumption' of fossil fuels (Valdivia 2011, 312; also see Altvater 2007; Urry 2013). The tourism sector is linked to petrocapitalism via a global, fossil-fuel dependent mobility network that includes airplane, cruise ship, ferry and car travel, while the oil sector is bound to petrocapitalism through fossil fuel extraction, employment and royalties (Urry 2009).

*Corresponding author. Email: sbs105@mun.ca

The petrocapiatist profile of Newfoundland's economy is apparent when analysing Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment and greenhouse gas emission statistics. The oil sector contributes significantly to the provincial GDP, 31%, compared to less than 5% for the tourism sector. However, the tourism industry is an employment engine, engaging 13,000 people, compared to approximately 3000 in the oil sector (GNL 2014a; Higgins 2009).³ The fossil-fuel intensive transport and oil sectors account for approximately 70% of provincial greenhouse gas emissions (GNL 2011a).⁴ Such carbon intensive development is at odds with provincial emission reduction target of 10% below 1990 levels by 2020 (GNL 2014b).⁵

Legitimation and denial

We combine an analysis of techniques of distraction used in the public sphere, as detailed by Freudenburg and Alario (2007) and Gramling and Freudenburg (2012), with Norgaard's (2011) insights into climate change nonmobilization in the private sphere. By linking these perspectives, we highlight different registers of legitimation – a public and 'political' register and an 'everyday' private register. The result is an elaborated typology of discourses that divert attention from climate change inaction. Linking these approaches better attunes us to the way legitimation is socially produced in these different spheres.

Freudenburg and Alario (2007; see also Freudenburg 2005) contributes to legitimation theory by asking not how public attention is drawn to certain issues, but rather how it is diverted and how 'nonproblematicity' is achieved. Rather than responding directly to a matter of concern – the coveted straight answer – representatives of government, industry and other opinion leaders often employ rhetorical techniques to divert attention or reframe an issue. Freudenburg and Alario (2007) invoke the metaphor of magicianship to describe how public attention is intentionally manipulated. They argue that interrelated techniques such as framing, blaming and activating questions are analogous to 'the flourish, the smoke, the noise, the flash' employed by magicians to direct audience attention (2007, 155). In terms of framing, choice of words can signal an organization's position on an issue, and consequently shape the nature of the debate (Lakoff 2002). For example, in the case of Alberta's Athabasca bitumen deposits, the use of the term 'oil sands' connotes a pro-development stance, while the term 'tar sands' is associated with an anti-development stance. The choice of one three-letter word over the other signifies a cascade of political, economic and environmental values and policy positions.

Likewise, blaming shifts questions about legitimacy and competency from one social actor or organization to others. Rather than responding to questions about an organization's own practices, representatives divert attention to a real or constructed opponent. Two related tools used in blaming are asking questions and raising doubts.

Freudenburg and Alario draw on cases of technological risk, whereby questions about the safety or legality of corporate and governmental practices are met with attempts to undermine the legitimacy of those raising concerns, for example, by questioning their technical expertise and doubting their commitment to local jobs. Through this process, questions about safety and legality may be obfuscated.

Gramling and Freudenburg (2012) elaborate on the role of distraction with the concept of *double diversion*, a combination of rhetorical and policy techniques used to evade environmental regulation (Rudel 2013). Through an exploration of the intersection of American energy policy and the 2010 BP blowout, Gramling and Freudenburg posit that the US government pursued two diversionary tactics that in combination perpetuated unjust and ineffective energy policies. The first diversion is that of public access to resources and related revenues by facilitating the transfer of offshore energy resources from the public to the private sector. The second diversion is that of *attention*, by framing such a transfer as a means to foster domestic energy production and energy independence. Critically, while American energy independence has been advocated since the 1970s, oil imports increased from approximately 30% to 60% in 2005.⁶ Gramling and Freudenburg (2012) argue that energy independence is an appealing but artificial goal – a myth – that diverts attention from the transfer of public assets to corporate coffers. The diversion of access needs to be paired with the diversion of attention to lend such a wealth transfer the gloss of legitimacy and create a permissive environment for industrial practices, such as deepwater drilling and hydraulic fracturing that pose a high ecological risk. Shearer, Davidson, and Gramling (2013) argue that the double diversion applies to other fossil fuel sectors, such as the American coal industry and the Albertan oil/tar sands, with diversion of resources to the private sector paired with accounts of how such projects benefit the public via economic development. Environmental harms are predominantly framed as the price to pay for the public economic good, while counter frames focus on how such projects divert resources to the few and distribute risks to the many.

While, in combination, Freudenburg, Alario and Gramling examine the political and economic spheres, Norgaard explores how conflicting identities in a Norwegian community contribute to nonresponse to climate change. Citizens identify as both beneficiaries of a lucrative domestic oil industry and proponents of social justice, which paradoxically the former undermines via global climatic impacts (Norgaard 2012). Norgaard (2011) identifies everyday conversational tactics – controlling exposure to information, shifting attention and maintaining tradition – that entrench nonresponse both emotionally and materially. Focusing on the local scale and maintaining traditions frame time and space in such a way as to limit climate change discussion. In combination these tactics constitute *tools of order*. Norgaard also identifies *tools of innocence*, which are

stories that Norwegians tell themselves that shape a collective identity that fosters nonresponse to climate change. One such theme is ‘Norway is a little land,’ and refers to the country’s relatively small contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. Another is ‘We have suffered,’ which refers to the hardship experienced during WWII and before the rise of the oil economy. Given the past experience of such economic adversity and the current economic benefit of the oil industry, Norwegians justify limits to their action on climate change (Norgaard 2006a).⁷ Norgaard (2006b) argues that such tactics buffer citizens from the discomfiting emotions associated with climate change, such as guilt, fear and helplessness. The cumulative effect is that of hiding under one’s *nisselue* (i.e. Nordic hat) or sticking one’s head in the sand, and rationalizing the status quo.

Methods

We draw on policy documents and interview data to examine social interpretations of changing social-ecological interactions on Newfoundland’s coast. We focus on the actual and potential intersections of the nature-oriented tourism industry and the oil industry.⁸ Data were collected from 2011 to 2013 in the context of debate over whether oil exploration should be undertaken in proximity to Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site and major tourism attractor located on Newfoundland’s west coast.

Using a purposive sampling strategy, we conducted interviews with tourism industry participants (13), Newfoundland-based and regional environmental, tourism and recreation nongovernmental organizations (11) and government-affiliated participants (5), for a total of 29 interviews. Given the orientation of the project, interviews focused primarily on the tourism sector because of its role in reshaping cultural perceptions of – and social interactions with – coastal environments. The interview schedule included specific questions on tourism’s relationship with the energy sector, including perceived environmental risks, the economic and social impacts of both industries, and connections between the two sectors (i.e. in relation to environmental governance). Because of a primary focus on the role of tourism in re-orienting social-environmental relationships in Newfoundland, interviews were not carried out with energy sector representatives, though this would be a valuable extension of our present analysis.

In addition to the interviews, we analysed three flagship policy documents specific to the tourism, energy and climate change sectors published respectively by the provincial Departments of Tourism Culture and Recreation; Natural Resources; and Environment and Conservation. Using content and discourse analysis, we focused on human interactions with the coastal environment as well as intersectoral linkages, such as references to climate change in tourism documents. Finally, we carried out field research at 12 public events related to tourism, offshore oil extraction and climate change between 2011 and 2014, informing our analysis.

Findings –legitimizing techniques

Three broad legitimization techniques emerged – pursuing divergent policies, manipulating timelines and diverting attention.

Pursuing incongruous policies: tourism, energy and climate goals

Strategic action plans, such as those in the tourism, energy and environment sectors, play a dual diversionary role. First, they contain proposed actions that subsequently require diversionary tactics to justify. Second, they are in themselves a diversionary tactic, creating an impression of policy efficacy and coherence.

Tourism

Uncommon Potential: A Vision for Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism is ‘a blueprint for extraordinary growth’ and commits the province to doubling annual tourism revenue to \$1.6 billion by 2020 (GNL 2009, 8). In 1992, 264,000 nonresidents visited Newfoundland, spending \$127 million (Globe 2011). By 2010, this grew to 518,500 nonresident visitors, spending \$411 million (Globe 2011; Target 2012). The total economic impact is larger: in 2009, the tourism industry contributed \$850 million to the provincial economy (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2009, 17). When asked about the benefits of tourism for the province as a whole, Aaron, who works on regional development for the provincial government, replies:

Obviously when there’s one billion dollars of spending from the tourism sector in this province in one year alone there’s all kinds of spin-offs, economic spin-offs and reinvestment that occurs, both in the tourism sector and, you know, in other areas, to give back to the province, so it generates all kinds of tax [revenue] ... and the ability for small- and medium-sized enterprise in this sector to be successful means that there are individuals that also buy cars and buy gas and buy things and they’re consumers themselves. So, all that is good.⁹

Aaron’s response frames the provincial tourism strategy as successful in attracting visitors and creating economic benefits that extend beyond individual operators and industry boundaries to contribute to the regional economy broadly. Many participants focus on the positive economic spillover effects from oil to tourism, such as enabling well-paid oil industry workers to be tourists within the province, attracting new tourists and donating resources to projects that benefit tourism, such as the extensive East Coast Trail hiking network.

One strategy used to attract tourism revenue is *Find Yourself Here*, a provincial tourism campaign that competes for market share by celebrating Newfoundland’s natural beauty and close-knit communities. The advertisements position the province as an escape from the high-speed pressures of a globalized world where, as Urry

(2009) notes, artifice and excess are celebrated. Ironically, the ability to access such authentic locality is dependent on a carbon intensive mobility network constituted, in part, by airplanes, airports, highways, rental cars, cruise ships and ferries. At the same time, interview participants generally view this promotional strategy positively – a successful example of conveying a sense of spectacular nature and cultural authenticity to potential visitors. Patricia, who works for a nongovernmental organization, describes this as follows:

I think tourism has grown exponentially. I travel two or three times a year outside of the province. And no matter what time I'm there ... I see the Newfoundland tourism ads everywhere. And when I meet my fellow co-workers [in other provinces] they're all like 'I want to come to Newfoundland, I want to come to Newfoundland.' On their TV stations and stuff they're seeing images and really great commercials for tourism.

The provincial government's focus on tourism as a form of economic development grew out of the devastating impacts of the cod fishery moratorium of the early 1990s on coastal rural communities. After two decades of effort to build the tourism industry as a means of economic diversification, cultural and nature-oriented tourism is now important to the viability of many rural communities.

Energy

When asked about the relationship between the tourism and oil industries, Anna, who works for the provincial government, states, 'The oil and gas industry will provide more jobs, more economic benefit to the province and therefore create more of a cash flow and an opportunity for people to create more tourism businesses.' As this quote illustrates, oil is seen as the main economic driver with tourism playing a secondary and supporting role in regional economic development.

There are three major offshore projects in Newfoundland: Hibernia, Terra Nova and White Rose. All are located about 350 kilometres southeast of the provincial capital, St. John's, in the ecologically rich Grand Banks (C-NLOPB 2012a). From 1997, when the first well began production, to 2011, the fields produced 1.3 billion barrels of oil (GNL 2012). By comparison, Alberta's operations are much larger, producing 1.9 million barrels of oil per day with proven reserves of 170 billion barrels (Government of Alberta 2014). The value of Newfoundland's oil production in 2011 was approximately \$11 billion (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2012). Hebron, a fourth field in the same area is currently in development, with estimated reserves of 660–1005 million barrels (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2012). Pending approval by the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board, Hebron is projected to produce oil from 2017 to 2042 (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2012).

In addition, the provincial government is exploring deepwater oil extraction off the Labrador coast. If approved, drilling would occur 1100 metres below the ocean surface, a depth 10 times greater than current provincial offshore development. By comparison, the Deepwater Horizon platform drilled 1500 metres below the ocean surface in the Gulf of Mexico with the well extending 10,700 metres. (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2014; Freudenburg and Gramling 2011).¹⁰ Between these projects, estimates of potential reserves range between 960 and 1600 million barrels with a concomitant carbon footprint for extraction, transport and consumption. The promise of further oil development serves to delay a comprehensive transition to energy conservation and renewable energy (Fisher 2006).¹¹

An additional traditional oil development, Old Harry, is proposed for an area 100 kilometres off the west coast of Newfoundland in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. By contrast with other offshore oil projects, Old Harry has generated resistance from environmental organizations and residents of the five Canadian provinces that border the waters of the proposed oil field.¹² Likewise, recent proposals for fracking operations in the community of Sally's Cove were met with resistance and resulted in a moratorium pending further research (Telegram 2013). Organized opposition to oil development is atypical and is focused on a particular project, rather than on the legitimacy of oil extraction broadly.

This project-specific concern about oil development is captured by tourism operator, Keith, who reflects on risks associated with the proposed fracking development:

Because we depend so much on the puffins and the whales and that whole interaction with the marine life in coming close to shore. If something was to seriously disturb that balance well that would be very, very detrimental to the tourism industry.

Likewise, Roy, a government representative, states:

Now, I'm not against development ... absolutely not saying that I'm against it. [However,] if you have a spill in the Gulf, well, you're landlocked, pretty much. And even a minor spill ends up probably putting oil on all four coasts, be it Labrador, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. So, I think there's a lot more to lose over here [compared to other areas of the province], so without a strategy, a proper strategy.... It can't just be willy-nilly, 'Okay, well let's let these guys do this and see what happens.'

These recent examples of project-specific opposition to oil development are driven in large part by their proximity to Gros Morne National Park, a regional tourism magnet.

Climate change

The perceived impacts and potential risks of climate change for Newfoundland, including its tourism industry, are captured by William, an interview participant who works with the provincial government:

We have bigger, heavier, higher impactful storms than we used to have 30 or 40 years ago. This seems to be what the research is telling us. All that could have a huge impact on people's decisions to travel here. Particularly when it comes to the impacts climate change will have on some of our tourism assets such as whales, icebergs, seabirds, and fishing even. There are a lot of impacts that could have disastrous consequences in certain parts of the province.

In response to these and other risks, the provincial government's climate change action plan, *Charting Our Course*, sets an emissions reduction target. Compared to the ambitious goals set out in the energy and tourism plans and also to calls in the climate policy community for emission reductions of 50–85% by 2050, Newfoundland's 10% reduction target is modest (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2014). However, the tone of *Charting Our Course* is optimistic, referring to 'untapped opportunities' and stating that the 'government is committed to positioning our economy so we are well placed to seize the opportunities associated with the move to a low-carbon global economy' (GNL 2011b, np). Total annual greenhouse gas emissions in 2011 were approximately on par (1.3% greater) with 1990 emissions levels (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2011a). Such an appearance of stasis masks remarkable variability, with emissions reaching a low of 23% below 1990 levels in 1994 due to the cod fishery moratorium and its wide-reaching economic impacts, and a high of 23% over 1990 levels in 2002 with the rise of the oil industry.

The Government of Newfoundland intends to double tourism revenue by 2020, maximize the economic benefits from the oil sector and reduce emissions. When considered in isolation, each plan appears plausible. However, when compared, tensions emerge. The provincial Department of Environment and Conservation concedes that

... in the absence of any further actions to tackle climate change, greenhouse gas emissions in Newfoundland and Labrador will rise by the year 2020. The forecasted increase is a result of further industrial growth in the province, such as the Hebron offshore oil development and growth in mining. The development of the clean energy Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project, which will enable the province to eliminate the [oil-powered] electricity generating station in Holyrood, will help offset these increases but will not, on its own, enable the Provincial Government to meet the targets it has set for greenhouse gas reduction (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2014b).

A 10% reduction may be feasible, either unintentionally – and undesirably – in the case of an economic downturn, or intentionally through emission reduction efforts in other sectors (e.g. home energy retrofits, composting). However, more substantive emission reductions in the face of growing tourism and oil development are unlikely.

Pursuing incongruous policies

Freudenburg (1993) and Youn (2013) warn against accepting the framing of problems forwarded by those in power. By extension, as seen in the case of Newfoundland, the framing of solutions also needs to be questioned. Each policy document has an internal logic. However, when analytical connections are made across these projects, conflicts are apparent. The nonproblematicity of divergent policy pursuits – doubling tourism, maximizing oil extraction and checking emissions – is also reflected in the perceptions of research participants. While several interviewees are aware of, and express concerns about, the ecological risks of oil development, many also view tourism and oil as distinct and compatible development paths, welcoming the economic benefits of each. Theodore, a government representative, reflects on the relationship between the sectors: 'By and large if they have a relationship, I think it's a good one. Oil companies have made some very generous contributions to some community-based organizations that directly or indirectly are involved with tourism attractions and services.' Likewise, Keith, a tourism operator, observes:

There's no two ways about it, the oil industry has created a lot of wealth in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially around St. John's ... So, if people have excess disposable money they're more willing to go take advantage of your product: go on a kayak tour, go on a hike, stay at a hotel, do a boat tour, do these different things.

Richard, another tourism operator, voices a similar sentiment: 'The offshore oil industry is a major contributor for taxation base as far as workers go. It's also ... a major revenue generator for driving the province's economy in general. So, do they conflict? Being offshore, I don't see that they conflict.'

While interview participants often note the risk of a large-scale oil spill as a conceivable but controllable impact of oil development, the climatic impact of the oil industry is largely unacknowledged. For example, Andrea, a tourism operator, responds to a question about the relationship between tourism and oil development by saying, 'If you have one major spill, I cannot imagine the impact that would be on the bird population alone. And that brings a lot of tourism dollars to [the area]. Because not everybody works in the oil industry, but a lot of people receive a benefit from it.' Ruth, also a tourism operator, responds to the same question as follows:

Without the offshore oil industry, this province would be in dire straits. We wouldn't have enjoyed all of the marketing dollars that have gone into promotion of Newfoundland and Labrador and I think we would not be where we are today, in terms of tourism, without oil and gas development. So I'm certainly not anti-oil. But I think that it should be done in a manner that's not going to have negative impacts on other industries.

As in provincial policy documents, stakeholders separate and reconcile the relationship between tourism, oil and the environment. This may be due in part to the fact that the economic benefits of development are experienced – though far from equally distributed – throughout the economy from corporate offices to outport touring companies (Harvey and Varuzzo 2013). Like Norway's story of 'we have suffered,' due to offshore oil development Newfoundland is appreciating economic growth after the devastation of the cod fishery collapse.

Manipulating timelines: energy, tourism and climate policy

The temporal frame of the tourism plan positions tourism as a longer-term mode of development in contrast to the shorter lifespan of the oil sector: 'developed carefully, tourism can be a sustainable industry with far-reaching economic, social, and cultural benefits. It has the ability to further generate substantial economic returns *long after nonrenewable resources have been extracted from our province*' (emphasis added) (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2009, 17). While there is a desire for tourism mobility both on the part of tourists and government, there is also recognition that most transport modes depend on fossil fuels. The plan acknowledges that 'climate change has emerged as a significant environmental concern and travellers are becoming more conscientious of their footprint' (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2009, 16).

The provincial energy plan sets out the goal of maximizing the economic benefit of energy development, while simultaneously reiterating the provincial emissions target (GNL 2007). The authors acknowledge the tension between pursuing oil development and meeting provincial climate change commitments, noting 'the inextricable link between the production and use of energy and the emission of greenhouse gases' (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007, 83). However, the authors attempt to reconcile the conflicting agendas: 'We will continue to pursue the development of our oil and gas resources and use proceeds from these projects to support the development of renewable energy infrastructure that will enable us to have a sustainable clean-energy future' (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007, 50). While such a strategy has an internal and comfortable logic – first A, then B – it is at odds with evidence produced by the scientific community indicating the necessity of immediate emission reductions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2014; National Roundtable of the Environment and Economy 2012). Further, despite the development of the Muskrat Falls hydroelectricity project, which may lead to a net balance of renewable electricity, the production and export of oil for purposes other than electricity generation continues full bore.

The provincial climate change plan echoes the linear timeline of the energy plan, stating that the current oil boom will finance a transition to renewable energy

infrastructure: 'Our province has vast clean energy resources and our government is committed to using revenues from our nonrenewable resources to support a clean energy future' (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2011b, np). In short, the province will maximize revenue from the oil sector, and then use this fiscal foundation to develop clean energy.

The temporal framing used in provincial policy documents is more than simply short-term political opportunism; it is a rhetorical diversionary technique that, whether employed intentionally or unintentionally, fosters the impression that the province can both extract and consume oil and reduce carbon. In all three provincial plans – tourism, energy and climate change – such temporal framing suggests that a paradigm shift is necessary; however, the shift is positioned as future-oriented, vague and distant. Such framing is opposite to, but serves the same purpose as, the focus of Norwegian communities on looking to the past and maintaining tradition (Norgaard 2011). Both techniques effectively defer present action.

It is worthwhile noting that all three plans acknowledge climate change. The discursive technique of manufacturing uncertainty that was prevalent in North America in the 2000s is not in evidence in the selected provincial policy documents (Alario 2013; McCright and Dunlap 2010). However, the disjuncture between science and policy remains. In effect, the temporal logic of provincial policy documents does not reflect ecological reality. In framing tourism and oil development, longer-term and sequential time frames are implied, whereby immediate carbon intensive development can purportedly be followed down the road by an expanded tourism sector and renewable energy development.

In the same vein, Shaw (2010) traces the development of the widely referenced two degrees Celsius upper limit for a tolerable increase in global average temperature. Shaw finds that such framing fosters the illusion that risk is associated with the future, rather than the present, and a false sense that 'go-slow' policy approaches are tenable. However, such linear plans do not correspond with a disrupted climatic system. As a discursive tactic, this temporal distancing works to maintain an image of the tourism and oil industries as unproblematic in relation to parallel, but separate, discourses about climate change.

Such temporal framing takes on richer meaning within the context of Newfoundland, which relies on its geological and cultural history as key elements of its tourism discourse. The province's geological assets are measured in the billions of years, with tourism attractors such as the Tablelands mountain range in Gros Morne National Park and fossil sites in Mistaken Point and Fortune Head. In terms of human history, pre-colonial habitation is dated to 9000 years ago. Vikings first made contact 1000 years ago, an occurrence memorialized at the L'Anse aux Meadows UNESCO World Heritage site. Further, the now struggling outport fishing communities that defined the previous century are celebrated in tourism commercials as rare examples of livelihoods derived from the sea. The

province relies on the historicity of outport communities to attract tourists to sites such as Trinity, Bonavista and Battle Harbour. Perhaps more so than other regions, calls for immediate climate action and references to dramatic climatic tipping points are incongruous with the far-reaching geological and cultural history of a region acclimatized to more temperate policy responses.

Diverting attention: out of sight and micro scales

The third and final key discursive tactic is diverting attention, which occurs in two main ways: allowing what is out of sight to remain out of mind and focusing on the micro-social rather than the macrosocial scale.

Out of sight, out of mind

The fact that existing oil developments are located far offshore and are imperceptible from land emerges as a key diversionary technique. The role geographic inconspicuousness plays in facilitating the status quo was cast in high relief with the emergence of controversies over the recent oil development proposal in the Gulf of St. Lawrence near Gros Morne National Park. Several interview participants make a strategic distinction between offshore oil development beyond the reach of nature-oriented tourism operations and oil development that may impact tourist viewscapes or environments. Tourism operator, Keith, states:

...industry is looking to do some fracking right in Gros Morne National Park, all these things cause great concern. ... We're trying to sell ourselves as this pristine environment with a very unique coastline, do you want to have oilrigs right in the middle of those harbours? Of course, right now they're out of sight, so the tourists don't see them, they don't know what's going on ...

Patricia, an environmental organization representative, states similar concerns:

I understand that we need oil and gas to fuel tourism, because you know the cars, the planes, the trains ... When they're out of sight, like this Hibernia stuff, [it's] out of mind ... but to have it so close in proximity. People don't want to come to a pristine coastline, a fragile ecosystem or something, and know that we're tearing it apart. ... We still need oil and gas, we're 100 per cent aware of that. But if you look out your window, everybody likes to look out the window and see the sea, see the boats, see the islands, they don't want to see [an oil] platform.

The offshore oil industry enjoys support amongst tourism operators and government officials. Oil development is viewed as a major economic driver that, because it is located far offshore, is seen as a separate and isolated entity, physically distinct from tourism development and climatic impacts in coastal environments.

Focusing on the microsocial

Focusing on the microsocial is akin to focusing on the trees, not the forest, as attention is drawn to the details of everyday operations, rather than on larger-scale analyses of the sustainability or resilience of social-technical systems. Two examples emerge related to oilrigs and natural disaster response. With regard to oilrigs, the environmental mandate of the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board (2012b) states that one of its roles is to 'verify that operators assess and provide for effects of the environment on the safety of their operations.' This refers to the threat posed to oil platforms by icebergs. During the spring and summer, oil companies identify oncoming icebergs and tug them onto a different course to prevent collisions with rigs, which can result in production disruptions, oil spills and harm to personnel (Hibernia 2014). Such framing focuses on isolated threats to infrastructure, directing attention away from the impact of oil production on iceberg formation and mobility, whereby an increase in global atmospheric temperature contributes to the deterioration of polar ice sheets (MacLeod 2014).

A second example of diverting attention from the macro to the micro scales relates to Hurricane Igor. The most costly storm on record in the province, Igor incurred an estimated \$100 million in damages, and washed out roads and bridges isolating communities for up to 10 days (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2011b). In media coverage of the hurricane, a central theme is 'community spirit,' that is, the tendency for neighbours and families to help each other get back on their feet.¹³ A related sub-theme of the 'resilient Newfoundlander' emerges where political leaders laud citizens' ability to respond to crisis. The resilient Newfoundlander is celebrated as tough and resourceful. Then Premier, Danny Williams, states,

It was a truly humbling experience to see people, faced by their own hardship, putting others before themselves and going above and beyond to assist in any way humanly possible. ... Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a reputation for being some of the kindest and most *resilient* people in the world, and this past week was certainly a testament to this claim (emphasis added) (Bartlett 2010).

Likewise, after touring affected communities, Prime Minister Harper observed that citizens 'are facing the aftermath of the storm with their characteristic resilience and determination' (Telegram 2010). Compared to the blaming tactics identified by [Freudenburg and Alario \(2007\)](#), high-level figures use praise as a diversionary tactic. Such flattery diverts attention away from macrosocial questions about the resilience of infrastructure (including tourism and oil infrastructure), disaster preparedness or climate change mitigation, to a microsocial focus on the role of individuals, possibly preempting more critical assessments of infrastructure design and maintenance, as well as disaster response.

Jennings (2011) similarly notes that neoliberal governance tactics were used in response to 2004 flooding in England, where responsibility for environmental impacts was diverted from government to the individual through a discourse centred on 'bottom-up' adaptation measures. In the case of Newfoundland, praise emerges as a form of persuasion. Such admiration is deserved and genuine; however, when there is a concomitant lack of discussion, whether intentionally or unintentionally, about macrosocial issues such as the resilience of transport systems, the result is a naturalization of the status quo.

Connecting public and private legitimization tactics

We identify techniques of distraction that appear in public, political discourse, as well as in private talk, that work to minimize attention to tensions between tourism and oil industry expansion and emission contraction. By connecting the work of Freudenburg and Alario (2007) and Gramling and Freudenburg (2012) with that of Norgaard (2011), we highlight the interplay of the public and private spheres as complementary registers for producing environmental (non)problematicity, as demonstrated, for example, by interviews with tourism operators who personally and professionally reconcile oil development with coastal tourism.

Our typology of diversionary techniques extends previous research in several ways. Gramling and Freudenburg (2012) focus on a single policy sector (i.e. energy) and Norgaard (2011) focuses on multiple realms (i.e. oil, skiing and climate) from an interpersonal perspective. By contrast, the diversionary techniques that emerge in the case of Newfoundland link multiple policy sectors: tourism, energy, climate change mitigation, and climate change impacts in the form of Hurricane Igor.

We also identify three related but distinct diversionary techniques not included in earlier analysis of diversionary tactics: pursuing incongruous policies, manipulating timelines and diverting attention, with the latter category further broken down into focusing on inconspicuousness and micro scales. Pursuing incongruous policies, which we see as a variant of the double diversion, distracts through the illusion of policy coherence (i.e. three provincial policy documents that in isolation appear plausible but when compared are in conflict). Manipulating timelines and focusing on the microsocial are examples of specific types of diversionary framing, while praising provides an important counterpart to blaming as a strategy.

The cultural nonresponse tactics that Norgaard (2011) observes help us further understand the diversionary tactics used at the policy level. Manipulating timelines to conform to linear modernistic notions of time and action, rather than responsiveness to climatic and resource tipping points is a form of adhering to tradition or convention. Further, while Norgaard's research points to emphasizing past traditions as a foundation for climate inaction, Newfoundland policy makers defer action to the future, allowing both societies to effectively avoid difficult questions pertaining to the present. Finally, the inconspicuousness of offshore oil rigs

geographically permits avoidance; lack of visibility conveniently permits a lack of consideration.

We argue that there is a synergistic effect of multiple diversions operating across multiple sectors within the public and private spheres of legitimation, which in combination perpetuates the status quo and delays meaningful climate action. While this web of diversionary strategies is diverse, it may also be fragile. Changing social-ecological dynamics can expose tensions that threaten the status quo. As Murphy notes in his analysis of the 1990 ice storm that severely disrupted power grids in the eastern North America, 'The freezing rain produced by primal nature crushed not only electrical transmission lines but also discourse which claimed that it would not happen' (2009: 324). Proposals for oil exploration in the Gulf of St. Lawrence were met with concern for the established tourism industry and disrupted the dominant framing that focuses on the short-term social benefits of oil development.

Freudenburg and Alario (2007) argue that interrelated techniques such as framing, blaming and activating questions are analogous to the work of magicians who manipulate audience attention (2007: 155). What emerges from our analysis of Newfoundland is more diffuse and ambiguous, perhaps reflecting a lack of understanding of climate science, political compromise, industry influence on policymaking, or a tendency to incrementalism, rather than a concerted effort to mislead or distract. While the maintenance of a petrocapiatist status quo is not accidental, it is neither entirely intentional. It is accepted as political economic common sense by a wide range of social actors, thereby effectively warding off uncomfortable and disruptive questions (Freudenburg and Alario 2007). There are a myriad of untapped opportunities for less divergent pathways that could be pursued, including investments in sustainable transport; development of renewable energy sources, particularly wind; and leveraging the economic potential of energy efficiency retrofits in homes and businesses. A fundamental barrier is switching tracks from the diversionary discourse to one that confronts a changing social-ecological reality.

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Notes

1. The official name of Canada's easternmost province is Newfoundland and Labrador; however, colloquially it is referred to as Newfoundland, a practice we adopt in this article.
2. Because of overfishing by factory draggers, a moratorium was placed on the 500-year old Newfoundland cod fishery with pervasive social and economic impacts, including the

migration of workers to Alberta's oil sector. Tourism and energy were fostered as a key means to transition towards a new economy. Mining (e.g. nickel, iron, cobalt, gold, copper) has also emerged as a key economic sector, though is less prominent in the coastal areas that are the focus of this research.

3. Employment figures in the tourism sector include seasonal and part-time employment; employment figures in the oil sector increase temporarily during the construction phase of a given project.
4. Based on greenhouse gas inventory data, this calculation includes oil production (e.g. oil and gas extraction and related fugitive sources, as well as mining) and transport (e.g. gas- and diesel-powered road, off road, marine and domestic air travel). The calculation is approximate as oil and gas data includes mining, and transport data excludes international aviation.
5. For anticipated regional climate impacts see Catto (2010) and Finnis (2013).
6. Because of widespread development of fracking, U.S. energy imports have declined since 2005 reinvigorating aspirations for energy independence (Krauss 2014).
7. This said, Norway is not inactive in terms of climate policy, but is working to address climate change, aiming for a 30% reduction in emissions below 1990 levels by 2020 with a further goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 (Government of Norway 2014).
8. Nature-oriented tourism includes activities such as whale watching, iceberg watching and kayaking.
9. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of research participants.
10. Deepwater drilling is defined as oil extraction that takes place in water greater than 150 metres in depth.
11. In 2018, an 824-megawatt hydroelectric generating facility in Muskrat Falls, Labrador, is scheduled to begin production that may support the closure of an oil-powered generating station (Nalcor Energy 2014). Wind energy is largely undeveloped, with two sites totalling 54 megawatts (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007; Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro n.d.).
12. This controversy is examined in depth in a related paper (see Stoddart and Graham 2014).
13. This data is drawn from a distinct but related project to inform and augment this subcomponent that addresses the diversion of attention. The project explores how Hurricanes Igor, which hit Newfoundland in September 2010, highlights areas of social-ecological resilience and vulnerability in the personal and freight transport sectors. The term 'Hurricane Igor' was entered in the search engine of the provincial newspaper, *The Telegram*, to identify relevant media items. The sample starts one day prior to the storm to capture preparation measures, and ends one month after the storm in order to focus on short-term coping strategies and related discourses (n18).

Notes on contributors

Stephanie Sodero is a Doctoral Candidate in sociology at Memorial University of Newfoundland and a Visiting Scholar at New York University's Superstorm Research Lab. Her doctoral research project is titled *Navigating Disruption: Mobile Society and Hurricanes Juan, Igor and Sandy*. Her research explores the intersection of mobilities, social-ecological resilience and climate policy. Her work is found or is forthcoming in the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *Mobilities* and the *Journal of Transport Geography*.

Mark C.J. Stoddart is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Memorial University of Newfoundland, with

research interests in environmental sociology, social movements, and communications and culture. His research contributions were recognized with the 2014 Early Investigator Award from the Canadian Sociological Association. He is the author of the book, *Making Meaning out of Mountains: The Political Ecology of Skiing* (UBC Press). His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Global Environmental Change*, *Environmental Politics*, *Society and Natural Resources*, *Organization & Environment*, *Nature & Culture*, *Mobilities*, *Social Movement Studies*, and *Sociological Spectrum*.

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