

**Disciplinary Research Report**  
**The Sociology of Place and Land Use Change in North Idaho and Northeast Oregon**

**Max Nielsen-Pincus and Jo Ellen Force**

Recent social science and natural resource management research has applied the concept of place to large landscapes (Blake 1998, Brown et al. 2002, Steadman 2002). Past research indicates that a population's relationship with their geographical setting has implications for natural resource management, land use planning, and community development. A place is most easily defined as a geographical setting that is imbued with meaning developed through social interactions, experiences, emotions, and thought (Tuan 1974, Stedman 2002). Places imply shared meanings and behavioral responses to those meanings. The concept of place is also dynamic in that a person's sense of place is renegotiated over time as the place and the person interpreting the place encounter change. Yet to view a place as such a macrosocial phenomenon ignores the individual, group, and spatial variations in the meanings and behavioral implications a place may have. Understanding a place, therefore, necessitates an understanding of the socio-cultural, socio-psychological, and spatial variations and contributions to that geographical setting.

Most scholars of place agree that places involve cognitive, affective, and behavioral relationships with a geographical setting. The basic nature of these relationships are not well theorized, but may be explained by a number of factors including the scale of place under investigation (Cuba and Hummon 1993, Cheng and Daniels 2003), socio-cultural or ecological factors (Stedman 2002, 2003; Cheng et al. 2003), individual or group value orientations (Stern and Dietz 1994), or length of experience with a place (Tuan 1974, 1975; Relph 1976). Much of the research investigating the meanings of landscape scale places has occurred in high amenity/recreational landscapes such as wilderness areas (Williams et al. 1992), Cape Cod (Cuba and Hummon 1993), and the Grand Tetons (Smalldone, In review) to name a few. In contrast, relatively little research has been devoted to: 1) understanding working landscapes (landscapes dominated by intensive human management) as places, 2) comparing different landscapes as places, or 3) investigating the relationship between the land use change and place meanings. Our research objectives address these three areas.

We use multiple methods to broaden our scope of understanding, including: 1) qualitative interviews and content analysis, 2) quantitative mail surveys, and 3) spatial mapping activities. The overall research design is a comparative case study that evaluates differences in the concept of place at the county level in northern Idaho and northeast Oregon. Three counties (Benewah and Latah in Idaho and Wallowa in Oregon) serve as the landscape scale place units.

Fieldwork began in the summer of 2004 with semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, document collection, and attendance at community meetings. Interviews focused on the meanings people attribute to the social and biophysical landscape of each county. Semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded; questions focused on specific places of meaning or importance within each county and the values embodied by those places. Informal interviews focused on general meanings associated with each county and the perceived trends in the county's social, economic, and environmental

context. In all 22 semi-structured and over 50 informal interviews were conducted, and meetings ranging from community fire planning to Soil and Water Conservation District meetings were observed. Recorded interviews were transcribed in October and November 2004, and all interactions have been recorded and reflected on in a reflexive journal.

Two separate mail surveys were developed for the population of household property owners in each county in the fall and winter of 2004 and 2005. The first questionnaire focused on sense of place (SOP) concepts such as place meanings, place attachment, community satisfaction and involvement, values orientation, and demographics. A mapping exercise was also developed to complement the questionnaire using Brown's (2005) values mapping protocols. Both the SOP questionnaire and the mapping activity were oriented to the county level social and biophysical landscape. The second questionnaire focused on land use change (LUC) and investigated past land use decisions, barriers to decision making, future land use plans, values orientation, and demographics. Sampling for the LUC survey instrument was stratified by parcel size and included only tax lots larger than 2 acres; the SOP sample was also stratified by parcel size and included property owners from all size classes. The LUC survey was developed as a key research component for the IGERT Idaho alternative landscape futures team.

We followed a modified Dillman (2000) three contact mailing method for both survey instruments. The first contact was mailed on March 3, 2005. The SOP instrument and mapping activity was sent to 1869 property owners in all three counties; the LUC instrument was mailed to 945 property owners in Latah and Benewah counties, Idaho. Overall, 213 surveys were returned due to poor address information, and another 153 surveys were returned blank because the recipient had either sold the property, was deceased, or was for another reason unable to fill out the survey. A total of 867 SOP surveys and 440 LUC surveys were completed for response rates of 53% and 54%, respectively. Data entry for both questionnaires was completed on June 1, 2005. Data entry for the SOP mapping activity is planned over the course of this summer and fall.

Data collection for this research project is nearing completion. Follow-up interviews to help explain some of the survey data are in the planning stages. Analysis methods will use coding procedures to analyze the interview and observational data. Basic statistical tests and more complicated multivariate techniques such as structural equation modeling are planned to analyze questionnaire data. Spatial data (including data from the SOP mapping activity, and spatially referenced land use data from the LUC survey) will be analyzed using a combination of spatial statistical techniques such as semi-variogram modeling, and ordinary and indicator point Kriging. Results from the SOP surveys and qualitative interviews and observations are expected to demonstrate the relationship between sense of place and willingness to engage in specified behaviors under specific conditions of land use change and natural resource management decisions. Results from the LUC surveys will be used to create probabilistic spatial models of land use change across the two county study area.

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