“Been-heres vs. come-heres” and other identities and ideologies along the rural–urban interface: A comparative case study in Calaveras County, California

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A B S T R A C T

The rural–urban interface is the place of transition between that which we call “urban” and that which we call “rural.” The interface is situated between two places perceived to be different, but which are indelibly linked. Although the functional differences between “rural” and “urban” people (or those seen as “been-heres” versus “come-heres”) seem to be diminishing, differing perspectives and preferences persist along the rural–urban edge. Such differences influence the way that land users, decision makers, and the community manage the environment and react to landscape change. Using a comparative case study in Calaveras County, California, I examine the differences and similarities between “been-heres” and “come-heres” along several lines: basic demographic characteristics, political party affiliations and ideologies, and conceptions of private property rights, concluding that the dichotomy is false but instructive. The been-heres/come-heres divide, rather than being a definitive means for characterizing stakeholders or predicting their behavior or perspectives, serves as a heuristic for understanding the starting places of certain actors. Furthermore, this kind of analysis reveals not only where and how people and perspectives contrast but also the ways that they converge. Improving our understandings differing people and perspectives is especially important as decision-makers struggle to plan for and manage livable places and sustainable environments among groups with varying preferences which may sometimes conflict.

Introduction, context, and background

“Rural”, “urban”, and the rural–urban interface

Although the literature has problematized the binary conception of “rural” versus “urban” (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011; Walker and Hurley, 2011), increasingly recognizing the linkages between these two spheres and their internal heterogeneity, the concepts continue to hold relevance for both the academy and the public. Even as we recognize the difference between rural and urban as a continuum rather than a binary, the differing conceptions of “rural” versus “urban” have distinct policy and management implications. The perceptions, and thus actions, of decision makers (planners, policy makers, local and regional governments, land managers and developers) lead to and/or maintain material differences between the places. While this is significant in each of those locales separately, it is also important for the border spaces between them, otherwise known as the interface.

The rural–urban interface is the place of transition between that which we call “urban” and that which we call “rural.” As a place “in between,” it can take various forms (Taylor, 2011). The rural–urban interface is necessarily proximate to urban areas (and rural ones) and is a place which is often perceived to be amenity-rich, especially in the American West (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011; Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Taylor, 2011) and the Sierra Nevada specifically (Duane, 1999; Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996; Walker and Hurley, 2011).
Fortmann, 2003; Walker et al., 2003), whether that belief is justified or not.1

Different perspectives of rural life are evident along the rural–urban interface, especially in those places on the urbanizing fringe (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011; Duane, 1999; Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996; Taylor, 2011; Travis, 2007; Woods, 2005). The rural–urban interface represents a changing environmental context and is a locus of political, cultural, and economic activity (Duane, 1999; Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996; Travis, 2007; Woods, 2005). In Calaveras County, California, nestled among the Sierra Nevada foothills, competing philosophies and rival factions fight for sometimes very different land use outcomes. Such strife is often attributed to an influx of amenity migrants who have flooded rural areas seeking an idealized rural lifestyle, which, at times, can run counter to prevailing and/or historically predominant uses and value systems (Abrams et al., 2012; Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Ilbery, 1998; Woods, 2005).

Although the data presented here are related to a particular region, the findings point to broader trends applicable to other places. Specifically, this case study and the literature reviewed herein indicate that the rural–urban interface becomes a focal point of change as urban migrants seek particular lifestyles they imagine to be located in rural areas (Ilbery, 1998; Lichter and Brown, 2011; Spain, 1993; Woods, 2005). Different perspectives, different histories, and different environmental imaginaries (Nesbitt and Weiner, 2001; Peet and Watts, 2004) amount to differing expectations of rural life. These differing perspectives and expectations are negotiated between factions with sometimes deeply divergent views (Abrams and Gosnell, 2012; Bebee and Wheeler, 2012; Hurley and Walker, 2004; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker, 2003).2

Although the presence of conflict along the rural–urban edge is well documented and some conclusions as to the characteristics of these conflicts — and the actors involved in them — have been noted, the motivations and value systems of these groups are less well-defined (Taylor, 2011). One way that these differences can be framed is by centering “new” versus “old” residents. For example: “Competition between old-timers and newcomers has triggered a clash of lifestyles and a conflict over how to plan collectively for the future” (Spain, 1993: 156). The resulting conflict(s) are “clothed in the language of different values regarding the community’s identity” (Spain, 1993: 156), and these values are then attributed to insider/outsider status. Spain (1993), among others, attributes these differences to disparate views of production versus consumption (see also Sayre, 2011; Walker, 2003; Woods, 2011).

This kind of newcomer/longtime resident conflict is not unique to the study site. This divide, whether “real” or perceived, has been documented elsewhere in the United States and beyond. For example, Larsen and Hutton (2011), conducting research in Colorado, find that community discourse in amenity landscapes in the American West can be marked by differences between “new” versus “old” residents but that those discourses can also carry messages of co-opetition (simultaneous cooperation plus competition) among local stakeholders. Johnson et al. (2009), using a case study in South Carolina, describe how insider/outsider politics get entangled with class and race disparities among in-migrants and longstanding locals, further complicating the new versus old dichotomy in land use and environmental management. Hurley and Ari (2011) describe the complexity of mining opposition (and support) in Western Turkey based around differing social locations (e.g., time in residence, occupation, amenity motivations, level of political engagement) noting that the “outsider vs. insider” and “newcomer vs. long-timer” narrative is complicated by shifting residential and land use patterns related to changing rural capitals and rural restructuring. In addition, Abrams et al. (2012), drawing from cases across the globe, outline how amenity migration and exurban encroachment instigates a range of environmental as well as socio-political challenges as communities “struggle[s] to accommodate growing numbers of people with urban tastes and rural dreams” (citing Gurr et al., 2007). That being said, the literature — and my own findings — also indicate that environmental and rural imaginaries and political ideologies (can) transcend the “been-here”/“come-here” divide.

This paper examines differing values regarding the form and function of rural landscapes by teasing out belief systems along the rural/urban or new/old framework. Rather than adopting the new/old binary as a preconceived, defining notion, I use the been-here/come-here divide as a heuristic, as a tool, to better understand those identities and values systems which are, as of yet, unclear. Adopting a binary as a start to analysis could be problematic, and, indeed, Robbins et al. (2009) explicitly argue against labeling perspectives and viewpoints preemptively. Similarly, Taylor (2011) warns that (over)simplified binaries can complicate already complex planning and policy contexts by obscuring rather than revealing stakeholder motivations. However, what I am doing here is taking the perspectives present and testing how well they do or do not fit into the common cultural “boxes” provided — i.e., “been-heres” versus “come-heres” and/or “rural” versus “urban.” I do this not to “give in” to the temptation to do so, and thus succumb to an incomplete characterization of the people and places of the rural–urban interface, but instead to understand what processes and drivers “produce, maintain, or erode those cultures and differences,” as so eloquently suggested by Robbins et al. (2009: 367) themselves. Moreover, in gaining a greater understanding of those processes and drivers, we can push past the false dichotomies and encourage policy makers to identify areas of mutual concern to promote creative problem solving among traditionally opposed groups.

Theorizing the rural–urban interface

There are plural contemporary understandings of rurality (Ban and Ahlqvist, 2009; Crompton and Bucholtz, 2008), and in all of them rural meaning and values remain important to local identities and politics and policy at all scales even as rural places and landscapes shift (Lichter and Brown, 2011; Travis, 2007; Walker and Hurley, 2011; Woods, 2011). There are several models of rural change (Woods, 2005, 2011), many of which are characterized by the presence of urban-like land forms as well as so-called “urban” values in encroaching in otherwise rural areas (Lichter and Brown, 2011; Taylor, 2011). According to Lichter and Brown (2011: 566), “urbanization is a demographic process involving shifts of population from rural to urban territorial units, whereas urbanism refers to the sociocultural and even symbolic aspects of urban life (e.g., values or attitudes).” Along the rural–urban edge, not only is urbanization occurring but urbanism as well, meaning rural areas are facing a pervasive and fundamental social and cultural shift toward urban idea(l)s of living.

In response to this urban shift to the rural, in its various forms, negotiation is required on the part of in-migrants, whether

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1 While there is a long-standing and strong socially embedded belief that rural places are safe, affluent, healthy, and predominantly ethnically White, evidence to the contrary abounds. Nevertheless, our popular and policy discourses struggle to incorporate these myriad rural realities into practice. See Woods (2005, 2011), Solnit (2007), Gosnell and Abrams (2011), and Churchill (1993) for more on this.

2 For coverage of this discord in the Sierra Nevada region specifically, see Alcalá (2012a,b).
“newcomers” or no, and established residents to find an acceptable balance of form and function in the rural landscape given their sometimes divergent views on the issues. This is significant because, as Woods (2005: 77) put it, “the projection of [urban] value judgments on to rural space and rural society introduces a political dimension into migration that can subsequently contribute to the emergence of local conflicts.” In other words, when the formal and informal negotiations between rural stakeholders are unsuccessful, conflicts can emerge over changes occurring across the physical landscape as well as to the socio-cultural or political one.

Indeed, the existence of multiple perspectives and preferences complicates local governance efforts; sometimes there is cooperation despite a diversity of opinions and/or contested viewpoints, and sometimes there is conflict. There is a broad literature on the topic, including both case studies (Bebee and Wheeler, 2012; Duane, 1999; Hurley, 2012; Hurley and Walker, 2004; Johnson et al., 2009; Larsen et al., 2007; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker and Hurley, 2011) and more theoretical treatments (Davidoff, 1965; Gallent et al., 2006; McCann, 1997; Travis, 2007). In this paper I examine how different conceptions of rurality, which are held by a variety rural interest groups (e.g., long-time residents versus newcomers, production-oriented rural land users versus consumption-based rural stakeholders, community-development-minded progressive change agents versus “good ol’ boys” power structures, etc.), are mobilized in and through public processes of land use decision making.

Although conflicts and contestations over rural meaning and value are common (Abrams and Gosnell, 2012; Bebee and Wheeler, 2012; Cadieux, 2008; Duane, 1999; Ewert et al., 1993; Furuseth and Lapping, 1995; McCann, 1997; Nelson, 2001; Sheridan, 2007; Smith and Kramnick, 2000; Travis, 2007; Woods, 2011), there is also a level of cooperation and alliance building (or “co-opetition”) which must occur in order to maintain a rural atmosphere in places of rapid change due to an influx of new residents and land uses (Larsen and Hutton, 2011). Although this phenomenon of creating “unlikely alliances” has been documented in the American West, such alliances have had varying degrees of success (Hurley and Walker, 2004; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker, 2003). Nevertheless, the swift and radical shift many areas of the American West have faced in recent decades has necessitated political alliances that might not have formed in times of less intensive population growth and extensive landscape change.

Rural change in context: The Sierra Nevada and Calaveras County, California

Calaveras County is situated in central California and stretches from the floor of the Central Valley of California into the alpine reaches of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. As such, the landscape is both heterogeneous and dynamic (Bunn et al., 2007). In addition to its scenic and natural resource features, much of the county remains within commutable proximity to two large metropolitan centers, the capital of California, Sacramento, and Stockton. The county is rural by most conventional descriptions (Cromartie and Bucholtz, 2008; Ilbery, 1998; Woods, 2005) based on its population, housing density, and abundance of undeveloped land.

Calaveras County is part of the region known as the Sierra Nevada foothills. The Sierra Nevada foothills, also known as the Mother Lode or Gold Country, is comprised of eight counties (Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Sacramento, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa) (Gold Country Visitors Association, 2012). The Sierra Nevada foothills are part of the larger, 23 county Sierra Nevada ecosystem (Planning and Conservation League Foundation, 2009; Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996).

The population of Calaveras County, as of 2010, was 45,578 (Census Bureau, 2010). Its land area is 1036.84 square miles or 645,210 acres (Census Bureau, 2010; Mintier & Associates et al., 2008). The elevation of the county ranges from close to sea level to over 8000 feet above sea level, meaning:

the county is characterized by a wide variety of natural and cultural landscapes, ranging from low-elevation foothill lands and their associated ranching and mining landscapes, to higher-elevation forest regions and their associated logging and wilderness landscapes (Mintier & Associates et al., 2008; 1–2).

Since the 1970s, Calaveras County’s population has been steadily growing. The county experienced a growth rate of 135.5% between 1970 and 1990, and grew an additional 42.4% from 1990 to 2010 (Census Bureau, 2010; Forstall, 1995). In comparison, California grew by 49.1% and 25.1% during those same periods. Most recently, from 2000 to 2010, Calaveras County’s population growth rate was 12.4%, significantly higher than its neighbor to the south, Tuolumne (which grew at just 1.6 during that time) and also faster than its neighbor to the north, Amador, which grew 8.5% in that time frame (Census Bureau, 2010). In the past ten years, Calaveras County has nearly kept pace with El Dorado County, one of the fastest growing areas of the greater Sacramento area and a known haven for exurban migrants (Bebee and Wheeler, 2012), which grew 15.8% from 2000 to 2010 (Census Bureau, 2010).

Regionally, the population doubled in the Sierra Nevada between 1970 and 1990, with 40% of that growth occurring in just three counties (Nevada, Placer and El Dorado). Overall, the most population growth – and attendant landscape and ecological change – had occurred in the foothill area of the Sierra Nevada (Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996). Much of the growth in the Sierra Nevada foothills is what the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project calls “suburban in nature,” (i.e., having suburban characteristics) and, as such, is related to nearby Central and San Joaquin Valley metropolitan areas.

There have been large influxes of both commuters and retirees to the foothill region (Bermudez, 2012; Mintier & Associates et al., 2008; Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996). Income earned by commuters or acquired through payments of interests, dividends, or transfers to retirees and others accounts for more than half of the total personal income in the Sierra Nevada (Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996). This trend is typical of the American West as more and more residents and in-migrants are able to choose where to live based on amenity preferences rather geographical necessity (Travis, 2007).

In terms of diversity levels, U.S. Census data indicates that Calaveras County is 88.9% white (Census Bureau, 2010). Nevertheless, there are minorities present, particularly people of Hispanic or Latino origin (10.3% of the population in 2010) and Native American groups (1.5% in 2010) (Census Bureau, 2010). As this description indicates, the study site can be mainly characterized by its racial homogeneity and a significant period of recent population growth.

Production versus consumption landscapes

The rapid influx of new residents (a.k.a. “come-heres”) – as has taken place in Calaveras County, California, for example – brings with it changes to social patterns, the economy, and the physical landscape as residential development expands to accommodate (or lure) in-migrants. As mentioned, in-migrants often come seeking particular idealized visions of rurality (also known as the rural idyll

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3 It is commonly perceived that incoming rural migrants (usually from urban settings) are “newcomers” to rural settings; in fact, many are instead “returnees” to rural areas, having lived there earlier in life to follow other opportunities or preferences (see Woods, 2005, among others).
These kinds of modernization and production in Hurley, the rurality Wilson, although defined as post-productivist spaces of the American and cumulative through are containing a variety of definitions (Wilson, 2001; Duane, 1999; Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Hurley and Walker, 2004; Taylor, 2011; Travis, 2007; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker, 2003; Woods, 2005). Rurality is unstable in that although general descriptors of rurality exist—such as having, or having had, primary production or natural resource extraction activities, being characterized by large open spaces or vistas, and, very importantly, being perceived as rural—definitions of rurality can and do shift over time (Clode, 2000; Cromartie and Bucholtz, 2008; Ilbery, 1998; Lichter and Brown, 2011; Woods, 2005, 2011).

As such, the rural–urban interface is a place of transition socially, culturally and physically as land use shifts over time (DeFries et al., 2004; Duane, 1999; Huylenbroeck and Durand, 2003; Ilbery, 1998; Libby and Dicks, 2002; Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, 1996; Travis, 2007; Woods, 2005). Rural landscapes can variously be seen as:

- **Productive:** wherein agriculture, focused on modernization and increasing outputs, is central to rural function and meaning (Wilson, 2001).
- **“Traditional”:** i.e., containing cultural or historical heritage value and use (Quétié et al., 2010).
- **Post-productive:** marked by a reduced emphasis on material production and increased emphasis on the provision of environmental services, while acknowledging that rural land use is increasingly less dependent on agriculture (Mather et al., 2006).
- **Consumptive:** defining rural space as a place for others to “consume,” through leisure and recreation, sightseeing and travel, food and crafts, and natural amenities, such that “attributes of rurality are objects of consumption... commodities that can be bought and sold” (see also Walker, 2003; Woods, 2011: 93).

and more, as the process of rural restructuring unfolds (Woods, 2005). Although “rural areas have always been spaces of change,” rural restructuring refers to the fundamental, persistent, and multidimensional shifts which have occurred, and are still occurring, in rural spaces “driven by the twin forces of technological and social modernization and globalization,” which has “affected all areas of rural life” (Woods, 2005: 40). Rural areas in the Sierra Nevada, and in the American West generally, have been facing precisely these kinds of cumulative and fundamental shifts.

**Rurality in the American West**

Although traditionally envisioned as an unsettled, open frontier, the American West is today the country’s fastest growing region as well as being its most urbanized (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011). In addition to the physical and demographic process of urbanization occurring in rural areas, growth in socio-cultural preferences for urbanism have also been on the rise (Lichter and Brown, 2011), meaning that not only has the physical landscape shifted but so has the cultural one. As perceptions and functions of rural space are often constructed by urbanites, the policies pertaining to and regulating rural spaces are sometimes at odds with the perceived and lived experiences of rural residents themselves (Walker and Hurley, 2011; see also Williams, 1973).

The emerging post-productivist or multifunctional countryside is defined in part by non-agricultural representations of rurality, the rise of the consumption of rural landscapes, and the movement of urban ideals and expectations to rural places (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011: 306; citing Wilson, 2001).

The character of the West is changing as manufacturing and extractive industries decline and are replaced by service sector, high tech, and recreational jobs. Nevertheless, as rural economies shift away from the primary sector industries like mineral extraction, timber, and ranching, these heritage uses still hold sentimental and cultural/historical value (Huntsinger and Hopkinson, 1996).

Walker (2003) argues that the main competition occurring in the rural American West is between a production-based view of the economy and a consumption-based view (see Section “Production versus consumption landscapes”). Driven by extra-local factors such as changes in industry, urban land prices, and residential preferences, land in rural areas that was previously used for ranching or timber came to be valued for its development potential. As such, the West became “the spatial investment arena for the affluent,” resulting in the transformation of production landscapes into landscapes of consumption (citing Robbins, 1999; Walker, 2003: 17). Locals tied to the natural resource economy (“been-heres”) thus feel that they are being pushed out, and accordingly seek to “take back” their communities. In this way, the clashes of culture and ideology in the rural West are as much the result of personal experiences as reactions to broader regional processes. In essence, the conflicts “reflect underlying tensions between competing capitalism that commodify nature in incompatible ways” (Walker, 2003: 17).

Amenity migration is a part of this cultural and economic shift. The study of amenity migration, of which exurbanization is a part, links to rural gentrification and looks at “power relations and alliances between competing landscape ideals” (Taylor, 2011: 333). The concept of rural gentrification is discussed by a number of authors (for example, see Sayre, 2006; Travis, 2007). The idea is that rural areas, in being revalorized, shift from being “low-value productive lands to high-value positional goods,” through a process of commodification of idealized rural lifestyles (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011: 308). Rural gentrification through amenity migration brings together conceptions of socially constructed nature (and the rural idyll) (Cadieux and Taylor, 2013) and links rural change to wider processes, namely “national and international patterns of investment and disinvestment in rural places” (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011: 308; see also Sayre, 2011). Broadly speaking, such efforts can be labeled regional political ecology, as the goal is to understand the “chains of explanation” which drive such processes over time and space (Baikie and Brookfield, 1987; Neumann, 2010; Walker, 2003).

But, as Walker and Fortmann (2003) point out, for some “old-timers” accustomed to a productive/extractive view of the landscape, development is just the next form of value extraction from available resources. It is these landowners and historic and influential agricultural, mining, and timber families who, in collaboration with corporate developers, control the face of change in the rural Sierra Nevada foothill areas. These contemporary values can be linked to the Gold Rush histories of the Sierra Nevada region (Holliday, 1999) as this sense of extractable value has carried forward to successive generations of land managers, whether “new” or not (Walker and Fortmann, 2003). Now, under the mantle of private property rights and driven by an imagined rural ideal, land users feel entitled to take what they can— at whatever cost— from the land they control. A discussion of findings related to private property rights is presented in the section titled “Been-heres versus come-heres, political ideologies, and views of private property rights.”

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4 Interestingly, Walker and Fortmann (2003) refer to these stakeholders and power brokers as part of the local “growth machine,” a term which emerged from political economy studies of urban growth (see Logan and Molotch, 2007).
The exurban landscape

One particular form of rural land development, called exurbia, is a major driver of rural restructuring. Exurbia is characterized by low-density, large lot subdivisions led by urban in-migrants (“come-heres”) seeking natural or cultural amenities which crop up along the metropolitan fringes (Taylor, 2011; Travis, 2007). In addition to its physical characteristics, exurbia is also a site of social and economic change. As “exurbanites are city people who have deliberately chosen the rural landscape as a setting for their homes” (Taylor, 2011: 324), exurbia is the site of amenity-seeking, consumption-based, rather than production-based, rural change. And although this phenomenon is present all over the United States and, indeed, increasingly across the globe (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011), it is also a process which is occurring most intensely in the American West (Travis, 2007). The impacts of exurbia are broad (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Travis, 2007), including issues that are:

- **environmental**, such as habitat fragmentation through fencing and roadways, the creation of discontinuous management zones, shifts in vegetation and animal life, and other associated impacts of sprawling residential development;
- **social**, in terms of engendering spaces of conflict between differing interest groups (i.e., “new” versus “old” residents, productivist versus post-productivist mentalities, etc.); and
- **economic**, as economies shift from being primary sector or resource based to amenity-driven, consumption landscapes.

Exurban land change, again, is driven by idealized conceptions of rurality (Cadieux, 2011; Travis, 2007; Woods, 2011) and made possible by a variety of factors, operating at multiple scales, which make “the movement of affluent urban populations to scenic rural areas possible, desirable, and socially acceptable” (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011: 306). Such factors include: global capital flows and (dis)investments, cultural and demographic trends, infrastructure and technology improvements that facilitate literal or virtual commuting, and the “unique attributes” of scenic rural places which act as specific pull factors for migrants (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; see also Travis, 2007).

The meeting of differing perspectives and land use preferences in rural areas due to various forms of rural restructuring can manifest as conflict between “been-heres” and “come-heres,” even though the range of residents could include those whose families have inhabited a rural space for several generations as well as back-to-the-landers who arrived 20, 30 or 40 years ago, and those who arrived more recently and yet still have strong feelings about land use and rural preservation (Woods, 2003). In consumption-based rural capitalism, local industries such as tourism, recreation, and real estate depend on the maintenance of a rural landscape that meets outside (potential tourists and in-migrants’) perceptions of a “rural” lifestyle and environment (Walker, 2003; Woods, 2011). There is an inherent contradiction in the interests of such industries, though, because newcomers’ ability to migrate to (or visit) rural areas is often dependent on real estate developers’ actions and, hence, landowners decisions to change the local environment (by putting in a subdivision or a tourist amenity, for example).

The influences of outside capital are in nothing new in rural areas (Sayre, 2011) or in the Sierra Nevada specifically (Greenland, 2001; Walker, 2001). As a result, power and influence are integral aspects of the study of governance and environmental management because in these matters there are differing perspectives and interests competing for dominance. When preferences differ among interest or stakeholder groups (Arnstein, 1969; Forrester, 1999; Travis, 2007), a social exchange must occur as “culturally and socially situated individuals generate and enact agency as they negotiate overlapping norms for land use” (Gezon, 2005: 148). “The rural–urban fringe is highly contested space,” and, as some groups or interests have more power and influence, “money and political power sometimes drown out the concerns of long-term residents who hope to maintain their way of life” (Lichter and Brown, 2011: 574). This is why examining who has power and influence and how they use it is so important (Flyvbjerg, 1998, 2001).

As rural population demographics have changed due to rural in-migration of a particular sort (white, middle class migrants), there has been an increase in the service class (those employed in professional, managerial, administrative positions) (Woods, 2005). The growing service class is relatively well-educated, has good organizational and communication skills, has strong social networks, and has time and money to spare (Walker, 2003; Woods, 2005). Well-educated and affluent rural migrants (framed as newcomers or “come-heres”) have the capacity – i.e., the skills, resources, and/or time and money (Eade, 1997) – to mobilize for causes near and dear to their hearts (Spain, 1993). Differing degrees of capacity and access can lead to unequal influence (Gezon, 2005), and exurban professionals’ skills and financial resources have allowed them to dominate the political scene (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Walker and Fortmann, 2003).

In-migrants, particularly urban ones, while seen as lacking local knowledge – of traditions, culture, processes – nevertheless “often play pivotal roles in regulating local space” by participating in local governance activities (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011: 310). The divergent constructions of place and community found in rural areas means that there is much room for conflict and contestation. A single, highly influential group or community can shape a whole county’s direction if it has in-roads in the policy-making process (Walker and Fortmann, 2003), so although the build-up of networks in civil society is generally seen as positive (Putnam, 2000), it is possible that the forming of associations and coalitions could be used to exclude some groups or people from influence instead of opening up the process (Allen et al., 1998). Walker (2003) describes how exurban in-migrants forged an unlikely strategic alliance with conservatives based on the protection of property values and rural qualities in Nevada County. The alliance was not steadfast, however, because among large landholders there are divergent interests and motives (Walker, 2003).5 Following a brief description of the research methods, the remainder of this paper examines the differences between “been-heres” and “come-heres,” testing this problematic but popular frame of reference for understanding socio-cultural differences between residents in areas undergoing processes of rural restructuring.

Methods

The findings reported in this paper are the result of a multi-method, comparative case study of three cases in the Sierra Nevada county of Calaveras in California. These methods were selected to support an intensive research design, which seeks to examine “actual relations entered into by identifiable agents [and] the interdependencies between activities and between characteristics” (Sayer, 2010: 242) rather than make perhaps broader, but less vivid, concrete, and/or satisfactory explanations. Using qualitative and quantitative data, I identify the dominant discourses around land use change and land use planning that existed in Calaveras County, California, during the period of data collection. This study builds on and furthers other studies in the Sierra Nevada foothills

5 See also Walker and Hurley (2011), which chronicles Oregon’s distinctive land use planning system, its trials and tribulations, and the divergent views present in many land use debates. Larsen and Hutton (2011) also discuss when and how divergent interests cooperate in the interest of common goals.
which examine how social and physical landscapes are changing (Bebee and Wheeler, 2012; Hurley and Walker, 2004; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker, 2003), adding to the literature by investigating the values, motivations, and environmental imaginaries of rural change agents and characterizing the form and manner of such change, a task suggested by numerous prominent scholars in the field (including: Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Nelson, 2001; Taylor, 2011; Travis, 2007; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker and Hurley, 2011). Although my findings are not directly replicable, they are representative in the sense that they represent a wider set of conditions and context beyond my distinct study area (Sayer, 2010).

The goal of this study, and others using an intensive research design, is, as Spain (1993: 156) puts it, to identify “structurally typical” cases even if those cases are not statistically representative. As such, my sample focuses on causal groups who may be “either similar or different but which actually relate to each other structurally or causally” (Sayer, 2010: 244). In this way, specific individuals and groups are of interest because of their relevance to the questions being asked.

The purpose of this study was to explore how the perceptions, perspectives, and preferences of rural residents and stakeholders in Calaveras County influenced (1) their own land management decisions and (2) the way they responded to others’ land management decisions. Toward this end, I first identified three distinct sites of land use change, which offered very different land use outcomes on agricultural lands. I then identified key stakeholders who would be involved in or concerned about the cases selected. I selected respondents across a spectrum of values, interests, and backgrounds, including residents, stakeholders, and public officials, including farmers, ranchers, landowners, land use advocates, and policy makers. As my study is focused on the power holders and decision makers, i.e., those who “show up” for public processes, by necessity my sample is somewhat limited. Indeed, those who were the most interested in speaking with me might also be those with the most polarized views. However, as my goal was not generalizability, rather corroboration based on explanations derived from causal groups (Sayer, 2010), I was comfortable with this potential outcome.

For this study, I examined three divergent instances of land management, each representing a different outcome, a different way of dealing with changing landscapes and lifestyles along the rural–urban interface. One, Garamendi Ranch, a historical cattle ranch, has weathered variously economic, environmental, and social challenges to remain in the ranching business for over 150 years. Another, Ironstone Vineyards, which transitioned its operations to tap into the booming California wine economy, mainly let go of its cattle ranching and orchard growing history. And the third, Trinitas, very controversially, transformed an idle sheep ranch into an exclusive golf resort with little to no adherence to land use guidelines or environmental planning protocols. In selecting which cases to compare, I chose to examine three sites with similar land use contexts but which had varying land use outcomes, purposefully choosing three sites within one county in the Sierra Nevada foothills to ensure that the political, geographical, and environmental contexts were as homogenous as possible, easing comparison between the three.

Using these cases, I investigated the values various rural residents embrace and how they mobilize those values and ideologies to influence and enact land use change, whether that change is marked by cooperation or conflict. Toward this end, I gathered data in a variety of formats. Methods used included in-depth, semi-structured interviews, a written demographic and political/ideological survey, participant observation, and document review (DeLyser et al., 2010; Patton, 2002; Sayer, 2010; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). I interviewed the major political officials as well as representatives from various interests and perspectives using a cumulative, “snowball” (Patton, 2002) or inductive (Sayer, 2010) style sampling method, conducting 51 interviews total. Participant observation occurred during primary data collection between January and June 2010, however, this study was also informed by an ongoing interest in the area beginning in January 2008. Through these various methods I sought information related to the background and motivations of the rural population being interviewed, conceptions of rurality as presented by this sample of respondents, the range of ideological characterizations present (self-identified by respondents and observed by me), and the current popular understanding of the three differing cases of land management in the area. From this extensive data set, I present in this paper findings related to identity, specifically in relation to been-here/come-here status and political ideologies, and preferences for environmental management mainly in regards to conceptions of private property rights.

Results and discussion: interrogating divergent perspectives

Conceptualizing been-heres and come-heres

The three cases of my study demonstrate that environmental imaginaries translate into competing ideologies, resulting in different perspectives on the use, value, and functions of land. Mixed motivations and value systems are present in the rural populace, ranging from fiscally conservative, small government, libertarian values to well-educated, post-urbanites who seek to implement land controls and value-driven policy. The conflict is that the fiscally conservative, small government perspective can be at odds with the planning or regulatory mechanisms required to maintain the physical landscape and rural lifestyle desired by both in-migrants and long-term residents. On the other hand, enacting perhaps wide-reaching land use controls in an effort to protect coveted environmental amenities, as might be espoused by newer residents and landowners (Abrams et al., 2012; Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Robbins et al., 2009), may conflict with other stakeholders’ preferences, preferences which are often conflated, accurately or not, with so-called “rural” values.6

Nevertheless, the conflicting interests presented in these cases, and indeed in the wider literature regarding exurbia and the rural American West, are often framed as “conservative,” property rights supporting landowners (“been-heres”) versus “progressive,” planning/regulation-oriented urbanites (“come-heres”) (Spain, 1993; Walker and Fortmann, 2003). However, this dichotomy is both overly simplistic (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Taylor, 2011) and contradictory because in-migrants, particularly those lured by real or perceived environmental amenities, are interested both in preserving local environmental quality as well as in preserving their own property values, which can translate into heightened private property rights concerns (Abrams et al., 2012; Yung and Belsky, 2007). As such, numerous authors note that characterizations of “new versus old,” “insider versus outsider,” or “been-heres versus come-heres,” may not only lack significant explanatory power, but may do even worse by carrying connotations and stereotypes which can create obstacles that hinder creative solutions to common concerns and challenges (Lichter and Brown, 2011; Taylor, 2011).

Even so, the dichotomy persists culturally despite evidence that the social landscape of rural areas is more diverse and complex.

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6 The “rural” values which emerged most strongly from my interviews and observations were defined by the ideals of independence, privacy, a generally unobtrusive government, and strong private property rights; that being said, these values could just as easily be described as “conservative” and be ascribed to either newer or longer-standing residents.
than these simple black-and-white, urban-influenced versus rural-based social categories can explain (Lichter and Brown, 2011; Taylor, 2011). Still, the persistence of this conception may have some utility as often the dichotomy is framed as “local” residents who have “long-term, often generational, roots in the community” versus “newcomers” who have a more “transitory orientation” and are less invested in the community (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011: 310). Gosnell and Abrams (2011: 310) note that while the “new versus old” characterization does not capture the complexity of rural society, it does allow for analysis of amenity migrants specifically whose “patterns of social interaction, civic and political engagement, spending investments, and land ownership and use have the potential to affect social dynamics in unique ways.” Gosnell and Abrams (2011) suggest these specific ways in which in-migrants impact receiving communities: when their land ownership, use, and management differs from “traditional” expectations; when in-migration is part of a larger trend of (usually rapid) development and population growth; and when in-migrants shift the “local balance of power” as also suggested by Walker and Fortmann (2003) and Hurley and Walker (2004).

Therefore, although embracing the rural–urban dichotomy is potentially problematic, it also holds promise in that it is a simple, culturally accepted, and sometimes valuable characterization. In trying to understand the distinction(s) between been-heres versus come-heres, I examined several factors: political party affiliation; political, social and economic ideological values; demographic factors (specifically educational background and income); and perspectives of private property rights, both by been-heres/come-heres and political party and by been-here/come-here status alone. These factors were selected and analyzed to determine if their variation between respondents mapped along been-here versus come-here lines. Although the sample is small, this analysis gives an indication of general trends for the populations of interest (see the discussion of causal groups in the methods section) during a given time frame even if it is not strictly representative of the population as a whole.

For the purposes of this analysis, 1990 is used as the cut-off year for been-here versus come-here status, such that those who had moved to Calaveras County in the past 20 years (at the time of data collection, 2010) were “come-heres” while those who had been living in the county for 20 years or more were placed into the “been-here” category. However, culturally speaking, the differences between newcomers and old-timers are much more nuanced. In other words, there are cultural, economic, and political differentiations (Robbins et al., 2009) between the back-to-the-landers versus multi-generation rural people, but there are also certainly social differentiations made between those two groups and very new in-migrants, such as those included in the “come-heres” category.

Assessing “been-heres” versus “come-heres”

This section examines been-heres and come-heres in terms of a number of factors, including: educational attainment, income, political party affiliations, and political/social/economic ideologies. The demographic factors chosen – educational background and income levels – were selected in response to Respondent 38’s statement, which opened this paper. Respondent 38 noted that the only real cultural diversity present in the study area was between been-heres and come-heres, groups which she described as having appreciable differences – namely in terms of income and educational attainment. This is where our analysis begins.

Educational attainment and income

In regards to educational attainment, the most striking differences between been-heres and come-heres in the study are that more been-heres reported having completed at least some college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My sample</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $50,000</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-99,999</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-149,999</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-199,999</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $200,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<td>Decline to State</td>
<td>11.4</td>
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Fig. 1. Reported income from my sample in comparison to US Census data. Data from author survey and the United States Census (Census Bureau, 2010).

than come-heres on the whole. Overall, according to these results, the been-heres were the more highly educated group. This finding is a bit surprising as it is not what the literature suggests; the literature suggests in-migrants will be more highly educated and “savvy,” facilitating their political and civic involvement in rural spaces (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Spain, 1993; Taylor, 2011; Walker, 2003; Woods, 2005). However, also noticeable in the data is the large amount of come-heres who declined to state their educational background. This finding will be discussed in more detail in a moment.

As for the income distribution, there are some interesting trends which do follow characterizations in the literature. In short, come-heres reported higher incomes overall with 30.4% stating an income over $100,000 annually. Only 18.5% of been-heres claimed the same amount. The majority of been-heres (51.9%) claimed an income of $50,000–100,000, whereas only 39.1% of come-heres did. Also, the number of people who selected $50,000 or less was greater for been-heres, at 22% in comparison to the come-heres’ rate of 13% for that income category. These findings support descriptions in the literature regarding in-migrants bringing higher incomes through differing employment streams and non-wage income (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Walker, 2003; Woods, 2005).

However, also in regards to income, numerous respondents noted that agricultural landowners are highly likely to understated their income or income potential, so self-reported income data must be taken as just that: self-reported, and thus potentially inaccurate. The median income for Calaveras County for 2006–2010 was $54,971, as reported by the United States Census (Census Bureau, 2010). Fig. 1 outlines the reported incomes from the study area in relation to the income distribution collected through the United States Census. Based on this data it would seem that the sample included fewer low income people than would be representative to the county generally. This is not entirely surprising as the type of person who has the time and financial flexibility to participate in public processes (Forrester, 1999) and thus be a useful informant for the study would generally be from a higher economic group.

Both the educational and income data suggest another difference between the two groups. As noted, proportionally, large numbers of come-heres declined to state data related to their personal background and demographics. For example, in regards to educational attainment, 43.5% of come-heres declined to state their status (versus 7.4% of been-heres who did the same). This could be due to a disinclination to share information related to education attainment, a theory which is bolstered by the fact that

1 For full disclosure, the physical layout of the survey could have also been a factor as the question on educational background was placed on the page in a manner which may have made it less noticeable for respondents. However, this would not explain why only certain respondents (namely those categorized as “come-heres”) missed it.
there were a number of respondents, especially come-heres, who declined to state other demographic information, like income, as well. For example, more than double the amount of come-heres declined to state their income in comparison to been-heres (17.4% versus 7.4% of been-heres). This high non-response rate does seem to suggest a disinclination to share personal information, a preference which was also indicated in qualitative comments. At least six respondents noted in their survey and interview comments that income (or potential income, if one is considering cow-calf counts for ranchers) is a private topic and they prefer keeping it that way. This difference in preferences regarding what is private and why is a good indicator of a qualitative social difference among respondents.

Political party affiliation and political ideologies

Having considered the basic demographic information, we can now examine political party affiliations and political ideologies. The study survey revealed that 41.7% of respondent identified with the Republican Party, 29.2% identified as Democratic, 8.2% identified as Libertarian, and 20.8% declined to state (this is from 49 valid responses to the demographic and political ideological survey). These numbers are generally in line with statewide statistics, especially when considering that the more rural and, particularly, inland areas of the state are more conservative (Baldassare et al., 2011). A striking difference though is the very high numbers of Libertarians – especially in this sample and in the county generally. The statewide registrations for the party are at 0.55% (Bowen, 2012). However, Libertarians are well established and politically prominent in Calaveras County. For example, Calaveras County is home to a long-standing Libertarian elected official, Mr. Tom Tryon, who was first elected to the Board of Supervisors in 1984 (Board of Supervisors, 2012). As such, the Calaveras totals are at 1.2% (Bowen, 2008, 2010). In this sample, though, 8.2% of my respondents self-identified as Libertarian.

Although Calaveras County has a high number of registered Libertarians, the general numbers of those who identify as conservative or liberal are in line with state totals. Moreover, as the entire region is known for being more politically conservative than some other areas of the state this finding is not out of place (Baldassare et al., 2011). As for the high numbers of Libertarians in this sample, as the study design required sampling for causal groups rather than strict representativeness, and that sample was to consist of those who “show up” for public processes, it is not surprising that the individuals with strong opinions are those who participated. As such, although the findings herein are perhaps not strictly representative in a statistical sense, they do offer insights into similar processes occurring in comparable contexts.

As a rough caricature, the literature suggests “new” equals liberal or progressive ideologies and “old” equals conservative ideologies (though this is highly problematized; see the discussion in section “Conceptualizing been-heres and come-heres” above); as such, we might expect the conservative party affiliates to mainly be been-heres. And, indeed, these data demonstrate that there are more conservative been-heres than come-heres. Specifically, half of the survey respondents (an even 50%) were Republican-identifying been-heres as well as some stated Libertarians (14.3%), of which there were none in the pool of come-heres. Also come-heres were more likely to decline to state (DTS) or say “none” in response to their political party affiliation, 30.4% doing so in all, in comparison to 14.3% of been-heres declining to state. Fig. 2 provides a full summary of political party affiliation by been-heres and come-heres status.

These rough caricatures do seem to indicate that been-heres (as demonstrated by this sample, in this county and region) are more conservative than come-heres; however, both theoretically and with attention to the data, political party does not provide a full account of people’s political preferences and belief systems. In order to see if, beyond political party affiliation, the been-heres/come-heres dichotomy would align with conservative/liberal ideologies, I designed a demographic and ideological survey wherein respondents were asked to, among other things to, rank themselves politically, socially, and economically on a scale of one to five where one is liberal and five conservative. The ideological data was then parsed by been-heres versus come-heres status (Fig. 3). This analysis showed that the conception of “been-heres versus come-heres” as a proxy for “conservative versus liberal” does not pan out at all when it comes to various political ideologies. In the sample, the distribution of political ideological beliefs was virtually identical whether respondents were been-heres or come-heres. The results are the same – i.e., the distribution of ideological preferences is virtually identical between been-heres and come-heres – for social and political orientations as well economic ones. In other words, there were proportionally the same amount of conservatives to liberals for each ideological category.

The analysis presented above demonstrates that there are both similarities and differences between been-heres and come-heres. The conceptualization makes sense in terms of political party affiliations as the majority of been-heres associated themselves with the Republican or Libertarian parties, whereas only 39.1% of
come-heres did the same.\textsuperscript{8} Also, reported incomes were higher for come-heres. Other than that, though, it seems the two groups have much in common. Nevertheless, the “been-heres versus come-heres” dichotomy persists socio-culturally in that it is a conception that people talk about and continue to give credence to. And, indeed, social and political difference is present in the study site, the wider region, and in rural places generally (Woods, 2011). However, the differences seem to stem more from attitudes and ideologies regarding specific issues.

Data from this study indicate that there are substantial and notable differences between political ideologies, regardless of whether respondents are been-heres or come-heres (Robbins et al., 2009; Walker and Fortmann, 2003). Areas investigated in this study include perceptions of and preferences for policy related to: the “economy vs. environment” debate; whether land use regulations are valuable or detrimental; the role of special interests, even at the local level; and the meaning and value of land as a common resource or as private property, including perspectives of private property rights, stewardship, and the “highest and best use” of land and other resources. This list gives an indication of how vastly differently people with similar backgrounds and other general characteristics can see the world and how it “ought” to be. Although a full analysis of the range of difference between rural stakeholders’ views of particular public environmental issues is not feasible in this paper, the following discussion (section “Been-heres vs. come-heres, political ideologies, and views of private property rights”) will examine one of these areas of difference: views of private property rights.

\textbf{Been-heres versus come-heres, political ideologies, and views of private property rights}

\textbf{Private property rights in the literature}

In this section, conceptions of private property rights are used as a proxy for understanding the political ideologies present in the study area. However, in order to understand how conceptions of private property rights do or do not influence perspectives of land use and management for various groups in the case study area, we must first examine private property rights generally.

The debate over private property rights is a long, ongoing one that has undergone waves of attention and which, as an institution, has shifted over time. However, fundamentally, as much as private property rights are associated with freedom and liberty in U.S. society, property rights cannot exist without the laws that protect it. “Private property is made possible by law, police, and courts: it is a social institution in which public and private are necessarily joined” (Freyfogle, 2003: 2). The debate on private property persists over time, despite being at times “settled” by various rulings and regulations, because society is always changing, and as populations, conditions and technologies change so do people’s values regarding land, land uses and the rights and responsibilities for owners and the public over natural and common resources (Freyfogle, 2003).

Freyfogle (2003) and Echeverria and Eby (1995) note that private property is a political and legal construct which provides certain rights to land holders, but also, through various regulatory mechanisms, infers certain responsibilities. The degree of freedom that a landowner has can be interpreted differently as can how much responsibility the landowner has and for what. There are certain clear cut and carefully regulated restrictions and requirements, but the issue of private property rights can also be very ideological. In other words, a person’s view on private property rights reflects their political beliefs or political ideologies. The literature around private property rights often links private property rights and Republican or conservative political ideologies (Anderson and Hill, 2004; Echeverria and Eby, 1995; Freyfogle, 2003; Jacobs, 1998) as conservative groups hold adamantly to the belief that private property rights are an essential and fundamental element of public governance. This link held true in this study.

\textbf{Conceptions of private property rights in Calaveras County, CA}

The following analysis uses views of private property rights as a proxy for environmental ideological diversity and conflict. Using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program HyperRESEARCH I examined every mention of “private property” within the many pages of interview transcripts. There were 112 mentions of the phrase. I then went through a re-coded each of those instances to define the perspective of private property rights presented by mention. From this analysis, I came up with four specific versions of that code:

- \textit{Private property as an absolute right} is characterized by a belief that the landowner should have ultimate control over the use and management of his/her land with as little outside intervention possible.
- \textit{Private property as limited} is characterized by the belief that although important (and protected), private property rights should be subject to the rules, regulations, and guidelines imposed by the governing body that enforces/organizes them.

\textit{Fig. 3.} Distribution of political ideological values by been-here versus come-here. Data from author survey.

\textsuperscript{8} However, as there were high numbers of decline-to-state responses from the come-heres, determining how many were or were not conservative is difficult.
Private property as political identifies how private property rights are mobilized as an abstract concept, as an important symbol of belief systems and ideology.

Private property as stewardship identifies a belief that private property rights are also marked by responsibility for stewardship and land care. In other words, landownership is not only about receiving personal benefits but also about caring for the land and resources of which the owner is a steward.

Private property as an absolute right was mentioned the most frequently (51 mentions by 34 respondents) with “private property as limited” and “private property as stewardship” following second (each with 26 and 23 mentions by 15 and 16 respondents, respectively). “Private property as political” was mentioned the fewest times (12 mentions by 10 respondents). These results indicate that although many people view private property rights as absolute, there is also strong support for the view that private property rights are limited and/or are tied up with responsibility for stewardship. Lastly, there are those who see private property rights as a political tool. As each respondent could have mentioned private property rights multiple times, there are two different ways to look at this data set. One, which aims to examine the intensity and specifics behind each view of private property rights, would want to maintain the detail provided by raw number of mentions, regardless of how many respondents made that mention. A second option, which is more focused on comparing who noted particular viewpoints not so much the valuation or intensity behind that sentiment, would utilize the count of respondents who noted a particular viewpoint at least once. This is the “one person, one vote” strategy and is the one utilized in the analysis to follow.

In the data set (Fig. 4), Republicans were much more likely to say private property rights are an absolute right (55.9% of respondents who characterized private property rights this way were offered by Republicans), regardless of their been-here versus come-here status. Republicans were the least likely to mention private property rights as stewardship (accounting for only 12.5% of respondents to do so) while the Decline-to-States captured the largest share (43.8%) of that category, followed by Democrats (25%) and then Libertarians (18.8%). Republicans and Democrats were both evenly split and on par with each other in regards to likelihood to see private property rights as an important element of their political ideologies as well as to conceptualize private property rights as limited. Those who declined to state a political party affiliation were half as likely to describe private property rights as inherently limited as Republicans or Democrats. No Libertarians noted thinking of private property rights as limited, which is not surprising given the political tenants of Libertarianism (Advocates for Self-Government, 2012).

When the private property rights data is parsed by been-here/come-here, it becomes clear that private property rights as stewardship was mentioned significantly more by been-heres (62.5%) than come-heres (37.5%). However, otherwise the responses are virtually identical for been-heres and come-heres. As such, views of private property rights, particularly as related to private property as conceptualized as both a right and a responsibility, was the only indicator, barring income, which showed any real difference between the groups. This suggests that the differences between the two groups, rather than being demographic – i.e., based on strict quantitative measurements like political party affiliation, educational attainment, and income (though, as mentioned, the latter did indicate some divergence between the groups) – is rather more qualitative, based around differences in opinions, attitudes, and imaginaries. In other words, the divergence between been-heres and come-heres is not so much one of actual attributes (as a similar spread of characteristics is present between them), but a difference in attitudes and political preferences.

Attitudes, preferences, ideologies

Having established that the main divergence between been-heres and come-heres is a diversity in terms of attitudes, preferences, and ideologies, the following section examines how these qualitative dimensions shape the social landscape. The following quote, from the leader of local taxpayer association, demonstrates how one faction creates “others” of outsiders, portraying their preferences as foreign and detrimental.

When you [attend] the public meetings, they’re pretty well-stacked with people with strong socialist ideologies. They believe government should play in everything, even development, maybe even own everything. Anyway, those people are highly energetic. The people on the other side are people that are basically working for a living. They want to be left alone. They are willing to be responsible for their own property and to
respect the property rights of others, but they don’t go into all the, to the Board of Supervisors meetings, and they don’t participate at all in the public planning process. They just want to be left alone, and they don’t know they’re losing their rights, but they’re starting to discover that (Respondent 28, March 2010).

This respondent is a Tea Party conservative (Formisano, 2012), he is a “been-here” as he moved to the area in 1975, and he is very active in the local political scene advocating for less intensive land use controls and regulations for the purpose of freeing up “the market.” He, as well as many others like him, think the solution to economic and environmental problems is through allowing landowners to pursue the “highest and best use” of their properties. The idea is that a free(r), laissez-faire market will deter landowners from causing too much harm on their properties and, by tying the hands of landowners through excessive regulation, you inhibit the ability of the market to perform this role adequately (Freyfogle, 2003). The only restriction many conservatives support is that the landowner be responsible for avoiding (potential) impacts outside of one’s own property; in other words, it is not acceptable to externalize the negative impacts of your land use choices on your neighbors (Freyfogle, 2003; Last, 1998). However, within that one confines, landowners should be free to decide and to act on their preferences.

The quote above also highlights the social distance between various rural stakeholders. Respondent 28 is the leader of a conservative taxpayer association in Calaveras County, and he rhetorically frames the difference between various rural dwellers as the difference between “working stiffs” and “meddling environmentalists.” This is akin to White’s (1996: 171) framing in his discussion regarding work and nature: “Are you an environmentalist or do you work for a living?” Respondent 28’s statement reveals his beliefs about the ideal function of government and his beliefs about “the others,” those people who have the time and money to attend public meetings and promote their “socialist” agendas.

These kinds of references are to the prototypical, though perhaps mythical, in-migrant (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Nelson, 1992; Taylor, 2011; Travis, 2007): a well-educated, politically savvy exurbanite who telecommutes, lives off of capital gains or other unearned income, and/or is retired. This theoretical person has “time on their hands” to get involved in political processes and has invaded the rural with his or her urban ideals of planned growth and environmental preservation, lofty goals which come at the cost of traditional rural livelihoods.

However, the “typical” rural person (or in-migrant) does not seem to exist. In fact, the speaker, Respondent 28, could himself be considered a “come-here,” depending on the definition of that term. He was one of the advance guard of the back-to-the-land population boom (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Woods, 2005) in the 1970s and 1980s in the Sierra Foothills region (Census Bureau, 2010; Forstall, 1995; Walker and Fortmann, 2003). He is someone who made a living on real estate as he shepherded other in-migrants into the region. So although he is claiming the mantle of a working class, rural person he also could be called out for being “foreign,” an “outsider,” or “from away.”

By way of contrast with Respondent 28, here is another perspective, one from a local land use planning advocate:

If a large landowner is going to keep [his] land in open space, agriculture, forestry, whatever, row crops, orchards, I don’t care, he ought to be compensated for the watershed he’s protecting, he ought to be compensated for the carbon sequestration that he is providing... but they ought to be compensated for all the benefits that they’re providing to the community at large, and that’s one of the things that make it difficult for private land owners that want to hold on to their land and stay in agriculture...I sometimes get frustrated with the environmental community because they’re, “Oh, well you have to put a conservation easement on your land, keep it open space, be a steward of the land.” Well, yeah, great, I support all these things, but you also have to realize these people have to live and have an income. It has to be financially viable for them, so I’m a very strong believer in putting value on ecological and biological assets and compensating landowners (Respondent 5, January 2010).

Respondent 5 is also very involved in planning and land use planning advocacy efforts and lives in a small-acre-parcel subdivision on a golf course. Given these characteristics, she would likely also be considered a come-here, but she moved to the area in 1985, 5 years before the somewhat arbitrary 20 year residency mark, 1990. The point here is that, more important than how long this respondent has lived in Calaveras County, is her value system, which she puts into action regularly in her land use planning advocacy work. It is this qualitative dimension of her political ideologies and environmental imaginaries that contrast with Respondent 28. Otherwise, these two respondents are not very different from one another according to the lines of difference normally highlighted: both are “been-heres,” both live in exurban-style housing developments, and both are very active in the local land use planning scene. However, they represent both poles of the socio-political range of types described in the exurbia literature, from professional and politically savvy land use planning advocate to conservative, government-out-of-my-business property rights advocate (Nelson, 1992; Travis, 2007).

In short, regardless of their longevity in rural space, these respondents’ ideological stances are extremely different. Moreover, each perspective represents a “structurally typical” viewpoint; in other words, they are not outliers in their perceptions of these issues (Spain, 1993). This outcome destabilizes the rural/urban be-en-here/come-here dichotomy and supports existing literature which suggests that political and otherwise fiscal or economic ideologies are significant drivers for rural change agents (Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Sayre, 2011; Travis, 2007).

**Discussion: (Social) difference and its public policy implications**

Taken together, the statements from Respondents 5 and 28 demonstrate how various perspectives can talk across each other. Respondent 5’s perspective is that someone, most likely the government, ought to play a role in incentivizing “good” land management, i.e., land management which provides for both a private and a public good. The discourse presented by Respondent 28, on the other hand, espouses a neoliberal, laissez faire perspective, arguing explicitly against governmental oversight and control of landowner actions. The two individuals quoted here are enemies in the land use planning process in Calaveras County, just as the perspectives they represent are at odds within the public policy realm.

Nonetheless, the role of planning and public policy is to find common ground between conflicting parties. Spain (1993) indicates that there can be basic community concerns in common between been-heres and come-heres. Indeed, this stripping away of perceived differences to identify areas of common ground among seemingly intractable political-ideological divergence is key to...
many authors’ recommendations for improving rural policy making (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011; Gosnell and Abrams, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Walker and Hurley, 2011), environmental management (Balint et al., 2011; Barrow, 2006), and/or policy-making/planning generally (Davidoff, 1965; Forester, 1999; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; van Lier, 1998). That being said, the means through which these two groups prefer to pursue the implementation of their values are quite different. Each side has a different perspective of – and preference for – how the government should function in relation to land use and planning, demonstrating differences in political ideologies, environmental governance, and conceptions of private property rights in the area.

As this analysis indicates, the easy, black-and-white conception of “new” versus “old” residents is inadequate for explaining the processes occurring in rural places, as it is really political ideologies which drive the divergence in views, not necessarily whether someone is a long-standing resident or a newcomer. However, by applying the rhetorical frame of been-here versus come-here to this sample, we can begin to see that the actual differences between these populations are minimal, except for when it comes to ideological issues or environmental imaginaries, a characterization supported by the literature. Almost equally, “new” and “old” residents may be committed to the conservative, “highest and best use” philosophy12 while long-standing landowners or recent arrivals may support progressive land use policies to sustain coveted landscapes which have been stewarded over generations. Indeed, if problems are properly framed, “new” residents may be “old” residents’ biggest supporters if doing so is a means for preserving – or creating – the rural landscapes in-migrants desire (see Larsen and Hutton, 2011, for example).13

The challenge is that, for a number of reasons, including jurisdictional and political obstacles to doing otherwise (Barrow, 2006; Rosenbaum, 2011; Smith, 2004), decision makers often address planning and environmental issues in a piecemeal or isolated fashion rather than handling growth, development, and environmental management holistically or cumulatively. This is problematic because as Cadieux and Hurley (2011: 297; see also Walker and Hurley, 2011) note, by focusing on narrow issues – for example, protecting particular landscape or ecological attributes, advocating for particular management strategies, or promoting development in one form or another – scholars and practitioners “often miss opportunities to engage with the complex mixing of urban and rural and to facilitate dialogue across competing perspectives.” Yet, it is precisely how rural and urban people and places are mixing that is unknown. For example, Taylor (2011) notes that while the structure of exurbia is pretty well understood, less is known about the processes, behaviors, and motivations driving the creation of those landscapes. This analysis seeks to address some of that uncertainty so that we may better understand the interests and motivations of land users.

While the oversimplified dichotomy of “new vs. old” is inadequate, clearly differing perspectives and preferences persist even if they do not line up neatly behind the labels of “new” and “old” or “been-here vs. come-here.” Understanding the motivations behind the actions and rhetoric of stakeholders in places along the rural–urban edge is of value to planners and policy makers as such differences influence the way that land users and the community react to change. Specifically, differing perspectives and ideologies can lead to varying land use decisions and goals in environmental management. These divergent goals and decisions have real, material impacts on society and landscape. Moreover, how people view the landscape, and how that landscape in turn alters them, creates mutually reinforcing social categories with which people identify. Allen et al. (1998) note that social difference is constructed through the process of identity-formation–through-counterposition. In other words, it is through the process of defining ourselves individually and socially, often in contrast to others, that (significant) “difference” is created – and, incidentally, how dichotomies such as “been-here vs. come-here,” however false, persist.

Conclusion: plural spaces, plural identities

When faced with a challenging, perhaps even “wicked” environmental dilemma (Balint et al., 2011), such as how to accommodate and manage population growth, and attendant socio-cultural change, while maintaining environmental quality in a changing ecological context, there is a delicate balance between relying too heavily on a technocratic process and doggedly pursuing the optimal outcome and, alternatively, allowing political conflict to derail much-needed intervention(s) (Barrow, 2006). Clearly, ecological data are essential for making informed land use decisions (Theobald et al., 2000); however, it is important to keep in mind how perceptions of different kinds of land users can influence how various environmental management and land use practices are evaluated (Abrams et al., 2012). In other words, the politics of environmental management and land use planning can be just as important – and sometimes as difficult to sort out – as the ecology behind such decisions (Balint et al., 2011).

Moreover, the ideas, identities, and experiences in rural spaces are not singular. Taylor (2011: 329) puts it this way: “There is more than one social world occupying each geographic space and urbanites and ruralites live in overlapping geographies” (see also Allen et al., 1998; Massey, 1999). In other words, people living outside of city limits have not all moved there explicitly to escape the urban or to approach the rural; as such, “exurbia is more than a geographic zone; it is a way of life with multiple social, economic, political and environmental interconnections” (Taylor, 2011: 329). Gosnell and Abrams (2011: 315), argue that “the heterogeneous nature of rural places [complicate] simple narratives of a ‘clash’ [between] generalized urban and rural publics.” Indeed, rural areas along the urban edge are multidimensional and plural – there is no one conceptualization of rurality, it is variable and contextual and in process.

Although the findings presented here are drawn from one particular locale, the themes are broadly applicable. Namely, environmental and social contestation, such as that described in this paper, demonstrate that although there has been debate about the utility of separate conceptualizations of “rural” or “urban” – and, indeed, as I have shown, they are not representative in certain respects, nor do they always align with conceptualizations of “new” versus “old” residents – the concepts continue to hold relevance on the ground in terms of the lifestyle and policy choices made by residents and stakeholders (Travis, 2007; Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker, 2003; Walker and Hurley, 2011; Woods, 2011). This has significant implications for the study of difference and the function of boundaries between distinct settlement and social forms. As Sayre notes, “that amenity-seeking capitals are symbolic in no way diminishes their objective consequences economically or ecologically” (2011: 438). In other words, people’s values, identities and ideologies drive their actions, and those actions are what shape the rural–urban interface – socially, economically, environmentally – and rural space more generally.

12 In fact, Yung and Belsky (2007) note that sometimes the most ardent supporters of private property rights are newcomers who push the definition of private property rights farther than those who have been around for a long-time, even though it is often “traditional” rural players who are characterized as being (hyper) conservative.

13 That being said, previously described “unlikely alliances” of actors both new and old, no matter how well intentioned, have been shown to struggle to withstand the test of time and shifting political pressures (Hurley and Walker, 2004; Walker and Fortmann, 2003).
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