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

of

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MA (Athabasca University, 2013)
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“Globalization’s Ruptures and Responses: Lessons from Three BC Communities”

Interdisciplinary Studies

Thursday, August 27, 2020
1:00pm
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. James Lawson, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Co-supervisor)
Dr. Pamela Shaw, Department of Geography (Co-supervisor)
Dr. Warren Magnusson, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)
Dr. Richard Rajala, Department of History, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Greg Halseth, Department of Geography, University of Northern British Columbia

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Dr. Corinne Bancroft, Department of English, UVic

Dr. Stephen V. Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The global economy infuses every aspect of our day to day lives, from the clothes we wear, to the food we eat, to our political choices. And with its ability to "mutate, shudder and shatter" (Dicken et al), the unpredictable ruptures associated with the global economy elude our ability to grasp its impact and to govern its activities. So how, as citizens, do we imagine governing ourselves when ‘nobody appears to be in charge any longer’? How does our understanding of the state apparatuses – the legislation, regulations, policies – speak to people’s day to day experience in their communities? This research addresses two broad questions: how are communities responding to externally generated ruptures and how do they govern themselves in response? I propose that responding coherently to rupture events is inhibited by community members' lack of awareness of the complex interrelationships of the constituent elements of the economy, and secondarily by situating the state as the primary site of governance.

Through interviews, surveys, and documentary research, this interdisciplinary study (political science, human geography, sociology and history) examines how three communities – Tumbler Ridge, Tofino and Gabriola Island – were affected by ruptures associated with global recessions and how they responded. Each of these communities exists within Indigenous spaces. Understanding how communities perceived their relationships with their Indigenous neighbours grounds the stories within the historical impacts of colonization, although it is not part of this thesis to investigate both sides of the ‘settler’-Indigenous relationship in these communities. By telling the story of each community’s response to rupture over time and comparing the trajectories of the different stories, I draw conclusions comparing each community’s response and the outcomes. I pursue four broad areas of investigation: the degree to which communities understood their relationship with what I call the “capital economy” and others refer to as the market or capitalist economy, and how that understanding affected their response to rupture; how attitudes toward place shaped community responses to rupture; how community perceptions about the nature and attributes of their local economies affected the decisions they made and the strategies they employed to address economic and social challenges; and how the deployment of governance at various scales impacted the social and economic health of the communities.

The communities embraced a range of strategies from individual autonomous action, to networked autonomous action, to the creation of place-based governance entities as potential sites for autonomous action. The effectiveness of these strategies was determined by a number of factors. First, the degree to which communities saw the state as the locus of political action and the market economy as the primary agent for achieving community health and wellbeing had consequences for life control, self-determination and self-governance. Second, the extent to which the community was willing to work outside of the normative governance structures (normative in the sense that the state and corporate decision-making are commonly accepted as the primary and proper sources of governance and problem-solving) affected their ability to consider and create adaptive strategies capable of responding to the unpredictable mutations of global capital. Finally, the failure in some communities to understand the ongoing impacts of colonization hampered their ability to create meaningful and ultimately productive relationships with their Indigenous neighbours, relationships that may have opened up valuable avenues to the economic and social wellbeing of all parties.

I conclude that effective governance strategies capable of seeing communities through unpredictable ruptures will require developing capacities in five areas: building on a platform of deeply situated knowledge; building relationships across interests and social strata; employing ‘loose’ structure strategies; adopting approaches based on incremental persistence; and learning from Indigenous self-governance aspirations. Developing these local capacities will lay the foundation for a broader scope of political action.