Place and Place-based Planning

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Abstract

Place-related concepts are factors in public involvement, conflict, recreation management, recreation displacement, landscape planning and design. This has captured the attention of researchers and managers. We posit that planning and management of public lands requires an understanding of what it is about the lands that people value and care about. In this paper we discuss multiple uses of the term "place" and the various place-related concepts that have emerged, and how these concepts are used to inform public land planning and management.

Interest in Place

Place-related concepts are factors in public involvement, conflict, recreation management, recreation displacement, landscape planning, and design. This has captured the attention of researchers and managers. The concepts of sense of place, attachment to place, place meanings, place dependence, place identity, and place-based planning are appearing more frequently in academic literature, agency publications, and the popular press. Place-oriented approaches to natural resource and community issues are receiving more attention from academics, policymakers, citizens, and resource managers. In academia, place is a topic in landscape architecture, environmental ethics, environmental psychology, rural sociology, anthropology, human geography, and the humanities.

Academic and agency researchers and resource managers are using various methods to explore the meanings, experiences, and actions that enable us to understand place and the relations between people and their environments. There is a sizable literature on place and related concepts so we will not spend much time defining them in this paper. Farnum et al. (2005) review the literature on sense of place in recreation and tourism, and an edited collection of papers on place-related concepts applied in recreation and tourism studies (Kruger et al. (in press)) is in process.

At a basic level, place concepts generally recognize that understanding emotional ties and symbolic meanings of environments is critical to understanding the implications of environmental change and why conflicts over resource management become so contentious (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995, Greider and Garkovich 1994, Kemmis 1990, Krannich et al. 1994). Also embedded in these ideas is the recognition that traditional market-based decision frameworks (Galliano and Loeffler 1999) and western approaches to science (Entrikin 1991; Orr 1992; Sagoff 1992a,b) have led to an under-representation of certain meanings and values that people often associate with nature, place, or

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landscape (Bengston 1994, Wilkinson 1992, Williams and Patterson, 1996). Economic values and narrowly defined empirical variables have been counted and measured while other, less tangible values and meanings have been discounted or disregarded as non-empirical.

Slowly planning processes are recognizing the importance of meanings and values people ascribe to places and the emotions, experiences, benefits, and satisfaction people experience in places (Galliano and Loeffler 1999). Place-based planning processes provide a venue for managers to interact with people who live, work, and play in a place and care about it. This is important because planning in itself is a place-making or meaning-creating process (Galliano and Loeffler 1999, Williams and Patterson 1999, 1996). Place-based planning that engages the public enables an understanding of what Clarke (1971, quoted in Galiano and Loeffler 1999) calls "the interactive unity of people and place."

Multiple Uses of the Term "Place"

Place is used three ways in social science (Agnew and Duncan 1989). As *location*, place can mean "the spatial distribution of social and economic activities" that results from different costs of doing business in different places (Agnew and Duncan 1989: 2). Place as *locale*, on the other hand, provides the setting or backdrop for everyday activity. *Sense of place*, the third definition, involves individual or group identification with a place that comes from interacting with it. These conceptions demonstrate the multidimensionality of place but have also led to confusion. Place, according to Agnew and Duncan (1989) simultaneously encompasses all three aspects; however, the emergence of place as a social science topic reflects increasing recognition of the importance of this sense of place dimension.

The multiple uses of the word have led to two distinct orientations to sense of place. Landscape architects often view sense of place as inherent in a place—a quality of the landscape that can be physically identified and mapped by a trained observer, what the Forest Service Scenery Management System refers to as *landscape character*. In contrast, a social-experiential orientation emphasizes meanings that are created as people interact with a place and with each other in a place, developing connections to the place. These meanings are not inherent in the landscape but are emergent. They are said to be *socially constructed* through experience. Some researchers suggest that this experience need not be direct, but can be developed vicariously, asserting that a sense of place can exist for places a person has never visited but cares about.

In line with Agnew and Duncan's definition for sense of place, Pred (1984) views place as a *social process* of transforming and appropriating nature and space, simultaneous with and inseparable from the transformation and reproduction of society. Thus place is not something "out there" separate from, or that can be separated from, the people who create and define it through their day-to-day experiences. Despite common conceptions to the contrary, places are always changing and evolving and have multiple and often conflicting meanings.

In addition to sense of place, people sometimes talk about "special places." The most important aspect of the "specialness" of places is a holistic character that involves past experience and social and cultural meanings identified with the place such that the place "elicits an appreciation and attachment beyond the observable features of the landscape" Petrich (1984: 67). Thus, to know or understand place requires us to look at place from a perspective that can illuminate meaning and action. Meanings can be difficult to detect (they cannot be identified and counted like trees or fish); however, meanings expressed through enactment and engagement are observable and can be accounted for using "interpretive" methodologies,

which elicit and analyze narratives (stories and histories) about a place.

Place Meanings

In natural resource management, the place concept is often used to bring greater recognition to certain (usually intangible) kinds of place meanings variously described as social, cultural, symbolic, historical, emotional, and even spiritual. But it is important to note that traditional resource assessments have always attempted to identify and map potential uses and meanings of a landscape. The emergence of the place concept is mainly about expanding what counts as legitimate meanings of a place or resource beyond its tangible uses. The difference in a place approach is that meanings are not limited to widely recognized potential uses of a resource. They also characterize something of the relationship between the place and the people who use, occupy, or otherwise care about it. In contrast to the resource-utility approach, the notion of relationship implies past experience or history with the site as well as personal or group connectivity or identification with the place.

As managers, if we think of our traditional tasks of inventorying as efforts to identify and map landscape meanings, the place perspective argues for a wider conception of meaning. Resource maps, in effect, describe how certain kinds of meaning are spatially distributed. Natural resource management has successfully mapped certain tangible forms of meaning (e.g., commodity and amenity uses). We have inventory tools such as the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and the Scenery Management System to capture some of these meanings. But as intangible (e.g., cultural, symbolic, and spiritual) meanings are recognized within ecological/systems approaches to resource management, the scope of resource mapping needs to be similarly expanded.

Although in theory, meaning can be mapped like other spatial properties, there are at least two problems identifying and mapping intangible meanings. First, by definition, intangible meanings leave few if any, physical indicators, behavioral evidence, or cultural markers in the landscape to tell us they exist. Second, places typically do not have a single set of meanings held by everyone. Thus, for managers to identify the full range of meanings requires not only an expanded set of inventory techniques capable of identifying intangible meanings, but these techniques must also be sensitive to the social or group differences in identification with these meanings.

As a relational concept, meaning can be likened to stories about places rather than physical properties of places. The job of the resource manager is to learn these stories and to recognize when different groups of people have different and sometimes conflicting stories. Relatively passive approaches to gathering these stories includes identifying narratives, documents, and histories about a place or consulting key informants including long-time managers. More active approaches include engaging the public in identifying, constructing, and negotiating their various stories though various forms of collaborative planning (Farnum and Kruger, n.d.) or civic science (Kruger and Shannon 2000).

Place-based Planning

"Knowledge of places having high value to humans as well as an understanding of the significant meanings and images that places have to individuals within a community should allow planners, managers, and decisionmakers to [develop management guidelines] that will maintain the salient characteristics of those places" (Galiano and Loeffler 1999: 9). This is the goal of place-based planning. Place-based planning is a grassroots movement founded on the belief that understanding the identity, meanings, and images of places will

help design management actions and predict the effects of management alternatives on the people who use and care about a place. There are many methods, orientations, experiences, and levels of complexity of processes. Most place-based planning activities are participatory and collaborative, although not always.

Managers and scientists are recognizing the importance of understanding the attachments people have to places that are special to them and are designing ways to incorporate this knowledge into resource planning and management. This is important because people create "bonds with a locale based on a sense of place that involves sentiments extending beyond the use value of the land" (Eisenhauer et al. 2000: 438). More attention is being focused on the role of place and how it influences people's recreation and tourism choices and the acceptability of resource management decisions, for example. Researchers and managers are designing ways to map local knowledge and meanings of places and other social and cultural information. Place-based planning recognizes planning as a social process with cultural, social, economic, and political components.

An essential idea behind place-based planning is that caring about places is important and different from caring about resources. There is a difference between valuing a resource (or even what some might call a type of place such as wilderness) and valuing a place that might contain that resource or has a certain classification (e.g., wilderness). To value the wilderness resource or the collection of national parks is to value an ideal. To value the class of places that possess wilderness qualities is similarly to value certain fungible qualities – qualities that can be found in multiple locations with one substituting for another. But to value Yellowstone National Park or the Bob Marshall Wilderness is to value the one and only instance. Place-based planning brings to bear the meanings, values, and attachments associated with that specific piece of ground, in addition to any meaning it might have as a kind of place or container of a resource. Traditional forest planning was relatively disinterested in the forest as a place; it was mostly structured to recognize and assign meaning and value to its fungible resource properties.

Place-based planning is an opportunity to do the following:

- Empower community members and build community.
- Engage the community in inventory activities.
- Build relationships and trust; regain credibility.
- Engage in mutual learning.
- Explain policies and rationale.
- Raise awareness of and mitigate conflict.
- Plan holistically.
- Incorporate a broader range of meanings into planning.

Although there are multiple approaches, place-based planning includes mapping, sometimes by staff and sometimes collectively with the community. It also often involves a visioning process. Place-based planning is "an effort to create a more equitable, democratic way of defining, expressing, and valuing places" (Cheng et al. 2003: 101). It is seen as a way to build relationships and share power. A "one-size-fits-all" template does not work because the process recognizes the uniqueness of each landscape and situation.

Research has focused on shared meanings and using place-based approaches to achieve common ground, but there can be multiple and conflicting meanings and many senses of place for the same place. Knowledge of the politics of place can help managers understand natural resource conflict and better evaluate potential effectiveness of decision-making processes (Cheng et al. 2003). Understanding contested meanings of place is important for managers because sense of place and place meanings are often connected to attitudes and expectations about appropriate and inappropriate management or use. Paying

attention to both shared and contested meanings may lead to more productive dialog.

Research Needs

Tools, processes, and conceptual frameworks are needed that allow managers to access, assess, inventory, and monitor sociocultural meanings of places and incorporate socially relevant meanings into social inquiry and planning processes. These new tools would supplement current approaches, accommodating participation by diverse interests and inclusion and integration of a variety of types of knowledge. They would provide a venue for expressing and negotiating meanings. Managers are leading the way in exploring a variety of processes, activities, and forums to access meanings people hold for places. We lack an understanding of place-based processes. What processes work in what situations and why?

Planning and managing public lands requires understanding what it is about the lands that people value and care about. The following are two of the questions that have not received adequate attention: How can managers consider place attachment and place meanings when making management decisions and when conducting large scale planning efforts for an entire system of places such as a national forest, national or metropolitan park? What processes work at different geographic scales?

Additional research is also needed to further understanding of place attachment, factors that influence attachments, and how attachments influence attitudes toward land management and participation in planning processes. Understanding the connections between quality of life, sense of place, place attachment, and satisfaction would also help managers cope with the high levels of human migration to high amenity areas near public lands including forests, parks, and other protected areas.

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