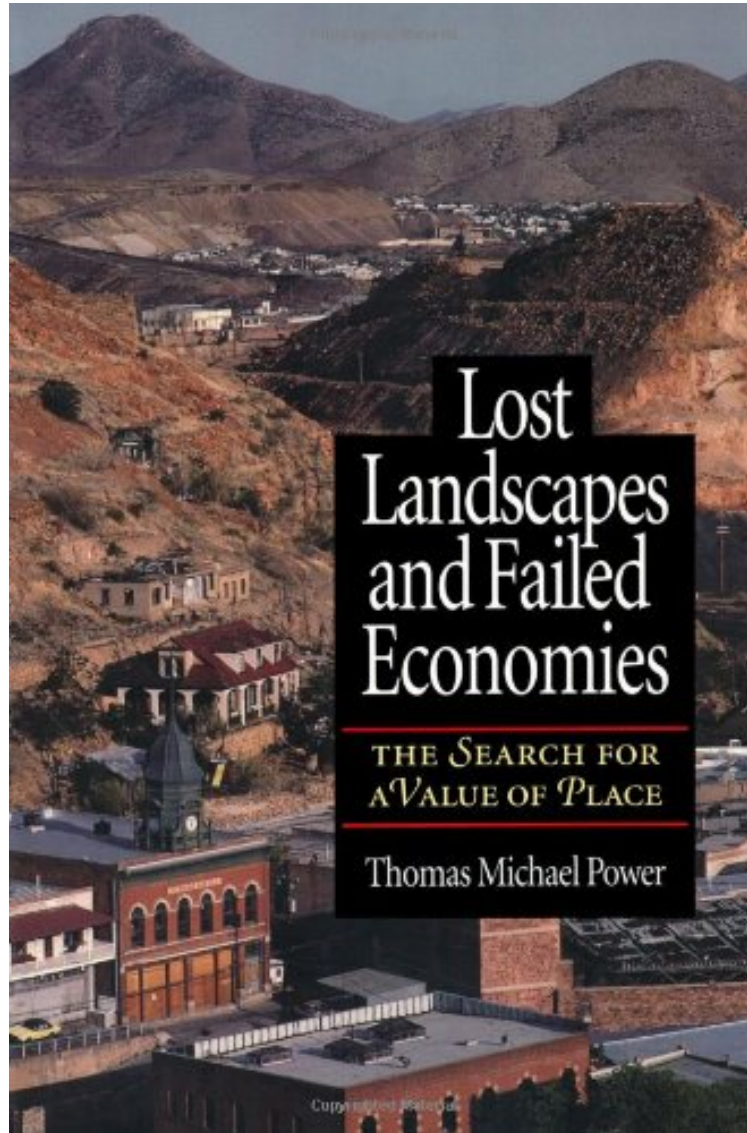


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Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search For A Value Of Place

Thomas Michael Power

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#1783443 in Books Island Press 1996Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .80 x 6.00l, .91 #File Name: 1559633697317 pages | File size: 72.Mb

Thomas Michael Power : Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search For A Value Of Place before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search For A Value Of Place:

In *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies*, economist Thomas Michael Power argues that the quality of the natural landscape is an essential part of a community's permanent economic base and should not be sacrificed in short-term efforts to maintain employment levels in industries that are ultimately not sustainable. He provides numerous case studies of the ranching, mining, and timber industries in a critical analysis of the role played by extractive industry in our communities. He also looks at areas where environmental protection measures have been enacted and examines the impact of protected landscapes on local economies. Power exposes the fundamental flaws in the widely accepted view of the local economy built around the "extractive model," a model that overemphasizes the importance of extractive industries and assumes that people don't care where they live and that businesses don't care about the available labor supply. By revealing the inadequacies of the extractive model, he lays to rest the fear that environmental protection will cause an imminent collapse of the community, and puts economic tools in the hands of those working to protect their communities.

Today's academic economists have, for the most part, withdrawn from "the parochial fray of local economic development policy" in pursuit of analyzing broader national and international issues. Not so, says Thomas Michael Power, whose intent in his scholarly and deeply felt *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies* is to address the fundamental errors and distractions inherent in folk economics. Power is uniquely suited to the task. A professor at the University of Montana, this is the perfect perch from which to regard the rapacious plunder of local and state economies by the mining and timber companies. "A popular folk economics," Power writes, "teaches us that the extraction and processing of natural resources are the heart of economic development, that 'all wealth springs from the earth.'" Power argues against this conventional model of extractive-dependent communities. Such models play a role, he proves, in the decline and destabilization of local economies. To see landscape and its preservation not as an aesthetic whim but as an economic necessity is a brave and lonely stance, indeed. Economic health equals nothing less than "avoiding needless damage to the natural--and therefore human--environment." We recognize the battle lines, clearly drawn between the environmental and resource-industry sides. At stake: both the extinction of whole species and traditional ways of life that have supported families and communities for generations. "If we could lay to rest," Power argues, "the fear that environmental protection will cause the imminent economic collapse of communities, the acrimony would subside and it would be much easier to engage in civil discourse over the real choices communities face." With a persuasive overview and the use of powerful case studies on the impact of ranching, mining, and timber on the land, Thomas Power has himself extracted a clear definition of the real issues from the rubble of misguided passions, paranoia, and a divisive media. In a devastating, scholarly attack on "folk" economics, Power turns on its head much of what has become common wisdom in his field. With ample statistics and penetrating logic, he demonstrates how and why economies based on extractive industries (mining, logging, ranching and agriculture) are rarely stable and rarely lead to a high quality of life. Equally cogent is his argument that environmental protection seldom inhibits economic expansion to a significant degree, and that it almost always causes an increase in the perceived standard of living. For instance, in looking at the issues of forestry and the timber industry, he states, "Denuded, biologically sterile landscapes are economic disaster areas. They lose residents and businesses. Forested landscapes can create economic vitality simply by attracting and holding residents" hence, his support for measures designed to protect forests from overlogging. An economics professor at the University of Montana, Power examines a wide array of current federal practices: water subsidies in the arid West, laws permitting mining and grazing on federal land, predator control and below-cost timber harvests in national forests and, in every case, challenges the idea that such policies are good for the economy at the local, state or national level. Power isn't an exciting prose stylist, and the many charts, pie graphs and statistical analyses he employs may deter casual readers. But his argument is powerful and should be listened to by citizens and policymakers alike. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.