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COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT IN THE ADIRONDACK PARK: AN
ANALYSIS OF CONSERVATION DISCOURSES OVER TIME

A Thesis Presented

by

Jeffrey M. O'Donnell

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science
Specializing in Natural Resources

January, 2015

Defense Date: November 4, 2014
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ABSTRACT

The role of collaboration within conservation is of increasing interest to scholars, managers and forest communities. Collaboration can take many forms, but one under-studied topic is the form and content of public discourses across conservation project timelines. To understand the discursive processes that influence conservation decision-making, this research evaluates the use of collaborative rhetoric and claims about place within discourses of conservation in the Adirondacks. Local newspaper articles and editorials published from January 1996 to December 2013 and concerning six major conservation projects were studied using content analysis. Results show that collaborative rhetoric increased during the study period, and conflict discourses declined, in concert with the rise of collaborative planning efforts. Data also show an increasing convergence between conservation sponsors and local communities regarding the economic benefits of conservation and the importance of public participation. The study has value in examining representations of place and media claims-making strategies within conservation discourses, an important topic as natural resource managers increasingly embrace community-based natural resource management.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Pat Stokowski, for her support, expert advice, dedication, and commitment to keeping my stress levels low by insuring adequate chocolate intake. I would also like to thank my committee members, Jon Erickson and Kieran Killeen, for their guidance and expertise.

Thanks to my mother Cheryl and father Jim, extended family and friends, especially Jenna, whose positive energy and bright smile kept me going as I worked through my data set and prepared my thesis drafts. My gratitude extends to the RSENR ski team crew, Nathan, Becca, and Vinson, who “kept shred alive” during the long Vermont winters, and Chris Hansen, who helped guide me through ArcGIS and the Trap Dike on Mount Colden. Also thanks to Tom and Lori, who generously provided a relaxing seaside writer’s retreat, and Rose and Dakota for their companionship during the retreat.

Lastly, this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of the newspaper staff and editors who kindly granted archive access or made their archives publicly available online, as well as the Northern New York Library Network, which maintains the New York State Historic Newspapers database.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
CHAPTER 1: COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW.....	1
CHAPTER 2: COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT IN THE ADIRONDACK PARK: AN ANALYSIS OF CONSERVATION DISCOURSES OVER TIME.....	13
2.1. Introduction.....	14
2.2. Literature Review.....	20
2.3. Methods.....	26
2.4. Results.....	32
2.5. Discussion.....	53
2.6. Conclusion.....	60
2.7. References.....	65
2.8. Appendix.....	79
CHAPTER 3: COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1: Timeline of major conservation projects and collaborative initiatives.....	19
Table 2: Newspaper data sources.....	28
Table 3: Database and coded statement overview.....	30
Table 4: Coding categories.....	32
Table 5: Frequency of collaborative and non-collaborative statements.....	34
Table 6: Collaborative and non-collaborative statements per article by content type....	36
Table 7: Summary of place image statements by source	38
Table 8: Distribution of place images across supporters and local constituencies.....	39

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Map of conservation project lands and location of newspaper offices.....	27
Figure 2: Research objectives.....	31
Figure 3: Collaborative and non-collaborative statements over time.....	33

CHAPTER 1: COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The role of collaboration within conservation is of increasing interest to scholars, managers and forest communities. Collaboration can take many forms, but one under-studied topic is the form and content of public discourses across conservation project timelines. To understand the discursive processes that influence conservation decision-making, this thesis evaluates the use of collaborative rhetoric and claims about place within discourses of conservation in the Adirondacks. The purpose of this literature review is to position this study within conservation, discourse, and place scholarship. Key concepts, theories, frameworks, methods and terms are identified, synthesized and contextualized.

Environmental Discourses, Mass Media and Content Analysis

Contemporary environmental problems and conflicts are inherently complex, and stakeholder values and meanings are embedded in discourses. As such, analysis of discourses is necessary to illuminate socially-constructed meanings and analyze complex and often hidden power relations. In many natural resource conflicts, economic and political power is unbalanced, and actors regularly employ discursive strategies to forward their position (Dryzek 2013). Scholars suggest that analysis of discourses can “override” powerful voices (Gelcich et al. 2005), illuminate marginalized discourses and framing efforts (Feindt and Oels 2005; Walton and Bailey 2005; Widener and Gunter 2007), and shed light on power imbalances regarding problem definition (Ebbin 2010).

Increased understanding of discourses can also help predict actor response to certain policies, which can allow problems to be addressed early in the policymaking process and ease implementation of management decisions.

Scholars have defined *discourse* in various ways. The concept has been encapsulated as “an interrelated set of ‘story-lines’ which interprets the world around us and which becomes deeply embedded in societal institutions, agendas and knowledge claims,” (Hannigan 2006, p. 36), and as “a shared way of apprehending the world” (Dryzek 2013). This study adopts Wodak and Krzyzanowski's (2008, p. 5) definition of discourse as “linguistic action...undertaken by social actors in a specific setting.”

Some research related to natural resource management and discourse has been performed in the Northern Forest region (Geczi and Stokowski 2005; Guber 2010; Senecah 1996; Wolf and Klein 2007), and some recent studies have examined conservation-related discourses (Abbott 2010; Cairns et al. 2014; Ebbin 2010). This paper extends prior work by specifically examining collaborative rhetoric and place meanings within conservation discourses over time. Analysis of discourses allows researchers to examine changes in place and community meanings over time, and facilitates deep understanding of the meanings behind important concepts and terms used in natural resource debates. Since discourses are employed and formed within the mass media, it is important to examine how the media “speaks” publicly about conservation and natural resource conflict.

It is widely acknowledged that the mass media plays an important role in the social construction of knowledge and culture (Gamson 1988; Crawley 2007; Altheide and Schneider 2012). Mass media can influence public opinion (McCombs and Estrada

1997; Iyengar and Kinder 1987), serve as a social force through news and topical coverage choices (Gitlin 1980), and participate actively in constructing and framing issues (Gamson 2005; Hansen 2000).

The analysis of media discourses can reveal complex relationships between stakeholders and landscapes, provide historical and cultural context about resource meanings and debates, and expose power dynamics and discursive strategies. Numerous studies have examined rhetorical devices employed by actors talking publicly about environmental and natural resource issues (see, for example, Bengston and Fan 1999; Hessing 2003; Senecah 1996; Watts and Maddison 2012). Such inquiries provide scholars, policymakers, and managers with valuable information regarding the discursive terrain of natural resource debates. For example, the illumination of public values regarding land management via media discourses can provide insight into public acceptability of management goals, inform implementation strategies, and address potential management conflicts arising from contested values (Bengsten et al. 2004).

The deliberative democratic theory of Habermas, in which the meanings and prominence of issues are constantly debated and formulated in public communication spaces (Habermas 1996), suggests that studies about community sentiment and values must examine opinion formation process that take place beyond formally structured participation forums. Thus, mass media discourses must be considered in order to ascertain community sentiment and understand how networks of actors debate and form their understanding of natural resource issues (Rodela 2012; Parkins and Mitchell 2005).

Much of the research examining conservation and natural resource conflict use data from national media sources, including newspapers, magazines and television programs. In recent years, researchers have employed media content analysis techniques to examine “new media” sources such as online trip reports (Champ et al. 2013), photo-sharing websites (Barry 2014), and Twitter (Roberge 2014). As more deliberation and public debates occur online, the importance of analyzing media and user-generated content on social networking and other websites has grown. New media outlets provide fertile ground for research examining public discourses, and the ability to access large quantities of archived content (also known as “Big Data” sets) strengthens and speeds data collection and analysis (Riff et al. 2014).

Despite the rise of new media outlets, traditional mass media, including print and online newspapers, continue to provide public discussion space for a general audience, including those unfamiliar with new media. In addition, researchers have called for more studies examining regional discourses using local news sources (Bengsten and Fan 1999). Newspapers are also useful in social research as they provide permanent records of events and opinions, and can be cataloged and archived. These data sources can be compared temporally and spatially, allowing for the examination of trends in social climate and change in context over time (Stokowski 2011).

Newspaper letters to the editor and opinion pieces in particular allow researchers to analyze the viewpoints of engaged citizens who necessarily draw upon community ideologies as they frame and position issues within public debates (Stokowski 2011). Community newspapers have been found to provide more coverage of local events than do regional or city newspapers (Janowitz 1967). Such analysis of local perspectives is

critical to understanding how communities define and value their natural resources within community-based planning exercises (Jakes and Anderson 2000).

In a shrinking news media environment journalists increasingly rely on professional sources to provide information and frames for stories (Hannigan 2006), and scholars suggest that sources often exert more power over news than journalists (Hansen 2000). Politically powerful actors (individuals, agencies, or organizations) often have greater access to the media, and as such, their comments may be given greater prominence within natural resource debates (Hansen 2011). Actors may attempt to influence public opinion through statements made in the media, serving to bound conservation debates through repetition of a preferred argument. As such, consideration of media agenda-setting effects is critical to understanding conservation discourses. Media content analysis is a powerful way to investigate these effects and illuminate discursive strategies.

Media content analysis (MCA) techniques can reveal complex relationships between stakeholders and landscapes, provide historical and cultural context to resource management debates, and expose power dynamics and discursive strategies. First, it is widely held that in modern society the media creates and shapes popular culture, which pervades societal institutions. It has been suggested that any serious analysis of Western culture (or issue or problem embedded within it) must include analysis of relevant media content (Altheide and Schneider 2012). Second, important terms used in natural resource discourses (e.g., nature, sustainability, environmental risk, pollution) are socially produced and their meaning, interpretation, and implementation is constantly contested (Dryzek 2013; Hajer 1995). Much of this contest plays out in the media. Numerous

studies examine narrative and rhetorical devices employed by actors talking publicly about environmental and natural resource issues (Bridger 1996; Hessing 2003; Senecah 1996; Stoddart 2012; Stokowski 1996; Watts and Maddison 2012).

Media Content Analysis (MCA) techniques can be employed to better understand stakeholder values, a key goal of planning processes. For example, researchers can use discourse analysis to critically examine diverse publicly-stated viewpoints, while at the same time exploring the hidden social and cultural assumptions underlying actors' worldviews (Cairns et al. 2014). Media Content Analysis (MCA) techniques can also help researchers understand the meanings behind important concepts and terms used in natural resource debates. Terms such as "working forest" and "working landscape" are increasingly being used by stakeholders. Recent research has begun to examine the use of such terms in resource-dependent regions in the United States (Wolf and Klein 2007; Abrams and Bliss 2012). Additionally, unlike traditional static methods such as surveys and interviews, MCA supports deeper understanding of stakeholder opinion and ideology surrounding specific land units or conservation projects, as these meanings are constantly being created, shared and contested via continuous dialogue among stakeholders (Williams et al. 2013).

Recent focus on community among natural resource scholars and practitioners also support the use of MCA techniques, in particular narrative analyses, which help researchers understand stories embedded in a community. Communities are central to resource planning, and understanding how communities define and value their natural resources is critical (Jakes and Anderson 2000). As Bridger (1996, p. 355) asserts, "communities are defined, in large part, by the stories people tell about them." Stories

are critical to understanding the overarching frameworks in which the meaning of events are made and problems defined. Many of these stories appear in local media, which often serves as a primary means of cultural transmission and source for what is “newsworthy” in a community (Carrus et al. 2009; Hessing 2003; McHenry 1996; Stokowski 1996). Newspaper letters to the editor and opinion pieces in particular allow researchers to analyze the viewpoints of engaged citizens who necessarily draw upon community ideologies as they frame and position issues within public debates (Stokowski 1996).

Media content analysis can also be used to uncover discursive strategies. Conflict is central to many natural resource planning processes. In many instances, economic and political power among stakeholders is unbalanced, and actors regularly seek to employ discursive strategies to forward their position. Oftentimes, powerful actors threatened by emerging discourses antithetical to their own will attempt to manipulate discourses (Dryzek 2013). Foucaultian approaches to discourse analysis seek to uncover discursive strategies and illuminate power dynamics within discourses (Hajer and Versteeg 2005). Scholars suggest that discourse analysis techniques can “override” powerful voices (Gelcich et al. 2005) and illuminate marginalized discourses and framing efforts (Feindt and Oels 2005; Walton and Bailey 2005; Widener and Gunter 2007). For example, using discourse and rhetorical analysis techniques, Stokowski (1996) highlighted the use of a discursive tactic known as “diversionary reframing” in a debate regarding community change in two Colorado mining towns. Others point to the ability of discourse analysis to illuminate power imbalances with regard to stakeholder’s ability to influence problem definition, an important step in planning and policymaking processes (Ebbin 2010).

Collaboration and Place in Natural Resource Management

Collaboration, defined as “a process in which diverse stakeholders work together to resolve a conflict or develop and advance a shared vision” (Koontz 2006, p. 16), lies at the core of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Emerging in the 1970s as resource agencies moved away from traditional “decide-announce-defend” strategies towards increased public involvement, CBNRM strives to incorporate local knowledge, values and socioeconomic considerations into decision-making processes (Conley and Moote 2003; Yaffee and Wollendeck 2010). Central tenants of CBNRM include resolution of conflict, empowerment of local actors, and commitment to robust public participation and dialogue (Kellert et al. 2000). Collaboration and the implications of collaborative talk have been explored within the context of natural resource management (Lawrence et al. 1999; Tuler 2000). A recent analysis of conservation debates in Sweden suggests that dominant discourses can influence management outcomes by incentivizing or dis-incentivizing collaboration (Zachrisson and Lindahl 2013). The content and tone of discourses can also impact collaborative efforts. Authoritative language that reinforces claims or self-evident “truths” can hinder engagement and cooperation among collaborators (Tuler 2000), and repetition of incompatible claims by social actors engaged in mass mediated debates can serve to perpetuate the perception of intractable conflict.

Increasingly, applications of CBNRM highlight the important role of *place* in natural resource management. The concept of place differentiates elements of the physical environment (space) from specific locales endowed with human meanings and

values (Tuan 1977; Relph 1976). As observed by Yung and colleagues (2003, p. 856), “place is geographic space with particular meanings to particular people.”

Increasing recognition of the social and political character of natural resource management has led to increasing interest in place among researchers and practitioners (Anderson et al. 2013; Williams 2008; Yung et al. 2003). But, conceptual approaches to place within the natural resource management arena vary by discipline. Social psychologists tend to focus on individual emotional connections and attitudes, studying place attachment, place identity, and place satisfaction that situate human responses to settings as primarily internal processes (Brehm et al. 2012; Eisenhauer et al. 2000; Jorgensen and Stedman 2001; Stedman 2003). Sociologists explore place as a social construct, in which place meanings are constantly being created, debated, and privileged (Greider and Garkovich 1994; Stokowski 2008). The research presented in this paper explores place from a social constructionist perspective, focusing on place images and the language used to elaborate the important characteristics of specific landscapes and settings (Stokowski 2008; Shields 2013). Social actors use place images in conservation discourses to represent their notion of place and describe its character and values. This process of defining place through language also serves to bound the range of appropriate activities within a landscape, which helps to delineate management alternatives (Hall et al. 2013).

Collaborative, place-based approaches are increasingly integrated into resource management decisions (Farnum et al. 2005; Farnum and Kruger 2008; Williams et al. 2013). The potential benefits of place-based approaches have received considerable attention from scholars and researchers who suggest that integration of place can reduce

conflict by: fostering more inclusive discussions of diverse community-based values (Glover et al. 2008); supporting more effective decision-making by illuminating shared values (Yung et al. 2003); and increasing acceptance of management decisions (Kruger and Williams 2007). Knowledge of what Kemmis (1992) describes as the “politics of place,” in which place meanings are contested and may be discursively manipulated to influence management decisions, is also believed to support more effective decision-making processes (Kianicka et al. 2006; Stokowski 2002; Yung et al. 2003).

Research on collaborative natural resource management, natural resource partnerships, participatory forest planning efforts, and place-based planning has proliferated in recent scholarly and popular conservation literature. Conservation scholars and practitioners increasingly promote “peopled landscapes” and a holistic, “reconstructed conservation” that addresses, as Minter and Manning (2003, p. 339) state, “the complex whole of human experience in the environment, including the urban, the rural, and the wild.” Alongside this shift in conservation thought, prominent land use planning scholars have called for a “quieter revolution” in land use planning that, unlike the “quiet revolution” of regional, top-down planning of the 1970’s and 80’s, is more localized, bottom-up, and place-based (Mason 2007).

Using Interpretive Research Methods to Examine Place and Discourse

Interpretive methods provide researchers with the ability to investigate complex, contested and varied meanings and gain in-depth understanding of particular meanings within a community. Recent focus on meanings (of places, environmental concepts, and community) within the natural resource literature, points to the importance of interpretive

methods aimed at understanding meaning construction, negotiation, and destruction, which Williams and Patterson (1999) position at the core of natural resource management.

Interpretive qualitative content analysis can facilitate the understanding of complex discourses, which are increasingly important given the recent focus on deliberation in natural resource planning. Interpretive research that includes media content analysis techniques can better take into account the social construction of reality, which is important as discourses bound the limits of public thought and policy options (Hajer and Versteeg 2005). Interpretive approaches also facilitate the examination of power relationships, an increasingly important task given that certain discourses and frames are privileged within society. Asymmetrical power dynamics can result in views that become “naturalized” or taken for granted within a community, and such insights are difficult to obtain absent in-depth, interpretive approaches (Holland 2013).

Lastly, recent interest in place- and community-based planning has also focused attention on the importance of localized analysis. It has been suggested that interpretive methods focusing on local values are better able to completely identify stakeholder opinion and ideology surrounding specific land units or conservation projects, as highly-specific place meanings are constantly being created, shared and contested via continuous dialogue among stakeholders (Williams et al. 2013).

Conclusion

This literature review presents and synthesizes the theoretical underpinnings and foundational scholarship necessary to properly situate a media content analysis study

examining discourses of conservation. The study described in this thesis is grounded in, and seeks to build upon, the above scholarship by exploring the intersection of conservation, place, and collaboration within conservation discourses.

CHAPTER 2: COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT IN THE ADIRONDACK PARK: AN ANALYSIS OF CONSERVATION DISCOURSES OVER TIME

Abstract

The role of collaboration within conservation is of increasing interest to scholars, managers and forest communities. Collaboration can take many forms, but one understudied topic is the form and content of public discourses across conservation project timelines. To understand the discursive processes that influence conservation decision-making, this research evaluates the use of collaborative rhetoric and claims about place within discourses of conservation in the Adirondacks. Local newspaper articles and editorials published from January 1996 to December 2013 and concerning six major conservation projects were studied using content analysis. Results show that collaborative rhetoric increased during the study period, and conflict discourses declined, in concert with the rise of collaborative planning efforts. Data also show an increasing convergence between conservation sponsors and local communities regarding the economic benefits of conservation and the importance of public participation. The study has value in examining representations of place and media claims-making strategies within conservation discourses, an important topic as natural resource managers increasingly embrace community-based natural resource management.

Keywords: Adirondack Park, collaboration, discourse, media content analysis, natural resource management, sense of place

Introduction

Conflict and conflict management are central concerns in natural resource decision-making and management. In an effort to reduce resource-related conflicts, interest groups and resource managers have in recent decades demanded greater opportunities for public participation and the creation of inclusive deliberative processes (Wollendeck and Yaffee 2000; Walker and Daniels 1996; Parkins and Mitchell 2005). Within this context, collaboration has been seen as the new centerpiece of natural resources management (Benson et al. 2013), and collaboration has also become one of the central foundations of place-based management (Mason 2007; Williams et al. 2013). Collaborative planning and management initiatives have received considerable attention over the past decade, especially in protected areas such as New York State's Adirondack Park.

The question of “what does collaboration really mean,” however, persists. Raising the issue of whether there really is a paradigm shift to collaborative approaches, Benson et al. (2013) identify several structural factors that support a continuum of collaborative/non-collaborative approaches. One of these – that collaboration involves “processes of negotiation, consensus building and problem solving in the pursuit of commonly agreed goals” (Benson et al. 2013, p. 1700) – suggests the importance of public discourse in resource management. Hajer (1995, p. 44) explained that “Discourse is...defined as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.” Through discourse, people try

(personally and collectively) to make sense of the world around them, and they deliberate together to plan for their shared futures.

The mass media is particularly important in this discursive process. Through coverage and editorial choices, the mass media play a key role in giving issues prominence and thus influencing public opinion and understanding (Gamson et al. 1992; McCombs 2013). Attention to the social construction of natural resources and resource conflicts (Greider and Garkovich 1994; Cronon 1996; Neumann 2005; Robbins et al. 2013) also points to the usefulness of examining claims made in the mass media. For example, the meanings, interpretations, and implementation of concepts such as nature, the working forest, and collaboration is frequently contested in the public sphere (Dryzek 2013; Hajer 1995), especially during debates about conservation projects.

What can we learn about conservation projects and collaboration based on analysis of mass media discourses? This question provides the scholarly basis for a study of mass media discourses related to conservation projects in the Adirondack Park. By examining how the mass media “speaks” publicly and over time about conservation in the Adirondacks, this research seeks to determine whether there has been a discursive shift in how collaboration and conflict are expressed publicly. Examining mass media discourses can identify areas of shared values and understandings as well as intractable issues, to inform future collaborative efforts in conservation (Tuler 2000; Lawrence et al. 1999).

Several questions guide the analysis presented in this thesis. First, within mass mediated discourses of conservation in the Adirondacks, how and under what conditions do social actors use collaborative and confrontational rhetoric? Second, how do actors

structure arguments about place and conservation in the region; that is, what claims do they make, what evidence do they provide to support those claims, and to what extent do their discourses employ rhetoric of collaboration or conflict? Third, how do discourses vary across spokespersons and conservation projects, and how do discourses change over time?

Below, we present an overview of the Adirondack Park, its history of natural resource conflict, and more recent calls for collaboration. Following this, mass media discourses are compared across six major Adirondack Park conservation projects initiated between 1996 and 2007. The paper concludes with a discussion about collaboration, place, and media effects within conservation discourses. Implications for management are also explored.

Context: The Adirondack Park

The nearly six-million acre Adirondack Park is widely celebrated as a bold experiment in conservation. Established in 1892, the Park consists of a unique mixture of roughly equal parts public and private land. State land within the Park (currently over 2.5 million acres) is protected as Forest Preserve under Article XIV of the New York State Constitution. These lands are unique among public forest lands in the United States in that extractive uses are expressly prohibited: they must remain “forever wild,” and management efforts must comport with this objective.

The Adirondack Park as a concept and institution has always been controversial. Frequent fighting over the future of the Park and its communities led scholars to label the land as “contested terrain” (Terrie 2008) subject to “enduring conflict” (Harris et al.

2004). Management and planning in the Park, especially following the enactment of a regional zoning law (Adirondack Park Agency Act of 1971), has been characterized as a top-down approach featuring weak participatory processes that provide inadequate opportunities for local input (Erickson and O'Hara 2000). Similarly, conservation efforts in the region have often been portrayed as top-down actions imposed by the State or large non-profit organizations. Debates over new additions to the Forest Preserve are commonly framed as pitting local vs. outside interests, and often involve conflicts between single-issue interest groups (e.g., wilderness advocates vs. motorized access advocates).

Since its establishment, land use governance in the Adirondack Park has been vigorously contested. In the Park's first decades, some Adirondack residents viewed state regulations as restricting their freedom and removing local control over planning (Senecah 1996). A vocal group of permanent residents opposed the creation of the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and its regulations; they often referred to its creation as a regulatory "taking" of private property rights and future economic potential imposed upon local communities by outside forces (Harris et al. 2004). Further rancorous debates accompanied release of the 1990 report, *The Adirondack Park in the Twenty-First Century*. This contained several controversial recommendations, including significant new additions to the Forest Preserve and a one-year moratorium on development. This spawned several new citizen groups that battled publicly for much of the decade, perpetuating a sense of endless debate between environmentalists and pro-development forces (Senecah 1996). This top-down approach resulted in further acrimony, and very few of the report's recommendations were enacted.

In the aftermath of the *Twenty-First Century* report, several factors focused attention on the future of the Park. Global economic trends forced the Park's large timber companies to sell much of their holdings to the state or NGOs in fee or conservation easement. While most state purchases were controversial, they were subject to review under the State's Open Space Plan adopted in 1992, which required lands sought for purchase to be reviewed by a citizen-led acquisition panel. Observers point to this period as the beginning of a more civil Adirondack policy debate (Erickson et al. 2009). Creation of the Adirondack Research Consortium and release of the Northern Forest Lands Council's "Finding Common Ground" report in 1994 also pointed toward an increase in collaboration and concern with local interests. This period also saw the creation of the localized and collaborative Oswegatchie Roundtable and Adirondack Association for Towns and Villages (Erickson and O'Hara 2000). At the same time, several large timber companies began to divest their Adirondacks landholdings, starting with Champion International in 1997 and ending with Finch Pruyn in 2007 (Table 1).

Table 1. Timeline of major conservation projects and collaborative initiatives (*in italics*). *

Date	Project / Initiative
December 1992	<i>Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages established</i>
May 1994	<i>Adirondack Research Consortium established</i>
March 1994	<i>Northern Forest Lands Council releases “Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest” report</i>
February 1995	<i>First Meeting of the Oswegatchie Roundtable</i>
August 1996	Whitney Park
October 1997	Champion International
January 2001	International Paper Lakes
April 2004	International Paper Easements
January 2005	Domtar
October 2006	<i>Adirondack Common Ground Alliance formed</i>
June 2007	Finch, Pruyn and Co.
July 2007	<i>First Meeting of the Adirondack Common Ground Alliance</i>
July 2011	<i>ADK Futures Project initiated</i>
June 2013	<i>Five Towns Upper Hudson Recreation Hub established</i>
September 2013	<i>ADK Futures Project releases vision statement entitled “The Adirondack Park: The Next Twenty -Five Years”</i>

* Date project / initiative was announced.

Momentum towards a more community-based, bottom-up planning orientation in the Adirondacks gained speed in 2007 with the first meeting of the Adirondack Common Ground Alliance. Since then, additional collaborative efforts, including the citizen-based ADK Futures Project (Mason and Herman 2012), have emerged, with some observers pointing toward an Adirondack politics oriented toward grassroots, place-based approaches. Scholars have also characterized the recent Finch Pruyn conservation project as a more inclusive and participatory approach to conservation (Neurgarten et al. 2012). Despite these efforts, conservation remains a contentious issue in the Adirondacks, and vigorous debates about the future of the Park are commonplace.

Between 1994 and 2014, over 800,000 acres of land in New York’s Adirondack State Park were transferred from private to public ownership or placed under

conservation easement. These land transfers and easement projects precipitated significant debate among various stakeholders about conservation, economic development, and the future of the Adirondacks. Much of this debate occurred in the mass media, an important venue for social actors to make claims and arguments in an attempt to influence policy outcomes (Gamson 2005; Ryan et al. 1998).

Literature Review

Environmental Discourses

Contemporary environmental problems and conflicts are inherently complex, and stakeholder values and meanings are embedded in discourses. As such, analysis of discourses is necessary to illuminate socially-constructed meanings and analyze complex and often hidden power relations. In many natural resource conflicts, economic and political power is unbalanced, and participants regularly employ discursive strategies to forward their position (Dryzek 2013). Scholars suggest that analysis of discourses can “override” powerful voices (Gelcich et al. 2005), illuminate marginalized discourses and framing efforts (Feindt and Oels 2005; Walton and Bailey 2005; Widener and Gunter 2007), and shed light on power imbalances regarding problem definition (Ebbin 2010). Increased understanding of discourses can also help predict actor response to certain policies, which can allow problems to be addressed early in the policymaking process and ease implementation of management decisions.

Scholars have defined *discourse* in various ways. The concept has been encapsulated as “an interrelated set of ‘story-lines’ which interprets the world around us and which becomes deeply embedded in societal institutions, agendas and knowledge

claims,” (Hannigan 2006, p. 36), and as “a shared way of apprehending the world” (Dryzek 2013). This study adopts Wodak and Krzyzanowski's (2008, p. 5) definition of discourse as “linguistic action...undertaken by social actors in a specific setting.”

Some research related to natural resource management and discourse has been performed in the Northern Forest region (Geczi and Stokowski 2005; Guber 2010; Senecah 1996; Wolf and Klein 2007), and some recent studies have examined conservation-related discourses (Abbott 2010; Cairns et al. 2014; Ebbin 2010). This paper extends prior work by specifically examining collaborative rhetoric and place meanings within conservation discourses over time. Analysis of discourses allows researchers to examine changes in place and community meanings over time, and facilitates deep understanding of the meanings behind important concepts and terms used in natural resource debates. The study described here focuses specifically on mass media discourses.

Mass Media and Discourse

It is widely acknowledged that the mass media plays an important role in the social construction of knowledge and culture (Gamson 1988; Crawley 2007; Altheide and Schneider 2012). Mass media can influence public opinion (McCombs and Estrada 1997; Iyengar and Kinder 1987), serve as a social force through news and topical coverage choices (Gitlin 1980), and participate actively in constructing and framing issues (Gamson 2005; Hansen 2000).

The analysis of media discourses can reveal complex relationships between stakeholders and landscapes, provide historical and cultural context about resource

meanings and debates, and expose power dynamics and discursive strategies. Numerous studies have examined rhetorical devices employed by actors talking publicly about environmental and natural resource issues (see, for example, Bengston and Fan 1999; Hessing 2003; Senecah 1996; Watts and Maddison 2012). Such inquiries provide scholars, policymakers, and managers with valuable information regarding the discursive terrain of natural resource debates. For example, the illumination of public values regarding land management via media discourses can provide insight into public acceptability of management goals, inform implementation strategies, and address potential management conflicts arising from contested values (Bengsten et al. 2004).

The deliberative democratic theory of Habermas, in which the meanings and prominence of issues are constantly debated and formulated in public communication spaces (Habermas 1996), suggests that studies about community sentiment and values must examine opinion formation process that take place beyond formally structured participation forums. Thus, mass media discourses must be considered in order to ascertain community sentiment and understand how networks of actors debate and form their understanding of natural resource issues (Rodela 2012; Parkins and Mitchell 2005).

Much of the research examining conservation and natural resource conflict use data from national media sources, including newspapers, magazines and television programs. In recent years, researchers have employed media content analysis techniques to examine “new media” sources such as online trip reports (Champ et al. 2013), photo-sharing websites (Barry 2014), and Twitter (Roberge 2014). Despite the rise of new media outlets, traditional mass media, including print and online newspapers, continue to provide public discussion space for a general audience, including those unfamiliar with

new media. In addition, researchers have called for more studies examining regional discourses specifically using local news sources (Bengsten and Fan 1999). Newspapers are also useful in social research as they provide permanent records of events and opinions, and can be cataloged and archived. These data sources can be compared temporally and spatially, allowing for the examination of trends in social climate and change in context over time (Stokowski 2011). Furthermore, unlike new media, many newspaper archives extend back several decades, allowing for examination of trends across longer time scales. Thus, local newspapers were chosen as the source of data in this study.

Newspaper letters to the editor and opinion pieces in particular allow researchers to analyze the viewpoints of engaged citizens who necessarily draw upon community ideologies as they frame and position issues within public debates (Stokowski 2011). Community newspapers have been found to provide more coverage of local events than do regional or city newspapers (Janowitz 1967). Such analysis of local perspectives is critical to understanding how communities define and value their natural resources within community-based planning exercises (Jakes and Anderson 2000).

In a shrinking news media environment, journalists increasingly rely on professional sources to provide information and frames for stories (Hannigan 2006), and scholars suggest that sources often exert more power over news than journalists (Hansen 2000). Politically powerful actors (individuals, agencies, or organizations) often have greater access to the media, and as such, their comments may be given greater prominence within natural resource debates (Hansen 2011). Actors may also attempt to

influence public opinion through statements made in the media, serving to bound conservation debates through repetition of a preferred argument.

Collaboration and Place in Natural Resource Management

Collaboration, defined as “a process in which diverse stakeholders work together to resolve a conflict or develop and advance a shared vision” (Koontz 2006, p. 16), lies at the core of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Emerging in the 1970s as resource agencies moved away from traditional “decide-announce-defend” strategies towards increased public involvement, CBNRM strives to incorporate local knowledge, values and socioeconomic considerations into decision-making processes (Conley and Moote 2003; Yaffee and Wollendeck 2010). Central tenants of CBNRM include resolution of conflict, empowerment of local actors, and commitment to robust public participation and dialogue (Kellert et al. 2000). Collaboration and the implications of collaborative talk have been explored within the context of natural resource management (Lawrence et al. 1999; Tuler 2000). A recent analysis of conservation debates in Sweden suggests that dominant discourses can influence management outcomes by incentivizing or dis-incentivizing collaboration (Zachrisson and Lindahl 2013). The content and tone of discourses can also impact collaborative efforts. Authoritative language that reinforces claims or self-evident “truths” can hinder engagement and cooperation among collaborators (Tuler 2000), and repetition of incompatible claims by social actors engaged in mass mediated debates can serve to perpetuate the perception of intractable conflict.

Increasingly, applications of CBNRM highlight the important role of *place* in natural resource management. The concept of place differentiates general elements of the physical environment (space) from specific locales endowed with human meanings and values (Tuan 1977; Relph 1976). As observed by Yung and colleagues (2003, p. 856), “place is geographic space with particular meanings to particular people.”

Increasing recognition of the social and political character of natural resource management has led to increasing interest in place among researchers and practitioners (Anderson et al. 2013; Williams et al. 2013; Yung et al. 2003). But, conceptual approaches to place within the natural resource management arena vary by discipline. Social psychologists tend to focus on individual emotional connections and attitudes, studying place attachment, place identity, and place satisfaction that situate human responses to settings as primarily internal processes (Brehm et al. 2012; Eisenhauer et al. 2000; Jorgensen and Stedman 2001; Stedman 2003). Sociologists explore place as a social construct, in which place meanings are constantly being created, debated, and privileged (Greider and Garkovich 1994; Stokowski 2008). The research presented in this paper explores place from a social constructionist perspective, focusing on place images and the language used to elaborate the important characteristics of specific landscapes and settings (Stokowski 2008; Shields 2013). Social actors use place images in conservation discourses to represent their notion of place and describe its character and values. This process of defining place through language also serves to bound the range of appropriate activities within a landscape, which helps to delineate management options and alternatives (Hall et al. 2013).

Collaborative, place-based approaches are increasingly integrated into resource management decisions (Farnum et al. 2005; Farnum and Kruger 2008; Williams et al. 2013). The potential benefits of place-based approaches have received considerable attention from scholars and researchers who suggest that integration of place can reduce conflict by: fostering more inclusive discussions of diverse community-based values (Glover et al. 2008); supporting more effective decision-making by illuminating shared values (Yung et al. 2003); and increasing acceptance of management decisions (Kruger and Williams 2007). Knowledge of what Kemmis (1992) describes as the “politics of place,” in which place meanings are contested and may be discursively manipulated to influence management decisions, is also believed to support more effective decision-making processes (Kianicka et al. 2006; Stokowski 2002; Yung et al. 2003).

Methods

The research presented in this paper investigates the content and characteristics of mass media discourse related to land conservation in the Adirondack Park. News stories and published commentaries associated with conservation projects over 10,000 acres, in which all or a portion of the land was designated for inclusion in the Adirondack Forest Preserve, formed the data for the study. A total of six conservation projects initiated between 1996 and 2013 met this criteria (Appendix 1). The projects were primarily located in the northern and central regions of the Park (Figure 1). Projects involving less than 10,000 acres and those solely involving conservation easements were excluded, largely because database searches showed that such projects engendered minimal discussion in local media.

Figure 1: Map of conservation project lands and location of newspaper offices.

Media content analysis techniques were employed to investigate and interpret rhetorical strategies, claims, and arguments made by social actors engaged in conservation debates. Interpretive approaches offer researchers opportunities for iterative, reflexive analysis of data produced in debates about complex natural resource issues. Interpretive research designs “enable the researcher to document the subjective nature of real world phenomena, unearth unanticipated findings, and embrace the context of the study” (Davenport and Anderson 2005, p. 630). Research tools, including quantitative and qualitative media content analysis, are well-suited to identify stakeholder opinion and ideology surrounding specific land units or conservation projects, because place meanings are constantly being created, shared and contested via continuous

dialogue among actors (Williams et al. 2013). This study employs both qualitative and quantitative media content analysis for increased rigor.

Data Collection

Selection of Newspapers. Four newspapers covering the northern and central Adirondacks were selected for analysis based on coverage area, type of newspaper, and availability of electronic archives (Table 2). The newspapers represent a cross-section of media source and community types; they include both tourism-focused regions (Lake Placid, North Creek) as well as resource-dependent (Tupper Lake) areas. This provides a broad array of voices in the northern and central Adirondack regions, which also contain the majority of the conservation lands (See Figure 1).

Table 2: Newspaper data sources.

Source	Coverage Area	Newspaper Type	Print Circulation	Articles Retrieved
<i>Adirondack Daily Enterprise</i>	Tri-Lakes Region (Saranac Lake, Lake Placid, and Tupper Lake)	Local daily	4,600	186
<i>North Creek News Enterprise</i>	Southeastern and central Adirondacks	Weekly community newspaper	4,789	40
<i>Plattsburgh Press Republican</i>	Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties	Regional daily	20,000	98
<i>Tupper Lake Free Press</i>	Town of Tupper Lake and greater No. Adirondack area	Weekly community newspaper	3,600	44
Total				368

Identification of Articles. Keyword searches of each newspaper’s archive and the New York State Historic Newspapers database were conducted, initially generating 506 relevant articles. Keywords included official and unofficial names of and references to conservation projects and lands. For example, content regarding the International Paper Easements project was retrieved using several combinations of keywords (“International Paper,” “International Paper Lands,” “IP Lands,” “IP Deal,” and “IP Easements”). Purely informational or unrelated material and duplicate articles were removed, resulting in a total of 368 unique articles, commentaries, and letters to the editor concerning the six conservation projects (Table 2).

Approximately 71 percent of the total dataset could be categorized as news articles and 29 percent as editorial content (opinion pieces, letter to the editor, and editorials). As shown in Table 3, the Finch Pruyn land conservation project yielded the largest number of articles (162), followed by the Whitney (102), Champion (48), and Domtar (25) projects. The Whitney and Finch Pruyn projects also contained the most editorial content (40 of 102 articles, and 42 of 162 articles, respectively). The two International Paper (IP) projects accounted for the fewest number of articles, likely because the IP project involved almost entirely conservation easements, which tend to be less controversial because conserved lands remain in private ownership, and because the IP Lakes project was initiated by a conservation organization, precluding debate over public acquisition of land.

Table 3: Database and coded statement overview.

Project	Dates	Articles (Editorials)	Coded Statements
Whitney	1996 – 2000	102 (40)	260
Champion	1997 – 2001	48 (12)	136
IP Lakes	2000 – 2003	10 (1)	54
IP Easements	2004 – 2007	18 (5)	42
Domtar	2005 – 2008	25 (5)	52
Finch Pruyn	2007 – Dec. 2013	162 (42)	370
TOTAL		368 (105)	914

Data Analysis

Statements made by relevant actors (both direct quotations and paraphrased expressions) serve as the primary unit of analysis. Such statements, or “thought elements,” provide an appropriate unit of semantic analysis suitable for examining the prominence of certain themes within an article. Articles may contain several kinds of topical statements from one actor, or statements from several actors.

In order to determine whether there has been a discursive shift in how collaboration and conflict are expressed publicly, this research examines collaborative and confrontational language and rhetoric within mass media discourses of conservation over time (see Figure 2). Collaborative themes and place image codes were derived from recurring ideas, expressions, and arguments that emerged from the data; the process was also informed by previous content analysis studies examining collaborative and non-collaborative talk (Bengston and Fan 1999; Tuler 2000). Table 4 shows the codes used, beginning with sources (individuals, agencies, and organizations). Statements containing positive references to the benefits of collaboration and themes related to collaboration (including consensus-building, trust among social actors, public participation,

empowerment of local actors, and multifunctional landscapes) were coded as “collaborative.” Statements containing adversarial or polarizing sentiment or language, or negative references regarding distrust, questionable legitimacy, or suspect motivations of social actors, were coded as “non-collaborative.” Similarly, statements including language used to elaborate important characteristics of conservation lands or surrounding landscapes were coded with one of eight place image codes. A total of 914 relevant statements within the 368 articles in the final dataset were coded using HyperResearch content analysis software (Table 3).

Figure 2: Research objectives.

Table 4: Coding categories.

Sources	Collaborative Language	Non-Collaborative Language	Place Images
Conservation Org.	Collaboration	Combative	Cultural
Local Government	Local Input	Extreme Positions	Ecological
Motorized Advocate	Multifunctional	NYS against ADKs	Personal Identity
Newspaper Editors	Open Space & Econ. Dev.	Powerless Locals	Pristine
Park Residents	Public Participation		Recreation
Property Rights Org.			Scenic
State Government			Wild
Other			Working

Following coding, frequencies of relevant statements were compared across time and project and by sources and content type (editorial, news). Following the quantitative assessment of the structure of the discourses, prominent trends and emergent themes were identified and patterns discovered, evaluated and interpreted.

Results

Research Question 1: Collaborative and Confrontational Rhetoric over Time

Data show that the frequency of actor statements expressing collaborative themes increased across the study period, from an average of 0.29 statements per article (1996) to 2.0 statements per article (2013), while non-collaborative statements decreased over time from an average of 1.3 to 0.26 statements per article (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Collaborative and non-collaborative statements over time.

References to the importance of local input and public participation, and themes of collaboration and open space coexisting with economic development, increased over time and across all six projects. Notably, statements portraying the State of New York as actively working against Adirondack interests, and local residents as powerless in conservation decision-making, declined over the study period. This finding combined with the increased frequency of positive statements regarding local input and public participation suggests that in the early 2000s a trend emerged wherein prominent actors increasingly positioned Adirondack communities as able to achieve locally-desired conservation outcomes.

The Whitney and Champion projects – the two earliest – were the only ones found to feature mass media discourses that exhibited on average more non-collaborative than collaborative statements (Table 5). The sizeable increase (and then decrease) in collaborative statements from 2001 to 2003 is likely attributable to outlier effects, as only 13 articles were retrieved during the period. Notably, in the Finch Pruyn discourse, collaborative statements by local constituencies increased from earlier projects, with local government sources expressing collaborative statements 3.25 times more frequently than all other project discourses combined.

Table 5: Frequency of collaborative and non-collaborative statements (percentage of articles)*.

Project (Start Date)	Collaborative					Total **
	Collab.	Local	Multi-	Open Space	Public	
	%	Input	function	+ Econ. Dev.	Part.	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Whitney (1996)	10	3	1	14	4	6
Champion (1997)	33	8	19	48	0	22
IP Lakes (2001)	90	30	50	60	10	48
IP Easements (2004)	39	17	28	22	11	23
Domtar (2005)	44	24	48	24	12	30
Finch Pruyn (2007)	85	25	9	52	14	37

	Non-Collaborative				Total
	Combative	Extreme	NYS	Powerless	
		Positions	Against	Locals	
	%	%	%	%	%
Whitney (1996)	83	0	22	11	29
Champion (1997)	65	31	21	23	35
IP Lakes (2001)	90	20	0	20	33
IP Easements (2004)	22	17	11	6	14
Domtar (2005)	36	0	0	4	10
Finch Pruyn (2007)	30	2	1	6	10

* Percent of articles containing at least one coded statement.

** “Total” column is the mean of the percentages for each statement subcategory.

Results suggest that collaborative and conflict rhetoric are both more likely to appear in editorial than news content. This finding is not surprising, as letters to the editor and opinion editorials are personal essays, not subject to the same criteria as “objective” news stories. These are, instead, avenues for actors to address, praise or disparage, and evaluate the actions or positions of other actors. As seen in the study discourses, editorial content also provides a venue for interest group spokespersons to use adversarial or combative language and imagery designed to mobilize support. This trend could help explain, in part, the relatively high level of non-collaborative statements during the Whitney discourse and collaborative statements during the Finch discourse.

In addition to variations in content type during certain periods, the media can influence discourses through coverage choices. Over the study period, the mass media gave prominence to collaboration and conflict rhetoric to varying degrees. For example, with the exception of the IP Lakes project, non-collaborative talk appears more frequently in editorial content, while collaborative talk occurs more frequently in all but the first two projects (Table 6). Additionally, for discourses with more than 10 pieces of editorial content, the difference between the average collaborative and non-collaborative statements present in editorial versus news content is highest in the Finch discourse (0.604 and 0.568 more statements per article in news), suggesting the potential for a disconnect between media presentations of increased collaboration and actual local sentiment during this project (again, excluding the IP projects).

Table 6. Collaborative and non-collaborative statements per article (average) by content type.

Project (Start Year)	Articles (Editorial)	Collaborative			Non-Collaborative		
		Editorial	News	Difference	Editorial	News	Difference
Whitney (1996)	105 (40)	0.33	0.32	0.002	1.35	1.05	0.304
Champion (1997)	48 (12)	1.17	1.06	0.111	1.67	1.31	0.361
IP Lakes (2001)	10 (1)	0.00	2.67	2.667	0.00	1.44	1.444
IP Easements (2004)	18 (5)	0.00	1.62	1.615	1.40	0.23	1.169
Domtar (2005)	25 (5)	1.20	1.60	0.400	0.40	0.40	0.000
Finch Pruyn (2007)	162 (42)	1.40	2.01	0.604	0.81	0.24	0.568

Research Question 2: The Structure of Arguments about Place and Conservation

Social actors employed various discursive strategies to support their arguments about conservation and images of Adirondack forestland. Data show sharply contrasting expressions of the primary uses and benefits of forestland, conflicting claims about the interaction of conservation and economic development, the use of vivid imagery, and skillfully crafted stories to ground arguments in local details and personal experiences.

Looking across project sponsors (conservation groups, state government) and local constituencies (local governments, newspaper editors, Park residents) reveals differences in the ways that spokespersons used place images to describe conservation lands. As represented in the mass media, conservation organization representatives were nearly 20 times more likely than local government sources to express imagery referring to the ecological qualities and wild character of resource places (Table 7). On the other hand, local government representatives were nearly three times as likely to ascribe working qualities to conservation lands. Not surprisingly, references to personal connections to the landscape (“personal identity” column) are highest among park

residents and newspaper editors, who were more likely than project sponsor representatives to use personal stories in communicating about the Park's conservation projects. For example, *North Creek News Enterprise* editor Brett Hagedorn called on personal connections to the former Finch Pruyn lands: "It was on Finch land that I learned how to drive, how to hunt and fish, how to spend time alone in the wilderness – and probably most importantly, how to understand myself and my place in this world. These experiences defined me at the time, and I look back on them fondly." (Hagedorn 2008, p. 6)

Actors employ language within mass media discourses in order to advance their personal agendas. For example, conservation supporters (project sponsors) used ecological and pristine images of place – those images tied to ecological integrity of landscapes – far more than local constituencies in making their claims about conservation and appropriate uses of forestland (84 to 6 percent, and 72 to 13 percent, respectively). This contrasts with the claims made by local constituencies (local government representatives, paper editors and park residents), who most frequently supported their claims using cultural, personal identification, working, and recreation images – those images tied to a view of the land as working for humans (Table 8). As noted in Tables 7 and 8, a test of Significance of Difference Between Two Independent Proportions showed significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the proportion of place image statements expressed by project sponsors and local constituencies in six of the eight image categories. In both comparisons, project sponsors expressed a significantly greater proportion of ecological, pristine, and wild images, while local constituencies expressed a significantly greater proportion of cultural, personal identity, and working images.

Table 7: Summary of place image statements by source.

Project	Personal							
	Cultural (o) %	Ecological (-) %	Identity (o) %	Pristine (-) %	Recreation %	Scenic %	Wild (-) %	Working (o) %
Sponsors								
Cons. Orgs.	5.1	22.1	1.1	8.1	21.0	6.6	20.2	15.8
State Gov.	9.5	11.9	1.2	7.1	33.3	7.1	6.0	23.8
Mean	7.3	17.0	1.2	7.6	27.2	6.9	13.1	19.8
Local								
Constituencies								
Local Gov.	12.9	1.2	0	0.0	30.6	7.1	1.2	47.1
Paper Editors	7.1	7.1	14.3	7.1	14.3	11.9	14.3	23.8
Park Residents	14.0	2.3	16.3	4.7	25.6	5.6	16.3	16.3
Mean	11.3	3.5	10.2	3.9	23.5	8.2	10.6	29.1
Other *	9.3	10.7	5.3	5.3	10.7	13.3	26.7	18.7

* Statements from actors other than project sponsors or local constituencies, including timber companies, outfitters, and New York State residents (residing outside Park boundaries).

(o) Significance of Difference Between Two Independent Proportions Test showed proportion for Local Constituencies is significantly greater than Project Sponsors (Cultural: $p = 0.027$, Personal Identity: $p < 0.001$, Working: $p < 0.001$).

(-) Significance of Difference Between Two Independent Proportions Test showed Proportion for Project Sponsors is significantly greater than Local Constituencies (Ecological: $p < 0.001$, Pristine: $p = 0.029$, Wild: $p = 0.008$).

Table 8: Comparison of place images across project sponsors and local constituencies.

	Personal									
	Cultural ^(o)	Ecological ⁽⁻⁾	Identity ^(o)	Pristine ⁽⁻⁾	Recreation	Scenic	Wild ⁽⁻⁾	Working ^(o)		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Project Sponsors *	43	84	18	72	59	50	64	41		
Local										
Constituencies **	39	6	59	13	30	27	15	37		
Other ***	14	10	18	10	6	21	21	9		

* Project Sponsors include conservation organization and state government actors.

** Local Constituencies include local government spokesperson, newspaper editors, and Park residents.

*** Statements from actors other than project sponsors or local constituencies, including timber companies, outfitters, and New York State residents (residing outside Park boundaries).

^(o) Significance of Difference Between Two Independent Proportions Test showed proportion for Local Constituencies is significantly greater than Project Sponsors (Cultural: $p = 0.016$, Personal Identity: $p < 0.001$, Working: $p = 0.008$).

⁽⁻⁾ Significance of Difference Between Two Independent Proportions Test showed Proportion for Project Sponsors is significantly greater than Local Constituencies (Ecological: $p < 0.001$, Pristine: $p < 0.001$, Wild: $p = 0.004$).

A prominent source of conflicting claims that emerged within the mass media discourses – primarily in the earlier Whitney and Champion projects – related to arguments regarding the interaction of conservation and economic development. The Whitney and Champion project discourses exhibited highly polarized rhetoric regarding economic issues. Within these discourses, conservation supporters repeatedly claimed that conservation will benefit local communities by protecting ecologically and recreationally important landscapes and generating tourism revenue. For example, commenting on the Champion lands in an opinion editorial, Peter Bauer, Executive Director of The Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks (a conservation organization), said:

“Quite simply, the Forest Preserve and the clean water of Adirondack lakes underwrite the Adirondack economy. Purchase of the Champion lands is responsible state policy: Buy the important recreational and biological area for the Forest Preserve and buy conservation easements to protect productive timber lands. A great investment in the environment and economy of the Adirondack Park.” (Bauer 1998, p. 4)

This sentiment contrasts with that of some representatives of local constituencies, who claimed that conservation “locks up” timber-producing forests and potential development sites, and as such, is incompatible with local economic development. Other researchers have documented similar claims in Northern Forest land use debates (Welcomer 2010; Baldwin et al. 2007). The following comments from the spokesperson of the Blue Line Council (a property rights groups), illustrates this claim:

“State ownership of land locks up natural renewable resources as in a museum and eliminates jobs; it does not create or protect jobs, said John Brodt, Blue Line Council spokesman in a written statement. “Any plan that calls for more government ownership of private land and natural resources in the Adirondack Park, where the state already owns three million acres of land, is a plan for economic destruction,” continued Brodt. (Abello 1998a, Pg. A3)

Research Question 3: Comparing Collaborative and Conflict Rhetoric across Projects and Key Spokespersons

The political climate in the Adirondacks fluctuated during the 18-year study period, and the methods and level of public involvement varied with each project. The data show that later projects reported to have more local involvement and public participation, such as Finch Pruyn, generated more collaborative talk than earlier projects that were less participatory. Prior to the 2007 announcement of the Finch Pruyn project, Adirondack conservation discourses centered largely on conflict. Beginning in 2007, and increasing throughout the study period, data suggest a reorientation of the discourse away from conflict and towards collaboration. What precipitated this discursive shift?

Whitney Park and Champion: Conservation Easements and Shifting Discourses

The process and context of conservation projects can impact public discourse (Zachrisson and Lindahl 2013). For example, observers point to the Whitney project as being very controversial, involving a housing development proposal, Adirondack Park Agency permitting fight, one very combative player (Whitney Industries Vice President), all conservation land to be included in the Forest Preserve (an easement deal on additional acreage fell through), and a tough land classification battle (Harris et al. 2012). Several sources quoted in the mass media point to the perception of the deal and ensuing land classification process as largely negotiated by outsiders, including a downstate Governor and his Albany-based staff and statewide conservation groups. This sentiment is encapsulated in an *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* article about the Whitney project, in

which Long Lake Town Supervisor Tom Bissell speaks about his town's desire to see the land classified as less restrictive "wild forest":

Although Bissell indicated the small town - roughly 900 residents — has little influence downstate they will continue to seek support for their case. "Here we sit powerless while our fates are decided by people outside the Park," Bissell said. "I'm a native Adirondacker. I don't like stuff shoved down my throat." (Abello 1998b, p. 3)

Claims about powerlessness, both real and perceived, and the use of imagery designed to mobilize Park residents, may help explain why the Whitney mass media discourse included the most editorial content, the highest percentage per article of combative statements (83%), and references to the State working against Adirondack interests (22%), in comparison to the other conservation projects studied. Argumentation strategies involving the use of defensive rhetoric and claims about how "outside interests" supporting conservation projects have no concern for local residents have also been documented in other resource-dependent regions, including northern Maine (Welcomer 2010) and north central Montana (Yung et al. 2010).

Unlike the Whitney project, the Champion project consisted of a mix of fee purchase and conservation easements (nearly 74 percent of total land area); the first major conservation initiative in the Adirondacks to include a significant percentage of easement lands. Conservation organization spokespersons made several references to the project as a "surgical acquisition," protecting river corridors and sensitive wetland areas through inclusion in the Forest Preserve, while keeping less sensitive timber-producing lands in private ownership subject to an easement. Not surprisingly, statements regarding

collaboration, open space coexisting with economic development, and multi-functionality increased in frequency in the Champion project, compared to the Whitney discourse.

International Paper and Domtar Projects: Less Media Coverage

The next two projects, both involving former International Paper (IP) lands, generated the lowest number of articles (28, or 7.6 percent of the study dataset), and contained the lowest percentage of editorial content (0 and 10 percent, respectively) compared to news content. The second IP project (initiated in 2005) involved almost entirely conservation easements (over 98 percent of the land area), which could explain the low number of articles, as new easements tend to be less controversial than fee acquisitions. IP Lakes was the first project in the study to be initiated by a conservation organization (in this case, The Nature Conservancy), which could also be a factor since there was no period of speculation and debate prior to announcement of the privately negotiated land transfer. Similarly, since the State was not a key player in the two other projects initiated by conservation organizations (Domtar and Finch Pruyn), statements expressing frustration that the State acts against Adirondack interests occurred with the lowest average frequency (accounting for only 5 percent of all statements).

Finch Pruyn: A More Collaborative Conservation and Discourse

In their public, mass-mediated discourses, observers and actors portrayed the Finch Pruyn project as a new and more collaborative type of conservation in the region, involving a mix of easements, fee purchase, and community development parcels, a project sponsor (The Nature Conservancy) committed to working with local

communities, a focus on public participation by state agencies, and a Governor publicly stating his desire to take into account local economic considerations. The Nature Conservancy reached out to local communities for input early in the process, a strategy that research indicates can reduce conflict and increase acceptance of conservation projects (Cottle and Howard 2010). Discussing the Finch Pruyn deal, Barry Hutchins, supervisor of the town of Indian Lake, was quoted in the *North Creek News Enterprise* about the level of local input:

Hutchins said it was a welcome change from past land acquisitions – deals which were sealed without local involvement. ‘The process seemed to be a lot better this time with the Nature Conservancy meeting with local communities and trying to meet their needs,’ he said. ‘It was a productive way to get all of us on board, with everybody a winner.’ (Randall 2008, pg. 8)

Following announcement of the Finch Pruyn deal in 2007, the discourse increasingly reflects a commitment on behalf of participants (especially conservation organizations, and state and local governments) to collaboration, local input, and economic concerns. Data show that several indicators associated with public perception of collaboration are present in this discourse. The Finch discourse showed the lowest average frequency of non-collaborative talk and the highest frequency of positive references to collaboration, local input, and public participation. Notably, editorial content written by newspaper staff showed the highest frequency of any project with 1.71 collaborative statements per editorial ($n = 14$), over 13 times more than the Whitney project at 0.13 statements per editorial ($n = 8$).

Within the more collaborative Finch discourse, especially with regard to the Essex Chain of Lakes classification processes, actors talked about coming to understand the

values of others, while recognizing that conflict will persist. Several actors make reference to working together and bounded conflict. As quoted in the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* on the Essex Chain classification process, Sue Montgomery Corey, Supervisor of the Town of Minerva, said:

“It was a good, solid decision that balanced a lot of very difficult issues,” Corey said. “We were asked as towns to try and work with the environmental groups and did so in a very positive experience.” (Lobdell 2013, pg. 2)

Referring to a meeting with Governor Cuomo about the same classification, Randy Douglas, Chairman of the Essex County Board of Supervisors, is quoted in the *North Creek News Enterprise* expressing similar sentiment:

“I think it was a good meeting with the governor,” Douglas said. “I think the five towns and the two counties told him that we’re willing to compromise, but we need to sit down at the table with the environmental groups and work this out. Compromise, a common ground, can be found. Not everybody will end up totally happy but compromise is the best thing.” (Flynn 2013, pg. 2)

Social learning within collaborative management is based in part on actors learning how to work together (Cundill and Rodela 2012). The presence of references to compromise and bounded conflict suggest that collaborative discourses can support social learning in conservation decision-making.

Thus, as shown in the data, the factors that seem to support greater collaborative discourse in the media include a perception that conservation projects feature above-average local input and public participation, use of conservation easements, and project sponsors and key players publicly committed to high levels of collaboration. Factors that foster greater conflict (as presented in the media) include participation of key combative players, interest groups using adversarial language to mobilize support, and perceptions

of powerlessness among local residents. Understanding these factors is critical, as the prominence given to certain claims by mass media can serve to “set” the public agenda, shaping and bounding public debate (McCombs 2013). Additional contextual factors influencing collaborative rhetoric are explored below.

Funding Source

This study’s findings suggest a correlation between the source of project funding and the prominence of collaborative rhetoric in the discourses. Projects funded using the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which provides towns with the ability to veto certain State land transactions proposed within their boundaries, contained more collaborative talk compared to projects funded using unrestricted funds.

In the Whitney project, the State paid using Bond Act and EPF monies, but they added Whitney Park to the list of preapproved acquisitions during budget negotiations, negating the possibility of a local veto. In this instance, powerful actors, including conservation group spokespersons (who expressed the most non-collaborative statements of any project) more freely engaged in non-collaborative talk, perhaps because the outcome of decision-making was perceived to be predetermined. The Forest Preserve portion of IP Lakes was funded by the EPF, but most of the project was privately funded. The IP Easements project was EPF-funded, but when several towns objected, the State did an “end run” around the towns by shifting the funding source to negate the veto (Terrie 2008). Domtar was EPF-funded, and towns in Franklin County vetoed it, forcing the State to be more collaborative by holding additional meetings with town officials and conceding to a new snowmobile trail (Terrie 2008). The State’s acquisition of the former

Finch land relied on funding through the EPF. In addition to the normative focus on collaboration, this likely explains TNC's aggressive local outreach to the 27 impacted towns. This outreach is discussed in the following *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* article on the deal:

“Carr is trying to foster good public relations with towns, but also, towns have veto powers over state land purchases made with Environmental Protection Fund money.

“In order to appease the towns and public, Carr and his staff have engaged in hundreds of meetings with officials and sometimes the public around the Adirondack Park, traveling to 27 towns in six counties, Carr said at a presentation to the state Adirondack Park Agency Thursday.” (Lynch 2009, p. 1)

Furthermore, the specific details of projects might even limit collaboration. For example, the Whitney project featured a powerful citizen actor seeking to create a legacy for the family patriarch by selling land to the State for a new wilderness area, which limited the land classification debate.

Conservation Easements and Shifting Regional Economics

While contrasting economic arguments were evident throughout the study period, the data show that during the mid-2000s claims made by conservation supporters and local constituencies began to converge and coalesce. Across all the discourses, conservation supporters commonly expressed the idea that conservation, especially projects involving conservation easements, promote economic growth in the Adirondacks. Prior to 2005, during the Whitney, Champion and IP Lakes discourses, local constituencies (local government representatives, park residents and paper editors) only made five statements referencing the possible coexistence of conservation and

economic development (compared to 33 by supporters). Notably, from 2005 to 2013, positive references to the economic benefits of conservation by local constituencies increased four-fold to 20.

This rise coincides with the announcement of the IP project emphasizing conservation easements as a key collaborative development in the Adirondack Park. During the IP Easements, Domtar, and especially Finch Pruyn projects, easements are referred to as “win-win” arrangements by supporters, and even the Town of Newcomb Supervisor George Canon (presented in the mass media as a perennial critic of conservation initiatives) indicated his acceptance of easements. Referencing the easement lands portion of the Finch Pruyn project, Canon, quoted in the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise*, said: “This is a conservation easement, which does not preclude the economic benefit of cutting the timber. Was there ever going to be a big housing development in any of this land? Probably not. So I’m not opposed to this” (Knight 2010, pg. 2).

Statements containing the idea that Adirondack economies are based on natural resource protection and tourism were more commonly presented by the media after 2010, highlighting the convergence of conservation organization and local government rhetoric. For example, in commenting on the future of conservation and community development in the Adirondack Park, Hamilton County Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Farber was quoted in the *Plattsburgh Press Republican* as saying that:

“I really think that, universally, among the environmentalists and the governor, along with the state agencies, everybody is starting to coalesce around the idea that, in order for the Adirondack Park to be truly successful, we need to establish sustainable communities — towns both rich in natural resources and rich in the amenities that travelers are looking for.” (Smith Dedam 2013, p.1)

While individual actors involved in later conservation projects continued to claim that conservation “kills jobs” and degrades local economies, the increase in positive mass media references to the coexistence of conservation and economic development, especially during the Finch project, showcases the convergence of claims regarding the benefits of conservation. The ADE Editorial Board expressed this view in 2012: “Outdoor recreation is a huge part of the Adirondack economy - bigger than forestry, which some critics have mentioned to bemoan this deal - and adding these lands to the Forest Preserve might boost that sector, especially around Newcomb” (ADE Editors 2012a, p. 2).

Powerful Actors

The distribution and prominence of actors have been shown to influence media discourses (Trumbo 1996). Our results suggest that powerful actors had considerable influence over conservation discourses in the Park. Of particular note is the virtual disappearance of statements attributed to property rights groups after 2002 (only 1 of 34 articles containing such statements appeared after this time). Prior to this time, property rights groups had a sizable impact on overall levels of combative talk, accounting for approximately 15 and 48 percent of all non-collaborative statements in the Whitney and Champion discourses, respectively. Over the study period, representatives of property rights groups were identified in the mass media as expressing 64 non-collaborative statements and only 1 collaborative statement. Several of the non-collaborative statements included rhetoric characterizing conservation debates as a “fight” for the

economic survival of residents and traditional land uses, a pattern that has been documented by other Northern Forest researchers (Welcomer 2010). For example, an *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* article attributed the following quote to Carol LaGrasse:

“We’re fighting for the survival of the life and people of the Adirondacks,” said Carol LaGrasse, president of the Property Rights’ Foundation of American based in the Adirondack town of Stony Creek. (Gormley 2000, pg. 2)

In the Whitney discourse, one actor, Whitney Industries Vice President John Hendrickson, accounted for roughly 20 percent of all combative talk. In the Finch Pruyn discourse, Governor Andrew Cuomo expressed nearly 13 percent of all collaborative statements. A key player in the Finch Pruyn project – The Nature Conservancy’s Mike Carr – is quoted extensively and credited by other actors as promoting collaboration. Mr. Carr’s communication skills and consensus-seeking approach were lauded in the mass media by local government representatives:

“A big part of their success [The Nature Conservancy] so far has been trying to meet the needs of the towns they are dealing with, and Carr has been a big part of that. “I honestly think, if it wasn’t for Mike Carr and his ability to communicate, this probably would have been a very, very difficult sell,” North Hudson Supervisor Robert Dobie said. “But he tried to be helpful. He tried to be very forthright with everything, and I do commend him for doing an excellent job.” (Lynch 2009, p. 2)

Powerful actors can also influence norms about conservation processes, including the role of collaboration. Collaborative talk by newspaper editors and local elected officials – largely absent from conservation discourses prior to the Finch Pruyn project – suggests a new, more positive positioning of the importance of collaboration and fairness in conservation decision-making. This finding suggests that powerful actors, by way of their prominence in mass media discourses, can contribute to the construction and

support of emerging norms – in this case the normative ideal widely espoused among scholars and practitioners (Benson et al. 2013) that collaboration leads to better conservation outcomes. For example, the editors of the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* expressed this normative sentiment regarding collaboration and the Finch Pruyn deal:

“Compromise is essential in American government; it’s built right into our system. And compromise was essential to bringing about a deal, signed Sunday after five years of negotiation, for the state to buy 69,000 acres of former Finch, Pruyn and Co. timberland from The Nature Conservancy between now and 2017.” (Adirondack Daily Enterprise Editors 2013a, p.1)

Collaboration and the Mass Media

Investigations of conservation discourses must also consider the role of the media in privileging certain voices, arguments, and norms. On average across the study, collaborative talk is nearly five times more frequent in news content (1.21 statements per piece) than editorial content (0.24 statements per piece). Statements by actors likely to represent local sentiment (Park residents and local newspaper editors), appear more frequently in editorial content than news content (by an approximately 3:1 ratio). On the other hand, statements from state and local agencies and conservation organizations appear more frequency in news than editorial content (by an approximately 10:1 ratio). This suggests an opportunity for government agencies, conservation organizations, and other key actors to influence public opinion by reinforcing perceptions of collaboration or conflict in support of predetermined conservation objectives. Differences in the distribution of collaborative and non-collaborative talk by content type also raises questions regarding the potential inequity of media access and the level of local buy-in to positive agency and conservation organization rhetoric regarding collaboration.

Media sources themselves can also exert considerable influence in shaping conservation discourses. Throughout the study period, editors of the *Tupper Lake Free Press* demonstrated a consistent skepticism toward conservation. For example, while other editorial boards largely praised the Finch Pruyn project and used collaborative language, 17 non-collaborative and only 3 collaborative statements appeared in *Free Press* editorials about the project. This finding demonstrates how powerful actors can exert considerable influence over media portrayals of the role of collaboration in conservation debates.

Collaborative Initiatives

Conservation discourses are necessarily influenced by local economic, social, and political factors. Over the study period, especially during the last five years, there was a concerted and well-publicized effort to increase collaboration in the Adirondack Park. The activities of the Common Ground Alliance, ADK Futures Project, and North Country Economic Development Council all received considerable media attention. The media prominence and level of discussion among regional scholars and observers regarding these initiatives points to changing norms regarding local input and collaboration; the new message was that collaboration is possible and Adirondack residents can be empowered in decision-making processes. In addition, during the later half of the study period there was an increase in grassroots organizing, including establishment of the Wild Center natural history museum and ARISE (Adirondack Residents Intent on Saving Our Economy) in Tupper Lake, Keene Valley Broadband initiative, Cranberry Lake 50 long-distance hiking trail, and the Five Towns Upper Hudson Recreation Hub tourism

consortium. All these developments can contribute to changing norms, as local media outlets often give prominence to stories about “feel good” local grassroots efforts. In fact, several editorials concerning the Finch Pruyn project contained positive references to civil debate and collaborative initiatives, for example:

“For that, we also appreciate the stakeholder groups. Not that none of them did any complaining. PROTECT picked on several aspects of the process and the final deal in a press release it issued shortly after the vote. First, however, the group praised the overall classification. That’s a lot of progress from the Adirondack wars of the past. The Common Ground Alliance movement is working, and that means more peace in the Park.” (*Adirondack Daily Enterprise* Editors 2013b, p. 1)

Thus, the data suggest that broader regional collaborative and community development efforts can influence the form, content and style of mass media discourses surrounding conservation.

Discussion

This study finds evidence of a discursive shift regarding actors’ use of collaborative language and rhetoric. But, what effect does this have on-the-ground in the Adirondack Park? Could more collaborative discourses lead to less natural resource conflict, or does it simply mask existing power imbalances and preserve the status quo?

Public perception of inclusiveness and attention to local desires within natural resource management efforts can influence the success of implementation (Conley and Moote 2003). Previous work suggests that actors who believe they have been excluded often view conservation decisions as unfair or illegitimate (Yung et al. 2010). Our results suggest that more participatory conservation efforts like the Finch project can lead to

more collaborative public discourse, which may also increase positive public commentary, opinion, and community-wide discourse about fairness and legitimacy in decision-making, thereby decreasing resistance to the process and implementation.

This leads to the question of whether collaborative talk leads to collaborative agreements, or does collaborative discourse follow from collaborative action?

Investigating the use of collaborative discourse within a small group process, Tuler (2000) found that positive talk can increase the formation of new understandings among actors. Our results support this idea – and moreover, collaborative action can encourage collaborative talk. Local constituent actors, including some perennial skeptics of conservation, praised The Nature Conservancy’s and Governor Cuomo’s local outreach efforts during the Finch project. Local government representatives are quoted in the media praising conservation supporters for a perceived “shift in attitude” characterized by “listening” and “working with” local communities to identify local priorities, such as snowmobile corridors and motorized access points. This finding points to a critical question regarding the reasons behind changing discourses, namely: were increases in collaborative rhetoric tied to shifting opinions or turnover among key actors, journalists and editors? While a handful of key players are present throughout, many spokespersons and newspaper staff changed over the study period. However, one strength of the macro-level analysis employed by this research is that it captures arguments and language used by diverse groups over time. Rather than focusing on one person, group or agency, this study illuminates the macro-level discourse, which is key to understanding the discursive terrain of conservation and collaboration.

Dangers of Collaborative Media Discourses?

The research presented here also raises interesting questions about potential downfalls of collaborative rhetoric. Scholars have suggested that an argumentative model of environmental decision-making, as opposed to consensus-focused approaches, can foster scientifically-sound decision-making (Peterson et al. 2005). Indeed, in the Essex Chain of Lakes land classification debate, key spokespersons presented the argument that decision-making should be based on both ecological and economic considerations, and the data show evidence of the marginalization of dissenting voices. The pervasiveness of collaborative rhetoric during this period could have influenced state officials and regulators, pushing the process away from the material reality of the need to protect the resource, based on scientific “ability to withstand use,” toward the social reality of local economic development, as suggested by Peterson and colleagues. Thus, collaborative rhetoric drives consensus in conservation, but to what long-term effect? Could a focus on consensus and collaboration lead to degradation of the natural resource base and wilderness qualities of the Adirondack landscape?

Scholars have challenged the “myth of consensus” in conservation, asserting in part that consensus-based processes can stymie innovation and change, ignore science and material reality-based evidence, and downplay the role of powerful groups in forming consensus (Peterson et al. 2005). In this study, the two most powerful actors – the State of New York and The Nature Conservancy – consistently reference consensus without acknowledging that most decisions are essentially predetermined. Less powerful actors including Park residents and local government representatives referenced power imbalances, but these actors tended to be given less prominence in the discourses.

Furthermore, the observed differences between collaborative talk in editorial and news content in our study suggest that the more recent mass media discourses may not be entirely reflective of local sentiment regarding conservation. Indeed, debates surrounding proposed developments, such as the ACR project in Tupper Lake, have engendered heated local debate often featuring combative language (Nevins et al. 2012), but sometimes these debates are not well-covered by local media, or are not included in regional media coverage.

Can privileging collaboration and consensus within mass media discourses mask conflicting values and ideas expressed by stakeholders (Colyvan et al. 2011) and propagate unreasonable expectations about the power of collaboration (Kellert et al. 2000)? And, is doing this the result of a conscious decision by newspaper editors? The study reported here found that collaborative rhetoric by local government sources around the economic benefits of conservation increased during the 2000s, but resident surveys conducted in 2004, 2006, and 2008 (Cox et al. 2010; Wolf and Klein 2007) indicated that despite global economic trends and timber company divestment from the region, Northern Forest communities expressed a desire to maintain timber production and agriculture, rather than tourism and recreation, as the primary driver of local economies. Does this mean that the media are apt to downplay alternative perspectives when key spokespersons promote a specific view?

The discourse theory of Foucault (1980), who posits that actors use language to represent and produce knowledge, highlights the importance of power in media debates. Researchers have asked whether mass media discourse promoting consensus and collaboration can serve to give the false appearance of participatory conservation

(Peterson et al. 2005; Cairns et al. 2014), and the use of collaborative rhetoric has been theorized as a political strategy employed by powerful interests to “depoliticize” conservation debates and maintain existing power structures (Buscher 2010). This raises questions about whether local governments are being coopted by the media or by powerful conservation and state interests, or whether they are adopting the rhetoric of these interests in order to push locally-desired outcomes within existing power structures. While claims of conservation being “forced” on Adirondack communities decreased over the study period, conservation supporters have the financial and political means to drive land use change in the region. Are local governments adopting collaborative rhetoric in order to share some power they have over conservation decision-making?

Though this study cannot directly answer those questions, one solution to this potential problem may be seen in the “Five Towns” initiative established by the five “recreational gateway communities” surrounding the new public lands added as part of the Finch Pruyn project. The initiative highlights the role of organizing, which has been theorized as means for actors to strengthen discursive positions within collaborative processes (Lawrence et al. 1999). The Five Towns organization allowed the communities to coordinate messaging within local media and give prominence within the project discourse to “gateway communities,” a concept that privileges local control and local economic considerations.

Conservation, Place Images, and the “Working Landscape”

The concept of “working landscapes,” which attempts to balance ecological and local economic and social goals, has received considerable attention within conservation

scholarship and practice (Wolf and Klein 2007; Abrams and Bliss 2012). Our results suggest increasing convergence over time regarding actors' positive references to the multifunctional and economic benefits of conservation lands. Claims regarding the source of economic benefits, however, varied between conservation supporters and local constituencies. Conservation supporters commonly situated conservation as “working” for local communities via tourism and tax benefits, while local residents and leaders position the land, not conservation, as “working” via the forest products economy and potential residential or business development. This may speak to varying socioeconomic circumstances of locals and conservation supporters, with locals focusing on the tangible economic work that land performs, and conservationists (often with disposable income) focusing more on recreation and intangible resources such as wilderness experience. Across the study period, local constituencies most often expressed place images centered around the tangible and human benefits of land (cultural, recreation, and working), while conservation supporters use images of place to highlight experiential and ecological benefits (ecological, pristine, and wild). Recent research examining working forest discourses in the Adirondack Park uncovered similar sentiment among local constituencies, many of whom prioritized timber harvesting over non-extractive open space protection (Wolf and Klein 2007).

The results of this study also shed light onto potentially shifting views of land ownership in the Adirondacks. Harris and colleagues (2012) speculate that the concept of land ownership in the region is becoming less understood as a personal freedom and “more of a way for multiple actors to negotiate a variety of interests. In other words...land ownership (is) becoming explicitly a political process expressing social

values” (p. 278). Given the propensity of property rights groups to claim land ownership as a personal freedom, their virtual disappearance from the four recent project discourses points to a decrease in the salience of such claims in local media. The rise in mass media-based collaborative talk – wherein multiple actors debate the disposition of formerly private timberlands – also points to a shift away from a focus on the rights of individual landowners towards collective social benefits.

Limitations

Despite efforts to address errors and inconsistencies with the database, certain limitations regarding data acquisition are present. First, all media content related to the Whitney, Champion, and two International Paper projects were retrieved from a database that uses optical character recognition (OCR) software to perform keyword searches of scanned documents. This introduces a possible source of error with regard to the completeness of the dataset for these projects, as relevant content may have been missed due to poor quality scans of original documents. Accuracy rates for OCR software have been found to vary between 90 and 99.9 percent (de Graff and van der Vossen 2013; Lopresti 2009). On the other hand, the size of the datasets and average content length for the most recent projects (Domtar and Finch Pruyn, initiated in 2004 and 2007 respectively) may have been influenced by the ease and low cost of publishing content online. The Finch Pruyn dataset contained the most articles and highest word count of the six projects.

Another potential issue with media discourse research is that, as news media becomes increasingly focused on providing entertainment, journalists may be more likely

to select and incorporate sensationalized statements (Cox 2012) in their articles. As such, actors given standing by journalists and editors may be the most strident, but not necessarily the most representative of their peers. Additionally, the tendency within American mass media to attempt to report “balanced” stories often leads to the inclusion of quotations from opposing views, some of whom may be inclined to express an inflammatory non-collaborative statement in an attempt to elevate their voice to compete with those of powerful interests (Gamson 1998); these voices may only represent a small fraction of public opinion.

Conclusion

The Adirondack Park has a unique and rich history of conservation, conflict, and more recently, collaboration. The six major land transfers initiated during the study period precipitated significant debate about conservation, economic development, and the future of the Adirondacks. The research presented in this paper offers several implications for future research and conservation practice. More broadly, the study provides important insight into stakeholders’ long-term visions for the Adirondacks, and serves to “take the pulse” of public attitudes regarding recent moves towards collaboration, consensus, and participatory conservation in the region.

This research asks about the relation between discourse and conservation practices, and evaluates the strategic uses of discourses about collaboration and conflict, as well as claims about place and conservation. Few studies have examined conservation discourses over time. Our findings demonstrate how discourses and action run parallel within conservation processes; that is, discourses influence and, in part, enact

conservation practice. Results show evidence of an objective change over time in the level of collaborative talk within Adirondack conservation discourses. The media statements of key actors as reflected in the project discourses suggest that with regard to conservation initiatives Park residents, state government representatives, and local government representatives are increasingly embracing positive themes of collaboration, consensus, problem-solving, and multiple perspectives. Our results also suggest that: more participatory conservation can lead to more collaborative public discourse; actors can employ discourses to influence conservation decision-making processes; mass media effects can privilege certain views over others; and recent collaborative efforts in the Park are reflected in regional conservation discourses.

This research is relevant to natural resource scholars and managers, government agencies and officials, non-profits and community leaders. Our finding suggest that practitioners engaged in community-based management efforts must understand public discourses of conservation. In the near term, this study benefits land management efforts in the Adirondacks by uncovering actors' place images, highlighting shared values among actors, identifying areas of potential conflict, and providing insight into local community identity. The insight provided herein is especially important since the State of New York is in the process of incorporating 69,000 acres of former timberlands into the Forest Preserve, a process which is expected to continue until 2017. During this period, numerous required participatory processes associated with land classification and management planning will commence.

Even with the limitations of this study, the analysis of media statements is important because media is one way people make sense of the world and their

community. The mass media is the public space where ideas are created, contested, and reworked. In particular, analysis of place images can uncover contested and common values among stakeholders, improving land management and potentially reducing conflict. The findings regarding collaboration and conflict in this study can provide insight about the discursive behavior of social actors, and can aid implementation and guide future projects. This study also uncovered trends that are relevant to future investigations.

Researchers should be aware that media presentations of collaboration in conservation and actual local sentiment may not always map neatly over one another. Furthermore, while *editorial* content often contains more personal and community narratives and vivid imagery, attention must be given to claims and representation made in *news* content by social actors. In this study, examination of news content was critical to gaining an understanding of how repetition of collaborative rhetoric in more frequently published news content can reinforce perceptions of collaboration that may not necessarily reflect the view of local constituencies.

The disparity between statement frequency in news vs. editorial content also raises questions related to new media and content delivery. As readers increasingly view content that is aggregated and summarized on webpages and blogs, will they be presented with or have the patience to read through long-form news articles? Additionally, in a partisan news media environment, are readers directed more toward salacious or self-promotional editorial and opinion pieces that intend to interpret, rather than report, news about conservation? Future researchers may wish to explore the effects of new media on

message transmission by comparing conservation discourse across traditional and new media sources.

The research presented in this paper demonstrates how media content analysis techniques can be used to investigate collaboration and place within conservation discourses. This study builds upon previous forest conflict research (Bengsten and Fan 1999), scaling down to the regional level by examining discourses in local and community newspapers. As the context for conservation, place, and claims about place, are central to conservation debates, and scholars maintain that an understanding of local places – as they are in the physical sense, but also in their discourses – are critical as resource management efforts become more localized and unique local landscapes gain importance due to homogenization pressures exerted by globalization (Smith et al. 2011). Furthermore, it has been suggested that examination of conservation discourses can reveal how actors define various places, highlighting areas of both disagreement and intersection, which can encourage collaboration and development of novel management alternatives (Stokowski 2013).

Gaining an understanding of relevant discourses is critical for scholars, policymakers, and managers intent on implementing effective conservation strategies. This study demonstrates how macro-level analysis can improve understanding of discursive strategies. Future research at the micro-level, such as narrative, metaphor and semantic analysis, could provide additional insights and contribute towards establishment of a theory of discourse in conservation. For example, an interesting question is whether the term “working forest” has replaced or displaced “wilderness” in media debates. While such analysis was beyond the reach of this study, such comprehensive examination

regarding the language used to structure arguments about collaboration, place, and conservation would add greatly to existing scholarship.

The findings of this study suggest that actors can employ discourses to influence conservation decision-making processes, and demonstrate how mass media effects can privilege certain views over others. Underrepresented groups in media discourses would be wise to consider strategies to raise their prominence by authoring editorial content and fostering relationships with newspaper journalists and editors.

Conservation is increasingly conceptualized and operationalized as an effort in collaborative community decision-making. We find evidence that recent collaborative efforts and calls for consensus in the Adirondack Park have influenced the tone and content of public discourse regarding conservation. Our findings suggest that the Park is maturing, as civil debate displaces the confrontational “Adirondack Wars” of prior decades. Of course, no conclusions can be drawn as to the “success” of conservation in the Park, as further study is needed to determine whether recent collaborative discourses are resulting in more collaborative conservation practice. As the Adirondack experiment continues to evolve, scholars, conservation practitioners and land managers must give appropriate due to the public discourses that shape and define the social and discursive landscapes of conservation.

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Appendix 1: Description of Conservation Projects

Project	Dates (Coverage Period)	Acres (Disposition) Total	Summary
Whitney Park	1997 – 2000	14,735 (FP) 14,735 ac.	Located west of Long Lake in the central Adirondacks, the conservation lands surround nearly six-mile long Little Tupper Lake. A development proposal by Whitney Industries called for 40 large homes and resort type amenities. After several months of negotiations the State purchased the land, which was classified as wilderness. A 36,000 SF CE on the remaining Whitney land was rescinded by the owner.
Champion International Lands	1997 – 2001	110,000 (SF CE) 29,000 (FP) 139,000 ac.	Situated in the northwest Adirondacks, these lands include branches of four “Northern Flow” rivers lauded by paddlers and a large wetland complex. The Forest Preserve additions consisted mainly of half-mile wide river corridors and the wetland-rich Madawaska Flow/Quebec Brook tract. SF CE lands were sold to The Forestland Group, LLC, a private investment company. The deal required the removal of numerous hunting club buildings and termination of several club leases.
International Paper Lakes	2001 – 2003	15,500 (FW CE) ~ 7,000 (FP) ~ 2,591 (SF CE) 26,500 ac.	Purchased by The Nature Conservancy from the International Paper Company, these lands contain numerous streams, lakes, and ponds and adjoined Forest Preserve units containing numerous waterbodies, which reopened historic canoe routes. The entirety of Round Lake, Bog Lake and Clear Pond were transferred to the State. The remaining acreage was sold to private buyers encumbered by SF CEs and FW CEs, which prohibit development and extractive uses.
International Paper Easements	2005 – 2007	~253,000 (SF CE) ~2000 (FP) ~255,000 ac.	Distributed throughout the Park, this largest conservation initiative in the Adirondacks involved almost exclusively SF CE lands. The International Paper Company transferred nearly all of its Adirondack holdings to Lyme Timber Company, which agreed to continue forestry operations subject to a State-held SF CEs. Two types of easements were employed; one granting full public recreation rights (84,232 ac.), and the other largely prohibiting public access, with the exception of possible snowmobile corridors (171,004 ac.).

Domtar	2005 - 2008	84,448 (SF CE) 19,960 (FP) 104,400 ac.	Located in the northeast Adirondacks, these lands include much of Lyon Mountain, several miles of Chazy Lake shoreline, and high quality moose habitat identified by state biologists. Domtar Industries transferred 19,960 acres surrounding Lyon Mountain to The Nature Conservancy (who transferred them to the State) and the remainder to Lyme Timber Company subject to a State-held SF CE. Hunting club leases (with two exceptions on new state lands) were allowed to remain and no new restrictions were placed on motorized access to leased lands.
Finch Pruyn	2007 - 12/2013	92,000 (SF CE) 69,000 (FP) 1,100 acres (CDP) 161,000 ac.	Primarily located in the central Adirondacks, the Nature Conservancy purchased the Adirondack holdings of Finch, Pruyn and Company. The project, dubbed the "Heart of the Adirondacks," consisted of a mix of SF CE, future Forest Preserve, and small parcels near towns identified for community development. The SF CE lands were sold to a Danish pension fund, ATP, which contracted with a timber management organization, who agreed to continue sustainable forestry operations and supply Finch Pruyn's paper mill located just outside the Park.

CHAPTER 3: COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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