

Won't You be My Neighbor? Corporate Discourse, Formations of Community, and Fracking Above the Marcellus Shale

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Earthjustice's short documentary film 'Dryden – The Small Town that Changed the Fracking Game' and the efforts of the activists it depicts in order to analyze how a key figure in corporate discourse—the neighbor—was redeployed as part of a successful effort to prevent natural gas drilling within the eponymous community. This figure, a common trope used by the gas industry to insinuate itself into the areas it aims to exploit, was repurposed by activists as they worked to promote a collective sense of responsibility and foster feelings of solidarity. Though much of the discourse around fracking currently seems stuck in irresolvable debates that reduce the issue to merely scientific or economic terms, 'Dryden' foregrounds the social dimensions of this particular crisis. In reconsidering fracking as a crisis of community, Earthjustice's documentary and the activists in Dryden not only establish a groundbreaking legal precedent for imposing de facto bans on fracking, but also explore ways of breaking out of the discursive gridlock. The deployment of the figure of the neighbor illuminates new potentialities for being and knowing, compelling novel understandings of extrafamilial relationships and collectivity in the face of corporate exploitation.

KEYWORDS: fracking, documentary, Dryden, discourse, community, sociality

The current discourse around fracking in the United States has largely reached a stalemate as activists and natural gas corporations become increasingly ensnared in irresolvable debates that limit discussion to scientific or economic terms. Yet, as fracking continues to cause social, environmental, and legal crises that throw conventional forms of community into disarray, new ways of thinking about collectivity and belonging have begun to take shape. By examining the social dimensions of the crises incurred by fracking, I aim to think through and out of what has become a stultifying debate, one that Barbara Hurd has described elsewhere as "the 'I'm right, you're wrong' screech or mind-numbing data dumps we too often call conversations' (Hurd, et al. x). Instead, I attend to the ways in which communities' and individuals' choices to embrace or reject the expansion of the natural gas industry closely relate to their sense of responsibility to a larger collective and their relationship to nature—whether figuring it as an important part of the fabric of the community that must be preserved, or a resource for use and extraction. It is through analyzing corporate discourse, the tropes it deploys, and the rhetorical strategies that it uses that I discover an avenue towards imagining new and better ways of belonging.

To this end, I turn to the community of Dryden, New York, and the work of its anti-fracking activists. The town serves as a useful case study not just because its residents were able to establish a new legal precedent in their successful effort to prevent drilling, uncovering a way that communities across the nation might protect themselves from exploitation at the hands of natural gas compa-

nies, but also because the work of the activists there illuminated a novel way of imagining otherwise in the face of the catastrophic environmental and social crises caused by fracking. Their actions resulted in more than just a legal victory; Dryden's residents also found new and powerful ways of repurposing and (re)deploying the figure of the neighbor, perhaps the most commonly used trope in corporate discourse and policy. As detailed in the sole documentary film about their efforts, 'Dryden – The Small Town that Changed the Fracking Game,' produced by Earthjustice, the actions of the residents show the power of and potentialities latent in rethinking community relations. In turning corporate discourse back on itself, the residents uncover a novel way of repurposing the very terms of the propaganda used in companies' efforts to exploit rural communities. In this way, the figure of the neighbor becomes a site of contradiction and emergence, caught between inclusion and exclusion, the collective and the individual, the private and the public. Though fraught, it comes to serve as a site at which challenges to corporate rhetoric and exploitation find promising footing. Thus, the seemingly small-scale events in Dryden take on national significance, their ramifications extending far beyond the private property lines of the residents and the borders of the town itself, helping to reshape the national debate on natural gas drilling.

Though the fossil fuel industry's exploitation of rural communities is hardly new, corporations' interest in extracting natural gas in the northeastern United States is a recent phenomenon. Until approximately 2008, the Marcellus Shale's subterranean reserves of

methane were written off as prohibitively expensive to extract—if extraction were possible at all. By 2011, however, the immense value of the shale finally came to light. After finishing their assessment of its resources, the United States Geological Survey concluded that around 84,198 billion cubic feet of recoverable gas are trapped within the formation. 96% of that gas is believed to reside in the sub-region known as the Interior Marcellus assessment unit (AU), which spans from the northeastern half of West Virginia, through the bulk of Pennsylvania, and into the southern half of New York (Coleman, et al.). Improvements in drilling methods and fracturing techniques (the combination of which is known as 'fracking') have enabled companies to profitably mine the Marcellus's reserves, spawning a rush on the part of corporations to lease land within this AU.

In response, activists have raised concerns about drilling's environmental impact, ranging from worries about water contamination to noise pollution. Corporations, in turn, have worked tirelessly to influence the discourse around natural gas development, often by insinuating themselves into the very communities that they aim to exploit. In doing so, corporations appropriate and deploy conventional working-class themes, yoking drilling to patriotism and situating themselves as parental figures and other stakeholders within the community—most notably as 'neighbors.' Natural gas companies regularly propagate the idea that they are major forces of community building and, through economic trickle-down, serve as benefactors whose presence helps preserve the hallmarks of small-town life.

For economically depressed communities whose increasingly tenuous futures depend on agriculture, such rhetoric promises not only the return of stability and a sense of hope for the future, but also renewed importance: given the United States' reliance on imported oil, rural communities that welcome natural gas extraction become seen as fighters on the frontlines, preventing America from becoming too reliant on other nations' resources and thus subject to extortion by foreign powers. As Arlie Hochschild argues, Donald Trump's movement to 'Make America Great Again,' a nostalgic appeal to a now-gone but still-recoverable past, evokes a shared sense of lost prosperity—especially that historically enjoyed by white men working as manual laborers. As these men struggle to find a sense of dignity, purpose, or meaning in labor—a situation exacerbated as jobs increasingly move off-shore and extractive industries wane—patriotism has come to serve as a new foundation for a specifically white, working-class identity. Hochschild further observes that '[such men] are starved for a sense of heroism....Their source of heroism, of status, is humming; it's fragile' (qtd. in Khazan). The figure of the patriot, then, connects resource extraction to this now-recoverable sense of heroism and significance, the source of which is the fulfillment of one's patriotic duty to protect the sovereignty and well-being of the nation.

In addition to appealing to white, working-class men's feelings of irrelevance or disenfranchisement, fracking companies also aim to capitalize on rural communities' long histories of resource

extraction, promising the return of familiar, respected, and meaningful jobs. As Jessica L. Rich notes, such propaganda 'romanticizes labor identities...binding people and place to extraction and erasing alternative possibilities for working, living, and being without fossil fuel industries' (292). In seeking to forge a bond between workers' identities and the labor of extraction, corporations are ultimately trying to position resource extraction as an integral, inextricable part of the working-class imaginary. Here, Rich adopts the term as defined by Dilip P. Goankar, using it to describe the 'symbolic and material practices that build social life, 'the means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world'' (qtd. in Rich 293).

As an example of this particular rhetorical strategy, Jessica L. Rich cites Range Resource's televised advertising campaign 'Drilling is Just the Beginning.' Each of its eight commercials feature the same narrator, who always addresses the audience using plural first-person pronouns. Such deictic language situates the speaker among the working-class communities that the advertisements target and also works to position the natural gas company such that it 'enters the narrative as a paternal figure' (299). One especially notable commercial, titled 'Hockey,' opens with a father and his children playing street hockey. The narrator then observes, 'Children never seem to run out of energy. At Range Resources, we're working hard so that our nation can say the same.' Moments later, a car passes and briefly disrupts the game. As the camera cuts to a view of the boys from within the vehicle, the narrator makes a final remark: 'Natural gas drilling here is helping America become less dependent on foreign oil, and with that, comes a little piece of freedom we can pass along to our kids' (qtd. in Rich 299). The use of 'our' in this instance explicitly inserts the company within a generational, reproductive narrative in which the drillers serve as protectors and enablers of the nuclear family, its futurity, and the patriotic ideals to which this family structure is yoked. By extension, corporations ensure the futurity of the larger community, fostering and nurturing a new generation of citizens and laborers who can go on to enjoy liberty and prosperity while adhering to and protecting corporate values.

A company's paternal role is also reflected in and complemented by its supposed position as a 'neighbor,' a rhetorical figure almost invariably evoked when drilling is alleged to have caused environmental contamination or otherwise negatively impacted an area. As detailed in the widely influential film *Gasland* (Josh Fox, 2010), Colorado residents Ameer and Jesse Ellsworth were provided with drinking water after their well became tainted—likely by the fracking done nearby. Noble Energy, Inc., which drilled and fractured the gas wells, did not frame their response as recompense, but rather provided the couple with water in the interest of being a 'good neighbor' (26:12). Similar rhetoric was used following the Chesapeake Energy ATGAS Blowout, during which over 10,000 gallons of flowback were discharged from a well in Bradford, Pennsylvania, on April 11th, 2011. After the water quality in a nearby residen-

tial well deteriorated, the company spent \$25,000 to seal a fracture in the well and install a reverse osmosis filtration system for those affected. Denying any complicity in the affair during a subsequent press conference, Stephanie Timmermeyer of Chesapeake Energy described the company's actions as undertaken merely 'to be a good neighbor' ('Chesapeake Energy').

The use of this language occurs not only when companies are paying lip service in the interest of public relations, but also appears in official industry literature. For example, the American Petroleum Institute issued 'Bulletin 100-3' in July of 2014, laying out best practices (or 'Community Engagement Guidelines') in accordance with the industry's 'commitment to being a good neighbor throughout the full project life cycle' (American Petroleum Institute). Besides situating companies such that they appear to have a vested interest in the wellbeing of a community, this move also helps to discourage particular forms of redress. In 2012, for instance, when Glacier Sands was denied a mining permit in Buffalo County, the company's attorney lamented the decision and expressed that '[i]t is Glacier's hope to resolve this matter voluntarily without the need for litigation, which should always be a last resort between neighbors and friends' (qtd. in Pearson 149).

Despite the claims that they lay to neighborliness, much of the corporations' day-to-day work consists of undermining the very social structures of which they assert they are a part. As Melissa Troutman details in the documentary film *Triple Divide [Redacted]* (Joshua Pribanic and Melissa Troutman, 2013), gas companies pressure potential leaseholders into signing contracts by fostering a sense of competition among residents. It is true, in fact, that a landowner's ability to reap the financial benefits of natural gas drilling can easily be threatened by those living nearby. If landholders adjacent to unleased land sign contracts, the gas under a dissenter's property can be extracted anyway. Consequently, there is strong incentive for one to sign as soon as possible so as to avoid forfeiting the benefits others might acquire first. In acting in this fashion, gas companies exploit two legal principles for their own gain: the 'rule of capture' and 'forced pooling,' both of which allow corporations to circumvent conventional property rights and particular American ideals of land ownership.

The 'rule of capture' is a legal principle by which a landholder may claim ownership of a given natural resource, specifically the category known as *ferae naturae*. This term refers to those resources, whether living or not, that travel freely and do not respect the boundaries of privately-held property (Robertson). It is insufficient that *ferae naturae* merely be present or pursued for a landowner to claim them; rather, as the rule of capture specifies, the resources must be contained or held in custody. Given that oil, gas, and similar energy sources have an 'often-migratory nature'—in order words, they move of their own accord—they, too, are classified as *ferae naturae* and are subject to this specific principle. Prior legal cases have not specified whether the movement of fossil fuels must be naturally occurring or may be artificially induced, however. Drilling

companies have capitalized on this omission, and as of this writing, it is currently legal to extract gas from beneath unleased property by inducing its flow. Even if such practices were to be outlawed, it is prohibitively expensive—if it is possible at all—to image, trace, and document the induced flow of gas deep underground in order to mount a legal case.

Though companies can extract gas from underneath unleased land, doing so is often not necessary. Current laws in the United States provide few protections for dissenting landowners, and someone unwilling to lease their land might be forced to allowing drilling on their property via 'mandatory pooling.'² Joseph Todd, a resident of Big Flatts, New York, and a landowner whose half-acre property was integrated into a drilling unit against his wishes, describes the principle as 'eminent domain for gas drillers' (qtd. in Baca). In fact, very little property must be secured before a corporation can force dissenters into a pool and expand its operations. In New York (which currently has a moratorium on fracking), only 60% of the land needed for drilling must be leased before the state will consider a petition for mandatory pooling. In Virginia, a mere 25% must be leased before a permit may be granted (Baca). As of this writing, 39 states have laws allowing companies to force landowners into signing leases.

Despite incessantly asserting that they are good neighbors, a conspicuous tension emerges between corporations' rhetoric and actions. In capitalizing on the figure of the neighbor, the natural gas industry destabilizes and disrupts a specifically American conception of what a 'neighbor' is even as it lays claim to this role. Given the figure's rhetorical power and ubiquity in corporate discourse, it is worth pausing for a moment to explore 'the neighbor' in more depth. At its simplest, the neighbor is a member of a neighborhood, which Amie M. Schuck and Dennis P. Rosenbaum define as follows:

Neighborhood is generally defined spatially as a specific geographic area and functionally as a set of social networks. Neighborhoods, then, are the spatial units in which face-to-face social interactions occur—the personal settings and situations where residents seek to realize common values, socialize youth, and maintain effective social control. (62)

Neighborhoods as spaces and collective social units espouse 'a common understanding of identity, a set of interaction patterns, and a sense of belonging' and inspire 'neighboring behavior, in which people care for one another and protect each other from harm' (67). In the context of Dryden, as I will discuss, neighbors are specifically property-owning figures who participate in town life and also live in close proximity to each other.

The sheer significance of the figure's meaning and impact is the product of the United States' idiosyncratic culture of property ownership and its historical links to American political ideals. Since the nation's inception, private property has been figured as 'cen-

tral to democratic political structures' (Jacobs 53). As Harvey M. Jacobs notes, the United States began forming while Europe was still operating under feudal principles. There, land was largely held by an elite ruling class, and the average person's prospects of owning property were slim to none. In comparison, 'America offered an alternative. It was a place where any white male immigrant could get ownership of land and, with that land as capital, make a future for himself' (54). This ideal reaches its apotheosis in Thomas Jefferson's glorification of the figure of the yeoman farmer, which for him 'linked the individual's right to own and control property with the very existence and viability of democracy' (54). In possessing his own land, a farmer could be self-sufficient, indebted to or reliant on no one else, and thus able to think and act freely. Consequently, Jefferson believed that the yeoman farmer was the ideal democratic subject and an integral part of the American political project.

Following the end of the United States' westward expansion in the 1890s³, federal policy shifted its primary focus from land acquisition to resource management. This change eventually led to a 'literal explosion of laws, policies, and regulations at the national, state, and local levels that affected private property,' including a vast number of laws protecting air and water from pollution. The growing interference of the state fostered the 'so-called property rights movement,' which, in following a conservative interpretation of the founders' principles, asserts that '[t]hrough ownership and control of property, the owner has the material conditions that allow him to be literally free.' Extending Jefferson's figure of the yeoman farmer, such groups argue that '[w]ithout the availability of property, liberty and democracy in the American configuration are not feasible.' Yet, as Jacobs notes, 'legislatures and the Court seem to continuously affirm the rights of government over the property rights of individuals' (59). Such a shift, then, would seem to create rifts and tensions in a particularly American culture of property ownership and the privileges associated therewith.

Given the incompatibility of the interests of corporations, states, and private citizens, the erosion of a specifically American ideal of property ownership, the incursion of mining and drilling interests into vulnerable communities, and the manipulation of residents through coercive leasing practices, what is the status of neighborliness under such conditions? Has the figure of the neighbor been exposed as a tired and fantastical component of the equally fantastical American Dream, a romanticized ideal of community based on the precondition of contiguous property ownership? Given that the possession of property is the foundation of this particular relational form, what other types of connection are precluded, and how does the 'neighbor' inherently exclude—especially given the settler-colonial state's theft and ongoing appropriation of Indigenous lands? In pursuit of these questions, I examine the efforts of organizers in Dryden, New York, and 'Dryden – The Small Town that Changed the Fracking Game,' the sole documentary film that details the work of the activists who made a de facto ban on fracking a reality.

The short film, produced by the nonprofit environmentalist law group Earthjustice, consists primarily of interviews with the residents who spearheaded a petition drive. After concerted efforts to educate other members of the community about the environmental risks posed by fracking and collect their signatures, the organizers successfully persuaded their local representatives to adopt a novel legal strategy: the town council voted unanimously to use zoning laws to prohibit drilling on leased land, effectively outlawing fracking within town limits. While seemingly an event only of local importance, Dryden came to national attention for being the first community to discover a way of imposing a de facto ban despite the fact that towns lack the authority to regulate an industry. In addition to setting a legal precedent that could empower small communities across the United States, the events that occurred in Dryden warrant closer examination for a second, equally important reason: in conducting their campaign to inform and mobilize their fellow residents, the town's activists also discovered an important avenue for thinking through and out of corporations' propaganda. The organizers (re)deployed the figure of the neighbor, a trope regularly evoked throughout the documentary and ever-present at the heart of their effort to foster a sense of solidarity among their fellow citizens. In this particular instance, the figure's rhetorical force works in service of inspiring greater participation—and, consequently, greater faith—in extant democratic institutions, those same political bodies that widely cited documentaries like *Gasland* depict as ubiquitously corrupt or corruptible.

The film opens with an interview with resident Marie McRae, who recounts how she was manipulated into signing a lease. While standing out in the middle of her field, she declares, 'I never get tired of looking at this valley. It took me about 10 years to stop having the hair raise on my arm when I came over the hill and would catch sight of the farm. It's just so gorgeous. And this is what we'd lose, of course' (0:11-0:33). After repeated in-person visits, letters, and phone calls, the unnamed company's representative resorted to outright coercion. He warned McRae that all of her neighbors had signed leases, and if she did not follow suit, the company could—and would—proceed to drill regardless. Worn down and intimidated, McRae finally signed a contract, only to regret her decision after discovering how little she really knew. 'Dryden' fades from black to a shot of the area's striking fall foliage, cuts away to an American flag mounted above a local home's porch and waving gently in a light breeze, cuts away again to a cat sitting on a welcome mat outside of the house just a moment before the animal playfully bounds away, and finally settles on West Main Street. In short, the camera highlights what McRae, struggling to hold back tears at the end of her interview, could not bring herself to name: the various hallmarks of peaceful and quaint small-town life that she realizes she has endangered, perhaps irrevocably.

The film then proceeds to catalog the possible consequences of natural gas drilling in the area. The narrator declares: '[Fracking] also produces pollution, industrial explosions, earthquakes, and

changed communities' (2:11-2:19). As he finishes his sentence, the image of a man gesturing toward a cracked wall dissolves into another shot of West Main Street in Dryden. The camera looks down the street from the sidewalk, a row of businesses visible on the right, a flapping 'Open' flag waving on the left, and the United Methodist Church visible in the distance. This shot then dissolves into a close-up shot of Deborah and Joanne Cipolla-Dennis's clasped hands, their wedding rings visible. For a brief moment, the flag, church, shops, and hands overlap as the film presents a poignant collage of life in Dryden and, by extension, small towns more generally: independent businesses, religion and its associated moral sensibilities, committed and conventional relationships (including normative gay relationships, at least here), family, natural splendor, and stability. The implied juxtaposition is with urban life and its supposed trappings: large business enterprises, fast-paced daily life, instability, hedonism, pollution, and self-centeredness.

In featuring Deborah and Joanne so conspicuously, the families threatened include more than just the conventional heterosexual nuclear family; rather, the rural space that enabled a childless queer couple to (literally) make a home stands in danger of ruination. In this instance, the small-town way of life and the independent businesses that line West Main Street signify something different, something more deeply tied to a particularly American vision of democracy, self-realization, and independence. The yeoman farmer readily comes to mind, upon whom it has been suggested that America's democracy depends. Given the independence that accompanies landownership and the self-actualization it enables, it comes as little surprise that the efficacy of existing political structures—and the faith that residents ought to put in them—serve as major focuses of the documentary as it proceeds.

In response to the industry's incursion, the town engaged in grassroots organizing, here made uniquely effective by the features of small-town life. Taking advantage of their social connections and the tightly-knit nature of the community, the residents ran a successful petition drive. The process fomented neighborly solidarity and inspired the mobilization of a significant number of residents, as described by Marie McRae: 'We went door-to-door, talking to our neighbors, talking to people we'd never met' (6:10-6:16). At the heart of the operation was an unlikely figure: Martha Ferger, an 88-year-old retired scientist. As Deborah Cipolla-Dennis remarks, '[S]he knows everybody! What she did was sit at her table with the phone and called everybody she knew and told them they had to come to her house and sign [our] petition. And it's amazing! She got the most number of signatures' (6:25-6:39). When the residents finally presented their petition to the town council, one out of every ten people in Dryden had signed. The residents' success in their endeavor was ultimately the product of their faith in representative government and the efficacy of the democratic process. Here, their efforts were not even remotely disruptive—unlike, say, direct action—but rather took the form of an appeal to the incumbent town leaders, the people who ultimately hold the authority to make a

'democratic' decision.

Such faith in elected leadership contrasts sharply with the doubt, fearmongering, and paranoia of earlier documentaries like *Gasland*, which are rife with distrust and suspicion of governmental organizations running the gamut from the Environmental Protection Agency to Congress in its entirety. The opening image of Fox's film, for example, is a picture of Dick Cheney, who Fox goes on to accuse of playing a pivotal role in allowing lobbyists to ingratiate themselves with lawmakers and exert undue influence. Consequently, convenient legal loopholes freed natural gas companies from the restrictive environmental protections put in place throughout the 1970s. The federal government was left powerless to act and corrupted by deep ties to the industry it ought to be regulating. Instead of adopting a similarly suspicious mode, 'Dryden' instead focuses on a renewed belief in the American Dream. Joanne initially describes the gas company as intimidating and coercive: '[T]he industry kept telling us, "We have the power. You have none. We are coming. Get out of the way, or leave"' (3:53-3:59). Yet, when reflecting on their successful petition, McRae remarks that 'My voice by itself carries very little weight, but when I join my voice with my immediate neighbors, with the larger community that I live in, we all—together—have a voice that's loud enough for our elected officials to hear' (8:50-9:13). Joanne follows McRae's remarks with a concluding sentiment that epitomizes the central theme of the short film: 'Every community across this nation can do exactly what Dryden did. You have to care about each other. That is the American Dream, right? Yeah. That's the American Dream. You count on your neighbor' (9:14-9:29).

The underground breaking of rock finds its above-ground analog in the landman, who works to fracture a community, pitting neighbor against neighbor, so that natural gas companies can expand their operations and increase their profits. Yet, the very discursive figures that such corporations deploy also come to serve as sites of resistance. As seen in Dryden, the neighbor becomes a kind of leveling figure: to have a neighbor means that one is also a neighbor. A citizen's accountability does not end at their property lines; rather, the residents of Dryden developed a sense of collective responsibility, understanding that they all depend on the wellbeing of their surrounding environment. The danger of place-loss and its effects on community compel new understandings of the relationship between the individual and the whole, imbuing such figures as the neighbor with renewed possibility. Despite corporations' attempts to appropriate and exploit 'the neighbor,' the residents of Dryden are able to transform it into a site from which new forms of sociality and belonging might emerge.

Even so, I also wish to think critically about the ramifications of the deployment of such figures and social forms. As an inherently exclusive formation, community necessitates a consideration of what strikes me as a glaring omission in the film: those residents who might have supported fracking and the rationale for their position—especially in light of the ever-increasing precarity faced by

small farming operations. Furthermore, the activists depicted are overwhelmingly white women, calling into question why the work of organizing and community-building is seemingly the purview of a specific gendered demographic. Though a leveling figure, 'the neighbor' does not inherently bring about an equitable distribution of the labor. Above all, however, I wish to highlight that the neighbor is specifically a property-holding figure, one also associated with white flight, the rise of the suburbs, and the past and present exclusivity of neighborhoods along class and racial lines.

In this way, the figure serves to illuminate the specific contours of the debate around fracking, revealing the power and limits of social networks in mobilizing rural communities. Even as the neighbor is able to generate and appeal to a sense of collectivity, forging 'a common understanding of identity...and a sense of belonging' (Schuck and Rosenbaum 67), it does so in order to reinforce residents' faith in the government's current institutions. The neighbor ultimately works to promote the defining values of American democracy, encouraging and even compelling participation in established government as *the* mode of redress for incursions by corpo-

rate interests. In doing so, the figure also illuminates the bounds of what the current activist discourse imagines to be possible: as Fredric Jameson insightfully observes in *Seeds of Time*, 'It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations' (xii). Despite its relationship to property and ownership, I argue that the neighbor still serves as an important waypoint in considering the relationship between crises of capital and community and is a figure that works to mediate between the relational dynamics at play on the level of the local, national, and international. The events in Dryden and the documentary film produced about them provide an illustrative example of the potentialities inherent in reimagining forms of community and repurposing discursive figures. Though it may not illuminate an alternative to the profit-driven economic system at the heart of the crisis of resource extraction, the neighbor still provides a way of thinking through and out of the gridlock in which the discourse around fracking is currently stuck.

NOTES

¹In addition to winning the Special Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 2010, it was also nominated for four Primetime Emmy awards, receiving one. The film cemented Fox's place as a major environmental activist and brought national attention to the issue of fracking. Robert Koehler of *Variety* went so far as to declare that "Gasland" may become to the dangers of natural gas drilling what "Silent Spring" was to DDT" (Koehler).

²There is, however, a significant environmental benefit to the practice of mandatory pooling. Hydraulic fracturing's use of unconventional (horizontal) drilling enables multiple wells to be drilled from a single site—often four to six. Conventional drilling, i.e. drilling done perpendicularly to the earth's surface, limits any given pad to a single well. Consequently, a new pad must be built for each well. This is not only costly but also incurs widespread environmental damage. Mandatory pooling, then, reduces the density of well pads, keeps operating costs to a minimum, and mitigates environmental impact.

³For more information, see historian Frederick J. Turner's seminal essay, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' for an analysis of the 1890 census data and his thesis about the importance of the frontier to American democracy.

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