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Whose Sense of Place? A Political Ecology of Amenity Development

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Chapter 13: Whose Sense of Place? A Political Ecology of Amenity Development

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Using a political ecology framework, this chapter examines the ways in which sense of place and amenity migration contribute to alternative residential development, which relies on uneven use of conservation subdivision features in the American West. Using case studies from Central Oregon, this chapter demonstrates how senses of place and developer decision-making are tied to wider political economic changes. It highlights the roles that amenity migrants and developers, two groups that are sometimes identical, play in landscape transformations that simultaneously draw on a particular sense of place and commodify landscapes in new ways.

Exurbanization has attracted much attention in the United States in recent years, particularly because of the impacts that sprawl (unplanned, low-density, commercial and residential growth) can have on rural landscapes in areas that have experienced rapid in-migration. Concerns about the myriad ways that residential development reconfigures local ecologies include habitat loss, fragmentation, and alteration (DeStefano & DeGraaf 2003; Johnson & Klemens 2005; Theobald 2004); declines in the species associated with these altered habitats (DeStefano & DeGraaf 2003; Lenth et al. 2006); and impacts on land use that affect traditional livelihoods (Hurley et al. 2008). Likewise, critics have bemoaned sprawl's role in creating a "placelessness" (Duany et al. 2000) that contributes to a loss of natural resource production. In response to these ecological, aesthetic, and resource concerns, several new development approaches have emerged. One approach, referred to as "new urbanism" (McCann 1995; Till 2001; Zimmerman 2001),features specific design features intended to minimize environmental impacts while creating residential spaces that better fit in with their rural surroundings and maintain some forms of agricultural production (Arendt et al. 1996; Bjelland et al. 2006).

Exurbanization is the result of a move by formerly urban peoples to rural places in search of a better "quality of life" in places characterized by abundant natural and/or cultural amenities(Gosnell & Abrams 2011). Literature on this so-called "amenity migration" argues that economic restructuring is reshaping cultures and economies of places and communities historically tied to natural resource extraction. As new peoples, often with very different ideas about nature and higher levels of education and greater wealth, arrive in these places, new land-use decision-making priorities often emerge (Cadieux & Hurley 2011 ; Taylor 2011). But what role do amenity migrants and their sense of place play in efforts to create alternative developments in the exurban American West? This chapter draws on the political ecology literature to examine the interplay between amenity migration, environmental management trends in the context of urbanization, and the developer's sense of place in the design and construction of alternative residential development in exurban areas (see Bjelland et al. 2006). Also discussed are projects in Central Oregon that highlight the intersection of regional social-economic processes with specific developers' sense of place to produce development alternatives that commodify landscapes in specific ways. The chapter underscores a need for researchers to

investigate processes of migration and residential development that produce, or potentially contest, diverse place meanings within urbanizing regions.

Amenity Migration and Exurban Development in the American West

Economic restructuring in the American West has been a key feature of many natural- resource-dependent communities in recent decades (Jackson & Kuhlken 2006; Nelson 2001; Travis 2007). Economies of real estate have replaced economies built on extraction (e.g, Brogden & Greenberg 2003; Ghose 2004; Walker & Fortmann 2003). Amenity migration has become an important factor in explaining population growth(Nelson 2006). High-amenity counties typically have experienced greater rates of growth than low-amenity ones, with far lower density occurring in non-metropolitan areas than in nearby metropolitan areas (Nelson 2006; Vias & Carruthers 2005). In Idaho amenity-related residential development has led to uneven development in non-metropolitan areas formerly predominated by natural resource production (Smutny 2002). Population growth in counties that include public lands is often higher than local averages, with growth rates differing among counties with lands owned by specific federal lands agencies (i.e. U.S. Forest Service vs. Bureau of Land Management) as a function of amenities (i.e. forests vs. grasslands) and not management priorities (Frentz et al. 2004). These results suggest that high-amenity, exurban areas are characterized by lower-density parcelization rather than high-density land development.

Research on amenity migration has revealed variations in land management within counties and communities, and on individual parcels. Residential development and social change often lead to the creation of communities within communities. For example, work by Halseth(1998) in rural British Columbia, highlights the emergence of distinctive social communities associated with proximity to particular amenities (e.g., lakeshores), while long-time residents continue to live in areas further afield of lakes. Changes in landownership patterns, such as an increase in absentee owners, often results in more diverse land management that focuses on amenity or conservation values, instead of traditional production values (Gosnell et al. 2006). In many instances, shifts in environmental management at the county, community, and parcel levels have led to land-use conflicts over priorities (Shumway & Otterstrom 2001).

Walker and Fortmann(2003) attribute the source of such land-use conflicts in the American West to the cultural and economic changes associated with amenity in-migration. In their work, conflict is rooted in the ways that competing rural capitalisms seek to economically benefit from different landscape qualities (i.e. amenities vs. resource commodities). Importantly, Walker and Fortmann argue that one form of rural capitalism, the emerging real estate industry, emphasizes protecting the quality of natural landscapes through planning and development-related decisions, precisely because these landscape-attributes positively impact real estate values. Robbins and coauthors(2011)argue that fear of run-away, and just plain ugly, development in exurban areas of the American West leads to demands for new land-use controls, even in places where government intervention has long been anathema. Brogden and Greenberg (2003) empirically demonstrate the importance of amenity migration and changing place meanings in reassigning resource access rights from agricultural users to environmental users. This reassignment occurs through property markets and new environmental management schemes.

A Political Ecology of Sense of Place and Amenity Development

Political ecology examines "linkages between social systems and ecological systems" (Berkes 2004: 624), by combining "the concerns of ecology with a broadly defined political economy" (Blaikie & Brookfield 1987: 17). Political ecologists view biophysical systems as the products of politics that "are related in various ways to social relations of production and decision-making about resource use… [T]hese are exercised in diverse arenas, on multiple scales, and infused with cultural knowledge and value" (Paulson & Gezon 2005: 209) From this perspective, individual land manager decisions are conditioned responses to political-economic processes operating at scales ranging from local to global.

In explicating the politics of environmental management (e.g., Robbins 2004)—that is, the logical rationales underlying the various forms of appropriate environmental management—political ecologists have noted that new "nature-society" hybrids have proliferated in contemporary global environmental management.. These schemes use land-use zones and associated rules to "contain in space" specific human activities(e.g., hunting, farming, housing), thereby minimizing biophysical impacts on the environment while expanding markets (Zimmerer 2000, 2006). Zimmerer focuses on biodiversity conservation in the developing world, but his insights also apply to emerging environmental management in other human-dominated landscapes. Thus, nature-society hybrids are the products of privatization and commodification, which rest on particular constructions of environmental scarcity and sensitivity that encourage private enterprise to value ecological resources appropriately.

The types of nature-society hybrids emerging in particular regions have not been well studied. A notable exception is Reed's (2007) examination of two biosphere reserves, one in British Columbia and the other in Alberta. Reed's study reveals the importance of regional processes in shaping "formal and informal institutional arrangements" that characterize emergent (and uneven) environmental management regimes. These processes include property exchanges accompanying changes in regional economies and demographics; the influence of these changes on land valuations(i.e. various forms of commodification and marketing nature);rules and norms governing formal planning and land-use decision-making; and re-territorialization, that is the social processes that establish rules for administering natural resource access, use, and production.

Reed also compares the development of the two Canadian reserves, highlighting the roles of diverse social actors in advocating for the establishment of each reserve and calling for what they see as appropriate management strategies. In the British Columbia reserve, activists, scientists, First Nation groups, and governmental officials are involved in revising forestry management goals. In contrast, in Alberta privately run land trusts dominate the management of lakes and wildlife. Reed's work demonstrates that these different configurations of environmental management have emerged due to tensions between civic society and private entities. These cases illustrate links between the forces of privatization/commodification and processes of globalization and nationalization (Zimmerer 2000). Both areas of research also raise questions about the influence of sense of place on changes in environmental management.

Sense of Place and Environmental Management

Research on sense of place often seeks to better understand the meanings and attachment people place on their environments, including satisfaction with where they live and perceptions about environmental quality/degradation (Kaltenborn 1999; Williams & Stewart 1998). Biophysical environments and political contestation affect these meanings and perceptions (Johnson et al. 2009; Larsen et al. 2007; Stedman 2003).Similarly, sense of place influences land-use decision-making (Stewart 2008). Place meanings are complex, with different meanings for the same location subject to efforts by individuals or groups "to manipulate and market" their perspectives(Cheng et al. 2003).

Power (i.e. social, economic, and political) and access to capital are key factors in creating place meanings for given locations (e.g., Harner 2001).This finding resonates with political ecology research of environmental management, because it makes explicit the relationship between power and flows of capital that affect the social dynamics that produce new views about appropriate uses of environments (Robbins 2004). For example, Johnson and coauthors (2009) demonstrate that marginalized communities may strategically embrace new ideas of ecological integrity and global conservation, even if these new ways of viewing landscapes differ from those of many long-term residents. However, their findings also suggest that efforts to protect particular environments by groups associated with different sides of in-migration and urbanization processes, and the actions of individuals and groups collectively, can lead to the formation of new place meanings. Yet, none of these studies specifically addresses new design approaches associated with residential development practices.

New Exurbanism and the "Quest for Authentic Place"

As noted by (Bjelland et al. 2006), one of the many changes in urban land development during the past decade has been the rise of "new urbanism." This design approach aims to create forms of compact residential development that are more environmentally responsible and aesthetically pleasing than conventional housing. This design style emphasizes design features meant to create a distinctive sense of place, often along with conservation design principles that encourage land protection. Using these principles, developers typically limit the sizes of residential lots; cluster houses and lots together to maximize open space; and alter layouts to avoid areas with conservation, production, or recreational values (Arendt et al. 1996). Future development often is prohibited in common areas through deed restrictions or conservation easements (e.g., held by local government or a land trust). Finally, homeowner bylaws generally encourage ecologically appropriate activities for residential and conserved areas(Arendt et al. 1996). Such features not only address diverse environmental management issues, but reflect place meanings attached to specific landscape elements. Thus, this design-oriented land development underlies what Bjelland et al. refer to as new urbanism's "quest for authentic place."

Scholars have criticized new urbanism's innovations, dissecting ways that political-economic changes are leading developers to recast social and biophysical environments as spaces in need of protection while producing housing developments for elites. For example, in the Puget Sound (Washington) new housing designs are not fueled by demand necessarily, but rather regional social and economic conditions have enabled novel environmental designs to take advantage of

niche housing markets there (Veninga 2004). In the Minneapolis-St. Paul area of Minnesota local developers have fostered new "niche products" that conserve nature and make builders more money, while also potentially further contributing to sprawl (Bjelland et al. 2006). And, at Prairie Crossing, Illinois, which labels itself a "conservation community", nature is mobilized in defense of the suburban dream, representing both a nostalgic defense of the Midwestern frontier and a poor model of sustainability (Zimmerman 2001). Such projects discursively and materially package nature in ways that play on "Edenic myths" and rural idylls in a new form of "green politics" (Till 2001). Overall these observations suggest this new green politics is actively producing nature-society hybrids through sense-of-place design features that may or may not contribute to a form of social exclusion that characterizes the suburban project (Duncan & Duncan 2004).

At the same time, urban ecologists also point out that lifestyle factors and worldviews increasingly influence the environmental management on individual land parcels, with landscape and aesthetic concerns often trumping ecological ones(Larson et al. 2009). Nonetheless, developers potentially can foster management approaches that provide both environmental and recreational benefits(Larsen & Harlan 2006). Indeed, as Nassauer and coauthors (2009) suggest, developer-led initiatives may provide the best way to bridge this gap.

Natural Amenity and Land-Use Change in Central Oregon

The case studies discussed here focus on Deschutes and Wasco (Figure 1) counties, located on the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains in Central Oregon. The region is home to the Deschutes River, a significant tributary to the Columbia River renowned for its fly-fishing opportunities. While both counties share many natural amenities associated with communities experiencing rapid growth elsewhere, their experiences with development are quite different.

Since 2000,the Deschutes County seat, Bend, has ranked as Oregon's fastest growing metropolitan area and one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas nationwide(U.S. Census Bureau 2009a). Bend lies close to the Mt. Bachelor ski area and boasts an abundance of sunny days (McGranahan 1999). In contrast, Wasco County enjoys considerably less sunshine—a disparity in weather that has likely contributed to its slower growth (U.S. Census Bureau 2009b) and smaller influx of retirees and second home buyers. Wasco's major metropolitan area, The Dalles and its environs, have been overshadowed by rapid, amenity-related growth in and around the towns of Hood River and White Salmon (across the Columbia River in Washington State), both revered windsurfing sites. While the histories of shifting land-use in Deschutes and Wasco counties share important similarities, the scope of change has differed. In year 1973,a new land-use planning system emerged in Oregon(Walker & Hurley 2011). Its innovative sprawl-containing features came partly in response to the rapid partitioning of rural parcels in southwestern Deschutes County during the late 1960s. By the time the new system was enacted in Deschutes, however, much of the rural landscape had been subdivided into five-acre parcels. Similarly, portions of northern Wasco County experienced parcelization and land speculation just prior and after 1973, albeit to a much lesser extent than Deschutes. The resulting parcelization pattern and densities largely set development entitlements for future projects.

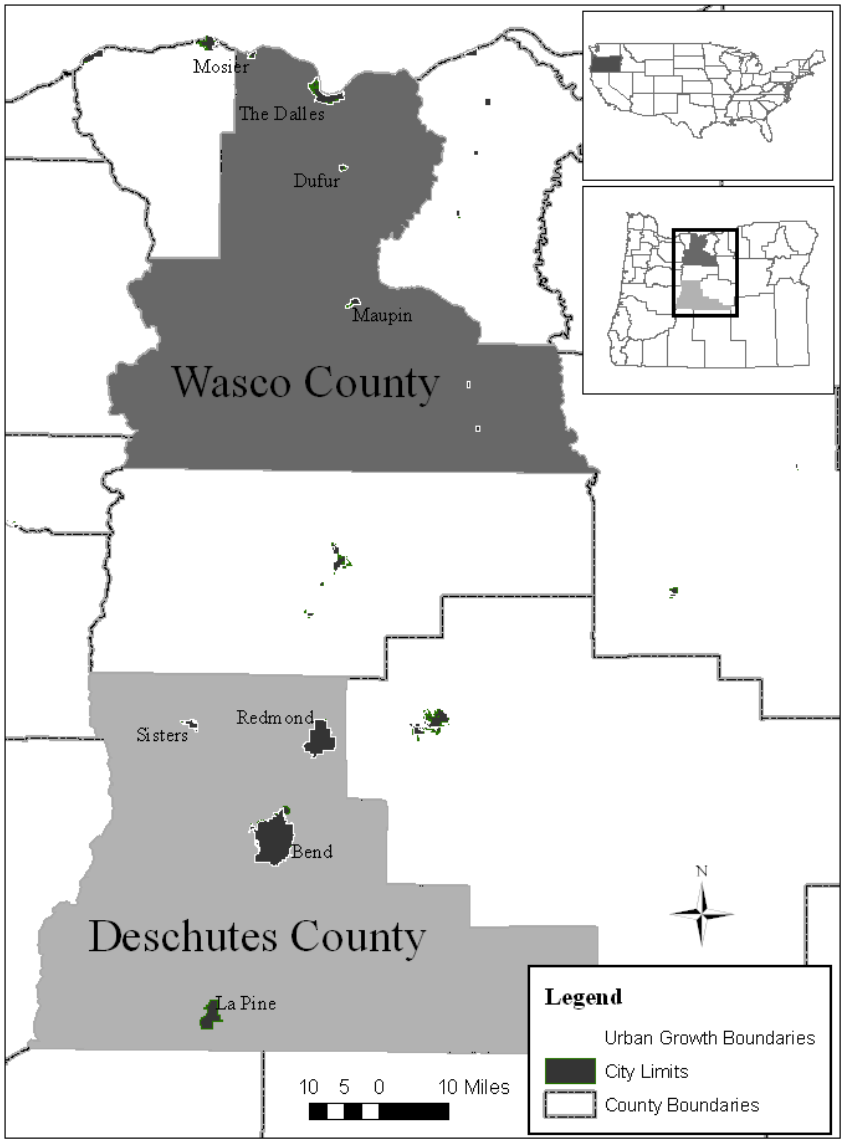

Figure 1. Map of study area, highlighting Deschutes and Wasco counties, in Central Oregon. Source: Oregon Geospatial Data Clearinghouse (2009).

Rural parcelization has prompted concerns over its impacts on agriculture and the environment in both counties. In Deschutes County, conservation groups such as the Deschutes Basin Land Trust and the Deschutes River Conservancy, pursued efforts to protect critical wildlife and high-desert habitats (e.g., sagebrush steppe, native grasslands, and Ponderosa pine forests); augment in-stream flows for fish in the Deschutes River and its tributaries; and retain working forests and farms. In Wasco County, some residents worry about sprawl destroying the county's cherry orchards. Meanwhile, land trusts have strived to preserve local woodland habitats and the rich diversity of wildflowers.

This examination of the intersection of amenity migration and land development is based on a wide-ranging review of development projects in Deschutes and Wasco counties, including their design features, relationships to local development trends, and relationship to area conservation issues. The analysis drew on proposals and county planning documents; real estate marketing materials; and "subdivision" governance documents (e.g. contracts, covenants, and restrictions; and design guidelines). Using design and governance documents, I evaluated conservation goals and environmental management rules for individual projects. During visits to the counties in May 2006 and May 2007, I conducted interviews with county land-use planners, representatives from land trusts and other conservation organizations, project investors/developers, and residents/landowners in the communities.

Whose Sense of Place? Developing Amenity in Central Oregon

We call this a preservation ranch… we're preserving the ranch by putting occasional residents on ranch, non-farm properties… Phone Interview, 2-27-2007

Amenity development projects in the case study areas have not widely applied the full suite of conservation design principles (described above); however, specific features, often in combination, are commonly employed. Only two communities in Deschutes and one in Wasco employed all features: limited lot size, clustering of houses, altered layout, easements on common areas, and ecologically-oriented bylaws. Although Deschutes County has more amenity development projects, features such as open space preservation, clustering, and novel forms of environmental governance are more predominant in Wasco County. Design elements in both areas most commonly relate to place meanings that value biodiversity protection, such as guidelines on planting practices, even for projects that neither cluster houses, nor reduce lot sizes. Indeed, one Wasco County project features large lots, but its bylaws emphasize the protection of native flora and fauna. In Deschutes, a project places strict review procedures on plantings. Despite these similarities, there are important differences in the pathways, namely through the developer, that marry particular senses of place with environmental management forms.

Whose Development?

We wouldn't need land-use planners if every developer lived in the developments they did.
Interview, Wasco County 5-31-2006

Residential projects in Deschutes and Wasco counties challenge attempts to paint developers in broad-brushed strokes. For example, only one of the ten projects was undertaken by a large developer—a former timber company—whose project bylaws provide strict guidance on appropriate land management activities, including rules about native species plantings. Indeed, a recurrent theme among the eleven projects examined was the active role of amenity in-migrants—not development companies—in creating these alternative residential schemes. In six cases in-migrants with extensive development expertise participated in the land purchase, helped design the project layout and features, and oversaw implementation. Of these: two were built by individuals with extensive development experience elsewhere. Four projects are home to those in-migrants today: another was until the individual became too old to live unassisted. One of the in-migrant developers was responsible for two projects. Another project is home to the "developer," but this project features parcelization of family land to create second homes for friends and other potential buyers.

In Wasco County, a reluctant local environmentalist entered the picture to act as developer and produce a different landscape outcome. Having learned that "developers are the enemy" at an early age, he leveraged his life savings to purchase a property for which an equestrian-oriented, 21-home project had been proposed. Despite his declared intention for a conservation-oriented venture, local conservation groups opposed it on the grounds that it would destroy the area's local ecology. In creating a new project with strict ecological bylaws, he sought to ensure that part of northern Wasco County's oak-pine woodlands would not be "destroyed". The resulting nine-home project situated houses away from sensitive areas and worked with a local land trust to place easements on key ecological features (e.g., stream corridor and riparian habitats). This incident, along with development trends in the two counties, suggests some developers attempt to create their *own* ideal residential community, in which they draw personal links to specific amenities and not just those that might be highly marketable to potential buyers.

By paying attention to local environmental contexts, amenity developers create projects imbued with specific place meanings and distinguish their developments in key ways. A former county planner suggested that when a "landowner comes in and creates the community that they're going to retire in, they're already looking to do all the things that we try to do by ordinance and they wind up doing it through the homeowners' association, covenants, lease-back options--all these other tools that we can't really regulate very readily…." Interestingly, however, Deschutes and Wasco land trusts initially hesitated to get involved with some projects, because they did not want to be perceived as facilitating the development of landscapes with important ecological and conservation values. Once the projects were approved by county officials, however, land trusts saw the importance of participating, to ensure protection of ecological meanings associated with these places.

Which Rural Amenity?

We didn't create a little Hollywood set, you know. This [ranch] is the real deal. And people recognize that and appreciate… looking across green pastures, [seeing] cows in the field."
Interview, Deschutes County, 6-9-2006

Marketing materials for the projects are quite diverse, but vividly depict the sense of place constructions behind individual projects. Panoramic pictures highlight the rugged Central Oregon landscape and majestic mountain views, and descriptions detail various types of recreation, the area's wildlife and plants, and dimensions of ecological stewardship or conservation. One site includes a rustic storybook theme, which plays on iconic imagery of the "Old West" and invites potential buyers to surround themselves with "a real Central Oregon ranch."

Residential development has taken place primarily on lands historically used for agriculture or resource extraction. In each case, the surrounding landscape plays an important role in attracting buyers. In Wasco County, for example, where ranching predominated in the past, four of the five developments are located on former grazing lands. These projects—sited in a narrow band of woodlands dominated by Oregon white oak, near long-established cherry orchards—contain lots featuring small rock escarpments and intermittent views of regional mountain peaks or the Columbia River. By contrast, Deschutes projects, primarily situated on former timber and ranching lands, lie in the transition zone between Ponderosa Pine forest and Central Oregonhigh-desert land. Still, individual environmental features, such as private, up-close views of one of the state's premier geologic features or irrigated fields that offer pastoral respites from the characteristic desert vegetation of the local area, also serve as a key dimension in signaling distinctive ownership opportunities.

These residential development projects have not only reconfigured landscapes, but have also introduced new land-uses that alter place meanings. In Wasco County, residents and wildlife now wander hillsides where cattle once roamed, and barbed wire that previously demarcated grazing lands has been transformed into place-based art. In Deschutes County, on the other hand, subtle changes in management have evolved, but greater continuity with past place meanings still exists. For example, cattle still graze on common areas in one Deschutes project. To some extent, though, this continuity is maintained by strict agricultural zoning controls imposed by the county and state.

Still, developers have used these constraints to market place meanings that simultaneously commodify landscapes in new ways and generate environmental benefits. Benefitting from historic water rights, for example, two projects include agricultural activities on portions of the conserved open space. In one (i.e. the case described above), irrigated land supports cattle grazing; in the other, hay production. In both cases communities have invested in new irrigation measures that allow them to conserve water and supplement in-stream flows for salmonids through transfers of water rights to a local conservation group. Despite being near a premier fly-fishing river, one project engineered a trout stream, complete with meanders, pools and riffles, and native riparian vegetation. Meanwhile, all of the communities feature walking trails, generally without public access. One project includes horse trails linked to several thousand

acres of public land. Indeed, close proximity to areas managed by federal agencies (e.g., the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service) or private conservation groups (e.g., The Nature Conservancy) is a common feature of these developments.

Whose Environmental Management?

I'm a minority of one, totally. I hate [clearing brush]. Yeah it's better for [preventing] fire, but it's devastating to much of the habitat… all the wonderful under story, service berry, and snowberry, and deer brush… all the wonderful low plants…" Interview, Wasco County, 6-6-2006

Environmental management of open space/common areas associated with the projects studied involves various entities, including local governments, regional land trusts, and the U.S. Forest Service. All of the Wasco projects incorporate open space with walking trails that are protected from future development. In one commons, a conservation easement held by a regional land trust, protects riparian areas. The land trust has sponsored riparian habitat improvements, and the local government developed trails through another property that allowed community access to an adjacent park. But more often than not, it is homeowners associations that own and manage common areas of a project. At least one association organizes regular land stewardship work parties, including using state funds to help with improving wildlife habitat and minimizing fire danger. In other cases, association rules require landowners to abide by strict landscaping and planting guidelines, such as landscaping only with specified native plants and restoring plants and rocks in disturbed construction sites.

Interviews with residents revealed the importance of biophysical environments and developer commitments to environmental protection in determining their purchase. While dramatic views of regional natural features were clearly a significant factor, residents spoke about environmental management features within their communities as a strong influence in their decisions. In non-agriculturally oriented projects, residents valued the respect for native vegetation upheld in community bylaws, emphasizing that native vegetation reduces water consumption and supports wildlife habitats. These residents spoke of wildlife in their yards and the sense that their communities tread lightly on the landscape. Similarly, home-owners in agriculture-oriented projects voiced their enjoyment of "oases in the desert" and appreciation for a lifestyle opportunity that helps to maintain rural traditions.

Despite such sentiments, landowner activities may or may not match the sense of place and management established by the developer. In one Wasco project a new resident negotiated with the developer to install a fruit orchard, while in Deschutes a resident planted a small apple orchard. In both cases, uses are consistent with the meanings the respective developers place on a cultural landscape that is tied to regional agricultural history. But in a Wasco County project noted for its strict ecological covenants and habitat focus, when a few residents tried to amend rules to allow horses, other residents contested this effort and ultimately prevailed. Regardless of the land's ranching history, a majority of residents saw horses as inappropriate given the new ecology-oriented meanings they associate with the area's oak woodlands. This example points to ways that place meanings among residents in a specific project may come into conflict with one another. More often, however, this mismatch is tied to similar place meanings but different levels of commitment to environmental protection and aesthetic concerns. In one case, residents

complained that the emphasis on housing aesthetics in their community's bylaws presented a barrier to the installation of solar panels. They saw this situation as inconsistent with the developer's supposed concern for conservation. In another case, a resident was frustrated by the lack of awareness among neighbors and the developer-resident about the need to remove invasive species and oak management. This resident organized regular work parties to remove exotics, but discussions about improving oak habitat through tree thinning were resisted by the developer-resident, reflecting differing place meanings associated with forests, forest change, and untouched nature.

Conclusions

Using a political ecology framework to examine the relationship of sense of place to amenity migration and evolving environmental management practices in the cases discussed above reveals several important points. First, differing ideas about landscape qualities, place meanings, and environmental management play out within the wider context of regional changes and among competing rural capitalisms. Access to capital, both by developers and residents, is key to fusing a sense of place with management in particular places. However, the distinction between developers and residents is not as clear as the literature often assumes; indeed they may be one and the same. Many of the Central Oregon developers interviewed here are in-migrants whose presence is directly tied to the process of amenity migration. These individuals comprise what might be best described as *amenity developers*, owing both to their links to the political-economic changes that drew them to these locations *and* to their active role in producing specific landscapes that reinforce this process. For these resident amenity-developers, regional and global capital is critical in realizing their personal place meanings, not just on one parcel but across an entire subdivision.

In amenity residential projects, developers discursively *and* materially alter landscapes and resource uses by deploying new design features and imposing environmental management practices. Personal values shape practices that valorize particular uses (e.g., agriculture or wildlife habitat) within specific spaces, which fashion marketable natural amenities, and thereby create a set of place meanings that re-commodify landscapes. These ensure control of landscapes in a way that conforms to the developer's vision. Amenity developers see different place meanings and act based on diverse motivations, sometimes attempting to create alternatives to wider practices in the locations and communities where they build. For one amenity developer, his project was the last resort to make things right on the landscape, seeking to prevent what he viewed as the materialization of inappropriate and inauthentic place meanings. In another, the project represented an opportunity for this long-time developer to deviate from the conventional development process and "do things differently." This developer's efforts illuminate the creation of idealized places by individuals affiliated with (yet still distrustful of) the "conventional" development process' impacts on landscapes. For other developers, the conservation design features may represent the path of least resistance, providing a niche product that allows a project to "pencil out" in economically rewarding ways and/or minimize institutional barriers created by county planning controls.

For non-developer residents, the proliferation of such projects means that those individuals or households with sufficient money have greater choice within the real estate market. Buyers can

both consume the amenities that result from emergent place meanings and purchase into a community with a set of management practices that ostensibly will protect *their own* place meaning. This is not to argue that this arrangement has no social or ecological consequences (e.g., DeStefano & DeGraaf 2003, Hurley & Halfacre 2010), or that social and economic exclusion does not limit access to housing opportunities in these projects (e.g., Duncan 2004). Still, while many landowners in the project are in-migrants, some developments may offer affordable housing choices for county residents as well.

Environmental management practices in areas experiencing amenity-related urbanization remain uneven. While planning creates some constraints on the types of place meanings that can be inscribed into the landscape, land trusts are important to the creation of lasting place meanings that blend agriculture and conservation. Providing an agricultural amenity maintains continuity with the history of these places, while providing legitimacy to the ecological protection features associated with the aesthetic and recreational amenities that are flowing rivers. Remembering that place connections are often diverse, nuanced, and multi-layered (Cheng et al. 2003), this study suggests a need to tease apart the ways that place meanings are produced by developers *and* the amenity migrants who purchase properties in their developments. Although developers rely on particular place meanings to attract amenity buyers, residents may contest those meanings and challenge the management practices that protect a developer's own sense of place in the development. This topic warrants further study. A similar focus on sense of place might reveal important distinctions among environmental management strategies by landowners in conventional residential developments.

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