

Chapter 1

The Emergence of Place-Based Conservation

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Abstract Place has emerged as a significant topic within conservation research and practice. The transformative changes connected to contemporary conservation are related to recognition of multi-scaled, social-ecological dynamics; emergent, multi-scaled governance structures; and rising importance of place-specific meanings and local knowledge. These transformative changes are central to place-based conservation and closely tied to the social sciences. There is no singular approach to place-based conservation; however there are ways to organize the complexity of related ideas. This chapter overviews the purpose of the book as a resource for researchers and practitioners to build the conceptual grounding for place-based conservation, including characterizations of the meaning of place, their relevance to conservation, and an explanation for the organization of the book.

Keywords Concept of place • Place meaning • Polycentric governance • Complexity theory • Enlightenment science

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The concept of *place* has become an increasingly prominent topic with mounting influence on natural resource management and conservation practice. Examples of place-based conservation include collaborative landscape stewardship, climate change adaptation, ecosystem management, conservation legislation, regional tourism planning, open-space preservation, and community development. The growing attention to place-based conservation is most often acknowledged in the context of extending greater consideration to place-specific values, meanings, and relationships in management practice. However, a broad range of professionals increasingly recognizes the importance of scale and place-based processes as emerging frontiers for natural resource management (Adger, Barnett, Chapin, & Ellemor, 2011; Billick & Price, 2010; Gillen, 2004; Olsen, Kleiven, Skjoldal, & von Quillfeldt, 2011; Williams, 2008).

This frontier has several fronts. One focuses on charting place-based values and sentiments as embodied in ideas such as *sense of place*, *special places*, and *place attachment* among stakeholders and local residents (Kruger & Jakes, 2003). Another emphasizes the importance of context-sensitive management and collaborative place-based planning processes (Mason, 2007). A third frontier derives from place-based considerations emerging from diverse disciplines such as ecology, computer science, urban planning, public health, and community development (Billick & Price, 2010; Gillen, 2004).

Sensing this new frontier, U.S. government conservation agencies have begun to address issues of place. Recognizing the complexity of integrating conservation efforts across all species and resources, in 2010 the U.S. Department of Interior established a nationwide network of 21 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). The aim is to move away from the bureaucratic stovepipes of resource responsibilities and jurisdictional boundaries to facilitate conservation planning at a scale and scope beyond the capacity of any one organization. The resulting LCCs are regional place-based partnerships comprised of federal, state, tribal, local, nonprofit and private stakeholders to facilitate communication, share the results of research, and strategically target and implement additional research and actions to meet shared conservation goals (Wood & Hoffman, 2011, p. 9). In another example, the Pacific Northwest Region of the U.S. Forest Service has put “valuing places” at the top of its strategic agenda as a core management task and has been a leader in efforts to map *sense-of-place values* across the region (Hall, Farnum, Slider, & Ludlow, 2009). Similarly, in developing a management plan The New River Gorge National River in West Virginia (administered by the U.S. National Park Service) sponsored a dialogue with stakeholders on the values connected to the park and made an effort to reflect a shared sense of stewardship in the park’s mission. Outside the U.S., the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning in New South Wales, Australia, has adopted a “Plan First” initiative to promote “a place-based approach to plan preparation,” in part to stress “the role of local communities in defining a sense of identity and how local agencies can specify and deliver environmental sustainability” (Gillen, 2004, p. 215). Similarly, Olsen et al. (2011) point to a case study in Norway to highlight the growing international interest in the development and implementation of place-based management through the designation of marine

protected areas and similar designations “where identification of key ecosystem functions and boundaries have carried a large weight in defining the area boundaries ... in contrast to other examples of area-based management that have political or management parentage” (p. 258). Elsewhere, Lejano and Ingram (2007) draw lessons for what they describe as place-based conservation in the Republic of the Philippines’s Turtle Islands by showing how context-sensitive management that respects local traditions proved superior to regulatory approaches in conserving endangered marine turtles.

While these isolated examples indicate an increasing interest in place-based conservation, the transformative changes in the resource conservation practice that they portend are beginning to drive the conservation agenda at the highest policy levels and yet remain murky in the minds of many natural resource managers. As one example, one author (Williams) recently attended the first National Landscape Conservation Cooperative Workshop (organized by the U.S. Department of Interior and held in Denver Colorado in March 2012, with over 400 conservation scientists and practitioners in attendance) in which discussions and debates over the value, vision, and political viability of landscape-scale conservation dominated the plenary sessions. While there was evident enthusiasm for the LCC idea overall, the effectiveness of the approach was still very much in question. Thus a key aim of this book is to examine both the social science foundations and emerging practices that underlie this move towards place-based conservation.

As used in this book, *place-based conservation* signifies a “spatial turn” in ecological, social, and political thought (Pugh, 2009) and a “quieter revolution” (i.e., less regulatory and more collaborative) in conservation practice (Mason, 2007) both of which have emerged over the past quarter-century. Conceptually, a simple, unifying definition of place-based conservation is difficult to pin down and may not be necessary. In a more comprehensive sense the term reflects three broad, inter-related changes to conservation practice relative to classic multiple-use management, which predominated over most of the twentieth century. First, it involves a shift in the framing of analyses from non-spatial modeling of the production of resource commodities to multi-scaled modeling of complex, social-ecological system dynamics, as reflected in the literature on ecosystem management (Christensen et al., 1996) and ecological resilience (Gunderson, 2000). Second, it involves a shift from largely top-down, expert-driven decision-making structures to polycentric governance emphasizing inclusiveness and collaboration (Wessells, 2010; Young et al., 2007). Third, place-based conservation encompasses wider considerations of local knowledge (Fischer, 2000) and the historical, cultural, and symbolic significance of places, emphasizing the context within which people derive meaning and identity in their lives (Adger et al., 2011; Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995).

These altered perspectives have contributed to a more geographically explicit emphasis in conservation compared to earlier utilitarian models. The results expand spatial considerations both upward and downward in scale. Consistent with the turn toward ecosystem management and complexity theory in ecology over the past two decades, place-based conservation involves expanding analytical horizons from highly localized sites to broader examinations of landscape-scale interactions and processes.

With respect to knowledge and governance, however, place-based conservation is often motivated by a stronger role for more localized and bottom-up decision-making processes. In either case, a greater appreciation of polycentricity and interactions at multiple scales has emerged, such that considerations of place and scale have become indispensable factors organizing conservation science and practice.

Despite increasing references to place in conservation practice, place in geography and social research remains a complex idea that continues to challenge philosophers and scientists (Casey, 1998). On the one hand, it would be difficult to navigate, much less make sense of, the world without a fundamental ability to distinguish places and recognize the names we give them. Place names function as a powerful geographic short-hand for conveying material, cultural and locational significance. On the other hand, in everyday life we give little thought to the way places come into being and change over time. We often speak of named places as if their existence is objective, natural, and enduring, and yet places are created and continuously transformed by human discourse and action. Understanding the social processes that create and transform places is essential to advancing place-based conservation. To that end, this introductory chapter aims to provide an orientation to three questions:

- What is “place”? Specifically, how has the concept been understood in social science?
- Why “place-based” conservation? In what sense has conservation practice *not* been place-based and why should anyone care?
- How do the various topics treated in this book connect place to conservation science and practice?

1.1 What Is Place?

In everyday life the experience of place is ubiquitous, and place itself is taken for granted. Humans naturally divide the world into more or less discrete, hierarchically nested places. As suggested earlier, it would be hard to carry on almost any conversation without employing place names, yet we rarely stop to think about the social processes that brought them into being and all that they have come to signify. Take Portland, Oregon, for example. When did the territory now identified as Portland become Portland, the place? In the vicinity of Portland, the Columbia River serves as the boundary between Oregon and Washington. The Columbia River is also a place, with meaning drawn from, among other sources, accounts from Lewis and Clark of their expedition two centuries ago. Oregon, Washington, Portland, and the Columbia River had no meaning to Anglo-Europeans before the Lewis and Clark Expedition, but meanings and identities emerged as a result of it. Also, the native peoples who occupied the area connoted by these names today had their own maps and place names of significance to them, which helped guide these early explorers.

Put simply, places are meaningful locations (Cresswell, 2004). A place is not only materially “carved out” of space, it is “also interpreted, narrated, understood,

felt, and imagined ... the meaning or value of the same place is labile—flexible in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time, and inevitably contested” (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465). This characterization reflects something of a working consensus among geographers (Agnew & Duncan, 1989; Cresswell, 2004) that place embodies three elements. First, there is an obvious materiality to places. Water indeed flows through the Columbia River Gorge to the Pacific Ocean. Second, places have geographic location—that is, human-imposed (socially negotiated) boundaries, which are embedded in and embed other places of larger and smaller scales. The city of Portland has politically negotiated boundaries and is nested within the American political entity called Oregon. Third, places have significance because humans invest them with meanings, which are often expressed in stories—historical and other narrative accounts, including oral traditions of the native peoples who occupied or otherwise experienced those places. Unlike a resource, which only has utility for certain purposes, a place is imbued with a storied past, both natural and human. This ultimately distinguishes the idea of place from mere physical (material) space. Thus each place is unique in the world, with history, stories, and meanings that are pliable across time.

Of the three elements of place—materiality, location, and meaning—social science perspectives typically emphasize meaning. From a sociological perspective, “Space is what place becomes when the unique gathering of things, meanings, and values sucked are out. Put positively, place is space filled by people, practices, objects and representations” (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465). Places are literally and figuratively created by the collective actions of various local and extra-local actors, groups, and stakeholders—each serving in some way to establish, maintain, or negotiate varying senses of the place. Because places are constituted by people through their material and discursive practices, their meanings are often politically contested. It is this socially negotiated, politically contested quality that makes place ideas such a powerful lens for understanding natural resource management.

Central to geographers’ notions of place, the term *meaning* is used throughout this book to describe various forms of knowledge and beliefs about a place (including scientific and traditional or local forms of knowledge), as well as deeper, more emotional, symbolic relationships between a person or group and a place. This notion of relationship implies past experience or history with the place as well as identification with it by individuals and groups (Kruger, 2001; Kruger & Jakes, 2003). The place perspective recognizes that meanings exist beyond those traditionally acknowledged within natural resource assessments (e.g., symbolic, spiritual, historical), and that there may be little consensus on a place’s meaning within society. Also, place meanings are not inherent or fixed properties of places but result from continuous social and political processes of negotiation and contestation. Much of the political conflict in conservation planning is over whose meanings will prevail.

In addition to possessing material, locational, and meaning features, different approaches and terminologies are associated with the concept of place. For example, *sense of place* is a term often favored by architects, designers, planners, and some human geographers. Sometimes sense of place seems to refer simply to images, beliefs, ideas, or cognitions linked to a geographic location. Designers, literary

writers, and others may articulate a somewhat different perspective, referring to evoked feelings and suggestions that certain places exude positive feelings, harmony, or character. In this context sense of place connotes a degree of authenticity or inherent character. For example, Kunstler (1993) writes about the “geography of nowhere” as a critique of America’s bland suburban, retail, and freeway landscapes that lack any palpable sense of place. This implied idealized connotation of authenticity makes the notion of sense of place popular within certain radical environmental philosophies (e.g., bioregionalism, deep ecology) that suggest human beings are estranged from place and have lost their sense of place in the world and/or their connection to the “community of life” (Grumbine, 1992; McGinnis, House, & Jordan, 1999).

Sense of place often comes with an implied normative or prescriptive quality to define actions and behaviors deemed appropriate to the place. It is difficult and inappropriate to limit the characterization of place to mere descriptive meaning. Consider everyday encounters in which people characterize places, say a back yard, wildlife refuge, neighborhood park, or 40 acres of farmland. These descriptions imply a “right” and “wrong” behavior for the given place. Gieryn (2000) refers to such qualities as the “normative landscape,” effectively emphasizing the social expectations about what is “in place” and “out of place”—that is, acceptable versus deviant behavior in a given place. By centering conservation dialogue on the use and governance of a specific place, the conflicting norms of right and wrong behavior or use emerge in the context of the various meanings associated with that specific place. This differs from utilitarian approaches that proposed actions without reference to the location where they might eventually occur. In the U.S., for example, the Forest Service often developed its forest plans that called for a specified level of harvest without identifying exactly where on the landscape the harvest might eventually take place. In essence management choices are framed as votes for or against specific uses of resources rather than consideration of how those practices affect meanings and relationships to specific places.

Place attachment is a term often attributed to Tuan’s (1974) idea of topophilia (love of place), which focuses on how strongly people feel a sense of connection to a particular place. The term captures (often in a quantitative but somewhat narrow sense) the important distinction between valuing a place for its goods and services and the deeper emotional and symbolic relationships people form with a place. Early application of place attachment as a value in resource management sought to move beyond the commodity view of resources as storehouses or venues for satisfying material needs (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). Place attachment is sometimes mischaracterized as simply positive regard for a place without understanding the strong personal meanings and sentiments behind the attachment. Often people do not merely prefer one place over another; they cherish certain places, much as they cherish their children (Williams, 2008). This kind of strong emotion, which usually develops over time, is deeply rooted in our personal experiences.

Geographers have also examined place as a “fundamental means through which we make sense of the world and through which we act” (Sack, 1992, p. 1). In other words, place gives structure to our knowledge of the world and our activity within it. For example, Sack shows how knowledge perspectives vary geographically between “views from somewhere” (subjective everyday experiences of limited

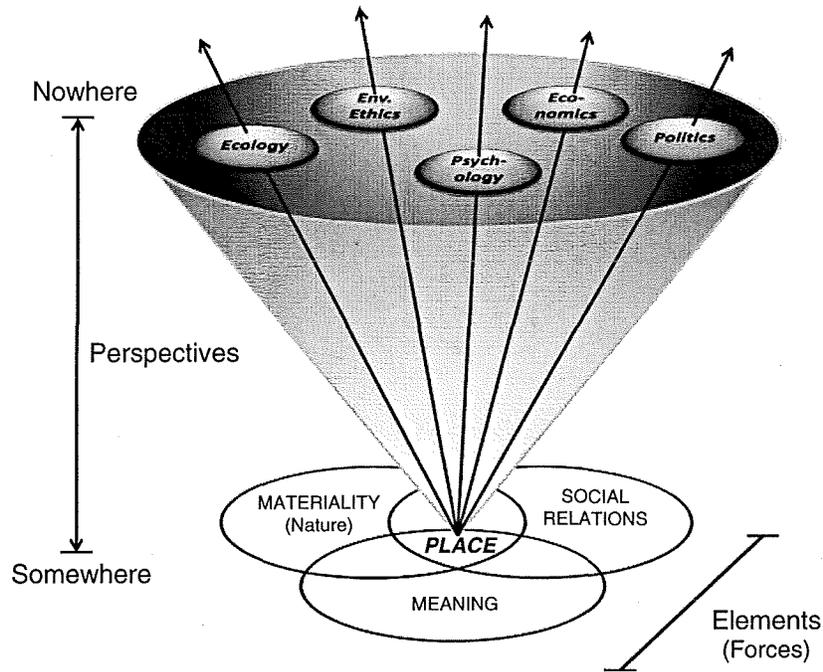


Fig. 1.1 The role of place in creating knowledge (Adapted from Sack, 1992)

generality) and “views from nowhere” (objective and generalizable perspectives) (see Fig. 1.1). Most scientific and technical knowledge is oriented toward the latter, with a high degree of generalizability from place to place. However, generalizability comes at the cost of constriction of knowledge into often narrowly defined disciplines. In recent decades social scientists have championed increasing attention to the view from somewhere, emphasizing the importance of context, local conditions, and place-specific culture in shaping knowledge and well-being (Finnegan, 2008; Fischer, 2000; Preston, 2000). This heightened emphasis on the importance of local context in making sense of the world reasserts the role of the direct, subjective, and emplaced experience as a legitimate form of knowledge relevant to decision-making, and it has played a foundational role in advancing a place-based approach to conservation (Bray & Velazquez, 2009; Fischer, 2000).

1.2 Why Place-Based Conservation?

In addition to laying the foundation for the chapters to follow, it is important to understand the social and intellectual forces driving a place-based approach to conservation practice. First, in what sense has conservation practice *not* been place-based? Second, why is place-based conservation intuitively appealing to

the public as well as practitioners? To answer the first question we need to examine the shifting intellectual outlook on the role of science and technical analysis in the rational management of natural resources. Understanding the second question requires us to examine contemporary social trends shaping perceptions of landscape values and the pace of landscape change.

1.3 The Transformative Potential Underlying Place-Based Conservation

The content of this book builds from the premise that a shift towards place-based conservation is underway, bringing with it a fundamental transformation in thinking to both conservation science and practice when measured against a deeply institutionalized history of multiple-use public lands management. This transformation has been underway at least since the emergence of the concept of ecosystem management in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Browman & Stergiou, 2004; Christensen et al., 1996; Salwasser, 1990). Some researchers have gone so far as to describe it as a paradigm shift in resource management from valuing commodities to valuing more holistic entities ranging from communities (Kruger, 2003; Rolston & Coufal, 1991) to ecosystems (Freemuth, 1998) and places (Williams & Stewart, 1998). While these various formulations of the changing paradigm have much in common—they are all in some way or another post-utilitarian (Kruger, 2001; Williams, 2002a)—place has emerged as one of the most inclusive ways to frame the changing practice of natural resource conservation.

From 1901 to 1909, considered the golden era of American conservationism, the guiding principles of practice became entrenched in the professional and institutional cultures behind the management of over 100 million acres of U.S. public land set aside for the public good. Two core principles of utilitarian conservation were: (1) to use scientific principles to drive land management decisions in order to be independent from the whims of public values; and (2) to become independent of the federal appropriations process by relying on revenue from sales of natural resources for administrative funding (Dana & Fairfax, 1980, Ch. 3). These principles were not forcibly questioned until the 1950s, when societal values regarding public lands expanded beyond market-based commodities (e.g., timber, forage, minerals) and land management agencies were pressured to consider a wider range of public values in their decision-making (Culhane, 1981; Hays, 1999; Twight, 1983). Given decades of privileging technical efficiency and discounting broader (non-utilitarian) public values, place-based conservation has been counter-intuitive to traditions of professional land management (Priscoli & Wolf, 2009; Sarewitz, 2004). However, in the past few decades land management agencies have tangled with increasingly complex problems that force them to reexamine the nature and role of science and technical information in their solution (Allen, Tainter, Pires, & Hoekstra, 2001; Larsen et al., 1990), suggesting in part a need to reinvent the practice of conservation (Minteer & Manning, 2003) and make it more participatory and inclusive (Mason, 2007).

In the 1980s, despite established agency cultures and professional identities built on scientific expertise, U.S. conservation agencies began to question their core traditions and seek pathways for transformation. At the outset this involved two fundamental changes to conservation practice that had guided multiple-use resource management throughout much of the twentieth century (Williams & Patterson, 1996). The first change involved expanding the spatial-temporal unit of analysis beyond the site and stand levels of traditional forest practice (e.g., in silviculture) and beginning to examine resource management from the perspective of a holistic, dynamic, multi-scaled landscape. The second change broadened consideration beyond the almost exclusive focus on economic or utilitarian concerns (as exemplified by the use of linear programming tools such as FORPLAN, a strategic forest-level planning and optimization program, to assess the economic or financial efficiency of resource allocations) to embrace a wider array of ecological and public values.

A key to understanding the transformative implications of place-based conservation is to consider place a social analogue to the ecosystem concept. As Williams and Stewart (1998) suggested, both concepts (place and ecosystem) recognize that society values natural resources in ways not easily or necessarily captured by the commodity and production metaphors of “use” and “yield.” Both notions seek to localize and contextualize knowledge and address spatial and temporal scales (see also Morse, Hall, & Kruger, 2009). Recognizing the processes and meanings that constitute a place, however, adds a significant human role in making and using the landscape, which is often absent in ecological analyses. Negotiating a shared sense of place that incorporates both natural and social history enables managers to seek common ground without locking people into discordant utilitarian, environmentalist, or preservationist positions. That is, it may be possible to build a level of consensus around a shared sense of place because it naturally leads to a discussion of desired future conditions in both ecological and human terms.

These changes in conservation practice are reflected by a broader conceptual shift in the sciences and philosophy in which the concepts of place, scale, and spatiality have become essential organizing concepts (Billick & Price, 2010; Finnegan, 2008; Gieryn, 2000; Schneider, 2001; Wright & Scholz, 2005). Over the past two decades place ideas have helped to elucidate a more systemic and embedded view of reality in the social and natural sciences. This is certainly the case in the social sciences, where human geography is being rediscovered not only by disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology, political science, communications, and anthropology, but within geography itself. Similarly, in ecology and urban and regional planning—where landscape and place have always had currency—spatiality is being taken more seriously (Healey, 1997). This change has elevated the importance of space, time, and context in a shift away from the reductionist views of science that reached ascendancy in the mid-twentieth century based upon the intellectual foundation of traditional utilitarian conservation.

Adopting new ecological perspectives on content and scale of analysis is only part of the transformation. What makes valuing or conserving places truly transformative is that it challenges cherished notions of objective science and knowledge that have traditionally legitimized conservation practice. Put another way, recognizing

that we socially construct the places we experience challenges the supremacy of Enlightenment science and reason that underwrites utilitarian conservation. The Enlightenment ideal of science involves an epistemology (theory of knowledge) variously described as promoting a singular “god’s-eye” (Hayles, 1995) or “view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1986; Sack, 1992) that is “insufficiently enlightened about its own conception of reason” (Schmidt, 1998, p. 420). To put this in spatial or place-specific terms, the Enlightenment understanding of science promotes a “placeless,” depersonalized, universal orientation to the world (see Fig. 1.1). It does this by continually seeking a more distant point of view, further from somewhere (the intimate realm of everyday experience) and toward a more remote and objective point of view that is virtually nowhere (Sack, 1992) and not actually experienced by anyone. Though profoundly useful for gaining certain forms of generalizable knowledge, the drive for a universal “god’s-eye” view inevitably obscures the particular meanings and relationships associated with a specific place as it is experienced by people. In the utilitarian tradition objects and features of a place were seen as components of abstract categories (e.g., forest types, recreation opportunity classes, fuel conditions). This limitation was evident to the Forest Service policy team that reviewed the first round of national forest planning (Larsen et al., 1990) in that the highly abstract computerized optimization models such as FORPLAN held little meaning for the public, with output that was difficult to comprehend even for the planners running these models.

In addition, moving from the highly subjective and holistic knowledge from somewhere to the more distant and objective view from nowhere tends to reduce and fragment knowledge along disciplinary and theoretical lines. In Fig. 1.1, Sack (1992) uses the image of an inverted cone rising and expanding above the horizontal plane to illustrate how the process of abstraction isolates and segments our understanding of places. From his model we can better appreciate how past conservation science and practice has largely deployed abstract technical lenses closer to nowhere. Nature was primarily viewed through a lens of “yield” (as from a factory or farm), neglecting larger-scale ecological processes and interactions. Social relations (value preferences and trade-offs) were examined through the technical lenses of microeconomics, management science, and linear programming in the hope of avoiding political controversies. Meanings were largely confined to notions of economic utility and user preferences for measurable goods and services, overlooking harder-to-define historical, cultural, personal, and spiritual meanings and values. Yet important uses, meanings, and values of a place are context-specific and experienced closer to somewhere. The more managers sought the view from nowhere, the harder it was to include the somewhere (what could be called the indigenous or local knowledge, meaning, or sense of place) in their model, which nevertheless remained a key part of the whole they sought to value in conservation practices. Often this resulted in a disconnect between people and planning processes, generating conflict over and resistance to management plans.

In sum, places encompass a variety of uses, meanings, and values for individuals, groups, and cultures that are difficult to identify using conventional scientific/technical tools for resource analysis. Any particular tract of land may be home to “local” people; an exotic, human-less “other” to foreigners and tourists, or a genetic reservoir

to scientists and environmentalists. To counteract the narrowing effect of the view from nowhere, Entrikin (1991) suggested recognizing intermediary forms of knowledge between somewhere and nowhere, which he described as a view or position of “betweeness”—that is, informed by scientific discourse while also being historically and spatially specific. Thus place-based conservation involves a fundamental repositioning between the scientific/technical view from nowhere and a more appreciated and enriched view from somewhere.

1.4 The Intuitive Appeal of Place-Based Conservation

Interest in place extends well beyond obscure academic debates about Enlightenment science and the view from nowhere. The idea of place has popular and professional appeal (Beatley & Manning, 1997; Kruger & Jakes, 2003; Lippard, 1997; Mason, 2007; Spretnak, 1997). Although place ideas have been widely used in geography, architecture, and regional planning since the early 1970s (Healey, 1997), more recently the growing emphasis on collaborative landscape-scale governance has amplified interest in place concepts within the natural resources field (Adger et al., 2011; Kruger & Williams, 2007; Nie & Fiebig, 2010). Treating nature as a collection of saleable products or commodities, or isolating properties of the environment in order to study them scientifically leaves many people—lay and professional alike—with a sense that the larger whole (the place itself) has somehow been lost along the way. This was the case with respect to much of the reaction described in the U.S. Forest Service’s internal critique of its technical approach to forest planning (Larsen et al., 1990). While early formulations such as ecosystem management attempted to put traditional conservation science into a broader spatial and historic context, most U.S. agency planning processes have not fully addressed the richness of human meanings and relationships to the land that people express and want to see represented (Farnum & Kruger, 2008; Kruger & Williams, 2007).

A key driving force behind the increasing discussion of place can also be found in public angst about globalization and the accelerating pace of change in contemporary society (Cresswell, 2004; Massey, 2005; Sheppard, 2002). The experience and meaning of known and cherished places increasingly is transformed by seemingly uncontrollable, distant, global-scale processes—from climate change and oil spills to economic interdependence, transnational corporate capitalism, and ubiquitous travel and migration. Concerns about the character and quality of places have increased with the spread of mass culture and consumption. For many people the social, technological, and economic forces of globalization appear to have weakened local distinctiveness. Also, relatively inexpensive transportation and new information technologies enable more people to experience ever more parts of the world through international trade, travel, and the media (Urry, 2000).

Ironically, the impact of globalization has been to make places more important, not less (Massey, 2005; Sheppard, 2002; Zimmerer, 2006). With the spread of globalization, the once taken-for-granted, subconscious meanings of a place now seem

threatened by nearly every proposed change to the local landscape. Proposals for new land uses—whether theme parks, prisons, wildlife preserves, timber harvests, land exchanges, or shopping malls—communicate a sense of place defined by an outsider (e.g., a scientist, government, corporation, etc.) and threaten the local sense of place, thus representing the power of the outsider over the local (Williams & Stewart, 1998).

At the same time that globalization threatens local control over place, it invites more and more distant stakeholders to make claims on what a place means and how it should be used (Williams & Van Patten, 2006). In other words, a more globalized, diverse culture often supports a more expansive set of place meanings than might be recognized locally. Some of these more-distant claims may recognize a place (e.g., as wilderness or a World Heritage Site) in ways that go beyond traditionally prescribed meanings and favor some other form of development. Thus at times globalization may appear to some as a positive influence in the protection of certain place values otherwise threatened by indigenous, national, or corporate exploitation, while at the same time evoking denigration from others as a dangerous, destabilizing force reshaping places from afar (Williams, 2002b).

1.5 Advancing Place-Based Conservation: Social Science Perspectives

In striving for an ever-more objective or generalizable view from nowhere, the philosophies of utilitarian conservation and scientific management have done much to advance our understanding of the material qualities and locational (spatial) structure of natural resources. Modern science has enabled us to describe myriad environmental conditions and model the distribution of biophysical processes such as the effects of different soil types on the flow of water, genetic variability in sub-species of birds, and impacts of wildfire on the carbon cycle—to name but a few. Using tools such as remote-sensing and geographic information systems (GIS), we have enlarged capacities to identify and map precise locations on Earth's surface in ways not imaginable a century ago. To be sure, such advances are highly worthwhile as part of a matrix of methods and information relevant to conservation practice. However as we develop increasingly powerful views from nowhere, we risk leaving out a core component of place-based conservation, the context-rich view from somewhere. The social sciences have much to offer in filling this void.

Until fairly recently we have lacked the theoretical justification and analytical tools for capturing the view from somewhere as an integral partner in conservation practice. Too often the knowledge, experience, and social significance of specific places have not been given the serious consideration afforded to more technical and ostensibly objective perspectives (Kruger & Shannon, 2000). We need to understand and incorporate indigenous knowledge and meanings attributed to places by people who live, work, play, and/or otherwise occupy these places. But the focus for most discussions of environmental controversies and the institutional structures that guide them have centered on the technicalities of laws and planning process, rather

than the more subjective aspects of place that typically animate these discussions. For example, Yaffee (1994) provided an excellent account of how controversies over the technical planning processes surrounding logging in the U.S. Pacific Northwest during the 1970s–1980s centered on issues of scientific uncertainty, jurisdictional ambiguity, and administrative cultures—to the detriment of productive dialogue about the meaning and use of specific places. Responding to the limitations of traditional practices of conservation, this book offers social science perspectives on how to reinvigorate the view from somewhere, or to borrow from Gieryn (2000), open up more “space for place” in the practice of conservation.

The book is divided into four sections that build on a particular theme in the social science of place. The first section examines conceptual issues of place-based conservation. Because place and place-based conservation have been applied in diverse ways, it is important to distinguish and clarify social science approaches. These chapters emphasize the idea that place-based practice in environmental and natural resource management involves a fundamental rethinking of its institutional context. They each portray a significant problem that traditional planning models have been poorly equipped to address, while offering suggestions for how place-based conservation might resolve them. Thus these chapters discuss the roles of, and interactions among, science, practice, scale, governance, organizational and agency cultures, and community relationships to place.

The book’s second section examines the source of the deep relationships that people develop with places and landscapes. Individual relationships with environments are a beginning point for understanding the concept of place. For most people, the places where they grow up, live, work, and play contribute to a sense of identity, value, and wholeness. The chapters in this section break down the issues that make place challenging for planners. These experiences and relationships are the wellspring of place meanings and sentiments that drive conservation policies and debates. The authors in this section discuss ideas such as felt value, lived experience, and the development of deep-seated intimacy with place, demonstrating how experience, knowledge, and identification with particular places are central to place-based conservation.

The third section explores the ways in which human relationships with places are represented, become more visible and public, and are transformed by conservation practices. Place meanings are for the most part taken for granted and are not easy to articulate. We all have places that are important to us for any number of reasons yet we do not often think about what a place means to us or why it is important or special. Because meanings are more than simply statements of preference, representing place meanings requires a conscious process of building a context—say, someone’s life or a group narrative—in which to understand the meanings ascribed to a place. This section addresses the difficulties inherent in representing place meanings and identifies processes through which they become public and (potentially) integrated in planning processes. This section posits that successful place-based conservation efforts involve innovation in governance strategies along with collective place-making, that address how meanings are created, contested, and transformed through public discourse.

Place-based conservation does not necessarily imply the need for new techniques or revamping strategies for public involvement, and the fourth section on “mapping

place” illustrates the application of traditional techniques for place-based conservation. Whereas some researchers start with the concept of place and derive planning process from the concept, others start with the traditional tools of land-use planners and fit the concept to adaptations of the tools. Such is the case with chapters of this section, which recognize that maps ground land-use plans in the physical world, and offer a common basis for dialogue amongst stakeholders. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) allow spatial information to be digitized and mapped for various kinds of analysis. Although the concept of place is embedded in frameworks of social construction, felt senses, and lived experiences, it is the physical groundings of place that emerge in the chapters of this section.

1.6 Articulating Place Through Lenses of the Social Sciences

The goal of this book is to provide a foundation for a better understanding of place-based conservation through the various lenses of the social sciences. Although there is no singular approach to place here, this collection of essays articulates place as a social science construct distinct from other approaches for understanding and applying a practice of place. It asserts a more human-centered approach to conservation and considers context-specific knowledge and values on equal footing with generalizable, context-independent scientific knowledge. Beginning a decision-making process with context-specific knowledge provides the foundation for the exploration of common ground through the sharing of place-specific values and meanings and opens the door to dialogue that may lead to improved outcomes that do not necessarily compete with each other (Young, 1996). At the same time, place-based conservation recognizes the potential for conflict and works to provide venues for bringing people with different meanings and sentiments together to build understanding and respect among stakeholders.

Place-based conservation has begun to catch on among land managers as they increasingly recognize that their responsibilities extend beyond managing natural resources to provide goods and services to serving as stewards for places that people know and value. Yet it remains unclear how to effectively translate the intuitive appeal of place into practice. Because the research on place is quite diverse, diffuse, and sometimes contradictory (Patterson & Williams, 2005) one aim of this book is to provide a resource for researchers and practitioners to help build the conceptual grounding necessary to work with these ideas successfully.

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