
Rural gentrification as permanent tourism: the creation of the ‘New’ West Archipelago as postindustrial cultural space

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Abstract. In this paper I describe rural gentrification—ie the in-migration of relatively young, ex-urban members of the postindustrial middle class (PIMC)—in the northern Rocky Mountains as a form of ‘permanent tourism’. The colonization of previously *industrial* landscapes—ie those created according to a regime that prioritizes the production/consumption of commodities—by the PIMC has led to the expansion of *postindustrial class – cultural space* and the creation of the ‘New’ American West. This shift in what constitutes the ‘highest and best’ use of these lands resonates with the character of late-Modern tourism in that this emerging regime emphasizes the production/consumption of ‘experiences’ to a greater degree than does the extant regime. Thus, rural gentrifiers are enacting cultural projects that are akin to those of tourists but doing so with the intention of permanently writing them into the social and physical landscape. Drawing on ethnographic examples from my fieldwork in south-central Montana, I demonstrate how members of the PIMC mobilize their increasing local strength through citizens’ environmental groups and political institutions and thereby forward their ideals of proper land-use policy and practice.

Introduction

The principal contribution of the following discussion of the contemporary rural gentrification of the ‘New’ West Archipelago is the elucidation of the character of the emerging postindustrial middle class (PIMC).⁽¹⁾ To that end, I will show that rural gentrifiers, as representatives of the PIMC, pursue the same agendas as are commonly associated with tourists. That is, they are oriented toward the accumulation/deployment of *experiences* as markers of their cultural capabilities—and thus their self-worth and social position within the US middle class on a ‘permanent’ basis. As I will demonstrate, it is through contests over land-use policy and practice that these rural newcomers seek to enact their specific *postindustrial* agenda of social distinction.

The term ‘permanent tourists’ developed herein is a conceptual hybrid that demands that we appreciate not only the analogy between the activities of rural gentrifiers and those of traditional tourists but also the fact that rural gentrifiers are pursuing these activities in a regular and constant fashion. This circumstance largely defies mainstream historical precedent and establishes them as the vanguard of an emerging project of social differentiation associated with the social politics of middle-class existence. As such, members of the PIMC are largely integrated into a regime that increasingly produces and consumes experiences, ie knowledge, services, entertainment, etc, as marks of its distinction from other subsets of US society (see Hines, 2010a; 2010b).

⁽¹⁾The ‘New’ West, as the term is used in this piece, refers to a subsection of the wider American West. Contemporary rural gentrification is building upon and exacerbating the preexisting geographic, social, and ecological heterogeneity of the region and creating, in the process, an ‘archipelago’ (Salamon, 2003, page 9) or chain of rapidly changing *island* communities in the midst of a relatively static, conservative, agricultural/industrial *sea* (Hines, 2010b). These islands form a list of the most emblematic sites of the “New” West, eg Aspen, Vail, Jackson, Sun Valley, Taos, Missoula, Bozeman, Durango, Telluride, Flagstaff, Moab.

In the first section I provide a brief overview of the social and physical landscape where I work in south–central Montana. In the second section I connect the local phenomenon with larger trends affecting Western societies, namely counterurbanization and urban gentrification, which merge in my discussion to reveal the class-based character of rural gentrification. The third section establishes analytical links between local rural circumstances and larger theoretical discussions on the characteristics of contemporary Modern-capitalist society and its emerging postindustrial features. The bulk of the presentation comes in the fourth section, where I provide specific ethnographic data from my extended research projects totaling 20 months in Park County, Montana. This section relies on two specific examples, each of which centers on a slightly different type of conflict—one legal, one political—that has developed between the local *industrial* natives and the *postindustrial* newcomers. I conclude the paper by summarizing the evidence presented, to refocus attention on the discussion of rural gentrifiers as enacting an abiding attention to the accumulation of experiences. In turn, this analytic approach allows us to see in clearer detail the ramifications of their actions in the (re)creation of the physical and social landscape of the ‘New’ West Archipelago as *postindustrial class – cultural space*.

Park County, Montana: two perspectives on the social and physical landscape

Overall, rural newcomers to Park County include several significant subsets. There are: (1) retirees; (2) the wealthy and/or famous, including members of the: (a) national economic elite (CEOs and owners of Fortune 500 companies) and (b) national cultural elite (film actors, professional writers, and other artists); and (3) younger (30–40s) ex-urban members of the middle class. My research focuses on understanding the character and importance of the third group as they are the ones who, by virtue of being the largest and most locally dynamic (both socially and politically) subset of newcomers, represent the most profound challenge to the preexisting way(s) of life. An effective characterization of that challenge requires a focus upon the central difference between this subset of newcomers—whom I describe here as rural gentrifiers—and Park County natives with regard to the perspectives on proper land-use policy and practice both by private individuals and by the various governmental agencies (at the local, state, and national level) charged with administering the local profusion of public lands.

As I have come to see it through my ongoing research in this area, the key difference is between natives and newcomers. The former are principally (although by no means exclusively) concerned with seeing the land of Park County produce materially tangible results through its three traditional industries: agriculture, silviculture, and mining. This perspective, I believe, is most effectively associated with the ongoing era of industrial production within our epoch of Modern capitalism. By contrast, I found that newcomers, and particularly the younger middle-class subset referred to previously, tend to believe (again, not exclusively, but certainly predominantly) that the lands of Park County and the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem (GYE) are best used to produce experiences. It is for this reason—building on Dean MacCannell’s analysis of *The Tourist* (1976)—that I feel the members of this group represent a vision of proper land use that is best understood as *postindustrial*.

An industrial vision of Park County, Montana

Since the forced expulsion of the indigenous Crow population by European-American ‘settlers’ in the early 1880s the vast majority of Park County’s residents (up to and through the late 1980s) have been participants in the traditional American-West extractive industries of mining, ranching, and logging [and/or related domestic (re)production].

In a similar fashion, the bulk of residents of the county seat of Livingston have historically been employed by the Northern Pacific Railroad in their railcar repair shops. The railroad, which created the town, maintained their shops there until the late 1980s. For that period, at any given time, at least one third of the population, and as many as one half of the male residents, of Livingston worked at railroad jobs.

As a result, the vast majority of the natives of both the town and the county can be characterized by their rural/small-town industrial working-class background. This perspective is internalized by the native residents, who commonly describe their hometown as a place where people *produce* 'things'. Emblematic examples I recorded of this discursive arrangement are:

"We work here in this town, whether it's on the railroad or in the mines or on the ranches, we get work done here. This *was* a working-class town" (Ralph, 65, ex-railroad employee).⁽²⁾

"Livingston is different; it is a place that still goes to work. We have a sawmill; we have the railroad shops; we have the ranches. We are not like Bozeman" (Ron, 55, construction worker).⁽³⁾

In the late 1980s, what had been a long-standing trickle of in-migrants (mostly seasonal residents, retirees, and members of the national economic and cultural elite) to south-central Montana became a steady stream of more middle class, and increasingly permanent, residents to the county. This demographic shift roughly coincided with the closing of the railroad repair shops and the loss of several hundred local jobs. At roughly the same time, the local timber industry—which as late as the early 1990s had sustained three full-time sawmills in Livingston and two others in the smaller towns in the north of the county—contracted rapidly; by 2002 there was only one active sawmill in Park County.

As a result of these coincidental forces, the population of Park County registered a pronounced shift in its composition throughout the 1990s; in a decade it went from an almost exclusively native population to an increasing preponderance of ex-urban residents. Conservative estimates based on survey and demographic data hold that, at least, one third of Park County's 15 694 residents (US Census, 2001) were born and raised in a US metropolitan area and moved to the community as adults after college and some work experience (Hines, 2004).⁽⁴⁾

A postindustrial vision of Park County, Montana

What draws newcomers to south-central Montana? Almost invariably the initial response from those I interviewed was another question—"Why not?" This implies

⁽²⁾ All proper names used in this paper are pseudonyms intended to protect the anonymity of the residents of Park County who consented to participate in my research project. I thank them for their contribution to this piece.

⁽³⁾ The perspective that PC is first and foremost a site of production is often rhetorically reinforced by natives with reference to their immediate neighbor to the west: Gallatin County, which for a variety of reasons they see as no longer part of the traditional ways of the American West. Among these reasons are the location of Montana State University in Bozeman, which is seen by many Montana natives as responsible for attracting people who do not contribute to the 'real' economy of the area and producing the dramatic influx of newcomers that Gallatin County experienced in the 1990s. We can hear this when Ralph states that in "Bozeman, they have a lot of people doing nothing: the fancy-pants types, like Ted Turner and his buffalo have bought out the [native] ranchers, the university crowd has taken over the town".

⁽⁴⁾ This estimate is based on a steady 2–4% population growth over the last 15 years (US Census 2001), coupled with a minimum loss of 1% of the native-born population annually [from the out-migration of, at least, two thirds of the average graduating high school senior class ($n = 130$) for work or education related opportunities unavailable locally] and a near zero or negative natural population increase (Hines, 2004).

that the appeal of the place is axiomatic, that all one has to do is look around to appreciate the quality of the place. Faced with such a response, I realized that the challenge was to get such participants to actually articulate how they read the landscape for the (self-evident) clues that made the space valuable to them. This demanded that they put into words the character of the area, and exposed your conversance in and allegiance to a (postindustrial) middle-class cultural aesthetic. The following is an overview of the newcomers' discursive attention to the aesthetic appeal of Park County.

The appeal of south-central Montana to the PIMC is relative. It offers newcomers a territory that is (perceived/described by them as) cleaner, quieter, less populated, and more possessed of the possibility for valued experiences than the places they have previously known. The potential they assign to the area derives (at least, in part) from its (seeming) lack of barriers—social, political, and otherwise—ie the sense that the rules that apply elsewhere do not obtain there. The appeal also proceeds from its seeming connection to the past both in terms of natural and national history. As we will see, rural gentrifiers constitute their new home by drawing upon and recasting preexisting cultural 'frames of reference' (Batteau 1990, page 200) that pertain to the rural US, the American West region, the Rocky Mountain subregion, the state of Montana, and the GYE. Through their discursive frameworks they (re)create the place as idyllic—in the process glossing over or ignoring the limitations of life there.

An example comes from the opening lines of a quintessential rural gentrifier's tale, *Yonder: A Place in Montana* (Heminway, 2000), in which John Heminway (a writer and photographer who grew up in New York and moved to Park County in the mid-1990s) proposes that

"Montana is different from most other states because it embodies a simple, compelling idea. The idea is: open spaces, sparsely populated. The idea assumes its own life if we situate ourselves at the heart of this aloneness. When each of us first sets foot in Montana, it would appear we can do what we like with the void. We can fill it, we can exploit it, we can restore it, we can leave it alone" (unnumbered frontmatter).

Fellow Montana newcomer John Wright translates this sense of promise into an idealized vision of the physical and ecological forms of the GYE, which represents the style and content of many in-migrants' descriptions:

"The Yellowstone River flows north out of the park through one of Montana's most contested valleys—the Paradise [in Park County]. The place is well named. The valley is a fault-bounded basin framed by high ridgelines. Serrated peaks of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness lift the eastern sky. The west is held up by the Gallatin Range ... Gallery forests of black cottonwood parallel the Yellowstone River. These are perfect places for whitetails, eagles, and otters. The river is a long reach of trout heaven—meander bends and gravel bars, riffles and pools ... Higher up, prairies turn to parklands—open woodlands of Douglas fir, juniper, and the ... wind-stunted limber pines. Meadowlark calls are everywhere ... True forests fill in upslope where the climate allows. Above the semiarid basin, Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce grow atop swards of pinegrass. Where the shade gets thick ... Mountain lions pad through the forests like hungry shadows. Grizzlies and gray wolves complete the pure circle. This is Paradise" (1998, pages 164–165).

The frame of reference that is Montana occupies a revered position in the national discourse of 'rural' America, which speaks to its *experiential* value. In his tongue-in-cheek work, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Middle Class and How They Got There* (2000), David Brooks calls this migration: the "Montana Soul Rush" because "Montana has come to occupy an exalted place in the American consciousness," becoming "one of those places Where Life is Honest and True" (2000, page 220).

The future, Brooks writes, does not “beckon us as bravely as it did 50 years ago, and it is precisely Montana’s simplicity that now attracts us. Montana has emerged as one of the antidotes to our striving lives, as a foil to the grubby ambition of city life and the prefab mediocrity of suburban cul-de-sacs” (page 220). Movies like *The Horse Whisperer* (Redford, 1998) and *A River Runs through It* (Redford, 1992)—both of which were filmed in Park County in the 1990s—“serve as fables for the upper middle class” that catalyze and inspire them to action (Brooks, 2000, page 220). A line of narration from the latter film, penned by the eminent scholar of the American West Wallace Stegner, captures the essence of the idea of Montana to many newcomers:

“The Montana of his youth was a world with the dew on it. Perhaps the time of youth always has dew on it, and perhaps that is why we respond to Maclean’s evocation of his. But I lived in Montana, or close to it, during those same years, and it was a world, younger, fresher, and more touched with wonder and possibility than any I have since known. After seventy years, I still dream of it” (Stegner, 1998, page 155).

Barnaby Conrad III, another rural gentrifier of Montana, points out that the exaltation of the state by urbanites is a relatively new development. “Once considered part of the vast unknown boondocks, Montana has risen in the nation’s consciousness as the Last Best Place, a mythic hinterland,” he writes (2003, page 1). Rural gentrifiers I interviewed echo these descriptions and elaborate on the characteristics of Montana and a variety of other sociogeographic ‘frames of references’ relevant to this analysis. Their words resonate with one another’s and those already presented:

“This place is stunning. You can’t get away from the nature. You are constantly in it” (Devon, 29, graphic designer/carpenter).

“From Yellowstone [National Park] down through the Paradise Valley, even up the Shields [River valley] and over to the West Boulder [Creek drainage] this is amazing country that never ceases to thrill me. I drive down [US Highway] 89 and every time I look at the Absarokas [Mountains] they appear different to me, new, fresh. As an artist it is a great feeling to be in touch with such renewable energy” (Hank, 39, writer-photographer).

“I came here to be a part of this phenomenal environment. It is a place like no other I know. We feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of it” (Isabella, 31, llama ‘rancher’).

“Park County, especially southern Park County, represents all that is best about America. They call Montana ‘the last best place.’ I agree. It’s been done right here, and I am proud to be a part of it. The policies that preserved the Park and the wilderness area and kept the [Yellowstone] river from being dammed, these are testimony to when we’ve got it right” (Roger, 43, photographer).

Counterurbanization as rural gentrification

In the US, both urban gentrification and nonmetropolitan population growth (Beale, 1975) reached the level of scholarly attention in the early 1970s. While gentrification has continued as a potent urban process in cities throughout the US, counterurbanization—the dominant force behind nonmetropolitan population growth (Williams and Sofranko, 1978; 1979)—was eclipsed in the 1980s by the resurgence of urbanization. However, counterurbanization reemerged in the late 1980s and remained a strong social current throughout the 1990s (Cromartie, 2003). As a result, the decade joined the 1970s as the only two in the last eighteen in which more Americans migrated from the city to the country than vice versa (2003). Although not uniformly distributed throughout the nation, the significant in-migration of ex-urbanites has been

documented in nonmetropolitan areas across the US, including: California (Duane, 1999; Walker, 2003), the Midwest (Gurwitt, 1998; Hoey, 2003; Salamon, 2003), the Mid-Atlantic region (Spain, 1993), New England (Brown-Saracino, 2004), and the Northwest (Rudzitis, 1993); as well as the Rocky Mountains (Beyers, 1999; Christensen, 2002; Cromartie and Wardwell, 1999; Ghose, 2004; Hines, 2010a; 2010b; Jobs, 2000; Nelson, 1992; Rudzitis, 1996; Rudzitis and Streatfield, 1993; Shumway and Davis, 1996; Vias, 1999; Williams and Jobs, 1990; Wiltsie, 1998).

The term ‘gentrification’ was first applied to the changing urban landscape, by Glass (1963), to describe the colonization of working-class London neighborhoods by members of the middle class, or a “new ‘urban gentry’” (Hamnett, 2003, page 160). Despite obvious similarities, it is only recently that US counterurbanization has been recognized as analogous to urban gentrification (eg Darling, 2005; Ghose, 2004; Hines, 2010a; 2010b). The similarities between the two processes, however, were not lost on scholars in the UK (eg Parsons, 1980; Phillips, 1993; 1998a; 1998b; 2004; 2005; Smith and Phillips, 2001), who more than a decade ago began to apply the analysis of gentrification to counterurbanization.

Phillips was among the first to attempt to apply the analytical perspectives developed in the analysis of urban gentrification to the rural context. Drawing on early and fairly broad definitions of the process (see Glass above), Phillips describes rural gentrification, in general, as “the replacement of a working-class population by a middle-class one” (1993, page 124). This definition has important implications for subsequent analyses like my own because it foregrounds the *effects* of rural gentrification as a discussion of class-based issues; in so doing, it highlights that the effects are also the causes, or that the class-based contests of differentiation are both the ends and means of the practice.

Importantly, Phillips takes pains to emphasize that the story of contemporary rural change cannot completely or best be told as strictly one of the replacement of one class by another. Instead, we must acknowledge that “[c]ontemporary class structures are more complex than the dichotomous middle class–working class division” (1993, page 124). Therefore, contests evident in circumstances like the ones described here are “more correctly ascribed to antagonisms between distinct middle-class factions” (1993, page 124). I join Phillips in his vision that “[r]ather than seeing rural social change in terms of a middle class replacing a working class ... in many instances it is probably more valid to talk in terms of one middle class fraction replacing another” (Phillips, 1993, page 124; see also Cloke and Thrift, 1990). In Montana, the implications of this are that the gentrification process must be viewed as *both* a form of class-based colonization (Hines, 2010a; 2010b) of predominately working-class environs by middle-class Americans *and* as the inspiration for intraclass conflict (Cloke and Thrift, 1987; Hines, 2010a; 2010b; Savage et al, 1992) between factions (ie industrial and postindustrial) of the middle class.⁽⁵⁾

⁽⁵⁾ My use of the term ‘colonization’ in this piece is intended to highlight: (1) the pronounced class–cultural difference between the in-migrating (younger, middle-class) ex-urbanites and the local natives in this case study and (2) the recognition that the project of gentrification, whether in the rural or the urban context, involves the marginalization (culturally, socially, economically, and politically), if not outright expulsion, of previous residents. Thus, gentrification in this context must be understood as a form of occupation that cannot be limited to the practice of residential rehabilitation. With that in mind, while no substantive evidence is presented here of the physical displacement of natives by newcomers, the examples described, nevertheless, speak to the dislocation of the hegemony of an industrial regime of production/consumption in such postindustrializing areas.

At another analytical level, as Phillips notes, multiple explanations have emerged for the *causes* of gentrification, which are

“(i) a manifestation of the uneven circulation of capital, (ii) a strategy to reduce reproductive labour, (iii) a strategy to buy into particular lifestyles, and (iv) a contradictory and complex jumble of contextually specific processes” (1993, page 125).

These approaches, by and large, have failed to integrate an effective vision of the role of interclass and intraclass conflict into their analyses and therefore effectively ignore an important aspect of the process. Nevertheless, they each offer an important contribution to a complete analysis; for this reason Phillips (like Hamnett, 1991; 2003) chooses to walk the line [pioneered by Zukin (1982)] between economic and cultural determinism. To this end, Phillips presents evidence from his research to “support the contention that gentrifiers are embodiments of capital and to suggest that other motives and social relations were of significance in creating gentrification” (1993, page 138). In this regard, he draws on Neil Smith’s work on the role of the producers of gentrifiable space vis-à-vis his ‘rent-gap’ theory of urban real-estate economics (eg 1979; 1982; 1987; 1996) and David Ley’s emphasis on the role of the consumer of gentrifiable space (eg 1994; 1996).

In line with Phillips, I seek to wield the productive tension between these two disparate (but not antithetical) visions of the causes of urban gentrification in my analysis of the effects of rural gentrification. To do so requires recognizing that Smith is “clearly right regarding the importance of capital depreciation and subsequent reinvestment in helping to explain gentrification” (Hamnett 2003, page 2403), which does not preclude us from also acknowledging the significance of increased demand from the middle class for *gentrifiable* space and their own role(s) in the creation of such space.

Zukin (1982) presented one of the first attempts to articulate a demand-side analysis of gentrification in New York City and thereby balance the prior attention given to the supply side of gentrifiable space. She noted that the (formerly light-manufacturing) ‘lofts’ that were the initial gentrified housing stock in SoHo had been available (and used by artists) since the 1930s but only developed large-scale middle-class appeal in the 1970s. Her evidence refutes the idea that solely availability inspired the influx of gentrifiers; instead, she proposes, it was an “aesthetic conjuncture” (1982, page 15)—the confluence of changes in demand with the sufficient “devalorization” of a given landscape within the cycles of investment in urban real estate—that precipitated the in-migration. From this Zukin was the first to propose the idea that gentrification was a “means of expression for a ‘post-industrial’ civilization” (1982, page 15).

This point is further compounded in the specific context in which I work by the virtual absence of people in the role of “speculator-developers” and the predominance of the newcomers as “owner-occupiers” [in Smith’s (1996) parlance]. In this circumstance, the people driving the inflation of the local residential market are the same ones appropriating and redeveloping the available housing to fit their tastes (Hines, 2010a; 2010b). Thus, the ‘consumers’ of the gentrified landscape of Park County are also the ‘producers’ of the same. Therefore, we can describe gentrification, at least in the context where I work, as producing what it seeks to consume, ie the displacement of industrial working/middle-class people and the creation of a postindustrial landscape of experience.⁽⁶⁾

⁽⁶⁾The stage model of rural gentrification is perhaps the most effective to help describe the current circumstances in PC, especially in light of the examples of other ‘New’ West ‘islands’ in Montana. It is entirely possible that, by dint of its relatively late entry into the process, PC is still engaged in an initial phase of gentrification wherein individual ‘owner-occupiers’ are generally recognized as

The US middle class and the postindustrial priority of experience

The circumstances described in this piece have their roots in large/long-standing socio-cultural processes, expressly: the character of middle-class identity in the US, the abiding qualities of Modern subjectivity, and the changes accruing from the programs of differentiation of the emerging segment of Western society that I refer to as the PIMC. As I have discussed at length elsewhere (Hines, 2010a; 2010b; building on Liechty, 2003), while membership within the US middle-class is predicated, to a degree, on socioeconomic factors (such as profession and income), its members still must ‘act right’ in order to be accepted as proper members of their class faction. Increasingly, *acting right*—for a growing segment of US society, the PIMC—is judged by the *proper* production/consumption of experiences as well as the production/consumption of *proper* experiences.

To appreciate the full significance of the difference between industrial and post-industrial regimes of production/consumption, I begin with Marx’s (1906) description of the former. It was he who first appreciated the ways in which members of a Modern capitalist society deployed ‘commodities’ as signs in a complex system of communication that allowed them to discern where people stood relative to one another in a highly stratified (if seemingly amorphous) society, in which other systems of (pre-Modern) communication (ie kinship networks, local residence, etc) had either partially or completely broken down. Marx recognized that the most important relationship in industrial society is “not between man and man (as in peasant society) but between man and his productions” (MacCannell, 1976, page 21). Building on this point, MacCannell proposed that by the late 20th century the dominant system has again shifted and that ‘experiences’ were beginning to supplant commodities as the principal signs (for at least some) in a Western middle-class system of social semiotics.

MacCannell developed the idea of an increasing emphasis on experiences as cultural criteria of social differences in his seminal work *The Tourist* (1976), in which he presents one of the first and most prescient descriptions of the emerging post-industrial section of the Western middle class. By drawing on this connection and accepting MacCannell’s point that the ‘tourist’ is an emblem for the Modern post-industrial subject, we can further see that their actions, whether in the course of expressly touristic pursuits or not, are primarily, if not exclusively, motivated by the pursuit of experience. In this sense, as I will show from my ethnographic evidence, rural gentrifiers can be seen as, in effect, ‘permanent tourists’.

Pursuit of experiences and the production of postindustrial cultural space

As anthropologist Mark Liechty has noted, based on his research on class formation in Nepal, the negotiation of middle-class identity is a profoundly performative and colonizing process, for it is “in fact through the ‘performance’ of middle-class life that the

⁽⁶⁾ continued.

the primary movers of the practice [see Zukin’s (1982) discussion of the ‘artists’ roles in the advent of loft living in Manhattan in the 1970s]. In this way the process of rehabilitation of in-town housing stock and the construction of new-builds on subdivided land in the Paradise Valley (south of Livingston) or Shields River Valley (north of town) is accomplished largely through the ‘sweat-equity’ of the young owners or at least by local labor using, by and large, local sources of credit. At this point in time there is very little in the way of large-scale and/or corporate development of the unincorporated lands of PC. The railroad and mining interests that control significant swathes of the county have not yet systematically pursued residential development strategies. By contrast, places like the Bitterroot Valley and Flathead Valley of western Montana, which began the rural gentrification process earlier and have seen much more rapid in-migration than PC, have experienced an acceleration of the role of ‘developers’ of residential property and of the size of rural developments to accommodate newcomers (see Ghose, 2004).

middle class makes and claims space” (2003, page 255). Building on this idea, we see that the differentiation within classes by alternately positioned sets of actors results not only in the appropriation of preexisting space but the redefinition of that space according to the divergent cultural logic of the ascendant group.

The prioritization of experience by members of the PIMC engaged in rural gentrification is an example of what Liechty refers to as a “class – cultural practice”, the result of which is “cultural space”— “[c]lass is an inescapably locational idea: it necessarily implies a geography in which difference (however imagined and/or enforced) is mapped onto social space” (2003, page 255). In each of the specific cases presented here we will see Montana newcomers enacting through their legal, political, and/or social actions their perspective on proper land-use practices and policies at the local, state, and federal level of administration; in the process, they are engaged in the restructuring of the ‘New’ West Archipelago as a *postindustrial cultural space*. As we will see in the following sections, changes written into the terrain through the importation and concentration by newcomers of a different land-use philosophy and landscape/architecture aesthetics (than that of the members of the previously dominant regime) provide graphic evidence of the relative success of the PIMC vis-à-vis the industrial middle and working classes.

Rural gentrification as postindustrialization

Drawing on my ethnographic material for the rest of this piece, I present several examples of contests that have emerged in the last several years between rural newcomers and natives over their differing ideas of how the local environment should be administered. These contests are actualized in a number of venues—legal, political, and social—that, when examined closely, draw into greater relief the distinctions between the perspectives of industrial and postindustrial Montanans on proper land-use practice and policy, thereby exposing the latter as enacting, in the process, a form of ‘permanent tourism’. The upshot from these contests is the increasing imposition of the class – cultural practices of the rural gentrifiers and the production of postindustrial cultural space in the ‘New’ West Archipelago.

A legal contest: the Georgetown Lake controversy

Georgetown Lake is a human-made reservoir that straddles the line between Granite and Deer Lodge Counties in southwest Montana. It is located at over 6000 feet of elevation near the top of the Flint Creek drainage, north and west of Butte—the state’s nationally renowned historical mining town. Flint Creek flows north out of the lake for thirty-some miles before it joins the westward course of the Clarks Fork River.

The lake was created in 1901 by the Montana Power Company (MPC) to provide electricity for its mines and smelter in nearby Anaconda. The construction of the dam was a boon for the local economy. Not only did it provide cheap energy for the mining and processing of precious metal ore for the miners of Anaconda but it also had an ancillary benefit for the other principal group of early European-American residents: sheep and/or cattle ranchers. Those ranchers lucky enough to possess water rights on Flint Creek were happy to see the dam because it meant that the distribution of water—upon which ranchers rely to produce alfalfa (and other crops), which they cut, cure, package, and store (as hay) for winter fodder for their livestock—would be spread over a longer period of time from spring runoff to the end of the growing season in the early fall. On streams in the Rocky Mountains without water impoundment the irrigation season is generally short and almost entirely dependent upon the schedule of snow melt. On streams with dams, ranchers can get one or two more

cuttings of hay per season and thereby reduce the cost of maintaining their animals during the long, cold winters that affect such latitudes and altitudes.

The first residential lots on Georgetown Lake were sold in the 1930s to local second-homeowners and summertime visitors from outside Montana. The seasonal character of these ‘postindustrial’ intrusions presented no significant challenge to the nearly exclusive economic sovereignty held by resource extractors and commodity producers. However, from that point of introduction the number of houses on and around the lake have only increased—now the lake is surrounded by homes on 20-to-40-acre lots, the majority of which are owned by full-time, year-round residents.

A recently chartered homeowners association on the lake epitomizes the post-industrial emphasis of these new residents; the covenants of the association express its purpose to

“ensure use of the Property for *attractive recreational and residential purposes only*; to *promote health and happiness*; to *prevent unnecessary impairment of the environment*; to maintain the tone of the Property in its native form and *preserve its natural beauty as far as possible*” (emphasis added).⁽⁷⁾

What is especially relevant to note about the document quoted above is the adamancy by which it seeks to establish the legitimacy of experiential pursuit as part of the mandate of this rural residential neighborhood. The statement differentiates this style of land use from the previously predominant procedures regarding residential behavior within a more strictly industrial regime of production/consumption.

In 1988 the production of electricity at the site was discontinued by the MPC. In 1997 the Granite County Commission (GCC), the five-member group of elected officials charged with administering the county, acquired the dam on behalf of its constituency with the idea of restoring its power generation capabilities. In 2000—before the federal permitting process for the reestablishment of energy production was complete—the administration of Georgetown Lake’s volume and Flint Creek’s in-stream flow resulted in a conflict between local industrial and postindustrial interests in southwest Montana.

The conflict reached the public eye in the summer of 2000 on the heels of four years of local draught, when the Granite County commissioners responded to pressure from homeowners, business people, and recreationalists to reduce the release from Georgetown Lake from its standard mid-summer flow of more than 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) to less than 30 cfs. The lowering of the outflow was the commissioners’ attempt to balance the concerns of the residents and recreationalists of the Georgetown Lake with the needs of the ranchers along Flint Creek who relied on it to water their stock and irrigate their fields.

Ultimately, the compromise satisfied few, if any, of those involved. The local ranchers were frustrated by the lowering of the in-stream flow from its traditional mid-summer volume; from their perspective the issue was a clear-cut ‘taking’ that threatened their economic survival. Summing up his constituents’ perspective, in somewhat hyperbolic terms, the local water commissioner, John Ohrmann, said that the “irrigation situation was really critical ... we are fighting for our livelihood” (*Montana Missoulian* 2000).

Meanwhile, Lake residents and recreational business concerns joined together in opposition to the continued draining of the lake at the previous rate. The groups feared that if the lake was drawn down further it would threaten the trout and salmon populations that made the reservoir the most popular sport fishery in western Montana.

⁽⁷⁾Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions for Badger Bay at Georgetown Lake Subdivision, Draft #4, 28 July 2005.

Within the ‘postindustrial’ camp, the local homeowners/recreationalists and the business people had distinct but related reasons for which they sought to maintain the lake’s volume. The lake residents and Montana recreationalists principally sought to preserve their access to the lake’s trophy fishing while the business owners primarily wanted to safeguard their economic interest in the people who sought such experiences. Karen Funston, the owner of Georgetown Lake Lodge—a local hotel and restaurant that caters to fisherfolk from around the state—echoed the water commissioner’s concern regarding the GCC’s resource-use policy and practice when she said, “There [are] a lot of people who have a lot to lose ... there is a lot at stake” (*Montana Missoulian* 2000).

In addition to the reasoning of the two principal constituent groups within the water conservation coalition, there was another implicit rationale, which even more clearly exemplifies the postindustrial perspective of contemporary rural gentrifiers. The newcomer residents of the Georgetown Lake area not only wanted to experience the fishing opportunities of the lake but also wanted to maintain and maximize the aesthetic beauty of the lake in its high-altitude setting. As summer heats up and there is less in-flow to the lake due to the decrease and ultimate exhaustion of the high-mountain snow-pack as well as the increased demand for outflow to sate the ranchers’ irrigation needs, the band of exposed earth that wrings the lake grows. Every year the residents around the lake bemoan the increasing distance between the full shoreline of early spring and the summer shoreline. As one lake resident, whose home sits right next to the high-water mark, expressed his dissatisfaction, “No one likes to look out over an empty bathtub; and that is just what it looks like in August, an empty bathtub.” For these advocates of less water release, it was not the health of the fish population as much as it was the simple limitation placed on the alpine aesthetic that inspired their participation in the movement to lobby the GCC. In so aligning themselves, these newcomers were clearly communicating their desire not to see their experience of the rural US compromised by the ranching interests. Put another way, by seeking to influence the outflow from the reservoir by the GCC they are clearly articulating their desire not to see the industrial production of agricultural commodities (alfalfa and, ultimately, beef cattle) continue to trump the postindustrial production of aesthetic commodities (the lake’s alpine beauty).

When the news of this issue hit the state-wide press in late 2001, much reaction was registered in nearby ‘New’ West communities like Park County. One rancher I asked about the controversy (and specifically about quotations like the “bathtub” one above) shook his head, muttered a four-letter word, and said, “I am not sure if people like that have the sense gawd gave a goose.” The prioritization of recreation or aesthetics over the use of resources for industrial production was considered the paragon of illogical behavior by him and other industrial natives I interviewed in Park County.

By contrast, a local newcomer to Park County and an ardent fisherman applauded the Georgetown provocateurs for their attempt to challenge the traditional priorities of the ‘old’ West. “I think it’s about time that we got people out in support of such measures,” he told me, “There needs to be more action taken to maintain Montana’s natural resources and to not see them exploited solely by the ranchers and miners.”

Although not completely successful in satisfying all sides of the dispute, the Granite County commissioners’ decision to limit the Flint Creek flow put off the conflict for the rest of 2000. Their hope was that with any luck a wet winter would break the draught in Montana, and further agitation would be alleviated by the benevolence of Mother Nature. They were not so lucky. The winter of 2000/01 was drier still than the previous half-dozen, and water managers throughout Montana were forced once again to make hard decisions regarding the allocation of that precious resource.

On 15 October 2001, the GCC was served with a temporary restraining order issued by US District Judge Don Malloy, in Missoula, requiring it to reduce the Georgetown Lake outflow to match inflow to prevent lowering the lake level. The order was prompted by the commissions' refusal on 2 October to follow the recommendation of its own advisory group—composed of irrigators, members of the lake's homeowners association, and state and federal administrative agencies—to reduce immediately the volume of discharge at the Flint Creek Dam from 30 cfs to 10 cfs. The request for legal action was filed by the Butte-based George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Georgetown Lake Homeowners.

It is interesting to note that no commercial concerns were overtly involved in the 2001 legal petition (unlike the informal request made the previous year); instead, it was the recreational advocates of TU and the local experience proponents from the homeowners association. The action and composition of these two groups are important for their bearing on the issue of changing perspectives within Montana communities under the force of recent rural gentrification. TU is a national organization that has a significant presence (twelve local chapters) in Montana. It focuses most of its efforts on the creation and maintenance of fishable habitat both in term of access and riparian restoration. As such, its focus is on the promotion of the experience of recreational/sport-fishing as opposed to any concern with fish production as an aquacultural commodity. Not surprisingly, the majority of its local members are newcomers to Montana.

At the same time as the restraining order was sought, these two groups also pursued an injunction in Federal District court to establish as permanent the conditions of the temporary judgment. As the result of this petition, an injunction was permanently issued by Judge Molloy in October 2001. The injunction required that the GCC maintain Georgetown Lake's level at no less than a foot below full pool by the end of May. This ruling—which to date remains unchallenged by the GCC and, thus, has become the *de facto* administrative regime of Flint Creek as a legal precedent—has some likely profound repercussions for resource management in the Rocky Mountain West in that it is a potential harbinger of a reversal of the predominant (industrial) priorities of local society.

A political contest: the New World Mine controversy

Whereas the Georgetown Lake controversy was principally, but not exclusively, brought to public attention through its activities in the legal realm, a similar contest over land-use policy and practice between the interests of postindustrial and industrial Americans—the New World Mine (NWM) controversy—was played out largely within the auspices of 'overt' political institutions. This contest had similarly significant implications for the industrial regime of production/consumption (of mining, this time) in southeastern Park County, Montana, in the mid-1990s and presaged the ongoing restructuring of the local economy/society that has occurred in conjunction with rural gentrification.

This controversy began in the early 1990s when Crown Butte Mining, Inc. (CBMI), a subsidiary of (what was at the time) the Canadian mining corporation Noranda Inc., took advantage of the US Mining Law of 1872 to acquire title to more than 27 acres of formerly federally administered land for \$135 on the northern threshold of Yellowstone National Park. At the same time, the company also secured ownership of previously privatized land as well as the lease of public lands in the same immediate area totaling more than 2000 acres. This land, in what is called the New World Mining District, is a few miles from the northern boundary of the national park and sits adjacent to

the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness area and the small town of Cooke City in Park County, Montana.

In 1990 the mining conglomerate filed for a hard-rock mine permit with the Montana State Department of Lands in which it proposed to develop an underground mine, an ore-processing pond, and a waste rock storage site as well as the necessary infrastructure for the project to procure what they estimated at the time to be \$600–\$800 million in gold, silver, and copper deposits. The company intended to employ what it termed “state of the art” technologies to limit the environmental impacts, including the potential contamination of the ground and surface water by acidic compounds used in ore processing. Local residents and regional environmental advocates were not convinced by CBMI’s proposal and almost immediately sought to counteract this development, which at over 9000 feet of elevation would form the headwater of all three principal tributaries of the Yellowstone River—one of the most iconic and the longest free-flowing (undammed) rivers in the US.

The mobilization of local resistance was spearheaded by Mike Record, a resident of Livingston and homeowner in Cook City. Record, a Montana newcomer (of twenty years’ local tenure), was dubious about the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures regarding mine pollution, but he was also concerned with other effects that such an operation would have on the alpine valley where he spends his weekends and summer vacations. He was certain that the increased highway traffic of people working at the mine as well as the around-the-clock noise of the operation itself would compromise the experience of this ‘pristine’ place in which he had chosen to live. John Graham, a local hunting and fishing outfitter, echoed Record’s concerns:

“Our clients are up here for a quiet wilderness experience, and that mine would ruin it. People don’t come up here to listen to a bunch of machinery. That mine is right in the middle of our outfitting area. I just can’t see them giving a permit to people to mine to make necklaces and wrecking that whole country up there” (Montaigne, 1995).

Acting on their fears of the impacts on their GYE experiences, Record and Graham along with several other Cooke City residents and concerned citizens from the area formed the Beartooth Alliance to fight against the proposed mining operation. In the summer of 1995, while awaiting a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as required by the National Environment Policy Act and the Montana Environmental Policy Act, another front of resistance was opened against the projected mine. This one was led by Mike Finley, the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, who in league with fourteen local, regional, and national environmental groups, enlisted the World Heritage Committee (WHC), a branch of the United Nations (UN), to assess the impact of the mine. Finley and his cohort were able to pursue this avenue because the park had been decreed to have “outstanding universal value” to humankind by the WHC in 1978, which brought the area under the purview of an international convention signed and ratified by the US and 136 other member nations of the UN.

Also in the summer of 1995, Record and others in the Beartooth Alliance staunchly opposed to the NWM project made the unorthodox move of pursuing the direct involvement of President Bill Clinton. In August they succeeded in convincing Clinton, who was vacationing nearby in Jackson, Wyoming, to see the site, and Record was invited to join him on his flight over the mining district. After that visit, the President—who was unable to accelerate the reformation of the 1872 mining law, which was stalled in Congress at the time—ordered a two-year moratorium on the mining of more than 4500 acres of federally owned land around the perimeter of Yellowstone National Park.

Crown Butte, in anticipation of this executive move, staked another thirty-eight claims (encompassing an additional 185 acres) adjacent to its original project. This move further galvanized the resistance, which saw the latest act as a cynical land-grab by an arrogant multinational corporation. As a result, the environmentalists and local recreationalists kept up the pressure through the political process. Ultimately, while awaiting the completion of the EIS, in 1996 the US federal government signed a settlement agreement with CBMI to purchase their NWM district holdings. Public Law 105-83 was approved by the US Congress in early 1997 to provide the necessary funds of \$65 million.

Evidence of local recognition of the portentous character of this situation is exhibited by Ralph Glidden, who owned the Cooke City General Store. When asked whether he thought the resistance to the mine was evidence that Montanans had changed their view of proper land use, Glidden said, “Traditionally, companies have come in and pulled the gold tooth, and then they’re out of here. That’s the history of Western mining. The fact that this issue has attracted national and international attention is good, because those are the forces that will bear down on the regional thinking that has raped this land for 100 years” (Montaigne, 1995).

In similar fashion, Louisa Wilcox, the then-program director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (the largest of the region’s environmental organizations), bemoaned the “industrialization of a quiet, funky place” (Miller, 1993) like Cooke City. Her statement, however, ignores the history of the region as well as Western society, which has been ruled to date by an industrial regime of production/consumption. Although this regime has coexisted for more than a century with the increasingly powerful post-industrial regime (principally in the form of summer tourism), the balance of dominion between the two has only recently begun to tip in favor of the latter as the result of the increased numbers of the postindustrial middle class as permanent tourists.

Conclusion

In the preceding section I followed several of the trajectories by which the cultural difference of the PIMC is mapped on to the local social and physical landscape through their pursuit of legal, political, and social actions as expressions of their visions of proper local, state, and federal land-use practices and policies. These geographies, as we have seen, quite often conflict with the previously hegemonic ‘native’ *industrial* perspectives on proper land use.

In the Georgetown reservoir controversy we saw an interim legal resolution between two competing regimes of land/resource use (centered on the waters of the Flint Creek valley)—one, preexisting, in the service of production/consumption of (agricultural) commodities and the other, locally emergent, in the service of the production/consumption of experiential opportunities (of fishing and alpine aesthetics). The issuing of the legal injunction in favor of the latter—in contradiction of the long-standing precedent that the “highest and best use” of land is for the production of commodities—is a likely harbinger of the continuing (if not accelerated) postindustrialization of such rural spaces.

Similarly, in the NWM controversy a political solution was enacted by the federal government in direct contradiction of more than 150 years of US public lands policy. The success of the actions of local and regional environmental organizations in catalyzing this action exhibits the increasing influence of such groups on the politics of Montana and the northern Rocky Mountains and represents, in the process, a profound reversal of the previously dominant perspective of the region that favored use of its lands in ways that contributed to the production of mining, silvicultural, and agricultural resources. It is newcomers to the region—the rural gentrifiers that

I describe here and elsewhere (Hines, 2007; 2010a; 2010b)—that compose the vast majority of the constituency of the groups through which the reaction against the proposed mine was mobilized. As rural gentrifiers, these newcomers are changing the balance of power in the areas into which they migrate. These in-migrants, as primarily members of the expanding PIMC, seek to create and maintain the experiential opportunities of recreation and the aesthetic of the region in which they now live. This example shows one way in which rural gentrifiers are mobilizing their increasing local strength through citizen's environmental groups and political institutions to forward their class-based ideals of proper landuse.

Postindustrialization as the creation of class – cultural space

The process of class (and subclass) formation, as was noted earlier, particularly by the middle class of Western capitalist societies, is a profoundly performative and colonizing process (Liechty, 2003); the drive to differentiation within and between classes (see Bourdieu, 1984) results in the appropriation and redefinition of space by the ascendant group according to its cultural logic (Bridge, 2001; Podmore, 1998). The “class – cultural practice” of rural gentrification exhibits the prioritization of experience by members of the postindustrial middle and is “mapped onto social space” as well as physical space (Liechty, 2003, page 255).

By extending the analysis of gentrification to the rural context, this paper seeks to contribute to the existing literature on the subject and, in so doing, to highlight that, in its contemporary US form, the process must be viewed simultaneously as the class-based colonization of predominately working-class provinces by members of the middle class as well as the inspiration for intraclass conflict between factions of the middle class (industrial versus post-industrial). The evidence of rural post-industrialization described here speaks to the ways in which all social domains (rural, urban, etc) are integrated in a cycle of devaluation/revaluation, which is central to the dynamic of uneven development (Smith, 1990) in our capitalist Modernity—that the impetus to this dynamic is simultaneously ‘material’ (Smith, 1979; 1982) and ‘cultural’ (Ley, 1996; Zukin, 1982).

What is more, the details of such contests testify to the character of the post-industrial newcomers vis-à-vis the industrial natives by demonstrating the way in which they individually and collectively envision proper land-use practice and attempt to influence administrative policy. The emphasis placed on producing/consuming valued experiences, by rural gentrifiers as permanent tourists, is inspiring the (uneven) development of the *postindustrial class – cultural space* of the ‘New’ West Archipelago.

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