PR Proposal:
Interpreting Values from Photo-Representations of Public Parks: A Case Study of Zilker Park, Austin, Texas

TOPIC AND RELEVANCE:
As Velvet Nelson discusses in "Representation and Images of People, Place and Nature in Grenada's Tourism," images have the power to act as representations of their subjects (Nelson YEAR). Images, and photographs more specifically, provide a platform for visual interpretation of subject matter. It is because of this that I have chosen to conduct a photo analysis as the primary methodology in the production of my Professional Report (PR) study. In my PR, I will conduct an analysis of photographs taken of Zilker Park gathered from social media sites. I will argue that I can interpret what people value in the park through the subjects that they choose to portray in their photographs. To support this argument, I will first suggest that parks and other public spaces have the power to elicit emotional responses in people, that it is this emotional response that prompts them to take photographs of the spaces, and that this very same response allows me to assume that the photographs can represent and convey people's values, whether through a positive or negative portrayal of the subject matter. Following the photo analysis and interpretation of values, I will propose that planners can apply my methodology in participatory park planning.

Public Spaces/Parks Elicit Emotions in Their Users:
Many public space authors and theorists examine public spaces through a lens that focuses on or elucidates how these spaces can prompt various kinds of emotional responses in their users and interested parties. For example, Catungal and McCann (2010) illustrate the connection between parks and emotional responses in their article "Governing sexuality and park space: acts of regulation in Vancouver, BC." In the article, they give an account of when an AIDS memorial was proposed to be placed in a prominent location within Stanley Park, a large and beloved park in Vancouver. The proposal elicited strong negative reactions from many people, who made their arguments based on the idea of a morally pure Stanley Park. This shows that these people held a certain moral ideal of the park, and when this ideal was "threatened" they experienced an emotional reaction leading them to argue against the proposed memorial.

Current Park Planning Methods:
Planning processes for community and urban public parks often involve similar steps. Some of these steps include visioning, issue and opportunity identification, goal and objective formulation, and public participation. Public participation is one of the most important parts of the process because it allows the public to voice their opinions, desires, and needs, as well as bring issues to light. Austin's Parks and Recreation Department also included public participation processes in their planning; for example, in the current process of updating the Long Range Plan for Land and Facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department shows a timeline that includes various types of public participation, starting from Spring 2015 and going through Summer of 2017, with the plan update expected to be finished by the end of 2017. These public participation types include a park user assessment survey, citizen meetings and stakeholder group meetings for input, and citizen meetings to review the plan draft (Long Range Planning Process YEAR). I hope to contribute to the park planning process with my methodology. I believe it can contribute as not only a form of public participation through the assessment of a community's shared photo content, but also as a way to identify needs, issues, goals, and visions by understanding what people do and do not value about public parks.
CASE STUDY - ZILKER PARK:
I have chosen Zilker Park as my case study. Zilker is a large public park and recreational space, centrally located in Austin, Texas, and home to a variety of events, activity facilities, and cultural and historical resources. It also has a long history and holds important meanings to residents and visitors to Austin, making it an appropriate choice for a study of this type. In the first third of the 20th Century, A. J. Zilker sold the land encompassing the existing park area and Barton Springs to the City of Austin, who developed the park. Currently the park includes several amenities, as listed by the Zilker Park Visitors Guide website: Lady Bird Lake, Barton Springs Pool, Zilker Park Boat Rental, Zilker Botanical Gardens, Austin Nature and Science Center, Zilker Hillside Theatre, Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum, Austin Sunshine Camps, and the Zilker Zephyr. It also hosts the following events as listed by the Zilker Park Visitors Guide website: Zilker Kite Festival, Austin City Limits Music Festival, Austin Nature and Science Center Events, Zilker Park Tree Lighting and Trail of Lights, Zilker Hillside Theatre Events, and Blues on the Green (Zilker Park Visitors Guide).

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:
Overarching question: What can an analysis of pictures published through social media reveal about the values and meanings that people place on public parks?
-Sub-question 1: What are the principal ‘meanings’ of Zilker in the historical ‘imaginary’ of Austin?
-Sub-question 2: What are the principal meanings and values placed on Zilker Park, Austin, Texas, in current social media postings?
-Sub-question 3: How can these social media research and analysis methods be replicated/become a useful planning tool for assessment of the features or programming of parks?

METHODOLOGY:
1. Review of historical documents of Zilker Park
I will search for documents related to Zilker Park in the Austin Public Library and in the Austin History Center.

2. Photo analysis
I plan to gather my photographs from two prominent social media sites: Twitter and Instagram. I will use these sites because they have large active user bases, they are readily accessible, and they allow for relatively easy photo searches. I want to gather the photographs from social media sites because social media has become one of the foremost methods by which people share details, content, and media relating to their daily lives. Also, researchers are increasingly utilizing social media sourcing as a means to collect data and conduct analysis, as growing numbers of people are conducting and sharing more of their lives online and through social media. I will focus on a one-year search period and include all pictures in order to capture the seasonality, since events and everyday uses in the park are on an annual basis. I will not use people’s captions in my research because not all pictures include captions or text, and I also want to focus on the images themselves. Before I start my research, I will review literature on social media research to further refine the methodology. However, the basic steps are as follows:
   a. I will search by keywords and hashtags including "zilker," "zilker park," "#zilker," and "#zilkerpark" (not case-sensitive), within a one-year period.
   b. I will ‘save’ all the images by ‘liking’ in Instagram and Twitter.
   c. I will then label each picture with a unique code in order to develop a spreadsheet with basic data about the picture, including date, time, user name, and URL.
   d. I will then study the photos to identify categories of what park elements are found in the photos (content), which will be used as a basis for a quantitative content analysis. To do this content
analysis, I will review the pictures to count how many include certain content that fall within one or more of the content categories.
e. I will then study the photos to identify categories of principal activities represented in the photos (behavior). I will review the pictures to count how many show behaviors that fall within one or more of the behavioral categories.
f. I will then study the photos to identify categories of prominent patterns in terms of how the pictures are taken (composition). Then I will review the pictures to count how many fall within one or more of the compositional categories.
g. Based on these three quantitative content analysis methods (d, e, and f above), I will conduct a qualitative interpretation of the photographs in order to identify the principal values that users of Zilker represent in their photographs.

**CHAPTER OUTLINE:**

**Introduction**
- Research Topic
- Questions Asked
- Case Study - Zilker Park: Relevance/Significance
- Outline of Methodology
- What I Will Propose
- Chapter Outline/Table of Contents

**Chapter 1** - Traditional park planning fails to capture people’s emotional response to parks...but social media sourcing can help (approx. 14 pages)

**Chapter 2** - Zilker Park Case Study: Zilker is an ideal case to test this methodology because it has special place in the history/culture of Austin, therefore emotional significance (approx. 16 pages)

**Chapter 3** – Methodology: Need to take a phased approach to capture how people value parks (approx. 18-20 pages)

1) Social Media Sourcing Methods (3-4 pages)
2) How to do Content Analysis methods (2 pages)
3) Methods Phase 1: (approx. 2-3 pages)
   - Picking the Social Media Sites (pros and cons)
   - Testing different search terms
   - Considering date ranges
   - Scan of the pictures
4) Methods Phase 2: (approx. 2-3 pages)
   - Determine categories
   - Develop spreadsheet
   - Determine what to exclude
   - Figure out how to create unique identifiers for quant analysis
   - Collecting the Images via screenshots
   - Input data
   - Stats
   - Selection of images for Phase 3, interpretation
5) Limitations of the Methodology (approx. 2-3 pages)
   - Subjectivity
   - Assumptions
   - Socio-Economic-Demographic Diversity
Chapter 4 – Findings and analysis

- Analyzing the Images
  - Identification of Content Categories, Behavior Categories, and Composition Categories
  - Sorting/Grouping Occurrences of Images Representing Content, Behavior, and Composition into Their Respective Categories
  - Results of the Quantitative Analysis
- Interpretation of Values
  - Results of the Qualitative Analysis

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Recommendations

- Assessment of people’s emotional attachment to Zilker
- Assessment of the Methodology
- Proposing the Methodology for Use by Park Planners
  - Using the Same Methodology
  - Adapting the Methodology
  - Usage for Active Public Participation

TIMELINE:
Preliminary ‘test’ search to develop analysis: December 15
Complete photo collection and quant data analysis (Phase 1 and 2): February 19 (Meet to discuss qual)
Complete qualitative analysis (Phase 3): March 1 (Meet)
Chapter 3 (Methods): March 1 (maybe meet with Dr. Paterson)
Chapter 4 (Findings and analysis): March 7
Chapter 2 (Zilker): March 12
Chapter 1 (Theoretical framework): March 20
Complete first draft (reflect your edits to chapters 1-4): April 1
Complete second (revised first) draft (in Grad School format): By April 15, 2016
Complete third (revised second) and final draft: By end of April 2016
Submit final completed PR document to the graduate school: May 6

BIBLIOGRAPHY: