Social Construction of Arctic Wilderness: Place Meanings, Value Pluralism, and Globalization

Daniel R. Williams

Abstract—This paper offers a social constructionist approach to examining the nature and dynamics of arctic wilderness meanings and values. Viewing wilderness as a socially constructed place responds to growing critiques of modern "Enlightenment" views of nature and society in three ways examined here. First, wilderness landscapes are seen as geographically organized and socially constructed into places that carry a plurality of meanings. A spatially rich understanding of landscape meanings goes beyond instrumental or utilitarian meanings of nature to legitimize a broader and more intangible array of landscape meanings. Second, resource management practice, historically anchored in resource utilitarianism, is poorly equipped to address and adjudicate among competing meanings and values of places because it employs a monistic (economic) theory of valuation. A post-Enlightenment perspective for valuing environmental goods conceptualizes valuation as a social-spatial and communicative process for the production and distribution of goods. Such a process does not simply reflect existing individual values, but potentially creates and improves public values. Third, the paper builds on geographic and social theory to discuss the ways in which conflicts over meaning and value of wilderness are significant consequences of globalization. Globalization can be understood, in part, as a process in which market norms are increasingly used to regulate more and more social interactions that previously were produced and distributed by nonmarket means. This paper concludes by arguing that understanding the ways in which wilderness meanings and values are socially constructed and contested is necessary for effective protection and management of wilderness.

Introduction

The purpose of the gathering in Anchorage, Alaska, was to examine the compatibility of divergent, if not competing, values of wilderness and protected landscapes in the Circumpolar North. My approach to this paper is to connect certain themes that have guided my own work—the social construction of place, pluralistic theories of value, and globalization—to the objectives of this international seminar. As I interpret these objectives, this seminar asks four questions:

1. What is our current level of knowledge about what "wilderness" means to a given culture?
2. How do different societies and parts of society value wilderness protection?
3. What are the likely current and future threats to the various meanings and values of wilderness in the arctic?
4. What trends in the arctic region are impacting traditional, ecotourism, and ecological values of wilderness?

My previous work has not been focused on the arctic context enough to offer very specific insights on these questions. Instead, what I hope to provide is some theoretical context and commentary to frame further inquiry. As a first step in framing these questions, I need to say something about how our modern understanding of concepts such as wilderness, nature, culture, and society, and hence how our assumptions about ecological, tourist, and indigenous values, are rooted in Enlightenment thought.

The Enlightenment refers to the emergence of an "age of reason" in European thought that dates to around the beginning of the 18th century and corresponds loosely with the industrialization of Europe. It is associated with a particular orientation toward the world (for example, scientific and human progress), an industrialized and market-oriented economic order, and a nation-state model for political

Daniel R. Williams is a Research Social Scientist, Rocky Mountain Research Station, USDA Forest Service, 2150A Centre Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80526-1981, U.S.A. E-mail: drwilliams@fs.fed.us

institutions and practices in which political legitimacy is based on reason rather than force or tradition (Giddens and Pierson 1998). The Enlightenment thus fostered certain views of nature and society that we often take for granted today. In Enlightenment thought, nature is understood as something mechanical and therefore reducible to a set of "clockwork" parts. The meaning and value of nature is limited to uses and commodities as opposed to essences or, as Max Weber so famously cast it, the effect of modern science is to disenchant the world (see Harrington 1996). Similarly, collective society is conceived as an aggregate of individuals liberated from local ways of life, community mores, and parochial traditions. Individual identities are seen as built around individual expressions of preference and desire.

Much of social and political theory of the late 20th century was prompted by critiques of this Enlightenment legacy. For our purposes, one particularly important critique is the way in which the Enlightenment has marginalized modern notions of space and place (Agnew 1989; Entrikin 1991; Sack 1992). In advancing universal principles over parochial tradition, the world we inherited from the Enlightenment is seemingly placeless (Shields 1991). For example, geographer John Agnew (1989) traces a deeply rooted "eclipse of place" to Enlightenment ideas, emphasizing national scale processes, placeless national society over place-based community, and the detachment of people from places through the commodification of (among other things) land. Similarly, Entrikin (1991) chronicles a decline in the geographic study of place to an apparent homogenization of world culture, a belief that studying particular places is somehow "parochial" and the tendency of the scientific method to seek generalization.

Agnew and Entrikin are in the vanguard of what amounts to a geographic turn in social thought that seeks to "re-place" the world by challenging the Enlightenment's universalizing perspective in the realms of science and epistemology, meaning and culture, and politics and ethics. In the epistemological realm, for example, Enlightenment science gives preference to abstract, universal laws. In contrast, those seeking a "reenchanted" science advocate a more holistic view of phenomena (Harrington 1996). Thus, place represents a kind of holism (similar to ecological science) and a rejection of the mechanical view of the universe. Similarly, in the universalized cultural realm, which tends to elevate society over community, much of the enthusiasm for place comes ironically from both romantic antimodern praise for local community and skeptical postmodern celebration of "local" differences. In the ethical-political realm, Enlightenment ideals emphasize nation states, universal rights, and individual liberty and sovereignty over parochial authority. In a "re-placed" Enlightenment, even global politics and ethics are spatially structured as people find "themselves in geographic proximity and economic interdependence" (Young 1996: 126) and must coexist in shared space even if they don't share much else (Healey 1997).

Modern social and political inquiry, then, has been forged in a contest between optimistic and pessimistic views of the Enlightenment. Those holding the optimistic view see the Enlightenment as progress and express confidence in science and technology and the rational world order it engenders. To the optimists, modernity creates high standards of living, a global economy and culture, and universal moral principles in contrast to retarded local economies and communities mired in narrow parochial interests and oppressive moral conformity. Place, understood as little more than location constituted as bundles of reproducible attributes, allows for more efficient production and consumption. Thus, some see modernity and even postmodernity as liberating identity from the local and parochial, thereby creating opportunity and power for those who have had little voice in the past.

For the critics, the Enlightenment has come up short of its promise of universal emancipation. According to the pessimistic view of Enlightenment, and modernity more generally, there are important virtues in a traditional sense of place and local community. The pursuit of universal principles of truth and justice have come at the expense of local culture, community, and difference. Geographic homogeneity, like other "monocultures," brings social and technological risks. Similarly, with the loss of community and place we lose local variation in meanings and forms (for example, placelessness and mass culture). Thus, what for the optimist is the efficiency of standardization is to the pessimist a bland retail landscape in the form of chain-store malls and freeway culture. While the Enlightenment provides a unifying framework, the modern world that follows in its wake diminishes our capacity

to record feelings and experiences of place and eschews the unique character of each place. The rise of mass culture and geographic mobility homogenize the cultural landscape and weaken attachments to local place.

Achieving compatibility among ecotourism, ecological, and traditional values of wilderness is tantamount to resolving the contradictions inherent in Enlightenment thought. Many in the environmental community, for example, struggle with these contradictions as they want to be at once modern in their enthusiasm for science, strong centralized government, and the search for universal justice, while at the same time antimodern as expressed in their concern for decline of local tradition, marginalization of local and indigenous cultures, and the degradation of ecosystems (Torgerson 1999). These contradictions can be seen in the way proponents of each of these wilderness values have appropriated the idea of wilderness in their desire to constrain modern civilization in some way.

First, recognition of touristic or experiential values of wilderness is exemplified in the early 20th century wilderness movement, which saw wilderness as the crucible of American character. Such a view reflects a romantic critique of Enlightenment treatment of nature. The recreational use of wilderness became a modern ritual for reproducing the character-forming experience wilderness enthusiasts associated with the American Frontier (Nash 1973). Though leaders of the wilderness movement sought limits on the spread of modern civilization, they were perhaps unwitting accomplices in the modern machination to commodify nature. They employed modern modes of thought and governance to protect wild nature by cordoning off pristine pieces into protected status. By emphasizing wilderness as specifically "designated" places for moderns to seek reconciliation with nature, and by putting wilderness on the map as places to escape modern civilization, they tamed nature as surely as the loggers, miners, and road builders.

Second, some have embraced wilderness protection in response to ecological critiques of the Enlightenment tendency to commodify nature. By this reckoning, wilderness is to be valued as an ecological preserve rather than as a character-building playground. But here again we can't escape some contradictions. Ecological arguments for wilderness sometimes have difficulty fitting humans into the landscape (Cronon 1996a) and perpetuate the myth of pristine nature "untrammeled" by humans (Denevan 1992). In both views, playground and preserve, indigenous human influences are frozen in time or eradicated altogether.

This draws attention to a third way in which wilderness is positioned relative to the Enlightenment. For those people who speak of and for traditional and subsistence cultures in the north, there is a desire to set limits on the tendency of modern civilization to annihilate local traditions (Torgerson 1999). Ironically, the effect of wilderness protection, while dehumanizing the landscape, may also constrain modern civilization's tendency to colonize local culture and tradition. Still, definitions and management prescriptions for wilderness, generally motivated by touristic and ecological concerns, sometimes see traditional uses as nonconforming uses or attempt to limit traditional uses to traditional technologies.

Arctic wilderness, it would seem, is very much caught in the contradictions of the Enlightenment, between a universal and particular view of the world. For example: Is wilderness a modern, universal spatial category that can be applied to landscapes throughout the world? Is there some common, trans-Arctic meaning or value to wilderness? Are there universal qualities, meanings, or values we can identify or apply throughout the Arctic region? Or is wilderness the product of a particular cultural construction of nature? Should we focus on what is unique to a particular landscape, whether it is wilderness or not, protected or not? Does or will wilderness advance local (indigenous) meanings of landscapes and places or annihilate them? Does wilderness protection halt the homogenizing forces of modernity and globalization, or is it an extension of this process by homogenizing local places, for example, by marketing their universal properties as exemplars of protected arctic nature?

These broad questions surround the specific question of the compatibility of three major kinds of wilderness value being discussed in this seminar (ecological, touristic, and traditional), and at first blush seem to challenge the wisdom of "making" wilderness, identifying its meanings, and tallying its value. But one can be critical of the Enlightenment without necessarily abandoning the Enlightenment altogether. As Entrikin (1991) argues, we may be able to find some point of view between the

universal and the particular, at once informed by a universal and rational discourse, but also historically and spatially specific. Entrikin reminds us that neither perspective (universal/global nowhere or traditional/local somewhere) provides adequate access to empirical and moral truths. Perhaps we can begin to resolve the divergent values of wilderness from such an epistemological position. With these ideas as a background, let me now address more directly the theme of the seminar with respect to the social construction of place meanings, the pluralistic nature of valuation, and the transformation of meanings and values by the forces of globalization.

Social Construction of Wilderness Places

The same intellectual shifts that have given rise to a geographic turn in social and political thought have advanced a social constructionist view of wilderness (Cronon 1996b; Greider and Garkovich 1994). A constructionist approach to wilderness—anchored in the sociology of knowledge, interpretive sociology, and much of what now passes as postmodern epistemology (Burr 1995)—addresses the historical, cultural, and political processes by which humans seek out, create, and contest specific wilderness meanings and how these meanings, in turn, structure social actions in and with respect to those places. The designation of wilderness landscapes in America is a case in point. The Wilderness Act of 1964 was subject to lengthy social and political negotiations that eventually resulted in a formal legal definition of wilderness. This legal definition, complete with use and management prescriptions, now shapes the way these landscapes are used, experienced, and ultimately modified.

A social constructionist approach to wilderness meaning is a dynamic and twofold process. It involves the interplay between representing or mapping meaning (for example, wilderness assessments and management plans) and managing that landscape guided by this assessment of meaning. This creates a dynamic landscape with meaning and action coevolving over time. Furthermore, the social construction of meaning tends to generate multiple representations of a given landscape. Conflicts are inevitable with multiple communities (for example, environmentalists, tourists, and indigenous people) offering multiple representations of a single place. And even if society somehow manages to successfully negotiate among these competing conceptions, there are few guarantees that places will conform to the negotiated image as large-scale environmental changes precipitated from afar (for example, oil spills and wildfire) alter the landscape in unanticipated ways. Social constructionism doesn't mean humans necessarily get their way.

The notion that landscapes, including wilderness, are socially produced suggests that their meaning is anchored in history and culture and not simply some enduring, objective, or visible properties. The point is not to deny the existence of a hard reality "out there," but to recognize that the meaning of that reality is continuously created and recreated through social interactions and practices. For example, the frontier and pioneer history of the United States is critical for understanding the meaning and management of public forests, wilderness, and National Parks. Early American settlers "constructed" a pristine landscape empty of civilization. They settled a vast and "unoccupied" continent that, from Anglo-European eyes, was initially seen as devoid of meaning apart from the instrumental uses that could be extracted from it. The specific meaning of any particular place was, in effect, very thin to start with. Landscapes were seen as mere "resources," which lacked any historical or cultural significance until Europeans occupied it. Slowly, the American landscape has taken on more and more cultural and symbolic meanings. Sparked by romantic visionaries such as Thoreau and Muir, the wilderness and the frontier began to symbolically represent American civilization (and the civilizing of a primeval landscape). Recreational use of wilderness and nature became a ritual for reproducing the frontier experience and what was taken to be American character.

In the absence of a long history of making places, Americans have great difficulty legitimating emotional, symbolic, or sacred meanings, and instead tend to seek a "rational" basis for resource allocations (Williams 2000). The history of public resource management is one of dividing up the landscape into tracts for various uses. Initially, this was largely a laissez faire process of disposal of the public land to private, utilitarian uses. For those remaining lands that were not transferred to private ownership, Americans developed highly bureaucratic and rational processes

of allocating specific uses to specific tracts of land. Lacking deeper historical and cultural meanings, Americans were free to employ criteria of utilitarian efficiency to guide land use allocations. Only after extensive settlement of the land, with more and more of the land cultivated and civilized, could they imagine a symbolic value to "preserving" as opposed to "using" the land. As they began to associate the frontier with the American character and experience, portions of the land began to take on symbolic value as wilderness. Thus, only as they created history could they sanctify places in the American landscape, and even then they often sought a more utilitarian reason for such actions.

Now these Anglo-European constructions of wilderness are further challenged by any number of groups, including indigenous people (Callicott and Nelson 1998). On the one hand, this romantic image of wilderness has at times been an excuse for the forced removal of indigenous people. On the other hand, environmentalists have often appealed to a presumed common ground of ecocentrism with indigenous people. But as Torgerson (1999) argues, western environmentalists have tended to assimilate indigenous senses of place into an ecocentric view when, in fact, much about indigenous sense of place remains uncertain and unknown to them. Such views ignore the unique relations to places embodied in indigenous traditions, ways of knowing, subsistence production, and locus of identity (Kirsch 2001). Still for Torgerson (1999) the paradox of a social constructionist view of wilderness is that while it opens a discourse on the meaning of wilderness to new voices, it also means that indigenous people find themselves offering public arguments in defense of their place that do no necessarily reflect the value that place holds for them.

Social constructionism attempts to overcome the Enlightenment tendency to reduce all meaning to instrumental or utilitarian relations between human needs and environmental properties. From a social construction perspective, landscapes embody a plurality of socially constructed systems of meaning; the totality of place meaning cannot be reduced to any single form. Different groups may emphasize different meanings, and following an earlier point, these tend to evolve over time as people create history and symbolic meaning within that landscape. But much of the difficulty for resource management has been that the more tangible meanings and values have been easier to represent in resource assessments and inventories, and in the process the more subjective, diverse, and contentious cultural and symbolic meanings have been ignored.

The Enlightenment's narrowing influence on science and reason also impacts how meaning is perceived and understood. An Enlightenment view of science, for example, involves the abstraction of a point of view from somewhere (the place of everyday experience) to a more remote, public, and distant point of view that is virtually nowhere (Sack 1992, 1997). The process of abstraction, though profoundly useful in many cases, has two undesirable consequences that are highly relevant to examining the meanings of wilderness areas (Williams and Patterson 1996). First, abstraction is a decontextualizing process that results in a loss of local or particular meanings. The indigenous experience or meaning of a wilderness area is marginalized in the universalizing discourse of "wilderness." This is certainly an issue in the Arctic, but it occurs whenever a landscape is "classified" as belonging to some "category." Methods of knowing that minimize or obscure important symbolic or emotional meanings of objects, events, or places, no matter how scientific they might be, are unlikely to be well received by those who sense the loss.

Second, abstraction is a process of moving from the highly subjective but integrated experience of place, to the more public, external, and objective experience that tends to fragment knowledge along disciplinary and theoretical lines. Wilderness management has been overburdened with the abstract technical lenses of nowhere— microeconomics, management science, and linear programming. To counteract the narrowing effect of scientific abstraction, Entrikin (1991) suggests seeking points of view between somewhere and nowhere, which he describes as an epistemological position of "betweenness"—informed by scientific discourse, but also historically and spatially specific.

To summarize, wilderness in the Arctic or any other place, carries a variety of meanings to various individuals, groups, and cultures. These meanings may be generated from both a local (particular, somewhere) and universal (abstract, nowhere) perspective. Any particular tract of land we might call wilderness may be home to some "local" people, an exotic humanless "other" to foreigners and tourists, or a

genetic reservoir to scientists and environmentalists. There is no single objective condition of the landscape, such as wildness, with inexorable implications for management. Recognizing wilderness as a kind of meaning certain people give to the landscape, as competing social constructions, helps to frame the question of compatibility between traditional, ecotourism, and ecological values of Arctic wilderness. Building a shared construction of wilderness is a difficult political task. The search for compatibility must recognize that meanings vary in perspective from universal abstraction to the local and particular; are spatially, culturally, and historically contingent; and continuously reconstructed into the future.

Valuing Wilderness _____

Thus far, I have noted that the ideals of the Enlightenment have marginalized "place" and the "particular" in favor of the universal and general and obscured the role of the social and cultural in producing a plurality of meanings for a given wilderness landscape. Similarly, the Enlightenment conceals the diverse ways of thinking about values and valuation and the necessity to adjudicate among incommensurable values.

Reconciling the divergent meanings and constructions of wilderness is not just a debate about which meanings and values are at stake, it also involves examining the appropriate social mechanisms and institutional arrangements by which society orders, evaluates, and decides about their relative production, maintenance, and distribution. From an Enlightenment or utilitarian perspective, the best method for ordering or allocating goods is the market, an institution with rational procedures for making valuations (and in the absence of markets for certain goods, society should create artificial, surrogate markets). This approach reached its zenith with operations research thinking, in which experts would identify the "outcomes" or consequences of alternative courses of action, economists would measure their values, and linear programmers would calculate the best, most efficient alternative. Accordingly, values do not pertain to places or other holistic spatial entities, but to their useful and exchangeable properties.

Implicit in these economic approaches to value is the assumption of a single, universal yardstick for comparison of all values. In contrast, value pluralists argue that values are often incommensurable and should not be so ordered on a single dimension or standard. Going a step further, social constructionists often argue that values do not exist as such, but are emergent properties of social interaction, especially communication. A social constructionist might argue, for example, that the discourse of romantic transcendentalists such as Thoreau and Muir, and ecologists such as Leopold helped to create the value of "wilderness." Moreover, as a result of continuing discourse, wilderness is now valued more and in different ways than it was in the mid-19th century. The discussion has even "progressed" to a point where some even question the value of the wilderness idea, particularly as this discourse has moved beyond the Anglo-American context (Callicot and Nelson 1998; Cronon 1996b).

A value pluralist such as Anderson (1990) suggests a number of different institutional arrangements for ordering values. She begins by noting that the market, like any institution or procedure for making valuations, embodies certain norms for regulating the production, exchange, and enjoyment of goods that are sensitive to some qualitative differences among values and insensitive to others. Her main concern is how to determine which goods are properly the subject of market transactions (and by implication market valuations) and which are not. The task of reconciling the diverse values of arctic wilderness is not just a task of identifying possible goods (values or benefits) that might accrue from wilderness protection (for example, carbon sequestration, human development, or the preservation of subsistence cultures), but also a question of the appropriate means by which society should decide among the production, distribution, and maintenance of these various goods.

She describes four modes for the valuation of goods and the corresponding social norms that regulate these different types of exchange (summarized in table 1). The key feature of the use or market mode, of which we are most familiar, is that it involves subordinating something to one's own ends. Market norms of exchange include: (1) impersonal relations (transactions with strangers), (2) freedom to pursue

Table 1—Modes and norms for valuation of wilderness (source: Anderson 1990).

Modes	Norms of social relations/exchange
Use/market	Impersonal, advantage, taste, exclusive and rival, exit
Intrinsic	Respect, acceptance
Personal	Intimacy, attachment, gift, commitment
Shared	Fraternity, need, mutual benefit, voice

one's own advantage unrestrained by consideration of others' advantage, (3) equating values to matters of personal taste, (4) where goods exchanged are exclusive in consumption and rival in competition, and (5) where dissatisfaction is expressed by exit from the market. Even though we recognize that not all values (goods) are exchangeable in market transactions, a key assumption of economics is that there is a single yardstick upon which all values can be measured and ordered. This amounts to a monistic theory of value in which everything can be ordered as some kind of tradeoff.

Market norms can be contrasted with three other valuation modes or sets of social norms for regulating the production, distribution, and maintenance of goods. One alternative is what she calls the intrinsic mode. Intrinsic norms deal primarily with respect and acceptance of the object as it is, rather than for how it can be used. Here is where we would likely locate ecological and aesthetic values, as well as the intrinsic value of indigenous cultures. We can, as economists have shown, identify the economic value of such goods using contingent valuation and other pricing techniques. But this is nevertheless an act of subordinating their intrinsic value to an economic end. To illustrate, economists who were asked to assess the damage to certain villages caused by the Exxon-Valdez oil spill concluded that the damage could be estimated as the cost of relocating the entire village to an undamaged location (Snyder and others, in press). But what do we make of the value of the history and cultural forms and relations people form in a specific place? Are such values literally replaceable? Can they be monetized? This limitation is not just confined to the application of economic analyses to nonwestern cultures. Many people object to questions about their willingness to pay for clean air on the grounds that they are being asked to pay to restore that which is intrinsically good, but which has been degraded by allowing people to subordinate its value to a mere economic good. Thus, it only makes sense to ask the question of willingness to pay from within the use mode of exchange.

A second alternative involves the personal or sentimental mode of exchange. Objects, people, and places are often loved and cherished. Whereas commodities are interchangeable, cherished goods are unique, irreplaceable, and given up only under duress. In this case, the dominant norms have to deal with commitment to the relationship and expressions of identity and self. Anderson (1990) develops her ideas about this mode by discussing interpersonal relations among friends and family and the role played by goods exchanged in such relationships. Goods such as trust, loyalty, sympathy, affection, admiration, companionship, and devotion cannot be bought and sold (although she notes that people sometimes deceive themselves in the attempt). Goods such as these (exchanged in personal relationships) are guided by the spirit of gift rather than the spirit of commercial exchange. To impose market norms of exchange for these goods undermines their authenticity and worth. Gifts of love or intimacy for example, "cannot genuinely be procured for oneself by paying others to produce them or by appealing to another's personal advantage to provide them" (Anderson 1990: 186).

Extending this idea to cherished landscapes or places, part of the value of a specific wilderness to a visitor may not be a result of consuming its wilderness qualities, but as a kind of relationship one develops from intimate knowledge of the landscape built up over long and repeated interaction. Such relationships to places may be severed or lost, but like true friendship, they are not goods one can trade in for a new model. The same might be said about the value of intimate ties to place experienced by indigenous cultures. In the context of indigenous claims of cultural losses due to environmental damage or forced displacement from homeland, an indigenous culture's relationship to place involves a sense of belonging and identity that is

difficult to reconcile within western market institutions and property rights regimes (Kirsch 2001; Snyder and others, in press).

The third alternative mode deals with value as public symbols and expressions of shared ideals. This is the political mode of valuation. As Anderson (1990: 181) notes, some "values cannot be realized in private acts of use, but reside in shared public understanding of the meaning and significance of the good." As an example, Anderson describes sites of historical events as having value as part of national heritage. Preservation of these values requires constraints on use, such as zoning ordinances to preserve the architectural integrity of the features and buildings associated with such sites. The norms for these shared community relationships contrast sharply with the norms of the market. These norms include fraternity in place of self-interest, mutual benefit in place of exclusive use, need over want, and voice instead of exit as the expression of dissatisfaction.

Fraternity is expressed through common provision of services, in contrast to the separateness of parties in a commercial transaction or the special relationship between parties in personal gift relationships. Publicly provided goods are provided to all, not just to those who pay. Shared goods are necessarily realized in common activities, and rights to these cannot be fully distributed in exclusive increments. When goods being distributed are not public, distribution takes place in accordance with some conception of the relative need of a citizen rather than in accordance with want. Finally, citizens participate in the allocation of goods based on voice rather than exit. The appropriate determination of need is based on reason and democratic deliberation. For example, Anderson compares the way respect is given in market versus political relations. In market transactions, one respects the privacy of the consumer by not inquiring into the reasons for wanting something beyond a level necessary to satisfy that want. In public transactions, respect for fellow citizens is to take their reasons for advocating a particular position seriously. Public goods are produced and distributed through institutions and practices that deliberate over the shared concerns of citizens. In contrast, market mechanisms of exit do not respond to reasoned ideals any differently than from unreflective wants. The realization of shared values requires a public forum for working out these understandings together.

Attempting to order these shared goods by market mechanisms tends to detract from their value. In an argument reminiscent of Olmsted's views on public parks, Anderson notes that the goods provided by public spaces are qualitatively different than if they were provided privately. Public space promotes the free and diverse association necessary for fraternity, civility, and democracy (see also Putnam 2000). With a private system of roads, for example, one would need to ask permission of each owner to visit people and places made accessible by such roads, thus creating potential restraints on the freedom of association that forms the bedrock of democracy. Anderson reminds us that we have inherited from the Enlightenment a narrow conception of valuation as something technocratic, expert driven, utilitarian, efficient, and instrumental.

Not only is our market/use concept of value overly narrow, it tends to colonize all other modes of valuation (Anderson 1990; Wolfe 1989). Intrinsic, personal, and shared modes of valuation constitute constraints on use. In capitalist societies we tend to value the dismantling of these constraints to "free up the market." Modernization can be understood, in part, as a process in which market norms are increasingly used to regulate more and more social interactions that previously were produced and distributed by nonmarket means. An important tool for deciding about the production and distribution of these various goods is vigorous, reflective public discourse. This kind of deliberation can create and improve public values, and is an essential feature driving the growing movement toward collaborative decisionmaking in natural resource planning.

Recognizing values as ephemeral products of social discourse enlarges and democratizes public decisions, as reasoning and reason giving are expanded from economic and technical experts to all citizens. Still, the mere act of defending the value of a place through deliberation and public reasoning risks changing these very cultural values. Noting that cultures change when politicized, Torgerson (1999: 202) writes: "An image of place, to defend itself, must speak out, must come out into the open, into the forum." Just as taking an exclusively market view of values suppresses the search for a public or citizen understanding, defending any particular value of

wilderness—indigenous, ecological, or ecotourism—involves assigning political meaning to that landscape and thereby changes how it is valued.

Globalization and Wilderness _____

Having described the social construction of wilderness, as the production and contestation of a multiplicity of meanings and compared various modalities for ordering or valuing environmental goods, the two remaining objectives of this seminar/workshop relate in one way or another to describing social forces of change and their consequences for Arctic wilderness. One way to organize or think about the trends or threats affecting Arctic wilderness is to think in terms of large-scale social processes, specifically globalization. First, I want to address the question of how modern social processes (globalization) impact the meanings and values of wilderness. Second, I will briefly illustrate how this process might be affecting the meaning and value of natural landscapes in Norway.

Globalization refers to the restructuring of time-space relations through rapidly accelerating rates of exchange, movement, and communication across space, and contributes directly to the unmooring (disembedding) of meanings and identities from place. Globalization tends to thin out and destabilize place meanings, and aggravates conflicts over how places or natural landscapes should be developed and managed. In a premodern (preglobal) era, local conditions were more predominant as constraints on how people adapted to and fashioned their world. Exploiting nature was limited by local knowledge, and the quantity and quality of locally available natural resources constrained economic and social activities. This tended to produce isolated local cultures with social patterns necessarily fitted to the contingencies of that place. This didn't make humans benign by modern ecological standards, as Soulé (1995) reminds us. Rather, the scope and scale of human-environment interactions were more directly embodied in a place. In other words, societies were adapted to the opportunities and constraints of local place.

Nurtured by Enlightenment thinking, modern industrial development freed production activities from the constraints of local place and began a process of transforming places around the logic of market economics. Modernization (whether in the form of industrial markets, mass communications, or more efficient transportation) has in an important sense "freed" people from constraints of place, or in economic terms, allowed for more efficient use of resources. As described in the earlier discussion of the Enlightenment, this has had profound implications for both nature and society. Whatever inherent moral value nature may have possessed in the premodern era, it has been supplanted by a view of nature as an instrumental resource to be exploited. Similarly, individuals were liberated from local ways of life, community mores, and parochial society. Thus, social theorists recognize that modernity—as the unmooring of social relations, production and consumption, and even our identity from particular places—also leads to greater freedom to contest the meanings we ascribe to both our immediate and more distant surroundings. Just as material life is no longer bound by local ecological limits, modern social norms and practices have become increasingly the province of the sovereign consumer/voter. While much has been gained in terms of material well being and individual autonomy and liberty, modern social relations have also led to the displacement of local, community norms and standards of behavior by individual preferences as expressed in the marketplace or the voting booth (Wolfe 1989). Thus, the meaning of a place (such as wilderness) is increasingly subject to a kind of ideological marketplace with all of the competition and instability that goes with it.

Increasingly modern ways of living involve circulating through geographically extended networks of social relations and a multiplicity of widely dispersed places and regions, yet much of our traditional concepts and frames of reference presume that people and cultures are normally rooted in one place. In a globalized age, meaning is increasingly created in a spatially decontextualized world of mass consumption and mass communications, a world in which market forces create and transform meaning at a rapid pace. Globalization partitions space into smaller and finer units and assigns specialized meaning to each. "From the fewer, more local, and thicker places of premodern society, we now live among the innumerable interconnected thinner places and even empty ones" (Sack 1997: 9). Globalization creates a tension

within local places, between searching out ever-wider spheres of exchange and movement, and simultaneously provoking an inward and deliberate search for authenticity, a conscious effort to evoke a sense of place and connectedness. It makes "place-bound" identities more salient as the homogenizing forces of globalization spur the search for an authentic stable place, which is otherwise threatened from the "outside." Place meanings are less and less prescribed by local culture and tradition, and instead meanings are plural, individualized, and more contestable.

In places like Norway, where contact with nature has been central to national and cultural identity, any change, loss, or thinning of traditional meanings and values associated with natural landscapes is likely to be especially troubling. In Norway, people feel their distinctive outdoor traditions are increasingly threatened by globalizing forces of European unification and rapid urbanization. As Norwegian anthropologist Eriksen (1997) argues, through their power to ritualize the cultural memories of rural Scandinavian life, outdoor traditions provide a way to shelter one's identity from changes associated with an increasingly multiethnic, urbanized, and globalized culture. Thus, Norwegians express concern that the growing use of natural landscapes as nature-tourism destinations by the rest of Europe will interfere with these traditions (Kaltenborn and others 1995). Globalization has the effect of pressing in on traditional forms of nature contact and weakening them as they become the commodified interest of ever more spatially and culturally distant social groups. As a result, the national significance of cultural myths and practices are magnified and even exaggerated, yet the modern world inevitably dilutes their meaning as they become commodities to the rest of the world.

One such tradition in Norway and the other Fenno-Scandinavian countries is "allemannsrett" (every man's right), which involves the right to roam relatively freely through most any uncultivated landscape regardless of ownership. It can be thought of as a "free space" of public rights to the land beyond the private economic/use rights (Sandell 1995). It is a type of common pool resource that allows anyone the right to traverse, camp, and collect edibles and small wood, but does not allow one to hunt, drive a vehicle, or collect materials of commercial value. Yet, as Kaltenborn and others (2001) argue, this traditional practice is being constricted by globalization (see fig. 1). Allemannsrett evolved in a "premodern" context where population densities were lower and travel was much more localized. One impact of globalization is that it simply makes it easier for distant people to take advantage of local opportunities, making the public commons more difficult to sustain. In addition, the "free space" of public rights is being squeezed by the increasing commercialization and commodification of what were formerly noneconomic goods (Sandell 1995). Tourism is a good example. Commercial outfitters can potentially guide or host clients on private property, earning a living while paying nothing to the landowner. Other sources of decline involve the increasing fragmentation and specialization of land use. Smaller, more intensively managed parcels leave little "free space" left over between smaller and more completely exploited parcels. Finally, not unlike the controversy over subsistence uses of wilderness in Alaska, creating nature protection areas usurps traditional rights of access by promulgating more restrictions on how the landscape can be used.
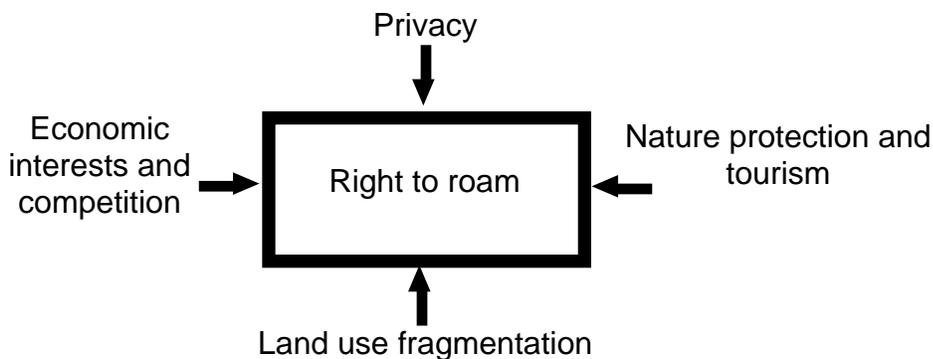

Figure 1—Globalization and Scandinavian public access to nature (source: Sandell 1995).

Globalization amplifies the importance of traditional forms of nature contact for those cultures that see it as part of their identity. At the same time, globalization allows more people to seek out and contest these same values. In other words, modern ways of living and traveling allow more people to access wilderness meanings and values and in the process appropriate and transform them for their own benefit. More people defining what a place (such as wilderness) means, destabilizes "traditional" meanings and intensifies conflict. Globalization makes even the most remote and little used wilderness landscapes important sites for cultural or identity politics. This returns us to some perplexing questions for wilderness. Is wilderness a way to reconnect modern identities to nature, place, and traditional lifestyles? Can wilderness facilitate maintenance of ancestral ways of life in a global world? Or is wilderness just one more piece of ground segmented and organized by modernity and thereby diluted of traditional meanings?

Conclusions

The mere examination of topics such as wilderness meanings and values, indigenous cultures, and cultural differences reflect a uniquely modern concern. These things are made problematic by globalization as the meanings and values we hold for cherished places and landscapes are most evident to us when they appear to be threatened from the outside. From the theoretical perspective of social constructionism, a major impact of modernity and globalization is to destabilize and thin out the meaning of places. In addition, this perspective helps us to appreciate, understand, and accept that even wilderness places contain multiple and conflicting histories and that people affirm in such places multiple and conflicting identities. The accelerated pace of change we experience as globalization helps us to see more clearly that much of what we thought was inherent and enduring is really socially constructed.

A social constructionist perspective suggests that society has more or less always functioned by working through contested meanings of places, things, resources, and ideas. However, the disequilibrium that is so much a part of modernity and globalization propels this process of contesting place meanings to new levels of intensity and geographic scope. Given our collective power to make and remake places, not even wilderness can be "protected" and preserved as some premodern authentic landscape. Still, the social construction of meaning is not completely amorphous. The creation and contestation of meaning involves social interactions structured within and by interest group formation and action, regulatory agencies, administrative procedures, law, local government, planning processes, and so forth. These processes are most obvious in the formal political arena, but they also occur through everyday practices such as deciding where to vacation or retire, whether and where to build a new shopping mall or Wal-Mart, and a thousand other small decisions made by consumers, businesses, families, and government officials.

Culture provides a map of meanings through which the world is made intelligible. It is not entirely consensual or shared, as it has often been described, but is something that varies across individuals and groups and is contestable by various interests. Similarly, wilderness designation, use, and management take on different meanings for different people and, in the process of negotiation, new meanings and group identities are created and modified. Globalization makes local meanings seemingly more salient and threatened as it destabilizes what are often taken to be more authentic, indigenous meanings. This constructionist approach focuses on how meanings and values are produced and reproduced through actual social practices that take "place" in historically contingent and geographically specific contexts. The challenge is to learn how to collectively work through the largely inevitable social change wrought by globalization while negotiating across cultural differences in meanings and values, which are increasingly diverse, individualized, and commodified.

By focusing on a sociocultural view of meaning formation, we are forced to examine not just what values people hold, but where these values and meanings come from, how they vary from place to place and community to community, how they are negotiated in society, how they are used in conflict situations, how they are impacted by globalization, and how they influence policy decisions. By focusing on how values and meanings are socially created and contested and how these affect resource management systems, we can begin to cultivate social knowledge and develop management procedures to address inevitable social conflicts and differences in ways that recognize

both the distant influence of globalization and the particular influence of local historical context.

Much of the postutilitarian (postenlightenment) challenge for natural resource management grows out of the increasingly contested meanings of places and ecosystems that come with modernity and globalization. Understanding the processes of making and contesting wilderness meanings gets at the heart of natural resource conflict. The social constructionist perspective draws attention to the idea that the work of environmental scientists, managers, and planners is itself an effort that seeks, creates, contests, and most importantly, negotiates the meaning of places. As planners, this means moving away from top-down, data- and expert-driven management styles and toward more deliberative, discursive, collaborative styles. Stated more globally, we need to learn how to collectively negotiate through change and across differences. This is much easier said than done, of course, as societies have structured all manner of processes and institutions around single histories, defined boundaries, fixed categories, and reified meanings.

Exercises in mapping meanings are, by definition then, necessarily political acts in which meanings are being created and contested, with certain meanings gained and lost in the process. Social construction is often about power relations. It asks: Who gets to draw the map? As Torgerson (1999) reminds us, the ideal of open democratic discourse as an inclusive and participatory exercise to map out and debate the ecological, ecotourism, and indigenous meanings and values of wilderness places is not necessarily conducive to protecting any particular sense of place. Regardless of how one feels about the "cultural politics" that globalization engenders and intensifies (and the corresponding reduction in the power and authority of science and expertise), such politics are part of the social reality.

It is perhaps tempting to think that the meanings and values of wilderness should be defined by an elite group of scientists and well-informed activists. We would like to discover some "rational" foundation for protecting wilderness that transcends local cultural truths. But an examination of wilderness in the Circumpolar North reinforces the role of culture in shaping the very concept of wilderness. In the north, it is more difficult to disregard the role of indigenous people and traditional practices in making and remaking the landscape. The western tendency to segment lands into the universalist categories of civilized and uncivilized are much less tenable. But it is equally impossible to pretend that the universalizing discourses of western landscape meanings have no bearing on northern landscapes. Wilderness uses, meanings, and values are constructed through the ongoing contest between indigenous, touristic, and ecological discourses and practices. Wilderness in the north is a continuing amalgamation of these and other social forces.

References _____

Agnew, J. A. 1989. The devaluation of place in social science. In: Agnew, J. A.; Duncan, J., eds. The power of place: bringing together geographical and sociological imaginations. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman: 9–29.

Anderson, E. 1990. The ethical limitations of the market. Economics and Philosophy. 6: 179–205.

Burr, V. 1995. An introduction to social constructionism. London: Routledge. 197 p.

Callicott, J. B.; Nelson, M. P., eds. 1998. The great new wilderness debate. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 697 p.

Cronon, W. 1996a. Forward to the paperback edition. In: Cronon, W., ed. Uncommon ground: rethinking the human place in nature. New York: W. W. Norton: 19–22.

Cronon, W. 1996b. The trouble with wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature. In: Cronon, W., ed. Uncommon ground: rethinking the human place in nature. New York: W. W. Norton: 69–90.

Denevan, W. M. 1992. The pristine myth: the landscape of the Americas in 1492. Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 82(3): 369–385.

Entrikin, J. N. 1991. The betweenness of place: towards a geography of modernity. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins. 196 p.

Eriksen, T. 1997. The nation as a human being—a metaphor in a mid-life crisis? Notes on the imminent collapse of Norwegian national identity. In: Olwig, K.; Hastrup, K., eds. Siting culture: the shifting anthropological object. London: Routledge: 103–122.

Giddens, A.; Pierson, C. 1998. Conversations with Anthony Giddens: making sense of modernity. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 233 p.

Greider, T.; Garkovich, L. 1994. Landscapes: the social construction of nature and the environment. Rural Sociology: 59: 1–24.

Harrington, A. 1996. Reenchanted science: holism in German culture from Wilhelm to Hitler. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 309 p.

Healey, P. 1997. Collaborative planning: shaping places in fragmented societies. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press. 338 p.

Kaltenborn, B.; Gøncz, G.; Vistad, O. I. 1995. På tur i felleskapet: Mulige virkninger av EØS og EU på den norske allemannsretten. [A trip in the commons: possible impacts of the European Economic Agreement and the European Union on the Norwegian common access tradition]. Project Report 25/1995. Lillehammer, Norway: Eastern Norway Research Institute. 58 p.

Kaltenborn, B.; Haalaand, H.; Sandell, K. 2001. The right of access—some challenges to sustainable tourism development in Scandinavia. Journal of Sustainable Tourism. 9(5): 417–433.

Kirsch, S. 2001. Lost worlds: environmental disaster, "cultural loss," and the law. Cultural Anthropology. 42(2): 167–198.

Nash, R. 1973. Wilderness and the American mind, revised ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 300 p.

Putnam, R. 2000. Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community. New York: Simon & Schuster. 541 p.

Sack, R. 1992. Place, modernity, and the consumer's world. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins. 256 p.

Sack, R. 1997. Homo geographicus: a framework for action, awareness, and moral concern. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins. 292 p.

Sandell, K. 1995. Access to the 'North'—But to what and for whom? Public access in the Swedish country-side and the case of a proposed National Park in the Kiruna Mountains. In: Hall, C. M.; Johnston, M. E., eds. Polar tourism: tourism and the arctic and antarctic regions. Chichester, UK: Wiley: 131–145.

Shields, R. 1991. Places on the margin: alternative geographies of modernity. London: Routledge. 334 p.

Snyder, R.; Williams, D.; Peterson, G. [In press]. Culture loss and sense of place in resource valuation: economics, anthropology and indigenous cultures. In: Jentoft, S.; Minde, H.; Nilsen, R., eds. Indigenous peoples and resource management. Tromsø, Norway: University of Tromsø, Centre for Sami Studies.

Soulé, M. 1995. The social siege of nature. In: Soulé, M.; Lease, G., eds. Reinventing nature? Responses to postmodern deconstruction. Washington, DC: Island Press: 137–170.

Torgerson, D. 1999. Images of place in green politics: the cultural mirror of indigenous traditions. In: Fischer, F.; Hajer, A., eds. Living with nature: environmental politics as cultural discourse. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press: 186–203.

Williams, D. R. 2000. Personal and social meanings of wilderness: constructing and contesting place in a global village. In: Watson, A. E.; Aplet, G. H.; Hendee, J. C., eds. Personal, societal, and ecological values of wilderness: Sixth World Wilderness Congress proceedings on research, management, and allocation, Volume II; 1998 October 24–29; Bangalore, India. Proc. RMRS-P-14. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station: 77–82.

Williams, D. R.; Patterson, M. E. 1996. Environmental meaning and ecosystem management: perspectives from environmental psychology and human geography. Society and Natural Resources. 9: 507–521.

Wolfe, A. 1989. Whose keeper? Social science and moral regulation. Berkeley: University of California Press. 371 p.

Young, I. M. 1996. Communication and the other: beyond deliberative democracy. In: Benhabib, S., ed. Democracy and difference: contesting the boundaries of the political. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 121–135.