

TH1.20.06 Urban Green Spaces

Park Futures: Excavating Images of Tomorrow's Urban Green Spaces

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Public parks are largely the creation of the nineteenth century but have become integral to the contemporary city. They provide a window into the soul of the city; its social relations, evident contradictions and everyday lives. This paper is part of a wider, historically-informed project which strives to think forward through the past drawing on case studies of public parks in Leeds, England. It considers the present-day social role of urban parks and the horizons of expectations of what parks might become, aligned with visions of the future. As such, the paper contributes to a renewed interest in 'social futures', albeit rooted in an 'historical consciousness'. The paper excavates futures both in traces rooted in the past and through extrapolations from current trends. It develops seven images of park futures that address three core issues - cost, congestion and conflict - critical to debates on past, present and future park provision and management. The focus is predominantly on the UK context; nevertheless, our contention is that these 'images of the future' have wider application and resonance, notably across Europe and North America. We contend that in contrast with the relative continuity of the recent past (over the last 150 years or so), we are likely to see the emergence of a plural patchwork of varied urban park futures, as municipal authorities respond in different ways to the changing dynamics of urbanisation, conditions of austerity, the growing cultural diversity of park users and the (new) demands on urban green spaces. Several of the park futures have implications for the founding social role of parks as public meeting places where loosely connected strangers mix in liminal, yet ordered spaces. We conclude by differentiating between possible, probable and preferable futures, and explore the broader implications of our arguments for theoretical and policy debates.

Urban Community Gardens and the Commodification of Space: Community Gardening and Neighborhood Change in St. Louis, MO

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Lauded as a resource for promoting food justice, sustainable living and civic engagement in marginalized communities, urban community gardens have gained tremendous popularity in many major American cities. However, community gardens are contradictory in nature. Community gardens often start as a response to the exclusionary, market-based food distribution system, but qualitative research has noted the many race and class-based tensions that can grow out of community gardening in deprived neighborhoods. I build on this literature through an empirical investigation of the relationship between community gardening and gentrification. The greening of poor urban areas, ostensibly a public service, may function as way of furthering capital accumulation by attracting professional and managerial class people who might otherwise live elsewhere. Although community gardens decommmodify food, they may simultaneously facilitate ecological gentrification by commodifying the space around them. This paper uses Urban Political Ecology as a theoretical framework for exploring this contradiction in community gardens in St. Louis, MO. Employing spatial statistics, this paper makes two major contributions to existing community gardening research: 1) The introduction of spatial statistics for measuring community

gardening's contradictions, and 2) Establishes an empirical link between community gardening and gentrification.

Revisiting Political Economy of Greenbelt for Sustainable Urban Growth Management - A Cross-country Case Study

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Ever since the emergence of urban planning, public decision-makers have engaged several policy approaches to shape urban form, including infrastructure investment, regulating land-uses, acquiring land for development, and restricting development through conservation actions. Several countries including the UK, Canada, Australia, the US, and South Korea have directly controlled urban form by establishing urban limits and defining the edge of urbanization – a policy known as the greenbelt. In this paper, we investigate how national legal-political environments have generated various outcomes of the greenbelt policy by conducting a cross-country case study of the aforementioned five countries. We find that political battles around property rights, rather than concerns for natural environment, plays a significant role in determining the degree of success in greenbelt policy. Opposition from developers and property owners has been a great challenge in creating and maintaining the greenbelts in most countries. Australia's greenbelt policy was almost dismantled in the 1950s because landowners desired development more than the protection of the natural environment. In South Korea, the greenbelt policy was rigidly maintained under the strong central government system until the Constitutional Court ruling upheld individual property rights over land regulations. Despite the escalating development pressure, the UK has managed to maintain the original form of greenbelt owing to the nationalized development rights and the strong support from the politicians and the public. Some metropolitan counties in the US, where landowners' development rights are strongly protected by the constitutional law, have customized the greenbelt to the US land use regulations and market-based land preservation programs. Similarly, Canadian cities such as Ottawa and Toronto have incorporated regional planning and market-based land preservation programs into their greenbelt policy to manage growth.

The Development and Distribution of Urban Green Spaces: A Case Study of Phoenix, Arizona

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Research hints at the idea that different SES groups experience green space differently. For instance, proximity to public parks can actually lower the quality of life for low-income residents while not affecting higher income groups at all. How residents perceive the quality of parks and other green spaces, how they use these spaces, and what their needs are related to them might vary across SES. Several studies have discovered an unequal distribution of green spaces, with residents of low SES having disproportionately poor access to parks and parks of poor quality and low acreage. While many studies have looked at the distribution of green spaces and their association with health outcomes and well-being, few studies have looked at the planning process end to understand how local governments make decisions about the provision of green space.

Using a case study method, this paper explores the planning and social processes behind the distribution of green spaces in Phoenix, AZ across neighborhoods of varying SES. The research questions for this study include: How do local governments make decisions about distributing green spaces? Do they differentiate spaces based on the SES of communities? Do planners consider that parks can serve as amenities and disamenities? In order to answer these questions we will review local planning documents and citizen surveys and interview public officials, neighborhood groups, and local advocates. We will seek to understand the way the City of Phoenix defines green spaces and their process for developing those spaces across the city.