

NEW URBANISM AND NATURE: GREEN MARKETING AND THE NEOTRADITIONAL COMMUNITY¹

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Abstract: A central goal of New Urbanism (NU) is to provide alternatives to suburbs through ecologically sound designs and more natural communities. This article situates NU environmental rhetoric culturally and analyzes why this form of nature is being promoted now. I argue that NU anthropocentric understandings of nature reflect and resonate with dominant mainstream environmental ideas in American culture. To understand why NU planners may uncritically adopt these socially and spatially limited understandings of nature, I discuss the institutional contexts of the planning profession. For various reasons, planners historically have understood nature in geographically restricted ways, as utopian garden, mappable data, and consumer product. More recently, NU ideals of community have been defined by representations of nature that may be construed by consumers as a form of green politics. This article concludes by stressing the need for further research and advocating more inclusive understandings of human-environment relations in the planning process. [Key words: New Urbanism, mainstream, environmentalism, planning profession, green marketing.]

My impetus for writing this article stems from a recent personal experience at Seaside, Florida with my graduate seminar in cultural geography.² As one of the first neotraditional towns built, Seaside has become the symbol for New Urbanism (NU) more generally (Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1997). As we arrived from the southwest, the pastel-colored town seemed to emerge from a dense, stunted forest of scrub oak. During a tour, we learned that only native plants were allowed to grow in town; ecologically wasteful green lawns were limited to public town greens. Our guide also mentioned that the colors of the homes mimicked the locale's natural setting, moving from the light pastels of the dancing waves (homes located closer to the shoreline) to the darker, earth-toned colors of the dense, scrubby vegetation encircling the town (homes located farther back from the shore). My students had never been to Seaside before and many commented on the town's coastal setting, with breathtaking beaches of fine, white sands and intensely turquoise blue waves. On this trip, I found myself taken with the (private) wispy bridges that framed that coastal beauty. As our guide pointed out, unlike other nearby developments, the bridges at Seaside protected the fragile harmony of the sand dunes, sea grasses and wild rosemary.

As I sought out what seemed to be the most "natural" parts of the town, I found myself walking along paths of crushed oyster shells (known as "Krier walks") toward the thickets of scrub oak away from the shore. Hidden from view toward the edges and back of Sea-

side were the headquarters for the town's cleaning crew and adjacent residential developments (compare Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1996). Seaside's nature, in other words, was "produced" (after Smith, 1996). It was another design component in the neotraditional town, like architecture or street width, and created for a particular group of consumers that most likely do not include service staff or residents of neighboring developments (compare Mitchell, 1996; Katz, 1998). As Pollan (1998, p. B12) described, "The Seaside yard wasn't simply a restoration of the native plant community but a carefully edited representation of it. It was, like all gardens, a metaphor of nature." Indeed, the town's "natural" setting (native plant species and pristine beach fronts) spoke to me as a White, middle-class, 30-something professional in search of an escape from my day-to-day stresses "in the city." But just how, exactly, do claims to "nature" fit within the New Urbanism (NU) movement, in particular for greenfield (suburban) developments like Seaside? And for whom is this nature designed?

NU developments are now considered alternatives to traditional forms of American suburbanization, by many professionals, government agencies, and citizens, in part because of the movement's environmental claims (compare McCann, 1995; Dunlop, 1997; Zimmerman, 2001, this issue). Indeed, one explicit objective of this movement, according to the "Charter for the New Urbanism," is to conserve natural environments, a goal clearly emphasized by the environmental task force of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU; Congress for the New Urbanism webpage, 2000b; see also Congress for the New Urbanism, 2000a). Unlike similar claims made for other greenfield master-planned communities, New Urbanists present their environmental agenda as central to the movement's larger critique of modern single-use zoning and suburban life in America. Thus, when considering the influence of NU, both as a planning and social movement, it is important to pay attention to the environmental discourses and practices of the movement in terms of its specific claims, designs, and impacts (both intended and unintended).

In this article, I situate NU environmental rhetoric culturally and discuss why this form of nature is being produced now. Because of the lack of empirical data (in part because NU developments are relatively new), I shall not ascertain the biogeographical consequences of NU developments on human and nonhuman nature here (a future research project that should be conducted at multiple scales). Nonetheless, a study of environmental rhetoric is important to undertake because, as Castree and Braun (1998, p. 19) have pointed out, the production of nature is both material and discursive. "Representational practices are material at the same time as they materialize; they are deeply embedded in social—and ecological—relations at the same time as they render 'society' and 'nature' intelligible." Through a textual analysis of NU literature, I explore what belief systems and underlying social-spatial assumptions inform NU understandings of nature.³ In the next section, I discuss two interrelated ways that nature is represented in NU rhetoric, as an idyllic setting for human communities and as a design element and resource to be conserved through open space. In section three, I argue that these anthropocentric understandings of nature resonate with and reflect dominant mainstream ideas that are socially and spatially limited. I then examine three possible reasons why these understandings of nature are being used now by NU planners. First I examine NU narratives as "Edenic myths," a familiar storyline in the history of planning that represents nature in socially selective ways as a utopian garden. Second, I look at the institutional and legal context of planners and suggest that empirical understandings of nature are geographically limited

(as mappable data). Third, I discuss contemporary “green” marketing and production strategies in a phase of late capitalism. I argue that NU representations of nature, especially those used to define NU ideals of community, may be interpreted by consumers as a form of green politics. I conclude by advocating the inclusion of a range of human-environment in the planning process (after Wescoat, 1987) and calling for professionals to “rethink” nature according to scale and social relations (after Katz, 1998).

Before moving to an analysis of NU literature, I should briefly clarify what I mean by the ambiguous words “nature” and “environment.” Human-environment relations (in the broadest sense) can tell us much about the aspirations and fears of a society. Indeed, many authors have argued that dominant social and cultural ideas of nature reflect prevalent understandings of what it means to be human (Tuan, 1974; Glacken, 1990; Soper, 1995; Cronon, 1996b). In many Western cultures, hegemonic understandings of nature have historically relied on a philosophical and gendered opposition of nature to humanity. Thus, the “otherness” of nature as external to humans, of nature as feminine and culture as masculine, historically has been a fundamental aspect of this complex and unstable concept (Merchant, 1980; Soper, 1995). Human understandings of nature within a given society, however, vary enormously across time and place; quite distinctive understandings also exist within different social groups and cultures.

Struggles over how societies define and think about nature often have material consequences. What counts as nature, therefore, influences how humans impact and interact with their physical and cultural settings, or environments. Environments, as the contexts of human activities, may include nonhuman bodies and lives. Thus, although my definition of environment is anthropocentric, I do not deny the existence and significance of nonhuman lives who may be central to, and often negatively experience, the material consequences of human negotiations about the meanings of nature (after Michel, 1998). When societies change their environments, regardless of whether environment is socially defined as “natural” or “human-made” (e.g., the urban environment), intended and unintended consequences of such changes may impact human as well as nonhuman lives in unequal ways. With these caveats in mind, I now turn to an examination of how nature is represented in NU literature.

REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE IN NU

As a planning movement, NU has begun to have a significant influence in various professional circles as well as material impacts in the built environment. NU has been well received in architecture and planning circles resulting in some positive changes (in association with other movements like sustainable cities), including proposed changes in zoning ordinances.⁴ At the national and local levels, government programs such as Smart Growth and former Vice President Gore’s Livable Communities agenda clearly reflect NU tenants and goals (Smartgrowth, 1999; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999a; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1999; compare Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue).⁵ California’s Local Government Commission, for example, promotes the Congress for New Urbanism’s founding Ahwahnee Principles for planning communities (Sierra Club, 2000d). NU has also influenced the “look” of greenfield residential landscapes in the United States with many developments and communities being built in many states (Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue). Numerous “copycat” planned

communities now also exist, which suggests at the very least that builders and developers are paying attention to the rhetoric and aesthetics of NU (but not necessarily implementing more substantive changes, as many New Urbanists point out). In addition, some national environmental groups also support at least aspects of NU, as evidenced by the Sierra Club's national "Stop Sprawl" campaign that cites the designs of Andres Duany and Peter Calthorpe as solutions for "Building Livable Communities" (Sierra Club, 2000c).

Although New Urbanists hold a range of views on planning issues, they share a common goal of providing alternatives to post-war suburbs by designing "better places to live" (Kunstler, 1993; Langdon, 1994). Thus, central to NU as a movement is a resounding critique of traditional forms of suburbanization. As the title of Duany et al.'s (2000) most recent book suggests, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*, suburbanization has led to social and environmental malaise. Indeed, in NU literature the metaphor "cancerous growth" has been used to describe the so-called unhealthy and environmentally destructive "spreading development" associated with mass-produced planned urban developments, single-use zoning, and car-dependent, sprawling suburbs (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1992). In contrast, traditional neighborhood designs (TNDs) and transportation-oriented designs (TODs) are more generally defined in the NU literature as "healthy" forms of growth. They are associated with vernacular architecture, multiuse zoning, high-density dwellings, preserved open space for nature, and designs that encourage walking and mass transit.

In NU literature, representations of nature are always constructed in terms of this comparison between the sprawling suburb and the TND.⁶ At a 1998 Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) conference, for example, one expert argued that NU "compact villages surrounded by large open spaces contrasts [sic] with conventional large-lot developments that privatize open space, degrade sensitive habitat, and ruin rural scenes by spreading development everywhere" (Taccker, 1998). Another CNU expert, Peter Katz (1994, p. ix), has argued that the "costs of suburban sprawl are all around us—they're visible in the creeping deterioration of once proud neighborhoods, the increasing alienation of large segments of society, a constantly rising crime rate and widespread environmental degradation." For Katz, sprawl is damaging to human as well as nonhuman nature; neotraditional towns are a more natural alternative.

In the context of such a comparative framework, of healthy and unhealthy growth, and of good places to live versus unhealthy, degraded places to live, there are at least two ways that nature is represented in NU literature. First, nature is represented as a utopian environment for human communities, and second nature is represented as a design element and resource. Both representations are not new within the history of American planning, urbanization and suburbanization.

Nature as Utopian Garden

As suggested earlier, nature is represented as the ideal place for human communities to flourish. According to the NU literature, this ideal, natural setting for healthy ways of life once existed in the past. As Calthorpe (1993, p. 25) explained,

Communities historically were embedded in nature—it helped set both the unique identity of each place and the physical limits of the community. Local climate, plants, vistas, harbors, and ridglands once defined the special qualities of every memorable place. Now, smog, pavement, toxic soil, receding ecologies, and polluted water contribute to the destruction of neighborhood and home in the largest sense.... Understanding the qualities of nature in each place, expressing it in the design of communities, integrating it within our towns, and respecting its balance are essential ingredients of making the human place sustainable and spiritually nourishing.

This NU architect-planner suggested that people can reconnect to their natural human heritage through closer contact with nonhuman nature (plants and animals). Such a message is prevalent not only in the literature targeted for urban professionals; it is perhaps even more dominant in NU promotional materials geared toward consumers.

Advertisements for NU developments represent the “natural” neotraditional town as the setting for healthy recreational activities and a source of spiritual inspiration.⁷ In a brochure for Kentlands, Maryland (available in 1996), for example, a heterosexual family (man, woman, and two children) was depicted relaxing along the shoreline of “Inspiration Lake.” In a brochure available in 1998, a series of eight photographs of Rosemary Beach, Florida, illustrated individuals and families engaged in outdoor recreational activities, such as fishing, canoeing, playing golf, or playing tennis. These pictures were interspersed with images of “nature,” including ocean settings, trees, and animals. For example, the largest image was in the top center of this page and featured a young couple riding their bikes together barefoot through beachfront waters. Both are smiling and looking toward the right corner of the page; the young man has his arm on the woman’s back. Through the spatial layout of this brochure page, the object of their attention appears to be the image in the upper right hand corner of the page, a smaller photo of a baby tortoise, clumsily trying to push itself forward in the white sand. Images of nonhuman and human natures are symbolically connected in these ads. Children (human and nonhuman) and families are represented as engaged in healthy activities located outdoors.

In the same Rosemary Beach brochure (as well as in a 1998 advertisement on the back cover page of *Southern Living*), a large photograph of a pristine beach was accompanied by text. The top half of the photograph depicts a brilliant, clear blue sky with white clouds moving onto the frame from above. In the lower half of the picture, grassy coastal vegetation sways slightly to the left from the onshore wind. Intersecting the two halves of the image is a beach of turquoise green waters and tropical white sands. The text that accompanied this image read:

The rhythm of the sea sets the pace for life on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Gentle waves roll in on soft white sands, kept pristine by an offshore sandbar. The bewitching hue and clarity of the water inspire endless comparisons to sapphire, topaz and emerald. On the dunes, wild sea oats wave in a breeze laced with jasmine and rosemary. This is a place so obviously unique that much of it has been given special protection by the State of Florida. With one of the ten best beaches in the entire world, according to *Condé Nast Traveler*, the area remains much the same as it has for generations. The deep sea and clear lakes tempt fishermen from all over the

world. In the bayous, canoers paddle under cypress draped in Spanish moss. Cool pine forests enchant hikers with miles of nature trails. And Rosemary Beach itself remains a favorite nesting spot for sea turtles. (Rosemary Beach Land Company, n.d., p. 11)

In NU professional, and especially promotional, literature, the neotraditional ideal is represented as a place where human communities can live in harmony with pristine settings and endangered species. The neotraditional environment is depicted as a “natural” utopian setting where families grow and become rooted in place.

*Nature as Design Element and Resource*⁸

The second way nature is represented in NU literature is as a design element and resource. While this representation appears in promotional materials, this understanding of nature is primarily found in professional journals, the Internet, and CNU conference proceedings. Representing nature as a design element and resource to an audience of urban professionals is not new, as evidenced by the history and ideals of the garden cities and sustainable cities movements (Van der Ryn and Calthorpe, 1986; Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1991; Greed, 1994; McCann, 1995). More recently, ecologically sound urban design has become a popular theme in planning circles (Keil and Graham, 1998) as well as with some mainstream environmental groups, a point to which I return later in this paper.

NU planners claim to create more natural environments for residential developments through conservation and ecological restoration (compare Zimmerman, 2001, this issue). They argue that nature forms the very basis of organic village design at all scales. At the TND Daniel Island, for example, located on a 4,500-acre island off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina:

The natural features of the Island—its marsh, creek and river frontage; its tree stands and historic oak allees; its old roads, fences and paths—become the basis of the design. The plan had to balance development with sensitive environmental and community design issues. (Shea, 1998)

More generally, NU planners describe their master plans for neotraditional communities in terms similar to biosphere reserves, but invert the priorities of protection. Rather than placing “pure, undisturbed” nature at the center of their plans, NU experts surround neotraditional towns with buffer zones of nonhuman nature. This is because, as Duany and Plater-Zyberk (1992, p. 100) have argued, “Americans need to be reacquainted with their small-town heritage and to be persuaded of the importance of protecting the human habitat every bit as rigorously as the natural habitat.” Nested green spaces move in size from large areas of open space, or regional “buffer zones” surrounding a town (for habitat preservation), to medium-sized community parks in town (for golf courses, artificial lakes, and equestrian areas), to smaller neighborhood parks (for picnicking, relaxing, and play spaces for kids), to “patches” of nature throughout a neighborhood or village. Taecker (1998) described this design principle for the TND Firestone Villages in Ohio:

A village green, smaller lots and larger structures define the center of each village... and puts the greatest number of residents within walking distance of community amenities. Conversely, larger lots are placed at the periphery of the villages to “feather” its edge with surrounding open spaces just as with traditional towns. Wild places and windrows will also be scattered within villages, weaving a patchwork of nature and development.

Public open spaces or green spaces thus are central components of the master plans of many NU developments at various scales.⁹ They are defined as spaces put aside from residential or business development that preserve local vegetation and animal habitats. Calthorpe (1994, p. xvi) described open space as a mega-scale “internal commons . . . [that] establishes the ecological and conservation values which can help form the basis of regional character” (see also Calthorpe, 1993). Greenbelts surrounding TNDs function as natural edges to regional development and “express the need to preserve nature as a limit to human habitat” (Calthorpe, 1994, p. xvi). The example of Firestone Villages well demonstrates NU goals. The town was described as:

an integrated network of natural open space... where open fields and forest define the edge of a village and are large enough to support wildlife, trails, and the area’s scenic beauty. Creeks, wetlands, woodlands and steep slopes will be permanently set aside. Activities that degrade the environment will be strictly regulated on private lots, while the most valuable habitat areas will be protected as public open space. (Taecker, 1998)

Although open space is intended to conserve nonhuman habitats, it is also defined as a resource for humans.

The Firestone Masterplan preserves over 75% of the site as protected natural open space. Wetlands, riparian corridors, dense woodlands, windrows, and roadside fields will provide an extensive network of open space with connections for migrating wildlife and trails for the community’s enjoyment. (Taecker, 1998)

The accompanying map for Firestone Villages states that “a nature preserve [with a historic barn house as an interpretive center] forms the heart of the project and will link together the area’s rich biodiversity” (Taecker, 1998). Biodiversity thus is a resource that can be protected through networks of open space, but is also designed as an amenity for town residents.¹⁰

Representations of nature in NU literature—as a utopian setting for communities and as a design element protecting open space as a resource—reflect two interrelated anthropocentric understandings common to mainstream environmental thought in the United States. First, nature is represented as nonhuman wildlife and habitat that should be protected from human development. Claims to protect nonhuman nature from destructive human activities reflect dominant understandings of the natural world as “out there,” as separate from humans (after Haraway, 1991; see also Michel, 1994). As Cronon (1996b) has argued, the sanctity of nature, in particular wilderness, as distinct from humans and as a source for inspiration has historically been important to defining American mainstream environmental groups’ ideals and reflects contemporary longings and fears (see also

Graber, 1976). Second, nature is understood as a resource to be conserved so that healthy human communities can be achieved. Nature in this second understanding reflects conservationist ideals of multiuse.

NU representations of nature, in other words, resonate, draw from, and may in turn influence mainstream environmental discourse. According to Smith (1996), various groups have used dominant, bourgeois mainstream understandings of nature to gain authority for their understandings of social relations. Thus, in order to understand the cultural and social values associated with NU environmental rhetoric, I first turn to a brief discussion of contemporary American mainstream ideas of nature. Following this discussion I describe why mainstream ideas are so prevalent in the planning profession. I argue that mainstream environmental ideas are socially and geographically limited understandings of human-environment relations for planners who seek to create democratic and socially inclusive communities through NU.

MAINSTREAM UNDERSTANDINGS OF NATURE

There are many similarities between the environmental rhetoric of NU and mainstream groups. Traditional notions of “preserving wilderness” and multiuse conservation remain a central part of the agenda of many national and local environmental groups today (Cronon, 1996c; Darnovsky, 1996). Some groups, moreover, explicitly advocate protecting open space from sprawl using much of the same rhetoric I have described above for NU. For example, a 1999 Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) mailer featured this headline on an “Urgent Reply Form” “Stop Sprawl! Save our Last Open Spaces!” Underneath the header was the following statement:

I am fed up with the out-of-control sprawl that is fast destroying America’s last beautiful landscapes. Our communities desperately need islands of nature to feed our souls and raise our children. That’s why I want to help NRDC mobilize public support for legislation that will protect open space, build thousands of parks, and create a future of greener, more livable communities.

Another 1999 NRDC mailer featured a “personalized letter” on tanned recycled paper from Robert Redford, a NRDC Board of Trustees member. In the letter, Redford uses natural metaphors to describe his memories of growing up and his shock that his childhood world was disappearing.

Then, I turned around one day and the place I had grown up in—the place I loved—had simply disappeared. The green open spaces had turned into concrete malls and freeways.... The smell of orange blossoms had turned into exhaust fumes.

I felt my home taken away from me, my roots pulled out from under me—and suddenly I understood the cost of unbridled development.

I believe we have a moral obligation to set aside some places in this country—in every community—for the soul of the people. The sheer chaos of our cities, and often of our lives, forces a fierce human struggle to find the balance, peace, and

silence so essential to sorting it all out. We need uncorrupted, natural places to feed our souls, to inspire our dreams, to nurture our hopes.

A final example comes from the Sierra Club that started a “challenge to sprawl campaign” about six years ago. As the organization’s general introductory paragraph on the “Sprawl” site of their national webpage described:

Poorly planned development is threatening our environment, our health, and our quality of life. In communities across America “sprawl”—scattered development that increases traffic, saps local resources and destroys open space—is taking a serious toll. But runaway growth is not inevitable. Hundreds of urban, suburban and rural neighborhoods are choosing to manage sprawl with smart growth solutions. (Sierra Club, 2000a)

Saving open space was emphasized as an important agenda of this campaign. In addition, alternatives to sprawl were listed under a linked “Livable Communities” site, including NU designs. More generally, “the Sierra Club and Urban Ecology advocate for compact, mixed-use, transit- and pedestrian-oriented development” (Sierra Club, 2000b).

Although there are similarities between NU and mainstream concerns, it is important to note that both NU and mainstream environmentalism are complex and diverse social movements. Not surprisingly, individuals and groups in both selectively use ideas about nature and environment, and about sustainable development, to achieve their goals in the present and future.¹¹ When I asked one individual of a mainstream environmental organization, for example, about the relationship between NU and the organization, this person stated that the group’s ideas about development came about independently of NU:¹²

I don’t know if we have ever supported “new urbanism” in general, but we promote their basic concepts of compact (higher density), mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods with good transit service—located near town centers—not in far-flung outlying areas. We appreciate NU’s effectiveness in changing the development paradigm, and utilize it for that end.¹³ (pers. comm.)

As this informant suggested, mainstream environmental rhetoric and understandings of nature are created and used in a recursive process. Planners have used environmental discourses and environmentalists have used planning discourses to achieve their respective goals. Both should be aware of the cultural and social values associated with each movement. In this section, therefore, I situate mainstream environmentalism culturally to understand better NU environmental rhetoric.¹⁴ In the section that follows, I argue that NU planners may use mainstream environmental rhetoric because of their historical, institutional, and economic contexts, and as a means to promote their projects. Before moving onto such a discussion, I wish to acknowledge that mainstream environmentalism is quite diverse and includes individuals with different politics and backgrounds, and groups with different ideologies and agendas (after Pulido, 1996a). Nonetheless, there is a dominant sector of mainstream or traditional environmentalism that is recognized by policymakers at the national and state levels and by the media as representing the environmental point of view (Gottlieb and Ingram, 1988; see also Seager, 1993; Pulido, 1996a). It is from this dominant sector that planners selectively draw. This is not to say, however,

that New Urbanists using these concepts are not interested in improving the quality of life for Americans and nonhuman nature.

Most environmental historians and environmental groups trace mainstream understandings of nature to the Progressive Era (but see Darnovsky, 1996). Drawing from earlier movements of romanticism, transcendentalism, and utilitarianism, early groups defined "nature" as separate from humans and as a resource to be used wisely and in sustainable ways by humans (Pulido, 1996a).¹⁵ As a result of these movements (which later became associated with preservation and conservation), national parks and forest preserves were established to "protect" wilderness from the destructive acts of humans and/or to be used for human enjoyment and natural resource management. Thus, the place(s) of nature became coded as authentic, rooted, and stable. Nature was represented as sacred space, a (Christian) God-given national heritage, a space for White European-American recreational playgrounds (a hyper-masculine sporting grounds), and a natural resource in need of management (Nash, 1982; Haraway, 1989; Demars, 1991; Hundley, 1992). Although these understandings of what counts as nature became dominant, it is important to note here that these views do not reflect the entire historical range of social interpretations of nature. They are, in fact, rather selective. Environmentalisms from the Progressive Era were diverse and fragmented; understandings of nature reflected the various social environments and experiences of women, people of color, immigrant groups and low-income groups, particularly in urban settings (Gottlieb, 1993; Dowie, 1995; Darnovsky, 1996).

Many authors have argued that mainstream environmental notions of nature culturally reflect specific colonial (and racialized), class-based, and gendered social relations (Graber, 1976; Nash, 1982; FitzSimmons, 1989; Haraway, 1989; Seager, 1993; Cronon, 1996c; Smith, 1996; Sturgeon, 1997; Willems-Braun, 1997; Braun and Castree, 1998; Michel, 1998).¹⁶ Historically, many early environmentalists, including John Muir, were wealthy, White, Protestant, Northern European men and held strong biases against Blacks, Jews, and southern European immigrants (Fox, 1981). Marci Darnovsky (1996, p. 24) argued that such prejudices resulted in a wilderness orientation marked by "a sometimes virulent racism and elitism, a heritage that today's environmentalists have only recently, and sometimes, under duress, begun to confront."¹⁷ Furthermore, Seager (1993) argued that the professionalization and corporatization of mainstream environmental groups since the 1980s have continued the gender-based process that privileges the overlapping interests of men in industry, the military, and the government.¹⁸ The professionalization of the environmental movement resulted in a highly organized, technocratic national lobby (FitzSimmons and Gottlieb, 1988; Pulido, 1996a).

Mainstream groups continue to emphasize socially specific quality of life issues rather than subsistence or production concerns; as a result they do not attract individuals who are economically insecure (Pulido, 1996a; compare also Paehlke, 1989; Martínez-Alier, 1997). When one considers the sociodemographic profile of mainstream groups, quality of life issues may reflect a limited range of lifestyles and understandings of nature and community. Many mainstream environmental groups today continue to have predominantly White middle-class members and staffs who are engaged in the service sector (rather than the primary or secondary sectors; Cotgrove and Duff, 1980; Seager, 1993; Pulido, 1996a).¹⁹ In addition, no woman has ever held the top post in any of the 10 largest environmental organizations in the United States, including more progressive national

groups (Seager, 1993). As Sale (1993) has suggested, whether the charges of racism and elitism against traditional environmentalism are fair,

it is true that their concerns have tended to mirror those of the white suburban well-to-do constituencies and that the kinds of people who have been attracted to the staffs have tended to be college graduates, often professionals, and of the same general milieu as the people they deal with in legislatures and boardrooms. (Quoted in Pulido, 1996a, p. 24)

According to Seager (1993), many people who do not fit the sociodemographic profile of mainstream groups may in fact be interested in what has traditionally been defined as wilderness. However, because of the ideological and political orientation of mainstream environmentalism, various subaltern groups choose not to participate. Different expressions of environmental action thus reflect the distinct positionalities of individuals and groups within a society (Pulido, 1996a). As Seager (1993, pp. 184-185) explained,

In one recent American survey, 80 percent of African American respondents said they had an interest in wildlife, wanted contact with wildlife, and felt that blacks should concern themselves with wildlife issues—but only 38 percent said they would join an environmental organization. Multiracial awareness means acknowledging that there may be different priorities in different communities, and that the exclusion of certain groups from the environmental movement is as often as not the result of priorities and practices that are skewed in the interests of the dominant class.²⁰

Compared to mainstream groups, many grassroots environmental movements have different types of communities, with distinct ideological and political orientations, and distinct social and economic concerns (Pulido, 1996a; Harvey, 1997). To take but one example, urban-based environmental justice (UEJ) members are predominantly minority, working-class, and female (Di Chiro, 1996; Pulido, 1996b). UEJ groups explicitly treat the problems of social oppression as inseparable from the exploitation of nonhuman natural world (after Taylor in Dreiling, 1998). Unlike many mainstream groups, environmental justice (EJ) activists more generally recognize the histories of environmental racism and injustice in cities and rural areas, and seek to find solutions for urban problems of public health, social equity, and public policy (Alston, 1990; Di Chiro, 1996; Pulido, 1996a, 1996c; Harvey, 1997; Martínez-Alier, 1997; Rajzer, 1999; Rajzer et al., 1999).²¹ One of the 17 “principles of environmental justice” published by the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 affirmed “the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources” (Rajzer et al., 1999). While in theory such a statement may be supported by some mainstream groups (and NU professionals), because it is the *land* and *bodies* of UEJ activists (poor and marginalized peoples in particular) that are at risk, their environmental and ecological priorities will most likely be different (Pulido, 1996a). A coalition of environmental justice (EJ) organizations, for example, wrote a letter to the main national environmental groups in 1991 arguing that “your organizations continue to support and promote policies which emphasize clean-up and preservation of the environ-

ment on the backs of working people in general and people of color in particular” (quoted in Di Chiro, 1996, pp. 304-305). Consequently, some contemporary UEJ activists view mainstream concerns with preservation and open space as antiurban and racist understandings of development (Jordan and Snow, 1992; Di Chiro, 1996; Pulido, 1996a; see also Austin and Schill, 1991).

In recent years, as a result of such critiques, environmental groups as well as scholars have begun to recognize that nature and environment may mean different things to different social groups (Fox, 1981; Gottlieb, 1993; Cronon, 1996c; Darnovsky, 1996; Pulido, 1996a; Martinez-Alier, 1997; Sturgeon, 1997). Certainly calls for social justice and the diverse agendas of thousands of environmental groups have had an influence on at least some mainstream groups since the 1980s and 1990s.²² For example, local Sierra Club chapters have broken from national agendas to address grassroots and social justice concerns (Dreiling, 1998). Nonetheless, most mainstream groups continue to frame justice issues within existing economic and power relations (Pulido, 1996a). The majority of these organizations cooperate with large corporations and use market-driven strategies rather than challenge the status quo or challenge how profits and benefits of development are distributed (Krupp, 1986; Dowie, 1995; Pulido, 1996a; Harvey, 1997). Planners need to acknowledge that there are many understandings of what counts as nature, and that one’s social and economic positionality has an influence on how individuals think about environmental action (after Pulido, 1996a). When claims are made to build a more democratic and inclusive new urbanism, experts need to be aware of whose nature and culture are institutionalized and marketed in neotraditional designs and codes (after Katz, 1998). As my discussion suggests, NU notions of nature that draw from mainstream views may reify White, class-specific, gendered, and suburban understanding of nonhuman and human nature.

WHY THIS NATURE NOW?

Given the range of environmentalisms in the United States, one has to question why understandings of nature from the dominant sector of mainstream environmentalism are so prevalent in NU rhetoric. Here I consider three possible reasons why NU planners may (uncritically) adopt dominant environmental ideals: the prevalence of Edenic myths in the history of planning (that reflect romantic, utopian understandings of nature); the institutional and legal structures of planning (that assume empiricist understandings of nature as separate from humans); and green marketing and consumerism (that represent nature as a commodity).

Edenic Myths and Planning

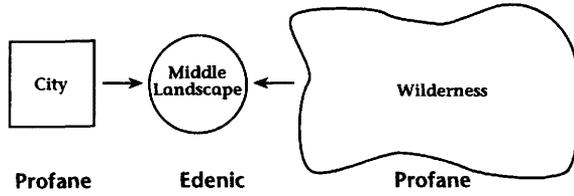
Romantic, Judeo-Christian understandings of nature are not only part of the heritage of mainstream environmentalism, they are prevalent in the history of American planning as well. In particular, the environmental recovery story is a familiar narrative used by planners to justify the establishment of towns, villages, parks, and suburbs, which may explain, at least in part, its appeal to New Urbanists. As I have already suggested, in NU environmental rhetoric nature is represented as an idyllic setting for healthier human ways of life. I interpret NU narratives about healthy growth and nature as “Edenic

myths,” or utopian tales about attempts to recover an idealized garden (Merchant, 1996). Slater (1996, p. 115) defined Edenic myths as “presentations of a natural or seemingly natural landscape in terms that consciously—or, more often, unconsciously—evoke the biblical account of Eden.” Based on my analysis of NU literature, I found a common “garden of Eden” narrative that I summarize as follows. In some distant time in the past, there was small town America (Garden of Eden), filled with nature and healthy communities (Adam and Eve). With modern planning, the fall from grace occurred and with it came the loss of human communities and the growth of sprawling suburbs. NU visionaries offer to recover paradise on earth through traditional urban designs and planning codes. More specifically, this NU narrative is an “after Eden” or “recovery” story that highlights “nostalgia for a perfect past or deep fears about continuing loss” and offers hope for recovery through a return to nature (Slater, 1996, p. 116; see also Merchant, 1996).²³

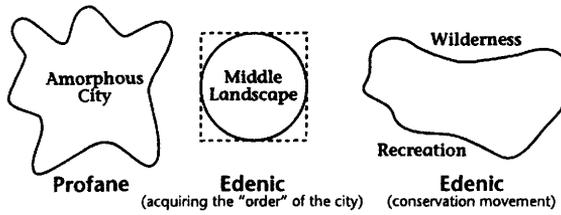
According to Tuan (1974) and as indicated in Figure 1, the garden has metaphorically symbolized Edenic settings and “good places to live” in the United States since the early colonial period. Romantic, Edenic conceptions of tamed nature were associated with morality, civility, and Whiteness (compare Soper, 1995). In the colonial period (Fig. 1.1), “untamed” or “wild” nature was a place historically associated with demons, savagery, and racialized others (in particular Native Americans) (Nash, 1982; Takaki, 1993; Cronon, 1996b). With industrialization, understandings of tamed nature were explicitly antiurban (Fig. 1.2); the “city” became viewed as a place of corruption, dirt, and disease, and associated with particular places (brothels, bars, gambling places, tenements, squatter settlements, and ghettos) and peoples (ethnic immigrants, peoples of color, low-income groups, and “fallen” women) (Riis, 1971; Jackson, 1985; Anderson, 1987; Wilson, 1991). The “after Eden” place of redemption for early planners in this period was a garden/suburb, a utopian “middle landscape,” to use Leo Marx’s (1964) term, located somewhere between the dangerous city and “untamed” nature (Marx, 1964; Tuan, 1974; see also Jackson, 1985). Planners assumed that “nature” had redeeming qualities, a belief that was reflected through urban environmental reform, including the garden-city and urban parks movements as well as bourgeois cults of domesticity (Boyer, 1983; Jackson, 1985; Miller, 1991; Wilson, 1991; Tuason, 1997).²⁴ Planned green spaces, in both cities and suburbs, were considered to be places where working-class and ethnic individuals could learn the gendered virtues of order, cleanliness, citizenship, and Whiteness. In more recent years, “Edenic” forms of nature were associated with ecological design; these planned places, including new towns and conserved wilderness, were considered to be threatened by sprawling cities and suburbs (Fig. 1.3). In this respect, NU representations of nature as utopian garden do not depart from traditional histories of planning, despite claims to be an alternative.

Representations of nature and social relations do have an influence on the ways people think about “real” peoples and places. For example, Slater (1996) argued that Edenic narratives inform much of what many Americans accept as fact about specific people and places even though these representations are exaggerated. Cronon (1996a) explained that the Judeo-Christian image of perfect nature as Eden relies on absolute moral dualisms, of right and wrong, of actions, peoples, and places that are either good or evil. Planners should be sensitive to the ways that the place of nature has been represented through metaphor and narrative precisely because such representations have been used histori-

1. The ideal of the "Middle Landscape" (Jeffersonian ideal)



2. Late nineteenth-century values



3. Middle and late twentieth-century values

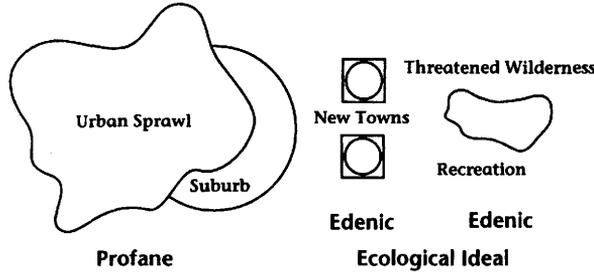


Fig. 1. Edenic myths, middle landscapes, and utopian gardens (after Tuan, 1974, pp. 104–105).

cally to legitimize social and spatial inequities. While the use of Edenic myths to emplot and position understandings of community and nature may make marketing sense, the contrast between the neotraditional town and the modern city/sprawling suburb relies on place-based categories of identity and geographies of otherness that historically have specified the content of racial categories (cf. Till, 1993).

Institutional Contexts: Legal Representations of Nature

A second reason mainstream environmental views may be prevalent within planning has to do with the institutional and legal structures of the profession. Wolch (1998) suggested that anthropocentric understandings of nature in planning reflect the demands of the local state and clients, and the emphasis on rationality and order in the cultural history of American planning (see also Boyer, 1983). Demands of the federal and local state include environmental legal requirements. Since the 1960 passage of the Clean Water

Act, mainstream environmental organizations have been involved in the process of developing, securing the passage of, and implementing environmental legislation (Pulido, 1996a). Scientific understandings of nature as external to humans began to appear in federal and local laws due to the successful energy of environmental and social group activism. Terms like “wildland preservation” and “endangered species protection” legally codified the place of nature; “wild and natural” areas, for example, were defined as places where humans should not be, as reflected in the 1962 Wilderness Act (Wilkinson, 1992; Switzer, 1998). Since officials and the media look to mainstream groups as the environmental experts in the United States (Pulido, 1996a; Gottlieb and Ingram, 1998), the expert role of the planners has not been to define or challenge existing understandings of nature or of human-environment relations. Rather, within this institutional framework, planners have been responsible for figuring out ways to fulfill environmental requirements and processes specified by national, state, and local legislation. With the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, for example, planners were forced to use land-use tools like zoning and public land acquisition to address the impact of urbanization and suburbanization on threatened and endangered animal species (Wolch, 1998).

The financial constraints of the profession are also related to the ways planners fulfill legal requirements. For example, due to federal cuts and fiscal crises in state and local budgets since the late 1970s, planners have increasingly worked with local and state governments and developers to gain approval for their projects. Developers now must provide public amenities for new projects (especially in greenfield areas), such as roads, water provision, libraries, schools, and open space (Weiss, 1987; Michel, 1994). As a public amenity, the provision of open or green space in new developments often meets some federal, state, regional, and local legal environmental requirements while simultaneously assuaging middle- to upper-class antigrowth constituencies (Till, 1991; Davis, 1992; Wolch, 1998; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999a).²⁵

Certainly there are many positive aspects about providing open space to “promote clear air and clean water, sustain wildlife, and provide families with places to walk, play, and relax” (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999a). Yet, in addition to the problems of mainstream environmentalist understandings of nature I discussed above, the process of using open spaces as a means to gain legal approval often results in a kind of geographical myopia. Although environmental planners have increasingly emphasized comprehensive approaches, by classifying open space as a design element or legal requirement they render “the local” as spatially fixed in Cartesian space. In other words, expert and regulatory conceptions of green or open space reduce the complexities of nature (both in terms of nonhuman life and human social relations) to bounded, countable, mappable, ordered spatial representations. The mapped image of nature counts for truth and reality, as scientific (and hence empirically quantifiable and objective) data in the legal system and planning profession (Michel, 1994). Planners, architects, and designers consider open space as one element in their comprehensive master plan. Developers see it as a way to gain approval and simultaneously to market their designs. Local governments look to fill environmental requirements in terms of the numbers of acres or types of amenities provided rather than in terms of the quality or the possibility for such spaces to help encourage nonhuman wildlife to survive.

Places, however, and what is defined as “local,” are continuously in flux. Places are interconnected at various scales at different historical moments through the simultaneous

ongoing related processes of urbanization, suburbanization, and globalization in other places and regions (after Massey, 1991; see also Michel, 2000b). A geographically narrow understanding of place and local natures is problematic for at least two reasons. First, empiricist understandings of nature often spatially constrain biogeographic understandings of environment and nonhuman nature; rarely is consideration given to habitat contiguity, watershed protection, and the protection of the large spaces needed by predators (Michel, 1998, 2000a; Wolch, 1998). Architects and planners still do not prioritize minimum-impact planning for urban wildlife despite legal requirements, including those movements considered environmentally progressive:

Adherents to the so-called New Urbanism and sustainable cities movements of the 1990s rarely define sustainability in relation to animals. The NU emphasizes sustainability through high density and mixed-use urban development, but remains strictly anthropocentric in perspective. (Wolch, 1998, p. 132)

Second, the emphasis on empiricist understandings of nature also restricts significantly the possibility of considering urban, social justice and equity, and grassroots understandings of environment. While providing open spaces and buffer zones may be an improvement over previous forms of greenfield development in terms of abetting the destruction of nonhuman nature, it still does little to acknowledge the needs and health of communities and individuals living in neglected inner-city neighborhoods who are disproportionately exposed to toxic poisonings or may not have access to adequate housing and public transportation, let alone “preserved” open space (after Seager, 1993; see also Taylor, 1989; Agyeman, 1990; Muwakkil, 1990).

Green Marketing and Consumption

In addition to gaining government approval, NU planners must sell a concept to developers who are concerned with financing a project and selling the product at a profit. Not only have suburban land markets and middle-class tastes changed since the 1970s, some middle-class suburbanites began to purchase housing as a form of symbolic capital to define their identities and lifestyles, or *habitus* (McCann, 1995, after Bourdieu, 1984; see also Knox, 1991). Developers identified and shaped consumer tastes and niche markets at the same time that these markets became increasingly fragmented in a phase of late capitalist accumulation (McCann, 1995; see also Harvey, 1990). Ellin (1996), for example, has argued that the success of the historic preservation movement led to a middle- to upper-class consumer interest in new developments with a “traditional” feel. Neotraditional towns also became viewed by developers, planners, and consumers as better investment opportunities than other suburban, greenbelt developments (e.g., gated communities) due to appeals made to “community,” in particular through associations with existing “authentic” and “traditional” American towns already identified with elite groups (McCann, 1995; see also Till, 1991; Ellin, 1996; Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon, 1997; Keil and Graham, 1998).

At the same time that the past and community were being marketed, nature and ecosystems have become commodified objects in capitalist production (Light and Higgs, 1996; Castree and Braun, 1998). To describe this trend, Escobar (1996) used the term

“postmodern ecological capital” and Harvey (1997) and Keil and Graham (1998) used the word “eco-“ or “ecological modernization” (see also Zimmerman, 2001, this issue). According to this view, in a late phase of capitalist accumulation sustainable development is required for both profitability and survival (rather than was previously the case through modern, antienvironmental expansionary practices). This new accumulation strategy is reflected in both mainstream environmentalism and urban forms since the 1980s. Many national organizations have promoted a form of corporate “free-market environmentalism” since this time by pursuing a politics of negotiation with Northern global finance capital and promoting “market-based incentives,” including permits that can be purchased by corporations for the right to pollute, open space preserves purchased by corporate funding, and Earth Day events funded by corporate sponsorship (Dowie, 1995, after Dreiling, 1998).²⁶ In protecting the environment in this way (as well as obtaining group membership and national recognition), nature became a “commodity to be bought and sold” (Gottlieb, 1993, p. 317). Second, around the same time, the discourses of ecological planning and sustainability became central to the material production of urban space (Escobar, 1996; Kipfer et al., 1996; Keil and Graham, 1998). Planners and developers of new urban forms (including NU) may claim to conserve nature but do so in terms of largely middle-class lifestyles. Nature is increasingly produced in the built environment as “pleasant backgrounds for privatized consumption and corporate activities” (Zimmerman, 2001, this issue, after Perry, 1994; Light and Higgs, 1996).

Eco-modern forms of production must also be discussed in terms of consumption. I argue that NU ideals of community in recent years have been defined by representations and productions of nature that may be construed by consumers as a form of green politics. Similar to other mainstream professionals, NU marketing experts can be considered “greenateers” who, to use Katz’ (1998, p. 52) words, “pander to and assuage consumers’ environmental concerns by making it part of their sales pitch that their products are packaged in ‘environmentally friendly’ containers.” The promotional spaces, textures, colors, and materials for Rosemary Beach, for example, evoke a “green” sensibility. When I visited the information office in 1998, wicker baskets offered postcards of the town (with aesthetically pleasing “natural” views) that were bound by undyed brown twine. Staff at the information office emphasized that the buildings of Rosemary Beach will have earth toned, natural colors (unlike the pastels of Seaside). The cover of the town’s brochure was on thick, mossy-green recycled-looking textured paper. In a local 1997 real estate newsletter available at the office, an article’s headline read “Nature Takes Center Stage at Rosemary Beach.” The article emphasized the location of the neotraditional town next to Deer Lake and Camp Helen, parks recently acquired as part of Florida’s Preservation 2000 program.

Packaging and situating a TND in these ways may speak to potential consumers who wish to be environmentally progressive through consumption instead of by changing their lifestyle or becoming politically active in habitat protection (compare Cronon, 1996a; Merchant, 1996; Katz, 1998). Consumers can purchase a NU environmental product, just as they may watch the Discovery Channel or shop

at the Nature Company... and play virtual reality games in which Sim-Eve is reinvented in cyberspace. This garden in the city recreates the pleasures and temptations of the original garden and the golden age where people can peacefully harvest

the fruits of earth with gold grown by the market.... With their engineered spaces and commodity fetishes, they epitomize consumer capitalism's vision of the recovery from the fall. (Merchant, 1996, pp. 153–154)

According to Katz (1998), such “green sensitivity” is incredibly lucrative in America's neo-liberal society that purchases “consciousness-cleansing” forms of environmentalism (see also Dreiling, 1998). When a consumer purchases a NU product, that person may feel as though he/she is contributing to a more environmentally sound future as well as making a sound investment.

BUILDING MORE INCLUSIVE NATURES: ENVIRONMENTS, COMMUNITIES, AND URBAN PLANNING

Remaking nature is a bigger project than ecological preservation or restoration. It is not at all about entertainment, privatisation or authenticity. All the indications are that it cannot be done without simultaneously remaking the social world, and this will require a class, gender, race, and sexuality politics that engages the concerns of political ecology and environmental justice across scale and nation. To begin to create a world in which all of us can live productively in an enduring way, we will have to be bold in imagining and working out new productions of nature. (Katz, 1998, p. 60)

Certainly there is much value in rethinking the social, cultural, environmental, economic, and structural impacts of modern planning and planned urban developments. In this respect, NU, like the sustainable cities movement, has done much to force planners to envision the social categories of nature and the city as belonging to the same social space. Brownfield projects like the Stapleton Redevelopment Plan in Denver, Colorado—a “model sustainable urban community... that allocates over 40% of the site for open space” and includes wildlife corridors (Shea, 1998)—might not have been possible without planning ideals promoted by the NU (see also U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999a). By many standards, such projects are an improvement over previous forms of urban development.

As I have argued in this article, however, contemporary NU views of nature may be quite limiting socially, culturally, politically, and geographically. Through the use of mainstream environmental rhetoric, Edenic myths, and green marketing, neotraditional towns are represented as places where people pursuing a particular lifestyle—that is, White, middle-class professional folk—live. If NU planners wish to encourage the production of more socially inclusive urban and suburban spaces, they must first rethink their designs, rhetoric, legal categories, and marketing strategies to include multiple social understandings of nature, environment, and community. When local natures are constructed in terms of bounded, empirically observable space or as commodities, ecological processes are abstracted away from their various social contexts, taking away the key to positive political potential (Light and Higgs, 1996).

Certainly, one of the most pressing research agendas is the need for future empirical work to ascertain the biogeographical and social impacts of particular NU projects at various scales. Because places are interconnected to other places in various ways, envi-

ronmental and development projects at one locale may have very large consequences elsewhere (Di Chiro, 1996; Katz, 1998; Michel, 2000a). Research projects therefore should explore those relations. What are the social, environmental, economic, and cultural impacts of NU developments at urban, suburban, and regional scales and on nonhuman lives? If environmental regulations are to be met, in part, by the construction of open spaces in more exclusive, predominantly middle- to upper-class private residential areas, how do such agreements impact the spatial and social development of cities and regions (and their human and nonhuman inhabitants) more generally?

In addition, more research about consumer and residential lifestyle practices needs to be conducted. What are consumer interpretations of green marketing? Why do residents choose TNDs over gentrified townhomes or gated communities? Does purchasing a house in a TND mean that a consumer is willing to make lifestyle changes? Preliminary work for this last question has begun to show that residents of NU developments may like the claims made to community and environment but are unwilling to change their behaviors in ways predicted by planners. For example, TND residents have not replaced driving with walking; it is also unclear if residents will be willing to pay more for items at their new community shops or if they will continue to travel to outlying retail and discount centers (Gerloff, 1997). An ethnographic study about TND residents' perceptions of community, nature, and environment therefore would be helpful to ascertain why NU is appealing today (cf. Till, 1993; Ford, 2001, this issue). Documenting the specific histories, ethnographies, and institutional relations of particular TNDs may also provide information about larger urban trends and about locally based planning issues.

As Katz (1998) suggested, it is not enough to claim to be environmentally progressive without thinking about the social relations and histories any conception of nature entails. Di Chiro (1996, p. 311), when speaking on behalf of the environmental justice movement, defined nature as "historically dynamic and culturally specific. What counts as nature is therefore different among various people of color groups that have very different cultural histories." Yet these various social groups—each with a range of understandings and relationships to human and nonhuman natures as well as to the city—historically have been excluded from the possibility of defining what a "new urbanism" might be, in part, because of the institutional contexts of planning. A progressive new urbanism would therefore have to change such structural limitations so that diverse understandings of human-environment relations by various social groups would be given authority.²⁷ In addition, scholars, instructors, community leaders, and students would have to re-educate themselves and the public about the wide range of environmental political movements, perceptions, and actions. To rethink environment and community in this way would mean to rethink place and local natures according to multiple scales and social relations, all the while taking nonhuman natures into consideration.

NOTES

¹Acknowledgments: This was a very difficult article to write and I appreciate the insightful comments and encouragement to continue this project from Suzanne Michel. My deepest gratitude is also extended to Karen Falconer Al-Hindi for her advice and enthusiasm on this project, as well as her patience and mentoring. I wish to thank the following individuals for their helpful suggestions, although all remaining errors are my own: Bruce Braun, Chris Hagerman, Joan Hackeling, Tom

Lekan, Joseph Musolf, Yi-Fu Tuan, Jeff Zimmerman, professionals and volunteers in planning and environmental organizations, and three anonymous reviewers. I wish to acknowledge the participants and attendees at the 1998 Boston AAG panel session on the New Urbanism for their comments and suggestions. I am deeply indebted to the 1998 Louisiana State University New Cultural Geography Graduate Seminar for the source of inspiration for this article. Finally, I wish to recognize the brilliance and strength of the feminist scholars whom I have cited in this article whose research has made this project possible.

²Seaside was designed in 1982 by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (Mohney and East-erling, 1991).

³For this study, I define NU literature as published and Internet-available material about the movement targeted for a range of audiences. First, to understand marketing and consumption practices, I examined promotional brochures and advertisements, and visited Kentlands, Maryland, Rosemary Beach, Florida, and Seaside, Florida, all of which are greenfield projects designed by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. A former town planner provided the class tour for Seaside. Second, I looked at materials for professionals and interested laypersons. I examined numerous CNU, NU, and mainstream environmental group webpages (as well as related links). For a selection, please see sources in the Literature Cited section. I paid particular attention to the CNU environmental task force listings from 1998 to 2000 (<http://www.cnu.org/taskforce.html>) and conference papers for the 1998 CNU Congress VI, "Cities in Context: Rebuilding Communities within the Natural Region," which focused on environmental issues (<http://www.cnu.org/congressvi.html>). Third, I collected and analyzed professional and scholarly articles written about the movement or by NU practitioners. In conducting a textual analysis of this wide range of NU literature, I attempted to understand the underlying belief systems and assumptions about the past and future, and about nature and human communities. I also examined how stories about time and place were told and spatially emplotted (Ricoeur, 1984; for a brief discussion of textual analysis in geography, see Aitken, 1997). Finally, in the process of writing and revising this paper, I communicated with some environmental scholars, planning professionals, and representatives of mainstream environmental groups to ascertain the history of the ideas being examined.

⁴The NU and sustainable cities literature often overlap. For example, see Van der Ryn and Calthorpe (1986) and Stren et al. (1992).

⁵The former Clinton-Gore administration's "Livable Communities" initiatives and Smart Growth initiatives in various states include NU concepts, agendas, and proposals (Smartgrowth, 1999; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1999a, under Brownfields and Sustainable Reuse; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1999).

⁶See note three for a definition of NU literature. The contrast between healthy and unhealthy growth, and modern and traditional, reflects the work of individuals and other movements that have inspired NU more generally. For example, one NU "guru" is Leon Krier, who draws from the tradition of European rural villages for his organic model of human community (Thompson-Fawcett, 1998). He has used the human body as a metaphor to describe healthy growth. In one of his sketches, small, numerous bodies of heterosexual families symbolize healthy urban growth (reminding one of the "small is beautiful" mantra of the 1960s and 1970s), whereas monstrous, obese bodies represent unhealthy growth. Antimodernism in planning is also not new. Lewis Mumford (1957) warned of America's abstract and fragmentary landscapes resulting in despair and sterility.

⁷I was denied copyright permission to reprint illustrations from a brochure and a magazine advertisement for Rosemary Beach, Florida, for this article. However, please see sample webpages for neotraditional towns (which are different from the printed advertisements) listed on the *New Urban News* webpage (<http://www.newurbannews.com/links.html>), the Rosemary Beach webpage (<http://www.rosemarybeach.com/>), and Duany and Plater-Zyberk's webpage (<http://www.dpz.com/>).

⁸In this section, I will focus on TNDs and not address regionally based transportation oriented designs. TODs are believed to reduce the number of automobile trips (and hence improve air and noise pollution) by encouraging walking and providing the option of public transportation (Calthorpe, 1993, 1994). Although this is a central part of NU environmental claims, an analysis of TODs would be the topic of another article.

⁹Greed (1994) mentioned that open spaces have been gendered design elements in the history of American planning since at least the 19th and early 20th centuries (see especially pp. 135–139).

¹⁰In addition to protecting beautiful natural settings for human enjoyment, landmarks at designated public spaces within towns are often symbolized by nature, such as Inspiration Lake at Kentlands, Maryland. Village greens in Firestone Villages, Ohio, are also considered to be community centers.

¹¹Not only may mainstream groups use NU rhetoric to help change the development paradigm, they may utilize buzzwords, such as the term “Smart Growth,” in their literature to achieve their goals (personal correspondence).

¹²Similarly, a well-respected CNU member involved in other national and local organizations mentioned that his ideas about sustainable communities came about independently of (and even before) those promoted by Duany and Plater-Zyberk (pers. comm.).

¹³This environmental group did not support some early NU designs that claimed to be “transit-oriented.” According to this informant, they “had no transit, were located near the city edge, and were too sprawling.” Since the mid-1970s, this mainstream environmental organization has “promoted inner-city rehabilitation, infill growth, and mixed use, while fighting against road and freeway expansion.” When I tried to ascertain the history of the environmental group’s antisprawl ideas, this informant stated that: “I have been pushing a pro-urban (antisprawl) agenda for 25 years,” first as local chapter and conservation chairs, and later as chair of national conservation committees (pers. comm.).

¹⁴Because of the limits of this article, I cannot discuss the nuances, divisions, and complexities of mainstream environmentalism (but see Gottlieb and Ingram, 1988; Gottlieb, 1993; Seager, 1993; Darnovsky, 1996; Pulido, 1996a; Dreiling, 1998). For the purposes of this paper, I define mainstream institutional environmentalism following Seager (1993) and Darnovsky (1996) as organizations belonging to the “Group of Ten” (G-10) that are oriented toward national policy discussions and have become increasingly professionalized. The G-10 mainstream groups are National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Wilderness Society, Izak Walton League, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, National Parks and Conservation Association, Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Policy Institute.

¹⁵The understanding of nature as separate from humans is related to the racialized and gendered histories of European-American colonial relations (Di Chiro, 1996). To create the distinction between humans and nature—and thereby justify “conquering” wilderness—Europeans and European Americans had to classify some humans as part of nature, and therefore as less human (Takaki, 1993; Cronon, 1996b; Darnovsky, 1996; Di Chiro, 1996; Slater, 1996; compare Soper, 1995). Yet this “story of brutality and forced removal does not appear in most accounts of U.S. environmentalism, though the ability to construe nature as pristine wilderness empty of people depends entirely on its repression” (Darnovsky, 1996, p. 21).

¹⁶The literature on this topic is enormous. In summarizing this literature, Michel (1998) discussed three long-standing discourses that remain prevalent in American society: (1) a colonial, Judeo-Christian Romantic understanding of nature as a sacred space, yet also a site of human control; (2) the modernist, gendered, and empiricist understanding of nature as external “data” or truth that can be classified and observed; and (3) the Marxist understanding of nature as transformed under capitalism as a resource to be exploited for human use. According to Michel (pers. comm.), few environmental history scholars have explicitly identified the relationships between race and ethnicity, and nature. Michel noted, however, that in recent years water resource and feminist environmental scholars have begun to address this understudied topic (Hundley, 1966, 1992; Gottlieb, 1988; Haraway, 1989; Reisner, 1993; Ingram et al., 1995; Di Chiro, 1996; Pulido, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Sturgeon, 1997).

¹⁷Seager (1993) argued that leaders of mainstream and other larger environmental groups have begun to recognize their poor record of including minorities in their organization but still deny racism. The responses by environmental groups to such charges vary. When faced with these data and the concerns of environmental justice groups, some large (but not mainstream) organizations tried to make multiracial coalitions, such as Earth Island Institute and Greenpeace. Or, for example, during NAFTA (which was considered by some to be environmentally unjust and racist), Greenpeace

and Friends of the Earth simultaneously encouraged grassroots mobilization and global environmentalism (Dreiling, 1998).

¹⁸Even though the mainstream environmental movement has “been fueled by women’s concerns” and labor, paradoxically it continues to be “mired in conventional male power structures” (Seager, 1993, p. 179). This may be because, according to Marinelli, the environmental movement (perhaps unconsciously) adopted the organizational model of traditional male conservation and preservation groups (in Seager, 1993).

¹⁹In 1990, the Audobon Society had 0.9% minority staff members, the Sierra Club had 0.4%, the Wilderness Society had only 0.3% in professional positions (none on its board of directors), the Natural Resources Defense Council had 3.6% minority staff members, and Friends of the Earth had 12% (which included secretaries) (Seager, 1993, pp. 181–182).

²⁰The survey information comes from Taylor (1989, p. 176, cited in Seager, 1993).

²¹The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1999b) defined EJ as “promoting the fair treatment [equal justice and protection without discrimination] of people of all races, income, and culture with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

²²Less influential have been those progressive, green environmentalisms that go beyond anthropocentric concepts of “the environment” (defined as a scientific, biological system external from humans or as natural resources to be protected for human use). Ecocentric understandings, for example, define the environment as an independent force with inherent value that is an active but unitary subject to be respected (Wolch, 1998). However, “its ecological holism backgrounds interspecific difference among animals (human and nonhuman) as well as the difference between animate and inanimate nature” (Wolch, 1998, endnote 7, p. 136).

²³The recovery narrative is a gendered one. Slater and Merchant convincingly argued that the Judeo-Christian story of redemption is combined with dominant progressive narratives of Western science, technology, and capitalism. The reconstructed Eden on earth occurs through an alliance of nature with technology or the radical replacement of nature by technology (Slater, 1996). The goal of recovery is to return humans to the Garden of Eden through labor, the reclamation of land, and technology on earth.

²⁴“Return to nature” movements had disparate politics. For example, adherents of the garden city movement in the United States, such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, drew from various strands of socialist utopian thought and the works of Ebenezer Howard (Hayden, 1983; Relf, 1987; Greed, 1994; McCann, 1995). Some early forms of urban zoning, such as New York’s plans for Central Park, displaced African Americans and also Irish and German immigrants to “clean up” the city and improve property values (Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 1992; see also Boyer, 1983; Jackson, 1985; Anderson, 1987; Sidawi, 1997).

²⁵Other factors that have an influence on the institutional contexts of the planning profession include the role of private property rights in land-use law, the influence of the lending community, and the structure of land-use regulation.

²⁶Dowie contrasts corporate, or third-wave environmentalism with “fourth-wave” environmentalism. The latter is anticorporate in nature, grassroots in approach, and defines environment in terms similar to environmental justice movements (Dreiling, 1998; see also Gottleib, 1993).

²⁷For example, see Healey (1997) and Wolch and Emel (1998). Planning experts should work with grassroots and social justice organizations to rethink middle-class, White notions of democracy, community, and nature. And by working with, I do not mean including socially marginalized groups as an afterthought, or as part of a process of “managed consensus” or “visioning” to gain approval for an already proposed project. I mean that residential urban experts and social groups should help define the problems, planning objectives, and solutions for urban and suburban areas.

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