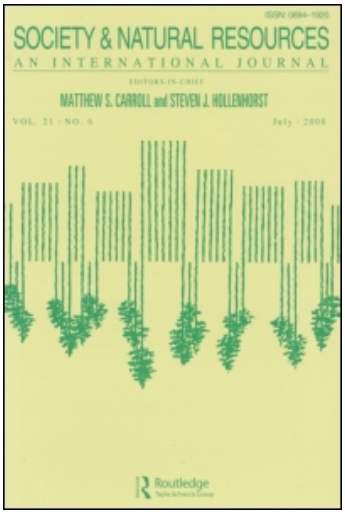

Society & Natural Resources
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713667234

Rural Community Views on the Role of Local and Extralocal Interests in Public Lands Governance

Laurie Yung[a]; Michael E. Patterson[a]; Wayne A. Freimund[a]
[a] Department of Society and Conservation, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, USA

First published on: 20 August 2010

To cite this Article Yung, Laurie , Patterson, Michael E. and Freimund, Wayne A.(2010) 'Rural Community Views on the Role of Local and Extralocal Interests in Public Lands Governance', Society & Natural Resources, 23: 12, 1170 — 1186, First published on: 20 August 2010 (iFirst)
To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/08941920903005787
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08941920903005787

Society and Natural Resources, 23:1170–1186

ISSN: 0894-1920 print/1521-0723 online
DOI: 10.1080/08941920903005787

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Rural Community Views on the Role of Local and Extralocal Interests in Public Lands Governance

LAURIE YUNG, MICHAEL E. PATTERSON, AND WAYNE A. FREIMUND

Department of Society and Conservation, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, USA

Based on in-depth interviews with residents on the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana, this article examines how disagreements about the appropriate role of local interests influence local conflict over public lands. Residents who advocated that local interests should be privileged framed the conflict in terms of class, social standing, and fairness. While some residents were clearly venue shopping (advocating the level of decision making where they believed they could achieve their goals), others supported the decision-making level they believed to be most democratic. We found that claims for increased local influence were not necessarily tied to support for development of public lands. Antigovernment sentiment was contributing to local resistance of extralocal proposals, and national attention to the area had further entrenched and polarized local views. Disagreement about the decision-making process and the conflation of conflicts over policy process with conflicts over policy outcome made local disputes over public lands particularly intractable.

Keywords community-based conservation, environmental conflict, public lands policy, rural communities, western environmental values

Public Lands in the West

Since the creation of the National Forests, the respective roles of local communities and the federal government in public lands policymaking have been contested. During the last two decades, there has been a growing interest in and use of processes that involve local residents in decision making, such as collaboration. Such efforts have inspired considerable debate about how decisions regarding federal lands should be made and the role of local residents relative to the national public.

Local versus national tensions in public lands policymaking bring up difficult issues in the context of federal lands, which are theoretically managed for the

Received 21 February 2008; accepted 11 December 2008.

The authors thank all the residents along the Rocky Mountain Front who generously provided interviews for this research. This project was funded by the Community Forestry Research Fellowships and McIntyre-Stennis programs, and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. We greatly appreciate all of our colleagues who assisted with this project, most especially Jill Belsky, Alan Watson, and John Adams.

Address correspondence to Laurie Yung, College of Forestry and Conservation, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812, USA. E-mail: laurie.yung@umontana.edu

American public as a whole. The key question in this debate is surprisingly simple, yet extraordinarily difficult to answer. What role should local and extralocal interests play in decision making for federal public lands? While there is considerable national debate over the role local communities should play in public lands policymaking, little attention has been devoted to understanding local views on how local interests should be considered and weighed. This article helps fill that gap by examining the nature of local debate over the respective roles of local and nonlocal interests.

The Role of Local Interests in Public Lands

Recent interest in community-based forestry and conservation and in decision-making processes that provide meaningful avenues for local input, especially collaboration, has been well documented (Baden and Snow 1997; Kellert et al. 2000; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Advocates of local-level collaboration argue that such processes are more inclusive, democratic, creative, lasting, and likely to produce solutions that fit local social and ecological contexts. At the same time, federal land management agencies are increasingly being directed to give more consideration to local views and interests (*Code of Federal Regulation* 2005).

Critics of local-level collaboration often argue that local-level decision making privileges resource extraction and development, even suggesting that local communities are "narrow, greedy, and shortsighted" (Coggins 1999, 2). This image of community contrasts sharply with the mythic notion of rural people in harmony with nature: an image sometimes used to promote community-based conservation and other programs that emphasize community involvement in natural resource management (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). However, both portray local communities as monolithic, timeless places with little or no internal political conflict. While small rural communities may appear monolithic and unified from a distance, close examination reveals important differences, even conflicts, related to class, gender, race, politics, occupation, and length of residence (Belsky 1999; Vandergeest and DuPuis 1996; Watts 2000).

Conflict over the respective roles of local and national publics in public lands policymaking appears to play an important role in some rural communities (Bryan and Wondolleck 2003). Durrant and Shumway (2004) studied rural residents' attitudes toward Wilderness Study Areas in Utah and found that residents did not necessarily oppose environmental protection. Rather, they were concerned that such programs were being "carried out in a heavy-handed manner and dominated by outside influences" (281). The research described in this article indicates that local conflict over roadless lands revolves, at least in part, around the respective roles of local and extralocal interests in decision making. (The term "extralocal interests" refers here to nonresident individuals or organizations who are interested in and/or work to influence policy that affects a particular place.)

The extent to which people feel that their views are represented in decision-making processes influences their judgments about the fairness and legitimacy of such processes. Previous research suggests that meaningful opportunities for participation contribute to public support for decision-making processes (Smith and McDonough 2001). Judgments about procedural fairness can influence support for policy outcomes (Lauber and Knuth 1999). In contrast, people who believe they have been excluded from a decision-making process oftentimes do not view that

process as legitimate (Young 2000). Thus, local residents who do not believe that public lands policymaking takes local interests into account may not see current decision-making processes as fair or legitimate.

Putnam and Wondolleck (2003) argue that conflicts that involve challenges to established decision-making processes and institutions are particularly intractable because parties do not agree on a framework for resolution. Disagreements about who should be making decisions "increases the chances that the conflict will elude resolution" (Elliott et al. 2003, 418). Thus, debates over the relative influence of local and national publics are difficult to resolve because the very process for resolution is contested.

Attempts to "localize" public lands policymaking involve reframing the debate to legitimize and privilege local interests. Privileging the local often involves defining local interests in ways that contrast with nonlocal interests. In doing so, some groups may construct or assert a particular community identity that serves their interests (Watts 2000). Framing public lands policymaking as local might involve justifying local influence based on proximity, tenure, local knowledge, or economic benefits. According to Turner (1999), social identities are self-categorizations based on "shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories" (12). Members of particular social groups not only evaluate themselves more positively in comparison to outsiders, they may also compete with and discriminate against nonmembers (Brewer 2001).

In constructing group or social identity and claiming that some groups should have more influence than others, political actors are invoking social standing as a measure of legitimate participation. Social standing (as opposed to legal standing) refers to the group membership, which grants individuals a legitimate voice in decisions (Daniels and Walker 1995). Daniels and Walker's analysis of conflict over timber harvest in the Pacific Northwest found that participants repeatedly refused to grant social standing to their political opponents.

Debates about level of decision making often involve venue shopping, a strategy whereby political actors pursue the policy arenas where they believe they have an advantage because of institutional rules, norms, or procedures (Pralle 2006a). In this manner, political actors make use of different scales to advance their agendas (Bebbington and Batterbury 2001). "Jumping scales" can involve strategies to shift decision making to new venues or secure public or political support at different levels (Smith 1993).

Disagreements about who should decide and the relative legitimacy of local and national interests contribute to local conflict over public lands, but local debate on these issues is not well understood or explicated. In this article, we examine rural residents' perspectives on this debate. We explore local debates about local and extralocal influence over public lands policymaking, and how claims for different levels of decision making relate to desires for development or conservation of roadless lands. In this article, we do not take a position regarding the legitimacy of local or nonlocal interests, but rather seek to identify different views and approaches to framing conflict at the local level.

The Rocky Mountain Front

The Rocky Mountain Front (also called *the Front*), in north central Montana, sits at the eastern edge of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, where the Rocky

Mountains meet the Great Plains. Local communities (Dupuyer, Bynum, Choteau, and Augusta) are small (total population is approximately 3,000 people), predominantly white, and relatively economically diverse (McMahon 2002). Most residents live in town, and private lands are primarily owned and operated by local ranch families. Unlike most of America, 47% of residents in the study site grew up on a farm or ranch or in a small town (population less than 1,000) (Yung 2002). Population is growing slowly, with amenity migrants settling in town, in rural subdivisions, and on large properties.

During the last 20 years, there has been increasing national conservation attention to the Rocky Mountain Front. Many biologists and conservationists consider the area ecologically important because of high biodiversity, the persistence of native megafauna, and the relatively undeveloped nature of public and private lands. The Front is the last place in the lower 48 states where grizzly bears still utilize prairie habitat.

The study site contains 620,513 acres of Forest Service land, including 365,041 acres of designated wilderness and 200,248 roadless acres. Management of these roadless lands has been hotly contested, the focus of both conservation and energy development proposals. While roadless lands on the Front were included in at least 15 wilderness bills during the 1980s, attempts to secure wilderness designation for the area have thus far failed (former Congressman Pat Williams, interview, 1 April 2007). However, during the last 15 years, many federal decisions have favored preservation. Mineral, oil, and gas development have been banned on most Forest Service lands in the area through a series of agency and legislative initiatives. The fate of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, adopted in 2001 to eliminate roadbuilding and most timber harvest, remains uncertain, as various groups continue to appeal federal court decisions on the rule.

Conservation and energy issues on the Rocky Mountain Front have been covered extensively by regional and national media. Many residents are keenly aware of this outside attention and, in interviews, expressed a sense of being in the national spotlight, saying that the area was "under a lot of scrutiny."

Research Methods

To understand the depth and complexity of local views and interests, we utilized participant observation and semistructured, in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are especially effective for exploring different positions and discourses involved in divisive environmental issues on which there are multiple points of view and no agreed upon solutions. Interviews were conducted between 1999 and 2002 with 80 residents. The sample was purposive, with individuals selected to represent a diversity of backgrounds, occupations, experiences, and political views. The chain-referral method was used to generate a list of more than 200 names (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995). Individuals with specific characteristics, representing different interests and relationships to the area, were then selected for interviews in order to provide for diversity in the sample. The sample included 28 ranchers, 10 newcomer nonranching landowners, 6 federal and state agency employees, 8 outfitter/guest ranch operators or staff, 8 local business owners, 8 nongovernmental organization staff, and 12 others, including teachers, elected officials, real estate agents, accountants, attorneys, and retirees. A large number of ranchers were interviewed for two reasons: (1) to better understand conservation on private lands and across

boundaries, and (2) to better understand diversity within the ranching community. Of the 80 residents interviewed, 50 had lived in the area more than 20 years while 30 had moved to the area within the last 20 years. A total of 34 women and 46 men, ages 22–90 years, were interviewed.

An interview guide was utilized to ensure comparability between interviews. Interviews focused on land management and conservation and included questions specifically about national attention to the area, how Forest Service decisions affect local communities, the potential for collaboration, and how the Forest Service should deal with local, regional, and national perspectives. Probes were utilized to obtain detail on particular topics and for clarification. While the interview guide ensured consistency across interviews, participants also had opportunities to bring up topics and ideas that were not covered in the interview guide.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis involved a process of coding that linked concepts and themes to data through reading and rereading of transcripts, interpretations, and social theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Patterson and Williams 2002). Coding initially focused on individual interviews, followed by detailed across-interview analyses to compare and contrast meanings and views to better understand patterns and to gain insight into broader social processes.

The quotes that follow are intended to provide detail about resident views as well as empirical evidence to support the interpretations put forth in this article. The quotes below come from 25 different individuals. These quotations were selected for inclusion based on the following criteria: (1) relevance to the topic and social theory, (2) ability to represent both typical views expressed by research participants and the range/diversity of perspectives within the sample, and (3) depth and clarity with which the idea was conveyed.

Roadless Lands and the Local Debate Over Public Lands Policymaking

According to recent research, residents along the Rocky Mountain Front were divided, even polarized, regarding whether or not they wanted roadless public lands developed (Yung, Freimund, and Chandler-Pepelnjak 2008). However, as the story unfolds in the following, it becomes clear that there were two conflicts at the local level: a conflict over what to do with roadless lands, and a conflict over how such decisions should be made. Thus, the debate over development versus conservation (to the extent that the meanings of these terms were even agreed upon) was entangled with a broader discussion and disagreement about decision making. Much of the conflict over public lands policymaking along the Front centered on the respective roles of local and nonlocal publics in decision making, with "localists" arguing for more local influence and "nationalists" supporting traditional federal decision making.

Localists and the Argument for Increased Local Influence

In interviews, "localists" argued that local views and needs should be prioritized in decisions about nearby public lands. For the purposes of this article, the term localist refers to those individuals who argued for local influence, control, or decision making. Localists challenged traditional public lands policymaking and resisted the influence of extralocal interests. Localist discourse was very much related to the broad anti-federal government sentiment that is relatively pervasive in these communities, and that permeates discussions of a wide range of natural resource

management issues. Next we outline how localists framed and supported their arguments for increased local influence.

"Those Are Our *Mountains": Localists Claim the Place*

When residents argued for increased local influence and local control, they often justified such changes by "claiming" local National Forest lands as their own. One long-time rancher said, "Actually, we think that those are our mountains." According to another rancher, "I guess the land is supposed to belong to everybody and I suppose we have the attitude that we want it to belong to us." These residents argued that local federal land "belonged" to residents and therefore local people should have more of a say over decisions affecting that land.

Many residents articulated this sense of ownership over public lands. But this assertion was not a claim to property ownership (i.e., title) or to particular use rights (i.e., grazing). Rather, these residents were claiming a geographic location (in this case, "the mountains") as their backyard, as their place. Such claims were based on knowledge of the area, daily familiarity, tenure (their individual longevity in the area or their family history), and labor (the fact that they had worked the land). For example, one rancher explained:

> Well, it's their right, but when it comes to passing laws governing the use of these mountains, it aggravates us to think that the mountains belong to everyone, they're federal, national, and so forth, and because of that reason, these people assume a right, you know, that they have to them. But to us, because they're immediate and because they affect our life, to us we're stingy about it. We're stingy, we think they're our mountains, and our forefathers came here and fought the elements and opened the area.

This rancher acknowledged that all Americans have a right to participate in public lands policymaking, but he also described the animosity some residents feel toward extralocal influence. Localists argued that residents had earned these mountains through experience, good stewardship, length of residence, and work, and that non-locals should not determine priorities for local public lands.

"Someone Else Is Pulling Our Strings and That's Not Right": Resisting Extralocal Interests

A major component of the argument for increased local influence involved a critique of extralocal interests and their influence over decision making. Localists described extralocal interests as wealthy and powerful, using terms like "big money" and "a lot of power." One rancher said, "I don't know whether we can hold out against the powers, the money," implying that residents were far less powerful by comparison. In nearly every case, extralocal interests were associated with a conservation agenda. Oil and gas companies were rarely mentioned in this context, even though they are not local groups and often attempt to influence policies affecting the area.

Localists argued that extralocal interests did not understand or care about the consequences of public land policies on local communities. According to one rancher:

> It bothers me for somebody in Florida or California or anyplace along the eastern coast trying to tell us what we should be doing here in our

> state . . . They don't know anything, and yet they are the ones that are trying to tell us that we, for instance, have to have all of the wolves and we have to have all of the grizzly bears and we have to have all of the mountain lions. I don't think they would want them, but I think they really ought to have a big dose of them, because I think it would really give them a big understanding that these things really aren't as pleasant as they think.

There was a strong sense of inequity, as described by this local business owner:

> a feeling that, it's you folks who are living along the coasts where the new economy is booming and you've got your high standard of living and your college education funds for your children taken care of and your four week or six week or eight week paid vacations, you are telling us who are eking out a living along the Front, don't have money to see dentists. You're telling us how to use this property that is in our backyard that could raise our standard of living, but you are telling us we can't do that.

According to this resident, it's not right for nonlocal individuals with financial resources to restrict the economic options of people who are struggling economically. By characterizing extralocal interests as wealthy and powerful, localists framed the debate, in part, as a class conflict. Given the relatively low median income in Montana, the perception that locals have fewer resources than nonlocals may, in fact, be accurate.

Many localists argued that nonresident values and interests were different from those of residents, especially with regard to public lands. According to this business owner,

> I think that they [localists] are feeling that, it doesn't really matter what I feel because the majority of the American citizens have a perception of the Front that's different from our perception of the Front, and they want this place saved, just either for the principle of having it there or so they can come and recreate in it.

The sense that nonresidents were interested in "saving" the area, potentially from residents, was widespread, and many localists argued that extralocal interests were promoting protective designations such as wilderness, parks, and monuments. One oldtimer and former National Forest user argued that conservation efforts were "concocted by some of these people that were . . . sitting in the cities in big easy chairs, wanting all the whole area clear out here to the front as the wilderness." Again, note the description of extralocal interests as urban and wealthy (implied by "easy chair"). Localists also argued that it was unfair for nonlocals to influence policy for the Front, because residents had no influence over policy in other places. Again, a sense of inequity or imbalance surfaced in these arguments, as well as a feeling that nonlocals are not concerned about the local impacts of policies.

Localist concern about extralocal influence stemmed largely from an assumption that national attention led to more restrictive policy, or "more rules, more regulations," as one rancher put it. Localists who did not support more restrictive public

lands policy felt resentment and animosity toward nonlocal citizens, organizations, and decision makers involved in policymaking. For example, the following local business owner described local feelings of being marginalized:

> Those things which happen so far away in Washington can really affect people here, and when you're so far away from where the decisions that affect your life are being made, it's very easy to feel frustrated, isolated, powerless, disenfranchised, all of those things.

In short, localists argued that public lands policymaking privileged extralocal interests. These residents described their view of decision making, saying, "We're not making the rules for what we're living in right now. Somebody else is pulling our strings and that's not right," "These are all decisions made by people that don't live here," and "We just have almost no input into it." Policymaking processes were characterized as happening "behind closed doors." These residents both resented and resisted extralocal influence over decision making. Localists were making an argument similar to the revolutionary critique of British "taxation without representation," suggesting that they should not bear the burden of policies they have no influence over.

Nationalists and the Argument for Federal Decision Making

In contrast to localists, "nationalists" were local residents who argued that public lands policy should be made at the national level, where all Americans have access to and influence over decision making. For the purposes of this article, the term "nationalist" refers to individuals who support federal level public lands policymaking (through Congress and the Executive Branch) that allows all Americans to influence decisions through traditional political representation. Fairfax et al. (1999) call this the "normal model" in which federal lands are believed to be "national resources and ought to be maintained to benefit the nation as a whole" (633) and the national government is "the necessary enforcer of environmental priorities and the protector of national interests in the nation's resources" (632). Next we outline how nationalists supported their arguments for federal-level decision making.

"That's Part of Our National Heritage": Nationalist Claims to Place

Like localists, nationalists used claims to place to justify their arguments regarding who should decide. They argued that "these are national lands and they belong to the whole country." Nationalists claimed that local public lands were owned by all Americans, regardless of place of residence. According this resident,

> I mean there is no question in my mind, it is a National Forest, it is owned equally by someone who lives in Choteau as someone who lives in Atlanta. So I think the national perspective has to be taken into consideration when you are managing National Forests.

Because federal lands legally belong to everyone, nationalists suggested that Americans have both a right and responsibility to participate in decisions affecting the management of federal lands.

> It's the nation's forest, it's not mine. Even though I'm the neighbor, the person who sits in an office building in New York City has every bit as much right to determine the use of this forest as I do. It's their forest. That's not popular out here, but in my humble opinion, that's the way it is. They may never come to Choteau, Montana to look at their forest, but to them there is a value in knowing that there is a forest near Choteau, Montana and that's part of our national heritage, part of our national worth, part of our national treasure.

National ownership of public lands was seen by these residents as part of our national heritage.

"Look at It From a Wider Perspective": National Decision Making Provides Protection

Nationalists also argued that national attention to public lands policy provides a broader perspective and is necessary for conservation of wildlife and wilderness. According to these residents, the Forest Service should "look at it from a wider perspective than just what the folks up at the deli in Choteau think" and that residents needed to "think beyond your own needs at times." They argued that public lands should be managed "for the greatest good for the greatest number." Nationalists believed that national attention to the area would help "people learn to love it," which in turn would "garner protection." According to some residents, national attention was critical to wildlife and wilderness protection. One business owner articulated this view, saying:

> I think that is the only chance we have of maintaining our wilderness, our wildlife, our pristine areas is through national attention. If it were up to many Montanans, because of our economic situation, which is understandable, we might lose our wilderness areas.

While a few of these residents qualified their support for national-level decision making by suggesting that extralocal interests should be better informed or by arguing that some issues lend themselves to local approaches (such as weed management), the typical nationalist discourse involved strongly held principles regarding the role of Americans as a whole in governing federal lands.

Identity Politics, the Fictional Community, and the Silent Conservationist

Despite the diversity and complexity of views that actually exist among residents, most respondents characterized local communities as overwhelmingly pro-development, arguing that local communities support development of natural resources on public lands because of economic needs. These beliefs aligned neatly with the "normal model" (Fairfax et al. 1999) and the assumptions of scholars (see Axline 1999; Coggins 1999) who characterize local communities as monolithically pro-development. While this mythical, monolithic community did not actually exist on the Front, the story of such a community furthered particular political goals by rendering dissention invisible.

This construction of a unified, undifferentiated local community served the political purposes of those localists who favored development. The argument for local influence depended, for some, on creating and maintaining an in-group (residents) and an out-group (nonresidents), each with discernible identities and common interests. In this case, group solidarity (or the illusion of such solidarity) was maintained by homogenizing and stereotyping local communities by suggesting that residents share a common vision for public lands, a vision that favors development. Group solidarity was also supported by characterizing extralocal interests as wealthy, powerful, and unified in favor of a conservation agenda that promotes restrictive policies, limits local economic development, and supports protective designations. Thus, pro-development interests on the Front gained political leverage by creating a fictional community whose power and desires contrast markedly with nonlocal interests.

Residents whose views do not conform to this vision were rendered invisible by the creation of this fictional community. Because the discourse portraying local communities as pro-development was so widespread, it effectively silenced residents with diverging views and interests. Local conservationists often described themselves as the minority, saying that they self-censored their views for fear of reprisal or ridicule. Some local business owners were deliberately low-key about their support for roadless area conservation. Several residents thought that people labeled, targeted, and even intimidated those believed to be "environmentalists." One local conservationist described "the conservation community here" as "largely underground" and "afraid to be very vocal." The effectiveness of this silencing meant that local conservation perspectives were oftentimes absent from local dialogue, further reinforcing claims that residents were unified in their support of development on public lands.

The story of the pro-development local community also limits our ability to tease apart local arguments over who should decide from disagreements about the future of public lands. Too often, residents who privilege local interests are assumed to also favor development. But this assumption misses the fact that many localists actually favored conservation. For example, both a local business owner and a rancher expressed strong antigovernment sentiments and preferences for local influence over policymaking. At the same time, both vehemently opposed oil and gas development, mining, and even motorized recreation. In other words, some residents participated in portions of the localist discourse, arguing for local influence and against extralocal interests, while also arguing against development on roadless public lands. These localists based their support for local influence on democratic principles of fairness and representation, not desires for development. The local claim for increased local influence, or even local control, was not, therefore, necessarily tied to support for development on public lands. However, when disagreements about what to do get conflated with disagreements about how to decide, the resulting confusion means that conflicts over public lands are even more intractable.

Polarization as a Consequence of National Attention

Some residents countered the characterization of their community as pro-development by arguing that local communities were, in fact, deeply divided over roadless lands. Local divisions over public lands policy may have been amplified

by the recent history of national attention to the area. A Forest Service employee noted:

> When grizzly bears started coming out of the mountains and onto the prairie, that drew some national attention. It also made some people around here realize that there are a lot of people who don't live here who really like the fact that the grizzly bears are coming out. But a lot of folks here didn't want to see that happen. And that created an "us versus them" thing. On the weekend they [local residents] go to these favorite places and they have a hard time with the fact that we [the Forest Service] have to listen equally to the voice of some guy in Chicago who has only come out here once, but wants to make sure that we do or don't manage a certain road or trail that way. The more attention you get and the more input you get from somewhere else on any issue, I think the more resentment you get locally . . . especially where opinions differ, it's an us versus them . . . it can kind of create a resentfulness and then maybe even a greater entrenchment in a certain point of view than they might otherwise have because they feel beset from outside and feel that they don't have much of a voice.

This Forest Service employee suggested that national attention to the area highlighted potential differences between local and nonlocal values and interests, spurring the creation of an "us versus them" mentality that ultimately encouraged polarization. Other residents blamed federal land management agencies and "extreme environmentalists" for local conflict over roadless lands. One local business owner argued that extralocal interests and federal public lands policy have increased "hostility" and caused a "much greater fractionalization of the public" and "a greater solidification of where you're at." He suggested that the hostility within local communities is so great that "you've lost this willingness to work together in some areas." According to these residents, federal policymaking and the actions of some environmental groups further divided the local public, entrenching views, and making it difficult to forge agreements between different groups.

In short, as the Front became more important to national conservation groups and other extralocal interests, they attempted to influence decisions affecting the area. At the same time (and perhaps not coincidentally), federal decision making tended to support a conservation agenda. Nonlocal views became more visible, and to the extent that these views conflicted with some local perspectives on public lands, some residents responded by strengthening their positions as a way to resist outside influence. For residents who felt that they had little influence over decision making, external influence may have seemed even more egregious. And, as a result of increased polarization and conflict, local communities seem to have lost some of their capacity for constructive dialogue.

It is not surprising that pro-development residents resisted what they viewed as a nonlocal conservation agenda. However, even conservation-oriented residents resisted the imposition of nonlocal proposals at times. Some residents admitted that they resisted specific extralocal proposals that aligned with their values and interests, simply because such proposals were being pursued by external organizations. These residents favored increased local influence because of democratic principles of fairness, equity, and representation, not because they wanted to develop roadless lands.

In contrast, some residents were very strategic in their support for local or national decision making. These residents were essentially venue shopping, and chose the level of decision making (local or national) that they believed would bring about the outcome they desired. Because local conservationists believed they were the minority, many of them preferred national-level decision making, believing it better reflected their values and desires for public land. Similarly, some residents who favored development believed that their values and interests were well represented in local communities and argued for increased local influence or control over public land decision making.

But despite evidence of local polarization resulting from national attention, some residents described an increasing tolerance or acceptance of nonlocal participation in decision making. One rancher described how his own thinking had changed:

> The public lands don't belong to the people, solely, that live next to them. They were set aside for everybody. And I have to be a big enough person to recognize that fact. I wouldn't have said that too many years ago. I certainly wouldn't have said it when I was growing up. We figured because we were the users and we were the ones in here, we never saw anybody else, they were ours, they weren't yours and they weren't anybody that lived in New York. They belonged to us . . . The general public needs to be concerned with their public lands; that's responsible. To be honest with you I'm kind of glad that people are taking the initiative and spending mental energy to really concern themselves with their national treasures, their resources.

This shift from a sense of local ownership to an acknowledgment of national rights and responsibilities may indicate increasing local interest in a national dialogue about local public lands.

Conclusion

On the Rocky Mountain Front, advocates of increased local influence are challenging the legitimacy of traditional public lands policymaking. These local residents feel excluded, believing that their values and interests are not sufficiently prioritized. Localists claim a political right, the right to influence or even control policies affecting local federal lands. This is a claim that residents' views and needs should be privileged in decision making, that they should determine, at least in part, the future management of public lands.

Advocates for increased local influence have framed the debate in terms of geographic privilege. According to Pralle (2006b), one way to influence a policy issue is to redraw the boundaries that contain it. In this case, localists want to contain public participation by framing public lands issues as local issues. In doing so, they assert a geographic privilege, stating that local residents' views and interests are more legitimate than nonlocals and should therefore be prioritized in policymaking. In this case, attempts to localize public lands policymaking involve the strategic deployment of group identity. Nonlocals are often cast as wealthy, powerful, and not well informed. We found, as Walker and Fortmann (2003, 485) did, that "the alleged power of 'outsiders' was deflected backward to *create* power" for local communities who were characterized by some residents as marginalized and powerless in

comparison to nonlocals. Characterizing nonlocals in this manner allows localists to foster in-group identity and solidarity and assert that locals have more social standing than nonlocals. As Brewer (2001) suggests, perceived differences between social groups can be used strategically during political conflicts. To the extent that the debate is framed as a class conflict and localists feel politically marginalized, issues of equity and access to decision making will continue to be of considerable concern to many local residents.

Local advocates of development also engage in identity politics, as they construct a monolithic, prodevelopment community that effectively silences many local voices. Similarly, Bryan and Wondolleck (2003) found that some Quincy residents characterized their community as unified and undifferentiated (oftentimes using the term "we" to describe what would more accurately be described as a community of interest) to further particular political goals. To the extent that some policymakers, academics, and political actors buy into the construction of local communities as homogeneous, they also render difference and diversity invisible in these communities and limit public debate.

The characterization of the conflict as "local versus national" is also problematic. This binary characterization, while typical, fails to recognize regional political actors, such as the Montana Wilderness Association or Montanans for Multiple Use, who are neither local nor national. This binary also masks the role of multinational corporations that have a stake in development. Portraying the conflict in a manner that fails to acknowledge the role that key interests play limits the opportunities to establish forums for effective public dialogue and decision-making processes capable of addressing the underlying issues.

Some scholars have suggested that increased public involvement will enhance the fairness of policymaking (Hunt and Haider 2001). But on the Rocky Mountain Front, many residents believed that broadening public involvement to include all Americans results in a process that is less fair. Unfortunately, arguing that all views should be represented does not help us navigate the sticky issue of how different concerns are weighed. While the notion of balancing different interests and scales is quite popular (see, for example, Mascarenhas and Scarce 2004), "balance" is a vague and slippery notion without the specificity to guide decision makers in prioritizing different views and interests. Public participation research and practice have come a long way, but we have thus far failed to determine if all stakeholders are really equal.

To what extent does venue shopping explain the debate over the appropriate role of local interests? Unfortunately, it is not always readily apparent whether particular groups support a particular process based on principles or whether they are venue shopping because of potential political advantage (Nie 2008). While some Rocky Mountain Front residents are clearly venue shopping, others advocate increased local influence because of genuine interests in decision-making process and democratic principles. In short, ideological differences regarding the respective roles of local and nonlocal actors figured prominently in the local debate. As described earlier, venue shopping typically refers to efforts to shift formal decision making to a new authority. However, in this case, localists were rarely specific about the mechanisms by which local views might be privileged. They rarely advocated for specific processes such as local advisory councils or collaboration, or policy proposals such as privatization of public lands or decentralized agency decision making. Arguments instead focused more on local influence or whose views should be privileged, as opposed to the formal venue making the decision.

It is also important to note that localist and nationalist positions are not necessarily fixed political views; they may shift in response to any number of factors, including which administration is in power, how the economy is performing, and the state of nearby public lands. In this study, we provide a snapshot of local views, not a long-term assessment of how and why such positions might change (or remain constant) over time.

That said, the history and role of anti-federal government sentiment in local resistance to extralocal policy proposals cannot be underestimated. According to Walker (2003), "In much of the West, the deep and enduring hostility to government . . . is a powerful force." On the Rocky Mountain Front, federal policymaking and federal lands inspired animosity, hostility, and resentment in some residents. By comparison, other natural resource issues, such as weeds, for which local decision making played a more prominent role, were not nearly as controversial or divisive. In some senses, claims for local influence or local control appear to be shorthand for a strong resentment of extralocal influence and decision making. Rather than arguments for specific changes to policymaking, most residents who want local interests privileged expressed a broader sense of resentment, frustration, and lack of control over the direction of public land management. In many senses, claims for increased local influence in public lands policymaking are embedded in and symbolic of long-standing resistance to the federal government in the region.

How can we move forward on controversial public lands issues, such as roadless areas, in this context? Lewicki, Gray, and Elliott (2003) would characterize the conflict over roadless lands on the Rocky Mountain Front as intractable for three reasons. One, this conflict is persistent and most attempts at resolution have failed. Two, there is strong disagreement at the local and national levels on what a fair, equitable, and just decision-making process might look like. To the extent that conflicts over process are framed in terms of class and that very different views regarding who has social standing and the role of government persist, resolution of the process question may be difficult. Three, policymaking during the last two decades appears to favor roadless area conservation. According to Azar (1990), conflicts are particularly intractable when decision-making structures appear to favor one side over another, increasing polarization between the two groups. In addition, local conflict over roadless public lands was exacerbated by the fact that disagreements over the decision-making process were often conflated with disagreements about policy outcomes.

Do the intractable nature of the conflict and the extent of local polarization suggest the need for local-level collaboration? In their study of local views on public lands, McGuire and Sanyal (2006) conclude that, given the degree of distrust, suspicion, and alienation that some residents expressed, public involvement and face-to-face dialogue would be essential to moving forward. Locally negotiated legislative proposals addressing the management of roadless lands are gaining momentum across the western United States and may provide an avenue for rural communities to combine wilderness designation with projects that promote local economic development. Effective collaboration, however, depends on the participation of a range of stakeholders and would require local political actors to explicitly acknowledge the diversity within their own communities.

Unfortunately, the extent of local polarization over the future of roadless lands combined with disagreement regarding the appropriate level of decision making (federal vs. local) might actually make collaboration more difficult. Walker and

Hurley (2004), based on their study of local collaboration in Nevada, conclude that collaboration does not always work and collaborative initiatives can actually increase conflict in some situations. The fact that people define the problem differently (how roadless lands are managed versus how decisions are made) creates a significant barrier to negotiating a path forward. As Daniels and Walker (1995) argue, differences in perceived social standing also limit the prospects for negotiated agreements. Furthermore, acknowledging local community diversity threatens two powerful groups, local proponents of development and nonlocal critics of collaboration.

Despite these barriers, local communities and nonlocal interests must find a path forward. Public lands policymaking is unlikely to embrace a strictly local or a strictly federal decision-making model in the foreseeable future. Thus, proposals must be negotiated amid ongoing tension over the respective roles of local and nonlocal publics. That said, several changes could improve the public dialogue. Explicit acknowledgment of the diversity of local views might limit venue shopping for purely political purposes. If local residents hold a range of views on public lands, arguments for local or nonlocal influence become much more about democratic principles, such as legitimacy and fairness, and much less about desired policy outcomes, such as oil development or wilderness designation. Decoupling the debate over the policy process from the debate over policy outcome might allow for more careful consideration of specific policy proposals, as well as innovative forms for decision making. Clearly, we need to move beyond vague calls for "balance" between local and national interests, and toward a detailed discussion of how different interests should be considered and weighed, and what sorts of policy mechanisms might allow for more effective negotiation between different interests at different scales.

References

Agrawal, A., and Gibson, C. C. 1999. Enchantment and disenchantment: The role of community in natural resource conservation. *World Dev.* 27(4):629–649.

Axline, M. 1999. Federal lands and invisible hands. *Ecol. Law Q.* 25(4):611–623.

Azar, L. 1990. *Twentieth century in crisis: Foundations of totalitarianism*. Dubuque, IL: Kendall Hunt.

Baden, J., and D. Snow, eds. 1997. *The next West: Public lands, community, and economy in the American West*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Bebbington, A. J., and S. P. J. Batterbury. 2001. Transnational livelihoods and landscapes: Political ecologies of globalization. *Ecumene* 8(4):369–380.

Belsky, J. M. 1999. Misrepresenting communities: The politics of community-based rural ecotourism in Gales Point Manatee, Belize. *Rural Sociol.* 64(4):641–666.

Brandenburg, A. M., and M. S. Carroll. 1995. Your place or mine? The effect of place creation on environmental values and landscape meanings. *Society Nat. Resources* 8:381–398.

Brewer, M. B. 2001. Ingroup identification and intergroup conflict: When does ingroup love become outgroup hate? In *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*, ed. R. D. Ashmore, L. Jussium, and D. Wilder, 17–41. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bryan, T. A., and J. M. Wondolleck. 2003. When irresolvable becomes resolvable: The Quincy Library Group conflict. In *Making sense of intractable environmental conflicts: Concepts and cases*, ed. R. J. Lewicki, B. Gray, and M. Elliott, 63–90. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Coggins, G. C. 1999. Regulating federal natural resources: A summary case against devolved collaboration. *Ecol. Law Q.* 25(4):602–610.

Daniels, S. E., and G. B. Walker. 1995. Managing local environmental conflict amidst national controversy. *Int. J. Conflict Manage.* 6(3):290–311.

Code of Federal Regulation. 2005. A national forest system land and resource management planning. 36 CFR 219. Washington, DC: Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service.

Durrant, J. O., and J. M. Shumway. 2004. Attitudes toward wilderness study areas: A survey of six southeastern Utah counties. *Environ. Manage.* 33(2):271–283.

Elliott, M., B. Gray, and R. J. Lewicki. 2003. Lessons learned about the framing and reframing of intractable environmental conflicts. In *Making sense of intractable environmental conflicts: Concepts and cases*, ed. R. J. Lewicki, B. Gray, and M. Elliott, 409–435. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Fairfax, S. P., L. Fortmann, A. Hawkins, L. Huntsinger, N. L. Peluso, and S. A. Wolfe. 1999. The federal forests are not what they seem: Formal and informal claims to federal lands. *Ecol. Law Q.* 25:630–646.

Hunt, L., and W. Haider. 2001. Fair and effective decision making in forest management planning. *Society Nat. Resources* 14:873–887.

Kellert, S. R., J. N. Mehta, S. A. Ebbin, and L. L. Lichtenfeld. 2000. Community natural resource management: Promise, rhetoric, and reality. *Society Nat. Resources* 13:705–715.

Lauber, T. B., and B. A. Knuth. 1999. Measuring fairness in citizen participation: A case study of moose management. *Society Nat. Resources* 11:19–37.

Lewicki, R. J., B. Gray, and M. Elliott, eds. 2003. *Making sense of intractable environmental conflicts: Concepts and cases*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Mascarenhas, M., and R. Scarce. 2004. The intention was 'good': Legitimacy, consensus-based decision making, and the case of forest planning in British Columbia, Canada. *Society Nat. Resources* 17:1–22.

McGuire, K., and N. Sanyal. 2006. A human dimensions inquiry in watershed analysis: Listening to constituents' views of contested legitimacy on the National Forest. *Society Nat. Resources* 19:889–904.

McMahon, K. 2002. *Teton County growth policy plan: County profile*. Great Falls, MT: Applied Communications.

Nie, M. 2008. *The governance of Western public lands*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Patterson, M. E., and D. R. Williams. 2002. *Collecting and analyzing qualitative data: Hermeneutic principles, methods, & case examples*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore.

Pralle, S. 2006a. The "mouse that roured": Agenda setting in Canadian pesticide politics. *Policy Stud. J.* 34(2):171–194.

Pralle, S. 2006b. *Branching out, digging in: Environmental advocacy and agenda setting*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Putnam, L. L., and J. M. Wondolleck. 2003. Intractability: Definitions, dimensions, and distinctions. In *Making sense of intractable environmental conflicts: Concepts and cases*, ed. R. J. Lewicki, B. Gray, and M. Elliott, 35–59. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Smith, N. 1993. Homeless/global: Scaling places. In *Mapping the futures: Local cultures global change*, ed. J. Bird, 87–119. New York: Routledge.

Smith, P. D., and M. H. McDonough. 2001. Beyond public participation: Fairness in natural resource decision-making. *Society Nat. Resources* 14:239–249.

Strauss, A., and J. Corbin. 1990. *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Turner, J. C. 1999. Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories. In *Social identity*, ed. N. Ellemers, R. Spears, and B Doosje, 6–24. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Vandergeest, P., and E. M. DuPuis. 1996. Introduction. In *Creating the countryside: The politics of rural and environmental discourse*, ed. E. M. DuPuis and P. Vandergeest, 1–25. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Walker, P. 2003. Reconsidering "regional" political ecologies: Toward a political ecology of the rural American west. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* 27(1):7–24.

Walker, P., and L. Fortmann. 2003. Whose landscape? A political ecology of the "exurban" Sierra. *Cult. Geogr.* 10:469–491.

Walker, P. A., and P. T. Hurley. 2004. Collaboration derailed: The politics of community-based resource management in Nevada County. *Society Nat. Resources* 17:735–751.

Watts, M. 2000. Political ecology. In *A companion to economic geography*, ed. T. Barnes and E. Sheppard, 257–274. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Wondolleck, J. M., and S. L. Yaffee. 2000. *Making collaboration work: Lessons from innovation in natural resource management*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Young, I. M. 2000. *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Yung, L. 2002. *Community land use survey: Summary of survey results*. A report to the Teton County Growth Management Policy Advisory Committee. Missoula: University of Montana, College of Forestry and Conservation.

Yung, L., W. A. Freimund, and J. Chandler-Pepelnjak. 2008. Wilderness politics in the American West: Rural community perspectives on the development of roadless lands. *Int. J. Wilderness* 14(2):14–23.