Reflections on Topophilia

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As a teacher and a researcher of economic geography, looking backwards provides the appropriate place to start considering the past and the future impact of Yi-Fu Tuan's seminal work. In 1974, *Topophilia,* presented a broad and deep analysis of the relationships between people, place and the environment. Its 1990 edition was no less prescient with an ever-increasing concern about the health of our planet and "present[ed] a general framework for discussing all the ways that human beings can develop a love of place" (Tuan 1990, p.xii).

I grew up in the Isle of Man: a small island in the Irish sea with a small population but an overwhelming sense of place and 'Manxness' . Indeed the name 'Man' is derived from an early legend of *Mannanin mac Lir* – son of the sea (Kinvig 1975, p.37). The island pulls me into being there and inhaling the sea smells, being buffeted by the wind and instantaneously feeling the sense of place and belonging resulting in the need to touch the ground. This sense of belonging appears in much of Tuan's thinking and I see application of his work to my island. According to Tuan (1990, p.119), "The Island seems to have a tenacious hold on the human imagination," and as a born and bred islander, I would agree. I lived the first third of my life on a small island which is smaller than the county of my current abode in northeast Florida, and I still miss being there. As Tuan asserts, topophilic sentiment by island residents leads to familiarity and attachment of the place.

Tradition and lore say that from Snaefell (the highest point on the Isle of Man, about 2,000 feet above sea level) a viewer can see seven kingdoms—Isle of Man, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Heaven, and Mannanin (the Sea). Furthermore, "In the Isle of Man, there is a multitude of quaint creatures and benign beings such as fairies or little people" (Stenning 1965, p.117). To this day, tradition says that a human should greet the fairies when crossing the fairy bridge, or bad luck will befall (Killip, 1986).

Island legend, lore, and superstition are still a deeply ingrained part of my sense of place and is part of my legacy memory and preservation and even though, as Tuan argues (p.124), "Academism inhibits the perception of reality. . . . Topophilia is richly informed by the reality of the environment . . . ." The environment, folk lore and tradition in the Isle of Man have been well recorded (Kinvig, 1975) and now I use my professional training and my legacy memories to unwrap

the relationships that the island consistently reveals. Moreover, I see these island relationships every time I revisit *Topophilia*.

Elements of the island's traditions, superstitions, and lore don't change but other parts of life do, and the island has jumped into being an actor of environmental protection and sustainability as succinctly theorized by Tuan in Ch. 8, p. 92. The Isle of Man (because it is small and a semi-autonomous crown dependency) has the political leeway and reflexivity to act quickly by establishing a position on environmental issues through the creation of a 'Climate Change Action Plan' https://www.gov.im/media/1381069/desc-climate-change-plan-2324-final_compressed.pdf.

The plan has four paths to address climate change and global warming through a Carbon Management policy: (1) Measure and Avoid carbon activities; (2) Reduce material use; (3) Replace/Switch to low carbon activities; and (4) Offset unavoidable carbon emissions. Because of the island's smallness and semi-autonomous political standing, local actors have consistently been involved in all policy decisions through a public-private consultative process. This process seeks opinions and feedback from the public (government) and private institutions and residents, in order to develop policy. (This consultative process was used successfully during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Cobb, 2022).

Looking forward from Tuan's thinking to embrace existential environmental challenges, the Isle of Man presents a good case study. The island's climate change plan is aggressive and reflexive establishing specific targets and metrics. The current environmental tensions facing all inhabitants of the planet, as theorized by Tuan, are supplemented by the inter-twining of further professional, private, and protective tensions when applied to the land of my birth.

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