

Park Development on the Urban-Agricultural Fringe

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Park planning in contexts of an urban-agricultural fringe is about the re-development of land and requires a transformation from a worked landscape into land suitable for a park. Distinct from the wildland-urban interface where planning is often about protecting *what is*, urban-agricultural contexts is about envisioning *what should be*. Because of the need to imagine a park, place meanings and landscape values are important to identify in urban-agricultural contexts of park planning. The empirical portion of the study assesses participants' lived experiences in the landscapes of their daily lives. Place meanings are embedded in these lived experiences. The paper applies a participant-based or auto-driven photo elicitation method—referred to as APEC—as a means to identify and encourage participants to share their lived experiences and to understand their place meanings. Data were collected from two groups of participants—one group was associated with the USDA Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie on the outer fringe of Chicago metropolitan area, and the other was associated with the Urbana Park District Advisory Committee in Urbana, Illinois, a midsize urban area in east central Illinois. Participants at both sites represented places meanings in ways that appreciated human history, were tolerant of human development, and indicated a need to heal the land. These place meanings provided two principles for envisioning parks on the urban-agricultural fringe. The first principle is that park development should embody public memories of the landscape and provide the community with a sense of its ecological and cultural heritage. The second principle is that park development should allow for the community-based restoration of ecological and cultural heritage, and in doing so, would allow for a healing process. These values are distinct from many other contexts of park development in which the vision for a park is more immediate and planning decisions are focused on visitor management techniques and use policies. The urban-agricultural context

of park planning requires public deliberation about the vision of a park and dialogue that creates public value for the vision. This study works to construct public values for parks on the urban-agricultural fringe.

KEYWORDS: sense of place, land-use planning, public involvement

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The transformation of agricultural lands to restored ecosystems, park lands, and other open space is the concern of this paper. As towns and cities expand their boundaries, residential development, retail districts, and associated infrastructure are increasingly encroaching upon land once beyond the city limits. The process of park development in places where urban development meets rural communities elicits divergent reactions from stakeholders, largely because they hold distinct visions for relationships between themselves, their community, and nature (Wilkinson, 1991). Understanding these visions would be at the core of any community-based model of park development in urban-agricultural contexts.

The urban-agricultural fringe has characteristics not fully recognized by natural resource recreation and park planning literature. Park planning in contexts of an urban-agricultural fringe is about the re-development of land. Parks are made from land that already is (or at one time had been) put to some beneficial human use. To transform land from a past use—or worked landscape—to park land requires re-framing the land's identity and the community's relationship to it. In the initial phases of park development of agricultural land, users (or visitors to the park) are usually not major stakeholders due to the agricultural use of land during planning. The transformation of land into a park from some other land use has not been the focus of outdoor recreation and park management research. Instead the major streams of literature in outdoor recreation are focused on parks without a significant history of being worked land (e.g., commercial, manufacturing-based, agricultural) with major planning issues framed as crowding, conflict, satisfaction, and other user-based concepts requiring information from park visitors (Manning, 2007). The relevance of a significant portion of such research is anchored in visitor-management techniques and operations of an existing park.

The urban-agricultural fringe has some distinct characteristics from a related, but more visible context, the wildland-urban interface. The former is about a mixture of land uses and development types with agricultural uses interspersed and becoming less dominant along a fringed gradient (often aligned with roads leading out of town). There is not already-existing land suitable for a park in urban-agricultural contexts, and park development necessarily entails envisioning of *what should be* (cf., Mowen & Confer, 2003). Wildland-urban interface generally refers to residential development within close proximity to public land, has its origins in public land-use planning in the western U.S., and is known for its management problems linked to recreational conflict, community safety, and wildfire hazard (e.g., Thapa, Graefe, & Absher, 2002). Wildland-urban interface problems are the consequences of people re-locating their businesses and families to be closer to the amenities offered by the public land (Blahna, 1990; Wilkinson, 1992). Although there are exceptions, the wildland is typically taken for granted as being suitable for park designation, and planning is about management operations to protect or enhance *what is*. Whereas many kinds of park planning have a tangible vision of a park and start from there, urban-agricultural park planning starts without a park, without a history of visitation, and without significant natural features. The urban-agricultural contexts of the Midwestern U.S. require a re-framing of land from its current "row crop" ecosystem to some imagined state suitable for a park.

There are some points of similarity between wildland-urban and urban-agricultural contexts. Namely, park planning involves several layers of government with decision making processes being accessible to diverse groups of citizens. Opening up the planning dialogue attracts a broad representation of values and requires the need to negotiate a bundle of tensions. On the urban-agricultural fringe, ecosystem conversion and restoration efforts require dialogue among groups of people who otherwise would not appear to share common interests with one another, and may involve conflicts and resistance to change. Such conflict has been characterized as a "tournament of values" due to the differing values voiced by stakeholders and their tendency to compete with one another (Hull & Robertson, 2000). Advocates for prairie restoration, for instance, could characterize prairie restoration projects as transforming a degraded state of nature into a healthy and functioning ecosystem. A contrasting story would frame prairie advocates as attempting to undo the improvements of a century of productive cultivation and transform a fertile piece of land into a useless field of weeds (Cronon, 1992; Schroeder, 2000). There are numerous other value orientations for park development initiatives with nuances related to differing people, places, and events that hold them together. These value orientations are reflected in narratives people tell about their history with a community and the landscape changes they have witnessed (Riley, 1985; Sell & Zube, 1986).

Relevance of Place Meanings to Park Planning

This paper frames community-based values related to park development as more than preferences or statements of opinions. Place meanings and values of landscapes are represented through narratives that inextricably link people to their community and their natural environment (Cronon, 1992). Story-telling, or narra-

tives, are natural ways for people to organize their lived experiences into meaningful wholes (Polkinghorne, 1988). Several scholars also have argued that narratives are a distinctly human expression of value (Fine, 2002; Linde, 1993; Rappaport, 2000), and that the stories we tell about our lives and communities are embedded with place meanings and values toward landscapes.

Stories representing place meanings show promise to facilitate park planning. As Gobster (2001) pointed out, “one of the greatest challenges to urban park planners, landscape architects, and managers is to balance the tension between providing for the diverse uses and values of park space and preserving and enhancing the unique qualities of place” (p. 35-36). Of course before park planners can integrate diverse values about park development, they must first identify them (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Schroeder, 1996; Zube, Friedman, & Simcox, 1989). Casting stakeholders’ values and place meanings as embedded in narratives of one’s lived experience allows park planners to understand socio-cultural issues of landscape change, and to situate any development within the values and place meanings relevant to a given community (cf., Daitch, et al., 1996; Linde, 1993; Marcucci, 2000; Yankelovich, 1991). Stakeholder values and place meanings provide a basis to imagine a park, and are reflected in narratives that explicitly connect stakeholders to the past, present and future of their community (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995).

Park planners are challenged to identify place meanings and stakeholder values within the multicultural contexts of communities on the urban-agricultural fringe. Public hearings and other stakeholder forums are often adversarial in their dialogue and not conducive toward the representation of place meanings and public values of landscapes. One of the first steps in park development in urban-agricultural contexts is to identify a vision for the future park; citizens of the community and stakeholders of land-use planning are increasingly important in development of such visions. The research herein represents the kind of information needed from citizens and stakeholders to develop a vision for a future park.

Method

A photo-elicitation method was implemented in two different locations on the urban-agricultural fringes in Illinois. The results identify stakeholder place meanings and landscape values to facilitate park planning and land-use changes. Through photo elicitation, place meanings were shared in the contexts of participants’ lived experience of the places depicted. Through the telling of their lived experiences in various environments, place meanings and landscapes values came to the surface and may serve as visions for park development.

Samples and Study Sites

There were two groups of participants. One group was comprised of stakeholders of the newly designated Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie just south of Chicago, Illinois. The other group was comprised of stakeholders of a municipal park district in a mid-size urban area about 120 miles south of Chicago in Urbana, Illinois. The landscapes associated with both of these groups were rapidly converting from agricultural uses to residential and commercial development.

Midewin (pronounced mid-DAY-win) is administered by the USDA Forest Service, and in close proximity to a diverse mix of land uses, including several state conservation sites, petro-chemical processing plants, an active landfill, a national veterans' cemetery, large power utility, and emerging residential development. Communities to the east, south, and west of Midewin are largely rural but comprise some of the fastest growing towns in Illinois. To the north and northeast are Joliet and the Chicago metropolitan area with their potential to surround Midewin within a decade or so. Twenty participants were recruited at various planning workshops at Midewin and completed their role in the study between September 2000 and June 2001. A booth was set up during the USDA's initial hearings and charettes that were located in public meeting places (e.g., Wilmington City Hall). During breaks in the hearings, attendees and agency staff were invited to take part in the study and informed of the role of a participant.

The second group of participants was from Urbana, Illinois—a mid-sized urban area in east central Illinois. The area surrounding Urbana (and its “twin” city, Champaign) is largely agricultural. However, residential growth is encroaching on agricultural lands at an increasing pace and conversion of cropland into housing subdivisions or shopping districts is evident. A recent state-wide survey of open space indicated that residents of the study area were more likely to report a need for parks and other natural areas than other regions in the state (McDonald, Miller & Stewart, 2002). Eighteen participants recruited from the Urbana Park District Advisory Committee completed their role in the study between November 2004 to November 2005. This committee is comprised of citizens who represent various neighborhoods of Urbana and provide advice to the park district. Researchers attended the monthly meetings of the citizens' advisory committee throughout the time period of study, and during the recruitment stage invited members and park district staff to participate.

Both of these study sites, and their related park planning issues, are located on an urban-agricultural fringe. Participants at Midewin were a mixture of rural and urban dwellers who were generally not familiar with one another, and those in Urbana were urban residents and in varying degrees were acquainted with one another. Agency staff were participants at both study sites, and the method allowed their place meanings to be told along with those place meanings of stakeholders and citizens who volunteered to participate.

Procedures

The coupling of participant photography with conversations focused on photographs taken is referred to as an autodriver photo elicitation conversation (APEC). The APEC is particularly suited for research that requires sharing deep-seated personal experiences with others. Due to its capacity to equalize power between researcher and participant, individuals are more likely to bring-out the complexity of their experiences with APEC compared to traditional methods that do not engage participants in a conversation (Clark, 1999; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988).

Disposable cameras were distributed to participants. Both groups of participants were given the same set of instructions. They were asked to take pictures of

special places in and around their community that were important to their everyday life—for better or worse. After the cameras were returned to researchers, they were processed into prints, and one-on-one conversations were scheduled and conducted in person with participants. After asking permission to record the conversation, researchers “walked through” each photograph with participants and directed the conversation at understanding the significance of each place depicted. Examples of questions and prompts asked at each photograph include:

- Why did you take this picture?
- What about this place is special to you?
- Compared to other places in the area, why is this place significant to you?
- What things do you do or think about at this place that couldn't happen elsewhere?
- Are there other people in the community that feel the same as you do about this place?

At the end of the APECs, participants were asked the following questions:

- Are there places important to you that you were unable or for some reason did not photograph? If so, what are they and why are they important to you?
- If you had to identify your top three special places, which ones would they be?
- Why are these three places the most important to you?

Conversations were usually held in participants' homes, but a few were held in a local restaurant or other comfortable meeting locations. The resultant data were sets of photographs coupled with transcripts from the conversations.

The APEC is centered on the life experiences of participants. During the conversation, the researcher is in a listening mode albeit prompting participants to discuss the significance of places they photographed and facilitating representation of their place meanings (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Heisley & Levy, 1991). The capacity of APEC to center itself on the life experiences of participants is a virtue of the method (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Tandon, 1989). Because of the need to understand participants' lived experience in landscapes, and the implications of these lived experiences for place meanings and landscape values, APEC was employed as a way to inform park planning.

The photographs provided conversational structure during the APEC. As such, meaning was situated in the text of the conversation and not in the photograph itself. Photographs served as the site for the embodiment of memory, and were the means by which everyday life was narrated. The narration sometimes represented their habitual everyday practices and other times their memory of a particular moment in their past in which events and experiences were relived (Blocker, 1977; Glover, 2003). Conversation about the photograph served as an interaction through which meaning of the lived experience was constructed. During the telling of their lived experiences, participants came to some understanding of their place meanings of everyday life and were able to link their past with the present and provided insight to their future (Collier, 1967; Denzin, 2001; Harper, 2000; Harrison, 2002). Although study participants were directed at depicting *what is*, their place meanings provided insight to general principles of *what should be*.

Analysis

The analysis was directed at identifying themes from the APECs that reflect community-based place meanings and public values about landscapes relevant to park planning. The initial tasks were focused on understanding the first-level data and exploring general categories of themes (Huberman & Miles, 1994), with subsequent tasks aimed at identifying relations between themes or sub-themes (sometimes referred to as axial coding, Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Themes were identified in text that reflected public values relevant to park planning and expressed aspects of community life, local heritage, or linkages between residents and groups of people in the community—past and present. Examples of such text included pride in local culture, positive emotions elicited from community events or festivals, sense of belonging to a segment of the community, or comments that championed aspects of one's community and lifestyle. A substantial amount of most APECs was relevant to park planning. However occasionally text from the APECs did not pertain to public values for park planning due to its focus on descriptive aspects of the physical setting (e.g., "...to the left of the road and out of the picture is a hill that runs down to the river and...), text about private property (e.g., backyards), and detailed depiction of behavior in various environments without providing insight about public values of the place. Because the narratives identified from both groups of participants were similar, the findings are organized as one study.

Findings

Collectively participants took over 900 pictures; the minimum number of pictures taken was eight and the maximum taken was 27 by any given participant. Each APEC lasted between 20 to 120 minutes and collectively resulted in over 500 pages of single-spaced interview text. Participants ranged in age from 30 to 70 years, and were split fairly even between male and female.

A number of themes were identified, of which a subset was useful for purposes of park planning. The themes presented herein are meant to illustrate the potential of APEC for application in urban-agricultural contexts of landscape change and urban growth. The three general themes are appreciation of human history, tolerance for human development, and healing the land; these themes are interrelated but distinct enough to warrant separate explanation. Each theme is discussed in turn, and illustrated with a few photographs from the APECs.

Appreciation of Human History

Several participants discussed place meanings that portrayed an appreciation of human history, both family history and community history. At Midewin there was widespread pride and need for public recognition, bordering on a moral imperative, to tell current and future generations the environmental histories of local landscapes. Various place meanings from Midewin involved histories connected to Native American cultures, white pioneers and their farm homesteads, I&M Canal development and its functions, and Joliet Arsenal workers and the various war efforts of the mid-20th century. Such place meanings were elicited from the remains of

material culture such as cemeteries, built structures and leftover foundations, watercourses, and features of the landscape (i.e., confluence of streams, knolls, remnant oak groves).

The stories behind the “settlement of the American west” and roles played by local waterways during the westward movement of pioneers in the 1800s were particularly compelling histories told by several participants at Midewin. There was significant community pride at protecting the vestiges of these histories. Framed as being part of their cultural heritage, participants told stories of commerce and industry transporting raw materials from the Upper Midwest downstream to river towns along the Mississippi River for processing and manufacturing purposes. This role as transportation hub was also the reason the site was chosen as a federal arsenal due to its central location and ease of transporting goods. During current times, this area also serves as a crossroads for trucking and rail operations to ship/store goods for distribution around the central states. The community-based heritage of a transportation hub was one that participants wanted reflected in the landscape and enhanced public recognition. The places meanings related to the I&M Canal (i.e., Illinois and Michigan Canal corridor is a series of sites administered by the National Park Service) were a common topic of discussion within the conversations. For example, Henry tells the story of towpaths along the canal route that need public interpretation (see Photo 1):

Henry: You see structure after structure out of the same stone... On the I & M Canal, they pull barges down there. They were pulled by mules upon the towpath... The locks should be preserved... It's just a feeling of history. That's too much history to plow back into the ground.

Bob is more to the point about the need for the past to be reflected on the landscape (see Photo 2):

Bob: Even though [the canal] hasn't had any boats in it for 130 years it's still a viable waterway. With just a little amount of care, it could be restored to a replica of the original waterway. My plan would be to put in a towpath along the side and to allow people to walk along the canal if possible. Have a replica of a barge boat and have it pulled by a mule... Along this waterway, there's a commercial link where it transported the people and the goods necessary to settle in northern Illinois. From east to west we have not only people who found the canal a convenient way to travel between Chicago to St. Louis, but also a lot of wood from the forests of Michigan and Wisconsin was the primary cargo of the canal for its first ten or fifteen years. It was the wood in the form of roofing, timbers, and such that made it possible to build homes that began to populate northern Illinois and down the river to St. Louis... The canal represents that pipeline that gave people work and provided for the continued growth of the western United States... This is the lock that I would like to see rebuilt and reused to provide a canal heritage park.



Photo 1. Henry tells the history of western settlement embodied in former structures of the I&M Canal.



Photo 2. Bob envisions a canal heritage park with living history tours.

The histories of the I&M Canal and the historic roles played by local landscapes in the settling of the American west were recurrent concerns of Midewin participants.

In Urbana, there were several participants who appreciated landscape history and inserted their own selves or family into that history. Participants characterized several places by remembering their past relationships with places, and would include their family and friends in their stories. Sometimes their place meanings were about stability and valued the timeliness of certain landscapes, whereas other place meanings brought-out changes that have occurred. In contexts of both stability and change, place meanings were contextualized as a living history and value created due to recognition of the impact of the place on participants' lives. Places that served as a basis to construct value due to the elicitation of personal and family memories included agricultural fields, barns, unique buildings (i.e., historic structures, churches, downtown mall), backyards, and landscape features (i.e., streams, hill-sides, sidewalks, trees). To illustrate the kind of value created due to the telling of personal and family history with places, Frances discusses her memories of playing in a local woodlot (now a park named "Busey Woods") with her grandmother (see Photo 3):

Frances: Back when I was seven or eight years old. My grandmother used to take me and my brother and my cousin and we all were really close in age, maybe like nine, 10, 11, 12, she would take us walnut hunting. Before this was Busey Woods, we would go and we would pick walnuts and we'd get cockobarrels all on our legs and fall down in the leaves and, you know, we'd bring home the walnuts and then we let them dry out, and then she called us over one day and we'd cracked them open and picked them all out and ate more than we put up and then she would make us cookies or fudge or something. But we would have such a good time there.

Although Frances' memories are not about a community's past, they represent the past of her family and ancestral heritage, and in doing so, the place meanings as history of her family's past reflect an important value of Busey Woods for Frances.

Tolerance for Human Development

Participants at both study sites were generally tolerant, if not appreciative, of human development. American cultural discourse has a long history of dichotomizing humans from nature and has traditionally framed most environmental debates in terms of "use vs. preservation." Park development, especially at national and state levels, historically has been directed at protecting undeveloped land from the intrusions of human society (Cronon, 1995; White, 1995). In the American west, the dominant discourse fits the wildland context; preservation of land historically has been assumed as an objective of park planning. However because dominant discourse tells us that undeveloped or pristine land is the ideal, some have argued that such discourse diminishes the value of worked land (Cronon, 1995). On the urban-agricultural fringe, a worked landscape is the starting point for park



Photo 3. Frances' family histories are connected with the trees of this woodlot.

development and preservation of land does not fit the planning context. There was a noticeable lack of place meanings that idealized pristine land, and evidence that participants tolerated, and sometimes resisted, the myth of pristine land by venerating cropland or other agricultural ideal.

At Midewin, several participants photographed small patches of restored prairie or native plants. The conversations usually focused on the value of prairie, even though the landscapes were generally small and surrounded by human development (e.g., fences, subdivisions, commercial development). For example, Del's idealized landscape could serve as a goal for park development. He was comfortable asserting a vision for the 15,000-acre restoration effort at Midewin, and did so through a depiction of a one-acre restored prairie surrounded by residential and industrial development. Del did not see any contradictions with idealizing one acre of high quality prairie and the development that fenced it in (see Photo 4).

Del: It's the best one-acre of prairie in Illinois... This is what a prairie should look like but it's not likely they're ever going to get much bigger than this because you can see there are industrial buildings and the railroad runs along this side. There are houses starting to be built around the other side. So this is sort of one little acre that's isolated, but this is what Midewin could be in 200 years if we do it right. This is what the goal is.

Del's photograph and text were a surprise to several of the Midewin staff. In contrast to Del's vision, the agency culture of the Forest Service is influenced by

dominant discourse and would generally value large tracts of pristine land “where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” (Wilderness Act of 1964). Due to learning about stakeholder values through their workshops, the management goals for Midewin restoration efforts moved from restoring an *historic prairie* and became linked to restoring a *contemporary prairie* (compatible with various land uses and having honourable roles for humans to play in its restoration).

At Urbana, most participants discussed human relationships with the land as part of their collection of place meanings. They did not easily dichotomize humans from nature, and were generally comfortable in their appreciation of human development within natural landscapes. Often their appreciation for human development was directed at rural or farm-based scenes, but it also included appreciation of various kinds of gardens, waterways—even those channelized by agricultural drainage districts—public art within a local prairie project, and small wetlands or groves of trees surrounded by development. To illustrate the tolerance of participants in Urbana for human development, Douglas appreciates a nearby barn and surrounding dirt roads for jogging, bicycling, and generally to enjoy the natural rhythms of life (see Photo 5):

Douglas: There’s barns and you see silos and cows and can get there in a short amount of time... I like the outdoors. I like sort of wide-open spaces that are un-crowded and... you don’t have to worry about cars... It’s a calm peaceful feeling connected to the natural rhythms and weather... I don’t know what the fate of these round barns are... This area is going to get developed in some way and I think there’s a lot of people who don’t like that... I like it the way it is, so I’d prefer that it didn’t get developed, but I don’t know exactly how/what it’s going to look like when it gets developed and I don’t know how long that’s going to take.

Healing the Land

Several participants in both studies developed stories related to making the land better and constructing a landscape that was valued by people. Although landscapes connected to human history were appreciated by many participants, and there was a general tolerance for human development, there were also felt needs to “heal” landscapes and improve upon their current conditions. Some sought to re-position community heritage as reflected in the landscape, and other times, suggested improvements were about representing the natural heritage of a prairie or wetland to demonstrate a visible land ethic for the community.

A number of contexts for constructing a valued and appreciated landscape were identified in the Midewin study. Many of the participants were aware of the enormity of the Midewin restoration project, and were either familiar, or had been personally involved in other projects that improve and revise the landscape. As an example, one the Midewin participants was particularly concerned with the conditions in waterways near Midewin, and talked at length about water quality, agricultural practices, and changing farming practices to improve riparian habitat, respect



Photo 4. Del is tolerant of development around a one-acre prairie site and idealizes this prairie as the right vision for Midewin.



Photo 5. Douglas felt close to nature amongst the outdoor spaces of a barnyard, and was concerned about “losing” the barn to development.

downstream neighbors, and an awareness for flood plain issues as part of urban sprawl. In his conversation, Walt took two pictures of the same creek—one picture was of a farm that allowed access to cattle in the creek, and the other picture was upstream from the cattle farm on a restored riparian site. Walt was concerned about the negative environmental impacts from cattle wading in the riparian area, but also had hopes for change (see Photo 6):

Walt: The farmer is using this [site] for grazing. There's no restrictions that can be placed on him at the moment. There's no law that says he can't graze cattle on the creek and this is the land he couldn't put into production obviously so he uses it for cattle. To me it's not a good idea but what are you gonna do?... Especially as you start getting more development upstream, you're going to have more runoff into the stream and it's going to cause more erosion, it's going to cause more meandering as the stream picks up speed it has a tendency to meander, cut in to the banks, there's no stopping that... If Prairie Creek Preservation go to the point where we had finances, we would do something, we would buy that from that guy. Get his cows out of there. I hope to see that someday.

Walt was optimistic about healing the riparian zone of Prairie Creek due to his first-hand experience in riparian restoration. He knew that landscapes could change for the better, had a vision of what could be, and was directly involved with the implementation of a watershed improvement project. In his discussion of the creek restoration project upstream from the area where cattle were grazing, Walt states (see Photo 7):

Walt: You know as more development comes upstream, they don't do good detentions, this is gonna get worse. As a matter of fact, the person who has a place on the corner, he was considering putting a berm around his house for flood protection... That's showing a stream bank restoration project that I was doing this past November and is completed now. It should be growing in pretty good. We'll see how that works out, stop some of the erosion from filtering into the creek... I planted native seeds in there, grasses.

Several participants in Urbana directed their comments to an 80-acre restored prairie, referred to as "Meadowbrook". One participant was glad to see the gradual expansion and restoration of the land from cropland into a tallgrass prairie. This transformation was viewed as being true to the landscape history of Illinois—the "Prairie State"—and making places that reflected the state's natural heritage (see Photo 8):

Jill: I've lived long enough to have seen quite a bit of change in it [Meadowbrook]... when I first moved there we had about 10 or 15 acres of prairie. Now we have about 80 acres. That has changed not only the



Photo 6. Walt is anticipating the day when a nearby farmer takes his cattle out of the riparian zone.



Photo 7. Walt's vision is to heal the land through watershed restoration projects like this one.

animals and plants that live in the park but also the number of people that visit the park. This was a cornfield before and we had people in the community that didn't want that to change which always amazed me. They were worried that there was even debate on whether or not we were destroying habitat. A monoculture of corn is not a habitat in my book of life... I can't help but think when I walk past here what would it have been like if this was... thousands of acres of what Illinois used to be and what was it like when the settlers first came and saw this expanse.

The restoration of native prairie in the Midwest is one that takes a vision with strong connections to volunteers willing to restore the land. Without the ability to imagine *what should be*, and the labor necessary to transform the landscape, prairie restoration as a vision for park development would not be possible (Gobster, 2001; Schroeder, 2000).



Photo 8. Jill has seen the transformation of 80 acres of crops to 80 acres of a prairie restoration project; she feels the land is returning to its natural heritage.

Implications for Professional Practice

Implications of this study provide insight to planning processes along several lines: First, there remains a strong need for park planners to facilitate ways in which stakeholders and citizens represent their values about landscapes and place meanings. These values are not fully reflected in expressions of opinions or preferences, but are conceived as representations of lived experiences of place. Two principles for park planning on the urban-agricultural fringe were suggested by the findings.

A primary principle for park planning is related to participants' place meanings that encouraged future park landscapes to reflect the human history of the land. Landscapes embodied memory and provided a sense of time to participants; place meanings often were told as public values in need of representation or framed as community heritage that should not be forgotten. In this sense, the layers of humanity who have come before—Native Americans, Anglo pioneers and immigrants working their way westward, farming homesteads, family farmers, farmers' markets, up to commercial agricultural—as well as the remaining material culture and structures were in need of interpretation and often framed as community heritage. As a planning principle, park development on the urban-agricultural fringe should reflect public memories of the landscape.

A second principle of park development on the urban-agricultural fringe is related to restoration of ecological and cultural heritage. Although "restoration" commonly refers to returning something to a previous state, restoring heritage is actually about the future representation of an imagined previous state, and implies actively generating and maintaining something to appear as if it were from the past (Lowenthal, 1998). *Preservation is distinct from restoration*. Participants in this study, although not using these terms, recognized the distinction. *Preservation* is about protecting a vestige of something that has not changed and was generated under some past ecological or cultural process; the implied strategy for preservation is generally to leave something alone and protect it from overuse or neglect. Preservation implies that something is protected from human intervention, and the goals of preservation usually do not connote negotiation or debate. In contrast, *restoration* is about the active generation of something that, although reflecting the past, has come in to being due to current ecological or cultural processes (Bruner, 1994). Urban-agricultural contexts for park planning are usually about restoration in which present-day efforts bring the past to life. Such restoration efforts involve humans and communities in their production processes and allow the land to heal. They are openly framed as restorations, re-creations, replicas, or living history. Because of this active and publicly transparent production process, the goals of the process are given to negotiation and debate (Chronis, 2005). However the debates about the vision of restoration projects are often ones that pit nature advocates against each other.

To illustrate the nuanced complexity of developing a vision, consider the diverse reactions of replacing one natural landscape with another within an Illinois' prairie restoration project that involved tree removal (Gobster, 1997; Vining, 1992). Residents, many who viewed themselves as environmentalists, framed the removal of trees and brush as being a destruction of nature, as lacking respect for historical

uses, and disrupting the area's sense of place. Birders or hunters, although different in their target species, viewed the tree and brush removal as a shift in wildlife habitat, and one that precluded survival of their favorite species (Gobster & Barro, 2000). Of course prairie restoration advocates framed the trees and brush as non-native and invasive species; they privileged prairie plants as being the "true" nature of the landscape. Each stakeholder had a distinct sense of place that framed the meaning of removal of nonnative trees and brush. This example illustrates the kind of tensions that surface in development of parks on the urban-agricultural fringe. This complexity would not emerge if hearings were connected to the protection of nature and preservation of ecological heritage—such concepts do not do justice to the place meanings and public values at hand.

The usual false dichotomies that pit ecological values against human values were not visible within the place meanings of participants. Yet there were numerous place meanings identified that appreciated ecological and natural history as well as cultural and community-based histories. Even with well-defined groups of long-standing stakeholders, the APEC method identified place meanings that otherwise would not have surfaced in the adversarial forums of many planning processes, and did not situate them in contexts to compete or battle with other values and place meanings. The APEC method asked participants to *describe their place meanings* and did not ask them to *prescribe their directives for landscape change*. Unlike traditional forms of park planning that assume a zero-sum game in which a finite "resource pie" is allocated within adversarial contexts of stakeholders (Yaffee, 1994, pp. 180-3), the APEC method works to create public value for parks and landscape change (Kruger & Shannon, 2000).

Although there are several points of optimism with the application of APEC to understand place meanings and provide visions for park development in urban-agricultural contexts, there are also issues that need consideration to extend the application. The virtue in the method is a good fit for planning contexts with stakeholders who are self-identified. APEC structures a process to represent values that otherwise may not surface. In doing so, it characterizes visions for park development that may not be identifiable nor linked to dominant discourse in park planning and outdoor recreation.

Representativeness is a complex issue. APEC requires a significant commitment of time and effort. The acts of engaging in the research, the taking of pictures, and the conversations with researchers involve a commitment of time. Clearly, a group of participants who are representative of the populations valued by a park should be engaged in planning processes. Most participants of this study indicated that the method enticed them to participate (perhaps due to the research being centered on their daily lives) and allowed them to discover place meanings they did not realize prior to being a participant. The role of a participant was one that led to self-discovery and community awareness. In this sense, the method enhanced the ability for stakeholders to represent themselves. However these findings are not meant to represent the entire community from which the participants resided, but are positioned as representing the place meanings and values of those whose voices would be reflected in public forums and decision-making workshops. To that end,

the method is effective at eliciting the complexity of place meanings and public values of landscapes.

Conclusion

Place meanings of community residents and stakeholders show promise as visions for park planning. For participants at both study sites, there were strong needs for local landscapes to reflect their histories. The truths of these environmental histories were relevant to family, community, state, and nation. To be sure, there are numerous parks that already tell histories of family, community, state, and nation, and this study supports such visions. However, a distinguishing characteristic of these methods was to elicit several histories that otherwise would not have been voiced, and therefore not have an opportunity to be represented as part of the landscape. Particularly in an era where waterparks, ballfields, jogging paths, and grassy lawns are popular in the U.S. Midwest, and continually appear as visions for urban-agricultural park development (e.g., Poff et al., 2006), the findings suggest other visions are “out there” and need to be told. These other visions are connected to reflecting cultural heritage of Native Americans, immigrant pioneers, and farm heritage, or to reflecting ecological heritage tied to native ecosystems and prairies.

Park-planning processes have changed over the past few decades regarding the involvement of stakeholders. Advisory committees, partnerships, open houses, workshops, town meetings, and other forums have developed and have become common practices for many land-use planning organizations with involvement of stakeholders increasing in numerous creative ways (Makopondo, 2006; Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006). This study was inspired by such needs and directed at further democratizing park development processes. The hope of this method is in its capacity to deepen park-planning dialogues to more fully involve community-based stakeholders. By centering the research and planning information needs on expertise of stakeholders and citizens—the significance of their everyday environments—this method grounds public values for park planning outside of professional “boxes” and agency cultural norms.

Compared to other park planning contexts, agricultural landscapes are less normative regarding their future as a park, and require a planning process that explicitly deliberates a vision. Such visions for park planning in urban-agricultural contexts are based upon public values of *what should be*. The need for explicit visions of park development suggests a re-consideration on the purpose of stakeholder involvement (Helford, 2000). Rather than stakeholders concerned about visitor-management techniques, operations, and use policies, stakeholder involvement is about place-making and fostering a dialogue that creates public value for the visions of a park. Toward this end, this study works to construct public values for parks on the urban-agricultural fringe.

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