



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (Queen's University, 2015)

**“Riftwalking: The Dissolution of Socio-Ecological Resilience  
and the Role of Resilience Thinking in Metabolic Rifts”**

Department of Political Science

Tuesday, May 14, 2019  
10:00 A.M.  
David Turpin Building  
Room A357

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. James Lawson, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Simon Glezos, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

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Dr. Ben Nadler, Department of Mechanical Engineering, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## Abstract

This thesis asks what effects concepts of resilience may have on political action and the ongoing ecological crises we see developing throughout the world. Specifically, it addresses disruptions in wild salmon migration, spawning, and fisheries brought about by industrial aquaculture in the so-called Broughton Archipelago in unceded Kwakwaka'wakw territories on the north east coast of Vancouver Island. These disruptions will be looked at as examples of resilience thinking in action. Through this example this thesis will examine the relationship between manifestations of resilience thinking and the emergence of metabolic rifts between nature and society that bring with them ecological crises. This thesis will begin by tracing the genealogy of resilience thinking from its origins in systems ecology to its depoliticizing formation in political-economic development. Through this it will show where resilience has been split from its origins as a socio-ecological concept, into purely social and ecological formations that interact in a zero-sum relationship. As a depoliticizing force, resilience works through the aforementioned cleavage to atomize individuals and distance them from their connections to socio-ecological communities, favouring instead marketized relations that reinforce capitalism, colonialism, and the state form. Following this, this thesis will argue that this cleavage and resilience thinking more broadly also generates sites of metabolic rifts within and between nature and society and is a factor in their reproduction and geographic spread. Resilience however need not be a fully depoliticizing force. Taking up from the work of Roberto Esposito on relational community and immunization, this thesis ends with an exploration of how resilience thinking can return to its socio-ecological roots and be used in emancipatory, decolonial, and ecologically sound ways that will help in the reconstituting of the metabolic cycles within and between nature and society disrupted by rifts. Understanding how resilience thinking plays a role in depoliticization and the generation and reproduction of metabolic rifts makes space for turning this mentality on its head. Reconstructing a more holistic socio-ecological form of resilience helps to provide the necessary political tools to challenge underlying structures of domination and exploitation that put our socio-ecosystems at risk.