Urbanites Creating New Ruralities: Reflections on Social Action and Struggle in the Greater Toronto Area

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As urbanites move in large numbers into the countryside, particularly adjacent to major urban centres, they transform the countryside, themselves and the political context. New ruralities are emerging in a variety of locations. In the rural-urban fringe and the urban shadow, affluent in-migrants have found their idyll to be flawed or blocked, and have taken action to make their vision of the countryside become true. Struggles over social infrastructure, amenities, privacy and a myriad of other issues have clarified the exurbanites new ruralite visions, often with dramatic restructuring of formerly rural areas into those new ruralities. Exurbanite ruralites in the Toronto countryside, the Greater Toronto Area and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, have been established for a generation. Struggles over waste-dump location, followed by a myriad of smaller struggles have been part of a re-creation of the rural environment and its political surround. This creation of new rurality by exurbanites, through struggle, is the focus of this paper.

Keywords: rural-urban fringe, rural idyll, Toronto

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These various processes are the subject of this paper. In short, the developments to be considered here are the ways in which newcomers turn their new homes and home territories into their own image. Exurbanite ruralites in the Toronto countryside, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), have been established for a generation. Struggles over waste-dump location, most recently, followed by a myriad of smaller struggles have been part of a re-creation of the rural environment and its political surroundings. This creation of new rurality by exurbanites, through struggle, is the core of this paper.

The underlying causes of the urban to rural migration of the affluent, are complex, producing a variety of new countrysides, variously interpretable. The line of thought which I want to develop emphasizes, in the foreground, the linkages between changing social composition and images of the countryside held by new residents, particularly in the exurban zone of that countryside. The associations between social position and mentalities are, or tend toward coherence. Those coherences are what I term ‘ruralities’. The processes which generate the exurbanites, as new residents, are related to the complex relations between restructuring within capitalist economies and long held beliefs about where the good life can be found.

One way to characterize the larger relocation processes is through the notion of counter-urbanization (see Geyer and Kontuly 1996). This notion is anchored on the observation, first put forward in 1970 by Calvin Beale of the U.S. Census, that there had been a population turn-around in which rural populations were
Figure 1: Aspects of the struggle over waste dumps in the GTA, 1991-1995
increasing more rapidly than urban populations. At first, the rural component was privileged as a rural renaissance. I will return to this in a bit, but it is indicative of the wishes of those who first chronicled the demographic changes. Following subsequent censuses, and extending research to many countries of the developing and developed world, the dynamics of counter-urbanization have been revised, and debates have blossomed. The centre of the notion is the association between declining densities in inner city locations and rising densities in the countryside, particularly near the great cities whose densities are declining.

The idea of a diffuse rural renaissance has faded and been replaced by a number of other dynamics over the last academic generation. Nevertheless, something major has been happening to cities and to their countrysides. Different countries have had quite different experiences of counter-urbanization. In the United States, the decay of the inner cities was considered as the operative causal matrix, with an intersection between racism and the flight of the white urban affluent. However, in Canada, the inner cities have not experienced the U.S. style of urban decay. In fact, in many Canadian cities the processes of gentrification have operated. As working class people have been pushed out of their old inner city habitats, or have moved to suburbs, as an upward mobility migration; they are replaced by a new urban gentry who characteristically reduce densities. Again, in the United States the counter-urbanization phenomenon was predicted to produce a donut form of new urbanization. The inner city would become empty, or nearly so, and the suburban belt would replace traditional urban densities.

Still again, the newcomers to the countryside tend to be affluent, and here there is a social transformation of the earlier processes distinguishing town and country. Rural areas, even close to cities, have traditionally been sites of poverty, with cities sites of wealth. The new exurbanites are not the poor, scrabbling to find a place they can afford near urban employment. Rather, the newcomers have above average incomes, and are better educated than most of those left behind in the cities. In fact, in many rural-urban fringe and urban shadow localities, there is no place for the poor.

Trying to sort out the question of population densities in peri-urban locations and social composition suggests several additional characteristics of counter-urbanization in Canada. Suburbanization is, in my opinion, quite separate from exurbanization. Suburbanization is more clearly an urban process. Suburbanites are still urban in a variety of ways, not least being their work places. Suburbs are middle density, nuclear places. Most often they are contiguous with already built up portions of the city. Sometimes suburbs are discontinuous, but their establishment is followed by in-filling to complete the urbanization of the countryside near cities. Exurbs are only occasionally contiguous with the city, though they are characteristically relatively close to the city, its work places and its amenities. Exurbs are almost always low density settlements. They are very often at levels of density that are scarcely greater than rural and particularly, dispersed agricultural settlements, most especially before the radical depopulation of the ruralization process which flourished mightily in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

In the Toronto countryside, it would seem, that the appearance of exurbanites is a two step migratory process. First, the future exurbanites leave the inner city, or small and medium cities, and relocate in suburbs. Second, they move again, this time into the country. The single biggest group of exurbanites I have interviewed in Toronto’s countryside came from suburbs, followed by middle size cities as migration sources.

My interpretation of one part of the counter-urbanization phenomenon is that there are two quite separate settlement regimes that are now intersecting. Cities and traditional countrysides are linked as one structure. However, the two components are normally quite distinct. The cities have taken on a gradient, widely recognized by geographers and others, from highest, densest values in the centre and lowest, least dense on the fringes. Countrysides usually have a common rural density, varying with a variety of conditions, but somewhere near farmer densities. In addition, dotting countrysides are rural service centres, often enlarged to provide a small town and village level of settlement. Within the countryside, the association between small town and rural dispersed settlement is common. The small town is usually culturally rural, not urban.
The complex processes that have produced counter-urbanization have introduced a new and expansive urban dynamic into the countryside. The creation of suburbs and now exurbs is something new. Of course, suburbs have been the hallmark of expanding urbanity for thousands of years. But the suburban/exurban settlement expansion has reorganized the countryside around cities into a city’s countryside, characterized by varying densities of dispersed and low density urban populations. The old rural-urban linkage, through central place supply centres for the countryside, has been replaced by the urban commuting field. This residential field is devoted to social reproduction.

The old rural structure of nuclear central places and dispersed agricultural spaces still exists, but now it is being eaten away by suburbs at the edge and exurbs, often in the middle of the countryside. These newer, urban generated settlements are produced differently, and usually competitively, with the rural-agricultural spaces into which they have been intruded. The people who populate the new urban spaces in the countryside are different people than rural dwellers. Most clearly they are different in terms of their affluence and of their close association with work opportunities in the city. However, they are also different in terms of the culture of the new comers.

Yet, while these differences exist, and are a very real element in the new countryside, the exurbanites and suburbanites, in varying degrees are living in the country because they see it as a superior residential environment and wish to become part of a culture of rurality. These speculative observations lead to a central consideration of this paper. What is the culture of rurality which the newcomers adopt, and is it different from the culture of rurality of the farmers and rural non-farm populations of the traditional countryside?

Emergent New Ruralities

I want to characterize two kinds of rurality, as active mentalities, found in the Toronto and nearby countryside. I believe these are of wider relevance than just Toronto’s countryside and will serve to orient the remainder of this paper. Traditional ruralities in North America, and particularly in southern Ontario, have expressed their culture through favouring certain central values. One of these, probably the most significant, is independence. Farmers have been seen as the flag bearers of this value. In variants of the Jeffersonian ethos, one found commonly in southern Ontario, though stripped of its republican overtones, farmers see themselves able to steer a course in life that is not controlled by either capital or labour. Farmers combine both roles of the modern industrial world, but in a manner that allows them to function as the archetype of independent citizen. Often the value of independence is associated with equality, certainly of political condition. Other aspects of traditional North American rurality stem from this core.

The landscape symbolizes much of the ethos of traditional rurality. The focus on the farm home, with its approaching road, lined by stately trees, is central to this symbolization. The house in a distinctive local style, and associated farm buildings, also in distinctive styles, are substantial, but at a human scale. Throughout localities in the countryside a similar style is found, in fact sometimes a number of styles, but all having a certain congruence. One of the central messages of these buildings and arrangements on the landscape is: we are quite similar to one another here. There are differences in condition represented, but the differences are minimized. A common rural culture is represented in its vernacular built form. Further, the prominence and respectable character of the yeoman farmer and his enterprise are highlighted. This is male dominated country, but the similarities between males is also maintained. In some ways, this is a variant on the classic mechanical solidarity of Durkheim, with its endlessly repeated segments, as neighbourhoods in the countryside.

Other differences and similarities can also be seen that are congruent with these declarations of carefully graded status positions, rather than the European development of mansions and hovels in the country. Churches are a prominent aspect of the countryside of Ontario. Here, the dichotomy between Protestant and Catholic is emphasized. Throughout most of English Canadian Ontario, Protestant chapels are the common church of the countryside. The dispersed chapel, with its relatively small building and local graveyard is another statement about limited inequality and linkage between dispersed settlement and rural culture. Catholic churches are more often located in village or
small town nucleations. Architecturally they are different from Protestant churches, usually more grand than the Protestant buildings. Catholic churches are rare in the dispersed countryside in English Canadian regions. This, in part, represents somewhat different values of rurality, but in Ontario represents the marginalized position of Catholics in a rigorously Protestant setting. Protestant churches in towns and villages, today in many hamlets, are rarely built in the same styles as Catholic churches, and between Protestant churches there are a variety of styles, but most distinguished by a greater architectural simplicity than Catholic churches.

The overall visual declaration of these countrysides, especially the dispersed portion, is that the countryside is a respectable place. It is in no way inferior to the nucleated, or even urbanized places. Finally, the layout of fields, fences, the very orientation of the countryside is guided by the private appropriation of property. Farms are simultaneously the sites of agricultural enterprise, the homes of the yeomen citizens and a piece of saleable property. For the traditional ruralites, again in their North American guise, the rural setting is a political community. The best, perhaps most natural, participants are property owning men. This patriarchal rurality has only recently begun to shift to inclusion for women.

Some of this is resonant in the arriving urbanite mentality, but only some. Overt politics and political community are not high in the field of exurbanites. First, and foremost, the countryside is a desirable amenity. That amenity is valued because it is congruent with some of the values that impelled the exurbanites to leave the city in the first place. The twin values of romantic ruralism and anti-urbanism are at the heart of the exurbanite attraction to the country.

Romantic ruralism, descended by devious paths from eighteenth century deism and cast in the terms of nature worship, through romantic literature, has been a core ideology for many urbanites, well beyond those moving to the country, for a long time. The values of romantic ruralism are posited on the notion that the natural is better than human artifice (for origins of this ideology see Glacken 1967). The appearance of the agrarian and bucolic environments is valued because it seems so natural. Of course, it is not a natural environment, but compared to the dense built form of the city it seems so. In addition, the rural, a necessarily artifactual environment, is a constant reminder of the long gone days of the past, the simpler, more natural social order of pioneers and country people. Needless to dwell upon, this is no more true than physical naturalism. However, it does indicate the symbolic loadings associated with landscapes. The exurbanite vision of its new environment is nostalgic.

For the farmers, and the few surviving rural non-farm people, this is a humanly created environment, valued as such, but one that is presently primarily the site of a major industrial operation, agriculture. For the arriving exurbanites, and upon arrival they are still more urbanite than exurbanite, the rural setting is redolent with nostalgic values, closer to nature, more direct than current cities, and nearer to god, or the gods and goddesses.

The other side of the exurbanite mentality, and again, one that goes far beyond the exurbanites who move to the country, is the view that the city is inherently evil. In one sense, this is a part of romantic ruralism and is a very old value. Without a doubt it is shared by ruralites. The city is rent by social divisions. Many of its residents are not truly free, but are wage slaves. These unfree urbanites are not able to participate in the political community of democracy, or even responsible government, because they are beholden to their employers. Even worse, many of the city dwellers are in permanent rebellion from natural social leadership and vote for parties representing not individual members of parliaments or councils, but parties dominated by trade unions or are otherwise committed to some subversive reorganization of society. In either case, another core value, social harmony is being violated.

Much of this intellectualized argument against the city is suspended in simple hatred of those who live in the city. Varied and conspicuous racial groups, associated with fear of crime and dangers of urban life in the twentieth century, translates to a strong emotional response to the city by many. This more visceral anti-urbanism, nevertheless, is still anchored to views that see moral virtue as a rural characteristic, attached to rural dwellers, and somehow inherent in their situation. The city is a bad place, inhabited by bad people, where bad things happen.

Of course, this fearful view plays very well in terms
of where one wishes to raise children. Here, not only is there resonance, there is direct association. Exurbanites and suburbanites are living in a residential environment in order to make a home and raise children. For the exurbanites their rural residence is a site of social reproduction. Most often when elicitations are presented to suburbanites and exurbanites as to what is most valuable about the sort of place they live, it is answered the site is the best place ‘for the children’.

When these various aspects of mentality are put together there is the beginning of an exurbanite rurality. Some of it is congruent with the traditional rurality, some of it is not. All agree the visual character of the countryside is nicer than that of the city. Countryside not only looks better, it smells and breathes better. Not for these people, ruralite or exurbanite, the ‘City of God’, even if some of their traditional spirituals sing of the twelve gates to the city. Political community is quite differently valued. For traditional rural dwellers political community is the basis of preservation of liberty, and not far behind, of property. For the exurbanites politics is a bother. Politicians are natural criminals, but unfortunately, necessary criminals. For both groups social harmony is a primary value. I believe this more often than not means little more than the recognition of the natural leadership of men, and occasionally women, of property (Galbraith 1992). However, this value is cast, it is important, and it is lacking in the city. Family and family values are asserted by both groups. For the exurbanites, if they could do it, they would eliminate any organized structure above the family. For the ruralites, the local state has for so long been seen as an elite enterprise, protecting property, and of course, liberty, that the same opposition to anything beyond the family is attenuated. Finally, both groups agree that property, property represented by real estate, is at the base of their vision of a civilized society. The defense of property encapsulates and invigorates all of the other values.

Thus, there is the basis of agreement on the form of the world by ruralites and exurbanites, and even suburbanites, in these divergent ideas of rurality. Just as importantly, there are the bases for serious disagreements between these groups. Further, the older ruralite population is used to being self-governed and acting on the kinds of agendas that emerge from the complex of values that are shared, and occasionally have to be reformulated through struggle. In addition, social realities of position, wealth, and threats from outside are always part of the mix. The newer exurbanites, and their brothers and sisters in suburbs, are vibrantly aware of their own values. They expect to set the agendas. They, and particularly some fractions of their populations expect to become the hegemonic populations of the countryside. Lots of potential for conflict is in the air. But sometimes these somewhat divergent populations, sharing the same habitat, cooperate and on these occasions there is the possibility of reformulating ruralities. However, one must remember, the exurbanites are expecting the rural world to be recreated in their image!

**Flawed Idyll and Social Action**

After exurbanites move in, they discover that their new residential locales are not exactly what they looked forward to. Schools are frequently not at all up to the urban standards exurbanites expect and need for their children. After all, a central desideratum of the countryside and its life is ‘for the children’. The children need an education that will prepare them for university. University diplomas are virtually the *sine qua non* of the affluent classes. Without university education the children of the affluent can not reliably maintain their position into the next generation. Most of the exurbanites are salaried employees. They are the privileged recipients of industrial restructuring. They make more than the average income, and sometimes much more. However, they are not just given their salaries and they do not just get their positions because they are well born. The meritocratic vision is very much alive. The university is seen as the place where merit, not birth, nor connections, will be recognized. University is the key to obtaining the jobs and high school is the key to attendance at university. Rural schools are rarely, before the arrival of substantial numbers of exurbanites, up to a standard that can guarantee a secondary education adequate to university entrance. Newcomers must often do something about this situation.

In addition, a wide variety of service provisions are typically inferior to those of the city. Much of this
situation, stems from the same sources as the state of schools, long term rural poverty. Police services, fire fighting services, garbage collection, above all medical and dental services are very thin on the ground. However, with the departure of many of the traditional rural poor and the entrance of the affluent exurbanites, this situation has changed. All of these are remedial, but all cost money. Spending money is not the automatic reflex of rural municipalities, in fact quite the opposite.

Political reform is the frequent response of exurbanites, political take-over is often the rural retort to exurbanite reform declarations. Transformations of the personnel of politicians becomes critical in turning the countryside in a direction that is amenable to being remade in the exurbanite image. Not only does the personnel of politicians need to be changed, the direction of institutions needs exurbanite overhauling. Professionalization is critical, for all services, but especially for education and planning. Professionalization and support for education is very commonly contentious. From the exurbanite perspective it is fortunate that the first couple of waves of education reform occurred long ago with school consolidation. The exurbanites enter the system when large public and separate school boards had already substantially upgraded schools. Nevertheless, there is only occasionally a school board which had already done the whole job of creating schools appropriate for the needs of the newcomers. Further, the resistance to spending money, a very common rural response to difficult conditions must be broken. Somewhat the same arguments can be put forward for other service provision. In fact, the reforming zeal of many arriving urbanites is in contradiction to the political environment of neo-conservatism. Only some of the requirements of the newcomers can be accommodated by privatization and limited access to public amenities.

An additional condition of contentious, and a flaw in the idyll, hinges on the requirements for agricultural industrialization. Farmers are almost always in desperate straits. This is central to the ruralization processes, which from the turn of the twentieth century have seen the drastic depopulation, transformation of demographic regimes and occupational structures of much of the countryside (Clout 1972). The way out of these difficulties, and over the generations there have been many ways that have been tried, is seen to be industrialization and modernization of agriculture. This means a move away from rurality and agrarianism as a way of life and toward an industrial form.

Part of the price of industrial agriculture is that this diminishes landscape amenity for exurbanites by farming more and more intensively. In addition, industrialization of agriculture also yields large amounts of seemingly abandoned land, land no longer cultivated. These industrialized behaviours mean removing trees from field edges to enlarge areas of cultivation, often rooting out woodlots, again for the same reasons. The intensification of agriculture usually means increases in cultivation activities, at least in some places and more pesticide applications, more artificial fertilizers. Specialization often means abandoning unused farm buildings and allowing them to decay in place. Abandoned land and abandoned buildings diminishes the amenity value of agricultural landscapes. Further, the famed countryside becomes less homelike. Put another way, these industrialized activities leads to increasing the profane character of the landscape. These various changes mean the amenity value of the agricultural landscape is diminished for the newcomers and occasionally the landscape becomes a disamenity. The industrial changes virtually dictate the necessity of exurbanites reorganizing their perceptions and often finding themselves in opposition to what the farmers are doing.

Further still, the outside world is just as active in creating conditions which make maintaining the rural idyll, among exurbanites, more and more difficult. Developers are always just around the corner, assembling land and putting up developments that seriously undermine the landscape character of the exurbanites’ residential spaces. In addition, the developments are frequently suburban in character. This brings not only more and more people into the exurbanites’ spaces, it brings in an uncontrollable group. The suburbanite newcomers are not as rigorously disciplined as are the exurbanites, by the market for large properties and large houses. Some of these potential threats can, however, be controlled by planning agencies, usually at the local, municipal level.

Planning agencies are almost ideal for exurbanites. The personnel are frequently, indeed, usually, professional. They speak the same language, and often
in the same contexts of ideas, as do the exurbanites. The exurbanites are comfortable dealing with bureaucratic agencies. Even the public character of hearings works to the advantage of the exurbanites. They are past masters of media events, and public meetings are almost ideal media events for those who know how to exploit them. Thus, planning is a very convenient way to deal with many threats. Simply plan the threats somewhere else. However, occasionally things occur which cannot be dealt with discretely. Public confrontation becomes necessary. As a wide variety of struggles in the new countryside illustrate, and exurbanites are up to the struggle.

Outside agencies, public and private, are often the source of contention and struggle in the countryside of exurbia. Most of the contentions can be fairly easily dealt with, though they all require a degree of mobilization and attention. Mobilization usually means the creation and maintenance of rate payer groups that pay attention to public authorities and planning agencies. Typically, rate payer groups provide the information that can be used to develop strategies and active mobilization to contest small scale threats. Throughout exurbia, there are, at any moment, a multitude of grass-fire threats. A developer wants to site a new development on prime amenity land, land claimed by exurbanites for their enjoyment and views. Private and public enterprises want to site temporary waste collection facilities. Occasionally, the government of the province wants to site some facility that is objectionable to the exurbanites. In the recent past, local and regional municipalities have wanted to cut back what exurbanites consider to be necessary services, busing of children to school for instance. Most of these grass-fire struggles require mobilization work, but are tractable to local groups.

Every once in a while, however, something big occurs, something that requires very large scale mobilization. In these circumstances, the slow building of a mobilized community, with a localized culture, sometimes including traditional ruralites, but almost always requiring the local shock troops of exurbanites, is inadequate. In the Greater Toronto Region (GTA) such an event was the struggle over mega-waste dumps in the period 1991-1994 (see Figure 1).

A new government was formed in Ontario in 1990, by the New Democrats, a centrist, social democratic party, which had won the election with a majority provincial parliament. By 1991 the New Democratic government began to implement their platform declaration calling for the reduction of waste materials. The government programme called for the elimination of the export of garbage from regional municipalities, the reduction in methods of disposal considered environmentally unsound, and the creation of several new waste dump facilities in the under serviced GTA. Thus, began a great struggle (Walker 1995; 1999). Without attempting to restate the development of the struggle, the processes of resistance were ideally suited to the suburban and exurban populations in the target municipalities. The fight was long and bitter. By 1994, however, the opponents had mobilized sufficiently that the province was not about to continue the struggle without a new election mandate. The New Democrats had a wide range of problematic situations; with labour, with business, all requiring a new mandate. The election of 1995 saw the defeat of the New Democrats. The Conservatives emerged in the GTA, where every seat went Conservative. The waste dump programme was ended by the Conservatives upon taking power. David had apparently bested Goliath, yet again!

In this major struggle, far beyond any grass-fire contention, a number of elements came together. In coming together they provided an opportunity for transcending the local contention inherent in the exurban-traditional rural contradiction. Not only were the exurbanites able to mobilize, they formed an alliance with the traditional ruralites, and between them they won the struggle. Beyond the immediacies of the struggle the exurbanites were able to make a considerable leap in forming an identity as new ruralites. It is this context of identity that the crystallization of a new rurality, as a mentality subscribed to by many exurbanites became critical.

The sheer size of the area contested in the waste-dump struggle, and the seriousness with which exurbanites, suburbanites and ruralites fought, provided a context within which many earlier differences could be ignored or overcome. Two observations are necessary before we attempt to generalize the processes into a model. As the struggle escalated in 1991 and 1992, it became clear that the rural residents took the placement of waste-dumps as a deadly insult to their residential zone and to themselves as residents. What
initially began as a series of Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) resistances quickly became a sacred cause. The various groups that had sprung up, usually from pre-existing rate payers associations, linked to one another and fought, with only occasional falling out among the resistors. The nature of the insult was strongly enough felt that the coming together of a resistance alliance was expedited.

Secondly, the basic strategy and tactics of resistance was under the leadership of the service class component of the countryside residents. The strategies relied very heavily on media manipulation that so characterizes the service class fraction. Tactically, service class members, through a variety of organizations were not only mobilized, they readily provided the numbers necessary to make their resistance believable. By late 1993 and through 1994, the resisters, who had conducted a very skillful campaign, reached the point where they played their trump card. They declared that should the provincial government actually go through with the beginnings of physically placing waste-dumps, they would use civil disobedience to resist. They were serious and they were treated seriously by the government. The image of hundreds, perhaps thousands of highly respectable citizens rushing forward to be arrested and jailed was clearly more than the government could deal with. It was at that point that the resistance had won, the rest was details, though important details.

Emergent New Ruralities and New Identities
The government of Ontario lost the waste-dump struggle in the GTA. In the election of 1995 the governing party lost its mandate, and it took no seats in the 905 portion of the GTA. In fact, every seat, 16 of them, were taken by the Progressive Conservatives. This was in itself quite a change from previous elections. The region had been, historically a Tory bastion, but the movement of exurbanites and suburbanites to the area had brought a renewal of Liberal Party support. In the provincial election the Liberals were swept away as were the New Democrats, who had been discredited before the election. In the subsequent, 1999 provincial election this situation was continued, all Conservative members elected. It should be pointed out that in the two federal elections of the 1990's, the Liberals had taken virtually all of the ridings in the province. This was and continues to be a volatile and complex province. This shift in political support was, I believe, indicative of changes that while not caused by the waste-dump struggle, were related. The relationship is mediated through the alliance the new ruralities forged in struggle and in the new identities which have emerged among exurbanites.

In the run-up to the 1995 election both Conservatives and Liberals, and the Liberals then held about half of the provincial seats in the 905 zone of the GTA, declared they would end the waste-dump sating process if elected. The Conservatives seem to have been the most believable, and were able to form a majority provincial government. Among the very first decisions taken by the new Conservative government was the ending of the Interim Waste Authority (IWA), the vehicle created by the New Democrats for the sating process. None of this was accidental. The relationship recently established between the provincial Conservatives and the 905 residents makes sense on a number of bases.

In the struggle the exurbanites, and particularly those in areas with very high concentrations of service class, upper middle class, residents were the leaders in the fight. The struggle over waste-dumps had as one of its more general outcomes the clarification of a wide range of issues for the local populations. Functionally, the struggle was carried out by a coalition which centred on service class members, but included the farmers of the open countryside and many of the suburbanites in the fringe zones around Toronto. Many of those participants and supporters of the resistance experienced major changes in their orientation through the struggle.

For many, the sense of belonging to the local community was strongly enhanced. During the struggle I had interviews taken in the impacted areas, particularly near the King/Vaughan Townline and the Bolton waste-dump sites. What became clear in the interviews was the awareness of the struggle and the quite uniform increase in already strong feelings of community identity. The two aspects of the changes that showed in interviews were a stronger identity with local community and a stronger sense of the exurban rurality I have been discussing above. The larger, and
more significant results of the struggle were to cement a new vision of rurality and a new ruralite identity on the part of many of the exurbanites living in the zones of contention.

As a summary to this discussion I want to set out a model in the form of a flow chart of changes, which generalize much of the dynamics I have sketched in the particular setting of the GTA (Figure 2). My focus in the model will be the structures around the theme of making a home in modernity, the lower elements of the diagram should be taken as important inputs to the processes around making a home. In this discussion I am highlighting the rural aspects of the transformations I see as significant to the new, emergent rurality.

The flow of the diagram begins with a core value in capitalist life, the private appropriation of social production. This is a hinge for the extraction of surplus value from those who actually perform the social labour of production. This is a key contradiction of capitalism, and a central value that ensures the continued importance and defense of private property. The next several blocks are to indicate some of the salient changes that have occurred in capitalist production over the last hundred years or so. There has been a major revision of the steering mechanisms of capitalism in the intersection of restructuring of the capitalist class, and its’ supplement by a new managerial class. Production has been overhauled numerous times, and we have not too long ago gone through what Soja (1996) refers to as a ‘crisis generated restructuring’. The agency of the capitalist state has taken on a variety of forms over this lengthy period. Initially the state functioned primarily as a direct ancillary to the support of capital, usually in a repressive manner. Over time, popular forces gained some voice in the state and the result, by the end of World War II, was the emergence of the welfare state as a popular institution. In the last couple of decades the welfare state has been curtailed, tax revenues given away and the state returned in part to its earlier role in the protection of property and capital.

Once in the countryside, the new arrivals found themselves confronted with several problems, based around the situation of making a home in modernity (Berman, 1988). The business of making a home is both serious work and indicative of the great shift of the countryside from its post-World War II productivism to a new focus on social reproduction. The exurbanites, and their cousins the suburbanites, are not living in the country to produce goods and services, though some few of them do just that. Rather, the newcomers are in the country for life itself, the production and raising of children. However, the earlier residents, and particularly the farmers, are not gone, and are themselves coping with the processes that have forced industrial agriculture on the countryside as a whole.

Inherent in these two streams of population are a wide range of problems, some of which have been suggested earlier in this paper. Once resident, the newcomers have been forced to put forward their version of reforms of many of the local institutions they have inherited. This has forced newcomers to forge alliances between themselves and beyond, to other class, ethnic, and place groups. The farmers have had an equivocal relation to both the newcomers and to their own critical engagement with industrialization. While farmers still own much of the open countryside, the favoured habitat of the exurbanites, they are not very numerous and are no longer necessary for voting coalitions. They are, however, necessary as the most potent symbol of the countryside. While the farmers can not be dismissed, just because the exurbanites and suburban allies have viable political coalitions, the farmers present a variety of problems to the newcomers as a result of their new industrial orientation. Farmers have and continue to produce an increasingly profane landscape, one that has great dissonance with the exurbanites’ idyll.
In addition to the problems of agricultural industrialization: pollution, machinery, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, removal of tree cover, etc., farmers have had to adjust and readapt their own earlier ruralities, as mentalities guiding their behaviour. Farmers throughout North America have evolved a variety of mentalities that allow them to live. Most often farmers in North America have adopted beliefs which minimize social differences in behaviour, but preserve the elitist character of political relations. In the United States this has been crystallized in the Jeffersonian ideals of the yeoman and typified in the style of plain people (Vidich and Bensman 1956). In central English Canada, that style is less prominent, but the familistic centre of the landscape suggests affinities with the American vision. However, all of these are threatened and seemingly made redundant by industrialization of agriculture. All of the protestations of farmers to be the salt of the earth seem hollow when, in effect, the farmers are salting the earth. Farms with a capitalized value of over a million dollars, even recognizing that net incomes are often modest, does not resonate with the yeoman ethic. Thus, farmers have had to reconsider their own attitudes. Further, the farmers have had to cope with an entirely new and rather foreign, if sympathetic, set of newcomers in their productive environment.

How can the residents of the new exurban habitat ever create, or recreate a harmonious environment and live together? One way is to participate in a struggle which as it develops can sweep away conflicts within the community of residents and focus on the enemy outside. In some ways this is the strategy of a small war to tone up the community. As with so many significant processes, though this one touched the state, here the provincial and local municipal states, it was only loosely controlled by state authority. The transformations are largely processes at the level of civil society, not controlled very much by the state. There is a sense in which the resistance to the provinces’ waste-dump project was a low level civil war.

For interpretive purposes we can look at the struggle as a space-time envelope within which some of the normal ways of doing things are suspended and participants enter a different state of consciousness. As the struggle and resistance to the provincial project escalated, both the rhetoric and actions of participants were transformed. Following the reporting in local newspapers between 1991 and 1994 gives several impressions of the character of what participants thought was happening. At the beginning the resisters skillfully used public hearings about the larger project and specific possible waste-dump sites to publicize resistance and to create the sense of resistance. There was a skillful use of media events.

The resistance, initially rather sporadically localized, gradually coalesced into a wide spread movement in the
905 parts of the GTA. Under this umbrella there were distinct nodes of organization, particularly in King Township, the city of Vaughan (especially near Maple), the Whitevale area of Pickering, the Township of Georgina, and the Town of Caledon (particularly near Bolton). This rough geography of resistance was approximated by the distribution of probable dump sites, and focussed on the final contenders in the siting process.

The rhetorical inflation in the struggle suggested something of the seriousness of the contest. As time passed the rhetoric both escalated and became more mythic in character. The central image that lingers is the way in which the entire process was taken to be a deliberate insult against the rural residents of the GTA. The enemy gradually became Toronto, and in some ways the city generically. The provincial government’s exclusion of Toronto from having to provide its own waste-dump site certainly identified the city as a privileged site compared to the open countryside. This seemed confirmation of the collusion of Toronto in foisting a powerful disamenity on the countryside. The sense of insult moved the question of resolution away from a rational approach to the problems of waste disposal and into the mythic world of the powers of good and evil, of us and them.

It was the dissolution of the usual bounds of political action and movement into the symbolic and emotional realm of defense of home, that marked a significant transformation of the struggle. It became clear that the first enemy, the New Democratic provincial government, was seen dramatically differently than the New Democrats saw the struggle. After a while the New Democrats were so loathed among the resisters that they almost disappeared as a governing political party and became the scapegoat for the waste-dump controversy. The Liberals, who supported the resisters, lost the 1995 election, as the Conservatives emerged as the defenders of rurality in the 905 zone.

The political alliance of the farmers and service class affluent appeared in the struggle. The freeing through emotionally based views allowed the disengagement of ideas that seemed to go together. For the time the two principal residence groups suspended what had been gradually worsening relations and devoted themselves to the joint enemies. A new rurality emerged, primarily among the exurbanites, but at least superficially shared by the farmers. The role of property owner became a defining legitimization of resistance. The exurbanites and the farmers shared this role. Though farmers increasingly became an icon for the resistance, the core of the actual troops of resistance was among the exurbanite service class fraction.

The landscape itself became a focal point in resistance, and in the transformation of feelings during the contest. The niggling disamenities of farmers industrialization faded. The focus of much of the resistance became the increasingly sacralized Oak Ridges Moraine. The moraine had been a major target of exurban settlement for a generation. Much of the rhetoric was aimed at the defense of the moraine from the great insult of waste-dump siting. Yet, ironically the moraine was explicitly off bounds for waste dump siting. However, by the end of the IWA process of selection two of the sites, on the King-Vaughan townline and outside of Bolton, were suspiciously near the edges of the moraine. The shift was increasingly toward the landscape as threatened and insulted, not just the residents.

It seems that the mythical struggle was, and has, produced the bases of a geography of little patria in the 905 region. The increasingly profane character of the agrarian setting has simply been shunted aside as the focus on the features to be defended has become the moraine. The moraine, as the less threatened Niagara Escarpment, have become the symbolic and affectionate representation of home. The fight over waste-dumps has, of course, faded subsequently to 1995, but not the results of the fight.

When the government forcibly amalgamated the six municipalities, and regional government of Toronto into one super municipality, in 1998, over the strong opposition of Torontonians, no amalgamation of the municipalities of the 905 area was undertaken. In fact, the provincial government was public that it would not be amalgamating those areas into the large municipal circumscriptions favoured by the Conservatives, until at least 2000 and the return of a second Conservative government. The 905 zone loyally supported the conservatives in the recent 1999 election and there has been no serious broaching of amalgamation that would threaten the small patria that are the focus of exurban and suburban care.
Planning at the local level gains a degree of saliency in localized exurban communities because it allows both prohibition and facilitation of various land-use regimes. The professional planners have to translate the new ruralite visions into seemingly rational decisions taken on instrumental bases about everyday activities.

The planning institutions, of course, do not overtly recognize sacred features. Sacred features are not part of rational, western governance. Yet, the defense of the moraine, not a new issue, has become a very widespread deseratum in the planning structures of the small patria. The recreation of a sacred landscape gives emotional meaning to the new world. It maps out the dimensions of a home that has come through the crucible and may provide the basis of transcending, for a little while, the inherent contradictions of place and people in Toronto’s countryside.

And now it’s all back! Richmond Hill wants to pave its northern edge of moraine lands. King Township wants to double the size of King City on the moraine. Bayview Avenue is widened, destroying parts of the Jefferson Forest. Throughout the moraine, developers have assembled land. The development proposals are thick and fast. The developers have discovered that they really do not have to go through the local municipalities for permission to build houses. The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) can be approached without any need for the embarrassment of contacting local government and facing potential rebuke and demonstrations. The end run to the OMB puts developers in an arena where all that counts is expertise, and expertise can be bought, but not easily by defenders of the moraine.

In addition, municipal amalgamation is back. The suburban municipalities of the south wish to expand, to eat their smaller neighbours and become cities. The exurban municipalities of the northern edge of the GTA, particularly those on the moraine, find themselves in disarray over defensive strategies. After all, many of these municipalities wish to expand suburban developments of their own. Yet, the small patria throughout the 905 GTA region are still the first defence of home.

David, still resting from the mythic struggle over the impurity and insult of waste dumps, looks up. Goliath has come over the hill and is chuckling to himself as he hoists his shield into place, lowers his visor, and looses his legal sword.

References