- DEBATES -

THE CONSTITUTION OF ASSEMBLAGES AND THE AQUAPELAGALITY OF HAIDA GWAII

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Abstract

Aquapelagos can be defined as assemblages of the marine and terrestrial spaces of groups of islands and their adjacent waters that are generated by human habitation and activity. This article explicates the nature of an assemblage (in this context) and addresses the manner in which assemblages are constituted at particular historical points and subsequently modified due to indigenous and/or exogenous processes, influences and/or events. It outlines the parameters of these modifications and the variegation of aspects of aquapelagality. The article uses the communally constituted locale of the Haida Gwaii aquapelago as a paradigmatic example with particular regard to historical factors and particularly those related to the establishment of the Gwaii Haanas marine conservation area and Haida heritage site. Discussion of these aspects illuminates key elements of the concept of the aquapelago.

Keywords

Aquapelago, aquapelagic assemblages, actants, Haida Gwaii, Gwaii Haanas

I. Assemblages and their assembly

I'll begin by retracing my steps. I introduced the concept of the aquapelago in a previous article (Hayward, 2012) in response to what I perceived to be shortcomings in the development of 'Archipelago Studies', as proposed by Stratford et al (2011), with particular regard to their limited attention to aquatic realms as anything more than watery spaces between and connecting land masses. I proposed the concept to refer to "an assemblage of the marine and land spaces of a group of islands and their adjacent waters" (ibid: 4). While I was attempting to be concise, this was an inaccurate rendition of what I had in mind. The problem concerns the "and". I could have expressed it as 'islands/adjacent waters' but the slash symbol might then suggest an overly abrupt boundary between the two. Perhaps the 'integrated space of islands and their adjacent waters and seafloors' gets closest. But it is also necessary to add two qualifications to this definition. The first concerns a query made by several personal correspondents asking why I excluded single island societies that have strong associations with their

surrounding waters, reefs etc. from my definition. Could they not also be regarded as aquapelagic? The answer is, of course, yes. The aquapelago I propose comprises an integrated land and aguatic space. Single islands can articulate with aguatic spaces to form aquapelagic assemblages. Equally, isolated peninsulas, 'outports' etc. can have aquapelagic aspects. While no one appears to have identified it. I also omitted something else. The air above the waters and land, the weather that occurs in it, the windblown seeds and species than are born by it and the birds than inhabit the air, sea and land are just as much part of the integrated space of the aquapelago. These qualifications serve to emphasise that if the archipelago is a purely descriptive geographic concept - and there remains considerable debate on this topic, as recently articulated by Peter Hay (2012) - the aquapelago I propose decidedly isn't. The concept I advance is one of the aquapelago being constituted by human (inter)activity within a combined terrestrial and aquatic environment. In this regard, without human presence and connectivities within island-water spaces there can be no aguapelago.² Put another way, neither cartography nor Google Earth services (etc) can identify an aguapelago on their own - analysis of human inhabitation of space is central. There are further complexities that can be teased out of the above in that some humans inhabit aquapelagos more aquapelagically than others; ie not all humans who live on the islands within aquapelagos are as actively engaged with integrated aquatic and terrestrial spaces as others. There may even be individuals within aquapelagos who (through intent or circumstance) exist outside of the aquapelagic assemblage, or - at very least minimally interact with it. (The most obvious examples being reclusive interior dwellers on islands who can sustain livelihoods without access to or interaction with aquatic realms and resources.)

Let me also address another aspect at this point. With regard to the notion of aquapelagic assemblages, I elaborated these as comprising:

a social unit existing in a location in which the aquatic spaces between and around a group of islands are utilised and navigated in a manner that is fundamentally interconnected with and essential to the social group's habitation of land and their senses of identity and belonging. (2012: 4)

As I elaborated, aquapelagic assemblages are "*performed* entities" (ibid: 6 – emphasis in original) that are premised on "human presence in and utilisation of the environment" (ibid). Further, and complementing Dawson (2012: 20), I emphasised the historical dimension of these, in that:

aquapelagos are assemblages that come into being and wax and wane as climate patterns alter and as human socio-economic organisations, technologies, and/or the resources and trade systems they rely on, change and develop in these contexts. (ibid: 7)

If this forms my conceptual 'bridgehead' into the uncharted terrain of the aquapelago, it is one that delivers the reader and I into a tangle of my own making. For the purposes of this paper (and as per my previous study), I propose aquapelagos as entities created when humans occupy and interact with integrated island and aquatic spaces.³ The tangle I refer to is one that Latour (2005) has vividly delineated, ie the difficulty of retaining an established concept of the social at the same time as you try and create an expanded framework that encompasses broader interactions. Put another way, my first exposition of the concept of the aquapelago effectively 'had its cake and ate it' by using

somewhat fuzzy concepts of the social and – implicitly – putting a 'hard' a barrier between the social and non-human entities, realms and actions. Let me try and correct this. While the human aspect is essential to the aquapelago, humans are only one of a series of actants without which the aquapelago cannot be performatively constituted. In stating this I acknowledge and draw on tenets of Actor-Network Theory, a body of thought that Latour acknowledges might better be entitled "actant-rhyzome ontology" (2005: 9) (a characterisation I am more comfortable with). While the "rhyzome" (more usually spelt as 'rhizome') referred here is the familiar multiple-noded entity proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2004); the reference to "actant" merits more sustained discussion.

Put at its simplest, an actant is something that causes action. It can be animate (eg animals, plants, microbes etc), inanimate (minerals, gasses etc) or the manifestation of energy (storms, climate change etc). Actants become actants by performing an action, ie by impacting on other entities, some of which may already be performing an action and others of which may be jolted into action by another actant. The aggregate of these actants and their activities constitute the assemblage central to my concept of the aquapelago. I contend that the humans who constitute aquapelagos through their engagements with terrestrial and aquatic spaces are (necessarily) engaged in interaction with what Bennett describes as the "vibrant matter" of the environment, characterised by the "vitality" of various non-human things (2010: iii). Bennett's work is particularly pertinent for the concept I propose since it elaborates the significance of these aforementioned aspects for understanding human society and – as her book's subtitle specifies "a political ecology of things" – through a "guiding question" that asks:

How would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies? By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own. My aspiration is to articulate a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and inside humans to see how analyses of political events might change if we gave the force of things more due. (ibid: iii)

Bennett's central focus on political conceptualisation and vision as the motive for her considerations parallels my own here. My concern to identify and assert the usefulness of the concept of the aquapelago is not simply taxonomic but is rather a response to a number of moral-political questions concerning how humans inhabit - and are causing and catalysing changes to - the wider environments of the planet, its oceans, its climate and biomass. Aquapelagic spaces are one type of site in which these changes occur. As sea-level rise, ocean warming, shifting currents and changes in the biomass and biodiversity occur; those humans implicated into aquapelagic spaces are interacting with a diverse range of actants. Such changes have of course happened since the earliest days of human existence but the crucial issue that concerns me is the activity that has occurred in the Anthropocene epoch, whose starting point is open to debate but whose full impact began to be apparent in the late 18th Century (when the Industrial Revolution gained momentum in Europe and produced population growth, migration and international commodity trades to support it). In this sense, my proposition of the aquapelago as a concept and focus is intended to facilitate comprehension of Anthropocene impacts on interrelated aquatic and land environments and of the impact on and responses of nonhuman actants. But the aquapelagic assemblage I propose as arising from the interaction of humans and other actants in particular locales is far from a homogenous one whose dynamics and results are easily adduced; rather, I commend Bennett's characterisation that:

bodies enhance their power in or as a heterogeneous assemblage. What this suggests for the concept of agency is that the efficacy or effectivity to which that term has traditionally referred becomes distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts. (2010: 23 – emphases in original)

Returning to this theme towards the conclusion of her study, Bennett offers what she describes as an "onto-story" (entitled 'Natura Naturans' - a Latin term that can be translated as 'nature doing what it does') (ibid: 116-119). After contending that, "an affective, speaking human body is not *radically* different from the affective, signalling nonhumans with which it coexists, hosts, enjoys, serves, consumes, produces, and competes" (ibid: 117); she goes on to assert that the environmental "field" these coexistent interactions occur within:

is not a uniform or flat topography. It is just that its differentiations are too protean and diverse to coincide exclusively with the philosophical categories of life, matter, mental, environmental. The consistency of the field is more uneven than that: portions congeal into bodies, but not in a way that makes any one type the privileged site of agency. The source of effects is, rather, always an ontologically diverse assemblage of energies and bodies, of simple and complex bodies, of the physical and the physiological.

In this onto-tale, everything is, in a sense, alive. This liveliness is not capped by an ultimate purpose or grasped and managed through a few simple and timeless (Kantian) categories. (ibid)

What Bennett is evoking here is a generative assemblage that is 'natural' in that it is diverse and multi-facetted, performed by multiple (and multiply interacting) actants. As will be apparent, the consideration of an aquapelago as such a lively assemblage in which humans interact with a range of other actants – sometimes imposing their will and/or causing unintentional impacts, sometimes blocked, diverted or defeated by interactions and reactions of other animates, inanimates or manifestations of energy – allows for insights into dynamic event phenomena within and between particular locations.

In his response to my earlier article introducing the concept of aquapelagos, Maxwell (2012) identified the concept of chorography as parallel to and supportive of the arguments around integrated island/marine spaces I advanced. Reflecting on critical emphases on "the primacy of space", he asserted that our beings have a "primal intercorporeality"; ie "rather than being set against the world we inhabit, we are given through and with it" and that we "live a radical continuity with our worlds" (ibid: 23). This leads him to identify the late medieval concept of chorography (itself an application of ideas derived from Ptolemy's *Geographia*), recently revived and re-inflected by writers such as Pearson (2008), as particularly pertinent. Chorography, in Maxwell's words, "renders (a) place in (its) chiasmatic idiosyncrasy, setting subjective and objective epistemologies into productive dialogue" (ibid: 23). In accomplishing this, it also

prioritises a thorough recognition of and engagement with specificities. Chorography is therefore particularly congruent with aquapelagic analysis since each and every aquapelago is differently constituted and temporally fluid. It is also congruent with Actor-Network theory. As Latour has characterised, while "Sociologists of the social seem to glide like angels, transporting power and connections almost immaterially" (2005: 25), those engaged in "actant-rhyzome ontology" have to engage with the specifics of places and the mesh of actants that perform them/in them at particular moments.

At this point it is pertinent to ask where this train of discussion gets us. One answer is that it transports the discussion away from simple taxonomic cartography (ie as to what an aquapelago may or may not be) and into a more daunting realm in which adequately representing and comprehending any single aquapelago requires complex multi-facetted research and conceptualization. But that's not to say that aquapelagos cannot be readily identified. Let's shift perspective at this point and – in the brief space of a 'Debates' article – illuminate the above discussions with reference to a specific spatial intersection Haida Gwaii/Gwaii Haanas.

II. Haida Gwaii/Gwaii Haanas

Haida culture is intertwined with all of creation in the land, sea, air and spirit worlds. Life in the ocean around us is essential to our well-being and it nourishes all of the communities of Haida Gwaii. (Council of the Haida Nation, 2011: 1)

As the above quotation suggests - and as I will go on to elaborate - the Haida Gwaii islands off the mid-north coast of British Columbia, their surrounding waters and the Gwaii Haanas marine park that is located in those waters constitute a paradigmatic aquapelagic assemblage (see Figure 2 for indication of geographical area). I make this characterisation based on indigenous perspectives communicated in various print and media forms, research on the region by specialists from various disciplines (referred to below), contemporary regional media reports, government reports and legislation and personal fieldwork undertaken in October 2011. My discussions are also substantially informed by various of the contributors to an important anthology addressing human impacts on sea mammal populations on the Pacific North West coast since the earliest phases of human habitation (Braje and Torbin [eds], 2011). While the anthology omits reference to Haida Gwaii, mainly focussing on the area between Guadalope and Vancouver islands and with additional reference to Alaskan islands, many of its overall characterisations and specific analyses are finely wrought and pertinent for my discussions. I freely acknowledge here that I am synthesising perspectives in order to make broad conceptual points rather than accessing data and representing and drawing conclusions in the painstakingly chorographical manner I commend above. The following are, therefore, essentially 'headlines'.

Haida Gwaii was performed as an aquapelago long before both the 'spike point' of Anthropocene activity generated from Western Europe from the late 18th Century on, and the historical moment (the mid-19th Century) when it became in contact with - and subsequently embroiled within and transformed by – western trade, neo-colonial, colonial and post-colonial apparatuses. While the region forms a peripheral fringe to the nation-states that currently constitute North America; archaeological evidence

increasingly suggests that the islands were once part of a narrow, ice-free coastal fringe that facilitated the human settlement of the Americas from Asia by providing both inhabitable 'stepping stones' down into the ice-free areas of (first) the North and then Central and South America some 10,000-13,000 years ago⁴ along what Erlandson, Graham, Bourque et al (2007) have characterised as a coastal kelp 'highway'. As Barrie, Conway and Josenhans et al (2005) demonstrate, the present-day Haida Gwaii islands were a product of rising sea levels that resulted from the melting of the glaciers that flooded the lowlands that now form the Hecate Strait between the islands and the mainland coast.



Figure 2 - Map of Haida Gwaii aquapelago and Gwaii Haanas (bordered to the south) and inset image of Haida Gwaii's position in regard to the coast of British Columbia (Christian Fleury, 2012)

The archaeology of more recent sites and artefacts suggests a continuity of human settlement in the region that links the contemporary indigenous Haida population to this

early human presence. Whatever complexities may be added to this account by subsequent research, since at least 2000 AD (when red cedar trees became established in the islands facilitating the construction of large, durable seagoing canoes⁵), the Haida comprised a group of well-established and powerful island based clans that 'raided and traded' extensively along the Pacific North West coast. They also developed a sophisticated culture most spectacularly manifested in large, elaborate wooden structures that included the complex and beautiful carved mortuary poles that remain the best known element of Haida culture (along with the more recent sculptural and decorative work of 20th Century Haida artists such as Bill Reid). The Haida appeared to have enjoyed regional security and supremacy from their island bases until the arrival of westerners, initially in the form of explorers and traders and, subsequently, colonists.

In terms of the region's constitution as an aquapelago prior to western contact and resulting disruption; the Haida were reliant on the coastal waterways of their region to obtain various resources either through harvesting of marine materials or through trading with or plundering from other regional communities. The often tempestuous waters around the islands, particularly north towards the Prince of Wales islands and across the Hecate Strait to the coastal fringe of (present day) British Columbia, required the development of stable, durable canoes and considerable navigation and crewing skills. While the waters adjacent to the islands may have been unpredictable in weather terms, the available aquatic resources were plentiful, providing reliable all-year round foods such as fish (predominantly halibut and rockfish), shellfish (mussels, whelks, clams etc.) aquatic mammals (seals and sea otters) and seabirds (mainly auks). In addition, salmon provided a valued seasonal resource and there is evidence of whales being consumed when these were washed ashore (Acheson, 2005). A contemporary assessment and evaluation of Haida uses of marine food resources that has been produced by the Council of the Haida Nation (2012), drawing on contributions by 56 Haida, shows a distinct similarity between current use patterns and the archaeological record.

Available evidence suggests that at time of initial contact with western traders the population of Haida Gwaii existed in a relatively stable equilibrium with their environment, inhabiting and enacting the aquapelago in an established and sustainable manner. This is, of course, not to suggest that the Haida had somehow slotted into habitation and exploitation of the aquapelago without environmental impact. Indeed a growing body of research, such as that presented in Braje and Torbin (eds) (2011), emphasises the 'shifting baseline' of ecological systems caused by historical variations in human exploitation of marine resources, often in response to changing climate patterns, and of consequent effects on ecological systems. As McKechnie and Wigen have identified, the "direct use and long-term occupation of the region by coastal First Nations people... indicate[s] that humans have been participants in this ecosystem for at least the past 10,000 years and as such, likely directly and indirectly affected the distribution, growth, behaviour, and relative densities" of the marine resources they harvested (2011: 129).

The relative equilibrium described above for the early-mid 1700s was not to last. A major disruption to this situation was caused by the arrival of western traders who were functionaries within a trans-Pacific trade network that acquired a marine product along the coast and islands of the Pacific North West (from northern California up to Alaska and the Aleutians) and (predominantly) retailed it in China. The product in question was the sea otter pelt. Pelts were highly in-demand as a fashion item in China and were

mainly traded by British and US merchants through Guangzhou for Chinese goods such as silk, porcelain and tea that could be sold in Western European and North American markets. Pelts were supplied by indigenous communities in the Pacific North West and were traded for western manufactured goods such as firearms, metal tools and manufactured cloth. Demand for the latter among communities such as the Haida motivated them to harvest pelts in an intense and (as it proved) unsustainable manner, with otter numbers crashing to the point of local extinction around 1830 as the result of fifty years intensive exploitation.



Figure 1 – shorelines and islets in channel off the south shore of Graham Island, Haida Gwaii (photograph: Philip Hayward, 2011)

The impact of the extinction of otters on fish stocks (through associated environmental factors referred to below) was largely obscured by another significant population decline, that of the human population of the region, which fell catastrophically due to the introduction and unhindered progress of hitherto unknown microbial actants introduced by westerners, such as syphilis and smallpox. In between the mid-1830s and early 1880s the population declined by around 75% with smaller villages aggregating into single settlements and combining members of previously distinct communities. By the early 1900s these had further aggregated into two communities, Skidegate and Masset. Further upheavals followed in the form of a commercial salmon fishery, which severely depleted local stocks for the benefit of companies based on mainland British Columbia, and – most famously – logging.

Logging began in the islands in 1901 and expanded in the 1920s and 1930s with the (lightweight but durable) sitka spruce a particularly prized product, used extensively in aircraft construction during World War Two. Logging continued through the 1950s and expanded rapidly in the 1960s-1980s, only levelling off when it had cleared many old

growth forests in the northern part of the islands and was increasingly opposed by high profile anti-logging campaigns intent on protecting the pristine southerly areas of Moresby and adjacent islands. Local opposition to this activity first became apparent in 1974, with the formation of the Islands Protection Committee in Queen Charlotte in and expressions of concern by the Skidegate (Haida) Band Council (Martineau, 1999: 242). After over a decade of concerted direct action and negotiations with the Canadian and British Columbian Governments, the South Moresby Agreement was signed in 1988 and led to the establishment of a zone that later became the Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve and Haida Heritage Site, officially established in June 2010. While the principal catalyst for the original eco-activism was the concern to preserve the region from the ravages of logging; it was significant that national park also included adjacent marine spaces.

At this point it is pertinent to refer to a perspective on the nature of aquapelagos identified by Suwa (2012) in response to my earlier article. Drawing on Shinto notions of sanctuary – and of the 'commons' of sanctuary, as discussed by Akimichi (2004) – Suwa has identified that belief systems, eco-systems and other aspects of social being can align to create a sanctuary in the form of an aquapelagic assemblage constituted, known and performed by the inhabitants of a marine region:

aquapelagic assemblages should be conceived as a space where landscape and personhood merge, and where the boundary between nature and culture or society merges into the same plane of interactions. (2012: 15)

Gwaii Haanas is premised on just such a set of perceptions and interactions. As its website identifies, in combination with the Haida Heritage site that comprises the southern part of Moresby Island and adjacent islands, the sanctuary/park "is currently the only place on Earth to be protected from mountain top to sea floor' (online) and encompasses an ecologically rich and diverse marine terrain:

Under the waters of the Hecate Strait, lie the contours of a former tundra like plain, with meandering rivers, lakes and beach terraces - a landscape drowned when sea levels rose after the last ice age. Off the west coast of Gwaii Haanas, the Queen Charlotte Shelf drops away abruptly to about 2,500 metres. This is an area of many transitions - between ocean abyss, continental slope, shallow shelf, and the dramatically upthrust landmass of the islands. Clean, nutrient rich water supports productive kelp forest communities and some of the most abundant, diverse and colourful intertidal communities found in temperate waters anywhere in the world. (ibid)

I reproduce this statement since it is notable for combining a description of the various types and depths of ocean floor, of the biological communities that inhabit those regions and a strong sense of the (current) seafloor's retention of characteristics from the last glacial period (when it was a low-lying extension of the current island landscape).

One of the most striking aspects about the public representation of the park is its official symbol. While the description I reproduce above does not refer to Anthropocene impacts, its crest does:



Figure 3 – Official Gwaii Haanas Crest

Note the logo carefully. Designed by Haida artist Giitsxaa and rendered in the stylised manner distinct to traditional Haida craft and contemporary artwork, it represents the single most significant element <u>lost</u> from Haida Gwaii since contact with western trade networks – the sea otter, depicted cradling one of its favourite foodstuffs, the sea urchin, whose numbers it controlled, allowing kelp 'forests' to flourish. Again, like the description of the plains under Hecate Strait that were flooded when the continental glaciers melted, there is a strong retention of history in the image, which is a salutary one, celebrating the past and illustrating what can easily be lost. As the Gwaii Haanas website states:

With the extirpation of the sea otters during the fur trade, the natural balance between species in the community has been disturbed, and the health of the kelp forest is threatened. The loss of the sea otter is a powerful reminder of the vulnerability of individual species and entire ecosystems. (online)

In this manner, the crest serves to invoke a deep history and to inspire commitment through its visual symbolism.

Along with the descriptions and symbolism described above, the terms and clauses of the 'Gwaii Haanas Agreement' are noteworthy. The first key point is the recognition of indigenous rights in the management of the area by the Archipelago Management Board, which comprises an equal number of representatives from the Council of the Haida Nation and Canadian Government, managing the aquapelago (or, in the words of the agreement the "lands and non-tidal waters' of the region" and the adjacent waters of "the Archipelago marine area" - Section 2.4). In addition to the expected stipulations of preserving natural resources, the Agreement clearly enunciates a vision for the site that includes human presence in and interaction with the spaces and animate presences in the region as the defining aspect, identifying that:

all actions related to the planning, operation and management of the Archipelago will respect the protection and preservation of the environment, the Haida culture, and the maintenance of a benchmark for science and human understanding. (3.1)

The parties agree that it is an objective to sustain the continuity of Haida culture and the parties agree to contribute to the attainment of this objective in the Archipelago by providing for the continuation of cultural activities and traditional renewable resource harvesting activities. (3.2)

The parties agree that there will be no extraction or harvesting by anyone of the resources of the lands and non-tidal waters of the Archipelago for or in support of commercial enterprise, except for the trapping of furbearing animals or the cutting by Haida of selected trees for ceremonial purposes or for artistic purposes intended for public display. (3.3)

Matters to be addressed by the AMB will also include... identification of sites of special spiritual-cultural significance to the Haida within the Archipelago, including historic habitation and burial sites, with particular reference to those lands known variously as "Gandle K'in" and "Hotspring Island", and those lands known variously as "SGaang Gwaii" and "Anthony Island", and management of these sites on a case by case basis taking into account the requirements for protection of natural resources and cultural features, for Haida cultural activities, and traditional renewable resource harvesting activities... and for visitor understanding and enjoyment. (4.2c) [and] strategies to assist Haida individuals and organizations to take advantage of the full range of economic and employment opportunities associated with the planning, operation and management of the Archipelago (4.2h)

Section 6 enshrines the following "cultural activities and sustainable, traditional renewable resource harvesting activities" as permissible within the site:

(i) travelling into and within the Archipelago;
(ii) gathering of traditional Haida foods;
(iii) gathering of plants used for medicinal or ceremonial purposes;
(iv) cutting of selected trees for ceremonial or artistic purposes;
(v) hunting of land mammals and trapping of fur-bearing animals;
(vi) fishing for freshwater and anadromous fish
(vii) conducting, teaching or demonstrating ceremonies of traditional, spiritual or religious significance;
(viii) seeking cultural and spiritual inspiration;
(ix) use of shelter and facilities essential to the pursuit of the above activities.

From these viewpoints it can be seen that the establishment of Gwaii Haanas has established, enshrined and introduced protection for an aquapelago constituted by the engagement of Haida with the locale that they inhabited prior to colonial incursion and disruption in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Its multiple provisions legally recognise the constituent elements that 'organically' comprised a similar realm of human interaction with the natural environment in the pre-contact era. Like any such document,

it necessarily compresses complexity and includes terms open for subsequent interpretation and dispute ("sustainable" in Section 6 for example, or the potential for tension between the multiple aims of 3.1 and the more specific aim of 4.2h) but it remains a notable aspirational charter that reflects what is – in all but name – an aquapelagic conceptualisation of space and occupancy that attempts to reinstate a pre-Anthropocene regime in a modern spatio-administrative context.

Conclusion

The brief discussion of Haida Gwaii/Gwaii Haanas in the second part of this article serves to identify the importance of an aquapelagic vision in two regards: 1) in attempts to protect aggregated island/marine environments from further degradation; and 2) to conceive of and legally encapsulate the complex relationship between humans and other animate and inanimate actants in integrated terrestrial and marine spaces. It is the performance of aguapelagality on that stage that constitutes the aguapelagic entity. The aquapelago is therefore a 'rich' concept, one that is premised on human interaction with "vibrant matter" in particular locales. It is an "onto-tale" in which everything is interacting. It is not a product of a cartographic imagination, an image rendered flat. Indeed it is the multiplicity of submarine depths, of regions of water and currents, of seafloor surfaces and their interactions with topologies of land and of aerial and weather systems, and of flows of materials between them, that produces an aquapelago. Like any space whose chorography can be understood historically, it's also a poetic space where traces and impacts of former interactions and former actants can be deployed to evoke what has been and gone and what may be in the future. In these regards, the richness of the concept comments back on the broader project of Island Studies (as it has loosely been constituted), stressing engaged, holistic, multiple-actant environments rather than spatial cameos or summary overviews where pale generalisms stand for the vibrant materiality of enacted spaces.

End Notes

⁵ See Moss (2008) for further discussion.

¹ 'Outport' is a term used in Newfoundland to refer to a settlement that is isolated in terms of terrestrial access routes but engages in marine activities and is connected by sea to other outport communities.

 $^{^2}$ I leave aside for now the question (and/or extension of the concept) as to whether others species' interactions in such environments can constitute a non-human aquapelago.

³ I should acknowledge that it might also be possible to envisage aquapelagos generated by other species' interactions with similar spaces.

⁴ See Koppel (2003) for a synthesis and interpretation of late 20th Century research on the topic and Fedje and Marhewes (eds) (2005) for a collection of scholarly papers on Haida history and prehistory. I drew on these for my earlier study of Haida cultural heritage (Hayward, 2008).

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