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Articulating Identity in and through Maine's North Woods

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ABSTRACT

Land-use changes can interrupt relationships to place, threaten community identity, and prompt instability, altering the social and physical context and impacting the present and future state of the social-ecological system (SES). Approaches that map system changes are needed to understand the effects of natural resources decisions and human-nature interactions. In this essay, we merge theories of articulation, the event, and symbolic territory into a critical framework to analyze online newspaper article responses and blogs referencing a land-use controversy in the State of Maine, U.S. Application of this framework reveals land-use controversies as place-making events that alter contexts and sense of place, and precipitate the re-articulation of identity in relation to, and through, symbolic territory.

Introduction

Communities throughout the world value certain spaces, not necessarily because they are the most beautiful, but because they are integral parts of the community's identity, often for reasons incomprehensible to outsiders. In Maine, US, there is an abundance of distinctive spaces intimately tied to community identity and quality of place. In 2010, the US Census Bureau classified Maine as the most rural state in the nation, with 61.3% of its population living in rural areas. It is also home to the largest block of undeveloped land in the Northeast, and in the nation. Despite its rural landscape, suburbanization and changes to land-use threaten many of Maine's rural communities (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2006). One exemplary case of land-use change began in 2005 when Plum Creek Timber Co., the United State's largest landowner, submitted a petition to rezone approximately 426,000 acres around one of Maine's most treasured natural resources, Moosehead Lake (Maine Land Use Regulation Commission [LURC], 2005), which also abuts a revered area known as Maine's North Woods. The proposal ignited one of the most contentious land-use controversies in the state's history. While Maine's Supreme Court ruled LURC's proposal procedures legal in 2012, putting an end to the judicial controversy (Miller, 2012), changes precipitated by this event are ongoing. This case, although unique in location and character, illustrates the disruptions that can occur from land-use conflicts and the impacts they can have on communities' sense of and quality of place.

According to Cantrill, Thompson, Garrett and Rochester (2007), land-use changes can be major events that interrupt relationships to place, or senses of self-in-place. These changes may create a "sense of rupture, or a breach, or a violation," trigger identity conflicts, cause significant unrest, or alter institutional and social-ecological practices that define a community (Carbaugh, 1996, p. 159; Norton, 2008). Some changes may even prompt instability sufficient to re-make

the social and physical context of the conflict itself, thus impacting the present and future state of the social-ecological system (SES), including identities, relations in place (Milstein, Anguino, Sandoval, Chen, & Dickinson, 2011), and cultural rules used for decision-making (Chibnik, 1981). Because of these potentially profound impacts, Lindenfeld, Hall, McGreavy, Silka, and Hart (2012) argue that we need to “attend to the complex social-ecological interactions . . . in novel ways” (p. 2). We agree and feel that it is critical to develop new approaches to study the effects of natural resource decisions, like rezoning.

In this article, we present a new way of conceptualizing and studying land-use conflicts and their repercussions on place and identity by bringing together the theoretical constructs of articulation, the event, and symbolic territory with our understanding of SES as contexts in constant movement. Through textual analysis of news and commentary, we show that ripples from significant land-use changes re-arrange the make-up of SES contexts and induce community members to reassert or modify their identity and relationship to place, even in a seemingly stable articulated context like the North Woods. Our analysis of public texts about the Plum Creek conflict demonstrates the rezoning proposal’s impact as a place-making *event* that precipitated the *re-articulation* of identity in relation to, and through, a *symbolic territory*.

We isolate changed relationships through online discussion comments posted in articles on newspaper websites and newspaper-associated blogs, as well as postings from websites of organizations (e.g. Natural Resources Council of Maine) mentioned by commenters. While environmental conflict studies typically analyze formal documents, such as public hearing transcripts and agency reports (Endres, 2009), or conduct participant observation (Walker, 2004) or interviews (Nunneri & Hofmann, 2005), we selected informal documents. Formal documents are highly important but do not always address the broader impact of land-use events and are

constrained by formal public participation structures. Communication outside of public participation mechanisms (e.g. social media) is important because it is directly plugged into the SES as contexts that people live in. By analyzing how community members position themselves relative to the North Woods in online conversations, we are able to study the evolving interconnection of community and place and demonstrate how the rezoning proposal functions as a place-making event for the state, not just for those living around Moosehead Lake. To proceed, first we introduce our theoretical constructs and synthesize them into a framework. Next, we describe how to apply this framework to textual analysis, followed by the analysis itself. Finally, we discuss the implications of this critical framework for understanding environmental conflict.

Theory

Communication has the power to reorganize basic human-nature relationships through what is said, how it is said, and who says it *in particular locations or scenes* (Cox, 2007; Carbaugh, 1996). Moreover, discourse is *shaped by* and *helps create* institutions, cultures, and physical landscape features (Ward, 2009). It follows that the contexts in which communication occurs are produced by and with communication practices and, as a result, that communication is integral to place making. This section conceptualizes the formation of context *as place* in relation to land-use changes.

Articulation Theory

Unlike analytical approaches that treat context as a *stable* object—separating practices, identities, and effects from context to analyze them—articulation theory treats context as dynamically *unstable* (Grossberg, 1992) and composed of the very elements that affect it. Contexts are always “in process,” emerging from relationships between things such as linguistic

practices, nature-culture relationships, institutional regimes, and locations as they continuously interact with one another. As articulations, contexts are nothing but changeable relationships produced by the temporary linkages between a diverse range of human and non-human elements (Greene, 2009). For example, Pezzullo (2007) documents how the siting practices of chemical industries and their wastes can “partially fix meaning” (Deluca, 1999, p. 335) by linking toxins, urban locations, groups dwelling near disposal sites, and practices mobilized in response to the waste into a “temporary unit” that tethers pollution, industry, and community to each other. That unit forms a context in which place and community become inseparable, giving identity and significance to both. Against theories that treat context as “*out there*,” articulation theory assumes that “*identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects*” (Slack, 1996, p. 123, original italics). To separate elements from one another is to change the context. Likewise, to introduce new elements is to change the context (Grossberg, 1992). Thus, context is not a frame for interpreting meaning under articulation theory because what constitutes a “text” to be read is dependent on the linkages that make meaningful discourse possible. In Pezzullo’s example, conjunctions between toxic waste practices, locations, and people create possibilities for meaning across an array of elements; they are not simply referents for signs (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Thus, discourses do not stand as texts to context, but as products of and organizing components in complex systems.

Discourse is therefore understood as a system of interconnected practices, not just of language itself, that have the ability to signify and that are integral *parts* of context. Practices that function discursively are not given but historically contingent. Although any practice might function discursively, it does so temporarily, contingent on relationships between different elements, like those between words, lakes, and memories. Meaning is not the semantic value of

a sign, then, but the significance established through conjunctions, for example, between people, values, and things. Importantly, “some articulations are particularly potent, persistent, and effective” (Slack, 1996, p. 122) and so may limit forging new linkages or breaking old ones. Hence, this theory does not envision endless, equivocal combinations of elements; just because meaning is radically dynamic, it does not mean “that any and all possible articulations are equally likely” (Deluca, 1999, p. 334). Instead, past articulations produce a type of structure (Hall, 1985) that constrains the sorts of discourses that are possible, and yet this structure is always in flux so that the limits established at one point may not be the limits at another. Mumby (1997) notes the paradox of continual change and stability in regard to communication: “Communication is thus (im)possible in that it simultaneously is stable (creating shared, relatively fixed, discourses) and unstable (continually articulating the possibilities for its own transformation)” (p. 16).

In land-use conflicts, the tension between stability and instability is especially vivid. For instance, referencing the Plum Creek controversy, commenters consistently posit that things that once were, like wilderness and privacy, are being “taken away” by development, thus creating a sense that prior stability is threatened. In making these arguments, commenters fail to recognize constant regional changes:

Then [turn of 20th century], four railway lines brought visitors to the popular resort destination [Moosehead Lake]. From there, a fleet of as many as four steamships ferried tourists . . . to hotels such as the Kineo House, whose dining room in the early 1900s could seat 500 guests—roughly one-third of Greenville’s population today (Parker, 2004, as cited in Lilieholm, 2007, p. 16).

Despite efforts to portray stability, the land is revealed through the conflict as impermanent, as an element within a system of practices related to it within an ever-articulating system.

Articulation as Event

Given the contradiction of stability from instability, articulation theory is strengthened in application by attention to eventfulness. For example, ocean waves are stable in that the tides are regular, but waves themselves are nonetheless an event, inherently unstable and variable, rising and breaking continually. Contexts-as-articulations may be viewed similarly as events always in flux. Deluca (1999) describes “image-events,” visuals of activist interventions like photos of tree occupations, designed to disrupt existing articulations. Recognizing that articulations are constantly developing and are continually disrupted at some level, we prefer the process-based concept of “event” forwarded by Deleuze (1993). He describes four event characteristics that, when repurposed, capture the continuous nature of (re)articulations in land-use conflicts. First, an event is marked by “extension,” meaning “when one element is stretched over the following ones, such that it is a whole and the following elements are its parts” (p. 77). The whole of the event is not pre-defined; it has no ordained final moment, but instead is indefinitely “stretched” (or “linked” in articulation theory’s vernacular). Plum Creek’s proposal has no specific closure date; it extends uncertainly through articulations with new elements, symbolic and material, such as when commenters link potential development in the North Woods to Maine’s coastal development. Second, events have “intrinsic properties” particular to the elements articulated within the whole (p. 77). Because of the qualities of the elements that comprise them, events do not unfold in random directions. This helps explain the paradoxical structuring effect of articulations because intrinsic properties can “serve as powerful barriers to the potential for rearticulation” (Slack, 1996, p. 122). Existing articulations of the North Woods and its

inhabitants constrain proposals like Plum Creek's from extending indiscriminately. It is hard to see how Plum Creek's proposal could redefine the North Woods as a marine environment, for example, even though coastal development is articulated to it.

As an event unfolds, the intrinsic properties of and specific linkages between elements produce Deleuze's third characteristic: individuality. The articulation of communities, the locations they inhabit, and the practices connecting them are unique to each land-use event. Plum Creek is distinguished from other development proposals in rural sites by its particular conjuncture of elements. As various coupled elements begin to coalesce into a distinctive event, it becomes more than the sum of its ever-changing parts. The different elements begin to hold onto each other, what Deleuze calls "*prehension*" (p. 78, original italics). Prehension, root of "apprehend," is an ability to grasp. Linkages not only join elements, but those elements (such as fishing and the North Woods) begin to belong to each other, producing a kind of mutual-capture. Call it a *place-making effect*. Carbaugh (1999), speaking of "listening" among the Blackfeet people, provides an example:

His [Two Bears] plea to us 'to listen,' then, is aroused by the place, just as the place becomes full of significance through this cultural form. In this practice of 'listening,' an activity and place become intimately entwined, for this cultural form and this natural site reveal themselves together. (p. 257)

As evident through his discussion of listening, place-making does not occur in a single moment; it is a process of *becoming-entwined* and *revealing-together*. If events are fluid, "forever moving, gaining or losing parts carried away in movement" (Deleuze, 1993, p. 79), the challenge is to see the event *as a process* rather than as single moment. Deleuze provides the necessary

tools with his final event characteristic, “ingressions.” Ingressions are comparatively moored entities that allow access to contexts *as events*. Certain articulated entities endure despite their continual mutation. They offer a kind of permanence in flux, remaining “the same over successions of moments” (p. 79), and can be physically durable or, perhaps, persistent like recurrent practices. Ingressions, as stable forms of instability, provide access to the process of place-making because researchers can isolate volatile changes against long-term, constant patterns and features of a place.

Symbolic Territory

The North Woods are a durable, yet ever-changing material-symbolic entity, a symbolic territory that offers access to the dynamic place-making effects surrounding Plum Creek’s proposal. Osborne (2006) describes how symbolic territories are articulated by the way they take hold of us and us them:

Identification with storied places is essential for the cultivation of an awareness . . . of their identity. The familiar material world becomes studded with symbolically charged sites and events that provide social continuity, contribute to the collective memory, and provide spatial and temporal reference points for society. (p. 152)

A symbolic territory “is not merely symbolic; its symbolic force emerges from investment in and labor on the land” (Norton, 2008, p. 230), which means its significance and force remain durable through ongoing re-articulations. In that sense, “the objective geometry of space is transformed into emotive places by *living* in place, *memorizing* place, *narrating* place and creating ‘symbolic landscapes’” (Osborne, 2006, p. 150, italics added). Because one’s awareness of and attachment

to symbolic territories are created through our interactions with the land, they are not representations forcefully overlain on a place; they are articulated contexts.

As such, place-based identity, particularly for a symbolic territory, is formed from the linkage of this practice to that location, this site to that memory, this memory to that territory, this land to those politics (Grossberg, 1992, p. 54). Such places are not only symbolic of, for example, a slow-paced life, but are intimately connected with how a community knows itself (“we are a mill town”) and with the history of person and place (“I have been going to this park since I was a little girl”). Symbolic territories provide important identity resources to community members through the mutual capture of place and self (“I fish in remote areas; it’s just me and nature”). Because of their storied importance, land-use change events can prompt significant re-articulations of symbolic territories and, although the territory remains, its material features and symbolic meaning evolve. Gudeman (2001) might call the North Woods the “sacra” of the community, or an object or practice that is “so powerfully linked to the constitution of community that it is never traded but held for the power and identity it conveys or sustains,” such that its loss “is a community tragedy” (p. 30).

Method

We have chosen to look at objects that are unproblematically discursive (news articles and their comment sections, editorials, blog posts, and pertinent organizations’ websites), but it is important to remember that other relevant practices can be discursive (economic and ecological systems, social practices, individual behaviors), although not readily marked as such. Accounting for the boundaries of what constitutes discourse about the North Woods requires a history of how different practices became discursive while others did not; that exceeds the scope

of this. Instead, we focus on well-recognized texts and employ an analysis of articulations as revealed by those texts to demonstrate the potential of articulation analysis to explain land-use changes as place-making events.

Texts

Texts selected for analysis include online posts in the comment sections of articles related to Plum Creek's rezoning proposal. Articles and their comments were located in the online versions of the *Bangor Daily News*, *Kennebec Journal*, *Morning Sentinel*, and *Portland Press Herald*. Additional comments were drawn from blogs and organizations mentioned by commenters (e.g. material on the Natural Resources Council of Maine's website). The newspapers are produced in four of Maine's largest cities, serving the majority of the state's population. A primary blog for this study, *MaineToday.com*, is accessible through these newspapers' websites. We collected articles, article comments, and blog posts published between January 2005 and May 2006, during which time Plum Creek submitted their first amended proposal. Exemplary responses representing both sides of the controversy were included where possible. Approximately 30 articles and letters to the editor and 90 commenter posts were analyzed.

Tonn, Endress, and Diamond (1993) demonstrate the potential for gaining access to events (in their case study of a Maine hunting accident) through newspapers and editorials. To gain access to the Plum Creek controversy, we followed their approach and expanded it to include comments posted in response to online news stories. Undoubtedly, written texts lack the richness of a study like Pezzullo's (2007), which utilizes observations, lived experiences, personal discussions, and public discourse. However, we chose to work solely from public texts

in response to the realities of highly formalized, text-bound decision-making. Scholars studying environmental conflicts need to be able to produce serviceable analyses of context formation when ethnographic work is not possible. In the US, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a major force behind public participation in environmental issues. Enacted in 1969, NEPA requires federal agencies to document environmental impacts of human activities (e.g. building a dam or wind farm) and to involve the public in the decision-making (Shepherd & Bowler, 1997). Public involvement generally occurs through formal announcements, written comment periods, and formal public hearings during which time participants can discuss the alternatives proposed by the agency (Black, 2004). The majority of the feedback that decision makers, like Department of Energy (DOE) officials, analyze is written; even verbal testimony is recorded and transcribed. Pragmatically, texts are often all that are available to guide researchers' and agency decision makers' assessments of environmental conflict. Given these constraints, it is critical that we develop tools to analyze written texts not just as representational documents but as windows through which we can observe the articulation of place and identity.

Analyzing “Double Articulations”

Articulation theory calls for an analysis of how symbolism within discourse *and* historic conjunctions between different “modes of production” (government regulations, past land uses, the land's ecology interactively constitute an entity's significance, like that of the North Woods. Greene (2009) calls this “double articulation,” where the entity in question has its identity and potential meanings secured through a double-pincer: discourses and nature-culture relationships (p. 55). Together, they temporarily stabilize what different elements can and should mean. The outcome is a sense of place and sense of self-in-place. One could argue that Pezzullo (2007) conducts a study of double articulation, wherein a raft of practices—waste, housing, racial,

economic, governmental, and touristic—are intricately interwoven with discourse to produce the context that toxic tourism disrupts and re-arranges. For this analysis, we are interested in historic conjunctions that seemingly define the North Woods (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), as well as the discursive practices used to talk about it. Yet, unlike Pezzullo, we must identify the relevant conjunctions through texts alone. We do this by conducting a “double reading” of the texts in order to get at the double articulation of the North Woods instigated by the Plum Creek proposal. First, we identify reported practices linked to the North Woods such as access, hunting, family activities, and economic production. These provide a partial, reflective record of modes of production that articulate the North Woods and Maine identities in relation to it. Self-reported practices are taken merely as an index, not a representation, of lived experience. Although not comprehensive, such reports do suggest affective significance. Second, we identify the discursive productivity of the texts themselves. We analyze how the texts connect material practices to identity and place. For example, consider the following comment:

I grew up in the area – and it would grieve me and my family to have the Moosehead Lake area – and the State of Maine – become a Mecca for the well moneyed people. If that happens, the locals – woodsmen, canoe makers, hikers, fishermen and hunters – will surely be denied a lifestyle their families have known for generations. (Katy, n.d.)

The first read notes lived practices, “woodsmen, canoe makers, hikers, fishermen and hunters,” that articulate a “lifestyle.” These practices identify the North Woods through specific, lived connections with the land. The second read analyzes how those practices are configured through discourse as “traditional” or something that “generations” of people have experienced, which articulates Maine identity partly by disarticulating “well moneyed people” from Maine. Notions of tradition and heritage are particularly important in this analysis as both are associated with

concepts of permanence, which helps explain why certain changes are threatening and destabilizing (Tonn, et al., 1993). The analysis that follows is a “double reading” of participants’ comments about Plum Creek’s rezoning proposal. Through the double reading, we document the ways in which place and identity are rearticulated through this land-use event.

Analysis – Articulating Maine’s North Woods

First Read: Identifying Reported Land-Use Practices

Commenters discuss a wide range of practices and institutions related to their experiences with the North Woods, but the most common are access, recreation and economy. Commenters state that rezoning could interrupt activities grouped under these categories, and they spend considerable time discussing Maine’s North Woods in terms of them. Although the categories are interdependent, we talk about them individually and highlight intersections.

Access. Maine’s tradition of unrestricted public access to private lands is “without parallel in the nation” (Maine State Planning Office, 2008, p. 3); it is common and expected. Unlike the West where public lands are abundant, in the Northeast they are scarce. Indeed, in Maine, 94% of the land is private (Maine State Planning Office, 2008) and, historically, the North Woods were privately held by the paper industry primarily. By the 1950s, “Great Northern Paper Company . . . own[ed] well over two million acres of the state – about 11 percent of its total land area” (Condon as cited in Judd, Churchill, & Eastman, 1995, p. 535). Despite private ownership, the public was given almost unrestricted access to these lands for recreation. “For generations, Maine people had used the North Woods without much regard for formal ownership or legal regulation, and these traditions of unrestricted recreational use defined, for Mainers, a proper ethical and aesthetic relation to woods, water, and wildlife” (Judd & Beach,

2003, pp. 82-83). Recent, massive turnover in North Woods' ownership has muddied the clarity of traditional practices: "since 1998 40% of Maine's land or 8,955,407 acres has changed hands in Maine's North Woods" (Natural Resources Council of Maine, n.d., par. 1). Such changes fostered uncertainty about the future of open access (Lilieholm, 2007) and these lands as a whole.

Our first read reveals that commenters explicitly debate access concerns. Jay (2006) notes, "And this will rob the residents and traditional users of one of Mainer's' greatest riches—the right to basically come and go as one pleases—a right always graciously provided by the timber companies." Peter (2006) states, "Many people oppose the Plum Creek plan because they fear a loss of customary recreational access to woodlands and development in pristine areas, especially around remote pond shorelines." In contrast, Dean (2006) argues, "[Those opposed to the Plum Creek plan] feel they have some inalienable right to use someone else's land and resources, yet deny that landowner the right to do what they wish with it. Where do they get the right to encumber any development . . .?" Concerns about access are frequently cited in research about this area of Maine (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2006; Judd & Beach, 2003; Lilieholm, 2007; Maine State Planning Office, 2008).

Access is also implicitly discussed in comments linking the rezoning proposal to Maine's coastal communities, which have suffered significant loss of access to the land and water to "outsiders" (Judd & Beach, 2003). Deluca (1999) notes that "larger social discourses" (p. 341) often factor into an articulatory process. For example, Stephen (2006) argues, "Take a good, hard look at what has happened to the coast of Maine. Plum Creek is about to do the same with a big chunk of the North Maine Woods . . .," and Pam (2006) emphasizes, "There's enough rich people's resorts and high-priced properties that have already excluded Maine people from the

Coast.” As evident in these comments, issues of class arise again and again. It is critical to note that class is inevitably connected to land-use change events relative to access and ownership. In this case, one concern is with the potential reallocation of community resources (Gudeman, 2001), specifically that approving the rezoning proposal will enhance private wealth and privatize natural resources at the expense of public wealth and quality of place. Some commenters identify unrestricted access as pivotal to articulating a sense of self-in-place, such that changes in access would bring an end to the North Woods as a symbolic territory. Thus, we see citizens linking open access to private land with Maine identity in response to threatened changes to land ownership.

Recreating in wilderness. Access is closely related to recreation. According to the Maine State Planning Office (2008):

This loss of access to private land threatens many traditional outdoor activities . . . Spending by wildlife viewers, snowmobilers, hunters, fishermen, ATV-riders, white-water rafters, and other recreationists supports many regional economies . . . the health and viability of these industries, and, equally important, the well-being and quality of life of Maine’s residents depend upon public access to private land. (p. 3)

Comments about recreation are frequently linked with explicit statements about development threatening tradition, and implicitly with restricted access threatening quality of life. Their responses to these threats identify a profound connection to the North Woods through recreating:

Hitting the dirt road heading towards 20 mile gate has been a *comfort* . . . for many years. Backpacking into remote ponds to float tube, fly fish and camp, will not be the same if this development occurs on the planned scale. (Mike, 2006, italics added)

My *escape* for the past 30 years has been a wall tent and tin stove deer camp . . . Plum Creek's plan reveals a dark future for this region. Black sky in the winter night is worth fighting for. (D. Karp, 2005, italics added)

Hunting, fishing, and camping are primary activities that fix the meaning of this area of Maine.

Not only does the rezoning proposal threaten present and future recreational traditions, but also the memories created through recreation:

It [Moosehead Lake] is where I saw my first moose, heard a loon for the first time and many other *wonderful childhood memories*. It deeply concerns me that this area would get developed so that I may never get to take my children to see their first moose there . . . (Indira, n.d., italics added).

My dad and I went on several camping and fishing trips to Moosehead . . . We would rent a boat . . . and motor along to a likely looking campsite where we would set up our gear and spend 2-3 days fishing . . . I don't remember catching many fish, but *I remember becoming attached to the Maine North Woods, which has stayed with me all these years* . . . (John, n.d., italics added)

Thus, shared, personal memories of recreation are key elements in the ongoing production of context. The conditions under which memories are connected to land-use change are significant for identity. Here memories are recalled in crisis, which is different from reminiscing. It is not specific moments that form the articulation but the threatened possibility of no more like them. For commenters' memories of the North Woods, and thus the symbolic territory, to remain stable, the public must continue to have these recreational opportunities.

Economy. Comments connect access and recreation with the economy. Tourism, development, and forest product production are key components that define the North Woods as a context. The ATV industry is one example of recreation-based tourism revenue, with nonresidents accounting for approximately 5.9%, or 9 million dollars, of the 156 million spent on ATVing in the 2003/2004 season (Morris, Allen, Rubin, Bronson & Bastey, 2005). “In 2006, tourism supported the equivalent of one in five Maine jobs, and one in five dollars in sales generated throughout the Maine economy” (Maine Office of Tourism, 2006). The paper products industry complements tourism activities in the North Woods economy. For almost a century, the paper industry dominated the Maine economy and strongly influenced land-use decisions. At one point in the 1900s, the paper industry was Maine’s largest employer (Millinocket Historical Society, n.d.). Lilieholm (2007) writes that “the region’s twin economic pillars: the forest products industry and the forest-based recreation and tourism sector. These two sectors contribute more than \$11.5 billion each year to Maine’s economy and support more than 50,000 jobs” (Lilieholm, 2007, p. 13). However, “between 1995 and 2003, the area of forest land owned by increased by 60 percent . . .”. Paper companies’ sale/exchange of their land in the 1980s, brought feared and actual changes to practices on the lands, including the decline of the paper products industry and changes to access. These changes caused significant disruptions in rural communities (Lilieholm, 2007), like those communities in the proposed area for rezoning.

Respondents’ comments make the link between the land, economy, and community tangible. Steve (2006) writes:

My grandfather operated woods camps in the Greenville area . . . His stories, told by his daughter, my mother, were of thriving economy . . . Though Greenville is still as

beautiful and breathtaking as ever . . . it is my observation that today's Greenville economic picture 'pales' to what it appeared to be, years ago . . . So where can we create jobs and what can we do? One way . . . is to support any efforts that may assist Greenville in taking another shot . . . to continue to live a good Maine life!

Barbara (2005) states, "Our industries (railroads, paper mills, small town businesses) are gone. Let's do something to keep our children in Maine." In contrast, Rob (2006) writes, "People I know who live there say the area is already thriving with outdoor related business so what more can Plum Creek do . . ." Opponents and proponents identify tourism and the paper industry as principle elements in the articulation of place.

Access, recreation, and economy index land-use practices by which the North Woods and Maine identity are mutually produced *as a context*. The North Woods is not a background against which identity gains meaning. Identity and place articulate each other in an ongoing place-making event, such that changes to those practices produce changes in both the land and identity. Despite extensive, recent upheavals, traditions of access, recreation, and economy settle the unfolding context of the North Woods into a "stable form of instability." As a symbolic territory, the North Woods is a temporarily fixed place, such that Plum Creek becomes a distinct, disruptive event.

Second Read: Constitutive Effects of Texts

In our analysis, identity is a changing and traceable element of place that is responsive to and interacts with system disruptions, like land-use events. In this section we examine how the texts performatively (re)arrange identity as part of the rezoning proposal event itself, not as an

outcome after the fact. We consider how discursive practices (de)couple Maine resident and non-resident identities in relation to access, recreation, and economy.

Access and identity. A community's ability to assert dominance rests partly on the ability to "portray [another] as a trespasser of literal and symbolic territory" (Tonn, et al., 1993, p. 239). Referring to access, commenters create an "us versus them" dichotomy where "we" value wilderness, solitude, and public access and "they" support limited access and destruction of a pristine, symbolic territory. Commenters create this divide by explicitly and implicitly linking Maine identity to open access and non-resident identities to exclusionary practices. For example, Jay (2006) posts:

In addition to putting in their Sub-Zero refrigerators, Viking stoves, [and] central vacuuming . . . , the Sport Utilitarians from megalopolis will also insist on putting up No Trespassing signs. . . A unique freedom [open public access] will be under siege.

According to Jay, non-residents are weighted down with private property in contrast to "traditional" Mainers' who are unbound. Woodrow (2005) writes, "developers and the folks who never were born there only want to make [it] their playground and try to drive the local people out so they can destroy a once pristine area." Mbrown (2006) comments, "Plum Creek is not about to give the state and the people of Maine a forest that won't be littered by homes, sewage, the rich and close gated communities . . ."

If identity is a series of articulations, these statements join, *through* Maine residents, virtuous consumption, valuing pristine land, and a traditional freedom to roam the woods. Identity is a conjuncture of elements here, not a personal characteristic. In contrast, over-consumption and pollution are joined with exclusionary practices (No Trespassing signs)

through nonresidents. These comments configure a mutually constitutive relationship between Mainers and the North Woods that is defined antagonistically (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) to Plum Creek’s rezoning proposal. Commenters discursively arrange the practice of open access so that survival of a cherished symbolic territory depends on a tradition and is concomitant with the survival of Maine identity.

Recreating and identity. Given that sense of place is based, in part, on associations between one’s self and the environment and developed through experience (Cantrill, 1998), recreation, as experience, is key to place making. Revisiting Mike’s (2006) and D. Karp’s (2005) comments, recall the importance of backpacking to remote ponds and camping, as well as black sky, a wall tent, and a tin stove. Their remarks on comfort and escaping illustrate a “prehensive” relationship in the way that the woods take hold of people as people absorb the character of the woods. Similarly, Karen (2006) argues that privacy and quietness in Maine’s wilderness are threatened by changing dynamics that rezoning would amplify: “Friends of mine now are constantly chasing strangers off their property and *having things they love taken away like the quiet and the privacy*” (italics added). Pam (2006) adds, “there will be no affordable places left for Maine resident [*sic*] to go for a quiet vacation in the beautiful surroundings that *we love, and that are, in large part, why we stay here*” (italics added). Implicitly, non-residents rob residents of peace and quiet by being intrusive and loud. Idyllic practices and the North Woods become one through the identity of those who dwell there.

As previously discussed, family activities and trips to the North Woods link the rezoning proposal not only to disruptions of beloved practices, but also to memory. Indira (n.d.), quoted earlier, emphasizes family camping trips to and childhood memories created at Moosehead Lake. Similarly, John (n.d.) remarks of childhood camping and fishing trips and his subsequent

attachment to Maine's North Woods. As wilderness is articulated through identity, so identity is articulated through wilderness. The comments enact the mutuality of place and identity. Sharing personal memories in response to the threat of losing particular traditions does more than articulate a place-in-crisis. As a discourse, personal memories become an ensemble that function as the historical memory of place. This historical memory is partial, forgetting older articulations of place that confound claims of identity, such as the Moosehead Region's former life as a resort area with large hotels, ferries, railroad stations and wealthy summer people. The narration of recreational memories disarticulates the North Woods from its Gilded and Progressive eras and re-articulates a pristine alternative filled with woodlands, wildlife, and Mainers unbound by ostentatious consumption. The rezoning proposal becomes a destruction of innocence, not a return to the past.

Economy and identity. The linkage of the North Woods with specific economic practices strongly impacts identity. Comments like “assist[ing] Greenville in taking another shot . . .” (Steve, 2006), and “The Moosehead region deserves better--a future that encourages nature-based tourism near existing developments, offers long-term economic benefits to existing communities and locally owned businesses, and retains the magic of northern Maine. . . .” (Standard, 2010) indicate that economic vitality is highly productive of senses of self-in-place. Yet commenters frequently separate themselves from wealth by articulating out-of-state individuals, the “others,” with wealth. For example, “[Plum Creek] is all about catering to the rich and 95% of Maine's population will never be able to own something that Plum Creek develops” (Mbrown, 2006). One commenter disagreed, arguing that the gentrification of this community is beneficial:

We should be welcoming them, as the influx of their wealth is what will make the existing communities prosper . . . [they] also contribute more to their communities, when it comes to supporting the arts, or fund-raising for a new health clinic . . . (Dean, 2006)

These comments, necessitated by a significant sociopolitical and environmental change, can be understood as experimentations with variations of decision-making rules about what is appropriate practice in this community and for these individuals (Chibnik, 1981). Again, the mutuality of place and identity is evident. Further, Gudeman (2001) asserts that the community's shared interests (e.g. land, products, skills), or the "base" domain of economic value, "represents what it means to be a member of a community" (p. 30) and is the foundation for other domains of value like social relationships, trade, and the accumulation of wealth. If the North Woods are a "base" for Maine, then rezoning potentially threatens all forms of economic valuing for the community.

Finally, globalization and transnationalism force us to reconsider communities as "bounded groups" with "unitary identities," and instead see them as sharing "partial, overlapping identities" (Kearney, 1995, p. 558). Paul (2006) writes "No longer are there sacred places on earth which should never be developed," and Butler (2006) notes "Mainers have a wonderful opportunity to lead the nation and the world regarding land use, corporate relations, nature-based tourism and local economies." The lack of development that defines the North Woods and community identity in relation to place is connected with broader issues of development at state, national, and global scales. As an event, the North Woods is as identified by the economic challenges of its inhabitants as its inhabitants are identified by the globalized challenge of development.

Conclusion

To better understand and anticipate the impact of land-use change on social-ecological systems (SES), specifically on sense of place and identity, scholars must attend to the ways these events remake the present and future contexts in which they occur. To do this, we need to find new ways of mapping the interactions and relationships between discourse, social practices, and physical elements that, when linked in particular ways, constitute what a place *is*. Through our case study, using the framework of articulation theory, eventfulness, and symbolic territory, we offer a way to observe and to study how places emerge unsteadily from events.

Our analysis shows that Maine identity is doubly articulated in and through the North Woods. It suggests that Maine identity and the North Woods are a dynamic, mutually defining context that is intimately bound up with land use. On an experiential level, residents feel that material practices of access, recreation, and the economy mutually define the North Woods as a place and “Mainer” as an identity. On a discursive level, these practices become resources for coupling or separating values, memories, other places, and other people. In some cases, place and values are joined *through* residents’ identity. In others, identity is attached to practices associated with a place. In still others, place is stabilized or destabilized by practices serving different identities. It is particularly interesting that the North Woods operates as kind of anchor within this dynamic context even though it is highly changeable and, within the logic of its articulation, very fragile.

Ultimately, land-use changes like the Plum Creek proposal are significant, rupturing events within a larger set of events that define an SES. They have the power to redefine sense of place and people’s sense of self-in-place. As Hall (1985) argues, “meanings which appear to

have been fixed in place forever begin to loose their moorings . . . as a result of the *struggle* around the chains of connotations and the social practices. . .” (p. 112). Isolating symbolic territories like the North Woods as “stable points” against which people make sense of change helps analysts gain access to the complexities of land-use changes and understand the significance of conflicts associated with them. By highlighting the ways in which an SES is produced *as the context in which we struggle*, we can help participants in environmental conflicts understand the ripple effect that policies may have on communities, especially on the relationship between place and identity. Given the role of communication in articulating and revealing articulations of identity in and through place, environmental communication scholars are well positioned to lend insight into the repercussions of land-use changes and encourage others to appreciate communication about the environment as a contextual element of the very places that make up the environment and our relationship with it.

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