

Place, Identity and Real Estate:  
The Experiences of German Immigrants and Locals  
on the South Shore of Nova Scotia

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how middle class locals and recent German immigrants on the South Shore of Nova Scotia have experienced the recent changes in the real estate market. This region is simultaneously experiencing high unemployment because of the downturn in the fishery and a twenty to thirty percent increase in ocean front real estate prices from 1997-1999. The increase in real estate prices is attributed to the interest of people from outside the area, particularly Germans and Americans. I argue that an understanding of the effects of the changes in the real estate market must incorporate local understandings of place as well as the region's position in the regional and global economy.

Drawing from anthropologists Feld and Basso (1996), Gray (1999), Olwig (1997, 1999) and Rodman (1992), and geographers Harvey (1995, 1996) and Massey and Jess (1995) and I discuss how the South Shore derives its meaning through social relations. Using Raymond Williams' conceptual tool "structures of feeling" (1977), I show how individual feelings about place are intertwined with their various class and cultural positions on the South Shore, as well as the South Shore's marginal position in the global political economy. I conclude by examining how the politics of place in the region figure into the ways both locals and Germans articulate narratives of identity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is very humbling to think of all the people who have helped me bring this thesis to completion. I am grateful to Amanda Lavers and Wanda and Mike Wolter for welcoming me into their homes and social circles during my fieldwork. To the extent that this project has been a success, it is largely because of their concern that my research progress and their constant help. Their approach to life and generosity have been an inspiration to me. I am thankful to all the people I spoke with on the South Shore who kindly agreed to share their experiences with me. Virtually every day I sat down to the computer, I dearly wished I was living their lives rather than writing about them.

Anna Keefe and Diane Pringle, who both died in the fall of 1999, made the initial introductions that allowed me to meet many of people that I have come to know on the South Shore. For this, and much more, they are missed and remembered with gratitude.

I have appreciated all the people in the Dalhousie SOSA department who have provided a stimulating and collegial atmosphere for learning. Particular thanks to Dawn-Aeron Wason and Kregg Hetherington for sharing the ups and downs of graduate student life. Thanks to Janet Graham and Mary Morash-Watts for their moral support. I would like to thank my committee members and reader Drs. Pauline Gardiner Barber, Lindsay DuBois and Marian Binkley. Pauline Gardiner Barber's infectious enthusiasm for understanding people's lives makes her an inspiring and compassionate teacher. Her incisive criticisms, which come out of her heartfelt commitment to teaching and anthropology, have challenged me immensely. She has influenced me and my work more than we both would might like to admit. Lindsay DuBois' consistent encouragement, positive outlook and thoughtful analysis have been immensely helpful and often recessitated my tenuous faith in this research. Marian Binkley's comments and eye for details are greatly appreciated. Tania Li's teaching was a formative part of my interest in anthropology. I was fortunate to find an intellectual fairy godmother. Donna Young's insights and interest in both my intellectual progress and emotional well being have been invaluable. If I had a magic wand, one of my first wishes would be for her this summer.

To my friends who obediently refrained from asking me how the "t-word" was going for these many months, my grateful thanks. I would especially like to thank Dave Redwood for his journalistic acumen, Geoff Brown for his maps, David Pringle for his interest in anthropology, Heather Asbil for answering the phone at all hours, especially during fieldwork struggles, Megan and Hannah Davies for reality breaks from academic writing and Shelley Robinson whose listening ear and wicked squash game have greatly improved my mental health.

Finally, I am thankful to my parents whose pragmatic idealism has allowed me to ask the big questions and taught me the practical skills to attempt to live the answers. I am more grateful each year for my broad based pre-university education for which they sacrificed so much. Thanks also to Evan for the pre-field work encouragement and to Paul for being Paul.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

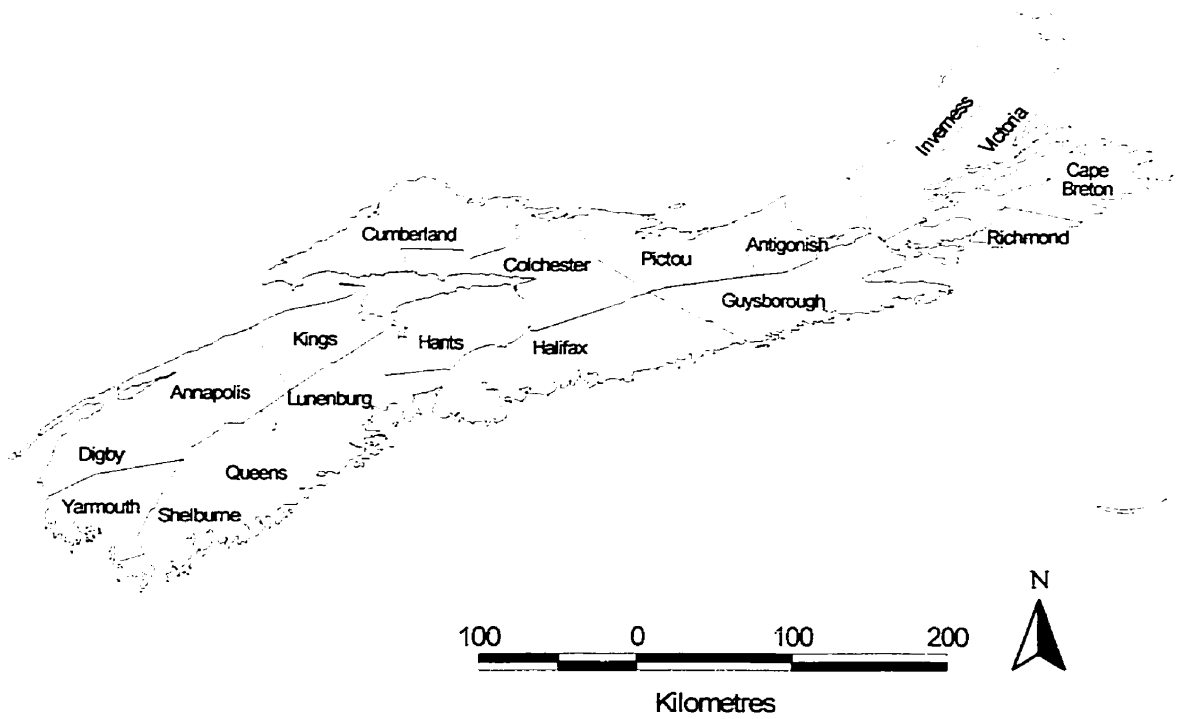
### Research Statement

This thesis is a preliminary consideration of how people living on the South Shore of Nova Scotia are experiencing changes in the real estate market. It examines the experiences of German immigrants who have participated in these changes as land purchasers and new residents, as well as the experiences of locals, who participate in the changes as land sellers and through being community members. Drawing on research of anthropologists and geographers who show the implications of the social construction of place, I demonstrate that places are rendered meaningful through social relations. Because landscapes and properties anchor cultural and individual histories and derive meaning in social relations, I argue that people's understandings of the real estate market cannot be separated from social experiences of place.

I then turn to situating the ways that the meanings of place and the real estate market are articulated in the political economy of the region. The region's position in the regional and global economy generates the conditions for particular buyers and sellers to participate in the real estate market on the South Shore. I demonstrate how locals' and Germans' positions lead to a particular sense of place that derives its meaning in a particular constellation of historical trajectories and power relations. Their positions give rise to particular "structures of feeling" (Williams, 1977). With this term Raymond Williams draws attention to those dynamic emotions experienced by individuals that are



# Nova Scotia: Counties



shared by others as a result of their class position and shaped by the historical and economic contexts in which they live. In his words,

The term is difficult, but 'feeling' is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of 'world view' or 'ideology'. It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systemic beliefs, though of course we have always to include them. It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal and systemic beliefs are in practice variable.... We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone: specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling as against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought.... (1977: 132)

As such, structures of feeling link individuals' experiences to larger economic and political processes whose precise effects on individuals are not always tangible. Williams writes, "We are defining a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic and even isolating..." (1977: 132).

Structures of feeling can be expressed in various ways. They can be made manifest through desires to consume particular goods in particular circumstances (Meneley, 1999b; Steedman, 1986), through gendered modes of organizing (DuBois, 1999) or through an idiom of place and landscape (Young, 1999; n.d.). In each case, the material and historical conditions at hand shape the possibilities for subjectivities and types of feelings to be experienced (Meneley, 1999a). In his notion of "Structures of feeling," Williams incorporated a conceptualization of livelihood that considers more than cash income. Harvey writes, "His [Williams'] materialism and critical realism always see to it that work (or what he elsewhere calls 'livelihood') - broadly understood as a simultaneously life-giving and culturally creative activity - is the fundamental process through which our relation to and understanding of the world of nature gets

constituted” (1995: 77). Barber, in the same vein, writes that livelihoods are series of social relationships through which “people secure access to the things they need to sustain themselves (1996: 5)”. These “things” include, she writes citing Wallman: “shelter, cash, food, information, (socially strategic) relationships, personal significance (sense of self) and group identity” (1996: 4).

In this thesis, I argue that the location of the South Shore and my interviewees’ respective class and cultural positions on the South Shore give rise to abiding structures of feeling expressed by Germans and locals through an idiom of place. Since their positions are not identical, their narratives of place which express particular structures of feeling, will also vary. What they have in common is the idiom of place and landscape through which the feelings are voiced.

Their structures of feeling also incorporate narratives of identity. Consequently, this thesis also examines the interconnections between narratives of place and identity, following on the work of Olwig (1999, 1997) and Massey and Jess (1995). These social scientists show that places serve as sites to anchor oneself ideologically and materially. Germans and locals’ narratives of place reveal structures of feeling as well as processes of identity formation.

In sum, in order to fully understand the impacts of the changes in the real estate market in this economically depressed area, this thesis investigates the social construction of place on the South Shore and the significance of narratives of place and identity in the current politics of place. For reasons that will be made clear, the rapidly rising real estate prices on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, brought about by the purchasing interests of

people from outside the area, have brought discussions of place and identity full centre in these rural communities.

### **Literature Review: Situating the Research Questions**

This thesis owes many of its insights to anthropologists and geographers whose research demonstrates that places derive their importance through social relations and daily activities. This literature addresses the following sorts of questions: How do we conceptualize landscape and place in a way that incorporates social relations? How does space become place? How do people relate to the landscape in their daily lives? How are histories embedded in a particular landscape and place? How do different positions affect experiences of place? How are property relations affected by local understandings of place?

My research has also benefited from work which shows that identities should not be taken as natural or essentialized, but rather examined as political expressions embedded in unequal power relations, with different articulations in different contexts. This literature provides the context for the following questions to be asked: How do particular narratives of identity relate to local power struggles? Since mobility is common, how do identities change in different contexts? What do we learn from the gaps between a discourse of a particular identity claiming certain qualities and how the qualities are lived in practice?

## **The Social Construction of Place**

Work in the last decade in anthropology broadens the conceptualization of place and, rather than accepting locations as containers of social relations, considers the ways in which places are rendered meaningful through social relations. Because all social events occur in places, the pervasiveness of place is obvious, and it was overlooked as a conceptual tool. On this point Geertz writes, “There are a number of possible reasons for this. One is surely the simple ubiquity of place and the sense of place in human life. It is difficult to see what is always there. Whoever discovered water, it was not a fish” (259: 1996).

Hirsch (1995) writes that in some geographical uses, landscapes are conceived as cultural images or pictorial ways of representing and symbolizing surroundings. To get beyond these static notions of landscape, Hirsch suggests conceptualizing landscape as a process that embodies both “a ‘foreground’ of everyday social life and a ‘background’ of potential social existence”(1995: 22). Feld and Basso’s collection of anthropological research on place follows in a similar vein, showing the interaction between people and their place by considering landscape as text, symbolically coded through local histories and customs, rendered meaningful through local interpretations. Stewart (1996) focuses on local narratives in Appalachia and through them shows the embeddedness of place as a crucial element in shaping people’s lives. In the narratives, places are interpreted as signs that give comfort and solace even as they are filled with painful memories and desperate poverty. Her ethnography is filled with evocative and lyrical descriptions of the hills and their role in shaping the social imaginary and the “social space of desire” for the people whose places are in this landscape. Because places are embodied with histories and

meaning, hills, tarpaper shacks and the wreckage that accumulate are not merely what they seem but “become compelling *signs* of a past, like the present, where things fall apart and where everything, including power itself, is constructed and transient” (1996: 96).

Counter to understanding place as constructed through narratives to be interpreted as symbolic texts, Gray (1999) has found in his ethnographic work with shepherds in the Borderlands of Scotland, that places are actively made through daily, weekly and yearly activities. He maintains that the shepherds get their sense of place by walking up, down, over, and around the hills with sheep; they have an intimate knowledge of their place because of these activities. He is critical of anthropologists like Basso and Feld (1996) and Hirsch and O’Hanlon (1995) who use what he calls “the landscape perspective”. Gray claims there is an over emphasis on landscapes as texts and the discourse of place, although he concedes that

the strength of analyses based upon a landscape perspective is the way they demonstrate how places viewed *at a distance* have reflexive and contemplative qualities. These qualities provide the basis for the well-recognized way places act as means of shaping conception and producing experiences of self and identity, e.g. Basso, 1996; Feld and Basso, 1996; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997. (1999: 443)

Rather than focus on landscapes as texts, Gray prefers to consider the “practices through which those who use spaces make them into meaningful places” (1999: 443). Citing Jackson, Gray writes, “Meaning should not be reduced to that which can be thought or said, since meaning may exist simply in the doing and in what is manifestly accomplished by action” (1999: 443). In this way he concurs with Rodman who writes, “Places come into being through praxis, not just through narratives” (1992: 642). This

distinction is slightly overstated in Gray's literature review. Narratives themselves, particularly narratives of belonging, come into existence through repeated practice.

Li states that "anthropologists have long recognized the social nature of property". Citing MacPherson, she writes, "it [property] is not a relationship between people and things, but a relationship between people, embedded in a cultural and moral framework, a particular vision of community". Her research in Indonesia shows "the ways in which contests over the distribution of property are articulated in terms of competing representations of community" (1996: 501-502). Olwig's research (1997, 1999) in the Caribbean also addresses the role of property ownership and its myriad implications for place making because of the "close connections between land, community and moral values" (1999: 370). Historically, properties on St. John had little commercial value, but prices have risen sharply in the 1990's due to interest of North Americans wanting a vacation home. Residents are confronted with a dilemma of acquiring ever alluring and necessary cash obtainable through selling their family home or maintaining their land. On St. John, which has a long history of emigration, land was and is important for family members, both those who stay and those who moved away. Olwig writes,

As a result, land has become a source of divisiveness and contention for many families rather than a site of belonging [which it used to be]. The conversion of family land into an attractive property investment in the American tourist paradise has seriously threatened the moral underpinnings and cultural significance of land for the St. Johnian community. (1999: 379)

Since this thesis investigates multiple meanings of place, through the narratives of both locals and Germans, a key conceptual tool in this thesis is Rodman's notion of multilocality (1992). She writes,

...a single physical landscape can be multilocal in the sense that it shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users. This is more accurately a multivocal dimension of place, but multilocality conveys the idea that a single place may be experienced quite differently. (1992: 647)

Furthermore, "...places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experienced places are forged of culture and history" (Rodman, 1992: 643). I see examining the multilocal elements of places as crucial to a rich understanding of how the fluctuations in the real estate market play into ongoing processes of social change in this region of Nova Scotia. Since the people who are purchasing the properties and moving to the area are largely from other place, this thesis considers how "genealogies of dispersion are entangled with those which stay put" (Brah, 1996). Leach has also pointed to analytical significance of examining this kind of social situation. She writes, "understanding the class and gender dimensions of who moves and who stays may be the very factors which are crucial to our understanding of the connectedness of global and local processes" (1997: 4).

### **The Political Dimensions of Identity**

Identity is a profound manifestation of the impact and interconnection of social processes on individual human experience. An individual's identity links their personal experience to that of collectivities they choose or are compelled to identify with. These processes are enacted in uneven fashion, rendering each individual experience unique but with certain commonalities within collectivities. Brah writes,

Identity may be understood as that very process by which the multiplicity, contradiction, and instability of subjectivity is signified as having coherence,



continuity; as having a core - a continually changing core but the sense of a core nonetheless - that at any given moment is enunciated as the "I". (1996: 124)

Because identity is this rich embodiment of an individual's relationship to a collectivity, in both real and imagined ways, the location and the local nexus of historical and cultural trajectories will have a profound impact on identity. Social scientists (Gregory and Sanjek, 1994; Mercer, 1992; Wilmsen and McAllister, 1996) have established that identity is defined relationally, and never in isolation from other factors, especially unequal relations of power. They assert that understanding this confluence of social processes is a political entry point into understanding how individuals create culture. Rouse writes,

[Identity] unites discussion of many different kinds of inequality, especially those organized along lines of nationality, ethnicity, race, sexuality and gender, and by offering powerful tools for linking the processes through which people are made collective to the ways they develop as individuals, it has become the primary medium for understanding and engaging the relationship between the political and the cultural, the subjective and the social. (1995a: 351)

The relational nature of defining identities means that they are experienced through the creation of an "other"; the other exemplifies many qualities that the subject is not. Therefore, being aware of the ways that differences are articulated is part of the discourse of identity. The articulation of differences often overemphasizes dualisms like urban/rural, foreign/local, here/away, which take more or less salience depending on the particular background of the person expressing them, and the social and historical contexts in which they find themselves. Often articulations of identity and difference, expressed through dualistic social categories, are connected to struggles over resources. As Leach writes, "identities and differences are foregrounded or pushed aside through the

agency of people in a process of defining legitimate participants and issues in current political struggles” (1998: 182). In that article she uses working class narratives of inclusion and exclusion, to show how these narratives are intertwined with steel worker’s current experiences of downsizing in their unionized factory workplace. She writes, “the process through which people come to belong simultaneously constructs ‘others’ who do not participate in the collective identity” (1998: 89).

Tauxe (1998) has undertaken research in two neighbouring towns in the mid-western United States where an economic boom has brought new people into the region. She writes, “identity politics were relocated within an insider/outsider conflict that redefined the significance of and relation between concepts of localness and rurality” (1998: 356). Locals blamed their loss of control over local affairs and the inflation of food and housing prices on the presence of outsiders (1998: 357). Locals claimed “a greater commitment to community and general moral superiority over the new residents” (1998: 36). In this way, Leach and Tauxe, along with others such as Cheater and Hopa (1997), Pieterse (1996) and Radice (2000) demonstrate that belonging and identity are negotiated processes that relate to local political contexts.

To be sure, local contexts alone do not fully explain how cultural identities are experienced and produced. Many anthropologists (e.g. Barber, 1997; Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Winland, 1998) working with immigrants have shown that identities are produced in both local and global arenas. The transnational character of many people’s lives serves as an ever-present reminder that cultures and identities are formed in spaces not limited by local boundaries or borders of nation states. Appadurai writes, “The landscapes of group

identity - the ethnoscapes - around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious or culturally homogenous” (1991: 191).

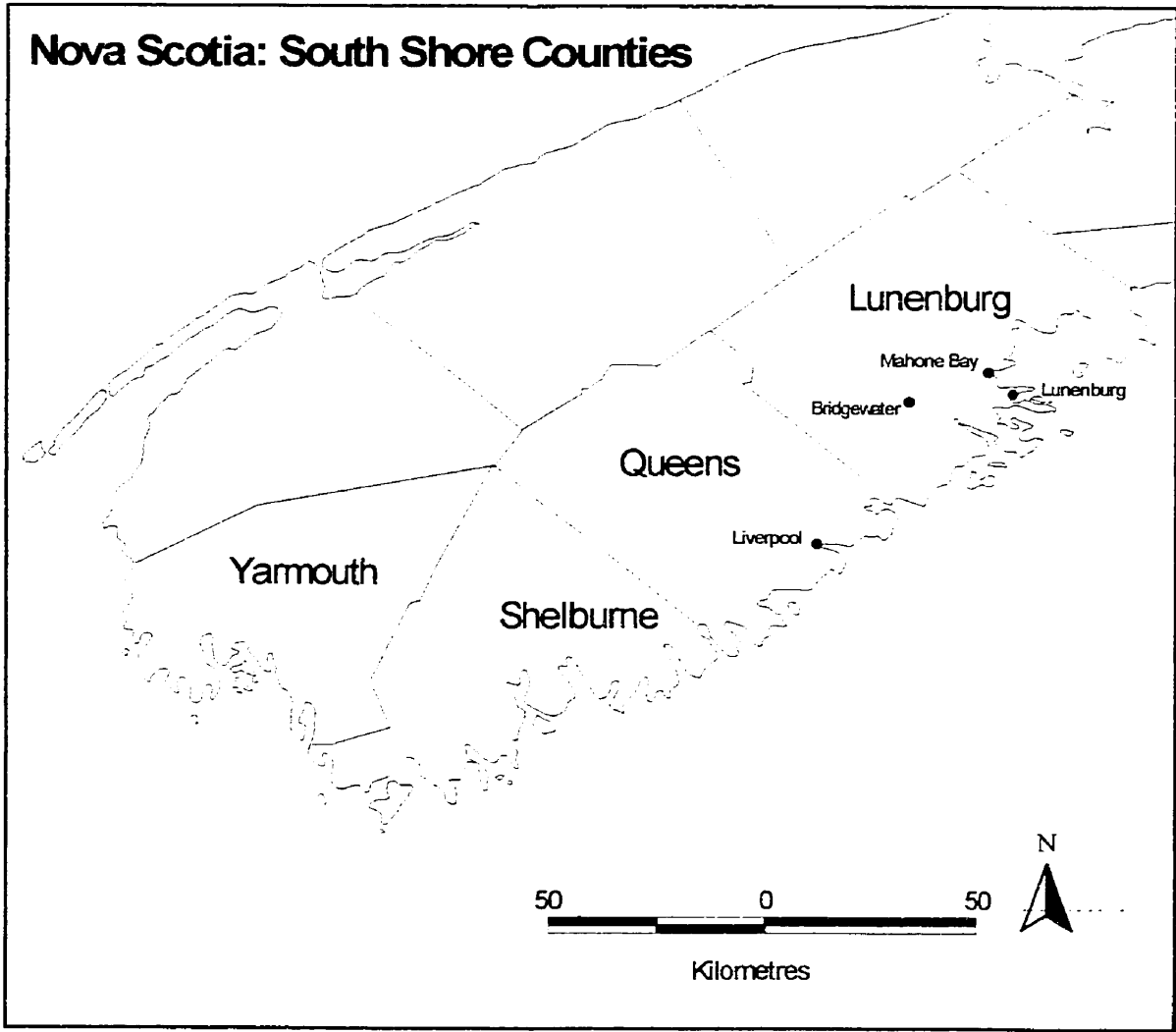
These bodies of literature coalesce into the themes this thesis seeks to address, namely, the understandings of place and property that are intertwined with identity for locals and German immigrants on the South Shore, generating a particular politics of place.

## **Research Setting**

This research was undertaken in Lunenburg and Queens counties in Nova Scotia. These counties, together with Shelburne and Yarmouth Counties constitute the South Shore. From Halifax it takes less than hour by car to the Lunenburg County line and three hours to reach Yarmouth County. In 1996, the populations of Lunenburg and Queens counties were 47, 634 and 12, 417 respectively. Between 1991 and 1996 Lunenburg county experienced a .2 percent net decline in population while in Queens the decline was 3.9 percent.

Since there is no public transportation within the region, or linking the region with Halifax, and the distances are too long to walk or cycle, residents almost always travel by car or truck. Driving through the landscape on the South Shore, I saw wooden siding houses that sit on rolling green hills, modest bungalows and trailers that form small settlements, and winding coastal roads that lead past sandy beaches, as well as rocky outcroppings and charming fishing villages often seen on post cards. Homemade road signs are ubiquitous, advertising everything from German food and local folk art to boat charters and Birkenstock sandals. Signs in German and English also announce land for sale, as well as construction and home maintenance services. I saw evidence of some industrial activity; a Michelin tire plant and the Lunenburg industrial park. Tim Horton's and McDonald's and other large chains are also part of the landscape; the "pristine" landscape many tourist love is not untouched by industrial development.

The landscape people now experience has been made though a long history of European settlement. Many people living in the area are descended from Europeans who came in the 1750's, called "the Foreign Protestants" (Bell, 1990). These settlers from



Germany, Switzerland and the Alsace region of France were granted land by the British in order to colonize the land before the Catholic Acadians could make permanent settlements.<sup>1</sup> Land, according to Paulsen (1996), was parceled out in ways that enabled ethnic identities and loyalties from points of origin to be maintained in the new country. The anglicized names of those ancestors, like Zwicker, Nauss, Hirtle, Wentzel or Mosher are the “South Shore” names of today. Grenke (1998) and Lacey (1982) found in their research on German ethnicity in present day Lunenburg county that many people are proud of their German heritage but their main identification with Germaness is with the qualities of their settler forbears rather than with present day Germans. According to the 1996 census, of the 19, 485 people claiming German heritage in Lunenburg county only 415 claim to speak German as their mother tongue.

People in this area have been incorporated in a global economy since European settlement, and perhaps before. Historically people have migrated from the South Shore to the “Boston States” (New England) and other parts of Canada in search of work, and tourism has regularly brought people from other parts of the world to the area since at least 1850 (Desbrisay, 1980). At the turn of the century residents on the South Shore built ships that sailed to far away ports, caught and processed fish sold elsewhere (Barss, 1978), and ran Caribbean rum during prohibition (Forbes, 1989). Now tourism is an important part of the economy (Dickinson, 1996), even more so since Lunenburg was designated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage site in 1996. Transnational companies like Michelin Tire employ

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<sup>1</sup>The expulsion of the Acadians took place during the same period.

significant numbers of people<sup>2</sup>, Christmas trees are sold on world markets; the South Shore is fully incorporated into the global economy in these and other ways.

Although the South Shore is economically integrated into the global economy, this does not mean that people living there are making a lot of money. According to the 1996 census, average household incomes in Lunenburg County were \$37, 932 and \$42, 128 in Queens, compared with the Canadian average of \$48, 552. In Lunenburg County thirteen percent of families live below the poverty line and sixteen percent in Queens County. There are fewer health, recreational and shopping services available than in Halifax, the regional centre. Although there are community colleges in Bridgewater and Shelburne, people must leave the region to go to university.

In the last few years, the prices of properties have risen dramatically, particularly those with water frontage on the ocean and to a lesser extent on lake. I saw one coastal mansion with a \$950,000 asking price (Real Estate on Nova Scotia's South Shore, July, 1999), and many more modest houses in the \$150,000-\$200,000 range. According to a survey conducted by Re/Max, a national real estate firm, the values of waterfront properties in Nova Scotia have risen twenty to thirty percent in the last two years (The Chronicle Herald, May 18, 2000). Claussen Walters and Associates affiliated with Sotheby's, South Shore realtors who specialize in upscale properties, sold 2.4 acres of property (land only) on Second Peninsula in Lunenburg county for \$285,000 while average waterfront properties, with no buildings, are likely to cost \$100,000 (Halifax Herald, May 18, 2000). The same article states that the South Shore is at the centre of the

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<sup>2</sup>Michelin employs about 1, 100 people, and a total of 3, 500 people when spin off jobs are considered (The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise, August 4, 1999).

interest. The houses are being marketed and sold largely to people from central and western Canada, the United States, Germany and Switzerland. Locals know from the asking price whether a house will “go local” since local incomes are often too low to afford anything above the average house value which was \$70,000 according to the 1996 census. Eighty two percent of homes are privately owned in Lunenburg and Queens counties, compared with sixty percent in Canada as a whole and forty percent in Halifax. Owning a home with property has been possible for most people who stay in the region as prices were in line with local salaries. Since the increase in real estate transactions, there is concern that prices are rising beyond the means of local people and that property taxes will rise faster than local incomes. There is also anxiety that traditional recreational land use patterns, such as the use of hiking trails, day trips to the many small offshore islands and seasonal hunting will be changed because the land is being sold to Germans, Americans and Upper Canadians. A common suggestion voiced in conversations, local newspapers and public meetings, is to levy a higher tax on properties owned by non-residents.<sup>3</sup> Such a tax would force non-residents, who do not pay Canadian or Nova Scotian income tax, to contribute to the infrastructure that service the communities throughout the year.

The recent shifts in the real estate market, and the related increase in tourism, contribute to significant social change for communities in this region. They are compounded by the decline in the fishery and resulting high unemployment and low

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<sup>3</sup>This term refers to someone who uses their property for vacation purposes and lives and works elsewhere for the remainder of the year.



incomes of locals. The changes affect the South Shore as a region and not just one particular community. These factors posed interesting issues for research design.

### **Research Design**

My research methods had to accommodate my theoretical concerns and what was realistically possible in two months of fieldwork. Since the literature review demonstrates that places are made through narratives and the activities of daily life, my research methodology needed to operationalize both elements of place-making. As a result, the data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

I lived in two sites on the South Shore during July and August 1999, first staying with a friend who live in Queens County and then with friends who live in Lunenburg County. The decision to stay with friends was made for personal reasons (I enjoy their company immensely) and practical reasons. It helped my research immeasurably because their wide social networks brought many people literally to my door. In more ways than this, where I lived and who I lived with had a significant effect on my research.

Whenever I was talking with people in the area, I would almost always be asked where I was staying. Because I was staying with people who lived in the area who are known, well liked and respected, I could be “placed” and this seemed to have beneficial effects on the nature of our conversations.

I met the interviewees through a snowball sample, starting from six original contacts. Without being fully aware of my assumptions, I soon recognized that I had commenced my fieldwork with rigid ideas of the categories “local” and “German”; locals

would have strong historical ties to the area and work in resource extraction jobs while Germans would be wealthy non-residents living on expensive coastal properties. In hindsight, these categories were ridiculous stereotypes. As I was introduced to people who did not fit these categories rather than adhere to my original, more clear cut categories, I decided to let the research guide the definition of my sample. Refusing to interview someone because they were not “a real local” or the “right kind of German” would have been detrimental to both relations in the field and understanding the diversity of people in the communities. As a result, the sample of Germans was characterized, retroactively, by the following criteria:

- They are German. (Born in Germany and speak German as a first language)
- They have purchased property on the South Shore in the last ten years.
- They live full time on the South Shore.
- They are self-employed, small business owners or retired from such employment, with middle class values.
- Some had moved to the South Shore from other parts of Canada.

The sample of locals was characterized by the following criteria:

- They live in Lunenburg or Queens County.
- They are actively involved in maintaining social networks in the area. (Not to the exclusion of networks including other places.)
- They are all landowners.
- Except for the retirees, at least one person in the household earns money in the area.

- They all have middle class values, though not always a middle class income, which often meant having innovative solutions to subsist on incomes that in other places might be wages of the “working poor”.
- They have all lived in other places for varying amounts of time, most were born in the area or other parts of Nova Scotia.

Because I was interested in processes affecting meaning of the region, not just a particular village, I chose to do interviews throughout Lunenburg County and a few in Queens County rather than in just one village. This was also practical since I was introduced to potential interviewees who lived across the region, reflecting the contours of people’s social networks.

The interviews were semi-structured, with certain common themes discussed in each. They generally lasted an hour and were held at the interviewee’s home. Two interviews were held on the phone and one was conducted at the interviewee’s place of employment. Having the interview at the interviewee’s home was always their choice, and I am grateful that this was possible, since it gave me a chance to enjoy many views on the South Shore, both literally and figuratively. Being taken around their properties was often part of the visit, which gave me impressions of the significance their properties had for them. The fact that everyone invited me to their home, rather than suggesting we meet in a public space, shows that a lot of socializing goes on in people’s homes, further accentuating the importance of home ownership and literally having a place. I interviewed a total of fifteen people in somewhat formal situations, and also enjoyed the

company of approximately twenty more people in a more informal way. Of these thirty five people, thirteen were German.

The interview themes were chosen to understand how people felt about the South Shore, with particular emphasis on the changes brought about by the increase in real estate prices. Livelihoods were discussed with both locals and Germans, since making a living in this region is difficult, and one of the prime reasons people have left. For this reason, it seemed that the ways people managed to generate their livelihoods were intimately linked to the meaning the South Shore had for them. The interviews with locals included the following topics:

- How it was that they were living on the South Shore? Had they lived other places?
- Their livelihood. (In Williams' sense of the term.)
- Their reasons for living there.
- Their thoughts on changes in real estate prices and the people moving in as a result.
- Any questions they had about my research.

In the interviews with Germans, I wanted to understand their reasons for coming to the South Shore, over other destinations as well as their experiences with locals and how they articulated the differences between themselves and the people already living there. As well, I wanted to understand the role, if any, transnationalism played in their daily lives. Here I am using the concept of transnationalism as theorized by Barber (1997). Brah (1996), Rouse (1995b), Winland (1998).

The following topics were discussed in the interviews with Germans:

- How had they heard about Nova Scotia?

- What led them to buying land on the South Shore of Nova Scotia? Did they consider other places? Their reasons for moving.
- The jobs they left behind in Germany and the new ones in Nova Scotia. Changes in livelihoods.
- Adjustments they made when they moved. Experiences they had with neighbours. The nature of their involvement, if any, in their geographical communities, the nature of social networks.
- What, if any, ongoing connections they kept with Germany and other Germans in Nova Scotia.
- Any questions they had about the research.

In all the interviews I was open about the nature of the research, and often the most interesting part of the conversations would come when we talked explicitly about the research questions.

Feld and Basso (1996) emphasize that places and landscapes are not merely seen in an objective way, but “actively sensed” requiring ethnographers to “listen with all their senses” (Rodman, 1992) that is, to use “multisensual” ways of perceiving landscapes (Hirsch, 1995). Because place is not merely something that is seen or talked about, but felt, smelled, longed for or struggled against, interviews alone would not have given me a sense of place. I used ethnographic methods, especially participant observation, to understand how place derives part of its meaning through daily activities. For almost two weeks, while my friends in Lunenburg County went away, I took care of their farm animals and prepared and delivered vegetables to restaurant clients. It was during this

time, in gathering the vegetables in the hot fields, looking out over the green rolling hills and then driving the deliveries to the bustling towns full of tourists that I got a deeper sense of the place. Through this work, I experienced in a small way the role that livelihood plays in feelings of place that contribute to structures of feeling. I also humbly realized my reliance and implication in their social networks when neighbours repeatedly came to fix the well and do many other helpful things. And, though puzzled at the emptied wine glasses left on the kitchen table during my absence, I gratefully drank a beer from the six pack that had magically appeared in the refrigerator.

I did other activities in the region as well, where the emphasis was less on the “participant” and more on the “observation” side of ethnographic methods. I attended a provincial election debate, church services, heard performances of the adult and children’s choirs of the South Shore German Association as well as an event at the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival. I went with a friend and her children to the South Shore Exhibition, an annual agricultural fair with travelling rides. I often took walks on the beach and coastal headlands both with friends and by myself, further opportunities for understanding the “multi-sensual” and experiential elements of the landscape. I developed a fascination with the letters to the editor section in the Bridgewater Bulletin and read the newsletters of the Riverport Citizen’s Association, The Riverport Review and the German-Canadian Association of Nova Scotia entitled *Der Gong* as well as *Neuschottlander Bote* (Nova Scotian Messenger) a magazine aimed at German immigrants and visitors older than forty (The Daily News, January 3, 2000).

I focused the ethnographic research by being particularly attentive to the following themes and issues:

- How people talked about their region, their home, their property.
- How people related to the landscape.
- Conflicts over land use, both related and unrelated to changes in real estate market.
- How identities both of being German and local were articulated.
- The significance attributed to these identities.
- The ways people generated their livelihood.

### **Limitations of Research Methods**

Although choosing a snowball sample was, I think, the best method for the situation, it does present certain limitations that must be acknowledged. Since snowball samples rely on existing social networks, they tend to lead the researcher to people of similar backgrounds. I have tried to address this by being very clear in this thesis about the kind of people I was talking to, never claiming that they are the only kind of people that live in the region. I cannot be sure, but I think that if I had more time and talked with people from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds, both Germans and locals, I would have heard different experiences of place and opinions on the implications of the current real estate market.

As well, implicit to my research questions and interviewee criteria, was the stipulation that people were interested in talking with me about their connection to place. People were recommended to me on this basis, so there was a selection process of sorts in who I was introduced to and who I was not. As a result, it is possible that I heard more about the positive attachments to place than frustration in the interviews because of those

who were suggested to me as interesting people to talk with. The fact that it was summer could also have had an impact on the amount of positive responses.

Though I was interested in understanding as many experiences of place on the South Shore as I could, the spectrum of responses do come from people who have chosen to live there. The experiences of those who have left, and there are many, might not have been as flattering. I tried to mitigate this by talking with people about why their relatives and friends have left, and by talking with a few young people who have returned to the region for their summer jobs.

### **Situating the Anthropologist**

In anthropological research, the premise has generally been to understand and represent the cultural processes produced and experienced by a distinct group of people who are typically “other” to the researcher. The challenges have been to comprehend the complexities, contradictions and the multiplicity of positions within a certain cultural group. This project differs from that pattern in that I explicitly set out to learn about people who are not only “other” in some ways from me, they are also “other” to each other. The focus is placed on understanding the ways people’s positioning affects their connection to the same place. I have centred the research on particular issues, - the changes in the local real estate market, and the social construction of place and identity - that are the outcome of certain historical and economic trajectories played out in a particular geographical location.

Anthropologists like Hymes and Weaver (1973) expanded the terrain of the discipline to include the possibility of doing fieldwork within one’s culture. (For more



recent examples see Barrett, 1994; Dunk, 1991). In Own or Other Culture?, Okely (1996) has compiled work of British anthropologists who do their research in Britain. Due to the multicultural character of British or any other society, doing research in one's own country can still mean researching "others". Still, there is a dichotomy set up in that the subjects are either from one's own culture or not. As I did this research I constantly felt I was slipping in and out of belonging to both groups depending on which of my experiences I chose to accentuate, but a full sense of membership in either one would be impossible.

In many ways, I was not part of either group, rendering their experiences somewhat "other" to me and mine to them. The difference most keenly felt for me was that they are all land owners and I am not. They are all settled in their respective professions or retired and most have a decent living. From this perspective this research constitutes an instance of "studying up" (Nader, 1969).

With locals I shared experiences of being Canadian, speaking English as a first language, as well as class values. I felt quite comfortable in the conversations, though I think it was a comfort that would not have existed if I had gone straight to the South Shore from my hometown, Toronto, a place with its own idiosyncrasies which marks me in a particular way in the Maritimes. With the German immigrants, I shared the experiences of being a "come from away" as well as many of their motivations for living in Nova Scotia and understanding many issues of small business owners. I grew up with many German and Swiss traditions, learned German at school and through living in Switzerland for a few extended periods, and felt quite at home with their demeanor and ways of being in the world (though no self respecting Swiss person would say that

Germans and Swiss are the same). With both groups, I found there was always something in common for us to talk about. But I am neither European nor a Nova Scotian, try as I may to distance myself from my Toronto origins. We shared common values about the importance of community, and the definition of a good life. In some ways, this project could be described as “studying across”. We were all aware of our attachments to place and the effects different places have on us. These feelings of belonging and identity and their shifting relationship to place have preoccupied me personally in the last years and led to this topic in the first place. I have now spent seven years in Nova Scotia, trying to understand why most introductions are followed with “So, where are you from?” I have learned to take comments like “Oh, you don’t *seem* like you’re from Toronto” as compliments. I still can not fully say why I love Nova Scotia so much. Perhaps I am caught up in romanticized ideas of the coast and the simple life, but also in very real experiences of beauty. And, after seven years of life in a relatively small town, I harbour no illusions of the uniquely beneficial nature of community. Still, though my focus in this thesis is not on diaspora experience, but rather its counterpart of place-making (Brah, 1996), Stuart Hall’s words are quite fitting in that, “If the paper seems preoccupied with the diaspora experience and its narratives of displacement, it is worth mentioning that all discourse is ‘placed’, and the heart has its reasons” (1990: 223).

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Real Estate Debacle:

#### Locating the Research Questions Ethnographically

##### The Debate

Seven p.m. July 22, 1999. I arrived at the community centre in Riverport to attend a provincial election debate in Riverport, organized by the Riverport District Community Development Committee.<sup>4</sup> Inside, amid sounds of anticipatory chatter, I struggled to find a seat. Three political parties were represented; the Liberal, Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Parties. The three candidates took their seats at the front of the room and the debate began. The candidates were introduced by the moderator. Their qualifications as leaders were listed, prime among them their long-term connection to the South Shore. The New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate who grew up in the Annapolis Valley (less than two hours away) emphasized that she was born to South Shore parents. In order to maintain an atmosphere of decorum, attendees submitted their questions in writing to a moderator at the beginning of the evening. The moderator would then read the questions to the candidates who were allowed a set amount of time to respond. The majority of the questions dealt with topics that one would expect at any debate in Canada; health care, deficit reduction, infrastructure commitments. The candidates generally had scripted responses. Near the end of the

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<sup>4</sup>This organization was formed in early 1999 in order to “ensure that our corner of the province develops - or does not - in a manner which is comfortable to the majority of residents” (*The Riverport Review*, July 1999). They were also organizing a series of consultations to assess the goals and aspirations that people have for their community and develop a community development strategy that supports those desires.

evening, the moderator unfolded a submission, read the question silently and then said, in his English accent, “Oh, that’s a terrible question.” He read it aloud, “What is your party’s position on non-resident land ownership of vacation homes?” For the first time all evening there was dead silence in the standing room only meeting. The Conservative candidate, Michael Baker, the incumbent and eventual victor, was “realistic” about the situation. He said that the region desperately needs to be open to these people, because their money is needed, but also because it’s the nice thing to do. He also thought it was important that the employment situation be improved for the local people who want to stay. He recommended a higher tax on non-resident land owners as well as continued government commitment to preserve coastline from damage and development. When he finished, above the clapping came a loud cat call, “He must live by the beach!” The NDP candidate, Marilyn Keddy, lamented that “Children of fishermen can’t even buy homes in our region anymore. We need to keep the prices down.” She said she would consult with communities about what should be done, and possibly launch a study. The Liberal candidate, Lila O’Connor, retorted that the government couldn’t dare try to tell people the price they could sell their land for, that people are entitled to sell their house for the price they choose. She went on to challenge the crowd to figure out who should decide the definition of foreigner. O’Connor demanded, “Who exactly is a foreigner? Who is a local? Is it someone from here who goes to Ontario for a job and then comes back here to retire?”

This election debate question and the responses point to the struggles on the South Shore that are at the heart of this thesis. To me, they called attention to tension between people’s desire to make a profit from their land in a somewhat depressed area and the

enduring importance of place which I am presenting as tied to livelihood in Williams' notion of structure of feeling. Keddy's remarks showed the concern that prices are rising above the means of locals, and that locals are defined in particular ways in many people's minds. The heckler's wisecrack demonstrated the awareness that certain people stand to benefit more than others; for those who already live at the beach, preserving the coastline can only raise the property values as well as protecting the peaceful quality of life they chose. Finally, O'Connor brought up the difficulties of negotiating these issues because of the history of migration to and from the region. How can the situation be regulated by the government? Just who is a local, anyway? The goal of this chapter is to further situate the research questions of place and identity ethnographically. In the process, I show that a full understanding of people's opinions of the real estate market implicates more than just property and money transactions. In this chapter I discuss local's thoughts on the real estate market and show that they evoke the social meanings of place and identity and are expressed as structures of feeling.

### **Contextualizing Meanings of Place in Regional Political Economy**

Isabelle<sup>5</sup> is an 85 year old woman who lives in the house she and her late husband built when they returned to the region to retire. She can look out over the Atlantic from her living room; a view she is grateful for since she is now wheelchair bound and cannot do the daily coastal walks she once did. Her house is across the street from the house where she was born and sits on land granted to her Foreign Protestant ancestors by the

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<sup>5</sup>All names used are pseudonyms except for public figures. Some place names and other identifying information have also been changed to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

British. The parcel of land is now subdivided between her children. One of her sons, also retired, lives next door during the summer and another son also plans to build a summer home. Her sons have sold some land to a German family and got “good money” for it. When I asked her opinion on changes in the area, she began talking about some controversial houses that have been built by newcomers on a bluff formerly used by the public.

Isabelle: [About the houses] I don’t like ‘em, but I don’t complain. I don’t see them. Back here you can’t see them. No, they buy the land, they have a right to put their houses where they like. I don’t like ‘em. They don’t add anything. First people that came here they built all Cape Cod style- every single house. Some of ‘em got rebuilt and changed you know, but they started out as Cape Cods.

SW: I was at an election debate in Riverport, to see what the issues were in the community and someone asked what the candidates’ position was on foreign land owners and people who own vacation land. It seemed like it was a big deal. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Isabelle: Well I must say I don’t. They buy land, and people are selling it you know, they’re making *good* money. And after you buy the land you should be able to... I mean within limits I suppose. No, I don’t see anything wrong with that, I have no problem at all with that. I don’t like it when they change things too much, you know. Things that you’ve always used and they were always free and your ancestors have used them for a *long* time. Way well over a century.

Isabelle’s comments about new land owners are indicative of the conflicting feelings people have on the subject of rising land values due to the interest of people from other places. As her somewhat contradictory thoughts show, this issue is fraught with many layers of colliding feelings and interests both at an individual and community level. She believes in the freedom of the individual who has purchased the land and also of the individual selling their property. But also feels that the changes will not necessarily benefit the people with long-term commitment to the community, which is upsetting.

I also spoke with Tom and Sally, a middle-aged couple living in Crousetown. Both grew up in the area, moved to Halifax and then returned to raise their three children in Crousetown. Tom commuted to Halifax for a senior civil service job, while Sally worked part-time in the tourism industry and was involved in church activities. All three of their children, who are now in their twenties, have left the area for jobs or university. Like Isabelle, Tom and Sally had conflicting thoughts on people “from away” buying land in the area. Tom began:

Well, I guess I have mixed feelings about it. There’s one side of me says okay but if they have money and they live here and they buy land and they build these monstrous homes, that’s good for the economy. If it’s good for the economy it’s good for all of us. If they come up here with lots of money, they buy up property and they pay big prices for the property and then people, and then a lot of people complain of property values and then our children who want to come back here and buy a home, buy a property the prices are so inflated, they’re out of reach. They [properties] get out of reach. So you have basically foreigners, Germans, Americans moving here and living in the community. Nuthin’ wrong with living in the community.... Our best friends as a matter of fact moved here from England via Ontario. You know, they’re great assets in the community. One was a physiotherapist, one was a teacher they’re retired now. So they add a lot to our community.

Sally: There aren’t very many... um...locals..., Canadian families coming in. You get a certain number. But each generation... It’s not like it used to be.

Tom assumes that what is beneficial for the economy is good for locals. But he and Sally are both keenly aware that their children might not be able to afford to buy land here. In both these excerpts, I see a conflict between their sincere commitment to community values, a big part of how they saw themselves, and the promise of money for the properties. Selling the properties to wealthy foreigners would mean that the nature of the community they valued would change. Their sentiments about place do not grow in a vacuum, but in a particular location and historical context. The reality in the region is

that people often need to leave to get “good jobs”. Their “mixed feelings” arise out of the economic reality of the region, as well as their love of the place and point to a key research question. How does the South Shore’s position, as well as the locals’ position on the South Shore play into their thoughts on the real estate market? How do individuals’ attachments to place intersect with the position of the region? By extension, how do the German immigrants’ positions contribute to their experience and attachment to place? A lot, I argue. To fully comprehend the effects of the real estate market increases on these communities, the interconnections between individuals’ attachments to place and the position of the region, as well as their position within the region must be examined.

### **Place and Identity**

Frank Fawson wrote the following letter to the editor in the The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise (locally called The Bridgewater Bulletin August 4, 1999, to express his feelings on the changes in the real estate market.

Lunenburg County offers us the best of Nova Scotia, Canada’s Ocean Playground. It should come as no surprise in this age of globalization that people from other parts of the world, who can easily afford it, are buying up our prime land. Non-resident land ownership has both short-term and long-term negative impact on our local community.

Every summer, we hear more stories of unhappy people returning to a now blocked favourite walking trail along the water. Our private property rights allow new owners to erect “No Trespassing” signs, fences, and gates where Nova Scotians once enjoyed free access.

What do non-residents come here for: the land, the people or both? At a recent community supper in Riverport, I asked some local women- What do you think of foreigners buying up land in the area? One woman replied, “Well you know, they



don't mingle." But do they come here to mingle? It appears they want little to do with the local community.

He goes on to say that non-resident land owners do not care about the community, nor do they contribute beyond paying the inexpensive local labour to have their houses built.

They should, therefore, be taxed for their contribution. He writes that Nova Scotians incorrectly believe there are laws protecting public access to salt water. Fawson continues,

There is no such legislation governing access to salt water. But traditional local unwritten agreements around private property rights have, for the most part, allowed everyone free access to Nova Scotia shorelines even in areas where rugged coastlines restrict access from below the high water line.

This silent agreement is being dramatically altered by the huge influx of non-resident land owners. We all lose by this quiet redefinition of private property rights. Perhaps it's time for our government to put in place legislation ensuring present and future generations the right to access our shorelines.

Given the fact that there are paths along most shorelines in Nova Scotia, which have been used for centuries, many over private property, do we not all have a legal right to continued free public access? A class action through the courts may accomplish what our provincial politicians have failed to do. Local municipal governments could initiate action as well.

Underlying Fawson's assumptions about non-resident land owners who do not care about communities, is a belief that locals do care about community, and do not put up "no trespassing" signs. His thoughts on the changes to the place reveal more than his feelings about land use and land ownership; they also are narratives expressing a local identity.

The complaints about the "keep out" signs put up by non-resident landowners are about more than the signs themselves; the significance of the signs must be understood in the broader context of the politics of the region. I say this because the same disdain and

frustration were not directed to locals who put up fences or “no trespassing” signs. Nor, as I shall discuss, did the locals experience the feelings of guilt that some Germans did over their signs and fences. Susan and her family expressed their incredulity and light hearted scorn to me that Germans were putting up electronic alarm systems on secluded lakes. Later that week, they took me to their “camp”. In this part of Nova Scotia a “camp” is a second house, more rustic than the primary residence, usually on a lake or river. Sometimes it is also referred to as “cottage” or “cabin”. There was a sturdy locked gate across their camp’s driveway, set back from the road. Susan immediately realized the irony and laughed saying, “Here we were telling you about the Germans and we have one too. But you know, ours is to keep the hunters out.” She had told me earlier about how her barn had been shot by hunters with bad aim. In her mind, the gate was entirely justified. I saw “no trespassing” signs on some locals’ property, and never on that of Germans’ I visited. However, I followed a “for sale” sign in German and English to a cluster of properties on a lake. People living in the area had pointed out to me as a place where Germans had bought land. At the end of a long dirt road, feeling as though I were in the middle of nowhere, I was greeted with a large, intimidating sign which read “No Trespassing. Trespassers will be Photographed and Prosecuted.” With a warning like that, this somewhat non-confrontational anthropologist turned around.

Susan and Jack’s following remarks about the motivations of locals who are selling their land for high prices to Germans further reveal underlying narratives of how they conceptualize local identities. Though they understood that the sellers want the best price they can get, Susan and Jack did not want me to think that locals were acting out of mercenary desires and went to great lengths to explain the locals’ motivations for their

actions. In one conversation, Susan earnestly wanted me to understand that her friend was giving a really special opportunity to this German man to fulfill his lifelong dream. This was to counter any suspicion I might have that she was selfishly doing it only for the money. She also told me her friend is a widow in poor health, who worked hard all her life, and deserves to have a good price. According to Susan, the German was not getting “ripped off”<sup>6</sup>, as some people would have said, because he could afford to pay the high price due to the exchange rate of the German Mark. In a conversation I had with Jack about inflating land values, he told me he was sure that the real estate agents or lawyers or someone put the locals up to it - they would never do that sort of thing of their own accord. In these co-mingling narratives of place and identity, Jack and Susan show their belief that locals are concerned with communities, and being nice, and only secondarily with money. On the other hand, Brenda commented that it was not the Germans making the real estate prices go up, but rather it was the greed of the locals. Somebody wryly remarked about the lament of some locals that land prices were sharply increasing, “They’re grumbling all the way to the bank.” While the expressions of local identity are not always the same for everyone, the point I am making is that in discussing the effects of the real estate market, place becomes an idiom through which identities are expressed. In subsequent chapter I discuss the significance of local and German identities and how they are affected by the politics of place in the region.

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<sup>6</sup>I saw a few real estate advertisements in German, promising “local” prices (Neuschottlander Bote, Sommer 1999); rumors abound that Germans have been sold land

## Conclusion

The real estate market on the South Shore is more than an assemblance of financial transactions. People's feelings on the issues are mediated by local understandings of place and identity. The issues elicited by the question at the election debate and the comments of Isabelle, Tom and Sally show that because of the social meanings of places and the regional economic context, selling land for high prices is both difficult and desirable. These feelings beg further questions: How is place socially constructed on the South Shore? What is its local significance? These questions will be considered in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, I consider the question of how the region's location affects people's sense of place. Or, as Williams (1977) might ask, what structures of feeling are expressed through narratives of place? Bearing in mind Rodman's notion of multilocality (1992), where places have different meanings for people who are differently positioned, in Chapter Five I explore how recent German immigrants experience the place and what structures of feeling their position generates. While these questions could just as easily be asked of Americans, or Upper Canadians, who are reportedly buying properties in larger numbers (The Chronicle Herald, May 18, 2000), the arrival of German landowners was discussed more frequently and their presence more conspicuous to locals. The irritation in the region is more about "non-resident landowners" than it is about foreign land owners or new immigrants per se. The Germans I interviewed are all residents but they are still potentially identifiable (mistakenly) as non-residents and must respond and react in their daily lives to these politics of place.

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at prices inflated by two hundred percent and more.

Locals' thoughts on non-residents landowners and the changes they are thought to be causing, bring out particular narratives of identity expressed through an idiom of place. In Chapter Six, I discuss the significance of local identities and how these experienced and reproduced. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I show how the current situation affects the manner in which Germans articulate their identities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Social Dimensions of Place on the South Shore**

At the core of this thesis is the conviction that places derive their meaning through social relations. Since this is a rather abstract notion, it seems fitting to illustrate what I mean by this, showing the significance of local understandings of place. This chapter demonstrates the social dimensions of the ongoing creation of a sense of place. I begin by describing a misunderstanding of sorts which led me to grasping the importance of knowing the landscape and its social meanings. I then show how knowledge of the landscape is derived through everyday activities (Gray, 1999; Rodman, 1992). In discussing the everyday activities, prime among them livelihood practices, and how they contribute to the social understandings of place, this chapter lays the foundation for understanding how place and livelihood are interwoven and contribute to certain structures of feeling in the region, discussed later in this thesis. I also consider how landscapes and landmarks can be read as texts anchoring individual memories and cultural histories (Feld and Basso, 1995; Hirsch, 1995; Stewart, 1996). I conclude the chapter by discussing two more examples of how people interact with the landscape. Sometimes people explicitly inscribe themselves in the landscape and occasionally others describe the effect the landscape has on them.

Learning to follow directions to interviewees' homes was an education in reading the landscape. At the beginning of my field work, I would always be getting lost, very uncharacteristic of me in urban situations, even in a new city. Directions are often given with reference to local landmarks predicated upon a familiarity with the landscape, like a

dam or a shipyard or a curve in the river, and not by street name or number. Typical directions to someone's house might be "We're one kilometer before Fancy Lake, just before Hebb's Greenhouses. And if that's not enough directions, our number is 144<sup>7</sup>, I think." One interviewee gave me following instructions, "You go up the hill and down the hill and then up another hill and down another twice and once you leave the woods turn left up the gravel road. Look for our name on the mailbox." The morning of the interview, I found myself unable to decipher the directions. Her definition of the ending of a forest was different from mine and I lost track of how many hills I had passed. Being late, I stopped at a gas station/diner and asked where these particular people lived. I have spent enough time in rural Nova Scotia to know that this would not require the person to have an extraordinary amount of knowledge; even if people do not actually know everyone in their community, they will likely know where their house is. The proprietor began to draw me a map, ironically on the reverse side of a place mat printed with the Nova Scotia tourist map. He penciled in the road, and various landmarks I would pass, like a sharp curve in the LaHave River (pronounced "LaHayve") and the elusive end of the forest. He continued his diagram by indicating various houses, telling me who lived in the yellow house I would pass, and where Joe's trailer used to be. A woman who seemed to be his wife, hotly contested some of the locations where he placed the houses, saying that this family had moved, and another family did not live across from where I needed to go, but kitty corner from it.

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<sup>7</sup>Numbers were recently given to every house for the province wide 911 emergency response.

While the anthropologist in me was fascinated with the map drawing exercise, the rest of me was feeling restless and impatient because I was already late. I gently kept asking for the name of the street, which also was not given to me by the interviewee. Finally he gave it to me with a quizzical look on his face saying, “but I don’t know if there’s a sign, that’s why I drew you this map”. Now I see this as an illustration of how social relations contribute to people’s conception of the landscape, as frustrating as it was to be unable to follow directions at first.

### **Landscapes through Practice: Places and Daily Activities**

People drive around the region a great deal. They take their children to soccer or hockey games, drive to work in Halifax or in smaller centres, go into Bridgewater to get groceries or building materials, drive to the farmer’s market to sell vegetables or visit friends among many other reasons. Many of these activities sustain and create social networks that are crucial to or even constitutive of livelihoods practices, when Barber’s (1996) and Williams’ definitions are considered. People know the contours of the region and landmarks intimately, because of the many activities that have taken place along these routes. In short, the unavoidable errands that necessitate driving the particular circuits frequently, while not quite as picturesque as the shepherds walking the hills in Gray’s research in Scotland (1999), produce similar effects. Many people wish they could do less driving but because particular commodities are not available in certain towns, they need to drive to Bridgewater or Halifax to obtain them. Many stores in the smaller towns like Chester or Mahone Bay cater more to the needs of tourists and less to people who live there. In addition to the driving, through other regular activities essential



to livelihoods and quality of life like gardening, farming, running errands, biking to the beach, repairing and building houses, people engage with the landscape in tangible and intangible ways. Through these repeated activities space becomes place and is made meaningful. Daily life and livelihood are, in many ways, implicitly embedded in a place.

In choosing what activities were the best for a particular piece of land, places were also forums to express opinions about social change. Throughout the summer, the Bulletin and Progress Enterprise published an article nearly every week dealing with land use issues and property relations. Besides non-resident landownership, there was concern that an aquaculture project would affect residents' enjoyment of a Cherry Hill beach (The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise, July 28, 1999; August 4, 1999), the parking lot at Hirtle's beach would bring too many visitors (The Bulletin and Progress, July 28, 1999) and a salvage yard was considered by some to be a community service and an environmental hazard to others (The Bulletin and Progress, June 23, 1999; July 7, 1999). These conflicts over land use were also frictions about control: they provided a forum for people to express that they wanted to participate in decisions affecting their community.

### **Landscapes as Texts: Individual Memories, Cultural Histories**

People see individual histories in the landscape and their own properties. A Christmas tree lot owner in his eighties, Bob, took me on a walk around his property. In the treed ravine of today he can see the hurricane that went through in the 1940's, the work to make a summer cottage with his first wife in the 1950's and the "pot parties" of teenagers sneaking onto his lot last summer.

People knew the genealogies of properties in their community and others in the region (e.g. The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise July 14, 1999). That is, it was common to know the three or four previous owners, their history and what the property had been used for. Driving from Bridgewater to Petite Riviere with someone who has lived in the area for fifteen years, I learned the history of buildings and properties we passed along the way through stories that related him to the people who had lived there before, and the good times he had enjoyed. Friends of mine who bought a house ten years ago told me they know that their house will always be known as Mr. Hirtle's house, no matter how long they live there. While I was acting as a caretaker on a farm owned by vacationing friends, a man came to see about buying something. Although he had not been to the property for twenty years, he could tell me his version of the history of the property, how all the buildings and fields looked under the previous owners and of the work he had done on them. Another time, at the end of an interview with Jack, a man whom none of us had met before dropped by. He told us he was a fifth generation blacksmith from the area, now retired and "as independent as a skunk". He looked out over the landscape and where brand new houses are, saw the old homes of long deceased friends and in a trickle in a ditch, the brook where he learned to swim.

I was continually told that farms were historically established on the tops of drumlins because that is where the fertile soil was left when the glaciers retreated. It seemed to me the drumlins were more than geological formations for people living in the area. Bob, who had lived in the area for forty years, would point to hills and name the identity of the owners and tell parts of their life story. Brenda, who herself lives and works on a farm on one of these drumlins, talked of three other farms owned by good

friends of hers on drumlins in sight of her house. She referred to them as her reference points.

As was said earlier, the anglicized names of the “Foreign Protestants”, like Zwicker, Nauss, Bush, Hirtle, Wentzel, Mosher, are the “South Shore names” of today. Through these names, as someone rather poetically told me, people and their history are embedded in the landscape; place names like Hirtles Beach, Voglers Cove and Mosher Island, among many others, proliferate in the region. Descendants of the Foreign Protestants also see their history in the landscape in the little graveyards that dot the landscape. Tombstones dating back to the first European settlers are inscribed with South Shore names, illustrating for many a continuity with their past in a particular place. As will be discussed later, having an historical connection to the place is an important component of local identities.

### **Inscribing Oneself in the Landscape**

Until the summer of 1999, cars would park on the dunes at Hirtle’s Beach, a popular beach for tourists and residents alike. In July of 1999, a large parking lot for 85-100 cars (The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise, July 28, 1999) was put in, and a boardwalk leading to the beach was installed. The Hirtle’s Beach Management Committee coordinated the changes and for a twenty dollar donation people would get their name carved into the planks of the boardwalk that is the entrance to the beach: a very public and literal way of inscribing yourself into the landscape and showing your care for a community resource in a particular way. Later in this thesis I will return to this theme: being concerned with the community is a crucial part of what it means to be local.

The changes on the beach were not without controversy, Isabelle, a long time resident said somewhat derisively, “They’re trying to save the dunes. After millenniums! It used to be so nice, you could drive right up, you know, and look out over everything, it was beautiful.” Ben Anderson, in a letter to the editor in the The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise on July 28, 1999 wrote, “I have always treasured the fact that Hirtle’s Beach is, and has remained, a truly hidden treasure filled with an abundance of natural beauty. I fear it is being placed in great jeopardy, despite the good intentions behind this new development.”

### **Landscapes’ Effects on People**

Until now I have described the ways that people derive and ascribe meaning from landscape through their experiences. But sometimes people explicitly described the effect the landscape and elements had on people’s character. Jack brought up this topic as we pruned his apple trees one July morning. Jack is a man who is deeply committed to Nova Scotia. He consciously shows his commitment by regularly publishing letters to the editor in the local paper, volunteering at the fire hall and by being involved in municipal politics. A skilled tradesman for most of his life, he now does social work and helps his partner run a small mixed farm. He thought that “living by the sea makes you feel wonder and awe, but it also makes a person feel quite small and insignificant”. He remarked on the great force of the water hitting the rocks and smoothing over all the rough edges. He thought that many people, like the “wealthy” (his word) Germans and Buddhists, come to Nova Scotia to be “cured because they’re all stressed out”. He was convinced that just as the rocks get smoothed by the waves of the ocean, so too,

eventually, the Germans, and especially the Buddhists would “calm down”. “Nova Scotia’ll heal them”, he said.

Astrid and Erich, a German couple who had lived in Calgary for years before moving to Nova Scotia in 1997 to retire had similar thoughts about how a place can affect the character of the people living in it.

Astrid: People here are more like fisherman in Germany. They are kind of...distant.  
[compared to Calgary]

SW: Fisherman in Germany?

Astrid: They are friendly...very similar.

Erich: The Atlantic coast in Germany...

Astrid: People are known for that,

Erich: They don’t talk that much,

Astrid: they’re more laid back, they are friendly, and once ...once you get to know them and get your contact then they are ...it’s kind of a life long thing.

Erich: I believe the reason is that this is the mentality that the ocean brings to the person. To the people. They have more respect for nature. It’s [the ocean] a dangerous thing. Not today, but as they were fifty or a hundred years ago. Then when you go over to this memorial from all these fishermen. There died whole families in one storm, I think that calms them down. They’re not...

Astrid: Outbursting...

Erich: I think so. It was the same in Germany. At the coast.

Astrid: [at the coast] You feel more like... what you are...just a sand pebble....

Erich: It forms the people.

While the power of the ocean in and of itself certainly has lasting effects on individuals, the power of social marginalisation that coastal communities experience can

have equally strong effects on personalities (George, 1996; Young, 1996). The connection between place, feeling and social processes, will be discussed in greater detail in the coming chapters.

## **Conclusion**

Human settlement is integrated into the landscape; the landscape gets its meaning through the human relations that take place in it. I have endeavored to show that the place is more than just a setting for the social relations to take place, but derives its meaning from social relations, like livelihood practices. The landscapes can be read as texts illustrating a history in a certain place, derived through daily activities. In some ways landscapes are thought to have effects on people, and others people affect the place by inscribing themselves in the landscape.

When I pointed to things that I thought contributed to a local sense of place and belonging people on the South Shore would agree, but then say that they had never thought about it or noticed it in that way before. Geertz writes,

...the invisibility of place has mainly to do with the fact that it is so difficult to free from subjectivities and occasions, immediate perceptions and instant cases. Like Love or Imagination, Place makes a poor abstraction. Separated from its materializations, it has little meaning. (1996: 259)

Just as no one would question the importance or existence of love and imagination, similarly no one contested the significance of place, though they often had a love-hate relationship with it. And, like love and imagination, place is easy to romanticize, though the reality of all three concepts is certainly as double edged as the phrase love-hate implies. As I have indicated in the hints about coming chapters, it is important to

contextualize the meaning of place in the political economy of the region, to realize the multiplicitous meanings of place. To this end, the next chapter examines locals' and Germans narratives of place in the context of the region's position in the regional and global economy.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Situating Local Narratives of Place in the Regional Political Economy**

Social scientists have made it abundantly clear that places derive their meaning in a particular constellation of political, economic and historical processes positioning them in particular ways at local and global levels (Harvey 1996, 1995; Leach, 1997; Massey and Jess, 1995; Olwig 1997, 1999; Williams, 1973). In this chapter and the next I show how the region's position affects locals' and Germans' feelings about the place. Their position within the region generates enduring structures of feeling expressed in narratives of place. These narratives are an idiom for discussing social relations and certain feelings. That is not to say that places are uniformly experienced - locals and Germans had different narratives of place. Rather, I argue, feelings about the meaning of place were generated as a result of the location of the region and their various class and cultural positions. In this chapter, I discuss locals' narratives of place and how they are connected to their experience of the structuring of regional economies. The next chapter deals with German immigrants' experience of place. Understanding these meanings of place will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the debate about real estate prices, since property relations are mediated by local understandings of place.

#### **Locals' Narratives of Place**

#### **Place as Justification for Living in the Region**

Because of the economic realities of regional economies, staying in the region generally means foregoing economic opportunities elsewhere or leaving to pursue them



and returning to retire. As I have said before, all the locals I talked with had middle class values and already owned land. They felt they were choosing to stay; it was not so much that they were trapped as some people with fewer resources may feel. People often expressed a love for the beauty of the place. This was often combined in a conversation where the “good jobs” in other places were contrasted with local restraints. Enjoying the landscape was an important part of life, but staying did mean passing up other opportunities. I asked Sally, a middle-aged woman what a typical day was for her. To which she replied.

Well, I work at the cottages. So it's seasonal work. I'm only working full time in May and June and in September and October. In the summer time I just work Saturdays. So I clean the cottages. In the spring time we're settin' up cottages and during the summer time when there's a changeover in cottagers. My life is boring here. (laughs) It really is now that the kids are gone. It's boring (laughs). I should be looking for something else in Bridgewater (laughs) but [place of work] is close, and it's so gorgeous up there in the Spring and Fall, it really is. And so I hate to get a job in Bridgewater because, because it's... I can sit on the rocks at lunch time and eat my lunch. Watch the ducks swim by and listen to the surf hitting the rocks. It's relaxing and it's beautiful, it's wonderful. Other than that, it's just regular housework and that's about it.

I often heard comments of this nature that made reference to the fact that an element of economic sacrifice had been made in order to enjoy the beauty of the place. Usually the jobs were in places farther away than Bridgewater. A man from the area who had gone away to take a job elsewhere returned twenty years ago to raise his children and told me, “You don't move here to be successful”. He also said that it was a really nice place, and a nice pace of life, but you had to “be willing to diversify.” He explained that in order to get by he had to have lots of different jobs. It was quite common for local people, especially but not exclusively women, to have many small sources of income. As

examples, (this is not an exhaustive list of income generating activities possible in the region) the women I met often did two or more of the following activities: they took in sewing piecework which initially required a significant personal financial investment, sorted blueberries during the night in harvesting season, delivered vegetables and did farm work, worked in the tourism or hospital sectors, managed Christmas tree lots and sold knitted goods at local farmers' markets. The men in my sample held civil service or NGO positions, engaged in farming and forestry activities on their own properties and did consulting and other self-employed professional work. If my sample had a broader socio-economic scope, I would certainly have encountered households directly dependent on the fishery.

### **Importance of Family and Community**

Narratives of place also showed a concern for community and family values.

Through these narratives, locals made it clear that they believed life in cities did not offer these things as life in the country did. Sally said:

We did live in the city for a while. And decided to come home and build a house and raise our kids here in Crousetown because we didn't want the city environment for our kids. We wanted the country life and for the kids to be close to their grandparents. Extended family is important to us.

The importance of continuity and family history was also expressed through narratives of place. Shortly after I returned to Halifax from the South Shore my friend Ruth passed away. Ruth had deep family roots on the South Shore but had lived in other places most of her life. After she was buried in a cemetery on the South Shore, her daughter, Hilary, looked out from the old wooden farm houses on a salt marsh to the

rolling hills on the opposite side of the LaHave river. She told me how glad she was that she'd been able to bring her mother "home", as she put it, to be buried with their many ancestors. Hilary told me that she had bought a plot for herself as well. From conversations I had enjoyed with these women I knew how much the South Shore meant to them, even though they had not lived there in ten years. They visited it more often as mental refuge than a physical one. It was of central importance in their lives and how they thought of themselves and where home was.

### **Contrasts between City and Country Life**

Narratives of place also expressed pity for people who lived in cities who did not have community feeling in their lives. Susan remembers having an "epiphany" when she was sixteen and living in Toronto when she realized that she was surrounded by two hundred and fifty square kilometers of concrete and people. She recalls thinking, "this is a really weird way of doing things". She told me about one trip to Toronto she took. Because of the people she was visiting, she drove and drove to "these terrible suburb developments" to a "fake castle with flags" where people could choose the model for their house before it was built. And she remembers being shocked at the perfect roads, in place before the houses even went in. They were there, she said incredulously, "So that all these people could take their cars and drive one and a half hours to work." They went to the main street of the suburb, formerly a centre in a farming area, which was

all decorated in a hokey way for the harvest festival. It was so great. People of all races were there and everyone was happy. And I thought, my God, all these people longing for the "main street feeling" and they're all moving into those developments with no centres or even a store and so they all come out to this hokey festival to get that feeling. And the merchants all organized this festival

and it may be for financial reasons, but they're still getting together and generating something.

Through this description of place and the pity she felt for those who lived in different circumstances, Susan conveyed the importance of community in her life. Isabelle returned to the area each summer from the cities where her husband worked. These visits kept her going through the year. When I asked Isabelle if she had considered living elsewhere for her retirement, she said, "Never. No, never. I suffered through ten years in Saint John [New Brunswick]. That was enough."

As well, narratives of place expressed people's dislike of stress in big cities and their appreciation for the pace of life on the South Shore. One of the many ways this is portrayed is in the endless talk comparing the weather on the South Shore with the weather elsewhere in big cities. From these ubiquitous, off-hand remarks, I was familiar with the weather in New York City and Toronto. The talk served to legitimate their conviction that the South Shore was a better place to be, especially in the summer, than anywhere else in the world, because of the smog and traffic and stress in other places, made all the worse by the hot weather. While watching the weather channel or the news, or in conversations with recently arrived family and friends from away, "Aren't we lucky to be here?" was a constant refrain.

### **Ambivalence**

Through narratives of place, locals also expressed ambivalence about people from other places coming into the area. There is, as a young woman told me, "a resentful

acceptance” of the tourists and “people from away”. It is assumed that their tourist dollars and real estate interest are needed to improve the local economy.

Sally: We have the best of everything here. Beautiful beaches ...in the summer time, we don't bother with the beaches which I used to when the kids were little but they got older and they could go by themselves I stayed away. But you walk on the beaches in the autumn, but I don't do that very often in the summer time. It's just so... there's so many people around. So many tourists! And so we do it up until May, I guess the long weekend in May and then after the long weekend in September we get our community back. (laughs)

SW: I've really wondered what that's like [living here], I was in Lunenburg yesterday and it's a crazy zoo.

Tom: I think that's part of the excitement of living here. Growing up as a kid, you meet so many people and people with different backgrounds. Our three children all worked in the restaurant while they were growing up. It was a marvelous experience for them. They made friends with kids of Americans and upper Canadians and people from Halifax. Some of them, now that they're grown up, drop by here in the summer. Now, of course, we can take friends up and stay with them too.

SW: So it's not all bad. It's kind of good.

Tom: It's all good.

Sally: It's fine.

Tom: We've got a small tourism industry going here, it's part of a going concern. They don't bother you. The tourists don't bother you at all.

Sally: No, they're very good.

This exchange shows commonly voiced mixed feelings about when people from outside the area come to their communities. They disturbed the peace but livened the humdrum quality of the place. Tom talked about how as a poor child, “kids from away” did not always talk to people like him. Tom describes his early experiences with “people from away” as well as his first experience in the big city. In these remarks, he further

expresses the ambivalent relationship with away, and the social relations implicit in the way regional economies are structured.

Tom: They [people from away] bring a whole different background. We had a lot of people from central Canada, retired RCMP who come here to retire. They brought a whole different background to [the area]... these are kids who lived all over the country and they didn't talk to kids, in my day, in my family. We didn't get out of Crousetown much. My first trip to Halifax was in grade nine, we went on a school bus.

SW: What was that like?

Tom: Oh it was pretty exciting...We went to a local talent show on the CBC. We couldn't sing but you went because you wanted to get to Halifax. To see the city.

SW: Did it meet what you had imagined?

Tom: Oh yeah!

The excitement Tom experienced on his first trip to Halifax, reveals a common desire people expressed - to be where things are thought to be happening. The South Shore is a place that some people escape to and a place that others would like to escape from. Some people talked of small places driving them nuts. As Rodman (1992) has pointed out, a landscape can be multi-local, in that "it shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users... It conveys the idea that a single place may be experienced quite differently" (1992: 647). There is another side to meanings of the South Shore I've portrayed thus far. The counterpoint to the importance of place, and the comfort of history and continuity that is embedded in the landscape, is the desire to be free of the place and the accompanying sense of being down trodden. Their middle class aspirations are hard to realize with the limited opportunities in the region. Thus the location of the region generates complementary and contradictory structures of feelings, making people happy to have been able to stay, but also itchy to leave. Leaving means

new opportunities but also contending with people who do not understand the situation where you have come from and who may judge you for being from a place sometimes conceived of as “backward” because of its distance from centres of power.

I had a revealing conversation with Stacey on people’s tangled relationship to the place; a place that is loved for being removed from city life, but reviled for the same reasons. We met when I signed the guest book in the museum where she had a summer job. I wrote that I was from Halifax. When she read what I’d written, she immediately piped up “Oh, I’m going back to Halifax in six weeks and four days!” That she knew the exact number of days until her departure, suggested how much she was looking forward to leaving. We talked further about where we were from and about growing up in the area. She thought it was a great place to grow up but now she finds it “small”. When she first got back from university in April she was so happy to be “running through the trees” and “walking on the beaches before they got crowded with tourists”. It was striking that these were mentioned rather than friends and family. But then came May and June and then July. What she called “the smallness” was getting to her. Which is why, she said, “when some people hit eighteen they’re out of here and they’re not coming back. They go to Toronto or Calgary”. Then there are the people like herself, she said, who love the South Shore, “it’s the best place in the world, but cannot see themselves living there”. There are the people who never leave and these “people really bug her because they’re too scared”. They think, “Nova Scotia’s the best, but they’ve never even left the province”. Some of their trepidation is warranted she thinks because “people in other parts of Canada make fun of Nova Scotians for being hicks”. In this narrative of place, the term “small” refers both to the geographical place and the nature of social relations.

The place was an idiom conveying her frustration about the people who annoy her, and fears of being lumped in with “hicks” because she is from rural Nova Scotia when she travels to other places.

I heard another narrative of place that conveyed the multiplicitous nature of locals’ relation to place. I spoke with a retired professional who had recently moved home after living for twenty two years in New Zealand. He told me he had to get out of Nova Scotia as a young man; the “close minded” life was not for him. He came back because he did not want his family home to be sold to a stranger when his mother died. But for his first year back he consciously avoided getting involved with local events and people because he did not want to get involved in their “small minded” politics. He was thrilled that so many educated people from other places had moved in, and thought that they had “really improved the place, making it more diverse and open minded”. He did not seem to realize that there were others like himself who had received an education and returned. People are well aware of the dual nature of their attachment to place. As someone who recently returned told me, “What made me leave is also what brought me back. ” Raymond Williams wrote about such feelings in The Country and the City . Saying that people who grow up in what he calls “the borderlands” are caught “between custom and education, between work and ideas, between love of a place and experience of change” (1973: 197).

## **Conclusion**

Locals’ narratives of place described in this chapter, while portraying emotions that are personally felt, are shaped by the region’s position in regional, national and



global economies. They are structures of feeling. Their frustration at “smallness” of the place and the lack of upward mobility reflect their middle class sensibilities and the South Shore’s position in a regional economy. Other narratives of place show that people value community and continuity and that they are glad to be away from the stress and pretense they believe exists elsewhere. Living far from centres is also what some desire. Beautiful places compensate for the economic opportunities they gave up to stay. In both these complementary structures of feeling, place is the idiom through which particular social relations arising out of the region’s position are expressed. Their narratives of place express frustration at the relative isolation, as well as pride and comfort.

These complementary structures of feeling and narratives of place are implicit in Isabelle, Tom and Sally’s reaction to the real estate market outlined in Chapter Two.

They convey a sincere commitment to community and family that they express through their attachment to place. Selling land to people from away, who may not value the same things, in many ways may appear to threaten the type of life they have sacrificed a more lucrative and ambitious career path for or “suffered” through years in other places to return in retirement. On the other hand, the narratives of place reveal annoyances locals have with the status quo, as well as a wish to have more contact with new people. Living in an economically depressed regional economy generally means making do with less, so the increased interest in their properties causing high property values means a large sum of money, in the context of local income levels, for those who want to sell.

Unfortunately, for those who “are there for the long haul” it means the probability of higher property taxes and the possibility that their children will not be able to afford property in the region.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Situating German's Narratives of Place

This chapter attempts to examine the interconnections between Germans' class position, the location of the South Shore and their narratives of place. Like the locals' narratives of place discussed in the last chapter, I consider the Germans' narratives of place as structures of feeling expressed through an idiom of place.

The Germans have left behind a place which they characterized as "stressful", "overpopulated" and "materialistic" for a new place they believed embodied the opposite characteristics. In 1997, the population of Germany was 82 million (Statistisches Bundesamt, 1999). At the macro level Germany is a wealthy country, economically productive (Smith, 1994; Smyser, 1993) and allows many of its citizens decent incomes - the average salary for someone working in manufacturing is DM 52, 668 (CDN\$37,394; compared with CDN\$26, 457 as the average male salary, and CDN \$14, 776 as the average female salary in Lunenburg County) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 1999; Statistics Canada, 1996). Full-time employees are entitled to a minimum six weeks paid vacation per year as well as free post-secondary education. The German mark is a stable and valuable currency, allowing Germans purchasing power in other countries. Despite what appear to be favourable conditions, all the Germans I interviewed had lucid critiques of life in Germany. They moved to Nova Scotia, sometimes via other places in Canada, because they wanted a different kind of life more in step with their values. A move to Nova Scotia was possible because of their incomes and purchasing power, as well as the fact that land in Nova Scotia, being in a relatively marginal part of the country, is cheap

to them. As this chapter will show, their narratives of place are a means through which they express visions of how life is best lived. Their narratives of the meaning of place reveal structures of feeling, expressing their middle class critique of structural conditions in Germany. Paradoxically, the position of the country they have left, of which they are so critical, as well as their position in that country, has allowed them the possibility to buy property on the South Shore and to express their opposition to the stressful way of life in Germany in this particular way.

Of the thirteen Germans I met, nine were self-employed and the remaining four were retired from management, professional and small business employment. Seven did not come directly from Germany but had lived in other parts of Canada. Of the people who were self-employed, six had a business involving a craft related skill such as baking, farming, weaving while the remaining three had businesses where knowledge was the product. With one exception, none relied on the local market for their livelihood but used their contacts in other places. Though making a living was a precarious balance for some, all had chosen their particular situation and were willing to take risks.

Without exception, all the Germans talked of wanting to escape the stress of Germany, and not just for any place, but for a place where land was affordable, where there were nice people and a good community feeling, and where the possibility of an ecologically friendly life existed. For some, the South Shore appeared to mean an opportunity to experience a type of life they thought had existed at one time in Europe but was lost because of encroaching modernization. To incorporate elements of what some called “real” life into their new life in Canada, they made their own bread, iced tea and jam, cleared the land for a house they built themselves, dyed wool with natural dyes,

did the renovations on their houses themselves and had beautifully kept yards and gardens. Most had gardens to grow food, in part because they wanted organic produce, but also because they enjoyed doing it. They were disappointed when locals did not appear to share these same desires, and were often disdainful about “artificial, processed food” like “*gummi Brot*” (rubber bread) and “plastic cheese” that they saw in grocery stores. It seemed to jar their notion of who local people were and what life in Nova Scotia was like.<sup>8</sup> Monika said<sup>9</sup>

Here you can live by the beach and enjoy all the kindness from the ocean. But I don't know if you have to own this piece of land, then nobody has access anymore to a nice beach. Probably it is right to look out for this. Maybe you can have certain areas where the people can have this. You have seven thousand kilometers of beach in Nova Scotia, that is a lot. Of course there are rocky beaches, stony beaches, sand beaches, but still maybe the nicest go and if then the local people are the people who live not on the ocean, they don't have access anymore, it would be bad. But so long the Canadians, or the Nova Scotians **DRIVE** on the sandy beach with the car... **FOR WHAT???** It's better to bring and put a stone [to block the car access] and then everyone can walk there. It's still allowed... [Monika's emphasis]

SW: On Crescent...

Monika: Yeah..You can drive there with the car and wait until the tide is coming up or down and you drive through and back and forth, on a BEACH!!!

SW: I saw old photos from earlier this century, there were cars on it back then...

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<sup>8</sup>It wasn't just Germans who had notions of Nova Scotia being a place that is quite different from cities. For people from Ontario too, the beauty of the place seemed to obscure the fact that it is part of the modern world, and that bad things happen here just as they do everywhere else. One time as I was leaving Hirtle's Beach, a much loved site of locals and tourists alike, a woman whose car had Ontario plates realized she had been robbed. In her distress she kept repeating, “I can't believe this could happen in a place like this. In as beautiful a place as this.” We did what we could to help her, looking for any sort of evidence, tried to console her (and repair her shaken perspective of Nova Scotia).

<sup>9</sup>To preserve the interviewees' idiosyncratic mode of speaking, I have left their narratives as they told them to me.

Monika: But that's what the locals say, you know, we did it forever. And the locals who hunt here in the wintertime they can hunt 'til hundred meters behind my house. They don't have to watch for my kids, they don't have to watch for me, they don't have to watch for the dog. They can go there hunting... I understand that they want to go hunting but so close to my house?!? And so many accidents happen. That with the guns is better in Canada than in the States, but still I don't think that guns are something that should be in everybody's hand.

I asked all the Germans I interviewed what motivated them to move to the South Shore. This question would usually lead to a discussion of what Nova Scotia meant to them. Following are some emblematic responses, communicating their dissatisfaction with life in Germany, and their hope for a certain kind of better life on the South Shore, expressed through a narrative of place.

### **Critiques of Life in Germany**

Monika owns a business with her husband, which they run out of their home. They also maintain their business in Germany, and her husband travels back and forth every five to six weeks. Their successful business takes them all over North America and often back to Europe. They live, with their three highschool aged children, in a modest house that is right off a main road in a community near Bridgewater with a small yard and a beautiful vegetable garden. Their property overlooks the LaHave river, but has no water frontage. When I asked what prompted such a life change for her and her family, Monika replied:

I believe that we in Germany are so overpopulated. People and especially our generation, you know, the hippies, we had a different idea to live for our children for the future. We didn't agree with everything what has happened, especially with the state and Germany and how they treated the whole world. And how everything's took over. And you didn't know what is happening. Or the big companies, and the pollution and nobody asks about it because everything went so fast. When it did come to a point that I couldn't drink my own water, it was

poison, and the air what I breathe makes me sick. Or when it is nice weather, the sun is not right for me anymore because the UV factor is so high that I got sick. There's something wrong. And that is what I think of when you come here. And my God, here you can breathe, the air is okay.

As a small business owner, Monika repeatedly voiced her annoyance with government control and the dominance of large companies as she mentioned above in a narrative of place. She soon realized that pollution is also a problem on the South Shore, and was as upset with the problem there as she was in Germany. She said

But many things are here not okay with the pollution. When I see that you can open a car wash on the river and wash the cars with all the polluted dirt and oil and gasoline and let it go into the river, *in 1999*, that is something what I absolutely don't understand. How they can do it?!? How can they still let this happen, with the knowledge of how poison it is, how?? It happens in Bridgewater! I can't believe it, it's something that I can't believe. Still if we would have ten or twenty of them it would be very bad but it is maybe only one or two and the people are very far and we don't have so many businesses. Here it is always a little, but it adds up. And if more people come and if everybody does it we will the same disaster what we have everywhere in the big cities, in Germany in Europe and it will not stop here. I really worry and am concerned about this because the people don't look after this.

SW: Why do you think they don't?

Monika: Why? I believe that many things the people don't know. They don't know. We have TV, computers.... But I think they only listen to the stuff what is easy, what is simple, what you can understand. But to look something maybe up the in the TV that tells you about your environment or what should be done right, maybe the information is not there. Maybe the people don't listen to this and maybe some people they are in power they don't want the people know this. If you use this paint and you will have poison air. Why do we have here in Nova Scotia the highest rate of cancer in Canada? Specially breast cancer. Why? In this environment? Is it the food? Is it the absolutely unhealthy building code? Making buildings so tight no air can go out and they use in the inside carpet glue that is so poison that you can stay there for only a half year and then you have always you allergy, or the kids get asthma. In the schools here, eighty percent of the kids are sick.

In her fervent environmentalist values, Monika expressed again her critique of large companies and the government keeping people from knowing the proper information. Her narratives of place express her position as a small business owner, which makes her opposed to control of both government and large corporations, and a champion of the individuals' responsibility to make a change.

Sabine cleared the land for her house herself, and then also built her sizable house herself, while running her own business. Before coming to Nova Scotia, she sold her self-described profitable business and then started a similar one in Nova Scotia, which requires a fair amount of travel. She described her reasons for coming to Nova Scotia, showing that she wanted a certain kind of existence; more peaceful and quiet than Germany. Because she had studied in Southeast Asia for a few years she also desired a place with a reasonable standard of living. She had been searching for a place that felt like home, and she believes she has found it on the South Shore.

Sabine: I was living in Berlin and I needed to get out of there *somehow* [Sabine's emphasis] and I wanted to take off for three years and go to a different place and find out about something else. I wanted to find a peaceful place by the ocean which is not a Third World country. And so I came to Nova Scotia at end of November in '92. And I fell in love with it... as desolate as it was in winter. I mean it was the worst time you can choose. It was rainy it was foggy it was a little bit snow on the ground. No leaves on the trees and still I fell in love with it. Yeah. Especially with the South Shore. I just fell in love with the country, with the people with the landscape with the atmosphere with the kindness of people and ... I mean, I have been many places and I travelled quite a bit for many years and I found a lot of beautiful places. But I never felt at home. Also not in Germany where I come from. I had the feeling really when I came the first time this is home. This is how home looks to me and this is how it felt and it is this special area here. (pointed out window to view) I mean I didn't have much time to go around again now, since I was here, because I was working all the time, but when I travel I like it very much, it's absolutely beautiful and gorgeous everywhere... differently. I think it's paradise. For me it's paradise. It was from the beginning. I mean I had some hard times in the beginning and you always

have that when you start something and when you change locations and when you change languages and whatever... it is a hard time... but so what..?

We talked further about what she found so wonderful about the place, and she kept coming back to the fact she could build her own house on her own land, and do her own thing. She felt constrained in Germany because she was always working to pay the bills and did not have time to do “important things” because she was so busy working. She felt stifled. In the following excerpt on building her own house, she shows how she identifies with the spirit and strength of the European pioneers; like her, they broke the mold and worked hard for a new life. Sabine realized the differences between her and the pioneers in that she has benefited from modern technologies, as well as a real estate market weighted in her favour.

It [her land] was really hard to clear, but what it did to me was that all of a sudden I could appreciate really what the people who came here first and cultivated this land really did. What they achieved, how hard they must have worked. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. It really gave a lot of respect which is different when you just only know it when you did what they did you can appreciate it in a different way.

SW: I often think that when I’m out camping or something and I have a map and a compass and all the equipment, I think about the people who came here. They didn’t know what they were coming to. They were pretty brave.

Sabine: Absolutely. And some were desperate too. But still. It’s hard work. But was I tired. I am used to physical work. I mean, I always worked hard in one way or another, but this is different, and they didn’t have chain-saws, they didn’t have electricity. They did it all with their own muscles. They did so much work. Such hard work. Such hard work. And women and men alike. Makes you look differently on a country like this. And I don’t regret that I did this because it was a very, very good experience for myself, quite an achievement.

In her narrative of place, Sabine expressed her desire to be independent and self reliant, also qualities she saw were necessary for her work as a small business owner and a single



woman in her forties. She has found her “paradise” in a place where she feels at home for the first time because, in part, she can be adventurous in ways that were not possible in Germany. At first, Sabine worked very hard to establish her business in Nova Scotia, then realized she was working as hard as she was in Berlin, so she changed her work habits, made possible because the cost of living is lower. Although, to some extent, she left Germany to be free of certain social constraints, she found new ones on the South Shore, which she willingly became used to.

Sabine: The adjustment I had to make, living in a big city like Berlin where everybody’s anonymous even with neighbours, you don’t really know your neighbours you might have seen them once on the stair case somewhere or... you know... so the first year when my neighbours came to visit me and when they came they said “well we haven’t seen you for so long we were wondering about you” mind you I was working all the time, morning 'til night. Spending the day in the shop, come back here and work 'til night and getting up early early early morning working before I went to the shop so I didn’t really have time to take care of neighbour duties or anything. So they came and were wondering about me and I was I thought hmmm what does that mean? In Berlin it would mean people are nosey and they were spying on you so I didn’t know if I should be mistrustful or if that was just friendliness and because it was so.. . the attitude was not, you know, mischievous or anything. I thought it has to be friendliness and kindness and I only had to adjust to that and to accept that. Which wasn’t very easy. They really care, when they don’t see you they think something happened to you and this the reason you have to understand coming from a city where... (laughs) They didn’t see my light at night a couple of nights in a row and I didn’t tell anyone I was away and they were really wondering. Really, I mean, imagine that in Berlin. That was the main adjustment for me.

## **Fulfilling German Middle Class Dreams, Escaping Stress of German Middle Class**

### **Work Habits**

Ernst is a self-employed skilled tradesman who left a secure job in Germany to pursue a life in Canada where he was more connected to the land. He moved here from

Germany with his wife and three small children a few years ago. They live inland on a small farm that they have put a good deal of work into. Initially he came as a tourist, then when he learned how cheap the land was, saw an opportunity to have a country home - a middle class dream far beyond his reach in Germany.

Ernst: Steve [friend he stayed with during his vacation] was involved in real estate and he showed me a couple of properties. I was curious to see those and then he showed me a piece of land inland and it's a beautiful setting. I really fell in love with this piece of land. And compared to Germany it was pretty cheap. In Germany to buy a piece of land like that, you would have to save a long time. So I thought I should buy, it could just be a vacation place build a little cabin there spend a few weeks there in summer - whatever - so I bought this piece of land but not with the intention to emigrate to Canada.

Later in the interview we discussed why he had decided to move here, rather than making it a vacation home. Since he has little faith in the current global economic system with its emphasis on paper speculation, buying land is his safeguard for his family in the event of a total market collapse. As the following excerpt illustrates, choosing to live this way is also his way of voicing his dissatisfaction with how people need to live in Germany.

Ernst: Because when the wall came down and for a few years after a lot of pressure came from East to West Germany. We lived in a nice area in the Alps. There was a beautiful lake there and it was a very nice area. And because it was so nice it attracted so many people it became so over crowded that it wasn't nice to live there any more. There was so much traffic it would take you an hour to go six kilometers between villages. Then when you get there you have to drive around the blocks for half an hour to find a parking spot. And then you have three people fighting for this spot. I liked especially the South Shore area. I liked the small villages, that are so nice, like Lunenburg or Mahone Bay or Chester.. and... then inland you have quite a few forests and ... compared to Germany there aren't too many people living in one spot and things are much relaxer here. In Germany everywhere is traffic and it's more relaxing [here]. No traffic jams... even in Halifax.

Ernst's desire to realize a particular dream of owning land in a rural setting, which was out of reach for most people, was often expressed by others in their narratives of place.

Monika said:

[in the advertising for Nova Scotia] you see a wonderful peaceful land where you can hunt, you can fish, that is all not possible anymore in Germany. Well, only for special people. And the people they work very hard in Germany. It's different. You really have to work. If they have their vacation they would like to have something special. Or something away from the work and to go relaxing and do something that they dreamed of. Only to take a canoe on a lake. To be in an open environment like this, that is more what you can only dream of in Germany. And that is something what you can say, that's what I want and even if I would have here a cottage I could go every year, only for my four weeks, you know I could live from this four weeks 'til the next year... and can dream and maybe... always live from the little bit from this what I had here.

Ernst had managed to bring his dream into reality, though now that he has to make a living on the South Shore, it is not quite as idyllic as he had anticipated. His middle class dreams fulfilled by owning a home in the country show middle class structures of feeling.

Gerhard had lived in the "real" wilderness of British Columbia since the late 1980's. and has worked as a motorcycle mechanic, but now is a self-employed consultant using his masters degree from a German university. He has travelled all over the world in unconventional ways and eventually came to Nova Scotia to escape a "personal catastrophe", a divorce from his first wife. For him, the South Shore is a medley of the good things from all the places he has lived, as he later puts it, somewhat of a "compromise".

Gerhard: When I first came to Nova Scotia, much more than in New Brunswick, there was something so familiar about it, I thought WOW. This is almost like a Germany or a Europe that never existed, or maybe two hundred years ago but it's too nice. And it reminded me of an area which I particularly like in Germany, the hilly inland here, really reminded of a certain area in Germany, BUT, as if it was right at the Atlantic, then you hit the shores here, especially if the weather is nice.

On my first weekend off as a motor cycle mechanic I went shopping and I ran into Mahone Bay and Lunenburg for the first time in my life. I thought, WOW, it's cool here. I always thought I couldn't live without mountains, and roaring rivers and wilderness [in B.C.] but I must say I do like it here a lot.

Gerhard was very articulate about the cultural and economic aspects shaping Germans' desires to come to Canada as well as their sense that achieving these dreams was possible. He talked about Germans desiring the free spirited qualities that First Nations people are thought to possess, as well as and the peace of a cabin near a lake. These desires are elements of structures of feeling, a middle class critique of the nature of life in Germany experienced as "constraining" and "stressy". These Germans have been able to make their dreams because of their middle class position in Germany and Germany's economic position relative to the South Shore.

Gerhard: I think Germans of a certain generation at least have this dream of Canada. And your father [I had mentioned earlier in the interview that my father is a Swiss immigrant] might have been one of them.

SW: Absolutely...

Gerhard: It's in me too. You read certain books as a kid and Canada is the only country that still seems to offer that. You read about those native Indians...

SW: Karl May<sup>10</sup>...

Gerhard: Karl May especially must be a major motivation for German speaking *men* (laughs) of a certain generation to come here to Canada period. And they all have that dream of a log cabin by a lake. I've even spun it further for the amusement of

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<sup>10</sup>Karl May 1842-1912 (pronounced 'my') is a well known German fiction writer read by many German speaking people in childhood and adolescence. He wrote romanticized adventure stories about explorers and their lives with North American Native people.

mechanic friends.... “and then you meet the chief’s daughter and you marry her” and they just howled with laughter.<sup>11</sup>

SW: Is it different for coming to the South Shore than Canada in general?

Gerhard: I don’t know enough people and I have to speak about other immigrants or German residents. I don’t know enough about their motivation, but I think a lot of them first of all come driven from.... They’re pulled from one side and pushed from another side. Pushed from the side that Germany is over populated and because of the stressy atmosphere in those parts of Europe and pulled from the old dream of living over there in Canada and preferably in a log cabin by a lake. Then once they start looking around they realize how hard it would really be to live up north or in Northern B. C. or in the Yukon where it’s, you know, really wild, because it is very hard to live like that. And normally we, we Europeans, are too soft for that. Money makes it possible. So they kind of settled for what’s a compromise to them. This almost “Germany and Switzerland reminding countryside” where you don’t have to go 300 kilometers to get your mail. You have it delivered or have a twenty kilometer drive and also the climate is much much easier here and the flight. From B. C. it used to be quite the flight to go there [to Germany] but from here it’s a few hours and you’re even rested enough to do something on the same day. I think that might be the reason. That it reminds, that it’s a compromise... It gives them nature and space and this country that somewhere has been calling them since they were children and reading Karl May and on the other hand now they’re, you know, too well to do to really have to put up with the hardship. (laughs).... And it *is* very beautiful here.

### **Gendered Structures of Feeling**

As Gerhard hinted, there were gendered elements in his and other German immigrants experience of place. Though no one I interviewed talked about these things as though they were personal experience, the following gendered feelings were often brought up. I was told that being in rural Nova Scotia was sometimes more the realization of men’s dreams than their spouses’. Male and female interviewees talked about female friends who experienced isolation and loneliness, especially in the winter.

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<sup>11</sup>A nature resort catering to German clientele has been built by German immigrants where guests can sleep in comfortable beds in teepees or riverside cabins. I spoke with an

Some thought that a number of women longed for the close proximity of neighbours they left behind in Germany while the men relished the thought of owning a house surrounded by forest, feeling the latent potential for adventure. This contrast in their experiences often led to tensions in their marriages, sometimes even divorce. Williams did not include gender in his description of structures of feeling (DuBois, 1999), but DuBois (1999) suggests that gender is a useful tool in understanding how certain structures of feeling may be expressed differently by men and women in a given context. The discrepancies between male and female experiences in Germans' experiences of the South Shore point to gendered aspects in the structures of feeling.

### **Conclusion**

I have tried to show how German immigrants' narratives of place express certain structures of feeling. Their disapproval with the fast-paced life in Germany, and the accompanying consumerism, constraints on time, and environmental degradation was countered with their love for the landscape and what I am conceptualizing as place on the South Shore. They voice their resistance to dominant achievement discourses in Germany that left them stressed out through their new way of living in Nova Scotia. In their narratives of place they are expressing a critique of middle class life in Germany. In their feelings about the South Shore, they reveal their values on how life is best lived. They wanted more leisure time, a more natural environment and the possibility to be as

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employee there. He told me that he had never seen a "real Indian" before, and found Germans' fascination quite amusing.

free spirited and, as Gerhard mentioned, as self reliant as First Nations people are thought to be.

While they are critical of Germany, the position of Germany in the global economy, as well as their positions in Germany, or Canada before they moved has allowed these Germans the possibility of buying land in Nova Scotia. At the same time, Nova Scotia's distance from large centres, and economic marginality on a national scale, has made the land quite cheap for them. In addition to being affordable, the place is also desirable because it is removed from stressful urban centres and is underdeveloped, industrially and economically.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Local Narratives of Identity

The anthropological literature on transnationalism and immigration (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1992; Malkki, 1992, 1995), diaspora (Clifford, 1995) and globalization (Appadurai, 1991, 1996, 1997; Hannerz, 1996) demonstrates that cultures and cultural identities are not bounded or immutably linked with a circumscribable territory. This insight comes from recognizing the mobility of people, money, commodities, ideas and information. It is well established in current anthropology that localities and local identities are not natural or essential, but social constructs produced in particular ways. Although my research design assumes a category of “local”, from this literature, I was aware from the outset that the term “local” was slippery at best. However, I did not fully realize the impossibility of permanently anchoring a definition that works in practice. This became clear to me as I tried to define the sample of locals and found the criteria of belonging to be somewhat pliable. Still, from the comments that arose in the election debate and the others mentioned in Chapter Two, I did remain convinced that the discourse of local identities had significance, particularly in the current upsurge in property values.

This chapter first illustrates narratives of local identities and then goes on to show their significance in the region’s politics of place. At times these narratives emphasize the importance of a historical connection to the area and at others, people’s involvement in the community and livelihood practices. Sometimes the middle class interviewees made derogatory references to locals, marking similar frustrations that people expressed



about the smallness of the place. The presence of such a category, multi-faceted as it is, attests to certain structures of feeling. The feelings and subjectivities expressed in narratives of identity are related to the historical and current conditions of comparative isolation and marginality. Valuing community and self sufficiency is linked to the material conditions of life in the area where such qualities have historically been quite necessary. As well, the “small minded” and somewhat mean spirited actions of certain locals can also be seen as linked to the social and economic marginalization. In the structural inequities of regional economies, people living in rural areas are not offered the same educational or employment opportunities as in regional and national centres. In the current context where housing prices appear to be rising beyond the means of locals, the category of local is emphasized as a means of demonstrating an entitlement to owning land. The category of local is voiced in opposition to a discourse of wealthy, individualistic non-residents. Being “local” and belonging on the South Shore, means, among other things, being able to claim a place, literally and figuratively, to anchor oneself ideologically and materially. Narratives of identity are expressed in connection with narratives of place.

Aspects of local narratives of identity call to mind representations so common in tourist products which promote the region as scenic place, where a simple life among friendly locals is there for the taking. It is no accident that Germans come to the South Shore thinking they will find a life different from that in Germany. McKay writes that these notions of the simple life, “are not invented by prejudiced politicians in the rest of Canada, or by superficial tourists but by Maritimers themselves” (1994: 226). He exposes the ideological elements of nostalgic constructions of a certain past and “the

folk”, revealing how they mask conflict and oppressive power relations and simplify the complicated conditions leading to underdevelopment and poverty. His analysis is useful in the situations he describes, namely the production of cultural products. However, in this instance I see the local identity rather as a means of laying claim to something they care about that seems under threat. In order to claim an entitlement to belonging, local identities are accentuated.

### **Narratives of Local Identity**

Following are themes that describe local identities. The divisions are made for clarity’s sake but they are somewhat artificial in practice.

#### **Community over Money**

Overall, in everyday conversation, locals were talked about by other locals as being good, nice people, who were community minded. Locals are embedded in social networks, caught up in borrowing and lending things, contributing time for childcare, house repairs and farm work, taking time for visiting to drink beer or gin and tonics (summer time equivalents of tea). People would also emphasize local’s self-sufficiency and work ethic, adaptability and ability to get by with little money. Jack told me about how much he admired the old men in the community because they were able to see what tool was needed to fix a problem and they could even make their own tools. Jack feels like “a transition generation” because he received an education. He sometimes feels out of place at family gatherings and yet also envies their jobs at times. He said, “They’re the happiest people. Sometimes I wonder why I just don’t work a job like them instead of

being tortured by this social justice stuff.” The non-commercial nature of locals’ character was particularly emphasized. Brenda described the character of a well-liked local person by quoting his words, “Money don’t make my world go round”. She quickly added that money is definitely important, but does not make you happy. Public good humor about their economic plights was part of everyday conversation. I expressed concern about a hole in John’s car roof and he replied laughing, “Oh, there’s a hole in the bottom too, for the water to get out.” When Brenda introduced me to someone she admires, she told me about all the part-time jobs he does, to which he laughingly responded, “Yep, and a full-time pauper.”

### **Unpretentious**

Local narratives of identity are dismissive of pretension. I witnessed a particularly humorous example of such qualities at the South Shore exhibition, an annual agricultural fair. To demonstrate that he was not above his upbringing, and former occupation of farming, the recently re-elected Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Don Downe, kissed a pig at the South Shore Exhibition for a 4-H<sup>12</sup> fundraiser. The pig, who was scrubbed a clean pink and had a red ribbon tied around her neck, energetically resisted his affections, squealing loudly and ran away at top speed once the deed was done. This was fodder for jokes about the MLA being used to kissing the other end of hogs up in Halifax. The The Bulletin and Progress Enterprise (August 4, 1999) published a photo of the public embrace with the caption, “Kissing up to Ham”, alluding to the Nova Scotia premier John Hamm. While taking pride in being local, these jibes revealed

some resentment that there are more resources elsewhere, and that attaining them involves catering to the demands of others who have more power.

### **Employment and Livelihood**

Living full time in the area and being able to earn a living was important in some definitions of “local” because, I think, earning a living there is a challenge. The following discussion took place with Isabelle when, because of my confusion over the ways that the definition of category of “local” works in practice, I began to ask people directly in the interviews what it meant to be local.

SW: If you say that someone’s a local person what does that mean?

Isabelle: Well someone who lives in the vicinity where you are. That’s what I would say.

SW: So would you consider Gerhard [her German neighbour. Also interviewed by SW] a local?

Isabelle: He is now, sure. Yep. And so are [people who moved there twenty years ago from the United States]. You can call them locals.

SW: And the people who just come home for the summer, would they be called locals?

Isabelle: I don’t think so because they live away. You know, *away* away. In Montreal, in Vermont, you know. They’re summer visitors.

SW: So it has to do with living and earning a living here?

Isabelle: That’s what I would say. Somebody else might have a different idea. People are local because they lived here and they still live here.

It needs to be said that her German neighbour takes her shopping and is quite unpretentious himself. He prides himself on the fact that locals treat him as “a blue collar

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<sup>124</sup>H is an organization for youth that centres around agricultural activities.

person”. I suspect Isabelle would not have referred to him as a local if he were less involved in social networks than he is.

Jack implicitly confirmed Isabelle’s comments about the importance of making a living in a particular way in local narratives of identity. Throughout our interview, Jack made it clear he was suspicious that the Germans and non-residents who come here do not care about the community. This annoyed him. However, he talked about one particular German man he met with the same admiration he had for the self-sufficient locals because, “He’s a mason and he can work with his hands”. He spoke approvingly of the life the German man leads, saying it was not extravagant, that he was “trying to make a living like everyone else.” Valuing simplicity, self-reliance and particular ways of working make sense in the context of the region, where most people must be creative to get by, even those with middle class type employment. This is a lifestyle choice for some, like the people I mentioned in the previous chapter who moved back to the region for a particular quality of life. Asserting such identities confirms the direction they have chosen in their life decisions. For others, simplicity is a necessity they would rather do without.

### **Historical Connection**

A historical connection and long-term commitment to the area were also important elements of narratives of identity and belonging. “South Shore names”, anglicized versions of the surnames of the “Foreign Protestants”, instantly mark people as a “local”. When I asked Tom and Sally what being “local” meant, they said:

Tom: Here? About fourth generation.

SW: Fourth generation? Do you feel the same? [to Sally]

Sally: Here, we're locals. And our kids [who don't live in the area any more] would be too. Because we were born and brought up here. The two of us. My father was from the LaHave Islands and my mother's from Crousetown and her maiden name was Naugler. But we have Mosher in our background. I think there's a little English somewhere. Because one of my ancestors was a [British name] and I think that's English isn't it? We're basically Germans, of German descent.

It seemed to me that it was possible to override the lack of a historical connection with a demonstrated long-term commitment to the area. I made the mistake of referring to Brenda as though she were not a local, to which she retorted, "We're locals! We've been working here for *fifteen years*." I learned later that many people in the area also considered her and her family locals because of their intense involvement in social networks.

Historical connections which allow locals to assert a place in the present are certainly mingled with personal nostalgia for the past. Sometimes people's memories are more about nostalgia for their own childhood, than accurate renderings of the social conditions at the time (Williams, 1973). I am sure that Isabelle's fond memories of being able to walk on the beach, are filtered through time and by the fact she is now wheel chair bound.

Isabelle: (...) I don't like it when they change things too much, you know. Things that you've always used and they were always free and your ancestors have used them for a *long* time. Way well over a century.

SW: Has that happened?

Isabelle: Ah, sort of. (big sigh)

SW: In what way?

Isabelle: Well the beach for one thing. My mother was born in that house down there by the beach. And we used to go, the children, I was one of the children, used to go through the woods over to Grammy Bolivar's. Can't do that anymore. Yeah, I suppose some changes. But anyway. There haven't been any great, great changes. The one that affected me most was the beach. When we were kids, some of the kids would come here to my home and we'd walk along the road and pick up all the kids from back there. And we all went to the beach out that road. It was called the Old House road. And the beach was just beautiful. We learned to swim there.

SW: Really?! In that cold water you learned to swim?

Isabelle: I didn't mind the water a bit!

I experienced the role of nostalgia and history and how intertwined they are with identity and place in a more public forum at the Lunenburg Seamen's Thanksgiving Service at the Fishermen's Memorial and Tribute. This is an annual ecumenical church service honouring the men who have died at sea from Lunenburg County during this century and their descendents. The moving ceremony is thick with references to the importance of the sea for the way of life in Lunenburg County. The hymns all contained maritime references, and the responsive reading was a mariner's version of the well known Twenty Third Psalm. Instead of the traditional Christian Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd", the congregation read, "The Lord is my Pilot, I shall not drift. He lighteth me across the dark waters; He steereth me in the deep channels." After the service, a colour party led the congregation to the harbour for the blessing of the fleet. Organizers began this segment of the event only a few years ago. Throughout the event, a continuity with a particular past is asserted, which is part of the identity of today. The past is remembered in a way that focuses on what unites the community. Even though the event commemorates horrible events, any conflicts, or inequalities that may have precipitated

the deaths at sea, are overlooked, as well as the current state of the fishery. Of such narratives of history Olwig writes,

It has been suggested by Herzfeld that “images generated by this kind of nostalgia put the poor firmly in their place and eradicate all memory of class differences” (1991: 75). It might be argued, however, that the present day St. Johnian tendency to paint a rather nostalgic picture of the past does not so much “put the poor firmly in their place,” as it insists on a place for the St. Johnian community (and the poor that it has sustained) on an island where this community is experiencing increasing social and economic marginalization. (1999: 382)

Olwig’s comments about the situation on St. John have particular salience for the situation on the South Shore. It could be argued, as Olwig cites Herzfeld, that the notion of “local” based on an historical connection with the place eclipses local class distinctions and romanticizes what were in some ways quite dreary conditions. On the other hand, the assertion of local identities in particular ways as illustrated in chapter two at the election debate and subsequent comments of Jack and Susan, is also a means of claiming a right to having a say in how development in the community should proceed in the current politics of place.

### **Differentiating Between Towns**

People attribute good or bad attributes to towns within the region in ways that resemble the discourses of “local”. Many people I met scoffed at Mahone Bay which is a town with many tourist stores selling expensive merchandise and a harbour with many more sailboats and sea kayaks than fishing boats. They said that it was not a “real town” or that people who lived or shopped there were “too uppity”. As Brenda described it, “When I go to Mahone Bay, I look at the people, and I just think they have a completely



different life from me, with their yachts, spending all this money... on my over priced products” (laughs). Jack had debated living there, but did not like the attitude of his would-be community members saying, “they told me I could only put up white Christmas lights!” Someone who does live in the area for his wife’s job said, “We live over a hill so that no one in Mahone Bay can see us”. Bridgewater, the industrial and commercial centre of the region, with malls and chain stores, was also chastised but for different reasons. Many expressed dislike for Bridgewater, also known as “Bilgewater” for being a town in “denial of its culture and history”, “a cultural vacuum”. Over and over I heard of the chagrin people felt that historic buildings have been bulldozed to make way for parking lots and malls. On the other hand, Lunenburg was enjoyed by Germans and locals alike, and praised for being a “real town”, for being well cared for, and for having preserved their history. Isabelle said, “Lunenburg likes to stay the way it is and I agree with that. Lunenburg is different. It’s nice. It’s really nice. Bridgewater is more cosmopolitan. You know.” She continued, somewhat scornfully, “Trying to be a city, I believe.” Someone else said about Lunenburg, “Sure, they’ve fixed it up but you can tell real people live there.”<sup>13</sup> The thoughts on these three towns further show the tendency to valorize the non-commercial and unpretentious as well as the importance of valuing history.

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<sup>13</sup>These comments were surprising to me because downtown Lunenburg to me felt more like a tourist Mecca than a “real town”. Lunenburg has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the buildings have been maintained to resemble to prosperous fishing and ship building town it once was.

### **“Small Minded”**

To be sure, there were also negative references made about local people. Locals were not always experienced as community minded, but rather as “small minded” in the words of the retired professional and implied by Stacey in an earlier chapter. It is crucial in discussing these incidences to situate the actions of these locals of lower status, which are understood by middle class locals as the behaviours of “hicks”, in the material conditions that exist in somewhat isolated communities. Often in such settlements, residents do not have access to many public services or employment opportunities. The tone of their contact with the state and people from towns can, in some circumstances, be described as condescending.

Brenda and I discussed with chagrin how locals had vandalized a mutual acquaintance’s farm twenty kilometers inland from where she lives. She remarked, “Yes, they’re very local out there.” I heard some other rather nasty stories of what locals had done. One family, who arrived four years ago from Ontario, told me this story about their neighbour, a man who has lived in the area all his life. In order for them to drill a well to get running water, a drilling truck needed to drive over part of this neighbour’s land. The neighbour refused them access to his land. In a short visit to the area at Christmas 1999, I learned that the family finally had their water hooked up, without the neighbour’s cooperation, at considerable risk to their own property. When I asked why he was being so difficult, they replied, “Because he’s lived here all his life and he’s an old curmudgeon.”

When driving late one Friday night with Sonia, a young university educated woman working in the area for the summer, she commented that we were taking our lives

into our own hands since so many locals drive drunk. She, rather compassionately, tried to reserve judgement by telling me their reasons but resents the risks they take. She attributed their behaviour to the fact that there is no alternative transportation and that there just is not much to do besides drinking on a Friday night.

Sometimes locals' attitude towards the environment was a source of annoyance. Susan is very involved in community events and spends a lot of time enjoying the woods in all seasons. She commented on her perceptions that the German's love the land, and thought that their purchase of land "might be the only way we can save some forest". Susan later explained that Germans have environmental sensitivities that they can afford to act on whereas locals' need the income from the forest and may have little choice. On a similar, but somewhat less understanding, note a former logger commented,

They [the Germans] came here for the land. They're not doing it out of greed. They want to preserve nature. A Canadian would never do this, they'd just clear cut it. We don't appreciate what we have, but they do. They're doing it for this (puts hand on heart).

He said this in reference to a large piece of land that is now protected because it is owned by Germans. The varying forestry practices and attitudes towards nature that Susan and the former logger mention are attributed to cultural differences and implicitly inform their notions of who locals are and the kinds of values they have. As the understanding comments of Sonia and Susan show, the varying values, understood as cultural differences that are part of German and local identities, are also about class and material realities of living in a rural area dependant on resource extraction with comparatively few public recreational services.

### **Significance in Current Politics of Place**

The ways in which these and other differences between locals and Germans and other non-residents are articulated define a particular local identity. In no other arena were the differences perceived as more pronounced than in the discussions about the “no trespassing” signs in the area. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in the stories of the “no trespassing” signs that Germans and non-residents put on their land, a particular local identity is being expressed. In practice, the divisions between those who do not put up these signs and those who do, do not fall neatly along cultural lines. As I wrote earlier, I did see “no trespassing” signs on locals’ property and also heard that locals denied people access to their land. My friend Emily and I were rudely told by an American summer resident that the particular path we were walking was on their private property. Emily coaxed him into neighbourly conversation, and he became quite pleasant, though we did go elsewhere to hike. When we were out of hearing distance, Emily smirked and said, “I’ll just come back this winter when he goes back to where he came from.” All the Germans I met did not have “no trespassing” signs or had removed the ones they put up initially. I really do not know how pervasive the problem of non-residents blocking access to previously publicly used land is. I inquired consistently all throughout my fieldwork and found very few actual examples, though rumors and stories were plentiful. However, I consider this discourse about the signs and public access to land, as with other narratives regarding the identities of non-residents and locals to have “truth producing effects”. Dunk cites Foucault,

I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of truth and that which comes under

some other category, but in seeing how the effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. (1991: 170)

Whether or not it is objectively true, the belief that Nova Scotia has a unique “culture of access” as someone put it, persists and has “truth producing effects”. It is not my intention to prove or disprove locals’ commitment to community values. I do, however, want to call attention to certain gaps between discourse and practice. In discussions of the real estate market, particular identities are being asserted that may overstate the polarity between locals and new land owners, but for reasons that make sense in the context of the region’s politics of place. In the resentment over the “no trespassing” signs, a local identity is being affirmed in opposition to the exclusionary values the signs are expressing. The signs, so commonly mentioned as proof that non-residents are different from locals, become symbols crystallizing some locals’ feelings about the real estate market, and the people arriving as a result. The comments suggest that locals are wary of the possibility that people from outside the region are causing social change with which many locals are uncomfortable, yet in which they are compelled to participate.

## **Conclusion**

Discourses of local identity incorporate narratives of humility, simplicity, lack of concern for money, the ability to make a living on the South Shore and are predicated on a historical connection to the region. As well, discourses include narratives of frustration at the “small minded” elements of social relations in the region. The kinds of attributes which exasperated the middle class locals I spoke with, speak to their class based notions

of appropriate behaviour. The actions of other locals that the middle class interviewees refer to must always be understood - but not excused - in the material context and conditions present in rural communities. In practice, "local" is a somewhat malleable category, since people can be considered local even if they live away but grew up in the area or if they are from somewhere else but settle in the region and behave in certain ways, depending on who you ask. There are wealthy locals as well. The point this chapter attempts to make, is that the discourses of "local" matter. Though they may rely on a nostalgic past or notions of simplicity that are more about economic necessity than choice, they do assert that people who do not have a lot of money because of economic circumstances in the region should still be able to claim a place on the South Shore. Massey and Jess (1995) have written that people's claims to belonging in a place often mean denoting others who do not belong. On the South Shore, these demarcations are made through discourses of "local". It is not that newcomers are uniformly rejected. If the Germans were perceived as contributing to the community or "working with their hands" people had only good things to say about their presence. It must be noted that these Germans are being characterized in comparison with the wealthier Germans who come and build large vacation homes on the coast and not with locals who "work with their hands" in resource extraction employment. In certain ways, middle class locals have more in common with these Germans than locals of working class backgrounds. To the extent that Germans were talked about negatively, it was when their behaviour conflicted with the middle class narratives of localness, especially with respect to commitment to place, and income level. The discourse of "local" is part of a structure of feeling in the area. The current material conditions of the area give rise to particular

emotions and subjectivities. This is a region where getting by has never been easy such that out-migration was and is a common occurrence. Now, land that previously had little value is now fetching high prices and is bought by people who may not understand the material realities of the area. As well, the increasing land prices are a further impediment for those who want to stay in the region. Being able to afford a house with some land, was always one of the positive reasons for staying. The discourse of community minded locals with an historical connection to the area, like the narratives of a particular history that Olwig (1997; 1999) writes of on St. John, insist on a place for these locals to continue to belong and to have the quality of life that they chose over leaving for other places.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### German Narratives of Identity

This chapter examines Germans' narratives of identity as they articulated them in the context of their new communities. To understand the German's experience of immigration to a place where they would be identified as "ethnic", I turned to work on ethnicity and studies of immigration to Canada. This chapter begins with a short overview of that literature. Fitting with their critique of the type of life they chose to leave I described in chapter five, these Germans avoided forming new German communities. The desire for distance from Germany and Germans was amplified as they confronted the politics of place on the South Shore. All the Germans I interviewed tried to distinguished themselves from Germans, especially the type of Germans thought to be arriving on the South Shore who put up "no trespassing" signs and do not care about the community. As such, I show how their experiences differ in many ways from those described in the literature on ethnic communities and identities, though there are some similarities to immigrants' experiences described in the literature on transnationalism.

Much of the recent anthropological literature (Comaroff, 1996; Gregory and Sanjek, 1994; Wilmsen and McAllister, 1996) on ethnicity considers ethnic categories as social constructs, of integral importance, but constructed nevertheless; they are not primordial, natural or based on some essential quantities though they may appear that way. Ethnic identities are, according to these anthropologists, intimately connected with unequal power relations and to be understood as differences that often mask features of inequalities. This is particularly true for class related inequalities (Rouse, 1995a; 1995b).



Ethnic identities are claimed in resistance politics by subaltern people themselves, or ethnic identities are imposed on the less powerful by elites in attempt to solidify existing relations of power (Shanklin, 1994). The narratives of identity the Germans expressed do speak to power struggles that are taking place on the South Shore expressed in the context of the real estate market.

Harney's work (1998) on Italian ethnicity in Toronto shows that daily social relations and the creation of social networks between Italians are central to maintaining ethnic identities and building communities where people derived some sense of belonging and identity. The Germans I spoke with did not claim a strong German identity, but rather tried to distance themselves from the local and their own understandings of what it means to be German. They did not, like the Italians Harney writes of, actively seek out other Germans or join German social clubs. Try as they might, though it is not visibly inscribed on their body as other ethnic identities are, it is an identity they cannot fully escape. They are marked as Germans to the local population and each other by their accents when speaking English which they generally spoke quite well and to some extent by their demeanour and consumption patterns. However, such categorizations rely more on stereotypes of brusque Germans driving their jeeps from their mansion on the coast to the health food store than careful observations.

Much has been written on the development of immigrants' transnational subjectivities (e.g. Gardiner Barber, 1997; Mitchell 1997; Winland, 1998), created and sustained through government policies and immigrants' experiences. These social scientists show that immigrants' daily experiences are simultaneously enabled and constricted by processes, events and responsibilities in Canada and their former

homelands. While a full examination of German transnationalism would be a thesis in itself, some aspects bear mention here, since they demonstrate the tenor of their relationship with Germany and Germaness. The Germans I interviewed maintained connections with Germany for business reasons and to keep in contact with friends and family. They did not sustain contact because they missed Germany, or wanted to keep close ties with their German culture as such. Monika and Ernst, the two people I interviewed who had children, did want their children to keep up their German; knowing a second language was seen as having intrinsic value and also a future advantage for employment options in Canada and Germany.

As has been discussed earlier in this thesis, there was a strong sense among the people I talked with, Germans and locals alike, that the Germans who were buying property were wealthy people who lived in gated or insular communities, both literally and figuratively. It is thought they put up “no trespassing” signs to protect their own property, buy islands for development and destroy traditional public access to coastal land. As well, certain coastal communities are known to be German enclaves. A Swiss-German developer has bought a number of islands to develop as a resort. There is also a widespread impression that Germans are not moving here permanently, but only come for the summer months and do not contribute to the community nor the economy sufficiently to be looked upon favourably. Someone told me she had heard that Germans would even bring all their own food. While I am sure that some Germans do fit the above description, the Germans I talked with did not fit this image of isolated wealthy people. This chapter illustrates their narrative attempts to distinguish themselves from this discourse. I cannot confidently comment on how their assertions of difference are played

out in practice, which would be an interesting thread to pursue in longer research. I suspect things are more complicated in practice. The point I would like to make in this chapter is that it cannot be assumed that all the new German residents resemble the stereotypes in the rumors. They are a diverse group. Also, they are not ignorant of the politics of place in the area, and attempt to accommodate to this, at the very least in their narratives. Though I cannot be sure how “true” these narratives are in practice, they all amiably agreed to chat with me and I met them in the first place because they were part of locals’ social networks.

### **Differences in Community Relations**

All of the Germans I interviewed told me how important it was for them to be part of a community. One proudly told me her neighbours had keys to her house, and all claimed the people were a big part of why they came to Nova Scotia. I ran into a number of them at local events or on public coastal hikes after the interviews. Most of the Germans I talked with tried to distinguish themselves from the Germans who lived in the enclaves and gated communities even before we discussed the nature of my research.

When I asked Monika who she spends time with since they moved she said:

We don’t have many Germans around, and that’s what I didn’t want.

SW: You didn’t want other Germans around?

Monika: I didn’t want to live in a German community. What you can find here. You know, with the fence around (makes gesture of a box) and say, okay I am German and everyone can see it. And I actually like my neighbourhood, and we have friends everywhere, we made friends in Halifax and it’s great. Yeah. Mostly, of course, with the same interests. The art is a special one and there are good people here and ... the neighbours... we meet each other.

Jurgen had lived in Vancouver since 1970 but left because it was getting too commercial, he's concerned the same could happen here. He recently bought land on the South Shore after visiting for years and was very annoyed by the fact that other Germans were coming. He said,

There's too many Germans. I know Germans. They're arrogant. They don't take the time to get to know the local culture. They just barge in and build monstrosities. I came here for Hirtle's Beach. That place was sacred for me and now people have built on it.<sup>14</sup> It drives me crazy. I hate it. I left Germany to get *away* from Germans!

One couple I met had lived through the second world war as young adults and then moved to Canada as adults. Having been involved (out of duty) with a visit of a German diplomat, Ulrike was embarrassed by the way he conducted himself. He had said that everyone should know German. She did not want me to associate her with his kind of Germanness. "Germans really have to be careful" she said, alluding to Germany's heinous past that is still in people's mind and gets triggered whenever some German is thoughtless and domineering.

### **Accentuating Class Differences**

Gerhard describes the difference between himself and the wealthier Germans in the following exchange:

Gerhard: I can only say that from the beginning I had very, very nice experiences here. Actually I think that people here treated me nicer than even in the rest of Canada and I think Canadians basically are a pretty nice people, pretty friendly and helpful people. It might have to do with how I travelled. I didn't, I really didn't have a lot of money at the time, because I just had all this splitting up with my

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<sup>14</sup> In many other conversations these buildings were mentioned. Jurgen was the only person who thought they were owned by Germans. I am reasonably sure they are owned by Americans and people from other parts of Canada.

wife thing behind me and I had to sell a lot of things that I owned so that she could afford to have her own future. So all I had was that rusted out old van and I had all my tools on board and all my clothes and a few pieces of furniture (laughs) and an old dog on board too, and I think people here, the real local people, immediately knew what that was about. I was somebody who was, you know, ... trying to make it. And **everybody** helped me, **everybody** helped me, I can't say I had one bad experience in that time. And I didn't ask for much help. People would just come and be friendly to me and give me good advice.

SW: So do you think that's different from some others... I know in this area there's in the last years a lot of Americans and Swiss and Germans coming buying vacation homes, do you think they treat them differently than they treated you?

Gerhard: I suspect they do. But I couldn't really honestly say because I'm not in that position. All I know is that when I go to a local.. eh..to a local... shop or garage or a tradesman or a company that maybe I have a different approach that I usually don't get treated like I hear some German and Swiss people tell me they get treated.

SW: And how is that?

Gerhard: Well, I think they treat me like a... like a blue collar person. While what I understand from other people... [Person who introduced us] is one of them, but I also can think about half a dozen other examples right away... Swiss too... who say that as soon as they realize "Oh, this is a Swiss or a German" their prices go up two hundred percent. And they rip you off... and, and, and. They might be very friendly to them, I don't know but that is what I've heard. But it's not my experience. It really isn't. We know quite a few of those people [wealthier immigrants], because this is the area where quite a few of them hang out and some of them are nice people but .... when it comes down to it, I always have the feeling that they live in a different strata of society, they have completely different you know... filters through which they see the world and experience the world too.

Erich and Astrid also showed similar sentiments. They distinguished themselves from other Germans, who they say are never happy with what they have and live in excess.

Erich: [in Calgary] We had lots of friends, few Germans, that's the way we are.

SW: And here?

Erich: Few Germans.

Astrid: A German couple, otherwise the rest are Canadians.

Erich: We prefer this.

Astrid: A different mentality. The German.

Erich: Yeah.

SW: What does that mean for you? A different mentality?

Astrid: Well, (sigh) lots of security... always lots of security and

Erich: They must have security. Germans...

Astrid: They take everything so ....

Erich: serious, very serious....

Astrid: Narrow.

Erich: Narrow, yeah. Everything... You name it....

Astrid: Not enough... tolerance... can one say that? I don't exactly know.

Erich: Yes. We went to the German club twice. Twice in nine years.

SW: Here?

Astrid: No, in Calgary. We haven't tried it here.

Erich: And that was enough for me. That certainly was enough. Not our style.

Astrid: That's not why I came here.

### **Land Use**

In no area was the negative image of Germans felt more intensely than in the discussions over land use. Ernst was keenly aware that locals assume the worst about Germans who put up fences, having put up some of his own at first. His tone of voice truly conveyed his sincere dismay that he had been misunderstood. He explains:

In Germany the land is so valuable, most people only have a small piece of land and they put a fence around it to protect themselves from the pressure from all the other people who are around. To say, this is mine, so to speak. And everybody needs a certain privacy. If you don't have that because there are too many people who live on one spot, you try to protect yourself to get this kind of privacy. And here people don't have fences, even in the city and this is reflected in the behaviour of the people because people here are much more open if you go to somebody and people will just be happy to meet somebody, or if somebody's coming you know for a visit or to talk or chat. In Germany, if someone did that you'd say, "Oh, what does he want? Leave me alone!" So to speak. "I don't want to talk". So people put up their fences, if they buy a nice wooded property or a beach, they put up their fence because they would do it in Germany. I did the same thing when I bought this land area. Because there is an old orchard, with old apple trees, and many deers are coming there in the fall to eat the apples. Where you have deers, you have hunters. I wanted to keep the hunters out of the land, you know. So, I put a little gate there and said, "No Hunting Please" and things like that. But they still went in there. Because they are going there to hunt there since God knows. I thought, I have to protect this piece of land, I want to protect the deers. But it's a learning process. If you don't know it, if you behave the way that you have grown up then you do it that way. It's hard to understand. I'm pretty sure that here in the local area many people rely on it for their food supply. Also the openness of the land. There are no gates, I would say it's something very good.

I later told this anecdote to a local woman, emphasizing that this German man really was concerned that local hunters needed the meat for their food supply and she quipped cynically, "That should account for about one percent of the hunters".

## **Conclusion**

As these examples show, the Germans I met were quite eager to distinguish themselves from the narratives of narrow-minded, non-community minded Germans which circulate around the region. They wanted to be part of the community. This image fits with the structures of feeling discussed previously which showed their critique of a certain kind of life associated with Germany. My interviewees did not participate in any sort of coherent narratives that could be considered their ownership of a discourse of

ethnic identity. Rather they had a coherent resistance to such a category. Given the response some have received from locals and the anecdotes of other Germans they have heard, it is understandable they want to distance themselves from such categorization. Discourses of German identities in both Germany and the South Shore do not fit with how they see themselves, and how they would like to be seen.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Conclusion

Monika: We just knew we want to live here. And I actually can't say why. No. It has nothing to do with... people... the people are friendly here and it is nice here. But I don't know if that is all. And to give anybody a reason to say why it is here, it has something special but I don't know why, I can't explain it.

As the above quotation shows, for the people whose experiences make up this thesis, the reasons why places matter cannot always be expressed - they are simply understood. Above all, for all the complexities and contradictions in their sense of place, the South Shore was where locals and Germans felt at home. That said, it is precisely the task of the anthropologist to unravel the naturalized and assumed elements in daily life to expose the power dynamics and discover the ways that meaning is generated. This thesis has been such an attempt.

If nothing else, this research has shown that people's feelings about place exist within a field of social relations and are indicative of their position in local and global processes. I began by arguing that understandings of the impact of the real estate market increases will be enriched by learning about local meanings of property and the social construction of place. To show the social meanings of place on the South Shore, I illustrated the ways people engage with the landscape through their daily activities and how landscapes can be understood as texts to interpret and anchor personal and cultural histories. I then went on to situate the social meanings of place in the broader political economic context of the region. The relatively depressed economic situation made livelihood issues figure strongly in narratives of place and identity. Because of this strong relationship between feelings of place, identity and livelihood Williams' notion of

structures of feeling is an effective conceptual tool. Structures of feeling highlight the relationship between individuals' feelings and the structure of their material world - the concept links a person's socio-economic position with the way he or she feels about the world in a dynamic way, allowing for individual variations and contradictions.

Narratives of place revealed structures of feeling, expressed through an idiom of place.

In understanding how people's varying positions translate into different experiences of place, I operationalized Rodman's concept of "multilocality" (1992). I demonstrated the ways that narratives of place are intertwined with narratives of identity because narratives of identity are constituted in a way that reflects the power dynamics in the local politics of place.

As with many discussions involving culture there are no clear conclusions to make. This thesis has focused on the connections between large social and economic processes and the feelings of individuals. Like the summary of a lot of social research, the obvious conclusion is that the system is flawed. Since an overhaul of our social system that gives certain people more choices than others is not likely to happen in the near future, my conclusions as to the immediate solutions are those which were told to me in conversations and interviews. In the current situation, land is attainable at prices which are cheap for outsiders because it is in an underdeveloped region. Land is also bought from people who have sacrificed and chosen to stay in spite of the region's marginality. They now risk their children not being able to afford land which has more than a twist of irony. The new possibility of selling land for lots of money brings up conflicting feelings. Residents are caught between believing increased economic activity will benefit everyone, but knowing at the same time it probably will not. People know

that economic development cannot be sustainable and equitable if it involves selling land at prices that locals cannot afford. The residents on the South Shore who are demanding that the non-residents pay their fair share of the infrastructure they avail themselves of during their vacation stays are justified. Regulations like those in place on Prince Edward Island deserve serious consideration for implementation on the South Shore and soon. On Prince Edward Island, a non-resident cannot own land in excess of five acres or a shore frontage in excess of 165 feet (PEI Lands Protection Act). The definition of non-resident is of crucial importance. As the chapter on local identity in this thesis showed, “local” on the South Shore is a malleable category, variously drawing on class and cultural backgrounds as well as historical connections. Defining a resident as someone who makes the South Shore their primary residence, living there more than six months a year, would address some concerns raised about foreign land owners. It would avoid formally discriminating against people, like the Germans I interviewed, who have started businesses and made the South Shore their home. On Prince Edward Island they define a resident as someone who lives there 183 days each year (n.d., Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission).

I support the motives the German immigrants I interviewed had for moving to Nova Scotia, and agree with their critiques of the stress caused by trying to live in a competitive society. The retired professional I talked with was correct when he said that people from away have brought a lot to the South Shore, financially speaking and otherwise. Still, I do hope that the re-elected MLA Michael Baker keeps his promise to create a climate where people who want to stay in the region are able to. Unfortunately

he is not the first Atlantic Canadian politician to make such a promise, and I doubt he will be the last.

The last word belongs to Tom who can sum up the meaning of the South Shore much better than I.

Tom: You know, there's something special about this part of Nova Scotia that is so incredibly different. I've traveled a lot and I have not once got off an airplane and not been sooo happy to be back. Other parts of the world are really nice. I've been all over the United States, China, Hong Kong, but here is where I want to be.

SW: Why?

Tom: Well, I just, don't know really. It's... I hafta have roots....

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