

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

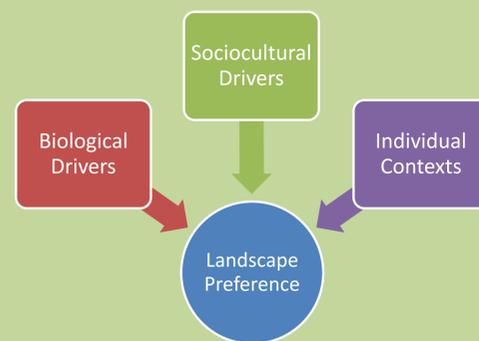
- There has been a concern about declining quality and quantity of green spaces in urban areas (Swanwick et al., 2014).
- There are economic, sociocultural, and psychological benefits of effective and appropriate green space design and management.
- The Rose F. Kennedy Greenway, as a result of the “Big 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)



Acknowledgement

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References

"The Central Artery/Tunnel Project - The Big Dig." *The Big Dig*. MassDOT, 2014. Web. 08 Apr. 2015.

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Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Kaplan, S. (1992). *The restorative environment: Nature and human experience*. In D. Relf (Ed.), *The role of horticulture in human well-being and social development* (pp. 134). Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Rogers, Z., & Bragg, E. (2012). *The power of connection: Sustainable lifestyles and sense of place*

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 *Gramfeed* 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.
- **Biological Drivers** were identified as preferences for **1) Natural Environments, 2) Complexity, and 3) Openness.**
 - “It’s just nice and relaxing and that’s green space and the sun is shining... the water is nice to listen to, and lots of people watching to be done.”
 - “When I walk on the greenway the first thing I think of is peace, when I see the color green. It is like a sudden burst of ‘oh, I think I will take a breath here.’”
- **Sociocultural Drivers** were identified as preferences for **1) Presence of People, 2) Cultural Representativeness, and 3) Functionality.**
 - “There’s a lot of human beings, and this goes along with how I define our city. In that there is a lot of people. It’s not a place where you go and be completely solitary all by yourself. It is a place where there’s a lot of people and there’s a lot of movement and activity.”
 - “I like the way trees caught the shadows and people communicating there...and the city... It is a very nice urban... suburbia look. That’s what’s so unique about Boston. There are just so many trees and it is a very small city compared to where I am from.”
- **Individual Contexts** were identified as **1) Sense of Place, and 2) Future Expectations.**
 - “My family is from Boston... And so... I am very much... it’s my backyard. And actually my father passed away about 3 or 4 years ago and was cremated and thrown in the harbor. So I visit him too over here, you know. So, it’s just a part of my world... and this (gardening) makes you feel good about yourself. It makes you feel like ‘I am spending my life doing something only because I want to ‘cause it means so much to me.’”

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.

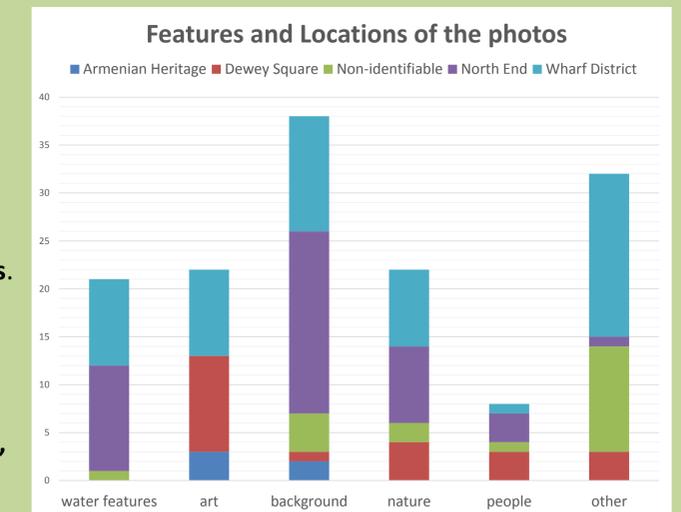


Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5