
**The Material-Discursive Spaces of Outdoor Recreation:
Rhetorical Exclusion and Settler Colonialism at the
Arizona Snowbowl Ski Resort**

Kyle Boggs

University of Florida, University Writing Program
302 Tigert Hall, PO BOX 112020
Gainesville, FL 32611-2020, USA
Kyleboggs@ufl.edu

Abstract

In this article, I confront settler colonial practices as they occur in the under-examined spaces of outdoor recreation. 'Spaces of outdoor recreation' refers to a theoretical and meaningful interpretation of outdoor recreational spaces that are implicated by both discourse and material reality. I argue that such a theoretical position is necessarily interdisciplinary and crucial to understanding rhetorical exclusion. Using the controversy over development by a ski resort on the San Francisco Peaks, which is held sacred to at least thirteen regional tribes of the southwestern United States, as a case study, I analyze some of the ways rhetorical exclusion is embedded in spaces of outdoor recreation. By revealing the way in which privilege and oppression are constructed in the spatial arrangements of the resort, I argue that this discourse always already works to the benefit of pro-development stakeholders, in this case the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort. By establishing how rhetorical exclusion operates through the ever-expanding spaces of outdoor recreation, I highlight the need for more critical scholarly engagement of such spaces as one of the many communicative practices that maintain settler colonialism.

Keywords

Rhetoric, recreation, tourism, skiing, settler colonialism, cultural geography, critical theory, religion, sacred sites.

Introduction

An elderly woman who identified herself as Diné, but wished not to disclose her name, approached the microphone slowly, clenching the arm of a man who steadied her steps. As she pulled the microphone down to meet the reach of her voice, the reverberation of her silver rings against the metal of the microphone echoed throughout the chambers; all eyes were on her.

She paused before she spoke, mumbled something indecipherable and paused again. Members of the City Council glanced back and forth at each other before one told the woman that her words would be translated if she wished. And it wasn't until she spoke about Dook'oooskíid, or The San Francisco Peaks, in her own language that she started to cry.

She went on well past her allotted time limit, speaking about sacredness, about desecration, about how the Creator had entrusted the mountain to her people and in return how the mountain has looked after her. She spoke of shrines on the Peaks, ceremonial plants, and medicinal herbs. She told the people present that day about how generations of her clan had buried the umbilical cords of newborn babies beneath the soil of the Peaks in a specified location she did not wish to disclose. 'To me, to us, that mountain', she pointed to the north side of the room, 'is alive just like me or you'.

When the skiers, snowboarders, and Arizona Snowbowl ski resort personnel spoke up in favor of the expansions, one at a time, their messages were clear: 'What is the big deal?' 'It's skiing; it's all about having fun'. 'Why are you trying to ruin people's fun?' they said.

I witnessed the exchange recounted above at a Flagstaff City Council meeting in 2005. The pro-development skier and snowboarder reactions to the Diné woman indicate more than the obvious and complex contrasts between Western and American Indian¹ views of nature. Indeed, indicative of generations of American Indian resistance since the late 1960s, the controversy over development by a ski resort on the San Francisco Peaks speaks to the notion that the land is imagined in different

1. The term 'American Indian' is used to refer to the indigenous communities involved in this case study. It is important to note, however, that within the context of this southwestern region, many self-identify as 'Native', 'Native American', and/or 'Indigenous', or more specifically by their tribal identity, for example, as 'Diné' or 'Hopi'.

and contested ways. Notably, despite well-documented and consistent American Indian opposition,² the resort was successful in nearly every round of expansions since the late 1970s. The longstanding controversy over the San Francisco Peaks highlights ‘the power that institutional entities possess over indigenous people’ (Bauer 2007: 343). It also underscores the powerful role that outdoor recreation plays in disputes that lie at the intersection of religion, nature, and culture—a space that is increasingly common, where claims of sacredness and recreational interests collide.

This article analyzes the contrast between sacredness and the recreational, ‘it’s all about having fun’, rhetoric. Specifically, it seeks to unmask the ways in which recreational discourses have shaped the space of the San Francisco Peaks. The literature on the rhetorical strategies of exclusion has identified many problematic ways in which governmental and legal discourses systematically limit or silence how American Indian people participate in decision-making processes (Conklin 1997; Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris 1999; Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer 2004; Endres 2009). While acknowledging the strides made to integrate American Indian cultural concerns more meaningfully in land-use decisions, the overwhelming lack of success for American Indians in such cases suggests there are challenges that go beyond legal constraints, that the cultural production of space also plays a significant role. In this article, therefore, I use the controversy over development on the San Francisco Peaks to animate rhetorical exclusion in a legal context, but also move toward articulating the spatial arrangements that have contributed to processes of rhetorical exclusion.³

The contrast reveals how discourses of recreation can delegitimize American Indian claims of sacredness, and indeed, trivialize their cultural and spiritual connection to those sites. Spaces of outdoor recreation—the material and discursive articulations of the Peaks through maps, brochures, signs, advertising, lodging, equipment rental, even infrastructure such as ski lifts, runs, trails, parking lots, and other ‘signs’ and ‘verbal performances’ that make up a discourse (Foucault 1972: 40)—function to reinforce a kind of hegemony. This produces a space where more development is always inevitable and where attitudes about what practices do and do not take place there are justified and sustained.

2. See USDA 2005.

3. This study is based on my work as a journalist with first-hand knowledge of this case, and as a researcher of rhetoric and composition with an interest in the spatial arrangements of outdoor recreation and the impact such arrangements have on shifting constructions of nature and culture.

Critically engaging spaces of outdoor recreation offers new ways to articulate issues of exclusion that push our understanding of textual analysis to include space. Spaces of outdoor recreation constitute powerful, yet often unexamined, 'sites and sights' that enable rhetorical exclusion to occur, and that exclusion is embedded in both the material and discursive landscape (Aitchison 2001: 145). Critically engaging spaces of outdoor recreation, however, demands an approach that is fundamentally interdisciplinary. Thus, this inquiry brings together scholarship not only from rhetoric and communication—including visual and spatial rhetorics—but also cultural studies, leisure studies, feminist studies, environmental studies, and cultural geography.

The Controversy over Development on the San Francisco Peaks

The Peaks, as they are referred to locally, stand north of Flagstaff, Arizona, a once small logging and railroad community turned quaint tourist town. Held sacred in different ways by at least thirteen regional tribes of the American southwest, the Peaks lie at the heart of a controversy over development by the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort, and constitute a powerful example of the tension between white and American Indian understanding of natural spaces. Despite staunch resistance on behalf of American Indians—sometimes in coalition with environmental groups and concerned citizens—the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort has continued to expand since the late 1970s. The resort's long-standing Special-Use Permit allowed the US Forest Service to approve everything from clear cuts for new lifts, runs, trails, lodges, parking lots, and a road, to the most recent and arguably most contentious decision to use municipal reclaimed wastewater to make artificial snow.⁴ The City of Flagstaff was complicit in this decision as it agreed to sell the resort this water, pumped through over thirteen miles of green pipe from the city to the resort. Court proceedings at both the state and federal level were accompanied by protests, rallies, prayer vigils, and direct actions—everything from tree-sits and road blockades, to hunger strikes, theatrical demonstrations, and public art displays—that called upon the Forest Service to reconsider its approval of expansions, and urge the City of Flagstaff not to sell reclaimed wastewater to the resort (Boggs 2011, 2012b). During these creative, often dangerous forms of resistance, activists sought to make visible their complex arguments, which were rich with appeals to identity, cultural survival, and ecological integrity. While other ski resorts around the

4. For further information on the controversy and its legal history, see Glowacka, Washburn, and Richland (2009). See also USDA (2005).

world use some percentage of wastewater to make snow, during the winter of 2012–2013, Snowbowl became the only resort in the world to use 100 percent reclaimed wastewater to make snow, a move regarded as extremely offensive to American Indians who hold the mountain sacred.⁵ The arguments in favor of the expansions were as simple as they were predictable: economic gains and recreational opportunities on public lands—and with those arguments, they won every time.⁶

Skiing and the expansion of the outdoor recreation industry provide a curious inquiry into how space can be defined through rhetorical practices, and how those practices privilege one racially hegemonic imagination. As the industry expands to make way for increasing numbers of participants, controversies pitting the interests of ‘outdoor enthusiasts’ against what American Indian people have referred to as their ‘cultural and spiritual survival’ are becoming increasingly common. According to the findings of the outdoor recreation industry’s annual report,⁷ of the 49.4 percent of all Americans who participated in the 646 billion dollar industry in 2012, 70 percent identified as Caucasian. The fastest growing industries, such as skiing and snowboarding, are overwhelmingly white spaces, with a long history of exclusion of people of color (Coleman 1996, 2004; Spracklen 2013). Often reinforced through media representation, with regard to ‘participation in outdoor recreation in our forest and parks...African Americans and other nondominant groups are on the outside looking in’ (Finney 2014: 2). Recent scholarship in leisure studies has increasingly focused attention on the racial disparities among participants of outdoor recreation (Long and Hylton 2002; Spracklen 2013), and there remain numerous sites across the United States where this type of study could be applied. While this project focuses on the controversy

5. In 2014, the City of Flagstaff renewed their contract with Snowbowl, extending their promise to sell the resort its reclaimed wastewater for an unprecedented twenty years. There are other users of the city’s reclaimed wastewater, such as the University of Northern Arizona and some golf courses, but none of them have a contract that extends this far into the future. Online: http://azdailysun.com/news/local/city-of-flagstaff-approves-snowbowl-snowmaking-contract-for-more-years/article_9a89939e-1f90-11e4-84e2-001a4bcf887a.html.

6. While the Navajo Nation was successful in a 2006 decision by a three-judge panel at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, that decision was overturned in a subsequent *en banc* appeal by the full eleven-judge panel (*Navajo Nation et al. v. The US Forest Service*). In a 2009 lawsuit, the attorney for the Save the Peaks Coalition and nine concerned citizens were told that they could not even mention the initial Ninth Circuit decision that went in their favor. The judge said because it was overturned, it was as if it ‘never existed’ (*Save the Peaks et al. v. the US. Forest Service*).

7. Outdoor Recreation Participation Report (2013). Online: <http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/ParticipationStudy2013.pdf?193>.

over development by the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort on the San Francisco Peaks, similar analysis could easily be utilized to understand the controversy over Sand Mountain, which is held sacred to the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe in western Nevada, which is also a destination of recreational ATVs and sandboarders (Kniazkov 2005). Or it can be considered useful in understanding the implications of rock climbers at Devil's Tower in Wyoming, who were challenged for decades by the Lakota and five other tribes (Dussias 2001). Or, despite a hard fought legal battle by the Washoe people to protect Cave Rock at Lake Tahoe, this type of analysis could help to understand the acts of those rock climbers who choose to climb there anyway (Makley and Makley 2010). Through arduous and complicated lawsuits, American Indian communities have been limited in their success in protecting these sites. In all of these cases, outdoor recreation, not merely as an activity, but as a colonizing discourse, has played a powerful role in justifying a comparison between recreation and American Indian cultural and spiritual values.

The Material-Discursive Spaces of Outdoor Recreation

Following rhetoric and composition scholar Sid Dobrin, we write our environments and in turn, those environments write us (Dobrin 2001). The Arizona Snowbowl ski resort is one such example, where the physical space of the mountain impacts discourse about it, and that discourse is always re-writing the physical space of the mountain. Other disciplines have similarly engaged with the relationship between material reality and discourse and have offered several ways to engage with the two, not as separate concepts, but together as a distinct framing lens. Cultural geographers have referred to first space, physical reality or the 'real', and second space as discourse, or 'imagined' spaces. Edward Soja, for example, combines them to refer to a 'thirdspace', or the 'realandimagined' (Soja 1996). Recent work in material feminisms has similarly pointed out that defining the material—such as nature and the body—strictly as products of discourse have 'skewed discussions of these topics' (Alaimo and Hekman 2008: 3). Material feminists are concerned with 'the interaction of culture, history, discourse, technology, biology, and the "environment", without privileging any one of these elements' (Alaimo and Hekman 2008: 7). While some have called for 'a new way to understand the relationship between language and reality' (Hekman 2008: 92), others have answered this need by articulating physical reality and discourse together: 'material-semiotic' (Haraway 1991; Harding 2008) or the 'material-discursive' (Barad 2008).

Barad's term, 'material-discursive', is ideal for this project because of the relationships under consideration, whereby 'imagined' is a potentially condescending term when engaging with powerful identity formations in which religion, nature, and culture converge. Discourse is not merely a 'disembodied collection of statements' but is grouped and 'enacted within a social context' (Mills 2004: 10). For Michel Foucault⁸ and later, Judith Butler (1993), the social context included the materiality of nature and the body. For cultural geographers, this means that the social context invariably includes space. Therefore, when it comes to understanding controversies over nature and culture, and the multitude of religious identifications forged through the two, a material-discursive approach to rhetorical analysis is useful because it privileges neither language nor reality, but allows scholars to focus instead on the relationship between the two.

A material-discursive analysis of spaces of outdoor recreation first requires a critical contextualization of recreation itself. Leisure, recreation, and tourism are typically regarded as 'overlapping concepts' and all three concepts fall under the umbrella of leisure studies (Hall and Page 2002).⁹ Aristotle positioned leisure as an 'intellectual activity', a necessary component to the formation of a meaningfully engaged citizen. He argued that a citizen must be able to 'not only work well, but to use leisure well' (Aristotle 1997). Therefore, leisure was not simply for pleasure and relaxation; like citizenship itself, leisure was regarded as a privilege, not an entitlement, which served to help citizens acquire moral wisdom (Aristotle 1997). The discipline of leisure studies, however, evolved from Marxist critiques of capitalist industrialism that produced a clear separation between work and leisure. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen demonized leisure completely, dealing out harsh criticism of the industrial society's striking social stratification whereby the 'lords of the manor', or the social elite, were able to maintain such status while engaging in 'conspicuous consumption' and 'conspicuous leisure', which he believed did virtually nothing to better society as a whole (2009: 28-69). Theodor Adorno and others, however, have criticized Veblen's attitudes toward Marxism as 'controversial', and even

8. See Foucault's accommodation of the material in his theories of discourse, in terms of nature and the body (1972: 44-49; 1978: 41-46, 143-44, 151-52). For a more in-depth understanding of Foucault's theories of discourse, see Foucault (1972) generally, but specifically his Appendix, 'The Discourse on Language'.

9. Hall and Page (2002: 6) also note that the distinction between recreation and tourism is 'increasingly irrelevant' in the field of leisure studies. Therefore, in this article, when spaces of outdoor recreation are discussed, rhetorics of recreation or tourism become different ways of talking about the same discursive formation.

'incompatible' because of his reliance on psychology and 'habits of thought' to explain economic facts (Adorno 1983: 77). Instead, Adorno and Max Horkheimer focused on the cultural production of leisure in relation to work. They posited that leisure is 'sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again' (Horkheimer and Adorno 2007: 109). However, considering the limited choices of leisure in relation to determinate social formations, understandings of leisure as simply oppositional to work, or its association with conceptions of freedom and free will, have been further complicated in more recent scholarship on leisure (Spracklen 2013: 5-10).

Leisure studies scholars have looked at the cultural production of leisure, not in opposition or relation to work, but in relation to other social formations with regard to race, class, gender, and sexuality, as well as culturally situated local and global conceptualizations of leisure, access to it, its many forms, and what it produces (Urry 1990; Rojek 1995; Aitchison 2001; Spracklen 2013). In his 2013 introduction for the third edition of his important text *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*—originally published in 1976—Dean MacCannell argued that tourism studies has not been beholden to postmodernist thinking, which has kept the field from having an impact outside of professional schools of hospitality management. Those limitations prevented scholars from approaching the complex ways in which tourism 'spreads itself rhizomatically through every intellectual, economic, cultural, and geopolitical domain' (2013: xvii). Karl Spracklen observed leisure as central to 'understanding wider debates about identity, postmodernity and globalization...a place where late modern identities are defined and defended' (2013: 1-2). MacCannell saw this 'place' as ever expanding and that 'this world was rapidly remaking itself in the tourists' image of it' (2013: xviii). Such moves in leisure studies have, henceforth, led scholars to integrate critical conceptions of space into their work (Urry 1990; Aitchison, MacLeod, and Shaw 2002), exemplifying a confluence of leisure studies and cultural geography, and positioning the everyday life of social space as a way to understand wider social relations (De Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 2006). Such efforts have shifted the scope of leisure studies from its roots in Marxism to encompass post-structural and postmodern theories of discourse (Rojek 1995).

A material-discursive engagement with spaces of outdoor recreation, therefore, considers the way tourism and tourist spaces produce peoples, cultures, and landscapes (Urry 1990; Aitchison 2001). By situating spaces of outdoor recreation as a discourse—complete with its own specific set of coding and representation—'tourism landscapes' such as ski resorts

may be better understood as 'sites and sights of social and cultural inclusion/exclusion [that] are not fixed but are in a constant state of transition' (Aitchison 2001: 145). The space of the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort is mapped, codified, and defined in a way that is inclusive of dominant discourses, accommodating to predominantly white skiers, and is, therefore, ideal to analyze through this framework.

'Material-discursive spaces of outdoor recreation' itself is a framing concept that allows for an interdisciplinary analysis of the way recreation shapes social and cultural conceptions of material landscapes. Once the trees are cut for ski runs, lifts, lodges, and parking lots, and once the allure of the resort enters the social imaginary through brochures, maps, and commercials, it becomes increasingly difficult to disassociate the landscape from the resort, the material from the discursive (Gordon 1997). Through the discursive lens of recreation lies a particular construction of nature, the way in which a specific, often narrow understanding and experience of the environment is accommodated and sustained. Yet the validity of this construction underscores the way 'power and knowledge gain traction at the sites of affective investment' in some knowledge(s) over others, 'between and among those who are constituted through belonging' (Rowe 2008: 3). Therefore, spaces of outdoor recreation exclude non-Western cultures and claims of sacredness, but ironically limit the way even Western audiences are meant to relate to other cultures and the natural world.¹⁰

Linking this framework to the controversy over development on the Peaks is an interrogation of one of the most ubiquitous statements those in favor of development at the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort propagate, which is that expansions and the use of reclaimed wastewater is said to take up 'one percent of the mountain'. Wrote one Flagstaff city council member, Jeff Oravitz, in a 2010 editorial, 'Apparently 99 percent being preserved is not enough for some. Who's being greedy here? The people that want 1 percent, or the people that want 100 percent?' (Oravitz 2010). Similarly, Snowbowl general manager J.R. Murray echoed these sentiments on camera to a group of children in a 2006 documentary, *The Snowbowl Effect* (Benally and Cody 2005). This effort to frame the spatial dimensions of the controversy is also an effort to privilege the quantifiable material space over the lived social space. Attempts like this to confine the debate around questions of what 'counts' as the mountain, indeed have a history.

10. For an analysis of the many ways in which a discourse on the sacred has been deployed and the effects it has had on indigenous peoples, see Tiedje 2007.

On 29 January 1974, during a city council meeting that drew no fewer than 2,000 people into Flagstaff High School's gymnasium, FS Supervisor E.H. Wiegel interrogated Hopi Herbert Lewis, asking, when 'you describe the Peaks area, at what level? How low down on the mountain do you go or how high up do you go?' (Coconino County Planning and Zoning Commission 1974).¹¹ Lewis responded in a fashion similar to the others who were asked this question:

When I meant the Peaks area, I didn't just mean half of the San Francisco Peaks or just the bottom of the San Francisco Peaks. Like my father indicated over there, he says the San Francisco Peaks has roots and this could go out for miles. We have shrines around the adjacent area of the San Francisco Peaks. (Coconino County Planning and Zoning Commission 1974)

To question the physical, 'real', or 'material' space of the mountain validates those who use the one percent claim to make an argument about space. Such a narrow interpretation of space would enable questions like: One percent of what? One percent of the Kachina Peaks Wilderness Area, where the resort lies? One percent of the Peaks District, upon which the mountain range lies? Of the entirety of the Coconino National Forest? Such questions would, however, evade David Harvey's notion of space as 'relative', 'relational', and always taking place in a 'frame' (Harvey 2006: 272-75). In other words, the *social* spaces in which lived practices are embedded are more revealing as such spaces encompass social processes as well as their interrelationships that foreground the actions that take place there (De Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1991). 'Processes' such as skiing, according to Harvey, 'do not occur *in* space, but define their own spatial frame' (Harvey 2006: 273). The constitution of space is not a passive process, however; it is produced, and that production is tied to determinant social formations. 'Belongings', a useful term from feminist and disability studies, is used to describe how geographical locations oriented to 'comfort, security, alikeness' are constituted by outdoor recreation, in part, through the production of spatial frames (Rowe 2008; Grabham 2009: 66). It is therefore necessary, as Harvey notes, to ask who is defining what is relative to the spatial frame (Harvey 2006). Power and privilege are always at work in the way material space is represented socially. The power of representation lies in its ability to determine who 'participates in environment-related activities' such as outdoor recreation 'and who does not; which voices are heard in environmental debates and which voices are not' (Finney 2014: 3).

11. During this time, an effort was defeated that sought to transform a natural prairie below the ski resort into a gated community called 'Snowbowl Village'.

In this case, the contested space is controlled and managed by the federal government and run by a for-profit corporation that lies outside of city limits. If space and time lie within processes that define them, however, the *social* space of the resort is much more significant than the measurable acreage it takes up (De Certeau 1988; Harvey 2006). It is not uncommon for skiers in Flagstaff to say they are going to ‘ski on the Peaks’, indeed, the phrases ‘ride the mountain’ and ‘ski the Peaks’ are found in the resort’s own promotional material. Such phrases blur the distinction between the entire metaphysical experience of the San Francisco Peaks and what occurs on the 777 acres of the resort.¹² Articulating the resort as social space allows for an analysis of the role that the resort plays in privileging dominant discourses and excluding others, or the way ‘it has redefined the land in terms of leisure’ (Wilson 1992: 22). The social space of the ski resort is found not just on the mountain, but in the city of Flagstaff—in ski rental businesses like the ‘Ski Haus’, in restaurants that cater to the aesthetics of skiing like ‘Altitudes Bar & Grill’, and also in the city’s promotional material, colorful maps, and events like the ‘Dew Downtown’, an annual urban snowboarding festival.

To engage critically with the material-discursive spaces of outdoor recreation on the Peaks is to consider the ‘material space’ of experience, perception, and sensation as inseparable from the ‘representation of space’, which is conceived, perceived, and represented, and ‘spaces of representation’, or as Harvey explains, ‘the lived space of sensations, imaginations, emotions, and meaning incorporated into the everyday’ (Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 2006: 279). Such a framework therefore brings powerful new authority to American Indian stakeholders who seek to dismantle the established credibility of the one percent claim. An example of this in action came during a press conference given by the Save the Peaks Coalition in February 2004. When responding to the claim that the resort sought to use reclaimed wastewater on ‘just a little piece’ of the mountain, Caleb Johnson, former Vice Chairman of the Hopi Tribe, said, ‘you cannot divide spirituality into little pieces, you have to honor and respect the whole thing’ (Benally and Cody 2005). Here, Johnson resists the limited way the Peaks can be understood as more than just quantifiable physical space, meaning the Peaks and the space of the resort are one and the same.

Through leisure, landscapes and cultures are commoditized in gift shops, coded on maps, written, and rewritten in museums and wilderness supply stores (Wilson 1992; Rothman 1998). Generations of discourse connecting the ski resort to the Peaks and to the city of Flagstaff has

12. Snowbowl Vertical Files (n.d.).

solidified the idea that the resort *is* the mountain, that the city is a 'ski town'. Such a synecdoche can only be created over time, through representations and '(re)representation of the past within the present...the transformation of landscape for the purposes of leisure and tourism' (Aitchison, Macleod, and Shaw 2002: 11). Indeed, the social space that the resort takes up, the representations of space, as well as the lived spaces of representation, is far greater than one percent. It is a material-discursive interrogation of spaces of outdoor recreation that offers a more complete understanding of these spaces. Complicating space as simultaneously physical and cultural illuminates the workings of privilege and power rendered through a partial perspective. In doing so, the frames that produce rhetorical exclusion in controversies that lie at the intersection of religion, nature, and culture are more easily exposed.

Rhetorical Exclusion Embedded in the Landscape

Understanding spaces of outdoor recreation as a discourse—spaces implicated by both language and physical reality—allows for an understanding of how privilege and oppression are constructed in the arrangements of those spaces. This process has been termed rhetorical exclusion, one of the many communicative tactics 'designed to foreclose debate without appearing to engage in undemocratic action', and 'a strategy used by members of the prevailing power structure to conceal any antidemocratic consequences of its actions' (Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris 1999: 27-30). Much of the scholarship on rhetorical exclusion points to the nuanced ways in which it occurs through the language of governmental policy and procedures, whereby American Indian voices are excluded from deliberation. Prominent works in this area have included studies of the American Indian Movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris 1999) and of the American Indian objections to the storage of nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain (Endres 2009). Many of the ways American Indian voices were systematically excluded from public deliberation over development on the San Francisco Peaks mirror those that were analyzed in these previous studies, including exclusion from the public participation process and development of Environmental Impact Statements (Killingsworth and Palmer 1992: 166).

In Klee Benally's 2005 documentary *The Snowbowl Effect*, Forest Service Ranger for the Peaks District, Gene Waldrip, noted that the Forest Service recognized in their Environmental Impact Statement that the expansions at Snowbowl, particularly the use of treated sewage effluent to make snow, was 'an adverse action' (Benally and Cody 2005). It was well documented in their Environmental Impact Statement that Snowbowl's expansions, and the use of reclaimed wastewater to make snow, was

extremely offensive to American Indians who hold the mountain sacred, who collect medicines there, and for whom the natural integrity of the mountain was integral to their cultural and spiritual survival.¹³ Benally then asked Waldrip how it would be possible to go through with an action if it were recognized as being 'adverse'. Waldrip responded on camera, during an information session at a Forest Service office:

Well, the law doesn't say that we can't go through with it; it just says that we have a process and a consultation process that we have to go through. At the end of that, the land management agency can still make a decision even though it's an adverse action. It's just that you have to document it as an adverse action. (Benally and Cody 2005)

Waldrip's statement reflects larger problems of marginalization within the public participation process, but specifically it reflects the problem of rhetorical exclusion for American Indians, whose voices are already 'outside the norm' (Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris 1999). Here, 'outside the norm' and 'deviant' are terms that have been used to point out how language functionally obscures the identities of non-dominant stakeholders (Killingsworth and Palmer 1992: 166). Therefore, at the level of policy and procedure, rhetorical exclusion is always already¹⁴ at work in the limited structure of decision-making processes, all while appearing not to engage in antidemocratic actions. As the rhetoricians Killingsworth and Palmer argued,

though they may draw upon the conventions of a democratic discourse that is open to information from diverse sources, the aim of instrumental documents is never to treat deviant discourses with respect but always merely to take note of them, to record them, and ultimately to treat them as 'noise' in the system, which needs to be ignored or expunged. (1992: 166)¹⁵

13. See Environmental Impact Statement for Snowbowl Facilities Improvement. Coconino National Forest. Online: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/coconino/landmanagement/projects/?cid=stelprdb5347260>. Also see *Save the Peaks* press release (Shanker Law Firm 2009) and *Navajo Nation et al. v. US Forest Service*.

14. The phrase 'always already' was popularized by Heidegger, although it can be traced back to Karl Marx, and back even further to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. It became important to Jacques Derrida and other poststructural theorists of discourse (see Spivak's introduction to Derrida's *Of Grammatology* for an expansive use of this term). The phrase is often used to articulate a relationship between language and ongoing processes, for example, the way ideology constitutes subjects. The phrase is used in this article to describe the way American Indians are often forced to navigate a system that was never designed to accommodate their ways of knowing and being in the world.

15. See also Chapter 7 in Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer (2004) for a lengthier discussion of marginalization within the process for creating Environmental Impact Statements and the structural problems of public participation.

While much of the scholarship on rhetorical exclusion shares the concerns of government procedures, such as the Environmental Impact Statement drafting process, as mere democratic performance, there are even more subtle ways in which rhetorical exclusion is at work in the controversy over development on the San Francisco Peaks, particularly in the spatial arrangements that foreground the way a debate can unfold.

In the controversy over development on the San Francisco Peaks, American Indians have little say or influence in decision-making processes because the Peaks lie on federally owned land, rather than reservation land. This is an example of the material-discursive arrangement of space functioning as a 'strategic silence', or a type of rhetorical exclusion including practices meant to 'continue silencing an already silenced group' (Endres 2009: 52). As Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris argued, 'rhetorical exclusionists are unable to see outside of their frames, unable to question their ideological predispositions'; therefore, the way those boundaries were defined, the history of colonial violence that resulted in the delineation of reservation land from federally owned land is systematically erased from acceptable deliberation over land use policy (1999: 28). American Indian opposition to development on the Peaks is not just resistance to development but also a rejection of these frames. As Hopi Tribal Chairman LeRoy Shingoitewa remarked in 2010, 'It is our duty to protect what has been given to us by the Creator long before Flagstaff even existed'.¹⁶ The Peaks lie on Forest Service land, which is partitioned into districts; the resort itself lies within the Kachina Peaks Wilderness Area. While these designations legally silence American Indian contentions to land-use policy, statements like Shingoitewa's serve as a reminder that all decision-making bodies—the resort, the Forest Service, and the City of Flagstaff—stake their claim and authority on stolen land.

Recreation and Settler-Colonialism

Spaces of outdoor recreation persuade individuals to experience nature and consume cultures in a particular way, and as I demonstrated in the last section, that particular way is often based on frames that reproduce historical power dynamics (Aitchison, Macleod, and Shaw 2002; Hope 2004). Material-discursive spaces of outdoor recreation persuade individuals to align their values and identities around the way both recreational activities and the land in which those activities take place

16. See Flagstaff Planning and Zoning Commission meeting 29 July 2010, Sinagua High School auditorium, Flagstaff, AZ.

are constructed (Wilson 1992; Rothman 1998). These spaces produce synecdochical thinking: in both simple and complex ways, specific activities, cultures, and landscapes all begin to signify each other (Lefebvre 1991; Rothman 1998; Harvey 2006). This allows one who employs a material-discursive interrogation of spaces of outdoor recreation also to consider broader notions of, for example, capitalism, the mythic frontier, individualism, and masculinity. But most important to this project is the way in which settler colonialism is embedded in these spaces.

Tied to postcolonial theory, 'settler colonialism' applies to circumstances in which colonists—the settlers—have never left, whereby settler colonialism is ongoing, performed in the every day. When settlers arrived, they brought their ways of living and being in the world, which continues to affect settler relationships with American Indian cultures and landscapes. Following rhetorical theorist Lloyd Bitzer, rhetorical discourse is called into existence by situation. The 'situation controls the rhetorical response', in the same way that an answer is controlled by the question (Bitzer 1968). The historian Lorenzo Veracini argues that the 'settler colonial situation is a circumstance where a contradiction between opposed impulses produces long lasting psychic conflicts and a number of associated psychopathologies' (Veracini 2008: 365). Regarding the Peaks as either a sacred space or a recreational space is illustrative of such opposing impulses, whereby the settler colonial situation sustained in spaces of outdoor recreation is also rhetorical.

On 29 July 2010, during a Flagstaff Planning and Zoning Commission meeting addressing the source of water the city would sell to the Arizona Snowbowl, a meeting that drew so many people it was moved to a local high school's auditorium, at least five members from the public who spoke up in favor of the expansions remarked, 'skiing is sacred to me' during public comments.¹⁷ The phrase was also seen on pro-Snowbowl counter-protest signs in front of city hall during this time. Bron Taylor (2010) has written about recreational activities like surfing as a spiritual practice, and others like Dolores LaChapelle (1993) have written directly about backcountry skiing as a way to connect with nature. Both of these examples, in different ways, complicate the relationship between religion and recreation. While acknowledging the validity as well as the growing popularity of nature religions and their associated activities, those 'religious perceptions and practices that are often characterized by a

17. This sentiment was echoed in other city council meetings as well as in online discussions such as this one: <http://sites.coloradocollege.edu/indigenoustraditions/sacred-lands/the-arizona-snowbowl-flushing-a-religion-down-the-toilet/>.

reverence for nature and that consider its destruction a desecrating act', the context of skiers' claims of sacredness in terms of the Snowbowl controversy trivializes the thousands of years of American Indian cultural and spiritual connection to landscape (Taylor 2010: 5). Scholars and policy makers must take careful measure, therefore, to distinguish the sincere from the insincere. It is important to note that the multiple individuals in Flagstaff who proclaimed their spiritual connection to skiing only did so after American Indians described their spiritual connections to the land; particularly during this public meeting, 'skiing is sacred to me' was a reaction to the many sincere American Indian comments, which linked the natural integrity of the mountain to their tribe's cultural and spiritual survival. As Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris described, 'Rhetorical exclusion is often a reflexive rather than calculated strategy', and thus such reflexive claims for the sacredness of skiing is a clever way of elevating recreation to the level of American Indian cultural and spiritual identification with natural landscapes (1999: 28). Strategies of rhetorical exclusion, particularly 'strategic silencing', is at work here again (Endres 2009). By elevating skiing, American Indian identities are simultaneously devalued in this comparative structure.¹⁸ And this is important to the settler colonial situation in which 'disavowal is directed at denying the very existence and persistence of Indigenous presences and claims' (Veracini 2008: 368). Descriptions of the ski resort in both the corporation's promotional brochures as well as those produced by the City of Flagstaff situate it within access to a number of other popular tourist destinations such as Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon, and Lake Powell. In the same way that 'skiing is sacred to me' degrades thousands of years of American Indian spiritual and cultural connection to natural landscapes, so too do these brochures, which mark the Peaks as no more or less significant than gambling and casino nightlife, a scenic view or hike, and water skiing on a man-made reservoir. Devaluing the impact that the Peaks has on American Indian culture and spirituality is one way to deny, or altogether silence, the validity of their claims.

Claims of the sacredness of skiing underscore the settler colonial situation, not only in how it demonstrates the 'regenerative' nature of settler colonialism—always adapting to new circumstances to maintain its validity and dominance—but also in what it reveals about 'settler anxieties', the 'paranoid fear of ultimate decolonization' (Veracini 2008: 368). Considering the settler colonial situation in spaces of outdoor

18. This is similar in the way that 'environment verses economy' arguments always work in favor of pro-development stakeholders, as discussed in Killingsworth and Palmer (1992).

recreation allows for an understanding into the neurosis reflected in the one percent claim, discussed above: 'Who's being greedy here? The people that want 1 percent, or the people that want 100 percent'?

Conclusion

In 2014, a Colorado businessman, James Coleman, expressed interest in buying the Arizona Snowbowl ski resort, and after a year of negotiations, became the new majority owner for 10 million dollars.¹⁹ Coleman, who already owned two ski resorts in New Mexico—Sipapu and Pajarito Mountain ski areas—also acquired Durango Mountain Resort shortly after purchasing the Snowbowl. Through his ownership of the four resorts, Coleman has created what is now a resort collective in the Southwest linked by a single season pass called the 'Power Pass'. 'This means that guests will enjoy unlimited access to all four mountains on one season pass...families will be able to get to each of the four resorts within a four hour drive', Coleman told the *Denver Post* prior to his acquisition (Blevins 2016). This change in ownership points to two significant issues.

First, by understanding spaces of outdoor recreation as a discourse, as spaces implicated by both language and physical reality allowing for an understanding of rhetorical exclusion within the spatial arrangements of those spaces, this new 'resort collective' presents a curious new turn. Rhetorical exclusion is a relational term, which stands in opposition to *inclusion*, or 'belongings' (Rowe 2008; Grabham 2009). Statistics support the notion that those who belong are typically Caucasian and upper-middle class, and these demographics are also reflected visually in the promotional material for the resort, in which every photograph prominently features white skiers alongside the resort map (Coleman 1996, 2004; Spracklen 2013). Within this material, the ski map is 'quintessentially ideological' and stands as a symbolic representation for the material landscape, such that it reinforces the tenuous connection

19. See <http://knau.org/post/colorado-businessman-buys-arizona-snowbowl#stream/0>. Snowbowl is owned by a group of investors, not a single person. It is important to note that under NEPA, an outright sale that included further developments would have required a new Environmental Impact Statement. The long delays coupled with the decision to absorb Coleman as a principal investor rather than an owner indicate the possibility that strides were taken to avoid having to complete a new Environmental Impact Statement, which would have required public participation. Complications involved in the sale are captured in the vague responses from Snowbowl personnel in this local news article: http://azdailysun.com/news/local/snowbowl-sale-stalls-out/article_86e1481b-5bb3-561e-975b-2796a9cf121e.html.

outdoor recreationalists have to the Peaks as anything but a ski resort (Barton and Barton 1993: 50). This juxtaposition between images denoting white inclusion linked to cartoon representations of geography also communicates exclusion in these spaces. As a resort collective, this exclusion is extended similarly across each of the four regional mountains. What is at stake is not just that a particular way of being and knowing in the world belong in these spaces, to the exclusion of others, but *how* they belong. 'The sites of our belonging constitute how we see the world, what we value, who we are becoming' (Rowe 2008: 3). In the same way that the inside of a McDonald's is not radically different than another in order to create the same customer experience no matter where the location, spaces of outdoor recreation increasingly enforce this homogenization. The rhetoric of representation—by which the four resorts are constituted through illustrative maps depicting the material commonalities of lifts, runs, lodges, and the like—reinforces the limited perspective that one mountain is not so different than another. Competing imaginations and identities are marginalized, which has consequences for everyone. But this is made even more palpable in a 'resort collective' in which the demographics of recreationalists are all similar. 'Belongings' within spaces of outdoor recreation denote spaces of 'comfort, security, alikeness...linking an individual or a group of people to a geographically defined area', such as a ski resort in Arizona on a mountain regarded no different than a mountain in New Mexico or Colorado (Grabham 2009: 66). Each resort sustains the validity, dominance, and presence of the others.

Second, the new owner's statements point to how interdisciplinary scholars might critically engage with spaces of outdoor recreation. I have outlined a few of the ways in which rhetorical exclusion is embedded in the material-discursive arrangements of space—granting access, validity, and accommodation to some. However, Coleman's emphasis on drawing 'families' to the resort underscores the powerful way in which heteronormativity is also embedded in these spaces. Many theorists have recently advanced settler colonial studies by drawing important connections to gender and sexuality and how gendered and sexual power is intrinsic to the way colonialism is produced, extended, and illuminated (Morgensen 2012). Others have considered the complex ways in which it is bound up in white supremacy (Smith 2010), or settler colonial interventions into queer modernities and the construction of nationalism (Morgensen 2010). It is my hope that such applications of the framework proposed here offer interdisciplinary researchers numerous ways in which to understand how privilege and oppression are embedded in the very landscapes in which we engage (Boggs 2016).

When I spoke to then-majority owner of Snowbowl Eric Borowsky in 2012 while covering this controversy as a journalist, he expressed much frustration that the tribes were so unwilling to compromise on this issue (Boggs 2012a). It is clear that the privileges afforded through rhetorical exclusion, however, rendered Borowsky incapable of seeing how much the discourse already worked in his favor. Those privileged subjects—those accounted for, accommodated, those who ‘matter’, those who belong—‘must reckon with the ways in which power relations are reproduced and potentially rewritten within these intimate sites of our belonging because our loyalties produce and are produced by a range of possible material and political conditions’ (Rowe 2008: 2). If land use policies are being meaningfully re-evaluated in an effort toward inclusivity, it is important they do so in a way that recognizes the biases embedded in the very spaces such debates happen, which is not always in city council meetings or court rooms, but in the very ‘sites and sights’ of inclusion and exclusion in which they occur (Aitchison 2001: 19).

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