



Redefining Beauty: Negotiating Consumption and Conservation of Natural Environments

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Editors' Note: Many people who are learning cross-cultural negotiation are studying the subject for utilitarian reasons, because they expect to negotiate commercial, industrial, or governmental issues across cultures. They may not immediately perceive the relevance of aesthetics. But to a significant extent, any of these kinds of negotiations is likely to have an environmental component, even when the presenting issues in the negotiation do not appear to be primarily "environmental" in content. Thus it becomes germane to a surprisingly large range of people that perceptions of what is appropriate environmentally have a consumption-versus-conservation element that is, at some fundamental level, about differing cultural perceptions of what is useful – and what is beautiful. The authors analyze some of the implications, including the perception that better cross-cultural training and wider travel is helping many people to appreciate others' views of beauty. That leads to a degree of aesthetic and social "convergence" that will be needed in future, for very practical purposes.

Introduction

How to reach international environmental agreements – for example, to reduce industrial pollution and CO₂ emissions – is a broad and complicated question, of interest to both negotiation and environmental

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scholars. While global environmental issues and their consequences deserve research and policy attention, international negotiations over such concerted action should be informed by an understanding of the cultural differences that can influence the negotiation process and its outcomes. One such difference concerns how people from across cultures define and value nature, in terms of both its aesthetic beauty and the economic and health benefits that accrue to them from the existence of natural ecosystems.

Perceptions of natural beauty vary considerably across cultures, drawing both from people's understanding of natural phenomena and from the spiritual values that they espouse as a result of their respective histories and experiences. Consequently, there is no shared metric for natural beauty that can be easily factored into negotiated treaties. Any mutual understanding that we might forge in international environmental agreements has to come from an awareness and appreciation of the cross-cultural definitions of natural beauty, as well as some insight into how individuals in different societies reconcile their consumption of natural environments with efforts to conserve these ecosystems. Such knowledge can shed light on the attitudinal component of environmental policies and regulations that is rooted in culture, and may require special attention during negotiations, because it can contribute to the intractability of international conflicts.

Teaching students how to approach environmental agreements across borders also presents challenges in the classroom, given current negotiation pedagogy. As instructors, we do not just contend with transferring existing negotiation wisdom. Rather, we have to make do with students' current lack of understanding about international environmental negotiations, as well as with the more general lack of effective tools to develop in students an awareness and appreciation of values that are different from their own. In this sense, reality and the classroom share the same difficulty when it comes to instilling in negotiators an understanding of different cultures. We are either looking into our own culture from within (as an ingroup member with the attending biases) or exploring another culture from without (using outgroup mental models such as our own values hierarchy), either of which is bound to lead us astray. Therefore, in the classroom we run the risk of offering and reinforcing biased interpretations, in more or less apparent ways.¹

It is rather difficult to illustrate effectively the profound and subtle international differences that can affect the process and outcomes of negotiations in a culturally bound classroom. In this chapter, therefore, we explore definitions of natural beauty that are reflected in approaches to conservation/consumption of natural ecosystems in the

United States, China and Japan, and which undoubtedly influence international environmental agreements involving these nations.² In doing so, we propose that this chapter can be used as a pedagogical tool for conveying to students not only how cultures can differ in conceptualizing and valuing nature but also that such differences find expression in physical environments. As such, this chapter can make these differences accessible for negotiators to observe and appreciate, thereby helping to conquer the challenge of surfacing cultural differences in a classroom without requiring extensive ethnographic studies for which neither instructors nor students may be equipped.

The current practice for sensitizing students to cross-cultural values is to use role-plays in which students act as negotiators from different cultures, in necessarily simplified situations.³ We explore here the possibility of accomplishing the same goal by accessing students' own experiences⁴ and available information about different cultural perspectives on the environment, in a way that conserves the physical and cultural complexity inherent in such a comparative study. To this end, we will strive in this chapter to convey (without essentializing) mainstream East Asian and American worldviews of natural beauty, and to identify some cross-cultural linkages between Chinese, Japanese and American values that should be integrated into the pedagogy and practice of international environmental negotiations. We begin by reviewing definitions of natural beauty in China, Japan and the United States, followed by a discussion of how these worldviews are relevant to negotiations. We conclude by outlining implications for negotiation pedagogy and practice.

Definitions of Natural Beauty

As researchers and even as travelers, we have noticed how China, Japan and the United States evolved different, country-specific balances between environmental conservation and societal consumerism. The untamed national parks in the United States exemplify the prevailing American conceptualization of natural beauty. In contrast, in China and Japan the beauty of nature is embodied in very carefully designed and scrupulously tended gardens and city parks that Americans might regard as "artificial" and not representative of nature, even if they find them aesthetically pleasing. What might be driving such apparent differences in physical design?

Several researchers who compared Chinese and Japanese gardens and city parks to the national park system in the United States have concluded that fundamentally different worldviews have shaped the planning, design and use of these public spaces, where people admire localized forms of natural beauty (Callicott and Ames 1989; Bruun

and Kalland 1995; Asquith and Kalland 1997; Saito 2002). Whereas traditional Chinese and Japanese worldviews construe the boundaries between people and nature as fuzzy and deserving of attention, American perspectives have historically differentiated clearly between areas for human activities and nature.⁵ As will be discussed in the following sections, Chinese, Japanese and American attitudes towards consumerism and conservation are rooted in these different yet historical worldviews about the relationship between people and nature. To examine the antecedents of this seemingly inconsequential difference in physical design, we now review briefly some of the philosophies that underscore the traditional worldviews of natural beauty in China, Japan and the United States respectively.

China

The traditional Chinese attitude toward natural beauty has been characterized as *organismic*, meaning that it is rooted in the perception of interdependence between humans and nature. Robert Weller and Peter Bol (1998) conjectured that this point of view is reflected in, and even may stem from, the Chinese philosophy of Cosmic Resonance Theory and in the practice of Feng-shui. Both reify the organismic worldview of natural beauty that frames people and nature as intertwined into a holistic entity.

Cosmic Resonance Theory, the intellectual foundation for Taoism and Neo-Confucianism in China, posits that an atomistic force (Qi) connects all people, events and objects (Weller and Bol 1998). *Qi*, according to Cosmic Resonance Theory, animates humans, animals and elements of nature such as trees, mountains, rocks and water. Tu Wei-Ming (1989: 116) noted in his study of Chinese views of nature that the ancient meaning of Qi specifically invoked the psychophysiological properties of blood and breath. Over time, that meaning has been gradually semanticized to signify “matter energy.” Chinese scholars have henceforth conceptualized Qi not only as incorporating people and nature together, but also as the hallmark of a universalist (rather than anthropocentric) worldview. To wit, “[t]o see nature as an external object out there is to create an artificial barrier which obstructs our true vision and undermines our human capacity to experience nature from within” (Tu 1989). Thus the concept of Qi effectively dissolves a barrier – considered artificial – and frames humans and nature as permeable, overlapping entities.

Feng-shui, an ancient art of placement also known as *geomancy*, is based on a perspective of natural beauty similar to that of Cosmic Resonance Theory. In his discussion of the connection between Feng-shui and nature in China, Ole Bruun (1995) summarized the central

tenet of Feng-shui as follows: a verdant socioecological setting leads to prosperity, while a destitute socioecological setting leads to suffering and demise.⁶ Consequently, rural and urban dwellers wishing to become successful and prosperous should pursue the goal of bringing the universe and nature into their physical environments through the practice of Feng-shui (Bruun 1995). As such, Chinese people sometimes seek the advice of geomancers or Feng-shui artists for the design of gardens, homes, office buildings and gravesites. Geomancers dedicate their attention to the shape of the landscape and flow of water in order to capture and balance the flow of Qi (Bruun 1995). Thus the art of Feng-shui is believed to regulate the interconnection of humans and nature, which led Bruun (1995: 185) to deem Feng-shui a “borderline science” that operates at the boundary of society and nature.

In his monograph on Chinese *scholar gardens*, R. Stewart Johnston (1991) added that Chinese gardens also reflect the organismic worldview of people’s interaction with nature. He noticed that to escape urbanity from time to time, pre-modern scholar-officials privately enjoyed scenic vistas afforded by the miniaturized elements of urban gardens that surrounded their places of study, such as the Confucius Temple in Beijing. Rather than protecting nature from urban influences, these gardens drew nature into city life through cultivated landscapes imbued with symbolism. Garden designers strategically arranged rocks to symbolize nearby mountain peaks and added small murmuring streams to symbolize rivers. They also incorporated curvilinear elements that embodied Feng-shui, such as curving streams, twisted branches or dragons, in order to maximize the flow of Qi (Johnston 1991). In concert with the organismic worldview, it does not seem that Chinese intellectuals perceived these traditional gardens as distinct, but rather as simultaneously a part of nature and of the human experience.

Chinese garden design is clearly rooted in the Chinese experience with and understanding of the vast natural environment, and in philosophical accounts and spiritual values that have evolved over the centuries of China’s history. Although Western-like concepts of urban development and public space have swept across China of late, the traditional gardens continue to fulfill the Chinese worldview of natural beauty. Gardens thrive in conjunction with the pulsating scenes of technological progress and consumerism in China (Weller and Bol 1998). These technological and consumer societal domains of everyday life merge with the spiritual and philosophical experiences of Chinese gardens, which ontologically codify humans and nature into an organismic unit.

Japan

Japanese worldviews of natural beauty bear some resemblance to Chinese worldviews, with some very notable differences. Although Japanese traditions also construe people and nature as an organismic unit, their relationship tends to exist within a “liminal zone” where idealized landscape imagery is appreciated from a distance rather than through immersion (Asquith and Kalland 1997). According to Yuriko Saito (2002), a preference for blurred boundaries and edges is constitutive of Japanese aesthetic tastes. The liminality is characteristic of traditional Shinto and Buddhist beliefs. Buddhism stresses the impermanence of things and the totality of being. Kami – the sentient beings of the Shinto religion – are considered by the Japanese as neither human nor spirit. They have the freedom to reside in natural elements, celestial bodies or even people. In this view, natural phenomena become the offspring of kami, reaffirming their liminal state between humans and nature (Asquith and Kalland 1997).

Admiration for the impermanence of nature is most readily apparent in Japanese architectural and landscape designs. Traditional architectural spaces in Japan flow from one room into the next, bringing the outside into the inside and vice versa. Old and contemporary vernacular architecture alike accomplish this through use of light, low structures made of natural materials, especially wood despite the fact that it is a scarce resource in Japan. Light partitions typically divide rooms and further contribute to the sense of blurred boundaries. The contrasts present in architectural spaces illustrate the traditional Japanese practice of blurring continua, with opposing realities and coexisting spaces (Saito 2002). In the Japanese view, the urban world is not perceived as encroaching upon nature, nor is nature perceived as necessarily purifying the urban world. The same idealized form seen within a garden may be equally appreciated within art, literature, fashion, toys or technology.

Japanese gardens, similarly, blur the boundaries between culture and nature. Joy Hendry (1997) described Japanese gardens as mediating between culture and nature by conceptually residing inside, but physically existing outside. Upon entering a traditional Japanese garden, a viewer is immersed in an idealized version of nature stemming from the liminality of being both inside and outside, as well as the transformation of wild nature into a perfect form (Asquith and Kalland 1997). Whereas this transformation in Chinese scholar-gardens primarily occurred through the manicuring of the gardens in accordance with local customs and beliefs, Japanese gardens transfer distant landscapes into locally experienced natural (miniaturized) carefully positioned elements (e.g., rocks, trees and water) that allow

observers to interact safely with wild nature through perfect, controlled garden scenery (Hendry 1997).

In contemporary Japan, urban gardens, villages and parks continue to function as miniaturized safe-havens. Hendry (1997) contended that gardens in Japan mediate between the presence of (wild) foreigners and (tame) local traditions. The traditional Japanese worldview of natural beauty as reflected in garden design reveals to an extent how the urban Japanese reconcile nature with modern day consumerism and industrialization. By framing nature as composed of desirable and idealized elements, Japanese gardens help viewers see through the dirt and grit of city life and its less-than-aesthetic components – power lines, garbage or highways (Asquith and Kalland 1997). For example, Japanese worldviews of natural beauty permit people to take in the ambiguous boundaries between the Tokyo Bay, the city of Tokyo, and the distant Mt. Fuji looming in the background, without perceiving them as separate entities. According to Asquith and Kalland (1997: 15),

contextualization allows for multiple concepts of nature to co-exist: the wild and threatening nature which sometimes plays havoc with people and landscape; or the other nature in its most cultivated form, a garden, a dwarfed tree (bonsai), or a soft drink in a vending machine. It is in the latter idealized form that nature is most appreciated by the Japanese.

As in the Chinese case, the physical environment (here, insular rather than seemingly limitless) has shaped Japanese garden design that also draws from spiritual values. Japanese and Chinese worldviews of natural beauty – one liminal and the other organismic – share a unique fondness for idealizing landscapes. The gardens rooted in these views are both carefully constructed models of nature, greatly valued by the public not least due to their scarcity and to a traditional lack of easy access to real natural landscapes. Borrowing from Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralist framework, Asquith and Kalland (1997) described Japanese worldviews of natural beauty as wrestling with *nature continua* anchored in three dichotomies: cooked–raw, wrapped–unwrapped and tame–wild. Both the Japanese and Chinese garden practices (manicured in different ways) are the result of worldviews that gravitate toward the cooked and tame ends of the Lévi-Strauss continua, driven by the East Asian cosmologies of Shinto, Buddhism, Feng-shui, Taoism, and Neo-Confucianism respectively.

United States

In contrast to Chinese and Japanese perspectives, American worldviews of natural beauty tend toward the raw and wild ends of the continua described by Asquith and Kalland (1997). Thus instead of using public works to build gardens as monuments, the United States instituted wilderness preserves and national parks where nature can be safeguarded, publicly accessed and “consumed” in its pristine, untamed state. National park systems, now prevalent throughout the world, may well be an American invention (Nash 1970; Machlis and Field 2000; Saito 2002). There is little evidence to suggest that any government-supported national park systems existed anywhere else prior to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming in 1872. According to Roderick Nash (1970), Yellowstone was the world’s first major wilderness preserve created with the public interest in mind.

The historical path to the present can contribute to our understanding of the outcomes we see today, both in terms of views of nature and in how they are reflected in gardens or parks. At the outset, American colonists were determined to cultivate the soil in an effort to “civilize” the wilderness. However, as urbanization spread westward from the initial colonies, people began to seek a different relationship with nature (Saito 2002) and even came to fear the disappearance of natural landscapes. Euro-American settlers came from relatively highly urbanized settings and from a tradition that had accumulated a considerable philosophical distance from nature. Perhaps as Nash (1970) put it best “[c]ities, not log cabins, produce Sierra Clubbers.” In other words, the American worldview of natural beauty evolved from a longing for what had been lost in time as urbanization created a boundary between people and nature. In contrast, Japanese and Chinese cultures had shaped their views of natural beauty during their early (rural) histories (Saito 2002) when contact with nature was more immediate, and they managed to preserve the continuity of this outlook to this day.

In her discussion of how American worldviews of natural beauty shifted from taming to preservation, Saito (2002) argues that the strategies for choosing and designating “pristine” sites as national parks often included criteria such as the natural history of the area and its spatial-temporal immensity (e.g., Niagara Falls). This approach is quite different from the traditional Chinese and Japanese concepts of natural beauty, which call for people to admire the wilderness at a distance through idealized (artificial) garden and park landscapes, often constructed in the midst of urban areas.

Rather than regarding society as part of nature (as reconstructed in Japanese and Chinese gardens), the American conceptualization of natural beauty led to preserved natural scenic landscapes and national parks, to conserve natural features at a distance from everyday life. American urban dwellers take in natural beauty in its own (natural) context. In parks, visitors tend to interact with nature as guests of the natural world, rather than seeing themselves as part of it. The American national park system resembles an environmental caretaker model, where the need to set aside land for conservation often entails the notion of stewardship for the public interest, including future generations.

As a result of this outlook, Americans tend to consider that consumerism and materiality infringe upon nature. Instead, in the dominant Judeo-Christian tradition,⁷ nature is seen as a divine gift that came with strings attached – a caretaker duty that implies the setting of protective boundaries even when they imply giving up some economic value in the process.⁸ By comparison, Japanese and Chinese worldviews merge consumerism, society and nature. The Chinese and Japanese display an ambivalent relationship with (reconstructed) nature, which is often challenging for Westerners to understand (Asquith and Kalland 1997). In turn, Chinese and Japanese people may find perplexing the American view of natural beauty as separate, and in its wild state.

In summary, traditional Chinese and Japanese worldviews of natural beauty reflect a preference for merging nature with their consumer society, as exemplified by the East Asian traditions of manicured urban gardens and parks. Mainstream American attitudes, on the other hand, tend to place consumerism and society in opposition to nature, as reflected in their vast national park system, which is protected from human encroachment. In light of these cross-cultural differences, we now consider the implications of Chinese, Japanese and American worldviews of natural beauty for negotiation pedagogy and practice, with specific reference to the context of international environmental agreements.

Implications for Negotiation Pedagogy and Practice

This chapter aims to contribute to one of the goals of the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching project, namely to innovate in negotiation teaching by developing tools to convey the complexity of international negotiations. The urgent need to develop students' cross-cultural understanding can be attributed in part to globalization and to the fact that some global resources – nature is an example – are shared, limited and threatened unless we successfully negotiate collective agree-

ments to safeguard them across borders. But most instructors and students do not have direct experience with international negotiations, let alone environmental agreements. However, global issues are increasingly seeping into national politics, so ultimately each country must choose to address them, whether unilaterally or jointly.

One example of a global issue that affects everyone is climate change. Despite wide recognition of the problem, there is no international (or intra-national, at least in the United States; see Honeyman et al., *The "Deliberation Engine,"* in this volume) consensus on how it should be addressed. In fact, there is much reluctance to devote resources to either prevent or mitigate climate change effects. Negotiations of global climate change treaties have so far repeatedly failed, or ended in rather vague plans for continuing the efforts, with no binding agreements. The topic of natural beauty and its valuation in different cultures is one way to introduce students to several of the obstacles present in negotiating global climate change treaties. It provides a nuanced, non-normative pedagogical tool to develop useful analytical skills in students. Chief among them is the ability to probe cultural elements that lead to certain negotiation stances and to devise proposals that take them into account, thereby increasing the likelihood of agreement and action..

At a first level, the actual topic of garden design and the underlying attitudes toward natural beauty could constitute an assignment of discovery: students might be asked to investigate and speculate on antecedents of observed garden design features (based on readings and images) with a class discussion that could bring out the differences and reveal the underlying variation in worldviews. At a second level, when possible, students might be asked to engage in a similar exercise by drawing on their own travel experiences. The latter task could be focused on other designs such as urban open spaces or markets that are prevalent across cultures and exemplify different worldviews. This exercise becomes full-fledged adventure learning if visiting (to another region or country) can be carried out as part of a class assignment. At a third level, our chapter can serve as a model for building an awareness and appreciation for other phenomena/activities that are carried out differently across cultures. The effectiveness of any such exercise in helping students become sensitive to cultural differences and in acquiring tools for understanding specific cultures resides in the debriefing of their experiences.⁹

All of the above pedagogical strategies, however, should be contextualized and informed by the changing cultural landscape, so as not to affirm simplistic cultural stereotypes. Moreover, having an understanding of the historical context that could have influenced defini-

tions of natural beauty and approaches to conservation/consumption of natural ecosystems in the United States, China and Japan should enhance students' ability to approach environmental agreements across borders effectively. Therefore, we now provide some of this context.

The Changing Cultural Landscape

People around the world live surrounded by our natural environments, even if in urban areas this is no longer readily apparent. Apart from cultural differences, we are biologically identical up to very small, insignificant, mostly appearance-related variations (Pinker 2002). It is, therefore, interesting to attempt to tease out the considerable differences in the very basic and ubiquitous relationship we have with our natural surroundings, which we might have expected to vary less than in actuality. What might account for these cultural differences? The temptation is great to ascribe observed garden styles – a reflection of people's attitude toward nature – solely to the spiritual values held by people in various countries, and even to find virtue in some and fault in others from the perspective of our own environmental values.¹⁰ However, we should resist this temptation and turn it into a learning opportunity.

Drawing on our knowledge of relevant cognitive biases (for example, Birke and Fox 1999; Korobkin and Guthrie 2006; Birke 2010), we should distinguish between what is likely present in the makeup of various cultural outlooks and our (often mistaken) attributions. We are apt to learn when analyzing cultural differences as much from our findings as from our analytic process, which should highlight the many biases that we are at risk of activating in forming our judgments during negotiations.

For example, to understand cultural differences in the perception and valuation of nature, we might also want to consider historical differences that may have led to people's conceptualization of their relationship to nature. China and Japan are among the oldest civilizations. Old civilizations evolved slowly. What we construe as fast-paced modernity is but a speck on the timeline of human evolution. The same is true for perspectives on the natural environment, over which people had little dominion at the outset, but which gradually came to be "tamed" as new technologies allowed. The various philosophies and spiritual values in which the Chinese and Japanese anchor their relationships to nature may have developed ex-post to reflect and rationalize, rather than necessarily lead to, these relationships.

The diminutive yet very organized Japanese gardens, where plants do not always occupy a central place, may reflect, for exam-

ple, a sense of triumph of an insular people over an inclement nature where earthquakes and typhoons are commonplace experiences that can violently and quickly destroy built structures. Perhaps the work-intensive sand arrangements in some Japanese gardens, constructed painstakingly only to be raked away in a flash and seemingly without regret, tell the story of short-lived structures that fall prey to natural forces and, therefore, should not be overly worshipped. The size and sparseness of these gardens may reflect the high value set on scarce productive land.

Another contributor to control and precision exhibited in Japanese gardens may be the political system, which for the better part of the country's history has been autocratic. Emperors made things happen and showcased them. They sought to leave legacies of their passing, taking advantage of available manual labor to construct intricate structures surrounded by designed nature. To this day, tourists might notice with surprise Japanese gardeners using delicate tools to clip the wayward blade of grass on a lawn where most of us would hardly notice it. The fluid boundaries between the natural and the built environments may be a graceful result of the necessity to pack much in small spaces, as well as the need to build light and sparse structures to reduce the damage to them and their replacement cost in the event of frequent earthquakes and storms. Shaped by these natural and political contexts, people's perspective on nature and its beauty might well evolve toward liminality. At the very least the latter accommodates its context well even while seemingly derived from philosophical and religious tenets.

By comparison, Chinese gardens tend to be larger, possibly because of the vastly greater space availability as well as the scale of the Chinese natural landscape elements that they represent. However, similarly to Japanese gardens, Chinese gardens are also stylistically reflective of control, possibly for the dual reasons of the historic slow evolution of control tools, as well as a predominantly autocratic political system. There too, emperors and philosophers left lavish legacies with help from plentiful labor. The Chinese organismic perspective also accommodates well the natural and political context.

Thus, it is not surprising to find that along the centuries the Chinese and Japanese gardens alike received justification and backing in unifying philosophies that helped people make sense of their circumstances. Why and to whom does it matter whether the philosophical underpinnings of their perceptions about natural beauty led or followed? This issue is important pedagogically because it highlights that the natural conditions and the historical evolution of cultures are universally key to understanding observed customs and belief sys-

tems. However, this link is not deterministic; similar political conditions can yield different outlooks in natural and cultural contexts that vary, as is the case with neighboring China and Japan.

Tool availability and the development of technology are related to people's relationship to nature (seeing oneself as part of nature vs. dominating the environment for one's needs). This is supported by the observation that before the arrival of Europeans on American shores, Native Americans – whose control over natural phenomena were relatively limited when compared to their Western contemporaries – had a relationship with their nature that was closer to the traditional Japanese and Chinese worldviews than to current American attitudes. Although today we tend to account for the historic Native American relationship with nature in spiritual terms (which might be true today but not necessarily in the past) and hold these attitudes as normative models to be emulated for sustainability, we lack counterfactual evidence of how the attitudes of Native Americans might have evolved had technology afforded them more control over their surroundings. In fact, some of the examples¹¹ offered by Jared Diamond (2005) suggest that when humans had tools to dominate their surroundings, people around the globe developed views of nature closer to the modern American perspective, and often used these tools to destroy their natural surroundings, which in turn led to their own demise.

That autocratic political systems could account in part for the emergence of controlling gardening styles is supported by the fact that European kingdoms (e.g., France, England, and Germany) in their heyday also produced very artificial “natural” environments around their palaces, for reasons quite similar to those of the Chinese and Japanese upper classes. The United States is relatively young by comparison to Japan and China, and even to Native American cultures, although arguably Western European values predominated in early America even though they developed much later in history than in China and Japan. These old European (early American) perspectives, however, were modified by the new physical and social contexts of the United States, which were very different from Europe both in terms of scale and content.

At the outset of American colonization, nature was an entity to be conquered for survival. Later, with the industrial revolution, physical conditions in urban areas were deplorable whereas natural environments were preserved because they were more difficult to reach, which is when nature became seen as an ideal in the American worldview. This change in attitudes contributed to the innovative creation of national parks and the protection of unique landscapes.

Nowadays, American views of nature are quite diverse, rather than monolithic. Judith Layzer (2010) proposed two useful concepts to anchor the two ends of the American contemporary range of views of nature. At one end, we find *deep ecologists* who do not see humans as having to be privileged in any way but rather as being on equal footing with other living things that form ecosystems. In other words, they view themselves and others as part of nature. Deep ecologists perceive population and economic growth as grave threats to ecosystems. They do not consider the value to people of various ecosystem components to be an important consideration in conservation decisions, and would rather curtail human activities than harm natural ecosystem elements (Layzer 2010). At the other end of this continuum of American views of nature, *cornucopians* value natural elements only insofar as they have some utility (aesthetic, economic, recreational) for humans. In other words, they have a consumer's attitude toward nature. They privilege economic growth and trust that eventually a technological fix will come along to help us overcome any challenges that stem from overuse of limited natural resources (Layzer 2010). The perceptions of the value of nature, people's place with respect to it, and the role of technology in producing solutions to problems generated either by limited natural resources or by their deterioration form a useful set of dimensions for characterizing American contemporary views of nature and locating them on the continuum between deep ecologists and cornucopians.

In addition to cultural differences rooted in the histories, technological and political contexts of different places around the world, we should add scale as a factor possibly accounting for part of the observed attitude differences toward nature. The countries we chose for analysis in this chapter serve well to illustrate the scale argument. China and the United States are the third and fourth largest in the world (at roughly 3.7 million square miles each, compared to Japan, in 62nd place with .15 million square miles). In terms of population, China is in first place (1.4 billion, 2010 China census), the United States is in third place (312 million as of September 6, 2011, U.S. Census) and Japan is in tenth place (at 128 million as of June 1, 2011, Official Japan Statistics Bureau). Thus, the United States has only eighty-four people per square mile, compared to China's 360 people and Japan's 876 people per square mile. Experiencing nature under these very different circumstances cannot but affect people's world-views.

It should come as no surprise that the smallest gardens with the most artificial (controlled and minutely managed) appearance are found in the smallest, most densely populated and most natural

resource-deprived of the three countries – Japan (which is sixty-six percent urbanized, with much of the rest of the land, and even some urban land, devoted to rice production.) Nor is it surprising that the idea of vast natural conservation areas should emerge in the United States, which has relatively large tracts of uninhabited land (judging by the fact that in 2008 it was eighty-two percent urbanized, meaning that the average density belies the concentration of population on a fraction of the available land). China's vast population is only fifty percent urbanized, with a considerable amount of accessible land being occupied by villages devoted to food production. Therefore, although its vast territory still harbors some natural areas, China may be less able (physically and economically) than the United States to engage in nature conservation, should it be inclined to do so.

Conclusion

Over the past century, societies have opened more to one another than in the past, and traveling among continents became relatively easier and more frequent. Economic globalization and communication technologies further reduced physical and cultural distances among countries. As a result, Chinese, Japanese, and American worldviews of natural beauty have intermingled and converged to some extent. For instance, the High Line Park in New York City is reminiscent of Japanese and Chinese gardens. The (in places) frosted glass-floored park, which is elevated above more than a mile of streets, affords subtle views of city landmarks while visitors meander through manicured gardens. The High Line appears to erase traditional boundaries between humans and nature. Mid-nineties American consumers and architects drew inspiration from Japanese design. During the 1990s, middle-class Americans became fascinated with the practice of Feng-shui in their homes. In turn, during the twentieth century China and Japan have created a few national parks of their own that are Western in spirit, in the sense that they are dedicated to protecting the wilderness for public consumption through tourism.

At the very least, these emergent developments support the notion that consumers, architects and urban planners have become particularly open to different worldviews over the years. They also offer hope that as more and more people encounter and experience other cultures, their awareness and appreciation of diverse cross-cultural values will increase. Our comparison of prevailing worldviews of nature, as well as their antecedents, in China, Japan, and the United States has revealed several similarities and differences that undoubtedly influence international environmental negotiations. Notably, no one perspective on nature – its beauty or its value – has generated

more sustainable or responsible ecological protections, despite rhetoric to that effect.

Notes

¹ The tendency to be unaware of our own lack of any genuine understanding of other cultures except through the prism of our own has been called “cognitive egocentrism.” It is defined as “the projection of one’s own mentality or ‘way of seeing the world’ onto others” (Elkind as cited in Landes 2007: 846). It entails attributing to members of other cultures our own values, interests and modes of thinking as if they were universal, despite much research and experiential evidence that many are not. The perils for negotiation are self-evident. For example, we may fail at following some of our most cherished general prescriptions – such as finding out the others’ interests and mutually beneficial tradeoffs – because they hinge on our ability (severely diminished in multi-cultural contexts) to decipher interests and values and how they might be satisfied in cultures other than our own.

² We selected these three exemplar countries/cultures because of their geographic and cultural distances from each other, and because some of their physical and history similarities and differences allow us to explore various hypotheses.

³ Nadja Alexander and Michelle LeBaron (2009) offer a robust critique of using role-plays for this purpose, in particular, the pitfalls of asking students to take on a cultural identity other than their own.

⁴ Our proposed approach to teaching about cultural differences by using students’ direct experience with one physical element – gardens – and encouraging them to discover the cultural reasons leading to very different designs is a member of the family of adventure learning devices described in other chapters of this volume.

⁵ A current example is the ongoing protracted conflict unfolding in Boulder, Colorado, over deep ecologists’ attempt to close off to hikers many of the local nature trails to protect plant and animal habitats they claim would be harmed by the mere presence of humans on designated paths.

⁶ This is reminiscent of Western planning theories at the turn of the twentieth century, rooted in belief in a similarly strong connection between people and their (urban) environment. Accordingly, physically fixing up neighborhoods was expected to remedy the social ills brought about by deep poverty. In turn, this perspective, by the mid-twentieth century, led to the urban renewal movement, which however failed to bring about the expected results. Expectations may have been either too high, or outright unfounded. While links between physical and social environments may be present, the direction of causality is not clear and therefore acting on it is fraught with perils.

⁷ While this tradition has been interpreted to mean that people were given dominion over nature and freedom to exploit it, alternative interpretations have framed it as commanding the caretaker role. For example, the Old Testament commands humane treatment of living things and a sabbatical (seventh) year of rest for land used in agriculture.

⁸ Environmental regulations limiting the kinds of activities permitted in national parks (even when they might bring profit, as through the exploitation of natural resources, or enjoyment, through recreational activities) reflect the American caretaker stance toward natural beauty.

⁹ For more information on the role of debriefing, see Deason et al., *Debriefing the Debrief* and Deason et al., *Debriefing Adventure Learning* in this volume.

¹⁰ Besides causing us to attribute to others our own values, our cognitive egocentrism also leads us to judge the past from the perspective of our current values and circumstances, which are often very different from those of years past even within the same culture.

¹¹ A good example is Rapanui – Easter Island – whose population perished after having destroyed the last trees in the quest for building ever more monumental statues, which was an awe-provoking technological feat (Diamond 2005).

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