Urban Green Space for Meaningful Experiences: Biophilia, restorative environments, and sense of place on an urban greenway
Kaylin Lee and Jeff Rose, Ph.D.
Department of Environmental Studies · Davidson College · Davidson, North Carolina

Background
- There has been a concern about declining quality and quantity of green spaces in urban areas (Swanwich et al., 2014).
- There are economic, sociocultural, and psychological benefits of effective and appropriate green space design and management.
- The Rose F. Kennedy Greenway, as a result of the “Big Dig” project, replaced the Central Artery and now provides a 27 acre open space (MassDOT, 2014).

Key Objectives
- To investigate if urban green spaces and their features meet the purposes and needs of urban dwellers.
- To examine the different meaning-making processes of one-time park users and frequent users.
- To provide potential ways of improving users’ urban greenway experiences.

Theoretical Framework
- **Biophilia:** Humans have inherent propensity to affiliate with life or life-like processes (E.O. Wilson, 1984)
- Restorative Environments: particular settings facilitate relief from mental fatigue (Kaplan, 1992)
- Sense of Place: Psychological construct that involves attributing a geographical location with meaning, values, and a sense of connection (Rogers & Bragg, 2012)

Methods
- **Social Media Analysis: Instagram**
  - Total of 113 Instagram photos geotagged and hashtagged as “Rose Kennedy Greenway” and taken from Oct 1st to 15th, 2014, were collected using Gramfree and the general patterns and regularities in the data were identified.
  - **Photo Elicitation Interviews**
    - 20 interviews ranged from 10-45 minutes were conducted to various types of users on the Greenway between Oct 11th and 15th of 2014 and the interviewees were asked to choose 3 “favorite” from 10 photographs taken on the different parts of the Greenway and to share their justifications.

Results
- **Social Media Analysis**
  - High prevalence of Background in the data showed that many people may be culturally driven to take photographs on the Greenway.
  - Size, location, and main features of each park also played as a significant driver of people’s photo-taking.
- **Photo Elicitation Interviews**
  - Photo 3, 4, 5 (See below) were selected by the most interviewees as one of their favorite three.

Discussion & Conclusion
- For green space to provide more meaningful experiences, it is important to understand how individuals experience green space and value landscapes differently depending on the type of users (frequent users and one-time users), sociocultural background, and previous experiences.
- Certain physical features of green space can promote the development of Sense of Place and improve users’ experiences in the green space.
- The restorative ability of urban green spaces stresses the importance of biophilic design that creates positive experiences within both natural and built environment for future urban green spaces.
- Meaningful experiences in urban green spaces can play a role of promoting environmental stewardship and environmentally-responsible behaviors of urban dwellers.

Acknowledgement
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References
- Rogers, J. & Bragg, E. (2012). The power of connection: Sustainable lifestyles and sense of place