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Putting Aesthetics in its Place in the Vermont Wind Power Debate

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PUTTING AESTHETICS IN ITS PLACE IN THE VERMONT WIND POWER DEBATE

A Thesis Presented

by

Brian Miles

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science
Specializing in Natural Resources

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Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, The University of Vermont, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science specializing in Natural Resources.

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, Vermonters have debated the benefits and costs of wind power in the state. Media accounts of the debate have portrayed opposition—particularly by grassroots groups—to utility-scale wind development in Vermont as being primarily aesthetic in nature. In these accounts, activists are represented as being concerned that such development would alter the aesthetic quality of the landscape and be accompanied by ill effects such as reduced tourism and lower property values. The goal of this research is to explain the media’s promotion of the aesthetic by understanding the aesthetic and non-aesthetic rationales that Vermont-based grassroots wind activists have used in the debate, and how they have used them. I situate this understanding in the context of how the Vermont landscape has been historically represented and thought about.

I used narrative analysis of interviews I conducted with activists to identify the rationales they used in their arguments. I developed and applied a discourse analysis methodology to understand how they used these rationales in these interviews as well as in activist websites, and in letters to state officials.

My findings show how institutionalized meanings of Vermont and its landscape have influenced how activists have framed their arguments for and against wind development. Further, my analyses provide a way of understanding the controversial nature of aesthetic objections to utility-scale wind in terms of the tension between institutionalized ways of representing the Vermont landscape and institutionalized ways of making land use decisions.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The debate over utility-scale wind energy in Vermont has intensified in recent years. Since 1998, citizens, developers, environmentalists, legislators, regulators, and grassroots organizations have discussed the benefits and costs of this ‘alternative’ energy source. Many in Vermont support a transition to renewable energy (Renewable Energy Vermont 2006). However, there is contention over the compromises that should be made in carrying out this transition. In the case of utility-scale wind energy, plans to construct new wind electricity generation facilities on ridge tops in the Green Mountains of Vermont have met resistance from local residents, environmentalists, and business people. Many reasons are given to oppose such facilities. However, media accounts of the debate have tended to emphasize the aesthetic reasons that motivate grassroots opposition to utility-scale wind development in Vermont. These accounts highlight concerns that the presence of such facilities would alter the aesthetic quality of the landscape and be accompanied by ill effects such as diminished personal enjoyment, reduced tourism, and lower property values. My purpose in this research is to explain the media’s promotion of the aesthetic by understanding the rationales—esthetic and non-aesthetic—that Vermont-based grassroots wind activists have used in the debate, and how they have used them. I situate this understanding in the context of how the Vermont landscape has been historically represented.

The debate over further development of wind energy in Vermont is happening in the context of debate over the state’s future electricity supply and demand, as well as in the context of national debate over energy policy and global debate over climate change.
In Vermont, the state’s contracts with its two largest electricity suppliers, Vermont Yankee Nuclear and Hydro-Quebec (which combined supply roughly 2/3 of Vermont’s current electricity demand), begin to expire in 2012 (Porter 2006). These long-term contracts locked in electricity rates that are believed to be significantly lower than those that suppliers are likely to agree to in future contracts (VPIRG 2006, pp. 10-11). In response to these looming supply and price uncertainties, Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG)\(^1\) has proposed that Vermont-generated wind energy supply as much as 20% of the state’s electricity by 2015 (VPIRG 2006).

The first commercial utility-scale wind electricity generation facility in Vermont, located near the southern town of Searsburg, began operating in 1997.\(^2\) The 11 turbines of this facility sit atop 198 foot-tall towers on a ridge in private land surrounded by the Green Mountain National Forest. At the close of 2007 there were plans to expand the Searsburg facility and to construct two new commercial utility-scale facilities in Vermont, one in Sheffield, and the other near Castleton. In the past decade, such facilities have been proposed in four other Vermont towns—East Haven, Londonderry, Manchester, and Lowell—but these proposals have either been abandoned by developers or been rejected by the Vermont Public Service Board (Fairwind Vermont 2007). In August of 2007, the Public Service Board approved the facility proposed for Sheffield (Vermont Public Service Board 2007).

\(^1\) A not-for-profit advocacy group whose goal “is to promote and protect the health of Vermont’s environment, people, and locally-based economy” (VPIRG 2007)

\(^2\) See Figure 13. Map of Vermont in Appendix F.
The sites proposed for utility-scale wind electricity generation facilities in Vermont tend to be ridge tops—over 2,000 feet in elevation (Vermont Agency of Natural Resources 2004b)—located in rural areas. These ridges are usually forested and, owing to their elevation, may be visible for many miles by permanent and seasonal rural residents as well as tourists (from “leaf peepers” to through hikers). According to media accounts, some of the “users” of these spaces place a high value on the aesthetic beauty of these “natural” settings (see Page 2005; Leaning 2002). Proposals to develop wind in such areas have met resistance from grassroots groups local to these areas—groups that formed to fight these developments. The organizing efforts of anti-wind groups in turn motivated individuals at the grassroots level across the state to advocate for particular wind development proposals, and gave rise to a single statewide pro-wind grassroots group. While pro-wind activists argue that utility-scale wind in Vermont would help solve global warming, for instance:

if you look at the big picture of what we have to do and how fast we have to do it, then logically wind power, commercial wind power, is a piece of the [climate change] puzzle that has to happen in order to get to the end. (P1)

anti-wind groups worry that exporting such power would hamper other states’ efforts to mitigate climate change:

Vermont, you know, sure we can take that on [producing more renewable energy than the state does already] for other states, but if we do it through wind, we're actually not helping our own situation. We're actually making it worse, because these other states need to conserve. … (A1)

Pro-wind activists believe utility-scale wind would enable economic growth in Vermont:

Stowe, and Lamoille Co. now, in the last couple of years, they've had to postpone … any major new development in the Stowe area because the Stowe electric department … couldn't supply any more major developments. And so, if we were able to build enough wind power to supply … about 15% of Vermont’s
electric demand … then that will enable the state to grow in other ways that are dependent on electricity. (P2)

However, anti-wind activists are wary of the further development—wind and non-wind—of high-elevation lands:

Ever since Act 250 and before for that matter, Vermont has recognized that high land in our state … should have a special status and that there should be regulations on development of land above … 2500 feet, that don't apply to lower land. (A5)

Those against utility-scale wind development are also worried about its affects on Vermont's tourist industry:

In the Northeast Kingdom, tourism is a billion dollar business; I mean that's how we make our money. The lakes—this project is going to set right on Crystal Lake, you know so [opposition to utility-scale wind is] … an economical thing too. (A1)

Pro-wind activists, for their part, wonder what tourism industry Vermont would have in an energy-insecure future:

If oil gets to be, petroleum gets to be very expensive, what's going to happen to the tourism industry? People say it's going to hurt the tourist industry to look at windmills, it'll hurt if you [laughing] go the other way too ... (P4)

Anti-wind activists are also concerned with what effects wind development might have on wildlife habitat:

Well the consequences are very substantial, major road building into the mountain sides, which certainly would have an effect on wildlife, on the passage of wildlife … we are in a corridor, there's wildlife passage from Massachusetts on up to the Canadian border through these mountains … this is a bear corridor. (A4)

Though pro-wind activists show similar concern:

We’re on a case-by-case basis … we want to see the evidence about impact on threatened or endangered species, about bird and bat impacts and if there was a proposal made that was going to have an adverse impact on the rest of the resources we might well say no, we just don't like that idea. (P2)

Both pro- and anti-wind groups hope, as one anti-wind activist put it, that:
there may be ways for us to … [solve energy security and global warming problems] without ruining the landscape at the same time. (A1)

The preceding excerpts from the interviews I conducted with Vermont-based grassroots wind activists show that—contrary to headlines in media accounts that privilege visual aesthetic opposition to utility wind development—both pro- and anti-wind activists support their respective positions with arguments that include both non-aesthetic as well as aesthetic considerations.

1.1. Goal statement

The goal of this research is to understand the rationales—aesthetic, environmental, social, economic, political, etc.—that Vermont-based grassroots wind activists and organizations have used, and how they have used them, to argue for and against commercial utility-scale wind development. I used narrative analysis of interviews I conducted with such activists to identify the aesthetic and non-aesthetic rationales in their arguments and to understand these rationales in terms of the collective identities and representations of the Vermont landscape that these activists (re)produced. The arguments of grassroots activists were realized through diverse texts, those that I analyzed included: interview transcripts, activist group websites, and letters written by activists to state officials. These texts employed various meaning-making tools: spoken and written language, photographs and drawings, web design, etc. I developed and applied a discourse analysis methodology to understand how activists used aesthetic and non-aesthetic rationales in these texts.
The results of my analyses highlight the importance of understanding the characterizations and representations of places that are used in land use debates. In the debate over utility-scale wind development in Vermont, I show how institutionalized meanings of the state and its landscape—institutionalized in representations of the state’s history and in its land use laws—have influenced how activists have framed their arguments. Further, this research provides a way of understanding the controversial nature of aesthetic objections to utility-scale wind in terms of the tension I identified between these ways of representing the Vermont landscape and these ways of making land use decisions.

1.2. Objectives

The following objectives guided my narrative and discourse analyses of grassroots arguments in the Vermont wind power debate. These objectives are organized around theoretical concepts that I describe in a review of the relevant literature (see chapter 2).

1. Describe the narratives told by grassroots groups that organized around the wind power debate in Vermont

   a. Identify the characters in these narratives: protagonists (e.g. the group itself, environmentalists, regulators, developers), antagonists (e.g. regulators, developers, environmentalists, other grassroots groups).

   b. Identify the typifications/characterizations present in these narratives (e.g. independent, self-sufficient, hard-working, eco-friendly, profiteer, bureaucratic, etc.) and the subjects to whom they are applied (protagonists, antagonists, the people of Vermont, the state itself).

   c. Identify the roles that grassroots groups create for themselves in their fight for/against wind development by posing the following questions:
i. Do grassroots organizations that are against wind development portray themselves primarily as protectors, as stewards of a local community and land?

ii. Do grassroots organizations that are for wind development portray themselves primarily as protectors, as stewards of a global environment?

iii. Do grassroots organizations that are against wind development portray themselves as local ‘Davids’ fighting cosmopolitan ‘Goliaths’ represented by ‘Big Wind’ and other supporters of wind development?

d. Identify the frames (e.g. aesthetic, injustice, public accountability, not cost effective, and others) present in these narratives.

i. Identify the modes in which aesthetic-based frames are articulated

ii. Identify how aesthetic-based frames are linked to non-aesthetic frames

e. Identify the benefits of success and consequences of failure in these narratives

2. Interpret the meanings of Vermont found in the narratives of grassroots groups by answering the following questions:

a. Do groups that oppose wind development use natura-ruralist depictions of Vermont to portray utility-scale wind energy as out of place in rural Vermont?

b. Do groups that promote utility-scale wind development challenge/redefine natura-ruralist depictions of Vermont to portray the state as being compatible with commercial wind development?

1.3 Terminology

In this thesis, I use the term “commercial utility-scale wind” to denote the particular kind of wind development that has been proposed during the past decade in Vermont. By “utility-scale,” I am referring to the technology that would be used in such development. As the name implies, such technology is intended to be used by utility companies to generate electricity that is fed into a grid so that customers of the utility can
consume it. This technology is characterized by turbines that generally have more than one-half megawatt (MW) of “nameplate,” or theoretical maximum, generating capacity. Further, these turbines are typically mounted on towers that are at least 200 feet tall. By “commercial,” I am referring to the process of wind development whereby for-profit corporations are the primary developers of a given project.

I avoid using the terms “windmill,” and “wind farm,” to refer to individual and collections of machines that generate electricity from wind on a utility-scale. Instead, I use the terms “turbine,” and “generating facility.” I use these technical terms to avoid what I perceive to be the normative judgments inherent in what I feel are terms developed for their marketing appeal.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I provide an historical context for this research while defining the key concepts and terms that have informed my analyses. This review of the literature begins with a brief history of the Vermont landscape, and continues with a discussion of the spatial and social theoretical frameworks that informed my methodology. I conclude this chapter with a review of concepts relevant to my case study of energy policy in Vermont and wind power and aesthetics.

2.1. Meanings of Vermont: A brief history of the Vermont landscape

In this thesis I argue that the debate over wind energy in Vermont is about more than energy; it is about what Vermont—especially rural Vermont—means; it is about how dominant meanings of Vermont are reproduced and redefined by debate participants who have differing levels of influence over and interest in wind energy development decisions. These meanings are embodied in the state’s material landscape: the rolling hills, the patchwork quilt of farm fields, rivers and lakes, trees and forests, mountains, villages with their white church steeples. However, these meanings are also embodied in the symbols that are used to talk about Vermont: the “Green Mountain State”, a “working rural landscape.”

Within the working rural landscape spatial imaginary of Vermont there is a tension between the ideas of this rural landscape as a “landscape of consumption” and a “landscape of production” (Hinrichs 1996, Harrison 2006). This tension can be seen in
the construction of an idealized rural Vermont that is attractive to tourists (Graffagnino 1991, Hinrichs 1996, Albers 2000, Harrison 2006). The contemporary resolution of this tension can be seen in the idea of the “working rural landscape” where “land uses and rural production practices [are] characterized by technological moderation, calm industriousness, and social harmony” (Hinrichs 1996, p. 262). In this tourism-motivated landscape, Harrison (2006) sees the inseparable blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure in rural places and argues that this “reworking of the rural landscape” provides a “framework through which visitors and residents have constructed landscape and identity in rural communities nationwide” (pp. 11-12). However, this resolution is tenuous, even illusory, for the contention among stakeholders (grassroots organizations, developers, regulators, legislators) over land use decisions (e.g. wind energy development), and the landscapes thus produced, does not cease merely because a recognizable pattern, which we have named ‘working rural landscape,’ has emerged. In her discussion of the development of forestry in twentieth century Vermont, Albers (2000) notes that:

Most loggers would tell you that they do what they do because they love the woods and people need the products trees give us. Many environmentalists believe the forests should remain undisturbed habitat for wildlife and humankind. Both can stake claim to some moral ground. Logging is a way of life that goes back to the first settlements [of Vermont], and loggers cut trees to put food on their tables. On the other side it is easy to point to clear-cuts and depletion of habitat caused by logging; if the woods are a temple, their cutting can be nothing other than desecration. At the heart of this is a viewpoint that divides the world into “natural” landscapes and “working” landscapes and declares that the woods are inherently more natural than other places. (pp. 298-299)

While the modifiers “most” and “many” are debatable, Albers is pointing to the same nature-culture problematic that Woods (2003) sees at the root of contention over of what is ‘natural’ in a rural landscape. However the nature-culture divide is itself made
problematic by the processes by which notions of what is ‘natural’ become naturalized in discourses of rurality. To say that there are process by which we come to accept as truth what we think of as natural for a place suggests that landscapes change over time and so with them do the meanings we attach to our symbols for these landscapes. To wit, in the same paragraph as the previous excerpt, Albers (2000) wonders: “what is natural about a forest that has been completely cut down at least three times…” (p. 299).

Indeed, the Vermont landscape has changed and will continue to change. These changes have historically been shaped by economic, aesthetic, and environmental forces (Lipke 1991, Albers 2000, Harrison 2006, Searls 2006). The Vermont landscape that is celebrated today can be seen as a braid of at least three strands of events: (1) the decline of hill farming after 1850 and later diary farming in the latter half of the twentieth century (see Graffagnino 1991; Albers 2000, especially chapter 4; Searls 2006), (2) efforts to market the state, from the latter half of the nineteenth century on, to potential vacation home owners and tourists (see Hinrichs 1996, Albers 2000, Harrison 2006), (3) the development of the state’s landmark Act 250 land use legislation in response to “sloppy and environmentally insensitive” tourist and suburban development in post-Interstate Vermont (see Albers 2000, pp. 316ff.).

Graffagnino (1991) writes that by the 1870s the belief that Vermont was “locked into a bleak ‘winter’ of decline and stagnation remained a significant part of the collective Vermont psyche.” Though the Roaring Twenties brought a ‘January Thaw’ to some in the state, by the time of Vermont’s post-World War II recovery and growth, “the idea was unchallenged that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had brought
little more than half-a-dozen successive decades of hard times to the state’s rural areas” (p. 58). As time passed however, there developed a seemingly paradoxical nostalgia for this time of despair. This nostalgia is rooted not in the loss of the hill farm and related modes of production, but in the landscape that resulted from the decline:

Quiet country villages, abandoned hill farms that have reverted to forest, rural calm instead of urban growth—these and the other legacies of 1850-1920 that distinguish Vermont today from much of the rest of America are all important elements in the “special world” of the Green Mountain State. The problems of a century ago have become some of the most significant assets of modern Vermont. (Graffagnino 1991, p. 58)

The decline of marginal hill farming gave way to dairy production. With it arose a patently natural landscape composed of biologically dominated forms (fields of crops, pasture land, herds of cows). As Albers (2000) notes:

While other states have seen trees cut down to make way for development, Vermont has seen them come back to an extraordinary degree. But there is nothing inherent or inevitable about the open, pastoral beauty of this land. Much of it came into being as open fields to serve Queen Cow. (p. 274)

This naturalized pastoral landscape played into efforts to market the state as a tourist destination. This idealized image drawn from the landscape would go on to influence the permissible forms that the physical landscape of Vermont could take while also imposing notions of idealized social relations on its people. Searls (2006) puts it thusly:

While working to organize the state to capitalize most effectively on tourist dollars, tourism’s promoters constructed and publicized a particular image of the state. According to this narrative, Vermonters had achieved a unique balance between progress and tradition; they embraced the promise of the future without sacrificing the ancient virtues that were their inheritance. This artificial vision of Vermont portrayed a unified state, its revered institutions manned by an independent and noble citizenry occupying an “unspoiled” landscape. (p. 3)

This landscape-produced social narrative was however more goal than reality. Indeed Searls (2006) continues:
Vermonters found manifesting it in reality no less difficult than did Americans elsewhere. The fundamental ideological differences that chiefly characterized Vermont residents indicate how elusive, and ultimately frustrating, were efforts to negotiate capitalist transformation in a way that effectively balanced progress and tradition (p. 4).

The difficulty of this negotiation has not abated in the age of post-Fordist Globalization.

The development, in the 1960s, of Vermont’s land use and development legislation—Act 250 (10 V.S.A. Chapter 151), which went into effect in 1970—as well as contemporary debate over growth center legislation in the state (see Hallenbeck 2007), highlights the continuity of this struggle into the present. Developed in the wake of the completion of Vermont’s interstate highways (I-89 and I-91) in the mid-1960s (Albers 2000, p. 290), and the late-1960s immigration of “back-to-the-land” hippies and “suburban refugees” (Vanderbeck 2006, p. 651), Act 250 can be seen as the codification in law of an environmental consciousness, a consciousness that can be traced back to George Perkins Marsh’s publication of *Man and Nature* in 1864 (Albers 2000, p. 198ff.). These laws “provide a public, quasi-judicial” review—before the Natural Resources Board, the members of which are appointed by the governor—of the environmental, social and fiscal consequences of major developments in Vermont (Vermont Natural Resources Board 2007).

According to Albers (2000), some argue that Act 250 has not limited growth (p. 316), but “because it requires that development be sensitive to issues of aesthetics and scenery in addition to more ‘practical’ considerations, there can be no doubt that Act 250 has helped to preserve the look of the land so highly valued by natives and tourists” (p. 318). Written on the land and codified in law, this convention of what Vermont means resonates, to a degree, with contemporary notions of sustainable development that
focuses on awareness and reduction of one’s “ecological footprint” (see Wackernagel, et al. 1999). However, the ‘landscape of consumption’ demanded by tourists relies on conservation, if not preservation. Some suggest that such conservation precludes a landscape of production (e.g. one home to utility-scale wind) that would localize and minimize some of the environmental costs of human existence in contemporary Western societies.

The decline of hill farming and subsequent rise of dairy farming resulted in a material landscape of pastureland that afforded scenic vistas of (re)forested hills. In turn, this landscape became idealized as a place for rural tourism. Contemporary land use laws such as Act 250, as well as numerous ‘informal’ means of representing the Vermont landscape (e.g. through the marketing of pure and wholesome food products—see Hinrichs 1996) can be seen as attempts to replicate this idealized place.

2.2. Social construction of space

This brief and selective trace of the development of the ‘Vermont Landscape’ illustrates the dual nature of the term landscape, referring to both the material, visual scene as well as to the “ideas that visitors and residents have carried around with them in their heads” (Harrison 2006, p. 6). This latter notion of landscape, dubbed the “cultural landscape” by Schein (1997 cited in Harrison 2006, p. 7), contributes to what Harrison (2006) describes as the:

ongoing production and reproduction of group- and place-based identities, of social and cultural values, and ultimately of the power relations inherent in any society. They [landscapes] do so by naturalizing the ideologies of one group over another, creating expectations about what is “normal” through their physical
structure and symbolic representation. In many respects, we learn to define social power by the ability of dominant groups to express their understanding of the world in visual form. And conversely we learn to challenge that power by manipulating the landscape according to our own values (p. 7).

Visual expressions of understandings of the world can be conveyed in various media ranging from the more-or-less symbolic (e.g. postcards and travel brochures) to the more-or-less concrete (e.g. the landscape itself). Lewis (1979) argues that such symbolic visual expressions can be agents of landscape change (p. 21). Thus material and cultural landscapes feed into one another, the historical formation of each influencing their present development. Shields (1991) calls this process ‘social spatialization’ which he defines as:

the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment). This term allows us to name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language and more concrete actions, constructions and institutional arrangements (p. 31).

In this way, social spatialization yields a contested, historically-contingent landscape that is part conceptual and part material, what Davis (2005) refers to as a “discursive-material formation.” In his study of the representation and reproduction of the Bikini Atoll since its use by the U.S. military for atomic weapons testing, Davis applies discursive-material formations to the study of how the atoll:

is a place that has been heavily impacted by external actors and discourses, different interpretations of place, transformations of those interpretations through time, and interactions between landscape and social processes. (2005, p. 608)

It is the symbolic and physical confines of discursive-material formations that provide social constraints on the forms that the material landscape of a place is allowed to take. These constraints result from a process that Lefebvre (1991) calls spatial practices. Spatial practices ensure “continuity and some degree of cohesion” in social spaces, and
help define—along with non-human, non-social processes—“each member of a given society’s relationship to that space … [and imply] a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance” for agents in that space (p. 33; emphasis original).

Spatial practices are related to Shields’s concept of social spatialization, which “allows for the sociality of everyday interaction and the creation of durable social forms and institutions” (Shields 1991, p. 46). Such institutions rely on the production and maintenance of taken-for-granted knowledge. Shields argues that this knowledge gives social institutions power by grounding the “cultural edifice of perceptions and prejudices, images of places and regions,” and establishes “performative codes which relate practices and modes of social interaction to appropriate [spatial] settings” (ibid., p. 46).

### 2.3. Discourses on place

To say that something has a discursive component—such as the discursive-material Vermont landscape—implies that it has to do with discourse or discourses. In this research, I take discourse to be the patterned use of semiotic resources (e.g. written language, visual depictions) that use metaphor and analogy to yield particular, historically-specific, ways of representing and understanding the world (Howarth 2000, p. 9; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, pp. 12, 143). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) show that texts can be multivocal; they can express the logics of two or more orders of discourses (p. 151). Orders of discourse are, according to Wood and Kroger (2000), “the particular configurations of conventionalized [social] practices … which are available to text producers and interpreters in particular social circumstances” (p. 134). Particular orders
of discourse can ally and become hegemonic, by which I mean that they, following Fairclough (1995), can gain temporary and partial power over the discursive practices of a society (p. 76). The ephemerality of this power invites challengers to struggle to supplant hegemonic orders of discourse.

According to Shields (1991) and Bridger (1996), evidence of social spatialization—where spatial and social practices yield particular ways of performing in particular spatial and social contexts—can be seen in the metaphors and images of places and regions used in public discourse such as everyday conversations, postcards, advertising images, song lyrics (Shields 1991, pp. 46, 47; Bridger 1996, p. 354) as well as—as I will show in this study—letters to state officials, and advocate websites. These “spatial metaphors” can, according to Shields:

> convey a complex set of associations without the speaker having to think deeply and to specify exactly which associations or images he or she intends (Shields, pp. 46).

Bridger (1996) identifies five elements of such discourse that are relevant to land use debates: heritage narratives, community typifications, ideographs, rhetorical narratives, and characterizations (p. 354). These elements can be grouped into two broad categories: (1) those that tend to be found mostly in public discourses concerned with representing places—heritage narratives and community typifications and (2) those that are found in public discourses in general—ideographs, rhetorical narratives, and characterizations. While these categories provide an analytical perspective for understanding the historical setting within which contemporary land use debates are framed, they should not be taken as an implacable taxonomy. In reality, representations of place both inform and are informed by public discourses as well as social institutions—heritage narratives form the
bases of rhetorical narratives that in turn may influence the evolution of heritage narratives. I have chosen to organize these categories around their narrative elements. I describe each category in turn.

Heritage narratives are “selective representations of the past that feed into and are partially driven by the demands, sentiments, and interests of those in the present” (Bridger 1996, p. 355). These stories about how a community came to be what it is provide an ontology for understanding contemporary events. Heritage narratives of Vermont depict a fragile, pastoral, working landscape, in harmony with nature, but threatened by exogenous forces of urbanization and industrialization. Such narratives have been historically constructed by responses to economic privation (e.g. the decline of hill farming in the late nineteenth century, and the consolidation of dairy farming in the latter half of the twentieth century) in which efforts to market the state as a tourist destination arose from the landscape that resulted from these economic declines. Subsequently, this marketing has reinforced the landscape forms that gave rise to tourism in Vermont. Heritage narratives work by providing those in the present with “real or imagined forbearers” with whom they can identify. This identity builds the basis for a sense of connection with the past. Bridger (1996) posits that these narratives are powerful because their surface appearance as simple historical accounts belies their deployment in discourses of persuasion (p. 355). However, such unwitting identification with heritage narratives can have perverse consequences (e.g. the case of sprawling development in Davis, CA resulting from zoning that limited the density of developments, zoning bolstered by Davis’s small town narrative; Bridger 1996, p. 356).
Community typifications (which I also refer to as heritage characterizations) are “shorthand understandings” that summarize what a community stands for (Bridger 1996, p. 356). These typifications, which are similar to Shields’s “place-images,” make sense only in the context of particular heritage narratives and they “come about through over-simplification (i.e. reduction to one trait), stereotyping (amplification of one or more traits) and labeling (where a place is deemed to be of a certain nature)” (Shields 1991, p. 47). Typifications can persist even after the real or assumed spatial or social components of their formation are gone. As Shields (1991) remarks: “such a label further impacts on material activities and may be clung to despite changes in the ‘real’ nature of the site” (p. 47). This reinforcement of landscape form can be seen in the Vermont wind energy debate. Typification of Vermont as the ‘Green Mountain State’ (i.e. a pristine forested landscape with small farms tastefully dotting a countryside that is harmonious with nature) limits the range of aesthetically permissible human intervention in the landscape at the same time that the energy demands of the state’s growing urban and suburban populations are met with technologies that are seemingly at odds with the state’s environmental consciousness (e.g. nuclear energy; imported oil, natural gas, and large-scale hydroelectric). Community typifications are used in two related ways in public discourse:

They provide concise definitions of particular places and, perhaps more importantly, they highlight the differences between communities … When used in this way, they can mobilize action by raising the specter that the familiar and valued will be transformed into something alien where the quality of life is less than desirable. (Bridger 1996, p. 356)
This typification and opposition process can be seen in the Vermont wind energy debate. For example, in a letter to the editor of The Caledonian-Record, one opponent of wind development in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont states that:

> a major contributor to the economy of the area is tourism but we do not attract the shop-until-you-drop set. We are the home to and destination of those seeking the beauty, solitude and abundant wildlife of the area. (Soininen 2005)

Community typifications quickly communicate the narrative context that a speaker is drawing on. As such, they are useful for understanding with what aspects of a community or a landscape a speaker is identifying.

Rhetorical narratives are accounts of events, real or hypothetical, that are told to persuade (Bridger 1996, p. 357). These narratives are associated with ideographs, which are a common “vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief” (McGee 1980 cited in Bridger 1996, p. 357). These concepts are typically vague terms, the abstract nature of which allows even groups with competing goals to identify with them. Ideographs are:

> short phrases that represent an orientation towards an abstract ideology…they are best thought of as setting loose constraints of thought, action, and debate while simultaneously serving as rhetorical tools that competing groups use as they attempt to influence the “official” definitions of particular situations. (Bridger 1996, p. 357)

The meaning of an ideograph is specified when it is employed as “the moral of the story” in a particular rhetorical narrative. These narratives also include: plot, character, and setting. In addition, they rely heavily on “characterizations,” which Condit (1987) defines as “universalized descriptions of particular agents, acts, scenes, purposes, or agencies…” (cited in Bridger 1996, p. 358). When characterizations become taken-for-granted knowledge, they change the course of public discourse. It is through discourse-
changing characterizations and the ‘morals’ associated with an ideograph that rhetorical narratives transform heritage narratives of place—reproducing certain community typifications, redefining others, and introducing new typifications.

2.4. Narrative, identity, and social movements

According to Glover (2004) narratives, as used in the advocacy campaigns of contemporary social movements, encode “collectively constructed and shared meanings, interpretations, rituals, and identities” that represent the common cause, the esprit de corps of grassroots groups that constitute a movement (p. 48). Davis (2002) asserts that the stories used by social movements are powerful vehicles “for producing, articulating, regulating, and diffusing shared meaning” (p. 22). Fine (2002) argues that narratives enable collective action by providing sharable symbolic representations of reality that help people understand their positions within power structures in societies; narratives allow culture to be communicated and thus shared; it is these shared cultures that enable sustained collective action (p. 230). Glover (2004) argues that stories accomplish this by helping individuals recognize their shared experiences and connected futures (p. 47). Further, “grassroots associations are institutional contexts in which collective identities are forged through the social practice of story telling” (ibid., p. 48).

According to Polletta and Jasper (2001), the goals of recent social movement groups are less overtly concerned with redistributing political power than with defending their collective identity:
Unlike the civil rights and early labor movements … post-citizenship movements are peopled by those who already enjoy most or all of the normal rights of citizens … Participants in these movements do not usually have an identity imposed on them by the political and legal systems, accordingly they have more freedom to engage in creative reformations of who they are (p. 287).

Collective identities represent an individual’s emotional, moral, and cognitive connections to a broader imagined or experiential community. Distinct from, but part of personal identities, collective identities are “expressed in cultural materials—names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing,” etc. (ibid., p. 285). “New social movements”—which I argue that grassroots groups organized around the Vermont wind power debate can in part be described as—establish and defend the ideational space for their identities and lifestyles through the management of meaning. This meaning making is accomplished through the telling of stories.³ Further:

social movements are not viewed merely as carriers of extant ideas and meanings that grow automatically out of structural arrangements, unanticipated events, or existing ideologies. Rather, movement actors are viewed as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers (Snow and Benford 1988 cited in Benford and Snow 2000, p. 613).

What gives rise to the ‘contentious identities’ that groups defend using meanings conveyed by narratives? That is, how do the social movements who craft such narratives develop? According to Polletta and Jasper (2001), the identities that these groups construct are culturally mediated, emerging from personal responses to structural forces (e.g. the boom-bust cycles of capitalist markets, the unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of economic development). The structural influences on these responses can be understood in terms of actors’ positions in overlapping networks of economic, political,

³ Following the literature on narrative and social movements, I use the terms narrative and story interchangeably.
and social relations (ibid., p. 289). Actors construct identities by inhabiting particular nodes in these networks and by articulating, through stories, the information that traverses the interconnecting network edges using historically- and culturally-determined semiotic tools. Thus, collective identities are defined in terms of their adherents’: (1) social relations, (2) prior personal and cultural experience.

Collective identities are an instance of discursive-material formation. Materially, they are constituted in the bodies, material goods, and the surrounding environment of the actors who assume them. Collective identities are constituted discursively in the meanings interpreted, based on prior cultural experience, from the information that actors draw from and inject into the economic, political, and social networks of which they are a part. Horton’s (2003) study of “green” identities espoused by post-1960s environmental social movements of Lancaster, England shows how the materialities of these lifestyles—style of dress, architecture, car ownership, grocery shopping—serve as signifiers, as cultural codes for the performance of identity by members of the movements. And as Vanderbeck (2006) illustrates, cultural codes associated with a collective identity are deployed discursively by both those who espouse and those who combat that identity. As discursive-material formations, the collective identities of grassroots groups reflect and can influence the shape of the landscape inhabited by group members as well as the discourses (i.e. stories) about those landscapes. By representing particular collective identities in narratives, grassroots groups advocate for the continuation of a particular lifestyle in a particular landscape (i.e. particular social-spatial relations). In providing conventions for the form a landscape should take (e.g. rolling hills of farm fields bisected by winding roads with forested ridge lines in the distance) and the social activities that
ought to take place therein (e.g. dairy farming, sightseeing, shopping at farm stands) the
discursive-material collective identities of these groups are related to Shield’s (1991)
social spatialization.

2.5. Landscape and identity

In this thesis, I argue that the grassroots associations that have formed around the
Vermont wind energy debate (both for and against development) make meaning—
construct their collective identities—by transforming heritage narratives and
characterizations of Vermont through the rhetorical narratives they employ in the debate.
The meanings of these narratives are conveyed via frames that define problems (see
section 2.6). Through these narratives, these organizations represent the Vermont
landscape using particular community typifications. These competing persuasive
representations tap into particular heritage narratives and characterizations that invite
readers to identify with meanings of Vermont that are harmonious with the collective
identity of a particular grassroots organization. According to Glover (2004), the
identities espoused by a grassroots organization can be understood by studying how a
particular organization portrays itself as contributing to a particular outcome (p. 50). For
example, does the group position itself as a protector, a keeper of a sacred trust? If so,
what is the group protecting? The ‘community’, the ‘environment’? From whom or
what (i.e. who is the antagonist?) is the group (i.e. the protagonist) protecting it? What
will happen if the group fails to keep its charge?
The narratives of a particular collective identity express the lifestyle associated with that identity. Lifestyles can be thought of as cultural codes and scripts for the performance of an identity (Davis 2002, p. 8; Horton 2003, p. 68). Instead of ascribing identities onto agents, a narrative understanding of identity “emphasizes a dialogical subjectivity and the storied transactions and relationships within which identity and difference are negotiated and renegotiated” (Davis 2002, p. 26; emphasis mine). Indeed, in order for a group to form a common identity, an ‘other’ must be defined (Glover 2004, p. 48), providing negative space against which to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them.’ Those with whom one identifies are cast as protagonists or heroes to rally for and fight beside against the antagonist or villain represented by the other. As Davis (2002) notes, when a reader identifies with the antagonist of a narrative (i.e. identifies with the grassroots group using a particular narrative), they make the story their own (p. 17). By identifying with a story, one also accepts, more or less, the interpretations of events espoused by grassroots groups.

By virtue of their role in identity formation, stories are inherently personal and emotional. This affective nature of stories enables tellers to influence the responses and conclusions that audiences have to stories (Davis 2002, p. 19). This use of stories relies on Berbrier’s concept of “cultural affectation” wherein emotionally laden values espoused by claims-makers and aligned with culturally resonant meanings (Berbrier 1998, p. 440). Contrary to rational arguments, stories are not generally expected to be transparent about their ontological and epistemological assumptions. This makes narratives difficult to contest and refute using the tools of Enlightenment rationality. This difficulty can be seen in some aesthetic arguments present in opposition narratives in the
Vermont wind power debate. Unlike questions of habitat impact or economic benefit, when the potential presence of wind turbines on ridgelines in Vermont is portrayed using emotionally-charged words such as ‘abomination,’ poetic musings on the sublime nature of the peaks, photographs evoking the bucolic, or animations depicting lighted turbines on pristine peaks, those who disagree with this portrayal cannot refute such sentiments using the scientific and technical discourses of public policy planning (see section 2.7.3).

To summarize, social movements form in order to cause or prevent changes in social-spatial relations. They do this by reasserting or contesting meanings framed through the telling of stories. These stories persuade those outside of a particular movement group insofar as the outsiders can be brought to identify with the members of the group. In this way, social movements seek to achieve their goals through the management of meaning. In this research, I founded my understanding of the rationales Vermont-based grassroots wind groups have used in the debate and how they have used them, in terms of the meaning making work that grassroots groups do as they craft narratives that: (1) sustain and bolster these groups’ collective identities and lifestyles; and (2) reproduce and redefine the symbolic and concrete landscape of Vermont.

2.6. Public policy discourse and framing

In this section, I move from the preceding discussion of more general spatial and social theory literature and on to a discussion of concepts central to my case study of the contemporary wind power debate in Vermont.
Grassroots groups construct stories to convey their preferred understanding of social and natural phenomena. These understandings, these meanings of events and processes, these problem definitions, are expressions of broader systems of meaning or what Gamson (2005) calls “frames.” As Benford and Snow (2000) note, groups generate interpretive frames that “not only differ from existing ones, but that may also challenge them” (p. 614). These collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change (ibid., p. 615).

By identifying and focusing attention on the causes of a bounded problem, frames limit the range of solutions to the problem while providing grounds from which to challenge the solutions of others (ibid., pp. 616-617). The frames used by grassroots groups vary in the scope of the problems they define (ibid., p. 618). Broader, more abstract frames can be drawn on by distinct, even conflicting, social movements (e.g. the injustice frame employed by both pro-life and pro-choice groups in contemporary abortion debate—inhumanity toward fetuses and injustice toward women, respectively). Abstract, or master frames become broadly accepted by virtue of being vaguely defined—the ‘reader’ is free to interpret the frame in a way that resonates with their particular culturally-defined values (ibid., p. 619).

The concepts ideograph (which I describe in section 2.3), and frame are closely related. According to Bridger (1996), ideographs set:

loose constraints of thought, action, and debate while simultaneously serving as rhetorical tools that competing groups use as they attempt to influence the “official” definitions of particular situations. (p. 357)
Frames, specifically Benford and Snow’s (2000) collective actions frames, are:

shared understanding[s] of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change. (p. 615)

Problem definition—what is the problem, who is to blame, what is the remedy—and rhetorical use in discourse are essential to the natures of both the concept of frame and the concept of ideograph. Given this shared nature, I treat ideographs and frames as identical concepts. In deference to the broad scholarly and popular usage of the term frame, I will henceforth use it instead of the word ideograph.

Frames gain currency in public policy discourse to the degree that they resonate with the conventional narratives of a culture; particular frames are not intelligible as narratives in cultures where they lack resonance (Polletta 2002, p. 34). Narrative expressions of frames are rendered in diverse modes of communication: written language (technical writing, journalistic writing, persuasive writing), speech (public speeches, conversations), visual images (still: photographs, drawings and diagrams; moving: animations, videos, films). These modes in turn are realized in diverse media: legal filings and decisions, policy white papers, newspapers, websites, and brochures. Each of these modes and media are suited to communicating particular styles of frames—for example the written language of policy white papers often conveys technical scientific discourses. Thus, when considering the frames that are present in public policy discourses, such as the debate over wind energy development in Vermont, it is necessary to analyze a dataset that reflects diverse meaning making practices.
2.7. Energy policy decisions in Vermont

In this section I will describe how energy development decisions are made in Vermont within the Act 248 public service permitting process. I will also describe the relationship between Act 248 and the Act 250 land use permitting process. Finally, I will briefly discuss the level of public participation afforded by the Act 248 process.

2.7.1 Act 248 permitting process

It is the responsibility of the Public Service Board (PSB) to evaluate the environmental and economic effects of new energy production facilities in Vermont (Vermont Public Service Board 2000). The PSB, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 3, consists of a chairperson and two members, each appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate (Vermont Legislature 1993). Before the construction of a commercial wind turbine can begin, the board must issue a certificate of public good (CPG) for the proposed development, indicating that it “will promote the general good of the state” (30 V.S.A. § 248, see Vermont Legislature 2007a).

2.7.2 Act 248 and the Act 250 aesthetics criterion

As part determining whether a project would promote the public good the “Act 248” permitting process carried out by the PSB considers the degree to which the proposed development would comply with many of the criteria considered under Vermont’s “Act 250” land use planning legislation (30 V.S.A. § 248 §§ 5, see Vermont Legislature 2007a). The eighth of these Act 250 criteria (10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1) through (8), see Vermont Legislature 2005) deals with the aesthetic effects of development and requires that a particular development:
(8) Will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural areas.

(A) Necessary wildlife habitat and endangered species. A permit will not be granted if it is demonstrated by any party opposing the applicant that a development or subdivision will destroy or significantly imperil necessary wildlife habitat or any endangered species; and

(i) the economic, social, cultural, recreational, or other benefit to the public from the development or subdivision will not outweigh the economic, environmental, or recreational loss to the public from the destruction or imperilment of the habitat or species; or

(ii) all feasible and reasonable means of preventing or lessening the destruction, diminution, or imperilment of the habitat or species have not been or will not continue to be applied; or

(iii) a reasonably acceptable alternative site is owned or controlled by the applicant which would allow the development or subdivision to fulfill its intended purpose. (10 V.S.A. Chapter 151 § 6086, see Vermont Legislature 2005)

In practice this aesthetic criterion is evaluated using a two-part test (Vermont Natural Resources Board 2007, p.1): (1) does the project have an adverse effect under the criterion; (2) is that effect “undue.” To determine whether the effect is undue, the decision maker—which in the case of the Act 248 process under which utility-scale wind electricity generation facilities are evaluated is the PSB—applies the so-called “Quechee” test that:

looks to whether a proposed project will be in harmony with its surroundings or, in other words, whether it will “fit” the context within which it will be located. In making this evaluation, the Board examines a number of specific factors, including the nature of the project's surroundings, the compatibility of the project's design with those surroundings, the suitability for the project's context of the colors and materials selected for the project, the locations from which the project can be viewed, and the potential impact of the project on open space. (ibid., p.2)

A project can also fail the Quechee test if the “size and density of its units would differ from surrounding structures” (ibid., p. 3). Thus, the test rests on the ideas of the fit and the scale of a project with respect to its context. As the aesthetics chapter of the Natural
Resources Board manual points out, “[t]he determination of the project's context is one that is crucial to the Criterion 8 analysis; if the project ‘fits’ its context, then the project, by definition, is not adverse, and the inquiry under Criterion 8 ends.” (ibid., p. 2)

To determine whether the lack-of-fit between a proposed project or its surroundings, or the degree to which the proposed project is out-of-scale with its surroundings is undue, the PSB considers the following factors:

Does the Project violate a clear, written community standard intended to preserve the aesthetics or scenic beauty of the area?

Does the Project offend the sensibilities of the average person? Is it offensive or shocking because it is out of character with its surroundings or significantly diminishes the scenic qualities of the area?

Has the Applicant failed to take generally available mitigating steps which a reasonable person would take to improve the harmony of the Project with its surroundings? (Vermont Natural Resources Board 2007b, p. 3)

If the board considers any of these factors to be true for a particular development proposal, that proposal is deemed to have undue adverse effect on aesthetic or scenic qualities of the area in which the development would be situated. Such undue adverse effects are grounds for the PSB to deny a certificate of public good required for a developer to build a project.

2.7.3 Act 248: rationality and public participation

The PSB decides whether or not to grant a certificate of public good after evaluating development proposals and environmental impact studies and considering testimony given at board hearings from proponents, opponents, and stakeholders. This planning process is dominated by what Watts (2006) characterizes as an “expert-based rational and technical” process (p. 98). The ‘public interest’ is officially represented in
this process by the Vermont Department of Public Service (DPS), an agency in the executive branch of the state government (Vermont Department of Public Service 2006). Additionally, the DPS and PSB rely on PSB hearings, as well as public comment periods, to allow for the citizen participation in energy planning mandated by Act 200 (24 V.S.A. § 4302) and other statutes (Watts 2006, p. 98). However, as Watts points out, such participation occurs towards the end of the planning process. Citizens may have some influence in final plans, but their lack of access to earlier phases of planning falls short of the legislative spirit of citizen participation at all levels of energy planning in order to ensure that decisions are made at the “most local level possible commensurate with their impact” (ibid., p. 98). Much of the power in early phases of energy policy planning, and thus in overall energy planning, is situated with developers and in the executive branch of the government, through which political influence over development decisions can be exercised.

**2.8. Wind energy and aesthetics**

When I began this research in the spring of 2007, current Vermont governor Jim Douglas did not support commercial utility-scale wind development in the state. Douglas had however supported wind development on a “Vermont scale” (Douglas 2005; Remsen 2006)—which he never specifically defined, but which seemed to refer to roughly 100-foot-tall turbines capable of producing approximately 10 kilowatts as opposed to 300+-foot-tall turbines with hundreds of kilowatts to megawatt capacity. Leaving aside questions of the relative effectiveness of Vermont-scale and utility-scale wind power, the
governor’s position on wind development attempted to, at least on the surface, balance three things: (1) developing new electricity in Vermont while; (2) minimizing the contribution of the state’s electricity generation to the problem of climate change; (3) while minimizing the local costs (i.e. aesthetic impact) of energy development.

Efforts to develop alternative energy sources in the face of global climate change tend to meet resistance due to the disproportionate local costs of such development. As Woods (2005) points out:

The strategies promoted by campaigners in order to alleviate the human contribution to climate change are also challenging to aspects of rural life…any substantial transition to renewable energy sources depends on the construction of a large number of renewable power plants, notably hydroelectric stations and ‘wind farms’ in rural locations that can meet their resource demands. Such developments inevitably have an impact on the immediate local environment as well as conflicting with aesthetic appreciations of the rural landscape. (pp. 123-124)

Thus, aesthetic objections to wind energy development are symptomatic of larger conflicts over the local environmental costs of continued global development.

As studies by Warren et al. (2005) confirm, and others have argued (Brittan 2001; Pasqualetti et al. 2002; Woods 2003; Burall 2004; Brisman 2005; Good 2006), aesthetic concerns are a primary motivation of those campaigning against wind energy development. Brisman (2005) cites avian mortality and aesthetic degradation as two recurring concerns of opponents to wind development off of Cape Cod, MA and on Glebe Mountain in Londonderry, VT (p. 69). He argues that avian mortality concerns can be mollified by selecting sites outside of areas with high bird activity while aesthetic
objections are harder to understand and to address (pp. 73-74).⁴ These aesthetic objections to wind energy are based on the visual degradation that opponents argue such developments would impose on the landscape (Brittan 2001; Pasqualetti et al. 2002; Brisman 2005, p. 74) rather than worries over noise pollution, which Brisman (2005) assumes is a problem isolated to earlier utility-scale wind technologies (p. 76).⁵

As Brittan (2001) observes: “much of this opposition … is grounded in a rather sharp separation between nature and technology, expressed in the thought that wind turbines … in the landscape are ugly” (p. 169, cited in Woods 2003, p. 277). Brittan identifies four ways that contemporary wind energy developments “offend aesthetic and culturally-constructed notions of landscape and nature” (Woods 2003, p. 277): (1) they are alien to the environment and there is uncertainty over whether their growth, as with weeds, will stop once it has begun; (2) they are out of harmony with the landscape; (3) they are out of scale with what surrounds them; (4) they are devices that are beyond the understanding and engagement of local inhabitants.

2.9. Aesthetics and nature

Theories of aesthetic appreciation of natural environments build on the aesthetic appreciation of art (Porteous 1996, Carlson 2000). Within both sets of theories, there are subjectivist and objectivist positions on aesthetic judgment. In the subjectivist view,

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⁴ Difficult to understand and address in terms of the rational-scientific framework used by energy planners.
⁵ However my research contradicts this and indicates that noise is still a concern of those living near more ‘state-of-the-art’ wind turbines.
there are no grounds on which to establish the veracity of an aesthetic judgment. Conversely, the objectivist position asserts that certain aesthetic judgments of a particular thing—a painting, a sculpture, a tree, a physical landscape, etc.—can be agreed upon as being correct, while others are incorrect. I will first discuss this objectivist form of aesthetic appreciation.

Carlson (2000), following Walton (1970), offers two criteria for determining the “truth value” of an aesthetic judgment about an object, art or natural: (1) the formal properties of the object (e.g. color, shape, size, texture, relationship to its surroundings, etc.), (2) the importance of these formal properties when the object is interpreted in its correct category. Walton (1970) argues that formal properties alone are insufficient for determining the correctness of a category for interpreting art objects. Instead he offers four circumstances for this categorical correctness (Carlson 2000, p. 56):

1. the object has a relatively large number of properties standard for the category;
2. the object is a better object when interpreted in the category;
3. the author intended or expected the object to be interpreted in the category;
4. the category was recognized by the society in which the object was made;

Let us consider the relevance of these circumstances to categories of natural objects in reverse order. I offer that the spirit of the fourth circumstance is relevant to natural objects, but must be reformulated as follows: the category is recognized by the society in which the object is interpreted. That an agent can think in terms of a category and thus apply it to an object under consideration implies that the category has stability within the socially-nourished mind—the existence of a category suggest that it is correct for some objects. Carlson (2000, pp. 62ff.) argues that where ‘natural’ (i.e. not-man-made) objects are concerned, the third circumstance is patently irrelevant, and counters that since we
usually discover, rather than produce, natural objects, it is reasonable to for us also to
discover their correct categories. Carlson writes off the second circumstance as evidence,
rather than precondition, of categorical correctness—it can be used as a ‘tie-breaker’ for
choosing among competing categories for an object (Carlson 2000, see note 21, pp. 70-
71). We are left with the first circumstance, which Carlson argues must include
properties that are beyond the formal features of the object as we perceive it with our five
senses. To the degree that we ‘discover’ natural objects/phenomena using scientific
discourses, Carlson privileges these discourses as the arbiters of correctness for the
categories of perceiving these objects/phenomena (ibid., p. 64).

Thus, the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of natural objects hinges on
perceiving them using scientifically-determined categories that reveal the objects for
what they are, not what they appear to be. Doing so avoids what Carlson (2000) refers to
as “aesthetic omissions and deception” (p. 65). Here Carlson links aesthetics with
ethics—by appreciating an object as what it is, rather than what it appears to be or is
represented as being, we “keep our aesthetics and our ethics in harmony” (ibid., p. 66).

In Carlson’s excellent example of the *Playboy* centerfold, he argues that to:

> aesthetically appreciate the model not as what she is (in the category of human
> beings), but only as what she here appears to be or is presented as being (in the
category of sex objects) … is ethically suspect for to engage in such aesthetic
> appreciation is to endorse and promote (in ourselves, if nowhere else) a sexist
> attitude toward women (ibid., pp. 66-67).

Carlson believes this argument to be valid because “we do not aesthetically appreciate
simply with our five senses, but rather with an important part of our whole emotional and
physical selves” (p. 67). Thus our aesthetic appreciation reflects and influences our
emotional selves, and plays an important role in shaping our ethical views. From objective aesthetic appreciation, we are led to the heart of subjectivity, to the emotive.

Carlson’s argument for the place of the objective and the subjective in appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature echoes that of Foster (2004). According to Porteous (1996) there has been a similar quantitative-qualitative dichotomy in theories of environment aesthetics since at least Chalmers (1978) (Porteous 1996, pp. 10-11). Foster labels the objective and subjective extremes of this dichotomy “narrative” and “ambient” respectively. Narrative aesthetics tend toward the social, drawing on discursively-constructed and shared knowledge—constructed through discourses such as mythology, social history, science.6 Ambient aesthetics are personal, emotional, drawing on knowledge that reflects direct experience with, and immersion in ‘natural’ environments. Foster’s goal, in considering the ambient alongside the discursive aesthetic, is to provide a “solution to the problem of how to determine, express, and invoke aesthetic value in the broader effort to preserve natural environments” (Foster 2004, p. 198).

Foster explains the contemporary dominance of discursive aesthetics by noting the tendency of Anglo-American philosophers to withhold epistemological integrity from ideas not expressible in verifiable propositions (ibid., p. 197). The discursive dimension of aesthetic appreciation relies on factual, scientific frameworks and is most often expressed by linking social or natural history with the object being examined (ibid., pp. 6

6 I use the term ‘discursive aesthetics’ for Foster’s ‘narrative aesthetics.’ This is merely a re-labeling to avoid confusion with my use of the word ‘narrative’ throughout this thesis.
Ambient aesthetic appreciation resists such factual framing and is instead characterized by:

the difficulty in giving a succinct sense of it in words. Surely it connotes a feeling of being surrounded by, or infused with, an enveloping, engaging tactility, but the ambient in all its forms resists discursive formulation (Foster, p. 205).

Foster argues that discursive aesthetics does not adequately account for how we actually experience natural environments by noting that for many, these aesthetic experiences do not:

always or even primarily derive from the conscious application of narratives to what we see and understand. Rather, we also value the departure from the self-conscious, controlled specificity-directed application of concepts to sense, and instead sometimes seek to encounter nature in a more moodful, multisensuous way. A kind of reflectiveness persists in such an experience, where we refrain from giving frameworks to, or deriving them from, the environment, but instead allow more subtle impressions to dominate us (Foster, p. 208, emphasis original).

This brings Foster back to the goal of marshalling aesthetics for environmental preservation. She acknowledges the role of science and advocates its use to “attempt to persuade people with facts about the future of the planet,” but also calls for “educat[ing] people through acquaintance” (Foster 2004, p. 208). She notes however the difficulty faced by social action advocates who draw on ambient aesthetics. This difficulty stems from direct experience not lending itself to communication using the discourses of science (written language, mathematics, etc.) common to public policy planning (ibid., p. 208). Instead, Foster points to indirect, or asymptotic, modes of communication such as art as means to approach, in a sidelong way, the sense or meaning of ambient aesthetic experiences of the natural world (ibid., p. 209).

The environmental aesthetics frameworks drawn and elaborated on by Carlson and Foster found my analytic frame for analyzing the persuasive uses of aesthetics by
grassroots activists in the Vermont wind power debate. There are, however, at least two limitations of this framework that must be acknowledged. First, despite his acknowledgement of the place of the emotive and his attempt to relate aesthetics to ethics, Carlson’s account of appropriate environmental aesthetics explicitly privileges scientific knowledge as the arbiter of aesthetic good in natural environments.\(^7\) This bias towards centralized, hierarchical, cosmopolitan, technical and rational ontology and epistemology is countered, to a degree, by Foster’s advocacy for the consideration of diffuse and localized, artistic and experiential knowledge. One gets the sense, however, that Foster’s otherwise compelling account does not quite achieve first-class citizenship for ambient aesthetics alongside the hegemonic discursive form. Lastly, both Foster and Carlson under theorize the middle ground between the autonomous emergence of ‘natural’ objects and the human creation of landscape-scale artifacts. Neither adequately examines the contingent character of our notions of what is natural for a given landscape.

Woods (2005) argues that dispute over what is natural in landscapes lies at the root of aesthetic objections to utility-scale wind development in rural landscapes (p. 190). Woods (2003) identifies two perspectives of rurality and nature salient to his study of conflicting notions of the rural landscape at play in debate over wind farm development in Wales, UK: (1) \textit{natura-ruralist} and (2) \textit{utilitarian} (p. 273). In the first, human agency in the landscape is acknowledged, but limits to acceptable intervention are established: vegetation is emphasized and human artifacts must be essentially biological.

\(^7\) In this thesis, I use a ‘strict’ definition of discursive aesthetic appeals, which are appeals to the effect of utility-scale wind on the senses using scientifically measurable quantities and thresholds. Ambient aesthetic appeals are those that do not use such measurable quantities and thresholds.
“Modifications which introduce large quantities of alien materials, or modern technology, or which appear disproportionate in scale to the morphology of the landscape, are considered unnatural and ‘out of place’” (p. 273). In contrast, the utilitarian perspective posits that the rural landscape is only rendered intelligible when humans tame its wilderness (e.g. by building roads and connecting to the electricity grid) and harness its natural resources. Moreover, nature is seen as resilient, able to endure these interventions (pp. 273-274). As I showed in my brief history of the Vermont landscape (see section 2.7), these two perspectives on rurality and nature have been and continue to be at play in the emergence and reproduction of dominant (i.e. taken-for-granted, universalized) characterizations of the Vermont landscape.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methodology used in my study of grassroots arguments in the contemporary debate over commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont. I begin with a description of my sampling methodology, and then describe the data I chose to analyze and the reasons for choosing them. I finish by describing the narrative and discourse analysis techniques used to analyze these data.

3.1. Sampling

3.1.1. Grassroots groups

The data that I analyzed in this study consisted of “texts” generated by members of pro-wind and anti-wind grassroots groups in Vermont. The formal definition of these groups is as follows:

- Composed of members who are volunteers;
- Formed by people who live in Vermont;
- Formed with the purpose of advocating for or against utility-scale wind development in Vermont;

In my initial analysis of the debate, I identified what I thought were two such pro-wind groups, and four such anti-wind groups (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Website URL</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean Power Vermont</td>
<td>???, VT (Montpelier)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cleanpowervt.org/">http://www.cleanpowervt.org/</a></td>
<td>for utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairwind Vermont</td>
<td>Londonderry, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fairwindvermont.org/">http://www.fairwindvermont.org/</a></td>
<td>for utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sampling criteria and process

Given my goal—to assess what rationales grassroots groups used, and how they used them in the debate—I took a purposive sample of two to three members of each group identified above. Thus, at the outset of my field research my goal was to interview at least 12 and at most 18 subjects. I constructed my sample using a “theoretical sampling” method (see Strauss and Corbin 1998, pp. 201ff.) whereby I sought subjects who would contribute to my building a sample composed of individuals with the following viewpoints, knowledge, and experience (no priority is implied in the ordering of this list):

- Has advocated in favor of utility-scale wind in Vermont;
- Has advocated in opposition to utility-scale wind in Vermont;
- Experience with Act 248 and/or Act 250 permitting processes;
- Lives or has lived in or near a Vermont town that has had commercial utility-scale wind development proposed in the last five years;

My sampling process was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glebe Mountain Group</th>
<th>South Londonderry, VT</th>
<th><a href="http://www.glebemountaingroup.org/">http://www.glebemountaingroup.org/</a></th>
<th>against utility-scale wind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom Commons Group</td>
<td>East Burke, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kingdomcommonsgroup.org/">http://www.kingdomcommonsgroup.org/</a></td>
<td>against utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge Protectors</td>
<td>Sheffield, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ridgeprotectors.org/">http://www.ridgeprotectors.org/</a></td>
<td>against utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermonters with Vision</td>
<td>??? (NEK), VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vermonterswithvision.org/">http://www.vermonterswithvision.org/</a></td>
<td>against utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Make initial contact via e-mail, introducing myself, the project, and asking for an interview;
• If e-mail contact fails, make contact via telephone (if a number was available);

In general, I found the “cold e-mailing” method of contact to be ineffective, and often only successfully made contact and secured interviews after having talked to potential subjects on the telephone. While interviewing the initial subjects of each group (see Figure 1 in Appendix A), I asked interviewees to put me in contact with others who might be willing to talk with me—soliciting people who would meet the above sampling criteria.

I received no response to the e-mails I sent to members of Clean Power Vermont. The link to the group’s contact page on their website was broken, and I found no phone numbers listed in their website. Further, I discovered that the domain name of the group’s website, cleanpowervt.org, was registered by a staff member of Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG).8 VPIRG is not, according to my above definition, a grassroots group (it has paid staff). Therefore I dropped Clean Power Vermont from my sample. This left me with only one pro-wind grassroots group to study. Since I did not feel that the two members of Fairwind Vermont would give me an adequate sample of grassroots pro-wind activists, and these interviewees did not know of another Vermont-based pro-wind grassroots group, I relaxed the specificity of my sampling scope to include individuals who self-identified as pro-wind activists.

8 I used the Unix utility “whois” to lookup the domain name registrar information for cleanpowervt.org. Here are the relevant lines from this query, which was done 12/14/2007 11:00 AM EST:
   Registrant Name:Andrew HUDSON
   Admin Name:Andrew HUDSON
   Admin Organization:Vermont Public Interest Research Group
The sample

When I felt that I had built a sample of sufficient size that met my sampling criteria (i.e. when my sample “converged”), I stopped sampling. I hadn’t yet contacted Vermonters with Vision when my sample converged and so dropped them from the sample (see Table 2 below for a list of grassroots groups in my final sample).

Table 2. Vermont-based grassroots groups studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Website URL</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairwind Vermont</td>
<td>Londonderry, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fairwindvermont.org/">http://www.fairwindvermont.org/</a></td>
<td>for utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glebe Mountain Group</td>
<td>South Londonderry, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.glebemountaingroup.org/">http://www.glebemountaingroup.org/</a></td>
<td>against utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom Commons Group</td>
<td>East Burke, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kingdomcommonsgroup.org/">http://www.kingdomcommonsgroup.org/</a></td>
<td>against utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge Protectors</td>
<td>Sheffield, VT</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ridgeprotectors.org/">http://www.ridgeprotectors.org/</a></td>
<td>against utility-scale wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total, I conducted 13 interviews: two interviews with members of the pro-wind group Fairwind Vermont, seven with members of anti-wind groups, and four with individual pro-wind activists. Eleven of the interviews were conducted in the subjects’ homes. Two were conducted in neutral public spaces. Three of my interviews, two with anti-wind group members and one with individuals not affiliated with a group, involved a female and male married couple, who I interviewed at the same time. Since gender and relationship power dynamics were outside the scope of this study, I consider these__________________________

9 To protect the identities of my subjects, I am withholding the specific locations of the interviews.
interviewees to be one subject. The final sample was comprised of interviewees with characteristics that are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of interviewees, by group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>No. of interviews</th>
<th>With PSB exp.</th>
<th>Wrote letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairwind Vermont</td>
<td>Londonderry</td>
<td>pro-wind</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual activists</td>
<td>NEK</td>
<td>pro-wind</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual activists</td>
<td>NEK</td>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glebe Mountain Group</td>
<td>South Londonderry</td>
<td>anti-wind</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom Commons Group</td>
<td>East Burke</td>
<td>anti-wind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge Protectors</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>anti-wind</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(see Appendix A: Subjects for more demographic details.)

**Protection of human subjects**

As with any research involving human subjects, I complied with The University of Vermont’s Internal Review Board (IRB) regulations for the protection of human subjects. My study of grassroots groups and individual activists in the Vermont wind power debate was determined by the IRB to be exempt from formal review by the university’s Committee on Human Research under Section 46.101(b) of the Federal
Policy for the protection of Human Subject (see Appendix B). The conditions of this exemption are as follows:

- the human subjects cannot be identified directly, or “through identifiers linked to the subjects”;
- disclosure of subject responses outside the research will not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability;

(see Appendix B for the full text of these conditions.)

To protect the identity of my subjects, I created a unique identifier (UID) for each interview that I conducted. I used the following schema to generate interview UID codes:

- Each code is two characters, a letter followed by a number;
- The letter corresponds to the position, as identified by the subject(s), with respect to commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont with:
  - P for pro-wind;
  - A for anti-wind;
  - N for neutral or neither pro nor con;
- The number corresponds to the order, within each class of subject (P, A, or N), in which I conducted the interview;
  - For example, A7 is the seventh interview with an anti-wind grassroots group member that I conducted, whereas P2 was the second interview I conducted with a pro-wind grassroots group member;

To ensure that I do not disclose information that subjects do not wish to have disclosed, I have allowed each subject that I have quoted to review and approve their quotations. I redacted any statements they did not wish to appear in this text. Each subject read and signed an IRB-approved informed consent form (see Appendix B), which summarizes the project and specifies the contract between subject and researcher.
3.2. Data

3.2.1. Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews of those in my sample to generate the data (interview transcripts) for my narrative analysis. I also used these data for my discourse analysis of the persuasive uses of aesthetics in grassroots arguments. These interviews were informal and conversational in tone. I conducted the interviews with the following goals in mind: (1) the co-creation, between the respondent and interviewer, of spoken-language utterances relevant to the wind power debate, (2) to learn whom else I should talk with in the respondent’s group or in other groups being studied, (i.e. to find new subjects for my theoretical sampling) (3) to collect artifacts for my discourse analyses.

I used an interview schedule to guide the roughly 45-minute-long interviews (see Appendix C). This schedule was tested on a member of Ridge Protectors (interviewee A1) in March 2007. Some questions and prompts on the schedule were introductory, setting up a conversational context in which I addressed specific objectives using the other prompts. The objectives that a given question addressed are listed next to that question in the interview schedule.

I recorded each interview using a digital audio recorder. I transcribed each interview for later coding and analysis. I will retain the original audio data, for my future reference, but will keep all data confidential (audio and text transcripts).
3.2.2. Texts written by activists to Vermont state officials

In the course of my interviews, I solicited supplemental texts—brochures, depositions before the Public Service Board, letters to the editor, photos, letters to state government officials, and others—authored by those I interviewed. From these, I selected two texts—one authored by a pro-wind activist, the other by an anti-wind activist—to analyze as part of my discourse analysis of the rhetoric of aesthetics of the debate. Each of these texts was written to persuade an audience whom the author perceived to have indirect or direct influence over wind development decisions in Vermont. These two texts, and the rationale I used to select them for my analysis are discussed in detail in section 4.2.2.

3.2.3. Position pages of grassroots group websites

The third source of data for my discourse analysis of the persuasive uses of aesthetics in the debate was activist websites. For this analysis, I used two texts—one a page from the website of a pro-wind grassroots group, the other a page from the website of an anti-wind grassroots group. Each of these pages represented what I call the groups’ ‘position page.’ A position page is a part of an activist website where the site author(s) comprehensively lists their rationale for supporting their cause. These pages, and the rationale I used to select them for my analysis are discussed in detail in section 4.2.3.
3.3. Analysis techniques

When I began this research, it was apparent that the debate over wind in Vermont was being influenced by ideas of what Vermont is supposed to be as well as what land uses are allowable in the state’s rural landscape. That is, the rationale I saw being used in the debate tended to follow patterned and institutionalized ways of thinking about Vermont. Given these influences, I chose discourse (as defined in section 2.3) as the theoretical basis for my analyses. This theoretical frame explained well the structural processes I saw shaping the debate. To connect the actions of the grassroots agents performing within the structure of these discursive processes, I used social movement literature, particularly that concerned with narrative and identity (see section 2.4).

I used a narrative analysis of the collective identities of grassroots groups to understand the debate in terms of: (1) the characterizations of Vermont, Vermonters, and commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont; (2) the roles of grassroots group; and (3) the benefits of success and consequences of failure for these groups. Building on this narrative method, I developed a discourse analysis framework to understand the persuasive uses of aesthetic arguments in the debate. I chose to focus on aesthetics because I found aesthetic considerations to be central to media portrayals of the debate as well to discourses of Vermont (see section 2.1 and section 2.7). Because discourses of Vermont were central to this study, less discursively oriented theoretical approaches, such as an historical study of the towns and regions that have been focal points in the wind debate, or a study of the rural demography of these areas, would not have allowed me to explain the contention that has arisen from the debate at a state-wide level.
3.3.1. Narrative analysis

In my narrative analysis, I relied on the following two techniques, borrowed from discursive psychology, for my analysis of the narrative structure inscribed on the wind power debate by grassroots groups: (1) pronoun analysis, (2) extreme case formulation analysis (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995, cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, pp. 130-132). With pronoun analysis, my primary goal was to identify the protagonists (e.g. “I”, “we”), antagonists (e.g. “they”, “them”), and the typifications/characterizations in these narratives, thus fulfilling Objectives 1a. and 1b (see section 1.2). Interview transcripts served as the sole texts for this analysis. Extreme case formulations—e.g. “they always say,” “they go everywhere and everybody has these secret agreements”—ascribe essential qualities to particular agents, groups, or places. I used the essential characteristics conveyed in these formulations to understand the roles the grassroots created for themselves in the debate, fulfilling Objective 1.c. while answering Questions 1.c.i. and 1.c.ii. I combined this narrative analysis with my frame analysis to answer Question 1.c.iii. With Objectives 1.a. through 1.d. fulfilled through the above methods, I was in a position to interpret the consequences of success and the benefits of failure that grassroots groups constructed, fulfilling Objective 1.e.

Frame analysis

Within my narrative analysis, I conducted an analysis of the frames used by activists to argue their positions in the debate. Frame analysis entails identifying the frames present in a text by finding particular thought elements that are characteristic of particular frames (Gamson 1989; Watts 2005). The goal of frame analysis is not only to
identify frames preconceived by the researcher (see section 2.6, Public policy discourse and framing) but to identify frames that emerge from the researcher’s interpretation of what subjects are saying. I applied frame analysis to the interview transcript texts in an effort to fulfill Objective 1.d. and to partially fulfill Objectives 1.d.i. and 1.d.ii (objectives I fully addressed in my discourse analysis, see section 3.3.2).

For both the narrative and frame analyses, I used Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to assist in the data organizing, concept coding and category building activities that underlie my qualitative analysis. I chose QSR International’s NVivo, version 7, as my CAQDAS platform for this study. I made this decision after reading Thomas König’s (2005) comprehensive review of qualitative analysis software and after evaluating NVivo as well as ATLAS.ti, and Qualrus. My criteria for evaluating these softwares were: (1) supports annotating/coding of text-base data; (2) supports organization of coded data; and (3) is an actively maintained and developed software that runs on modern operating systems. While all three platforms met these ‘discursive’ requirements, I felt the ‘ambient’ sense that NVivo’s user interface was easier to learn and to use, and found its querying capabilities to best fit my narrative analysis method.

3.3.2. Discourse analysis

I developed and applied a discourse analysis methodology to understand how the grassroots activists included in my study used aesthetic and non-aesthetic rationales persuasively in their arguments. This analysis was guided by Objectives 1.d.i. and 1.d.ii (see section 1.2), and was conducted on the following data: (1) interview transcripts,
which I co-created with my interviewees, and thus were “artificial” texts constructed as part of my research process; (2) letters to state government officials and regulators, which predated my interviews, but were collected as part of the interview interaction, and thus fall somewhere in between being artificially and naturally created texts; and (3) position pages of activist group websites, which were naturally occurring texts. In an effort to ‘put aesthetics in its place’ in the Vermont wind power debate, I focused my discourse analysis on how aesthetic-based frames were used persuasively in the debate. To do so I assessed the degree of linkage (e.g. syntactic, compositional, visual) between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic frames within a particular text (e.g. interview transcript, essay or letter, website). I also assessed the modes (e.g. ambient, discursive) in which the aesthetic discourses are expressed in these texts.

Why was I concerned with the inter-discursive linking of the aesthetic with the non-aesthetic as well as the modalities of aesthetic expression within the Vermont wind power debate? Why not, as did Brummett (1999) in his monograph *Rhetoric of Machine Aesthetics*, concentrate merely “on what signs within texts do rather than on the sort of signs or texts they are” (*ibid.* p. 23)? Unfortunately, this notion that the meaning making work of signs in texts can be separated from the nature of those signs reflects a ‘flat’ theorization of how meaning is made by the authors of texts. Such an understanding neglects the multiple layers—discourse, design, production, mode, medium, interpretation, etc.—at which meanings are made within texts.

Following Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), I believe that authors engaged in contemporary public discourses, such as the Vermont wind power debate, make meaning
by drawing on diverse semiotic modes, from the verbal (speech and writing), to the visual (color, graphic design, photography), and beyond (e.g. architecture, interior design, music, fashion). Further, it is the modality of communication that allows discourses to be realized in texts (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001, p. 21). Given the object of the aesthetic judgments in the debate—the Vermont landscape, a putatively ‘natural’ object—I used the ambient-discursive modal dimension of environmental aesthetic appreciation, drawn from the environmental aesthetics literature, to classify the aesthetic arguments I encountered.

To further specify the discursive space of the debate, I considered how aesthetic representations are linked to non-aesthetic arguments. The study of the persuasive use of a particular discourse—be it ambient aesthetic, juridical, scientific, etc.—presupposes the existence of a field of discourses, some of which are believed to be, by the rhetor, more effective at convincing an audience to accept as true a particular thought or idea. Given the “endless combination and recombination” of discourses involved in the creation of texts (Fairclough 1995, p. 134), it is necessary to understand how discourses are linked in order to understand the meanings that emerge from these texts. Thus I described the rhetoric, the persuasive use, of aesthetics in the debate in terms of the modal and linked dimensions of aesthetic arguments in the texts I have sampled from the debate.

**Identifying aesthetic utterances**

In this discourse analysis, I was concerned with utterances of aesthetic discourses that were articulated in spoken and written language and visual images. I used the following rule to identify such utterances in written language:
An appeal to the effects of utility-scale wind development on the senses—vision and hearing;

Given the dominance of the visual modality in making aesthetic judgments, I assumed that photographs, drawings, sketches, or paintings that appeared in the texts that I analyzed were by definition aesthetic utterances. I identified the non-aesthetic discourses that were referenced in these texts using frame analysis (see section 3.3.1).

Measuring modality

Measuring the modality of aesthetic utterances is an act of interpretation. As such, there is some room for disagreement when a particular aesthetic utterance is interpreted to be rendered in an ambient mode as opposed to a discursive mode. However, I believe it is possible to interpret the modality of most utterances in a way that most would agree with. I used the following rules to judge the modality of aesthetic utterances I encountered in my discourse analysis:

1. If an aesthetic utterance appeals to the effect of utility-scale wind development on the senses—vision and hearing—using scientifically measurable quantities and thresholds, it is a discursive aesthetic utterance;

2. If an aesthetic utterance appeals to the effect of utility-scale wind development on the senses—vision and hearing—without using scientifically measurable quantities and thresholds, it is an ambient aesthetic utterance;

An example of a discursive aesthetic utterance can be found in condition 8 of the certificate of public good issued by the Vermont Public Service Board to UPC Vermont Wind for the Sheffield, Vermont wind generating facility:

8. UPC shall construct and operate the Project so that it emits no prominent discrete tones pursuant to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards at the receptor locations, and indoor sound levels at any King George School structure and any surrounding residences do not exceed 30 dBA(Ldn).

(Vermont Public Service Board 2007, p. 2)
While this utterance in rendered in written language, a similar discursive aesthetic utterance could be rendered in a visual media, such as a two-dimensional graph depicting acceptable sound intensity levels for particular distances from the nearest turbine. Alternately, an aesthetic appeal to the effects that a utility-scale wind facility would have on the local soundscape could be rendered in an ambient mode, as in the following example taken from one of my interviews:

> the idea that … the relative peace and quite that surrounds [hill towns] … could just be shattered … for such a problematic benefit doesn’t seem sensible to me. (A5)

Another class of ambient aesthetic utterances that I identified was rendered in visual media—in the form of digital representations of photographs and drawings, sketches, or paintings—that depicted landscapes with and without utility-scale wind turbines.

**Measuring linkage**

Once I identified the non-aesthetic discourses and identified and classified the aesthetic utterances in a text, I was in a position to describe how the text’s author linked these discourses and utterances together. In the simplest case, written language, I relied on syntax and punctuation to identify cases where a particular discourse was being linked to a particular aesthetic utterance. I also relied on three visual methods to identify such associations: (1) page layout; (2) written language captions associated with or overlaid on images; (3) iconic visual images that index particular discourses. I primarily used page layout—in particular vertical or horizontal adjacency—to identify linkages in written language representations. I used image captions and iconic images to identify linkages between visual representations and written language within visual representations.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss the results of my analyses. I begin with my narrative analysis, and finish with a discussion of the results of my discourse analysis. In both cases, I relate my findings to the objectives and questions posed in section 1.2.

4.1. Narratives, frames, and consequences

4.1.1. Narratives: Characters

In this section, I address Objective 1.a. (see section 1.2) and describe the characters I found in the pro-wind and anti-wind narratives I encountered in my interviews with individuals and members of grassroots groups. In pro-wind narratives, the ‘protagonist’ refers to the pro-wind activist and their allies, while in anti-wind narratives that protagonist refers to the anti-wind activist and their respective allies. In both classes of narrative, the ‘antagonist’ refers to those who are seen, by the activist, as working against the protagonist and their position with respect to utility-scale wind development in Vermont. These characters are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Characterizations found in grassroots narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Characterization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>Protagonist / hero</td>
<td>Working class; advocates of common sense; targets; unwitting volunteers; not well funded; allied with VPIRG, VNRC, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>Antagonist / villain</td>
<td>Rich flatlanders; selfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Characterization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Protagonist / hero</td>
<td>Frugal green stewards; reluctant activists; historically victims of development; diligent guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Antagonist / villain</td>
<td>Profiteering developers; complicit government officials; other Vermonters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pro-wind protagonists**

Given the paucity of pro-wind grassroots groups in Vermont—relative to anti-wind groups—I was only able to interview members of one such group (I interviewed members of three anti-wind groups). I wanted to interview more than two people from the pro-wind camp, so I relaxed my sampling criteria to allow interviews with pro-wind individuals who were not aligned with a particular pro-wind group (see section 3.1.1). As such, my portrait of the pro-wind “activist” is more so a portrait of individuals advocating for commercial utility-scale wind development than one of individuals acting as parts of groups (though the sketch is inspired by elements of both).

This said, the narratives I encountered suggest a pro-wind protagonist that is, in part, a worker, an advocate of commonsense, and a target for anti-wind criticism. The protagonist as member-of-group, informed as it is by but two sources, is a volunteer in a group that is not well organized, uses the Internet to organize and plan actions and has a
state-wide focus. I deal with these individual and group aspects of the pro-wind antagonist in turn.

Identity: Workers, advocates of commonsense, targets

In an interview with a member of Fairwind Vermont (see Appendix A for a listing of subjects and their affiliations and other demographic information), the respondent commented thusly in response to my expression of the difficulty I had finding interviewees who identified as being pro-wind, whether part of a pro-wind grassroots group or not:

I think in Vermont's case, part of the problem was that very few people who are pro-wind didn't also have a day job, and a family and things that they had to get done on a daily basis, where they just didn't have time to join groups or form groups or attend meetings and express their opinion in things other than an occasional letter to the editor. (P1)

Another member of Fairwind put it likewise:

all of us are, you know for the most part, purely volunteers with other jobs and families … (P2)

When I asked an individual pro-wind activist why they thought there were more anti- than pro-wind grassroots groups, they replied:

because most of the people that are pro-wind … work for a living, [are] ordinary working people… (P4)

A member of Fairwind Vermont characterized supporters of wind in Vermont as generally being younger:

I've gone to a lot of the ANR [Agency of Natural Resources] hearings and spoke at a lot of public hearings around Vermont relating to several of the projects, … It's interesting, I made the observation in a lot of these meetings that there's very few grey-haired people who are on the … pro-wind side. (P1)

This respondent went on to say that they hoped that this:
Those with this “21st century” mindset are characterized as those willing to:

[a]fter a century of glutony, … bite the bullet a little bit to rebuild this [energy] infrastructure with this new 21st century model [of which commercial utility-scale wind is a part]. (P1)

What motivates the pro-wind protagonist to support commercial utility-scale wind? I found in my interviewee’s responses the following rationalities: (1) fighting global warming; (2) uncertainty over future energy supplies; and (3) desire for energy cost certainty (see section 4.1.3). These sentiments are related, as one respondent avered:

if we do [build utility-scale wind in sensible places in Vermont], then we've solved a piece of the puzzle of the energy demand that we're going to need from a logical source that's non-polluting, in the long run it's going to save our society and absolute fortune in money. (P1)

For adherents of this 21st century model, utility-scale wind energy is a commonsensical part of the future of energy infrastructure:

you know we spent five years … trying to pull together educational materials and distribute it and go to public hearings and plead, you know for common sense to prevail as to why this is important and you know to dispel the fears and the lies frankly and all the things that have been said about commercial wind and frankly every other energy option. (P1)

Believing in the importance of wind power to the future well being of society, research and knowledge sharing were keys to pro-wind activists’ appeals to common sense:

I believed in what I was doing. I believed, somewhat naively in hindsight, that I was in a unique position to dispel the misinformation about commercial wind spread by anti-wind activists, having done the research and having become educated (P3)

The commonsensical nature of the rightness of utility-scale wind is bolstered by a pro-wind protagonist that is seen as part of a majority in the state of Vermont:

80% of the state in general is supportive of wind power. (P1)
The majority is substantial, but it is a silent one:

I think most people, a silent majority like in anything else, are open-minded and receptive to it and, upon learning the facts, would probably would support it. (P3)

The relative lack of pro-wind organizing, the silence of these protagonists, may be explained by negative reactions to the pro-wind position in communities that faced potential commercial utility-scale wind developments:

there was another woman who was active in the Northeast Kingdom early on, whose name I won't bring up, because subsequently I think she feels like she got a little bit burnt… [I]n the Northeast Kingdom I think if you support wind power, in some instances, you might as well just paint a big target on your back … and you know walk around and wait for the first knife because it's that vicious. (P2)

As a consequence of advocating for wind, one respondent said that:

[I] became A1 number target for the locals who wanted to bash wind. (P3)

I return the the question of the relative lack of pro-wind grassroots organizing in section 5.1.

**The Organizations**

In describing how they became a pro-wind activist, a member of Fairwind Vermont represented themself as an unwitting volunteer:

as meetings continued forward, at some point we were talking to one of the selectboard members who said well, you know we hear from people who oppose this and just think it's the worst thing but we haven't really heard from anybody who thinks it might be a good idea. … it was like well, nobody else is speaking up then, I guess I have to do it. (P2)

The protagonist-as-volunteer is not well-funded:

we're not full-time, paid staff lobbyists, but, as much as volunteers can do and make time for, we try to do. (P2)

The well-meaning under-funded volunteer is not well-organized, here the worker-family identity is important:
most of us are, for the most part, purely volunteers with other jobs and families, so we've never pursued it as aggressively as some, to go out and raise all kinds of money and hire an executive director ... (P2)

As a consequence the pro-wind group Fairwind Vermont’s actions are more reactive than proactive:

We're not so well organized that we can be terrifically proactive other than going to things like the Step-it-Up days and that kind of stuff. But we work closely through things like the Vermont Sustainable Energy Coalition with the other advocacy groups, like VPIRG, like VNRC like Vermonters for a Clean Environment, Conservation Law Foundation. ... we don't feel like we're alone by any means. (P2)

However Fairwind Vermont is allied with better-funded and better-organized groups.

Further, the Internet is important to the networking and organizing that is essential to the existence of this small group:

there's a core of 20 people who receive the nuts and bolts e-mails that go out about ... [issues where] our legislators will moved by a couple or three phone calls on that subject. So we would fire off an e-mail to the whole group and say, now’s the time to call your representative and that kind of stuff. (P2)

This technology (e.g. e-mail and websites) enabled Fairwind to transition from operating at a local scale—advocating for a particular commercial utility-scale wind development—to operating at a state-wide scale—advocating for utility-scale wind development in the state in general:

but it then became clear that as other proposals came up around the state that the same issues were going to come up across the state, and that therefore, you know maybe we would have to assume the role of sort of a state-wide citizen's advocacy group. (P2)

**Pro-wind antagonists**

The antagonists of pro-wind narratives are characterized along two dimensions: identity traits and politics. These antagonists are rich flatlanders, prone to selfish
NIMBYism. They are ignorant and scared, driven to viciousness and deceit, ultimately fools. In political terms, they are seen as a vocal minority, aligned with Governor Douglas and the conservative elite establishment, they are reflexively anti-corporate, with suspicious sources of funding. I illustrate these traits and politics in the sections that follow.

**Identity: Rich flatlanders**

The core of the groups opposed to commercial utility-scale wind, it is argued, is made up of rich retirees:

The Northeast group, the Kingdom Commons Group, to a slightly less level, you know certainly the Glebe Mountain Group around here is made up of, or at least the core of the group is made up of almost exclusively retired wealthy people. (P1)

Wealth and free time afford them the opportunity to lobby against wind more effectively than the pro-wind antagonist can lobby for it:

the opposition groups, like Kingdom Commons and the Ridge Protectors up in the Northeast Kingdom and here in Londonderry the Glebe Mountain Group … a lot of them, face it are being staffed by people who are retired and you know have hefty … funds available to them from their careers as bankers or lawyers or whatever it was that they did before they bought real estate and retired to Vermont. Not that there aren’t native Vermonters that participate in those groups too, but generally they have gone after funding and much more aggressive political organizing than we have … (P2)

This wealthy core was dubbed by one respondent as “20th Century Aristocrats”:

But that core, entrenched group, what I call the 20th century aristocrats, who got filthy rich and more powerful than the pharaohs of Egypt, you know they’re not going to allow anything to happen in our society that’s going to rock the boat for their nice cushy ride … (P1)

These aristocrats are flatlanders, not Vermonters:

There are people who changed their town of residency in order to be able to vote on this issue [of whether a town should support a proposed commercial utility-scale wind development]. Their primary home is in Greenwich, CT, their
primary home is in Westchester, NY and yet, somehow … magically in the month or so before this issue, they became registered voters in the town of Londonderry, VT … (P2)

Identity: Selfish NIMBYists

The pro-wind antagonist-as-rich-flatlander is an elitist presence in the Vermont landscape:

There's a snob element involved in this thing, about the looks here and so on. It has taken on almost a religious aura, that we have to worship the ridges and so on. Well maybe yes and maybe no. … The world never stops changing, it changes constantly. And the idea that you could go back and lock this [the Vermont landscape] in to the 1930s is plainly silly. For one thing they don't want to lock it in to the 1930s, they want to lock it in to the 1930s after super-imposing cell phones, TV, three car families, and that—they don't want to live like people lived in the 1930s. I live in the 1930s, I know. They don't want to live that way. They want plenty of power, electrical power and you’re going to have to sacrifice something to have it constantly. (P4)

One respondent blamed the elitist desire to turn Vermont into Switzerland, exemplified by the pro-wind antagonist, for the perceived sorry state of the state’s economy:

…these people have very skewed ideas about the way this state ought to be compared to people that grew up here and would like to make a life here. And it's sad, it's really sad. There's an awful lot—this NIMBYism and this hypocritical way of looking at the way the state is supposed to be … it's kind of a skewed attempt to turn it into Switzerland. (P5)

The selfish NIMBYist is not open-minded, their opposition to wind is predetermined before debate:

My problem is, the anti-wind group is not open minded, they come into projects and they say they're open minded and—I used to go to their meetings, I used to attend the Glebe Mountain Group meetings, so I know exactly who they are and how they think—and you know they're going in, it’s kind of like a scientist who starts an experiment already knowing the conclusion they want to reach and then going in and trying to conduct the experiment to adjust the hypothesis to match their final conclusion. (P1)

Identity: Ignorant and scared

The narrow-minded pro-wind antagonist is dangerously ignorant—or at least was at the beginning of the Vermont wind debate, around 2002-2003:
if you ask the people who are anti-wind you know simple questions like how much power do we use in Vermont at any point in terms of peak-load power, and average consumption, none of these anti-wind people, or most of the anti-wind people, have any clue as to what the answer to any of those basic questions are, that need to be understood to even have a sensible dialog as to how we solve this problem [the energy supply/global warming problem] up here. (P1)

… ignorant, scared, or confused:

But it became obvious at the first couple of meetings even before there was really an organized opposition, that there were a bunch of people who were, either scared of it, or just outright opposed from the get-go and a bunch of people who were confused and didn’t know what to make of it (P2)

Identity: Vicious liars

The pro-wind antagonist is at a factual disadvantage and must resort to personal attack:

when people, complete strangers are being rude to your wife on the street because she's related to you and you're outspoken in support of wind, when they're trashing you in the media claiming these falsehoods, it becomes personal. (P3)

Unable to attack the message head on, the antagonist is forced to lie:

you know, Vermont has a reputation of being environmentally friendly, so you can't attack wind based on it being environmentally friendly, you've got to claim it's not environmentally friendly. (P3)

The alleged attack by the antagonist on the pro-wind protagonist was articulated around the question of indigeneity:

Well, then it became attack the messengers, personally. Over the course of the next 2 or 3 years it finally got down to the point of, he’s not a Vermonter—I can’t say this without naming names—but when you've got the head of an editorial board calling you personally and saying, you’re not a Vermonter, we’re not going to print your letters, why are you in this debate, you have to say, “wait a second.” (P3)

Another respondent, in relating a case in Sheffield, Vermont—where an anti-wind activist stopped doing business with a business owner whose son allegedly signed a
contract to allow wind developer UPC to build turbine(s) on his land—characterized the anti-wind activists as follows:

I don't know why [some] have made this such a vendetta … They have been nasty. … there's been some economic blackmail too (P5)

This “fearmongering” about wind told by the pro-wind antagonist ranges from: (1) wind turbines using more electricity than they produce, due to energy required to spin the blades to make them appear to be generating electricity (P3); to (2) turbines electrocuting cattle, from up to a mile away, by the electricity they allege leaks from the turbines and into the ground (P3).

The “poison” spread by the antagonist must be fought across geographic scales:

Dave Blittersdorf, the president of NRG wind systems is much more than a guy trying to sell wind turbines. He's got a very mature 21st century approach to our energy-environmental issues in general, and he's gone … into battle with some of the anti-wind people and some of the agents they've hired from all over the country to spread their poison. (P1)

… including cyberspace:

there are several organizations that you can get to on the Internet whose sole, their sole reason for existence is to spread a lot of bullshit about wind farms… (P5)

With their Internet-enabled echo chambers, the childish anti-wind antagonist is ultimately revealed as a fool:

You know they say this stuff to themselves so often the end up believing it in the end (P1)

**Politics: Vocal minority**

The pro-wind antagonist, the 20th century aristocrat, is a vocal minority in Vermont:
those particular people that, you know that 15% of our population who controls all the legislature and all the money and they're completely entrenched in the 20th century … (P1)

This minority has strong influence over the political bodies that control energy policy in Vermont:

most of the polls whether they're scientific or unscientific have basically shown that 15%, 15-20% of the population is … carrying the sentiment of the legislature and the PSB and the governor … (P1)

**Politics: Aligned with the establishment**

These Svengalis are, according to a member of Southern Vermont-based Fairwind Vermont, the ventriloquists behind Gov. Douglas:

Yeah, it’s funny, because that that whole, most of what comes out of Jim Douglas's mouth comes from his, he has some close personal friends who are part of the Glebe Mountain group here in Londonderry and Weston, and they tend to feed him information, because they’re essentially his conservative voter base (P1)

I found this same trope in the Northeast Kingdom:

the old Republican establishment in the Northeast Kingdom is very pro-Douglas. I mean Douglas relies on them for a lot support. That’s about the only Republicans left in the state and these Republicans, early on, were against wind. … but if you're an elected Republican … and you've been in office for 20 or 30 years and one of your—like the owner of Burke Mt.—walks up to you and says, “well I'm going to close this place down if they build that damn thing because I don't want to look at 'em,” then you're going to listen to that guy and you’re going to go back and tell the governor, “I don't want a goddamn wind farm in the Northeast Kingdom.” (P5)

The alignment between the pro-wind antagonist and the governor, as it is perceived by pro-wind activists, extends to business and industry groups within the establishment:

The energy … policy of the state right now is, with David O'brien as commissioner [of the Public Service Board] and Riley Allen, you know they're all agents of Douglas's mindset who were driven by the Chamber of Commerce

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10 All of my interviews took place before the August decision by the Public Service Board to grant a certificate of public good to UPC Vermont Wind for the Sheffield, Vermont utility-scale wind farm. Thus, no new wind projects had been approved under the Douglas Administration.
and the ... Vermont Association of Industries and all those conservative think tanks who think, number one, that global climate change is farce... (P1)

**Politics: Secretly funded**

In addition to their political ties to such establishment groups, the pro-wind antagonist is suspected as receiving funding from more than just the average citizen, as a member of Fairwind Vermont put it:

we've never quite established where their funding comes from, some of it I'm sure is donations from individuals, but we're not entirely sure that it's limited to donations from individuals, and they seem to have the budgets to hire lawyers and lobbyists and etc. etc. so they have much more of a profile in effect they're better, better organized in terms of their websites and that kind of thing. (P2)

Commenting on the perception that those with anti-wind sentiments are more often organized into groups, a pro-wind individual was likewise attributed suspicious of the funding sources of the anti-wind groups:

Why we haven't organized more I suppose is because nobody's given us any money to do the organizing. The other side apparently are [sic] drawing a lot of money from somewhere, I don't know where. (P4)

This suspicion is pervasive. Another pro-wind individual seems to trust neither pro- nor anti-wind groups:

both sides have had some sources of income that are less than honest. (P5)

**Anti-wind protagonists**

The heros of anti-wind narratives were represented as frugal green stewards who are standing up to problems inherent to the way commercial utility-scale wind development is carried in Vermont. The ways that anti-wind activists have responded to these problems contribute to the construction of an anti-wind protagonist that demands public accountability, and researches and shares knowledge with others.
Frugal Green Stewards

The protagonists that appeared in anti-wind narratives, as told to me by those I interviewed, were promoted as being frugal, clean and green, at home in the peace and quiet of rural Vermont—the true Vermont that draws tourists to the state. As one respondent put it:

Vermont is one of the most frugal states for electricity in the nation, we're really, we're really, if you come into the state at night, you look, people have one light on in this house, I mean its a dark state. (A1)

Conservation comes naturally to Vermont, a state peopled by frugal, self-sufficient Yankees:

here in the Northeast Kingdom … [there’s] a degree of provinciality you know and so on one hand we're “Buy Local Buy Local” and we really try to walk that walk here (N11)

These conservationist “localvores” are also exceptional in their embrace of low-polluting renewable electricity generation:

But and Vermont is incredibly clean. We have the cleanest emissions in the country. I mean as far as electric generation. We are the cleanest state in the nation. … [creating] an incredible amount of renewable energy already. The Northeast Kingdom in this area, we generate 240% of our power. If you include the Connecticut River dams, we have almost two-and-a-half times the power that we need here, and it's renewable. I mean the methane plant, the chip burning plant, the three hydro dams. (A1)

Here we see the Northeast Kingdom region of the state as a metonym for Vermont. However there is a sense that the Kingdom and the state are at risk of being lost, that Vermont and its people are endangered species. This threatened nature can be seen in the following opposition between the Northeast Kingdom and greater Vermont:

11 N1 self identified as being ambivalent toward commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont.
The Northeast Kingdom really is the only part of Vermont that’s Vermont, that’s left. … [M]uch of Vermont has become suburbia, or a sort of suburbia/exurbia. … The Northeast Kingdom still has wilderness … large expanses of seemingly raw land. … [I]t’s not raw land because it’s a sustainable harvest land [of trees]. (A2)

The Northeast Kingdom, green and wild, entrains residents with its peace and quiet:

hill towns that, for generations have cherished the relative peace and quite that surrounds them … that's why people live in places like Sheffield and Sutton, if they didn't happen to be born there. (A5)

Not only are residents drawn to the Northeast Kingdom, so are tourists:

We're just really frugal here, you know. And it, and we are, now we are the number one [geo-]tourist destination in the United States. (A1)

But what is it about the Northeast Kingdom and Vermont that attracts tourists?

I think because it's in its pristine state, I mean we've done such a good job over the years, we haven't allowed billboards, which dramatically, the look of this state as you come into it you know you're in Vermont, I mean you drive across the Massachusetts boarder and the billboards stop and so instantly you know you're in a different place. … We also didn't allow, they wanted to put a ridge top highway, we protected the ridgelines 20 years ago [sic12]. (A1)

The Vermont landscape popular with tourists has retained its wild, rural charm because of the work of the efforts of the state’s citizens to preserve its particular character.

we've been good stewards to the land. (A3)

**The problem with wind development**

Owing perhaps to the green sensibilities attributed to the protagonists of anti-wind narratives, of some activists (i.e. three of the seven anti-wind activists) said that, at first, they supported the wind development proposed in their community:

Well, like everyone, I began by feeling anything in alternative energy would be great. And so I was all behind wind in the beginning. (A2)

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12 The respondent is referring to the proposed, but never built, Green Mountain Parkway. This highway, which the state legislature voted down in 1936, would have run along the spines of peaks of the Green Mountains in Vermont (see Albers 2000, pp. 262-266).
Another respondent described themselves as a reluctant activist:

I will tell you honestly that before four and a half years ago [2002-2003], we were never actively involved in politics. ... I felt that there was a lot of corruption and self-interest and didn’t want to be involved in that. Now I believe that if you don’t get involved, you have only yourself to blame if things don’t work out the way you want. (A3)

However, according to these narratives, as community members began to learn more about and experience the process of wind development, they found problematic the particular wind developments proposed for their communities.

I think the longer this has gone on, the more people have discovered that the developers have not been open and honest with the community, and the more people are waking up to the fact that they better start researching the subject and they better start understanding what’s going on here...and getting involved. It's not a simple picture, and certainly not as simple as the developer would have the community believe. (A3)

Leaving aside for the nonce the problematic aspects of wind development in these narratives (see section 4.1.3), this call-to-action-through-research illustrates the realization in anti-wind narratives that it is up to the citizens to protect and preserve their communities. In these narratives I found a perception of the historical victimization of rural Vermont communities, for example:

We, the Northeast Kingdom, because it is the sort of rural poor part [of Vermont] has been historically, taking a lot of ... the things that no one else in Vermont wants—well that no one wants period, but that has to be housed somewhere, and so the Northeast Kingdom because it's sort of weakest and poorest winds up with it. (A2)

Contemporary wind development is seen as a continuation of this pattern of “being dumped on,” a pattern argued to be common in rural communities in New England. For example in Mars Hill, Maine, UPC Wind—the developer of the proposed Sheffield, Vermont wind electricity generation facility—constructed a wind electricity generation facility in the Fall of 2006:
It's a similar kind of scenario in the sense that it's a small, isolated, poor area. (A2)

While a common experience of rural communities, which can be read about for example on anti-wind websites (such as http://www.nationalwindwatch.org/), another respondent argued that the lived experience of wind development is central to being able to understand the effects it has on communities:

you know the rest of the state won't, can't understand this until it actually arrives in their back yard. They can't appreciate what these communities go through. (A1)

How does the wind development process affect rural communities in anti-wind narratives?

Well just imagine, you know, a small poor town and you imagine that you throw say a million dollars around in town, you have husbands and wives that are divorcing, you have neighbors that will never speak again. (A1)

What’s being referenced here is the practice—in the town of Sheffield, Vermont in this case—of wind developers drawing up contracts between the owners of land parcels that are suitable for hosting wind turbines. These allegedly secretive contracts offer landowners a small amount of money up front (alleged by A1 to be a few hundred dollars per year) to support the proposed development, as well as a long-term lease where for a larger sum (a few thousand dollars per month) the landowner will lease a portion of their land to the developer, who will be permitted to construct one or more wind turbines on it.

According to anti-wind activists, this particular style of commercial wind development—where an outsider decides to build a wind electricity generation facility in a community—causes conflict between community members. I found that this opinion was shared by one of my pro-wind respondents (also from the town of Sheffield):
Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about what effects the, the development or the proposed development has had on the town.

P4: It has caused a feud-type division that's going to last for the next 25- to 50-years. People who used to be friends are no longer friends and things of that kind, that really are angry at one another, they really are. (P4)

Such conflict is, according to anti-wind narratives, a common experience among rural towns in the Northeast:

- in every community that these wind facilities lands in you talk to the folks in Cohocton [New York], you talk to the folks in Mars Hill [Maine] it destroys the community, because of the greed and because of the people that want to save the landscape. (A1)

Thus the universal rural anti-wind protagonist fights to protect their landscape, community, and family from the forces of profit. In addition to causing disputes among members of a given town, this particular style of wind electricity development process pits town against town. As an anti-wind activist from the town of Sutton, Vermont (which borders Sheffield) put it:

- it's already in these communities caused an enormous amount of conflict and hard feelings among the residents, and that's, if it ever heals it's going to be a damn long time, I mean it will be. I mean people here just really don't think a whole lot of the folks over in Sheffield. Because the folks in Sheffield never asked … if we wanted to have a project. … [they] forgot the concept of neighbor. (A6)

On top of causing conflict within and between these rural poor communities, wind developers are portrayed as taking advantage of the relative disparity between developer and community in terms of having the funds required to be a party to the Act 248 process that regulates energy generation and transmission development projects in Vermont:

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13 I do not assume this to be true, I am at this stage merely giving voice to the anti-wind narrative as it was told to me.
And we’re just playing backup all the time, with all of our expert witnesses and
our, I mean, you know it's like *yikes*, because this whole … process has cost the
Ridge Protectors, I mean, *hundreds* of thousands of dollars. (A2)

Developers have millions of dollars of private equity money to spend on the
process and they go into communities knowing that the communities don't have
those kind of resources should they wish to fight a project. (A3)

Beyond the exploitation of the pastoral poor by the cosmopolitan corporations, the
problem with this style of wind development in Vermont can be traced to what I refer to
as a categorical mismatch:

It was really interesting to me because, there were very environmentally
conscious and aware folks and they were just absolutely passionately against
towers being on the ridge line. (N1)

I think that a lot of these people [wind developers] come into Vermont not
understanding how environmentally sensitive most people here really are. (A3)

In this “green mismatch,” the environmentalism of the anti-wind protagonist, the
protector if countryside and community, is not compatible with the environmentalism of
the wind developer, the developer of the green, alternative energy source.

*The activist response*

How does the anti-wind protagonist, the victim of the disingenuous wind
developer, respond to threats posed by wind development? According to the narratives
present in my interviews, they respond by demanding that developers be held accountable
to state land use planning regulations, diligently researching and learning, sharing
knowledge about wind development, and in the process building a movement that spans
socio-economic groups.

The following description of an early stage of a proposed wind development—
when the developer had done more extensive road work than they had agreed to do in
erecting wind measuring towers—shows the protagonist actively investigating the practices of the developer, making up for the alleged lack of oversight by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources:

We watched those towers … go up, and unlike most people, [we] hiked a long distance, you know through those mountains, and nobody else at ANR ever checked or anything to see how they were put up. We found two more infringements. (A6)

These diligent guardians use the tool of research to seek ‘the truth’ about wind development in Vermont:

And I think that because media people are not really researching it as in depth as we have, I think that they tend to trust the lobbyists for the developers, and the developers’ “salesmen.” What these interested parties say, the media and general population take as gospel. It is an amazing thing in a Yankee state like this, that because the developers’ words sound “green,” they are taken as fact. (A3)

The media are guilty of opaquely trumpeting the position of the developer, the ‘full’ effects of wind development are thus obscured. The antidote to this verisimilitude in the wind power debate lies in the efforts of diverse Vermonters:

It's been wonderful, it's been across the … socio-economic spectrum … you know we had one dairy farmer who sold three of his cows to donate, we had a state poet, we have an ex-game warden, we, it's just, people have told me they've never seen these people on the same side of the fence before, it's just people are just reacting to what feels like a destruction and invasion of their homes. (A6)

… each doing what they can:

And everybody sort of takes, because we're all farmers and housewives and students … everybody does what they're good at. (A1)

The watching, learning and sharing of information across the social relations between diverse Vermonters—some individual, some a part of anti-wind groups throughout the state from north to south—forms a part of a broader movement against wind in the Northeast of the United States:
so you know, [that’s] why all these groups [are] working together, we're sort of giving each other the heads up, what they're doing there, we can follow the trail ... (A1)

… a movement that, its members hope, will survive individual battles, whether lost or won, to continue fighting the broader war:

You asked also about what will Ridge Protectors do, in the eventuality that we lose, and once our bills are paid, I think that what we will probably do is well will at least try to help others in a similar position, like Cohocton, have you heard of those people in upstate New York? (A2)

The protagonist, a ‘David’ scarred with debt from battle with a financial ‘Goliath,’ emerges:

this is a case of people under the heal of a limited liability corporation that just, has such, they hire public relations people, they just roll in on top of you. (A6)

Undeterred, this David will fight again on fields near and far:

it's necessary for those of us, who who can, or become irate enough to defend against that, in order to preserve what's left of what we have. (A2)

… because:

it's just like if you have a child that's been diagnosed with an illness, you look into every possible cure that you can find … and that's the way I feel about these ridgelines. (A6)

Anti-wind antagonists

Who are the antagonists of this anti-wind narrative? My interview responses showed that they are: (1) the wind developers and their coterie of lawyers and PR operatives; (2) complicit, lazy, or ignorant government officials from town to state; (3) ‘The Other’; and (4) abstract forces. I explore these aspects of the anti-wind antagonist in the following sections.
Developers

The developer-as-antagonist in anti-wind narratives is a profiteer playing the market, an opportunist exploiting government incentives for ‘green energy’ development:

it's really sort of tragic that that a for-profit developer can come in and really invest really very little, if any, of his own money, but use the banks and the, and governmental funds to purportedly build these things and in the process, destroy, or really damage a local community. (A2)

The profits to be made are great:

there’s tremendous money to be made. You know J. P. Morgan is behind some of the power, and Noble Energy from Texas and they’re not in it for anything but making big bucks, I mean the rate of return, we calculate is about 40%, which is not bad. (A7)

... and there is suspicion of the motives of the developer:

The money isn't in the electricity generated from this, the money is in the federal subsidies. (A1)

... federal subsidies and burgeoning carbon credit markets:

They're called RECs, R. E. C. They might be, if you create green power, so much green power, they'll give you a credit and those credits are saleable, tradable, so like Florida Power and Light, where they generate, Florida generates, say they generate half of their power from coal or something like that, if they need more power, the federal government has mandated that they invest in renewable power, so they will buy this project so that they can boost their power. (A1)

Ultimately, the wind developer emerges as an antagonist with motives similar to those of oil and gas industries:

We also found, if you really start looking into this, that the growth of the wind industry has a lot to do with earmarks that have been given by the federal government through an energy policy that rewards wind companies many of whose leaders really come out of the oil and gas industries and know how to work the political system. Moreover, it is becoming clearer that our democracy is now the best money can buy. Special interests and lobbyists are more often than not determining our fate. In Vermont, VPIRG (once a fine public interest group but now an advocacy group), for instance, has five lobbyists working the legislature while three of their Board of Trustees are wind developers with financial stakes in projects in Vermont. Their agenda is to close the competition
(Vermont Yankee Nuclear – a carbon neutral source of base load energy) while pushing industrial wind as a source that can replace nuclear. And it can’t. (A3)

These developers, in seeking to fulfill their duty to profit, are disingenuous toward community members:

And we got involved with it because we found that the developers had an agenda, and their agenda was let's build a project and make lots of money and run rough shod over the local community and not be honest about the real impacts… (A3)

Lawyers and PR firm operatives, accomplices of the developer, enable the secretive and manipulative wind development process:

these guys are very very good at what they do, I mean they just fly through the town, cause they're young lawyers, and they, and you know these agreements if anybody exposes those agreements they're not valid anymore, so [chuckles] it it just leads to incredible corruption … they work the vote, they hired a PR firm from Burlington here to work the vote. They came and and dragged people out, paid residents to work the vote, dragged in, can you imagine, Spike Advertising, worked the vote here, they worked the dump, all these people in business suits (A1)

**Government and Regulators**

Local and state government officials are also antagonists in anti-wind narratives.

Accusations of lack of due process at the town level were common in these narratives:

I didn't like the way they worked sort of through the back door, through back room chats with our local government … our town fathers had agreed to something without due process. (A2)

Here the lure of the developers’ adding to the town coffers is too great:

You know it just, the temptation is too big, the town officials say “screw this,” and they just signed [agreements with wind developers] … (A1)

In these narratives, the good, if misguided, intentions of the town government are opposed to laziness on the part of state government:

For the legislature, they don't have to do anything, which they love. They just okay, open the gates and these guys come in and do all the work. (A1)
This respondent went on to compare the current wind development process with what might be required for small-scale hydroelectric development:14

It takes two years of work, it takes applying, the state has to do some work to help out [with small-scale hydroelectric development]. And they don't want to do that. … the things that really work over the long term and really help local people, local towns … take work and the legislature isn't famous for that. (A1)

Beyond mere laziness the legislature was portrayed, in reference to a perceived need for integrated energy planning, more darkly by another respondent:

[W]e couldn't get the legislature to pay [attention]—“don't give me the facts we just want what we want.” … Then we were told by one of the people on the natural resources committee, “don't tells us … what we can't do, you tell us how we can do what we want to do.” [laughs] That tells you where we're at. (A3)

Where the legislators are lazy or cynical, the regulators of the Agency of Natural Resources are portrayed in these narratives as being incompetent:15

nobody else at ANR ever checked or anything to see how they were put up [wind measuring anemometer towers]. We found two more infringements. (A6)

Early in the development process, regulators required that the wind developer pay for environmental impact studies, but the developer was allegedly free to choose the contractor who would perform the work. When I asked if developers should be required to pay for independent studies, the respondent replied:

They should have to. We don't do that. ANR didn't require that, and basically neither ANR or the Department of Public Service had any sense of what they didn't know—they didn't know what they didn't know (A6)

Further, since independent studies weren’t being done, regulators could not ensure compliance with environmental regulations:

14 Small-scale hydroelectric, or “run of the river” hydroelectric was often cited by my interviewees as a viable alternative to commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont—a state with hundreds of abandoned mills (Renewable Energy Vermont 2007).

15 Such references to the ANR were made in reference to the agency’s actions at the early part of the contemporary debate, around 2002 or 2003.
We had their, you know we got the records, the emails back and forth with the agency and there was no coordination. And the agency wasn't doing any studies, itself, and so theoretically, it's capacity to responsibly oversee and evaluate the impacts of the project was simply not there. (A6)

**The other: Burlington, Bennington, and beyond**

Antagonists in anti-wind narratives are not limited to developers, government officials and regulators, but also include other people in other places. These Others are invoked in these narratives firstly by citing the historical tensions between more-developed and less-developed areas of Vermont. One respondent cited commercial utility-scale wind development as merely the latest instance of the more-developed areas of the state taking advantage of the less-developed:

"Just say yes to this, it's way over there anyway, no one's going to see it from Burlington or Bennington or anywhere else, so no problem we'll just put it right there, and boom, it's all gone, there's no ... issue anymore, we can continue living the way we have all along, driving our SUV's and so forth. (A2)"

The Other is also invoked in relation to the ‘clean green’ identity of the anti-wind protagonist:

"That's another reason ... a lot of us are against it, because it actually allows those other states to boost the fossil production, you know [through carbon and renewable energy credit trading], it allows, by us doing this, it lets them keep going. They get one of one credit, they can go twice as much on the fossil fuel emissions. (A1)"

**Forces**

Underlying the actions of all of these antagonists, these enemies of the anti-wind protagonist are the forces of greed, authoritarianism, and unfettered development. The greed that suffused anti-wind narratives is exemplified in the willingness of some to forsake an implied social harmony in return for money:

"I think that one of the things that is quite nasty about this approach has been ... where a town says "well gee it'd be nice to have the money, so screw the"
neighbors, screw the next town, we don't care about them, we'll take the money and run.” (A3)

The authoritarian undertone of the narrative can be seen in the following, a part of a discussion of the town-wide meeting held by a developer at the early stage of a proposal, where the same respondent stated that:

the approach is more one that this is what we’re going to do, and we’re here to discuss mitigation with you if it’s necessary. (A3)

I have chosen to exemplify the greed and authoritarianism I heard in the debate using particularly articulate quotes, quotes which happened to be from the same source. However these themes can be seen throughout my discussion of the anti-wind narrative in quotes taken from a variety of sources. Another respondent placed the anti-wind movement in the historical context of grappling with the force of unfettered development;

So … that 30-year period, now 40-year period, saw a growing awareness that unchecked industrial and commercial development could really be the ruination, or at least the strong damaging of what [the landscape of Vermont] all of us here look at with great affection, and not just affection, but a realization that it is very important. (A4)

4.1.2. Narratives: Characterizations

In this section, I discuss the typifications and characterizations that I found in the grassroots narratives in my interviews with pro- and anti-wind activists and thus address Objective 1.b. (see section 1.2).

Characterizations of Vermont and Vermonters in pro-wind narratives

The characterizations of Vermont and Vermonters that I found in pro-wind narratives acknowledge that Vermont has a reputation for having an environmental
consciousness. However, Vermonters in these narratives, particularly those who do not support particular commercial utility-scale wind projects in the state, are characterized as being out of touch with contemporary crises of energy and climate, economics and demographics. The pro-wind characterizations of Vermont are ultimately bleak. The state is seen as: bad-for-business, a state whose democratic governance has gone awry, and ultimately a state in crisis.

**Vermont’s green reputation**

As one respondent put it:

Vermont has a reputation of being environmentally friendly (P3)

Another recounted a past encounter with tourists near the Searsburg, Vermont wind farm:

Where ya from, “well Connecticut” and what do you think of the prospect of other wind farms going up elsewhere in the state, would that keep you from coming here? “Well no, it’s kind of what you expect when you come to Vermont,” [tone shifts from quoting the tourist back to the present voice] that Vermont is going after those environmentally sustainable solutions. (P2)

Vermont is, according to another respondent, a leader in sustainable solutions:

In fact, [a Vermont-based green building group worked to] actually improve the LEED standard for Vermont, to be LEED and then some, because our Vermont standard, which we had been working on for five years is essentially superior to LEED for homes. (P1)

**Vermonters and the energy crisis**

Despite Vermont’s green reputation, some Vermonters (i.e. “anti-winders”) were characterized, during the early stages of the contemporary wind debate (roughly 2002-—

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16 I found, in the narratives I gathered in my interviews with activists, that pro-wind narratives, in general, dealt less with characterizations of Vermont and Vermonters, than did anti-wind narratives, and more with characterizations of anti-wind activists.

17 LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (see http://www.usgbc.org/)
2003), as not being so different in their environmental consciousness from “mainstream” Americans:

Someone had pre-planted the seeds in their mind that it was this big evil corporation coming in and they're going to destroy their neighborhood and put this stuff up and, you know it didn't work, and you know why are they ruining their lives with something that's a farce and you know there's no energy shortage and there's environmental issues [with wind development] and climate change is a farce and on and on and on. And it was just absolutely stunning to get exposed to all this stuff and realize that this is mainstream America or at least certainly mainstream southern Vermont. (P1)

Another source characterized early opponents of wind as wanting to:

keep burning coal, clean coal, liquefied coal, natural gas—there were several editorials/letters to the editor about it—even discussion of putting a natural gas-fired, the most expensive fuel source out there right now, in the Northeast Kingdom, it just it makes no sense. (P3)

Thus, there is a reality—that of rising energy costs and global warming—that Vermonters are characterized as being out of touch with.

**Vermont and the business environment**

Pro-wind narratives tend to characterize Vermont as being out of touch with the realities that face businesses trying to survive in the state:

Vermont can talk about being competitive [at attracting businesses] … but it's really not. And one of the reasons is, the cost of power … while we currently happen to enjoy the benefits of paying less than a lot of the surrounding states [because of the state’s soon-to-expire long-term contracts with HydroQuebec and Entergy Vermont Yankee] we only need to recollect back a couple years ago when it was the exact reverse because of the contracts [the market price for electricity was lower than the price Vermont paid through these contracts]. … The [other states] deregulated [their electricity markets], we haven't, but that will not prevent us from having to pay higher prices when the current contracts expire, prices that will no doubt be influenced by the fact that we continue to rely on others to produce much of our power. (P3)

This characterization seems to be arguing that other states have changed their regulatory environments to better suit the needs of business. Vermont, on the other hand, has a regulatory environment that is hostile to business:
if you know Vermont, there's a lot of environmental permitting … [that] makes it very very difficult for a company to do anything in this state. Now having lived in New Hampshire I can say to a certain extent, there are some very very good things that happen from that. Because if you go down in to Southern New Hampshire, it's a sewer. They don't have those kind of rules [Vermont’s Act 250] in New Hampshire and the result of that is some very very ugly development that nobody really wants. Vermont has eliminated that, but at what cost. Is there a third way that maybe gets the same effect with a lot less money and heartburn? (P5)

Vermont: democratic governance gone awry

The characterization of Vermont as being over-regulated and thus unfriendly to business stems, according to one respondent, from a long running trend—in America as well as Vermont—of privileging “majority rule” at the expense of private property rights:

there's a tough line to be drawn between majority rule and individual ownership, it's always been a problem, and it will continue to be a problem. But we more and more in my lifetime have moved the line toward majority rule and gotten away from private ownership. (P4)

Thus, regulation and ultimately government hampers business in fulfilling its goal of efficiently provisioning goods and services while profiting and providing jobs. Vermont is arguably a state whose governance is driven by pervasively democratic processes—from its Town Meeting local governance, its citizen review of land use decisions (through Act 250), to its part-time ‘citizen legislature.’ One respondent posits that this legislative body has produced poorly written, if not ill-considered, legislation that has hamstrung business in the state:

P5: one of the things that I have noted … since I got here is that you’ve got a bunch of amateurs running this state that pass legislation that does what it does, but it's not well written. Act 250 needs to be better written, Act 6018 … needs to be better written. … They’re just not well written. …

Interviewer: Because it's a part-time legislature?

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18 The state’s equal education opportunity legislation, which funds the states schools primarily through state and local property taxes. (see http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/laws/act60_fact_sheet.html)
P5: I'd say that. I'd say, well they're going to say “well we've got lawyers that are doing this” well that doesn't just because you're a lawyer, you've written legislation before doesn't mean you're doing a good job of it. And our country is full of bad legislation. It's full of times when somebody has to go back 5 or 10 years later after something's happened and say “you know we need to fix this, it's not working right” that doesn't happen in Vermont. … but it's small state, you step on a lot of toes when you start talking about that kind of stuff and nobody wants to go back and rehash that, but you're seeing, with … the school tax problem right now, you're seeing that with forestry issues. You're seeing that with any number of things that happen in Vermont. (P5)

In another part of our interview, the same respondent saw the failed H.520 “global warming” bill—a bill introduced in the 2007 legislature session, and later vetoed by Gov. Douglas— as a contemporary example of government and bureaucracy run amok:

this Efficiency Vermont bureaucracy they're going to create—this state already has too many bureaucrats, it has way too many state employees, it has way too many ways to spend your money and it's not awfully efficient—and just adding this level of crap to the system was not going to be the “be all” that they said it was, it’s just another, it’s another group hug that Vermont can have with itself, it really really is not going to work long term the way they claim it is. (P5)

The characterization of the expansion of Efficiency Vermont as a “group hug” furthers the characterization that some Vermonters tend to ‘preach to the choir,’ and tend to be out of touch with a particular reality. When I offered that Efficiency Vermont is seen as having been successful in reducing electricity demand in the state, the respondent replied:

Yes they have, but you know the amount of money needed to go to every Vermont home and make it energy efficient? This is, you're talking about an amount of money that doesn't exist in this state, and taxing the hell out of people to do it is just going to drive the impoverished people further into debt. They already can't pay their property taxes, where you going to get all of this money? Nobody wants to work here anymore, everybody that grows up in the Northeast Kingdom leaves, this state is becoming a retirement community. This is not the sign of a state that has a healthy economy, it's a sign of a state where the people that are coming here to retire are wealthy and they don't mind blowing their money before they die. That doesn't sound awfully good. (P5)

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19 This bill would have expanded Vermont’s energy efficient utility, Efficiency Vermont, but also dealt global warming and renewable energy (see Vermont Legislature, 2007b).
Thus those in the government, as well as lobbyists, activists, and citizens who supported this yet-another expansion of state bureaucracy are characterized as being out of touch with the economic and demographic realities that the state is perceived to be facing.

**Vermont in crisis**

These demographic and economic forces are causing a “wrenching change of land ownership that started maybe 10-20 years ago” (P5) where rich outsiders are vying to “get a piece” of Vermont. The result of this land rush is that Vermont is becoming:

> a state where the local people can no longer afford to own land in their own state. This happened in Connecticut, it happened in Massachusetts, and now it’s happening in Vermont. (P5)

Vermont’s lack of affordability stems from it being a high-tax state. In addition to having high property taxes:

> Vermont also has a very substantial income tax. It also has a very substantial sales tax, I mean you’re well aware that Vermont is a high tax state, and those taxes make it very difficult for a lot of people in Sheffield to own land and pay their taxes. (P5)

This sentiment was shared by another respondent:

> A great many people in Vermont, in this town in particular, are older people … and they don't have much of an income, their taxes have shot up in the air, their real estate taxes, and they'd like some relief on that. (P4)

This Vermont-in-crisis is due, in part, to attempts to turn Vermont into a “Switzerland”:

> people's idea of Switzerland is “oh it’s ski areas and little tourism and everything is perfect” … And it's like, let's do that in Vermont. Let's kick out all the forest—and they destroyed the forestry industry up here. Let's get rid of all of industry because “oh we can't have pollution.” … [former Governor] Madeline Kunin was the initiator of this concept. You know lets drag in IBM and make them the centerpiece for industry in Vermont. Well this is really great until IBM goes through a downsizing or has some problems and every time that happens and a bunch of people lose their jobs and things get a little worse, but everyday you read in the paper about, there are some success stories, but more often than not these are companies that have just said “screw this shit, we’re not going to
deal with Vermont [and its high taxes and burdensome environmental regulation] anymore, we’re going to leave.” (P5)

To summarize, the composite pro-wind narrative that I’ve sketched characterizes some Vermonters as out of touch with, and the Vermont government/bureaucracy as complicit in the energy and economic crises that feature prominently in these narratives.

**Characterizations of Vermont and Vermonters in anti-wind narratives**

The Northeast Kingdom, and the town of Sheffield specifically, was the site of the only wind development proposal that was in the Public Service Board permitting process during the period of my study (March-July, 2007). Thus most of the active organization against wind took place in this area. On August 8th, 2007, several weeks after I completed my final interviews, the Public Service Board granted a certificate of public good to UPC Vermont Wind to build a 40 MW wind farm consisting of 16 turbines in Sheffield (Vermont Public Service Board 2007). This decision was imminent and on the minds of all whom I interviewed.

Sheffield, the neighboring town of Sutton, and the Northeast Kingdom were a spatial focal point of the debate during my field season. This centrality is reflected in the characterizations that I found in the debate. The Northeast Kingdom tended to be characterized in relation to, or in opposition to, characterizations of Vermont as a whole. I will start my discussion of these characterizations with the general (Vermont) and work toward the specific (The Northeast Kingdom).
Privileging the hills

The characterization that I found to be most prevalent across anti-wind narratives was the centrality of uplands, hills, and mountains to the material wellbeing—as a source of physical health and economic sustenance—and the spiritual wellbeing—as a part of scenically beautiful places—of Vermont communities, and the state as a whole:

this is a very prominent mountain, it very much defines the area. There are valleys, there's a huge valley, and there are three peaks in the area, one is Stratton one is Bromly one is Magic. And so it's not only a prominent mountain, but it's one that the locals care about, there's people do hiking and hunting and it’s very much part of the recreational and scenic and integrated part of the community. (A3)

Indeed mountains are an essential feature of Vermont:

the mountains and what they represent, aesthetically, environmentally is key to our outlook on Vermont, most people's outlook on Vermont. … it's our birthright here in this state, and people do, in Vermont look upon Vermont as a special place, very much so. (A4)

One respondent reinterpreted a quote of Ethan Allen’s while arguing that mountains have long been recognized as important landscape features in Vermont:

So he wasn’t trying to set up a dichotomy between industrial development in the valleys and some sort of … untouched wilderness on the mountaintops. But whatever Ethan Allen might have had in mind when he said the “Gods of the hills are not the gods of the valleys,”[^20] it seems to me that Vermont [has a] long-standing recognition that high elevation land has to be, has to be treated differently from the rest of our natural resources. (A5)

The hills of the state, and Vermont-as-landscape as a whole, are characterized as being more than just objects to look at:

[^20]: According to my source, the original context of this quote is as follows:
I've taken it out of context. He did say that, but he didn't mean what I want the phrase to mean now or what I'm trying to make the phrase mean now. He was actually talking about, he had just been handed a verdict by some land court in NY concerning the title of land holders and he was telling the court that that their decision wouldn't stand up on the ground and he meant that the judgment of this court won't cut the mustard in the hills of Vermont” (A5).
being in the Vermont landscape is an experience that involves a whole mix of important landscape characteristics. And the ridgelines, uplands, pastures, woodlands, the variegated aspects of it, are what are I think it’s very important to Vermont to be a place to be in… (A7)

This “being-in-ness” hints at a sacred spirituality:

these [mountains] are sacred to us … They inspire us, sustain us. (A6)

As characterized in anti-wind narratives, the essential mountains of Vermont are a signifier for the natural environment of the state as a whole. This signification is, as I attempt to demonstrate in the following paragraphs, the central logic around which anti-wind narratives are articulated.

**Desirable Vermont**

Vermont—its mountains, its environment—is characterized as being uniquely beautiful:

I think we're unique in the United States and the world as a tourist destination because the natural beauty of Vermont … I mean it's our signature, that's our stock and trade. (A6)

The perceived beauty of this landscape implies a healthy environment that attracts tourists and residents alike:

This state has certain qualities about it that make it a beautiful place to live, that's one thing, but a healthy place to live in… (A4)

When I asked what these qualities where, the respondent replied:

Well, the qualities of the state are really what the natural world has created for us … you know them as well as I, the forest, the ability to farm safely, the ability to live reasonably well and comfortably, the ability to have clean water flowing in our streams so that fish can exist in there. The ability of our being able to breath clean air … (A4)
The health over time of the landscape—the environment of Vermont—is characterized as being important to the harmonious social relations that the state is represented as having and other places are represented as lacking:

we're finding out in terms of New Orleans, it's very hard to create a community without the accretion that takes place over many generations of a social structure and a physical structure that brings continuity and that's what has drawn people to a place. And Vermont is lucky in the sense that it has a native population that has a strong feeling, New Hampshire does too, ... I don't know as much about Maine, but I know, like Vermont, parts of Maine where that's true (A7)

Thus Vermont is characterized as having a high quality of life—composed of abundant natural and social capital—that is largely dependent on an environment that is perceived and represented as being intact and in a healthy condition. Vermonters, characterized as having an environmental consciousness, understand this connection:

people come into Vermont not understanding how environmentally sensitive people really are (A3)

Vermont’s environment is protected not only by its diligent citizens, but also by its government through legislation:

the Acts are meant, particularly Act 250 ... and [248] to preserve our natural world as much as is possible with the growth of technological ability to harm it. (A4)

The environmental consciousness of Vermonters and the state’s land use planning laws are an acknowledgement that Vermont’s environment, and hence the state itself, is a threatened species.

**Threatened Vermont, Vermonters**

A major threat to Vermont’s quality of life is, according to anti-wind narratives, development:

much of Vermont, ... [has] become suburbia, or a sort of suburbia/ex-urbia (A2)
This development is driven by values carried in the minds of some newcomers to Vermont:

[there’s a] sense that people came to Vermont in small numbers and were gradual and modest and fair-minded people and over time, they took their time getting to know Vermont and knowing Vermonters and they acquired a certain sense of the place; but there’s also a sense ... that there are some intruders and a lot of these intruders want to change the state in ways that they [modest Vermonters] don’t want to see it change, which has to do with growth, and not so much with, growth per se, but a kind of showy, flashy, know-it-all sense of what’s in the best interest of the state. (A7)

In this formulation, it is possible to become a naturalized Vermonter of sorts—though one is still a ‘flatlander’ for just as the foreign born can never be elected President of the United States, one cannot truly become a Vermonter—21—if one assimilates, accepting the values of Vermonters. Those who do not attempt such assimilation, those who persist in their ‘non-Vermont’ values, are instead ‘Flatlanders.’ What values are typical of Flatlanders? According to the same source, Flatlanders:

  tend to be isolated, they tend to bring urban values, or at best (maybe at worst) suburban values. And they just, and they tend to operate that way, they tend to demand services that reflect that, and they’re different, just different. (A7)

While I failed to ask what the services demanded by Flatlanders are, the “suburban” characterization of Flatlander values suggests that the respondent was referring to the services provided to the sprawling housing subdivisions by big-box retailer establishments that are a common feature of the suburban landscape of the contemporary capitalist West.

21 This respondent, A7, self-identified as a flatlander, despite having lived in the state for over 45 years and having adopted an arguably ‘Vermont’ lifestyle that includes operating a small farm.
**Yankee Vermont**

The characterizations of Vermont I found in anti-wind narratives hewed closely to the Vermont Yankee imaginary of popular media and scholarly literature. Vermonters tend to be trustworthy:

> It is an amazing thing in a Yankee state like this were people tend to be trustful (A3)

As I’ve already noted, Vermonters are frugal:

> Vermont is one of the most frugal states for electricity in the nation (A1)

More generally, one respondent characterized Vermonters as being modest:

> I think one of the great hallmarks of the Vermont personality, and I'm talking about the people who have been here for a long time, generations, is a kind of hands off modest and fair-minded view of the world. (A7)

Ultimately, Yankee Vermont is characterized as a place where citizens have a hand in maintaining the qualities of the state (e.g. a healthy intact environment) that afford its citizens a high quality of life:

> A4: This state has certain qualities about it that make it a beautiful place to live, that's one thing, but a healthy place to live in, and a place where man can control his or her living conditions, within reason—

Interviewer: You mean through through the sort of democratic processes?

> A4: Yes, exactly, exactly, and lawmakers … have got a structure that enables them, following with amendments that come through time as need arises, to look at maintaining what this state is, and keeping it from turning into … a place that would lack the qualities it has now. (A4)

**Northeast Kingdom**

According to some of my interviewees, despite the state’s land use planning laws (e.g. Act 250), some of the special qualities of Vermont have already been lost. I will attempt to shed light on what qualities Vermont is perceived to have lost by looking at the
ways that the Northeast Kingdom is characterized as being different from the rest of Vermont. For example, the Northeast Kingdom is represented as being seemingly wild:

the Northeast Kingdom still has wilderness, it still has large expanses of seemingly raw land. There—it's not raw land because it's … sustainable harvest land [harvest of trees] (A2)

Another respondent conjures the idea of the Northeast Kingdom as a working rural landscape:

But we have biomass energy, this is the wood basket of Vermont, the Northeast Kingdom (A6)

The Northeast Kingdom is also a nostalgic landscape:

Everything in the Northeast Kingdom is sort of 19th century building stock, that's what it's charm is. (A2)

Further, the Northeast Kingdom is a tourist destination with distinctive characteristics:

The Northeast Kingdom was just chosen, by National Geographic, as one of five new places in the world, as a geotourism destination. (A1)

Geotourism, according to National Geographic’s Center for Sustainable Destinations (2006), is defined as:

tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, and the well-being of its residents.

In its “geographical character of place” the Northeast Kingdom is characterized as a last bastion of Vermontness:

The Northeast Kingdom really is the only part of Vermont that's Vermont … in large part, aesthetically, but [also] in the sense of community. … the whole sort of sense of community is, was, has been, much stronger in the Northeast Kingdom than in other parts of Vermont (A2)

The Northeast Kingdom, thus characterized, is an atavistic landscape—with 19th century buildings and harmonious social relations. This is a landscape that contrasts with a modern, anonymous, over-developed Vermont.
4.1.3. Frames

What follows is my discussion of the frames that I identified in pro-wind and anti-wind narratives in my study of the debate over commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont. This discussion addresses Objective 1.d. (see section 1.2). These frames are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Frames found in grassroots narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Cost effective</td>
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<td>Energy security</td>
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<td>Global warming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utility-scale is VT scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Position frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High elevation land sacrosanct</td>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Position frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation is the carbon problem in VT</td>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Position frame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vermont electricity is already green</td>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Position frame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vermont has poor wind resources</td>
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<td>Wind is a scam</td>
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<td>Wind is a token</td>
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<td>Wind is not base load power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costs of energy generation should be shared</td>
<td>Anti</td>
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<td>Lack of due process</td>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Process frame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quid pro quo</td>
<td>Anti</td>
<td>Process frame</td>
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Frames in pro-wind narratives

In my interviews with individual and grassroots-group-affiliated pro-wind activists, I found five major frames that structured arguments for utility-scale wind development in Vermont: *global warming, energy security, cost effective, environmental justice,* and *utility-scale wind is Vermont-scale wind.* These frames form the order of discourse drawn on by pro-wind arguments. I describe this order through the following discussion of the discursive logic of and the interrelations between each frame.

**Global warming**

The *global warming* frame rests on the premise that energy issues are environmental issues:

> hopefully mankind is starting to mature to understand that the problem is that—a siamese twin joined at the hip—that energy and environmental issues are one in the same, and that we can’t address one without addressing the other. (P1)

The environmental problem of our day is climate change, global warming, a problem that requires urgent action:

> If you understand the big picture, on the global context, national and here in VT, as to where we have to go environmentally and how fast we have to do it, and while at the same time addressing levels of existing current comfort in terms of providing and alternative source of energy that allows us to clean up the environment in time and to the magnitude necessary…(P1)

Conserving energy is a necessary, but not a sufficient action to address global warming:

> the anti-wind folks their stance on [utility-scale wind development] is, well I understand there's a problem and we need to worry about energy and ecosystems, but conservation works so much better than building more power capacity. … and my point has always been to them in all these meetings, and the governor still doesn't get it, is that it's not an either-or choice, it's an all-of-the-above-and-then-some problem. (P1)
According to this frame, reducing anthropogenic influences of climate change means reducing our fossil fuel usage for transportation:

we're going to have to get away from fossil fuels for transportation and start depending on electric-powered transportation and that when we start needing electricity to run automobiles we're going to have to be capable of generating a lot more electricity than we do now just to run the lights and appliances and such, so that’s going to have a huge impact on demand. (P2)

Electricity, generated by ‘carbon-neutral’ energy sources, is seen as a logical replacement for fossil fuels. Thus, mitigating global warming requires the urgent adoption of ‘alternative’ energy sources for electricity generation:

as soon as you, if you've done the math of all those things, even just here in little Vermont, as soon as you're done and you look at the bottom line, you say, “oh my god, the question is not gee do we have to look at these ugly windmills on the hillside,” it's, the question becomes, “oh my god, how fast can we build them and how many can we stick up there.” (P1)

According to the logic of this particular evocation of global warming, wind power—utility-scale in particular—is an inexorable component of the solution to our contemporary energy-environment crisis.

Energy security

Apart from the issue of global warming, utility-scale wind power should be pursued in Vermont because it would help the state improve its energy security:

are you going to [make] any concessions at all to the fact that we’ve got to do something about the oil problem or the energy problem or you know I mean where’s your realization … that wind is a good energy source? (P5)

Wind energy, particularly utility-scale wind, is believed to be a good source of energy, and thus part of the solution for increasing Vermont’s energy security. This frame problematizes the fact that most of Vermont’s electricity is imported—more than two-
thirds of which comes from Quebec and from Vermont Yankee Nuclear, powered by imported uranium:

Here we are, as a state, importing most of our power (P3)

Lack of energy security is positively correlated, in these arguments, to the percentage of the state’s energy that is imported from out-of-state. In addition to having an insecure supply of electricity, Vermont suffers from insecurity in the supply of its transportation and heating fuels (i.e. oil):

we're going to have to do something to substitute for oil, and we may have to give up a little bit of our pristine [view] in order to do something. (P4)

Thus, gaining energy security by building utility-scale wind generation facilities in Vermont will require that Vermonter's sacrifice some of their “pristine” ridgelines. This sacrifice is deemed to be worth it, given the looming ‘Peak Oil’ crisis, with its immediate consequence of a sharp rise in oil prices:

I also am convinced that things like oil are going to get scarce and the price is going to go through the roof. You may think of this as an aside, but I just read a piece in the paper Sunday, it was in the Burlington paper, about a number of settlements way up in the arctic circle in Alaska, they used to be Indian villages, and now, I don't know whether they're incorporated or not, but gas is $7.11 up there. (P4)

Cost effective

Given the lack of energy security in Vermont and its financial consequences, wind power should be pursued in the state because it is a cost effective alternative to fossil-fuel-based electricity generation. One respondent described this belief among fellow members of Fairwind Vermont:

Other people are concerned about … the pricing of energy that as fossil fuels get more and more expensive, in other words, these people would be complaining
about the price of fossil fuels even if we weren't running into climate change issues, as the fossil fuels run out and the price inevitably goes up, you know where is the affordable electricity going to come from, if particularly for New England, if natural gas prices continue to climb, all of our electric bills are going to go up when our long-term contracts with Hydro-Quebec and Vermont Yankee expire, we might still be able to get electricity from those sources in major amounts, but the prices are going up (P2)

Individual respondents (i.e. those who self-identify as being pro-wind but who were not aligned with a particular pro-wind grassroots group) echoed this Peak Oil sentiment:

the price of power is determined at the margin by the price of natural gas, effectively in New England and NEPOOL 22 so … let’s get it using a free fuel source. Yes the initial construction costs are more expensive because you have to put in roads and go up to the top of the ridge line, but if you have a turbine that has a 30 year useful life … that’s a lot of years’ kilowatt hours of free fuel. (P3)

The cost effective nature of utility-scale wind—powered by a free source of raw energy, a source that is not being provisioned via a market—promises an escape:

you really should be looking at the opportunity that this [utility-scale wind in Vermont] may bring to future generations to build, to get off the fuel-, energy-based inflationary merry-go-round that we've been suffering the whole second half of the 20th century. And it's an absolute opportunity to build enormous wealth, prosperity and health for our great-great-great-great grand kids, that we don't even imagine now. (P1)

Thus, utility-scale wind in Vermont as cost effective is framed as a Meadows-like (1997) system intervention that offers a way to transcend the cycle of infinite-growth capitalism that has lead our society to environmental crises such as global warming.

Environmental Justice

The environmental justice frame in favor of utility-scale wind in Vermont argues that some of the state's current sources of electricity involve a form of injustice where Vermonters reap benefits while others pay costs disproportionate to the compensation

that Vermonters pay in return. A common object of this injustice is the First Nations peoples affected by the operations of Hydro-Quebec:

there’s people who say, “oh we've got Hydro-Quebec, you know life is good” and it’s like okay, so all those Cree gave up all their culture, their land so that your TV and radio can work, no problem, so and you're okay with that because they live far away. A friend in town takes students up every fall to the Cree and basically they look at the culture and everything else, they do a canoe trip and stuff like that, to understand where Hydro-Quebec is, what has been done, you know what that trade off is. (N123)

The perceived environmental injustice that the environmental justice frame responds to is enabled by the ignorance of Vermonters, an ignorance sustained through the missing information brought about by the spatial discontinuity between electricity production and consumption in Vermont:

This state is, in my estimation, mainly from the residents in the towns which are incredibly democratic compared to the countryside, oblivious to where they are getting their power … they're getting a lot of their power from Hydro-Quebec and Hydro-Quebec has destroyed thousands of square miles of the of the James Bay watershed to build, to get this hydro power, they've displaced Indians for God’s sake. They created some environmental nightmares … Nobody's talking about that. (P5)

This frame draws on a characterization of Vermonters as being honest, democratic Yankees to argue that Vermonters should care about this environmental injustice.

Further, these Yankees are leavers and not takers:

This town [Sheffield], like most rural towns or Vermont as a whole, doesn't produce any petroleum or any coal or anything like that. So in a sense, since the automobile was invented, everybody who lives in Vermont has been a taker. And places like Pennsylvania and West Virginia got torn up, you know, I used to live in the hard coal section of Pennsylvania, and if we can give something back, I'm all for it. And this is what part of this [the proposed wind development in Sheffield, Vermont] would do. Now I don't say, never have said that wind power is a magic bullet. It's not. (P4)

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23 Respondent N1 self identified as being ambivalent toward commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont.
Thus, utility-scale wind development in Vermont, it is argued, has a role in righting past environmental wrongs—or at least ensuring the future wrongs are not committed—by allowing Vermont to take more responsibility for the consequences, the externalities, of its demand for electricity.

냇ility-scale wind is Vermont-scale wind

The vaguely defined notion, coined by Governor Jim Douglas, of “Vermont-scale wind” is generally thought, by the pro-wind activists I interviewed, to refer to less-than-utility-scale turbines (something smaller than the 197 foot tall turbines in Searsburg, Vermont). These turbines would be erected near homes, farms, businesses, schools, or government buildings throughout the state. The pro-wind challenge to this idea of Vermont-scale wind is motivated, in part, by the belief that such small-scale wind is not practical due to property liability issues:

I’ve known Jim Douglas a long time, and he’s very careful not to get into a specific foot measurement, it’s on a Vermont-scale, what the hell [emphasis] does that mean. You know if you had one in mind, say so, what the specific height is. I talked to another state senator whom shall be nameless at the moment because I don’t have his permission to say so … and he said … “you don’t really think that the state is going to let people on a quarter acre or half acre lot put up a 100 foot tower do you, where it would fall out in the town road or in the state highway over here? Or fall on his neighbors property on his house?” So he said, “we’re not going to, the law is not going to allow that sort of thing.” So anybody who thinks that we’re going to have thousands of small towers is crazy, it isn't going to happen. (P4)

Another pro-wind respondent challenged this small-scale Vermont-scale definition by citing the superior cost effective nature of utility-scale wind:

So that's another reason why I'm all for residential [-scale wind power] [but] if you're giving me the either-or, then that would be something I'm against because you're doing away with what I see as one of the great advantages of wind. You stick them in inefficient locations, the economics disappear. (P3)
This argument for utility-scale wind rests on the assumption, backed by average wind speed surveys conducted in Vermont (Vermont Agency of Natural Resources 2004b), that the most consistent and strong winds amenable to wind power in the state are found at the high elevations that the state’s iconic ridgelines happen to inhabit. Given this assumption, why not deploy thousands of utility-scale turbines across the state?

Vermont scale, to me, suggests 16-25 turbines on Magic [Mountain near Londonderry in the south of the state]. I'm not even sure that I would find an installation of hundreds of machines that appealing in terms of aesthetics. But a line of turbines arrayed over a mile and a half or two miles of a ridge line, you know single space or maybe grouped like Searsburg in sort of odd numbers so they're not just lock-step across the ridge line, something like that, I have no problem with that aesthetic impact. And I think that's doable on a Vermont scale. You know we don't have the huge sweeping plains of the upper Midwest like North Dakota or South Dakota or Texas and such. We have a much more intimate landscape where you can maybe see across the valley, or maybe a couple of valleys over, but you know a single array of turbines like on the Sabra Fields print or something, I don't find that intrusive, and I think that is the Vermont scale. You know, big enough to have some impact on Vermont's electricity market, but not hundreds and hundreds of these things. So that's what I think of as Vermont scale. (P2)

Thus, utility-scale wind, has a place in the Vermont landscape. Utility-scale wind is Vermont-scale wind only so long as it respects the intimacy of this landscape.

Frames in anti-wind narratives

As with the frames in pro-wind narratives described above, the frames I found in anti-wind narratives form the order of discourse drawn on by anti-wind arguments. Again, I will describe this order through a discussion of the discursive logic of and the interrelations between each frame. Before doing so, I will briefly discuss the two classes of anti-wind frames that I encountered.

Two classes of frames emerged from my study of anti-wind narratives: 1) frames concerned with position; and 2) frames concerned with process. Frames-of-position
provide reasons why wind power does not make sense as a source of electricity for a particular community or for Vermont as a whole (e.g. Vermont has poor wind resources, electricity generation is already clean in Vermont). Frames-of-process problematize the ways that commercial utility-scale wind development has been pursued in Vermont (e.g. lack of public accountability, developer dishonesty). I deal with these two classes of frames in the sections that follow.

Frames-of-position

High elevation land is sacrosanct

As I demonstrated above, the association of Vermont with high elevation land is a key point of articulation in narratives of anti-wind grassroots groups (see “Privileging the hills” in section 4.1.2). Correspondingly, the belief that the state’s high elevation land is sacrosanct, that it should only be developed with great care—if at all—is a central frame-of-position in anti-wind narratives:

The only way that you could develop this [high elevation] land is through electric generation. So we were somewhat surprised to realize that this was even possible. We thought that land above 2,500 feet was sacrosanct according to the Act 250, but then we learned that electric power could trump the longstanding environmental protections afforded by Act 250. (A3)

With this frame, anti-wind activists advocate that high elevation land be spared from development while at the same time acknowledging a perceived need to address the problems of energy supply and climate change:

I see ... the concern over alternative forms of energy through a prism that has two distinct facets: one is that we should obviously be doing something about alternative energy the second is how do we accomplish the switch to alternative energy in a responsible way that protects the important assets of the state which include ridgelines and uplands. (A7)
Thus, in the case of wind energy development in Vermont, the pursuit of this ‘alternative’ energy source is in conflict with the desire, of anti-wind activists, to preserve the highlands of the state. Why are highlands worthy of preservation in the first place? All those I interviewed touched on roughly that same rationale—forested highlands as important to wildlife from bears to birds to bats, forested highlands as important to controlling erosion and ground water quality, forested highlands as important sites of recreation for residents and tourists alike.

Aesthetics

Aesthetic frames-of-position in anti-wind narratives are related to the high elevation land is sanctum frame. Indeed aesthetics arguments play a role in the privileging of high elevation landscapes. However aesthetic justifications for opposing utility-scale wind development are concerned not just with the aesthetic qualities of highlands, but those of the Vermont landscape as a whole, its mountains and hills, valleys and pastures, streams, rivers and lakes. These justifications singled out the scale, as opposed to the sleek modern style, of utility-scale wind turbines, sitting on towers over 200 feet tall, as the most significant reason that they do not fit in the Vermont landscape. According to one interviewee, these utility-scale wind turbines do not fit with the windmill of popular imagination:

It wasn't the small, you know the windmills of the past ... everybody loves windmills, and we still love small windmills but ... this is just a different thing, this is not what people imagine ... (A1)

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24 This is not to say that the modern appearance of contemporary utility-scale turbines is unproblematic to anti-wind activists.
Referring to the wind turbines—and the 420-foot height of their blade tips at the apex of their rotation—proposed for Sheffield, Vermont by UPC Vermont Wind, another respondent drew on a country-city opposition:

that's 42 stories of a sky scraper, that's taller than anything in the state…That's taller than almost everything in Boston. (A6)

Just as Boston’s largest structures would not fit in the Vermont landscape, neither would these turbines. Another respondent expressed lack-of-fit in terms of an iconic natural feature of Vermont:

They don't look like a nice little windmill … in terms of size, they're so huge that they dwarf a mature maple … (A2)

Ultimately, utility-scale wind turbines do not fit, are aesthetically bad for, Vermont because they do not honor the landscape as it has come to be:

all of the sudden when you introduce into a an existing fabric, something that is way out of scale, way bigger than anything else, what it happens to do, I think, and many of us agree, is it diminishes what's there already, and I think that's really what Act 250 is all about, in that criteria, will this enhance, diminish or keep the same what is there? (A2) [emphasis original]

Anti-wind activists structured their aesthetic opposition to utility-scale wind around the aesthetics criterion of Act 250. This criterion, at least in letter, tends to limit the perceptual modality with which one can claim that a particular development will have adverse aesthetic effects to the visual. This limitation can be seen in the statute’s explicit consideration of the scenic qualities of the Vermont landscape. To anti-wind activists, the noise generated by utility-scale wind generating facilities has the potential to cause such adverse impacts:

maybe the last negative impact that's worth talking about from my point of view is the sound impacts … proximate impacts which have come up much more in this present case that's pending over here in Sheffield because there are a number of residents that are close enough and there's the King George School close enough to the project so that it's, all the expert testimony seems to make it clear
that there will be distinct audible impacts on, say the King George School and the dormitories there and so forth, and the state has not established any clearly defined caps on decibel-level … of the sound output from anything, wind projects are a special case, but other states … have clearly defined ceilings on sound impacts, sometimes they’re expressed in terms of the difference between the existing ambient sound levels … the idea that hill towns that, for generations have cherished the relative peace and quite that surrounds them, I mean that’s why people … live in places like Sheffield and Sutton, if they didn’t happen to be born there.  … (A5)

Thus, anti-wind activists make aesthetic appeals that are within as well as beyond the perceptual scope that the Public Service Board has been mandated to consider (See section 4.2 for an in-depth discussion of the uses of aesthetic frames in the debate).

*Wind threatens natural resources*

Another reason that *high elevation land is sacrosanct* is that anti-wind activists see it as being a haven for wildlife:

the potential that arose to alter those mountains and to impact further on wildlife, which again is highly treasured by— the health of wildlife in the state is highly regarded by the people in the state (A4)

According to this argument, wind development, with its need for construction and access roads, would disturb wildlife habitat through fragmentation:

This particular mountain has a diverse wildlife population and important bear habitat as well as wetlands and headwaters.  A five and a half mile road through undeveloped and contiguous wildlife habitat would have a considerable impact on this thriving ecosystem.  This is one of the largest contiguous undeveloped wildlife habitats in the State and as such deserves protection from an ecosystem standpoint.  Conservation groups have for many years identified this mountain and surrounding area as an important and top priority ecosystem deserving protection. (A3)

Such road building would harm the health of the ecosystems that provide such habitat by threatening the physical structures that upland forests rely on to manage flows of water:

Through the access roads … you would change your normal forest hydrograph and create a much more flashy, high run-off, high energy situation, so you have the potential to rip out and highly modify stream beds that are currently now in
balance with their geologic substrates … most of this area is sort of an alluvial, glacial till over bedrock and along the streams if you really have much high flood peaks with higher energy, you’re just going to rip those stream beds apart. (A6)

The loss of forest canopy to roads and turbines would also affect water resources:

the water table in Vermont, the level of our streams and our lakes and underground aquifer are all ultimately dependent on the amount of water that can be collected from, not just rain fall, but from condensation, cloud condensation, and if it weren’t for the canopy that covers most of our high land, if all that high land was bare, our water resources would suffer because the additional surface [area] … created by all the foliage … is what makes all that condensation possible, and if it weren’t for the additional surface area of the canopy, the amount of water that would reach the soil and feed the streams and so on, would be significantly reduced. So any kind of development that involves deforestation of high elevation land is just by definition a bad thing (A5)

Thus, all who rely on natural resources—wildlife and humans, locally and statewide—would suffer if utility-scale wind were developed in Vermont.

Vermont has poor wind resources

Another position against utility-scale wind in Vermont rests on the belief that Vermont, and inland New England as a whole, is a poor source of the winds necessary to support utility-scale wind—poor compared to Texas, California, or even New York:

so you can find wind that’s better, the only viable wind from the point of view of commercial wind generation in New England and in Vermont is at maximum elevation (A5)

Vermont is a really poor wind resource, we're 34th in the nation. (A1)

Being a poor wind resource, the capacity factor\(^{25}\) of utility-scale wind installations is argued to be low:

\(^{25}\) The Energy Information Administration defines capacity factor as “The ratio of the electrical energy produced by a generating unit for the period of time considered to the electrical energy that could have been produced at continuous full power operation during the same period.” (Energy Information Administration 2008).
you know and when people actually get down and look at the facts and you know you know, Searsburg is running at 20%, that says something … (A1)

With the winds only strong enough to turn the turbines 20% of the time, the logic of this frame posits that the benefit of an intermittent increase in electricity production is not worth the costs concomitant to wind development:

[utility-scale wind] would be damaging to the state, for very little, in comparison, gain. (A4)

And our feeling is that such a tiny amount of power … we would put up with it if it had so much benefit, if it was so beneficial that is was worth trading a few mountains for. (A1)

But why is Vermont a poor source of wind?

between … Vermont’s adverse topography and climate, adverse to wind generation, winter conditions pose another impediment to large-scale commercial wind development over 2000 feet because, not just ordinary glaze ice, but rime ice at the elevation becomes an important factor in the winter … (A5)

Thus the rationale that Vermont has poor wind resources relates to the particularities of the state’s climate and landscape—to its uniquely ‘Vermont’ qualities, to its high elevation land being sacrosanct.

Wind is not base load power

Given that Vermont has poor wind resources, and the assumed-to-be low capacity factor of utility-scale wind in the state, another frame-of-position against wind emerges in the argument that wind is not base load power.26

I guess finally, and perhaps most importantly, it would provide a miniscule amount of highly unreliable power to Vermont rate payers. … (A6)

26 The Energy Information Administration defines base load power as “The minimum amount of electric power delivered or required over a given period of time at a steady rate” (Energy Information Administration 2008).
Unreliable power which, it is argued, does not address the state’s electricity needs:

we have some real needs, and we've got to address them (A6)

These perceived needs are related to the imminent changes in Vermont’s contracts with the suppliers of nearly two-thirds of its electricity:

the state has to worry about making sure that Vermont continues to have base-load power. And its true that we have to re-negotiate our contracts with Hydro-Quebec and no one knows for sure whether we'll continue to import that same amount of electricity as we have been and no one knows for sure whether Vermont Yankee [Nuclear] will be, if and when Vermont Yankee will be decommissioned. (A5)

Wind, an intermittent power source given Vermont’s poor wind resources is not seen as a part of a solution to this base load problem:

you can’t take anything off line once these [utility-scale wind turbines] are online, you still have to have everything on line. So really, what’s the net gain? The net gain is a small amount, when they are running. But is it worth it … that’s really … the big question. Is it worth it, this small net gain, while they are running, … is it really worth it? And it, it became very clear to me that the answer to that one was no. (A2)

Like the Vermont has poor wind resources frame-of-position, the wind is not base load power frame extends the logic of the cost-benefit analysis—an analysis inherent to the Act 248 permitting process—to say that the benefits of utility-scale wind development in Vermont are not worth the costs associated with the degradation that such development would visit on the landscape.

Vermont electricity is already green

Even if it were not true that Vermont has poor wind resources and not true that wind is not base load power, the benefits of utility-scale wind would still not justify the costs in Vermont because Vermont electricity is already green:
This is just, it makes no sense, because we are so clean already … it's not worth what you're trading … because we are so clean (A1)

How is Vermont’s electricity supply green?

Vermont … creates an incredible amount of renewable energy already. The Northeast Kingdom in this area, we generate 240% of our power. If you include the Connecticut River dams, we have almost two-and-a-half times the power that we need here, and it's renewable. I mean the methane plant, the, [wood] chip burning plant, the 3 hydro dams … (A1)

We have negligible fossil fuel burning sources for our electricity. Our electricity comes almost entirely from a combination of hydro, including Hydro-Quebec, and nuclear from Vermont Yankee, and a fair amount of biomass … we have the McNeil plant in Burlington and we have another [wood] chip plant in Ryegate, both of which are pretty productive. (A5)

In addition to having an already environmentally friendly supply of electricity, Vermont’s greenness is exemplified in its work to reduce its demand for electricity:

We’ve done a great job with respect to Efficiency Vermont and reducing our growth of consumption in fact. (A6)

Thus, as a frame of position, Vermont electricity is already green, argues that utility-scale wind in Vermont is a solution in search of a problem:

We think it's a mismatched solution and problem, completely. (A6)

Transportation is the carbon problem in Vermont

Considering that Vermont electricity is already green, if one hopes to combat global warming at the scale of the state, one must concede that transportation is the carbon problem in Vermont:

The problem isn't with electricity, because we already are the cleanest in the nation, the problem is with cars and heating oil, and that’s really where we should be focused. (A1)

In this frame-of-position, transportation, and to a lesser extent home heating oil, affects Vermont’s carbon footprint overwhelmingly more so than does electricity consumption:
Transportation is where … we’re [Vermonters are] really carbon gluttons. (A5)

Vermont is fundamentally clean and green, but the vehicles on its roads are not:

We don't leave a … carbon footprint by virtue of power production in the state, it’s actually—if you consider the absorptive capacity of Vermont's forests, it’s actually a net-zero or sink…not a producer, on the power production side. It’s on the transportation side that we create the problems. Now if the legislature really wanted to deal with the carbon footprint problem in Vermont, they’d deal with the transportation side. (A7)

According to this frame, utility-scale wind is preposterous in Vermont insofar as it is a solution to the non-existent problem of electricity production in Vermont being a major component of the state’s carbon footprint. Why is it, according to anti-wind narratives, that the “solution” of utility-scale wind is being mis-applied in Vermont? Firstly, wind is a token, and secondly, wind is a scam. I discuss these two frames-of-position in the following sections.

Wind is a token

According to this frame, utility-scale wind development in Vermont would be a largely symbolic gesture:

it doesn't make sense that we should deface, we should deface one of our grandest natural resources by putting up, what you know just they're it seems like tokenism to me, in Vermont. (A5)

More than having costs that outweigh its benefits, utility-scale-wind-in-Vermont-as-token has dangerous side effects:

industrial wind development is a distraction from addressing the real long-term problem of supplying electric power to Vermonters. (A6)

Given that transportation is the carbon problem in Vermont, the symbolic effects of utility-scale wind may further distract Vermonters from making fundamental changes in their ways of life necessary for combating climate change:

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so no problem we'll just put it [a utility-scale wind facility] right there, and boom, it's all gone, there's no, there’s no issue [i.e. climate change] anymore, we can continue living the way we have all along, driving our SUVs and so forth. (A2)

Thus, in the wind is a token frame, the taken-for-granted notion that wind power is clean and green, good for the climate, is seen by anti-wind activists as obscuring the ‘true’ nature of the energy and climate change problems that Vermont faces.

Wind is a scam

Wind developers, generally for-profit corporations, seek to maximize their profits. In the wind is a scam frame, these profit seekers are driven to marginal Vermont, which has poor wind resources, by federal subsidies that make utility-scale wind profitable in the state:

The money isn't in the electricity generated from this the money is in the federal subsidies. (A1)

Federal subsidies for wind are seen as being exceptionally high:

A7: I also think that wind in particular is a product of financial gain that attracts venture capital that is artificially supported, I mean … look at the profitability of wind, with the accelerated cost recovery [due to the advantageous depreciation rates] and the other tax benefits that are in the code, you get back your initial investment in a period of about 4 years, you get the entire investment … and it’s the profit they’re after...this is not a public-spirited investment, it's an investment to make gobs of money, big money.

Interviewer: But aren't all energy sources subsidized?

A7: Oh sure they are, but not to the extent that this one is. (A7)

Further, high wind subsidies are seen as taking away money from other renewable energy sources:
Really, from a Federal level where wind has got so much in the way of subsidies it’s incredible. I mean certainly they have renewable energy credits, but they’re looking at much less subsidized environment for biomass. The methane generation for example at the Coventry landfill accepts waste from all over Vermont and it turns it into substantial amounts of reliable electric power. (A6)

In addition to federal subsidies, renewable energy credits are seen as another source of perverse incentives for utility-scale wind in Vermont:

They’re called RECs, R. E. C. … if you create green power, so much green power, they’ll give you a credit and those credits are saleable, tradable, so like Florida Power and Light, … say they generate half of their power from coal or something like that, if they need more power, the federal government has mandated that they invest in renewable power, so they will buy this project [the Sheffield wind installation to be developed by UPC Vermont Wind] so that they can boost their power. (A1)

The promises of federal subsidies and tradable carbon credits lead this respondent to wonder:

Is this for Vermont or is this really for Florida Power and Light. You know what I mean. (A1)

Like the wind is a token frame, the wind is a scam frame positions utility-scale wind energy in Vermont as antithetical to the project of clean or renewable energy development at scales larger than the state of Vermont:

The economics of it, the fact that we have … an acid rain problem in all of the North East, not just the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, but all of the North East, and that, in effect, these developers would be able to sell their green credits in order to continue with our acid rain problem. That was, that was another thing that became exposed in the whole process of discovery … it all quickly looked like a sham. (A2)

Thus, wind is a scam because the wind-developer-as-profiteer profits while Vermonters suffer the insult—of the negative externalities of America’s continued reliance on coal—on top of the injury inflicted to the Vermont landscape by the feckless towers.
Frames of process

Costs of energy generation should be shared

The frame-of-process that argues that the costs of energy generation should be shared is concerned with both monetary and non-monetary costs:

Nobody's willing to pay the price. And I think that there's a little bit of an irony that most of the people in the more populous Burlington and Montpelier part of the state are really all for this idea [utility-scale wind power], but they don't want to pay for it, and they don't want to have to see it either. (A3)

This frame operates at multiple scales: (1) at the scale of Vermont, pitting ‘peripheral’ areas in the south and north-east of the state—areas targeted for wind development—against ‘central’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ areas, the media and political capitals of the state (e.g. Burlington and Montpelier); (2) at the scale of northeast region, if not the nation as a whole, pitting the state against regional or national others:

If we were like New York City or somewhere like that where you're really polluting, we would suffer that burden … (A1)

Here the respondent is drawing on the idea that Vermont is at the periphery, in the shadow of New York City, a cultural and economic hegemon. Further, Vermont is at the periphery of the energy problem for which commercial utility-scale wind is a proposed, if not a preferred, solution. This energy problem is global:

The energy dilemma is that, that you know we're dependent upon foreign oil, and it's similar to the energy crunch that we had in the early '70s, and but it's certainly more … important now, and in part because Al Gore has raised everyone's consciousness to … global warming, and so forth. And so that's a great thing. … (A2)

A global problem cuts across scales—body to globe—and affects all people. All people should thus share the costs of solving the problem:

The impact [of mitigating global warming while solving the energy crunch] on Vermont is simply going to be the impact as it will be on, should be on everyone.
My point is that it should be shared. … if this is a state-wide, nation-wide, world-wide problem, then everyone needs to bear the [costs]. (A2)

Thus, commercial utility-scale wind power should be opposed in Vermont to the degree that the energy/climate problem, which wind is said to address, is not being solved in a manner that ensures fair distribution of the costs of solution.

Lack of due process

Commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont, according to anti-wind narratives, suffers from a lack of due process. This frame-of-process implicates developers in what is perceived to be a flawed development process:

they have a similar approach in every town, when they come through, they get hold of the planning board, they direct the select board, they offer them money, it's all very secretive (A1)

This problematic is seen by anti-wind activists to be common to commercial utility-scale wind development across the Northeast of the United States. This respondent, when speaking of the perceived lack of due process in the proposed wind development in Sheffield, Vermont, referred to similar phenomena in both Cohocton, NY and Mars Hill, ME:

it's a similar kind of scenario in the sense that it's a small, isolated, poor area, with a, with a select board who has made a deal before due process. It's the same, it's like Mars Hill (A2)

While this frame acknowledges the active role of developers in fostering a lack of due process, users of the frame focus on the complicity, whether witting or not, of government officials—from town select boards to the state legislature—in a process that is characterized as being corrupt and secretive. The commercial utility-scale wind development process is perceived to be overly concerned with political considerations, to
the detriment of policy considerations. This over-politicization of the debate has 
alienated the public from policy making, and has ensured inaction on important policy 
problems:

    I think the Vermonters were turned off by [the politicization]. A lot of the 
population in Vermont was just turned off by the whole debate… I think most 
Vermonters would say, “yeah wind power probably ought to be some places … 
but we oughta study that, rather than getting into this big business about carbon.” 
Yeah, we got problems with transportation, maybe we should do something 
about that. There shouldn't be a big fight about that politically and so forth.” 
(A7)

The lack of due process in the commercial utility-scale wind development process in 
Vermont is thus framed as a failing of the state’s political system to live up to the honest 
and pragmatic Yankee ideals that characterize the Vermonter imaginary.

Quid pro quo

    Quid pro quo, as a frame-of-process against wind power, argues that the 
development process of commercial utility-scale wind in Vermont has been unfair 
because people living in communities that would host proposed wind developments have 
not been offered, by developers, fair compensation for having to bear the costs of 
development:

    If the developer is not prepared to compensate the people significantly affected 
(by noise and visual intrusions that diminish that person’s right to enjoy their 
own property) so that such a person can either decide to leave and move 
somewhere else, or be fairly compensate for what's happening, then you're going 
to get tremendous controversy and you're going to get … a very angry and 
divided situation, which is really what's happened. (A3)

27 This comment was raised in the context of a portion of our discussion that dealt with the failed H.520 bill 
of the 2007 Vermont Legislature that was aimed at energy efficiency and climate change (Vermont 
Legislature 2007b).
*Quid pro quo* is related to the notion that the *costs of energy generation should be shared*. Both rely on periphery-center oppositions and both are concerned with the distribution of costs and benefits of energy production:

The idea of 24 industrial-size windmills being there and it serving the grid of which, the metropolitan areas will be pulling obviously the max on that, as opposed to some of the energy being returned to the town they are located in—I do want major metropolitan areas to be able to save energy, i.e. [sic] Boston, Hartford, etc.—but...again if there's nothing, no holdback up here, it kind of makes me cranky that it will be going there and not contributing to our town’s energy needs. (N1)

However, *quid pro quo* differs in than it is focused on questions of who benefits from development rather than on questions of who bears its costs. While monetary compensation (i.e. revenue streams from the developer to the town) is important to users of this frame, users tended to be more concerned with jobs:

To have a transnational corporation come in to town and say, “no I'm sorry, probably local contractors can't [build] the [wind generating facility access] road. Once again it was, “so what’s in it for us?” And the corporation responded with, “well there’d be taxes or something.” (N1)

Speaking about the proposed wind development in Sheffield, Vermont, another respondent argued that the development:

wouldn't, beyond the sort of transitory construction jobs associated with building the project, create substantial numbers of new jobs to benefit this local economy here, and the developer said maybe five, six jobs at most, and these are … low-paying security personnel. Anytime they want to have actual work done on the turbines, they're going to have to bring in somebody from the outside because it doesn't pay them to [keep someone here all the time]. (A6)

This respondent went on to describe an alternative to wind energy development in the Northeast Kingdom:

[B]iomass energy, here, is a sustainable resource. We can bring low value stems out of the woods, in the process we can improve wildlife habitat we can improve the residual growing stock, and we can provide a whole suite of continuing family-wage jobs in the woods, in trucking and in local generation plants, and you can produce wood pellets, you can produce wood chips and you produce
electricity. So those are some real sustainable options that would be a great benefit here for our: social, environmental, and economic frameworks. (A6)

This version of biomass energy development is, in its *quid pro quo*, everything that commercial utility-scale wind is not. This framing does not preclude the possibility that some sort of utility-scale wind development would offer a similar *quid pro quo*. Instead it critiques the current process of wind development in Vermont for not benefiting the means of production of potential wind communities, for not giving community members a hand in working the land.

*Corporate exploit of poor towns*

While the *quid pro quo* between wind developers and towns is seen by anti-wind activists as being inadequate, these activists argue that what concessions developers *do* give—lease payments to land owners, promises of tax revenue to town governments—are tools in the *corporate exploit of poor towns*:

Well just imagine, you know, a small poor town and you imagine that you throw say a million dollars around in town, you have husbands and wives that are divorcing, you have neighbors that will never speak again, you have you know, that's what money does, money corrupts, and these guys are very very good at what they do, I mean they just fly through the town, cause they're young lawyers, and they, and you know these agreements if anybody exposes those agreements they're not valid anymore, so … it just leads to incredible corruption (A1)

According to this frame, developers, awash with venture capital funds, use the promise of money to secure support for their development from poor towns. Further, some townspeople support the development—for monetary or other reasons—while others oppose it; the town is divided against itself. Those that oppose development are isolated, left to fight from a position of further financial disadvantage:
Developers have millions of dollars to spend on it [the legal battle of the Public Service Board permitting process] but they go into communities knowing that the communities don't have those kind of resources… (A3)

In the face of the divide and conquer strategy of wealthy developers, anti-wind activists scrape together what funds they can to mount a defense:

So here are the local people spending you know, we've given spaghetti suppers, we've given yard sales, we've had ... antique auctions, we've had ... dances ... chicken barbecues, we, you know we've done just everything we could think of to do, we had a Christmas bake sale,28 we made $600 on that, we'll take it. In comparison to that, UPC's on legal, for legal services, spent $3 million. (A6)

However, the resource differential between developer and town is insurmountable:

But I mean this is a case of people under the heal of a limited liability corporation that just, has such, they hire public relations people, they just roll in on top of you. (A6)

Communities under threat

As a result of the corporate exploit of poor towns, the commercial utility-scale wind development process in Vermont places communities under threat. Again, this negative side effect of wind development is seen by anti-wind activists to be common to this style of wind development across the Northeast:

people are divorcing, when we have events people sit on different sides of the hall, people don't speak anymore ... in every community that these wind facilities lands in you talk to the folks in Cohocton, you talk to the folks in Mars Hill it destroys the community, because of the greed and because of the people that want to save the landscape. (A1)

28 Recounting the first meeting that the town of Londonderry, Vermont had with the developer of the failed Glebe Mountain wind project, one respondent alleged:

to set the stage a little bit for that first meeting, that we were sitting in the audience, and two of the experts sat behind us and as people continued to pile into the room, one whispered to the other, “what do they think this is, a bake sale?” So there was a level of arrogance I would say, that was quite palpable and the town people saw, saw that right away. (A3)
Further, this frame argues that the threat-through-division to communities by the commercial wind development process is also due to the: (1) costs of energy generation not being shared; and (2) the unequal quid pro quo at the scale of the community:

I think that the fact the these things have been so incredibly divisive in communities everywhere has been because some people are benefiting and some people are not, and there's something intrinsically unfair about benefits going somewhere and the costs going somewhere else. If it is really a “public good,” the costs and benefits should be shared across the board. I think if you look at the history of some of these things, and I've investigated quite a few of them, you'll find that the developers really don't want to give away very much, wishing to keep the quite sizable profits (which they refuse to divulge) for themselves and their investors. And there seems a complete lack of concern—a business as usual—in affluent areas where the abuse of electricity and gas guzzling cars is considered a right as long as you can afford it. Until the benefits and the costs are spread across all people … destroying or damaging inappropriate and sensitive sites is nothing more than green-washing for profit. If communities in Vermont are being asked to sacrifice for the public good, then the public should be made to conserve energy whether or not they can afford it. (A3)

Another respondent evoked a sense of disintegrating social capital (as in Putnam’s (2000) *Bowling Alone*) in discussing the consequences of communities under threat:

one terrible consequence of this whole thing is how it splits communities apart and how it has a devastating affect upon relationships in communities, it's almost like a civil war. And that's really ... too bad because ... all communities these days are more fragile than they've ever been, what with very few venues for people to come together any longer, be it in church, or community functions or whatever, even movie theatres, everyone stays at home with Netflix. ... why would I want to go to town meeting if it's all going to be about this [wind development] (A2)

Thus, communities under threat stand to suffer a continued displacement of citizen engagement in policy making, opening more space for politicization and lack of due process.

4.1.4. The roles of grassroots wind groups

In the following section, I discuss, in addressing Objective 1.c. (see section 1.2), the roles of pro- and anti-wind grassroots groups, that were articulated in the narratives of
the Vermont wind power debate culled from my interview data. These roles are structured around similar themes:

Pro-wind activists fight the lies spread by wealthy anti-wind activists; their goal is to help fight global warming and improve energy security in Vermont through common sense energy policy that includes utility-scale wind.

Anti-wind activists fight to expose the true costs of utility-scale wind in the face of misinformation spread by wind developers, with the goal of protecting the environment and community of rural Vermont.

Both the pro- and anti-wind camps see themselves as Davids fighting Goliaths. In the case of pro-wind groups, the working-class characterization of those who are in favor of utility-scale wind (see Pro-wind protagonists in section 4.1.1) positions the pro-wind activist as the David to the Goliath of the anti-wind activist characterized as a “20th century aristocrat…filthy rich and more powerful than the Pharaohs of Egypt” (P1) who is aligned with—and constitutive of—the conservative political elite represented by Gov. Jim Douglass (see Pro-wind antagonists in section 4.1.1). As for anti-wind groups, it is they who are at an economic disadvantage to the millions of dollars that wind developers have to spend on litigation in the pursuit of utility-scale wind development (see The problem with wind development in section 4.1.1), compared to the hundreds of thousands of dollars anti-wind groups have “scraped together” from fundraisers and donations (see Corporate exploit of poor towns in section 4.1.3). The David and Goliath struggles that both pro- and anti-wind groups view themselves to be engaged in are primarily concerned with claims of truth. Pro-wind groups work to dispel the lies about wind made by anti-wind groups and those aligned with them (see Workers, advocates for commonsense, targets in section 4.1.1; and Pro-wind antagonist in section 4.1.1). Anti-wind groups on
the other hand are concerned with the misinformation spread by wind developers and their consultants (see Developers in section 4.1.1).

The roles of pro- and anti-wind activists differ in their spatial and temporal scales. Pro-wind groups are explicitly concerned with protecting the health of the global environment for future generations of humans. The focus on global warming in pro-wind arguments (see Global warming in section 4.1.3), the evocation of the “21st century” mindset (see Identity: Vicious Liars in section 4.1.1), as well as the belief that wind will wind power benefit our “great-great-great-great grand kids” (see Cost effective in section 4.1.3) exemplify this concern for the global future. Anti-wind groups are explicitly concerned with the protection of the health of the local community and environment. From references to “Buy Local” campaigns, good land stewardship (see Frugal Green Stewards in section 4.1.1), to concerns over the deleterious effects of wind development on community relations (see The problem with wind development in section 4.1.1), the anti-wind protagonist sees the protection of local environments and communities as a joint endeavor. In terms of temporal scale, the roles of anti-wind groups that I interviewed made few, if any, explicit appeals to concern for future generations. Further, the tense of the anti-wind struggle against wind developers tended to be focused on the present and near future.

While the dominant, explicit concerns of pro- and anti-wind groups are arguably focused on complementary spatial and temporal scales, both camps make implicit references to alternate scales. Pro-wind characterizations showed concern for the health of local economies and the inability of many present-day Vermonters to afford to buy
homes in the state’s ‘inflated’ real estate market (see Vermont in Crisis in section 4.1.2). The anti-wind argument that the Green Mountains are the birthright of Vermonters (see Privileging the hills in section 4.1.2) intimates a concern for the Vermont landscape that will be left to generations to come. Further, I found that all anti-wind activists acknowledged climate change as a problem that needs to be addressed (see Costs of energy generation should be shared in section 4.1.3), thus showing concern for global environmental health.

In summary, I find that, according to the question I asked in Objective 1.c.i., anti-wind grassroots groups do portray themselves primarily as “stewards of the local community and land.” Further, I find that the answer to Question 1.c.ii. is yes, pro-wind grassroots activists do portray themselves primarily as stewards of the global environment. Finally, in answering the question I posed in Objective 1.c.iii., anti-wind groups do portray themselves as local Davids fighting the cosmopolitan Goliaths of wind developers,29 as I expected. However, I did not anticipate that pro-wind activists would also use the David and Goliath trope, portraying themselves as fighting the Goliath represented by anti-wind groups that were characterized as being wealthy and politically connected.

4.1.5. Benefits of success and consequences of failure

This section, which fulfills Objective 1.e. (see section 1.2), deals with the benefits of success and consequences of failure that I interpreted from the narratives I found in my

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29 Anti-wind groups made relatively few direct references or characterizations of pro-wind activists, so I cannot include pro-wind activists as part of the Goliaths that wind activists portrayed themselves as struggling against.

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interview data. The pro-wind activists I interviewed spoke both of the benefits that they thought would accompany the construction of utility-scale wind development in Vermont and of the negative consequences they associated with scenarios where such development did not occur. My anti-wind subjects, however, only made mention of the negative consequences that they associated with the hypothetical development of utility-scale wind in Vermont. In the following discussion I compare the benefits of success and consequences failure perceived by pro-wind activists to those perceived by anti-wind groups. My goal in this section is to use these differing views of potential consequences and benefits of utility-scale wind power in Vermont to represent the “discursive conversation” between pro-wind and anti-wind activists as it was during the period of my study (March 2007-July 2007).

For pro-wind activists, a benefit of utility-scale wind in Vermont is that, as a source of electricity, it would solve a part of the global warming problem:

if you look at the big picture of what we have to do and how fast we have to do it, then logically wind power, commercial wind power, is a piece of the [climate change] puzzle that has to happen in order to get to the end. (P1)

It's not going to solve all of the problems, but it's one of the critical parts of the solution, as far as we're concerned. (P2)

Anti-wind activists however, saw in the adoption of utility-scale wind power in Vermont a risk to the amelioration of the problem of global warming:

Vermont, you know, sure we can take that on [producing more renewable energy than the state does already] for other states, but if we do it through wind, we're actually not helping our own situation. We're actually making it worse, because these other states need to conserve. The whole state of Florida is lit up. ... Vermont is one of the most frugal states for electricity [consumption] in the nation ... if you come into the state at night, you look, people have one light on in [their] house[s], I mean it’s a dark state. You know you go into Florida or New York City or New Jersey, the whole damn state is [lit up]. (A1)
Here, it is argued that because Vermonters are already frugal and the state already produces and consumes a relatively large proportion of renewable energy, adding more renewable electricity generation capacity that would be sold to out-of-staters—out-of-staters who are not frugal in their use of electricity—would hamper efforts to combat global warming.

Another benefit of utility-scale wind in Vermont seen by pro-wind activists is the improvements to the stability of Vermont’s electric grid that they associated with the deployment of new electric generating facilities throughout the state:

The grid issues, for instance on the southern end of the state here we’re impacted by the, what’s called the southern loop, which is a big loop, kind of a semi-circle that runs from Brattleboro up through Londonderry and back down to Bennington on the other side. That loop right now is maxed out. … there was a utility research conference last year that we [Fairwind Vermont] participated in that [was] basically trying to get the public on board with what might be the most reasonable solutions for strengthening the reliability of the southern grid. And although it doesn't solve all of the issues for the southern grid, the Magic Mountain wind farm [near Londonderry] might have helped, along with other types and sources of distributed renewable generation located along the loop, to stabilize the grid by putting some electricity in at this point in Londonderry, at which we are farthest away from the other source feeding in. So, local-sited wind power projects throughout the state could have helped the reliability of the transmission system with that northwest reliability project between Rutland and Burlington, which you know has all of the towns in the corridor there along route seven up in arms about the fact that … they’re putting in more high tension lines and people are upset about having to look at them and such. (P2)

In addition to perhaps obviating the need for unpopular electric transmission capacity upgrades, strengthening Vermont’s electricity grids by adding utility-scale wind would make possible more economic growth in the state:

Stowe, and Lamoille Co. now, in the last couple of years, they've had to postpone or otherwise shut down any major new development in the Stowe area because the Stowe electric department … couldn't supply any more major developments. And so, if we were able to build enough wind power to supply … about 15% of Vermont’s electric demand from wind power, or and other renewable sources might get us to the 25% level in the years ahead, you know small-scale hydro, biomass, wide-spread application of solar on you know rooftops, that kind of
stuff, then that will enable the state to grow in other ways that are dependent on electricity. (P2)

Anti-wind activists however are troubled by the prospect of such growth:

I don't suppose … that if we have, what half a dozen wind farms scattered around the state, that suddenly we would have trashed everything that makes Vermont Vermont. But it's hard not to believe that if we begin, well, take a half step backwards, ever since Act 250 and before for that matter, Vermont has recognized that high land in our state should be, should have a special status and that there should be regulations on development of land above … 2500 feet, that don't apply to lower land. (A5)

While this particular activist does not quite invoke the image of a dangerous slippery slope of utility-scale wind development in Vermont, where once one facility is built the floodgates of deleterious wind development would be open, there is however an expression of unease in this passage over further development of high-elevation land, which is the type of development that would, according to the previous pro-wind quote, benefit from the development of utility-scale wind in the state.

There are financial benefits, according to pro-wind activists, to building utility-scale wind in Vermont. First, they argue that the state’s economy will benefit from the construction of wind facilities:

they will … most likely use as many local contractors as they can in the construction of the facility (P2)

… further, there will be tax benefits, to Vermont towns, associated with selling the electricity:

there are tax benefits to the town of Sheffield and to the state particularly if this House 520 [bill], with a standard tax program, is passed. (P2)

Anti-wind groups, however, see the potential for a decline in tax revenues in towns that neighbor those that would benefit directly from taxes paid by commercial wind operators:
And we think the grand list will change substantially, you know how our properties [are assessed and taxed]. (A6)

Thus, it is argued that some towns would win from commercial utility-scale wind development, while others would lose—at least in terms of tax revenue paid to towns.

For pro-wind activists, there are also financial benefits to wind for Vermont’s electricity rate payers, for generations to come—they will benefit from the low ‘fuel’ cost associated with wind power:

I mean if you think about any energy source if the cost of gasoline say right now in 2007 is $3 per gallon, what's it going to be in the year 3007, if it's even available. Well wind, is essentially, once the infrastructure is in place in 2007, the cost of the fuel is $0 per unit and guess what, in the year 3007 it's going to be $0 per unit. (P1)

This financial benefit affords, according to pro-wind activists, an opportunity to bring about a fundamental change in our economic system:

you really should be looking at the opportunity that this may bring to future generations to build, to get off the fuel-, energy-based inflationary merry-go-round that we’ve been suffering the whole second half of the 20th century. And it's an absolute opportunity to build enormous wealth, prosperity and health for our great-great-great-great grand kids, that we don't even imagine now. (P1)

The economic benefits ascribed to utility-scale wind in Vermont by pro-wind activists contrast with the negative economic consequences these activists see for the state if utility-scale wind is not developed in Vermont. Firstly, economic growth will be hampered by having to import power that will be potentially more expensive in the future, especially if it is generated by natural gas-fired facilities which, unlike wind, do have per-unit costs for their fuel. Further, such fuels may not be available at a price that Vermonters can bear:
Michael Dworkin from Vermont Law School has a great image in his PowerPoint presentation of this natural gas tanker, you know a super tanker, in the middle of the Atlantic and it's just sitting there. And it's sitting there waiting for the phone call from the boss which says, well, right now New England is paying the best rates for this gas … so go to New England. The day will come in the near future when they say, right now, India's paying the most for natural gas, or China's paying the most for natural gas, so got to China, go to India. And the United States is going to be like [chocking/strangling noise/gesture] where are we going to get...and so the price implications (P2)

This risk to the energy security of New England will affect Vermont, so it goes, if Vermont does not build more in-state electricity generating capacity such as utility-scale wind. Without energy security, economic growth will be limited.

The potential for limited economic growth in Vermont—especially in areas like the Northeast Kingdom, and the town of Sheffield—is seen as a continuation of a rural economic decline narrative. This narrative can be seen in the following account, by a pro-wind activist, of the dispute over the re-opening of a granite quarry in Sheffield—a dispute that the activist saw as similar to debate over utility-scale wind power development:

Sheffield has never really had much of a claim to fame, historically there was an old granite quarry over on the south … about 15 years ago, somebody tried to resurrect that granite quarry. One of the large international granite consortiums started trying to open a lot of the smaller granite quarries in New England as a way to basically compete with Rock of Ages, which owned the rest of them. … And they actually got, they actually had, if you know Vermont, there's a lot of environmental permitting and they went through the process, but what happened when they, when people got wind of this was, a certain group of people in town—generally the more conservative, local people, thought this was a great idea. The rest of the people, which tended to be people that weren't originally from this area, were flatlanders like I was, that came in to retire or that lived near this thing, got really really upset about the idea of having a quarry, and they spread an incredible level of rumors and innuendo about what this was going to do, “oh there's going to be trucks by every five minutes. your house is going to settle. There’s going to be all kinds of noise, lots of blasting.” All of which was not true, because it wasn't going to be that big an operation. Ultimately they got their permit but the guy who leased the company the land wanted too much for the granite that when they got down to discover what quality of rock was there, it wasn't worth pursuing. So the company left. So that failed. This [commercial
utility-scale wind development] is kind of the second attempt in 15 or 20 years for Sheffield to glom on to a claim to fame, some way for some jobs to happen, some way for Sheffield to get out of the rut it's been in for the last...X number of years. As an example, Sheffield's town forest was sold about 30 or 40 years ago because it didn't have any money and they sold the land to get some money to keep the town going, I mean that's how bad it was here. (P5)

Another pro-wind activist sees the potential for this rural decline to worsen with the decrease in energy security that is seen as accompanying Peak Oil:

I was the last one to run the store in this town. This town doesn't have a store, a gas station or anything else, it has 700 people. I was running the store, this was 20-some-odd years ago, a guy came in, he was doing genealogy, and I'm a history nut so I sent him around to various cemeteries. [This] was a cold, nasty March day and he'd come back and I'd feed him a cup of coffee and so he finally asked me if I'd make him some lunch and I did. And I said “what do you do for a living?” He said “I teach political and economic geography at the University of New York,” I think in Albany. …Well I thought that was a fascinating subject, I'd never heard of it before. And we got talking and we found we shared a passion about the history of migrations and I said to him, “where’s the next big migration?” “Back to the city.” I said, “whaddaya mean?” He said—now remember this was 20-some-odd years ago we weren't talking about oil or anything—well he said “as soon as the oil … runs short,” he said “which is easier, to supply people who live in a 20 story building or one every five acres?” (P4)

Thus, according to pro-wind activists, not having in-state production of utility-scale wind electricity in Vermont in an energy-constrained future could be the death blow the state’s rural communities.

The potentially increased dependence between transportation and electricity in Vermont—where Peak Oil as well as global warming will make using fossil fuels for transportation unpalatable if not untenable—may sound a similar knell for the state’s tourism industry:

If oil gets to be, petroleum gets to be very expensive, what's going to happen to the tourism industry? People say it's going to hurt the tourist industry to look at windmills, it'll hurt if you [laughing] go the other way too... (P4)
Anti-wind activists however, see a loss of tourism in the state as a negative consequence of building commercial utility-scale wind in Vermont:

This type of landscape—the beauty here is more beautiful than some other place, and people are saying that and choosing this, if we keep it like this, we have something very saleable. In the Northeast Kingdom, tourism is a billion dollar business, I mean that's how we make our money. The lakes—this project is going to set right on Crystal Lake, you know so [opposition to utility-scale wind is] … an economical thing too. (A1)

Other features of Vermont’s “landscape economy” would suffer if, say anti-wind activists, commercial utility-scale wind comes to pass in the state. These activists argue that the King George School, a private boarding school for “unjudicated youth” located in Sutton, Vermont, would close as a consequence of wind development:

King George School … would undoubtedly have to shut down as a result of these because of the noise, and the flicker and the fact that all of the parents who send their children to this school, at a huge expense, have better choices. There are better, more sylvan settings, than at the base of a wind turbine facility. (A2) [emphasis original]

If the school closes, the area economy would suffer:

we'll lose 50 family-wage jobs from the people working at the school. We'll immediately lose $70,000 in tax revenue from the school. In my view that may be replaced by something else, I don't know what would go in there, but presumably that will generate some taxes, so we don't know… (A6)

Further, wind development would have negative visual as well as aural consequences for the Vermont landscape:

anecdotally … UPC [the company that would build the proposed utility-scale wind installation in Sheffield, Vermont] is just now in the first few months of having a project in Maine at Mars Hills and that project has residences that are located well within a mile radius and … even though they assured the townspeople over there that the sound impacts would be negligible, the reality appears that they are not at all negligible and a lot of the people who live in properties that are close to the project are bitterly … complaining, they're trying to get the state to come in and remeasure, there were some, there was some language in the permit that did establish a ceiling or cap and chances are then the turbines are putting out levels beyond that cap, the state will have to decide whether they are or not. … Typically in Vermont, the sites that the developers are
attracted to turn out to be … hill towns that, for generations have cherished the relative peace and quite that surrounds them … (A5)

Further, utility-scale wind development in Vermont, it is argued, would have negative consequences for the state’s wildlife communities:

Well the consequences are very substantial, major road building into the mountain sides, which certainly would have an effect on wildlife, on the passage of wildlife … we are in a corridor, there's wildlife passage from Massachusetts on up to the Canadian border through these mountains … this is a bear corridor. (A4)

The consequence of utility-scale wind in Vermont that anti-wind activists fear most is the ruination of the landscape. These activists hope that, even in the face of climate change, peak oil, and rural economic decline:

there may be ways for us to … [solve these problems] without ruining the landscape at the same time. (A1)

4.2. Persuasive uses of aesthetics

In this section, I discuss the results of my discourse analysis of the rhetoric of aesthetics in the debate over commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont. In my narrative analysis, I used interviews that I conducted to sketch an overview of the wind power debate from the perspective of both pro-wind and anti-wind grassroots activists. I used the same interviews as well as supplementary texts in my discourse analysis of the persuasive uses of aesthetic arguments in accounts of grassroots activists in the debate. I described this rhetoric of aesthetics in terms of the aesthetic modalities used and the linkages between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic frames found in these arguments. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 6.
Before discussing these results, I first want to say more about the nature of the texts that I analyzed. I used interview transcripts in the following ways: (1) In my narrative analysis to provide a “back drop,” to describe the order of discourse, and to understand how debaters understand and feel about Vermont and wind power; (2) In my discourse analysis, interview transcripts were a source of utterances of aesthetic arguments that were rendered in particular modalities and linked to other discourses. These interviews are examples of artificial texts in the sense that I took an active role, along with my subjects, in the creation of these texts.

While I did not take part in the creation of the letters to state government officials and regulators written by interviewees, I did solicit these texts in the context of my interviews with activists. Thus, I do not consider them to be fully naturally occurring and thus completely free from researcher bias. However, these texts are important because my interviewees chose to share them with me. Therefore, I view these texts as sitting at an intersection of my biases—my focus on understanding the persuasive uses of aesthetics in the Vermont wind power debate—and the disparate, individual biases of my interviewees.
The position pages of activist group websites I used in my discourse analysis are naturally occurring texts—I, as researcher, did not directly influence their creation. Further, they are true “multi-modal” texts that incorporate diverse modes (e.g. photos and sketches along with written language, composed together using page layout/graphic design principles) that have broader expressive capabilities than the linguistic narrative interaction of the interviews themselves, or the written letters written to state officials.

4.2.1. Rhetoric of aesthetics in interviews

Pro-wind interviews

Aesthetic arguments in favor of utility-scale wind in Vermont were largely absent from my interviews with pro-wind activists. While these activists generally admitted that aesthetics matter, they argued that aesthetic considerations must be prioritized with other considerations:

I think the common denominator is that most of the people in the group are in favor of a logically-planned, well-crafted, well-detailed and regulated and fair facet of our future energy coming from a renewable, clean source such as commercial wind. And that my personal opinion is that I don’t want to ruin anyone’s day by putting a windmill in their view if they don’t want it, but what it all comes down to is a matter of priorities. If you understand they big picture, on the global context, national and here in Vermont, as to where we have to go environmentally and how fast we have to do it … the question is not “gee do we have to look at these ugly windmills on the hillside,” … the question becomes, “oh my God, how fast can we build them and how many can we stick up there.” Once you address the whole discussion of wind power in those kind of broader-picture contexts of accountability as stewards of the planet and the fact that we, as Hanson\(^{30}\) says, we essential got about a decade left to solve the entire problem.

(P1)

\(^{30}\) Jim Hanson, directory of NASA’s Goddard Institute of Space Studies and climatology researcher.
Here we see the activist deprivileging anti-wind concern for potential adverse aesthetic effects of utility-scale wind in Vermont in the face of global warming. Another respondent made a similar deprivileging argument:

P4: I have to copy of the National Geographic from August of 2006, which talks about the end of cheap oil. And another one of June of '04, that the title of it, "Cheap oil is on its way out" or something like that. I've got both at home, so the National Geographic is taking, you know two different looks at it, there's not necessarily contradictory, they're just two different ways of looking at it.

Interviewer: So the two different ways were?

P4: We’re going to have to do something to substitute for oil, and we may have to give up a little bit of our pristine [view] in order to do [it]. (P4)

Thus, we see an implicit discursive aesthetic argument for a natura-ruralist Vermont landscape—framed in terms of Act 248’s notion of undue adverse effects—which these respondents perceived as being promoted by anti-wind activists. This aesthetic argument was linked and opposed to global warming and energy security frames that argue in favor of utility-scale wind development in Vermont. These frames are privileged over aesthetic considerations in part because they represent, to pro-wind activists, crises that—if not addressed by building new ‘clean’ electricity generation capacity in Vermont—will have dire consequences for the well being of society at both the Vermont and the global scale. According to the pro-wind argument, it is better to have to look at and listen to utility-scale wind in Vermont than to face the consequences of global warming and the continued lack of energy security in the state.

This deprivileging of aesthetics is enabled by the notion that aesthetic judgements are totally subjective:

I think that criterion 8 of Act 250, which is the aesthetic principle that basically all centered around the cornerstone statement that aesthetics is judged as being detrimental or negative if it's shocking and offensive to the average person.
Well, the terms shocking and offensive and average person are absolutely indefensible as objective terms in a court of law. In other words, criterion 8 of Act 250 I think is unconstitutional because you—aesthetics is a completely subjective issue—that you cannot prove to me, objectively in a court of law that this pencil is either beautiful or ugly, you cannot do it. You know and the criteria that you use are invented from your own subjective opinions, one way or the other. (P1)

… totally subjective, and subject to norms that are always changing:

Looks are tricky things, they change constantly. (P4)

Given the subjective, shifting norms of aesthetic considerations, such considerations are looked at with suspicion by pro-wind activists when they are used by anti-wind activists:

I mean, other than, you don't want to look at it, there are few reasons to object to properly sited wind farms (generation plants for those who do not characterize harvesting/harnessing the wind for power). So people create all these other reasons to justify why you're against it, why it won't work or why it is evil. Take the opposition directed at the “it's the out-of-state, even out-of-country” entities that are behind many of the proposals. Ignoring the fact that much of the wind expertise comes from countries where large percentages of power is generated by wind (20% Denmark, 25% Germany, etc.), and the fact that it takes a large company to risk the 2 to 3 million dollars it takes to develop a wind farm, so what, for example that enXco had ties to France? An obvious diversion from the true issues, but, conveniently for opponents, that it resonated during the “ban french fries, call them Freedom fries” hysteria during the run to war in Iraq? (P3)

This suspicion of subjective arguments may be a reflection of the hegemony of rationalistic scientific and juridical discourses in the Act 248 permitting process that wind development in Vermont is subject to. To the degree that pro-wind activists tailor their messages to have more persuasive force within this process, they will avoid making aesthetic appeals and dismiss such appeals made by others. The general lack of aesthetic appeals in pro-wind arguments intimates a pro-wind audience, such as the Public Service Board, that is primarily swayed by scientific-juridical arguments. However the pro-wind case is not devoid of aesthetic appeals. When the alleged aesthetic effects of proposed
utility-scale wind developments in Vermont were considered in my pro-wind interviews, these effects have not been deemed to be adverse:

P5: Well, what are the downsides? Noise is not an issue. The King George School would tell you that is, but they're a mile, almost a mile away from the closest unit, they're not, they're going to have to have some kind of a PA system to magnify the sound in that school if they really want to be harmed by it. They are not going to be harmed by the noise. … the other group that that doesn't want them will tell you that they're going to ruin our ridgelines. Well I gotta tell ya, they're, they don't affect the ridgelines. They ruin the view of some people who moved to Vermont to retire and watch the sunset on the ridgeline and now there's going to be a 400 foot tower there, so it ruins their view. That's kind of selfish. I mean—

Interviewer: Selfish in light of?

P5: In light of, it's well geez, are you … making any concessions at all to the fact that we've got to do something about the oil problem or the energy problem or you know I mean where's your realization that … wind is a good energy source? (P5)

In one of the few pro-wind utterances that did not deprivilege and displace the aesthetic for energy security, global warming, or cost effective framings, the respondent provided conditions under which the aesthetic effects of a utility-scale wind facility in Vermont would not be adverse:

I'm not even sure that I would find an installation of hundreds of machines that appealing in terms of aesthetics. But a line of [roughly a dozen] turbines arrayed over a mile and a half or two miles of a ridge line, you know single space or maybe grouped like Searsburg in sort of odd numbers so they're not just lock-step across the ridge line, something like that, I have no problem with that aesthetic impact. (P2)

However in making this discursive aesthetic argument for the possibility that utility-scale wind is Vermont-scale wind, the respondent still linked the aesthetic to a cost effective framing:

You know, big enough to have some impact on Vermont’s electricity market, but not hundreds of these things. So that’s what I think of as Vermont scale. (P2)
Thus, aesthetic arguments—with their subjective tendencies—were in my interviews with pro-wind activists, if not subordinated to, then justified or rationalized by being linked to the juridical scientific, environmental, or economic discourses that dominate the Act 248 permitting process.

**Anti-wind interviews**

The arguments against particular commercial utility-scale wind developments that I encountered in my interviews with anti-wind activists did include aesthetic frames that activists used in a variety of ways. Some uses employed discursive modalities, others ambient. In either modality, aesthetic arguments were linked to non-aesthetic frames (e.g. wind threatens natural resources). The following excerpts represent the range of these persuasive uses of aesthetics.

In the following exchange the respondent describes their discursive aesthetic argument against wind in terms of the Act 250 aesthetic criterion used by the Public Service Board under the Act 248 permitting process:

Interviewer: So you mentioned that, you know these 400 towers are, you know out-of-scale and … that's similar language that's used in the Act 250 aesthetic criterion … can you talk a little bit about that criterion?

A2: Well … the Act 250 language, basically revolves around fit. Whether something is appropriate … whether it fits in size and scale and proportion … in this instance, it's difficult because a wind turbine is an anomaly anyway, it doesn't look like anything else. … I think that there really are sort of two issues here, it's not so much … style, it's not so much, does it fit with the 19th century building stock, … as [it is] size and proportion. Size and proportion really, [have] nothing to do with what it looks like, in the end on its exterior cladding, that's the last sort of 1/4" that you see on a building or a structure. So it's not so much just the … whether it's a white, perfect box with a lot of glass, or whether it’s … 19th century clapboards painted white like everything else is. And, with a standing seem or a slate roof or whatever. It's not that … it's proportion and it's size. And all of the sudden when you introduce into a an existing fabric, something that is way out of scale, way bigger than anything else, what it
happens to do, I think, and many of us agree, is it diminishes what's there already, and I think that's really what Act 250 is all about, in that criteria, will this enhance, diminish or keep the same what is there? If given, that, if what is there is worth preserving. If on the other hand it's some sort of a site that's either hidden enough so that these are sited in such a way that it does not diminish a large surrounding area, or it's already a built up developed, industrial site, as you referred to the radar tower area as being, then … it might be okay, but to … put something that, that's out of scale and out of context … I think that's really what they're after. … Act 248 is charged with the, is it worth it, ultimately, is this trade-off worth the gain. (A2)

This respondent went on to link this juridical discursive aesthetic argument—that utility-scale wind should not be built because such turbines are so out-of-scale with the built and natural features of natura-ruralist Vermont—with the argument that the costs of energy production should be shared:

The energy dilemma is that, you know we're dependent upon foreign oil, and it's similar to the energy crunch that we had in the early '70s, and but it's certainly more important now, and in part because, because Al Gore has raised everyone's consciousness to … global warming, and so forth. And so that's a great thing. The impact on Vermont is simply going to be the impact as it will be on, should be on everyone. My point is that it should be shared. (A2)

This framing responds to the global warming and a lack of energy security frames promoted by pro-wind activists and relies on the discursive aesthetic framework provided by the Act 250 criterion to cast light on the environmental injustice that anti-wind activists see in the commercial utility-scale wind development process in Vermont.

In the next example, the aesthetic case against wind is made with an ambient aesthetic appeal that relies on a more intricate interweaving of non-aesthetic frames against wind:

I think, and the Governor stated it quite recently, more recently than I've been involved with it, that the amount of power generated by development of wind power on the mountainsides is really not sufficient, in his view and certainly in mine, to require the defacing of our mountainsides. The value isn't there to lead that to be a viable option. The power available from other sources that exist now and could exist in the future simply don't point to good reason to permanently scar what is basically our birthright here. With its attendant impaction on
wildlife, the viewing landscape … it would be damaging to the state, for very little, in comparison, gain. (A4)

The aesthetic effect of wind development is described in an ambient mode—“permanently scar what is … our birthright”—and is intimately bound to the belief that *Vermont has poor wind resources* and that *wind threatens natural resources*.

Other ambient aesthetic arguments were less intimately linked to the non-aesthetic:

A6: [Y]ou know after attending meetings with the VP of UPC, … I watched the vice president stand up and tell the audience, “well our opposition are well-heeled people,” … and he drew this caricature of perhaps a flatlander or a somebody selfishly concerned about, only concerned about their view … “these are a bunch of well-heeled NIMBYs” … And I knew, I knew good well about the game warden, I knew about the farmer who sold his herd, I mean, the way we've been characterized is maddening, when you know the variety of people who are, who absolutely love these mountains, like the state poet, we’re, these are sacred to us … They inspire us, sustain us.

Interviewer: How do you respond to that? That NIMBY criticism?

A6: You try to get the facts out … but it's so easy to be characterized … and then they don't even listen to the opposition, but thank goodness [members of our group have] a scientific background, you know wildlife biologist, … fishery biologist, … a forester, [and] can speak beyond NIMBYism. (A6)

Alongside appeals to protect the mountains that sustain them, anti-wind activists use statements belonging to scientific discourses, perhaps to defend against being characterized as NIMBY aesthetes. These scientific discourses intimate that *wind threatens natural resources*. In this linkage we can see an implicit rhetorical strategy whereby non-aesthetic discourses are used to bolster positions based on ambient aesthetic appeals.

In the next example from my interview transcripts, the interviewee describes an explicit rhetorical strategy where the persuasive use of aesthetics is purely opportunistic:
In order to become a party in the PSB docket, it was necessary to maintain that you personally were going to sustain some sort of negative impact, in order to be a personal party, and I did. I had to rely on the fact that the radar base\textsuperscript{31} is in my viewshed, I didn't really care about that, and I don't care about it … I don't think distant views amount to much one way or the other whether … a wind turbine in the distance looks good to you or doesn't look good to you depends on what you think about the all the related issues … in purely aesthetic terms, I suppose a wind turbine is arguably a pleasing structure. You know the towers, the new towers, not the old lattice-work towers, but the new towers that have skins, aren't, there's nothing displeasing about the shape, and the and from a distance they're sort of mesmerizing and if you if you seen them as a symbol or an icon of something good, they look good, but if you see them as an icon of a mistake [laughs] or … the argument over wind power in, certainly in Vermont, and to some extent … more generally, is that it … [is] sort of a feel-good symbolic effort in terms of reducing, reducing carbon emissions, [it] does so much less than something like a 55 mile and hour speed limit, or almost any measure that might be taken in the area of transportation. Transportation is where … we're really carbon gluttons. (A5)

Here, the respondent linked their putative aesthetic concern with assertions that transportation is the carbon problem in Vermont and wind is a token. However this aesthetic appeal is a Trojan Horse of sorts, a pro forma argument that the activist was required to make in order to play a part in the Act 248 permitting process that regulates wind development in Vermont.

4.2.2. Rhetoric of aesthetics in texts written for Vermont state officials

For my analysis of the persuasive uses of aesthetics in texts written for Vermont state officials, I chose two texts—one arguing for commercial utility-scale wind development in the state, the other against—from the set of supplemental texts given to me by my interviewees.\textsuperscript{32} Each of these texts was written to persuade an audience whom

\textsuperscript{31} On East Mountain in East Haven, Vermont, the proposed site of a “demonstration” utility-scale wind farm consisting of 4 turbines. This development did not receive a certificate of public good due to the developer’s unwillingness to conduct particular wildlife studies on the site. The developer, Matt Ruben, has abandoned the project (Fairwind Vermont 2007).

\textsuperscript{32} In order to protect the identity of these subjects, I will not indicate which interviewee wrote these texts.
the author perceived to have some degree of power over wind development decisions in Vermont. The pro-wind text, a letter written to Governor Douglas in 2004, called for wind and other renewable sources of electricity to be considered as part of the state’s energy policy. The anti-wind text, a deposition written in 2006 for the Public Service Board to consider in its decision on the Sheffield wind generation facility proposed by UPC Vermont Wind, cautioned the board over what the author perceived to be the dangers associated with developing Vermont’s ridgelines for the purpose of generating electricity. These texts differ in the degree of power their intended audiences ostensibly have over wind development in Vermont—the governor has the power to appoint PSB board members as well as orient his government toward broad energy initiatives, the board members have the power to grant certificates of public good for particular energy generation and other “public service” developments. They also differ in that the pro-wind text is concerned with Vermont’s policy toward in-state electricity generation in general, while the anti-wind text is focused on the question of utility-scale wind generation in the state. However, these texts offered me the best opportunity, using the documents I gathered from my subjects, to compare appeals made by grassroots wind activists to those who have power over wind development decisions in Vermont.33 A discussion of my analyses of these texts follows.

33I would have analyzed two documents written for the same audience. Unfortunately, I did not receive any texts written for the PSB from my pro-wind interviewees, nor texts written to the governor from my anti-wind interviewees.
A letter from a pro-wind activist to Governor Douglas

This letter, which spans two printed pages that are reproduced with my comments overlaid in numbered boxes with arrows in figures 9 and 10 in Appendix D, opens with a discussion of the “debate over global warming” that had been “heat[ing] up” at the time the letter was written. The author cites a contemporary federal government climate report and an issue of National Geographic Magazine as having “fueled” this debate in the national discourse. The author charges “proponents of the status-quo” with denying that these publications “state[d] that global warming is a real and growing threat.” This denial, and in particular the concomitant “wide ranging policy implications,” is the problem that the author sets out to address in this letter.

In the second paragraph, the author acknowledges ambient aesthetic effects of global warming. A “harrowing picture” of the effects of global warming, the author argues, is “painted” by the photos, and accompanying text, found in the issue of National Geographic Magazine. In the next sentence, however, the author deprivileges the aesthetic representations in the debate in favor of the scientific—represented in the publications the author cites by visual displays of quantitative information that show, it is argued, the anthropogenic nature of global warming. The author is implicitly arguing that while aesthetic considerations can help reveal the effects of global warming, only the discourse of science can provide us with access to the knowledge necessary to determine whether human activities are a significant cause of global warming. By arguing that only science, and not aesthetic considerations, has the power to define the problem of global
warming, the author opens the door to granting similar privilege to science and other non-aesthetic discourses in defining the contemporary problems of Vermont’s energy policy.

On the second printed page of the letter, the author links the global warming framing that dominates the first page to an energy security frame. The argument is that as other states and countries (i.e. Canada) turn to renewable sources of electricity, which are argued to help mitigate global warming, Vermont’s supply of imported renewable electricity (i.e. that provided by Hydro-Québec) will diminish and will cost ratepayers more money. The state’s energy security is further threatened by the as-yet-unsolved long-term nuclear waste storage problem that affects Vermont Yankee Nuclear. The author concludes that Vermont’s energy policy must respond to the politically and economically defined problem of energy security as well as the scientifically defined problem of anthropogenic climate change by developing “in-state renewable generation capacity.”

In the final paragraph the author states that “commercial grade wind farms” can provide part of this in-state renewable capacity. However, given the ‘de-aestheticization’ of the definition of the problems that wind generation facilities would help solve, there is no discursive space in which to consider the potential for such facilities to have “undue adverse effects,” in the language of Vermont’s Act 250 aesthetic criterion, on the aesthetic qualities of the Vermont landscape. This is not to say that the author of the letter does not think highly of the Vermont landscape or does not think that wind turbines could have adverse aesthetic impacts upon this landscape. What I am arguing is that the privileging of the non-aesthetic over the aesthetic in the author’s policy problem
definition reflects the priorities the author assigns to the non-aesthetic and aesthetic considerations that are made in the selection of solutions. Moreover, the consistent deprivileging of the aesthetic throughout the letter keeps the author’s argument honest. The inclusion of an aesthetic appeal, say in the concluding paragraph, would have—given the author’s earlier abandonment of an aesthetics-based argument—smacked of rhetorical artifice.

**A deposition by an anti-wind activist before the Public Service Board**

In the deposition presented to the Vermont Public Service Board, which is reproduced along with my comments overlaid in numbered boxes with arrows in figure 12 in Appendix E, the author leads with an ambient aesthetic argument. This argument, if not against utility-scale wind development in the state, attempts to instill a sense of gravitas in the board members whose task it is to decide whether or not such development is in the public interest. This sense of gravitas is conveyed in lyrical prose and informed by a spatial imaginary of Vermont in which *high elevation land is sacrosanct*.

The author argues that wind development would cause Vermont to “forfeit yet more of her most iconic and most enduring resource: the unbroken crests of the *Great Northern Forest*” [emphasis original]. This ambient aesthetic appeal is linked, in the final clause of the last sentence of the first paragraph, to the argument that *wind threatens natural resources*. The author then ramifies the aesthetic argument by broadening the visual perceptual modality of the original claim to include the aural—“…forfeit as well the very peace and quiet that has for generations been the hallmark of her hill towns” [emphasis original]. Turning back to the non-aesthetic, the author argues that *wind is not*
base load power and that Vermont has poor wind resources. In the final paragraph, the author acknowledges the energy security and global warming frames found in pro-wind arguments, but tempers these considerations with a closing ambient aesthetic appeal that emphasizes the privileged status of mountains.

The author uses the discursive swings in this deposition—from aesthetic, to non-aesthetic, to aesthetic—to build a logic wherein: (1) Wind is bad for Vermont’s mountains; (2) Vermont’s mountains contribute to the wellbeing of Vermonters; and (3) Vermont’s mountains make utility-scale wind impractical in Vermont. Within this order of discourse the concept that ‘utility-scale wind electricity generation is in the public good of Vermont’ is preposterous. This conclusion can be reached in the following way. With the first two propositions, wind power can be shown to impose costs on Vermonters: if mountains are good for Vermonters, and wind is bad for mountains, then wind is bad for Vermonters. The third proposition is an attempt to short-circuit the cost-benefit analysis that is central to the PSB’s determination of public good. If Vermont’s mountains make utility-scale wind in the state an endeavor with marginal benefits, it is unlikely, so the anti-wind argument goes, that such benefits will outweigh the costs wind would impose on the wellbeing of Vermonters—human and non-human.

The discursive logic of this deposition is suffused with a natura-ruralist aesthetic sensibility. The natura-ruralist influence on the non-aesthetic aspects of the author’s argument can be seen in the poetic mode used to express these aspects. Such aestheticized representations of the non-aesthetic appear to be at odds with the scientific-juridical ideology that dominates the discourses employed in typical Public Service
Board (PSB) proceedings (see section 2.7.3). Why then did the author choose represent their argument in an aestheticized poetic mode? Perhaps it was an attempt to ‘out flank’ the Act 248 process and appeal to the PSB members not as public service regulators, but as Vermonters? If so, this appeal would seem to rely on a particular understanding of what it means to be a Vermonter—and understanding founded on the natura-ruralist notion of the Vermont landscape.

4.2.3. Rhetoric of aesthetics in activist websites

As my study identified only one grassroots pro-wind group, Fairwind Vermont, I used this group’s position page for the pro-wind text. For the anti-wind text, I chose the position page of Ridge Protectors. I chose to work with a text from Ridge Protectors because this group is based in Sheffield, Vermont and formed in response to the wind generation facility proposed for Sheffield. This region of the Northeast Kingdom emerged as a focal region in the Vermont wind power debate during the time of my study. Thus, the region was the physical site over which debate participants contested the merits of commercial utility-scale wind development in Vermont.

Fairwind Vermont website

The Fairwind Vermont position page (Fairwind Vermont 2005) can be found in the “Why Windpower?” section of the site, which is referenced in the site home page by the linked titled “The Case For Wind”. This text spans two printed pages. These pages are reproduced, with my comments overlaid in numbered boxes with arrows, in figures 7 and 8 in Appendix D. These numbered boxes correspond to the order, roughly left-to-
right and top-to-bottom, of the elements of each page that I cover in my discussion of the aesthetic modalities and linkages present in the text.

On the first page we see a banner graphic that shows two seemingly utility-scale wind turbines on a green field or plateau under a blue sky. This stylized depiction is by definition an ambient aesthetic representation of wind turbines. The goal of this image is to communicate to the page viewer an impression of the, I assume good, feelings that the author(s) associate with wind turbines. The foreground and caption text associated with the image link the ambient aesthetic representation with a ‘commonsense’ call for a transparent and honest discussion about utility-scale wind development in Vermont. However, the image inaccurately depicts utility-scale wind in Vermont. The landscape, a field, does not look like a ridge top, where such turbines would likely be built in Vermont. The roughly eye-level point-of-view, where the viewer looks across to the turbines, suggests an egalitarian relationship between the viewer and the wind turbines. An arguably more realistic depiction of the visual experience of utility-scale wind turbines in Vermont would feature a low-angle point-of-view (cf. the photo of the turbines on printed page 2, discussed below) where the viewer would be looking up at the turbines. Such a point-of-view however has the potential to imply power over the viewer, and would undermine the author’s message that utility-scale wind is a fair deal for Vermonters.

In the body of the text, the first five paragraphs make the argument for wind in terms of energy security and global warming frames. In the sixth paragraph, the tone changes with an appeal to the idea that forests are heritage characteristics of Vermont.
This appeal, with its reference to climate change and acid rain and their assumed potential to destroy Vermont’s forests, is an oblique discursive aesthetic argument for the adoption of utility-scale wind electricity generation in the state. This aesthetic argument is linked to the reference to the potential destruction of the state’s forests, at the hands of anthropogenic climate change and acid rain, and to the consequences that this destruction is believed to have—namely the loss of the “fall foliage tourist season.”

The second printed page of the “Why Windpower?” page, under the heading “Then What is the Problem?” responds to what the author(s) perceive to be common positions against utility-scale wind development in Vermont. The second sentence of the first paragraph introduces the perceived aesthetics-based argument against such development—“Some people see ridgelines as scenic resources, which they do not want developed.” In the next sentence, this aesthetics-based claim is linked to the potential negative consequences “some see” as being associated with such ridgeline development—“risks to property values…wildlife habitats and tourism.” The second paragraph dismisses these and all critiques against wind by noting that the alternatives to wind-based electricity generation have worse environmental impacts. The author then argues for a triple bottom line accounting—environmental, social, and energy—of the consequences of energy supply decisions, and thus provides a framework to promote a wind power that has far less environmental and geopolitical entanglements than fossil fuels and nuclear power. In the final paragraph, the author redefines the *natura-ruralist*

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34 Given that this text is part of a website published by a group, I assume the authorship/editing to be collective. However in the interest of compact prose, I mean the singular “author” to refer to this collective of authors for the remainder of my discussion of this text.
Vermont landscape to be compatible with wind power. Vermont is uniquely beautiful. Its landscape is admitted to be fragile, yet utility-scale wind power can be responsibly developed here. The key to ensuring that such development is “fair to all” is openness and honesty. Thus, the only thing stopping wind development in Vermont, according to this pro-wind text, is the politicized nature of the process. The authors do not however discuss how or why the process has come to be politicized.

With the two photos at the bottom of the page—which share the caption “The choice is yours…pick a power source for your grandchildren”—the author, in addition to shifting the temporal scale of the debate, attempts to juxtapose what they believe Vermont is not, with what they argue Vermont should be. The top photo depicts a hyper-industrial scene, which Vermont is argued to be not. The bottom photo shows an American flag set against the backdrop of four utility-scale wind turbines (possibly parts of the Searsburg facility in Southern Vermont) on a forested ridge above the viewer. Through this juxtaposition, the author is arguing for a version of the \textit{natura-ruralist} Vermont landscape that includes utility-scale wind. The American flag in the foreground of the bottom photo seems to be an attempt to link this new landscape with patriotic concerns for energy security (e.g. expressing a distaste for “oil wars”). For me, this alignment is strengthened, made visceral, through the juxtaposition of the flag with the massive plumes in the upper photo. At first blush, I read the top image as a depiction of the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in New York City on September 11th, 2001.
Read in either way, these photos form a given-new relationship: with the fossil energy economy of today we face geopolitical annihilation; with a renewable energy economy we could restore our Arcadian republic. The ‘semiotic ecology’ of these images relies on an ambient aesthetic flow—from the bad: grey, black, and brown; to the good: green, red, white, and blue. The argument that emerges from this flow is a hybrid discourse of patriotism articulated around environmentalism and vice versa. In terms of the rhetoric of aesthetics in this text, we see the author using these the iconic forms in these two visual representations—stacks and plumes, a flag and turbines—as anchors of meaning that form the vertices that define the shape of a particular message within a multidimensional discursive space.

**Ridge Protectors website**

The Ridge Protectors position page (Ridge Protectors 2007) can be found in the “LEARN THE FACTS” section of the site, which is referenced from the home page via the link titled “LEARN THE FACTS”. This page is reproduced, with my comments overlaid in numbered boxes and arrows, in figure 11 in Appendix E. As above, these numbered boxes correspond to the order, roughly left-to-right and top-to-bottom, of the elements of each page that I cover in my discussion of the aesthetic modalities and linkages present in the text.

As with the Fairwind Vermont page, at the top of the Ridge Protectors page there is a banner image—a photograph of Hardscrabble Mountain. This mountain, which is along the Sheffield-Sutton border, is the site that, at one point in the life of the proposal, would have hosted the turbines of the Sheffield Wind Farm proposed by UPC Vermont
Wind.\textsuperscript{35} This image depicts the ridgeline at, as I believe the author\textsuperscript{36} intends, the peak of its scenic beauty during the fall foliage season. In the lower right corner of the photo, pastures can be seen. This ambient aesthetic statement—made using a photograph without the aid of caption text—intimates that this land is not just for looking at, but is a \textit{natura-ruralist} working rural landscape.

The body of the page, under the “LEARN THE FACTS” header, is structured around two columns of text (where the “facts” are listed) as well as a header paragraph. This column layout makes it easy for the reader to randomly seek around the page, which makes personalized non-linear readings more likely. In the header paragraph, the author establishes a metonymic association of the Northeast Kingdom as “the real Vermon” \textit[sic]. They then problematize the proposed wind development by noting that a non-Vermont—“An out of state developer”—plans to build wind turbines that are greater in size and number than those of Vermont’s only standing utility-scale wind facility. This discursive aesthetic argument against wind—which relies on the “scale” aesthetic criterion of Vermont’s Act 250—continues in the first argument listed at the top of the left column. This aesthetic argument is visually linked, via the page layout, to the “environmental” claims (made in the adjacent cell in the right column) that the project would create soil erosion and adversely affect the water table and wildlife habitat on and near Hardscrabble Mountain.

\textsuperscript{35} See http://www.sheffieldwind.com/\textsuperscript{36} Again I assume collective authorship but use the singular “author.” in the discussion of this text.
At the bottom of the left column, the author broadens the perceptual modalities upon which they found their discursive aesthetic argument against utility-scale wind by claiming turbine noise as a significant negative impact of the development. The aesthetic consideration for noise, along with the marring of the night sky by the FAA-mandated aviation warning lights, is linked to a concern for property values. The implication is that a Vermont landscape that does not feature such noise and lights is more highly valued, to those who would buy property in the state, than one that does feature such ‘blemishes.’ Thus, the *natura-ruralist* qualities of the state’s landscape are argued to influence the value of its real estate market.

In the fourth cell down of the right column, an ambient aesthetic appeal to the “untouched ridgelines” that “define Vermont’s landscape” is opposed to the industrialized landscape that would result from the building of roads, the cutting of trees, and ultimately the erecting of 400 foot turbines. This aesthetic claim is linked, using the page layout, to calls for conservation, as well as Vermont-scale energy production, made in the cell below. Utility-scale wind, so the argument goes, cannot have a place in a landscape that its existence would threaten. Thus, the Act 250 aesthetic criterion of “fit” is the central point around which the aesthetic arguments against utility-scale wind development are framed. Such development does not fit in Vermont, it brings with it things that do not belong in Vermont: noise and light pollution, forested peaks denuded and sullied by large industrial structures, threats to wildlife habitat and water quality.
**Comparing activist position pages**

In their “position” web pages, both Fairwind Vermont and Ridge Protectors make aesthetic arguments in the course of defining their particular positions. Fairwind Vermont argues that utility-scale wind belongs in Vermont and can help to preserve the unique qualities of its landscape. Ridge Protectors argues that utility-scale wind does not belong in Vermont and will contribute to the destruction of the unique qualities of its landscape. Aside from their positions, these groups differ in the modalities they use in their aesthetic representations and to a lesser extent in the links they make between these representations and other discourses. In the case of Fairwind, ambient aesthetic representations dominate, and are linked to environmentalist and patriotic discourses. Alternately, Ridge Protectors’ aesthetic representations tend more toward the discursive, and are linked to environmentalist and property value discourses.

How might these differences affect the issue culture of the Vermont wind power debate? The anti-wind linkage between aesthetics and a concern for property values makes such groups likely targets for charges of NIMBYism. The pro-wind linkage between ambient aesthetic representations and patriotism results in a message that, I assume the author hopes, is more likely to resonate across political divides. The symbol of the American flag is powerful. Some Americans love it, while others feel ambivalent towards it. The association of the flag with wind turbines, and the contrast with environmental degradation may be an attempt by the author\(^{37}\) to reclaim or redefine a

\(^{37}\) Lacking a credit for the photo, I assume that the author and photographer are one in the same.
symbol that some, including myself, have come to associate with the negative political, economic, social, and environmental effects of a reckless and globally hegemonic state.

If the purpose of these position pages is to persuade readers to make the positions communicated their own, what do the differences in the persuasive uses of aesthetics between the pro-wind and the anti-wind pages tell us about the Others that these groups are targeting? The linkage, by both groups, of environmentalism with aesthetics acknowledges and reinforces the idea that most Vermonters have an environmental consciousness. The use of a conventionally patriotic symbol by the pro-wind group may be an attempt to extend the concepts of patriotism and environmentalism to be more palatable those who might have historically subscribed to one while rejecting the other. The appeal to a concern for property values has the potential to appeal to many who own or hope to own property in the state. However given the second- and vacation-home market in Vermont, which is represented as inflating real estate prices in the state, this message may not have broad appeal in a state that is represented as having an affordable housing problem. The difference in the potential for the pro- and anti-wind positions to transcend “traditional” political identities may be related to the differing scalar focuses of these arguments. The pro-wind position concerns itself more with cosmopolitan broad or distant scales—global climate change, national energy security, future generations—

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38 I assume that both groups craft messages that they believe will best resonate with and thus persuade their target audiences.
while the anti-wind position concerns itself more with local near or intimate scales—local watershed health, nearby property, your tax dollars.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{39} It is not my intent to argue that one position is more correct than another, nor am I advocating for the privileging of one scalar focus over another. Making such valuations is outside the scope of this thesis, and thus out of reach of the analytic protocol I have defined.
I begin this chapter with a reflection on the methodology of this study. Through this reflection, I offer a tentative recommendation for reforming the commercial utility-scale wind development process in Vermont. In the concluding section, I answer the questions I set out in Objective 2 (see section 1.2) while attempting to put aesthetics “in its place” in the debate. In doing so, I will highlight what this research offers to activists, policymakers, and social researchers and theorists. I close with an afterward that discusses the August 2007 approval of the Sheffield wind facility by the Vermont Public Service Board.

5.1. Methodological reflection

Throughout my analyses one question has persisted in the back of my mind: why is there only one pro-wind grassroots group while there are several anti-wind grassroots groups in the contemporary wind power debate in Vermont? I now attempt to answer this question by addressing what has so far been lacking in my discourse analysis—an attention to materiality, power, and knowledge.

Within my discourse analysis, I primarily engaged with the discourse of the Vermont wind power debate at the level of language and signification. Relying on language alone to understand the discursive-material phenomenon that was the object of this research—the Vermont landscape in the wind power debate—reduces the explanatory power of this analysis. As Hook (2001) argues, true discourse analysis is
concerned with language only insofar as analyzing language use helps to explain the roles that power, knowledge, and materiality play in constituting discourses. Paraphrasing Foucault, Hook states that:

language links to, and stems from, external, material and tactical forms a power. Power, in no uncertain terms, cannot be fixed, or apprehended in the meanings and significations of texts, but must be grasped and traced through the analysis of tactical and material relations of force (Hook 2001, pp. 529-530).

While I have, in the preceding discussion, touched on some of the rhetorical tactics at play in the debate, I now wish to directly discuss the material and power conditions in the debate. Understanding these conditions helps to explain the disparities between the pro- and anti-wind ‘movements’ I observed in the Vermont wind power debate. To do so, I rely on the results of my narrative analysis to shed light on the power relations, as perceived by those I interviewed, that intersect in the wind power debate.

The roles within the debate that pro- and anti-wind activists saw for themselves (see section 4.1.4) are both built around the pattern of victimization, which implies that some Other is unjustly exercising power over the activist. It is the anti-wind activist, with their ties to the conservative political elites in Vermont, who has power over the pro-wind activist. It is the developers, and the complicit town governments and state regulators, who have power over the anti-wind activist. In addition to their constellations of power, the material concerns of the opposing activists also differ. The pro-wind
activist is concerned more with the global environment, while the anti.wind activist is concerned more with the Vermont landscape-environment-community.\textsuperscript{40}

These differing material foci help to explain why there are more anti- than pro-wind grassroots groups. Anti-wind groups fight what they see as the\textit{concentrated} costs that they\textit{will pay} if a\textit{particular} wind development\textit{is} built—costs that are to them intimate, confined to their town as well as their psychological\textsuperscript{41} landscapes. Pro-wind activists fight the\textit{diffuse} costs that they believe we\textit{will pay} if wind development in\textit{is not} pursued in Vermont—costs that stem from effects ranging in scale from state-wide electricity rates to global climate change. Given that utility-scale wind power is widely considered (across the activists I encountered and in the wind power debate in the state at-large) to be but a piece of the possible solutions to the problems presently emerging from our fossil-energy driven economy, and considering, as Woods (2005) points out, that the costs of not building utility-scale wind in a place are indirect and will be shared by many while the costs of building such development would be direct and borne by few, it is not surprising that more people across the state have seen fit to organize into groups to fight wind development.

How do activists in this struggle over land use in Vermont respond to those they perceive as having power over them? The pro-wind characterization of anti-wind activists as being NIMBYists—the implication that the rich anti-winders do not want

\textsuperscript{40} Both sides understand that the well being of each is connected, and both acknowledge, to varying degrees, the global and local aspects of contemporary energy policy questions. My point is that they differ in the focus—global v. local—that each places on the material sites of their respective struggles.

\textsuperscript{41} Here I refer to the worry over psychological damage in anti-wind narratives, damage that wind turbines may cause through noise pollution as well as their omnipresence in the landscape.
utility-scale wind in their ‘back yards’—is an attempt to withdraw the political agency from anti-wind activists. This disempowerment tactic constitutes a form of reverse classism. It relies on the anti-wind-activists-as-rich-flatlander characterization to dismiss out of hand anti-wind claims that utility-scale wind would have negative effects, and thus short-circuits debate over whether these effects—aesthetic or non-aesthetic—are worth the benefits of wind development.

The xenophobic and anti-corporate tack of anti-wind activists serves a similar disempowering function. Because utility-scale wind developers tend to be for-profit multinational corporations—in this time of corporate-fueled market expansion, the hyper-accumulation of wealth, and the perceived weakening of civil society worldwide—and considering the federal government subsidies being given to motivate the development of ‘alternative’ forms of energy production such as utility-scale wind—in this time of the pervasive corruption of governments with corporate money—the corporation-as-evil characterization ascribed to developers by anti-wind activists attempts to deny corporate actors a role in energy policy in Vermont. Thus, the anti-wind activist dismisses the positive, productive power that commercial utility-scale wind developers have through their knowledge, experience, and access to the capital needed to develop utility-scale wind.

The differences in the scalar-material foci, perceptions of power and disempowering strategies between pro- and anti-wind activists indicate that the debate over utility-scale wind power development in Vermont is not about one thing. For pro-wind activists, it is primarily about the how large a role utility-scale wind power should
play in Vermont’s energy policy (larger). For anti-wind activists, the debate is about how
great a role for-profit corporations should play in the state’s energy policy (lesser).
Personally, I agree with both positions. However, I believe that reaching the pro-wind
goal of developing utility-scale wind power “responsibly in a manner fair to all of
Vermont’s residents, communities and to its uniquely beautiful and fragile environment”
(see Figure 8. Excerpt of Fairwind Vermont website, page 2 of 2, in Appendix D)
requires reform that makes Vermont citizens—who must live in Vermont and get along
with one another—and not for-profit corporations—who above all must increase value
for geographically dispersed shareholders—the driving force behind the state’s energy
policy.

Similar reform is already underway, and can be seen in Vermont’s “Act 208”
which mandates public engagement in energy planning (Vermont Legislature 2006).
However this act is focused on informing short-term energy policy in light of the looming
contract renegotiations with Hydro-Québec and the relicensing of Vermont Yankee. This
public engagement process should be made permanent (e.g. occurring every five years).
The power and knowledge of the for-profit developers of particular energy generation
technologies should be introduced into the energy development process, and loosed onto
the landscape and into the environment, only after the state—its Department of Public
Service, its Agency of Natural Resources, and its citizens—decides what sources of
energy should be used to meet a Vermont’s energy policy—a policy in which Vermonters
have democratically decided what benefits they want and what costs they are willing to
bear to gain them.
Such reform would not magically erase political contention from the process. It may however remove such contention from the realm of zero-sum opportunism and place them within the social relations between Vermonters. Above all, it would empower Vermonters—such as the activists, both pro- and anti-wind, whom I encountered in my study of the wind power debate—to use the extensive knowledge of energy policy they have built as they have taken part in the debate over utility-scale wind; to use this knowledge to work together to solve the state’s undeniable energy supply and demand problems. Seen in this light, the debate over wind power in Vermont yields an understanding of the Vermont landscape where town-based democratic decision making, rooted in a sturdy social fabric, is central to what it means to be a Vermonter in the Vermont landscape.

I wish now to make a brief methodological remark. I have shown that by combining my narrative analysis and my text-centric ‘discourse’ analysis I arrived at a methodology that is closer to being a ‘proper’ discourse analysis. Such a discourse analysis grounds the study of language use in discourse in the particularities of materiality, power, and knowledge that constitute, along with the language used, the discourse(s) being studied. This analysis is not intended to be ‘objective’ in the sense of being apolitical. It is intended, following Foucault, to be a “means of enabling forms of critique and resistance” (Hook 2001, p. 522). The critique and resistance that I have given voice to in this thesis represents both the pro- and anti-wind positions that I encountered. However, these voices are unavoidably filtered through my own discursively constructed understandings and biases. If it appears that I am more sympathetic to one cause at the expense of another, I believe that this text is open
enough—provides a sufficiently transparent theoretical basis for understanding my empirical data—to enable others to mount criticisms that will better explain the fascinating phenomena I have had the privilege to study these past two years.

5.2. The place of aesthetics in the Vermont wind power debate

I have shown through this research that the aesthetic rationale at play in the Vermont wind power debate is a source of unresolved political contention in the debate. In the interest of helping to resolve this contention—in the interest of upsetting the equilibrium between NIMBYism and anti-corporatism that the debate has settled at—I have tentatively put aesthetics ‘in its place’ in the debate. I have done so in two ways, first by placing the aesthetic arguments made in the debate in the context of the diverse non-aesthetic arguments used therein, and secondly by situating the persuasive uses of aesthetics within the historical, political, and material contexts in which the debate took place. I will now ‘finish’ putting aesthetics in its place with a discussion of the discursive forces that have contributed to the political contention in the debate. In doing so, I will re-examine the idea of the Vermont landscape as a landscape of consumption and a landscape of production, and will highlight points of interest to those applying social-spatial and environmental aesthetics theories in studies of analogous conflicts in other settings.

I have identified two dominant orders of discourse in my above analysis (see section 4.2) of the persuasive uses of aesthetic arguments by grassroots activists in the Vermont wind power debate: (1) the natura-ruralist Vermont landscape; and (2)
Vermont’s scientific-juridical Act 248 public service permitting process. I argue that these discourses constitute a hegemonic Vermont landscape discourse—having partial and not absolute discursive power and influence—that has shaped the Vermont wind power debate as it has been articulated by grassroots activists. These component discourses coexist harmoniously to some degree—see for example the inclusion of aesthetic considerations in the Act 250 and Act 248 processes. However, there is also discord between these discourses—discord that can be seen in a wind power debate where grassroots activists have differentially promoted and contested these discourses.

In my interviews I found that pro-wind activists generally did not appeal to aesthetic considerations because aesthetic judgments were thought to be completely subjective. To the limited extent that pro-wind activists made aesthetic appeals, these appeals were rationalized through their linkage to environmental and economic arguments. The dismissal of “subjective” aesthetic appeals and the justification of the aesthetic with non-aesthetic appeals is, in effect, mandated by a hegemonic Act 248 process that is dominated by scientific-juridical rationality.

In the letter to Gov. Douglas, this perceived hegemony compelled the pro-wind activist—in an effort to craft a persuasive message—to de-aestheticize the definition of the problems to which, the author argues, utility-scale wind electricity generation in Vermont is a partial solution. Such a problem definition left no room in the author’s argument for the consideration of the aesthetic effects that this solution may have on the Vermont landscape. This letter is not without reference to the aesthetic effects of the problem of global warming. The existence of a passing, dismissive aesthetic reference in
an otherwise de-aestheticized argument is evidence that the author felt compelled to acknowledge the aesthetic discourses at play in the wind power debate. This ‘mandatory’ aesthetic acknowledgement speaks to the power of the *natura-ruralist* sense of landscape aesthetics in the Vermont spatial imaginary.

The interplay between these two hegemonic discourses in the debate—the juridical-scientific Act 248, the *natura-ruralist* landscape aesthetic—can be seen in the pro-wind position page. The written language of this text was crafted in deference to the ‘rational’ elements of Act 248: ‘subjective’ aesthetic considerations are absent from the main line of the argument, the reference to anti-wind uses of aesthetic appeals serves to downplay the aesthetic effects of utility-scale wind development on the Vermont landscape. The photographs toward the end of this text further downplay these effects. The re-articulation of patriotism and environmentalism that emerges from this ambient aesthetic appeal argues that utility-scale wind *can* fit into a Vermont landscape that is true to the state’s Yankee and Green traditions.

Thus, activists advocating for the development of utility-scale wind in Vermont simultaneously ‘go with the flow’ of the juridical-scientific Act 248 order of discourse, while they challenge and seek to redefine the *natura-ruralist* notions of the Vermont landscape pervasive in discourses on place throughout the state. The persuasive arguments that emerge from this interplay, by and large, eschew or downplay the use of aesthetic arguments.

In interviews with anti-wind activists, I found that aesthetic arguments—grounded in the *natura-ruralist* notion of the Vermont landscape—were used to highlight the
environmental justice problems that these activists saw in the commercial utility-scale wind development process in Vermont. Some interviewees were compelled to defend their ambient aesthetic arguments against wind development that they saw as a threat to the *natura-ruralist* landscape by appealing to non-aesthetic arguments grounded in Act 248’s juridical-scientific framework. Perversely, the aesthetic provisions of the hegemonic Act 248 even compelled one anti-wind interviewee to make aesthetic arguments *to be able to* make their preferred non-aesthetic arguments against utility-scale wind development in Vermont.42

The anti-wind deposition before the Public Service Board (PSB) is, in its poetic style, thoroughly steeped in the *natura-ruralist* landscape aesthetic. However, the discursive logic of this piece relies as much on its aestheticization as it does on its appeals to the non-aesthetic. While the author is compelled to appeal to the juridical logic of Act 248, this deposition is ultimately a challenge to this logic. With the poetic mode, the author attempts to appeal to the PSB members not as public service regulators, but as *natura-ruralist* Vermonters.

The dominance of *natura-ruralist* discourse can be seen in the anti-wind position page. The author makes a discursive aesthetic appeal against the noise and lights they argue would accompany utility-scale wind development. Such development is argued to be out of place in a *natura-ruralist* Vermont because it unduly harms the Vermont

42 In the words of the interviewee:
In order to become a party in the PSB docket, it was necessary to maintain that you personally were going to sustain some sort of negative impact. In order to be a personal party, and I did, I had to rely on the fact that the radar base [on East Mountain] is in my viewshed, I didn’t really care about that … (A5)
landscape—harm measured in losses to wild life habitat, natural resources, as well as the value of real estate. While the natura-ruralist order of discourse figures in every aesthetic articulation on this position page, the power of the juridical Act 248 order of discourse compels the author to rely more so on the discursive mode to render these articulations.

Thus, activists who are opposed to the development of utility-scale wind electricity generation in Vermont promote the widely resonant natura-ruralist ideal of the Vermont landscape while challenging the hegemony of the rationalistic Act 248 permitting process. However, like pro-wind grassroots activists, anti-wind activists do not have full control over the terms of the debate. Therefore, anti-wind arguments tend to consist of hybrid discourses that combine ambient and discursive aesthetic arguments with non-aesthetic arguments.

Turning briefly to the landscape of production-landscape of consumption dichotomy that Hinrichs (1996) and others argue characterizes Vermont: this dichotomy does not imply that there are those who want the Vermont landscape to be strictly of one type or another. However it is a useful analytic tool for thinking about the Vermont landscape because it provides rough categories for describing the simultaneous and competing desires that individuals and communities have for this landscape. Both the wind power debate and the Act 248 process can be understood as social practices that attempt to negotiate and resolve these competing desires. Building on social-spatial theory, I will now show how these categories discursively shaped these practices and the participants thereof.
The differences in the rhetoric of aesthetics that I observed between the arguments of pro-wind and anti-wind grassroots in the Vermont wind power debate are in part due to forces outside the control of the rhetors. Both those who argue for and those who argue against utility-scale wind development in the state are compelled by the hegemonic forces of the *natura-ruralist* landscape and the Act 248 permitting process that are present in the land use planning issue culture in Vermont. Thus, features of these orders of discourse are likely to appear in both arguments for and against wind. Further, the presence of each order of discourse in the issue culture affects how utterances that fall within a particular order are expressed (e.g. *natura-ruralist* aesthetic appeals expressed in discursive modes).

The inclusion of the *natura-ruralist*-inspired Act 250 aesthetic criterion in the Act 248 permitting process makes it possible for activists to make such aesthetic appeals in the juridical modes of Act 248. However, the decision to largely avoid aesthetic appeals in pro-wind arguments was more or less up to the rhetors who formed these arguments. Likewise, it was anti-wind activists who, on some level, chose to include aesthetic appeals in their arguments. To the degree that this latter choice was conscious, it may represent a rhetorical blunder on the part of anti-wind activists. For as Porteous (1996) argues, “in terms of political economy … aesthetics still lags behind utilitarian, instrumental, and ecological concerns” (p. 10). Given the juridical-rational context of the Act 248 process, and considering the widely held notion that aesthetic judgments are purely subjective—‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’—aesthetic arguments, even those rendered in discursive modes, would seem to face an uphill battle from the start. Perhaps it would have been better—better in terms of disarming the main pro-wind...
rebuttal of anti-wind positions—to have avoided making such appeals, to attack wind development on ‘purely rational’ grounds. However, it might be that the power of the *natura-ruralist* ideal—with its associations with pastoral bounty and harmonious Yankee social relations—was too great to resist the temptation to appeal to the popular desire to protect the landscape that sustains this social imaginary. Indeed, the *natura-ruralist* ideal may be so powerful—it may have been hegemonic in the Vermont spatial imaginary for so long—that it has achieved invisibility, become embedded in the social logic of some Vermonter. Perhaps Vermonter for whom this logic is commonsense are more likely to be interpellated as anti-wind activists than as pro-wind activists. For such activists, it may not be possible to avoid *natura-ruralist* aesthetic appeals in their arguments in the wind power debate.

This discursive understanding of the Vermont wind energy debate is useful for understanding debate over wind development, or other questions of distributive justice, in places with similar as well as different cultural histories. In the case of wind development in rural Wales, which Woods (2003) used as a case study that informed his *natura-ruralist* theorization, I would expect debate with a similar discursive shape as that in Vermont—given the similar rural spatial imaginaries, and related English-based legal traditions shared by these places (Atiyah and Summers 1987). However, the discursive approach I used in Vermont could just as well be applied in a different cultural context—for example to resistance by indigenous communities to commercial utility-scale wind development proposed by the Spanish firm Iberdrola in Oaxaca, Mexico (see Centro de Investigaciones y Promoción de Iniciativas para Conocer y Proteger la Naturaleza 2008).
As I have shown, the discourse analysis approach that I used to study the Vermont wind power debate—which takes into account the historical, material, and power dimensions that give rise to discourses about a place—can be used to elucidate the emotive and rationalistic dimensions of distributive justice problems that involve complex ecological, social, political, scientific and economic components operating at a variety of spatial scales. Through this approach, I have shown that the aesthetic arguments used in a land use policy debate are not mere distractions. Indeed, aesthetics are intertwined with the characterizations and representations of place that must be understood if one hopes to understand how debates over land uses in particular places are framed.

The inclusion of aesthetic criterion in Act 248, and the popular conception of aesthetic appreciation as being subjectively concerned with beauty, creates conditions where Public Service Board land use decisions in Vermont, such as that to develop utility-scale wind, will be debated in an environment fraught with tension between the subjective-ambient and the objective-discursive. However, I argue that the aesthetic criterion of Act 250, insofar as it is seen as being subjective in nature, is misunderstood. On the contrary, this criterion—by linking the consideration of “scenic or natural beauty” with concern for “wildlife habitat”—is, at least in letter, an example of an “appropriate” framework for the aesthetic appreciation of natural objects proposed by Carlson (2000). Unfortunately, hope for the harmonious integration of aesthetics in juridical permitting processes is premature. For even Carlson (2000) admits that a purely “objective” aesthetic framework is impossible, owing to the gestalt “whole self” sensing with which we experience phenomena, such as landscapes, and thus aesthetically appreciate them.
Those concerned with energy policy may wonder whether Vermont should strike aesthetic considerations from the Act 248 process. The answer to this question depends on what the goals of the process are, and how these goals are weighted. If the process is above all concerned with making decisions characterized by formal, rational consistency, then aesthetics should probably be left out. However, if the process should result in decisions that honestly reflect the ethical dimensions of how landscape is experienced—by humans and non-humans—I believe that aesthetic considerations must be part of the process.

For those concerned with theories of environmental aesthetic appreciation, this research shows that there is a gap between how aesthetic appreciation is theorized—in terms of objective and appropriate models of appreciation as well as the relationship between aesthetics and ethics—and how aesthetic appreciation is valued by activists. This gap hints that environmental aesthetic theory has not achieved widespread relevance.\footnote{Relevance is a dimension of environmental aesthetic theory discussed in Porteous (1996).} I assume that at least some aesthetic theoreticians believe that their theories are relevant to land use debates. Thus, aside from scrapping these theories, if theoreticians wish them to achieve greater relevance—measured in terms of public perception and understanding—they might do so through education, but what sort of education? Here it is useful to quote Porteous (1996):

> the aesthetics of landscape must not only be considered in the context of place, ethics, and spirituality (loosely, ‘meaning’) but also inevitably embedded in a social, economic, and political matrix (pp. 9-10).
Thus, environmental aesthetic education must at minimum teach the relationships between sense of place, ethics, socio-economics and politics. However, if such an aesthetic education is to be truly \textit{environmental}, it must teach ecology and ways of reading natural landscapes. Such an environmental aesthetic education might fit well within existing environmental education curricula, or within the rubric of environmental art curricula. No matter the disciplinary category, those who teach environmental aesthetic education must find a way to discuss the social, economic, political, class, race, etc. dimensions of environmental aesthetics in a way that denies the comfort of entrenched positions and helps to build common understanding among diverse subjects and interest groups.

5.3. Afterword

The August 8, 2007 decision by the Public Service Board to grant a certificate of public good to UPC Vermont Wind for the construction of the Sheffield wind electricity generation facility indicates that regulators took seriously the aesthetic concerns found in anti-wind accounts (Department of Public Service 2007). Of the 32 conditions the board’s decision was contingent upon, seven dealt directly with aesthetics or historic preservation (three dealt with turbine operating noise, two with the FAA-mandated lighting plan, one with the color of the turbines and towers (white), and one with the historic preservation of a barn). There were six conditions concerned with pollution or natural resource effects. Thus, aesthetics and natural resources conditions accounted for 13 of 32. There were ten conditions concerned with the effects of construction (six with
roads and transportation and four with blasting). The remaining nine conditions were spread across concern for: electrical system interconnection, electricity rates for Vermonters, process/administrative concerns, public safety, educational signage, leases to land owners who would host the turbines, and the decommissioning fund. I leave it to other researchers to determine whether the aesthetic conditions of the decision will prove to be sufficient to ensure that the project, once built, will not have undue adverse aesthetic effects on the surrounding landscape. However, this decision shows, at least in letter, that the members of the Vermont Public Service Board take seriously the aesthetic criterion of Act 248, and they did respond to at least some of the aesthetic arguments of anti-wind activists.
### APPENDIX A: SUBJECTS

Table 7. Attributes of interview subjects (* = interview conducted with husband and wife at the same time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age (est.)</th>
<th>Born in VT?</th>
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<td>A1</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>con</td>
<td>Ridge Protectors</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
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<td>So. VT</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>Glebe Mountain Group</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>7/2/2007</td>
<td>So. VT</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>Glebe Mountain Group</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
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<td>con</td>
<td>Kingdom Commons Group</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6*</td>
<td>7/19/2007</td>
<td>NEK</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>Ridge Protectors</td>
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<td>one yes, one no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>7/20/2007</td>
<td>So. VT</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>Glebe Mountain Group</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1*</td>
<td>6/6/2007</td>
<td>NEK</td>
<td>ambi</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>one yes, one no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
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<td>pro</td>
<td>Fairwind Vermont</td>
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<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>4/25/2007</td>
<td>So. VT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>5/10/2007</td>
<td>NEK</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
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<td>NEK</td>
<td>pro</td>
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<tr>
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<td>NEK</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Subjects of initial contact (top) and those they referred to me (read top to bottom)
APPENDIX B: INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTATION

The University of Vermont
COMMITTEES ON HUMAN RESEARCH
SERVING THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
AND FLETCHER ALLEN HEALTH CARE
WEB SITE www.unh.edu/eth

RESEARCH PROTECTIONS OFFICE
OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS
245 SOUTH FARM, SUITE 900, COLEBERRY, VT 05406
TEL: (802) 656-5046 FAX: (802) 656-5041

MEMO TO: Brian Miles BS
FROM: Gale Weid, Research Review Administrator
SUBJECT: CHRB# 97-143* Landscape, Identity, and Meaning: The Debate Over Wind Energy in Vermont

March 19, 2007

According to federal regulations, certain types of research activities are "exempt" from formal Committee review and approval. Each institution must identify a process for determining what activities meet the exemption criteria. University policy requires that all projects which involve human subjects be submitted to the Committee office for exemption determination or Committee review.

Following such a review of your project, it has been determined that it qualifies for exemption under Section 48.101(b) of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. Please find attached your project exemption certificate.

It is University policy to require all research to be conducted in accordance with the Belmont Report, which sets forth ethical principles for research involving humans as subjects. A copy of this report is available on our website under Rules, Regulations, and Guidance.

Submit any proposed project modifications which affect human subjects for review prior to implementation (i.e. surveys, questionnaires, changes to on-line interventions, etc.). Modifications may affect the original determination of exemption.

Notes:
- It is recommended that if information sheets or consent forms are provided to participants that the nature and possible risks of the research are clearly described. Additionally, the following language should be included:

"You may contact Dr. […] the investigator in charge of this study, at […] for more information about this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project you should contact Nancy Stahlher, the Director of the Research Protections Office, at the University of Vermont at 802-656-5040."

- Retrospective and prospective medical chart reviews that meet exemption criteria #4 have in place, by virtue of the exemption, a waiver of consent and HIPAA authorization.

Thank you for contacting us.

Figure 2. IRB exemption certificate, page 1 of 2
Figure 3. IRB exemption certificate, page 2 of 2
Informed Consent

Title of Research Project: Landscape, Identity, and Meaning: The Debate Over Wind Energy in Vermont

Principal Investigator: Brian Miles

Faculty Sponsor: Prof. Adrian Ivakhiv

You are being invited to take part in this research project because of your interest in or concern over wind energy in Vermont.

We encourage you to ask questions and take the opportunity to discuss the study with anybody you think can help you make this decision.

Why Is This Research Study Being Conducted?
The goal of this study is to understand the conflict over utility-scale wind development in Vermont in terms of grassroots groups and their collective identities (the connections between people and place that draw people into groups). Through this study, I attempt to answer the question: why has wind power, an energy source represented as being environmentally-friendly, failed to be widely developed in Vermont, a state represented as having a strong environmental consciousness? An exploration of what Vermont means to Vermonters lies at the heart of this study.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Project?
Participants will include members of Vermont-based grassroots groups that are advocating against and for utility-scale wind energy development in Vermont. Roughly a dozen people will be interviewed in total.

What Are The Risks Of The Project?
There are no risks anticipated from taking part in this project.

What Are The Benefits of Participating in The Project?
You will be able to represent your views on and the costs and benefits of wind energy development in Vermont. This work will be available as a thesis at the University of Vermont so that others may build on it in the future.

What About Confidentiality?
Any personal information revealed about you while participating in this project will be kept confidential. To ensure that no unwanted information will be included in the project's written evaluation, I will make available, upon your request, a copy of your comments as used in the text. I will withdraw from the final text any comments you do not wish to be used.

(continued on other side...)

Figure 4. Consent form given to interviews, stamped by UVM IRB, page 1 of 2
Statement of Consent
You have been given and have read or have had read to you a summary of this research study. Should you have any further questions about the research, you may contact the person conducting the study at the address and telephone number given below. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty.

You agree to participate in this study and you understand that you will receive a signed copy of this form.

_________________________  ______________________
Signature of Subject          Date

_________________________
Name of Subject: Printed

_________________________  ______________________
Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee          Date

_________________________
Name of Principal Investigator or Designee Printed

Name of Principal Investigator: Brian Miles
Address:
    George D. Aiken Center
    81 Carrigan Drive
    Burlington, Vermont 05405
Telephone Number:
    802-553-2125

Name of Faculty Sponsor: Prof. Adrian Ivanhiv
Address:
    Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources
    153 South Prospect Street
    Burlington, Vermont 05405
Telephone Number:
    802-656-0180

Figure 5. Consent form given to interviewees, stamped by UVM IRB, page 2 of 2
## APPENDIX C: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

### Group Member Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | Demographic exchange.  
Prompts: who do you live, how old are you, where did you grow up, what do you do? | Individual |           |
| 2      | What made you start working [for I against] wind development?  
Prompt: when, where, with/against whom | Individual |           |
| 3      | How did you become involved with [GROUP_NAME]?  
Prompt: when, who did you start working with? | Individual |           |
| 4      | What do you do with [GROUP_NAME]?                                                             | Individual |           |
| 5      | Why does [GROUP_NAME] [support I oppose] wind development?  
Get at aesthetic, injustice, soft paths, not cost effective, public accountability, runaway technology frames | Group    | 1d         |
| 6      | What kinds of wind development would [GROUP_NAME] [support I oppose]?                         | Group    |            |
| 7      | What is [GROUP_NAME] trying to accomplish?  
Prompt: by what means? (e.g., education, litigation, legislation, etc.) | Group    | 1c         |
| 7.1    | Has anyone testified to the PSB on behalf of [GROUP_NAME]?  
Find out if they have any PSB filings/transcripts that they could share | Group    |            |
| 8      | Outside of [GROUP_NAME], what people/groups have similar goals?                              | Group    | 1a         |
| 8.1    | What people/groups have goals that go against [GROUP_NAME]’s goals?                          |          |            |
| 9      | What will happen if [GROUP_NAME] fails?                                                       | Group    | 1e         |
| 10     | Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?                                            | Wrap     |            |

**Figure 6. Interview schedule**
Figure 7. Excerpt of Fairwind Vermont website, page 1 of 2
Figure 8. Excerpt of Fairwind Vermont website, page 2 of 2
September 21, 2004

Governor Jim Douglas
100 State St., P.O. Box 66000
Montpelier, VT 05601

Governor Douglas:

As you are no doubt aware, the debate over global warming has heated up lately, fueled in part by the publication of the "Earth Changing Planets" report in Congress and the publication of the September issue of National Geographic. As many proponents of the status quo have been arguing through Letters to the Editor, it seems to me that these and other documents do not state that global warming is a real and growing threat, which in turn has wide ranging policy implications on the state, national, and even international level. I thought I would submit the enclosed for your personal review.

National Geographic dedicates 70 pages to global warming, which the letter in Chief calls "the biggest story in geography today." ("From the Editor," section.) While the pictures and accompanying text paint a harrowing picture, would you direct attention to the various graphical representations scattered throughout the series of articles.

These graphical representations show dramatically increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide and methane concentrations. In addition, the relationship between the two, as well as the fact that human activities are the cause of this increasingly alarming situation, is reinforced by the recent "Our Changing Planet" report which was presented by the Bush administration to Congress this August. As you can see, the enclosed excerpts the government's advisory committees have concluded (parts can be found at www.earthtrends.gov). Yet:

- atmospheric levels of CO₂ and CH₄ have been increasing as a result of human activity for the past 200 years and are now higher than they have been in 800,000 years;
- only when greenhouse emissions resulting from human activity are taken into account can the dispute rise in global temperatures since 1970 be explained; this data, which...
1. Energy security of Vermont is in jeopardy.

2. Utility-scale wind is a part of the solution to global warming and energy security problems of Vermont.

Figure 10. Letter from pro-wind activist to Gov. Douglas, page 2 of 2
APPENDIX E: RHETORIC OF AESTHETICS ANALYSIS: ANTI-WIND TEXTS

Figure 11. Excerpt of Ridge Protectors website
Figure 12. Deposition by anti-wind activist to Public Service Board
APPENDIX F: MAP OF VERMONT

Figure 13. Map of Vermont
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Soininen, A. H. (2005, 10 October) Don't spoil the view with wind towers. The Caledonian-Record, letters to the editor


