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ABSTRACT During the last decade resistance against environmental destruction has spread throughout much of the developed world. Over this period Environmental Direct Action (EDA) has evolved into an inventive and dynamic movement that not only rallies against specific environmental damages, but also the broader political and economic systems that are perceived to facilitate them. With the growth of Environmental Direct Action there has been a concomitant increase in the number wishing to understand and explain the phenomenon. This expansion of academic interest raises two questions: (1) Are conventional academic epistemologies suitable to understand and explain the motivations of and challenges posed by EDA?, and (2) Do the power relations inherent within such approaches facilitate or preclude our opportunities to make sense of this resistance movement? This paper uses experience gained from my own empirical work on EDA in the UK to explore these issues. Beginning with what Soja terms the 'Secondspace' approach to social science research, it will focus on the problems posed by issues of positionality and power relations for the study of EDA. The paper will go on to illustrate that, although entailing a number of problems, a 'Thirdspace' approach offers some solutions that can secure important insights into this political practice.

KEYWORDS: *environmental direct action, field, home, secondspace, thirdspace* JON ANDERSON
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Introduction: EDA and Second- and Thirdspace research approaches

Although enjoying a multifaceted lineage (see Wall, 2000), Environmental Direct Action re-emerged in the popular consciousness in the UK during the early 1990s. Its earliest significant manifestation came during the construc-

tion of the M3 extension through Twyford Down, Hampshire, where a group of activists physically resisted motorway construction through setting up camp en route, occupying earthmoving machinery, and using ecotage to hinder development (see Anderson, 1995; Bryant, 1996). Such protests, although unsuccessful in their primary objective, inspired similar actions against the then Conservative government's unpopular road building programme (see SchNEWSround, 1996), and spread to include a host of other 'environmental' abuses, including animal exports, house building in green belts, quarrying, and genetically modified crops (see Brass and Poklewski Koziell, 1997; SchNEWS, 1998). Concurrently, EDA spread throughout and beyond Europe (see Anderson, 2000; Do or Die, 1997, 1998), and altered its focus from apparently 'single issue' protests to encompass campaigns against orthodox power structures, liberal democratic decision-making, and the capitalist bias within societal organization (see Bircham and Charlton, 2001; SchQUALL, 2000, 2001).

As EDA has increased in its popularity and significance, so have the literatures that comment on these protests (see McKay, 1996, 1998; Seel et al., 1999) and offer insights into the intellectual debates surrounding resistance (Pile and Keith, 1997; Sharp et al., 2000). However, there is a need to interrogate the approaches and methodologies that facilitate our access and benefit our insights into this new form of 'autopoietic' politics (Escobar, 1995). As EDA's challenge to the mainstream system develops, it is important to ensure academic epistemologies and methods evolve so they remain sensitive to, and able to make sense of, EDA's challenges. Drawing on Soja, who himself drew upon the writings of Henri Léfèbvre, it can be argued that conventional social science research is 'tightly socialized' into a 'Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement' (1999: 267). Soja claims that this binary logic-based approach to understanding the world not only characterizes the discipline of geography (as the spatial metaphor implies), but also has resonance beyond these academic confines. In his own words, this critique 'cuts across all perspectives and modes of thought, and is not confined solely to [those] for whom spatial thinking is a primary professional preoccupation' (Soja, 1996: 3). According to Soja, the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement locks academic inquiry into a closed logic of *either* material *or* mental approaches to studying human life. This 'either/or' logic has led to Firstspace approaches – where the material world is empirically measured and mapped, and Secondspace approaches – where this world is cognitively and conceptually written and thought about (see 1999: 266). This closed logic in the academic imagination can be thought of not only as a microcosm of the 'Big Dichotomies' (Soja, 1999: 268) that operate throughout the history of Western philosophy and social theory (e.g. subject/object, nature/culture, man/woman, black/white), but also as being thoroughly imbued by them. As a result, Soja claims, the researcher is limited in the ways in which the 'experiential complexity, fullness and perhaps unknowable mystery of actually *lived*

space' can be understood (1999: 268).

In this article I argue that studying EDA from within this closed logic has significant implications for the type of knowledge produced by research. Being not only part of but also imbued by 'either/or' dualisms, the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement is underpinned by what Pile (1994: 259) states is a Kantian separation of once integrated elements – notably, time and space, reason and emotion, mind and body, and male and female. In these dualistic separations, the former 'half' of the logic (i.e. time, reason, mind, male) is valorized and valued when understanding the world, and the latter 'half' (i.e. space, emotion, body, female) neglected and ignored. In this way the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement is characterized by the dominant half of the Kantian dualism and, as a result, aspects of comprehension related to passion, emotion and irrationality are silenced – they are 'non-knowledge' (Pile, 1994: 259). A further separation is inherent within this approach; the now 'disembodied scholar' (McDowell, 1994: 241) is also detached from the activity under study. The researcher is located as disengaged and isolated – a neutral observer, or 'solitary knower'. In this position they cognitively and conceptually think and write about a world from which they appear to be apart. This positioning lends an air of objectivity and expertise to the knowledge generated.

I argue that these characteristics of the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement have implications for researching EDA as they contrast markedly with many activists' approach to knowing the world. Firstly, rather than configuring the world in a dualistic fashion, many EDA-ers mix intellect and emotion to explain and discuss their practices. Indeed, many (con)fuse the binarized elements of reason/emotion (etc.) to such a degree that their motivations for action do not conform to a clear, cognitive thought process, rather they are internalized and, once felt, rarely interrogated further. Secondly, EDA's evolving challenge to mainstream society not only involves resistance to environmental destruction but also the mode of organization and philosophical traditions that underpin these specific despoliations. As a result, they identify research emanating from what Soja identifies as the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement as being part of the culture they seek to overturn. Thus EDA-ers' knowledge not only remains unsuited to being the 'new wine' that is simply poured into the 'same old double-barrelled containers' of Firstspace-Secondspace (Soja, 1999: 267), but EDA-ers also mistrust this knowledge production as a process that actively recuperates (i.e. commodifies and renders harmless, see *Aufheben*, 1996: 34) their practice. Thus I argue that research from this perspective is limited in the ways it can gain access to and understand the challenges posed by EDA. It will find difficulty in identifying the full motivations for action, both in terms of establishing trust with activists from a distanced academic position, as well as analysing the (con)fused nature of knowledge exhibited and practised by activists. As a consequence, research into EDA needs to consider alternative ways to understand

this new form of political activity.

Gaining an alternative location to study EDA can be seen as being part of a wider post-modern project, again one that transcends the confines of the geographic discipline. This is a project, as Mohan describes, that seeks to 'challenge "externally" generated knowledge and ways to create more equitable and collaborative forms of knowledge' (1999: 42). It attempts to 'dissolve dualisms' (Murdoch, 1997: 321), and break down the 'categorically closed logic of "either/or" in favour of a different, more flexible and expansive logic of the "both-and-also"' (Soja, 1999: 258). I argue that recombining the dualisms separated in the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement, and repositioning research in a new associative (rather than alien) position in relation to EDA, proffers a useful alternative that can secure important insights into EDA practice. This alternative can be operationalized through the notion of 'Thirdspace'.

Thirdspace, as postulated by Soja (1996, 1999), is a deliberately flexible and tentative concept that seeks to open up alternative ways to comprehend 'the meanings and significance of space' (1996: 1). It is a response to:

any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices. . . . The original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open up new alternatives. (1996: 5)

Thus Thirdspace can be thought of as a reaction to the closed binary logics of Firstspace-Secondspace, as well as the epistemological dualisms that underpin them. Following Pile, Thirdspace mobilizes place, politics and hybrid identities (1994: 255) to facilitate new combinations of once dualized elements that augment and supplement knowledge production. By flexibly combining ideas, events, appearances and meanings, Thirdspace offers an epistemology that can respond to changing contexts and be 'creatively open to redefinition and expansion in new directions' (Soja, 1996: 2). A Thirdspace approach to the study of EDA thus offers the potential to facilitate new insights into the subject. Through new combinations of reason and emotion, mind and body, male and female, this approach can address the lacunae experienced through the binary logic of the Firstspace-Secondspace approach. A Thirdspace approach also offers the scope to occupy new positions in relation to the research subject; rather than being a distanced, remote and potentially colonizing academic, one can occupy positions that are flexible and tentative, somewhere between the roles of academic and activist (see Routledge, 1996). By inhabiting the spaces between and beyond the closed binaries of these positions it is possible to, as Bhabha contends, 'elaborate [alternative] strategies of selfhood, [and] initiate new signs of identity' (1994: 1). Through doing so it is possible to connect with EDA and experience fragments of practice that facilitate key insights into the phenomenon.

Researching EDA from the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement: the Secondspace approach

My initial approach to studying EDA in the UK was locked into the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement. This approach was adopted almost through default, being led by the inherited literatures relevant to EDA – notably democracy, political action, environmental ethics, civil disobedience and environmental politics. These literatures concentrated firmly on the way the material world is cognitively and conceptually understood (rather than measured and mapped, in the Firstspace tradition) and thus my research came to be characterized by the tenets of Secondspace. The theories put forward regarding activism depended largely on reasoned and rational motivations influencing protest (for example, resource mobilization and relative deprivation theories; see Johnston, 1989; and Rudig, 1990, for overviews), and although I was sensitive to the emotional, spiritual and irrational influences that motivated much activism, their absence from the literatures led me to doubt the efficacy and absolute relevance of these issues for an academic understanding of EDA. Thus my approach became one analogous to that of the Secondspace: I focused on the dominant half of the Kantian dualisms, assuming that activists had rational motives underlying their environmental concerns and logical, thought-out reasons that translated these into action. Following from this assumption, I began my empirical work choosing to interrogate further these rational motivations. To do so I adopted the questionnaire approach, seeing few problems in securing reasoned responses through this methodological means. I collated key activist addresses and, alongside a covering letter, posted questionnaires to them. There follows a short example of some of the questions asked:

Environmental concern and action

Why do you care about environmental issues?

- Economic self-interest (i.e. profit maximization or property protection)
- Efficient resource use
- Conventional-religious stewardship
- For human survival/for future generations
- Emotional/spiritual attachment
- Intrinsic value (caring for the environment for its own sake)
- Any other (please explain)

Please detail the nature of your concern:

Has the nature of your involvement in environmental action changed over time; if so, why?

Why did you turn your concern about the environment into action?

What has influenced your environmental views the most?

- Education
- Books

Philosophical ideas
People
Experiences
Media images
Any other (please explain)

Please detail the nature of your influences:

On receipt of responses it was clear that the Secondspace approach to studying EDA was hamstrung by a number of factors:

I think caring about nature is the basic requirement of living happily on this planet. I care about nature because . . . *because*. Don't you think its weird to separate all those reasons into different categories, as if spiritual attachment and intrinsic value didn't go hand and hand? (Activist 1, Questionnaire Response)

From the outset, it was evident that the modernist epistemology underlying the Secondspace approach did not coincide with the philosophical outlook of activists. As the quotation above exemplifies, many responses seemed to indicate that more inchoate, pre-literate feelings underlay practice, rather than reasoned cognitive thought processes. It was clear therefore that there was a contrast between the closed logic and dualistic separations inherent within the Secondspace approach, and the more holistic, connected, and (con)fused approach favoured by many activists. This contrast was so striking that some activists saw my approach to knowledge production as an object of ridicule:

Jon Anderson, where have you been all of my life (or at least since the last two issues?). Somehow we received your dissertation proposal over email and someone thought it funny enough to put in the unprinted read and comment file (potential articles). I thought your proposal was so hilarious I tried to find your email address by doing a web search (which is a lot of effort for me because I hate all things computer-related.) . . . What *does* direct action have to do with geographical sciences? (Activist 4, Questionnaire Response)

Requiring activists to confine their responses to the demands of Secondspace thus instigated a schism between my and their approach to knowledge, especially as many activists not only failed to share my adopted philosophical outlook, but also identified it as a route cause of the eco-problem.

Sorry not to feel too happy with your categories, I guess that is a typical response from someone who sees the narrow reductionism/restriction of fitting the world into set categories as central to the current socio-environmental crisis. (Activist 2, Questionnaire Response)

It was clear therefore that a philosophical distance had been established between my approach to knowledge and that of EDA-ers. This philosophical distance I had been unable to breach through my choice of methodology; indeed by opting for an anonymous, faceless questionnaire, I had enhanced my alien position in relation to activists. I had become caricatured by those questioned as a(nother) detached academic, one whose research approach signalled an insensitivity, and indeed challenge to, EDA practice. As

a consequence, activists treated my research with suspicion. They positioned me as part of the wider societal system their actions resisted and I became stereotyped as a potential colonizer, at one with the academic system they routinely vilified:

Well, [academia] sums up everything that is wrong with the printed word. How it is easy to change, distort, revamp, omit, edit and corrupt . . . SchNEWS is written by activists – not academics . . . [it is] our words – words of people actually out there doing it – in black and white and cyberspace for the academics, historians and analysts to pick over the bones with and come up with amazing theories about our ‘glorious movement’. (SchNEWSround, 1997: 5)

From the perspective of activists, it was clear that by adopting a Secondspace approach to research I had sided, indeed colluded, with the power-ridden values sustaining this epistemology (after Pile, 1994: 255). I was now positioned as someone who determined knowledge as principally defined by the closed logic of reason and rationality, and thus actively silenced ‘other’ knowledges – their knowledges. By effectively positioning activists as lacking knowledge I had reinforced the perception of academics as a colonizing other whose practices seek to recuperate resistance activities.¹ From the position of detached and disembodied academic, I therefore did not have the tools or opportunity to access the knowledge of EDA-ers. Although this position was successful in garnering information on how activists viewed academic inquiry, and academia’s relation to broader mainstream culture (both important lessons in themselves), the physical and philosophical distance created between me and the everyday nature of EDA, alongside the valorization of my position over that of activists, meant I could not ‘connect with the trenches’ of EDA (see Chouinard, 1994). At this stage I reflected back on my motives for study. I was interested not only in the motivations and means by which activists take and make political space, but also the constitution of the culture expressed within these spaces. I also reflected on my earlier sensitivity to the irrational and passionate stimuli that can prompt activism and the absence of any scope for exploring these usefully through the Secondspace approach. I realized that through operating from the location of Secondspace I had valorized certain ways of understanding, certain ‘modern’ knowledges (Anderson, 1995: 80), and through doing so tacitly silenced other ‘post-modern’ knowledges. It was, it seemed, these post-modern knowledges that intrigued me. As a result, I considered that a much more rigorous interrogation of my research approach was necessary in order to understand EDA appropriately.

Dissolving dualisms: moving towards a Thirdspace approach to studying EDA

In order to allow scope to be sensitive to the ‘post-modern’ knowledges of EDA I considered it important to dissolve the dualisms that had characterized my inquiry to date. I decided to approach study from a position that could

integrate all feelings, experiences and emotions related to EDA into the study, rather than just the 'modern' characteristics of reason and rationality. Due to the non-cognitive elements that apparently combine with rational cognition to motivate EDA, it now seemed appropriate to venture into what Game describes as the 'outskirts of our rationality' where 'passion's darker, wilder forms still prowls' (1997: 4). I also wished to attempt to approach EDA from an alternative position to that of distanced academic. Through reflection I acknowledged that I was not a neutral mediator of transparent, universal 'truths' – 'a solitary knower' – but a situated being, determining the focus of research in response to particular motivations, impulses and objectives. Echoing the sentiments of McDowell, I concluded that:

knowledge is positional . . . and that there is a politics as well as a poetics in the production of texts . . . [that] the unchallenged authority of the disembodied scholar, untouched by relations of power or social attributes (let alone feelings of jealousy, envy, doubt, love, possession) has been burst asunder once and for all. (McDowell, 1994: 241)

As a result I now saw the opportunity to step into my repertoire of selves that were sometimes sympathetic to and active in resistance activities, and then step outside them again to reflect, react and respond. This mildly schizophrenic approach thus acknowledged that at any point in time humans wear a number of 'hats' which together constitute identity; we both enjoy and endure the multiple, dynamic and often paradoxical nature of self. I did not wish to reject my 'academic hat' as I recognized that this location offered specialist skills for understanding (following Halfacree, 1999), as well as critical distance from the practice of EDA (following Bakhtin, in Marcus, 1998). However, I also did not wish to forfeit the emancipatory potential promised through becoming aware of my multiple positioning. This new approach thus sought to find new ways of recognising that research is a product of social relations both within academia, and between it and the world at large (following Cook and Crang, 1995: 7; also Hastrup, 1992). Through integrating my multiple selves into my research I envisaged this would improve relations between academia and the wider world (or at least the world of my specific research subject) and in turn improve my understanding of both.

Engaging with ThirdSpace

Imagining research in this way led me to explore further the work of Bhabha (1994), Pile (1997) and most notably Soja (1996, 1999) and in these literatures I found the formalization of this new research approach. These writers had sought to move the geographical, and by extension perhaps the social science, imagination beyond 'modern' perspectives through the use of the metaphor 'Thirdspace'. Bhabha identified the need to move away from a world conceived of in binary terms, and focus more on the spaces 'in-between' these

binaries. By exploring these 'third spaces' it was possible to 'elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves (1994: 39). Soja too sought to move beyond binaries by 'interjecting an-Other' set of choices. In his 1996 volume he demonstrated that by a process of 'critical thirding' we could subject the binary to 'a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open up new alternatives' (1996: 5). Routledge (1996) developed this work by re-addressing the specific binary of his personal and professional self. He located himself in the third space between the roles of 'academic' and 'activist' with a view to address the relations between the personal, the textual and the political. From this location, Routledge suggested it was possible to oscillate between binary positionings and gain an understanding that enabled a critical reflection of both; a location where 'neither site, role, or representation holds sway, where one continually subverts the meaning of the other' (Routledge, 1996: 400). According to Routledge, the third space positioning allowed new perspectives to be brought into research, opening up insights that the resolute situatedness in one location could not offer. In this way differing representations of reality could be invoked that, although not necessarily coherent, reflected the perspectives held by the social actors involved. Imagining research, positionality and self from the perspective of third space thus appeared to offer an alternative way to understanding EDA. From this perspective it seemed possible to integrate both my personal and professional self into inquiry, and the critical oscillation between these two apparent opposites had the potential to invoke useful insights not only into the research subject but also the process of the research itself.

The specific methodology was chosen to operationalize the research developed almost naturally from the orientation and objectives of third space, but came to be formalized through Collins' work on 'participant comprehension' (in Bell and Roberts, 1984: 54). Now liberated from the fetters of distanced inquiry, I was free to, in Collins' words, acquire 'native competence' about EDA, to gain my own experience and share the 'experience of others with whom [I could] share a small segment of [my] life' (Bell and Roberts, 1984: 54). Instead of viewing participation as an 'unfortunate necessity', it could now become 'central, irreplaceable and, indeed, the essence of the method' (Bell and Roberts, 1984: 60). Through overtly making myself and my multiple positioning clear to activists, I could attempt to internalize the way of life adopted by the researched, and through a process of 'participant introspection' the knowledges and practices of EDA could be accessed and analysed. The use of other methods (including the questionnaires already completed, other interviews and extensive documentary searches) could contextualize, corroborate and contest experiences gained through participant comprehension.

As my research approach evolved, an on-going campaign against a local quarry extension was approaching a crisis point. Pioneer Aggregates, an

Australian multinational, was set to extend a quarry into Ashton Court Estate, a park bequeathed to the people of Bristol, UK. Located on the outskirts of the city, the Estate provided a valuable amenity for local residents as a site for horse-riding, cycling, golf and rambling, as well as being the location for annual music, balloon and kite festivals. The proposed quarry extension threatened 30 acres of Ashton Court, specifically enclosing a wild flower meadow, regionally significant in amenity and ecological value.² Pioneer Aggregates had been granted the option to extend their limestone mining in the mid-1980s, and since this time local groups had run a conventional campaign against the quarry extension.³ However, it was clear that this campaign would ultimately prove unsuccessful as permission for mining had already been approved by North Somerset County Council. Many of those involved in the anti-quarry campaign wished to continue the fight to save the meadow and chose to prepare direct action protests against both the local council and the mining corporation. An EDA camp was set up within the Estate to act as a focus for the campaign⁴ and, due to my interest in EDA, as well as my own affection for Ashton Court (having lived nearby for 18 months), I felt motivated to gain first-hand experience of this nascent direct action protest.⁵

Researching resistance: negotiating Thirdspace

As I was well aware of the potential for friction between academics and activists, I was rather apprehensive when initially negotiating my own third-space. The inevitable excitement of stepping into what Okely and Callaway (1992) describe as the liminal space of the cultural encounter, especially one taken and made explicitly to challenge and resist that of the mainstream, was tempered by the knowledge that activists may not welcome an academic 'colonizer' into their midst. My apprehension was (slightly) overcome due to the 'virtual gatekeepers' constructed by the EDA campaign. The 'Save Ashton Court' and Bristol Friends of the Earth (Bristol FoE) (<http://www.joolz.demon.co.uk>) web-sites both encouraged participation in the action campaign, and I saw this as my opportunity to negotiate involvement. Notes made at the time captured my first experience of these academic/activist relations:

The first time up at site I got the impression that people had had a busy night and were relaxing with some pot . . . it didn't feel to be the right time to brazenly announce my 'two hats' as I referred to it, so I just helped out building the firepit. . . .

The second time on site I was able to speak to one of the main activists who had helped to set it up. From a number of visitors I had met that day I ascertained that she had friends who were students, and that she had finished a degree herself quite recently. It seemed to be both a good person and a good opportunity to reveal my 'two hats'.

It went remarkably well: 'Jill'⁶ suggested herself that maybe I could integrate

this campaign into my research. We talked about some common issues that she had worked on in her time volunteering with FoE, and that I had studied for my MSc, and this common ground, allied to my participation in events (in what was a horribly cold and wet time of year) seemed to forge a good relationship (Field Diary 1).

From these first experiences my attempts to negotiate a thirdspace for research appeared to be successful. I had given activists the opportunity for face-to-face physiognomic contact (see Rousseau, 1997) and this opportunity seemed to be welcomed as they treated me as a 'normal' human being, rather than as an alien outsider. Negotiations continued in the same vein; after several visits many activists encouraged me to live on site full time, and inquired as to how my (academic) work was progressing. A later diary entry detailed some of the reasons why I felt this transition from 'alien academic' to 'academic/activist' to be relatively painless:

Good points of my integration: I enjoy similar interests/locality/language/clothes/ages/student history etc. from most other activists here, i.e. I'm not that different from them at all. This has made it easier for me to 'survive' in this 'place of risk' (i.e. this third space) and it has made it easier for the 'other' activists to accept me . . .

perhaps more importantly I get accepted 'cos I do things, I sit in the rain all day with them getting cold, I risk myself up a tree putting up the treehouse, I muck in, I'm there, I'm human. I'm their mate . . . offer them showers, food etc. at my house in town (Field Diary 1).

My experience illustrated to me that the assumed distance between academics and activists did not hold when face-to-face relations had been established. There can be little doubt that I benefited from being in age and outlook 'one of them' (Schoenberger, 1992); but perhaps more significantly at this point it was not whether the individuals were from an ivory tower or from Mars, the relations thrived or died on whether those concerned showed respect and were willing to get involved. My attempts to negotiate a thirdspace were thus successful in challenging activists' framing of me as a 'colonizing academic'. Indeed, this possession of 'two hats' had the effect of making me more like other activists, rather than setting me apart. It became clear that each individual had multiple motives for being involved in EDA, and only some of these motives could be construed as being directly related to the specific environment under threat. Many were influenced by their politics, their chosen lifestyle, the bonhomie of site-life, or by other personal problems they were encountering. Thus my academic interest in EDA came to be perceived as just happening to be one of my motivations contributing to involvement and, as with (the majority of) other people's multiple influences, did not adversely affect my 'right' to be there. As the following activist comment (from the Social Movements mailing list) implies:

. . . let's not forget that activists' motivations for being on site are never completely 'pure' . . . Let's be realistic. We've all got our baggage, even if it's just

background psychology of hating father figures, wanting to be needed or whatever . . . (From: respondant@email.address: 27 May, 1998 16:30:07).

Following the success of my initial negotiation of thirdspace, I began to internalize my new situation, both in terms of my role as academic and activist. This meeting in the (third)space of the cultural encounter had come to feel like home.⁷ Creating this home in the field benefited research as it demonstrated my on-going commitment to Craggy Island. Activists perhaps appreciated my 'actions speak[ing] louder than words' (paraphrasing SchNEWSround, 1997) and this commitment opened up the possibility of 'total participation' (Ganz, in Burgess, 1994: 163) in protest activities.

Home from home: working through Thirdspace

As I had gained the trust of activists, this facilitated access to important practices crucial to EDA. This point is perhaps best illustrated when a secret tunnel under the meadow was initiated:

Joe and Helen are chatting and hint something about the proximity of the meadow to the new camp [named 'Bulgaria'⁸], 'have you measured it yet?' Helen asks. I don't know what she is talking about, I'm not IN on this yet . . . (Field Diary 2),

Steve calls me over when I'm passing 'Bulgaria' and he tells me about the tunnel that is going to be built under the meadow [i.e. what Joe and Helen were talking about yesterday]. The tunnel has been codenamed 'dino' so we can talk about it on site without casual visitors or security knowing about it – it's a secret between the seven of us who are going to build it . . . (Field Diary 2).

Adopting the thirdspace approach thus resulted in me gaining access to important situations that a less committed observer may not have been privy to. This was significant as it not only gave me insight into strategic activities involved in direct action, but also the motivations underlying them. It appeared to me that people said their most astute political commentaries as throwaway comments in conversations etc., and so small but insightful pieces of knowledge were ascertained that more structured interviews, or indeed questionnaires, would have failed to capture.⁹

Through establishing a 'home' in Ashton Court I thus experienced the benefits of strategically drawing upon existing binaries to create new alternatives. No longer was my rational, cognitive, 'professional' self enclosed within the academic space and my passionate, intuitive, 'personal' self exiled, but I could now creatively draw on both in the thirdspace of inquiry. As a consequence I now felt a sense of identification with a multi-locale world (after Wulff, 2000: 158), and enjoyed a feeling of residence and making sense in and of multiple 'homeplaces' (see hooks, 1990). This feeling of residence in both academic and activist spaces led to the collapse of the apparently exclusive locations of 'home' (academia) and 'field' (research space) (see Amit, 2000). Confined within a binary logic when working through Secondspace, the distance

between home and field was now significantly reduced – in thirdspace I now enjoyed a ‘home’ in the ‘field’, as well as a ‘field’ at ‘home’. This fusion allowed me to draw upon my own first-hand experiences of activism, as well as reflecting upon them using the insights gained from the academic space; this led to what I came to think of as a ‘resonant understanding’ of EDA. I envisioned this ‘resonant understanding’ through the use of Roszak’s description of Ivan Illich’s near death experience and his subsequent reflection on the phrase ‘All men are mortal’. As Roszak puts it,

Ivan has at last learned what these four words really *mean*. . . . It is in the feel of the words as they pass through his mind and in the power they have acquired to change his life. The words are the same, but now when Ivan ponders them, there is a resonance that was not here before. The meaning is in the resonance. And the resonance swells within him until it rocks the foundations of his life (1989: 380).

I have also found Thoreau’s perspective of this issue useful, one he retells in *Civil Disobedience*;

I speak understandingly on this subject, for I have made myself acquainted with it both theoretically and practically (1983: 83).

The value of a resonant understanding of EDA was confirmed to me during one evening at Craggy Island. A student came to site and introduced herself as a researcher on the influence of ‘magic’ in EDA. At this point, approximately half the activists on site remembered that they had pressing jobs to do, such as wood collection or washing up. Those that remained answered her questions willingly, but I was aware (from my experience of eco-magic from three months on site, and literacy on the subject before that), that the key ‘magicians’ on site were now absent, and the answers given by those that remained were clear ‘mickey takes’. Once the questions were answered the researcher left, and life resumed as ‘normal’. The researcher thus got her ‘data’, but I doubt that, due to her apparent lack of experience of how sites operate, exhibited in the poor research techniques used for the situation, she could decipher it adequately or attribute to it its true weight (i.e. none at all).

Although securing key insights into EDA, working through thirdspace is not without its problems. The meeting of sites and selves in thirdspace often produces significant conflict within and between these multifarious elements. Tension was commonplace, for example, whenever new activists came through Ashton Court. New arrivals brought with them the potential to disturb the balance between my entangled spaces of habitation and self, as well as the relations created between other activists and myself. This point I was sensitive to at the time:

When Dean said in a conversation that he was a student etc. etc., I felt uneasy that me and my ‘two hats’ were going to become the centre of conversation, and to be honest I wanted to avoid that if possible. Lots of weekend visitors were on site at the time and I didn’t want to go through all the rigmarole of

defending my position[s] etc. etc., in a place where I had felt at home for ages . . . (Field Diary 3).

It was clear therefore that occupying thirdspace involved the potential need to *continually* (re)negotiate positioning, even when stability within and enjoyment of a certain location was desired. Direct conflict in thirdspace was also experienced in relation to those employed to control and monitor EDA. As non-violent direct action has come to be classified by state authority as a criminal act, those enforcing the law treat activists as 'fair game' in regard to the tactics used to enforce legislation. As the bailiff in charge of evictions at the Newbury bypass stated, 'Protesters have forfeited their rights to protection by the law as they are authors of their own misfortune' (from Vidal, 1996). This approach to law enforcement has introduced the prospect of physical injury and arrest when approaching EDA through thirdspace. Fortunately I did not experience incidences of violence as extreme as those at other EDA sites in the UK (for example during 'Yellow Wednesday' at Twyford Down (see Anderson, 1995), the evictions at the M11, Bangor, or Newbury (see Evans, 1998: 44; Merrick, 1998; and Warwick, 1998, respectively), or those at the recent anti-capital demonstrations in London, Seattle and Gothenburg (see Clark and Rose, 1999; Hopkins et al., 2001; Vidal, 1999). However, it was not uncommon to encounter threats and intimidation:

The last few days since Sunday have got really larey – the security [has] been told to up the aggression, people have been getting punched and kicked, verbally abused for just walking across the meadow, bizarre since police are so totally on their side, they're there in half an hour if security call them, they have so many security for so little fence, and we are so vulnerable all the time, ribbons as our defences and that's it – so they are upping the ante since the fence is going up – the last few nights they have been coming in with loud hailers all through the night, so weird 'cos there's this guy with a loud hailer swearing and effing and blinding at us coming out of the pitch black, devilish voices, whistles, very weird – at once humorous 'cos its clear we're getting to them, but at the same time quite scary if its pushed too far, if they come into camp etc. The third time they came into the camp last night I became really awake, sensed that something was going to happen, they come up to my bender, its quite exposed, away from the others and the firepit, and they start rattling the tarps, but you don't know what to say 'cos Jill and Nobby rose to it earlier and then they know that it's getting to you and it'll come back worse at you, so I don't say anything, they say 'is anyone in there' and I reply 'yeah I am', so they say, 'right we'll give you a wake up call then' and you hear them take a few steps back, and you're lying on the ground in the foetus position 'cos you've just been sleeping and it's dark and what light there is useless 'cos you haven't got your glasses on, and, so after their few steps you hear them run at you and they run straight through, up and onto the bender collapsing it, and you, under the weight of the guards. So I'm right underneath this and can feel it all. They get up, laugh and say right same time tomorrow then. You think fuck!

The bender's fucked, they're laughing and you're glad it was no worse. But you think you're so vulnerable, no protection whatsoever, they can come in and do

whatever they want with little comeback – threaten, destroy, physically abuse, it's scary. Could've been seriously injured I supposed, pretty galling. It's okay to say if they get violent then we're winning, but then the reality is that people are going to be seriously hurt and that shocks you – yob mentality, they can make it as rough as they want to. There are no rules. You become aware of your own physical fragility – small consolation that you're morally right if you're physically fucked over (Field Diary 3).

I feel *scared* about the heavy-handed police tactics at the Reclaim the Streets party this morning. The guy a yard away from me was felled by half-a-dozen coppers and his bike was smashed – it was completely arbitrary: it could have been any of us. (As I'm walking back later, and see ANOTHER police helicopter diving low overhead) . . . I feel a bit violated that I can/do use this personal emotion for a PhD, that this PhD is my life and vice versa. It is all too pervasive . . . (Field Diary 4).

During such experiences I realized that the potential for conflict was not only manifest between me and other parties involved in EDA, but also within/between my self/ves. I found my 'professional' self wishing that the law enforcement agencies knew of my 'two hats' and this knowledge would somehow leave me immune from the hazards involved. Of course such a scenario was wishful thinking, and my homeplace was truly as hooks' describes, a 'place of risk' (1990). Conflict within my self/ves was also made explicit in relation to the possibility of arrest for my involvement in EDA. This risk clearly brought with it more long-term side-effects than the emotional anxiety and physical threat of a security guard attack, and when I weighed up the pros and cons of the situation I often found myself in temporary disagreement. The emotional investment and identification with place engendered through creating a home in the field made it very difficult not to try to prevent the imminent destruction of the meadow in any way possible, even if that involved arrest. However, the consequences of such an action would have had large repercussions, both personally and professionally, and thus I opted not to choose to be arrested during actions. Nevertheless, working in thirdspace often left me with no choice in many circumstances. One such example occurred during an eviction threat at Ashton Court. Through enjoying Internet access through my student status, and having emails of EDA groups to hand through my research, my third space location put me in pole position to publicize the prospect of eviction to other activists. It was thus agreed that I would go to the department and send the messages prepared on site. However, the very day after these postings the local constabulary arrived on site asking who this 'J.Anderson@. . .' was who was networking information about the mooted eviction! Since EDA bulletin boards and other virtual gateways are open to anyone, very little conspiracy was necessary to access my email. However this possibility could not be discounted, and it is disconcerting to think that the police can monitor your personal email messages (even though, of course, this is a bone fide operation, see Bamber, 1997; and Road Alert, 1997). This disconcert was compounded by the threat of arrest for

incitement under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994). This Act empowers the police to arrest and detain individuals who are thought to incite criminal action. Such arrest would not have happened directly, so in the immediate time after the email posting I was worried whether the message had been worded 'incorrectly' and, if subsequent illegal activity occurred, I could somehow be linked to it. I naturally checked the email I had sent and was relieved to find it being non-committal about illegal activity.

Reflections on Thirdspace

As the previous sections have illustrated, working through thirdspace offers significant potentialities to knowledge production that are not offered by the Firstspace-Secondspace bicameral confinement. However, thirdspace is not without its problems. Oscillation between multiple sites requires the ability to merge into a new set of circumstances, rules and customs of behaviour or, as Marcus (1995: 113) puts it, a 'constantly mobile, recalibrating practice of positioning in terms of shifting affinities for, affiliations with, as well as alienations from, those with whom [you] interact at different sites'. Ability to identify with actors in different spaces is thus crucial, as is the ability to swiftly acclimatize to new norms of behaviour. Entangling the once exclusive sites of 'professional' and 'personal' self, of 'home' and 'field', thus fuses and has the potential to confuse proceedings. Utmost importance is placed on the ability of the researcher to maintain a balance between the multiple roles adopted. If a balance is not maintained, there is the potential to bind the researcher too close to the action, thus limiting the degree to which they are able to effectively comment or criticize it – a problem perhaps of 'going native'. This failure to 'disconnect' with action has a concomitant opposite – the researcher failing to connect adequately to the subject. Clearly, failing in this regard would preclude the insights available through thirdspace.

A key consideration in creating the balance between the multiple sites involved in thirdspace is the issue of time. It is clear that a significant amount of time is required to adequately internalize a different lifestyle – the length of time required though is, of course, dependent on a number of factors: for example, the researcher's 'literacy' of activism, and the representativeness of stay.¹⁰ (I was involved in the EDA campaign at Ashton Court for a year, which allowed me to experience the instigation, operation and closure of the campaign. As a result, I felt a relatively comprehensive experience of EDA was attained.) Another consideration in maintaining and creating balance in thirdspace is the issue of reflexivity. If successful in combining and fusing multiple sites and selves, the researcher benefits from being able to create a position of 'committed scepticism' (Cochrane, 1998: 2130; or 'critical engagement' as Routledge [1996] calls it) of all sites involved. This, as Stanley (1991) notes, has the advantage of transferring a level of accountability to the knowledge produced as the entangled roles adopted are illuminated

through the research record. Entangled positionality thus demystifies the researcher from the 'detached' and 'disembodied academic' position (following Plows, 1998), and the research becomes not the 'expert' account, but rather a resonant, often contradictory contribution to a rolling record of the phenomenon under study. Through creating and maintaining the important balance between entangled sites and selves, I was able to reflect back and understand why such antipathy towards my initial position to study was experienced from activists. Without some form of immediate experience of environmental resistance I now agreed that one could not assume that the distanced view is the first and final comment on EDA. Silences in that knowledge indeed exist. Experiencing resistance through thirdspace recalled to me Northrup's comments about knowing slavery:

Men may . . . discourse flippantly from armchairs of the pleasures of slave life; but let them toil with him in the field . . . behold him scourged, hunted, trampled on, and they will come back with another story in their mouths (quoted in Scott, 1985).

Conclusions

This article has shown that choosing Second- or Thirdspace approaches to research has significance, not only for environmental resistance, but in any case where the 'experiential complexity, fullness and perhaps unknowable mystery of actually *lived space*' wishes to be understood (Soja, 1999: 268). Reflecting on these approaches it is clear that any research space is not a neutral, passive location, but rather is imbued with certain epistemological and philosophical mores that influence not only the research approach, but also how other key factors interact with the research process.

The article has illustrated that, although Secondspace approaches offer a relatively straightforward, efficient and safe option to study, they can entail key drawbacks through silencing crucial information, and alienating the research subject from inquiry. In the words of Pile, they can 'collude . . . with the reproduction of power-ridden values' and, in this case, add environmental activists to the list of 'women, children, blacks, the colonized, other classes, other sexualities' who have been 'excluded and silenced' by these knowledge-producing practices (1994: 255, 261). In contrast, Thirdspace entangles multiple sites and roles. As a consequence, axes of power between researcher and researched move beyond simplistic binaries of academic as colonizer and research subject as colonized. In this situation, researchers can no longer, as Mohan (1999: 51) states, 'assume rather heroically that it is only us who are "using" them'. My experience has illustrated that on many occasions activists hold power in terms of research access, and have the capacity to use, even perhaps abuse, the academic self (through, for example, use of department computers). In an arena where all individuals are seen as actively constituted by multiple identities, a diagnosis of which selves are using which always

involves an entanglement of relations both individually, as well as collectively. Such entanglements extend into the written record, as Routledge (1996) has noted. Here 'neither site holds [absolute] sway' (Routledge, 1996) as academic and activist voices do not silence, but rather continually subvert, support and synergize with, one another. Working through Thirdspace is thus not a straightforward exercise, and poses numerous, but not insurmountable problems. To paraphrase Anzaldúa, working through Thirdspace requires, 'keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, [it] is like trying to swim in a new element. . . [it's] not comfortable, but [it becomes] home' (1987: preface).

NOTES

1. As the radical journal *Aufheben*, drawing on Situationist theory, describes, recuperation seeks to 'appropriate antagonistic expressions and render them harmless through transformations and integration into some form of commodity' (1996: 34). Or, as 'Do or Die' (the radical environmental journal) states, 'Our actions are packaged; wrapped up in a sugar coating to make them palatable for the middle classes to swallow' (1998: 139).
2. This meadow provided the habitat for 'many uncommon species' and was 'a grassland community of regional importance' (from www.gn.apc.org/cycling/ashtoncourt.html, defunct as of 2001); it was home to rare botanical species such as green-winged and bee orchids, broomrape, yellow rattle and adders' tongue fern. Skylarks reputedly nested on it, and it was the foraging location for badgers and six varieties of bats (including the rare 'Leisler'). As such the meadow enjoyed the official designation of a 'Site of Nature Conservation Interest', and was nominally protected under the Avon Structure Plan.
3. This campaign included lobbying both Pioneer and local councils, site visits, legal manoeuvres to limit the extension, judicial review of the Council's decision, submissions to English Nature (the quango responsible for conserving England's biodiversity, High Court hearings, and MP support for a public inquiry).
4. The first camp established at Ashton Court was given the moniker 'Craggy Island', named after the home of 'Father Ted', a UK television comedy focusing on the antics of vicars in Ireland. The site in Bristol was named thus as Dermot Morgan, the lead actor in *Father Ted*, died the week the camp was set up. It turned out to be an apposite name as the cry of 'More tea?' (a catchphrase of Ted's housekeeper, Mrs Doyle – who in turn gave her name to the site lock-on) was never far from everyone's lips (for more information on *Father Ted*, see <http://www.phill.co.uk/comedy/ted/index.html>).
5. More information on the actions at Ashton Court can be found in SchNEWS archive, see Issues 158, 172/3, 179, 183, 188, 202, 204, 220 at <http://www.schnews.org.uk>.
6. The names used for activists are all pseudonyms.
7. As a diary entry recorded at the time: '... Got logs on way home – I called Craggy Island home!' (Field Diary 1).
8. Named after a character from the popular UK children's TV programme 'The Wombles' – furry bear-like creatures who cleaned up the litter on Wimbledon Common, London. Get the lowdown on the Wombles at <http://www.tidybag.co.uk/>.

9. The following diary excerpts go some way to exemplify this point: 'I asked Gareth if Top Park Field was a SSSI [Site of Special Scientific Interest] or not and he replied that 'that's not the point, it's a field, or a hole in the ground, and it should be a field' (i.e. it's not the official protection that's the point, more the intrinsic value and aesthetics). He went on to say that the badgers were very important' (Field Diary 2); and, 'Jock said today that his dad says he should vote, his reply was that he'd have to wait 50 years for the type of government that he wants' (Field Diary 2).
10. A Native American visitor to Ashton Court suggested that it would take at least three months (but preferably six) to begin to understand her own Shoshone tribe on Turtle Island.

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