

# An archaeology of fear and environmental change in Philadelphia

Alec Brownlow

*Department of Geography, DePaul University, Chicago, IL 60614, United States*

Received 5 March 2004; received in revised form 29 December 2004

---

## Abstract

This paper examines how mechanisms of social control function to mediate human–environment relations and processes of environmental change in the city. Using the Fairmount Park System of Philadelphia as a case study, I argue that a history of social control mechanisms, both formal and informal, maintained viable socio-environmental urban relationships. Their decline over the last several decades has produced a legacy of fear towards the city’s natural environment that has had, and continues to have, profound socio-spatial and ecological implications. I argue that these changes have their origin in a set of racially motivated decisions made during the volatile years of the late 1960s and early 1970s and that African American women, in particular, have been impacted disproportionately by their consequences. Fear of crime in the natural environment and suspicion of environmental change have resulted in the exclusion of local women and children from what was, historically, a politically and socially viable public space. In this context, urban ecological change is locally understood as more an issue of social control than one of environmental concern.

© 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Environmental change; Social control; Fear; Gender; Race

---

## 1. Introduction

It is well established in sociological, criminological, and geographical thought that social control plays a fundamental role in shaping urban experience. Theories of social control have a rich history towards our explanation of urban society, urban form and function; indeed, it is considered by many to be the foundational principle of urban sociological thought and analysis (e.g., Janowitz, 1975; Gibbs, 1989). Social control was the cornerstone of urban ecological thought developed by the Chicago School and most demonstratively applied in Park’s and Burgess’s *The City* (1970) where it was called upon to explain everything from neighborhood and community structure to patterns of criminal behavior and delinquency (see also, McKenzie, 1923; Shaw and McKay, 1942). Later, in her analysis of urban dysfunction and decay, Jacobs (1961) emphasized everyday

forms of social control as a priori to urban viability, a mechanisms of social and spatial regulation whose diversity and health were central to the livable and accessible city. Since Jacobs, however, ecological accolades and theories of social control (inter alia) have fallen into disfavor and have been roundly and legitimately criticized for their failure to account for the disproportional influences of structural power in shaping social control’s form, function, distribution, and implementation. Faced with the pervasiveness and apparent rigidity of uneven development and segregation in the urban US, subsequent scholarship on the topic has reconceptualized urban social control as an authoritative project of social and political hegemony involving any number of regulatory and reproductive spatial practices and institutions (Harvey, 1973; Wilson, 1987; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey and Denton, 1993). Today, a growing chorus of urban theorists continues to expose and call our attention to the often brutal, increasingly quixotic and Orwellian methods and technologies deployed to police social interaction and secure spatial meaning in the post-Fordist,

---

*E-mail address:* [alecb@temple.edu](mailto:alecb@temple.edu)

entrepreneurial city (Davis, 1990; Smith, 1996, 1998; Zukin, 1995; Flusty, 2001; MacLeod, 2002; Mitchell, 2003; see also Harvey, 1989).

However, in its fervor to reveal the ideological and spatial injustices of fin de siècle capitalism, recent critique has, at best, been ambivalent to alternative readings and interpretations of the social control debate (see Atkinson, 2003)—that is, to the capacities for exclusion, brutality, and violence that often accompany the absence (either real or perceived) of social and spatial control mechanisms, especially among the city's most marginalized populations. For example, the patterns and high rates of violent crime found in inner city black neighborhoods are widely and increasingly attributed to the decline of or the neglect by institutions of control, both formal and informal, that accompany racial spatial segregation, impoverishment, and poverty concentration (Blau and Golden, 1986; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Anderson, 1999; Peterson and Krivo, 1999; Rosenfeld et al., 2001). Similarly, a perceived absence of control is central to the ever-growing fear of violent victimization among urban women, especially the fear of male sexual attack in public spaces (Warr, 1985; Valentine, 1989; Pain, 1991, 1997; Stanko, 1995; Sparks et al., 2001). Among the latter, the result is a persistent and pervasive sense of public vulnerability, a constant accounting of the surrounding environment for cues of possible danger or disorder, and exclusion from or restricted or conditional access to those public spaces, resources, and activities perceived to be of possible risk (Valentine, 1989; Gardner, 1990; Day, 1999a,b; Koskela and Pain, 2000). To this end, these examples suggest that uncontrolled urban space results in patterns of exclusion and denied opportunities for public participation that are every bit as pernicious and un-democratic as the entrepreneurial and revanchist practices, policies, and discourses decried by Smith (1996, 1998), Mitchell (2003) and others. Further, the uneven implications for spatial use and meaning among marginalized social groups, not least the safety and inclusion of women and blacks (and, especially, black women) in the urban public sphere, suggest similar regulative ideological influences and histories.

In this paper, I explore how social control, or the lack thereof, influences and shapes human–environment relations in the city. My starting point is the general overlap of public and ecological geographies that constitute urban parks and greenspaces, and the implications of social and spatial control towards their social and ecological viability, function, and meaning. I demonstrate how access to these public urban environments is, for many, contingent upon a healthy and diverse control network. I argue that the absence or decline of control has profound implications for how public ecological space is used, perceived, and accessed; moreover, I demonstrate how the removal or collapse of control trans-

lates into material changes in the physical landscape that, first, signify and are interpreted locally as the result of uneven power relations and a culture of neglect and, second, reproduce patterns of exclusion among marginalized populations. To this end, I demonstrate how urban ecologies are politically inscribed and manipulated in a manner that reflects and reproduces social relations of power and inequality.

More precisely, the paper explores how structural racism and racist decision-making, both past and present, both black and white, combine to produce dangerous spaces and landscape level changes that influence human–environment relations and environmental conditions in Philadelphia today. On the one hand, it is an historical account of social control in that city, including its forms, its functions, its interpretations, its political meaning, and its local collapse during an especially ugly period in Philadelphia's racial history. On the other hand, it is a contemporary account of the social and environmental implications that are the legacy of this violent and volatile past.

The paper is structured as follows. First, I discuss the theoretical framework upon which my argument is assembled. I draw from a variety of social and ecological theories and perspectives that, combined, are necessary to problematize, investigate, and explain the social and ecological complexities that influence “everyday” urban ecologies in the US today. To this end, the paper draws from and attempts to build upon a nascent urban political ecology that explores how power is materialized, represented, and interpreted in urban environments (e.g., Katz and Kirby, 1991; Kipfer et al., 1996; Keil and Graham, 1998; Gandy, 2002; Keil and Desfor, 2003; Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003).

Next, using Philadelphia's Fairmount Park System and the West Philadelphia community of Cobbs Creek as my case study, I discuss the social and political significance of public parks to that neighborhood's expanding and increasingly segregated black population in the 1950s and 1960s; I introduce the local network of social control mechanisms (formal and informal; de jure and de facto) and discuss their significance towards facilitating popular use of and access to these public spaces. Next, I discuss the collapse of these socio-spatial and socio-ecological relationships during a particularly volatile period of racial hostility in the 1970s, when the network of local social control mechanisms dissipated, or were dismantled and redistributed in response to the racial violence that gripped both the city and the community at that time. Finally, I explore the social and ecological implications that resulted from this collapse of the control network, the economic and political impotence and ambivalence of the city and park commission to account for and rectify these changes, and their disproportional impact upon local patterns of public space access and human–environment relations today.

In short, I argue that current patterns of ecological change, spatial exclusion and fractured human–environment relations in Cobbs Creek today are, in large part, the legacy of an overtly racist and racially explosive period in Philadelphia’s political history; one in which both the city’s governing, white elite and local black activists play significant, if disproportionate, roles. Today, the results of this legacy combine with severe and pervasive conditions of racial segregation, impoverishment, economic isolation, and the constant, if growing, threat of male sexual violence to further alienate local residents, especially women, from adjacent urban ecologies and the social and political benefits of public participation.

## 2. Urban political ecology and the nature of public space

Urban nature is replete with social meaning. It reflects and signifies a host of power relations, both historical and contemporary, insofar as its distribution, form, function, general condition, and terms of access are the products of the political and social struggles that constitute urbanization, generally. Accordingly, urban nature is a “microcosm of wider tensions in urban society” (Gandy, 2002, p. 2) whose production is implicated in the production and reproduction of urban social relations (Katz and Kirby, 1991). Popular arguments critique the discursive and ideological significance of urban nature, both historically (Rosenzweig and Blackmar, 1992; Spirn, 1996; Taylor, 1999) and in more contemporary analyses of nature’s reemergence in fin de siècle urban discourse, where it is often couched within the languages of urban sustainability, competitiveness, or renewal (Keil and Graham, 1998; Cowell and Thomas, 2002; Whitehead, 2003; While et al., 2004).

Beyond the discursive, however, are material landscapes whose physical conditions are similarly inscribed with the histories of urban social relations and power. The politics of urban ecology are identifiable in everything from greenspace provision (e.g., Koehler and Wrightson, 1987; Wolch et al., 2002; Pincetl, 2003) to the material differences and environmental conditions that often attend these uneven distributions. The latter, according to Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003), goes to the heart of an emerging urban political ecology whose principle aim is to “expose the [political and ecological] processes that bring about highly uneven urban environments” (906). To this end, recent analyses correlating ecological differences and distinctions with social dimensions and spatial patterns of uneven development are foundational to a growing awareness of urban ecological injustice, whereby the relative “health” (normatively defined) of local ecologies and ecosystems is indicative of larger patterns of social inequality and marginality. For example, Heynen’s (2003) study of the politics of uneven

patterns of forest health and diversity in Indianapolis, Grove’s (1996) thesis on the socioeconomic ecologies in Baltimore, Robbins’ and colleague’s (2001, 2003) analyses of the geographies and risks of lawn ecologies in Columbus, Ohio, and Davis’s (1998) brilliant deconstruction of Southern California’s politico-ecological landscape succeed in demonstrating the permeation of power into the very physicality of everyday urban ecological patterns and processes. I argue below that Philadelphia’s urban ecologies and ecological geographies have similarly been shaped by dynamics and histories of power.

Political ecology, however, moves beyond identifying and explaining the processes and patterns of uneven environments to demonstrate and explain (a) how social relations of power are reproduced through uneven ecologies insofar as the latter shape and condition patterns of and capacities for resource access; (b) the political factors and implications involved in ecological transformations; and (c) how patterns of environmental change and patterns of resource access are related (Robbins, 2004). Questions of access permeate “traditional” Third World political ecology; they are central to explorations and analyses of the discourses, institutions, and social relations that govern and that are reproduced through regimes of resource ownership, distribution, tenure, and control (Peet and Watts, 1996; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Bryant and Bailey, 1997). To this end, access to or control over resources is a function of power and is contingent upon the reproduction of discourses, institutions, and social relations residing at a variety of spatial scales and social spheres, invoking dynamics of gender (Schroeder, 1993; Carney, 1993; Rocheleau et al., 1996), race (Miller et al., 1996), ethnicity, age, and class.

I argue that it is this relationship between power, control, and access that most clearly and convincingly links political ecology with urban social geography; where the rubber hits the road, the dynamics that govern access to timber and rural ecologies in Nepal or Southeast Asia parallel the processes that regulate access to parks and urban ecologies in Los Angeles or Philadelphia insofar as both are regulated by and reflect historical relationships of power existing along a variety of social, economic, and political axes and scales. The fact, however, that urban ecologies are often synonymous with public space and all that that term infers to the social and political life of the city (see Goheen, 1998) suggests that quite different stakes are at hand when political, social, and ecological processes coalesce in a manner that denies or corrupts the terms, or the rights, of access; in the city, exclusion from public space is not so much an issue of economic livelihood (although it very well could be) as it is a political and moral issue involving the rights of citizenship that accompany civic and public participation (Stahli and Thompson, 1997; Mitchell, 2003). This right, I argue, is for too many (especially women and

minorities) a function of fear and the conditions and contingencies that govern spatial and social control (see Burgess et al., 1988; Valentine, 1989; West, 1989; Feagin, 1991; Burgess, 1998). The corruption or absence of these ‘rights to the city’ (Mitchell, 2003) can often be discerned from the general physical condition of public spaces and ecologies themselves, whereby decline, decay, and fear are often the product of politico-spatial neglect and social marginality.

In the remainder of this paper I explore the relationship between changing urban ecologies and changing patterns of control and resource access, and how these dialectical processes and patterns combine to produce landscapes of power and exclusion in a West Philadelphia community.

### 3. Methods

Narratives provided by Cobbs Creek residents, Philadelphia government and Park officials are used throughout the paper as a means of drawing attention to the discursive and political significance attached to the events culminating in the social and environmental changes in Fairmount and Cobbs Creek Parks. They were gathered in focus groups and interviews between the summer of 2000 and the fall of 2001. Residents of Cobbs Creek participated in several focus groups that varied in size from 6 to 12 participants. Both men and women participated in adult focus groups moderated by the author. Young men and women in their teens participated in single-sex focus groups moderated by a same-sex African American instructor with whom they were familiar.<sup>1</sup> Interviews and focus groups were loosely structured, using open-ended questions and conversation techniques so as to facilitate discussion and draw forth oral histories and narratives of Philadelphia life over the past several decades. All interviews and focus groups were attended, recorded, and transcribed by the author. Age and, where necessary, gender are provided for Cobbs Creek residents only, so as to provide historical and positioned context to their perspectives and narratives.

### 4. Cobbs Creek

#### 4.1. *The community*

Cobbs Creek, with a population of roughly 15,000, is the largest neighborhood in West Philadelphia (Fig. 1). Beginning in the 1950s, the largely (99%) white neigh-

borhood was “opened” to black settlement. Middle class families, eager to escape the burgeoning and increasingly violent ghettos of North and South Philadelphia and raise their children in a safe community, began arriving immediately. Over the next 20 years, black in-migration and white flight would combine to produce a majority (96%) black population by 1970, a demographic that it retains to this day.

Early in its black history, Cobbs Creek was among the most progressive and politically active black neighborhoods in the country. It was home to personalities like Wilt Chamberlain, Johnny Sample, and Paul Robeson, and from it emerged a political structure and tradition of civic activism that made it among the most powerful black Democratic neighborhoods in the city. Hardy Williams (male, early 70s) was (and remains) among its most powerful early leaders.<sup>2</sup>

A most unusual group of people. The Cobbs Creek community became identifiably the forerunner of a lot of models citywide. I mean, not citywide but nationwide! (Author: In terms of what?) In terms of its ability to define the issues that impacted on that community – and other communities – and therefore provide a model of how to effectuate political empowerment, therefore economic growth, civic, social, and political participation in an organized way so as to stem crime, grow other viable offshoots ... So, it was a laboratory, historical and exciting, that gave to the rest of this city the participation of the black people in the most important way. And that is, politically they grew up into an independent, political movement that was based on participatory, community stuff; where the folks felt the obligation to organize.

By the late 1960s, declining economic and political conditions locally, combined with one of the highest and most intense degrees of racial segregation in the nation, provided the impetus for the emergence of both street gangs and radical black political activism. During this period, groups like the Black Panthers and, later, MOVE would come to represent, if only symbolically, Cobbs Creek’s black political profile—a more radical political form of the kind described by Senator Williams above. The racial violence and unrest of this period in Cobbs Creek’s and Philadelphia’s history would change local human–environment relations forever.

Since the rather quick and, in the case of MOVE, violent demise of radical black political activism in the 1970s and 1980s, Cobbs Creek has languished and decades of economic decline, neglect, and racial and economic segregation have caught up with the neighbor-

<sup>1</sup> The teenagers in this study were students in a summer environmental education program in Cobbs Creek Park. Their course instructors served as focus group moderators.

<sup>2</sup> Senator Hardy Williams served several terms in the Pennsylvania State Senate where he represented the Cobbs Creek District. Today, his son Anthony Hardy Williams serves in that position.



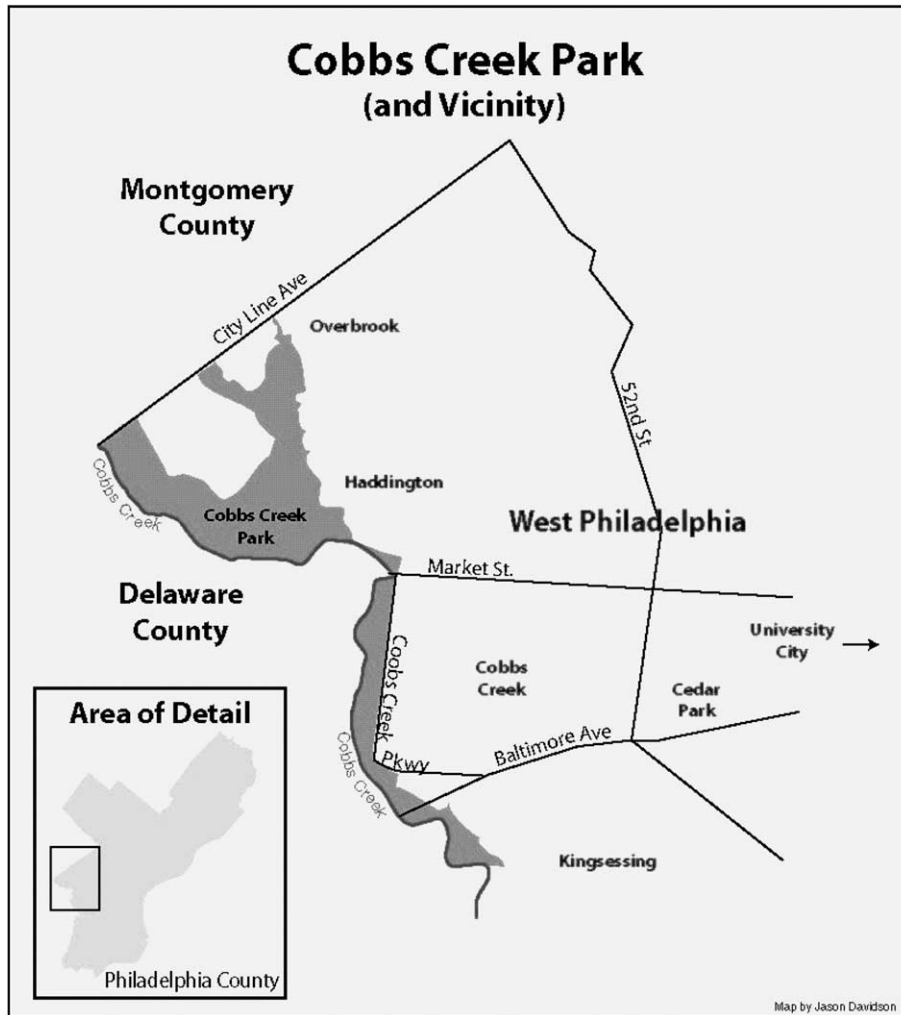


Fig. 1. Cobbs Creek Park and vicinity (map by Jason Davidson, Temple University).

hood.<sup>3,4</sup> Today, the Cobbs Creek “condition” is dominated by social indicators of inequality and neglect: 12% unemployment; male unemployment near 50% and closer to 75% among young men between the ages of 16 and 19; the number of families living in poverty (16%) or headed by a single female (17%) are more than twice that of white Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup> Of particular concern, violent crime rates are rising rapidly. Rape in Cobbs Creek is increasing at an average annual percentage rate of 11%, a pace 1.5 times that of the rest of the City. Further,

<sup>3</sup> Philadelphia, along with other northern cities, continues to be among the most hypersegregated (Massey and Denton, 1989) cities in the nation.

<sup>4</sup> On May 13, 1985, the Philadelphia P.D., with the approval of then Mayor, Wilson Goode, dropped an incendiary bomb on the home and headquarters of MOVE, a largely black and politically radical and active group, on Osage Avenue in Cobbs Creek. The consequent conflagration killed 11 people and burned down an entire city block, leaving 300 people homeless.

<sup>5</sup> 1990, 2000 Census data.

while murder in Philadelphia has declined annually by an average of 6.4% since 1995, murder in Cobbs Creek has grown at an annual rate of 4.1% during the same period. Today, the geography of violent crime in Cobbs Creek is pervasive, encompassing the parks and public spaces of the neighborhood, including Cobbs Creek Park where nearly two-dozen men and women, most of them from the local neighborhood, have been murdered or discovered dead over the past two decades and where rape and attack are relatively regular occurrences.<sup>6</sup> It was not always so.

#### 4.2. The park

Cobbs Creek Park (est. 1913) is an 800-acre stretch of wooded open space following the contours of the neighborhood’s (and the city’s) western boundary. It is one of

<sup>6</sup> The two most recent homicide victims were discovered in the park earlier this year (Summer 2003). Both were women.

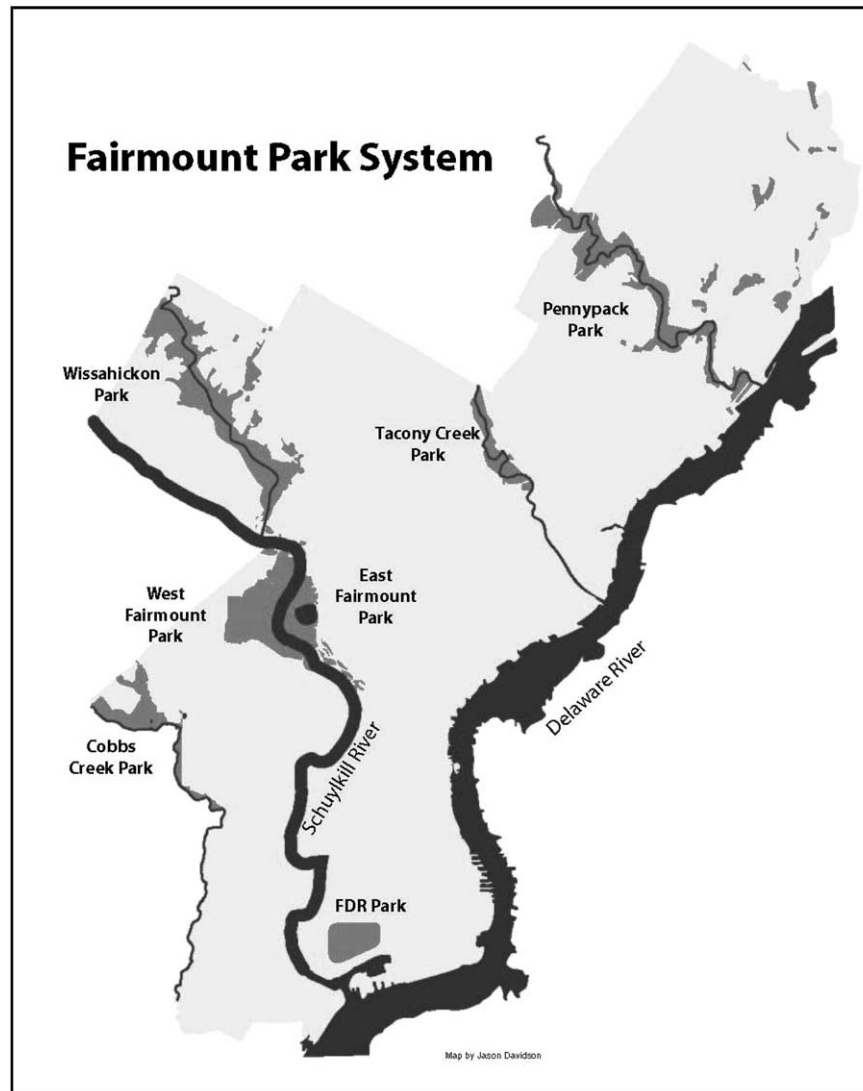


Fig. 2. Fairmount Park System (map by Jason Davidson, Temple University).

seven watershed parks that comprise the Fairmount Park System (est. 1855) of Philadelphia (Fig. 2), which, at 8900 acres or one-tenth of the city's area, is among the largest municipal urban park systems in the world.

As the neighborhood's largest and most prominent public space, Cobbs Creek Park played a critical role in the community's social and political development.

Senator Hardy Williams: [The park] was very nice, physically, unique and attractive. You had a park right there. It was just a nice aesthetic thing. Not myself, but a lot of kids were able to play and interchange there. You always had the ability to go here and there and recreate. And there was a sense of ownership of that piece of earth. It was about aesthetics. It was continuity.

Harriett (mid 60s): Walks in the park were very much a part of community life and pleasure, then. I used to

walk with my mother in the park every Sunday after church. We would sit for long periods of time on the benches, just watching the world go by. My children used to visit the park with their grandparents, my parents. My father would teach them about insects, my mother would show them the flowers.

Tony (early 50s): You know, trees, forests, climbing trees were all a part of being a kid. I had a dog and all my buddies used to go into the park. Use the trails. I mean, it was probably more – the recreation there in the park was not manufactured for us ... We had fun with the natural environment of the park, you know, doing what you'd do in a park. Roll in the grass, roll down the hill, take my dog and find a new trail. You know, discovery kinds of things ... You know, that was a part of being in the community.



Fig. 3. Ecology of Disorder I (a Cobbs Creek chop shop).

Today, Cobbs Creek Park has become infamous, renowned more for dysfunction, neglect, and disorder than for its social and recreational opportunities or its environmental amenities, with commensurate change in its significance and meaning to the Cobbs Creek community and the local imaginary (Latty, 2000). Drug use, crime, and prostitution are chronic. The stripped, burned out shells of stolen autos and appliances, regularly augmented by heaps of illegally dumped construction and restaurant waste, have become defining features of the landscape's new topography (Fig. 3). Moreover, all of these activities and perceived disorders are accompanied and hidden by an emerging ecological structure that is the product of political neglect and ecological change.

“Weed” based ecologies dominate large areas of the Cobbs Creek landscape. This is largely a function of: (1) being surrounded by and perpetually exposed to the myriad environmental stressors and disturbances of urbanization—including air, soil, and water pollution, landscape fragmentation, invasive ecologies from surrounding residential areas, botanical gardens, and ports, soil and stream bank erosion, inter alia (McPherson et al., 1994; Forman, 1998), augmented by (2) a decades-old culture of fiscal neglect and political ambivalence that permeates Philadelphia politics (Goldenberg, 1999).

Currently, 35% of the local biotic diversity in Cobbs Creek is non-native in origin, much of it growing in thick, mat-like monocultures of kudzu, Japanese knotweed, Oriental bittersweet, and wisteria (Fig. 4). Among ecologists, these new ecologies are reviled for their role in the disappearance of “native” ecosystem types (Mooney and Hobbs, 2000) and their removal is the primary goal of

restoration ecology policy and discourse (Jordan et al., 1987; Baldwin et al., 1994). Social scientists and environmental psychologists, on the other hand, reveal an entirely different aspect of weedy ecologies—as indicators of social disorder and a lack of control whose physical structure triggers fear, suspicion, and subsequent avoidance among potential landscape users (Fisher and Nasar, 1992; Burgess, 1998; Herzog and Chernick, 2000).

### 5. Ecology of fear

Beyond their ecological impacts, in Cobbs Creek, these new ecologies have profound social implications: their emerging dominance in the landscape has, along with the pervasive trash, abandoned autos, drug paraphernalia, graffiti, etc., become indicative of disorder and a perceived absence of social, spatial and, ecological control, augmenting and amplifying already existing fears of place among, especially, women (see Schroeder and Anderson, 1984; Madge, 1997; Burgess, 1998), whose primary fear concerns the risk of male violence. In Cobbs Creek, these fears are explicit and justified.

Nina (early 30s): It's getting – like they found the bodies down in the park in broad daylight. Girls getting raped. Little girls. It's sick! ... The point is they finding girls' bodies – raped, dismantled. They found three girls' bodies in the park, right down at the bottom of the hill.

Julia (late 60s): I know you've heard about some of the things that have happened over the last four or five years in the park. There were bodies found.





Fig. 4. Ecology of Disorder II (kudzu in Cobbs Creek).

There was about four or five bodies that was found, to my knowledge, in the park.

Shirley (early 50s): A girl was killed back there.

Pam (early 50s): A young girl.

Shirley: They never did find out who killed that girl.

Pam: Or whether she was killed in the park or wherever. She might have been dumped there.

Tina (late teens): I will not go back there.

Moderator: Why?

Tina: Because, I think it was last year, they found a dead body back there in the creek.

Amy (late teens): There's probably dead bodies in that creek now.

Tina: It was some girl and she was back there dead in the water.

Far from being a neutral backdrop against which violent crime occurs, the park's ecology—especially, though not confined to those areas dominated by thick, mat-like weedy growth—is readily associated with criminal activity and the loss of control and explicitly implicated as being an increasingly deadly risk agent (see Madge, 1997; Burgess, 1998).

Rachel (late teens): It's like there's forest back there. Once you get past the playground there's like a whole lot of trees and weeds and stuff. So once you get back there, once you get behind that part of the playground anything can happen to you!

Moderator: Are there certain parts of the park that you think are less safe than other parts?

Tonya (late teens): In all those invisible places.

Kate (late teens): Behind all those trees.

Tyreisha (late teens): It's like if you go back there behind the playground, the trees are not safe.

Donna (late teens): Well, what I think is so scary about the park is it's just *closed off*. It's like, you notice the park and it's so nice and everything, but then you go to the trail and it's like *trees, trees, trees*. And you don't know like who's back there. You could get kidnapped and ripped up and nobody would know (emphasis in original statement).

Tyrone (late 40s): The grass isn't cut. You can't see because of all the weeds. The weeds are out of control. We won't allow our kids to go but 6 or 10 feet into the [woods] because of all the weeds. We can't see them. That's so dangerous. Anything can happen. Kids can get stabbed, kidnapped, murdered.

Normative ecologies (i.e., those perceived to orderly, controlled, and well maintained; Fig. 5) are being replaced or overcome by ecological and topographical changes that are perceived to be disorderly and further indicative of neglect and the absence of control. Fear of the park, like fear generally, is discursively affiliated with a perceived absence of control over one's own well being. Among the women of Cobbs Creek, this relationship was explicit.

Shirley: It's desolate and anything could happen. And nobody from the street could hear me.

Tewanna (early 60s): Or see you.





Fig. 5. Ecology of control.

Shirley: Or see me. I'm afraid some nut ...

Christine (mid 40s): Well you see it's not patrolled. So there's no patrol. You put yourself in danger by being in an isolated place without control because that's the way the situation is.

Tewanna: The interest was there back in the day, when our parents would take us up (to the park). It was like an outing. Just to get off the street and let the kids rip and run. You didn't have to worry ... Today, you know, *there's no control* (emphasis in original statement).

Among the women I interviewed, the most common response to fear and the perceived absence of control in Cobbs Creek Park was complete or conditional avoidance for both themselves and their children.

Monique: I'm 34 years old and I don't even take my kids there. I don't even mess with it and I live on the top of the block. My block comes right down – at the bottom of my block I'm right at the park. I don't even walk my dog there ... My kids used to play in the park before it got like it is now. My kids don't go in that park! My kids *do not* go down in that park. (emphasis in original)

Nasheeda (late teens): I will not go down there by myself. I will not! I see people walk down there, walking on the trail by themselves, and I'll say "Are you sure you want to walk down there?" I'm not going!

Shirley: I don't do anything over there. Absolutely nothing. And I love the park!

Among the women and children of Cobbs Creek today, there is pervasive culture of environmental and spatial alienation involving their relationship to Cobbs Creek Park. It is a very different relationship to the park and its environs than their parents and grandparents had. What was once a focal point of community exchange and interaction has become, in the words of Davis (1998), an ecology of fear. The questions now are how and why did this happen? In what follows, I discuss the dismantling of the control network that had protected Cobbs Creek Park and its users for decades.

## 6. Race and the politics of park decline

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Philadelphia, like so many other US cities, was experiencing an intense period of civil rights activism, racial tension and violence. While the riots in the north and south of the city gained the lion's share of police, public and media attention, it was in West Philadelphia and the relatively placid Cobbs Creek that a series of racially motivated events unfolded that would change Fairmount Park's place in the city's imaginary and, as a result, effectively alter human–environment relations and urban ecologies in Philadelphia for the next thirty years.

On the evening of August 29, 1970, Russell Shoates, a young man loosely affiliated with the local and powerful



Fig. 6. Body of Officer Frank VonColln (Courtesy of Temple University Urban Archives).

chapter of the Black Panthers, strode into the headquarters of the Cobbs Creek District of the Fairmount Park Guard, pulled a handgun, and shot to death the unarmed officer on duty—Desk Sergeant Frank Von Colln, a 17-year Guard veteran.<sup>7</sup> Several blocks away, a second Guard Officer was shot and wounded by Shoates and his colleagues minutes earlier.<sup>8</sup> The following day, two Pennsylvania State troopers investigating the crime were the third and fourth shooting victims in Cobbs Creek in a 24 hour period; neither died of their wounds. All shooting victims were white men. Officer VonColln's was the first murder of a Fairmount Park Guard in the line of duty in the Guard's 105-year existence (Fig. 6). His sudden, violent and unprovoked death stunned both blacks and whites alike and was met with widespread outrage and condemnation throughout the City of Philadelphia and throughout the Cobbs Creek community:

Tom (early 50s): It was the Black Panthers. The Black Panthers were coming on strong out of the west and different groups tried to imitate militant, aggressive, black nationalists. You know, "Power to the people. We ain't taking it no more," that sort

<sup>7</sup> Shoates and his colleagues were members of a group calling themselves the Black Unity Council, whose ties to the Black Panthers were loosely established.

<sup>8</sup> Although Shoates was the gunman, five men were ultimately tried and convicted in VonColln's slaying.

of thing. So a group was formed out in West Philadelphia and actually the plan was to kill a [Philadelphia] cop but it went sour. They was to kill a cop in the street but it went sour. So instead of having the night completely wasted, these nuts went down there and shot an unarmed guy sitting behind a desk. We were outraged. The entire community was completely outraged ... It was just – we all were casualties of that era, man. And it was horrible.

The violence and carnage in Cobbs Creek that evening could have been several times worse, as several military-issue hand grenades—stolen from New Jersey's Fort Dix days earlier—were found cached in the general area of the Guard station. Immediately, Police Commissioner Frank ("The Big Bambino") Rizzo—arguably the most racially polarizing figure in Philadelphia's history and self-proclaimed "toughest cop in America"—pinned the violence on

A group of fanatics, yellow dogs ... We're dealing with psychotics and we must be in a position to take them on. These imbeciles and yellow dogs ... When the police action is strong enough they will want no part of the Philadelphia P.D. (Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, August 31, 1970).

Within hours, Rizzo and the Philadelphia P.D. embarked upon an intense manhunt and citywide cam-

paign of raids and roundups of any and all suspected black militants that would bring Philadelphia to the brink of outright racial warfare. In so doing, Rizzo's intended message of zero-tolerance stretched far beyond the city's borders to signal the attendants of a Black Panther leadership conference scheduled for the following week at Temple University that they and militant black politics were unwelcome in Philadelphia. For the next two years, Commissioner Rizzo would keep up the pressure on the Panthers and other black power groups in West Philly, doing his part to fuel what would be referred to colloquially within the Philadelphia media as a "Hatfield – McCoy-type feud" between the Philadelphia P.D. and West Philly's black activists.

Already stressed race relations were not the only victim that evening; the violence of August 29th would be a turning point in park-society relations in Philadelphia. As the Fairmount Park Commission, itself, conceded, "This attack, by militants intent on killing policemen as a blow against authority, served to point out the vulnerability of [the] Park Police." In 1972, now-Mayor Frank Rizzo (cash strapped and humiliated by the fastest growing [34%] crime rate in the metropolitan US) would use the event to justify dismantling the Park Guard and absorbing its 500+ officers into the Philadelphia P.D. Despite their uncertainty and ambivalence over the matter (the Fairmount Park Commission repeatedly dodged threats from and calls by previous city administrators, including Police Commissioner Rizzo, to merge the two institutions), and despite overwhelming opposition among the Philadelphia public (a 1972 poll by the Philadelphia Inquirer revealed a public opposition of 2-to-1),<sup>9</sup> the Fairmount Park Commission nonetheless unanimously approved Mayor Rizzo's plan on May 10, 1972. "In this way," the Fairmount Park Commissioners reasoned, "it was thought a more efficient and productive use of the Park Police would result."<sup>10</sup> While Rizzo had designs on the Park Guard since his tenure as Police Commissioner, his stated purpose for the merger was to increase the number of available police on the street so as to boost ongoing and strained efforts by the Philadelphia P.D. to contain or preclude rising levels of gang-related crime (the streets of Philadelphia, according to Rizzo, were "worse than Vietnam") and black resistance occurring in the ghettos of North and South Philadelphia at the time. To mollify any opposition or uncertainty over the move, he publicly reasoned that local police precincts would assume crime prevention activities in the various sections of Fairmount Park. However, Bill Mifflin, a 30-year veteran and longtime Executive Director (1988–2002) of the Fairmount Park System, suggests a more personal vendetta was at hand

It was very interesting – and I remember it – a situation that occurred in the mid-sixties. There were [race] riots on north Broad Street. Civil rights issues and marches ... Then-Police Commissioner Rizzo called the [Fairmount] Park President and said, "We need reinforcements. I want park guards assigned to help patrol north Broad Street." And the [Fairmount Park] Commission President said, "No. The park guards will stay in the park. They're not – these aren't the kinds of things that they do." ... When Rizzo became Mayor four years later, the first month he took office he [disbanded the Park Guard and] combined the two.

As expected, the Guard's dissolution was met with widespread condemnation and outrage throughout the city, not only because of the Guard's reputation among the city's population—both black and white—as cooperative, reasonable, and non-violent (for instance, throughout their history, the Fairmount Park Guards did not carry weapons), but even more so because of the Philadelphia P.D.'s counter repute as brutal, corrupt, and racist—an image and disrespect it had honed under the tutelage of Commissioner Rizzo (Fig. 7).<sup>11</sup> As one outraged observer wrote:

It's obviously over now. The change [from horses to cars] no doubt precedes the transition from Park grey (sic) to black leather, hoodlum-type jackets, Magnum pistols, Sam Brown belts and screaming sirens on Park drives for no apparent reason ... Assuming the Philadelphia Police Department's legendary capacity for corruption continues, it is only a matter of time before ... we can look forward to a rash of "line of duty" shootings sprinkled throughout the Park and complaints of lesser offenses such as shakedowns and harassments ... If there were any honorable intent in the upcoming merger, the Philadelphia Police Department would become a division of their proven superiors, the Fairmount Park Police. (Letter to the Editor, Philadelphia Inquirer, April 21, 1972)

The Park Guard, once over 500 strong (17.4 acres per Guard) and distributed among six districts that spanned the entire Fairmount Park System, is today represented by 24 Park Rangers whose beats no longer include Cobbs Creek or other marginal public lands beyond the park's more conspicuous, economically and politically popular core (e.g., Wissahickon Park and Rittenhouse Square).

<sup>9</sup> Philadelphia Inquirer, April 19, 1972.

<sup>10</sup> Annual Report of the Fairmount Park Commissioners (1971–1972, p. 37).

<sup>11</sup> In March of 1972, a report by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) criticized Rizzo for his "refusal to demonstrate commitment to [Philadelphia's] black community." The report further recommended the creation of an independent civilian board to "police the police."



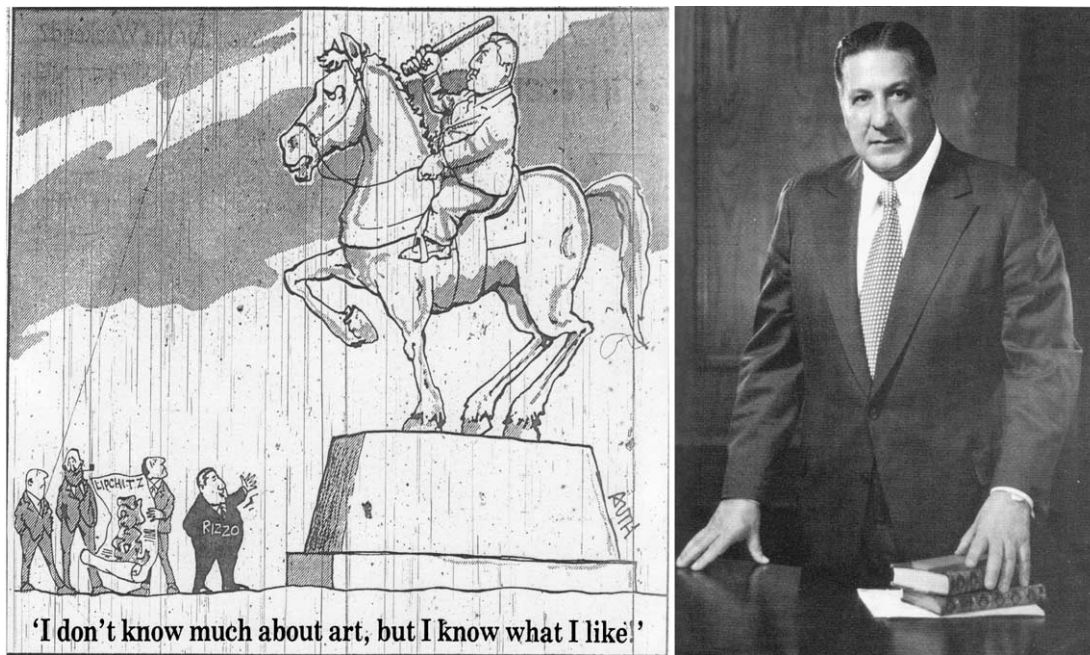


Fig. 7. Frank Rizzo—the man and the myth (editorial cartoon, Tony Auth, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 2, 1972).

The effects of Rizzo's action upon violent crime geographies were immediate. Far from reducing street crime (despite a shrinking population, Philadelphia's violent crime rate rose steadily throughout the 1970s and 1980s), the immediate result of the Park Guard's dissolution was the spatial displacement of crime from the street into the park.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, any subsequent protection of the park and its users by the Philadelphia Police, as Mayor Rizzo had envisioned it, failed to materialize. As former Park Director Mifflin notes,

Once the guards were assigned to these districts they were assigned to street duty and the park became an absolute afterthought ... [The police] cleaned the corner [of crime] and just drove [it] into the park. And there they stopped pursuing them. So prostitution, drug selling, drug use all proliferated in [the park]. [Parts of the park] became a no man's land, and the police clearly looked at it as a second or third tier priority.

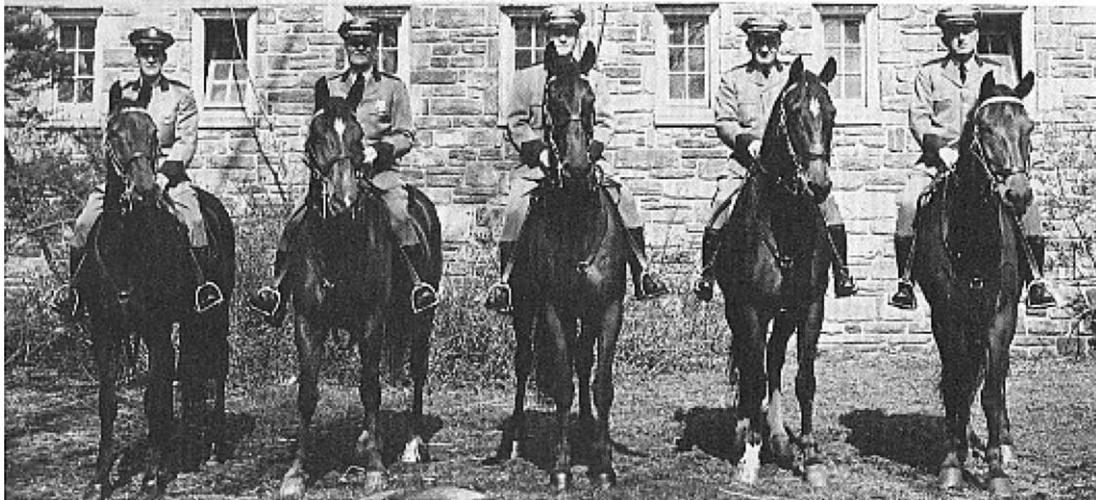
Among many Philadelphia residents, especially those living in or using parks adjacent to high crime areas, the abolition of the Park Guard in 1972 signaled the moment of park decline and the fracturing of community-park relations. As one park official in charge of community relations lamented, "It's almost eerie how many times that date comes up in our public meetings as the date when the public perceives as the start of the park's decline because that's when security was removed

from the park." For the residents of Cobbs Creek, the loss of the Park Guard was devastating; it represented a hole in the social control network that the Philadelphia P.D. were unable or unwilling—not to mention distrusted—to fill; the loss would fundamentally reshape park-community and community-authority relations.

Tom: The Park Guard was accessible ... they was never bullyish. They were never like city cops at all. They were really nice guys. They'd stop you from neckin' in the park. And at night they kept the park safe. If you want to go out in the park and just chill or something you knew you were safe, 'cause at any time you could look up and see one of them big horses standing over you ... I mean, you could almost time it. Twelve minutes, watch out, here come a cop - some place ... Those bridal paths were covered by horses ... They weren't harassing people. They were just keeping it safe ... To people who utilized the park, these guys were a welcome - they were a beacon, man. (Fig. 8)

James (early 50s): We need a dedicated security like they have at Pennypack or like they have at Wissahickon. They have rangers; people who know the rules as far as the park service is concerned. The police are not familiar with it. But the rangers are made familiar because they work with the park service ... The police, they get calls but they don't know what to do. If you have a dedicated group to be down there, and that's their job to go up and down the park - without service like

<sup>12</sup> A similar pattern of crime relocation is currently unfolding under Mayor John Street's 'Safe Streets' Program.



AT THE STABLES

Fig. 8. “At the Stables.” Fairmount Park Guard, circa 1960.

that for a park this vast, you’re always gonna have these problems. It’s not gonna go away with the Philadelphia Police Department because they don’t have the manpower to dedicate. They have to have park rangers. Either on dirtbikes, on horseback, mountain bikes or all three. You need something to that level.<sup>13</sup>

Bernard (late 70s): You don’t see a policeman go through here once a week, if that much. The only time you see them going through is if someone has an emergency, you know, an ambulance, you’ll hear them. But as far as police going through this area, it’s nil. The Cobbs Creek section? Nothing. They just don’t come. They just don’t come.

## 7. The role of gangs

One of the more ironic responses to the rise of the Black Panthers and the black power movement in West Philadelphia was the dissipation of a gang culture that for years had provided de facto security to Cobbs Creek Park during the early years of black settlement in the neighborhood. The identities of these early gangs coalesced around the previous neighborhoods and parts of Philadelphia from which the new youth of Cobbs Creek had moved (see Ley, 1974). Despite the fact that the use of guns was not common during this period, gang activity nonetheless could be remarkably violent, with beatings and murders occurring to a degree not experienced

in even the worst neighborhoods of North and South Philly.

Tom (early 50s): As different factions from different sections of town began to move into Cobbs Creek they brought old ways with them. One of the old ways was the corner ... What was happening was those from South Philly was hanging out together, those from Elmwood was hanging out together, those from down the way was hanging out together, and North Philly, because there wasn’t that many of us, we just fit where we could fit. That’s almost how that street cultural thing hooked up ... You had Woodland Avenue, Osage Avenue, and Cedar Avenue. Now they were the three major killer gangs. Now Cobbs Creek had a gang called ‘The Creek’, after Cobbs Creek. It never really took off. They had a couple of homicides, though. But it never became like Osage Avenue, 60<sup>th</sup> and Osage Avenue. Between Osage Avenue, Cedar Avenue, and Woodland Avenue, in one year twelve people were killed. That was back in the heyday.

John (early 50s): If you didn’t belong to a gang you risked a lot. While guns weren’t a big thing back then, your chances of getting caught for being in the wrong neighborhood – literally, the wrong neighborhood – was a beating waiting to happen ... I was in a gang. That’s how I *survived*. (emphasis in original)

According to former gang members, Tom and John, the public geography of gang activity was confined to “the street” and “the corner”. Moreover, there existed, according to them, an unwritten and unspoken agreement among gangs and gang members ensuring the park’s neutrality and its use and meaning as a truly public space. Cobbs Creek Park was not territory.

<sup>13</sup> The Wissahickon, long considered the gem of the Fairmount Park System, straddles the city’s northwest section and some of the wealthiest, most heavily white communities in Philadelphia (e.g., Chestnut Hill) (Fig. 2).

John: The park was sort of that neutral ground because everybody came to the park, and you had picnics out there and all kinds of things in that community – cook outs. Sometimes just the scouts coming down camping; and a lot of the people from the gangs. And they were all kids, teenagers ... So when you saw each other [on the street] you knew you were from the moon or from the coast or from 58<sup>th</sup> Street. But when you were in the park you were in the park. “We’re here, you know playing or whatever. If I catch you up on the street, you know, you’ll have to hold your own.” So you pretty much stayed in the neighborhood. You dealt with people from your frame of reference – the streets.

Tom: We did not allow gang fights or stuff to occur in the park. That was neutral. We would not allow it. A lot of the older people backed us up with that. We didn’t have no gang wars. We didn’t have no turf. The park was nobody’s turf. It belonged to everybody. It was an unwritten agreement that the park would be neutral. We had a lot of children out there. We didn’t want no shooting. We didn’t want none of that.

Indeed, Cobbs Creek Park served as haven of sorts, where one could go—both gang member and non-gang member alike—to escape the violence of the neighborhood, itself. During this period in its and the community’s history, the park was not only spared the kind of violence plaguing “the street” but, indeed, it is safe to assume that anyone considering committing a criminal act in the park thought twice about it, knowing that they would do so only at considerable risk of punishment by the gangs themselves.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, under the growing pressure of the black identity and black power movement to cease black-on-black violence and focus their energy and anger on greater social and political wrongs, Cobbs Creek’s early gangs blinked out as quickly and as quietly as they had emerged, taking with them the informal park security that they ensured. Similarly, the decline of the black identity movement and the outmigration of middle-class blacks in the late 1970s left a power vacuum that facilitated the re-emergence of gangs in the 1980s. This time, however, their structure and membership in no way resembled the organic, home-grown gangs of the 1950s and 1960s; rather they emerged in more violent forms and structures that mimicked gang activity in cities like L.A., Chicago, and New York, where there were no agreements, unwritten or otherwise, on what did or did not constitute “turf.” With very little to stop or resist it, violence rapidly took up residence in Cobbs Creek Park where it has remained, in one form or another, to one degree or another, for the past two decades.

## 8. The final straw

Soon after absorbing the Fairmount Park Guard into the Philadelphia P.D., Mayor Rizzo again set his sites on Cobbs Creek, the veritable thorn in his side where black activism continued to foment. Park benches had long lined the 1 1/2 mile stretch of Cobbs Creek Parkway, functioning not only as a facilitator for park use among individuals and social groups who may otherwise have not used the park (for instance, the elderly or the disabled) but, consequently, as an informal mechanism of social surveillance (Jacobs, 1961). Their significance to park users and to the Cobbs Creek community at the time is unquestionable.

Harriett: Walks in the park were very much a part of community life and pleasure. I used to walk with my mother in the park every Sunday after church and sit for long periods of time on the benches watching the world go by.

Julia: I used to watch the elderly, how in the evenings after dinner they would take their walk in the park. I thought it was so romantic. They would take their walk in the park and just sit on the park benches. You’d see husbands and wives in there, in their seventies, just sitting on the park benches holding hands! That’s beautiful!

Rebecca: It was beautiful. Beautiful! They used to have a fence, one of those iron fences that went all the way down, with the benches that you could sit on.

Mayor Rizzo, as part of his anti-gang campaign, argued that park benches were a menace and an invitation for loitering, prostitution, drug dealing, and other criminal activity. Once again, a browbeaten and demoralized Fairmount Park Commission conceded and, almost overnight, the park benches disappeared, to the dismay and outrage of many Cobbs Creek residents, especially older women.

Rebecca: [W]hen Rizzo came in he took the fence down because he said people could rob you and sit on the fence. Sit on the fence and wait for you to come by. So he took the fence down and then for the same reason they took the benches away ... So it’s not as nice as it used to be.

Tyrone: The benches were where you could watch the activity in the park. They provided opportunities gossip and chat. They used to line the parkway; now they’re gone.

Harriett: We need the park benches back!

In short, between informal surveillance along the park’s periphery by park users sitting on benches and more formal patrols by the horse-mounted Park Guard



regularly in the park's interior, there was very little in Cobbs Creek Park that went unnoticed. For all intents and purposes, Cobbs Creek Park was considered a safe place and, consequently, a popular and, more importantly, a populated public space. More park users, in turn, meant more available eyes on the park and its activities. Their elimination expedited the park's social and ecological decline and effectively ensured its future neglect by user and manager alike.

Finally, despite the litany of concessions provided by the Fairmount Park commissioners, in 1974 Mayor Rizzo dropped the axe on the entire Fairmount Park System, allotting the park just 1.1% of the City's total budget expenditures, a 50% cut from the previous administration and the smallest allotment in the park's history up to that time (Fig. 9). It was a devastating and demoralizing blow from which the park system has yet to recover. In the years since, faced with dire economic and social conditions citywide (Adams et al., 1991; Bis-singer, 1997), subsequent administrations have done little to reverse this trend of neglect. Confronting escalating violent crime, poverty, deindustrialization, white flight and the exodus of the middle-class to the suburbs, blight, and possible bankruptcy, Fairmount Park's financial and political needs are widely considered expensive and unnecessary luxuries alongside Philadelphia's more pressing social and economic woes. As one City Councilman, whose district encompasses thousands of park acres, lamented, "Trees don't vote".

Since the early 1980s, Fairmount Park's operating and capital budgets have represented less than one percent of the city's expenditures. Adjusting for inflation, Fairmount Park has not experienced a budget increase in over three decades. In 1999, the per capita park expenditure was \$13, a figure more than twice as small as the next lowest per capita expenditure for an urban parks system in a US city (Pittsburgh; \$28/resident) and over

five times lower than the average per resident park expenditure among the country's 25 largest metropolitan areas (Harnik, 2000). Layoffs have plagued Fairmount Park in the three decades since Rizzo's cuts. Today, the number of full-time park personnel has dropped to an all time low of just over 200, a 66% reduction in size since the early 1970s. Routine maintenance activities (i.e., mowing, trash removal, etc.) dominate park management protocol; however, even among maintenance workers, staffing is a fraction of their recommended levels. In 1994, 62 maintenance staff were responsible for the nearly 8500 natural acres encompassed within Fairmount Park, an average of over 136 acres per worker. The Park's own records recommend a maintenance staff nearly three times larger, or roughly 50 acres per worker. In short, Fairmount Park is understaffed and existing park labor is overworked, with each staff member responsible for nearly three times the recommended workload. As a result, both jobs and places are triaged, with the lion's share of attention afforded to those landscapes whose "health" and appearance are considered vital to Philadelphia's viability and economic future; landscapes on the margin, like Cobbs Creek, do not fit the bill.

Overall, the decline of Cobbs Creek and of Fairmount Park, generally, has paralleled the decline of the city's white population over the past several decades (Fig. 10), the result being that local opportunities for leisure and public space participation among the city's growing black population are increasingly represented by decaying ecologies and infrastructure. Places like Cobbs Creek, at the margins of urban space, economic activity, and political power, tend to be the first to see their resources diminish or disappear resulting in more extensive and intensive changes in the landscape. The consequences are apparent both physically and socially.

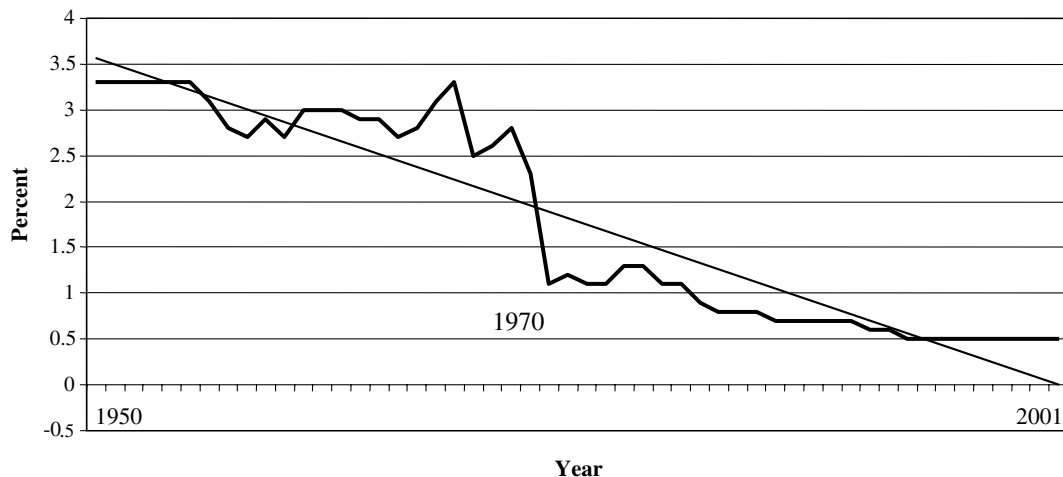


Fig. 9. Fairmount Park budget as a percent of Philadelphia's operating budget, 1950–2001.

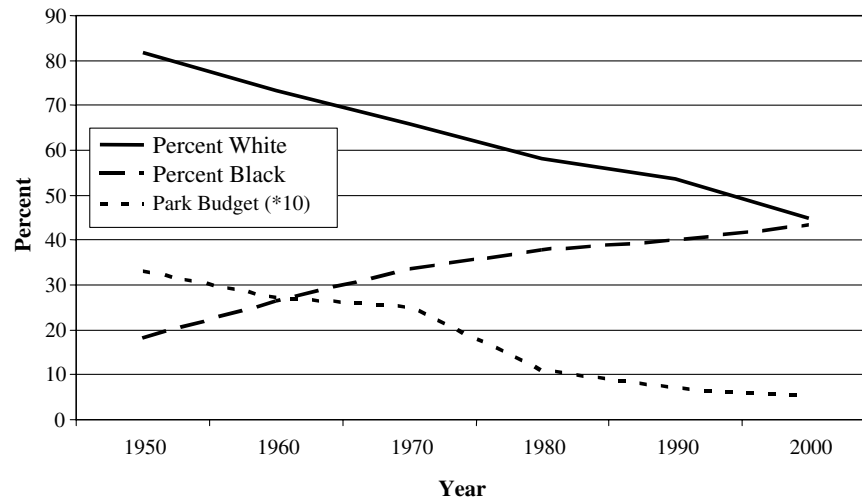


Fig. 10. Population and Park Budget Trends: 1950–2000. (Budget numbers multiplied by 10 for purposes of illustration).

## 9. Conclusion

Sociologists have long emphasized the significance of social control to the production of urban social relations and spatial patterns of mobility, access, and residence. More recently, the discourse of fear, involving a perceived absence or decline of control mechanisms and institutions, has emerged to critique and expose the structural factors involved in the shaping and conditioning of marginalized urban human geographies. Feminist discourse reveals the gendered patterns of mobility and access to the public sphere as a function of perceived safety and control among women, whose fear and perceived risk of male attack undermines their free involvement in urban public life and activity, a pattern that Valentine, 1989, p. 389 terms the “spatial expression of patriarchy.” Similar fears undermine the urban experience among urban blacks, whose fears of white racial violence and intolerance restrict public space opportunities and activities outside of the inner city (West, 1989; Feagin, 1991; Skogan, 1995; DeFrances, 1996).

Combining these perspectives with the theoretical approaches and insights offered by political ecology, this paper suggests the roles played by power and social control towards the production of hazardous, “unsafe” urban ecologies that undermine the terms of access and fracture human–environment relations among marginalized urban populations. I have demonstrated how the decline of social control mechanisms, both formal and informal, change the nature of human–environment experience from one of perceived safety and order to one of perceived fear and disorder. Black women, in particular, have been disproportionately impacted by the decay of these surveillance mechanisms. Perhaps more than any other social group, their overexposure to violence and fear in the inner city constantly conditions their day-

to-day activity patterns and decision making, influencing all spatial relations, environmental or otherwise. In so doing, it builds upon a nascent urban political ecology by demonstrating the significance of urban social and cultural theory to our interpretations and analyses of urban environments. To this end, there is nothing inherently unnatural or normatively profane with environmental changes of the kind witnessed by Cobbs Creek (Botkin, 2001) and the men and women surveyed here appear to be universally concerned about the possible risks lurking in the natural landscape, weedy or otherwise. And yet, the uncontrolled growth of weeds and their emerging dominance in the landscape do appear to symbolize disorder, decay, and the absence of control that accompany years of political and fiscal neglect. Socially speaking, the significance of weeds is not what they do but, rather, what they represent; the same can be said for the abandoned autos, heaps of garbage, discarded needles, condoms, and drug paraphernalia, and broken glass that are pervasive throughout the park. And what they mean and how they are responded to must be understood in a wider socio-political context. Restoration ecologists, working simply from an ecological imaginary based upon some normative landscape type, would do well to understand this perceptual dynamic (c.f. Higgs, 1997).

However, these two conditions—order and disorder—are not universal; rather, they are social constructions whose meanings reflect differential social relations of power and control. Recent critiques of the powers and institutions involved in defining and disseminating social order and control (e.g., Mitchell, 1995, 2003; Smith, 1996, 1998) have, justifiably, pointed out the inconsistencies and disproportionate means by which it is meted out, often singling out “others” for special disciplinary control and exclusion. Exemplary patterns are readily

found throughout the Rizzo regimes (both as police commissioner and mayor). Indeed, even Rizzo's decisions to dismantle local social control mechanisms in Cobbs Creek can, itself, be interpreted as a form of social control—as a means of controlling social organization and activity among a politically active black community during a period of racial upheaval by removing, for all intents and purposes, their primary public arena of social intercourse and political exchange. The environmental and social legacies of these mayoral actions have been the focus of this paper. However, by emphasizing only the inequalities and potential for violence that often accompany authoritative, hegemonic mechanisms of political and spatial control, critiques such as Mitchell's neglect the very real potential for “othering”, violence, oppression, and fear that accompany control's decline or decay. As I hope to have demonstrated here, social control is as much a mechanism for social and spatial inclusion of otherwise marginalized populations, as it is a political means for the social exclusion of other, often oppressed social groups.

Finally, the story told here cannot be separated from the larger, historical context of black racial and economic segregation, deindustrialization, and economic decline that have burdened Philadelphia's past and continue to plague its political and economic future, with particular consequences for its rapidly emerging black majority (Adams et al., 1991; Bissinger, 1997). The segregation and poverty of urban blacks and the apartheid-like social conditions that they facilitate, condition human–environment relations and environmental quality in urban black communities nationally (Bullard et al., 1994). Similarly, park neglect and its commensurate changes to the landscape is a national trend, leaving the nation's increasingly black urban population to be the sole benefactors of any accompanying risks that these changes may facilitate or produce (Harnik, 2000). How women and children negotiate and respond to these racially induced environmental changes is an increasingly viable arena for political ecological inquiry.

### Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Rick Schroeder, Kevin St. Martin, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions to earlier drafts of this paper. I would also like to acknowledge the men, women, and children from Cobbs Creek and officials from the Fairmount Park Commission for all of their time and assistance during this research. Funding for this research was provided by a Ford Foundation Community Forestry Fellowship. Many thanks to Louise Fortmann for her encouragement.

### References

- Adams, C., Bartelt, D., Elesh, D., Goldstein, I., Kleniewski, N., Yancey, W., 1991. *Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division, and Conflict in a Postindustrial City*. Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Anderson, E.J., 1999. *The Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. W.W. Norton & Co, New York.
- Atkinson, R., 2003. Domestication by *cappuccino* or a revenge on urban space? Control and empowerment in the management of public spaces. *Urban Studies* 40, 1829–1843.
- Baldwin, A.D., de Luce, J., Pletsch, C. (Eds.), 1994. *Beyond Preservation: Restoring and Inventing Landscapes*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Bissinger, B., 1997. *A Prayer for the City*. Vintage, New York.
- Blau, P.M., Golden, R.M., 1986. Metropolitan structure and criminal violence. *Sociological Quarterly* 27, 15–26.
- Botkin, D.B., 2001. The naturalness of biological invasions. *Western North American Naturalist* 61 (3), 261–266.
- Bryant, R.L., Bailey, S., 1997. *Third World Political Ecology*. Routledge, London.
- Bullard, R.D., Grigsby, J.E., Lee, C. (Eds.), 1994. *American Apartheid: The American Legacy*. UCLA Press, Los Angeles.
- Burgess, J., Harrison, C.M., Limb, M., 1988. People, parks and the urban green: a study of popular meanings and values for open spaces in the city. *Urban Studies* 25, 455–473.
- Burgess, J., 1998. ‘But is it worth taking the risk?’ How women negotiate access to urban woodlands: a case study. In: Ainley, R. (Ed.), *New Frontiers of Space, Body, and Gender*. Routledge, New York, pp. 114–128.
- Carney, J., 1993. Converting the wetlands, engendering the environment: the intersection of gender with agrarian change in the Gambia. *Economic Geography* 69, 329–348.
- Cowell, R., Thomas, H., 2002. Managing nature and narratives of dis-possession: reclaiming territory in Cardiff Bay. *Urban Studies* 39, 1241–1260.
- Davis, M., 1990. *City of Quartz*. Vintage, New York.
- Davis, M., 1998. *Ecology of Fear*. Vintage, New York.
- Day, K., 1999a. Embassies and sanctuaries: women's experiences of race and fear in public space. *Environment and Planning D* 17, 307–328.
- Day, K., 1999b. Strangers in the night: women's fear of sexual assault on urban college campuses. *Journal of Architecture and Planning Research* 16, 289–312.
- DeFrances, C.J., 1996. The effects of racial ecological segregation on quality of life: a comparison of middle-class blacks and middle-class whites. *Urban Affairs Review* 31, 799–809.
- Feagin, J.R., 1991. The continuing significance of race: antiblack discrimination in public spaces. *American Sociological Review* 56, 101–116.
- Fisher, B.S., Nasar, J.L., 1992. Fear of crime in relation to three exterior site features: prospect, refuge, and escape. *Environment and Behavior* 24, 35–65.
- Flusty, S., 2001. The banality of interdiction: surveillance, control and the displacement of diversity. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25, 658–664.
- Forman, R.T.T., 1998. *Land Mosaics: The Ecology of Landscapes and Regions*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Gandy, M., 2002. *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*. MIT Press, Boston.
- Gardner, C.B., 1990. Safe conduct: women, crime, and self in public spaces. *Social Problems* 37, 311–328.
- Gibbs, J.P., 1989. *Control: Sociology's Central Notion*. University of Illinois Press, Chicago.
- Goheen, P.G., 1998. Public space and the geography of the modern city. *Progress in Human Geography* 22, 479–496.



- Goldenberg, N., 1999. Philadelphia launches major restoration initiative in park system. *Ecological Restoration* 17, 8–14.
- Grove, J.M., 1996. The relationship between patterns of and processes of social stratification and vegetation of an urban–rural watershed. Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, New Haven, CT.
- Harnik, P., 2000. *Inside City Parks*. Urban Land Institute, Washington, DC.
- Harvey, D., 1973. *Social Justice and the City*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Harvey, D., 1989. From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler* 71B, 3–17.
- Herzog, T.R., Chernick, K.K., 2000. Tranquility and danger in urban and natural settings. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 20, 29–39.
- Heynen, N.C., 2003. The scalar production of injustice within the urban forest. *Antipode* 35, 980–998.
- Higgs, E.S., 1997. What is good restoration ecology? *Conservation Biology* 11, 338–348.
- Jacobs, J., 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage, New York.
- Janowitz, M., 1975. Sociological theory and social control. *American Journal of Sociology* 81, 82–108.
- Jordan, W.R., Gilpin, M.E., Aber, J.D. (Eds.), 1987. *Restoration Ecology: A Synthetic Approach to Ecological Research*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Katz, C., Kirby, A., 1991. In the nature of things: the environment and everyday life. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, 259–271.
- Keil, R., Desfor, G., 2003. Ecological modernization in Los Angeles and Toronto. *Local Environment* 8, 27–44.
- Keil, R., Graham, S., 1998. Reasserting nature: constructing urban environments after fordism. In: Braun, B., Castree, N. (Eds.), *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium*. Routledge, London, pp. 100–125.
- Kipfer, S., Hartmann, F., Marino, S., 1996. Cities, nature and socialism: towards an urban agenda for action and research. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 7, 5–19.
- Koehler, D.H., Wrightson, M.T., 1987. Inequality in the delivery of urban services: a reconsideration of the Chicago parks. *Journal of Politics* 49, 80–99.
- Koskela, H., Pain, R., 2000. Revisiting fear and place: women's fear of attack and the built environment. *Geoforum* 31, 269–280.
- Latty, Y., 2000. Trashing of Cobbs Creek. *Philadelphia Daily News* (23 February).
- Lefebvre, H., 1991. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell, Cambridge.
- Ley, D., 1974. *The Black Inner-city as Frontier Outpost: Images and Behavior of a Philadelphia Neighborhood*. Monograph # 7 Association of American Geographers, Washington, DC.
- MacLeod, G., 2002. From urban entrepreneurialism to a “revanchist city”? On the spatial injustices of Glasgow's renaissance. *Antipode* 34, 602–624.
- Madge, C., 1997. Public parks and the geography of fear. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische Sociale Geografie* 88, 237–250.
- Massey, D.S., Denton, N.A., 1989. Hypersegregation in US metropolitan areas: Black and Hispanic segregation along five dimensions. *Demography* 26, 373–391.
- Massey, D.S., Denton, N.A., 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- McKenzie, R.D., 1923. *The Neighborhood: A Study of Local Life in the City of Columbus, Ohio*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- McPherson, E.G., Nowak, D.J., Rowntree, R.A., 1994. Chicago's urban forest ecosystem: results of the Chicago Urban Forest Climate Project. General Technical Report NE-186, USDA Forest Service, Radnor, PA.
- Miller, V., Hallstein, M., Quass, S., 1996. Feminist politics and environmental justice: women's community activism in West Harlem, New York. In: Rocheleau, (Ed.), *Feminist Political Ecology*. Routledge, New York, pp. 62–85.
- Mitchell, D., 1995. The end of public space? People's Park, definitions of the public, and democracy. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, 108–133.
- Mitchell, D., 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. Guilford, New York.
- Mooney, H.A., Hobbs, R.J. (Eds.), 2000. *Invasive Species in a Changing World*. Island Press, Covelo, CA.
- Pain, R., 1997. Social geographies of women's fear of crime. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 22, 231–244.
- Pain, R., 1991. Space, sexual violence and social control: integrating geographical and feminist analyses of women's fear of crime. *Progress in Human Geography* 15, 415–431.
- Park, R.E., Burgess, E.W., 1970. *The City*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Peet, R., Watts, M. (Eds.), 1996. *Liberation Ecologies*. Routledge, London.
- Peterson, R.D., Krivo, L.J., 1999. Racial segregation, the concentration of disadvantage, and black and white homicide victimization. *Sociological Forum* 14, 465–493.
- Pincetl, S., 2003. Nonprofits and park provision in Los Angeles: An exploration of the rise of governance approaches to the provision of local services. *Social Science Quarterly* 84, 979–1001.
- Robbins, P., 2004. *Political Ecology*. Blackwell, Malden, MA.
- Robbins, P., Sharp, J., 2003. The lawn-chemical economy and its discontents. *Antipode* 35, 955–980.
- Robbins, P., Polderman, A., Birkenholtz, T., 2001. Lawns and toxins. *Cities* 18, 369–380.
- Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B., Wangari, E. (Eds.), 1996. *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*. Routledge, New York.
- Rosenfeld, R., Messner, S.F., Baumer, E.P., 2001. Social capital and homicide. *Social Forces* 80, 283–309.
- Rosenzweig, R., Blackmar, E., 1992. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Sampson, R.J., Groves, W.B., 1989. Community structure and crime: testing social-disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 94, 774–802.
- Schroeder, H.W., Anderson, L.M., 1984. Perception of personal safety in urban recreation sites. *Journal of Leisure Research* 16, 178–194.
- Schroeder, R.A., 1993. Shady practice: gender and the political ecology of resource stabilization in Gambian garden/orchards. *Economic Geography* 69, 349–365.
- Shaw, C.R., McKay, H.D., 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Skogan, W.G., 1995. Crime and the racial fears of white Americans. *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Sciences* 539, 59–71.
- Smith, N., 1996. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. Routledge, New York.
- Smith, N., 1998. Giuliani time: the revanchist 1990s. *Social Text* 16, 1–20.
- Sparks, R., Girling, E., Loader, I., 2001. Fear and everyday urban lives. *Urban Studies* 38, 885–898.
- Spirn, A.W., 1996. Constructing nature: the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted. In: Cronon, W. (Ed.), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Norton, New York, pp. 91–113.
- Stahli, L.A., Thompson, A., 1997. Citizenship, community, and struggles for public space. *Professional Geographer* 49, 28–38.
- Stanko, E.A., 1995. Women, fear, and crime. *Annals of the Association of American Political and Social Sciences* 539, 46–58.

- Swyngedouw, E., Heynen, N.C., 2003. Urban political ecology, justice, and the politics of scale. *Antipode* 35, 898–918.
- Taylor, D., 1999. Central Park as a model of social control: urban parks, social class and leisure behavior in nineteenth-century America. *Journal of Leisure Research* 31, 420–477.
- Valentine, G., 1989. The geography of women's fear. *Area* 21, 385–390.
- Warr, M., 1985. Fear or rape among urban women. *Social Problems* 32, 238–250.
- West, P.C., 1989. Urban region parks and black minorities: subculture, marginality, and interracial relations in park use in the Detroit metropolitan area. *Leisure Sciences* 11, 11–28.
- While, A., Jonas, A.E.G., Gibbs, D., 2004. The environment and the entrepreneurial city: searching for the urban 'sustainability fix' in Manchester and Leeds. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, 549–569.
- Whitehead, M., 2003. (Re)Analysing the sustainable city: Nature, urbanization and the regulation of socio-environmental relations in the UK. *Urban Studies* 40, 1183–1206.
- Wilson, W.J., 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Wolch, J., Wilson, J.P., Fehrenbach, J., 2002. Parks and park funding in Los Angeles: an equity mapping analysis. Independent Report, Sustainable Cities Program, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.
- Zukin, S., 1995. *The Culture of Cities*. Blackwell, Oxford.