

Adaptation of Rural Communities to Postmodern Context and the Role of the Northwest Forest Plan

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Objectives

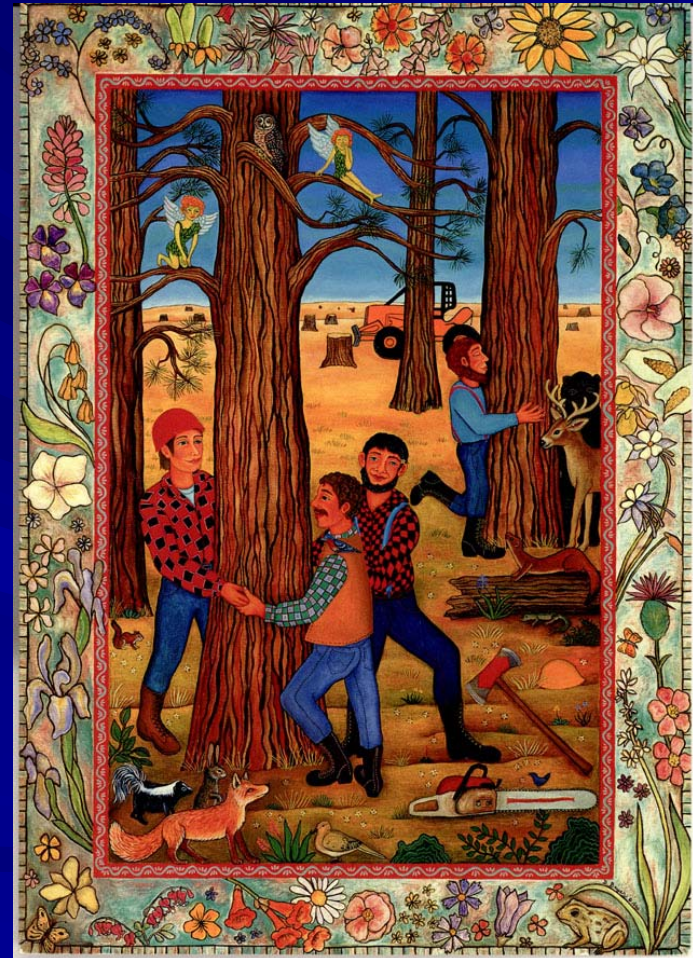
- Define community
- Describe context of community adjustment
- Hypothesize how communities are changing in response to changing context
- Describe implications of NWFP
- Suggest scenarios for anticipating possible futures

Community Defined

- Communities are like ecosystems:
 - not “real,” but mental models
 - with “reality” always changing in response to surroundings
- Communities represented as
 - Places
 - Networks
 - Identities
- Are identities and networks becoming more important than place?
- What might be causing this change?

Postmodern Society as Context for Community Change

- Key attributes of Postmodernism
 - Shared faith in rationalism is declining
 - Acceptance of “messiness” of human affairs
 - Expanded role for emotion, morality, and spirituality
 - Unique solutions to common problems



Public Forestry Epitomized Modern Rationality



- RPA's Assessment
- NFMA's Forest Plans
 - FORPLAN
 - Econometric “morality”
- Shared vision of desirable future conditions
 - Common morality
 - Rationality valued as means to future

Why did NWFP Supersede NFMA Planning?

- Decline in liberal democracy
 - NFMA plans were “liberal social contracts”
 - Loss of faith in bargaining and compromise
 - Loss of shared vision
- More affirmative role for centralized authority
 - Presidential leadership for NWFP
 - Affirmed value of biodiversity and natural processes
 - State made moral judgments
 - State helped create and destroy “communities”

How did decline in liberal democracy change 'communities'?

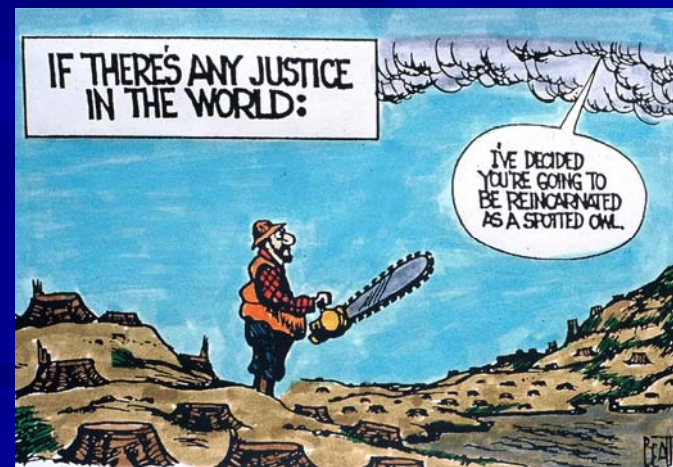
- Loss of integrating “center”
 - Representative decision-making
 - Societal morality
- Consciousness of moral pluralism
 - Diverse moral claims
 - Social morality (sexuality, reproductive rights, etc.)
 - Environmental morality (biocentrism, anthropocentrism)
 - Inability to accept anthropogenic foundation to morality
- Rise in new forms of fundamentalism

How have rural people responded to decline in liberal democracy?

- Postmodern fundamentalism
 - Focus on restoration of order (return to “original” meanings)
 - Social morality (conservative Christian fundamentalism)
 - Nature (environmental fundamentalism)
 - Working for shared future less important; diminished rationality
- “Place” no longer as effective as integrator
 - Social segmentation
 - Social networks
 - Identities
 - Loss of effectiveness by rural politicians
 - Political fragmentation
 - Political centralization

Fundamentalist Beliefs Provide Templates Coping

- Loss of shared, central meaning
- Fragmentation
- Moral pluralism promotes anxiety
- Issue framing becomes new source of political power



How are rural people likely to respond in the future?

- Sociologists cannot predict changes
- Can anticipate responses to some scenarios
 - Politicization of science
 - Continued loss in faith in rationality and liberal democracy
 - Affirmative moral leadership by government
 - Return of timber economy with shrinking dollar

Conclusions

- Postmodern society may be fundamental source of change; federal forest policy secondary
- Decline of faith in liberal democracy may bring more autocratic/theocratic role for state
- Moral communities may supplant communities of place; moral communities require enemies
- Not possible to return to modernity
- Therefore, forest planning must adopt new forms for promoting social and cultural dialogue