

# Chapter 13

## Conclusion: Moving Beyond Competing Rural Capitalisms and Uneven Environment Management in Exurbia

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### 13.1 Toward a Truly Comparative Political Ecology of Exurbia

This book has provided a comparative political ecological examination of exurbia. In doing so, we have connected case studies of local exurban landscape change in particular places to the larger-scale regional, national, and global processes producing these changes. The collective analytical focus of this volume draws solidly on the work of Walker and Fortmann (2003) and the ways competing rural capitalisms produce dynamics that shape uneven environmental governance regimes (Reed 2007). The case studies discussed in the previous chapters describe contemporary nature–society relationships in the transitional landscapes of not only the United States but also in other contexts, both in the developed and developing worlds (see e.g., Hurley and Ari 2011). As the cases here illustrate, the rural to exurban transition appears at different times in different places, ranging from the South Carolina Lowcountry to the Cascade Mountains of western Washington to the tablelands of southeastern Australia.

Discussing the social, political, and ecological challenges arising in the case studies here can provide food for thought for those who seek to better understand exurbia and its social dimensions from a scholarly perspective as well as those who see exurban change on the horizon in their own communities. By following local communities—and the constellation of regional, national, and global actors that

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align in these places—through a critical moment in their environmental and social histories, the extensive case studies in the book provide excellent examples of the diverse local experiences had when dealing with the exurban transition. Indeed, a key goal of this book has been to identify the similarities and differences in this very common, yet complex and dynamic process of landscape-scale change, which we have identified as the exurban transition. In doing so, we have sought to more critically and fully examine the black box that is the land-use planning process, given what we see as its particular relevance for viewing the social dynamics that shape exurbanization.

Exurbanization has been the source of scholarly attention for more than two decades. This attention has often focused on the ecological and social shifts that occur in transitional rural areas in the U.S., western Europe, Australia, and beyond. Scholarly attention in the United States has frequently sought to explore what these transitions mean for local ecologies and communities. With this scholarly attention, it has become evident that exurban change often results in new patterns of land use, associated vegetation changes, and concerns for aesthetic features across relatively large areas of the United States. However, much of the research has focused on identifying exurban areas, quantifying their extent, and characterizing the ecological patterns that have resulted (Berube et al. 2006; Brown et al. 2005). By contrast, fewer systematic and comparative approaches—by which we mean those studies that collectively pick case study areas for examination using the same methods, question frameworks, and analysis—have been employed in describing the types of conflicts exurbanization has produced. Moreover, not all aspects of the exurban transition fit neatly into the binary of urban/rural so often deployed by scholars as an analytical tool for examining exurbia. This book, then, has been an attempt to address these shortcomings within exurban scholarship; that is, in order to consider more than just ecological and social shifts we have undertaken a comparative approach to examining exurbia and have throughout attempted to theorize the uniquely rural/urban/suburban characteristics of exurbia.

While this volume has considered exurban conflicts, landscape change, and land-use outcomes, and the “urban” dynamics that produce them, many of the chapters have attempted to bring a more ethnographically grounded perspective to understanding the complex social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics that shape exurban landscape transformations in places more recently thought of as “rural.” In doing so, contributors eschew a frame that sees only newcomers in conflict with longtime locals. Instead, these chapters have focused on the roles that governance and land-use decision-making processes, influenced by competing forms of capitalism and diverse ideologies of nature, have played in creating new landscapes. As such, these case studies also highlight the key aspects of the “rural” that animate decision-making processes, the ways that natural resource users (both newcomers and longtime locals) engage in these processes, how different types of urban development come to be embraced (or not), and the ways that rural landscapes are maintained into the future.

By focusing on the ways these social-cultural-political dynamics of decision-making influence the exurban transition, particularly within land-use governance

and decision-making processes, this book seeks to provide comparative insight into the forces that shape the emergence of particular exurban places. In doing so, we hope to bring greater focus to the role that power and land-use negotiations of different types among economic and cultural actors play in the production of new exurban landscapes. To this end, the chapters have, on the one hand, sought to highlight the distinctive dynamics of exurban change in particular places, often focusing on details and dynamics seemingly distinctive to a particular case. On the other hand, our contributing authors have sought to place their case studies within the framework of existing political ecology examinations of exurbia. In taking this analytical approach, this volume provides new insights into exurbia as place and exurbanization as process. Among these insights are the myriad ways in which diverse actors—often thought of as holding divergent and competing perspectives—are collectively engaged in producing emergent landscape outcomes.

### 13.2 Focusing on Emergent Landscape Outcomes in Exurbia

Focusing on emergent outcomes in exurbia helps to reveal the diversity of responses by exurban actors and the variability in landscape outcomes that characterizes exurbia. Seeing exurbia as a series of similar and divergent outcomes, as illustrated by the works gathered here, will help to open up new analyses of the drivers of this type of landscape change. But to do so, we suggest three particular ways in which a focus on emergent outcomes can be systematically pursued. First, developing a better understanding of the exurban transformation means paying closer attention to the ways that land-use policies and plans get created, how they influence landowner decisions, and the extent to which particular strategies or planning tools are implemented (or not) at different stages of decision-making. Second, developing this better understanding also means examining the ideologies of nature that shape proposed and realized parcel-by-parcel changes as part of development, both by landowners and other actors within the land-use planning process. Third, examination of exurbia must focus on the ways that landscape ideologies play out in time and space, often by detailing the way individual and aggregate parcels are transformed by changes in the types of land-use regulations, management approaches, and stewardship styles applied to these places. Importantly, eventual landscape outcomes are best understood by keying in on the “defining moments” when parcels are subjected to new visions associated with the destabilization of ideologies and their subsequent recoding (Hiner [forthcoming](#)), including how these ideologies engage with and work through the technical aspects of the land-use decision-making process.

The above three broad areas of analysis should be used in combination with the key markers of exurban change proposed in the Introduction (Chap. 1, Table 1.1) to this book. The seven markers were proposed to identify common characteristics of emergent outcomes in order to promote more comparative research in the future (i.e., rural landscape character, accessibility to urban centers, nature ideology, land management, amenity-driven increase in land values, persistence of resource-based

activities, increased participation of coalitions of people in community politics, and the emergence or expansion of the role of land-use planning). The wide diversity of exurbanization experiences means that each of the seven common characteristics will tend to look very different across case studies but they likely emerge through very similar processes. The three approaches to analysis suggested in the previous paragraph encourage readers to see how their experience with local exurban change is produced through the interaction of land-use regulations and landscape ideologies, each of which are often tied to regional, national, or even global dynamics, but also how the enactment of those regulations and ideologies is accomplished by very specific constellations of individuals and/or communities. Research that incorporates those three approaches to exurban analysis described above could include the following: documenting the different landscape forms and types that propel economic valorization within the amenity economy (i.e., prioritizing particular landscape elements or material aspects of nature through, primarily, real estate markets); documenting the diverse types of economic changes experienced by natural resource producers within markets ranging from the local to the global that precipitate this new type of landscape valorization; studying the uneven and unexpected ways in which other types of changes in the culture or attitudes of residents in a particular area engage with or respond to exurbanization at different points in time and affect different parts of the landscape; and observing the convergent and divergent groups that seek to influence land-use planning and its control over landscape change trajectories.

Comparative research, such as that presented in this book, provides a first step toward identifying the ways that particular ideologies are inscribed into specific landscapes, the circumstances and dynamics that seem to enable or constrain these types of landscape inscriptions, and the ease or difficulty with which alternative forms are rejected. At the same time, we hasten to add that further efforts are needed in this regard. Indeed, while the work presented here is intended to provide comparative insights on these dimensions, we see a need for future political ecology perspectives of exurbia that are more systematically comparative in their project formulations and methodological approaches (i.e., where cases are chosen deliberately and concurrently, and parallel sets of methods are employed). Such efforts might begin to trace the ways that particular ideologies of nature are at work in and through key actors or “defining moments” in the development and land-use decision-making process more widely.

If more systematically comparative research is to be undertaken, it is also appropriate that we further reflect on the specific insights that our cases have for the existing political ecology research on exurbia. Thus, we now turn to thinking about what these cases mean for the current thinking in political ecology about transitional rural landscapes. In the first of the following sections, we suggest ways that the cases presented in this book challenge the idea of competing rural capitalisms and we suggest how this concept might be restructured and expanded. In the next section, we turn our attention to a rethinking of the idea of “uneven environmental management,” and we specifically consider how the focus throughout this book on the types of conservation territories, commons, and other environmental management areas helps us to better understand the dynamic and emergent outcomes produced by rural capitalisms in “co-opetition” (see below).

### 13.3 Competing or Compatible Rural Capitalisms?<sup>1</sup> Emergent Coalitions and the Transformation of Rural Landscapes

A key aspect of political ecology's insights about exurbia has been that different forms of rural capitalism are *competing* with one another to extract value from the material resources and landscapes in particular places (Chap. 1; see also Walker and Fortmann 2003). These struggles are tied to sociodemographic shifts and associated political economic transformations, including changes in who controls access to an area's resources and the forms of governance that shape their development. But these struggles are also clearly shaped by the ways that new ideologies of nature seek to extract particular values from the landscapes and biophysical features that characterize areas in transition. This aspect of competing rural capitalisms in exurbanization has been conceptualized in some studies as a duality wherein landscapes of production are replaced by landscapes of consumption. Yet the chapters here, like earlier work in political ecology (see e.g., Abrams and Bliss 2013; Hurley 2013), point to the ways in which the binary between productive and consumptive economies dissolves under further scrutiny. Indeed, the case studies in this book show that coalitions of actors characterized by different political economic interests, often reflecting histories of livelihood relationships to particular resources (e.g., hunting/fishing/gathering, mining/farming/forestry, land development/real estate), emerge to forge distinctive trajectories of development and landscape transformation. These trajectories are clearly influenced by particular ways of envisioning area landscapes and their future ability to extract value (or not). In the process of breaking down this binary, however, the relational dimensions between resource production and landscape consumption can be hidden in fundamental ways.

Landscapes of production often create the very landscape aesthetics that are consumed by exurbanites. For example, in Quakertown Swamp, as discussed in Chap. 2, small-scale farming and the fields that typify this resource form help to create the pastoral characteristics of a seemingly "rural" place. In South Carolina, not just tidal marshes and wetlands but expanses of pine forest (including plantation forests) add to the rural feel of the Lowcountry (see Chaps. 7 and 8). In the Sierra Nevada, open areas of oak woodlands signal the region's long history of ranching, while fruit orchards and vineyards remind observers of the region's historic success in producing fruit (Chap. 5). In northeastern Oregon, forestlands (both publicly and privately owned), ranchlands, and the rugged mountain landscape contribute to the area's rural beauty (Chap. 6). In the southern Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina, the hardwood forests of the region long used for timber harvests, but that also support commons-style harvesting of nontimber resources, comprise the spectacular viewsheds and rural character (Chap. 9). In each of these cases, as with others in the book, landscape features and qualities are the amenities being sought out by new migrants and being capitalized on by housing developers. But, as these cases show, the continued use of these landscapes for resource production

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<sup>1</sup> See McKinnon (Chap. 5).

may be perfectly compatible with—and may, in fact, be essential for—emerging real estate values.

The links between these exurbanizing landscapes, moreover, may be more complicated than sometimes recognized, with landscapes of production and consumption economically and politically intertwined. Indeed, as McKinnon specifically argues in Chap. 5, the exurban transition in some contexts raises questions about whether some types of rural production landscapes are economically dependent on the consumption dimensions of the emerging real estate economy. The Jackson County, Oregon case demonstrates that, rather than conflicting with or disrupting the agricultural economy, amenity migrants have historically provided capital and labor for agriculture in the area. Moreover, recent land-use regulations proposed by the state, which are intended to restrict urban sprawl in support of agricultural land preservation, instead threaten this historic cooperative economic relationship. In so doing, land-use governance intended to maintain agricultural landscapes may, in fact, be destabilizing the *complementary* nature of rural capitalism in the area, where farmers' livelihoods are dependent upon real estate capital investment and related markets. The land-use changes indicate an assumption on the part of the state of Oregon that production and consumption are land uses in conflict rather than in symbiosis. The role for planners and this process remains a challenging one, but political resistance may result if these tensions are not addressed (see also Walker and Hurley 2011).

The political dynamics of rural capitalisms are also examined by Abrams (Chap. 4), who shows how actors in Wallowa County, Oregon associated with diverse livelihood interests are collaborating, even if not through coordinated action, to ensure the maintenance of particular landscape features. These include but also extend beyond agricultural landscapes. Specifically, Abrams documents how amenity migrants are working together with longtime residents and different kinds of resource users to ensure the maintenance of a landscape aesthetic that both suit their economic interests and match their particular environmental imaginaries. In doing so, these efforts to manage particular landscape elements highlight the tensions between the exurban real estate economy and the ways that certain types of “working landscapes” contribute to the maintenance of the landscape upon which real estate values rest. These collaborations point to the shifting commitments of specific resource users during the exurban transition.

The case of exurban development in King County, Washington (Chap. 11) reminds us that area governments may actively shepherd the relatively rapid emergence of new exurban transformations, as opposed to reactively mitigating ongoing in-migration and its impacts that create new settlements in an area. Developers may respond in ways that produce different housing patterns, including projects that offer high-density buildings and increased open space in the form of common areas or houses with large private yards, which are intended to meet different kinds of housing markets. As Tilt and Cerveny conclude, the resulting relatively high-density developments, albeit in a rural context, may confound existing quantitative characterizations of exurbia that focus on density patterns. In the South Carolina Lowcountry (Chap. 7), a similar process is underway, in which new developments are part of the process of maintaining the rural character and the natural amenities that contribute to the area's sense of place. The insights of these cases remind us

that political and economic conditions create new livelihood opportunities for both the actors that already inhabit or manage exurban areas and new ones recently arrived on scene.

Indeed, actors long associated with natural resource production activities may transform themselves into promoters of exurbanization and its associated landscape aesthetics and amenity-driven real estate economy. Such was the case with Deer Creek Park 2 and Wolf Creek Ranch Estates in Nevada County, California, as discussed in Chap. 2. Further, within the context of unlikely exurban boosters, Olson's examination of Central Oregon (Chap. 6) is noteworthy for highlighting how existing natural resource companies shift their means of extracting value from the natural resources they own, thereby engaging with and participating in the transformation of exurban places. For example, Brooks Resources actively worked to recreate itself as a development entity, benefiting from the landscape aesthetics created by forests that they once had planned on harvesting for timber. A similar story is at play as part of the examination of the South Carolina Lowcountry and the development undertaken by the company MeadWestVaco as described by Watson and Skaggs in Chap. 7, where the company is engaged in a comparable transformation in the valuation of its lands from timber resource to real estate. Similar dynamics are also at play in the western Cascades of Washington, where new residential communities are emerging on lands formerly envisioned for timber harvest (see Chap. 11 by Tilt and Cervený). Meanwhile, Hiner, in Chap. 3, further demonstrates how in Calaveras County, California individual, non-corporate landowners can seek to capitalize on the emergence of an amenity-focused real estate economy. For example, through idiosyncratic attempts some exurbanite developers (e.g., a golf course and a vineyard) seek to reconfigure landscapes in ways that simultaneously extract value from agricultural production and meet the recreational demands of new and longtime residents but without compromising the scenic landscape.

Despite there being many examples of productive and consumptive economies existing "symbiotically," the developments (and development proposals) that both produce and reinforce exurban patterns of land use and landscape change often involve moments of conflict, some more intense than others. In their case study examining Beaufort County in South Carolina (Chap. 8), Finewood and Martin provide a historical perspective on the ways the contemporary landscape is the product of intense struggle between a proposed industrial use and those who defended the area's tidal beauty. The contemporary Lowcountry landscape of the Bluffton area hides the historic rejection of the industrial use, but the same landscape is still a place of production based on a fishing industry supported by the area's natural amenity values. Similar struggles are still in full view in Jackson County, North Carolina (Chap. 9), where concerns over exurban sprawl motivated a diverse set of actors to defend new land-use regulations based on the logic of protecting the region's steep slopes. Here, though, the overlap between the interests of amenity migrants and other actors demonstrates how particular landscape features may, for very different reasons, motivate their defense. In Beaufort, the success of the amenity valuation of the landscape appears complete, while in North Carolina the debate over which land uses are acceptable is ongoing.

Thinking about future research on exurbia, we suggest that the competing rural capitalisms frame might be expanded and reinterpreted to offer ways to explore emergent dynamics in exurbia. As such, the concept of competing rural capitalisms involves a wide diversity of actors and political coalitions, which sometimes compete and sometimes cooperate to extract economic value from landscapes and their associated natural resources. This type of “co-opetition” has been documented by Larsen and Hutton (2012), who focus on the nature of community interaction and acceptance in the valuation of particular heritage landscapes in an exurban area of Colorado. Larsen and Hutton provide a counterpoint to the literature on exurban conflict by demonstrating how competing actors in the community found ways to cooperate in situations where reliance on neighbors is necessary to particular types of land maintenance or in dealing with specific emergencies. Here, in our work, we note that these forms of co-opetition extend beyond discourses on community and have implications specifically for changes to material landscapes. Further examination of how ideologies of nature play a role in co-opetition would contribute greatly to our understandings of exurbia. At the same time, we are reminded that even though these efforts to find points of agreement and collaboration take place within the context of shifting economic conditions at regional, national, and global scales, they remain highly contingent upon local and regional histories of land ownership, social–cultural interactions with these landscapes and resources, and the ongoing influence of in-migration.

Understanding the ways that exurban transitions result in new forms of landscape and natural resource valorization requires paying attention to these multi-scalar dynamics. Doing so means disentangling the myriad ways that actors are seeking to extract economic value from landscapes and resources, and exploring how these ways correspond to specific sets of actors and the political coalitions that appear to support their efforts. In some cases, sets of similar types of actors, such as developers, amenity migrants, or longtime residents, may cooperate in one case study of a time and place, but the same types of actors may compete with one another in other cases. We suggest that these instances of cooperation and competition are likely to be best viewed through engagements within the land-use decision-making process as the mechanism for fixing the dominant ideology of nature in material landscapes and thus regulating the future use of those landscapes. Exploring how, when, and where particular co-opetition dynamics couple in specific ways should be a key goal for future exurban scholarship.

### **13.4 Beyond “Uneven” Environmental Management: Land-Use Governance Regimes and Acceptable Forms of Land Use, Open Space, and Stewardship**

Besides the concept of competing rural capitalisms, an organizing concept for this book’s analytical framework was the idea of uneven environmental management. To some extent, the exurban dynamics described above are shaped by dimensions not specifically or directly economic, in that exurban actors draw on specific visions



and ideologies about what constitutes appropriate land management. In doing so, they are making claims on resources or parts of the landscape that extend beyond their direct ownership or control, particularly in terms of protecting landscape qualities and aesthetics. This was an explicit element of consideration in Walker and Fortmann's (2003) discussion of competing rural capitalisms in Nevada County, California (discussed in Chap. 1) and these dynamics clearly emerge in the cases from Quakertown Swamp and the contests over new subdivisions in Nevada County from Chap. 2. The dynamics associated with competing rural capitalisms point to the ways in which ideologies of nature and the outcomes that result from political conflict over those ideologies come to reflect exactly whose ideas of appropriate land use persist or emerge through new forms of stewardship and in the types of open space maintained and created. We hope that increased understanding of how the exurban transition results in uneven outcomes in nature conservation and sustainable uses of the land can help communities involved move beyond or avoid common problems in dealing with their own exurban dynamics.

As conceptualized by Reed (2007, pp. 321–322), the concept of uneven environmental management refers to the “social relations, cultural practices, and ecological conditions” that determine “the character and direction of both ecosystem change and social outcomes” in a given place (see Chap. 1). Even with similar social relations, cultural practices, and ecological conditions, outcomes vary from place to place—the success of conservation efforts or of sustainable design efforts are “uneven”—more successful in some places than others. Reed's work is intended to “explore the roots of and effects of uneven environmental management,” especially on the forms of governance and associated specifics of management. Reed's examination of protected areas in Canada focuses primarily on the role of different civil society actors in “setting aside” lands from future development—whether as possible sites of natural resource extraction or residential development. In her article, she discusses the outcome of two cases with similar decision-making processes, where in one case a public regime conservation area was created and, in the other, a private regime conservation area was created. Her analysis is critical both in pushing toward a comparative approach to understanding environmental governance processes and demonstrating important differences among protected area design and the ways these differences shape ongoing constructions of and interactions with nature in specific places.

Indeed, the maintenance and creation of open spaces “set aside” from future resource or residential development is a key marker of exurban landscapes (see key marker number 3, “Sect. 1.3.3” in Chap. 1). The emergence of differential approaches to open space creation through planning and zoning strategies says much about the ways particular communities and their governments prioritize degrees and types of intervention, potentially share assumed landscape aesthetics, and/or leave resource protection and/or development up to chance (i.e., the market). The focus on the types of and ways that open spaces are created through exurban land-use decision-making processes can reveal a lot about the role that ideologies play in shaping different types of landscapes of production and/or the maintenance of landscapes of consumption, as discussed in the previous section. Understanding these land-use

processes and practices also helps to inform researchers about the ways that both political and cultural commitments align with particular economic considerations. In both the Quakertown Swamp and Nevada County examples in Chap. 2, different communities and constituencies clearly set out to restrict residential development, while ensuring that aesthetic landscape qualities were retained. In one area of the Swamp, this meant the use of large-lot zoning and limited public land acquisition focused on protecting pastoral and working landscapes, while in another it meant strategically working with a local land trust to ensure the core of the Swamp ecosystem and adjacent lands would be conserved in perpetuity. In yet another part of the Swamp, a wider set of forest, fields, and “representative” landscape features would be incorporated into new conservation territories. All of these actions were facilitated by county-level and state-level technical assistance and funding, but individual township-level interventions were designed and administered by local governing bodies responsive to the political dynamics of their respective jurisdictions. These are examples of how uneven outcomes occur within similar regulatory and governance regimes. They also represent critical examples of how similar types of actors in the planning process negotiate diverse public–private partnerships. The variability in open space conservation efforts results from and produces particular aesthetics and ecologies. The fact that different outcomes emerge in the same place and within the same general economic and ecological context further suggests the roles that environmental imaginaries and particular planning tools play in reimagining and shaping the emerging landscape.

The resulting conservation territories may also reassign access rights to new groups of individuals (also described as reterritorialization; see Brogden and Greenberg 2003), including exurbanites, or reinforce longstanding patterns of access associated with particular coalitions. Outside of Charleston, South Carolina, the case of East Edisto (Chap. 7) shows how the advocacy of local residents and engagement with those residents by large-scale timber landowners (turned developers) is leading to alterations to the residential housing layouts. Moreover, this engagement helped in the production of an exurban landscape featuring significant conservation features through both the for-profit East Edisto development and the not-for-profit Savannah River Preserve. But these efforts include land trust and developer-initiated conservation areas (two different forms of private conservation regimes) committed to ensuring the persistence of the community’s traditional forms of access to the area’s forests. This case shows that concern over local ecologies and their amenity values often leads to permanent open space conservation and to continued community uses of that landscape, where those uses are in conformity with the ideology of nature conservation decided for those lands. Such cases challenge conclusions that exurbanization cannot accommodate longstanding land-use traditions. But they also raise further questions about how this accommodation comes about and the durability of these forms of cooperation over time, as new residents continue moving into the resulting exurban landscape.

One of the best examples of the interdependence of conservation interventions and development is Tilt and Cervený’s case study of King County in Washington State in Chap. 11. There, timber and mining companies, seeking to divest them-

selves of resource lands no longer profitable due to changes in global markets, are very successful in navigating the land-use planning process to create areas for exurban residential development. In the process, large areas are set aside for ecological conservation, which provide conservation areas for ecological restoration, open space recreation, and further secure real estate investments for those who purchase properties within the emerging residential communities. A similar story emerges in the South Carolina Lowcountry described in Chap. 7, as MeadWestVaco responded to community concerns by ensuring that their development project maintained large areas of open space. To ensure vast areas of the wetland and forested landscape would be kept from being transformed by residential development, an assemblage of landowners and conservation organizations created the nearby Savannah River Preserve using conservation easements and land trusts. In both cases, once again, a coalition of actors—both longtime locals and newcomers—embraces the creation of new conservation territories.

At the same time, Klepeis and Gill in Chap. 10 remind us of the ecological challenges that exurbanization creates. Their research on invasive species in New South Wales, Australia describes emerging environmental management regimes in exurbia, where ranchers and exurbanites are faced with the necessity of collaborating to manage ecological change. In collaborating, their collective efforts support the ideology of nature that drew amenity migrants by ensuring invasive weeds do not threaten the livelihoods of ranchers who maintain the working landscape. Yet this intervention also pushes a process of considering alternative ways of approaching this ecological management challenge. The authors focus on an alternative approach that includes forming alliances to improve knowledge exchange as well as regulation. Their work suggests that future studies of exurbia and conservation need to take into consideration the ways in which ideologies of nature specifically shape the logics and ethics of stewardship in exurbia.

Public entities, including local government, are actively involved in the creation of open space, both in ways that draw on private ownership and that transfer land to public ownership. In the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina, the case of Jackson County (Chap. 9) illustrates the ways that exurban counties may embrace new regulations that are simultaneously about reducing levels of development and addressing risks associated with natural hazards. Key to the politics of land-use planning in this part of southern Appalachia appears to be the combination of low-density development and steep slope regulation in protecting forests and forest access. That these land-use interventions are supported by discourse coalitions spanning the newcomer-longtime local divide will not be entirely surprising to many who study political ecology. But this finding is a reminder that longstanding community traditions associated with resource commons (see e.g., Newfont 2012), such as hunting and foraging, may align with the ideology of nature underpinning the real estate economy, lead to regulatory outcomes (in this case steep slope ordinances) that may confound assumptions that local peoples will resist government intervention in exurban areas (Hurley and Walker 2004; Nesbitt and Weiner 2001; Walker and Fortmann 2003).

By contrast, Hiner's exploration of land-use and landscape conservation in the Sierra Nevada foothills in Chap. 3 suggests that cooperation does not always occur, nor do these types of cooperative coalitions always emerge. Indeed, in the absence of land-use planning and government intervention to ensure the conservation of large areas of open space, other types of environmental management processes will unfold. Hiner describes the success of a winery in meeting local nature ideologies, despite the fact that another attempt at economic expansion (specifically, the creation of a golf course) was rejected by the community as it failed to meet their local landscape vision. With or without state intervention, exurban landscapes exist in an often-uneasy balance between conservation and development.

The exurban transition is a dynamic socio-ecological transformation with uneven environmental management outcomes in different times and places. "Setting aside" lands for conservation, either through public or private means—or in partnership—seems to be necessary to secure the ideology of nature in the exurban landscape for the future. As discussed in this chapter, representing the rural to exurban change as a purely urban/rural or newcomer/longtime resident culture clash and power shift does not tell the whole story. Walker and Fortmann (2003; see also Hurley and Walker 2004) are clear to point out that amenity migrants often find political supporters among longtime locals, who object to particular types of natural resource extraction and wish to take control of the growth and land management agenda. Together this coalition of interests around landscape values seeks to influence decision-making about regulatory practices and priorities, including challenging traditional *and* emerging land-use practices through land-use planning processes. Further, real estate developers may influence the creation of more standardized forms of development approval within land-use decision-making processes, in part because they seek to protect natural amenity in the landscape as a form of resource commons (Robbins et al. 2012). In so doing, new types of land-use planning approaches or decisions in exurban contexts are not just intended to shape the built environment, but the natural environment as well; that is, exurban planning frameworks—often the first time strong land-use regulations are imposed in a particular place—secure the natural landscape value dimensions of newly emerging economies and influence how socio-cultural and ecological values develop. Understanding these dynamics is not only important for scholarly explorations of exurbia, but also for understanding how and whether interventions intended to achieve goals of conservation and sustainability can be achieved.

The transition from rural to exurban often feels cataclysmic for local communities and their relationships to particular places, natural resources, and community relations. Exurbanization threatens the loss of a sense of ruralness on what may be perceived as an inevitable march toward becoming the city. Cherished traditions of rural land use, like hunting, often come under scrutiny and may be challenged, thereby leading local customs to radically change or even die out. Forms of social interaction that maintained community cohesion and even household subsistence may be severely threatened or altered in a process often referred to as enclosure of the commons, whereby longstanding resource users lose access to these resources (Robbins et al. 2009). Some landowners benefit handsomely from exurban land

sales, including land that was previously relatively worthless, while others struggle to retain their property and maintain their longstanding resource-based forms of income. Yet these exurban transitions are not always inevitable, nor are they straightforward, and the exurban turn may offer new opportunities for local livelihoods, albeit on new terms whose power dimensions are uneven at best (see e.g., Grabbatin et al. 2011).

### **13.5 Creating a More Integrated Urban Political Ecology: Drawing on Exurban Political Ecology Insights**

Recent developments within political ecology have seen a divergence between approaches derived from urban studies (Heynen 2013) and approaches derived from rural studies, especially those in the developing world (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peet and Watts 1996). We intend that our approach provide a model for integrating urban and rural theoretical approaches. Within urban political ecology, an increased interest in the urban/rural divide has emerged with (re)new(ed) attention to the countryside outside of major cities (Gustafson et al. 2014). With this turn, urban political ecologists have taken notice of the exurbs and other peri-urban areas. Urban political ecology scholars are seeking to examine the logics of capital in exurban areas, where the transformation of rural places is described using the metaphor of the nature being “metabolized” by both individual residents and investment strategies tied to urban centers (see e.g., Heynen et al. 2006; Gustafson et al. 2014). This work offers many fascinating possibilities, but unfortunately (and quite strangely from our perspective), urban political ecologists have almost entirely ignored existing political ecological scholarship on exurbia. While both theoretical traditions focus in part on the role of capital, we argue that the existing exurban political ecology scholarship has a stronger history of examining key aspects of land-use governance, including the role of land-use planning and decision-making specifically in producing development outcomes. Existing scholarship on the political ecology of exurbia, drawing from critical cultural geography, also provides important insights into the particular ways that nature is constructed through ideological struggles not always easily aligned with race, class, or gender during the exurban process. Moreover, exurban political ecology, having developed out of the application of “rural political ecology” and its roots in the so-called developing world (Walker 2003), may be more attentive than urban political ecology scholarship to the issue of how non-economic aspects of development (e.g., specific land uses associated with subsistence interactions with nature) as well as dimensions of land use that are not associated with residential development shape this peculiar transition (Walker and Fortmann 2003).

Moreover, representing the rural to exurban change as a purely urban transformation may risk recreating the newcomer/longtime resident culture clash and power shift binary. As illustrated in the chapters of this book, exurbia is a place where diverse values are fought over in particular times and places, embraced and sup-

ported through competitive strategies in other times and places, and where new forms of residential and natural resource development emerge as a result. While these dynamics are shaped by flows of capital and people, some from within the global urban, they are also shaped by ideas, uses, needs, and engagement by capital and individuals much less directly tied to urban centers, or capital and individuals acting in rejection of urbanism. So, too, these dynamics take place within the context of shifting global economic, social, and ecological dimensions.

Also, in overcoming the newcomer/longtime resident binary, public and private conservation area creation is a regular feature of exurban landscape change, with conflicts over the creation of these spaces tied to the different land-use and amenity needs of both competitive and cooperative capitalist groups and entities. Thus, the chapters in this book demonstrate that the concepts of competing rural capitalisms and uneven environmental management can be fruitfully expanded to think not just about the creation of new protected areas in transitional rural places, but also the constellation of emerging land-use interventions that shape exurban spaces. As we wrap up this book, we are considering the potential of “uneven land-use governance regimes”—the “formal and information institutional arrangements” (Reed 2007, p. 321) within which political economic power is wielded—as an operational concept for studying the myriad ways that new environmental management configurations emerge from within the land-use planning process, where the regulation of land is the result of the negotiation of competing ideologies of nature, and where those configurations set the rules (open up opportunities) for the type and extent of capital investment in and profit-taking from the landscape and nature.

Competing (and complementary) rural capitalisms institutionalize particular rules, the visions of future land development these codify, and the patterns of development that emerge in exurbia. By examining how these rules reflect the ideologies of different constellations of actors associated with diverse efforts to extract value from particular types of landscapes, we further suggest an ability in future research to tease apart the politics and processes of exurbanization. In the process, scholars might develop a better understanding of nature’s role in politics and broad socio-economic processes, including by revealing how material entities of nature enable, constrain, and/or marginalize particular actors and uses within exurban spaces. Indeed, wider and more systematically comparative examinations of these social-ecological dimensions are needed in the study of exurbia. Such an approach would also provide a way to begin systematically exploring the conditions under and through which particular types of land-use interventions seem to be pursued and how and why they are successful (or not).

The hybridity of exurban landscapes, where rural character and economic processes persist alongside the so-called urban ideologies of nature and real estate valuation, calls for more nuanced scholarship on the part of political ecologists, moving beyond a strong focus on capital and/or its effect on material flows. Clearly, exurbia is a rejection of the urban by many living in these transitional places, but the very process of exurbanization threatens the persistence of rural ways of interacting with, benefiting from, and using landscapes. Neither urban political ecology nor rural political ecology has satisfactorily described what is fully going on in these dynamic

spaces. Exurban political ecology needs to continue comparative research into the nature and dynamics of these fascinating landscapes, albeit seeking to further detail what is distinctive about particular cases and what is generalizable to exurbia as a whole. We therefore call for a more integrated Exurban Political Ecology that is systematically comparative in its approach.

### **13.6 Exurbia Beyond North America and Australia**

Rural landscapes across the globe have undergone and continue to undergo dynamic transitions, many of which share similarities with the exurban transitions discussed in this book. We acknowledge that this book has been about the experience in the (primarily) English-speaking, industrial, and post-industrial landscapes of the United States (although the book also contains one chapter about Australia and insights are drawn from the experiences of a Canadian editor). And indeed, as we have learned during presentations of the material in this book at conferences outside the United States, the term exurbia does not necessarily travel all that well in some global contexts. For some, the term raises notion of “peri-urban” spaces or evokes contexts of low-density development that may not be present in a particular country. Nevertheless, in our discussions with colleagues studying the types of urban and global pressures placed on transitional rural spaces, we have often found distinct parallels. Thus, we feel strongly that many of the insights presented here may offer clear guidance for a better understanding of rural transitions elsewhere, especially for developing more critically engaged studies of the social dynamics shaping those transitions.

A few points are key in thinking about the application of the insights provided in this volume to other regions. First, widespread acceptance of land-use planning, as it is generally understood in the European and British-colonial context, is largely absent within the United States. Only a few jurisdictions have anything close to paralleling the strict control over urban expansion and regulation of land uses that is a critical feature elsewhere in the developed world. This fact, however, should not lead scholars in more highly regulated environments to easily dismiss the insights provided by the U.S. case studies included here. Indeed, as several case studies reveal, the power dynamics and ideological work of landscape and conservation science are often at play outside, within, and through planning processes. Planning contexts constrain and shape negotiations over ideological differences, and, at times, layers of planning regulations have the effect of smoothing over ideological differences by leaving no room for their negotiation within political processes. Second, the lessons for thinking about low-density development within the U.S. context—specifically because planning controls are so weak—may indeed provide useful parallels for thinking about rural change in other parts of the developing world. Indeed, the socio-economic transformations associated with the exurban turn appear to be well underway in many parts of the developing world, with the same kinds of planning and conservation approaches circulating and being tested and applied within these contexts. Third, we are reminded of recent work by Nelson and

Nelson (2011), where exurbia—conceptually limited in this book to a consequence of amenity migration—also includes the movement and presence of ethnic minorities, through the existence of the so-called “linked migration” (i.e., low-wage workers, often immigrants or members of minority communities, that take up work in exurbia). So, too, ideas about what constitutes the rural or the urban—and the exurban—may differ along ethnic or racial lines (Hanlon et al. 2006; Pfeiffer 2012). Thus, the work contained in this volume—to the extent that it focuses principally on the experiences of a dominant, white majority (frequently the demographic reality in exurbia)—overlooks significant social–political and ecological dynamics and anticipates future study of these dynamics.

We hope that readers have been inspired to proceed with their own exurban political ecologies. In the book, we have offered a systematic and comparative approach to the study of the impacts of amenity migration, the processes of exurbanization, and the idea of exurbia as a fusion of urban and rural ideas worthy of study in its own right. We have compared case studies where exurban landscapes have emerged from an identified cluster of processes. We have focused on political ecological analyses of material landscapes emerging in the United States and Australia from social and political processes in which the shift from rural to exurban is negotiated. We have been especially interested in land-use planning, ideologies of nature, and the material landscape changes these processes bring about, from individual homes and properties to large areas of open space conservation. We have used the concepts of competing rural capitalisms and uneven environmental management to provide frameworks for exploring the intersection of ecologies and economics, suggesting that exurbia is a place where productive and consumptive land uses and livelihoods co-exist in dynamic tension over the long term. But we continue to see exurbia as a fusion of urban and rural with energy of its own. That is, exurbia is a phenomenon in its own right and worthy of theoretical consideration and grounded research, distinct from urban and rural analyses. We hope the analytical framework of this book and the resulting increased understanding of exurban change will provide a basis for more sustainable and just outcomes for communities and natural spaces undergoing exurbanization.

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