Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Environmental Planning and Management

ISSN: 0964-0568 (Print) 1360-0559 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjep20

Heritage narratives for landscapes on the rural–urban fringe in the Midwestern United States

John Strauser, William P. Stewart, Nicole M. Evans, Lorraine Stamberger & Carena J. van Riper

To cite this article: John Strauser, William P. Stewart, Nicole M. Evans, Lorraine Stamberger & Carena J. van Riper (2019) Heritage narratives for landscapes on the rural–urban fringe in the Midwestern United States, Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 62:7, 1269-1286, DOI: 10.1080/09640568.2018.1492908

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2018.1492908

Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 2019
Vol. 62, No. 7, 1269–1286, https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2018.1492908

Heritage narratives for landscapes on the rural–urban fringe in the Midwestern United States

John Strauser[a,*], William P. Stewart[a], Nicole M. Evans[b], Lorraine Stamberger[b] and Carena J. van Riper[b]

[a]*Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA;* [b]*Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA*

(*Received 26 September 2017; final version received 20 June 2018*)

Landscapes on the rural–urban fringe are experiencing rapid change. Along with agriculture, additional fronts of landscape change are related to suburbanization, conservation, and tourism. Building a framework related to heritage narratives, this study analyzes stories told by stakeholders to make sense of landscape change and influence their perspectives about growth. Drawing on focus groups of community and development leaders at two sites in the Midwestern United States – Jasper County, Iowa and Will County, Illinois – this study explores sense of place and shared values in the context of landscape change. From 76 heritage narratives, five thematic areas were identified: (1) agriculture, (2) tourism, (3) industry, (4) grassland conservation, and (5) housing. Participants expressed needs to find compatibility across multiple narratives and develop coherent visions for future growth. A "planning for place" meta-narrative was explored to integrate diverse perspectives and stimulate dialog about shared values with potential to unite landscapes and communities.

Keywords: landscape planning; narrative analysis; prairie conservation; sense of place; shared values

1. Introduction

Landscapes on the rural–urban fringe have evolved into hybrid places that reflect multiple pressures from growth and change (Antrop 2005). Like many areas on the outskirts of cities, urban-proximate rural areas in the Midwestern United States have withstood dramatic shifts in land-use patterns. Prior to the 1800s, much of the Midwest existed as a tallgrass prairie. In the central US, 57 million acres of farmland exists today where there was once native prairie (Savage 2011; United States Department of Agriculture 2012a, 2012b). Rural landscapes in proximity to urban areas continue to experience new patterns of growth given pressures from suburbanization (Salamon 2002), industry (Lafferty 2016; Slack and Jensen 2004), and decreasing productivity of various ecosystem services (Auch and Laingen 2015; Choi *et al*. 2008; "Jasper County Fish Kill Traced to High Ammonia Levels From Tile Line" Des Moines Register 2016).

Residents of these landscapes are searching for ways to make sense of growth, at the same time planners and researchers are seeking to translate public perceptions of

*Corresponding author. Email: johnrs2@illinois.edu

change into concrete land-use change directives (Lapka and Cudlinova 2003). Despite two decades since the inception of urban development models to combat sprawl and encourage compact cities (Duany, Speck, and Lydon 2010), urban areas are still pushing further away from city centers into the rural countryside. The encroachment of housing and other development on former agricultural (i.e., row crops or pastureland) and natural areas (i.e., green spaces for recreational use and nature protection) are creating unique stressors for people and ecosystems. This outward expansion is causing communities that once held strong agrarian roots to experience scattered growth patterns of an incoherent mix of industry, commercial strips, and residential patches, while ecosystems undergo dramatic changes caused by water pollution, air pollution, and loss of wildlife habitat (McDonnell *et al*. 1997). Because of these changes, traditional ways in which residents have identified and connected with their home landscapes may become antiquated, causing residents to seek new framings that can accommodate their new trajectories.

With land-use planning moving in directions that encourage community engagement, frameworks have been developed to promote deliberation of social meanings of policy in ways that are accessible to non-experts (Ferranti *et al*. 2014; Mason *et al*. 2015). A growing group of researchers are developing land-use planning models that recognize narrative as a natural form of expression that integrates community values, history, and expected trajectories for the future (Dare, Vanclay, and Schirmer 2011). There is general agreement that narratives include a sequential arrangement of events (Labov 1972; Polkinghorne 1995; Riesmann 2005; Wiles, Rosenberg, and Kearns 2005) in the form of a beginning, middle, and end (Hampton 2004; Labov 1972; Soliva and Hunziker 2009) and that they embed norms and values as connecting linkages across events. Narratives as a vision for landscape change are not expected to have reached their end state, but rather function to anticipate a preferred growth alternative in ways that it coheres with the past. Through their assessment of two Dutch rural sites, Arts, Buijs, and Verschoor (2017) characterized stakeholder engagement as narratives that integrate emotions and expertise and hold normative implications for policy. In Green and Dzidic's (2014, 1785–1786) study in rural Australia, stakeholders' perceptions of natural resource issues were explicitly framed as distinct layers of stories that brought to life worldviews, preferences, and place meanings. Over the past decade, other studies have also suggested that place meanings can be articulated in stories told about the past that are anchored in various narratives of people and their community (Rudestam 2014; Stewart, Glover, and Barkley 2013). With narratives being a common form of expression within contexts of participatory planning, this paper frames stakeholder engagement as an exchange of stories told to explain the way a community comes into being and anticipates its future.

Heritage narratives are natural ways in which residents make sense of changes within their local environments, and stakeholders strategically frame preferred growth alternatives. The purpose of this paper is to adapt the concept of a heritage narrative as holding promise for effective regional planning on the rural–urban fringe. A secondary purpose is to explore the existence of a meta-narrative that could account for various fronts of growth and integrate a diverse set of heritage narratives into a coherent vision for landscape change. A meta-narrative would recognize benefits that traditional narratives bring to the community and account for concerns of various singular narratives.

2. Heritage narratives that reflect place and guide change

At first read, narratives may appear to be descriptive histories that objectively chronicle the past up to the present (Lowenthal 1998). However, upon closer examination, they are politically charged directives for community action (Bridger 1996). Macaraig and Sandberg (2009, 451) referred to narratives as "socially produced, contingent, and malleable categories that can be used … tactically to support different policy positions." Macaraig and Sandberg's definition aligns with that of Bridger (1996) who developed the concept of a "heritage narrative" as:

> "selective representations of the past that feed into and are partially driven by the demands, sentiments, and interests of those in the present. Heritage narratives give temporal persistence to a community by providing an account of its origins, the character of its people (both past and present), and its trials and triumphs over time." (p. 355).

Our use of the "heritage narrative" concept follows from Bridger's (1996) work, and is applied to understand ways in which stakeholders frame their sense of place and guide their preferences for landscape change.

The implications of heritage narratives are in their characterization of place and associated human values for landscapes. Extending Tuan's (1974) thesis of humans as having emotional bonds to environments in their daily lives, particularly of home and culture, Cronon (1992) indicated that places are valued through stories told about them. Cronon (1992) and Sampson and Goodrich (2009) developed two dominant American narratives that characterize national land-use debates of the last century, namely the "use versus preservation" dichotomy. The "use" storyline is one of pioneers toiling with the land to make an otherwise unproductive landscape into a bountiful breadbasket. What was once a wasteland has been cultivated by the hard work, ingenuity, and perseverance of farmers to feed and house a growing American populous. The normative implications of this progressive narrative are that farming and other types of human development should be prioritized, with an implied justification anchored in American individualism, economic benefits, and nationalistic pride. The opposing side of the debate is a tragic narrative that frames pristine land as virgin and pure. Any human impact would degrade a landscape fresh from God's creation. Within these two narratives are embodied place meanings as well as imperatives to guide decision-making about landscape change (cf., Williams 2014).

Distinct heritage narratives often compete with one another and, rather than working toward pluralism or compatibility, require an "either/or" choice – as if one heritage narrative is more just than another. Because heritage narratives are inherently positive, being forced to choose one over the other (as in a vision for land-use planning) becomes arbitrary or, at best, is a complex and "wicked" problem (Patterson and Williams 1998). Stakeholders are usually focused on expanding the influence of their own perspectives and generally believe their narrative for change is superior. In this sense, various contexts in which land-use planning occurs are framed as stakeholders advocating for themselves as they pit heritage narratives – and their normative implications – against one another (Lowenthal 1998). Rather than competition between narratives, the planning problem is one of exploring compatibility across narratives to hybridize, synthesize, and otherwise develop a sense of coherence across the collection of singular narratives. Developing a comprehensible whole is what we will refer to as

a "meta-narrative" for landscape change. A meta-narrative holds potential as a policy tool because it could function as a coalescing force to build linkages through shared values that otherwise would not be apparent (Hampton 2004; Irvine *et al*. 2016).

Due to various layers of development across the past century, communities in the Midwestern US may have numerous heritage narratives. People belonging to distinct groups often tell different stories about themselves and their environments (Alkon 2004; Grieder and Garkovich 1994; Soliva 2007; see also Haller 2017, who found differences in perceptions of landscape change across sub-groups in an urban-proximate region of Peru). Because of the presence of a diverse collection of citizens, landscape planning is complex and relies on the presence of multiple shared values that emerge through deliberation and reflect normative implications for how places should be managed (Irvine *et al*. 2016). Distinct values associated with landscape change could create different perceptions of the same landscape and result in mixed directives for the future (Stewart *et al*. 2007). In their comprehensive discussion of fragmented landscapes on the rural–urban fringe, Scott *et al*. (2013) developed a framework that recognizes multiple growth narratives and the need to make connections between the past and the future. Others have suggested that people's beliefs about a landscape are influenced by individual knowledge systems connected to their sense of place (Soliva and Hunziker 2009; Wheeler *et al.* 2016). The contexts for research on landscape planning are Will County, Illinois and Jasper County, Iowa. These two study sites were selected due to recent growth patterns they both share regarding urban growth encroaching on agricultural landscapes.

3. Methods

3.1. Study sites

Will and Jasper Counties are examples of rural landscapes dealing with growth and change (see Figure 1). There are attributes of, and events, in both counties that could be incorporated into residents' heritage narratives and serve as visions for their sense

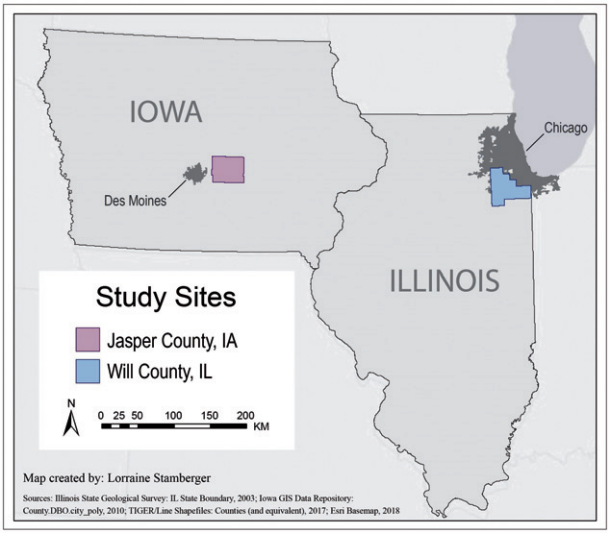

Figure 1. Map of study sites.

Table 1. Focus group participants

Location of focus group	Participants	Organization represented
Will County, Illinois	Six males/two females	Agriculture County-wide conservation Economic development Grassland management Higher education Land-use planning Tourism
Jasper County, Iowa	Three males/four females	Agriculture County-wide conservation Grassland management Higher education Local Media Tourism

of community. Will County, Illinois has a population of 677,500 and is on the rural–-urban fringe of Chicago, and Jasper County with a population of 36,842 is experiencing similar pressures on a smaller scale just east of Des Moines. The counties differ economically. The median household income in Will County Illinois is $77,507 while Jasper County Iowa has a median household income of $55,503 (United States Census Bureau 2010).

Despite differences in population size and median income, these two counties have similarities. Both counties have a NASCAR motor speedway, are home to federally maintained tallgrass prairies with bison, and attract newcomers desiring small town amenities with big city conveniences. In addition, both Will and Jasper Counties reflect a patchwork of rural agricultural, urban housing, commercial development, and conservation areas of protected grasslands and prairies. We purposely chose these two study sites due to their comparable mixture of land-uses, similar pressures for land-use change, and the promise they hold to advance prairie restoration and grassland protection on the rural–urban fringe of the Midwestern United States.

3.2. Focus groups

In 2016, we hosted focus groups in each of the two study sites. Through a referral method starting with directors of respective conservation organizations in the counties, stakeholders were interviewed either face-to-face or over the phone to introduce the study, learn about the participants' roles in land-use decisions, and discuss the general topics of research related to sense of place and growth opportunities. After each interview, stakeholders were asked for names of other leaders in the county and requested ones who may have different opinions than their own (Babbie 2017). Focus groups consisted of seven to eight participants selected to represent leadership from a diversity of organizations in each county, including representatives of industry, higher education, conservation, tourism, land-use planning, farming, housing development, and the local newspaper (Mountjoy *et al*. 2014). In Will County's focus group, there were eight participants – six males, two females – representing seven industries; in Jasper County's focus group, there were seven participants – three males, four females – representing six industries (see Table 1). The authors facilitated the focus group discussions in the roles of

moderator (to ask questions), scribe (to record points), and assistance in set-up (to arrange tables, audio record, and set out refreshments).

The focus group procedures aligned with the structure recommended by Morgan and Krueger (1998). These procedures called for a format that began with introductory items to initiate the flow of ideas, followed by transition to key points, and ended with a final set of questions being asked to summarize and call for anything missing. Each focus group used prompts directing conversation for an appreciative dialog about the county's sense of place and framing future landscape changes as something that could be managed by them:

- What are positive aspects of life in the county?
- What have been changes experienced over the past 5 years?
- What are the impressions of the county taken away by your visitors and friends?
- What are your perceptions of various growth opportunities?
- What changes must occur in order for growth opportunities?

A visible flip chart to outline the points of the focus group was used to direct ideas and keep the group on task (Bloor *et al*. 2001). Each focus group lasted about 2 h.

3.3. Analysis

This paper makes use of narrative analysis techniques developed by Labov (1972) that have been widely applied to explain how people conceptualize their collective situations in communities. Labov breaks narratives down into six parts: abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, result, and coda. The *abstract* is a short summary of the story. The *orientation* is the identification of the time and place of the story. The *complication* is the crisis or problem in the story. The *result* is what happened to address the complication. The *evaluation* is where the storyteller indicates the point of the story. The *coda* signals that the story is complete and sometimes brings the listener back to the present. We did not expect every story to have all these parts or follow the typical order. Additionally, we anticipated that some heritage narratives that communities tell would be in the middle of their story with its completion being anticipated, while others might tell their story as a completed account.

Transcripts were analyzed independently by the first three authors for identification of narratives across 75 pages of text. Narratives were identified according to thematic areas related to growth of agriculture, recreation and tourism, conservation, industry, housing development, and those that integrated multiple themes and/or discussed the need for large scale planning. After developing procedures for the identification of a narrative structure and keywords that reflected the content of the text found in the transcripts, the first three authors independently reviewed the entire texts of both focus groups. They identified 76 narratives, many of which integrated multiple voices from the focus group. Inter-rater reliability exhibited an acceptable level of agreement across coders at 77% (MacQueen *et al*. 1998; Youngs, White, and Wodrich 2008). The narratives were analyzed using Labov's structure (i.e., abstract, orientation, complication, result, evaluation, and coda) to understand desirable senses of place and preferences for future growth.

4. Findings

For each thematic area, a narrative is presented to illustrate its power of explanation and normative implication for the future. The narratives presented are not meant to be exhaustive, and have been edited to target the essence of the narrative.

4.1. Agricultural narrative

An agricultural narrative identified in the Iowa focus group championed the tremendous productivity of Iowa's farmlands and underscored the need to enhance its national visibility. The agricultural industry was not only connected to technology and agri-business, but also to transportation infrastructure that linked Iowa to the rest of the world in direct and dependable pathways. As close to an ending point as possible was an understanding that the way forward was to continue bringing international visitors to the state for opportunities to see agricultural innovations on a first-hand basis. The narrative asserts agriculture as a cornerstone of Iowa's heritage, as well as lamenting the lack of public awareness for this heritage.

> Abstract: *I don't think people realize how many foreign visitors come through the Des Moines airport… And they're coming to Iowa primarily for agriculture.*
>
> Orientation: *And it's a two-way street. We're trying to sell them on what we've got is what they need to buy.*
>
> Complication: *I'm not sure everybody in the state of Iowa fully realizes that all our excess on everything that we grow has to go somewhere else… the thing that gets me when you go around the world, people around the world seem to know Iowa better than some of your own friends* [in Iowa] *and at either end of the country.*
>
> Result: *For somebody around the world, the price is right and the conditions are right, will buy. And for a farmer, we're more concerned about infrastructure that will get it there, including the river and highway, and the rail… there is no question, that is what makes all this viable.*
>
> Evaluation: *We are, and will be, dependable suppliers of quality goods for you to buy. That's our message, loud and clear.*
>
> Coda: *That's why you get them on the farm, you get them out in the country, you show them what you got, and I can tell you many instances of people that actually get in the field and are impressed.*

The problem of weak visibility for agriculture is larger than any given farmer or agribusiness. Political visibility of an industry does not come from within the industry, but from mutual respect and recognition from outside. A long-term solution to enhance visibility for Iowa agriculture is needed to address the conclusion that foreigners know the value of local farms better than Iowans and other Americans.

4.2. Tourism narrative

A tourism narrative in the Illinois focus group reflected the unique role that tourism plays for rural communities. Framing it as an industry that has no downsides, it was coupled with the advantage of bringing people and communities together. Participants

knew well the places and activities of their hometowns, yet struggled to communicate the collection of these places to attract visitors. They saw benefits in both developing a more visible brand as well as collaborating across the communities of the county. Although branding and collective action are dependent on one another, they came out in the focus group as distinct.

> Abstract: *What would be upsides and downsides to increasing rural tourism? I don't know if there's a downside.*
>
> Orientation: *I don't see the tourism part being a downside… there's a lot of potential for that in Will County.*
>
> Complication: … *could you do it in such a way that it's somewhat sustainable… it's organizing the message, I think conveying the message… what is that place that we want Will County to be sold and perceived as?*
>
> Result: *Be it Route 66, be it the rivers, be it Midewin and the bison, or the Joliet penitentiary. You know, start adding up the packages. It's like, boy, there's a lot there… I actually don't see a lot of downside to that type of tourism. And with the bike trails, health… they want to be able to bike distances for health… that would be very sustainable.*
>
> Evaluation 1: *We can identify and sort of brand our destinations. Places where people come and visit and spend money and do tourist type things, tend to be more interesting places… Think about what all that does to the energy of a community. And I think we should be playing that as much as we can.*
>
> Evaluation 2: *And this year the Red Carpet Corridor just celebrated its 10th anniversary, so in respects to a festival, we're still in the infant stages and growing. And to help that, the 13 communities all along the route* [who] *were saying, every year we have a commemorative give-way… Take that passport and get your stamps.*c
>
> Coda: *You start adding up and boy there's a lot of stories… Ultimately people love stories… there's a lot of stories it seems like we could tell.*

Participants understood the need for sustainable tourism development that would encourage local businesses and connect the seemingly disparate parts of their county. They understood the need for a brand that would bring coherence to stories they told about themselves. In the end, highlighting the many stories of the county – both past and present – was considered one of the assets that would be instrumental in the progress of the tourism industry. Route 66 and the Red-Carpet Corridor were seen as just starting, and participants felt an over-arching narrative had yet to be developed and would need translation into a compelling brand.

4.3. Industrial narrative

An industrial narrative identified in the Jasper County focus group spoke to the need for economic diversification after dealing with adversity from the closure of the headquarters and manufacturing site of a national brand appliance company – Maytag. Understandably, the county built its identity around this plant and, after its closure, has gradually recovered. They realized that, even with the prospect of these jobs never coming back, they could move forward and reinvent themselves. They learned from

this closing that having a diversified economy is essential. Despite problems created from the Maytag pull-out, they would emerge an even stronger community.

> Abstract: *There's been a change in the attitude of the places* [in Jasper County].
>
> Orientation: *I think the whole county came out of the Maytag pullout and it had quite an effect on the place. Both in terms of the reality of the situation and also the perception of the situation*.
>
> Complication: *You know the county was going to dry up and blow away because Maytag wasn't here because they'd been such a strong presence…. everybody knows the UAW jobs that Maytag had, those aren't going to come back. The wages aren't coming back, the benefits aren't coming back, the retirement programs aren't coming back.*
>
> Results: *I've really perceived an attitude shift that, 'Yep, we're ready to move forward.' We have this great legacy and this great history of being the capital of the washing machine industry for the last 100 years. But that's what it was… we're ready to move on.*
>
> Evaluation: *We are diversifying the industrial base. I mean, it's happening right now… we feel like we've made progress in terms of back-filling what we lost with Maytag… we have a really good core of industry in a lot of central Iowa.*
>
> Coda: *You go around this country and there's a lot of places who haven't done nearly as good a job. And they've become ghost towns. I don't think anybody necessarily thinks that* [being a company town] *is the best model for a healthy community.*

Economic diversification is both a message and set of actions that needs continual vigilance. Through the closing of Maytag and other events, Jasper County residents learned a valuable lesson to ensure the sustainability of their communities. They were keenly aware of both economic and social implications of local industries to the point of explaining their loss as one of eroding their sense of identity. The path to a diverse economy involved expanding their sense of place to attract outside industry, working collectively across a regional set of communities, and supporting development of environmental amenities, quality of life, and opportunities for family activities.

4.4. Grassland conservation narrative

A grassland conservation narrative identified in the Illinois focus group connected grassland protection to storm water management. After withstanding a decade-long fury of housing development, Will County stakeholders were sensitive to the need for strategies to alleviate flooding in residential areas. Although Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie was established at the beginning of the housing boom in Will County, it has been viewed as unrelated to amenities that attract new residents. Connecting housing development to grassland protection is not a new design feature in the greater Chicago region; however, its implementation in Will County has been slow to gain traction. Instead, other land-uses have appeared to take priority, particularly a booming transportation and warehousing industry. The upshot of this narrative suggests that organizations who care about grasslands need to connect with organizations who care about residential and community development.

Abstract: *There's a number of benefits of looking at something like that* [grasslands]*, you can look at it from an environmental side and play that up.* [The benefits of] *storm water. There's a lot of different angles from setting aside land both from an environmental standpoint and just a planning standpoint.*

Orientation: *Is there a way to look at how you define a sustainable water supply for the future of Will County? Is part of that grassland and open space areas where water can soak and infiltrate? Water's going to be a more important issue in Illinois maybe 10, 20 years from now.*

Complication 1: *I love Midewin, but Midewin's a destination. I can't really get to Midewin from my house easily, but I can get to an open space grassland.*

Complication 2: *The negative side is it* [open space grassland] *costs money… you're setting aside lands in public trust; it's not free. And so, in order to maintain and manage those, there's an investment.*

Result: *It gets back to, what do you want your place to be, to look like, and what's sustainable? I know we're trying to look at* [doing] *more with grassland… but how that relates to storm water, water infiltration, water supply, and ground water?… You just can't keep endlessly pumping out and not have a ramification at some point. So I think about preserved areas that allow the opportunity where water can actually soak in.*

Evaluation: [Open space grasslands] *break the monotony; it gives somebody a place to get away out of their house, out of their work, out of their developed area, and even* [better] *if it's close to home.*

Coda: *What we want to do is bring it* [open space grasslands] *in closer and try to develop it in those* [residential] *areas and work together.*

The convergence of participants in the Illinois focus group who contributed and agreed to this narrative was impressive. It was as if each stakeholder had individually arrived at grassland development as a solution for residential flooding; yet, the focus group was one of the few opportunities in which they could voice the need to connect these seemingly disparate pathways for development. The public sharing that connected grassland protection to flood mitigation led to the discovery of shared values and created – at least in the context of the focus group – a strategy to move forward. Undoubtedly, the problem of land costs to support grassland development is a hurdle to address, and, fortunately, it was well-recognized among the stakeholders assembled. The use of "we" in the coda held promise for a larger narrative that encompassed more than one sense of place.

4.5. Housing narrative

A housing narrative identified in our Illinois focus group integrated housing, urban infrastructure, and community quality of life. The specific narrative focused on building and subdivision codes but led to wider discussions about regional development and the need for inter-community cooperation. Rapid development reportedly led Will County down a path that lacked any regional coordination or information sharing of best practices for growth. Participants shared experiences of communities in competition with one another and that surrounding towns compromised their building and infrastructure standards to remain competitive.

Abstract: *The key here is the lay-down-our-arms concept between communities, especially when it comes to regional infrastructure.*

Orientation: *I'm not just talking about roads. Storm water, and water itself. I think we can take a page out of some other parts of the country that have done it well… Regional sustainability helps each individual pod grow in a way it should. We haven't really spread that enough. The mentality that as a whole, everyone's better off.*

Complication: *But how do you get these municipalities to buy into that? It is extremely difficult. Some of them have adopted different types of resolutions or policies, and they've carried them out and enforced those while others don't enforce them. And people start to see that, developers see that, and it snowballs.*

Result: *It depends how savvy and how territorial communities are. And that goes to their leaders. Mayors or trustees, I think that the round table that you had with all of the communities, I'm hoping that continues and grows because that's a positive for us and how we can change things. That they have to see past their municipal borders. They have to see that what they adopt has a direct impact on their community to the north, or* [elsewhere].

Evaluation: *Some areas are more progressive. They follow the rules that are in place and they make sure everybody else follows them too, where others don't do that as much.*

Coda: *The policy approach* [is that] *communities that understand growth and how to manage growth,* [will] *plan for growth.*

The housing narrative provided insight on the need for communities to be cooperative in their plans for residential housing growth. There was broad agreement among participants that regional cooperation was an important step for building desirable communities with an attractive sense of place. Participants were hopeful for the dialog among mayors to share information and discuss best practices to move forward together.

4.6. "Planning for place" as a meta-narrative

The meta-narratives identified were based on a growing appreciation for a regional sense of place that needed deliberate planning. Across both study sites, participants wished for a holistic plan that linked together multiple sectors (e.g., agriculture, tourism, housing, and conservation) and contributed to a unifying vision that would materialize with concerted action and a coherent sense of place at the county level. This sort of planning has not yet occurred in Jasper or Will Counties but, if embarked upon, could provide a path to make sense of their past and connect with their future. In other words, meta-narratives were not identified to build coherence among the various fronts of growth. Rather the meta-narratives identified were about *developing a process* that would do so, and these meta-narratives were mid-story and hopeful, rather than complete or retrospective. It may be that the focus groups brought together a set of stakeholders who heretofore had not viewed themselves as a united front. Alternately, the rural residents of this study were discovering their regional interdependencies and searching for ways to expand their own narratives to encompass a network of people and places rooted in shared rural values.

We identified a set of "planning for place" meta-narratives that warrant further discussion about shared values on the rural–urban fringe. These process-based meta-narratives reflect three shared values framed as: (1) preserving authenticity, (2) cooperating with others, and (3) defining acceptable growth. Figure 2 presents a schematic diagram centered on regional planning for a sense of place, emphasizing the need for shared

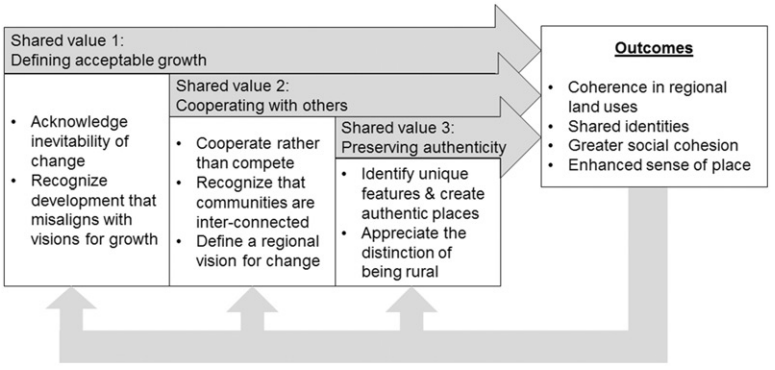

Figure 2. A meta-narrative directed at planning for a regional sense of place.

values. Although neither Will nor Jasper has a regional planning organization and their meta-narratives were recurrent throughout the focus groups, participants converged on their desire for synthesizing the diversity of their concerns. That is, participants identified a problem, suggested the need for landscape-level planning, and anticipated the benefits that would emerge from negotiating their shared rural values (see Figure 2). Each of the shared rural values identified are discussed within a planning narrative that could address the challenges presented.

4.7. Preserving authenticity as a shared value on the rural–urban fringe

An anticipated outcome of some kind of regional planning effort was the identification and preservation of areas viewed as authentic. Participants found authenticity in features that made rural landscapes unique compared to their urban and suburban counterparts. This rural feeling was particularly important in comparison to the undifferentiated development of metropolitan areas. One participant stated: "*These rural communities … you'd hate to see those swallowed up and lost. Will County is so diverse … South of I-80 … what we have that they* [DuPage County] *don't have is a lot of this agricultural area … . Not everybody's going to be Naperville … . just accept it and be yourself*." A participant in the Jasper County focus group identified authenticity as an outcome of landscape-level planning:

> Abstract: *As somebody who works with all the towns, there's really strong community identity in all of these places.*
>
> Orientation: *That's something that I think we need to market in Jasper County, and that's a good idea to do because of some of the facelessness of the Des Moines metro area.*
>
> Complication: *We like to joke that they're building fake town squares in Ankeny, and we have the real town square. Joking aside, we do feel like there's an identity to Jasper County that's distinctive, but yet the access, if you work in Des Moines, is so that you can have a life that has an identity.*
>
> Result: *If we can sell that and market that better. And we're in the process of trying to put some numbers down that individuals can take into a financial institution and show the pent-up housing demand* [associated with communities with a strong identity], *so that a banker is comfortable loaning money to somebody who wants to open up more ground* [in Jasper County].

Implied evaluation: County-wide information-sharing leads to appreciation and preservation of community identity.

Implied coda: The authenticity of the towns in Jasper County are a significant impetus to attract new residents for future growth.

Some expressed that they believed planning could do more than preserve authentic places, that it could create authentic places. Overall, planning was considered a way of maintaining uniqueness of places. By coordinating changes at a countywide level, an outcome would be the creation of comprehensible places, where growth could be a tool for the preservation and creation of authenticity.

4.8. Cooperating with others as a shared value on the rural–urban fringe

Planning reflected the shared values of cooperation over competition and caring for those around one's community. These values for cooperation were still in an emergent stage, in part, due to the lack of landscape-level planning that had occurred. There was talk about celebrating and emphasizing the uniqueness of each community rather than competing to have the most economic growth. Several people made a seemingly ethical appeal to planning, stating that people should recognize that what one community does impact on other communities around them: *That they* [communities] *have to see things past their municipal borders, that they have to see that what they do, what they adopt has a direct impact on their community to the north, or you know…*

Cooperation did not necessarily mean that everyone would get everything they wanted. One participant explained that comprehensive planning at a town or county level meant defining a vision, not necessarily conceding to everyone's interests. Without this kind of tough decision-making, a community can become too piecemeal and in the words of one participant like a "Christmas tree" with something for everyone. Participants recognized the exclusion that sometimes occurs in a sense of place and the necessity of making decisions to create coherency in the landscape.

In line with past research (Irvine *et al*. 2016), cooperation with others occurred between organizations as well as individuals. The shared values of collaboration were the context for one participant to praise the high level of inter-organizational activity in the county, stating: *I've worked in a lot of different parts of the country and when I came here, I was amazed at how much connection there was between the social service agencies, the business community, the environmental groups, and the farming community.* In response, another participant acknowledged, "*we're moving in the right direction*" with such comments garnering agreement from others.

4.9. Defining acceptable growth as a shared value on the rural–urban fringe

Planning was a way for people in the counties to determine the acceptability of various kinds of growth. None of the participants maintained illusions about keeping growth stagnant or shutting out development. They accepted change, but believed planning was necessary for defining acceptable growth. They readily framed the need to establish a regional sense of place that was widely shared and articulated through a coordinated planning process, which would provide fodder for rejecting development that threatens identity. An example of a narrative about defining acceptable kinds of growth goes as follows:

Abstract: *All* [this growth] *has to be planned.*

Orientation: *If you look at zoning from one county to the next, they are all different. Polk, and Jasper, and Story, they are going to vary.*

Complication: *Builders are going to go where it's easiest to build. And they're going to go to the land that's easily developed, and many times that is some of the best prime agricultural land. It's ready made, without trees, and flat… if we try to entice one population from another, you're going to see counties competing to get the quick housing.*

Result: *We've got to break out of the county and look at more regional* [development] *and the implications.*

Implied evaluation: Regional planning would bring us together and guide county-wide growth in the direction in a way that reflects our shared values.

Across the many narratives identified in the focus groups, coordinated dialog and regional level planning was viewed as having significant roles to play in moving forward. By reviewing the complications of the illustrative narratives, the hoped-for-accomplishments of planning came into focus. The desire for regional planning reinforced and promoted their sense of place and associated shared values. Although the two study sites were distinct in terms of population size and history of urban encroachment, they were remarkably similar in their need for, and anticipated benefits of, regional planning that framed growth and change as a place-making process. Participants did not problematize the complexity of shared values in their county but, instead, felt that there were widely shared values among county residents and community leadership.

As indicated in the process-based meta-narrative of Figure 2, planning for a regional sense of place was based on shared values that recognized the importance of defining acceptable growth, cooperating with other communities and organizations, and preserving authenticity in ways that recognized the seemingly ordinary places of rural activity, such as town squares, open spaces, and gathering spots. By embracing these values, the anticipated outcomes were a coherence in regional land-uses, shared identities across neighbors and communities, greater social cohesion, and a sense of place that integrates various geographic scales of home, work, town, and country. Such outcomes were thought to influence shared values through feedback that would build capacity for regional planning and coordination.

5. Conclusion

One contribution of this study is the connection of place meanings to narratives told about the past. Sense of place was articulated in terms of a storied history that led to unique qualities of Jasper and Will Counties. These community heritage narratives, assert the value of rural places and function as guidelines for moving forward. Although previous research has observed the expression of place-meanings as being stories (Sampson and Goodrich 2009; Wheeler *et al*. 2016), the narrative analysis further legitimized the claim of stories as being a natural form of expression for sense of place. As part of this natural expression, a normative component of place-meanings was apparent. The evaluation (i.e., outcome) was an opportunity to voice what ought to be, or what should not happen. Place meanings reflected not just the description of

the uniqueness and attachment one felt toward an environment, but also prescriptive notions of future options for growth.

A second contribution is the applicability of heritage narratives as a framework for understanding discussions about landscape change. Identifying 76 narratives across two focus groups suggests that story-telling about growth and change is a natural format to explain one's perceptions of the past as tied to preferences for the future. Although many of the 76 narratives were not complete, they each attributed causality between events and were understood by participants in terms of having both descriptive and normative components (Wheeler *et al*. 2016). The high frequency of narrative expressions highlighted the effectiveness of a story-telling structure as a common form of communication. Embracing a dialog that invites the sharing of heritage narratives and encouraging their use at community forums could function to mediate conflict between stakeholders (Hawkins 2014). Such collaborative planning processes would pay tribute to a complex past, while allowing for pluralism and hybridity in future growth options.

A third contribution of this study is the recognition that coordinated planning holds promise to capture shared values on the rural–urban fringe. Rather than being resistant or acquiescent in the face of encroaching development, stakeholders of rural communities are optimistic to enhance their resiliency through coordinated planning. There was broad awareness that communities were interdependent upon one another and that activities in one community influenced life in another community. Such awareness provided both a positive sense of togetherness, as well as concerns that such interconnections were not well-understood nor organized to plan for their collective sense of place. Acknowledging the need for planning is a positive first step that brings hope for shared rural values to be reflected in future growth. Across the two sets of stakeholders, the shared values that needed deliberation within a planning process were preserving authenticity, cooperating with others, and defining acceptable growth for the future (Coleman and Stern 2017). This finding extends a growing body of research focused on shared values and deliberation that aims to equip communities for their future and generate useable evidence to guide decision-making (Irvine *et al*. 2016; Kenter *et al*. 2016).

Communities on the rural–urban fringe are looking to create landscapes that enhance sense of place and strengthen interconnections with each other. Over the course of the last century, the United States evolved from an agrarian society to an economy with a diversity of sectors linked to agriculture, industry, tourism, housing, and conservation. With uncertainty being an expectation for the future, appreciating the various heritage narratives within regional planning contexts could be a first step to embrace their future and understand the shared values at stake. Landscape-level planning would be needed to honor a sense of place that respects our agrarian roots and seeks compatibility across other vectors of change.

Funding

Research was supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture/United States Department of Agriculture [grant number 2016-68006-24836].

ORCID

Carena J. van Riper http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6200-8855

References

Alkon, A. H. 2004. "Place, Stories, and Consequences." *Organization and Environment* 17 (2): 145–169. doi:10.1177/1086026604264881.

Antrop, M. 2005. "Why Landscapes of the Past are Important for the Future." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 70 (1): 21–34. doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2003.10.002.

Arts, I., A. Buijs, and G. Verschoor. 2017. "Regimes of Justification: Competing Arguments and the Construction of Legitimacy in Dutch Nature Conservation Practices." *Journal of Environmental Policy and Management* 61 (5-6): 1070–1084. doi:10.1080/09640568.2017.1319346.

Auch, R., and C. Laingen. 2015. "Having It Both Ways? Land Use Change in a US Midwestern Agricultural Ecoregion." *The Professional Geographer* 67 (1): 84–97. doi:10.1080/00330124.2014.921015.

Babbie, E. 2017. *The Basics of Social Research. 7th ed*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning Solutions.

Bloor, M., J. Frankland, M. Thomas, and K. Robson, eds. 2001. *Focus Groups in Social Research*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Bridger, J. 1996. "Community Imagery and the Built Environment." *The Sociological Quarterly* 37 (3): 353–374. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.1996.tb00743.x.

Choi, Y., V. Temperton, E. Allen, A. Grootjans, M. Halassy, R. Hobbs, M. Naeth, and Torok, K. 2008. "Ecological Restoration for Future Sustainability in a Changing Environment." *Écoscience* 15 (1): 53–64. doi:10.2980/1195-6860(2008)15[53:ERFFSI]2.0.CO;2.

Coleman, K., and M. Stern. 2017. "Boundary Spanners as Trust Ambassadors in Collaborative Natural Resource Management." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*. 61 (2): 291–208. doi:10.1080/09640568.2017.1303462.

Cronon, W. 1992. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative." *The Journal of American History* 78 (4): 1347–1376.

Dare, M., F. Vanclay, and J. Schirmer. 2011. "Understanding Community Engagement in Plantation Forest Management: Insights from Practitioner and Community Narratives." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 54 (9): 1149–1168.

Des Moines Register. 2016. "Jasper County Fish Kill Traced to High Ammonia Levels From Tile Line." September 14. https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2016/09/14/jasper-county-fish-kill-traced-high-ammonia-levels-tile-line/90350820/.

Duany, A., J. Speck, and M. Lydon. 2010. *The Smart Growth Manual*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Ferranti, F., E. Turnhout, R. Beunen, and J. Behagel. 2014. "Shifting Nature Conservation Approaches in Natura 2000 and the Implications to the Roles of Stakeholders." *Journal of Environmental Policy and Management* 57 (11): 1642–1657. doi:10.1080/09640568.2013.827107.

Green, M., and P. Dzidic. 2014. "Social Science and Socializing: Adopting Causal Layered Analysis to Reveal Multi-Stakeholder Perceptions of Natural Resource Management in Australia." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 57 (12): 1782–1801. doi:10.1080/09640568.2013.839443.

Greider, T., and L. Garkovich. 1994. "Landscapes: The Social Construction of Nature and the Environment." *The Rural Sociological Society* 59 (1): 1–24.

Haller, A. 2017. "Urbanites, Smallholders, and the Quest for Empathy: Prospects for Collaborative Planning in the Periurban Shullcas Valley, Peru." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 165: 220–230.

Hampton, G. 2004. "Enhancing Public Participation Through Narrative Analysis." *Policy Sciences* 37 (3): 261–276. doi:10.1007/s11077-005-1763-1.

Hawkins, C. 2014. "Planning and Competing Interests: Testing the Mediating Influence of Planning Capacity on Smart Growth Policy Adoption." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 57 (11): 1683–1703. doi:10.1080/09640.

Irvine, K. N., L. O'Brien, N. Ravenscroft, N. Cooper, M. Everard, I. Fazey, M. S. Reed, and J. O. Kenter. 2016. "Ecosystem Services and the Idea of Shared Values." *Ecosystem Services* 21: 184–193. doi:10.1016/j.ecoser.2016.07.001.

Kenter, J. O., R. Bryce, M. Christie, N. Cooper, N. Hockley, K. N. Irvine, I. Fazey, *et al.* 2016. "Shared Values and Deliberative Valuation: Future Directions." *Ecosystem Services* 21: 358–371. doi:10.1016/j.ecoser.2016.10.006.

Labov, W. 1972. "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax." In *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, 354–396. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Lafferty, S. 2016. "Proposed Great Lakes Basin Railroad Close to Will County." *Chicago Tribune*, April 20.
Lapka, M., and E. Cudlinova. 2003. "Changing Landscapes, Changing Landscape's Story." *Landscape Research* 28 (3): 323–328. doi:10.1080/01426390306517.
Lowenthal, D. 1998 "Fabricating Heritage." *History and Memory* 10 (1): 5–24.
Macaraig, J. M. R., and L. A. Sandberg. 2009. "The Politics of Sewerage: Contested Narratives on Growth, Science, and Nature." *Society and Natural Resources* 22 (5): 448–463.
MacQueen, K. M., E. McLellan, K. Kay, and B. Milstein. 1998. "Codebook Development for Team-Based Qualitative Analysis." *Cultural Anthropological Methods Journal* 10 (2): 31–36.
Mason, S., J. Dixon, F. Mambulu, A. Rishworth, P. Mkandawire, and L. Isaac. 2015. "Management Challenges of Urban Biosolids: Narratives Around Facility Siting in Rural Ontario." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 58 (8): 1363–1383. doi:10.1080/09640568.2014.925853.
McDonnell, M., T. Steward, P. Groffman, P. Bohlen, R. Pouyat, W. Zipperer, R. Parmelee, M. Carreiro, and K. Medley. 1997. "Ecosystem Processes Along an Urban-to-Rural Gradient." *Urban Ecosystems* 1 (1): 21–36. doi:10.1023/A:1014359024275.
Morgan, D., and R. Krueger. 1998. *Focus Group Kit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
Mountjoy, N., E. Seekamp, M. Davenport, and M. Whiles. 2014. "Identifying Capacity Indicators for Community-Based Natural Resource Management Initiatives: Focus Group Results from Conservation Practitioners Across Illinois." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 57 (3): 329–348. doi:10.1080/09640568.2012.74380.
Patterson, M., and D. Williams. 1998. "Paradigms and Problems: The Practice of Social Sciences in Natural Resource Management." *Society and Natural Resources* 11: 279–295. doi:10.1080/08941929809381080.
Polkinghorne, D. E. 1995. "Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 8 (1): 5–23. doi:10.1080/0951839950080103.
Riessman, C. K. 2005. "Narrative Analysis." In *Narrative, Memory and Everyday Life*, edited by N. Kelly, C. Horrocks, K. Milnes, B. Roberts and D. Robinson, 1–7. Huddersfield, UK: University of Huddersfield Press.
Rudestam, K. 2014. "Loving Water, Resenting Regulation: Sense of Place and Water Management in the Willamette Waters." *Society and Natural Resources* 27 (1): 20–35. doi:10.1080/08941920.2013.840020.
Salamon, S. 2002. *Newcomers to Old Towns: Suburbanization of the Heartland*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Sampson, K., and C. Goodrich. 2009. "Making Place: Identity Construction and Community Formation Through 'Sense of Place' in Westland, New Zealand." *Society and Natural Resources* 22 (10): 901–915. doi:10.1080/08941920802178172.
Savage, C. 2011. *Prairie: A Natural History*. Vancouver, CA: Greystone Books.
Scott, A., C. Carter, M. Reed, and P. Larkham. 2013. "Disintegrated Development at the Rural–Urban Fringe: Re-Connecting Spatial Planning Theory and Practice." *Progress in Planning* 83: 1–52.
Slack, T., and L. Jensen. 2004. "Employment Adequacy in Extractive Industries: An Analysis of Underemployment, 1974–1998." *Society and Natural Resources* 17 (2): 129–146. doi:10.1080/08941920490261258.
Soliva, R. 2007. "Landscape Stories: Using Ideal Type Narratives as a Heuristic Device in Rural Studies." *Journal of Rural Studies* 23 (1): 62–74. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2006.04.004.
Soliva, R., and M. Hunziker. 2009. "Beyond the Visual Dimension: Using Ideal Type Narratives to Analyse People's Assessments of Landscape Scenarios." *Land Use Policy* 26 (2): 284–294. doi:10.1016/j.landusepol.2008.03.007.
Stewart, W., J. Barkley, A. Kerins, K. Gladdys, and T. Glover. 2007. "Park Development on the Urban-Agricultural Fringe." *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* 25 (4): 117–138.
Stewart, W., T. Glover, and J. Barkley. 2013. "Sharing Stories of Place to Foster Social Learning. In *Place-Based Conservation: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, edited by W. Stewart, D. Williams, and L. Kruger, 137–150. New York: Springer Verlag.
Tuan, Y.-F. 1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Values and Attitudes*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

United States Census Bureau. 2010. "Quick Facts." Accessed March 31, 2018 https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/willcountyillinois,US,jaspercountyiowa/PST045217.

United States Department of Agriculture. 2012a. "County Summary Highlights, Illinois." Accessed April 17, 2017. https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Illinois/st17_2_001_001.pdf.

United States Department of Agriculture. 2012b. "County Summary Highlights, Iowa." Accessed April 17, 2017. https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Iowa/st19_2_001_001.pdf.

Wheeler, M., A. Sinclair, P. Fitzpatrick, A. Diduck, and I. Davidson-Hunt. 2016. "Place-Based Inquiry's Potential for Encouraging Public Participation: Stories from the Common Ground Land in Kenora, Ontario." *Society and Natural Resources* 29 (10): 1230–1245. doi:10.1080/08941920.2015.1122130.

Wiles, J. L., M. W. Rosenberg, and R. A. Kearns. 2005. "Narrative Analysis as a Strategy for Understanding Interview Talk in Geographic Research." *Area* 37 (1): 89–99. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4762.2005.00608.x.

Williams, D. R. 2014. "Making Sense of 'Place': Reflections on Pluralism and Positionality in Place Research." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 131: 74–82. doi:10.1016/j.landurbplan.2014.08.002.

Youngs, Y., D. White, and J. Wodrich. 2008. "Transportation Systems as Cultural Landscapes in National Parks: The Case of Yosemite." *Society and Natural Resources* 21 (9): 797–811. doi:10.1080/08941920801942065.