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Introduction

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Environmental themes have come to pervade our everyday lives. T-shirts, bumper-stickers, and TV spots constantly exhort us to save this species of animal or that patch of nature. An equally persistent, though less pervasive, "ruralist" movement has called for saving the countryside, family farms, and rural life. Rurality, moreover, is often linked to nature, so that the recent surge in interest in saving nature means interest in rurality is also on the rise.

As attention becomes more focused on rurality and nature, the once accepted meanings of words like "environment," "country," "family farms," and "wilderness" are becoming less and less clear. What does it mean to save nature and rural life? Do people know what they are trying to save? Do they know why? What do people mean by "save"? These are difficult questions to answer.

Governments, for their part, create environmental conservation and rural development policies with the stated goals of saving nature, farm families, and rural communities. Yet these policies neither deal with the ambiguous meanings of the words used to describe the goals nor explicitly recognize the political and economic ways in which words take on meanings. The meanings of these concepts are more than just points of view because people act on their understanding of key concepts like rural, nature, and wilderness. In many cases they do so by trying to create, in the landscape, the concepts they imagine, talk about, and write about.

The contributors to this book have therefore begun to look closely at the concepts people use to describe rurality and nature. Each of the chapters in this volume takes up an example of how government administrators, writers, academics, movement activists, or people in their everyday lives create and implement these concepts. In doing so, the authors go beyond abstract statements characterizing nature and rural people to look at the historical evidence and the experiences of people in particular places and situations.

The essays show how separation—of country from city, improved land

from wilderness, and human activity from natural processes—remains the basis for most development programs, for most environmentalist and ruralist thought, and for actions that aim to save rurality and nature. The construction of boundaries between these categories may contradict the "real" histories and lives of rural people whose everyday lives may not be governed by these boundaries or who may understand these categories in a way very different from those at the centers of power. Participants in environmental debates often understand and describe the countryside in ways that gloss over the diverse and complex lives of rural people. Even the phrase "rural people" simplifies many of the situations described in this book.

Because the real world is often much more ambiguous and varied than the abstract categories formulated by land use planners or proponents of environmental and rural preservation, governments often need to resort to coercion to implement policies based on these categories. This coercion may be overt or hidden. Governments may use army and police forces to patrol the boundaries of nature parks or conservation zones, or they may simply discourage agriculture in areas they classify as wild.

Unfortunately, as many of the chapters in this book show, the critics of these policies frequently work within the same basic categories, and this results in concepts of resistance that often limit the political options of rural people. Supporters of environmental or ruralist movements tend to understand nature as sacred and timeless, and somehow outside of human society. For example, when environmentalists identify rural people with nature (that is, as if they had no social history), these people are less able to fight for social justice. At its worst, the fight to save nature assumes the air of a religious mission in which almost any means is justified, since the goal is greater than mere human interests. As a consequence, many proponents of environmental and rural conservation may eventually find themselves condoning the coercive actions of government agencies.

Many participants in these social movements are beginning to feel uncomfortable about much of what is going on under the rubric of saving nature or rurality. Through this set of essays, we hope to contribute to current debate on these problems, by emphasizing the importance of observing how planners and movement activists construct theoretical frameworks that divide landscapes and rural people and the effects of programs that are based on these divisions. Our aim is also to highlight the differences between these theoretical frameworks and local understandings of landscapes and nature. We do not argue that urban policy-makers, movement activists, and intellectuals must adopt these local meanings; however, groups working on behalf of

nature and the countryside should, at the very least, recognize that their views often differ from those of people who live in these areas. This awareness would foster real dialogue between activists, policy-makers, and rural people about the policies and programs that affect them.

Approach and Themes

It is useful to separate the questions considered in this book into three themes: first, the chapters describe and explain the cultural frameworks that people use to make sense of particular situations or to justify policies and programs. Second, many chapters show how these categories frame environmental and rural "problems" and how people act on these problems. Third, many chapters question the congruity between these frameworks and the histories and lives of people in rural areas.

All chapters explore how dominant groups can exercise control over the production of meaning. Although these dominant groups are sometimes classes and states, in other contexts they include such varied groups as environmental organizations, cooperative managers, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and migrant men. But the essays also show that the construction of meaning cannot be reduced to political and economic interests alone. People make meaning in part by re-creating cultural traditions. The authors show how dominant understandings of rural landscapes and the people who inhabit them might be thought of as expressions of old and new Euro-American stories and assumptions about the Garden of Eden, rural communities, the American Frontier, the efficiency of the market, nature without people, and national progress.

In particular, the essays show how the meaning of rurality is often construed as if in opposition to urban life, while visions of nature are often opposed to human life. Rurality and nature are typically linked: urban people, for example, think that rural people live close to nature, although they sometimes exclude from their vision of nature all humans, including rural inhabitants. People also place rural–urban and nature–culture in temporal and spatial sequences. Thus urban people think of rurality and nature as both the past and that which is peripheral, far away, or strange. In contrast, urban life and culture are the present and future and that which is nearby and familiar. Opponents of development, by virtue of their opposition, not only adopt the same key concepts but characterize them in a similar fashion: nature is rural, sacred, timeless, and located in the past and the periphery.

The second major set of themes consists of an account of how modern categories are actively imposed on the landscape and the people who live there. Many of these categories are dualistic. Modern states attempt to create unambiguous spatial boundaries between city and country, private and public property, parks and agriculture, or residential and industrial land. They also categorize people and their activities, for example, into urban and rural residents, indigenous and nonindigenous, or small-scale mixed farming and large-scale specialized farming. Finally, they create and implement policies that conform to these categories, so that people will be treated differently according to their classification.

Dualistic categories are not limited to modern or Euro-American traditions, and not all modern categories are necessarily dualistic. What distinguishes the modern approach is first, the attempt to draw strict boundaries between multiple categories of people and space, and second, an unprecedented technical and coercive capacity for reconstructing the landscape to conform to these bounded and exclusionary categories. Modern states and other organizations have employed a number of technical, bureaucratic, and coercive measures to control people and to transform the landscape. They do so by setting boundaries in ways that fit their own understanding of the landscape, and by specifying which kinds of activities will be permitted in the resultant land use zone.

The result is the marginalization of many rural people who do not fit into the categories, who are deemed inefficient in their use of rural resources or destructive toward nature. Rural people frequently attempt to undermine these efforts, because the policies often fail to come to terms with the real complexities of rural life. Nonetheless, policies that reorganize rural activity on the land have also transformed rural life with a rapidity that would have been unimaginable just a few centuries ago.

Many rural and environmental activists participate in this categorization process. They do this by framing their goals in terms of resistance to modernity or attempts to "save" species, family farms, or rural communities from unchecked progress. This often becomes tantamount to removing the city from the country—culture from nature—and setting sharp boundaries between them. At best, this resistance ignores the wishes of those rural people who may not want to be saved from all aspects of "progress." At worst, it places some rural people on the wrong side of these boundaries, converting them into human encroachers from whom nature should be protected.

The third set of themes is thus the disjuncture between cultural frameworks adopted by various dominant groups (classes, states, genders) on one

hand, and the histories and lives of rural people on the other hand. Governments and other groups, as well as the writers and social movements that resist these groups, are caught between their exclusionary accounts of nature and rurality and the actual histories and lived experience of rural residents. The acceptance of a limited set of meanings may block both inquiry into the social histories of marginalized peoples and alternative courses of action.

Local people may construct alternative meanings that exist outside of these development-based categories and that challenge boundaries and exclusive dualisms. For example, rural life may be far from an idyllic harmony with nature, while urban life may present opportunities for cultivating nature. Rather than completely accepting or rejecting development, rural people may reject some aspects of the development agenda and yet enthusiastically embrace others.

The disjuncture between ruralist and environmentalist thought and actual histories in rural areas can also result from the spatial separation between people who want to save nature and rurality, and people who live in contested areas. In noting this, we do not intend to dismiss movement activists, policy-makers, or academic intellectuals. As Amita Baviskar argues in Chapter 7, intellectuals and activists are important to rural and environmental movements because they have influence in powerful institutions that are reconstructing rural landscapes, they are often committed to social justice, and they are able to add a global perspective to particular issues. We also do not intend to simplify the many debates among writers and activists, debates that echo many of the issues raised in this book. We do think, however, that these debates must give more attention to the ambiguity and variety in the actual lives of people who live in contested areas, and recognize that the perspective of those who reside in an area is in all probability different from the perspective of those who do not. That is, state planners, intellectuals, and movement activists should recognize that they cannot "represent" all local people in all ways; instead, they must enter into a dialogue that recognizes and respects differences as well as commonalities.

The Construction of Meaning

Although this book is intended to demonstrate the value of paying attention to the construction of meaning, the chapters also situate their work in the tradition of political economy. It is not possible to understand the con-

struction of meaning without attention to the means by which local and nonlocal groups (colonizers, wealthy urban classes, and so forth) can exercise widespread political and economic control over the countryside. Political and economic control allows these groups to impose modern concepts on the countryside—such as dividing private land from nature or separating wilderness from the garden—in ways that serve their political and economic interests.

In the 1970s, world systems and dependency theorists successfully challenged the modernization approach and its ahistorical assumption that rural or peripheral peoples are *outside* of modernity and therefore need to be modernized or saved. They specified the ways that the periphery and rural hinterland are made and remade by institutions located in the core and in cities, including multinational corporations and state agencies. This observation is also applicable to rural areas in wealthy countries that are often characterized as outside of modernity in popular and academic writing.[1] Thus the essays in this book draw on dependency and world systems ideas to make explicit the ways that political and economic forces centered in cities have shaped not only the country but also the way that people think, speak, and write about the country.

For example, Bill Fisher describes how both development and environmental interests have constructed the Amazon as undeveloped wilderness. The successful contemporary portrayal of the Amazon as undeveloped, despite a long social and economic history, justifies both contemporary exploitation of the region from one point of view and salvation of the region as pristine nature from another. Because the labor of the native Amazonians is no longer needed by the dominant economic interests, the Amazonians' history of economic participation and exploitation is forgotten, and they become redefined as guardians of the undeveloped rainforest—out of society and into nature. Melanie DuPuis shows how urban food interests, allied with industrial agriculture, shaped an ecological rhetoric to legitimize the restructuring of the New York State countryside during the early twentieth century in ways that marginalized small mixed farmers. Nancy Lee Peluso links the environmental valuation of wilderness as areas that should be out of bounds to human activities to the state's interests in taking the control of resources away from local people. Other chapters link particular representations of rurality and farming to the division of labor (Goldring), the need for cheap labor, the selling of rurality (Hinrichs), managerial control (Taylor), and East Coast industrial interests (Bell, DuPuis).

This book, however, is much more than a demonstration of the utility of a political-economic approach in explaining the construction of the countryside. The authors step outside of the orthodox political economy approach by emphasizing the role of culture and nonclass social movements.[2] Nonclass organizations such as environmental groups and NGOs often construct accounts that oppose state and dominant class interests but that are not necessarily in accord with the perspectives held by inhabitants of the area being contested. We return to this issue in the final section.

The chapters in this book also investigate the importance of culture to the reorganization of physical space and rural life. In the past, most political economists assumed that the economic basis of society functioned as the final arbitrator of how people created meanings. Thus, they explicitly rejected culture as an important influence in creating the hinterland. This rejection of culture was heightened during the 1970s, when critical scholars rejected culturalist approaches to development and modernization programs that attempted to eliminate "backward" rurality (Vandergeest 1988).[3] The essays in this book show how both modernizers and many of their critics often think within the basic framework of modernization. Our intention is therefore to provoke increased critical reflection on the categories used in both political economy and cultural critiques of development.

All of the chapters in this book show how people draw on opposing principles inherent in modern or Euro-American thought to label and divide rural people.[4] Cooperative managers in Spain labeled farmers as either progressive or backward by seemingly neutral criteria derived from market standards of efficiency (Taylor). Policy-makers and planners in the United States designated farmers as either marginal or permanent according to their scientific analysis of the productive potential of land (Bell, DuPuis). Government officials either define all rural residents as traditional and backward in opposition to urban modernity (Vandergeest), or, in what amounts to the same thing, see them as representatives of a marketable rural authenticity (Hinrichs). Environmental groups pass over the social history of selected peoples, favoring accounts that idealize them as living with nature, apart from a polluting social world (Fisher, Baviskar). Perhaps most disturbing are cases where conservation programs define people out of nature altogether (DuPuis, Peluso), opening the way for their removal from the landscape through policies that may be more or less openly coercive.

The cases in this book show how dualistic categories such as nature–culture or city–country are invoked and applied in concrete instances in

ways that affect people's lives. It is thus important to know something about the history of these categories in modern or Euro-American thought.[5]

City and Country

The city–country dualism has been fundamental both to the popular imagination and to the formation of basic social science categories. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectuals like Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Ferdinand Tonnies, Max Weber, and Robert Redfield focused their lifework on explaining the growth of urban-industrial capitalist societies and their effects on social life. These writers characterized rural life as more bound by the past, by tradition, by community ties, and by nature. In contrast, they characterized urban life as future-oriented, breaking with tradition, lacking close community ties, secular, and more cultured. Modern life was life in the industrial city, which was also the site of progress, scientific rationality, and the specialized efficiency of industrial production.

For most people, rurality invokes the past. The idea that the trip from the country to the city is a journey forward in time appears in both social science writing and in popular culture. In highly urbanized areas, the farm is a place from the past, where grandparents once lived. Travel agencies advertise the Third World as a place where urban tourists can go to see truly primitive people while trekking in natural surroundings.

In the academic world, the distinction between modern and traditional was institutionalized as disciplinary boundaries were drawn up between those who primarily studied traditions in the agrarian colonies (anthropologists) and those who primarily studied modernity in industrial Europe and North America (sociologists). Rural sociology took up the interstice: the study of country life in Europe and North America. Since the object of their study was the traditional countryside in "advanced" societies, rural sociologists retained an interest in the tradition–modernity continuum, expressed as a rural–urban continuum (Sorokin and Zimmerman 1929; Buttel, Larson, and Gillespie 1990, Bell 1993).

Romantic authors' criticisms of rapid urbanization and industrialization did not challenge these dichotomous conceptions. On the contrary, Romantic writers (for example, Henry David Thoreau, Thomas Hardy, J.R.R. Tolkien) reaffirmed these images, not only by extolling the simple life of the country and decrying the dislocation inherent in modern city life but also by associating the country with the past—sometimes the immediate past to

which an urban dweller could return, and sometimes a more timeless or fanciful past. For many environmentalists, rural people living near forests and on the peripheries of modern society are contemporary representatives of a past where rural people lived harmoniously with each other and with nature (Baviskar and Vandergeest, this volume). NGO critics of state policies often agree with state promoters that rural villages represent the past, and are therefore critical of state policies because they believe that more of this past should be preserved. Ironically, the high value placed on preservation can lead to a commodification of preserved rurality. In Vermont, for example, state promoters and local companies such as Ben and Jerry's have taken advantage of the notion that past farming methods and products were more natural and authentic than present methods (Hinrichs, this volume).

These descriptions of the continuity and community orientation of rural life all too often ignore a parallel and concurrent history of class exploitation and drudgery, as Raymond Williams (1973) has argued in his classic analysis of depictions of the English countryside. Many of the chapters in this volume (Fisher, Baviskar, Lynch, Hinrichs, Vandergeest, Goldring) similarly question the idealization of rural community and depictions of rurality and wilderness that omit the social history of residents—a history that is often replete with exploitation, marginalization, division, and feuding. For example, Luin Goldring shows how in the United States, women migrants from Mexican villages are much less likely than men to idealize the village as a place of rest since for women, rural life means hard work and a lack of modern amenities. For these women, progress and urban life are not all bad. Amita Baviskar describes how her attempts to understand Adivasi reverence for nature were confused by evidence of intergroup feuding.

The basic divisions associated with the city and country have often been rethought as divisions within the countryside: between improved, agro-industrial forms of agriculture on one hand and traditional, subsistence agriculture on the other; between productive land on one hand and wilderness on the other (DuPuis and Peluso, this volume). Policy-makers, academics, and environmental organizations construct these oppositions in the context of programs to modernize rural people, or to save some aspect of rurality or nature. In the United States, rural sociologists divided farmers according to their willingness to innovate and modernize—meaning willingness to adopt commercial technologies. These divisions were incorporated into policy in diverse contexts, as DuPuis shows for New York State during the 1930s, and as Taylor shows for an agrarian cooperative in northern Spain. The result has been the neglect and marginalization of large numbers of people—

pushed off land considered inappropriate for agriculture, pushed out of cooperatives for being inefficient. Policies based on dividing people into modern and traditional were incorporated into Third World development programs initiated by the United States from the 1950s onward, with similar results.

People and Nature

As country is often opposed to city in modern perspectives on rurality, nature is often opposed to society. The notion that social life is opposed to nature is unconsciously reinforced in countless ways in academic and popular modes of speaking and writing. Even ecologists who criticize this separation are apt to draw on it. For example, in their important book on land degradation, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) write about human "interference" in natural processes, implying that natural processes do not include human activities. Although humans also have a "nature," it is generally understood as that which is biological rather than social and those activities that are not based on conscious control or planning.

As we noted above, rurality and nature are often linked. Both popular representations of rurality and the academic literature on rural development describe rural life as being close to nature. Although the wilderness is believed to be antithetical to country landscapes transformed by farming, the two are linked in that both are often vulnerable to modernization. For example, in many countries, NGOs argue that Green Revolution technology threatens the "traditional" methods of peasant cultivators, while governments and some environmental groups believe that these same peasant cultivators threaten the wilderness.

Nature is also associated with a specific temporality: if rurality represents the past, then nature is out of time altogether. They are often linked, however, in a kind of timeless past, opposed to what seems like the incredibly rapid pace of change in modern society. As with rurality, we often project our impressions of nature onto places outside of our direct experience: unpopulated wilderness, the sea, the atmosphere. Most of us think that more distant places are those that do not change; according to Tuan (1978, 122) the past recedes, like the horizon or a rural landscape, into the distance. Both the past and faraway places are seen rather than experienced, for example, on television or on vacation.

The association of timelessness with both nature and faraway places has

often led Europeans to juxtapose European progress with the timelessness of the rest of the world. Thus, early social theorists in Europe identified faraway places in the non-Western world with an unchanging nature and tradition, and anthropologists represented native societies as people without time and history (Wolf 1982).

Within this broad notion of nature as separate from secular human activity, three very different views of the morality of nature are relevant to this book (although they are not by any means exhaustive): first, nature as dangerous, wild, and in need of being tamed; second, nature as a set of morally neutral processes within which society operates and that affect society; and third, nature as pure and idyllic, the antipode of everything bad about progress and civilization. These three views of nature justify and shape what people do, and therefore become incorporated into our social and physical landscapes.

Hardin's (1968) well-known argument describing the tragedy of the commons provides an example of the first view of nature—in this case, of the effects of uncontrolled human nature. According to Hardin, the human proclivity to breed is a natural process, which, if left unchecked, allows families to take advantage of a global resource pool. The only way to control this and avoid a tragedy of the global commons is for society to control breeding by an act of intervention. Birth control policies must include sanctions to be effective; thus, coercion to prevent uncontrolled population increase is justified. Hardin's approach associates nature with unchecked individual self-interest, which must be controlled by societal institutions.[6]

For writers like Hardin, nature is dangerous unless humans act to control it. This view of nature remains important for many people. In popular Euro-American culture, images of wilderness and nature continue to be strongly associated with fertile dark tropical jungles, fierce tribal peoples, African famines, Bangladeshi floods, and population explosions of dark people that seem to mimic the fertility of anarchic jungle growth and threaten to overwhelm cities and Western societies. Much of the current sense of crisis about the global environment can be traced to a fear of uncontrolled human nature in the peripheries. For colonial and postcolonial states, mobile rural people living "in nature" were similarly wild and uncontrollable, and states continue to devote great efforts to taming such people by forcing them to settle down.

People whose livelihood is centered on farming may perceive the wilderness as a threat or an area that is best tamed and controlled through settlement. This attitude toward the forest has been dominant among American farmers, but it is by no means limited to the modern or Euro-American tra-

ditions. For example, among wet rice cultivators in Thailand the word that is closest to the English "wilderness" (*pa*) connotes that which is wild or untamed, not yet cultivated or civilized (Stott 1991). In China, the agrarian state has long emphasized settlement of wildlands as a means of bringing it under control (Menzies 1992, 723).

In many places, people try to control or tame dangerous nature by offering gifts to its spirits. In the modern tradition, however, people think that nature is best controlled by understanding it. The founders of modern science, such as Francis Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton, linked the aims of modernization to the scientific understanding of and informed intervention in natural processes. For them, knowledge of nature gave humans a power to improve their lives. Modernization thus implies substituting scientific knowledge for superstition and fatalism among rural peasants (Vandergeest, this volume). From this perspective, modern people have the cultural and technological capability to take control of their own destiny, thereby making their own history, while traditional people remain controlled by the forces of nature. Modernization is thus the process of taking control of nature, in Hardin's case, by forced contraception of fertile women. It also implies specializing and professionalizing farming practices so that farming is less susceptible to natural processes (Taylor, this volume), or even separating nature into that which is modernizable and that which should be preserved as wilderness (DuPuis, this volume) in clearly demarcated territories (Peluso, this volume).

Because people frequently understand nature as that which is not self-consciously controlled by humans, nature can also be characterized as a set of morally neutral processes, the second view of nature. Dangerous nature can be neutralized by understanding its dynamics through scientific inquiry. Neutral nature can be made into a nonhuman scapegoat, allowing people to avoid taking responsibility for the suffering caused by their actions. For example, Peter Taylor (Chapter 3) shows how cooperative managers labeled market processes as "natural" and then blamed their abandonment of small farmers on this natural process. Michael Bell (Chapter 2) similarly argues that by blaming New England's rocky soils for the decline in New England agriculture, we can absolve ourselves from finding societal causes for this decline. In New York, the decline of extensive mixed farming has been presented by agricultural economists as the result of poor soils, not state policies (DuPuis, this volume).

In many contexts, the separation of nature from society allows us to idealize it as free from the moral failings of humankind (Bell 1994) and, there-

fore, as an alternative basis of morality—the third view of nature. This view of nature emerged in Europe during the eighteenth century (Tuan 1990). The shift is typified by the European attitude toward mountains, an aspect of nature that seems to defy taming through human control. Prior to this, Europeans were unsympathetic toward mountains (nature as dangerous), but beginning in the eighteenth century Romantic poets began to praise the splendor of mountains. Also during this period Europeans began to regard mountains as a good environment for revitalizing the human body, a belief that eventually led to reconstructing parts of Switzerland as Magic Mountains for the sick and tired and as vacation playgrounds.

These attitudes crossed the Atlantic to the United States, and Americans began to build resorts in mountainous areas, while activists launched campaigns to preserve mountains and forests in a natural state (Nash 1982; Tuan 1990, 111). The nineteenth-century Eastern establishment in the United States, influenced by the Romantic view of nature, disliked farmers and was offended by the unkempt farms of upstate New York and New England (Tuan 1990, 63–5). This attitude is illustrated by Thoreau's disdain for farmers near Waldon Pond. Bell and DuPuis (Chapters 2 and 4 in this volume) show how this disdain was turned into policies to marginalize and remove these unkempt farms from the landscape.

For the Romantic movement in Europe, anything that was remote or relatively inaccessible could become the object of a nature mythology. Traveling explorers, naturalists, missionaries, anthropologists, and painters helped to produce images of timeless nature in faraway places as they traveled to the corners of the globe in search of resources, exotic species, and native societies (Haraway 1989, 7; Savage 1984). The search for the Garden of Eden was important in the initial phase of European expansion (Grove 1990, 17–18). Among the early romantic and conservative critics of modern industrial societies, the myth of faraway Edens easily turned into the idea that tribal life was in itself an intrinsic critique of modern capitalism. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 110) write that for nineteenth-century Romantic naturalists, "[the savage] took his place—along with children, yeoman, and the virgin landscape—as an indictment of the 'jarring and dissonant thing' that civilization had made of man."

The third view of nature, nature as good, has evolved as a critique of modernization.[7] Contemporary critics of progress invoke these myths in arguments based on the idea of a peasant "natural economy" destroyed by capitalism. Many of the chapters in this volume also give examples of the use of nature myths to criticize the environmental degradation and marginalization

caused by development. Ideal landscapes and nature myths are not monopolized by European Romantics; for example, Lynch (Chapter 8) shows how people of the Caribbean appropriated the writings of European conquerors to construct myths of ideal landscape destroyed by the conquest. These myths have now been carried into urban environmental movements by Caribbean immigrants seeking to reshape the landscape of New York City.

The three views of nature frequently have more in common than critics realize. In particular, all start from the assumption that nature is separate from society. The idea of nature as opposed to society can result in a vision that saves and purifies nature by eliminating the social, including local histories of human activities.

Media depictions of nature often reinforce this separation. Movies such as *Gorillas in the Mist, At Play in the Fields of the Lord,* and *Fern Gully* describe seminaturalized heroes and heroines bravely using whatever means necessary to defend innocent savages or befriended animals against civilization. These sorts of movies, together with nature programs on television, tend to present humans as either destroyers of nature or as its saviors but seldom as participants in nature (Wilson, 1992, 135). Today's most prevalent image of endangered nature remains the dripping rainforest, the Amazon as "nature's preserve" (Hecht and Cockburn 1989a, 11). This vision "excludes man altogether and proposes a world whose lineaments reflect only the purity of natural forces, freed entirely from man's despoiling hands" (Hecht and Cockburn 1989a, 14).

For romantic writers, nature is also sacred, opposed to the secular and everyday world of human beings. Like other sacred places (heaven, Eden) nature is timeless and for the most part outside of lived experience. This view of nature has entered into popular culture as a place of renewal (Marx 1964); the foray into nature is a modern equivalent of Christian rebirth. People get in touch with themselves by stripping away all but the physical essentials—sometimes through physical action, and sometimes by trips to areas demarcated as "natural." Renewals through trips to nature have been institutionalized in the form of the annual vacation in mountains and forests, or by trips to the seashore or just to the country. For many modern people, in other words, nature is regarded as much more than a set of mechanical processes; it has become part of the sacred—that which is timeless, flawless, and provides for short periods of personal renewal.

When nature is understood in this way, it becomes extremely important to save it, and almost any means can be justified. Moreover, because nature is not dynamic and changing, but a timeless heritage, it must be preserved

without change for future generations, often in strictly delimited territories. In the hands of government, this vision has produced the national park: land claimed by the government with the justification that it is defending nature against human encroachment. International environmental organizations support these policies, while the ecologically sensitive media call on governments to devote greater efforts to defending nature against people. Television viewers, for their part, send checks to international environmental organizations to assure themselves that the natural world that they see on their television screens will continue to exist exactly this way.

In Chapter 5, Nancy Lee Peluso shows how the high priority placed on preservation of such sacred places leads some people to take drastic coercive action in their attempts to save them. Other chapters indicate the ubiquity of the concept of nature as an escape from complex and self-interested urban life (especially DuPuis, Lynch, Hinrichs, and Goldring). If the preservation of nature is linked to saving it as an escape for nonresidents, then the priorities of actual residents who rely on local resources for a living, and who may have a different sense of nature aesthetics, are likely to be marginalized in arguments over disputed areas.

Disjunctures

The essays in this volume show how exclusionary categories often limit the range of policy options we can imagine. It restricts our ability to formulate policies and programs that accept people as part of the dynamism of nature and that bring nature and activities associated with the countryside back into the lives of urban or suburban peoples.

The contributions to this collection show that cultural categories are not just ways by which people understand the world; they also control how they act in it. The attitudes of different agencies about the village (either as backward or as a site of authenticity) shape development projects (Vandergeest). Mexican men initiate projects that reconstruct the village as a site of fun and relaxation (Goldring). In Vermont, state authorities promote the construction of rural landscapes that conform to urban tourists' ideas of an idyllic rural vacation (Hinrichs). Land users deemed inefficient have been marginalized, excluded from government support, or expelled through the enclosure of land and nature (Bell, Taylor, DuPuis), while elsewhere, resource users who found themselves in areas demarcated as nature preserves were evicted (Peluso). The characterization of Amazonian Indians as part of nature has

demarcated their opportunities for exerting political influence (Fisher). These processes have continued to the present through the ongoing proliferation of boundaries, the increasing enforcement of boundaries, and the development of more policies relating to these boundaries (Vandergeest).

It is no accident that a theme running through many of these essays involves the spatial dimension of planning.[8] We can see the effects of spatial zoning when we cross the boundaries set up between, for example, city and country, "improved" property" and "wilderness reserve," or "industrial zones" and "green spaces." All of these environments exist because of the establishment of borders and boundaries, based on maps, laws, plans, and administrative rules. We live in a landscape shaped by land use zones and political territorial categories. Our lives continue to be shaped by the increasingly detailed implementation of these categories.

One of the central spatial boundaries in the modern nation-state is between privately owned land and public land. In a capitalist economy, land is divided into "private" and improved land on one hand and nonprivate, nonimproved "nature" on the other. In legal definitions of property, "nature" is at the frontier; it refers to land not yet enclosed and appropriated as private property. It also refers to land not yet "improved" by human activities. Other types of property relations have been marginalized in the modern imagination (MacPherson 1978, Cronon 1983).

It is only a small step from the modern conflation of all types of property into private property to the conflation of all property not legally private into the category of nature. According to this view, nature must be free of property rights and undisturbed by human livelihood activities. Preserving nature means keeping it free of property claims. The exception is the nation-state's claim that it must control nature in order to preserve it for the nation as a whole (DuPuis, this volume). The division of land into private property and nature produces the assumption that people who truly exist in a state of nature have no notion of property at all. The denial of alternative legal definitions of ownership results in social dislocation in nature's name as these ambiguous places become redefined as natural—and national—places or parks. Consequently, places owned by the nation-state, rather than the individual, become space that can be visited and viewed, but not lived in and used.

Yet these ideas and policies nearly always contradict claims that local people have on resources in these areas, as well as their social histories of exploitation and marginalization. Even in urban areas, pressures to reclaim public spaces for habitation by homeless people compete with the established definition of a "park" as a space in which working families might spend a small portion of their leisure hours.

The essays by Peluso, Fisher, and Baviskar in this volume document the threat that people face when local resource rights do not fit the definition of private property. From the view of state bureaucrats, land used in common or noncontinuously falls into the unimproved category, making it open to enclosure, appropriation, or "preservation." Enclosures have not only demarcated improved land but also distinguished land legally defined as wilderness and "owned" by the state—off bounds to residents (Peluso). State agencies justify state claims on wilderness land by arguing that the state represents the public interest, or the interests of humankind. This bounding and categorizing of land according to strict legal definitions developed in tandem with the rise of national and regional planning capacities (DuPuis).

The problems that we have identified—and that appear throughout the chapters in this volume—are the result not only of powerful institutions such as states and corporations, but also of many groups who are trying to resist these powerful forces and save nature or rural areas. Both tend to separate out what they believe should be improved or saved, dividing it from opposing land use categories. This has produced divisions within the environmental movement between those who take a more "biocentric" point of view, and who would save nature by eliminating people, and those who believe that saving nature is compatible with human livelihood activities (Guha 1992).

In many cases the key players in struggles over rural land use do not live in the contested areas. The views of local residents are often surveyed and invoked, but these views are seldom investigated in all their complexities and contradictions. And residents do not have much direct political clout, compared to elite groups in urban areas; their influence derives from what they do on the land, more than from what they say or write. The separation of the major political players from residents in contested areas raises difficult questions about accountability and about the general relationship between residents and nonresidents in these struggles. Even the distinction between "local resident" and "nonresident" is ambigious, as people situate themselves and others within and outside of boundaries.

Beyond Culture Versus Nature

People who live in or near forests, or in rural areas, often do not think of nature as being either benign or sacred. Neither do all rural people have similar views about rural life and nature. People's views on rural life and nature vary greatly, following local cultural traditions, livelihood practices, gender, class, and so on.

It is possible, however, to make some tentative generalizations about how local people who actually live in a place experience it differently from visitors. Tuan (1990, 64), for example, notes how "a visitor's evaluation of the environment is primarily aesthetic. It is an outsider's view. The outsider judges by appearance, by some formal canon of beauty. A special effort is required to empathize with the lives and values of the inhabitants." Development tourists driving through a rural area in the Third World will react to what they see primarily on the basis of their aesthetic evaluation of the landscape—as will tourists everywhere. Visitors usually have simple viewpoints about a place, which are easily expressed. Natives have complex attitudes derived from their immersion in the environment. Visitors' viewpoints are easily stated, while natives express their complex attitudes either with difficulty or indirectly (Tuan 1990, 63). The visitor's evaluation of a given environment can vary tremendously, depending on his or her own cultural background. For example, European attitudes toward wilderness shifted dramatically during the eighteenth century, from wilderness as threat to wilderness as sublime (see above). Nevertheless, this reaction remained primarily aesthetic.

There is no doubt that these observations on differences in environmental perceptions carry over to current environmental and land use debates. Many urban people sympathetic to environmental conservation react to scenes of environmental change such as deforestation with aesthetic revulsion, and their viewpoints are simple, compared to the complex attitudes of those who have lived all their lives in a rural place. There is also no doubt that some environmental groups encourage aesthetic dismay through campaigns that draw attention to the negative aesthetics of environmental change.

The recognition that the ideas, interests, and agendas of rural environmental planners and activists are often different from those who reside in contested areas is now the basis of vigorous debate among movement activists and intellectuals. Participants in these debates have raised many of the same issues as those identified by contributors to this volume. For example, Hecht and Cockburn (1989b) presented arguments similar to those of Fisher (Chapter 6) when they accused American environmental organizations of failing to report the union and leftist associations of Amazonian rubber tappers while presenting them to the world as saviors of the rainforest. Invoking these sorts of incidents, Larry Lohmann, writing for *The Ecologist,* has pointed out that dissident groups often recast other people's movements to suit their own purposes, forcing subordinate people to act out

parts assigned to them—a form of "green orientalism" (Lohmann 1993; Said 1979). Environmentalist writers like R. Guha (1992) have staked out a "Third World" perspective in criticizing radical American environmentalists and organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for their inattention to livelihood issues. Guha also points to environmentalists' highly selective and orientalist interpretation of diverse "Eastern" traditions, which in effect recasts them to express a monolithic American ecological ideal.

Publications such as *The Ecologist* and *Third World Resurgence* have vigorously argued that rural people should not be separated from nature, and that only rural people are equipped to understand and preserve biological diversity. Writers who take this position criticize organizations like the WWF for supporting governments whose policies are based on the separation of nature from people. In a similar vein, many academic writers (such as Cronon 1983) have shown how even environments that are often represented as pristine have been shaped by human activities.

The dualistic approach to nature and culture, North and South, indigenous and nonindigenous, simplifies the contrast between aesthetic and livelihood interests (Lynch, Chapter 8), implying that local or rural Third World people have no aesthetic interest in the landscape. Current rural environmental debates should not involve only aesthetics versus livelihoods. They should also involve an appropriate set of principles or morals by which we should plan for the future. But different groups look to very different kinds of principles. In particular, nonresidents sympathetic to environmental concerns often evaluate a local situation based on abstract or globalizing principles such as effects on biodiversity, while local residents may evaluate the same situation based on a complex set of principles derived from intricate attachments to features of a particular landscape and from the need to make a living.

Although we believe that it is important to point out the separation between the everyday lives of many environmental writers and activists and the places about which they write and argue, in no way do we intend to dismiss their importance. International organizations located in global centers contribute important knowledge about the global effects of local activities. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that this knowledge is not usually based on local meanings; such meanings seldom fit the abstract dichotomies presented in many modern critiques of development.

At the risk of oversimplification, we might say that nonresidents may take one of two political positions vis-à-vis rural residents in contested

areas. The first position is that of technocratic authority, as exemplified by state agencies that try to control the spatial activities of rural residents through land use planning activities. This approach may lead to policies that attempt to save nature by eliminating people. The second position is that of representation, a position taken by both nation-states and by NGOs that claim to represent the interests of rural residents. These groups try to promote policies that save nature by turning its management over to local people.

However, the distance between residents and nonresidents always raises the question of whether externally based organizations really represent rural people, or whether they merely project their own principles onto rural people. The latter situation is all too common, although there are many exceptions, including small local groups whose members live in the contested areas. By virtue of their immersion in the local environment, they frequently do represent some (but generally not all) local people and are often more aware of local diversity in their perceptions of a given issue. Larger organizations based in capital cities and in the United States and Europe are more likely to project their own interests onto rural people. Many of the essays in this volume tell the disconcertingly similar story of how the definition of various people as either in or out of a demarcated natural environment provides a very selective account of their history. In the worst cases, such accounts eliminate elements of a people's real history, because that history is as much social as it is natural.

If we keep in mind the fact that our categories are social products, we are more likely to question them and thus open up alternative ways of thinking. Instead of a wilderness without people, we can imagine a "wilderness" that includes people with a social history. Instead of envisioning modern or traditional farming, planners and rural activists could recognize a series of different farming and land use strategies, all of which have their place. Instead of extolling the moral superiority of one land use practice over another, we might admit that many practices have a legitimate role.

We can also incorporate alternative ways of thinking by paying attention to the categories of people living in contested areas and to diverse cultural traditions of environmental discourse that do not fit easy categorization (Lynch, Chapter 8). Understanding the social history of people in rural or wilderness areas serves to draw our attention to the importance of issues of exploitation and marginalization, typically endured by most rural people, even those in places remote from the "centers" of the world system.

Greater attention to local history might also engender a recognition of

important divisions within rural society, along lines of class and gender, for example. Past political economy approaches to understanding rural society tended to emphasize this,[9] but the recognition of differences among people living in contested areas has often been forgotten in the new agenda to save traditional rural life or nature. Recognition of marginalization and of difference might encourage us to pause before leaping into generalizations about "other" people's relation with a timeless nature.

Our final point is that we need to acknowledge the spatial and social gulf dividing state planners, intellectuals, and activists in environmental and ruralist movements on one hand and the people living in contested areas on the other. This acknowledgment does not mean that we should dismiss the ideas of nonresidents, since they add an important global perspective to local issues. Although it is important that those participating in current debates over environment and resource use pay close attention to the stories and perspectives of rural people, these perspectives should not be sanctified as the only authentic voice. That would constitute the sort of entrapment that we have already described: it would dichotomize the debate and give one particular voice the moral high ground. The activities of nonresidents would be reduced to merely seeking out and representing the authentic rural voice, or to acting as mediators between rural people and other powerful groups, masking their role in selecting and constructing rural voices. In such a scenario, there is a very real danger of overlooking any rural voices that do not agree with the viewpoints of their external representatives.

Another possible approach would recognize the differences in points of view between different rural residents and movement activists, planners and such. If activists and state agencies recognized that they had interests and perspectives that differed from those of many local residents, they might give more thought to whether they can "represent" residents. An appropriate path would replace representation with dialogue, and mediation with alliance or solidarity (Lohmann 1993). Doing so might induce activists, academics, and planners to listen to and be sympathetic to diverse local perspectives that are different from their own.

NOTES

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