

# The bomb in my backyard, the serpent in my house: environmental justice, risk and the colonisation of attachment

Christopher Groves

*School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK*

*Email: grovesc1@cf.ac.uk*

## Abstract

Theorists have argued that environmental justice requires more than just the fair distribution of environmental benefits and harms. It also requires participation in environmental decisions of those affected by them, and equal recognition of their cultural identities, dimensions most clearly articulated in relation to indigenous struggles, where past devaluation of place-based cultural identities is seen as a source of injustice. I argue for an alternative concept of environmental justice that draws on accounts of how attachment (and place attachment specifically) is constitutive for both self-efficacy and collective agency in the face of an intrinsically uncertain future. Drawing on the work of Peter Marris and using a case study of UK gas pipeline infrastructure, I show how disruption to attachments also disrupts lived strategies for dealing with an uncertain future. The source of injustice involved in such disruption should be viewed as the ‘colonisation of attachment’.

Keywords: attachment; environmental justice; insecurity; lived future; place attachment; uncertainty

## Introduction

Environmental justice is about more than just how the benefits and harms of development are shared out. Scholars working with groups campaigning for environmental justice have noted that they often demand the right to participate in decisions that affect them, and to have historical denigrations of their cultural traditions recognised. David Schlosberg, drawing on Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young, has argued that empirical study of indigenous movements suggests that we should broaden our conceptions of justice. Claims on recognition, he argues, arise from how planning and siting decisions erode the collective agency of populations linked by their cultural traditions to the land (Schlosberg, 2004). Environmental justice therefore points to the moral and political significance of the constitutive relationships between individual and collective capabilities, and also between human capabilities and the biophysical world (Schlosberg, 2013). If demands for such relationships to be recognised challenge the dominance of distributive

conceptions of justice, environmental justice also foregrounds the importance of places to understanding the spatial and cultural dimensions of environmental justice (Walker, 2012).

Demands for environmental justice are not only made by indigenous peoples, however. Inhabitants of communities affected by land-use decisions more widely also frame their activism in terms of complex links between everyday experiences of socio-environmental degradation and place attachment (Burningham and Thrush, 2003). The processes of colonisation from which indigenous peoples have suffered have their counterpart in siting and management decisions, the consequences of which emerge over time and across space, producing a range of inequalities that transform places inhabited by non-indigenous communities into ‘faulty environments’ (Irwin and Simmons, 1999). Such communities become subject to emergent vulnerabilities thanks to the stigmatisation of their localities, which in turn tends to attract more stigmatising infrastructure (Walker, 2009: 626).

Wherever claims of environmental injustice arise from, they are associated with the effects of land-use decisions on identity and the capacity of communities to shape their own futures at least as much as with specific distributional health or economic effects (Gregory and Satterfield, 2002). Here, I argue that explorations of environmental justice as encompassing procedural and recognition aspects need to go further to make sense of what is at stake. I propose that connections between place, identity and agency need to be interpreted through aspects of attachment theory that identify attachment as a process and relationship that undergirds individual and collective capacities for making sense of and influencing intrinsically uncertain individual and collective futures. Place attachment is therefore positioned as a constitutive element of agency, a capability in Sen and Nussbaum’s sense, as discussed by Schlosberg and Carruthers (2010). Injustice, then, must be defined in terms of what Young (1990) identifies as oppression and domination – the denial of active capabilities of self-definition and self-determination. This denial, I propose, occurs through the ‘colonisation of attachment’, whether those affected are indigenous or non-indigenous. By ‘colonisation’, I mean a failure or refusal on the part of developers and decision-makers to recognise constitutive values, but also the ways in which the governance of environmental conflicts often constrains

those who raise claims of injustice into representing and defending their own interests in a manner that ends up harming them.

After setting out in the next section the theoretical basis for my position, I explore the colonisation of attachment using empirical research into community-based campaigns against energy infrastructure in South Wales and Gloucestershire in the UK. I show how the disruption of place attachment through processes such as stigmatisation can undermine individual and collective strategies for dealing with uncertainty, an effect encapsulated within two metaphors used by interviewees to talk about a major gas pipeline: the ‘bomb in my backyard’ and the ‘serpent in my house’.

### **Analytical framework**

Beyond distributive justice, at least two other dimensions of justice have been articulated by advocates of environmental justice. The first is that those affected by land-use decisions should have effective voice in these decisions, which opens up questions regarding exactly who (across a range of temporal and spatial scales) is affected by them (Bristow et al, 2012). The second is that there should be public recognition of the effects of the degradation of environments and the stigmatisation of places on identity, on agency and thus upon the well-being (in a more eudaimonistic sense) of the people who inhabit them (Schlosberg, 2004). Further, a lack of participation and recognition often allows distributive injustices to continue. More than a distributive concept of justice is therefore needed to understand what is at stake in environmental justice conflicts.

In this section, I set out a framework to help understand how place attachment is linked to embedded agency and how this link underlies environmental injustices in relation to recognition. This takes us into considerations of attachment as a capability, not a passive bond. In this sense, attachment weaves together place, identity and agency in helping to domesticate, for individuals and the collectivities of which they are part, an intrinsically uncertain future. This capability forms the connective tissue of ‘ecological citizenship’

(Latta, 2007), a citizenship that challenges classical liberal understandings of citizenship by recognising the embeddedness of political and moral agents in the material, biophysical world (Rose, 2007). Claims of environmental injustice point towards failures to recognise the existence of this form of citizenship.

### ***The value of attachment: identity and agency***

Attachment is a capability through which intersubjectivity emerges. Though part of how an infant's material needs are provided for, its primary value lies in how it helps give shape to the future for the individual subject. It creates anticipations and expectations, with good attachment creating a 'secure space' that underlies a developing child's creativity and capacity to take risks (Bretherton, 1992). Playful, tender and consistent interaction with caregivers helps culture the self-efficacy and subjective agency of the child, which initially takes the form of an infant's capacity to regulate its emotions of distress (Stern, 1985).

Attachment's primary value therefore lies in taming an intrinsically uncertain future, a concern which is perhaps as close to universally human as we can get (Jackson, 1989: 15-17), by creating a secure intersubjective space. Within this space, progressively more complex and integrated forms of agency, along with accompanying models of the self, can be actualised. Sociologist Peter Marris (1996) points out that this achievement always takes place from within a lifeworld of attachments that is also social and historical, and extends beyond simply interpersonal relationships. Attachments through the lifecourse may include relations to places, non-humans, objects, social institutions and even ideals, all individual objects that may be of widely-shared importance. These create webs of interdependence that extend across the social field and also into the biophysical world. In this sense, a 'secure space' is more than just the 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1991) of the individual. Nor does it imply that subjectivity is conceived of as inward-looking and continually seeking safety, as some have insisted (e.g. Miller, 2008). Instead, it is a relational, temporalized space, which guides agency by providing armatures of habits and expectations, together with their emotional accompaniments, without determining it. It constitutes a 'lived future' (Adam and Groves, 2007), in the

sense of a future that is latent in the materiality of the environment, as well as being projected through the dispositions, attitudes, beliefs and practices that are embedded within that environment.

A significant consequence of this complex relationship between attachment and subjectivity is that what happens to attachments can enhance or harm agency and identity. Social-psychological literature on place attachment demonstrates how the embeddedness of identity and agency in attachment relationships manifests itself in the specific case of places, and shows how changes in place attachment can affect, over time, individuals' agency and self-concepts, as well as the meanings of place and forms of agency shared among collectives. Individual place attachment rests on biography and memory, which shape identity (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). It is also shaped by experience-in-place (Manzo, 2005), in which shared meanings are incorporated in an individual's sense of place (Altman and Low, 1992). Place attachment further shapes agency in the form of self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1992), i.e. the assurance that one is situated within a 'manageable environment' that one can influence. The contribution of place attachment to self-efficacy is evident in emotional self-regulation but also in cognitive processes (Scannell and Gifford, 2010).

These contributions of place attachment are conditional, however, on the continuing character of places themselves. Places' physical characteristics are important in shaping affective responses, as attachments to lakes, parks, forests and so on demonstrate (Manzo, 2003). Trust in others and trust in place as reliable supports for one's way of life are often linked (Edelstein, 2004a). Changes to the character of place, through development or disasters (whether natural or human-caused) can therefore affect self-concepts and self-efficacy through changes to the quality of attachment, which may become negative or ambivalent (Manzo, 2003). Processes of stigmatisation and their effects on the shared and individual meanings of places have been widely studied as sources of shifts in place qualities (Sims et al., 2009; Broto et al., 2010), as have the direct effects of noise, pollution and other phenomena on the practices and expectations that characterise place attachment relationships (Edelstein, 2004b: 234).

Although individuals may respond to disruptions to place attachment in very different ways, such disruptions are not therefore experienced solely as part of an individual lifeworld. They are events which are responded to through collective sense-making (Irwin and Simmons, 1999). Such responses have been interpreted as attempt to rescue valued identities and effective forms of agency embedded in particular places from being lost (Hillier, 1999). If place attachment is a capability that enables identity and agency, then the loss of this capability may lead to a loss of identity and agency.

### ***Attachment and harm***

If significant attachments are eroded or lost, the result is a particular form of harm. Whereas Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach (e.g. Nussbaum, 2003) refers ultimately to capabilities as the possessions of individuals, Marris (1996) stresses that attachment is a capability that exists only relationally. Place attachment, for example, is a capability possessed by individual agents only by virtue of their embeddedness in specific places and among particular others who also inhabit them. Marris discusses how shared attachments give rise to individual and collective strategies for dealing with uncertainty (somewhat analogous to attachment psychology's 'styles' of attachment). These come in distinct forms, such as solidarity with others, an orientation towards individualised autonomy, or withdrawal and disconnection. The erosion of shared attachments on which such strategies depend can therefore undermine the ways people share of living with an intrinsically uncertain future, and encourage them to develop other strategies. Also, Marris points out, changing strategies (particularly where solidarity is abandoned in favour of withdrawal or autonomy) can become self-undermining in some circumstances, producing more insecurity rather than reducing it. In terms of Marris's classification of strategies, a certain degree of 'solidarity' is implied in all attachment, as attachment *is* interdependence. In relation to place, this implicit solidarity is particularly evident. Maintaining the character of a place requires care from actors. Places, if they change their character, can then cease to sustain those who inhabit them, as the 'secure space' that makes embedded agency possible decays. With the loss of this secure space, the lived futures of its inhabitants may be undermined.

That environmental injustice relates to the loss of lived futures, and the disruptions of identity and agency that go with it, is implicit in documented cases of damage to place attachment. It is particularly evident in cases where change to the character of places stems from human intervention, and thus undermines broader expectations of trust that are rooted in attachments to shared ideals that agents of unwanted change are seen as having betrayed (Erikson, 1995; Edelstein, 2004a) .

Writing of the increase in alcoholism, homelessness, and abusiveness in family relationships that followed toxic contamination of the tribal lands of the Ojibwa First Nation in Ontario, Canada, Kai Erikson (1995: 35) describes a condition ‘that the usual sociological concepts – anomie, estrangement, alienation – are not rich enough to capture or reflect’. He interprets individual troubles as manifestations of a collective crisis caused by lost lived futures. Erikson elsewhere describes this communal condition of eroded futures as one where “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body’ (Erikson, 1976: 154). Lack of access to tribal lands and the practices connected to them eroded tribal members’ shared sense of a lived future and also the value of their own identities as members of the community.

The kind of harm imposed on individuals and communities in such cases is not just a failure to recognise marginalised identities, i.e. the failure to recognise and value difference. It comes from the loss of the implicit interdependence of individual, community and place – a perhaps largely unspoken condition of ‘solidarity’ between humans and the socio-natural places they inhabit. Witnesses to such losses are left scrambling to reform communal and individual strategies for dealing with uncertainty. Vanesa Castan Broto (2013: 8) quotes an environmental justice activist in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina:

‘[...] before the advent of industry, this area had clean rivers, open-air swimming pools, and parks where people could meet. However, with the advent and development of industry, everything was taken away from us.’

Injustice is made tangible in such cases via descriptions given by people of the erosion of their sense of themselves as doers and actors. What is taken away from these residents is, essentially, the capacity to ‘negotiat[e] a future for themselves and their children’ (Castan Broto, 2013: 9).

Inhabitants of disrupted environments have to develop new strategies for dealing with uncertainty by re-negotiating relationships with place, with each other, and with external agents of change. This may allow them to reconstitute identity and agency within places (by resisting or attempting to shape processes of change). Success in this would, however, require that implicit interdependence and solidarity between individual, community and place be made explicit and articulated as a common commitment. In Marris’ terms, such processes might lead on to the articulation of a new solidaristic strategy, as envisioned by Broto’s interviewees, some of whom articulated a hopeful future, but one conditional on polluting industries negotiating over the roles they could and should play in communities. Compensation, activists argued, would not be enough. Instead, a company would have to become ‘internalised’ within the community – joining it in creating a new form of active solidarity to transform the lived futures of community members.

Often, however, only defensive responses are possible. Factions within communities are frequently driven into pursuing what (after Marris) could be called fragmented strategies of autonomy in pursuit of whatever forms of official recognition are offered to them (such as financial compensation). As Rob Nixon (2011: 65) notes in relation to Bhopal and Chernobyl, those affected ‘are thrust into a labyrinth of self-fashioning as they seek to fit their bodily stories to the story lines that dangle hope of recognition, (possibly, though elusively), even recompense’. Where even the pursuit of these forms of recognition is denied to communities, then they may find themselves caught in what Marris describes as strategies of withdrawal of one kind or another, as exemplified in the condition of the Ojibwa. Processes of disruptive and/or stigmatizing change can therefore be compounded by the responses that such disruption can encourage in the inhabitants of affected places.



The meaning of claims about environmental injustice that go beyond distribution may thus be read as claims about exclusion from a particular kind of subjectivity. This is an ecological, and implicitly solidaristic form that recognises the constitutive bonds between the body politic and the body of the world (Latta, 2007). This embeddedness of human communities and the subjects of which they are composed is more than simply material dependence. It is also the embeddedness of meanings, affects and emotions that serve as conditions of forms of identity and agency, whether individual and shared in nature, and which provide ways of making sense of and domesticating an uncertain future. Where the specific value of such meanings, affects and emotions is publically recognised, it becomes possible to speak of an acknowledged condition of ecological citizenship, a recognition of the interdependence between places and embodied subjects. Furthermore, this embedded citizenship must be seen as embedded in places in all their complexity, rather than simply relating to specific categories of place (such as ‘unspoilt’ locations), as is demonstrated by, for example, classic studies of urban slum clearance, from Gans (1982) to Fullilove (2004).

### **Case study: the South Wales Gas Pipeline**

We now turn to an empirical study of how disrupted place attachment can undermine strategies for living with uncertainty. The South Wales Gas Pipeline (SWGP) project, including two LNG terminals to which it was connected at Milford Haven (MH) in west Wales, was constructed during 2003-2008. The pipeline construction work by National Grid and its subcontractors comprised two phases (see Figure 1), in addition to the construction of the terminals by other developers. The 120 km (75 miles) Phase 1 ran from Milford Haven to Aberdulais near Swansea. The 196 km (122 miles) Phase 2 ran from Felindre to Tirley in Gloucestershire, across the Wales-England border. The pipeline required above-ground installations (AGIs) at two points – at Cilfrew in the Swansea valley, near the junction of Phases 1 and 2, and at Tirley, where Phase 2 would be connected to the UK national gas grid.

My research examined how those involved with community campaigns against the infrastructure experienced the project planning and construction processes, how these experiences related to their

motivations for campaigning, and how their sense of the future and what it held had changed in the period of their involvement and since. It comprised a series of 16 semi-structured narrative interviews (between 90 and 180 minutes in length) during 2008 with members of campaign groups from ‘flash-point’ sites along the pipeline (see Table 1), including Safe Havens (Milford Haven and Waterston, the sites of the two terminals), CRA (Cilfrew Residents’ Association, concerned with an AGI), CRAG (Cwmtawe Residents’ Action Group, at Trebanos, concerned with Phase 1 of the pipeline), a looser group centring on Brecon and Hay-on-Wye (concerned with Phase 2) and CAPRI (Campaign Against the Pressure Reduction Installation, at Tirley, concerned with another AGI). Interview material was qualitatively analysed and coded using NVivo 8.

**Table 1. Overview of interviews (with pseudonyms)**

Identifier	Gender	NS-SEC classification (5-class)	Age	Organisation	Interviewee location	Date
Anna	F	Intermediate	55-64	CRA	Cilfrew	22/07/08
Ben	M	Intermediate	55-64	Safe Havens	Milford Haven	23/07/08
Carl	M	Intermediate	45-54	CAPRI	Tirley	24/07/08
David	M	Higher managerial, administrative and professional	55-64	Brecon activists	Brecon	28/07/08
Elin	F	Small employers and self-employed	35-44	Brecon activists	Brecon (Hay-on-Wye)	28/07/08
Frank	M	Small employers and self-employed	25-34	Brecon activists	Brecon	29/07/08
Gareth	M	Higher managerial, administrative and professional	55-64	Brecon activists	Brecon	29/07/08
Harriet	F	Semi-routine	45-54	CRAG	Trebanos	30/07/08
Ian	M	Full-time student	15-24	Independent	Trebanos	30/07/08
Julie	F	Intermediate	65+	CAPRI	Tirley	31/07/08
Karen	F	Semi-routine	25-34	Safe Havens	Milford Haven (Waterston)	31/07/08
Leonard	M	Higher professional	55-64	CAPRI	Tirley	01/08/08
Maggie	F	Intermediate	35-44	CRA	Cilfrew	15/10/08

Neil	M	Higher managerial, administrative and professional	45-54	CAPRI	Tirley	16/10/08
Olivia	F	Unemployed	25-34	CRAG	Trebanos	24/10/08
Penny	F	Intermediate	35-44	Brecon activists	Brecon	19/11/08

Due to its multi-phase nature, no environmental impact assessment (EIA) was legally required for the whole project (a decision that meant there was little scope to publicly challenge the need for the project as a whole, and which was questioned by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and others). Different phases of construction were announced, publicised for consultation and then implemented at different times, meaning that campaigns against different elements of the project failed initially to link up to address issues that would often prove to be shared concerns. In publicity materials, National Grid (2005) described the project as a necessary response to an inevitable increase in gas demand through to 2015, and thus as a matter of national energy security. Localised benefits, in the shape of jobs for communities (and, as it later transpired, financial payments for community projects), were also promised. Distrust of the developers emerged in response to what interviewees reported to be late communication and one-way consultations, as well as in response to what was felt to be overlooked potential localised threats to safety relating both to the construction and the operation of the infrastructure. Distrust and perceived threats formed the initial foci for campaigns, later becoming their main public focus. However, interviews revealed that people's interpretations of the harms they associated with the infrastructure were multifaceted and complex.

It proved difficult for campaigners to participate in decision-making processes. Their narratives in interviews touched on different aspects of the loss of anticipated futures provided by secure place and community attachments, including the reliable expectations and anchoring ideals associated with these attachments. Translating such concerns into forms that would be legitimate at planning enquiries was a challenge. As time went on, campaigners began to make links between local concerns and ones (such as the imposition of risks on Welsh communities for the advantage of English ones, and anthropogenic global

warming) that related to regional, national and global scales. However, they found that, as it was relatively late in the day, these objections also achieved little traction, particularly as no scope for challenging the project at a strategic level had been allowed.

Campaigners' experiences reflect more general characteristics of the politics of planning in the UK.

Following privatisation, the UK energy industry underwent decentralisation followed by recentralisation around particular 'centres of calculation', including utility companies, regulators like the Office for Gas and Electricity Markets (OfGEM), and transmission network operators (TNOs) like National Grid, who are responsible for assessing risk both strategically (e.g. in relation to energy demand forecasts) and in relation to site-specific infrastructure (Groves et al, 2013).

Recentralisation has done little to change established dynamics within the planning system, such as the ways in which the impacts of projects tend to be considered far 'downstream' and disconnected from strategic priorities (Cowell, 2010), or the emergence of conflicts between strategic priorities and locally-defined conceptions of goods or bads (Bristow et al., 2012). Such dynamics appear to be reflected in assumptions among TNO representatives about the public's inability to understand and therefore to take a meaningful role in consultations on the strategic significance of network projects like pipelines (Cotton and Devine-Wright, 2010).

In contrast to the relatively well-defined and quantifiable strategic and site-specific risks communicated by National Grid and other developers in their communications about developments, non-quantifiable, complex uncertainties were at the heart of many concerns expressed by campaigners in describing the hazards and resulting insecurity they felt the project had imposed upon them. These uncertainties derived from sources such as unforeseeable third-party action or complex interactions between risks associated with different pieces of infrastructure, which were felt to have been ignored in official risk assessments provided by developers (Groves et al, 2013: 350-1). Difficulties campaigners experienced with obtaining information about infrastructure plans from National Grid compounded these uncertainties.

Other uncertainties not directly related to risk were also significant, however. At Brecon, Elin looked ahead to the completion of the pipeline – present, yet absent because of its invisibility – and described it as promising a stigmatised future that would erode her anticipated, lived futures, representing the pipeline as ‘a huge serpent’ that ‘goes through every single room of my house’. Here, the meaning of the pipeline itself placed in question the character of place attachments. The infrastructure came to stand as a synecdoche for uncertainties that remain beyond influence and which therefore disrupt the past, present and most of all, the future – the narratives of individuals and communities. We now turn to explore interviewees’ motivations for and experiences of campaigning in relation to these kinds of uncertainties, which relate specifically to the changing meaning of attachments.

### *Attachment and motivations for campaigns*

Place attachment is not necessarily positive. Ambivalence characterised relationships to place in Milford Haven, Waterston, Trebanos and Cilfrew, where experiences of stigma were described by several interviewees in relation to waves of unwanted development and continuing markers of social deprivation, like unemployment and incidence of long-term limiting illness. Such consciousness of stigma is common across post-industrial communities in the south and south-west of Wales that have historically attracted significant polluting infrastructure (cf. Cotton, 2014). In such locations, the biophysical world may, as much as the social, be experienced as untrustworthy (Edelstein, 2004). Ill-health, for example, is experienced as intimately connected to place. Ben, for example, discussed a condition known locally as ‘the Milford cough’ caused, sufferers suspect, by particulates from nearby petrochemical plants, a background phenomenon of a kind that, as Bush et al. (2001) note, creates stigma even in the absence of specific pollution incidents. In Trebanos, the instability of the mountain on the slopes of which the community lives formed another such backdrop to interviewees’ descriptions of place. The background presence of mineworkings - ‘thousands of small mines, [...] a lot of them have never been documented really’ (Harriet) - is keenly felt: ‘where we are is too dangerous’ (Olivia). Less ambivalent and often more positive attachments to place are found in

Brecon and Tirley, where a great deal of anger was caused by the possibility that the sudden imposition of industrial infrastructure upon an environment felt to be characterised by continuity across generations would stigmatise communities (Leonard).

Even if place attachments proved ambivalent, however, what united interviewees generally was their affirmation of the significance of place as a communal environment that sustained strong threads of personal attachments. Karen, from Waterston near Milford Haven, noted that she and her partner moved there because they felt it would be ‘better for the children’ than the city they had come from. It was ‘a country village, it was quiet, no traffic, it didn’t even have [street]lights’. Despite the uncomfortable presence, less than a mile away, of a petrochemical plant (built in the 1950s), the source of smells and noise, rural landscapes could be reached easily via back lanes and ‘quiet roads, you know there’s a playpark that way, they [the children] can go mix, mingle with the children from the village’.

At Trebanos, CRAG’s campaign was motivated initially by uncertainties associated with explosives being used as part of pipeline construction works. But several houses and a school in the area had previously been severely affected by subsidence (Harriet). The broader local context was, therefore, one of gradually growing insecurity, an experience of shaken attachment that nevertheless awakened solidarity. Initial fears about blasting evoked cultural memories of previous disasters associated with the environmental effects of industrialisation. ‘[A]nother Aberfan’ (Olivia, a reference to the South Wales village where a spoil tip collapse in 1966 killed 144 people) was viewed as a real possibility.

In Cilfrew, an AGI was opposed because of uncertainties surrounding the nature and seriousness of potential explosion hazards. But concerns also focused on how development might disrupt what the village’s inhabitants felt was the rural character that distinguishes it from the towns and peri-urban settlements

nearby. Despite ‘faultiness’ and stigma, manifested in a higher than average level of economic inactivity and long-term limiting illness among the population, good local facilities (schools, post office, shops) and rurality contributed to an environment felt by one interviewee to be a source of community identity and resilience.

We've got nothing, we're a very, very quiet area, we've never had anything, the only thing we've ever had is the fact that we're rural, that you can walk outside your door and you're in country, you're in total country (Anna).

Such narratives centring on present and previous insults did not characterise interviews from Brecon and Tirley. Instead, in these localities, pipeline infrastructure was represented as a sudden and unacceptable encroachment of industrial society into areas which had remained relatively free of it, and indeed in the case of Brecon, expressly preserved from it by the Brecon Beacons’ protected status: ‘what were they doing in a National Park?’ (Frank). Nonetheless, in all cases, whether stigma was present or not, campaigns were begun in the name of communal solidarity and reliance understood as anchored in specific places.

### *Experiences of disruption and loss*

We now turn to explore how ongoing disruption to environments and threats of stigma can erode agency and identity in specific ways described by campaigners. This effect, with both individual and collective dimensions, was related by interviewees both to ongoing construction work and to imagined possible futures, ones given weight by specific uncertainties associated with infrastructure. Disruption was experienced and potential stigma made concrete through their effect on attachment to environments, whether attachment was positive or more ambivalent.

In Waterston, Karen reported that the balance between an increasingly troubling ‘background’ of infrastructure and the ‘foreground’ of everyday life had been tilted. Construction traffic (‘diggers coming in, the width of the road’) along the main road, which previously had been ‘used to drive cows down [...] from

field to field', threatened not just safety but also 'family life', creating a situation where 'I have to lock my children in the house'. She and the community experienced, she felt, the loss of any ability to maintain their environment. When the village campaign to halt construction failed, this opened fault-lines in the strategy of solidarity it had initially created. Many individuals gave up the campaign, pursuing instead examples of Marris' strategies of autonomy such as taking jobs at the new plant or moving away.

At the same time, the presence of uncertain risks prevented other residents from pursuing such strategies. The failure of the community's campaign represented a failure of collective agency. Karen saw in her and her partner's failure to leave Waterston a further erosion of agency, symbolised by falling house prices in the village. 'I've got no rights, absolutely no rights here at all. I feel very stuck here, I do.' The failure of both a strategy of collective solidarity and one of individual autonomy marked a point where the imposition of disruption and insecurity on people in the area seemed to have become a source of irremediable self-stigmatization (Corrigan, 1998): 'I think it's a poor area, I don't think they think they're worth that much. You can see that everywhere you go here.'

In Trebanos, pipeline construction was also experienced as degrading collective control over community environments. Valued community land was lost: the pipeline route crossed 'a lot of council land, common land, forestry' before crossing a playing field that 'had been given to Neath Port Talbot [council] to be held in trust by the Playing Fields Association' (Harriet). Failure to get these dimensions of impact recognised within the planning process led to splits within CRAG over strategy. As at Waterston, fractured solidarity led many campaigners to pursue individual autonomy instead – a shift of strategy that tended, again, to collapse, as at Waterston. Once again, the deep disruption of the link between place and agency was symbolized by falling property prices. The pipeline established a link, it was felt, between Trebanos and other stigmatized 'faulty environments' in the region:



A lot of people have kept quiet because they're more concerned about their property losing value – there's another area of landslip a few miles over there, called Panteg, [...] and there a lot of properties have been condemned, and the values of the properties are much lower [...] (Harriet).

At Cilfrew, the AGI blocked free public access to March Hywel mountain, on whose lower eastern slopes the village is built. This was experienced as symbolic of the deepening of the existing stigma suffered by the community. It was felt that the AGI would disrupt the deeper emotional contours of the landscape and its contribution both to community identity and to the forms of life felt to be central to living there.

But when you go up to March Hywel Mountain, which is practically a sacred mountain around here, up here you looking smack at it. So that area, we used to go up there, it's God's own country, you look out and you can see nothing, only mountains all way across to Brecon. That's been totally destroyed (Anna).

Once again, a failed campaign produced splits in the community, and a re-orientation for many away from solidarity towards autonomy. Some residents left the area – with difficulty. Again, barriers to selling one's home erected by stigma were felt to be symbolic of exhausted agency: '[t]hey had to move, they had to sell their house, they were lucky enough to sell it' (Maggie).

In Tirley, CAPRI's collective campaign against hazards associated with a planned AGI was, for a time, successful. Despite its eventual failure, the community was left with a sense of pride in its ability to organise a strategy of solidarity rooted in a shared evaluation of place (Leonard), but also sorrow at the changing character of the area and at its suddenly undomesticated future: '[y]ou put it on the back burner, but it's not going to go away is it?' (Julie). Around Brecon, interviewees linked the threat of stigma strongly to visual evidence of questionable engineering practices (David), to how National Grid was felt not to have dealt appropriately with questions regarding risk (Gareth) and with dangerous incidents during construction (Frank).

For Frank, the threat of stigma was most significant in relation to the land inherited through his wife's family and which his family now managed: 'you plough a lot of energy of your life into a place that you hope the children might continue after you'. This feeling of continuity was also connected to a historical and cultural context of cooperation between local landowners in looking after the land. The pipeline was constructed quickly to meet contractual obligations, Frank observed, and so landowners were offered financial incentives to allow construction, a factor that had created disagreements locally.

Having accepted payment himself, Frank expressed regret at this move from a strategy of solidarity to one of autonomy. He described the shift as leaving behind 'a bomb in our backyard', and had 'certainly changed the way we feel about living here.' As in other locations, moving away was felt to represent a residual form of private agency, in the absence of effective collective agency. At the same time, and ironically, Frank experienced a remaining solidaristic tie between family and land, which linked place attachment with attachment to ideals and moral duty (a 'heritage millstone'), as an obstruction to this strategy of autonomy.

Also in Brecon, Elin saw the presence of the pipeline most emphatically as an invasion of an extended, emotionally-significant environment in which her business life and private life were both heavily invested:

[...] it really has broken my heart, you know? And I would say it's a bit like somebody who had a beautiful house, and it became occupied by a huge serpent, and unfortunately it just became occupied by this large serpent and unfortunately it goes through every single room of my house. There isn't one piece left here. I had all these rooms in the countryside, all my most precious places, and that pipeline had gone through every single one of them.

She described the experience of campaigning in terms that recall Nussbaum's (2001) description of mourning as revolving around 'enormous significance, permanently removed', and around the work of remodelling the world and the self to reconstitute a secure space in which identity and effective agency could be reclaimed. 'You know what it's like when you're going through something, when things make

sense, you may be able to move on and let it go’.

## **Discussion**

Interviewees recounted various experiences of loss, which related primarily to disruption of place attachment occasioned by actual or threatened stigma – stigma arising from either uncertain hazards, or from the contribution of development to changes in place character. But these experiences were also of the loss of valued strategies for dealing with uncertainty. Attempts to respond to imposed change transformed implicit strategies of solidarity into explicit ones, among at least some community members, leading them to explicitly identify and defend attachments. Where campaigns were unsuccessful, however, these strategies were eroded. The links between community and place that served to buttress collective agency were undermined, even where a sense of pride at achievements was reported. The experience of loss witnessed particularly in the comments from Elin and Karen above expresses, therefore, the failure of a strategy for living with uncertainty that is conditioned by bonds between collectivities and individuals, on the one hand, and between collectivities or individuals and places on the other.

These experiences of loss were often narrated explicitly as injustices, arising from acts perpetrated upon them.

That’s the biggest harm that’s been done to this village is that they now feel oppressed. Before there was a glimmer of hope that if something was wrong you could get it righted, whereas they’ve lost that, yeah that expectations been taken away (Maggie).

The injustice articulated here is undoubtedly one of recognition, but is not a failure to recognise a defined, fixed identity. Instead, there has been a failure to recognise a group as ‘doers and actors’ trying to articulate explicitly the implicit, embedded solidarity that they sense to be embedded within a given environment, and which – as Broto’s (2015) interviewees make clear – may be linked to a more hopeful future, given opportunities for more extensive participation in both local and strategic decision-making. As time went on, participants often came to see campaigns as interventions that extended beyond local hazards. They were

seen as offering a future (however unlikely) that would be fundamentally different from the present and past, a future that would depend upon a range of actors (including communities, energy companies, local councils and the Welsh Government) entering into new, more democratic relationships which actualised some form of explicit solidarity around the value of places.

Underlying claims about injustice, about failures to recognise the embedded nature of ‘doing and acting’, is what I referred to earlier as the ‘colonisation of attachment’ through which the capability for domesticating the future sustained by place attachment is threatened. Attachment is a process through which an uncertain future is tamed and made liveable in the present through the creation of affective bonds of trust and attendant expectations about how the world should be. Attachments are thus a way of giving shape to the future that encourage particular ways of acting in the present – strategies for living with uncertainty. As we have seen, disruption to place and the threat of (new or increased) stigma threaten to impose a new projected, lived future upon those which have been moulded, over time, through attachments. Such impositions are themselves driven by specific strategies for dealing with uncertainty that are employed by actors (such as National Grid) who are concerned with managing the future, having been invested with the authority to assist in governing risks (defined primarily at the national scale, as with energy insecurity). What Giddens (1991) has described as ‘the colonisation of the future’, the capacity of actors to map uncertainties as risks and thus shape strategies in the present, is here revealed to be a political, unequal enterprise.

Such strategies, in their relation to ‘local’ lived futures, recall what Nixon (2011: 17) has described as the relationship between ‘official’, gridded, abstract maps of a standardised landscape that governance often imposes upon the dynamic, ‘vernacular’ landscape of places as they are emotionally and symbolically meaningful to those who inhabit and move through them every day. Applying Nixon’s distinction temporally is important for our attempt here to understand environmental injustice through the lens of attachment and uncertainty. The ‘maps’ of expected costs and benefits that are constructed as part of risk

governance are maps of the future, which are anchored to maps of space. Armed with such 'future maps', actors can employ strategies of autonomy which exploit planning governance, enabling them to

decisively and speedily shape the future territory on which less agile and capable others [will] later have to make decisions and deal with consequences (Groves, 2013: 194).

Risk defines strategic need, and thus initiates 'planning cascades' (Owens, 2004) in which the only issues communities can comment on are localised safety risks, defined and quantified as part of environmental impact assessments. The discourse of safety risk through which 'material concerns' are expressed in the planning system balances hazards against prospective benefits, which are typically expressed in equally quantified terms (numbers of jobs, community payments).

Planning governance, in its reliance on risk, rewards actors (such as developers) who are able to marshal the requisite expertise with considerable room for manoeuvre in framing and justifying their intentions. It simultaneously minimizes the agency of others, and crowds out the futures they, for their part, envision and anticipate. Those able to input assessments of uncertainty to decision-making processes cast in terms of quantitative risk, and thus sanitised of other discourses that define value in non-quantifiable terms, therefore enjoy strategic advantages over those for whom the future is primarily tangible through specific investments in place and other attachments (Bauman, 2005).

Decisions justified through the calculative mapping of a future terrain of risks and benefits, therefore create zones of certainty for some actors. The creation of such zones, however, both produces new uncertainties and tends to transfer them onto the shoulders of others (Vail, 1999), who struggle to translate their suddenly uncertain futures into the language of risk, which is nevertheless the only language they are officially permitted to speak (Jensen, 2006). The SWGP interview material documents such processes, showing how the disruption of place attachments undermines identity and agency. It demonstrates how community members experience planning processes as failing to recognise both attachments that matter to them,<sup>1</sup> and

the forms of agency, the strategies for living with uncertainty, that are sustained by these attachment relationships. It shows how this lack of recognition translates into campaigns that are attempts to articulate ‘what matters’, and finally, it shows how failures to obtain recognition for what matters leads to the erosion of both identity and of agency, and even the adoption by campaigners of strategies which impose further losses (as in the adoption of failing strategies of autonomy). With the concept ‘colonisation of attachment’, I designate the failure of governance to recognise attachment and the agency it sustains, together with the ways in which risk-based governance allows powerful actors to effectively exploit, for strategic advantage, the ways of living with uncertainty on which place-dependent communities rely.

### **Conclusion**

If attachment is a constitutive part of how people inhabit particular environments, then the ripple effects of stigma and/or disruption on place attachment can spread out to dislocate the individual’s and/or a collectivity’s sense of being part of a meaningful ethical, and ultimately metaphysical, order. This is as true of non-indigenous communities as of indigenous ones, as is suggested both by theoretical accounts of the importance of attachment, and by the empirical case study of the colonisation of attachment presented above.

I have argued that these effects both motivate and give specific meaning to claims about environmental injustice. Such injustices arise from a failure to recognise and support agency along with the individual and collective attachments, which sustain it. My case study confirms an insight originating with Marris (1996), that the impact of the colonisation of attachment can affect the relational capabilities of individuals and collectives, constraining them under some conditions into developing strategies for living with insecurity (such as fragile attempts to realise autonomy). Over time, these strategies further impair these capacities, a point mirrored by findings on the effects of stigma from social psychology (Corrigan, 1998).

The injustice thus done is one of oppression and domination – an erosion of capabilities that support the power to influence one’s future (Young, 1990). These capabilities are relational ones that connect

individuals and/or communities to places, and thereby also embed them dynamically in the biophysical world. If justice is the key virtue of the ‘body politic’, then a political perspective sensitive to environmental injustice is one able to recognise when attachment, this body’s connective tissue, is torn. Colonisation of attachment provides a way to think about how the substance of claims of environmental injustice should be understood. They are claims about the erosion of forms of agency embedded in attachments to places and collectives that posit individuals as ecological citizens.

The urge to articulate what cannot easily be articulated and yet still perhaps matters most of all is both empowering and debilitating, when entering public fora in which such values cannot readily be represented. The struggle to translate values into the language of the colonists of attachments may fracture opposition and render it ineffective, particularly for communities that are unable to invoke countervailing environmental justice discourses such as that of cultural recognition, as employed by indigenous movements. The great achievement of indigenous peoples and the environmental justice movements they have formed is to begin to create forums in which new legal instruments may make possible the public recognition of attachments. What I have shown is that discourses of environmental justice need to acknowledge the connections between individual and shared attachments and agency, the ways in which agency is tied to the domestication of uncertainty, and how attachment, while being the basis of agency, is also fragile in the face of the ways of mapping the future privileged by risk-based governance. Understanding environmental justice is not simply about the recognition of identity, but more about the recognition of ecological citizenship, the ways in which the embeddedness of individuals and communities in specific places enables them to be doers and actors in an uncertain world.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> National Grid has since produced a set of design guidelines influenced by the need to recognise place attachment, although these are only relevant to overhead power lines (National Grid, 2011).

## Reference

- Adam, B. and Groves, C., 2007. *Future Matters: Action, Knowledge, Ethics* Leiden: Brill.
- Altman, I., and Low, S. M. (1992). *Place Attachment*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Bauman, Z., 2005. *Liquid life* London: Polity Press.
- Breakwell, G.M., 1992. Social representations and social identity. *First International Conference on Social Representation*. Ravello, Italy. Online at [http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR1993/2\\_1993Brea2.pdf](http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR1993/2_1993Brea2.pdf)
- Bretherton, I., 1992. The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28, 759-775.
- Bristow, G., Cowell, R., and Munday, M. (2012). Windfalls for whom? The evolving notion of 'community' in community benefit provisions from wind farms. *Geoforum*, 43(6), 1108-1120.
- Broto, V.C., Burningham, K., Carter, C. and Elghali, L., 2010. Stigma and Attachment: Performance of Identity in an Environmentally Degraded Place. *Society and Natural Resources*, 23, 952-968.
- Broto, V. C. (2013). Employment, environmental pollution and working class life in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of Political Ecology* 20, 1-13.
- Bush, J., Moffatt, S. and Dunn, C., 2001. 'Even the birds round here cough': stigma, air pollution and health in Teesside. *Health and Place*, 7, 47-56.
- Corrigan, P.W., 1998. The impact of stigma on severe mental illness. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 5, 201-222.
- Cotton, M., and Devine-Wright, P. (2010). Making electricity networks "visible": Industry actor representations of "publics" and public engagement in infrastructure planning. *Public Understanding of Science*, 21(1), 17-35.
- Cotton, M. D. (2014). Environmental Justice Challenges in United Kingdom Infrastructure Planning: Lessons from a Welsh Incinerator Project. *Environmental Justice*, 7(2), 39-44.
- Cowell, R. (2010). Wind power, landscape and strategic, spatial planning--The construction of 'acceptable locations' in Wales. *Land Use Policy*, 27(2), 222-232.
- Edelstein, M.R., 2004a. *Contaminated communities: coping with residential toxic exposure* Boulder, CO: Westview Books.
- Edelstein, M. R. 2004b. Sustainable innovation and the siting dilemma: thoughts on the stigmatization of projects and proponents, good and bad. *Journal of Risk Research*, 7(2), 233-250.
- Erikson, K., 1976. *Everything in its path: destruction of community in the Buffalo Creek flood* New York: Simon and Schuster
- Erikson, K., 1995. *A new species of trouble: the human experience of modern disasters* New York: W. W. Norton.
- Fullilove, M.T., 2004. *Root shock: how tearing up city neighborhoods hurts America, and what we can do about it* . New York: Random House.



- Gans, H.J., 1982. *The urban villagers: group and class in the life of Italian-Americans* New York: Free Press.
- Giddens, A., 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gregory, R. S and Satterfield, T. A. 2002. Beyond Perception: The Experience of Risk and Stigma in Community Contexts. *Risk Analysis*, 22(2), 347-358.
- Groves, C., 2013. Horizons of Care: From Future Imaginaries to Responsible Research and Innovation. In K. Konrad, C. Coenen, A. Dijkstra, C. Milburn and H. Van Lente (eds.) *Shaping Emerging Technologies: Governance, Innovation, Discourse*. Berlin: IOS Press/AKA, 185-202.
- Groves, C., Munday, M., and Yakovleva, N. 2013. Fighting the Pipe: neo-liberal governance and barriers to effective community participation in energy infrastructure planning. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 31(2), 340-356.
- Hillier, J. 1999. "What values? Whose values?" *Ethics, Place and Environment* 2(2): 179-199.
- Irwin, A. and Simmons, P., 1999. Faulty environments and risk reasoning: the local understanding of industrial hazards. *Environment and Planning A*, 31, 1311-1326.
- Jackson, M. 1989. *Paths toward a clearing: Radical empiricism and ethnographic inquiry*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Jensen, K.K., 2006. Conflict over Risks in Food Production: A Challenge for Democracy. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 19, 269-283.
- Latta, P.A., 2007. Locating democratic politics in ecological citizenship. *Environmental Politics*, 16, 377-393.
- Manzo, L. C. 2003. Beyond house and haven: toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23(1), 47-61.
- Manzo, L. C. 2005. For better or worse: Exploring multiple dimensions of place meaning. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25(1), 67-86.
- Marris, P., 1996. *The politics of uncertainty: attachment in private and public life* London; New York: Routledge.
- Miller, G. 2008. Why Scottish 'personal relations theory' matters politically. *Scottish Affairs*, 62, 47-62.
- National Grid. (2005). *Gas Transportation Ten Year Statement 2005*. Warwick: National Grid.
- National Grid. (2011). *A Sense of Place*. Warwick: National Grid Transco.
- Nixon, R., 2011. *Slow Violence* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nussbaum, M.C., 2001. *Upheavals of thought: the intelligence of emotions* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Nussbaum, M.C., 2003. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Owens, S. 2004. Siting, sustainable development and social priorities. *Journal of Risk Research*, 7(2), 101-114.
- Rose, N. 2007. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Scannell, L., and Gifford, R. 2010. Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(1), 1–10.
- Schlosberg, D., 2004. Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements And Political Theories. *Environmental Politics*, 13, 517-540.
- Schlosberg, D., 2007. *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schlosberg, D., 2013. Theorising environmental justice: the expanding sphere of a discourse. *Environmental Politics*, 22(1), 37-55.
- Schlosberg, D. and Carruthers, D., 2010. Indigenous Struggles, Environmental Justice, and Community Capabilities. *Global Environmental Politics*, 10, 12-35.
- Simmons, P. and Walker, G., 2004. Living with technological risk: industrial encroachment on sense of place. In Å. Boholm and R.E. Löfstedt (eds.) *Facility siting: risk, power and identity in land use planning*. London; Sterling VA: Earthscan, 90-106.
- Sims, R., Medd, W., Mort, M. and Twigger-Ross, C., 2009. When a “Home” Becomes a “House”: Care and Caring in the Flood Recovery Process. *Space and Culture*, 12, 303-316.
- Stern, D.N., 1985. *The interpersonal world of the infant : a view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology* New York: Basic Books.
- Twigger-Ross, C.L. and Uzzell, D.L., 1996. Place and identity processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, 205-220.
- Vail, J., 1999. Insecure times: conceptualizing insecurity and security. In J. Vail, J. Wheelock and M. Hill (eds.) *Insecure times: living with insecurity in contemporary society*. London: Routledge, 1-22.
- Walker, G. 2009. Beyond Distribution and Proximity: Exploring the Multiple Spatialities of Environmental Justice. *Antipode* 41(4): 614-636.
- Walker, G. 2012. *Environmental Justice: Concepts, Evidence and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Young, I.M., 1990. *Justice and the politics of difference* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

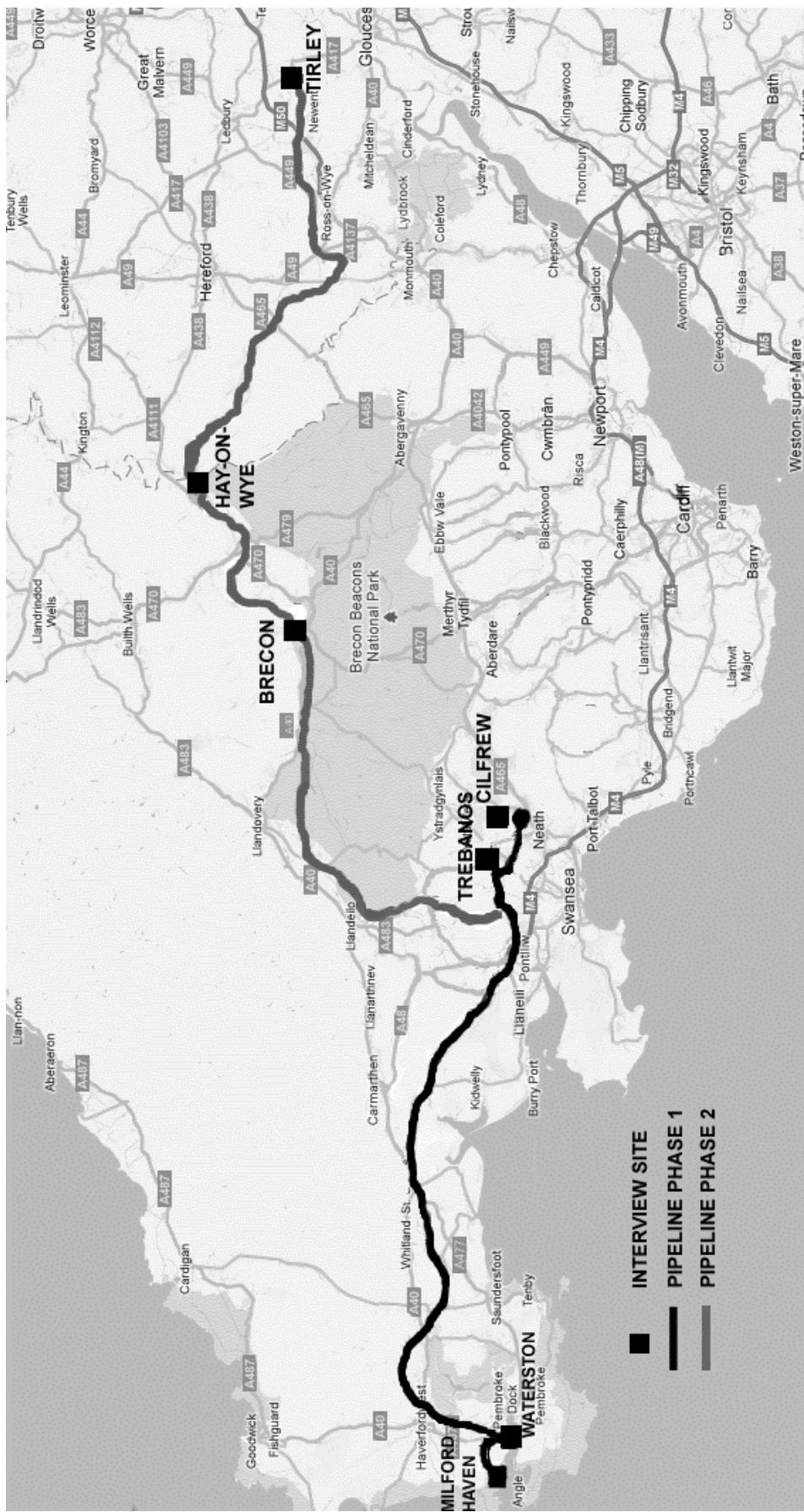


Figure 1: LNG Terminals, Phase 1 and Phase 2 of South Wales Gas Pipeline (source: Google Earth).