

Whose landscape? A political ecology of the ‘exurban’ Sierra

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In rural places that sit at the uneasy crossroads between ‘traditional’ natural resource-based production and ‘new’ economies and cultures of aesthetic landscape ‘consumption’, ideas of landscape become increasingly important and contested. This paper examines one such conflict in Nevada County, California – a former mining and ranching community in the Sierra Nevada that has experienced rapid ‘exurban’ in-migration and gentrification. In-migrants brought with them particular ‘aesthetic’ or ‘consumption’ views of landscape that long-time residents with continuing ties to the ‘old’ production landscape viewed as political threats. These tensions have recently ignited a political firestorm over a proposal by the environmentalist-dominated county government to incorporate landscape-scale aesthetic and environmental principles into county planning. The ferocity of this contest reflects the multiple issues at stake, including competition between different forms of rural capitalism, class conflict and social control, and cultural frictions. At each level of this multi-tiered conflict, ideas of landscape are key. Together, political ecology and new cultural geographical studies of landscape provide powerful insights into the ways that the politics of landscape – revolving around the question of who ‘owns’ the landscape or decides how it ‘should’ look – become a pivotal node in the shifting human–environment dialectic.

The charming landscape which I saw this morning, is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1849)¹

Landscapes become possessions for those with the wealth and power to control them. (Jim Duncan and Nancy Duncan, 2001)²

The day after a blistering 4th of July holiday in 2001, proponents of a county-wide biotic inventory and open space protection project called Natural Heritage 2020³ sat before a heated audience in Nevada City, the county seat of Nevada County, California – a former mining area in the ‘Gold Country’ of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Reflecting the county’s population, most in the room were ‘exurban’ professionals who migrated to Nevada County because of its scenic beauty, open spaces and cultural history. Faced with continuing in-migration and rural residential growth, most would agree on the need

to preserve certain 'rural qualities'. Yet the proponents of 'NH 2020' were clearly on the defensive. One project founder explained, as she had in many similarly heated public meetings: 'The purpose of NH 2020 is to do large landscape planning . . . to look into the future and gauge where we might be heading and be smart about how we protect our natural assets, our social assets, and our financial assets over the long term so we protect our rural quality.' The careful words elicited little response from the audience. A robust, grey-haired rancher took the microphone and, refusing to follow protocol requests from the League of Women Voters moderator, began an emotional denunciation of NH 2020, including the complaint:

We didn't use to have committees to tell us what to do [with our land] . . . Now we have all these people telling us just how great we're going to make it for you. 'We're [county government] going to do this for you, we're going to do that for you.' And when it comes time to sell, well, 'We'll buy it from you [as a park or open space].' But now there's a little catch. 'We'll give you market value and maybe you paid \$65,000 and you're selling it for \$400,000; well, we'll give you the \$65,000, but we'd like you to donate the balance to the wonderful Earth Charter.' By the way, [former Soviet leader Mikhail] Gorbachev runs that. All this crap's coming out of there . . .

The rancher's diatribe was met with raucous applause, and another demand for order from the moderator.

The assembled county officials and leaders of Natural Heritage 2020 were accustomed to rowdy audiences, including accusations of planning to confiscate property at the behest of a global environmental and communist conspiracy. Approved by the Nevada County Board of Supervisors in May 2000, NH 2020 was intended as a community-based, participatory effort to respond to the perceived risk of 'losing the natural and scenic qualities that distinguish [Nevada County] from other more urbanized regions of the state and country'.⁴ In a county dominated demographically and economically by exurban immigrants who came for just these qualities, NH 2020 might have been expected to raise little controversy. Instead, the programme split the county. Acrimonious rhetoric emerged on a daily basis in public meetings, editorial pages and activist meetings. Key proponents and their families were threatened with violence.⁵

The battle over NH 2020 is emblematic of conflicts throughout the rural United States in the past few decades, reflecting broader social, cultural and economic changes.⁶ Among these – and embedded within the fight over NH 2020 – are conflicts between competing forms of rural capitalism, conflicts over property rights and social control, and cultural frictions. Integral to these contests is the competition between differing ideas of *landscape*. In rural places that sit at the uneasy crossroads between 'traditional' natural resource-based production and 'new' economies and cultures of aesthetic landscape 'consumption', ideas of landscape become increasingly important and contested. This article examines the ways in which ideas of landscape in Nevada County have become deeply politicized, shaping future trajectories of change.

We draw insights from two broad areas of research in human geography – political ecology and cultural geographic studies of landscape. We utilize a central theme of political ecology: the 'constantly shifting dialectic' between society and the natural environment.⁷ We suggest that the politics of landscape represent a pivotal node in this shifting dialectic. We emphasize that 'local' politics are shaped by broader economic,

social, and environmental forces – concurring with Paul Robbins's observation that political ecology is most distinctive and powerful when it 'ascends in explanation from the site of environmental interaction through scales of individuals, households, communities, regions, and states'.⁸ We also concur that, with its recent 'post-structural' turn,⁹ political economy has receded too far into the background in political ecology.¹⁰ Thus, we suggest that in Nevada County 'local' conflicts over landscape can only be meaningfully understood in the context of structural processes that set the stage for certain environmental conflicts, and play a central (but not determining) role in their outcomes.

However, having typically focused on conflicts over access and control of natural resources, neither 'structural' nor 'post-structural' political ecology provides much guidance on the key question of landscape.¹¹ In increasingly gentrified and 'aestheticized' rural areas of the global north such as Nevada County, conflicts over landscape are of growing importance (seen, for example, in recent national-scale debates over 'rural sprawl' and 'smart growth'). Conflicts emerge particularly in places where economic and cultural value is being placed not on individual natural resources but on aesthetic and environmental values (such as 'viewshed' or 'rural quality') that derive from a totality of many individual landholdings. These are especially subject to dispute because 'ownership' of landscape qualities is often undefined. Deeply political contests emerge over the question of who will 'possess' or 'control' the landscape. Despite its strength in examining the multi-scale politics of resource control, political ecology has barely begun to examine the question of how landscape articulates with these approaches. We suggest that political ecologists (particularly as they shift attention northward¹²) have much to gain by engaging the 'new' cultural geographical studies of landscape that turn increased attention to the intersections among landscape, political economy and cultural politics (most often in the global north). We draw specifically upon this revitalized landscape literature in our discussion of the political ecology of landscape in Nevada County.

Landscape ideologies and politics in Nevada County

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountains . . . are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. (John Muir, 1898)¹³

This is a timber and mining community, and they want to change that, but that's what it is. (Native Nevada County logger, 2000)¹⁴

The 'Gold County' of the Sierra Nevada was 'seen' by most nineteenth-century Euro-Americans literally as El Dorado – a place of inexhaustible resources and unlimited potential for enrichment¹⁵ (an ideology that lives on in some respects today). During the Gold Rush, whole mountainsides were blasted away by hydraulic mining; many waterways were permanently choked and poisoned by mine tailings; and virtually every tree around major mining areas was cut for timber and firewood. The Native American population and much of the native flora and fauna were driven near extinction. The Sierra became

imprinted by a way of seeing the landscape associated with the dominant utilitarian and capitalist ideologies of the time.¹⁶

After the Gold Rush, Nevada County's landscape began a slow recovery. The county's population peaked in 1852 and, with a stagnant economy, dropped through much of the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁷ While many scars from the Gold Rush remain visible on the landscape today, with fire suppression, pressure from conservation groups and reduced population and economic activity, forest cover in much of the region increased.¹⁸ By the late 1950s commercial mining had all but ceased. By the 1960s Nevada County's landscape, still lightly populated, regained certain visual qualities attractive to a growing number of exurban migrants.¹⁹

With this revitalized landscape, a 'second Gold Rush' began in the 1960s and 1970s based on land speculation and rural residential development for 'exurban' in-migrants. Nevada County's population and the 'new' rural residential economy boomed.²⁰ Between 1970 and 2001, the population nearly quadrupled.²¹ The landscape began quickly to fill up with relatively small rural residential parcels. Ranchers and farmers sold land to developers for subdivision into smaller residential parcels (at prices previously unheard of in the county). We see this transition in our own longitudinal transect study of land use in Nevada County, in which we find the acreage of private land in the county under primarily residential use increasing from 30 per cent in 1957 to 70 per cent in 2001, with an almost equal decrease in agricultural land.²² Most of these residential landowners are migrants: in a survey using the same transect sample, by 2001–2 only 14 per cent of rural landowning households (or 22 per cent of adults responding) reported that they or their families first purchased land in Nevada County prior to 1968.²³

Changes in the county's economy reflect this change in land ownership. Today only a few dozen family-owned ranches and farms that existed prior to the residential land rush of the 1960s and 1970s are still economically active, and almost all ranchers and farmers rely on full or part-time off-farm jobs to make a living. Employment in agriculture, forestry and mining (together) in Nevada County dwindled to about 2 per cent of local jobs by 1998.²⁴ Employment shifted towards service and professional jobs oriented to the new rural residential economy.²⁵ Growth in the residential sector became the mainstay for many families who could no longer make a living in the natural resources sector. By contrast, many newcomers depend less on work in *any* form. The county's single largest source of income is 'dividends, interest and rent', which together with 'transfer payments to pensions' accounted for 45.2 per cent of income between 1998 and 2001.²⁶ In-migrants work primarily in service or professional jobs, including many who commute or telecommute to distant urban employment.²⁷ Thus, unlike earlier Euro-Americans who came seeking gold, timber or other natural resource jobs, the livelihoods of recent migrants tend to be weakly tied, if at all, to material production in the local landscape.

Largely attracted by scenic and rural qualities, and untied to local natural resource production, exurban migration contributed to a growing conflict over local landscape visions. Although many in-migrants engage in small-scale production activities (e.g. vineyards or horse farms), these are seen primarily as recreational activities ('locals' speak derisively of exurban 'hobby farmers'). Most recent migrants tend to see the landscape primarily as a place of 'natural' beauty and as a refuge from urban life.²⁸ In contrast, long-

time residents with continuing economic or cultural ties to the resource-based economy (with its roots in the Gold Rush era) still see the landscape primarily as a place of production.²⁹ The form of production may have changed (from, say, mining to real estate development), and ideologies of natural resource production have largely transformed into ideologies of development and growth; but the view of the local landscape as a source of production and livelihoods has largely remained.

These contrasting views have generated chronic political tensions. To many newcomers, the prospect of the diminution of the aesthetic qualities of the landscape through resource production or the 'suburbanization' of the county through growth has become a critical concern. To many long-time residents, the increasing pressure to curtail growth and the activities of the 'old' economy is seen as a grave threat to livelihoods and 'traditional' culture. Predictably, these differing positions have precipitated bitter conflicts about the future of the county's landscape.

Perhaps less predictably, by the mid-1990s a changing economy and culture in Nevada County brought a remarkable political transition that not only put questions of landscape front-and-centre in local politics but also held the prospect of a more radical departure from the county's tradition of production and growth than anyone inside or outside of the county might have imagined. With deep roots in county politics, the county's traditional 'growth machine'³⁰ had remained firmly in control of county politics through the 1980s. Leading the charge for growth were several influential timber, mining and farming families that had become key players (along with corporate developers such as the Boise Cascade Corporation) in the early large-scale residential developments in the county during the late 1960s and early 1970s.³¹

By the early 1990s, however, the political mix had changed, and concepts of landscape were central in the transition. A catalytic event came with the drafting of the county's 1995 General Plan. Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), counties are required to include in the General Plan procedures for mitigating the environmental impacts of development. Reflecting increased public interest in land use,³² in 1992 the Nevada County Planning Director established a citizen steering committee with representatives of major stakeholders, including major industries as well as environmental groups, to find ways to address the requirements of CEQA and other environmental laws in the 1995 Plan. Five hundred citizens volunteered for committee and sub-committee service. They produced recommendations that found common ground in what T. Duane describes as a 'vision for maintaining rural character and the quality of life that made Nevada County special', including specific limitations on the county's 'build out' population.³³ In February 1993, the growth-oriented Board of Supervisors dissolved the steering committee and all its subcommittees, and approved a plan that largely dismissed the citizen recommendations in favour of policies that fitted a pro-growth ideology.

The response from citizens whose recommendations were discarded by the Board was swift and dramatic. Most of those involved were educated 'exurban' professionals who had invested a great deal of time and effort. In the words of one member, 'We weren't used to being treated that way . . . so within a few days a few of us got together in Pioneer Park under a tree down by the band shell, and we said we've got to form a group and do something about this . . .'³⁴ The result was the Rural Quality Coalition (RQC), one of

a number of activist groups formed to preserve the county's quality of life. These groups campaigned vigorously against the pro-growth political establishment. In 1994, the first strong environmentalist candidate was elected to the Board of Supervisors. In 1998, the county's new politics culminated in the election of a four-to-one pro-environment majority to the Board. The 150-year grip on local political institutions by those representing a largely undiluted rural production ideology was broken.

Natural Heritage 2020

With the political changing of the guard in the late 1990s, the institutions of county government were opened for the first time to a fundamental revisioning of the county's future. This revisioning began in earnest in May 2000, when the new Board of Supervisors voted to begin the Natural Heritage 2020 project to identify and protect natural habitats and culturally valuable open spaces – a project specifically promoted as a *'vision for Nevada County'*³⁵ (our emphasis). The ensuing struggle over NH 2020 was the culmination of tensions resulting from a number of important transformations in Nevada County that by the early 1990s had generated intense political pressures converging around the question of landscape.

NH 2020 originated from language on habitat and open space management in the 1995 General Plan that was approved by the pro-growth majority on the Board of Supervisors at the time. However, the General Plan did not specify how these goals were to be achieved, and the Board allocated no funds to address these questions. When the new Board of Supervisors was elected in 1998, county officials obtained funding from the Packard Foundation, through a grant from the Sierra Business Council, to create the Natural Heritage 2020 project to assess how the county could implement the unfulfilled environmental language of the General Plan.

The new majority on the Board were sensitive to the politically charged nature of this task, and insisted (against the wishes of some staunch environmentalists) that the project be directed by citizen participation. For two years, NH 2020 consisted entirely of information gathering by scientists and volunteer citizen advisory committees. During this period no new policies or regulations were proposed. The project was promoted, in words that proponents would later greatly regret,³⁶ as an 'empty box' into which the community would put suggestions about forest practices, agriculture, recreation and open-space policies.

Environmentalist opponents of the participatory approach predicted that citizen involvement in landscape-scale planning would open a 'can of worms'³⁷ – words that would later seem scarcely adequate to describe the massive public rhetorical (and on occasion nearly physical) brawl that erupted. Proponents of NH 2020 had initially argued that a participatory approach 'generates more enduring solutions and helps to knit back together the frayed edges of our communities'³⁸ – a view that proved wildly optimistic. Indeed, the acrimony engendered by NH 2020 can hardly be exaggerated. The county was deluged with large billboards demanding 'No on NH 2020' (Figure 1). In July 2001, supervisor Izzy Martin, a co-founder of the project and its most visible proponent, barely survived a recall petition (Figure 2) replete with at times venomous rhetoric. Martin and



FIGURE 1 Anti-NH 2020 signs visually dominated the landscape. (Photo: Peter Walker.)

other proponents of NH 2020 were publicly denounced as (among other things) 'gang' members, 'communists', 'terrorist' sympathizers and, simply, 'evil'.³⁹ Rumours of death threats against proponents and even journalists circulated.⁴⁰

On 30 April 2002 Izzy Martin called for an end to NH 2020, citing the need to avoid 'tearing the community in half any more'.⁴¹ On 23 July 2002 the project ended with the presentation of recommendations to the Board. The citizens' advisory committees were dissolved, and unused funds returned to the general budget.⁴² The more ambitious open space and habitat management goals of the project were shelved. The goal of a community-based revisioning of the future of the county's landscape appeared, at least temporarily, abandoned. Echoing the views of many proponents, one of the founders of NH 2020 observed: 'We were very naive . . . we knew we would have a problem, but we didn't know it would be this big . . . no.'⁴³ Today, the question of *why* the NH 2020 conflict became so explosive is perhaps the most discussed political topic in Nevada County – and itself a matter of great disagreement.

We suggest that the question of competing visions of the landscape connects the multiple forces that shaped the NH 2020 conflict. Despite officially leaving choices about the future of the landscape to 'the process' of community participation, preferred visions of landscape never seemed far from the surface in the NH 2020 battle, beginning with the project's title: 'Natural Heritage 2020: *a vision* for Nevada County' (emphasis added). In the view of opponents, a particular vision, in which nature is central, is strongly suggested. Official reticence notwithstanding, opponents seized the opportunity to insist



FIGURE 2 NH 2020 co-founder and county supervisor Izzy Martin fights recall initiative. (Photo: Peter Walker.)

that a particular end point of the ‘participatory’ process – ‘a vision’ presumed to be unlike their own – was predetermined.

This political strategy was rooted in the recent political history of the county, in which ‘visions’ and the ‘visual’ qualities of the landscape were explicit subjects of political activism by the Rural Quality Coalition and others groups associated not only with certain environmental values but also particular economic and cultural ideologies. Thus, to opponents the idea of ‘A Vision for Nevada County’ was perceived as anything but politically neutral and ‘participatory’. One of the founders of NH 2020 later noted that the failure to ‘take the offensive’ by clearly articulating a socially inclusive vision was ‘a mistake’ that allowed opponents to transform the ‘empty box’ into a Pandora’s box of real or perceived threats. In short, ownership of the ‘vision’ – that is, *whose* vision⁴⁴ – was, in the view of opponents, of absolute and central importance. On this key issue, proponents of NH 2020 appeared vague and equivocal.

NH 2020: a vision for a ‘new’ economy?

One important dimension in the question of whose vision is represented in NH 2020 is the competition between ‘old’ and ‘new’ rural capitalisms in Nevada County. NH 2020 would not have emerged as it did without financial support from the Sierra Business Council, a group widely viewed as promoting the region’s ‘new’ economy, for which


'environmental quality' is seen as 'key to the Sierra Nevada's economic prosperity'.⁴⁵ A particular kind of landscape vision is clearly viewed as central to this new economy:

The dramatic beauty and majesty of the Sierra landscape define our region in the public's imagination and in the minds of business owners . . . In a recent survey of Sierra Nevada business owners, 82 per cent identified 'the high quality of life' as one of the most significant advantages of doing business in the region . . . When asked to define 'quality of life,' business owners identified 'the rural character of the overall region,' 'access to high quality wildlands,' and 'the landscape surrounding my immediate community.'⁴⁶

To the Board of the Sierra Business Council (which does not include representatives of extractive resource industries) and other business leaders in the county, protecting rural and scenic qualities is simply good business. This effort to promote local business through 'rural quality' has been successful: in 2000, 66 high-tech companies had operations in Nevada County, including well-known companies such as 3Com, Tektronix and TDK.⁴⁷ Many of these companies *followed* a highly skilled labour force that migrated

Quality of Life

Nevada County in northern California, teems with a sense of history and an abundant natural beauty. The area hosted thousands of gold miners in the 1800's as people flocked to one of the richest gold-producing regions in the Golden State. People have continued to travel to Nevada County to reach treasures found in a quality of life surrounded by some of the most magnificent scenery in the state. National forest covers nearly 170,000 acres within the county providing plentiful recreation. The county produces cultural riches as well, with uniquely gifted residents sharing their talents.



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FIGURE 3 The home page of Century 21 Davis Realty, Inc., is one of the many in Nevada County that market ideas of 'natural beauty' and 'quality of life' in the Sierra landscape (<http://www.century21davisrealty.com> last accessed 16 September 2002). (Reproduced by permission of Century 21 Davis Realty, Inc.)

to the area primarily for reasons of 'quality of life'.<sup>48</sup> The importance of certain landscape qualities for local businesses is also illustrated by the plethora of real estate advertisements that market images of a 'natural' or rural landscape: 'Stunning Sierra views!', 'Naturewood Estates', '20-acre paradise'<sup>49</sup> (See e.g. Figure 3).

In this view the quality of the environment is defined specifically in terms of the visual qualities of the landscape, namely 'where the dominant view is nature'.<sup>50</sup> While proponents of NH 2020 state publicly that they will defend the 'working landscape', a desire to see an end to at least some aspects of the 'old' economy is quietly acknowledged. One member of the pro-environmental county leadership has specifically defended this view, arguing:

Do you want to have an economy built on belching diesel trucks running up and down the roads in the middle of the night cutting trees in a cyclic economy? Or, people riding their bikes to work in small-footprint buildings bringing in lots of wealth to the community that in turn goes back to the community for cultural events, keeps the restaurants humming, and all of that sort of stuff. Me, I've made my choice. I think the integrated, upscale economy is best for everybody.<sup>51</sup>

Unsurprisingly, not everyone in the 'diesel and timber' economy agrees. Business groups and prominent individuals with ties to the county's development and natural resource-based economy have played a pivotal role in inciting the public backlash against NH 2020. These groups include alliances of national-scale natural resource industries such as timber giant Sierra Pacific Industries and 'local' natural resource and development interests represented by property rights advocacy groups such as the California Association of Business and Property Owners. While unabashedly supporting development and natural resource-based economic interests, these activist groups frame their political actions within their own (often religiously inspired) 'visions' of the human place in the landscape. These visions reject an allegedly anti-human wilderness romanticism in favour of a landscape in which humans are masters of nature:

Why shouldn't people be able to live in the forest? Why shouldn't people be able to build a house there and partake of that beauty themselves on their own property that they've purchased with their hard-earned dollars? Environmentalists think we shouldn't. They want us out. They want to create huge [parks] . . . devoid of humans . . . And it's because they have a philosophical difference with people like me. [Humans] have dominion, because we can think, over everything else, and it's a heavy responsibility to take care of that. But [you have to] include human beings in that equation. They don't. That's the major difference between us.<sup>52</sup>

In this view resources are to be used for human economic needs through material production, and human presence improves rather than degrades the landscape.<sup>53</sup> In the campaign against NH 2020, these landscape ideologies have been integral and explicit elements in resistance by the 'old' economy against the 'inevitable' dominance of the 'new'.

### ***NH 2020: A vision of social control?***

The ferocity of the anti-NH 2020 campaign also derives from social conflicts that go beyond economic competition. To many in the anti-NH 2020 campaign, the 'new'

economy is founded upon the domination of one social group by another, with a loss of social power and cultural identity for the dominated group. Proponents of NH 2020 recognize this to the extent that it is understood that much of the resistance to NH 2020 is not, ultimately, about the goals or policies of NH 2020: rather, 'local' conservatives commandeered the NH 2020 'process' as a vehicle to regain the control of the county's political machinery. One pro-NH 2020 candidate observed that long-time political powers in the county, who profited from largely unrestricted real estate development in the past, not only stand to lose economically from potentially stricter controls on growth but are also culturally unaccustomed to being told 'No' by county officials.<sup>54</sup>

However, resentment against NH 2020 extends beyond the question of control over the formal political machinery of the county. Many 'locals' feel a sense of loss of their community, and accuse in-migrants of a lack of understanding and respect for traditional culture, property rights, and livelihoods. One particularly divisive issue, for example, is the question of harassment of livestock by exurban pets. Many in-migrants purchase 'working' dogs as part of their rural visions (border collies are a popular choice). Ranchers bitterly complain that exurbanites fail to understand that unless they are given work, these dogs 'find their own work' by harassing livestock. A descendent of a ranching family that settled in Nevada County in the 1850s reports shooting numerous dogs until exurban neighbours understood that 'we're serious – we have to make a living'.<sup>55</sup> The moral undertone is that exurbanites do not understand local cultural traditions of work on the landscape: they do not do 'real' work for a living, and their own pets recognize in the landscape a place of work, even if the owners do not.

This sense of displacement of local cultural tradition and livelihoods is complemented by ideas of class conflict. While in fact both supporters and opponents of NH 2020 span multiple levels of wealth, opponents frequently frame the contest as an uneven fight between the hard-working rural poor and a privileged exurban elite who can *afford* to see in the landscape only aesthetic values. Long-time residents note with bitterness (and generally correctly) that local youth in low-paying service jobs have almost no hope of affording a home in Nevada County. This view is reinforced by the not uncommon juxtaposition of (multi-)million-dollar exurban leisure 'ranchettes' and luxury homes directly adjacent to struggling farmers or ranchers, contributing geographically to a sense of marginalization and exclusion in a gentrifying landscape.<sup>56</sup> For example, one long-time resident and property rights activist claims 'this is class and cultural warfare . . . we went from high-paid jobs in resource industries to low-paid service jobs, servicing the RQCs [Rural Quality Coalition] of the community with housecleaners and people to pump up their tires and wash their cars.'<sup>57</sup> This simmering resentment found an outlet in the fight against NH 2020. Claims of elite power and class conflict, while concealing the anti-NH 2020 campaign's own links to wealthy businesses and corporations, have nevertheless frequently been used discursively to delegitimize NH 2020 by suggesting that its advocates gained political power simply through the force of their professional skills and large chequebooks.

The campaign against NH 2020 is more than a vehicle for broader social and cultural struggles: at least some of the resistance to NH 2020 also derives from the social implications, implicit in the NH 2020 process, of a shift toward increased planning at a

landscape scale. This tension stems in part from a fundamental contradiction: a development and natural resource economy depends upon a conceptualization of space as largely separable and individualized, whereas a 'new' economy based on 'consumption' of rural landscape qualities depends upon a view of the *landscape* as a space of multiple interdependencies and responsibilities to the common good. Advocates of NH 2020 who seek to protect landscape-scale rural qualities see the absence of ownership of the landscape, inherent in a production ideology, as a threat. For example, key proponents of NH 2020 draw explicitly (and erroneously) on Hardin's idea of the 'tragedy of the commons'<sup>58</sup> to argue that government restrictions on individual landowner behaviour are necessary to protect the landscape as a *common* property.

In contrast, NH 2020 opponents see a threat in this vision of common management by leaders perceived to have different values and priorities, arguing that NH 2020 'is a movement to bring under absolute control the social and economic aspects of our society in the guise of environmental preservation'<sup>59</sup> – a 'socialization of property'.<sup>60</sup> This perceived threat is at the core of local 'property rights' campaigns that emerged in response to NH 2020. Despite thick layers of hyperbole, this perception reflects real differences of vision – visions of individual control of resources; or, community management of landscape. Thus, in the view of NH 2020 opponents, the 'box' could never be 'empty' because it was perceived to have emerged from an 'elitist' vision of the landscape as a commons to be controlled through government regulation.

### ***NH 2020 and the power of place***

While the NH 2020 conflict partly reflects well documented trends occurring throughout much of the rural United States (such as gentrification and the increasing importance of service industries and unearned income sources),<sup>61</sup> relatively little is known about the micropolitics that mould these broader social forces into specific forms of rural change.<sup>62</sup> Understanding the micropolitics of Nevada County is essential to understanding the fate of NH 2020.

Since the 1950s, when artists and a small gay community from San Francisco settled in Nevada City, Nevada County has been a magnet for alternative-lifestyle communities. Although small, these communities played pivotal roles in county politics. In particular, many key environmental leaders have been connected with the counter-culture community on the county's San Juan Ridge – a community with highly developed environmental visions influenced by deep ecology, biocentrism and Eastern religion. The county's first strong environmentalist supervisor, Sam Dardick, ran for office in a district that includes this community. The well-organized and highly active 'Ridge' community was the driving force that led first to Dardick's victory in 1994 and then to the election of a pro-environmental majority on the Board in 1998. Critically, Dardick, as a one-vote minority in 1994 and 1995, pushed to include language in the 1995 General Plan that later became the official *raison d'être* for NH 2020. Thus, while multiple forces were at play, a single community with a highly articulated vision became the proverbial camel's nose under the tent, opening Nevada County politics to a fundamental re-examination of the kind of landscape that some citizens wished to see in the future.

However, the power of this particular community to transform local landscape politics derived in large measure from the way it intersected with broader structural shifts. Specifically, the regional forces generating large-scale exurban migration also created opportunities to forge political alliances between 'left' and 'right'. Most exurban migrants to Nevada County are ideologically conservative, and many came specifically to get away from poverty and the increasing cultural and racial heterogeneity of urban California.<sup>63</sup> Such exclusionary ideologies allowed environmentalist leaders to forge alliances (such as the Rural Quality Coalition) with 'green' Republicans and other conservatives. While immigrants would otherwise tend to gravitate ideologically toward the county's earlier conservative leadership, the landscape itself became a wedge between 'old' and 'new' conservative values: the values of earlier conservative leaders were manifested on the landscape, for example, in sprawling shopping centres planned without consideration of the county's aesthetic values or cultural history,<sup>64</sup> threatening the county's 'rural quality'. This landscape history enabled environmentalists to position themselves as the defenders of rural quality. As one elected environmentalist leader stated, 'They decided that even though I may be a liberal Democrat with a record in social programmes and the environment, I was palatable because I was saying that I wanted to protect the things they came here for.'<sup>65</sup>

This political alliance also contained key fissures that opponents would later exploit to drive an ideological wedge between conservative quality-of-life migrants and environmentalist politicians. Although exurban conservatives tend to see personal benefits in specific policies to protect the landscape, they also place high value on the county's image as a hard-working mining and ranching community.<sup>66</sup> Real estate advertisements, for example, refer as often to the romance of the Gold Rush as they do to the beauty of the landscape. This allowed opponents of NH 2020 to label county officials as environmental 'eco-extremists'<sup>67</sup> who want to regulate out of existence all productive land uses.<sup>68</sup> This strikes a chord for many conservative exurbanites, even those who do not themselves engage in production activities but nevertheless imagine a cultural affinity with the county's timber, mining, and agricultural past (exurbanite high-school children play on sports teams known as the Nevada Union 'Miners'). Even seemingly wild rhetorical claims – such as the claim that NH 2020 is part of a communist or United Nations conspiracy<sup>69</sup> – were made somewhat tenable by cultural differences between conservative voters and the county leadership. Such differences were exploited in *ad hominem* attacks in which county leaders were called 'hippies', 'radicals' and 'socialists'. While exaggerated and distorted, real cultural differences ultimately made the 'left-right' alliance unstable.

Opponents of NH 2020 have also attempted to exploit this instability to seize the county leadership's most powerful political tool – the mantle of defenders of the environment. In Nevada County today, one result of the regional forces generating large-scale quality-of-life migration is that 'the environment' has become as politically untouchable as 'Mom and apple pie.'<sup>70</sup> Opponents of NH 2020 have recognized the political imperative of asserting their own environmental credentials. In particular, those with ties to natural resource industries claim that *they* are the 'true' environmentalists because they know the landscape through work,<sup>71</sup> arguing that they provided the

stewardship that allowed the landscape to recover after the Gold Rush.<sup>72</sup>

On the question of who is an environmentalist, the landscape gives its own (albeit disputed) testimony. Some of today's 'locals' are descendents of early Euro-Americans who engaged in some of the nation's most aggressive acts of environmental degradation.<sup>73</sup> For many ordinary citizens who find themselves the targets of rhetorical campaigns on both sides, this history calls into question 'local' claims of good stewardship.<sup>74</sup> Thus, while opponents of NH 2020 have successfully increased the ideological discomfort of typically conservative voters with the current county leadership, advocates of NH 2020 have succeeded in raising doubts about the alternative landscape vision on offer by conservatives (Figure 4). Thus, the power of particular landscape ideologies may be determined by the degree to which they are consistent with the history of the landscape itself, and the ability of political actors, positioned within specific social and cultural histories, to strategically mobilize (selected) portions of that history.

## Discussion and conclusions

In Nevada County we see the shifting human–environment dialectic coming full circle. Since the 1960s, the beauty and cultural history of the Sierra have attracted migrants who valued the 'natural' and 'rural' qualities of this landscape. This migration precipitated a crisis, as the landscape qualities that attracted so many migrants became threatened by continuing migration and rural residential growth. Many migrants view forward-thinking county planning as key to securing the kind of landscape they wish to see in the future. Yet there is no single, shared 'vision' of the landscape, and some fear that planning policies will reify particular ('elite') ideologies of landscape.<sup>75</sup> The diversity of visions reflects the population's heterogeneous economic positions and cultural and social identities.<sup>76</sup> The battle that emerged over Natural Heritage 2020 reflects the desires of these competing social actors to make their particular landscape vision 'concrete'<sup>77</sup> (i.e. whether the landscape will remain 'rural' and 'natural', or veer further toward a 'suburban' future). Thus, competing social groups struggle through a political process to limit or redirect the course of change toward a future landscape consistent with their respective visions. Landscape shapes politics that in turn reshape the landscape.

To examine this dynamic we have used a political ecology framework that considers the interactions of multi-scalar social forces – from the 'border collie wars' between ranchers and their exurban neighbours to transformations of regional labour and real estate markets – but we also find important areas of convergence with cultural geographical studies of landscape that share political ecology's focus on politics and power. Among these, the case study of Nevada County is consistent with the theme that landscape is a *work* that reflects histories of human labour and dreams,<sup>78</sup> and this history of work becomes central to political processes that contribute to the reshaping of the landscape. In Nevada County, denuded hillsides left behind by hydraulic mining during the Gold Rush as well as the cultural mythos of the hard-working, scrappy '49er', for example, each play important roles in the politics of landscape in Nevada County today.

We also see in our study convergence with the theme that ideas of landscape *do* work



FIGURE 4 The feared 'suburban' landscape: cartoon by Lew Toll in *The Union* (23 May 2002). (Reproduced by permission.)

in reproducing normative social values necessary to particular forms of economic activity.<sup>79</sup> In the conflict over NH 2020 in Nevada County, ideas of how the landscape *should* look are central in the struggle between the 'old' and 'new' economies. The often ragged landscape of natural resource extraction represents an obstacle to a newer capitalist landscape of (largely) 'aesthetic' consumption in the residential-recreational economy.<sup>80</sup> In the resulting conflict, the 'old' resource-based capitalism resists 'creative destruction' through ideologies that pave the way for a 'new' rural capitalism,<sup>81</sup> and individuals tied to this older capitalism resist relegation to the status of a reserve labour force serving the high-tech and rural residential economy. Thus, landscape ideologies are both products and political tools of these competing rural capitalisms.<sup>82</sup>

This competition can also be framed in Raymond Williams's terms as a conflict between 'practical' and 'aesthetic', or 'production' and 'consumption' landscapes.<sup>83</sup> Just as a growing elite once sought relief from the pollution, crowding, and crime of urban industrial Britain in scenic rural areas, so, too, a typically well-educated middle-to-upper class migrated to Nevada County seeking refuge from the city and pleasure in being close to a perceived 'natural' landscape. Williams observes that very idea of landscape implies separation from production.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in Nevada County, opponents insist (despite emphatic official denials) that the NH 2020 'vision' is a prelude to a kind of 'rural cleansing'<sup>85</sup> – the purging of rural labour and production for what Williams calls the 'pleasing prospects' of elite classes.<sup>86</sup>

While proponents rightly point to the participatory structure of the NH 2020 process as evidence to the contrary, anti-NH 2020 activists and many poorly informed but ideologically conservative citizens draw on an almost instinctive reaction to the perceived 'elitist' social position and ideologies of NH 2020 proponents to infer intentions of exclusion and domination. We found among leaders of the NH 2020 campaign a sincere desire to be inclusive; yet these leaders labour against the weight of social history (including the precedent of autocratic, 'winner takes all' politics by earlier conservative county Boards).<sup>87</sup> The prospect of a reworking of property rights (which opponents insist is implicit in NH 2020s 'empty box' metaphor) by alleged 'elites' with distinctive cultural ideologies raises substantial alarm. The many citizens who are bewildered by the NH 2020 debate have relied on their own understandings of social history as well as local social relations and culture to conclude that a landscape 'vision' is not 'objective' but is in fact integral to changing relations between social groups and realignments of power<sup>88</sup> – changes that, for many, raise deep suspicions.

In these ways the politics of landscape in Nevada County are clearly shaped by broader social histories and political and economic realignments; and yet we are also reminded of the power of particular histories of place. While similar conflicts over 'rural sprawl' are legion in the rural United States, the monumental battle over NH 2020 probably could not have occurred in other gentrifying and 'exurban' areas. The effort in NH 2020 to integrate principles of conservation biology, for example, into county planning represents a quite radical reconceptualization of county-level planning, which has traditionally focused on parcel-scale regulation with little attention to landscape-scale environmental concerns.<sup>89</sup> This approach most likely could not have been conceived, much less carried out, in a county that lacked a critical mass of highly educated activists and landscape





FIGURE 5 Signboards link NH 2020 and supervisor Izzy Martin to an 'outside' 'environmentalist' political agenda. (Photo: Peter Walker.)

visionaries. Thus, Nevada County's distinctive history of attracting social and cultural visionaries made NH 2020 possible, even while it created an unstable alliance that ultimately contributed to its political collapse.

This particular social history also speaks to the observation in political ecology that science is embedded in relations of power<sup>90</sup> – power that is nonetheless subject to the politics of place. In Nevada County, proponents of NH 2020 insist that the project is about compiling 'objective' biological and social data. NH 2020 opponents reject the claimed impartiality of this scientific view. Some have demanded that officials 'take the scientific data out into the parking lot and burn it'.<sup>91</sup> NH 2020 advocates have responded with disbelief bordering on derision, failing to appreciate that the 'objectivity' of science is largely irrelevant: to opponents, the key problem with NH 2020s science is its position as allegedly *outside* the community, inviting 'manipulation' by outside 'meddlers'.<sup>92</sup> The appointment, for example, of Dr. Michael Soulé – an internationally known conservation biologist and activist – to the NH 2020 scientific advisory committee and the funding of the scientific research by the Packard Foundation enabled opponents to depict NH 2020 as part of an 'outsider' environmentalist agenda (Figure 5). This alleged power of 'outsiders' was deflected backward to *create* power for opponents who constructed for themselves an identity as oppressed 'locals' attempting to slay a would-be Goliath, helping to give at least partial victory to defenders of the 'old' production landscape.

This capacity to strategically construct 'local' identity must be understood as it intersects with broader political economic forces. We are reminded of recent concerns

in both political ecology and landscape studies about the seeming preoccupation with the 'local'.<sup>93</sup> In political ecology, social movements and the deconstruction of science are portrayed as 'emancipatory'<sup>94</sup> tools of oppressed peasants against capitalist domination. In Nevada County, we find that *both* sides of the struggle over NH 2020 represent advanced forms of capitalism. As much as they would like to assume the identity of the oppressed, the anti-NH 2020 'movement' derives much of its power from the financial and organizational capacities of an embattled resource-based capitalism. In the NH 2020 conflict, such industries – including major transnational corporations – tapped into the power of 'local' identities to win one more political struggle. In this sense we see the limits of both 'local' and 'structural' politics as analytical constructs – in the fight over NH 2020 these are part of the same political process. This suggests the importance of looking 'upward' from political ecology's traditional focus on informal political spaces<sup>95</sup> toward meso-scale arenas of power (such as county planning) where 'local', 'regional' and 'global' meet. It is in such places that a dialectical analysis can be achieved that does not undermine the autonomy of the particular and yet views politics in place as framed by broader dynamics that have order and pattern without being teleological.<sup>96</sup>

To achieve this kind of dialectical analysis, political ecology can gain from more systematic incorporation of ideas of landscape. In the mid-1990s, Peet and Watts observed that 'each society carries what we refer to as an "environmental imaginary", a way of imagining nature, including visions of those forms of social and individual practice which are ethically proper and morally right with regard to nature',<sup>97</sup> and that these imaginaries, rooted in the histories of place, become 'prime sites of contestations between normative visions . . . Unjust property rights and aesthetically offensive uses of nature can spur political opposition to the hegemonic social order.'<sup>98</sup> Such normative landscape visions, including ideas of property rights and aesthetically acceptable land use, are central in the politics of Nevada County. We find ideas of landscape woven into every level of a multi-tiered social conflict. Since Peet and Watts's writing, however, political ecology research has made infrequent use of landscape and the 'environmental imaginary'. Particularly as political ecology expands to such 'exotic' places as north America and Europe, where 'aesthetic' and resource-based economies and cultures come into increasing conflict,<sup>99</sup> we expect an increasing focus on the underutilized concept of landscape.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> R. Emerson, 'Nature', in A. Ferguson, ed., *The Collected works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971 [1849]), p. 9.
- <sup>2</sup> J.S. Duncan and N.G. Duncan, 'The aestheticization of the politics of landscape preservation', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **91** (2001), pp. 387–409.
- <sup>3</sup> See Nevada County, 'Natural Heritage 2020', <http://www.nh2020.org/> (accessed on 1 June 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> Nevada County, 'Natural Heritage 2020 Program Proposal adopted by the Board of Supervisors on May 9, 2000' <http://www.nh2020.org/proposal.html> (accessed on 1 June 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> Interview A, Nevada City, CA, 29 March 2002; Interview B, Penn Valley, 6 July 2002; Interview C, Nevada City, 25 June 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> See W. B. Beyers and P. B. Nelson, 'Contemporary development forces in the nonmetropolitan West: new insights from rapidly growing communities', *Journal of rural studies* **16** (2000), pp. 459–74.
- <sup>7</sup> P. Blaikie and H. Brookfield, eds, *Land degradation and society* (London, Methuen, 1987), p. 17.
- <sup>8</sup> P. Robbins, 'Obstacles to a First World political ecology: looking near without looking up', *Environment and planning A* **34** (2002), pp. 1509–13.
- <sup>9</sup> R. Peet and M. Watts, eds, *Liberation ecologies* (London, Routledge, 1996).
- <sup>10</sup> J. McCarthy, 'First World political ecology: lessons from the Wise Use movement', *Environment and planning A* **34** (2002), pp. 77–91.
- <sup>11</sup> When the question of landscape has been addressed in political ecology, emphasis has been placed on the social production of landscapes as products of human labour and livelihoods, or on the misreading of landscape histories in ways that have legitimated the extension of government control over land use and land users. In *Misreading the African landscape* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), J. Fairhead and M. Leach, for example, show that in West Africa colonial and postcolonial misperceptions of the landscape shaped policies restricting access to forests among African peasants whose labour had in fact encouraged forest growth. In this view, landscapes are seen as products of social relations and human labour, and landscape ideologies are seen as tools that support broader programmes of economic or social control. Political ecologists who have examined landscape from similar perspectives include K. S. Zimmerer, 'Wetland production and smallholder persistence: agricultural change in a highland Peruvian region', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **81** (1991), pp. 443–63; and S. Batterbury, 'Landscapes of diversity: a local political ecology of livelihood diversification in South-Western Niger', *Ecumene* **8** (2001), pp. 437–64. Much less attention has been given to struggles in which competing normative visions of landscape and future trajectories of landscape change *per se* are the specific subjects of political conflict. An exception, in which competing visions of landscape are explicit subjects of conflict, is presented in R.P. Neumann's *Imposing wilderness* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), which describes the struggle between 'production' and 'consumption' ideologies as these shape landscape changes in parkland areas of East Africa.
- <sup>12</sup> McCarthy 'First World political ecology'; Robbins, 'Obstacles to a First World political ecology'; P.A. Walker, 'Reconsidering regional political ecologies: toward a political ecology of the rural American West', *Progress in human geography* **27** (2003), pp. 7–24.
- <sup>13</sup> J. Muir, 'The wild parks and forest reservations of the West', *Atlantic monthly* **81** (1898), pp. 21–4.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview D, Grass Valley, 7 Aug. 2000.
- <sup>15</sup> Nevada County is one of three counties known as the 'Gold County'. The others are Placer and

- El Dorado counties. For a discussion of early Euro-American ideologies of the Sierra Nevada and the environmental impacts of these ideologies, see G.A. Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999).
- <sup>16</sup> See C. Merchant, *Green versus gold* (Washington, DC, Island Press, 1998).
- <sup>17</sup> T. Duane, 'Human settlement, 1850-2040', in Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, *Status of the Sierra Nevada*, II (Davis, CA, Centers for Water and Wildland Resources, University of California, 1996), p. 243.
- <sup>18</sup> D. Smethurst, 'Transforming the high country: absentee ownership and environmental change in the Central Sierra Nevada' (PhD dissertation, Department of Geography, University of California at Berkeley, 1997); see also D. Beesley, 'Reconstructing the landscape: an environmental history, 1820-1960', in Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, *Status of the Sierra Nevada*, vol. II, pp. 3-24.
- <sup>19</sup> Interview E, Grass Valley, 4 Sept. 2000.
- <sup>20</sup> Duane, 'Human settlement 1850-2040'.
- <sup>21</sup> Nevada County's population increased from 26 000 in 1970 to 94 361 in 2001. T.P. Duane, *Shaping the Sierra: nature, culture, and conflict in the changing West* (Berkeley, University of California, 1999), p. 271; US Census Bureau, Quick Facts <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06057.html> (accessed on 7 July 2002).
- <sup>22</sup> The research presented is the product of multiple methods employed by the authors (separately and together) and doctoral student Patrick Hurley in Nevada County between 1990 and 2002. These include 62 in-depth interviews with 57 individuals or families, 104 semi-structured interviews, a mail-in survey of 358 households, and a geographical information system to track land-use changes. Our research builds upon historical land-use data collected by Teeguarden *et al.* in 1957. See D.E. Teeguarden, P. Casamajor and J.A. Zivnuska, *Timber marketing and land ownership in the Central Sierra Nevada region* (Berkeley, Division of Agricultural Sciences University of California, 1960). Beginning in 1995, we resurveyed the same sampling transects used by Teeguarden *et al.* to track shifts in land ownership and use between 1957 and the present. Reflecting the decreased size of parcels through subdivision, the owners of parcels along these transects numbered 333 in 1957 and 1 359 in 2001.
- <sup>23</sup> In 2001, we mailed 1 204 questionnaires to private owners with parcels along the 1957 Teeguarden transects (see n. 22). 358 households responded to the survey between 2001 and early 2002. Of these, 342 supplied data indicating the year they or their family first acquired land in Nevada County.
- <sup>24</sup> Sierra Economic Development District, *Nevada County economic and fiscal indicator review report* (2001), pp. 11, 13. Data source: State of California Employment Development Department and the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the Center for Economic Development, Chico.
- <sup>25</sup> Sierra Economic Development District, *Nevada County economic and fiscal indicator review report*, p. 12.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- <sup>27</sup> Duane, 'Human settlement, 1850-2040', pp. 261-3.
- <sup>28</sup> In our survey of 358 rural landowning households in Nevada County, 76% of residential owners who acquired land in the county after 1967 reported that their primary reason for migrating to the county was 'Scenic/environmental qualities and/or open space' or 'To "get away from the city"'. These results are consistent with other survey data for the region reported by Duane, *Shaping the Sierra*, pp. 261-2.
- <sup>29</sup> Key informant interviews were conducted with 12 families with roots in the county dating as far back as the 1850s. These families, who remain politically influential in the county today, indicated a strong and consistent philosophical adherence to a production ideology. See also Duane,

*Shaping the Sierra*, pp. 337–85.

- <sup>30</sup> W. Riebsame, review of Duane, *Shaping the Sierra*, in *High Country News* **32** (14 Feb. 2000), p. 5.
- <sup>31</sup> H. Berliner, *A plague on the land* (San Francisco, California Tomorrow, 1970). Even today these families remain key power-brokers holding 'clear values' of production and growth: Interview C.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> Duane, *Shaping the Sierra*, p. 369.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview F, Nevada City, 8 Sept. 2000.
- <sup>35</sup> Nevada County, 'Natural Heritage 2020 Program Proposal'.
- <sup>36</sup> Interview G, Nevada City, 24 July 2002.
- <sup>37</sup> Interview F.
- <sup>38</sup> Sierra Business Council, *SBC News* (Truckee, CA, spring 2001), p. 2.
- <sup>39</sup> Examples include: C. La Moure, 'Enviro Leninists' (letter to editor, 13 June 2002), G. Robinson, 'Stalinist Chimps on attack again' (letter to editor, 14 May 2002), and G. Karpa, 'Some warn of U.N. land-use plans' (news article, 1 May 2002) in *The Union* (Nevada City, CA).
- <sup>40</sup> Interview H, Nevada City, CA, 25 June 2002; Interview B.
- <sup>41</sup> G. Karpa, 'Martin says finish NH 2020 by July', *The Union* (May 2002).
- <sup>42</sup> J. Dickey, 'NH 2020 put to rest, committee disbanded', *The Union* (25 July 2002).
- <sup>43</sup> Interview I, Nevada City, 5 July 2001.
- <sup>44</sup> P. Hurley and P. Walker, 'Whose vision? Natural Heritage 2020 and land use planning in Nevada County, California' (in review for *Environment and planning A*).
- <sup>45</sup> Sierra Business Council, 'About SBC', <http://www.sbcouncil.org/about.htm> (accessed 13 June 2002); also Interview J, Truckee, CA, 26 June 2002.
- <sup>46</sup> Sierra Business Council, *Planning for prosperity* (Truckee, CA, Sierra Business Council, 1997).
- <sup>47</sup> E. Nieves, 'Nevada City Journal: Internet's wealth jolts rural towns', *New York Times* (16 July 2000), p. 12.
- <sup>48</sup> See J.M. Shumway and S. Otterstrom, 'Spatial patterns of migration and income change in the Mountain West: the dominance of service-based, amenity-rich counties', *Professional geographer* **53** (2001), pp. 492–502.
- <sup>49</sup> Sierra Foothills Real Estate, advertising magazine (Grass Valley, CA, July 1998), pp. 17, 27; Network Real Estate, Grass Valley, CA: <http://www.network-realestate.com/detail.php3?vt=0&mnum=002487BB> (accessed 28 July 2002).
- <sup>50</sup> Interview K, Nevada City, 29 June 2001.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> Interview L, Nevada City, 5 Sept. 2000.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview M, Chicago Park, 25 June 2001.
- <sup>54</sup> Interview A.
- <sup>55</sup> Interview N, Nevada City, 6 Sept. 2000. Shooting dogs that harass livestock is legal in Nevada County under Ordinance 1179 Sect. G-IV 1.48, and the California State Food and Agricultural Code, Sect. 31102–3.
- <sup>56</sup> See Duncan and Duncan, 'The aestheticization of the politics of landscape preservation'.
- <sup>57</sup> Interview N, Nevada City, 5 Sept. 2000.
- <sup>58</sup> Interview O, Nevada City, 28 Mar. 2002.
- <sup>59</sup> Interview L.
- <sup>60</sup> Interview P, Nevada City, 28 Mar. 2002.
- <sup>61</sup> Shumway and Otterstrom, 'Spatial patterns'.
- <sup>62</sup> See Beyers and Nelson, 'Contemporary development'.

- <sup>63</sup> See J. Walsh, 'The frontiers of white flight', *San Francisco Examiner, Sunday 'Image' magazine* (17 Nov. 1991), pp. 36–45, on Nevada County as the 'whitest enclave in California'. For example, in our field research, a native Nevada County farmer reported his surprise that exurban migrants reveal in bald terms their racist views. One reportedly stated, 'When you leave the big city and you take a stick and hang a tortilla on the end, and start walking, and when somebody asks you, "What's that thing?" – that's a good place to settle' – Interview M.
- <sup>64</sup> Interview C.
- <sup>65</sup> Interview I.
- <sup>66</sup> In our 2001–2 survey of 358 rural landowners, 82% of residential owners who first acquired property in Nevada County after 1967 indicated that they 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree' with the statement that 'Nevada County's agricultural, ranching, timber, and mining economy and culture are very important'.
- <sup>67</sup> e.g. C. La Moure, 'The eco-fraud: biocentrism' (letter to editor), *The Union* (29 Jan. 2002).
- <sup>68</sup> This strategy by NH 2020 opponents has been effective despite emphatic denials by county officials and specific language in NH 2020 documents upholding the value of the 'working landscape'.
- <sup>69</sup> The effectiveness of this rhetoric can be seen in the plethora of letters to the editor and in comments in public hearings on NH 2020 in which ordinary citizens voiced genuine fears on these issues, despite emphatic denials by county officials. These questions were also raised frequently in our interviews with Nevada County citizens.
- <sup>70</sup> Interview I.
- <sup>71</sup> One local logger, for example, argues that through knowledge acquired by working the land, 'local' people know how to use *and* protect the local environment: 'A good logger is concerned about the ground, about erosion. We're concerned about having trees for generations to come': Interview Q, Nevada City, 1990. Such arguments are often presented in contrast to the alleged ecological naivety and romanticized ideas of 'wilderness' among 'environmentalist' newcomers.
- <sup>72</sup> Interview M.
- <sup>73</sup> Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco*; Merchant, *Green versus gold*.
- <sup>74</sup> Interview R, Grass Valley, 29 June 2001; Interview S, Grass Valley, 25 June 2001.
- <sup>75</sup> J. Hillier, 'Paradise proclaimed? Towards a theoretical understanding of representations of nature in land use planning', *Ethics, place, and environment* 1 (1998), pp. 77–91.
- <sup>76</sup> D. Cosgrove, *The Palladian landscape* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1993); S. Daniels, *Fields of vision* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1993); D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, Reaktion, 1998).
- <sup>77</sup> D. Mitchell, *Cultural geography: a critical introduction* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p. 100.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>80</sup> Duncan and Duncan, 'The aestheticization of the politics of landscape preservation'.
- <sup>81</sup> D. Harvey, cited in Mitchell, *Cultural geography*, p. 142.
- <sup>82</sup> D. Cosgrove, *Social formation and symbolic landscape* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, eds, *The iconography of landscape* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- <sup>83</sup> R. Williams, *The country and the city* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 121.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- <sup>85</sup> Anti NH-2020 sentiment was inflamed by literature associated with the national 'Wise Use' movements that circulated among Nevada County property rights activists. See T. Miller, 'Rural cleansing by endangered species' press release (Alamogordo, NM, Paragon Foundation, 13 June 2001).

- <sup>86</sup> Williams, *The country and the city*, p. 120. This gentrification of landscape derives moral legitimacy from the concept of 'nature' (see Daniels and Cosgrove, 'Introduction: iconography and landscape', in *The iconography of landscape*), generally ignoring that in the Sierra today, a 'natural' landscape is often consciously designed to conceal its own artifice. See G. Crandell, *Nature pictorialized* (Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); also W. Mitchell, 'Imperial landscape', in Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and power* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 5–34. For example, 'pristine' is one of the most common words in Nevada County real estate advertising, despite a history of human-induced landscape transformations.
- <sup>87</sup> Interview A.
- <sup>88</sup> D. Mitchell, *The lie of the land* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996); also R. Peet, 'A sign taken for history: Daniel Shays' memorial in Petersham, Massachusetts', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* **86** (1996). However, in contrast to Williams's presentation, in which the 'consumption' landscape is viewed primarily as a place of leisure and 'elevated sensibilities', in Nevada County the 'consumption' landscape is equally a place in which such sensibilities *produce* economic value for a 'new' economy that commoditizes landscape qualities for direct consumption (i.e. real estate values) or as conditions of production (i.e. to attract skilled labour for high-tech industries).
- <sup>89</sup> T. Beatley, 'Preserving biodiversity: challenges for planners', *Journal of the American Planning Association* **66** (2000), pp. 5–20.
- <sup>90</sup> R. Peet and M. Watts, 'Liberation ecology: development, sustainability, and environment in an age of market triumphalism', in Peet and Watts, eds, *Liberation ecologies*, pp. 1–45.
- <sup>91</sup> Interview A.
- <sup>92</sup> Citizen comments at a public forum on NH 2020 in the Miner's Foundry, Nevada City, 5 July 2001.
- <sup>93</sup> D. Mitchell, 'The lure of the local: landscape studies at the end of a troubled century', *Progress in human geography* **25** (2001), pp. 269–81. McCarthy, 'First World political ecology'.
- <sup>94</sup> Peet and Watts, *Liberation ecologies*, p. 37.
- <sup>95</sup> Robbins, 'Obstacles to a First World political ecology'.
- <sup>96</sup> Peet and Watts, *Liberation ecologies*, p. 38.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.
- <sup>99</sup> T.M. Power and R.N. Barrett, *Post-cowboy economics* (Washington, DC, Island Press, 2001).