



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

NICOLAS GRAHAM

MA (University of Victoria, 2011)
BA (Simon Fraser University, 2008)

**“Forces of Production, Climate Change and Canadian Fossil
Capitalism”**

Department of Sociology

Tuesday, May 7, 2019
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. William Carroll, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Martha McMahon, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)
Dr. James Lawson, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Gregory Albo, Department of Political Science, York University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Lara Lauzon, School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, UVic

Abstract

The dissertation reinterprets the concept of forces of production through an ecological lens and analyzes the fettering of “green productive forces” in the context of the deepening climate crisis. In contrast to more established interpretations, I define forces of production broadly as *the practices, processes, relations and objects through which we are purposefully linked to and transform the rest of nature*. I demonstrate the basis for this interpretation in Marx’s own work and develop its implication through contemporary scholarship. In present circumstances, it allows us to see that ecological knowledge itself, as well as associated developments in renewable energy technology and green infrastructure, represent advancements in productive forces. However, I argue that such green productive forces are today fettered by capitalist relations of production. The second portion of the dissertation analyzes this process through cases studies focusing on Canadian fossil capitalism. In this context, I examine the deepening of fossil-fuelled productive forces and simultaneous blockages in the development and productive utilization of renewable energy and ecological knowledge. This includes a focus on carbon capital’s strategic efforts to colonize such productive forces and fashion them in a manner that is consonant with the accumulation strategies and power relations permeating fossil capitalism.