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Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place

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conservation literature is rapidly growing but lacks systematic analysis" (page 264). One of the main gaps here is the failure systematically to examine social and economic impacts of protected areas around the world. On what basis, for example, can we extrapolate findings about the impacts of individual reserves or parks to the rest of the nation? Few studies, if any, are based on randomly selected sites. Similarly we do not know how or why the studies in *Contested Nature* were selected, or what brought the collection together (this is a significant flaw). Perhaps all we can say for sure is that they are representative of the interests of a community of researchers at a particular time. We cannot say whether they are representative of a country or region's conservation policy. We could be more systematic. Databases outlining the number and location of protected areas provide a sampling frame and a means by which we could compare that which we have written about, to that which exists and find out where the islands of knowledge are, and where the oceans of ignorance are. This could become incorporated into the current world database so that it made more mention of the social consequences of conservation. We could also examine the broad relationships between protected areas and indices of poverty and well being at national and international levels.

Finally *Contested Nature* repeats a persistent error in social science writings about conservation which is also particularly prevalent in sustainable development writings generally: that unjust conservation does not work. This oft repeated mantra conflates social justice as end in itself and as a pragmatic means of achieving conservation goals. This can lead to fine sounding, but ultimately confused, statements such as Brechin's assertion in the introduction to *Contested Nature* that "conservation will not succeed in the long run if it is built on the backs of the poor. It must maintain the moral high ground or it will lose its soul." (pp. xi-xii). This is a worthy ideological position, but not a particularly sound empirical one. Oppression and injustice have been sustained repeatedly for centuries, and continue to be sustained. Asserting that inequitable states of affairs cannot last stops us from asking when they might be changed or how. What we need to ask now is

under what circumstances oppression is effectively maintained, and in what circumstances the rural poor can effectively oppose unjust conservation.

I hope that these ideas will promote conservation with social justice, as *Contested Nature* will itself do. Knowledge by itself will not be enough however. We must find the common ground, the innovative spirit, and the political will to help rural people become effective partners in conservation that provides them with equitable benefits while effectively protecting biodiversity.

Dan Brockington, School of Geography and Environmental Studies, St. Hughes College, Oxford

Notes

¹ I counted the following papers: *Conservation Biology* 7; *Science* 3; *Bioscience* 2; *Environmental Conservation* 2; *Oryx* 2; *Nature* 1; *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 1. Zerner's *People, plants and justice* has similar proportions from natural science journals.

Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place

THOMAS POWER

ISLAND PRESS, WASHINGTON, DC, 1996
295 pp. \$35.00 HARDCOVER

REVIEWED BY BARBARA J. DILLY

While this book is firmly based in the rhetoric of academic economics, Power's local economies and popular folklore makes it an excellent text for economic anthropology. Specifically he focuses on the ways in which folklore expresses local economic decision making wisdom with regards to environmental resources. These issues are brought to life through descriptive ethnography of the diversity of political and economic interests in American extractive industries.

But this work is not merely descriptive. Power advocates the demystification of two competing modes of thought in local economic behavior. One is the ideological bias of academic economic science that assumes absolute truth. The other is the uncritical bias of naïve folk economics that mistrusts expertise external to local communities. This demystification is motivated by his objective of helping local people better understand how they make their decisions so that local economic policies are neither misled nor distorted.

Three basic assumptions inform his arguments in the body of the book: 1) popular folk economics that assume natural resource extraction industries are critical to economic development are incomplete and misleading; 2) contrary to popular belief, people seek high-quality residential environments over economic opportunities; and 3) business development follows labor, not vice versa.

Environmental economic issues (i.e., agriculture, ranching, fishing, mining, and logging) are primarily rural in context, where folk wisdom persists in political and economic decision-making. These extractive activities are centers of economic and environmental conflicts. Power argues that it may be more productive to view these conflicts from the perspective of scientific vs. folk economics rather than as political interest group conflicts. This new perspective, I think, is his main contribution to economic anthropology and environmental scholarship.

According to Power, the various interests representing extractive industries and environmental protection are often deadlocked. He proposes a different framework for engaging in civil discourse to examine local realities. Scientific economics can be employed to demystify the significance of the role of extractive industries at local levels. In most cases, argues Power, that role is not as significant as many locals assume. Scientific economics can also identify the significance of protected landscapes on local economies. In most cases protected areas and ecotourism contribute much more to economic vitality than is locally believed.

Power argues that it is people's commitment to local environments that influences local economic agendas. Therefore, environmental protection is not

only central to economic decision making, but the most central resources in the local economic base. When local people begin to see the protection and preservation of their natural landscapes as essential to economic development, and not in opposition to it, acrimonious conflicts are transformed into opportunities for collaboration.

He states that "there is little evidence to support the idea that vigorous protection of environmental quality limits economic opportunity" (p. 22). It does mean economic transition, however, which is often disruptive to local economies without public policies to enable and energize adaptations. He identifies the local factors that reveal the instability of income from extractive industries. He also shows the relative stability of the service industry in providing sources of employment in the U.S. economy. Power is not just touting low paying service jobs as the solution to rural unemployment. His focus is on the kind of service goods and services that offer entrepreneurial opportunities. He provides a "bootstrap economic development" model that contributes to greater local self-sufficiency and attracts nonemployment income flow to the local economy.

Power supports these arguments with economic models that non-economists can read and understand. In each of his chapters, he reviews basic academic models of economic behavior and applies them to local economic activities. By building an environmental model of the local economy, Power includes an aesthetic value of social and natural resources. He creates a broader vision of a total economy that includes noncommercial resources that contribute to and support the local economic base. Through these more comprehensive models of economic activity, he shows that the vitality of local economics is a better goal than just measures of quantitative growth.

Working as an applied economic anthropologist in an agricultural community in northeast Iowa, I've organized local stakeholders to read Power's book. Economic opportunities in this community have diminished steadily, but local efforts to develop ecotourism have been met with cynicism in this community. If Power is correct, however, the stable residential environment and the high quality of natural environment amenities in this community

suggest that the cultural and intellectual inertia that exists can be overcome by glimpsing a new vision. Rather than fearing that things will get worse, people can learn to gain confidence in their communities and nurture their commitments to them as active economic development strategies at the grass roots.

I recommend this book for all economic anthropologists engaged in economic development issues in rural communities. Power thinks more like an anthropologist than an economist, but his academic economic science rhetoric brings a much needed perspective to rural economic development and environmental preservation from the grass roots.

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Material Culture and Sacred Landscape: The Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty

PETER JORDAN

ALTA MIRA PRESS, WALNUT CREEK, CA,
2003

308 PP. \$80 HARDCOVER, \$29.95 PAPERBACK

REVIEWED BY THOMAS J. PLUCKHAHN

It seems safe to assume that I am not the only archaeologist who experiences something akin to a pang of longing when I have occasion to pick up an older ethnography. Many of the ethnographers of the early and middle twentieth century devoted almost as much attention to the material culture and environment of the people they studied as the people themselves. For all their shortcomings, these early ethnographies presented a richness of detail that is too often missing in contemporary works of cultural anthropology: settlement maps, illustrations of house patterns, accounts of subsistence techniques, and descriptions of everyday material objects. I was thus perhaps predisposed to have a favorable opinion of

Jordan's book and its close attention to Khanty material culture. But this is not a work of vulgar materialism, nor is it a return to the simple descriptive style of many past ethnographies. His primary concern is describing how the Khanty material culture, including landscapes, is 'enculturated' (i.e., given symbolic meaning) through physical transformation or incorporation into the symbolism of social practices.

Jordan draws from a number of theoretical strands in an effort to find a middle ground between cultural materialist ("socioecological") and interpretive ("semiotic") approaches to hunter-gatherer studies. By his own admission, however, the middle ground he proposes leans heavily toward interpretive theories of material culture, which he sees as a corrective to the materialist approaches that have traditionally dominated this field (p. 22). While the terms he uses may be unfamiliar to some readers, his theoretical discussion is clear (free of much of the jargon inherent in the primary works) and even-handed (pointing out some of the limitations and criticisms of these approaches).

Jordan contextualizes his ethnographic material in broad temporal and spatial scales, placing the Khanty in a macro-regional, *longue durée* historical context. This history is phrased in the language and perspective of world systems theory, while extending discussion and credence to its many critiques. While readers anxious to get into the details of the ethnography may wonder why this wasn't incorporated into his earlier theoretical discussion, as an archaeologist I appreciated the inclusion of an extended historical context. World systems theory is appropriate for understanding this history, given that the Khanty paid fur in tribute to the Tatar Khans during the medieval period, were later incorporated into fur tax systems of the Russian and Soviet empires, and today occupy a landscape valued for its mineral resources.

Having dispensed with the historical context, Jordan turns to the heart of the ethnography. In addition to material from a 10-month field study of communities on one tributary of the River Ob', he makes good use of other scholarly works and ethno-historic data. He reviews many of the fundamental aspects of Khanty society, including gender roles, kinship, settlement patterns, and subsistence practices.