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# Articles

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## Leisure Identities, Globalization, and the Politics of Place

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As a particularly modern modality for making and resisting claims about the use and meaning of places leisure has a prominent role in the politics of place. This is particularly evident in land use politics in the western U.S., which serves as a launching point for examining the ways in which leisure makes competing claims on a place. Within leisure studies initial interest in place ideas focused on leisure places as sources of identification and affiliation that lend meaning and purpose to life. More recently the field has witnessed a growing appreciation for how leisure places create and structure social differences and the potential for leisure to be used to assert power and authority over place. Both the intensified politics of place and the primacy of leisure as a venue for self identity have their origins in modernity and globalization. These social forces not only destabilize and uproot place meanings, they generate the modern project of constructing an individual identity. As vehicles for making and affirming modern identities, leisure and tourism, in turn, give rise to greater competition for the meaning of places.

**KEYWORDS:** *Place, politics, identity, Western U.S., modernity, globalization, place-identity*

### Introduction

The theme of the 2001 Leisure Research Symposium opening session, *Leisure and The Politics of Place*, brought much needed attention to the role of leisure in creating and contesting places. Set in the rapidly changing American West, the symposium venue and theme were of particular interest to me for two reasons, one professional and one personal. On a professional level, the intersection of leisure, place, and politics is a major theme of my own research and I will have more to say about that in a moment. On a personal level, the keynote presentation by University of Colorado Geographer William (Reibsame) Travis, describing the politics of a changing region I will call the Mountain West, resonates with my own sense of western identity in a way I hope may illuminate the topic of leisure and the politics of place.

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Although I am a relative newcomer to Colorado and the Front Range of the Rockies, I am in genealogical fact the fifth generation of Williams to live and wander among the mountains and deserts of the West. Like my forefathers, I have not managed to stay long in any one western state, let alone establish roots in any particular community. My high mobility within and among western states is hardly unusual, yet when it comes to the politics of the West the storyline we often hear is rather different: political conflict in the West is frequently characterized as one of well-settled locals pitted against an itinerant lot of newcomers, tourists, and part-time residents. This leads me to ask: who gets to claim they belong to the West or any other place for that matter? There are certainly some who can boast that they are fifth generation western ranchers, but I am inclined to dismiss them the "landed gentry" who use their so called deep roots to claim the West as their own. Like my ancestors, many who reside in the western U.S. are the descendents of landless peasants, itinerant mine workers, hired farm and ranch hands, or general laborers who, in the typically boom-and-bust economy of the region, were forced to wander from one boomtown to another in search of work. Where do they belong? What is their sense of place?

The politics of the West is indeed much about who counts as a "local" and we should be mindful that what it means to be a local or an old-timer is problematic and often contested. Newcomers and old-timers, the rooted and the itinerant, tourists and former inhabitants can all claim to have a sense of belonging to the West and yet have in mind very different *senses* of that West. To put it another way, a shared sense of *belonging to* the West does not necessarily translate into a shared sense *of* the West. Similarly, we need to be careful with words like "old" and "new" to describe a place like the West. Old implies authentic and original, creating a standard against which we measure the appropriateness of the new. And we sometimes forget that even the old was once new. Whatever may have been our image of the authentic "Old West," that West was created by relative newcomers bringing with them exotic ideas (such as manifest destiny) and new practices (such as ranching and mining) that transformed an earlier West of pre-European settlement. In truth both the Old West and the New West are contested socio-political constructions: there are really many different "Wests," both old and new (see Wrobel & Steiner, 1997). Scholarly efforts to describe the region such as the *Atlas of the New West* (see Reibsame, 1997) are part and parcel of an ongoing process of making the West. Places are created through local and not so local discourses, dialogues among farmers and ranchers at the Grange and debates among academics at the Center of the American West and in journals like this one. We all participate in the politics of place by making and resisting claims on what the place is, was, or ought to be. We do this in the formal venues of community planning and political decision making; in our choices of how and where we live, work, and play; and in our more prosaic routines of daily life.

### Leisure and the Politics of Place

Beyond my personal stake in the politics of the West, I have a professional interest in exploring the intersection of leisure and the politics of place. As I see it, both revolve around the concept of identity. Just as talk of an emerging "New West" is about identity politics, leisure is very much a venue for making and expressing identity. In other words, an important way of making and resisting claims about places is in their use for cultivating and expressing leisure identities. Let me explore this connection initially by teasing out two ways in which place ideas have entered the academic discourse of leisure studies. I will follow this with a discussion of how globalization frames both the politics of place and the making of modern identities. In making these latter arguments I have drawn heavily from several of my earlier attempts (See Williams, 2000; Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999; Williams & McIntyre, 2001; Williams & Van Patten, 1998).

One form of place discourse in leisure studies builds on a psychological approach typically described by terms such as *place attachment* or *place identity*. Place attachment is used in a broad and general way to characterize the emotional ties people form with places (Altman & Low, 1992). Place identity is used in a somewhat more specific way to characterize the role of places as sources of identification and affiliation that add meaning and purpose to life (Proshansky, 1978). The two are related in that strong feelings for a place derive, in large measure, from the role that places have in forming and affirming a sense of personal identity. In either case, psychologists are interested in the meaning people ascribe to places and the extent to which people see themselves as attached to particular places.

This use of the place idea has been the central path of my research career. In one guise or another my research has continued to emphasize the role of place commitments and affiliations (in contrast to consumer metaphors) as a basis of leisure participation and choice. I originally started down this path in my master's thesis (Williams, 1980) because I was troubled by the prevailing operational concepts of leisure and recreation of the time in which activities and settings were viewed as collections of separable, substitutable properties. Along with place ideas I was attracted to concepts of leisure careers, specialization, and identity development because they emphasized more enduring meanings, the meanings people derive from devotion to something or somewhere (see Haggard & Williams, 1992). For me the outdoor recreation resource was not some kind of supermarket of trails and trees, rivers and rocks to be arranged by recreation programmers and managers for consumption as leisure experiences, but a collection of places, each with its own unique set of histories, rituals, and meanings. The basic idea I have been exploring is that people value their relationships to leisure places just as they might value enduring involvements with certain people or particular "free time" activities. We choose leisure places not merely because they are useful for leisure, but to convey the very sense of who we are.

The idea that people use leisure to affirm connections to places has led, perhaps inevitably, to the second way place has entered leisure research, as contested claims over the meaning and use of places. Ideas like place attachment (feelings of affiliation and identification) and related notions such as sense of place (more inclusively, the meanings people ascribe to a place), are necessarily political because (a) place meanings create and structure social differences (serve to define us and them, locals and outsiders) and (b) claims of what belongs to a place (what kinds of meaning and practices are deemed authentic to the place) are often invoked to assert power and authority over place.

Academic interest in the politics of place is not a recent invention. Leisure researchers have long recognized the role of informal rules of ownership and social group affiliation in defining urban spaces. As Lee (1972) observed, parks are not, as we tend to assume, free spaces within which to pursue and construct our identities as we see fit, but social territories with formal and informal rules about who can use them and which activities are allowed. In recreation resource management, claims about what belongs to a place range from debates about the appropriateness of various leisure activities within a given setting to establishing recreational carrying capacities for wilderness and national parks. We see evidence of this kind of place politics today. When Anglo-Europeans named a certain volcanic extrusion *Devils Tower*, used the icon to adorn Wyoming license plates, and sent out legions of "New West" rock climbers to conquer the monolith, they contested a pre-European (dare I say indigenous) claim on the place as a temple or shrine (Dustin et. al. 2002). Similarly in tourism development, we grapple with the basic question of whether an "authentic" sense of place exists or is just a myth perpetrated by tourism promotion organizations (Cohen, 1988; Selwyn, 1996).

Leisure is an important arena within which we construct and contest the meaning and use of places and the landscapes of the mountain West are no exception. To talk about the politics of place is to recognize the historic and geographic context within which meanings, values, social interactions, and practices are re-produced. To talk about the politics of place is to recognize a process in which place meanings and values are actively and continuously contested and re-constructed within individual minds, shared (or not so shared) cultures, and social practices. Let me re-emphasize my viewpoint: "sense of place" is not *an* or *the* authentic quality of a place waiting to be recognized by the more observant among us, but a social construction perpetrated by some one or some group with a particular interest. Competing senses of place, including those created by leisure practices, are important sources of political conflict.

### Politics of Place in an Era of Globalization

If leisure involves making and resisting claims about places (i.e., claims about what a place means or what constitutes the true character or sense of that place) why do these claims seem more intense and problematic today

than in the past? Part of the answer lies, I think, in how modernity and its partner, globalization, drive the politics of place and the making of modern identities. Modernity has made possible rapidly accelerating rates of exchange, movement, and communication across space. One geographic outcome of modernity is globalization, what some geographers refer to as "time-space compression" (Harvey, 1996) to emphasize the way modernity restructures time-space relations and uproots social meanings and identities from place. This uprooting of meaning and restructuring of spatial relations suggests two particular facets of globalization that might account for the pervasive role of leisure in place politics. First, globalization, as a kind of politics of place, restructures our experience of mobility, home, and ultimately the spatial construction of our identities, our sense of who we are and where we belong. Second, by unmooring meaning and identities from place, globalization dilutes traditional/local sources of identity and amplifies the quest of modern people to actively construct a sense of identity.

In the premodern era, local conditions and culture were more predominant as constraints on how people adapted to and fashioned their world. Exploiting nature was limited by local knowledge, and the quantity and quality of locally available natural resources constrained economic and social activities. This tended to produce isolated local cultures with social patterns necessarily fitted to the contingencies of that place. In other words societies were adapted to the opportunities and constraints of local place, with meaning and identity locally prescribed. Harvey (1989) contrasts this premodern condition with the modern era by noting the way the latter has transformed places around the logic of market economics. Modernization (whether in the form of industrial markets, mass communications, or more efficient transportation) liberated economic activity from the local constraints of place and allowed for more efficient use of resources.

The transformation from premodern to modern times has had profound implications for society beyond the obvious impacts on material well-being. Individuals were liberated from local ways of life, community mores, and parochial society. Modernity detached social relations, production and consumption, and even identities from particular places and enlarged individual capacities to contest the meanings other people ascribe to both the immediate and more distant surroundings. With material life and well-being no longer bound by local ecological limits, modern social norms and practices have become increasingly the province of the sovereign individual. While much has been gained in terms of material well-being and individual autonomy and liberty, modern forms of social relations have also led to the displacement of local community norms and standards of behavior and replaced them with individual preferences often expressed in the marketplace or the voting booth (Wolfe, 1989). Thus, the meaning of a place is increasingly subject to a kind of ideological marketplace with all of the competition and instability that goes with it.

The tendency for globalization to displace identities has important implications for how we think about leisure and tourism because these concepts largely take their meaning as oppositions to the traditional anchors of iden-

tity, namely *work* and *home*. What characterizes modern forms of dwelling, working, and playing is that they increasingly involve circulating through geographically extended networks of social relations spread across a multiplicity of places and regions. With circulation no longer the disruption of normal settled life, as it is sometimes presumed, globalization effectively deterritorializes or dislodges what have long been geographically bounded conceptions of culture, home, and identity. This makes increasingly problematic our assumptions of singular place identities and geographic rootedness as starting points from which to build social theories to explain tourism, leisure, and identity.

People, cultures, objects, images and ideas migrate and with global reach of modern communication technologies we can even experience virtual migrations (Urry, 2000). To illustrate the impact of but one form of changing mobility, Urry (2000) has this to say about the automobile:

It reconfigures civil society involving distinct ways of dwelling, travelling and socialising in, and through, an automobilised time-space. . . . Automobility necessarily divides workplaces from the home producing lengthy commutes; it splits home and shopping and destroys local retailing outlets; it separates home and various kinds of leisure site(s); it splits up families which live in distant places; it necessitates leisure visits to sites lying on the road network. (p. 59)

The point here is show that circulation, whether by car or other means, has profound impacts on the meaning and experience of place, social interaction, leisure, and our very sense of self.

Massey (1993) also reminds us that there is an important element of power to consider as the mobility of some actively weakens the mobility of others. It is not just powerful and mobile elites who are impacted by globalization: it has real meaning for the powerless, the locally constrained who lack the means to take advantage of spatial mobility, who often suffer the disruptive consequences. Our everyday actions as leisure participants exert subtle power over distant others. Massey cites as an example that every time we use a private car to drive to the "regional" shopping mall, what we potentially gain in convenience and choice from globalization comes at the expense of environmental quality and social groups who must depend on viable public transport and the success of neighborhood shops and businesses. What applies to shopping malls applies to community based leisure services as well. We engage a politics of place whenever we mobilize our leisure choices as surely as when we enter the voting booth. Driving to the regional park is as much a political act as voting for it in a local bond issue.

Modern mobility is not limited to daily or short term circulations around a fixed home place. Migration patterns can also take the form of oscillatory movements initiated by diverse factors from biennial movements between summer and winter residences, to circulations between residences over the life span (McHugh, Hogan & Hoppel, 1995; McHugh & Mings, 1996). Not only does this create problems for demographers and census takers, it raises the question of how people develop a coherent and consistent identity in a

world where people routinely circulate among a variety of places. The very notion of home has long represented the geographic center for constructing a self-identity. How is a modern identity built from widely distributed places and social relations, when home is less often rooted in a singular or stable place?

Globalized patterns of migration also challenge traditional political theories of what constitutes a "local" polity. What does it mean, for example, to propose turning the management of federal lands in the West over to "local" authorities, as Kemmis (2001) suggests, when modern place affiliations often stretch across much larger reaches of geography? Does it make sense to limit my political franchise to Fort Collins, Colorado, where I have lived for only a few years, yet deny me the right to weigh in on decisions affecting Lake Tahoe on the California-Nevada border, the place where I grew up, the place that more than any other centers my sense of self, the place I know most intimately? How are we to reconcile the local way we vote with the increasingly global way we live?

Though we often think of globalization as destroying local distinctiveness and "homogenizing" local places, the transformation of places does not necessarily lead to alienation and placelessness as many critics of globalization suppose (e.g., Kunstler, 1993; Mander & Goldsmith, 1996). In fact, as some have argued, globalization may actually make "place-bound identities more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication" (Harvey, 1993, p. 4). Globalization creates a tension within local places between searching out ever wider spheres of exchange and movement and simultaneously provoking an inward and deliberate search for authenticity, a conscious effort to evoke a sense of place and cultivate connections. Still, the desire for an authentic and stable sense of place is perhaps most evident to people when place meanings appear to be threatened from the "outside."

Within the context of modernity and globalization, tourism reflects both sides of this tension between the inward search for authenticity and an outward desire for exchange. On the one hand, tourism represents a potential vehicle for the preservation of traditional meanings. On the other hand, tourism is a major contributing factor in the transformation of places and the thinning of their meaning. The increased mobility and freedom of identity that comes with modernity energizes the tourist's search for thicker meaning and authentic place, yet tourism is the epitome of "consuming places" (Urry, 1995). Within tourism there is often a very deliberate and conscious effort to evoke a sense of place that, ironically, can lead to its artificial preservation in the form of staged authenticity, invented traditions, and phony folk culture. In MacCannell's (1989) view, tourism is largely motivated by the desire to experience the authentic, which globalization makes increasingly inaccessible. Similarly, Jaakson (1986) suggests it is a search for constancy in a sea of change that attracts many to seek out a rural summer cottage retreat—an escape from modernity in pastoral settings. While communities often hold out the hope that tourism can sustain local economies

and ways of life, there is clearly a transformational character to tourism development. Tourism, more than other forms of economic development, values and trades on the character of places. The question remains as to how much and under what circumstances tourism can balance the inevitable tension between the commodification (thinning) of places and the desire to experience and live in authentic and thickly textured places.

Such desires for stability and authenticity can also perpetuate social inequities when they become arguments for narrow and exclusive definitions of who and what belongs to a place (Shurmer-Smith & Hannam, 1994). Critics see sense of place as a romantic, dangerous sentiment aimed at perpetuating local cultures, traditions, and social relations that are intolerant and xenophobic. "The danger arises when such modes of thought are postulated as the sole basis of politics (in which case they become inward-looking, exclusionary and even neo-fascistic)" (Harvey, 1996, p. 199). In contrast, Massey (1993) argues for a "progressive" view of place that tries to give credibility to the human need for authenticity and rootedness without regressing into the fortress mentality of a gated community. "The question is how to hold on to that notion of spatial difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that without it being reactionary" (Massey, 1993, p. 64). She notes that even under modern, globalizing conditions places are still unique assemblages of global and local processes. "What gives a place its specificity," she writes, "is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations articulated together at a particular locus" (p. 66). Modernity makes this wider constellation possible without necessarily reducing uniqueness. Places still possess a character of their own even if they lack a singular and coherent sense of place. Indeed any single place may possess multiple senses of place. The American West is old and new at the same time. Coffee bars stand next to cowboy bars. Mining towns have become ski towns. Ski slopes overlook cattle ranches. These multiple senses of place afford both a richness of meaning by incorporating more distant influences and a heightened conflict over how to balance and combine the new and the old, the local and the global.

### Constructing the Self in Global Society

This brings us to another feature of globalization. In addition to expanding and intensifying claims on the meaning of place, globalization also makes problematic the constructing of a coherent identity or sense of self. Giddens (1991), for example, refers to self and globalization as "two poles of the dialectic of the local and the global" where "changes in intimate aspects of personal life are directly tied to the establishment of social connections of very wide scope" (p. 3). As modernity sweeps away tradition, our sense of self is no longer passively given by the circumstances of birth and local culture. In contrast to premodern or traditional cultures, where things stayed more or less the same from generation to generation and the passages of



life were clearly staked out, in modern society the self has to be explored as an active, deliberate, and reflexive project of constructing a biographical narrative.

The individual task of constructing a sense of self is very much a modern necessity and leisure offers a particularly rich context for addressing it. The relative autonomy afforded in leisure gives us moderns greater individual latitude to construct and project our identities as we want them to be. Psychological theories of self-affirmation, for example, suggest that through the course of human development, we actively strive to understand ourselves and be clearly understood by others. Schlenker (1984) suggests five processes we use to create and affirm this sense of self. These include (a) selective participation in occupations, tasks, and hobbies that society associates with particular self images; (b) displays of signs and symbols of identities through styles of dress and appearance and the display of possessions including homes and automobiles; (c) selective affiliation with others whose appraisals of our identities are desired and supportive; (d) interpersonal behaviors designed to shape identity affirming responses in others; and (e) cognitive processes such as selective attention, recall and interpretation of self-relevant information. Leisure is that arena where we have relatively few constraints on how we might apply these processes in making and projecting an identity.

Lest we begin to think this modern view of self and identity affirmation is the culmination of an enlightened and inevitable emancipation of the human potential, I feel obliged to point out some of the psychological burdens that come with greater freedom to define oneself. Though the modern self (identity) is actively and reflexively constructed "this task has to be accomplished amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities" (Giddens, 1991, p. 3). Gergen (1991, p. 15) makes a similar point, noting that the self in a postmodern globalized age is saturated with meaning and images such that experiencing "a secure sense of self" or even a "bounded, essential identity" is much more problematic. In other words, the modern, globalized world engenders a tension between the freedom and burden to fashion an identity for oneself under circumstances where the social norms and guidelines on which to base these life choices are weak or nonexistent. Moderns live in a global world offering a profuse collection of life choices, much of it commodified into standardized units. Thus, the modern project of constructing a self-identity includes a deliberate and reflexive effort to build and sustain a coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narrative. And although this narrative may take advantage of a relatively high degree of choice, it nevertheless must be filtered through the abstract systems of meaning that modernity replaces for traditional/local systems of meaning (Giddens, 1991, p. 5).

Tensions between the freedom and burden to fashion an identity for oneself, what Giddens (1991) describes as the "tribulations of the self," require moderns to navigate four dilemmas for constructing a coherent narrative of self-identity: unification versus fragmentation, powerlessness versus

appropriation, authority versus uncertainty, and personalized versus commodified experience. Underlying each of these is the “looming threat of personal meaninglessness” (Giddens, 1991, p. 201).

First, the identity dilemma of unification versus fragmentation involves steering a course through and selectively incorporating the numerous contextual events and mediated experiences that modernity presents. Williams and Kaltenborn (1999) describe the dilemma of fragmentation versus unification in the context of owning a second home or cottage:

Cottaging is an attempt to thicken the meanings we associate with places in response to the modern tendency for places to become thinned out. It emphasizes continuity of time and place, a return to nature, and convergence of spheres of life such as work and leisure. [On the other side, however,] it necessarily re-creates the segmented quality of modern identities in the form of separate places for organizing distinct aspects of a fragmented identity. It narrows and thins out the meaning of each ‘home’ by focusing the meaning of each on a particular segment of life (i.e., work and subsistence of urban daily life versus recreation and rejuvenation of cottage life). It also segments identity around phases in the life cycle with youth and retirement focused more on cottage life than working adulthood. (p. 227)

For some leisure may present a dizzying array of possibilities and options such that modern life may seem irreparably fragmented. The diversity of available lifestyles, however, may also be an opportunity to create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative. “Thus a cosmopolitan person is one precisely who draws strength from being at home in a variety of contexts” (Giddens 1991, p. 190).

Second, modernity gives us moderns greater power to appropriate various lifestyles and meanings from a wider range of possibilities for building our identity narrative. At the same time, there is also a sense that globalization and the necessity to transfer control of some aspects of life to abstract or expert systems, can leave us feeling powerless in the face of modernity. Home, for example, is the terminus for all manner of expert systems and technologies designed to efficiently deliver warmth, sustenance, rejuvenation, entertainment, and information. It is not until these systems go “off-line” or seem threatened in some way (remember Y2K?) that we notice how dependent we are on this incomprehensibly complex network of systems. But we also have greater power to build and restore meanings and sense of identity undermined by globalization. For example, leisure has been shown to be an effective arena for appropriating various lifestyles around which one can build a coherent narrative of self (Kuentzel, 2000; Haggard & Williams, 1992), but it has also developed into professional discipline with the aim of securing the public benefits of recreation. As parents we increasingly turn over to experts, market analysts, and the media the leisure education of our children and seek advice on our own leisure lifestyles from professional leisure counselors. Similarly, as the primary home is thinned of meaning—reduced as it were to a staging area for daily life; as a feeding, laundering,

and sleeping station; storage container of personal goods; and designated meeting place from which to coordinate the disparate paths and projects of individual family members (see Chaplin, 1999)—alternative mythic places such as second homes or favorite vacation spots may be cultivated to recreate a seemingly thicker place of attachment, identity, continuity, tradition, and refuge otherwise undermined by modern lifestyles.

Third, an identity narrative must navigate between authority and uncertainty. For many moderns it may be “psychologically difficult or impossible to accept the existence of diverse mutually conflicting authorities. They find that the freedom to choose is a burden and they seek solace in more overarching systems of authority” (Giddens, 1991, p. 196). Thus, some people may be willing to sacrifice their own capacity for critical judgment in exchange for the convictions or assurance supplied by an authority who provides rules and guidelines for living. But in modern world what constitutes worthy sources of authority has also become more diverse and contested. Modern lifestyle authorities have evolved from the Mickey Mouse Club to MTV and such bastions of moral authority as the clergy, Boy Scouts and Big Brother/Big Sister organizations, to take three recent examples, are embroiled in scandal and controversy. Along with media and advertising offering lifestyle advice, lifestyle management has become professionalized. As noted earlier, leisure counseling and therapy have emerged as relatively new specializations within the repertoire of human development expertise.

The dilemma of authority versus doubt, however, is in part resolved, according to Giddens (1991, p. 196), “through a mixture of routine and commitment to a certain form of lifestyle.” This brings us back to the concepts of place attachment and leisure careers as ways of understanding leisure participation. Thus, rather than trying to build our leisure identities from the mindless consumption of media marketed experiential goods, leisure also affords what Stebbins (1982) calls “serious leisure,” the long and practiced commitments to certain lifestyle forms that give life a sense of purpose and meaning. The routines and traditions of holidays and family celebrations may similarly offer direction and purpose, but they may also be harder to maintain throughout an increasingly diverse and mobile life course. This again suggests a modern role for second homes: by providing family members a regular gathering place for maintaining routines and traditions second homes forge a shared commitment to place in an otherwise rootless modern life.

Fourth, for all the choice and freedom in constructing the self, our personal appropriation of life choices and meanings is often influenced by standardized forms of consumption. Thus, leisure and tourism may be variously experienced as manufactured and commodified or authentic and personalized (Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999). We have outfitters, guides, and park interpreters to tell us how to experience the out-of-doors and media often give us a plethora of pre-packaged lifestyle options to choose from. Advertisers promote the “sport utility vehicle” to nature loving outdoor enthusiasts as a way to get their mountain bikes closer to the backcountry or

as a handy anchor for their climbing ropes as they descend into an enticing cave. Park agencies have even joined forces with these advertisers to promote various outdoor lifestyles. Television programming presents images and myths about home and lifestyle that serve as models for organizing “a coherent narrative which is a reassuring balance to difficulties in sustaining the narrative of the self in actual social conditions” (Giddens, 1991, p. 199). But rather than passively taking up such narratives, we also exercise the capacity to actively discriminate among pre-packaged images and modify pre-fabricated storylines to suit our individual tastes. We take the back roads and search out the less traveled tourist destinations. We reject the guided tour offered by the park interpreter and explore and discover on our own the park’s natural or historical significance.

Navigating through the identity dilemmas of the modern life course may be more difficult than we commonly recognize. But Giddens doesn’t see “personal meaninglessness” as inevitable or all-pervasive. Rather, by recognizing modernity’s fragmenting and disorienting qualities we can begin to focus on the strategies people have available and draw on to assemble a coherent narrative of self. For Giddens, the modern, reflexive self is built from a series or pattern of “lifestyle sectors” (consistent and ordered sets of practices within a time-space slice of an individual’s overall activities in leisure, work, marriage, friendship, etc.). The activities and projects that engage us derive their significance from their capacity to represent or reflect various aspects of self. Much like Giddens, Bruner (1990) envisages the “self” as distributed through our personal undertakings and suggests that meaning in life is created reflexively through narratives, both as the stories we tell our “Self” and the stories we tell to others. “The object of a self narrative [is] not its fit to some hidden reality but its achievement of external and internal coherence, livability and adequacy” (Bruner, 1990, p. 112, emphasis in the original). In other words, the stories we tell provide the “glue” that binds together the various aspects of self played out in our actions and enable us to negotiate our way through the tribulations of modern life.

As a summary, let me attempt to tie the tribulations of self back to the politics of place. On the one hand globalization liberates individual identities from a given place, no longer bounding who we are around the culture and practices of a given traditional place-based community. On the other hand, by unmooring identity from place, globalization expands our capacity to make claims on how we might value and use a universe of places. Modernity frees us from some pre-existing and fixed set of meanings and turns all meaning into contest. If I think of myself as a nature lover, I might make claims on a certain landscape as wilderness. I might also demand that it should be managed in a way consistent with my identity as an environmentalist. Or perhaps I think of myself as a climber and covet that same mountain as an exemplary arena for demonstrating my skills. Or perhaps I think of that landscape as a hallowed temple or monument to my ancestors and don’t take very kindly to outsiders disrespecting its sacred meaning by climbing on the temple walls. The meaning and use of places become entwined in the

stories we tell our selves and others about who we are. These stories appropriate places and assign essential meanings to them, but in so doing contest the identities of others who assign different but equally essential meanings to the same places.

### Closing Comments

Leisure research has been slow to confront the reality of modern, globalized spatial relations. For too long concepts of importance to leisure researchers (e.g., identity, amenity migration, tourism, culture, home, and community) have been premised on an increasingly outmoded concept of the subject singularly rooted in a local place. Rather than thinking in terms of roots, perhaps a more apt metaphor for the way modern subjects are tied to places is in terms of rhizomes (Sack, 1997). Just as some plant species send out long horizontal root branches to colonize a larger space, moderns may adapt to high mobility by putting down multiple roots distributed across a variety of places. Modern (some would say postmodern) identities are not some spatially fixed, authentic, or hidden essences to be discovered through the course of life, but the product of deliberately constructed and reflexive efforts to create biographical coherence out of the many facets of modernity. This requires revisions in the way we study leisure, tourism, and identity in modern life. We need research strategies that examine how moderns interweave complex dwelling, circulating, and lifestyle patterns into coherent identity narratives.

Modern leisure is a constituting factor in the politics of specific places by making and resisting claims on the meaning and use of spaces, claims that often collide with one another as well as with non-recreational uses and meanings. This surely describes the highly valued recreational and tourist landscapes of the western U.S. In modern America the recreational use of wilderness, and the American West more generally, provides ritual for reproducing the frontier experience and what is sometimes taken to be the American character (Nash 1973). This relatively recent view of the West continues to clash with an older extractive sensibility. Yet, in certain respects both views are founded on a "pristine myth," a landscape empty of civilization and meaning apart from the instrumental or experiential values that can be extracted from it (only in the process of settling the landscape did Americans begin to imagine pre-existing or symbolic values worthy of preservation). Contemporary politics of wilderness has begun to challenge this myth as illustrated in the debates over the social construction of wilderness (Cronon, 1995) and the increasing recognition of ecological and indigenous claims on wilderness over recreational and experiential uses (Callicott & Nelson, 1998).

Our desire to claim places for ourselves may also heighten social inequalities. As we develop and manage leisure delivery systems, especially publicly funded ones, we need to recognize that social justice nearly always involves the spatial distribution of goods and services (Harvey, 1996; Sack,

1992). In other words, as managers of leisure service systems we are sometimes confronted with the competing objectives of sustaining places on the one hand, and achieving a more just distribution of benefits on the other. What we think of as environmental planning is a form of place politics and, as Appleyard (1979) pointed out some time ago, in our professional capacities as planners we create, contest, and negotiate the meaning of places. Our authority and identity as professionals are always embedded in our resource plans and program decisions.

Leisure and tourism are certainly not unique as manifestations of the politics of place, but are nonetheless important modes within which social and identity differences are constructed. Places contain multiple histories in which people affirm multiple and conflicting place identities. A key challenge, then, is to learn how to collectively negotiate through local-to-global change and across social differences. What "locals" might take to be "outsider" disturbances to a place often engender a strong politics of resistance as people attempt to keep places the way they imagine them to have been. But again, who counts as a local in the politics of the West? Who decides which landscapes shall be preserved as wilderness? How do gateway communities balance their local sense of community against the onslaught of visitors on their own pilgrimages to a promised landscape? And in an age of globalization, how do we take into account the legitimate considerations of those who reside far from the place, who are nevertheless impacted by decisions made locally?

These are challenging questions for which there are no ready answers. Still, the intensifying politics of place need not be viewed as hopeless and negative, but instead as an opportunity to strengthen and renew civic democracy (Barber, 1998; Kemmis, 1990). First, the injunction to find common ground can be taken literally as the necessity of having to learn how to co-exist in a shared space regardless of our social or ideological differences (Healey 1997). Thus, the minimal social unity that makes possible and motivates political action is not some presumed set of shared values but that people find "themselves in geographic proximity and economic interdependence such that the activities and pursuits of some affect the ability of others to conduct their own activities" (Young, 1996, p. 126). Second, recalling Olmsted's ideal of public parks as meeting grounds, leisure can create the kinds of proximity and interdependence that motivate civic dialogue. The problem or danger is not that through leisure people make competing claims on public space, but that the excessive privatization of leisure, "bowling alone" as Putnam (1995) so elegantly put it, risks weakening our civic skills and diverting us from deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good.

Reconciling competing claims on a place, like the American West, is not simply a debate about which uses, meanings, and values are at stake. It also involves examining the appropriate social processes and institutions by which society orders, evaluates and decides which practices and meanings to protect

or promote. These processes and institutions require learning how to collectively navigate among the forces of local and global change and across our social differences. They would likely build on a view of area planning as exercises in public reasoning, as shaping shared spaces despite our differences, as “making sense together while living differently” (Healey, 1997, p. 50). To plan is to engage in a politics of place and in the public sector this underscores the necessity to move from a top-down, expert-driven management style to one that is more bottom-up and inclusive. The redesign of planning/decision making processes and institutions needs to be radically participatory and democratic.

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