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Naturalizing Communication and Culture

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The world is places.

—Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*

Communication occurs everywhere as part of natural contexts, physical spaces, and landscapes. Whether in riversides, mountain retreats, mountaintops, schoolrooms, courtrooms, living rooms, board rooms-each of these holds considerable force somewhere-or wherever, communication is radically "placed." In this sense, communication is always situated physically, in the particulars of place and time. Also, in turn, communication everywhere creates a sense of place, of the natural, of what is affirmed as emphatically and already there. Rather naturally, communication creates senses of (what is taken to be) sheer and utterly natural space. Communication can thus be conceived as radically and doubly "placed," as both located in places and as locating particular senses of those places.

By being within and by creating senses of places-from wilderness to Wall Street-communication helps cultivate particular ways of living as natural. Through everyday practices of communication, people everywhere cultivate ways of being placed with nature, in it, as it, ways of being within the natural realm. Taken together, then, and universally, communication occurs in places, cultivates intelligible senses of those places, and thus naturally guides natural ways of living within them.

This introductory and universal point also has a radically particular dimension: communication is not created the same in all natural places, and it does not create in all such places the same senses of-or relations with-the natural realm. Communication, therefore, as in and of natural worlds, is not only located in natural places: it also locates senses of natural spaces. Moreover, it localizes-that is, it creates-senses in socially distinctive ways, in particular cultural contexts, tilling specific tropes, fertilizing particular fields.

That communication occurs in natural space, that it also naturally creates senses of such places, that it guides sensible living in such places so conceived, and that it does so locally, thus variously, from place to place and people to people—these provide the starting points for the present essay.

If one starts here, by foregrounding communicative practices in natural and cultural space, with particular sensitivities to the natural senses of place being cultivated with communicative practices (and clearly there are other places to start), then questions arise about the links between "nature," "culture," and symbolic processes, and about the reflexive relationship between them. What is the relationship between specific symbolic practices and their natural environment? How, among people in specific contexts or communities, is nature (or place)

symbolized? What expressive means are available for giving "nature" a voice? What meanings are associated with these expressive means? When are these used? By whom? What are the environmental, political, social, and interactional consequenccs of these expressive means, and the meanings that-in particular rimes and places-give voice to the natural?

These questions are not comprehensive, nor do they suggest simple answers, but perhaps they do suggest some initial probes, some paths to travel, so better to hear, and critically assess, what we [and others in other places) so often presume, a natural world. How we go about cultivating the natural, in time and place, the various features assumed and foregrounded (and forgotten), the various ways of natural living being nurtured (and negated)-all warrant our serious attention.

Natural and Cultural Dimensions of Communication

> There is an essential role for language studies [of the environment], for they are fundamental to exposing and then overcoming the presuppositions which entrench the distinction between nature and culture.
>
> —Max Oelschlaeger, "Wilderness, Civilization, and Language"

Because of certain well-worn features of our Euro-language, we are often caught in ideational duels between, for example, nature and culture, or between terms for contexts (e.g., wilderness, civilization, nature, homes, environment) and that which lives in those contexts (e.g., culture, plants, animals, humans). Further- entrenching this picture of concentric entities is the view that language is a mere instrument for re-presenting what is already present in nature and culture, with its use involving a simple mapping of an objective something-out-there (in nature) or a something that is humanly common (iii culture). Because of these well-worn linguistic ruts, we tend to speak and think about nature as an objective environment (sans culture), culture as a built environment (sans nature), and communication as simply a means of saying something about each.

These current cultivated tendencies make it easier, for a Western mind, to suppose that I am proposing to examine linguistic presentations of nature (or culture). And this would be correct. I am advocating this. This aspect of my proposal brings to the foreground the various ways human linguistic constructions shape meanings about natural space, and the consequences of these upon local and natural worlds. But I am also advocating a more basic point: that all systems of communication practices, as carriers of cultural meanings, and whether about "nature" or not, occur in natural spaces, naturally create ways of living in those places (bodies included), and thus are affected by and carry real physical consequences for those places. Whether one is speaking then about nature, or about cars, or families, or religion, or Disney, one's communication practices are a part of and consequential for nature's (and culture's) processes.'

I include cultural meaning systems as a constituent part of this general process and thus treat them likewise, for they are also part of natural space, influ-

encing it and influenced by it. I do **not** assume that culture determines nature (although it does influence what is meant by *nature* and is thus consequential for nature). Nor do I assume that nature determines culture (although it does influence it). I do presume that these processes are related, that cultural meaning systems are part of and consequential for natural processes just as natural processes (broadly) give shape and form to all cultural systems. **In** other words, natural and cultural systems help shape each other and are radically consequential for each other. Keeping both in mind, I want to move in a particular direction and discuss how the social senses of each are being cultivated through particular practices of communication.

Communication is the basic social process in which natural and cultural senses are cultivated. Communication transforms raw space into a natural and cultural scene, into a place that is publicly meaningful in social terms. A condition and consequence of symbolizing activity, a process and outcome of communication, is the fashioning of places in humanly sensible, mutually intelligible, and actionable terms. Common senses of what is natural and cultural, then, are inextricably intertwined within human symbolic practices, with what is particularly intelligible about each of these processes deriving from local communicative practices.

From this naturalistic orientation, systems and practices of communication radically implicate cultural and natural processes and are thus consequential for both. But communication is not the totality of these processes. The order(s) of communication, while giving human expression to nature and culture, does not, and cannot, exhaust the natural or the cultural. To paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson and to redress current environmental difficulties, we must "know more from nature than we can at will communicate" (1987, p. 19). This Emersonian "knowing" productively points beyond the order of communication to ineffable resources that then might eventually seep into and enrich communication. This, I believe, is one reason we walk trails, climb peaks, or, for other reasons, visit sites of land use controversies, or landfills, oil spills, and so on. As a result of being a part of nature's spaces, we "know" more and thus might work to say something else, something better, about our places.

My fundamental starting point then is not simply that we talk about nature in distinctive ways, or that we talk about physical places in distinctive ways, or that different cultures represent things in distinctive ways. I take all of this to be true. But my fundamental point of entry into environmental issues and discourses about them is this: communication is the basic social process through which our natural ways and cultural meanings are being exercised socially. Further, whether this communication is explicitly about landscapes, lions, limousines, or whatever, in the process we implicate something of natural and cultural processes, with our communication being radically consequential for, if not the whole of, both the natural and the cultural. With regard to the main theme of this book, environmental communication is not just one type of communication that people sometimes produce (e.g., when they talk about "the environment"). As communication continuously and naturally (re-)creates places, it creatively integrates

natural and cultural messages. At some level, these natural and cultural messages are being presumed and (re-)created as a condition for all systems of communication practices. Seen this way, environmental communication is the ever-present and multifaceted shadow of-natural and cultural-place in human symbolic action. It is being cast, contested, and cultivated in the communicative practice> of all of our human communities.

In short, there is immanent in all systems of communication practices an environmental dimension, and it is being tailored and designed in locally distinctive ways. Whether talking about "the environment,""nature," or "culture," we are implicating each in our particular communicative practices, so we may as well erect some of our studies with these basic implications in view (see Ingold, 1991, 1992).

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss some elements of this approach to environmental discourse and advocacy and apply some of its elements rather quickly to some social practices of communication. I focus on various cultural and natural dimensions of expression, with the general approach being a kind ot naturalist's view of communication and culture. My belief is that the approach applies to symbolic practices generally, where "nature's objects" are explicitly discussed and where such is perhaps slightly less obviously explicit or pivotal. I begin by discussing one potent kind of communicative practice, place-naming, as a way of demonstrating the cultural and natural dimensions of communication. I will discuss, eventually, expressive forms in which "the natural" or "the environmental" dimension is a bit more hidden in the communicative practice.

Explicitly Radiating Nature and Culture

Naming places, and using such names in order to say various things, is a practice in all known languages, among all peoples. 'Through such a communication practice, people learn particular ways of identifying with their natural place, what specific spaces mean, vantage points from which to view these places or spaces, and ways of living (speaking, feeling) with them (Carbaugh, 1996, pp. 157–90).

The Western Apache of south central Arizona engage in one particularly powerful cultural practice of place-naming. During the course of some conversations, when wanting to comfort someone present, when speaking of absent parties who are close to those present, when wanting to do so with tact, and when traditional wisdom applies to serious errors in someone else's judgment, an Apache might say, "lt happened at line of white rocks extends upward and out, at this very place!" followed by a pause of thirty to forty-five seconds, and then, "Truly. It happened at trail extends across a long red ridge with alder trees, at this very place!" followed by another pause (Basso, 1989, p.105). When this kind of speaking is done successfully, an effect of smoothness, quiet, and softness is achieved. Keith Basso shows how such depictive language, for the Apache, accomplishes several outcomes: it yields very precise images of nature, symbolically positions persons in 311 exact natural space, and privileges one vantage point as optimal for viewing (thus looking forward) into that space, but it also evokes a

communal history of entire sagas or tales that radiate from that very place (thus looking backward into time).

Basso describes the process of place-naming as "appropriating the landscape" (1989, p. 107), as involving an interpretation of the landscape, turning it into an expressive means, and using such means to achieve specific social ends. Basso's study superbly demonstrates how symbols of nature, while highlighting a depictive or imaging quality of language, can never be merely that. They also have other cultural and natural uses, from evoking historical wisdom through shared tales, to transforming worry about close others into hopefulness, to cultivating a rich relation with a natural world. Basso summarizes, "Such systems operate to place flexible constraints on how the physical environment can (and should) be known, how its occupants can (and should) be found to act, and how the doings of both can (and should) be discerned to affect each other" (p. 100).

Basso's study demonstrates how reflections on one communicative resource, place-naming, enables one to engage the various social and cultural uses of nature, with this communicative means having powerful semantic potential. Let me describe some similar patterns, based in other cultural worlds yet demonstratingwhat Basso found, that place-naming practices enable one to hear nature and culture anew.

Recently I had occasion to climb Mount Monadnock, on a wonderful ridge walk above the treeline in southern New Hampshire. Upon reaching the bald summit, I noticed some dates carved into the rock, "1834" and so on. Feeling irritated at this apparent necessity to write on the rock, I then scanned the wonderful panorama, 360 degrees, uninterrupted. Perched on the summit, again I noticed dates, and feeling annoyed, my mind turned backward, to an American past, which began "speaking" to me. This, indeed, was exactly the spot where Thoreau walked, exactly where his annoyance had been similarly aroused, because of the chink-chink of hammers on rock. Emerson also walked here, energized by this wonderful place. Yes, indeed, at this very place! After returning from the climb, I monitored uses of the place-name, Mount Monadnock, that I and my cohorts sometimes invoked. I began speaking and hearing in our words, not just a vivid physical picture, a looking outward into a space, but also the voices of ancestors dear to me, a looking backward into time. And further, upon invoking this and similar place-names, I felt specific moral precepts about nature, how it can and should be known, about us, how we can (and should) act within it, and about how the doings of both affect each other. In short, place-names (and these can include names of street corners as well as ridge tops) can provide powerful expressive means and meanings, and when invoked they do indeed ignite natural and cultural processes. There is great communicative work, a cultivation of nature and culture, getting done with place-names in particular and with communicative practices generally.

Like place-naming practices, other expressive forms or genres of communication explicitly identify "the natural." These forms are various and cannot be rigidly classified, since their parameters are by definition subject to cultural variability. The common link among these forms is a referential function of com-

munication; that is, each form requires for its expressive power a particular relation between a word-phrase-image and a thing of the physical world. I wish therefore to cast a large net in order to include all communicative resources that are used to symbolize nature, thereby drawing attention to what might be called ethno-physical nomenclature, such as place-names and regional names (e.g., Takaki, 1984), local nomenclature of habitat, plants, and animals (e.g., Carbaugh, 1992, 1996), culturally loaded vocabulary for the body (e.g., White & Kirkpatrick, 1985), landscape paintings (e.g., Mulvey, 1983), landscape poetry, films, and so on. Considered most comprehensively, such phenomena would include the expressive forms that people use to render intelligible what Burke called "the sheerly natural" (I 966, p. 373). Particular studies are suggested that focus on one phenomenon or another (e.g., place-naming or body-naming), or within a phenomenon (e.g., local nomenclature for habitat) a particularly telling instance (e.g., the spotted owl) (see Lange, 1992).

When communicative forms such as these are used, local and natural meanings are being radiated, and when social interaction carries forth unproblematically, a coherent statement about nature and culture is achieved. Coherence is "what participants hear (though generally they fail to notice it] when their work is going well" (Basso, 1989, p. 107), such as the meanings aroused when a natural resource, such as Mount Monadnock, is invoked. Three general functions of communication are foregrounded when nature is explicitly symbolized through such forms. These include, but arc not necessarily limited to, the depictive, the cultural, and the social.

With regard to the depictive (cf. Ellis, 1983, pp. 229–31), some symbolic constructions function partially to portray (but never merely to represent) some aspect of the physical world, and that portrayal is always partial and selective. To create a vision with words or images is always to do so in one way rather than others. To mention Mount Monadnock, the timber wolf, or the human body is to focus a view, highlighting one image over possible others. Saying that such images are never merely re-presentational is an effort to highlight an ontological belief: communicative practices as natural and cultural phenomena are symbolic, and as such, they select from, locally design, and create particular senses of "the natural," suggesting particular configurations of attitudes and actions toward the natural and cultural, rather than possible others. Emerson's dictum perhaps says it best: "We know more from nature than we can at will communicate" (1987, p. 19). But communicate in and about nature we do, and in so doing we depict some things rather than others, cultivate some senses of that world, and of being with that world, while muting and deflecting others (the others including the "more" to which Emerson refers). This is the depictive function of communicative practices that is ever-present in all languages but is especially aroused when certain emotionally charged, sometimes physical, items are being explicitly symbolized, and being symbolized with.

I use the cultural function as a way of building upon and extending the depictive, thus placing it within a larger symbolic context of meaning-making (Carbaugh, 1989, 1990, 1993; Philipsen, 1987). The cultural suggests that "radiat-

ing" from the use of symbolic practices is a larger, historically grounded, multi-voiced semantic system of shared sentiments about what is and what ought to be (Carbaugh, 1988). This symbolic system and its parts, in my view, are always essentially contestable, and they suggest questions: What must be believed about nature, the person, social activities, relations, and emotion for this saying to be efficacious? What unspoken consensus must be present, for this imaging practice to have its local force? Thus, while the depictive function draws attention to a specific relation of an item with time and space, the cultural highlights the larger symbolic system, an ethos, of which the image is one particular part. Interpreting "cultural" messages thus may lead investigations in various directions (the particulars of which need to be discovered in each case), including discourses about religion (as in Emerson), about science (as in biology), about business (as with the continual oil spills), and so on, with each invoking shared Premises about nature, what it is and should be, about persons, what they are and should or should not be, and about social life, the modes of action and relations that should or should not be (Carbaugh, 1990).

I have already invoked the social function. The social invites questions about the actual, interactionat contexts of communication, about the places in which coherent ideational (and interactional) work is getting done. One might ask: How is it that the use of natural symbols not only depicts physical worlds but also positions people in specific human activities, creating identities (of present and nonpresent others), social relations (especially political allies and alliances), and patterns of action (structuring ways of living with nature)? In short, the social draws attention to exact social scenes where people act, how they act and cast shadows of place there (e.g., are they interpersonally, institutionally based), how they are related to each other (e.g., equal to unequal, close to distant), and the modes of action they cultivate together (e.g., cooperative, competitive).

To summarize the argument so far: Communication occurs in natural and cultural space, creates senses of that space, is consequential for that space, but varies by people, place, and time. Particular communicative forms are used that symbolize nature and culture, like place, animal, plant, and body names; these are used and interpreted culturally in order to accomplish multiple purposes. These purposes include, but are not necessarily limited to, the depictive, the cultural, and the social.

A Conceptual Framework Grounded in Place

Suggested above is an approach to and functional elements of a naturalistic study of environmental communication. Such a study would address the general problem of the relationship between communication, nature, and culture, would do so in full view of the natural and cultural dimensions and devices of communication, and would suggest responding with an anguished study of symbol use, anguished because of a constant attentiveness not only to communicative symbols, especially the use of words and images, but moreover to both the natural world consequences of those symbolic expressions and the cultural processes

being cultivated in their use. Concepts such as context, symbol. code, discourse, and culture should help elaborate such a view. I discuss them here briefly, then apply them to two different sites of environmental communication.

With regard to *context,* suggested is the anchoring of studies both in rich descriptions of specific physical places and in descriptions of actual communication practices being used by particular people in these places. Where, generally and specifically, is this natural communicative practice being used! By and for whom? The physical setting, scene, participants (speaker, immediate and potential audiences), and topics of discussion provide important contextual information with regard to the natural processes, as well as the socially expressive means and the meanings associated with them (Hymes, 1972).

The concept *symbol* is fundamental. It is the basic material of expression, a strong toehold in situated communicative practices. As exemplified above with Apache sayings and the Mount Monadnock example, each such meansaffords a partial view (or hearing), a reflection, selection, accentuation, and deflection of reality (Burke, 1966, p. 45). In this sense, natural symbols, at least on some occasions, are potent expressive means, consisting of basic words and/or phrases and/or images, terms and/or tropes (metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, etc.) that amplify sense in some directions, while muting others. The use derives from Kenneth Burke (1966) and is developed by Clifford Geertz (1973, esp. p. 89), with reviews and demonstrations appearing elsewhere (Carbaugh, 1988, I 996).

Symbols, though, are significant only within natural environments and larger systems of practices, within physical places and the clusters of symbol,, contrastive agons, and mediating terms used there. To interpret these natural systerns, the concept of *code* is useful. What symbols, along with their discursive meanings, cluster together in this place, for these purposes? The concept of code suggests interpreting any given symbol as part of a larger natural and symbolic system, pointing to comparisons (e.g., *eagle* versus *bear* as suggesting a coding of wildlife), contrasts (e.g., *eagle* versus *bear* as a coding of international conflict, the United States versus the Soviet Union), agonistic relations, and perhaps even their mediation by an epitomizing symbol (e.g., *negotiation* as a solution to international disputes). Such an analysis unveils beliefs of existence and values in the things that are naturally "said," what they suggest both about nature's ways and the ways of living with it. The term *coding* is useful here in order to move from assessments of structural relations (as with code) to modes of action (or how codes get practiced, constrained, and/or transformed ill social scenes over time). This view of symbolic practices thus provides access to a worded world, just as the above focus on context provides access to the physical place in which it plays a consequential role. Both are essential for a balanced view, a view with a double allegiance to natural and cultural processes, bringing into communication both nature's ways and ways of living with it (Carbaugh, 1992).

Of course, any image from nature, or a symbolic expression of it (e.g., the term "Rocky Mountains"), might play a role in various places and codes of life. Living in some natural and cultural contexts suggests some ways of coding and cultivating nature more than others. Identifying a possible range of coding practices

associated with such places would help give some sense to the multivocal, polyphonous quality of these practices in nature and community, tracing the multi-faceted role of the item within and across the contexts of social life (Rakhtin, 1986).

Any item or symbol, and the natural and cultural codes of which it plays (a) part(s), may thus be arranged into larger units or *discourses,* or systems of symbols and codes. These can be defined variously, as, for example, along topical, actional, and/or affiliativc lines, that is, by content, by the force of the action, and/or by social alliances and separations. For example, *eagle, winter wren,* and *raven* can play a role in a coding of bird life, which, when taken together with habitat (e.g., sugar maple, lodgepole pine) and topography (e.g.. Mount Monadnock, Lake Sunapee), constitute a (partial) community and discourse of wilderness, defined topically. Other discursive communities, defined actionally, suggest ways in which expressive means arc used to celebrate, antagonize, revolutionize, persuade, and so on. Defined affiliatively, one draws attention to the aspects of communities and codes that unite members (e.g., an epideictic discourse), separate one group from others (e.g., an oppositional discourse), stratify into constituencies, and perhaps arrange each subgroup within an overall hierarchy (e.g., a positional discourse), and so on. The point here is that the interpretation may lead in various directions, each to be discovered in situ, given the local design of such systems. In this sense, critically exploring a community of symbolic practices in their natural and cultural scenes, through concepts of codes and discourses, provides less by way of what will be found, more by way of looking and listening. It is a sensitizing more than a definitive conceptual approach, a general way to ask about the meaningful use of, for example, an image in context, more than a "thing" to posit in advance and therefore "find."

This leads eventually to a view of *culture* as a system of symbols, codes of expression, and the grand and supersensible discourses it creatively implicates. It is a system molded within and to context, a somewhat coherent set of practices that are consequential for nature, with its primary toehold in highly situated, socially constituted, mutually acted, and individually applied communicative practices.

Given these dimensions, functions, phenomena, and framework, we might then ask: What is the nature of the communal conversation in which "the environment" is expressed (conceived and evaluated)? Let us turn now to two brief demonstrations of environmental communication in which a keen sense of place (natural and cultural) is being created. The main objective of the demonstrations is to treat natural place as part of cultural communicative practices. The objective is analogous to the recent efforts in environmental advocacy to move from treatments of single entities (e.g., species, acts) to communities (e.g., ecosystems, places).

Green Roots in Finland

In midwinter, a few weeks after arriving in Finland, I took my five-year-old twin sons to a public swimming pool.[2] After being delightfully impressed by the quality of the public facility, we walked into the locker room area for men and

proceeded to undress and put on our swimsuits. Because of our excitement to get into the water, we did not notice others around us as we rushed to the pool. After swimming, however, we came back into the locker room, and being less in a hurry, we found the showers arranged not in private stalls but in an open row. As we undressed by a shower, I looked by "our" shower for a place to hang our wet suits. Not finding any, I realized that if I wanted to hang up our wet suits, I needed to walk across the rather open locker room to the pegs set aside in one common place for the suits. As I walked to the pegs, I noticed that several men were standing upright, naked, arms across their chests, talking. Others were chatting similarly, with a foot propped up on a bench. Still others, *au naturel,* walked around to sinks, brushed hair, washed, went to sauna, and so on.

As my sons and I showered and went to sauna and then showered again, we noticed the extent to which the Finnish body was being used somewhat differently in public, at least differently from whdt we were accustomed to seeing (and doing) in the United States. We were part of a scene in which a rather matter-of-fact naturalness was being foregrounded. The delightful taken-for-granted quality oi it all was striking, as one so often finds when confronting a different cultural world. Reflections were created in two directions as we got dressed. One set concerned our new environment in Finland, which, in turn, brought to mind our more familiar ways in the United States. I realized that I was "naturally" turning away from the view of others to hide myself from them, a gesture my Finnish contemporaries did not share.

Similarly, a few weeks later, while attending a wonderful "smoke" sauna where women and men used the same facility but at different times, I saw a large window overlooking a striking lake and forest scene. On the periphery was a hole in the lake ice where men and women could cool their bodies after the hot sauna. That this part of the scene was within public view, that some men and women proceeded in view to plunge through the cold water, and that this was all rather common fare for Finns was evident. Further, upon walking the public spaces of Finland, Americans at least are struck by some of the poster art, sometimes in the form of advertisements, that displays images of all parts of the body subtly, naturally. One poster presented men, two young and one middle-aged, nude, upright, in full profile, on a lakeshore, examining the scene, apparently ready IO take a plunge. Another image showed a young woman, hands folded across her chest, hut thereby accentuating, rather than hiding, her nipples.

This use of the body is a form of cultural expression and is, I think, tied to important Finnish codes. My point, of course, is not that all Finns "exhibit themselves"—as Americans have put it-in locker rooms or public saunas, or that they always display frontal nudity in their artwork. My point is that in Finland, one can notice such things being done as a part of routine life, and no Finn takes particular notice of such things. Finnish cultural meanings are invoked, some of which implicate cultural themes of naturalness, simplicity, and strength. As one Finn put it: "The body that requires no elaboration communicates strength."

Naturalness here has something to do with a public matter-of-factness, acknowledging the intrinsic quality of things as they are, and their limits, and is thus

a part of a larger theme of modesty. Naturalness in this sense is opposed to artificialness as something made, civilized, borrowed, or seeking to become other than it is. Being natural is in this sense an affirmation of an unspoiled, sometimes holy (related especially to the sauna ritual), wild, even rural sense of being. Naturalness, in this way, implicitly de-emphasizes the unnatural, more civilized accoutrements of refined urban living, social stratifications, class distinctions, or luxurious "things." Foregrounded and valued is the simple matter-of-fact, limited, natural being, against its social corruption. As a Finnish woman said of being nude in sauna with various people: "You are a human being, plain and simple, no pretense."

Simplicity elaborates these meanings as it emphasizes and morally affirms a minimalist and noble attitude of getting by naturally, simply, with commonsense. An air of elegance and plainness of style (notable also in Finnish design) is even apparent as one uses no more than is necessary to get the job done. A sense of strength integrates the natural and the simple and resonates with a rather agrarian past (and present). One ably inhabits rather harsh conditions (e.g., the hot, steamy sauna or the cold winter water and air), preferably with the simple and natural means that are available (e.g., the body).

This coding of the body as natural, simple, strong, is presumed and expressed in some public scenes and is part of many discourses of Finnish culture. Perhaps this coding is also most forcefully evident, albeit through a different symbol, as Finns describe and inhabit the summer cottage, an institution of Finnish life, a place set aside, ideally, for cultivating the simple, natural, hearty aspects of Finnish character.

Finland, a country of about 4.5 million people, has about 350,000 summer cottages, second homes used for summer holidays (Julkunen & Kuusamo, 1991, p. 217). Estimates are that two of three Finns have access to a summer cottage, and during June and July cities are quite empty as Finns migrate to their cottages. The image of the summer home is tied intimately to the landscape: the ideal cottage is perched on a slight hill or rise, in the forest, next to a lake. That the image is tied to the landscape, and the landscape to Finnish character, is a deep historical taproot of Finnish ways. A Finnish historian commented: "Finland's nationalism and identity were not based on history. .[but on] a romantic infatuation with the landscape" (Klinge, 1992, p. 67).

In fact, the 1800s, the crystallizing era of Finnish nationalism, were replete with landscape art, poetry, and literature in which Finnish character is tied closely to the land, forests, and lakes. With even a short exposure to Finland, one sees and hears the prominence of "nature" to Finns. In the early 1900s, as Finns acquired material wealth through industrialization, many purchased summer cottages in order periodically to escape the communal living arrangements in urban industrial life. Returning to the forest, to "nature," one could cultivate the deeper, historically grounded values of simplicity, naturalness, and heartiness.

In the present, one can hear sprinkled into Finnish speech the place of the summer cottage and landscape. One woman was describing Finnish history and making the point that Finns have "always" been in the area now known as Finland by linking the people to their land and linking that land to the summer cottage:

Wc Finns, she said, "arc grounded in our rocks, forests, and lakes. Y'know, we have the oldest rocks in the world here." A few seconds later, when discussing her summer cottage, she said: "Under each corner of the house are rocks stacked on other big rocks, and there the house sits." The Finns and their land are steadfast as rock, strong and enduring, in their natural home, with this strong and natural life tied to simple and modest living in a potent place, the summer cottage. Through these words and images one can hear a national and natural character, a landscape and locale, a simple and situated place for the hearty.

Another woman described her summer cottage, saying: "It's important for Finns to have the summer cottage, a place to be with nature." A man said of his: "It's on a hill, overlooking the lake, about two acres' worth." He smiled broadly. "And of course the sauna, an old sauna by the Lake, with the trees and water around, sitting in there quietly, peacefully, with the birds singing. Nothing beats it." A woman noted similarly: "We Finns live very close to nature. .we go to the sauna for peace, quietness, refreshment mentally. We expect to come out feeling better." A recent five-part video by Finns on "how to become a Finn" contains much footage of the summer cottage, lakes, lakeshores, and water.

What I attempt to draw attention to here is the use of the body, the summer cottage, and the sauna as symbols of expression and to suggest that part of what is getting expressed with these symbols is a deep root and code of Finnish character. The expressions are grounded through uses of a particular landscape (the rocks, forests, lakes), situated with the summer cottage (and sauna), with the body used sometimes similarly. These images and forms of action create physical sites through which a simple, natural, hearty life is lived. Through these Finnish symbols and meanings, that are both of and about a place, potent images of life are conducted (with the body) and portrayed (with the summer cottage symbols). Through symbolic acts and expressions such as these, one is guided to living in place in a simple, natural, and hearty way, living an environment both naturally and culturally.

With these localizing expressions and codes, then, one can begin feeling, hearing, and seeing Finnish links between body and place, between patterns ot living and locations, between being in and being as an environment. As the body can become a natural, simple site of unadorned being, so one can inhabit a natural site, the summer cottage (or sauna) in which natural energies can be restored, simple living conducted, a heartiness of soul nurtured. As the favored physical places of the society are celebrated, so too is the body conceived, as a site of and for being in place. That the attitudes of naturalness and simplicity, as well as modesty and limits, are associated with these routine practices, and that these attitudes provide some cultural bases for living, should be better understood. Environmental discourses, conceived culturally, penetrate routine living, and as they do so, they create ways of inhabiting, being with, and being part of nature's places.

A recent study of forest management in Finland, under the interesting title "The Forest and the Finns," begins a special section by saying: "The forests and trees have not only provided material sustenance hut at the same time many beliefs have been linked with their use" (Reunala, 1989, p. 51). The essay goes on to

describe the Finnish folk image of a "world tree" that supports the firmament of life, a belief that results in the preservation in timbered areas of special "memorial trees" as life-sustaining sites of both material and moral good fortune. Such a practice is yet another example of life conducted, as it were, close to the ground, a simple practice of naturalistic thinking, a source for the preservation of hearty living. It also anchors cultural reactions against clear-cutting and other forest management practices that exploit this place and its people.[3]

The cumulative effect of these symbols, codes, and discourses for Finns is, I believe, a pronounced minimizing of the distance between some everyday communicative practices and, as Finns put it, "nature's" processes. In other words, when they are lived, the practices create very little space between rhese symbolic forms and the physical environment. Just as the sauna historically was used as a sacred place for birthing and for cleansing the dead, so today the sauna, the summer cottage, and some forms of bodily conduct help keep Finnish life rather close to nature's ways. That Finnish communication cultivates such a link, and that the Finnish policies for living draw upon such links, should not go unnoticed. For through such symbols, forms, and codes, a naturalness, a simple strength, is being nurtured, in and of its space, of body and place.

Green Writing

We have focused our attention on communication patterns that cover visual images, routine conduct, and spoken comments by Finns. These patterns were identified, then interpreted, as depictive and cultural codes that established a particular-that is, a Finnish-relationship with natural space. Now we turn our attention to communication patterns that pervade a print medium by exploring one written text in detail. My objective here is simply to suggest how some features of a single text can be treated as richly depictive, cultural communicative resources.

This focal text is a journalistic article that appeared in the magazine *Wilderness*, a quarterly created for members of the Wilderness Society but also available to the general public. The magazine states the objectives of the society: "The Wilderness Society, founded in 1935, is a non-profit membership organization devoted to preserving wilderness and wildlife, protecting America's prime forests, parks, rivers, deserts, and shore lands, and fostering an American land ethic." The particular issue from which our text was taken is entitled "Saving the Wildlands of New England-A Puzzle of Possibilities." Our text, "Whose Woods These Are" by Norman Boucher, is the first in a series of three articles on the subject. The glossy medium and the society's stated objectives thus "place" this text squarely, but not exclusively, with a "green" audience, since the society generally advocates "preserving wilderness and wildlife." I will focus on the first part of the article:

> At last, the woods. After everything I've heard, 1 was afraid they'd appear different this year. I was afraid that this spring the hobblebush would fail to flower, that the winter wren, having read the newspapers, would choose to hide in the Georgia mountains and skip the tiresome journey north. For months I have been reading

> dozens of reports and articles about these northern New England forests. For weeks I have been collecting opinions about what they are and what they're likely to become. In offices, motel rooms, restaurants, airplanes, and pickup trucks I have heard them sized up in such disparate images that I began to distrust my own memory, accumulated over two decades of happy scrambling at every season of the year. Finally, to escape this gloomy fog of confusion, I filled a pack and drove to the Percy Peaks, two isolated mountains in [the remote Nash Stream area ofj northern New Hampshire so close to the Quebec border that the locals say those who get lost there come out speaking French. I was seeking one of the dimmest, most poorly marked trails I could recall. I needed the illumination of wildness.. .]I did not know two years ago that even my modest wilderness ambitions were being squeezed. I didn't realize what would soon happen to the woods of this valley and would make them a notorious landscape, one whose fate could affect the future of much of the region's wildest places. The time of innocence was already ending; the idea of New England wilderness by any definition was inching closer to absurdity. Already, as I lingered watching ravens drift unconcerned above the Percy Peaks, Wall Street had come calling on Nash Stream. [Boucher, 1989, p.18]

Even a casual reading of this passage leads one to a very particular sense of Place. Created, on the one hand, is a sense of the Percy Peaks area, a remote area in northern New Hampshire, pristine, untouched, ravens quietly soaring, hut threatened! By what? Wall Street and the attendant gloom, confusion, and the disparate images that go with such a place. But of course there is more than this. Ways of living are being asserted: some are being nurtured, preserved; others are being criticized. There is clearly more here than "mountains" and "motel rooms." Yet how do we hear and see in this snippet of text, through these depictive symbols of nature, cultural messages at work? To begin, we might simply inquire about structural relations among symbols, with one preliminary eye toward a discourse of "wildness" and the other focused toward "Wall Street."

A discourse of wildness is signified here with several symbols. The use of the terms "the woods," "wildness," "New England wilderness," and "Nash Stream," as a "notorious landscape," all invoke a kind of place with which readers are assumed to be familiar, of which they can ably create images, and for which they would tight. But how, specifically, is this place symbolized, for present purposes? What specific objects are linguistically painted onto this cultural canvas? With what meanings?

Within this discourse of wildness at least three specific codes are activated explicitly. One concerns precise, valued images of habitat, such as "the woods," "northern New England forests," and "the hobblebush." Another creates valued images of wildlife, the bird life of "the winter wren" and "ravens." Thus we are offered some details of place through images of forests, plants, and birds. These codes of habitat and wildlife evoke common meanings-beliefs and values-about preserved lands, as being more or less pure, filled with free spaces for flight (by birds and people), set aside for their own value, creating, because of their pristine qualities, possibilities of human "illumination." A third code builds on images of a larger regional topography--"the Georgia mountains," "the Percy Peaks," "New Hamp-

shire," "Quebec" and the related "speaking French"-thus quickly saying something important about "wildness" as radically contextual (in a remote region of New Hampshire) but embracing something beyond state (Georgia to New Hampshire), national (United States to Canada), and linguistic (English to French) boundaries. Thus, the code of topography "speaks" of places conceived generally as different, but it does so by stressing their-from this point of view-often hidden and muted interdependencies. The discourse of wildness, so built, speaks of habitat, wildlife, and topography, evoking common meanings of purity, freedom, and interdependencies and affording valued opportunities for "illumination."

Placed against this discourse, and developed in a characteristically polemical fashion, is what might be called a discourse of development. While not elaborated to the same degree as the discourse of wildness, suggested are elements of its own habitat, "offices, motel rooms, restaurants, airplanes, and pickup trucks," its own form of life, "disparate images," which result in a "gloomy fog of confusion," all-at this point-somewhat weakly associated with "Wall Street."

A third discourse identifies a relationship between wildness and development. Playing "wildness" against "development" creates both a fear of change ("afraid [the woods would] appear different") and an anxiety over movement from the "innocence"of wildness to the "absurdity" of development. In short, the old alarm is sounded: "wildness" is succumbing to "development," invoking a call to arms for allies and readers to be readied for battle. Yet again, the one seemingly uncontrollable mode of action (development) needs to be combated by another (preservation). So far as this goes, and at this level, the discourse reveals a familiar tune or plot line.

But what is familiar in it? And is this discourse preserving a discursive system that itself needs to be developed? Do the contents, propositions, oppositions, and morals of this discursive system (preservation over development) constrain its ability to transform environmental issues (e.g., the development of preservation discourse)? Are the traditional expressive means of nature operating to preserve the very problems they seek to solve?

My response is, well, yes and no. As for the affirmative, the primary depictive messages involve images of wildness as static, innocent, tranquil, and above all "natural." The "other" place is Wall Street and is characterized by toxic, cancerous growth, greed, jaded activity, and above all, in the sense of a learned and manufactured form of life, "culture." At this level, the depicted images speak cultural messages: they exploit and reproduce a fundamental opposition in American culture, nature versus culture (and the related polemic of theism/atheism). Nature here is God-made, given and pure. Culture is man-made, and a fall from grace. Such oppositions as these run very deep and are, if not literally present in the words of this text, hearable in its symbolic meanings. It is precisely these kinds of semantic structurings, among other things, that a cultural interpretation can expose: that is, a deeper hearing of such patterns that are typically presumed, unquestioned, and constitutive parts of the deeper meanings of the text.

Some elaborations of this theme should demonstrate the point further. Several possible cultural meanings may be brought to this and similarly structured

texts, including-building on the above-oppositional themes of religious discourse (e.g., the saved environmentalist versus the sinner developer), of purity versus pollution, or spirituality versus immorality. Related are discourses that relate such cultural Places to fortns of action, making wilderness a place for rejuvenation and illumination, the other a place for exhaustion, confusion, and exploitation. A similar contrast basic to many American lives is the separation, and felt tension, between a sense of play and of work, which when combined with its Puritan roots yields a work hard, play hard syndrome. In our present text, this cultural theme becomes very interesting as the one group's playground is the site of the other's work. With regard to ownership, there are explicit overtones, in wildness, of the public good for the many, whereas *development* connotes the private interests of the one or the few. The latter triumph of private interests over the public good sounds themes of exploitation, pollution, immorality: the intrinsic corrupt(ible) nature of "cultural" institutions is immediately asserted and presumed. The Wild West confronts the Establishment East, and so on. All such sytnbolic oppositions raise a fundamental question of what it means to be a cultural actor, of what it means to be in natural places, suggesting responses in different moral discourses: one responds with meanings of purity, enlightenment, a union with nature, the other with meanings of corporate identity, exploitation, and multiple uses of nature.

The Point here is not to give a comprehensive listing of discourses that come to bear on this communal conversation but rather to suggest some that may repay deeper analysis and interpretation. Indeed, part of the necessary work in cultural interpretation is the discovery of the most powerful discourses whose crisscrossing continua create the complexity of communication in cultural "tests" like this one. With regard to this written snippet, perhaps the above commentary suggests some leading candidates.

Concerning the social functions of this text, two faces are presented and agonistically related, with the agon resolved by praising the one. The face presented is that of the environmental advocate who strives against tremendous odds and almost overwhelming fiscal resources to preserve and protect wilderness and wildlife. The face attributed to the other is that of the greedy developer, the immoral profit mongerer, out to satisfy insatiable personal needs at considerable costs to others. In case the reader is unconvinced or unfamiliar with the latter type, the next paragraph in the article tells of Sir James Goldsmith, a "flamboyant" owner of a pulp and paper business, Diamond International Corporation. Goldsmith is described as an uneducated "crank" who "commuted between a wife in Paris and a mistress in London, fathering children with each." The story eventually gets quite complicated, with "the government" mediating between these two faces-groups, all in the name of what locals in northern New England call the working forest (Boucher, 1989). The struggle between the groups, as far as the discourse goes, tells of two peoples, one doing immoral work in the other's playground, the other recklessly playing around with the hard workings of locals. So constructed, the relationships portrayed are ones of strain and stress, and the primary mode of action is competition. The resolution offered is clear: Praise the preservationist, and damn the developer.

A full-blown analysis of the intricacies involved in this discursive production, as a cultural creation, would highlight the subtleties and depth of the communication. It would enable the reader to hold up for scrutiny the particular symbols, codes, anddiscourses being typically used but not typically scrutinized. This is a basic task ofcultural study: to render scrutable that which is typically inscrutable. Once this is done, once the basic cultural discourses and oppositional faces are exposed, one is placed better to identify and assess the senses of place of which the discourses and faces are apart, as well as the discursive constructions being cultivated.

In the process, we can understand better how we reproduce our own well-worn ways and how we can create anew. In this regard, note how the term *working forest,* used by locals in the northern New England woods, stands at the borders of the two discourses. Themes of each are brought to bear and creatively played out. It is telling that the people who live closest to the issues have devised an expressive means able to embrace and express oppositions that for others, living elsewhere, are nearly impossible to integrate.

A similar dynamic, another effort at cultural creation or cultural integration, moves beyond these often impenetrable oppositions and concerns the general perspective being suggested here itself. How does one identify and redress old, tired tangles like those of nature versus culture? How does one design discourses able to transform old problems, in newly productive ways? The naturalistic approach advanced here is one such effort, an effort to hear (sense, see, feel) natural and cultural process in communication practices, to "hear" in the cultural the creation of nature, and to "see" in nature a culture at work. The approach seeks practical, as well as theoretical, goals.

In a single text like the *Wilderness* article, there lurk large natural and cultural meanings. From the familiar symbols of expression, to codes, to discourses, to competing faces, to tired ideological tangles-all become woven into rather routine practices of environmental communication. As we unveil the inner workings of these, we can, one hopes, become less habitual in their use and more able to enrich our knowledge about various places, of nature and culture.

Environmental Communication as the Creation of Natural and Cultural Place

By inquiring at the nexus of natural space and communicative processes, by arguing for a multifunctionally based interpretive and critical framework, and by briefly suggesting paths of inquiry around socially grounded texts, I hope to have shown some of the promise in a naturalistic approach to environmental commu-Cation. Surely there is much more to be said and much work that needs to be done. Of special importance is the grappling with highly particular, socially situated, symbolically constructed images in place. Specific case studies that trace the patterned use and interpretation of nature in communication and community are essential. This chapter suggests some movements in that direction, with Basso's 1989 study being exemplary. Such studies would enable a comparative assessment regarding available means for conceiving of, and evaluating, natural space, local

meaning systems, and the attendant attitudes that these cultivate, and constrain (for some examples, see Bird, 1987; Bird-David, 1990; Callicott &Ames, 1988; Cox, 1973; Glacken, 1967; Hastrup, 1989; Ingold, in press; Myers, 1986; Rolston, 1987; Swagerty, 1984; Willis, 1990). Also, such studies should lead us to see our own taken-for-granted ways anew and to reflect upon them, freeing us from entangled webs we have helped to weave.

In the process, we shall be able better to respond to fundamental questions about communication, culture, and nature: How is natural space conventionally symbolized? What do these symbolic processes enable, and constrain, as situated social living? Are we reproducing and reconstituting troubles we seek to remedy? Or are we changing for the better the natural conditions, of nature and culture, in which we speak?

Notes

1. I want to include as "nature" and "natural space" all possible physical place and thus, following Roderick Nash, to include "a spectrum of conditions or environments ranging from the purely wild on the one end to the purely civilized on the other—from the primeval to the paved. This idea of a scale between two poles is useful because it implies the notion of shading or blending. Wilderness and civilization become antipodal influences which combine in varying proportions to determine the character of an area. In the middle portions of the spectrum is the rural or pastoral environment (the ploughed) that represents a balance of the focus of nature and man. As one moves toward the wilderness pole from this midpoint, the human influence appears less frequently. In this part of the scale civilization exists as an outpost in the wilderness, as on a frontier. On the other side of the rural range, the degree to which humanity affects nature increases. Finally, close to thr pole of civilization, the natural setting that the wild and rural conditions share gives way to the purely synthetic condition that exists in a metropolis" (Nash, 1982, p. 6). Further, in this chapter I am particularly Interested in the ways the dimension proposed here (or something like it) is conceived and expressed, related to actual natural worlds, and the ways different points on this spectrum are creatively invoked in the communication practices of distinctwe human communities.

2. This report from Finland is based on fieldwork conducted during November 1992 and January–August 1993. The report is very preliminary and intended only as a demonstration of some of the possibilities of the approach advanced above. In the process, I am not trying to advocate that readers become Finns. I am trying simply to demonstrate that we can explore corners of life—typically untended—in which environmental-natural attitudes can be found. Such a study stands at the nexus of culture, nature, and communication, of natural and social studies, and can help provide an integrative view into environmental discourses. Offered in turn is a grounding of advocacy in the grass roots of local living.

3. These themes are portrayed visually and profoundly in the 1893 painting *Burning the Forest Clearing (The Wage Slaves)*, by the Finnish landscape artist Ecro Jarnefelt. The images provided critical commentary on both the unfair labor practices of "slaves" (especially through the image of a young girl) and the "slash and burn" agricultural method at a time when the advantages and disadvantages of the method were being publicly debated (see Valkonen, 1992, 72–88).

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