Financing nature management in the United States

Entrance fee conflicts and donation boxes in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

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Abstract

This thesis uses a theoretical framework on conceptualizations of particular nature-society configurations to better understand how national parks in the United States have become a nation-identifying institution. Current management objectives have led an entire National Park System to be dependent on significant funding to continually produce particular wilderness and landscape in National Park Service managed park units. As congressional appropriations for park operational funds are insufficient and maintenance backlogs accumulate, understanding how single park units respond to lack of incomes is of interest, and this study seeks to qualitatively approach a single case. One of the key questions in this essay is thus how one national park, Great Smoky Mountains, have difficulties implementing an entrance fee, which has proved to be a vital source of additional revenue at other NPS units. By addressing this question, this study shows how debates over entrance fees on public recreational lands should be understood in historical and place-specific contexts, as archive findings indicate the present day outcome of a free-to-enter national park in the Smokies have roots that can be traced back to a pre-park era. As the park was founded on private rather than publicly owned land, land purchases by Tennessee and North Carolina, and subsequent transfers to the United States was integral to realize the project of forming a national park in the east. It was thus believed the citizens of the two Smoky states had paid enough of a price, and deeds were put in transfers to secure GSMNP would remain free of entrance fees and road tolls.

In identifying factors contributing to the reproduction of GSMNP as a entrance fee- and toll free park, a further question is asked of how visiting tourists are targeted for donations to the national park. In-field participant observations of donation boxes and donation box signage were applied to analyze and advance understanding of how one national park partner organization requests donations from tourists, who thus contribute with direct financing of reproduction of wilderness and landscapes. These observations took place at four of the most visited locations in the park, and findings show how donation boxes and signage vary in design and formulations at different sights. Ranging from signage appeals to visitors to make donations to preserve the view and landscape immediately in front of them to creative multi-receptacle donation boxes in a visitor center playing on visitor state loyalty to attract donations for general management objectives.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

1.1 The National Park in the East

About 80 years ago, on Labor Day, September 2., 1940, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stood at the Newfound Gap border between North Carolina and Tennessee. Thousands had made their way to the mountain ridge several thousand feet above sea level to witness the official dedication of the newest member of the American institution that is the National Park System. Although the park was already the most visited national park in the United States. at that point, it was not until 1940, by grace of FDR, it was given full recognition (Catton, 2014, p. 59). The process of founding a national park in the area had been a long one (Catton 2014; Pierce, 1995), and although wartime was looming in the country, many showed up to witness the president formally dedicating the exceptional among the exceptional – a national park in the east that could be entered free of charge.

Some argue that American Exceptionalism permeates all periods of American history, and that it is the number one agent most significantly impacting an identity of Americans over centuries. It is the ideology that Americans return to when they struggle to understand what they are and in which direction they are headed as a society. The concept´s historical roots can be traced back to the first Puritan migrants who came to the Americas with an idea of being charged with the responsibility to create a society and a church that would exist as spiritual and political models for European nations. They were saving other people in the world from themselves by establishing that exemplary and exceptional `city upon a hill´ to which everyone could look for guidance, where they could establish the conditions believed necessary for the return of Christ to earth. The complex set of assumptions, both historical and theological, that the Puritans brought with them produces a foundation for a unique and enduring narrative of an American identity (Madsen, 1998).

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) is located in the Southern part of the Appalachian Mountains. Historically, the mountains have been regarded as a barrier for travels from the east to the west, and have thus been the site of myths creation regarding the American Frontier[1] and an early challenge to the Manifest Destiny. Especially in the American southeast, the Appalachians were a significant divider of the original thirteen states

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[1] See Daniels (1993, p. 195-196) for the importance of the American Frontier and the

and the massive land areas to the West (Madsen, 1998, p. 90). When the United States had annexed lands beyond the Mississippi river in the mid-1800s, it was feared that the expansionist ambitions of the young nation would lead to a development of imperial rise and demise. The progressive ideology did, however, triumph and the United States developed onwards and upwards. Expansionist ideals were best captured in William Gilpin´s[2] (in Daniels, 1993, p. 180) 1846 declaration that "the untransacted destiny in [sic] of the American people is to subdue the continent – to rush over this vast field to the Pacific Ocean – to animate the many hundred millions of its people, and then cheer them upward … to carry the career of mankind to its peak". According to this ideology the nation was destined to occupy lands, spatially manifested by an army of middle-class farmers, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Feeding the American experiment thus, required continual acquisition of lands in the West and further displacement of people (Madsen, 1998).

At present, the Appalachians, that stretch and cover most of the states on the Atlantic Coast, can, for most parts, be traversed quite comfortably by use of private automobiles on extensive networks of highways, or by getting up into the air with commercial airliners. As is the case with many mountain ranges throughout the world, however, the Appalachians are not only seen as barriers. They are sites of recreation, production, consumption, preservation, and for home building. Sites in which the wants and needs for all these activities potentially come into conflict are in the national parks and their gateway communities. The story of the foundation of a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains goes back roughly a century, and it is filled with conflicts of interest, bargaining and resolutions. Interests in the area are local, regional, federal and global, and the GSMNP[3] now lies at the intersection of important American institutions (Pierce, 1995). In this paper, this national park in the east will receive attention for some of the integral ways it differs from other national parks in the country. Specifically, on how it struggles to generate income for the reproduction of wilderness and landscapes, and how philanthropic actors set up donation boxes confronting visitors with their important role of financing management and preservation of a national park.

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[2] The first territorial governor of Colorado (Daniels, 1993)
[3] GSMNP will be used as a shortened term for The Great Smoky Mountains National Park throughout the thesis paper.

1.2 Research questions and scientific relevance

The aim of my thesis is threefold. Firstly, it is my aim to get a better understanding of nature-society configurations that have led to the specific outcome of a national park institution in the United States that produces distinct wilderness and landscapes in American nature, and that requires financing to be continually reproduced. Secondly, I want to provide a thorough account of the historical roots from which the continuously missing entrance fee to GSMNP can be traced. Thirdly, I would like to suggest that the lack of a fee has led to a long-lasting conflict over park finances and management. By exploring how these issues are manifested spatially within the park, I hope to show struggles over funds can lead to alternative modes of generating income, albeit within a relatively strict judicial framework, that confronts park visitors with the option of reproducing wilderness and landscapes through contributing financially to a partner organization of GSMNP. Throughout the latter sections of the thesis, I want to engage in a discussion, with my data from fieldwork in mind, to contribute to the highly ideological debate over access to public space, funding of national parks and how to manage nature. Given the multiple aims of this thesis, I have applied multiple methodological approaches in the research process to give thematic accounts of, and answer the following research questions.

The structuring theme of this thesis is the interest in how particular nature-society configurations influenced the institution of national parks in the United States, and financing them have become an issue? In the first sections of the thesis I would thus like to better understand the national parks institution in the United States, and the question is used as a point of departure for theoretical assessments of nature, wilderness, landscapes, tourism and environmental management. It will be my argument in this section that nature, wilderness and landscapes are socially produced and reproduced through environmental management, and by showing financing of national parks is both contentious and a pressing concern for some national parks, I will make the claim that challenges in revenue generation should be further addressed on singular park levels. To support this argument I intend to answer the two following research questions.

- **Why is the GSMNP free to enter, and why is it continually reproduced as a national park with no fees?**

This question, after doing preparatory work for fieldwork, seems to me to be somewhat of an unanswered question within existing literature[4]. There are some who have covered the topic to an extent, but this has predominantly been as a smaller section within larger works on park history[5]. To get a better understanding of why GSMNP can still be visited for free, a more thorough assessment of specific parts of park history is required. In the process of answering this question, then, I collected data through document analysis. These documents are a combination of books, journal articles and online resources. The lion´s share of the documents I have enquired, though, have been gathered from archives. In the month of September 2019, I spent four weeks in the Appalachian region to do fieldwork for this thesis, and a fair share of my work in that period revolved around visits to the National Parks Service Collections Preservation Center in Townsend, TN. Multiple visits to local area libraries[6], the two visitor centers within the National Park and to other popular park destinations have also been vital to access data and information that would have otherwise been difficult or impossible to approach if I hadn't done fieldwork. By answering this question, I hope to provide useful insights to the topic of why GSMNP is acutely limited in their possibilities to generate revenue that can be spent on reproducing wilderness and landscapes within the park. I will further give some examples of how park officials and local gateway community residents attempt to reproduce the surrounding areas of the national park in a way deemed consistent with the landscapes and wilderness within park boundaries.

- **How are visitors targeted in attempts to secure financial contributions for the purpose of reproducing particular wilderness and landscapes at select locations in GSMNP?**

Participant observation became a method of choice in the process of researching the spatial manifestations of a continual conflict over park finances, and how tourists are confronted with

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[4] Although he wrote a larger work on general management issues in the GSMNP, Theodore Catton (2014, p. 113-115) did a great job at briefly and concisely describing the issue of entrance fees in the park, the historical context and how it continues to be a topic of contention.

[5] For a thorough introduction to the history of the GSMNP, see Pierce (1995; 2000) and Catton (2014).

[6] King Family Library in Sevierville, TN, The Pigeon Forge Community Library in Pigeon Forge, TN and the Bearden and Downtown branch of the Knoxville Library System.

the issue of financial struggles. My data for this section was primarily collected from four selected tourist sites within the national park. At these locations, trying to balance the role of tourist and ethnographer, I looked for donation boxes and signage encouraging visitors to donate money to the park. It is reasonable to suggest private visitor donations are also encouraged in other parks, but it is nonetheless a phenomenon worthy of attention in the case of the GSMNP where evidence indicate maintenance backlogs are growing increasingly bigger. I will make the argument, based on the signage, that the wording of some requests for donations is unique in the case of GSMNP, and that tourists visiting are confronted with the issue of fees, tolls and financing.

Lastly, in the analysis and conclusive sections, I intend to connect the empirical concrete evidence from GSMNP to the abstract theory of nature and wilderness production in terms of how entrance fee and donation collections have become alternate modes of generating income to reproduce landscape and wilderness in the southern Appalachian national park. I will stress further in this section that there are many topics, due to the thesis scope, not being covered that would be interesting to see further studies on. The national parks institution constitutes a basis for many conflicts and also reveals some clear discrepancies between the consumerist nature and preservationist ideals that help shape national parks. Getting at these issues proves an interesting scalar question as well, as actors at different governance levels seem to be in disagreement on what should be park priorities. By assessing such conflicts, it could further the argument of National Parks being relational spaces with impacts that often drastically alter regional economies. Assessments of fee programs for instance, one could thus argue, should benefit from establishing circumstantial conflicts at NPS managed sites, as unit interests extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries.

The relevance for social research and human geography in particular is the prospect of bringing to attention the issue of financing federally designated land for national parks. Seeing as GSMNP differs from most other national parks in the United States in that it has limited options of generating revenue through collection of tolls or entrance fees, attention should be brought to the topic of path-dependency of decisions restricting their opportunities to do so. By analyzing the signs and boxes asking visitors to donate, I hope to show how tourists can be engaged in alternative income generating activities, and consequently how they contribute in the reproduction of nature, wilderness and landscapes by making donations.

1.3 Thesis structuration

The logical sequencing of this thesis is to follow the introduction with two chapters on theory and key concepts. My choice of getting at these elements at such an early stage is a belief that contextualizing is vital to understanding the outcome of a National Park System in the United States and the particularities of GSMNP. To comprehend how the National Park Service are in charge of maintenance of national parks in the United States today you would have to account for place-specific nature-society configurations, the production of the concept of wilderness, tourism and travel, landscapes and mobilities, and the institutions involved and the scales they cover. Throughout this section, I will attempt to alternate somewhat in assessments of grand and more general theoretical perspectives on these topics with considerations of middle-range theories that are deemed relevant for the case study.

Data collection for the thesis will be covered in the fourth chapter. In this segment, I hope to provide insights into the process of doing fieldwork. For a beginner in the world of fieldwork and ethnographic studies, trial and error becomes modus operandi, and I hope to show that help from and communication with locals in the area of study might be necessary to get access to vital data for the thesis. In some ways, the chapter on data collection can be seen as a dialogue between my experiences in the field and reflections on methodology literature. Methodologically, there are two main modes of data collection that informs the analytical section of this thesis. Firstly, there is the process of doing document analysis through archival fieldwork. This method is applied to better understand the historical significance of local government and local law officials and their decision-making, and how it continues to influence present day management questions and issues. There are good reasons to argue decisions made by Tennessee and North Carolina lawmakers in the early 1900s have been integral to the continual reproduction of GSMNP as a national park free of entrance fees and tolls. Secondly, I attempt to use on site observations as a starting point for discussions on alternative ways to generate income for parks with no entrance fees and tolls. How central does the role of philanthropists and volunteers in non-profits supporting the park become, and in what ways does it hint at the need for tourists to participate in the reproduction of tourist spaces, landscape and wilderness? The practice of asking for and collecting donations from visitors will thus be scrutinized and analyzed in terms of recurring themes and formulations on donation boxes and donation signs. Doing an ethnographic study of the park, it was evident that requests for donations were highly present throughout popular areas of the park

and especially so at the primary tourist sites, which serves as a testament to the relative importance of donations in financing park management.

Putting a chapter attempting to set the scene in Southern Appalachians in the middle of the thesis is a conscious choice made to allow readers to gain insight into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and its surrounding areas immediately before I go into the analysis of findings in the field. In this chapter, through descriptive accounts, I hope to provide descriptions of place, historical roots to the national park and the conflicts deeply embedded in GSMNP.

Lastly, I turn to analyzing data from the field to understand the highly spatially specific outcome of major on case in one of the integral cultural institutions in the United States. Central to this section will be findings from archival research particularly focused on the issue of collecting entrance fees and road tolls in GSMNP. By adding a section on how both local gateway community populations and GSMNP officials take an interest in developments on the park outskirts, I will support the argument that interests in reproducing particular landscapes and wilderness extend across park borders. Having established the path-dependent problem of generating revenue in the Smokies, I turn to observational research for examples of alternative modes of increasing park budgets.

2. Nature, Wilderness, Scales and Institutions

The theoretical section in the thesis is divided into two parts. Particular views on nature and further conceptualizations of wilderness are seen as central to understand how the national park institutions eventually became vital for an American identity. The uniqueness in the American view of nature and wilderness further explains why management and preservation has been fundamental rationales for the creation of a National Park System. Somewhat contesting these, arguably, virtuous arguments of why to form national parks are the embedded prospects of profiting from economic opportunities of tourism. It thus seems essential to give theoretical accounts of nature tourism, mobilities, and public space accessibility. I will also give brief explanations of the concepts of scale and institutions, as these will be central and applied broadly in this paper. This contextualization serves as a dialogue in which I try to get a better understanding of the outcome that is a national park free of tolls and fees in the Great Smoky Mountains.

2.1 Nature

Theoretically, nature and society can, it is argued (Eder, 1996, p. 7) be conceived of in an exclusive dualism. The first conception is that of a "natural constitution of society", and the latter as a "social construction of nature". The naturalistic understanding of nature and society is based on an underlying assumption of either dominating the other. Society is reproduced and measured against evolution of nature. It becomes a question of adaptability and controlling of resources. The culturalistic view of nature and society, on the other hand, stresses the importance of a history marked by people cognitively, morally and aesthetically interacting with nature (Eder, 1996). Smith (2008) claims the growth of industrial capitalism fundamentally established contemporary assessments and conceptualizations of nature. Although accepting conceptualizations of nature as complex, varied and often contradictory, he sees the Kantian dualistic philosophy of nature, either external or internal, as immediately intuitive. The assessed dualisms do not seem to be in total agreement. Although both the naturalistic and external, and the culturalistic and internal views somewhat overlap, there are significant differences in the dichotomies. The naturalistic theory of domination was accepted both by those regarding it as a testament human progress, and by those who feared it could lead to natural disasters.

Smith´s (2008) conceptual framework of production of nature begins with an abstraction of nature-society relation as a material exchange exclusively for use-value. In nature, people find their means of subsistence, and if it is not naturally available, they appropriate objects of production and instruments to work with from nature to be able to produce products for consumption. When humans produce means to satisfy needs, Smith extends, they are actively producing material life, which in turns produce further needs that necessitate increased productivity. Clearly central to this consideration of nature-society relations is labor, and as societies developed labour became a means to produce surpluses to combat social crisis. Although not a direct causal outcome of the possibility of extracting surpluses, particular socioeconomic configurations in which individuals collectively produce more than means of subsistence have led to realizing possibilities of enduring social surpluses. The permanency in production of surpluses emancipated human societies of nature´s constraints, and facilitates production for exchange (Smith, 2008, p. 53-59).

Production for exchange comes as a result of nature-society relations in which use-values are not produced exclusively for direct use. As those use-values are traded, they become transformed, through social interference, into commodities. From these observations, you can arrive at an exchange economy in which human appropriation is regulated by societal institutions that allow and incentivize production of more than what is needed for subsistence. Fundamental to this economic configuration is division of labor, which Smith (2008, p. 60-61) argues, ultimately leads to the development of social classes in which some people perform no labour whilst still being able to appropriate the socially produced surplus. With the establishment of social classes and class structures, states emerge as an administrator of the class society (Smith & O´Keefe, 1996; Smith, 2008). In this conceptualization of the development of nature-society relations or configurations, nature, through the assessments of labor, becomes intrinsically important to understand modern capitalist societies in large.

First and second nature are the concepts applied by Smith (2008) to differentiate between societal nature and nature as isolated as local unities are replaced by larger societal unities. Production for exchange facilitated complex divisions of labour, a societal second nature, comprising institutions that regulate commodity exchanges directly and indirectly. This understanding can, in many ways, be understood as a critique of what Smith and Phil O´Keefe (1996) refer to as a positivist paradigm in social science. In the positivist dualist conceptualization, nature is treated as an external given to humans, whilst also being abstract and containing human and non-human spheres. The idea of uniting nature through

conceptualizations of first and second nature is thus a claim contingent on a belief that society and nature are in fact not two separate and independent parts of reality. They are rather differentiated within a united nature. This constitutes a drastic shift in social theorization and conceptualization of nature, in which the external was to be tamed and mastered by humans (Urry, 1995).

Although, initially theorizing nature and society at large, it is evident that Smith still account for the particular geographical outcomes. The differentiation in society-nature or first-and-second nature configurations within the nature unity can be understood as an outcome of varieties in divisions of labour, and as the divisions are qualitatively different in significance in capitalist societies, access to nature is diverse. In Smith´s (2008) assessments of the ideology of nature, he uses poetic nature as an example of a particular way of experiencing and conceptualizing nature in a particular capitalist geography. In a poetic fusion, the colonialist unraveling of physical geographies and sociocultural myths, established what Leo Marx (in Smith, 2008, p. 18) termed a moral geography of America. Stephen Daniels (1993, p. 5) argues that legends and landscapes are defining features for national identities. He says: "Landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape; they picture the nation. As exemplars of moral order and aesthetic harmony, particular landscapes achieve the status of national icons". Smith (2008, p. 19) regards this poetic experience of nature as the leading influence over taken-for-granted conceptualizations of nature. In an American context, for instance, nature conception resulted from a journey into a so-called wilderness.

2.2 Wilderness

Wilderness is a widely used term that arguably has no commonly accepted definition. The decision to do a section on this concept is not to give a full account of its meanings and applications[7]. It is rather an attempt to acknowledge its complexities and introduce the idea of it not simply being an external given, but rather a concept that is created in unique sociocultural contexts. One of the most challenging aspects of reading the literature within the discourse is the interchangeable use of the concepts wilderness, nature and landscape. In my understanding these are, to some extent, used to describe similar physical geographies although having varying cultural meanings.

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[7] For more in-depth discussions on the concepts, see Cronon (1996), Grusin (2004) and Smith (2008).

Wilderness can be argued to be a term that describes a quality that in turn produces moods and feelings in people, and consequently is assigned to the specific places producing the subjective feelings (Nash, 1982). Considering wilderness is a term reliant on subjective assignations of qualities to place, it is evident that wilderness as a concept can have varying socio-spatial meanings. It leaves room, one can argue, for the production of a concept that is a distinct American wilderness. In the United States, nationhood has been built upon ideas of people that have, in an exceptional matter, gradually conquered wilderness. Nature and civilization became absolute counterparts, and the view of the American wilderness was one filled with hopes and aspirations. During the era of westward expansion in the country, the ideology of a manifest destiny legitimized and necessitated a destruction of what they regarded as wilderness to expand civilization. This view of wilderness as a hindrance to the development of an American civilization, Madsen (1998, p. 92) claims were clearly evident in representations of the pioneers in paintings, folklore and writing. Daniel Boone, for instance, was hailed as one of the heroes who overcame the confining features of the American wilderness to further civilization in the pursuit of reaching Manifest Destiny. In the New World, a lack of dominating social symbols paved the way for fusing physical geography and cultural myth to a type of moral geography (Smith, 2008, p.18). The sense of exceptionalism, however, does not stand uncontested. Some argue that it is based on an unwarranted denial of Native Americans´ impact on American nature, and a further reduction of their lives as purely primitive ones (Steinberg, 2013).

Ginn & Demerit (2009, p. 303) extends this criticism, saying the concept of wilderness must be understood in a colonial context. Historically, they argue, European colonial settlers used to speak of nature and civilization as opposing, as it functioned as a rationale for subjugating cultures and peoples throughout the world that they, in a scientifically racist way, claimed were less rational, uncivilized and underdeveloped. The white colonialists, on the other hand, were regarded as rational and well suited to govern the people and places seen as less developed. By separating the rational settlers from the primitive natives, colonialist impositions of scientific management for the purpose of controlling and improving lands was legitimized. Lands and nature considered unsuited for economic purposes, which colonialists termed wilderness, were to be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. Important to Ginn & Demerit´s understanding (2009, p.303-304) of the wilderness concept, moreover, was the evidence of forced removal of indigenous people from these lands. Wilderness thus had to be produced, rather than existing objectively and exogenously. In short, they say, wilderness

is a social construction that stems from a "culturally and historically contingent expression of a certain colonialist way of seeing nature".

William Cronon furthers the critique of the application of the wilderness concept, arguing (1996, p. 7) it is key to understand wilderness not simply as a "pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization". Wilderness in his view is rather a product of civilization – a social construct. In this view wilderness, somewhat confusingly, becomes highly unnatural, as it is a cultural creation that represents an escape from history. In American Environmentalist discourse, recent revised interpretations of the ideology of nature have been less centered on the triumphant narrative and more concerned with how American nature intrinsically reproduces sociocultural suppressing structures along race, class and gender lines (Grusin, 2004).

Based on these contesting assessments of the concept of wilderness, it seems vitally important to be critical when applying it. To understand how wilderness is defined presently, you would have to take into account how it came to be. It clearly has its roots in a colonial era, in which scientific racism was used as a basis for rationalizing subjugation of cultures and people. How has it become a concept widely acknowledged to have virtuous and positive connotations? In an American context, one of the answers to this question could be that it has been implemented in judicial and governmental language used to describe institutions that are commonly supported by the general public. It is thus a practical application of a concept to define physical geographies as preservations or parks. This idea is in line with Denis Cosgrove (1985) and Gillian Rose´s (1996) evaluation of the historical conceptualization of landscape. Albeit taking on a drastically different meaning in more contemporary humanist geography, landscape has historically been applied in a strictly scientific way for the purpose of spatial appropriations. My argument, thus, is that although the concept of wilderness is regarded widely as a virtuous, untouched part of nature that normatively seems an agreeable way to define a particular geography for the purpose of conservation and preservation, it is still a form of spatial appropriation that often comes at a cost of displacement.

In 1964, a Wilderness Act was signed into law in the United States. The purpose of the act was to create a nationwide system, put in place to ensure wilderness resources for generations to come in the future. In the act, wilderness is defined as areas in which the earth and animal and plant life is unimpeded by humans, and to which humans only can be visitor and not

permanently remain. Wilderness should moreover be areas that are undeveloped, and spatially retaining an ancient character free from influences of human life and permanent improvements. Areas with these characteristics, Congress wants to protect and manage in a way that makes preservation of the natural conditions feasible. By doing so, they hope to offer people possibilities of experiencing unrestrained primitive forms of recreation and a sense of solitude (U. S. Department of the Interior, 2016). Despite the somewhat daunting challenge of defining a wilderness (Nash, 1982), the U.S. Congress made an effort of providing some main characteristics for what could be designated wilderness. It is evident in the wording of the characteristics, however, that subjective senses of place go into producing the American wilderness. It seems reasonable to ask, rhetorically, if it is possible to objectively define areas of solitude? Some suggest approaching the idea of nature relationally, arguing the concept changes over time and vary from place to place (Ginn & Demeritt, 2009). If the same could be said for the concept of wilderness, it strengthens the argument that the applications of it should be critically assessed. Concluding on the concept of wilderness proves to be a massive challenge. In some respects, it is understandable that there exists a need for it to be precisely defined in order to make it a relevant term in policy-making. On the other hand, it is necessary to keep in mind how, historically, it has inherent colonialist, racist and exclusionary connotations.

2.3 Scales and Institutions

The concept of scale is useful both to address the question of why the GSMNP still has no entrance fee, and in further discussions on the challenges of financing and managing a park that have lesser opportunities of generating income. Scale is a highly contested core concept in human geography, and its ontological status is continually debated (Herod, 2009). Some have addressed the need for the concept to be given more precise parameter for usage, and further warned that scale can become an overgeneralized concept, if it is applied without reflexivity to delineate any given aspect of socio-spatial processes. This critique is derived from observations of an increase in the use of scale in an expanding array of socio-spatial research. Fearing that the core concept can become "blunt", it is recommended we should come up with clearer definitions on how the concept should be applied and make more room for other methodological innovations (Brenner, 2001). It is evident, however, that all sides in this debate can agree on it appropriately being used in analyses of political struggles (Herod, 2009). Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008) criticize what they regard as one-dimensional,

abstract and obscure empirical socio-spatial inquiries. Promoting a "strategic-relational approach to TPSN configurations" (2008, p. 395), they hope to show the benefits of studying the interactions of the primary structuring principles of socio-spatial relations - territory, place, scale and networks. In their initial conceptualizations of a framework for socio-spatial inquiry that accounts for cross-principle interactions, they introduce a matrix, albeit admitting it is a heuristic one, with a main purpose of showing the traditional structuring principles do not apply to themselves. By overcoming the one-dimensional barrier, they hope to take the first step towards a polymorphic approach to socio-spatial analysis.

Scale will be pragmatically and practically applied to discuss conflicts of interests between federal, state (which in the case of the United States must not be confused with a traditional nation-state level) and local levels. Although a highly politicized issue in nature, the issue of entrance fees has also proved to be a question of jurisdiction. In a strategic-relational approach to TPSN configuration (Jessop et al., 2008), scale is used as a structuring principle to operationalize territory. US courts operate on two distinct levels, federal and state/local systems, and they are massive institutions in the American society. Federal and state courts have geographically delimitated spaces they have authority and jurisdiction over. Traditionally, the state and local courts handle most of the legal work in the United States. If cases, however, have arisen under the federal Constitution, under federal jurisdiction, or if the dispute involves the federal government, it belongs to the federal court system. It is the Constitution that stipulates that all 50 states in the country have spatially specified authority, and to some extent sovereignty, outside of the larger federal system. States can thus have their own, often varying quite extensively between them, legal systems and laws. This is a way for states to safeguard a degree of independence and consequently state courts make decisions that often doe not lead to further appeal (Mauk & Oakland, 2014, p. 233-236).

There are two metaphors that are commonly used in geography to describe the relationship between scalar levels. The first of these is a hierarchical ladder, which would imply local being at the bottom-tier, and a progression going all the way up to the global scale. When using this metaphor, each scale is distinguished from each other, and it is assumed that the global is higher than all else and that the local is subordinate to both the global, as well as national and regional scales. The second frequently used metaphor is that of conceptualizing scalar relationships in the form of concentric circles. In this perception scales are still regarded as separate entities, in which the global encompasses all other scales, the national

encompassing regional and local scales, and lastly the regional encompassing the local scale. Rather than being hierarchical in its nature, the concentric circles suggest the local scale is smaller than the others, and presents the global as the biggest one. Although the concentric circles and the ladder are the most repeated metaphors used to conceptualize scalar relationships, others have attempted to describe scales as being connected and intertwined rather than separate, and as less hierarchical (Herod, 2009), and in the case study of GSMNP I will show how scalar intertwined connections are key to understand a conflict over entrance fees and tolls.

Scale inevitably becomes relevant, as I will account for historical events and decisions leading to present day outcomes. In my assessment of the historical roots of entrance fees, a number of laws and legislative procedures are key for policy changes, enablers of park establishment etc. The relevance of scale is embedded in the highly territorial structuration of legal institutions in the United States, and empirical findings will prove courts at several scales have vastly impacted the outcome that is present day GSMNP without an entrance fee. In a sense these scales can be seen as pre-existing geographical levels in which the formal decision-making has to take place. I do however recognize that conflicts of interest can not necessarily be defined rigidly for either of these bounded or differentiated scales, as there seems to be fluidity and complex relationships across the bounded pre-existing levels. Interest groups, for instance, can cross state limits, and thus traverse the boundaries of the particular geographic unit lawmakers reside over. Seeing GSMNP is also a national park covering lands in two states, it further complicates the issue of scaling the issue.

Institution is a term used widely in several disciplines within the social sciences. Despite the extensive application of it, there are no universally accepted definitions of the concept (Hodgson, 2006). These confusions have led some to treat it as a heuristic device (Kuus, 2020). In my thesis, I use institution as a term to describe a myriad of entities in the social realm, ranging from the law to the interstate highway system and the national parks, and it seems key then to clarify what is meant in varying uses of the concept. I am making a point that the national parks are institutions in themselves, and that their emergence and growth must be understood in a spatially embedded institutional context. The common denominator between the entities termed institutions is that they are what Hodgson (2006, p. 2), citing Knight (1992), describe as systems in which well established social rules constitute and structure social interactions. These institutions can be divided into formal (i.e. the law, state or

government) or informal status (i.e. culture and social practices). In the next chapter, I will show how formal and informal institutions intersect to construct a foundation for the emergence of a National Park System in the United States.

3. (Re)producing landscapes and wilderness in the U.S.

3.1 Nature and wilderness – management and preservation

The debate over the concepts of nature and wilderness becomes an important aspect of explaining theories of *nature management and preservation.* Saying nature can in fact be managed, only makes sense if nature is viewed as something societies manage. There are traditions in the United States for attempting to overcome what has been regarded as barriers to the modern civilization. Nature, specifically the wild one, was described as barren and sinister, and a confining feature of the landscape (Smith, 2008, p. 20). As the frontier closed and manifest destiny was reached, the discourse of the concept of nature developed towards an idea of it being less threatening and intimidating. In arts and literature nature was romanticized, and a clear shift can be observed from the utilitarian view of the frontier wilderness to the ideal visions of a nature that had been subdued. Scenery and nature became cultural assets. This was particularly evident in the western parts of the country where explorers had encountered dramatic sceneries of tall mountains with snow-covered peaks, trees of unprecedented size and waterfalls as beautiful as those found in Europe (Runte, 2010). The shift identifies a dualistic view of nature concepts. On the one hand, there was an external nature, a wilderness to subjugate. Conversely, there was a view of nature as universal, virtuous and spiritual (Smith, 2008). Grusin (2004), although in agreement that environmentalism and its origins should be scrutinized, says American environmentalist discourse had turned to a view of nature as overlapping with culture in which particularity and specificity was completely removed from the nature conceptualization. The problem with this discursive turn, he argues, is that it fails to distinguish preservation of nature in the formation of national parks from managing nature through ranching or extractive industrial use. His hope is that, given an assumption of nature being inseparable from culture, we can further debates on how nature management and preservation in national parks differ from other cultural constructions.

To understand how national parks came to be, and what they reveal of conceptualizations of nature, we have to trace interconnected and –related discursive practices in environmentalism and other scientific, technological and cultural networks, through which it has emerged. This in turn leads to an argument that national parks cannot simply be understood as forthright forms of nature preservation. They are, however, complex and interrelated representations and

productions of particular cultures. National park formation is, according to Grusin (2004, p. 3) a technological construct that operates within discursive constraints. He stresses that he has no intention of denying that it is a type of preservation that requires practical definitions of a "natural" inside and an "unnatural" outside. These differences, however, are not intrinsic. They are products of assemblages of heterogeneous social practices and technologies. These assemblages, in turn, produce or reproduce a cultural and discursive contingent object that is nature. His main argument, in short, is that national parks are not only preservations of nature. They preserve a network of cultural constituents, such as economic, social, aesthetic, technological and scientific practices (Grusin, 2004).

The National Park Service, The National Park System and the National Parks are concepts that will be addressed throughout the thesis. To avoid confusion, it should be clarified how they differ. The National Park Service (NPS) was formally established through President Woodrow Wilson´s signing of the National Park Service Organic Act in 1916[8]. The main mission of the NPS, an entity within the United States Department of the Interior, is to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations" (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016, p. 1). Serving the general public, the NPS should aim to protect both natural and cultural resources in the United States. Equally important to the mission of preservation, however, is the facilitation of opportunities for public enjoyment of the valued resources. A dual mission of both conserving and ensuring public access to recreation on designated lands throughout the United States is thus the main purpose of the NPS. Adding to the direct responsibilities pertaining to the designated lands, the NPS has also become an important driver of economic activity in regions close to national parks. It is estimated that national park visitors spent just shy of 20 billion USD in gateway regions, and thus supported more than 300,000 jobs in 2017. For the national economy it is calculated that this ammounts a 35.8 billion USD economic output[9] (Culinane et al., 2018). The issue of preservation and facilitation for public enjoyment is a contentious topic. Can the two main interests and missions of the NPS coexist without considerable tensions? In the NPS there are factions within whom one of the two interests outweighs the other, and the ambiguity of the general statement leads to conflicts (Abbey, 1990, p. 48).

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[8] There were units preceding the NPS in being charge of the national park system, but this was the first one to be formally established (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016).
[9] See Cullinane et al. (2018) for further details on calculations, and benefits for local regions, states and the national economy.

The National Park System, of which the NPS is in charge of preserving, includes a myriad of separate units ranging from national parks to the White House. There are more than 400 park units in the National Park System, and the list is growing. 61 of the total of 400+ units, in turn, are national parks. GSMNP is, it is important to note at this point, an example of the latter, a national park, and moreover a part of the National Park System that has been established as the NPS´s responsibility to operate and manage (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016). In the United States, the national parks concept was introduced in the later half of the 1800s. It is a concept that has no universal definition, and although the ones first established in the Unite States have influenced many national parks throughout the world, it is key to acknowledge that they are also constructed in particular local contexts. There are wide variations, globally, in how national parks are planned and executed, and in what rationales are used to support establishment of parks. There have been attempts from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to provide definitions of what a national park should be. They have, however, been conceptual and not regulatory, leading countries to apply the concept to their own liking (Hall & Frost, 2009a). The concepts of the NPS and the National Park System can be said to have developed as a result of the growth of a national parks institution. Whereas the system of park units was based on many of the same foundational principles as the national parks, it was useful to apply an umbrella term that included all parks.

Edward Abbey (1990, p. 47) suggested, based on his observations in Arches National Park and other relatively proximate units within the national park system, that within the institution of the National Park Service, there were people who advocated what he called the "complete subjugation of nature to the requirements of – not man – but industry". He himself held the view that wilderness was essential to civilizations, and that NPS had a particular responsibility of preserving the wilderness that still remained. The reality, how the NPS actually pursued their goals, laid somewhere in between industrial subjugation and complete wilderness preservation (Abbey, 1990). One of the key arguments for modern developments within parks, such as building road infrastructure, was to ensure parks were accessible. Although there are arguments to be made for nature being accessible without road infrastructure, accessibility is a theme that will be discussed in the thesis. On one hand, accessibility can refer to minimizing physical barriers and constraints for people to access national parks (Abbey, 1990, p. 48). It can, moreover, as I will later argue in this paper, be a

useful concept to employ in a larger debate on the democratic principles of accessing public space. In the United States, national parks have a longer history than what widespread use of private automobiles do. It can consequently be argued that it never was the original intention that private automobiles were to become the prime mode of transportation for visitors. Evidence from the oldest national parks, Yellowstone being an example, suggests railroads were viewed as essential infrastructure for national park tourism (Frost & Hall, 2009a). In a modern day context, in which networks of roads rather than railroads are extensively found in national parks, it is necessary to question how accessibility can be guaranteed without the use of private automobiles.

3.2 The ideology of nature and landscapes in America

Many have claimed that the American national identity to some degree is inseparable from nature (Grusin, 2005; Frost & Hall, 2009b; Frost & Hall, 2009c; Smith, 2008; Steinberg 2013). There are long traditions in the United States for using natural attractions, many of which can now be found within present national parks, as symbols of pride, identity and achievement for the nation. National identities evolved as a concept in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment, to some extent offsetting and adding to previous local, regional and religious affiliations and identities. Despite early material advancements in the infant years of modern American history, there were widespread sentiments of the United States lacking in qualities that would typically characterize major European powers. In the Western European countries American´s often compared themselves to, arts, literature and architecture were important institutions contributing to formations of national identities. It became a reminder of Americans lacking in principal social symbols. Eventually, however, nature became the answer to American´s cries for markers of national identity as westward colonial expansion revealed snow-covered peaks, magnificent trees and other natural wonders (Frost & Hall, 2009c, p. 63-66). For relatively long then, the United States has been regarded as "nature´s nation", a starting point for an identity that has been strongly grounded, to a large degree, in the physical landscape itself (Grusin, 2005).

A problem arose, in terms of reproduction of an American identity, when there was no more nature to be discovered. The Western frontier was closed when colonial exploration parties reached the Pacific Coast, and it led to fears of moral and physical relapse among Americans. National parks were regarded as a good substitute for the frontier, as the parks would provide

both opportunities for recreation whilst also being a continual embrace of the created virtue of wilderness (Frost & Hall, 2009c, p.67-68). The need for a substitute in the natural world proves how central nature has been to American self-identity. In the United States, consequently, questions of environmentalism have always been very much ideological issues with national significance. It is never simply a question of preserving natural spaces as an alternative to cultural spaces. It is also a question of creating America itself (Grusin, 2005, p. 1).

Although widely considered a uniquely American invention, there are those who argue that a broader contextual understanding of how parks came to be in the United States requires historical consideration of European societies. The idea of seeing nature as a picture stems from the Italian renaissance, and the taste for informally produced landscapes was observed in England in the 18th century as a response to the rigid and formal construction of Italian and French estate landscapes (Mark, 2009). Alfred Runte in the preface to the fourth edition (2010) of National Parks – The American Experience, furthers the idea that national parks are landscapes, but describes a more formal institution:

> "It is said that the national parks are our best idea – that their idealism defines
> America. Surely, just having parks elevated conservation above simple common sense.
> Once Americans believed in saving beauty, the land itself became inspirational. To the
> founders of national parks in the nineteenth century, that meant the natural wonders of
> the West. In time, the national park idea was variously modified and applied to other
> chosen landscapes, including a multitude of recreation areas, urban preserves, military
> parks, and historic sites. The original label is nonetheless indelibly associated with
> inspiring scenery and expansive nature. When Americans hear the term `national
> parks´, they think instantly of magnificent landscapes".

Although intrinsically linked with inspiring scenery and landscapes, as was the case both in England and Italy, the application of the national park status has evolved into including historic sites, military parks etc.

The United States is often hailed and recognized for two important advancements and accomplishments in establishing as a democracy. Declaring explicitly, in the foundational document of the Declaration of Independence, the United States were at the very front of implementation of ideals of civil rights, and it continues to remain a prime point of pride in national achievement. By proclaiming a need for preservation, secondly, Americans ensured

democratic principles were also to be applied to nature and the land (Runte, 2011). One of the manifestations of the latter is the growth of the National Park System. In the latter half of the 19th century, Congress ensured the United States became the first ever nation to designate land for the purpose of preservation, when President Ulysses S. Grant dedicated a significant section of Wyoming to the Yellowstone National Park in 1872. Although acknowledged as one of the first efforts to include conservation as a political priority at a national level (Steinberg, 2013, p. 136-137), there are however contesting views on whether or not Americans were as rigorous, in terms of early attempts to promote conservation, as the history is often portrayed. It is argued that the outcome of wilderness preservation was unintentional, and that the primary rationales had been to avoid private interests to acquire lands and exploit hot springs, geysers and other curious natural features found in the area. Although there were debates among the early expedition team members on the prospects of dividing the lands between them, some were adamant that rather than giving the lands to private speculators, it should be designated a national park (Nash, 1982, p. 108-110).

Roderick Nash (1970, p. 726) argued there were three specific factors explaining the United States becoming a pioneer in the field of nature preservation for the purpose of serving a greater public good. The first of these is the idea that Americans and the nation as a whole had a distinctly unique relationship with and attitude towards nature in general, and moreover an exceptional experience with wilderness particularly. A second explanatory factor Nash, in agreement with Runte (2011), points to is the democratic ideology. Without a clear democratic ideology that also extended to the nature, national parks would have been inconceivable. The third factor, studied closer by Hall & Frost (2009b) and Steinberg (2013), was the availability of unused and undeveloped land. Referred to as worthless lands, the idea was that areas of natural beauty without other prospects for economic use, could be preserved and potentially generate income in alternative ways (Hall & Frost, 2009b; Steinberg, 2013). If for instance there were lands with no resources to extract, no potentials of being used for ranching, or less arable, alternative use methods had to be put in place (Steinberg, 2013). Worthless lands with grand and monumental natural features were believed to obtain the same cultural significance as the epochal architecture found in Europe. It is thus argued national parks not only were a result of virtuous democratic ideals and conceptual ideas of nature preservation, but rather also a pragmatic solution to come up with new means of generating income from lands that were conceived of as worthless (Hall & Frost, 2009b).

Public actors were not the only ones fronting capitalist and moneymaking rationales in the process of preserving nature. Private entrepreneurs became deeply invested in the early stages of park establishment. The Northern Pacific Company finished a second transcontinental railroad in the United States in the immediate aftermath of Yellowstone´s formation, contributing to the supply of transportation, and thus also ensuring increased accessibility to the new national park (Steinberg, 2013, p. 146). A solid number of the earliest national parks, established in the late 1800s and early 1900s, were described as having both rugged scenery and picturesque landscapes (Hall & Frost, 2009b, p. 48). Privately owned railroad companies, seeing the prospective incomes to be generated from a growth in tourism, thus became engaged proponents for the formation of national parks. Runte (2011) suggests, granting the entrepreneurs were inarguably profit seeking, that national parks would not have been established by congress if it were not for railroads. It thus seems, reasonable to argue that an economic rationale was integral to the formation of national parks from the offset, and that simply seeing them as a result of a collective altruistic effort from the American people and government, fails to account for the complexity of factors explaining the national park outcome. In the context of nature consumption and tourism, railroad actors were deeply concerned with preserving nature, as access to landscapes and scenery were one of the major selling points of railroad companies.

In a political theoretical approach to nature-society relationship assessments, it should be relevant to discuss empirical observations of the changing role of nature in American history (Mosedale, 2015). For the institution of the National Park System, rationales for formation are both economic and virtuous (Nash, 1970; Steinberg, 2013). All rationales, ranging from the unique and exceptional experience of nature, through inherent democratic ideologies to theories of worthless lands are constructed within a particular societal context. Taking into account the fact that natural world features could serve as substitutes for cultural icons further strengthens the argument that they are indeed social constructs. As these rationales are separated into categories of economic, social, cultural, and environmental purposes for producing nature, it should be scrutinized how the arguably more virtuous motivations are highlighted to obscure potential contradictions inherent in the myriad of factors explaining the growth of a National Park System[10].

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[10] A process Duffy (2015) refers to as neoliberalizing nature.

3.3 Fees and tolls on public recreational lands

The practice of collecting fees or tolls for park entrances has a longer history than the NPS itself. When Yellowstone was established as the first national park in 1872, it was initially thought that there was no need for congressionally appropriated funds. Parks were to be self-supported through leases to concessioners and tolls on roads. It did not take long, however, before government was actively involved in the financing of national parks, and in 1908 park visitor fees were levied in the first park admitting automobiles at Mount Rainier in the state of Washington. At the time NPS was established in 1916, auto fees could be spent directly on administration costs and park developments, with no appropriations or further demands from Congress. For then director of the NPS, Stephen T. Mather, this was an incentive to gain absolute civilian control over the national parks, that had up until that point in time, been mostly staffed by the United States Army. In 1918, however, it was decided that fee receipts were to go the general Treasury, and thus the direct correlation of collected fees and available funds for park expenditures disappeared. The issue of visitor fees continues to be highly contentious. Some speculate that the position of the National Park Service has always been that user and visitor fees are a necessary evil (Mackintosh, 1983).

In 1996 four federal agencies restructured their revenue management policies drastically. To handle what had become long-term difficulties of financing several federal agencies, the US Congress voted to authorize a pilot program allowing the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, the US Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to charge and collect entrance and usage fees at certain sites. The program, shortened to RFDP (Recreational Fee Demonstration Program) was established with a hope that the four federal agencies would be better able to maintain parks and improve experiences for their visitors, if they could increase revenues through new or increased fees (Bengston & Fan, 2002).

The purpose of collecting fees, a practice currently enabled by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), is to enhance visitor experiences. In 2005, as a replacement of the 1996 RFDP, President George W. Bush signed the bill that allowed the NPS, with some further specifications and requirements, to continue charging fees (Nyaupane et al., 2007). Of the revenue collected from fees, a minimum of 80% is to stay in the park in which it was collected. The remaining money is allocated to other parks that do not collect fees. Five of the

areas the NPS is authorized to increase expenditure for the enhancement of visitor experiences are (National Park Service, 2019d):

- Maintenance and repairs directly related to visitor experiences, such as construction of park visitor centers, repairs of trails and park infrastructure etc.
- Restoration of habitats in national parks related to recreational activities, exemplified by hunting and fishing, dependent on wildlife
- To finance law enforcement that is related to recreational visits and public use. This is often done through partnering with local law enforcement offices, and in practice by contributing with money to provide dispatch services within the parks.
- To cover the direct capital and operating costs of having entrance stations and staff at campgrounds to collect the fees.
- To establish management agreements with surrounding gateway communities for the provision emergency medical services within parks.

There are several studies on the topic of entrance fees, asking questions such as how public land user fees impacts agency autonomy (Lowry, 1993), public attitudes towards and beliefs in fee programs, exemplified by the RFDP program (Bengston & Fan, 2002), whether fees are value for money or barriers to visitation (Ostergren et al., 2005), how fees impact visitation of national parks (Schwartz & Lin, 2006) and the fairness of prices and user fee policies (Chung et al., 2011). Bengston and Fan (2002) conducted text analyses of more than 4000 instances of news coverage of the topic of entrance fees in national forests, units the NPS is in charge of, by 96 different news sources, including radio and television coverage as well as local and national newspaper articles. Covering a wide range of stakeholder views, they divided their findings into two main categories. The first were the beliefs that supported a favorable attitude about the RFDP program, whereas the second were the opposing beliefs supporting unfavorable attitudes. Favorable attitudes were based on ideas of fees being fair, fees generating benefits for users, fees being a pragmatic necessity, and fees being affordable. On the other hand, the opposing views were centered on sentiments of rights to free access, fees being unfair and costly, an introduction of fees changing the very nature of recreation, and that the fee system was confusing. Overall, they concluded that news media coverage, albeit with some deep-rooted concerns among some, was mostly supportive of fee implementation in national forests. The backing, it must be stressed, was in many instances contingent and conditioned on the basis of revenue collection having to be spent locally on improvements

and to tackle infrastructure backlogs (Bengston & Fan, 2002). The contingency and conditionality of support for user fees, suggest a genuine want to see fee dollars materializing in local progresses. It is evident that this is also a concern for the NPS, easily exemplified by their transparency in listing what revenues from fees will be spent on (National Park Service, 2019d).

Findings in Bengston and Fan´s (2002) research, revealed fee opponents largely based their views on ideas of rights to nature and fairness beliefs[11]. Nyaupane et al. (2007) claims the right-based arguments could purposefully be analyzed as equity issues. Equity is often operationalized as equating to income. Perceptions of virtuous qualities of being fair and reasonable to those who are disadvantaged, however, can be extended beyond the easily quantifiable variable of income. In their study (2007), they construct equity as a multi-dimensional concept in discussions of recreation fees. The three dimensions are democratic equity (providing equal opportunities for all potential visitors), compensatory equity (e.g. discounted fees for disadvantaged groups) and equity beliefs in the specific context of recreation fees (perceptions of equity are relational and highly case-dependent). In the analysis, they found the democratic and compensatory dimensions when handling issues of equity in recreation fee assessments, and challenged assumptions of disadvantaged groups actively seeking discounts.

3.4 Economic valuation of nature and the environment

In environment economic theorizations, the environment has four primary functions for the economy. It is a source of energy and inputs to production (i), it is a waste sink (ii), it can be a direct source of amenity (iii), and it can serve as a provider of ecosystem services on local to global scales (iv). Economic use values (i), (ii) and (iv) share the common feature of providing inputs to a production process. They are moreover categorized as having indirect benefits as environmental values, as they are valued indirectly through assessments of its roles in production processes. In this typology, national parks must be categorized as having economic value in terms of being a source of amenity (iii), and consequently they take on an environmental economic value that more directly impacts utility. To best provide an amenity

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[11] Supported by Anderson & Freimund (2004, in Nyaupane et al., 2007, p. 428) who in in-depth interviews found equity to be a significant ideological rationale for those opposing fees.

service, furthermore, it can be argued it is vital to minimize the other economic use values. It is stressed, lastly, that economic value must not be confused with market price. Exemplified by landscape quality, the economists argue that although it does not necessarily have a market price (or a market prize of zero) it still has economic value (Hanley et al., 2019).

Among some of the most commonly applied models (Benson et al., 2013; Hanley et al., 2019) of calculating valuation of environment as a direct source of amenity are Travel Cost Models (TCM). They were first applied in the United States to plan and manage recreation in American national parks and forests. The challenge they were trying to cope with in the model was to calculate the value of recreational activities within the units of the park system. What, you could for instance ask, is the value of a picnic and a hike? As a solution, offering an alternative to approaches trying to estimate willingness to pay by accessing individually stated preferences, proponents of TCMs argued the value of environment could be calculated through looking at expenditures to participate in recreation (Hanley et al., 2019). As the market price for a visit to a recreational site is fully or partly missing, the travel cost models say the price implicitly must be equal to the travel cost to the site (Benson et al., 2013), which is based on observations of recreational activities necessitating expenditure (Hanley et al., 2019). Benson et al. (2013) estimated, based on visitor data from Yellowstone National Park, that the average benefit of recreational visits to the national park across all visitor cluster groups would amount to somewhere between $235 and $276. Visitor cluster groups were characterizations used to determine how visitors with similar visit purposes benefitted differently from their trip than what visitors with other purposes did. These cluster analyses require an organization of individuals into groups that maximizes similar characteristics and, whilst also maximizing the differences between the clusters. In this particular study, they identified a total of 5 different clusters, with the number of respondents categorized in either cluster ranging from 76 to 166. The names of the clusters were "Do It All Adventurists", "Windshield Tourists", "Value Picnickers", "Creature Comfort Seekers" and "Backcountry Enthusiasts". From the calculations of average benefits to all visitor clusters in this study, and essentially the key point to take from this section of the thesis paper, is evidence suggest a value that vastly outnumbers the annual congressional appropriations to park per visitor (Kays, 2019).

3.5 Mobilities and landscapes

In search for a definition of landscape, John B. Jackson (1996) stresses the idea that it is neither a purely natural space nor a simple feature of a larger natural environment. Landscape is rather artificial and synthetic. It is subjected to abrupt and capricious change and created as places in which human space-time configurations are produced. Landscapes are thus necessary for social life itself. John Wylie (in Merriman et al, 2008) argues that landscapes are highly complex and exist within multiple tensions between subjects and objects. On his perceptions of the concept, he says (p. 202-203)

> "Landscape isn't something that is kind of vaguely inside or vaguely outside —who knows where it is. Landscape is precisely the tension through and in which there is set up and conducted different versions of the inside and outside—self and world— distinctive topographies of inwardness and outwardness. Landscape isn't either objective or subjective; it's precisely an intertwining, a simultaneous gathering and unfurling, through which versions of self and world emerge as such. And the notion of a visual gaze in which the world recedes in depth before a perspectival subject is one especially influential version of these types of creative tension of self and world".

In the analysis section of this thesis, evidence from observational research will be essential to understand how particular landscapes are produced by a myriad of actors in GSMNP.

It is suggested that places and landscapes are not static. A more suitable description could thus be to talk about continually ongoing processes in which places, spaces and landscapes are constructed (Cresswell & Merriman, 2013). Gillian Rose (in Merriman et al., 2008, p.200) claims

> "The co-constitution of landscape and spectator has been reemphasised through notions of performativity as well as through the claim that landscapes are made rather than found; and the implications of the materiality of both landscapes and their representations have been considered as well"

In this description it seems as if the concept of landscape has been taken through a performative turn, which is enabled by mobilizing practices. In this thesis I will make the argument that the GSMNP face unique challenges that most other national parks do not. Spatially, the park constitutes an intersection for people practicing several different forms of mobility. The difference in reasons to move, moreover, provides explanations to why there is no entrance fee in this particular national park. Mobilities theory, thus, offers a framework in

which the case of the GSMNP can be studied. Cresswell and Merriman (2013, p. 5) argue decisions to physically move involve making decisions "within, or despite, the constraints of society and geography". Mobilities require spaces in which the practices can be enacted. Within these spaces structural and infrastructural contexts are produced influencing how mobility can be practiced. This is not, however, a one-way relationship in which mobility practices is purely constrained by structural and infrastructural contexts. Practices of mobility, rather, can be seen as responses to the constraints and therefore contribute in co-producing spaces in which they are performed.

In mobilities theory, the actors performing mobility practices are referred to as subjects (Cresswell & Merriman, 2013, p. 9). Most relevant in this thesis are, first and foremost, the tourists. The others, albeit outnumbered by their tourist "counterparts", and again important to the uniqueness of the GSMNP case, are those practicing everyday mobility. In regards to the Creswell and Merriman typology, it is tempting to say that there are people moving through the GSMNP who could be considered commuters. One of the ways in which this particular park differs from other national parks in the Unite State, is that at the time of park establishment, the area was both a destination in itself, but also a throughway and historically important trading route (Ise, 1967). This serves as an argument why conflicts of regulation, tolls and fees are particularly high at this NPS site, as there exists local wants and needs to pass through the park without encountering financial barriers.

3.6 Travel and tourism

Vast growth in the number of annual international travelers and significant increases in the money these travelers spend on their trips abroad, has led tourism to be regarded, quite commonly, as the largest industry in the world. The word tourism, although frequently applied by immensely varied groups of people, scholars and non-scholars alike, is subject to an array of understandings and meanings. It is an industry studied by multiple disciplines, which leads to a wide range of perspectives on the concept. A starting point for most disciplines would be the acceptance of tourists as being actors undertaking certain types of travels. The rationales and purposes behind the choice to travel ranges from business to pleasure, and it needs to be regarded both temporally and spatially. Tourism is thus said to be a temporary escape from the habitual and routine situations of everyday practices (Urry, 1990; Williams, 1998). One of the explanations to the emergence of the tourist concept and

subsequently the expansion of tourism activities is that of travel becoming increasingly democratized in the 1900s. The issue was no longer, as much, who was able and who was not able to travel. It made more sense to distinguish gradually between travelers in different classes. Popularly conceived as a work-leisure dichotomy[12], people with money had the option of and want to buy time away from work and replace it with leisure time (Urry, 1995).

Williams (1998, p.21-22) elaborates, offering four factors as explanatory for changes in spatial patterns that eventually led to the development of tourism. The first of them has to do with changing attitudes to and motivations for travelling. It is suggested travelling has historically been uncomfortable and dangerous, making social desires and motives to travel more basic than what is the case in the present. As infrastructure for travel was bettered and it became more affordable, other motives for travel started to occur. Social and economic emancipation of the middle classes, secondly, was essential to drastically increase the number of potential tourists. As explained by Urry (1995), Williams (1998) talks of potentials for working people to afford time off work and to accumulate reserves of income that could be spent on holidaymaking. The third factor is development in infrastructure and the growth of new affordable modes of transportation. These changes were instrumental for people to extend the ranges of people´s leisure travel. Fourth and lastly, tourism has required significant organizational systems, service workers and supporting facilities. Although there are forms of tourist practices that do not necessarily necessitate vast supporting infrastructures, most forms have always been and still are dependent on accommodations, transportation, entertainment etc.

Fletcher (2011) suggests three overlapping theories provide a solid framework for analyzing tourism growth. The three are divided between push and pull theories. Tourists can, on one hand, as partially explained by Urry (1995, p. 130) be seen as pushed by a changing nature of labor, in which workers have bargained for and achieved rights to paid vacation time and shortening work hours. The nature of industrial, to an extent, and post-industrial labor in turn facilitates the pull factors of touristic experience and chances to see exotic sights. Adding to these explanations centered on individual decision-making, one can also see the rise of tourism as a result of larger institutional efforts of coming up with new strategies for economic growth.

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[12] Williams (1998, p. 174) claims tourism, and particularly the leisurely form, is regarded widely to be the complete opposite of work.

Construction and consumption of tourist places is a socio-cultural process. Embedded in identification of places to which tourists may be drawn is a cultural evaluation, and the materiality of tourist destinations is highly dependent on institutions and social structures. Although innovations in transportation technologies have served as space-time compressors and physical mechanisms for mobilizing tourists, the social organization of tourism is also integral to understanding the growth of the industry (Williams, 1998, p. 172-173). The tourist gaze, the way in which tourists encounter scenes and landscapes in their travels, refers to a presupposed system of activities and signs locating particular tourist practices in contrast to non-tourist practices based in everyday routines such as in the home or at work (Urry, 1990). Tourism must accordingly be considered a highly visual practice. A process of "doing" or performing (Edensor, 2001) tourism often begins with visualizations of the forthcoming travel, and on the trip itself many spend significant amounts of time sightseeing and gazing. Following the trip, memories can be experienced and relieved by looking at photographs and videos taken to serve as visual reminders of the travel. The entire process of visualizing travels, from pre-travel planning through in-place gazing to post-travel recollections, is contingent on social constructions and cultural filters. Travelling and sightseeing requires selections of sights, places and people to regard and to disregard for being uninteresting. By making these selections the tourist invents and reinvents places to best suit the individual and subjective purpose for travelling (Williams, 2013, p. 173).

Urry (1995, p. 174) constructs four ideal types of societal intersections with respective physical environments. Stewardship, exploitation, scientisation and visual consumption are recognized as particular configurations of societies and their environments, and reflect how differently they can be socially constructed. In the case of national parks, I would argue the configurations of stewardship and visual consumption best reflect the rationales for construction. The first is used to describe a society-environment configuration in which land should be managed for the purpose of ensuring it can be inherited in better shape for future generations, whereas the latter refers to construction of physical environment as landscapes to aesthetically appropriate. I will return to societal intersections with physical environments at particular sites in GSMNP, and moreover to how they are referred to in calls for donations in the analysis section of the thesis.

Rather than determining what types of tourism can exist, organization of travel and tourism exists in a somewhat symbiotic and interrelated relationship. The idea of a one-way causal link between developments in transportation technologies and organizational innovations has in many instances proven to be wrong. To become dominating forms of transportation, new technologies have throughout history been dependent on a corresponding transformation in social organization of travel (Urry, 1995). For most national parks, allowing access to private automobiles has been integral for growth in visitation numbers, and "Like the railroad before it, the car and the highway became vehicles for renewing and reforming the prophetic rhetoric of landscape and national identity" (Daniels, 1993, p. 196). In the case of GSMNP, an alternative mode of transportation has been a recurring topic in debates over park management. Discussions on wilderness protection and visitor access often return to a long-lasting debate on cars and car-dependency in parks. To some, the issue of cars, and whether or not to allow them in the national park, was a question of whether to exercise leadership in environmentalism by limiting cars or to continue facilitating the park for private automobiles to ensure accessibility and a democratic form of national park experience. Although attempts at establishing alternative modes of transportation within the GSMNP have been limited and, in a context of overall visitation numbers, somewhat meager, actions have been taken to reduce the role of cars within the park (Catton, 2014, p. 94-95).

3.7 Moving forward from theoretical assessments

In the theoretically centered chapters the main objective was to identify ways in which nature-society configurations influenced the formation of national parks in the United States. A dialogue moving back and forward from grander abstract theories towards more concrete outcomes, constitutes a framework in which the two research questions can be answered. Particular views of nature have influenced the way in which in the construction of wilderness and landscapes have become intended goals for nature managers, exemplified by the NPS, to pursue. The way in which they operate requires a financing structure, and later in the thesis I will pay attention to the challenges the NPS have in regards to fulfill their intended primary objectives of producing wilderness and landscapes. Current financing models have been scrutinized in economic studies of entrance fees to federally and state designated lands for nature preservation, and nature recreation valuation models show discrepancies in user value against congressional appropriations. In these models visitors, or tourists, are identified as important subjects in national parks. One of the many factors influencing how and where

tourists travel are financial barriers such as an entrance fee or road tolls. They are, however, important tools to generate revenue to handle maintenance backlogs, and have consequently been both widely accepted and applied at national parks. By looking at scalar conflicts in the case of GSMNP, I will address historical reasons to why an entrance fee is not established in the Smokies. Later, in the analysis section, I attempt to highlight the role of mobile tourists in the reproduction of the tourist spaces in wilderness and landscapes in GSMNP, by analyzing the donation boxes and donation box signs they are confronted with in the park. By answering these research questions I hope to expand on some of the contradicting rationales of national parks, and further contextualize particular spatial outcomes of an institution of national parks.

4. Data Collection and methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodological approach to this thesis has carefully been considered as the heuristically and practically most efficient way to answer the main research questions, and planning and preparations for a period of fieldwork began as soon as the research topic was settled. Doing a case study of a National Park a fair distance from where I live, it seemed evident to plan for, and execute, one single trip for the purpose of data collection. Travelling and accommodations come at a cost, and going to the United States more than once for research purposes never was a viable option. On the question of methodological considerations for the thesis, I did evaluate the plausibility of several possible approaches. There would, for instance, have been a plethora of good arguments for this project to include interviews of visitors to GSMNP, GSMNP staff or other local actors with park interests. Given the amount of time I had at hand in the field, financial constraints and the somewhat daunting prospect of obtaining formal permits to do either in-depth interviews or visitor studies, the rationale of doing archival research and participant observation was strengthened. In the conclusion of the thesis, I intend to account for some of the knowledge gaps my research has not covered.

4.1.1 Social research

Social research involves mediating dialogue between ideas on one hand and evidence on the other. Ideas and evidence exist in somewhat of a symbiosis and in a dialogue in which they both have the potential of impacting each other. Social researchers use ideas to discern evidence, and evidence, in turn, are used to test, revise and expand on ideas. The result of this process, the aspiration for a social researcher, is to produce representations of complex social life. These representations researchers produce, it is important to note, require some type of evidence to ensure reliability and rigour (Ragin, 1994). In this section of my thesis I will account for the procedural thesis writing procedure, present my approach to the data collection process, provide arguments defending my methodological choices, and discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of my research.

4.1.2 The case study

John Gerring argues that referring to research as a case study might mean a multiple number of things. Qualitative (small sample) studies, holistic and thick studies, non-experimental and non-survey based studies, studies that are naturalistic in its method of gathering evidence, studies with diffuse topics, studies employing triangulation, and studies investigating the properties of a single observation, phenomenon or example, could all be categorized as case studies. It is thus difficult to come up with what a clear definition of what a case study is, as none of the above types of studies fully could serve as ample general definitions (Gerring, 2007, p. 17-18).

My research is concerned with the single case of the GSMNP. The topics, issues and points of discussion arising from my intensive study of a single national park, however, I regard as being of relevance to other national parks within the National Park System, and also to other similar institutions throughout the world. It is important to note also that the case being studied in my research must be understood in a wider societal context, and that the GSMNP exists in an extensive network of other land areas designated as parks by the federal government. To comprehend the uniqueness of one case, then, some comparisons to other similar units should provide valuable information. The fact that there are variations to essential features of park management, financing being a prime example, would moreover indicate that research can be key to explore what types of financial management, for instance, is best suited to reach overarching institutional goals. Taking into account all the elements necessary to do this research it becomes evident that even though it is first and foremost a case study, cross-case components help provide a better starting point for critique of the single unit (Gerring, 2007).

4.1.3 Structuration theory

The research paradigm having the most influence on this thesis is structuration theory. Drawing on hermeneutics, ethnomethodology and phenomenology, Anthony Giddens developed structuration theory as an approach to social theory. The contemporary research paradigm is based on an idealist or subtle realist ontology and epistemologically it is firmly rooted in constructionism. In establishing the concept of duality of structure, he aimed to recognize social actors engaging both in production and in reproduction of their social world.

These social actors are moreover knowledgeable, capable of reflecting on and rationalizing their actions and potentially have unconscious motives. These social actions in structuration theory, differing from other research paradigms, are regarded as occurring within a set framework of unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions. It thus refutes claims of abilities of generating common laws in social sciences, and suggests rather that we can produce time-space limited generalizations. This view of knowledge production in social sciences is based on the assumption that all knowledge social actors have are based in particular social contexts, and that when these change, so too can social scientists´ generalization of them (Blaikie, 2007, p. 162-163).

4.1.4 Triangulation

The methodological approaches to this thesis become, given the research design, three-fold. For the first part of the thesis, the purpose is to explain an outcome. In this case the outcome of a national park system that requires a financing model to continually reproduce landscapes and wilderness. Secondly, I intend to show how one national park struggles to generate revenue to offset financial backlogs due to meager congressional appropriations. I will argue that the uniqueness of GSMNP, in terms of fees, have clear historical explanations, and I aim to provide an overview of some of the most important ones. Thirdly, I want to provide examples of how a conflict over finances is manifested spatially within the park, and how it can affect visitor experiences. It is also a basis for discussing the role of philanthropy in national parks, and the influence of private actors in public spaces.

Triangulation is an analysis technique used in research designs applying multiple methods. In research projects where more than one dataset has been produced through more than one method of data collection, triangulation is a technique that helps combine the individual datasets. There are three forms of distinguishable triangulation, and complementarity has been my main motivation for doing triangulation. It is a method seeking to produce fuller pictures of a research question by joining information found using multiple methods. In many instances complementary triangulation is phased, in terms of findings from one method of data collection helping inform questions asked in a second method (Nightingale, 2009). Embedded in the method of complementarity triangulations is an assumption of methodological traditions´ inability to perceive reality, and that aspects from multiple methods have to be put together (Erzberger & Prein, 1997). To some extent data triangulation

in the case of my thesis work was phased. In the discourse on national parks in the United States, I found finances to be an issue for most national parks. Archival research showed and confirmed the issue of entrance fees, and consequently financing, had been a pressing concern for a myriad of GSMNP actors for a long time, constituting a major obstacle for an individual park to generate revenue. This underlined to look further into how this conflict was manifested within the park, exemplified by donation boxes and donation box signs.

4.2 Ethnography

4.2.1 Institutional ethnography

Ethnography can be defined as a thorough study of everyday life. Ethnographic data is typically collected through interviews, observations, fieldnotes and analysis of archives (Billo & Mountz, 2016). Given the varieties of data collection typically associated with ethnographic studies attempts at giving a clear definition of it could obscure essential differences in the methodological approaches (Herbert, 2000). The modes of data collection all serve different purposes, and give us insight into social interactions, power relations, behavioral patterns and the daily practice of exercising power (Billo & Mountz, 2016). Herbert (2000, p. 552) argues it allows ethnographers not only to examine what people say, done through interviews, but also what people do. The methodological approach, typically, requires researchers to balance the role of being insider and outsider. Ethnographers adopt these roles to highly varying degrees, but some involvement with actors studied seems inevitable.

Theory for ethnographers is usually built from the ground up, and they typically engage the field with aspirations of exploring and studying social phenomena, rather than testing specific pre-defined hypotheses. Although order in ethnographic studies normally emerges from experiences in the field instead of imposing it on the field, it is not an exclusively inductive approach. Ethnographers always have a pre-existing conceptual understanding and consequently have to mediate observations and theorization (Herbert, 2000). If researchers accept having a pre-existing conceptual framework in which they study the social phenomenon, it refutes the epistemological principle of empiricism that is adopted in a purely inductive research strategy. The epistemological assumption of empiricism relies on researchers adopting completely objective procedures (Blaikie, 2007, p. 60), and given

Herbert´s (2000) description of ethnographic studies it becomes evident that the study requires application of more research strategies. One of the key advancements of ethnography to research is its particular understanding of social life. Ethnography is a methodological approach that attempts to recognize the reproduction of macrological social structures, and how the same structures are constantly contested through processes of social life (Herbert, 2000, p. 53). Geographers have been pioneers in ethnography in doing multi-sited ethnography (Watson & Till, 2010), and thus support my rationale for entering the field to answer the research questions outlined.

4.2.2 The challenges of doing ethnography

Reflexivity is inarguably a critical trait for aspiring ethnographers. Analytically examining the methodological approach you have to the research, and examining your own position in relation to the objects of study are two ways to show how the practice of reflexivity is emphasized in your work. The reasoning for stressing the importance of reflexivity in ethnographers is that it allows the researcher to be open about the biases and cultural frameworks shaping their approach to the study. By doing so, researchers can avoid and let go of so-called illusions of an omniscience or of a false sense of objectivity that is actually based in an arrogance both related to cultural and educational superiority (Guschwan, 2018, p.978-979). In the section on participant observation, I will reflect further on this topic.

One of the main challenges of doing ethnographic research is that

> "The collection of ethnographic information that any individual can reasonably obtain is quite limited in comparison to the historical record, (or any other documentation of a phenomenon). At the very least, the collection of data done by other guides the collection of new information – it gives a starting point and a set of questions to ask, re-ask and work against" (Guschwan, 2018, p. 980).

By adding multiple methods of data collection I hope to overcome some of the most pressing challenges related to collecting ethnographic information. I confer with interpretive communities, and look at various ways in which financing of nature management conflicts materialize.

4.3 Fieldwork – Archive visits

4.3.1 Preparations for archival work

I had, from the early beginnings of this project, always imagined that working with archival resources could be an integral part to the data collection part of my thesis work. A major source of influence has been Cole Harris´ article on Archival Fieldwork from a 2001 edition of the Geographical Review. In his article, he reflects on a career of doing geographical research, and talks of how he has approached his interests in the "intersections of people, land and space in the past" (2001, p.330). In preparing for the fieldwork, a list was made of all libraries, with open access to the general public, in the Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg area. When looking up libraries, special attention was given to the National Park Service´s Collection Preservation Center just on the outskirts of the National Park, in Townsend, Tennessee.

On my first day in the field, I visited King Family Library, the main library in Sevier County, in Sevierville, and the Pigeon Forge Public Library. Both of the libraries had sections devoted to local history, and local librarians were highly accommodating in helping to find material that could be relevant for my research. When hearing about the project, one of the employees at the Pigeon Forge library said, confirming one of my ideas about what to do during my fieldwork period, that the NPS Collection Preservation Center would be well worth a visit. With no further hesitation, the very helpful librarian called up the librarian-archivist at the facilities in Townsend, briefly introduced my project, and asked if I could come by. I got the archivist´s contact information and sent an email the following day to follow up on the request to do work in the archives. We scheduled for me to come by the next week and corresponded regularly from that point and throughout the fieldwork period.

The purpose of the communication was for the librarian-archivist to learn as much about my project as possible, so that they could prepare for my visit. At the archives there were far more data and information available than what could be processed by one researcher in a few weeks, and the correspondence in advance was thus integral for the archivist to get an idea of what information and documents I was looking for. In the preparations for my visit to the archive, I was also sent excerpts of texts from documents he prepared to have ready for me. By doing so, the archivist got an even better idea of whether or not this was going to be useful

for me. This process of preparatory communication is in accordance with many of the elements going into Roche´s argument of "archival research beginning before you arrive at the archives" (2010, p. 176-177).

4.3.2 Archival research

When dichotomizing types of archive research, my project would inarguably be categorized as problem orientated. This differs from source-oriented research projects, that is primarily centered on examining a single source more in detail in order to provide more detailed and thicker descriptions of the document. Doing a problem-oriented type of research requires defined research questions prior to the first engagement with the historical sources and the archives. By establishing these questions in the preliminary parts of the research project, researchers get a clearer idea of what questions should be asked of the data found in the archives (Black, 2003, p.478).

Being new to archival research as a method of data collection, it was important to do research into it prior to the actual visit to the archives. As with most other qualitative methods, there is no single blueprint to how to do it (Roche, 2010, p. 176). There are however guidelines and some rules that do apply for all researchers going to archives. Firstly, there were basic rules of sitting at a designated desk to which no pens, foods or drinks could be brought. By using pencils and computers only, the risk is of ink spills are minimized, and the chance of old documents being damaged in any kind of way lessened (Roche, 2010, p. 177). During my first visit, the librarian-archivist quickly went through the rules of the archive and presented me with the documents that needed to be signed. The way it worked at the NPS CPC in the Smokies, was that the librarian-archivist would prepare and bring out relevant folders for the researcher given the topics discussed in the week before the actual visit. Upon requests, also, the archivist could bring out any other material visitors were interested in taking a closer look at. In a way, then, the researcher did not get full access to the actual physical archive, but was rather sat in a type of study hall just outside the archive with the option of requesting material from the archivist. The argument could probably be made that it would be better for researchers to have direct access to all materials, but having done archival research in practice I can see compelling reasons for organizing it the way they did at this particular collections preservation center. When the time researchers have available for data collection, and perhaps especially when doing fieldwork abroad, is limited it seems purposeful to use the resource

that is the local archivist with great knowledge of what is in the archive, where to find it and how it is organized.

For my first visit, a trolley full of folders and boxes stood beside my designated desk at my arrival. The folders, for most parts, had labels that would indicate the major topic of the documents found in them. It would also, in many instances, include a year, a period of years or something that limited the temporal aspect. For my project, it seemed logical to go through the folders in chronological order, as the issue of entrance fees goes way back in park history. As time available for data collection was limited and documents manifold, it required a strict selection approach in which single documents were assessed briefly before a decision had to be made on whether to move on the next document or to take a closer look at the one at hand. There are weaknesses to that approach as relevant material can be passed up. It would, however, not have been doable to closely read through all the files. Harris (2001, p. 330-331) claims the scenario of having far more relevant documents available than time to actually examine them is highly likely to occur. If this is the case, researchers tend to lean towards a reaction of either trying to get through it all despite of the time constraint, or to be overly confident in that they will find exactly what they thought they were looking for before coming to the archives. Allowing changes to initial plans and to be flexible when researching seems then to be one way of facing the challenge of collecting data at archives

4.3.3 Critically assessing historical evidence

Ian Black (2003, p. 479) argues we must accept sources are made and not given, and that from this conclusion several important questions about the nature of any given source arises. The four important checks he lists are:

- "Is it genuine?"
- "How close is the source to the events or phenomena it is recording? How accurately was the information recorded?"
- Identify what was the original purpose of for gathering the information. "How might this have influenced what was collected?"
- "How has the process of archiving the information imposed a classification and order upon historical events?"

These four elements going into a critical assessment of historical evidences should firstly help researchers establish the authenticity of the sources and data. Secondly, the framework gets at the accuracy of the sources by asking when and how it was recorded. The initial purpose of the information collection, thirdly, can give researchers an idea of who thought it was valuable to save the particular document. It is also important to note that researchers should consider who might be missing in the recorded history, as those in power tend to overshadow the larger general population. Classifications and filtering, fourthly, is something to keep in mind when doing historical research. Sources themselves can reproduce power structures, and become filters between the researchers and the original material. The last check leads to a need to make a distinction between primary and secondary data. Whereas the primary data refers to raw, unpublished and unprinted data, secondary data include those sources that have been altered from that raw state. In terms of what data should be considered superior to the other, it seems most agree that both types need to be carefully considered and critically approached (Black, 2003, p. 479-480). All documents assessed in the archives were publicly available, and either originals or copies reproduced at national archives. In my understanding there are no indications of these documents being altered. I do, however, accept that people in power, perhaps overshadowing other actors, have written most of the documents.

Some of the critical elements of historical geography highlighted by Ian Black (2003), overlap with the two major challenges of archival research. The first of the two is of intellectual nature and the other is more related to the technical aspects of doing research in archives. Roche (2010) is in agreement with Black (2003) over issues of classifications and filtering, and argues that there power relations are inherent in archive sources, and must be taken into account by researchers. The most pressing technical challenge to archive research is document readability. Older texts can be hard to read simply because they used fonts and styles that are dissimilar from what researchers are used to at present day (Roche, 2010, p.183-185). In the case of my research, most documents and sources are from the 1920s and onwards, and the few texts that were handwritten could easily be interpreted. One challenge, however, was to understand handwritten signatures. In one of the source materials I wanted to use, the letter was typewritten, but the author only signed in handwriting. The archivist helped me interpret the author´s surname and given his office in local county courts, I was able to get enough information to track him down.

4.3.4 The process following archive visits

Almost as important as the actual archive visits, was the processing of the data collected in the days that followed. At the archives I asked for several scans of documents and took pictures of documents myself. For each and every one of these scans and pictures, lists had to be made that included all available information about the documents, where they could be found etc. A lot of the important work done in this process was, thus, the organizing of data in the days following the actual archive visits. Getting the correct records and having a clear system of referencing the specific archive filing system is highly important, as it is both helpful to myself in my thesis work and also because it would make it easier for other researchers to access the same documents at a later point (Roche, 2010, p. 182). In practice, for me, I structured the work in the following way: At the archives I would, exclusively, note citations and the information I needed about all documents in a notebook. All information about one specific document was kept at one single page, and I decided not to put information on two or more documents on the same page to avoid confusion at a later stage. If information is missing or necessary details about a document are not recorded, it could end up being essentially useless in the writing process (Harris, 2001, p.332-333).

The archivist introduced me to the filing system and how to properly cite the archive material. Their filing system was alphanumerical, meaning they used both letters and numbers in the collection numbers. Some collections had short numerical codes, whereas others had longer names including both letters and numbers. In the bibliography I have added as much information as possible on where the particular documents can be found. For most parts, they were organized in a matter that required collection names or alphanumericals, box numbers as well as folder alphanumericals or names. Some sources, on the other hand, were only categorized exclusively under a collection name. It is, however, my assumption that all archival sources referenced in this thesis would be easily accessible for all given the information provided in the bibliography. In the bibliography, archival sources are entered slightly different than others. The decision to add as much information as possible on these documents have led to the inclusion of specific dates (when applicable) and a description of what the document is. In practice, archival bibliographic entries will, for most parts, look like this:

Name of Author. (Year and date). [Description of the type of document[13]]. National Park Service Collections Preservation Center (Collection number, box number, file number). Townsend, TN, United States.

4.4 Fieldwork – Observations

4.4.1 Observational research:

There are numerous purposes for observation in research. As a rule of thumb, these can be summarized in three words that all, to the delight of researchers, begin with the letter `c´. Counting, firstly, can help establish rhythms and flows of spatio-temporal activities. This type of observation can give researchers numerical data that can be easily presented in graphs or statistics. It can be argued, however, that counting can be too much of a reductionist methodological approach if the goal of the research is to develop a broad and thorough understanding of place. To use observation to complement evidence, secondly, is rationalized by it having potential of adding value to fieldwork. Observation can thus be seen as an additional source for data collection, complementing more formal and controlled methods. The third, and last, main purpose of observation is contextual understanding. Through directly experiencing time and place, researchers can construct in-depth interpretations. As this makes first-hand observations the prime source of data collection, it requires researchers to fully immerse themselves in specific socio-temporal contexts. These purposes can in turn be identified in two types of observation – controlled and uncontrolled. Controlled observation is typically conducted by natural scientists who have made explicit decisions on what they are observing, how they will observe and at what times they will do it. Observation in controlled forms is often lauded for being rigorous and highly replicable, but criticized for putting limitations on what can be derived from complex place characteristics or feelings of residents. Uncontrolled observation, as also is the case with controlled observation, is concerned with goals and ethical considerations. It is, however, not as restricted when it comes to what phenomena should be noted (Kearn, 2010, p. 242-243).

When doing observations in fieldwork, it is key to take into account Gillian Rose´s feminist critique of the method of geographic observation (1996). In her perspective, the ontologies

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[13] I.e. whether it is a personal letter, legal document etc.

and epistemologies of geographic projects must be questioned to understand marginalization and exclusion of women both as subjects and objects of research. Femininity is not missing in geographic studies and text, but in Gillian´s words it is present only as a counterpart to masculine and meaningful establishment of knowledge. The feminine is thus reduced to the unknowable. This is most visibly present in the persistent geographic conceptualization of landscape. Geographic interest in landscapes continues to make fieldwork an often-applied method of data collection for geographers. The practice of fieldwork to scientifically understand landscapes have long traditions, and its purpose was mainly to directly observe how people interacted with the flora, fauna and the land. Holding the landscape together was the gaze of the geographer, analyzing and selecting features in the landscape to scrutinize and explain (Rose, 1996, p. 340-343). This tradition, Denis Cosgrove (1985) argues stem from renaissance Italy, and must be understood in close relation to practical spatial appropriations through warfare and bourgeois transformation of space into property. Even though contemporary humanist geographers deploy landscape in radical and, some would argue, anti-scientific methods, it is a concept with strong roots in scientific theory like other practical sciences. It is the idea that landscape, due to its historic applications, must be treated as a visual ideology (Cosgrove, 1985, p. 47) that is extended further by Rose, claiming the ideology "is a way of seeing which is patrician because it is seen and understood from the social position of the landowner…", that makes the conceptualization of landscape subjected to feminist critique.

4.4.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is often considered one of the easiest methods of data collection, as it requires few hard-to-learn skills and little knowledge of complex technical lexicons. There are, needless to say, however, obvious challenges particular to this method of data collection. One of the main challenges for researchers doing participant observation is that the stages they have to go through in the research process are also "stages which arise out of the phenomenon and settings you are investigating" (Laurier, 2003, p. 134). Mike Crang (2013) reflected on his positionality in a study on tourist sights in Kefalonia, Greece. He suggested (2013, p. 205): "homo academicus[14] might be uncomfortably closely related to that embarrassing relative turistas vulgaris". To arrive at this conclusion, Crang argued it is

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[14] See Bourdieu´s *Homo Academicus* (1988).

important to regard tourism as an informed activity, to see tourists as not simply following knowledge produced by others, and consequently not merely regard them as a counterpart to a knowledge-producing ethnographer. A clear distinction between tourist and ethnographer, however, is observed in velocity of travel. In this division tourists are regarded as superficially, briefly and inattentively consuming place, whereas ethnographers immerse themselves thoroughly in places and thus are able to produce stern knowledge. Citing Bourdieu (1988), Crang (2013, p. 206) admits that this particular differentiation between ethnographer and tourist easily can be detected as a construction of a hierarchy in which values and tastes are explaining ability to produce serious knowledge. His approach to the study of tourism in Kefalonia thus, very much in line with Laurier´s argument (2013, p. 134) of one of the main challenges for ethnographers is to go through stages that arise out of the phenomenon they are studying, begins with the acceptance of having to become a tourist to apply participant observation as a methodological tool to research tourism to the Greek island.

Pierre Bourdieu (2003) introduced *Participant Objectivation* as an alternative method of inquiry in fieldwork. It can be understood as a method attempting to solve conflicts of choosing between outright participant observation, an activity he refers to as a "fictitious immersion in a foreign milieu", and to be objectively gazing from afar, the researcher attempting to be as removed as possible from both their self and from the object of study. The goal of participant objectivation is not to objectivize the ethnographer analyzing a foreign phenomenon, but rather to objectivize the social world that produced the ethnographer and the ethnographic field of in which he or she is engaged[15]. This includes not only the unique personal traits of the ethnographer, e.g. gender, nationality, age etc., but also his or her positionality within a professional universe and interpretive community. It is within the latter social spheres most biases are structurally embedded, and it should thus also be scrutinized. Keeping Bourdieu´s method of participant objectivation in mind poses a solid check of balance to several ethnographic field study practices. One of these, writing fieldnotes, is an integral yet often overlooked part of ethnographic research (Wolfinger, 2002). It is argued fieldnotes inescapably reveal ethnographers´ background knowledge, and or tacit beliefs. Taking fieldnotes involves decision-making processes concerning ordering of notes, what to include and not, and when to document events. It can thus be purposeful to strategically approach the practice. Wolfinger (2002, p. 89-91) citing Emerson et al. (1995), describe two

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[15] Bourdieu (2003) consistently speaks of anthropologists in his exemplification, and I interpret and regard his method as being fully applicable to ethnographers in general.

of these strategies. *The Salience Hierarchy* is a strategy in which researchers begins describing the observations that were most striking, interesting and worthy of attention. It is consequently a strategy highly dependent on subjective interpretations and on the particularity of a specific research context. Deviant cases, moreover, are often subjected to exceptional attention from researchers, as they regularly produce salient data. The deviancy can be derived from the researcher´s tacit knowledge and beliefs, and through in-situ knowledge development. To avoid background and tacit knowledge completely orchestrating what data the fieldnotes produce, an application of *comprehensive note taking* is proposed as an alternative strategy. This is a strategy that requires note taking to be systematically and comprehensively completed following, typically, a list of generalized concerns or temporally in the sequence of events as they occur.

It seems necessary, at this point, to recognize the works that have influenced the complementary observations of my research. Although her approach to data collection through observation could arguably be categorized as more controlled, Ann Fletchall´s (2013) work on the GSMNP gateway community, Pigeon Forge, was highly influential. The same can be said about Terrence Young (2002) and his study of one of the most visited parts of the GSMNP, Cades Cove. Whereas Fletchall (2013) attempted to account for the themed landscapes of a gateway community through counting and categorizing Pigeon Forge business names in five specific themes, Young (2002) got at the theming of landscapes within the national park. The similarity between the two lies both in their methodological approach, but they are both also concerned with how a places and landscapes are themed for visitors´ enjoyment.

Critically reflecting on my approach to participatory observation during the fieldwork period, then, I admit to subscribing, for most parts, to the strategy of salience hierarchy (Wolfinger, 2002). Accepting the critique of this particular strategy, I acknowledge background- and tacit knowledge has had an impact on the data produced. Charles Ragin (1994, p. 66-67) says the empirical world is infinitely complex and detailed, and that social research necessitates fact selection. Social researchers have limited time to inquire the social world, and are dependent on analytic frames, ideas, interests and discourse to recognize data that are particularly important to answer research questions. It is thus, integral to at some point in the research process establish a hierarchy in which evidence is ranked in terms of relevancy, even though it comes at a cost of, consciously or not, ignoring other data that could be regarded relevant.

The decision to create a salient hierarchy, in my case, must be seen as resulting from an initial period of comprehensive note taking in which I hope to have been genuinely susceptible to a wide range of evidences.

In my project, the inclusion of observation as a methodological tool serves to recognize how the issue of financing the management of national park is spatially embedded at important within-park tourist locations, and how it targets visiting tourists. When it comes to what type of observation it can be categorized as, I am somewhat hesitant of assertively placing it in either or of the categories[16]. To an extent, most of my observations seemed uncontrolled, in that it was exploratory in nature. Albeit, directed by goals, I often found myself taking notes on, and observing, phenomena that were not originally intended to be included in the research. On the other hand, I found myself planning for more controlled observations as I got to the latter stages of the fieldwork period. I had a better idea of what to look for to make my arguments stronger, and that undoubtedly influenced the way in which I travelled, what was observed and which places I decided on going to. The changes in personal immersion in place symbolize the transition from tourist to ethnographer. On the ethnographic study of tourism, Crang (2013, p. 2010) writes:

> "… I was encountering myself, but clearly not myself, and revisiting things I knew as a tourist, but in different ways. I felt distinctly estranged from and not at home with the other tourists – which had something to do with the black Moleskine notebook in my pocket, upon whose very materiality I was hanging a set of increasingly anxious assertions about my ethnographic self."

I will make the argument, supported by the differentiation of velocity of travel noted by Crang himself (2013, p. 206), that it is not only the material notebook that distinguishes the ethnographer from the tourist. During my fieldwork period, I had more than enough time to revisit sights multiple times to engage even further. Visitor statistics suggest most of the tourists stay 5 days or less (Papadogiannaki et al., 2008), which inarguably impacts the way in which they can immerse in place. One example of this is the observation of donations collection boxes throughout the national park. During my first visits to the park, I was somewhat startled by the number of collection boxes and collection box signs I came across and noted that they often were central at selected sites. On revisits I noted they were easily visible in all of the most visited parts of the park, and became somewhat of an omnipresence

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[16] See Kearn (2010) for typology.

at the main tourist sights. I started taking notes on where they were, which actor had put them up, and in what way the pieces of text on the boxes encouraged visitors to donate money. For the purpose of exemplification in the thesis paper, I also made sure to take pictures of some of the boxes. I did not count the donation collection boxes-, but rather observed, both to collect complementary evidence and to further the contextual understanding of nature-society relations and the issue of financing nature and environment management in the case example of GSMNP.

4.5 Summing up

In the later stage of my thesis, I see it as crucial to connect findings from the case-centric study of GSMNP to a broader discourse on national parks, the prospects of managing nature, and how to finance it. By doing so, my aim is to construct a check of balance to the images constructed from my findings in the southern Appalachians (Ragin, 1994). In many ways this process resembles what Bradshaw and Stratford (2010, p. 77-78) refers to as research constructed as a hermeneutic circle. As a means to establish trustworthiness and ensuring rigour in research, I both begin and end with involving and conferring interpretive communities. By assessing other similar works, reflections and acknowledgements of limits to and possibilities of research transferability for the research is made easier.

5. Setting the scene – GSMNP, regional understanding and financing issues

Picture 1: View from the highest point in GSMNP, Clingman´s Dome.

5.1 Conflicts and displacement

There are many scholars and writers who have done a good job at presenting much of the cultural history of the Smokies, and it is not the purpose of my thesis to go into all the details that many have done before me. It is important, nevertheless, to provide some background to a pre-park era, as it significant to understand both the natural and built environments of the parks and its surroundings, and moreover to comprehend a political and cultural context for the most visited national park in the United States. (Catton, 2014, p. 3).

A historical account of the history of the national park in the southern Appalachians necessitates recognition of the legacy of dispossession that sadly is so important to understand how the GSMNP came to be in the first place (Catton, 2014, p. 211; Kays, 2019). It is estimated that people have inhabited the Smokies for nearly 12,000 years, and that these prehistoric people were living on lands that had plenty to hunt, forage and gather. In the last two millennia, agriculture has been the main source of food for those living in this part of the Appalachians. The Cherokee Native Americans permanently settled mainly along the rivers in the lowlands, but would continue to use the mountains as hunting grounds. When white frontier settlers reached the area in the late 1700s and 1800s, the pressures on Cherokee tribes soon became inexorable, and the Cherokee Nation were forced to sign several treaties that gradually deprived them of their lands. In the Cherokee Treaty of New Echota of 1835, the United States pushed the tribes to cede all lands in the East and coerced them to accept being removed to distant lands on the other side of the Mississippi[17]. One band of the Cherokee, the Qualla, went to extreme lengths to be able to remain in the Smokies area. To do so, they renounced connections to the larger Cherokee Nation and became citizens of the state of North Carolina (Catton, 2014, p. 3-4). It is not my intention to cover the specific case of Native American displacement in the region extensively, but I would suggest readers take notice of some of the horrific historical events explaining the outcome of a national park in the Southern Appalachians. For more information on the topic, I refer to Catton (2014) on the specific case of GSMNP and Zeppel (2009) on the issue of global national park formation on indigenous lands[18].

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[17] Those who did not accept the treaty, were escorted away from the lands by military in what has become known infamously as the Trail of Tears (Catton, 2014, p.4).

[18] Estimations show 50% of the total land area in the world designated as national parks or protected areas are on indigenous lands (Zeppel, 2009).

In the aftermath of the making of GSMNP, some have suggested that as many as 7000 people were displaced as a direct consequence of national park formation. This is the largest displacement of resident people from their homes in national park history, and the exodus lasted for 15-20 years. The founders of the park hoped the process of acquiring a substantial amount of mountain farms would be as swift as possible, and were hopeful it would not leave a tainted bitter legacy on the national park history. Leading forces in the park movement reassured, early in the process, that there would be no use of eminent domain[19] and managed to convince a substantial portion of the general public that park formation would give mountain farmers a much wanted chance of life improvements (Catton, 2014, p. 211). The reality, however, was a long-lasting process of harsh conflicts. Park commissions both in North Carolina and Tennessee, as well as the federal government (Ise, 1967, p. 255), all made use of the power of eminent domain to proceed in the process of acquiring land for the national park. The use of power was highly contested by some park residents, pursuing legal action to test the use of eminent domain. Although some residents won initial judicial battles, state legislatures would eventually pass bills ensuring state powers were upheld (Catton, 2014, p. 212).

Through act of Congress in 1928, it was established that the tracts of lands acquired for the creation of GSMNP could be leased back to original owners. While there were some arguably generous motives behind the decisions, leaseholders would still face restrictions and difficulties that would highly impact their lives. Among the requirements for obtaining leases were limits to lease extensions and strict formulations of what could be cultivated, and demands of property upkeep. The introduction of leases gave government significant control over all properties within park boundaries, and overall great power over land developments (Catton, 2014, p.212-213). Although having established a legal framework in which tracts of lands could be appropriated for the purpose of making a national park in the Smokies, the issue of financing the purchases was still very much unresolved. In later sections of the thesis, I will return to the topic of leaseholds restrictions, and how these agreements have impacted place making within the park as well as to the issue of financing.

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[19] A tool for Governments to appropriate privately owned land for the purpose of public use.

5.2 The gateway communities

Even though the national park serves as the obvious main point of attraction for the millions of annual visitors to the area, accommodations and activities in proximate communities outside the park play a considerable part in drawing tourist interest (Anderson, 2019). Estimates suggest GSMNP is integral to the economic performance of smaller communities on the outskirts of the park. The gateway communities[20] have developed from being primarily dependent on farming and logging industries to become booming tourist destinations. Although Fletchall (2013) and Martin (1994) both claim Pigeon Forge´s position at the intersection between two major American institutions, the interstate highway system and the national parks, being a main facilitator to the particular development, it is important not neglect the efforts of actors within the local community. By formally incorporating 1961, after initially being rejected in the first vote a year earlier, locals hoped provisions of municipal services would lead to increased tourist activity and more planned developments (Martin, 1994). The developments were not, however, exclusively good to the local community. Exponential rise in land values led most Pigeon Forge farmers to sell out to developers, as property taxes accumulated[21]. With rising land values, private, in many case outside, developers, invested heavily in tourism infrastructure. In the 1980s Pigeon Forge tripled its motel capacity, and introduced a number of outlet malls, theatres, and restaurants. At present, Pigeon Forge is described as a postmodern pastiche, with U.S. Highway 441 serving as a commercial strip going through the city, quite similar to that of Las Vegas (Fletchall, 2013).

Catton (2014) attributes these developments in the gateway communities partially to federal policy, adopted by the Department of the Interior in 1940, establishing tourist services were not to be established within GSMNP. Present visitor-use patterns to the park have led to a description (2014, p. 121) of the park as "commuter park surrounded by bedroom communities, a drive-in `wilderness´". Although within-park developments have been few in the last decades, the surrounding region, and gateway communities especially, have changed

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[20] A term used to describe communities on the immediate outskirts and others in close proximity of a national park. Fletchall (2013), for instance, explains the growth of a tourism economy in Pigeon Forge, TN as being an outcome of outgrowth along the main road corridor connecting the national park with Interstate 40.
[21] Property taxes are typically calculated based on land value.

drastically. The park management, concerned with protecting park values, has followed the developments in gateway communities closely, and have worked with entities on both local and state levels as well as private actors to ensure they have a say. The external threats for the park, and thus somewhat telling of the activities typically found in the surrounding region, have ranged from scenic helicopter rides to landscapes filling up with second-home chalets.

Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge are the two most prominent gateway communities on the Tennessean side of the national park. They attract millions of visitors annually, and are small towns turned into spectacular tourist destinations filled with hotels, motels, restaurants, shops and tourism-related activities. Two of the major actors in the steadily growing tourism sector of the gateway community economies, are Ripley´s and music- and entertainment-legend Dolly Parton. Although Ripley´s have built aquariums, odditoriums and mirror-mazes at several tourist destinations in the United States, including Myrtle Beach, N.C., Williamsburg, VA, and Branson, MO, as well as internationally in the seaside town of Blackpool, U.K., beach destination Surfers Paradise, AU, and Dubai, UAE, there are no places in the world where they have more attractions than in Gatlinburg. Pigeon Forge, a few miles down the road is not lacking in attractions either. Wonderworks, Hard Rock Café, Hatfield McCoy and a Titanic Museum are all features found along the parkway leading to the foot of the Appalachians. As a result of massive ventures from local and non-local investors alike, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg are partially themed landscapes with clear examples of time-space compressing signifiers, such as signs and images or simulacra (Fletchall, 2014; Ritzer & Liska, 1997; Urry, 1995). Dolly Parton´s "Dollywood" and "Dolly Parton´s Stampede" are attractions arguably contributing to localizing[22] an otherwise postmodern pastiche (Fletchall, 2014), and shows creativeness in producing a distinct image of place despite the disappearance of some older spatial barriers (Urry, 1995). It is fair to question, still, whether the Dolly Parton themed attractions present a real experience of place. Theme parks and tourist attractions tend to present only, or over represent, the elements of places that are appealing to the market, as chances of return visits are bettered by confirming visitor expectation (Williams, 1998).

On the North Carolinian side of the park, close to the Oconaluftee entrance, Cherokee is a small town that has become increasingly dependent on the flow of tourism coming to the area.

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[22] Dolly Parton was born and raised in Sevierville in Sevier County, a mere 15 minute drive from Pigeon Forge, and obviously has strong roots in the area.

As with the linear strips packed with tourist-related businesses found in the prominent gateway communities on the Tennessee side of the national park, Cherokee also has a main strip catering to visitors. The main difference, however, between Cherokee and the likes of Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg is that most storefront signs and symbols in the North Carolinian town have caricatures of Native Americans, and the businesses themselves have names suggesting a strong spatially embedded Native American culture (Griest & Kranitz, 2016). The Cherokee Indian Reservation is one of the biggest reservations in the eastern part of the United States, and is home to the Eastern Band of Cherokee with a member population of roughly 13,400, making it the largest tribe east of the Mississippi recognized by the federal government (Catton, 2014, p. 223).

The growth of tourism in Cherokee coincided with the end of WWII when the number of visitors to GSMNP began to rise from the wartime lows. It soon became the second gateway community, following Gatlinburg in Tennessee. In the early beginnings of establishing the town as a destination for tourists, many feared the main attractions would be centered on misrepresentations of Cherokee culture. Seeking to supply a perceived demand among tourists for stereotypical "Indian trinkets" that were borrowed from other Native American Bands´ imagery rather than representing an authentic Cherokee culture, the practice of "Chiefing"[23] became and continues to be a highly visible, and contentious, way of tapping into the tourist economy (Catton, 2014; Griest & Kranitz, 2016). In 1997, despite opposition from politicians, church communities and the NPS, Harrah´s Cherokee Casino was opened in the Cherokee Reservation. The Casino soon became a vital source of income for the Cherokee, and visitation numbers indicated it was the second most visited tourist destination in the state. With more than 3 million visitors per year, Harrah´s employ hundreds of members from the local community and help generate activity also in winter months that are typically less busy in terms of national park visits (Catton, 2014, p. 228). Through the application of a profit-sharing plan, Harrah´s distributes yearly checks of thousands of dollars to all members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee (Griest & Kranitz, 2016).

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[23] Chiefing, in this context, refers to a practice of dressing up as a stereotype image of a Native American, and to pose for pictures with tourists to receive tips and to attract customers to shops (Griest & Kranitz, 2016).

5.3 Great Smoky Mountains National Park

The NPS should be assessed as one of the key drivers for establishing national parks. In the early half of the 20th century, John Ise (1967) spent considerable time covering the history of the NPS extensively. In the infant years of the National Park System, most parks were enjoyed primarily by regional or local visitors. Considering all parks were located in the American West, resentment grew among easterners claiming they were financing recreational activities for their western counterparts. In the NPS administration, led initially by director Stephen Mather, ideas of establishing national parks in the east were partially explained by wants of increasing accessibility to parks for people living in all parts of the country. One positive side effect, obviously, could also be wider support for the NPS. A significant challenge, however, was covering the cost of park establishments in the east, as most lands there were privately owned and not in federal possession. Congress had set a precedent in deciding early, as a general rule of thumb, not to appropriate funds to cover purchases of private land in the pursuit of park creation. Consequently, it was up to the states themselves or private actors to acquire land, which in turn could be transferred to the federal government (Ise, 1967, p.248).

Early attempts at forming national parks in the southern section of the Appalachians can be traced back to the late 1800s. In the early 1900s, many suggestions for potential parks gained some support, but none materialized. Park promoters in the east, hoping they could achieve dreams of a park in their region, joined forces in efforts to secure support for parks in the Smokies and in the Shenandoah mountains. A Southern Appalachian National Park Commission was appointed, consisting of politicians, engineers, local business owners and philanthropists. Following a period of surveying, travelling and gauging public opinion, conditions for park establishment in the Great Smokies were laid down. The daunting task of raising money to acquire privately owned land was to be undertaken by the Secretary of the Interior and the Commission (Ise, 1967, p. 251-257). The story of park formation in the Great Smoky Mountains, in practical terms, is one also one of a process filled with needs for numerous legislative authorizations and long-lasting issues of raising money. Tennessee and North Carolina legislatures both issued bonds exceeding a million dollars to buy tracts of land. These sums were, frustratingly for those working on the project, not enough. Widely acknowledged to have solved the issue of funds (Catton, 2014; Frost & Hall, 2009b; Ise, 1967), was John D. Rockefeller Jr., a philanthropist heading a memorial fund he had founded

in memory of his mother, Laura Spelman Rockefeller.

One of the main responsibilities for the NPS in many of the national parks and other units within the park system is to charge and collect fees and generate revenue. Charging fees for entrances to parks and camping permits is a phenomenon that occurs throughout the world. The rationale behind the implementation of fees is generally based in issues of inadequate funding from governments for management and conservation purposes, typically in periods of visitor growth and increase in demands of services. Two of the main issues with charging fees are the question of social equity and how to make use of money raised (Buckley, 2003).

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is currently the most visited national park in the United States in terms of annual visitors. In recent years, the number of recreational visitors to GSMNP has surpassed 11 million per year, twice the amount of visitors to any other national park (National Park Service, 2017a) Situated in the southern sections of the Appalachian Mountains, the GSMNP covers more than 500,000 acres of land on both sides of the North Carolina and Tennessee border. The Appalachian Mountains are considered to be one of the older mountain ranges in the world, and some of its highest peaks are situated in the Smokies. Average rainfall in the GSMNP is abundant, and the precipitation feeds an extensive network of streams and rivers. The park is famous for its biological diversity, bolstering 1,500+ species of flower plants and no less than 4,000 non-flowering varieties (The National Park Service, 2015b). The national park in the Smokies can be categorized as adhering mostly to the protectionist conservation paradigm of protected area management[24]. Also known as the "Yellowstone Model", the key elements of this model revolve around ideas of governments managing national assets. It is a top-down structure in which local inhabitants are forcibly removed and excluded from the parks with the intended purpose of preserving nature and wildlife (Zeppel, 2009). The framework for conservation is based on a view of nature as being separate and external to culture, and resembles Young´s (2002) description of Cades Cove in GSMNP.

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[24] The one part of a dichototmy in which Participatory Conservation or the Uluru Model is the other (Zeppel, 2009).
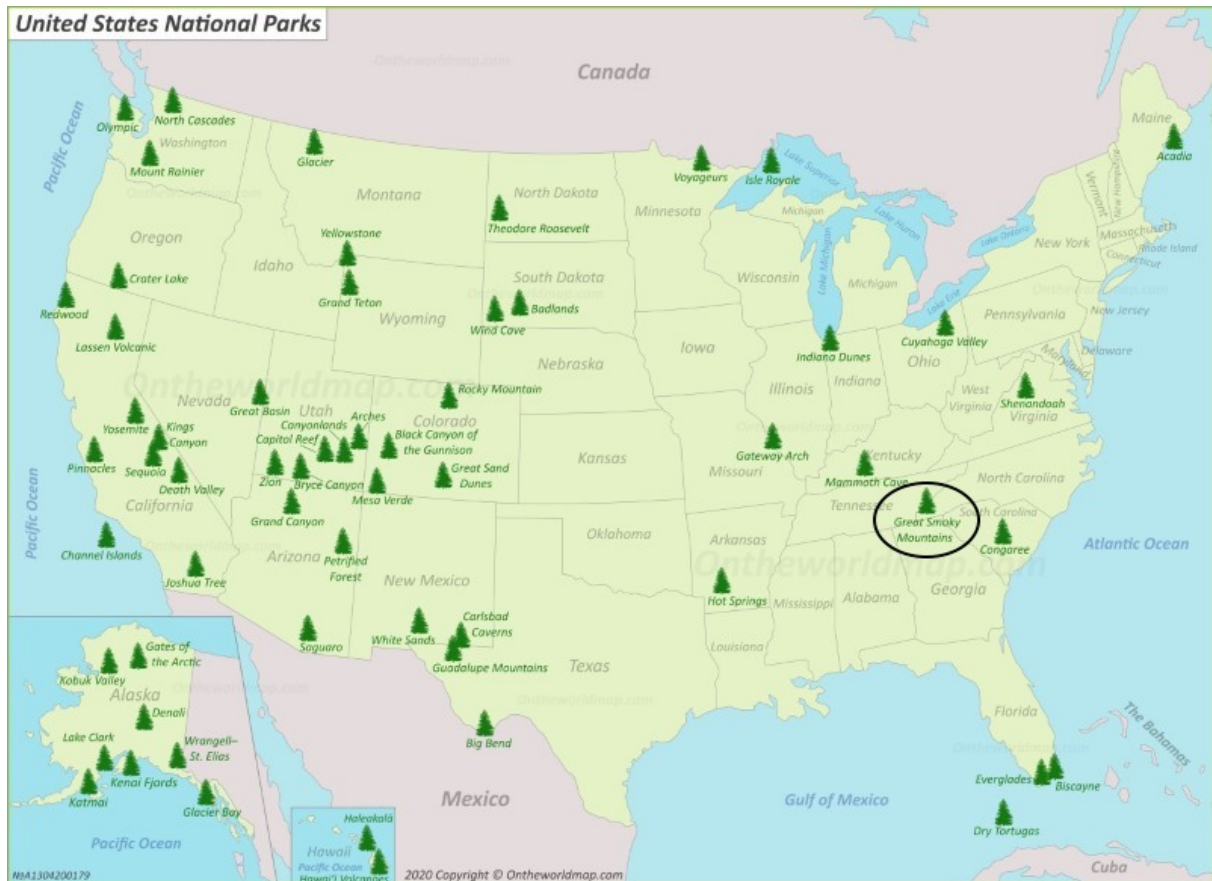
Map 1: Map of all national parks in the contiguous United States, and in Alaska and Hawaii. GSMNP is located in the circle (OnTheWorldMap, 2020b).

High visitation numbers to the GSMNP and surrounding areas can be partially explained by its geographical location (Fletchall, 2013). Being one of few national parks on the American east coast, it is within reasonable[25] driving distance of many of the major cities and highly populous areas in the country. Among the major cities within a day´s driving distance from the national park, are New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis, Nashville, Atlanta, Charlotte, Jacksonville, Orlando and several others. Within the park some of the main sights of attraction include Cades Cove, visitor centers at Oconaluftee and Sugarlands, Newfound Gap and the highest peak in the area at Clingman´s Dome.

Cades Cove, the location in which I conducted parts of my fieldwork, is located on the Tennessee Valley side of the park-, and is one of the main attractions for recreational visitors

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[25] See https://www.mypigeonforge.com/planning/transportation for estimated length, in hours, of driving from major cities in the Mid-West and on the East Coast to the proximate gateway community, Pigeon Forge.

to the area. Initially, in the process of planning a national park, proposed to be flooded to create an artificial lake, the Cades Cove valley has for decades been known to offer panoramic views of the Appalachian Mountains. Being one the more populous areas[26] in years leading up to attempts to form a national park, Cades Cove valley was cleared for agricultural purposes, and the NPS, after rejecting the idea of flooding the valley floor, decided to maintain the agricultural land by leasing land back to initial owners (Catton, 2014, p. 203). At present, thousands of acres of land in the valley are pastures in which both cattle and horses graze. On the edges of the fields is an eleven-mile long loop road that takes visitors to several historical buildings preserved to give visitors insight into what life was like in Cades Cove before the park was formed. Young (2002) likens the one-way linear loop road to amusement parks and living museums. The unidirectionality, in which visitors move through the landscape, he claims, comes as a consequence of tight management of the visitor experience by the NPS. It guarantees tourists will visit the buildings in the valley in a particular order, with many also following the NPS tour booklet for the loop road.

5.4 The issue of entrance fees in GSMNP

Out of the 12 most visited national parks in the United States, the GSMNP is the only national park that does not charge any entrance fees. For the other parks on the higher end of the annual visitation list, entrance fees are either 30/35 U.S. Dollars per vehicle or 15/20 U.S. Dollars per person. There are 36 national parks out of a total of 61 that currently charge entrance fees, and the sum of money charged per vehicle or person ranges from 20-35 USD for vehicles and 7-20 USD per person. For all these parks, visitors can also buy park-specific annual passes that comes at max price of 70 USD (Ziesler, 2019; National Park Service, 2019d). For eager park visitors, however, an annual pass that gives people access to more than 2000 Federal Recreation Sites can be purchased for 80 USD and covers cost for all passengers per personal vehicle (US Park Pass, 2019). The standardization of entrance fees in the national parks is a result of 2006 NPS establishment of a payment structure that would simplify the process determining the fee amount for the individual parks (National Park Service, 2019d).

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[26] In the 1920´s the valley was inhabited by about six hundred people working, for most parts, in farming, but also in milling, timbering and in the early tourist industry of the area. The entire valley was owned by federal government by the date of the official park dedication in 1940 (Catton, 2014).

5.4.1 Annual park budgets

For the fiscal year of 2014, for which the final numbers have been made available to the public, the GSMNP had a base budget of 18.5 million USD (National Park Service, 2017). Numbers for the years following 2014, according to GSMNP Management (D. Soehn, personal communication, January, 2020) indicate slight increases in this budget, and for 2018 park budget totals reached 19,4 million USD. In comparison, Yellowstone National Park, with less than half the number of visitors, had a base budget of 118.7 million USD in 2018 (National Park Service, 2019c). Although there is a plethora of potential reasons for the massive park budget discrepancies, it seems relevant to have a look at some general statistics for the two parks to see if the massive difference in finances is justifiable. Firstly, it is necessary to point out that Yellowstone NP covers about three times as much land as GSMNP. In terms of infrastructure, however, Yellowstone only narrowly outnumbers GSMNP when it comes to road- (both paved and unpaved) and trail miles. When it comes to comparing personnel and employees it gets somewhat more demanding. Whereas Yellowstone NP is only open for visitors in the summer months of each year, tourists come to GSMNP year around. On one hand, then, Yellowstone NP employs more permanent and seasonal workers than what GSMNP do. Out of the permanently employed, on the other hand, less than half of employees in Yellowstone NP are full time workers. Considering that the difference in number of employees (when all permanently and seasonally employed personnel are included) is at about 400, it is still nowhere near explaining why there is a 100 million USD disparity in park base budgets (National Park Service, 2017a & National Park Service, 2019c).

Another element obscuring and challenging the potential of park budget comparisons is the fact that Yellowstone NP has a lot more facilities inside park boundaries than what is found in GSMNP. In the larger of the two parks, there are several options for both dining and lodging inside the park. GSMNP, on the other hand, offers picnic areas and developed campgrounds, but only one hotel-like option for accommodation and no restaurants (National Park Service, 2017a & National Park Service, 2019c). At first, then, it can be fairly challenging to figure out whether or not operational costs for the hotels, restaurants, convenience stores etc. in Yellowstone are included in the park base budget. If these services were to be operated by the NPS itself, it would have made the large budget discrepancies more understandable. When

taking into account, though, that lodging and dining services are operated by private businesses, the issue of large variance in budgets should be addressed. For many national parks, Yellowstone included, commercial use authorizations can be handed out to private companies supplying "small scale, commercial activities that are appropriate, low impact, and consistent with the purpose for which Yellowstone was established[27]" (2019a). Concessions contracts are also agreed upon for larger scale commercial activities. The idea and rationale behind allowing the NPS to make these agreements is that private companies and businesses can help with offering services to visitors, and that it can contribute to strengthening the gateway communities´ economies (National Park Service, 2019a). In the case of GSMNP, however, the Department of the Interior adopted policies in 1940 that ensured the park, through concession operations, would not provide these services within the park boundary. In the southern Appalachians this responsibility was left to local communities on the outskirts of the park, as the Department of the Interior wanted to "maximize the park´s wilderness character, which was perhaps its most valuable attribute" (Catton, 2014, p. 121).

Returning to, and connecting, the issue of entrance fees to that of inconsistency in national park budgets it is evident how the ability to collect fees influence park income and funding. In the fiscal year 2018, Yellowstone NP collected 43.9 million USD in fees from visitors (National Park Service, 2019c). When comparing this amount to the total base budget of GSMNP it is evident that the most visited national park in the U.S. has a massive unfulfilled potential of generating income in an era where entrance fees have become regular features. The PEW Charitable Trusts (2017) suggest GSMNP has a 233 million USD maintenance backlog, and recognize the crumbling road network as being the most pressing current challenge. With financial constraints leading to a budget distribution in which park maintenance has received annual funds ranging from 5,4 million to 8,1 million USD between 1998 and 2019 (D. Soehn, personal communication, January, 2020) it is apparent the suggested maintenance backlog can not be dealt with in the short term. Although they are pressing concerns for other units within the NPS too, it is still not close to the more than 10 times, compared to annual revenue, deferred maintenance backlog in GSMNP. Considering that the other most visited national parks in the United States have significantly increased their annual revenues due to higher fee collections in the last 5 years, whereas GSMNP has remained at a relatively stable level, the issue of collecting entrance fees in the Southern

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[27] Although this statement is written for Yellowstone NP particularly, it seems reasonable to believe that similar adaptions exist for other national parks.

Appalachian national park could become an increasingly contentious topic. In calculations for the fiscal year of 2018, for the purpose of exemplification, it was found that park funding (calculated by adding the sum of congressional appropriations and the revenue from fee collection) in GSMNP was at $1.92 per visitor. This is about half of the second to least (Zion National Park) funded park among the five most visited national parks, and about a tenth of the per-visitor funding of Yellowstone National Park (Kays, 2019).

Despite financing being a major issue for the management of GSMNP, there are few actors with interests in the area that see imposing entrance fees as an imminent possible solution. Senators, representatives and local politicians from Tennessee admits raising an entrance fee would be resisted by local actors, and some say they themselves, albeit aware of the backlogs, would not want to put up a fee with a rationale of ensuring accessibility for all people regardless of income. One of the concerns of politicians about the prospects of collecting fees is that it could have a negative effect on the booming tourism industry in the district. Sevier County, in which important gateway communities Sevierville, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg are located, is currently the third-largest payer of sales tax dollars to Tennessee, despite being only the 15th most populous county in the state (Kays, 2019). To those in favor of free access, the main arguments to support their position are seemingly both to secure accessibility for visitors, but also to strengthen the economies of the gateway communities. One of the assumptions is thus that imposition of a fee would lead to a decrease in flows of tourism to the area, and reduced incomes both for the local counties and the state. In the analysis section of the thesis I will return to the issue of entrance fees and go further in details over why contestation to the prospect of financial barriers were strong in Tennessee and North Carolina.

5.4.2 The philanthropy of park support and donations

Philanthropy is a term deriving from Greek, meaning `love of humanity´. The term was coined in the 1600s and is generally linked to enlightenment thinking. Throughout recent centuries, the returning key principle for actions regarded to be philanthropic is that a flow of financial support should be stewarded from those who have gained most from enterprise to benefit humanity. This tradition of philanthropy in an Anglo-Saxon context is said to have its moral and cultural roots in religion. Catholic ideas of relieving individual level suffering are combined with Protestant and Puritan values of work ethics, individualism and the moral

obligation of liberalism. In capitalist societies, thus, the role of the market is partially to make civil society contributions, whilst operating principally outside of the state (Holmes, 2012).

The traditional definition of philanthropy has been limited to the practices of the wealthy members of Anglo-Saxon societies. It has been centered on how the rich have redistributed their income, and the concept has thus excluded all other socio-economic strata. Philanthropy has moreover failed to recognize donations of expertise, time and effort, and only captured the formal donations of money (Holmes, 2012). There are some that have criticized the narrow application of the concept, saying it overemphasizes `Wall Street titans´, and overlooks charitable practices in other parts of the world. The strength of broadening the concept, some of the critics argue, is that it facilitates engagement with various philanthropic practices from more angles (Ramutsindela et al., 2011). The concept of philantrocapitalism refers to ideas and practices gaining attention for advocacy of increasing roles of capitalist actors, capitalist techniques and significance of market forces in philanthropy. There are good arguments to why philanthropy and capitalism should be regarded as intrinsically linked. Philanthropy has distinct roots in religious and cultural practices, such as ideas of relieving individual suffering, but moreover also in obligations of paying back and contributing to a greater public good if you succeed through enterprise or in the market. There are debates over philanthropy as a concept, and on what types of goodwill should be included in the conceptual framework. Its historical roots might indicate that philanthropy is exclusively an act done by capitalists, whereas others have argued the concept should be defined more broadly (Holmes, 2012). In the analysis section, philanthropy as a concept will be applied broadly to include all donations to GSMNP (Ramutsindela et al., 2011). Further nuancing of the concept could inarguably be purposeful, but for operationalization purposes I decide to refer to park donations as philanthropic acts.

Adding to the revenue generated from entrance fees and the collection of taxes, national parks are also dependent upon donations. On the NPS website there is a section in which visitors can explore the different ways in which they can contribute to increase park revenues. For potential donors, the NPS lists specific projects, particular parks or the larger national programs as prospective recipients of financial contributions. Most national parks in the United States have at least one partner organization that helps raise money for park management and further supports the main mission of the parks. The National Park Omnibus Management Act of Congress recognized the need for non-profit organizations to increase

revenue for parks in 1998. It provided NPF[28] should implement a comprehensive program to both assist in and promote philanthropic programs targeting supporters at individual park unit level (Ansson Jr., 1999).

Holly Kays (2019) suggests the role of partner organization becomes increasingly important for GSMNP, due to their unique issues with funding. The two current main partners of the GSMNP are Great Smoky Mountains Association and Friends of the Smokies, estimated to contribute $1.3 to $2 million and $3.5 to $4 million respectively on an annual basis. Even if you consider the numbers at the lower end of these ranges, the sums still amount to an addition of over 20% to the revenue generated by the park from camping fees and congressional appropriations. It is not in my interest to speculate on the motives of actors that are involved in, or members of, the GSMNP partner organization. From what can be found on their online pages, and given the statements in Kays´ article (2019), their foundational principles and prime reason for staying active is to ensure that the park is able to operate despite budget constraints and few options of increasing revenues. The operational rational, thus, is assumed to be highly rigorous.

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[28] Short for National Park Foundation – an offical chartiable partner of the NPS.

6. Entrance fee conflicts and donation boxes in GSMNP

In the analysis section of this thesis, I want to argue that the common explanation of GSMNP still being free is due to an eternal deed in the transfer of lands from North Carolina and Tennessee to the United States for the purpose of park creation is correct. My hope, however, is to contribute and add to this explanation by placing the issue within wider institutional and socio-spatial contexts. Although the tensions, historically, were largely due to multiscalar judicial incompatibilities, I deem it purposeful to show how the initial and reproduced conflicts over entrance fees also must be understood within a given society-nature configuration that has produced views of nature as something to preserve and manage whilst also being given aesthetical value. I will also argue that a visitor experience in the national park, because of a missing entrance fee, is seemingly disconnected from traditional capitalist modes of production and consumption. However, findings will show that other, and somewhat more obscure forms of capitalism offset the sense of disconnection. Supporting this argument are within-park observations of spatial and material manifestations of the role of philanthropy for park management, and an assessment of the national park as a relational space highly influenced by, and influencing, local, regional, national and global economies. Archival findings and the scrutiny of financing issues and philanthropy will eventually lead to a final reflection on the use of entrance fees on publicly owned lands. Throughout this section of the paper it should be taken into account that ontological and epistemological assumptions clarified in the methodological chapter are used as a basis for interpretations of data collected in the field

6.1 Archival research – findings

6.1.1 The historical issue of entrance fees:

The overarching goal of conducting archival research was to get a better understanding of the historical significance of the conflict over charging entrance fees to GSMNP. Among the most visited national parks in the United States, GSMNP is unique in that it does not charge visitor fees. In assessment of other works on the topic (Catton, 2014; Ise, 1967) I recognized the need to research the path dependency in reproductions of park financing based on decisions made on the issue in the early beginnings of the park. The Smoky Mountains Collection Preservation Center kept records of a myriad of documents that helped explain

how events unfolded to produce an outcome of a present day free-to-enter park. I consciously use the concept of path-dependency with regards to fee collection, as the ownership status of lands prior to park formation proves to be a distinct predicative for whether or not this park charges fees at the point of entry. Whereas most other national parks, historically, have been founded on federally owned land, the situation was highly different in the Smokies. As of today, the only fee visitors to GSMNP could potentially be paying is a camping fee[29], or for pavilion rentals in picnic areas. All other activities are free, and most importantly, entering the park with a car can still be done without paying a fee (National Park Service, 2017b).

To provide some background and contextual framework for the development of a conflict over entrance fees to GSMNP, it is essential to address the differences in the campaign to a national park in the Smokies compared to western counterparts in the early 1900s. Most national parks had up until that point mostly been a concern of convincing local area residents and members of Congress that founding national parks could have positive effects both for locals whilst also being of national interest. In the case of GSMNP, somewhat contrary to that of earlier western parks, a park in the Smokies became a clear regional interest as well. It was expected to be a site of recreation for larger parts of the American east. Its central location could be reached by half of the American population within a day´s drive already in the first half of the 20th century. Although it generated a lot of support in the Department of Interior and by members of Congress, it had to overcome hurdles of financing and completing purchases of a significant number of privately owned tracts of land (Catton, 2014).

Newfound Gap road, the main route crossing the park, was completed in the early 1930s. In July 1929, The Asheville Times reported that they on the North Carolinian side of the park were about half way done with the roughly 13-mile long stretch connecting a road that earlier had stopped at Smokemont, N. C. to the Tennessean highway ending at the Newfound Gap. Although realizing the potential of offering tourists a more comfortable way of crossing the Smokies, and to get close to sights such as Mt. Le Conte, Hughes Ridge and Clingman´s Dome, it is also made clear in the article that when completing the road, people of Western North Carolina will shorten their trip to Eastern Tennessee by many hours (The Asheville Times, 1929).

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[29] Ranging in price from $14-23 per night (National Park Service, 2017b)

The issue of entrance fees to GSMNP first arose in the 1930s. When the NPS sought to take over control of maintenance work on the main arterial road through the park, Newfound Gap Road, from the respective state highway departments, state officials both in North Carolina and Tennessee required assurances from the NPS that all abandoned roads had to remain toll free. In a letter from C. F. Holland (1936), then Executive Vice-President of the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce to Senator Kenneth McKellar of Tennessee, many of the concerns of what impact the establishment of toll gate(s) in the area would have on both flow of commerce and on the flow of tourism to the area.

> "…the hindrance such a toll gate would establish to the free flow of commerce and trade between the states involved. That is an important thing to consider. It is also extremely important that consideration be given to the fact that the tourist business is strongly on the upgrade in this area. … If now it is proposed to make people pay a toll fee for going through the Park or for going around the scenic loops in connection with this Park, it will have a very great tendency in our opinion to divert tourists from this area and that diversion would be a very great economic disaster to this section"

It is evident from the voiced concerns that gateway community interest regard implementation of tolls to be an economic hindrance both in terms of its capacity to reduce demands from tourists, but also in that it becomes a barrier for commercial traffic in the area. This confirms roadway networks within the park are not exclusively roads for tourist consumption of nature, landscapes and wilderness. It is additionally a conjunction of communities on either side of the Appalachians to which flows of trade go in both directions.

In correspondence between national park officials and the NPS, the sentiment in 1937 was that they were seemingly hoping that they could resolve the issue without having to put the no toll or license-fee into legislature (Cammerer, 1937). Then associate of the park service, Arno B. Cammerer, perhaps seeking some progress in the process of establishing the park, later advised the NPS to adhere to the state´s requirements to not license fees (Catton, 2014). Although highway commissioners in both states agreed to abandon their authority over roads, the process was complicated by the fact that it was not within Tennessee´s highway commissioner´s vested power to cede state highways (Phillips, 1937). Despite several requests from the Department of Interior to the governor of Tennessee to foot the necessary bill, cooperation froze, and the issue remained unresolved for a long time (Catton, 2014, p. 113-114).

Complications over roadway jurisdictions proved to be a major issue for the NPS, who considered abandonment of all roads within the park to the United States a requirement to fully complete the park. In a letter from Cammerer (1938), at that point promoted to director of the NPS, to GSMNP Superintendent J. R. Eakin, the particular obstacles to a resolution in Tennessee and North Carolina respectively were explained to halt prospects of park developments:

> "A distinct understanding was had and was mentioned officially in the correspondence with the States involved, especially in the prescription of the park boundary by the secretary, that before the park will be accepted for development purposes, all county and state roads within the boundary must be turned over to the United States. In view of this, we do not want to put ourselves on record as going ahead with the development of the park until the title to the roads is completely vested in the United States".

It is evident that Cammerer sought to resolve the issue at hand, albeit being vary of not acting outside of his power. He moreover urged Superintendent Eakin to address Chairman Dunlap of the North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission in an attempt to get to an agreement on road abandonment. In Cammerer´s communication with Dunlap the issue of entrance fees and tolls had been reoccurring, and reassurances were given to the North Carolina official that, if need be, the NPS would not recommend a license fee to use the road. From a legal standpoint, however, Cammerer struggled to see how this is practically doable, and his address to Eakin thus seems to be somewhat of attempt, in desperation, at getting other stakeholders, i.e. the GSMNP represented by Eakin, to further the pressure on the North Carolinians (Cammerer, 1938).

The U.S. Department of Interior, keenly interested in resolving the issue of highway legislation, voiced their concerns over the effects of lack of road transfers in a letter to former governor of Tennessee, James McCord. In this letter, assistant secretary of the department, Oscar L. Chapman (1945 in Chiles, 1986), says that federal control and jurisdiction on within-park roads on the Tennessean side of the park was an absolute requirement for federal funds to be authorized expended on road maintenance. Chapman assures, backing his claim by referring to the similar promise given to North Carolina, that the department had no intentions to charge tolls or license fees for highway use, and that they did not contemplate interfering with "reasonable" commercial traffic. In his plea to the Tennessee governor, the assistant secretary concludes:

"In authorizing thconveyance [sic] of the highways to the United States, there would
be no objection to a provison that **no toll or license fee shall be charged the users of
Highway No. 71,** and that there shall be no interference with reasonable commercial
truck travel over that highway… Any action that you may take toward securing the
enactment at the present session of the Tennessee General Assembly of appropriate
legislation to accomplish the purposes outlined herein would be appreciated by this
Department.".

Enclosed into this letter was a suggestion to how the required bill could be drafted. The
enclosure was divided into three sections, in which the first attempts securing no further
issues of conveying lands from Tennessee to the United States, and the second that the state
public works and highway commissioner was to be authorized to execute the transfers with
the no toll or license fee-deed in place. Third, and lastly, the Department of Interior suggest it
should be further enacted that the bill should be effective immediately if passed and approved,
because it is required for public welfare provision.

6.1.2 Tennessee state bills resolving the question of road jurisdiction

Two Tennessee state bills were required to complete the transfer of roads from state to federal
ownership. The roads in question in these bills were the Foothills Parkway, Gatlinburg Spur
and Tennessee State Highways 71 and 73. The first of these bills (Tennessee Senate Bill No.
659) was passed and approved in February 1945, and was an attempt by the Tennessee
legislature to secure a toll free future Foothills Parkway. In the wording of the bill, they made
it clear that the even though it was going to be constructed and operated by the Federal
Government, that rights were reserved at state level to ever collect taxes from taxable
privileges in relation to the scenic parkway. It further stated that

"…no charge shall be made by the United States Government or by any agency
thereof for the use of said Highway or Parkway by anyone desiring to travel along or
over the same, and that no toll gates, toll stations or toll bridges shall be maintained on
said Highway" (Chiles, 1986).

This act was later amended by House Bill No. 804 in March, 1947 to include specifications of
any highway or parkway between gateway communities Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg[30] also
to be toll free. Similarly, Tennessee Senate Bill No. 404 passed and approved grants for

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[30] A road eventually named the Gatlinburg Spur.

Tennessee Highways 71 and 73 to the United States in February 1951. Later that year, in June 1951, A. E. Demaray (Director of the NPS at the time) accepted the final deed on behalf of the United States. It is through these deeds Tennessee have power over the decision-making processes regarding entrance fees to GSMNP up until this date. Imposing fees would require amendments to these acts, and proves to still be highly contentious particularly in the region surrounding the national park.

6.1.3 Local opposition to park fees and road tolls

The lengthy process of transferring roads from Tennessee to the United States can be understood as an attempt to secure an eternal deed that would ensure toll and entrance fee national park visits. Although the state bills had deeds stating that this was an integral part of the agreement of road transfers, the concern of tolls and fees continued and continues to surface. Some of the main advocates to further the free-to-enter status in the park were local residents in gateway communities, who had the issue of fees as one of their core interests. Groups and organizations based in Knoxville were particularly active in the no-fee campaign. In a piece in the Knoxville Journal from 1948, several members of The Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association (GSMCA) reflected on the prospects of tolls. The association had assembled in light of a congressional committee scrutinizing increasing revenues of the NPS, and the latter had asked the GSMCA for their views on the matter. The group had voted unanimously to oppose all proposed tolls, and their arguments for taking this stance ranged from Tennesseans already having paid for the park[31] to potential increased revenues being offset by losses in gasoline tax collection (Evans, 1948).

These sentiments were extended to Newton B. Drury, director of the National Park Service at the time, by the president of GSMCA, Frank Maloney. In one of the correspondence letters (1948), Maloney revealed that he had invited two representatives of the East Tennessee Automobile Club, two members of the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, two from the Knoxville Tourist Bureau, editors from the two biggest newspapers in Knoxville as well as the Mayor and City Manager of the gateway community Gatlinburg. The unanimous

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[31] Referring to the GSMNP foundational process in which both Tennessee and North Carolina contributed with a significant share of money needed to build the park. By saying "the people" explicitly, I interpret it also to include the many private donations from Tennesseans towards the national park project.

opposition at the meeting to implementation of fees and tolls, Maloney emphasized, was based on the local contributions to land purchases in the park being perceived as a hefty enough of a price to drive on park roads. Reflecting on the fact that Shenandoah National Park in the neighboring state of Virginia were charging tolls from visitors driving to the park, the president of GSMCA says those present at the meeting felt the best option was to eliminate tolls in Shenandoah as well. This view was defended by claiming the two eastern parks had a vastly different status to the parks in the west that had been created from public domain.

In the same document (Maloney, 1948), concerns over within park establishment of concession stands and lodging are voiced. Although recognizing the lacking facilities in the gateway communities at the time, GSMCA and others present at the meeting were genuinely assured adequate lodging and tourist services would be provided as full road infrastructure was in place within and on the outskirts of the national park.

> "When the state road is completed from Cosby to Gatlinburg, we feel the development along this highway will increase sufficiently to provide adequate facilities for all people visiting the park from the Tennessee side. We feel that the granting of concessions inside the park will only add to the troubles and worries of the Park Service, and not give any great relief to visitors".

Rationalizing their argumentation were claims of the Newfound Gap[32] being a 1½ hours drive from gateway communities Cherokee and Gatlinburg in either direction. Despite claims of being concerned with the potential burden granting concessions within the park could have had for the NPS, it is reasonable to believe a range of actors present at the meeting had interests in increased demand for tourist services, accommodation and food in the gateway communities.

Further examples of the opposition to entrance fees in the gateway communities include local responses to a 1995 proposition from then GSMNP Superintendent Karen Wade to charge entrance fees. Park officials told the Knoxville News Sentinel (1995) that budgets were meager, and that they had only increased to keep up with inflation. One of the noticeable effects of the finance backlog, they stressed further, was that they had not been able to increase numbers of staff despite significant growth in visitation numbers. Wary of the issue

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[32] As shown on Map 2, located quite close to a geographic center of the park.

of park finances and reluctant to accept introduction fees, elected officials from several GSMNP gateway communities met at a picnic at the Twin Creeks shelter sponsored by the city of Gatlinburg. Interestingly, one of the attendees at the event, mayor of Pittman Center, Judy Perryman, claimed she would not oppose charging tourists who came to the park. She was quoted, on the topic of tourists, saying "They use it. They abuse it. To them it´s just another vacation". For locals who had given up their homes for the purpose of park foundation, on the other hand, Perryman said it was "sacred ground". Among others present at the picnic, most were opposed to any entrance fee in general. They were, nonetheless, able to recognize that finances had become a pressing concern for park operations, and some of the suggestions from those who opposed entrance fees included use-based charges on picnic areas and park campgrounds[33], levy taxes on accommodation that would be transferred to the park budget, use municipal funds to cover some expenses that had been covered in the park budget, and raise more money through donations (Davis, 1995).

Findings from the archival research on the historical roots, and the continually reemerging, issue of entrance fees, suggest place-specific factors are largely explanatory to the difficulties of generating revenue in GSMNP. Through formal deeds in the transfer of roads to the federal government, Tennessee secured that the main roads within park boundaries would remain free of tolls and entrance fees. The implementation of necessary legislation came as a result of a numerous actors with interest both within and outside of park boundaries, felt they had already paid a price for park formation, and that they could benefit from increased visitor numbers with a free to enter park. Despite recognition of the existing financial backlogs in the GSMNP, and the attempts of NPS to address this concern by reintroducing a debate over entrance fees, local interest responses have been adamant in finding alternative methods of revenue generation. This concern was raised also by John Ise (1967, p. 635), who argued national parks, GSMNP included, that were also serving as throughways to destinations beyond park limits would have more problems with putting up or increasing a fee.

6.1.4 NPS and the case of SmokyWorld

Although the NPS have jurisdiction only over the federally owned land within the park borders, findings in the archives suggest GSMNP management have followed gateway

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[33] That further required lobbying congress to ensure the money generated from those fees would remain in the park.

community developments closely. One of the cases includes the conflict over the proposed
SmokyWorld theme park in the late 1970s. SmokyWorld was part of a proposed larger
development on lands adjacent to the national park near Townsend, TN. Developers
anticipated a total of $100,000,000 in capital investments were required to build the complex
as a whole, nicknamed "The Smokies", that would have included, among other things, a vast
resort and conference center, a golf course and the SmokyWorld Theme Park. The buildings
supposed to make up the complex included 21-story twin residential towers, and theme park
rides and architectural components in the theme park. A selling point, and the "theming" of
SmokyWorld, was to allow people to:

> "Relieve the old-fashioned country fair complete with medicine shows, cotton candy,
> sawdust, the Ferris wheel, the Loop, the Spider, plus scores of rides and thrills unique
> in the South, including a runaway mine train, jet roller coasters, a carousel, a water
> `flume´ ride, using the natural cool, clear waters of Little River from the Great Smoky
> Mountains National Park ending up in a breath-taking finale in mountain trout-filled
> waters" (Mountain Hosts International, 1977).

All these features would make up the "most old-fashioned yet modern amusement park in
America to date" (Mountain Hosts International, 1977), and it was evident that developers
saw good potential in profiting from theming the park to visitors seeking to experience the
old-fashioned life of the Southern Appalachians.

Although the SmokyWorld park proponents saw the adjacency to the park as an exclusive
positive, GSMNP management were unconvinced of the potential developments on
neighboring lands. In a letter to the director of planning in Blount County, in which
SmokyWorld was to be located, acting superintendent in GSMNP at the time, Roger R.
Miller, replied to a request for review and comments on the proposed resort-, conference- and
theme park complex. In the introduction to the reply, Miller stresses that although NPS only
administer the land within the park, developments outside of it could also affect the integrity
and the possibilities of enjoyment in the national park. In the letter, he categorically goes
through the major points of concern for the park management, including visual impacts, noise
impacts, air pollution and traffic congestion (Miller, 1978). The prospect of the amusement
park was neither exclusively popular among Blount County locals, and an organization was
formed to keep park propositions in check. Alternatives for Blount County, the community
organization, furthered the skepticism voiced by GSMNP officials, saying the Smokies
complex would likely lead to increased traffic and expose park visitors to "urban views and

noise". SmokyWorld was eventually put to rest in 1981, and the community organization later folded. One of the long-term effects of the conflicts over the project, it is claimed, are restrictions on zoning in gateway communities for the purpose of producing natural environment that do not conflict with national park objectives (Anderson, 2019). Interestingly, especially in terms of scales of conflicts, local area residents seem to be in agreement with the federal NPS on the questions of gateway community developments. It can be argued that this agreement is somewhat incompatible with views on entrance fees, given the emphasis of developing natural environments. Nonetheless, it suggests the lines of conflicts over park-related issues are highly dependent on individual cases, and that gateway community populations are not automatically supporting all potential investments and income-bringing developments. The major issue with SmokyWorld for both GSMNP officials and local community populations was that it could infringe on what were regarded virtuous place-myths. A national park, serving as a monument of the natural world, is produced and re-produced not only visually (i.e. tall residential complexes on the premises). It is also created aurally, in the sense that only certain types of noise are appropriate for particular places. Noise-producing activities failing to be included in the appropriate category are thus unwanted (Urry, 1995).

**6.1.5 Archival research summary**

Findings in archive research on the issue of entrance fees in GSMNP are in agreement with findings from previous assessment of park management history (Catton, 2014). The conflict was rooted in attempts from federal government to obtain rights over within-park jurisdiction road management, and Tennessean and North Carolinian requests for the roads to remain free of tolls and entrance fees. Rationalizing the arguments of fee and toll opposition were sentiments of people living in the area having already paid a great price for park formation. As the lands that eventually became the national park consisted of numerous tracts of privately owned land, GSMNP became an exceptional case in U.S. national park history. Consequently, on the concern of within-park roads, Tennessee and North Carolina governments and lawmakers had leverage in terms of refraining from completing the transfer until a deed was put in place to ensure they would forever remain free of tolls and entrance fees. Arguments adding to the one of local populations already having paid a significant price for the park to be established, were concerns over how a financial barrier could negatively impact flows of commerce and tourism through and to the area.

For locals, despite being aware of the severe maintenance backlog in the park, reproducing a free to enter park has seemed essential up until present day. More recent attempts at raising the issue of entrance fees in the park have been met by alternative approaches and suggestions on how to generate income, indicating there still exist local community aversion to financial barriers to the park. Having established the national parks are cases of nature, wilderness and landscapes managed and preserved within budget constraints, and further recognized how GSMNP are currently unable to take advantage of a fee system many parks use to offset lacking congressional appropriations, attention turns to the alternative modes of revenue generating measures in the Smokies.

6.2 Observational research – findings

6.2.1 Contextual understanding

My decision to do include observations as a methodological approach in fieldwork was based on the intriguing question of how the everlasting of collecting money for park management was manifested spatially within the park. Would a visit to the park genuinely feel as a free, in terms of entry costs, experience? Or were there perhaps examples of alternative methods of collecting money from tourists? I will make the argument in this section of the thesis that the conflict over entrance fees should be seen as a contributing factor to the presence and the design of donation boxes and donation box signage in the case of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. At select locations, visitors are confronted with the prospect of donating with a reminder of their park visit being free. I follow Edensor´s (2001) claim that tourist performance is both socially and spatially regulated to a certain extent, and that the regulatory framework varies contextually. In further agreements "there is something to be gained by interrogating how landscape/landscaping is practiced emergent through mobile and material practices, and how mobilities animate landscapes and places, and are inseparable from particular materialities" (Merriman et al., 2008, p. 192). When analyzing GSMNP as a tourist space in wilderness and landscape, I will provide examples of how it is organized, its materiality and the aesthetic qualities attributed to selected sites by park management. The particular organization unquestionably regulates tourist performances, but it is nonetheless not fully determining how they perform their activities. By opting to donate, it is my assumption that tourists have yet another means of reproducing landscapes and wilderness in the park.
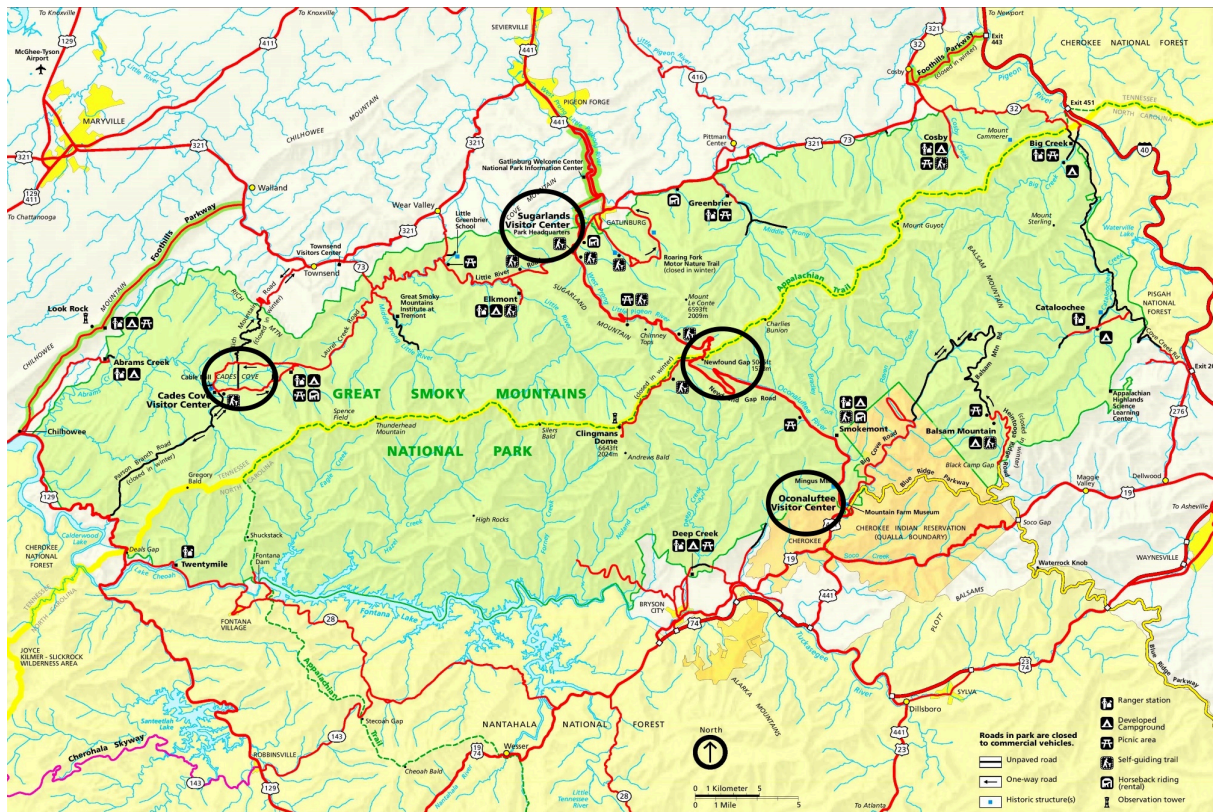
Map 2: Map of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (OnTheWorldMap, 2020a). The locations circled, Cades Cove, Newfound Gap, Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Sugarlands Visitor Center, are sites at which I observed and took photos of donation boxes and donation box signs.

It is important to stress in this section that collection of donations from park visitors and benefactors occur in most national parks in the United States (Kays, 2019), and that it would have been interesting at some point to extend this study to include comparisons to other park units. My suspicion, or hypothesis if you will, is that conflict of finances causes alternative ways of generating income and they are spatially embedded within parks, and impacts park visits. If, for instance, the cost of running GSMNP was footed completely by congress appropriations, I further speculate, the particular conflict and spatial manifestations would not exist. The hypothesis and speculation is based on the main objectives of the two main partner organizations of the GSMNP, Great Smoky Mountains Association and Friends of the Smokies. These partner organizations raison d´etre must be understood as recognition of the shortcomings of congress appropriations in the effort to maintain vital national park functions, and the subsequent decision to take action through forming interest organizations (Kays, 2019). Historically, philanthropy has proved beneficiary for environmental conservation. The discourse on philanthropy, however, is two-sided in that scholars often scrutinize its negative

yields, whereas philanthropists themselves present their work as fully altruistic and harmless. To get a better understanding of the impacts of philanthropic actions, it is purposeful to study the variegated forms it takes on (Ramutsindela et al., 2011).

At the beginning of 2019, due to government shutdown, GSMNP had to close operations of park facilities. Although associations supporting the park had provided emergency operational funds, a long-lasting conflict in congress led park managers, the NPS, to eventually having to comply with the Department of Interior´s contingency plan. Restrooms were not in operation, trash was not removed, fewer park rangers were on the job, backcountry camping was disallowed, and the visitor centers at Cades Cove, Oconaluftee and Sugarlands were closed. Quite ironically, and somewhat telling of the omnipresent conflict of financing the park, one of the effects noticeable to visitors passing through in the most recent shutdown period, was donation boxes filled to the brim. With no park rangers on the job, donation boxes were not emptied, and visitors wanting to support the park financially to keep it open found themselves having to shove money into the slot (Whetstone, 2019). The irony here is that people seem quite willing to pay to keep the park open, yet the current system of financing the NPS leaves the national parks vulnerable to government prioritization in periods of struggle, making them unable to collect the donations made with the intention of supporting park operations. It thus becomes a governmental run park operation, to some extent dependent on private donations, which during budget crisis are at no capacity to benefit from particular philanthropic acts.

Private donations and philanthropic acts have been essential to the initial production of, and the continual reproduction of a national park in the Great Smoky Mountains. Financing of park formation and park management has been, and continues to be, dependent on financial contributions from a broad range of donators. In the early stages, ranging from schoolchildren donating hard earned, yet in the bigger picture meager savings, to the Rockefeller foundation bashing out millions of dollars to pay for land acquisitions to form the park (Catton, 2014; Frost & Hall, 2009a; Kays, 2019), and presently from collections and donations of single dollars in creative within-park donation boxes to substantial contributions made by individuals or families to non-profits supporting the park.

In the case of GSMNP, Friends of the Smokies (FOTS) are the main support organization. They have been active since 1993, and have helped support the national park with financial contributions of more than 68 million USD. The non-profit organization is an official partner

of the GSMNP, and their contributions cover a myriad of park services. Their 2019 total financial donations of 2,710,900 USD to help cover the cost of resource management, environmental education, volunteer programs, administration, facilities management and improvements of visitor experience, complements generous donations of 150,000 volunteer hours from over 2,500 individuals[34]. Whereas Great Smoky Mountains Association (GSMA), one of the other official partner organizations of GSMNP, primarily raise money from sales at visitor centers and membership programs, FOTS host special events fundraisers and raise money through donation programs. It is one of these donation programs that will be assessed in the following sections, as I analyze the organization´s donation boxes and donation box signage at selected sites in GSMNP (Friends of the Smokies, 2020).

The observation of donation boxes at the Cades Cove Loop Road, Sugarlands Visitor Center, Newfound Gap and Oconaluftee Visitor Center correlates with the number of visitors to particular sights within the national park. In the 2008 visitor study, over half of responding visitor groups said they had visited Cades Cove, 45% had been to the visitor center at Sugarlands, 37% at the Newfound Gap and 36% at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. These four locations constituted the top of the list in the sites visited section (Papadogiannaki et al., 2008), indicating donation boxes are placed strategically to ensure as many visitors as possible pass them on park visits. The conscious decision to place boxes at these sights is moreover in agreement with NPS guidelines. Under the headline "**Location, location, location"**, they say (2013) "Donation boxes are best located in areas where visitors congregate. Often boxes are situated in visitor centers, at entrance and egress points where visitors congregate or wait. Consider that visitors are moved to donate right after they have had a great visitor experience in the park".

I will refer to these locations as tourist sights, defined as spatial locations distinguishable from the everyday life of visitors due to its extraordinary cultural, natural or historical significance (Rojek, 1997). In the following section, I will discuss my findings from these selected sights, and provide photographs as evidence and points of departures for analysis and discussion. Important to note is that my application of tourist performers will be quite broad in this section, agreeing with the arguments of Urry (1990) and Williams (1998). I make the assumption that people who visit these sites can be regarded as tourists, and thus include them in a broad category of social actors.

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[34] The particular example is from 2016, but the organization claims these numbers are representative also for other years.

6.2.2 Cades Cove – reproduction of landscape

The tight spatial control of visitor travels in the Cades Cove section of the national park likens it to living museums and amusement parks. From the point of entry, for those visiting by car, there are few options of altering routes along the 11-mile ride. There are, however, plenty of turnouts, shoulders and options for parking along the road, inviting visitors to stop to have a look at some of the historical buildings found in the area. The unidirectionality and tight spatial control allows the NPS to produce a museum to be experienced in a particular order. Terrence Young (2002), argues that what they have produced at the site is a message of goodness. Presented are the beautiful, romantic and positive parts of former life in the area. Left out of this official presentation are the stories of resistance towards park formation by Cades Cove inhabitants, and the subsequent processes of displacement. What visitors are left with, he claims (2002, p. 158), are lessons of social, aesthetic and environmental virtues. The tourist performance in the Cades Cove loop can be categorized as directed, and the discourse[35] functions as acts to engage tourists´ considerations of what, when and where to gaze (Edensor, 2001).

Although Cades Cove is generally considered a beautiful place that to some extent presents a realistic geography, it fails to reveal some of the most fascinating ironies of American nature-society relations and configurations. Early enabling legislations intended to form national parks in the United States clearly stated that people attempting to locate or settle on parklands would be considered trespassing. What this legislation essentially did was thus to define a spatial division, in which the National Parks became spaces for nature and not people. Young (2002, p. 175) makes the argument that people and society are considered impious, and that the national parks´ premise is to improve people and society through access to nature. The law, however, is written in a way that regards society as polluter and nature as indefensible recipient of negative externalities from the human counterpart. With this fundamental view of nature-society relations, it seems reasonable to point to the irony in the virtuous NPS presentation of society in Cades Cove when taking into account that the people living there had to leave when GSMNP came into existence. The particular nature-society view is furthered in the NPS´ defense of removing residents from the Cove, and reproducing their

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[35] I.e. the opening hours, unidirectionality of the roadway and visitor guides to the area.

actions in reenactments and their landscape. They argue that their program functions primarily to preserve a pastoral appearance in the area, and not the people who first produced the landscape they now protect (Young, 2002). In an ideal-type categorization of society-physical environment intersection (Urry, 1995), management of Cades Cove can be seen as an attempt to facilitate visual consumption. The idea of still allowing agricultural practices in the area is not first and foremost to produce foodstuffs for consumption or for exchange value. It is rather functioning as a means to reproduce a desired landscaped physical environment to be aesthetically appropriated by visitors (See picture 2).

The communities inside park boundaries, from which numerous individuals were removed forcibly in the process of forming a park, have been targets of several myth creations of a mountain resident people that lived at the complete outskirt of larger society. Evidence suggests rather that people living in the highland communities, exemplified by the one in Cades Cove, broadly represented the American culture they came from, and that they had a great deal of contact with the outside world. People living in the Smokies in general had significant knowledge of life and cultures in the world (Pierce, 1995). The narrative, however, of a remote rural community with little outside interference could be more suitable to national park promoters. Grusin (2004) argues national parks, from their inception, have functioned as technological tools to reproduce nature adhering to particular practices, exemplified by aesthetic, cultural and scientific, of an era stretching between the Civil War and the end of WW1[36], and it is reasonable to suggest this particular production of a landscape makes the place high in demand among visiting tourists.

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[36] In his book (2004), Grusin pay significant attention to Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite national parks.

Picture 2: The pastoral landscape of Cades Cove (09/17/2019).

I would extend the argument of irony even further, when considering the apparent relative importance of people to reproduce the landscape and wilderness in the area and especially so with regards to the act of visitor donations. Visiting Cades Cove it seems impossible to avoid signs asking you to make donations. On the following pages I will show two pictures taken in Cades Cove. The first of these (Picture 3) is of a donation box observed within one of the buildings listed in the official tour booklet. This box is set up by Friends of the Smokies inside the Primitive Baptist Church, and assures visitors that their donations will be spent on preserving the historic structures in Cades Cove. By donating, visitors can show their appreciation both in a philanthropic sense with a rationale of preservation (National Park Service, 2013), but it can also confirm that individual tourist expectations are met (Williams, 1998). It can be regarded as a way of performing tourism, as visitors make a direct financial contribution towards reproducing tourist space and landscape (Edensor, 2001), despite of the inarguably staged scene of Cades Cove. It is fair to argue then that

"…landscape can be recognized as dynamic and processual through a consideration of representations relationally with the character of life and its practices, through each of which landscape arguably happens. These have been related to ways in which landscape can engage multiple interactions and a possible unsettling of cultural resonances through which new ones may emerge" (Crouch, 2010, p. 14).

Supporting this view of producing landscapes are other ways in which tourists interact with the material and natural landscapes in the area. Noticeably, the donation box is filled with penned ramblings. Graffiti, carvings, signatures and markings has become somewhat of a problem in the park, and obviously stands in stark contrast to the preservation message clearly embedded on the donation box sign. To deal with the issue, GSMNP park rangers have put "Bob Was Here" signs at a number of within-park locations. These signs inform visitors of the consequences of being caught damaging park buildings[37] (National Park Service, 2015a). What the donation box and the ramblings on the pole have in common is that they serve as reminders of the importance of tourists in the continuous reproduction of tourist space. Although the acts of donating and carving your name on national park buildings are arguably opposites in terms of contributions to preservation, it is needless to say they are evidence of tourist performance.

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[37] Those arrested for tagging in GSMNP could face USD 5000$ fines, or 6 months in jail (National Park Service, 2015a).

Picture 3: Friends of the Smokies Donation Box found at the Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery in Cades Cove (09/17/2019).

Along the loop road, moreover, were signs reminding people that their park visit was free and that donations count. Interpreting the signage and the texts written on them, it is evident that

the issue of park finances becomes part of the Cades Cove experience. The capital letter heading reads "DONATION BOX AHEAD", and slightly smaller fonts underneath it argues why visitors should donate. "Entrance to the park is FREE, so your donations count" (Picture 4)[38]. Other elements on the roadside sign include a large picture of a black bear. They are an integral part of the national park fauna, and can regularly be found in the thousands inside park boundaries. From personal experience, I recall seeing two bears at my visit to Cades Cove, and at several points during my drive around the loop I saw people flocking in areas were bears had passed. Whereas the donation box inside the Baptist Church specifically referred to the preservation of historical structures in the plea for donations, the sign along the loop uses the bear to give connotations to the importance of donating for the purpose of preserving the wilderness. The two of them combined covers a vast share of historical general management objectives for the park, which is:

> "To manage the Park in a manner with the purposes of preservation, enjoyment, and benefits to humankind through scientific study, of its distinctive combination of natural and cultural resources" (GSMNP Management Objectives Committee, 1978).

Cades Cove stands out as a great example of the distinctive natural and cultural resources intended to be preserved, enjoyed and benefitted by park management and visitors to GSMNP. Friends of the Smokies further these sentiments in their calls for donation, and allow tourist performers to make direct financial contributions towards reproduction of tourist space (Edensor, 2001). When taking into account the history of myth creation surrounding Cades Cove, the argument could be prolonged further that tourists contribute to the proliferation of place-myths. Some of the places most susceptible to myth creation have been places regarded as being on the margins of society, and in given nature-societal configurations, Cades Cove and other smaller communities in the southern Appalachians can inarguably be said to have existed on the periphery when nature and society are dichotomized (Urry, 1995). Taking into account the socially selective nature of place-myth creation, it might be reasonable to believe that many of those visiting Cades Cove are drawn there by the myths of place on the periphery or in pursuits of experiencing another time by changing place (Adler, 1989).

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[38] Similar appeals, with references to the park having no entrance fee, were found at other sites in the park.

Picture 4: Friends of the Smokies sign along the Cades Cove Loop (09/17/2019).

6.2.3 Visitor centers – creative boxes for general management funds

The visitor centers are important features to most national parks in the United States. In the mid 20th-century, visitor centers began replacing national park museums that were deemed inadequate for public service. The new buildings were designed to be more open than the traditional museums, and were to house interpretive facilities, relevant exhibits as well as rest areas (Gross & Zimmerman, 2002). In the case of GSMNP, the two main ones are located strategically along the main arterial road, Highway 441, going through the park. Sugarlands is located a short drive from Gatlinburg, and serves those arriving the park from the Tennessean side. At the center, visitors can find exhibitions, visit the gift shop and speak to park rangers to get information. Inside the center there are also donation boxes. During my fieldwork period there were two boxes located by the visitor center entrance doors. One of them resembled the boxes observed at other sites, and asked visitors to consider donating; returning to the rationale of park visits being free (Picture 5). In the smaller text on the sign, the nonprofit partner, says donations will help cover the cost of - "education programs, special events, exhibits, cultural demonstrations and operations of the visitor centers".

The second box at Sugarlands was arguably of the more creative kind. At the front of the box, the question "Where are y´all from?" sticks out in front of a picture of the mountain range during autumn foliage. In a smaller font at the bottom of the poster, the Friends of Smokies continue "Show us how much you love the Smokies! Make a donation in a slot above and help your home state win bragging rights!". Rather than hinting at the responsibility of individual visitors to make a financial contribution, as is the case with the other donation boxes, this one attempts to strike a nerve in state pride. Instead of having one singular compartment for all donations, then, it is divided into several sections. One for each of the 50 states constituting the United States, and a few more to cover international travellers (i.e. India, China, Europe, South America). Interestingly, as seen in the compartment in the bottom right corner of the box in picture 7, one is also reserved for visitors from Westeros. A creation of author George R. R. Martin, the fictional world of Westeros has been popularized in the latter years through the HBO-produced fantasy TV-series Game of Thrones. Albeit not unconventional in applications at national parks, questions should be asked over the creativity apparently needed to raise money from national park visitors. In some ways, it becomes central empirical evidence in debates over how to finance federal or government services. The particular design of this box concurs with NPS (2013) recommendations of designing with

visitors in mind. A similar box[39] put up by the Rocky Mountain Nature Association in Rocky Mountains National Park is praised in the document for having donations increase with 100 percent within a year of installing it at the location. It is further suggested to adapt ideas to suit visitor patterns, as some parks have sizeable numbers of visitors from other countries. The inclusion of countries, continents and the fictional world of Westeros in the Sugarlands Visitor Center donation box can thus be seen as an adjustment to the box used for exemplification.

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[39] A box with seperate receptacles for all states in the country.

Picture 5: Donation box at Sugarlands Visitor Center (09/16/2019).

Picture 6: Friends of the Smokies donation box at Sugarlands Visitor Center (09/16/2019).

Picture 7: Friends of the Smokies Donation Box at Sugarlands. The same box as the one pictured in Picture 6 (09/16/2019).

At the visitor center in Oconaluftee, donation box signage is similar to the ones found along the Cades Cove loop (figure 2). The headlines of the two signs on the donation box read "Your donations count…" and "Entrance to the park is free…". Additional information on these donation boxes tell what the financial contributions will be spent on, and includes funding of education programs, conservation of park wildlife, maintenance of the park trail network and the protection of natural resources. Again, the signage and the wording on them refer directly to the role of visitors in reproducing tourist space (Edensor, 2001; Urry, 1990; Urry 1995), and manifest the outcome of a particular nature-society configuration (Smith, 2008; Urry, 1995). On design of donation boxes, NPS (2013) recommends making signs that are simple and distinctive. There should be a clear thematic link that ties into the particularities of the park setting and the mission of the park, without overwhelming visitors with information. In many parks, primary resources or constructed park themes have been added to ensure distinctive boxes that engage visitors. Visibility is further key to attract donations, and the Park Service claim people are likely to contribute financially based on the contents they see in the box. Evidently then, transparent boxes are encouraged at locations where it is deemed safe.

There are clear definitions of what must be included on all collection devices in national parks. The two key elements are clearly visible signage indicating the owner of the box, as well as specify what funds collected from it will be used to support. General operation and maintenance donation boxes (like the one in picture 8 at Oconaluftee) allow flexibility in terms of expenditure for park operations, but typically have less of an appeal to donors than those who are put up for specific uses (National Park Service, 2013). The boxes at the visitor centers (picture 5, 6, 7 and 8) are all put up for general operation and maintenance funds, and function quite differently from the one in the Primitive Baptist Church in Cades Cove (picture 3) where use of donation money is defined to go to the restoration of buildings along the loop road. My understanding of this decision is that the box in the church appeals to tourist experience on sight.

Picture 8: Donation box at Oconaluftee Visitor Center set up by Friends of the Smokies (09/30/2019).

6.2.4 Newfound Gap – the romantic tourist gaze

Newfound Gap is located on the within-park border of North Carolina and Tennessee. At an elevation of 5,046 feet (1538 meters), the gap provides visitors with a scenic overview over larger parts of the park. The sentiments and the value of the view are presented in the signage, in which donations are encouraged for the purpose of preserving the view. It serves as an example of the centrality of nature consumption relying progressively on aesthetic judgments. The romantic tourist gaze refers to a change in visual consumption patterns steered towards solitude and deeper and, in a sense, semi-spiritual human relationships with physical and built environments. By reminding visitors of their role in preserving the view, the park benefactors can play on the romantic tourist gaze to increase support to protect the particular environment (Urry, 1995). It is slightly fascinating that a picture of the view is included in the donation box sign, given the fact that it is a photographic representation of the landscape immediately in front of the tourists. It can be regarded as an example of how national park actors transform the public lands into a space in which boundaries between the natural world and the mediated world are blurred and permeable (Grusin, 2004). The addition of pictures on donation box signs proves the centrality of the visual in construction of a touristic memory of places and spaces. Travel and tourism is a practice in which people move away from normal environments, and later returns with a myriad of memories. Visual images can contribute to social memory-production of place, adding to verbal commentary (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997). Functioning, I argue, as a reminder of the visual value of the landscape in front of tourists, the sign plays at conceptions of place, and hope tourists see the benefits in making financial contributions to preserve the landscape.
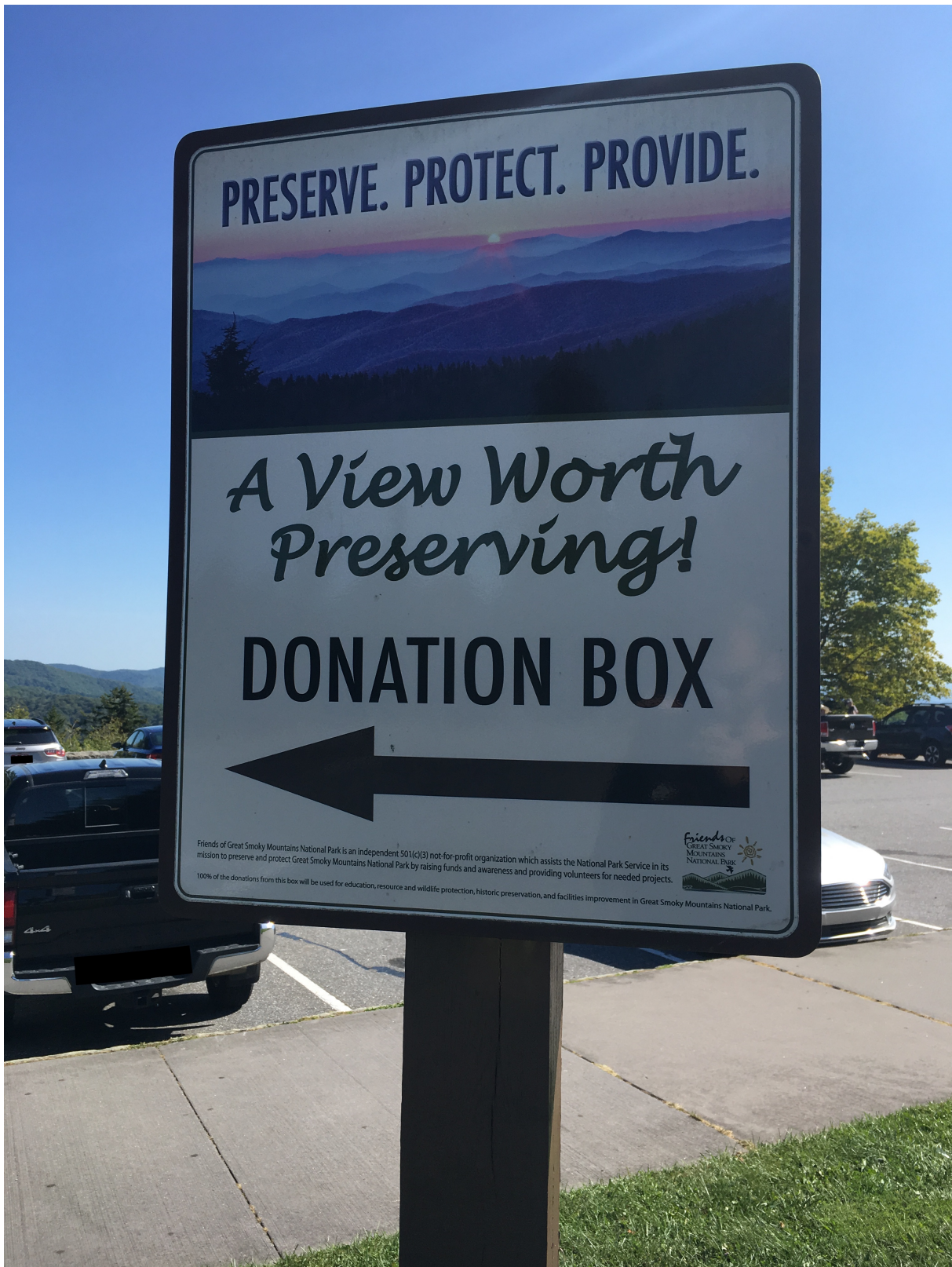
Picture 9: Sign pointing to a Friends of the Smokies donation box at Newfound Gap (09/16/2019). The picture has been edited to cover license plates visible in the original photography.

6.2.5 Observational research summary

Evidence from empirical findings at selected sights in GSMNP suggests parts of the park have undergone processes of what I want to refer to as obscure commoditization. Whereas commoditization traditionally refer to a process in which things and activities become evaluated in terms of a market priced exchange value (Cohen, 1988), GSMNP have spaces in which the travel and tourism activity become optional to donate money to perform. GSMNP partner organization, Friends of the Smokies have put up donation boxes and signage at some of the most visited locations in the park, on which they ask for financial contributions towards smaller or larger park management projects. At the visitor centers at Oconaluftee and Sugarlands, donation boxes seem to be covering a wide range of projects in the park, such as general education programs and wildlife conservation. To increase incomes from donations (National Park Service, 2013), the example of a visitor state-, country-, continent-, and fictional world multi-receptacle donation box suggests park supporters are working creatively to generate revenue for the park.

At Newfound Gap and Cades Cove donation boxes and signage were thematically centered on the landscapes in which they were located. Whereas the Baptist church donation box asked for donations for the particular purpose of preserve the historic structure found along the looped road, signage at Newfound Gap have clear references to the specific view of landscapes immediately in front of visiting tourists. The way in which donation boxes and signage are differently themed would suggest mobile traveling tourists´ experience of particular sights and locations in the park become important for direct financial contributions towards park reproduction of wilderness and landscape (Edensor, 2001)

7 Conclusions and final remarks

7.1 Connecting the dots

In this thesis I have accounted for the ways in which unique production of nature, wilderness and landscapes are crucial to understand the growth of national parks and national park management institutions in the United States. National parks are examples government attempts of nature and environmental management, and their rationales range from highly virtuous aspirations of preservation to identification of economic opportunity on worthless lands. The production and reproduction of these parks requires financing, and throughout U.S. national park history there have been numerous examples of hardships in covering the cost of park operations at multiple NPS locations. Identifying this broad concern for several of the locations, I took a particular interest in how the most visited national park in the country, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, had yet an obstacle in its current inability to collect entrance fees to increase revenue. Findings from archival work suggest the ever-resurfacing question over fees in the southern Appalachians are rooted in deeds signed in the process in which roads were transferred from North Carolina and Tennessee to the United States. If this reproduction of a free-to-enter national park in the Smokies had led to other attempts of handling financial struggles, I asked, lastly, created a basis for the interest in donation boxes and donation box signage. By analyzing their design and signage, I hoped to show visitors to the park were confronted with the recurring issue of the park being free to enter. In the conclusive section of this thesis, I intend to summarize my findings for the two research questions asked in the thesis, and further connect them to the structuring theme of nature-society configurations and nature management financing issues.

7.2 Entrance fees – Why are they missing in GSMNP?

The practice of collecting fees and tolls at national parks has a longer history than the NPS itself (Mackintosh, 1983), and at present is currently enabled by the Federal Lands Recreational Act. Under current structures national parks can collect a federally standardized sum of money from visiting tourists, and a minimum of 80% of the revenue gained from entrance fee collections remain at the particular NPS unit it was collected from (Nyaupane et al., 2007). The money collected is intended to ensure parks can increase expenditure on

visitor enhancing experiences such as general maintenance and park infrastructure and emergency services. At present there are 36, out of a total of 61, national parks that collect entrance fees from visitors, and GSMNP is the only park among the 12 most visited ones that does not charge fees for park entrance or tolls on within park roads (National Park Service, 2019d).

Having no entrance fee proves a vast challenge for the operation of GSMNP, and the most visited national park in the country struggles with steadily increasing maintenance backlogs (PEW Charitable Trusts, 2017). As other parks have been increasing their annual revenues significantly due to fee collection, GSMNP still remain free of entrance fees and road tolls. It has been suggested the answer to why this is the case in the southern Appalachian park are rooted in the foundational history of the park (Catton, 2014). By reading works on GSMNP history and doing fieldwork in the region I hoped to answer the question of why it was still free to enter. Doing archive visits, findings showed the issue of entrance fees have been highly contentious for GSMNP due to it not being constructed at public domain land.

Through analysis of a myriad of legal documents, letters and newspaper articles found in the National Park Collections Preservation Center, I hoped to further knowledge on the historical path-dependency of a fee- and toll-free national park in the Smokies. Some of the main arguments of those opposing entrance fees and road tolls in GSMNP were based on the fact that it was established with financial contributions from Tennesseans and North Carolinians. privately owned tracts of land in the area had to be bought and transferred to the United States for the park to be established. Adding to these arguments, were local interests in keeping roads free of charge, as commercial traffic would still be passing through the park, and keeping the park free of entrance fees under the assumption it would increase visitation and subsequently also demand for tourist services in gateway communities.

Benson et al. (2013) estimated, through travel cost models, the value of individual recreational visits to Yellowstone to be ranging from $230 to $700 depending on what activity cluster the visit belonged to. It should be interesting to question then, given their relatively high valuations of recreational visits to national parks what significance an entrance fee on top of the travel cost would do for park visit demand. A study of visitors to GSMNP including questions over preferences of either paying a set fee, or a continuation of a system involving the material manifestations of donation boxes and signs, could provide useful insights into

how to approach the issue of financing in the park in the future. It can also be purposeful to conduct studies in which local community actors participate to get a better understanding of how they currently view the potential of introducing entrance fees or tolls in the national park, as history suggest fee contestation is strongly rooted in particular local communities.

The case in point should support the claim for further park specific case studies on the issue of entrance fees. Although studies (Bengtson & Fan, 2002; Chung et al., 2011) show most people have positive attitudes towards fee collections at NPS units, they could benefit from understanding historical significance of local contestation, local actor resistance and local wants of reproducing the park as free for all to enter or pass through. Further, evidence from the case study in GSMNP backs a relational understanding of space. What happens inside GSMNP, and how it is managed and financed cannot be completely removed from regional processes. I would make the argument parks must be understood also in a context of activities going on immediately outside of the park, and the growth of gateway communities (Fletchall, 2013; Griest and Kranitz, 2016; Martin, 1994) along arterial roads connecting the park to the interstate highway would indicate they are places very much centered around consumption. It can thus be said that although park visits in themselves are free, they are still highly dependent on consumption to facilitate visits (Benson et al., 2013; Hanley et al., 2019).

7.3 Donation boxes – reproducing landscapes and wilderness

Having established the national park institution in the United States consisting of national parks in which landscape and wilderness have been produced and continually has to be reproduced requiring finances to do so, and that several national parks have issues with generating enough income to fully cover its main objectives, it is interesting trying to understand what measures are taken to offset the backlogs. In the case of GSMNP, entrance fees and road tolls have historically not been an option, and I was thus curious to understand what attempts were made at generating more revenue at the park. Through in-park observations, the discovery of the presence of donation boxes and donation box signs at the most popular locations in the national park revealed philanthropic actors were actively seeking to facilitate practices of visitors making financial contributions, and further confirmed current financing structures did not sufficiently covered the cost of performing essential management objectives at the park unit.

It is my main argument in interpreting the donation boxes and donation box signage that tourists are confronted with the possibility of, and enabled to, directly make financial contributions towards the reproduction of nature, wilderness and landscapes. The regulatory framework for what must be included and what can be put on these boxes and signs is relatively strict (National Park Service, 2013), and it should be clearly stated what the money donated will be spent on. Analyzing boxes and signs at four different sights, the most visited locations in the park (Papadogiannaki, 2008), findings indicated calls for donations at visitor centers often were focused on collecting money for larger and broader park purposes. At the outdoor sights at Cades Cove and Newfound Gap, on the other hand, signage suggests Friends of the Smokies are playing at landscapes, views or experiences visitors have just had to encourage donations. Tourists visiting the national park are thus contributing to the reproducing particular spaces, landscapes and wilderness in terms of their travel patterns, mobility practices, by immersing in place and gazing (Adler, 1989; Edensor, 2001; Urry, 1990; Urry 1995; Williams, 1998), as well as by donating money to highly particular or more general projects the national park needs funding for.

Similar donation boxes are found also in other national parks (National Park Service, 2013) but their centrality in GSMNP is heightened by the fact that park visits there are free at entry. It would be of interest to do a comparative study of other units belonging in the national park system, and particularly other national parks. One of the recurring topics and wordings on donation boxes and signs in the Smokies is the reminder of park visits being free. In a sense, the lack of entrance fee becomes one of the major selling points for the partner organizations of the park to attract donations. The creativity in donation box signage in GSMNP, moreover, can be a reflection of the lacking opportunities of accumulating more revenue to prevent maintenance backlogs growing increasingly larger. Further studies of donation boxes at other NPS managed locations, both national parks and other units, would serve intriguing frameworks for comparisons to the single case of GSMNP. Are they central features also at fee-collecting units, and what is included in the signage when entrance to the park has a set cost at the point of entry?

7.4 Nature-society configurations producing national parks

In the theory sections an assessment of the function of nature in modern capitalist society served as a framework for understanding how national parks in the in the U.S. came to be.

Debates over whether nature was an exclusive counterpart to society in a nature-society dichotomy are fundamental to understand its conceptualizations. Naturalistic and culturalistic identifications of nature-society configurations were centered on differences in the establishment of the status of nature being either external or internal to society (Eder, 1996; Smith, 2008). Critique of the positivist dualist conceptualization of nature and society was based on assumptions the two not being independent parts of reality. A united first and second nature is suggested to offset the understanding of nature as external counterpart, as isolated local unities are replaced by larger societal unities. Applying this abstraction to particular geographies requires a regard for varieties in divisions of labour, and thus serves as a starting point for evaluating spatial differences in experiences and conceptualizations of nature (Smith & O´Keefe, 1996; Smith, 2008).

In the United States wilderness has historically been considered part of a barren nature that had to be overcome in the pursuit of westward expansion and construction of nationhood. It was a hindrance to a developing American civilization, and its confining features had to be overcome (Madsen, 1998; Smith, 2008). Evidently, the conceptualization of wilderness tends to disregard indigenous populations, and can be argued to have clear roots in colonialist and racist views of a particular part of nature (Cronon, 1996; Ginn & Demerit, 2009; Grusin, 2004). Despite the troubling history of the concept, the role of an American wilderness is important to understand the growth of the national parks institution, as it seen as a part of nature that ought to be managed and preserved (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016).

Efforts to establish large-scale wilderness preservation programs in the United States can be traced back to 1872, when Yellowstone National Park was designated as the first of its kind in the world (Nash, 1982). Three of the most important factors explaining why the U.S. were pioneers in the field was the unique symbolic status of, and American attitudes towards, nature (Nash, 1970), a democratic ideology (Nash, 1970; Runte, 2011) and availability of unused and undeveloped land (Nash, 1970; Hall & Frost, 2009b; Steinberg, 2013). The rationales behind the formation of national parks ranged from virtuous to purely economic, and were made possible by efforts of both private and public actors (Hall & Frost, 2009b; Steinberg, 2013). At present there are 61 national parks in the United States, and for a larger part of national park history, the U.S. Department of the Interior entity NPS, have been in charge of the preserving and managing natural and cultural resources within these parks as well as over 400 other various parks (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016). Numbers of

visiting tourists to NPS managed park units in the United States increased as a consequence of time-space compressing technological advancements and social and economic emancipation of more and more people. Mobile travelers with money were and still are eager to see the wilderness and landscapes produced in national parks, and thus contribute to the production and reproduction of tourist spaces (Edensor, 2001; Urry, 1995; Williams, 1998).

Despite increases in visitation, financing this institution has proved a massive challenge, and most national parks have had to look for further sources of revenue generation to supplement congressional appropriations, confirming nature, wilderness and landscapes in national parks should be regarded as highly influenced by human action.

7.5 Final reflections and implications of my research

Connecting the findings in data collected in the field with grand theories on nature-society configurations, it becomes evident that the case of GSMNP, although often thought of, imagined and attempted to be constructed as wilderness with little human impendence, still requires financing and human management to be reproduced according to management objectives. Taking into account the numbers of visitors to the park, moreover, it is reasonable to refute an idea of nature and society being two separate parts of reality in the particular park (Smith, 2008; Urry, 1995). Manifestations of the role of human involvement in the production and reproduction of wilderness and landscapes in GSMNP include continuing debates over entrance fees and the materiality of donation box and donation box signs at particular sights within the park.

The issue of entrance fees reveals how the national park in the southern Appalachians has been generated from private domains in which historical accounts show the area has been a site for human production, consumption, home-making and leisure for centuries. By establishing GSMNP to preserve nature and for future generations to enjoy wilderness, the displaced are in a sense separated from the rational park developers. Rather than existing objectively and exogenously in the area, wilderness had to be socially constructed in GSMNP. Case findings, however, exposes a nature-society configuration discourse in which nature is believed, and purposefully intended, to be able to return to a pristine status. Further studies on financing nature management, with particular attention to NPS units in the National Park System, in the United States, should scrutinize current financial models and management

objectives, as this case study indicate there are some conflicting rationales in the ones currently serving a fundamental framework in GSMNP.

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